

Suppress the Monster, Silence the Bitch:

Containing the Rhetorical Feminine

By

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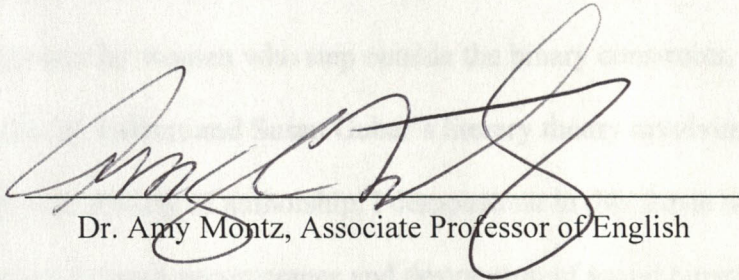
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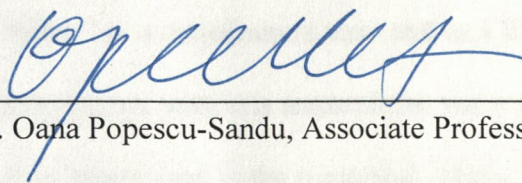
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A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Melanie Lee". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

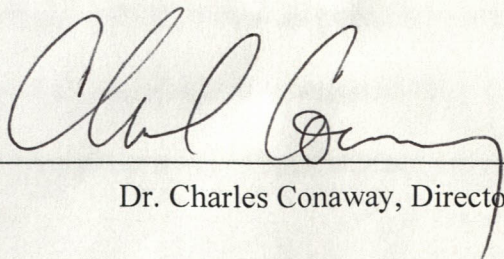
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A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Amy Montz". The signature is highly stylized and cursive, with a large loop at the end.

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A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Oana Popescu-Sandu". The signature is cursive and somewhat compact.

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Dr. Charles Conaway, Director of MAE

Abstract

The suppression of women's voices in the rhetorical sphere continues to present issues for women who attempt to excel in traditionally male-dominated fields of study. Historically, women who attempted to claim a place on the rhetorical platform were silenced and denied, as they defied patriarchal and socially constructed binaries that relegated women to the background. While modern women have gained rhetorical agency in many respects, others are still contained into their "proper" roles of the submissive and docile by those in power. To gain access to this platform, women must, as Sally Gearhart suggests, "scale themselves" to the preferred masculinized discourse to be heard. But the consequences for adopting masculinized discourse perpetuates containment for women who step outside the binary constructs.

Using Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar's literary theory involving the angel vs. monster dichotomy and anxiety of authorship, I demonstrate in this thesis how women attempt to overcome suppression through perseverance and destruction of social binaries in the rhetorical sphere. I investigate issues which lie within social media discourse, discourse in major media outlets, and discourse used in academia. Furthermore, I created my own primary research into the usage of the word "bitch" as a containment term and as a linguistic equivalent to Gilbert and Gubar's "monster." I demonstrate with this research the ways in which labels used toward women in literature reflect labels used in the rhetorical sphere. This thesis also investigates a small group of nationally recognized universities and attempts to call attention to patriarchal standards which reflect outdated rhetorical pedagogy methods. Finally, I suggest ways in which women can reclaim their own ideas of womanhood that break the dichotomies and allow women's voices to flourish in a sea of masculinized rhetoric.

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“The Great Bitch is the deadly female, a worthy opponent for the omnipotent hero to exercise his powers upon.”

—Germain Greer, *The Female Eunuch*

“We realize the importance of our voice when we are silenced.”

—Malala Yousafzai

INTRODUCTION

In October 2016, First Lady Michelle Obama gave a powerful speech in response to candidate Donald Trump and his alleged treatment of women: “Maybe we're afraid to be *that* vulnerable... we've grown accustomed to swallowing these emotions and staying quiet, because we've seen that people often won't take [a woman's] word over [a man's].” The first lady recognized that men's words and actions often go unchallenged, leaving women's voices silenced and ignored. The speech generated negative responses, however, prompting various news outlets, television hosts, and comedians to refer to Obama as a “black bitch” and to continually mock and degrade her opinion. Television host Sean Hannity called her “rants” during the 2008 campaign election speeches a product of her “angry and bitter” attitude, remarking that “her speeches always seem to have a negative tone to them” (Berrier). These responses signify issues which revolve around feminized discourse; when women use their own discourse, they defy the dominant masculinized discourse, and in turn, the masculinized majority silences them. The forced submission of women in the rhetorical sphere has affected women throughout history and continues to affect women well into the present. Socially constructed binaries which confine women into their “proper” roles manifest reductive thinking, ultimately constraining social identities into oversimplified dichotomic categories. By perpetuating these socially constructed categories, women's voices become relegated to the background, leaving the

aggressive and oftentimes combative discourse as the accepted norm. Historical women rhetors attempted to overcome this suppression and modern women rhetors still attempt this feat today.

In the late 1970s, Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar recognized the need for an overhaul of binary thinking. To generate links to societal binary thought and how literature reflects these binaries, they established a critical feminist theory in *The Madwoman in the Attic* that portrays the duality present within the mind of the female author. The angel represents everything good, quiet, and submissive, and acts as the face of the woman accepted by the patriarchal world; the monster represents everything passionate and fierce, and acts as the suppressed side of the woman despised by the world. Gilbert and Gubar's theory suggests that women authors need an outlet to release their suppressed "monstrous" identities, an outlet which portrays the demonized, hidden versions of themselves that society deems unacceptable to the public:

In effect, [successful women writers] have created submerged meanings, meanings hidden within or behind the more accessible, 'public' content of their works, so that their literature could be read and appreciated even when its vital concern with female dispossession and disease was ignored. (Gilbert and Gubar 72)

The "vital concern with female dispossession and disease" encompasses women's struggles of ideas, connections, and power which still reflect masculinized societal norms. Women have been dispossessed of their social power for so long that perpetuating new ideas which do not mirror those of patriarchal binaries remains an issue for women who seek power in the public sphere. This "disease" of anxiety of authorship reflects apprehensive behavior that success comes on the heels of man—she cannot fully commit to her writing and will forever remain in the man's (precursory) and successful shadow (Gilbert and Gubar 72-3). To overcome this anxiety, women

battle within themselves to redefine the very idea of womanhood: “Her battle, however, is not against her (male) precursor’s reading of the world but against his reading of *her*. In order to define herself as an author she must redefine the terms of her socialization” (Gilbert and Gubar 49). This “redefinition of socialization” only comes when women banish the angelic being and embrace their monstrous qualities, essentially “resurfacing” the splintered area of women’s duality to meld it into a completely new definition of what it means to “be a woman.”

While Gilbert and Gubar’s angel vs. monster dichotomy resounds in the work of women authors such as Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley and Sylvia Plath, we can also apply their theory to rhetoric. Women authors frequently recreate identities to promote change and to surface suppressed ideas and experiences. Women in rhetoric also attempt this feat, both within the highly public sphere of politics and media and the more intimate public sphere of academia. The masculine-dominant public sphere often presents very few opportunities for women to assert their own voices to gain rhetorical agency. On the occasion when women’s voices *do* puncture that sphere, patriarchal society promptly suppresses them because the preferred discourse stems from masculinized language instead of feminized, ultimately perpetuating an authoritarian discourse. Christine Mason Sutherland reiterates this notion as she explains, “...*silence* was said to be a woman’s rhetoric” (102, emphasis mine), leaving little room for women’s rhetoric to flourish. Furthermore, to withdraw this patriarchal concept that women’s feminized discourse acts as “less-than” the current perpetuated masculinized discourse, scholars Lisa Disch and Mary Jo Kane remark:

The patriarchal reversal does not take place whenever a woman challenges the typical gender hierarchy by taking a position in a traditionally male profession; rather, it occurs only when such challenge to traditional gender roles also destabilizes the certainties on

which the conception of gender as a social construction based on a natural binary depends. (293)

In order for women to “take a position” in the traditionally masculine rhetorical sphere, society must first redefine womanhood, not to fit within the confines of the structures currently set in place, but to create our own pathways to success. To succeed in this feat of engaging with womanly identity, we must execute change on multiple levels of discourse and societal norms and deconstruct binary thought and power within the rhetorical sphere.

THE FIGHT STILL RAGES IN 2018

The major thematic notions of Gilbert and Gubar’s angel vs. monster dichotomy still present themselves within rhetorical situations in 2018. Men consistently question the credibility and authority of women in higher positions of power in our government and in our universities. Obama’s words resonate within the public rhetorical sphere as we bear witness to displays of patriarchal combativeness, essentialism, and suppression of women’s voices on multiple platforms. The recent reactions to the sexual abuse allegations involving Christine Blasey-Ford and Brett Kavanaugh remind the world of patriarchal suppression that remains at the forefront of women’s issues. Ford’s condemnation of Kavanaugh’s alleged sexual abuse in 1982 provides a #MeToo-inspired¹ platform for women who find it difficult to speak about the atrocities they have experienced. However, differing opinions about what transpired on the day of Kavanaugh’s hearing reverberate throughout social media outlets and news sources: Ford exists simultaneously as a hero and martyr for coming forward about her experiences, but is also characterized as a nuisance for speaking about situations which are traditionally uncomfortable

¹ #MeToo is a social media movement inspired by social activist Tarana Burke to address sexual harassment and sexual assault on women.

to address; she emulates rhetorical tenacity when speaking about sexual assault, but is also accused of lying for political motive; and finally, she battles courageously as a woman whose voice and experience has been silenced, but is also charged with setting the standard for malicious intent used against men. These binaries reveal the type of anxious authorship to which Gilbert and Gubar reference; the high-profile nature of this hearing enables people who have never been in Ford's situation to actively dispossess her of her experiences and her voice. And while Ford recognizes the possibility that recounting these experiences will not provide her any closure, she still chooses to reclaim what has been dispossessed from her: her voice. As Ford states, "I am here today not because I want to be. I am terrified. I am here because I believe it is my civic duty to tell you what happened to me..." (Le Miere). Although Kavanaugh's hearing was a preliminary necessity to determine if he was fit for his political position and was not a criminal trial, it still provided a public platform for Ford to speak about violent acts deemed too uncomfortable for the public sphere.

People questioned Ford's credibility, however, and this hindered her from adequately gaining rhetorical ground. From the beginning of the hearing, Judiciary Chairman Chuck Grassley attempted to discredit Ford and her allegations, noting that she revealed the "secret information" pertinent to Kavanaugh only at "The 11th hour, on the eve of Judge Kavanaugh's nomination" ("Kavanaugh Hearing: Transcript"). Grassley essentially blamed Ford for not breaking her silence sooner. Grassley then recounted the ways in which he and other colleagues attempted to interview Ford before the public hearing, remarking that she declined eleven times to speak with anyone. From these two instances alone, gendered, hierarchal power dynamics continue to regulate the when, where, and how a woman speaks, punctuated with a condemning undertone: the woman will speak when the man wants her to speak. Grassley's insistence on the

absurdity of Ford's silence and repeated attempts to silence her during the public platform of a hearing raises questions regarding the treatment of women once they step into that public rhetorical position. He disguises this as an attempt to "seek additional information" ("Kavanaugh Hearing: Transcript") for the case, but the undertone of his words remains clear: Ford did not cooperate according to *his* conventional standards. Grassley uses his power on the rhetorical platform to question her credibility, and in doing so, allows the public to question her credibility as well. We see this rhetorical strategy echoed throughout social media as the public continues to ask: "Why would Ford not come forward and tell her story sooner?" Perpetuating timelines of when women *should* speak reiterates social dynamics which contain women to the idea that they are controllable. Moreover, it raises considerable questions regarding how women speak *at all*: women are presumed to remain silent, but face condemnation for *choosing* to remain silent until a certain point *and then*, also face condemnation when they break these silences at "inconvenient" times.

This act of containment and silencing stems from centuries-old societal and hierarchal normalcies found throughout history, ones which maintain that women belong in the private sphere of the home. Literature scholar Nan Johnson claims that conduct literature influenced how women were viewed during the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries. She bases many of her claims surrounding women's "rightful place" on the saturation of conduct literature into cultural expectations:

Conduct literature participated in the rhetorical repatriation of the woman back to the parlor by overtly discouraging women from having strong voices, literally and culturally, and by reminding American readers that, if happiness was to be secured, women should keep to their former place in the home and do it quietly. (222)

But Ford refuses to remain quiet, and, consequently, finds that this choice activates the containment response perpetuated by outdated societal and cultural norms. She endured social media abuse and mockery, received death threats at her home, and was forced to move out of her home because of the abuse she received from the public (Williamson et al.). By speaking about her sexual abuse, she actively encourages strong female voices, both from herself and from others. Consequently, her attempt to sustain the public rhetorical platform for women prompts her containment into the private sphere by the men she questioned. Her experiences “belong” in the private sphere of the home, with no place in the public sphere, ultimately situating her into the role of the submissive woman. Only from there could Johnson’s idea that “happiness comes from a quiet woman in the home” reign over social expectations of a woman’s place.

Furthermore, her character as a person, as a rape victim, as a *woman*, is repeatedly questioned—and yet, she persists. Ford demonstrates the rhetorical tenacity of women who frequently face suppression when attempting to claim agency; she represents the women who, as Liz Lane suggests, resist cultural expectations of the silent and docile. To the dominant patriarchal and cultural structures currently set in place, Ford embodies everything that represents the “monster” to which Gilbert and Gubar refer: she refuses to adhere to traditional, Westernized constructs of the woman speaker; she refuses to “sit down and shut up”; and she refuses to accept the cultural codes that, as Cheryl Glenn states, dictates that a woman must have “a closed mouth (silence), a closed body (chastity), and an enclosed life (domestic confinement)” (1). Ford’s refusal to remain contained by this culturally conditioned role challenges the current social paradigm of where women “belong” and how their voices rise when faced with domestic containment.

HISTORICAL WOMEN, HISTORICAL SACRIFICES

As 2018 comes to a close, we are reminded that the fight to correct imbalances within the rhetorical sphere—the very need for women to claim a rightful place on the platform—remains a timeless impasse. For this historical inquiry into female rhetors, I concentrate on women from the seventeenth century to present-day 2018. While many women struggled to speak publicly without trepidation well before the seventeenth century, women who fought for rhetorical expression in the last four centuries better reflect the modern struggles of present-day rhetors. In their book, *The Rhetorical Tradition: Readings from Classical Times to the Present*, Patricia Bizzell and Bruce Herzberg note Mary Astell, an author who found published success in the late 1600s and early 1700s with works such as *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies, Parts I and II*. Astell found herself as the object of mockery by male authors who were intimidated by her work. In 1709, Jonathan Swift created a satirical piece about Astell in *The Tatler*, depicting her as a ridiculous Bluestocking² figure (Bizzell and Herzberg 843). Although Bluestocking women were held to higher social standards, Swift parodied Astell to reflect a “zealous mistress of a female academy of dizzy philosophical speculation” (Deluna 233). This satire then translated to the stage, as others mocked Astell’s arguments and views even though she agreed with patriarchal hierarchies of the time (Bizzell and Herzberg 843). These acts beg the question of why she was satirized; even though some scholars considered her to be the “first English feminist” (Bizzell and Herzberg 843), she did not contradict the social paradigm and hierarchies like modern feminists, nor did she believe women should speak on multiple public platforms. Swift’s parody of her work, then, could only mean that it was an attempt to contain her voice simply because she was a woman who had any sort of public platform at all. The misogynistic views represented in

² According to Nicole Pohl and Betty A. Schellenberg, Bluestocking women participated in informal gatherings that promoted sociability, intellectual improvement, and refinement of art through patronage and philanthropy (2).

Swift's and other subsequent pieces further illustrate the need for women to have their own voice and platform on which to speak.

Women were still struggling with containment when the nineteenth century approached. Forms of containment began to transform, as women were not only satirized by men, but the role of their bodies as instruments of discourse raised questions when they spoke in public places. Public spaces were considered "promiscuous," as they contained a mixed audience of men and women (Bizzell and Herzberg 1046; Carlacio 248). These spaces were generally delegated to men, but when women dared to speak on these public platforms, their bodies crossed the boundary where *acceptable* viewing of the quiet, submissive woman became the *unacceptable* viewing of the outspoken, shameful woman. Upper-class women perpetuated the containment of "shameful" female bodies, as prominent, conservative educator Catharine Beecher chastised rhetors Angelina and Sarah Grimke for the "unwomanliness" of defending their arguments in public (Bizzell and Herzberg 1046). However, they were not deterred, as they toured in Massachusetts, speaking on behalf of the Boston Female Anti-Slavery Society and continually spoke for mixed audiences of men and women. According to Bizzell and Herzberg, the General Association of Congressional Churches in Massachusetts penned a letter against the Grimke sisters and their public speech. In this letter, ministers questioned the chastity of the Grimke sisters, insinuating that women who took on activist roles risked contaminating their "chastehood" (Bizzell and Herzberg 1046-7). Additionally, the ministers condemned the sisters for speaking publicly; one even declared he "expected the Grimke sisters soon to appear on the speaker's platform nude" (Bizzell and Herzberg 1047), equating public speaking with shamelessly "showing" women's bodies (which belong in the private sphere) to a male audience. The patriarchal notions of public speaking declared that women could persuade only by *seducing*

a male audience (Bizzell and Herzberg 1048), a concept which disgraces the abilities of female minds and equates women's intellectual worth to their sexual body. By allowing men to see their bodies *and* hear their voices, the Grimke sisters crossed the boundary between what was accepted and what was abhorred, ultimately releasing the socially unacceptable monstrous identity of the woman rhetor.

Containment of women does not stop at the physical. The patriarchy succeeds in dictating precisely which modes of discourse to allow women and which to silence. The idea of "femaleness" in the rhetorical sphere faces containment, while masculinized discourse remains the preferred norm. In her book, *Manly Writing: Gender, Rhetoric, and the Rise of Composition*, Miriam Brody characterizes masculine rhetoric as "...productive, coherent, virtuous, and heroic...plain, forceful, and true" (3); "the embodiment of masculine virtues" (11); "victorious over effeminate writing" (30); and "an enterprise of mastery, self-assertion, and achievement" (35). She also reiterates opinions from Hugh Blair, a Scottish Enlightenment "new rhetorician" who claims that manly writing "...deals in no superfluous or gaudy ornaments; but throws forth his images with rapid conciseness, which enable them to strike the mind with the greatest force" (qtd. in Brody 84). Observation of masculinized rhetoric continues with the work of Robert J. Connors. He claims, "The continuing discipline of rhetoric was shaped by male rituals, male contests, male ideals, and masculine agendas" (Connors 24), leaving little room for women to insert themselves into the dominant rhetorical sphere.

The most interesting facet of Connors' work lies within his careful archival effort of the incredibly masculinized idea of competition, one which still influences politics, social media debates, and even classroom essay writing. Connors includes Walter Ong's observation of rhetoric's historically agonistic displays, noting that agonists constantly fight for power, physical

comfort, ego-satisfaction, and territory (Connors 25). This solidifies the idea of competition as an important aspect of masculinized rhetoric. Additionally, the issues which surround masculinized rhetoric all predicate on one factor: the *self* resides above avenues of inclusivity and others.

Brody's description of masculinized rhetoric also emphasizes these ideals; her assessment of rhetoric and writing as "heroic" stresses the idea that one must conquer one's opponent to gain rhetorical worth. The fascination of rhetorical valor creates and sustains the accepted illusion that rhetoric values the dominant mindset over suppressed others. It misses the important aspects of inclusivity and employs rhetoric which seeks to destroy others, creating a world which does not benefit from these perpetuated ideals.

While these descriptions of masculinized rhetoric emphasize the competitive nature of argument and writing, what has been characterized as feminized rhetoric may serve as the best avenue for change. Karlyn Kohrs Campbell describes feminized rhetoric as "concrete, participatory, and contingent reasoning," discourse that "displays a personal tone, uses personal experience, anecdotes, and examples as evidence" (78-9). She also emphasizes audience participation. And although Campbell describes some of these characteristics as performative for women in rhetorical situations (80), many of the feminized aspects of rhetoric reflect the passionate discourse of which rhetorical delivery requires. Hélène Cixous provides her own commentary on the idea of feminized rhetoric as well in "The Laugh of Medusa," as she focuses on the response of women's bodies to the delivery of passionate rhetoric:

She doesn't 'speak,' she throws her trembling body forward; she lets go of herself; she flies; all of her passes into her voice, and it's with her body that she vitally supports the logic of her speech...In a certain way she inscribes what she is saying, because she

doesn't deny her drives the intractable and impassioned part they have in speaking. Her speech...draws her story into history. (Cixous 1528)

This type of rhetoric to which both Cixous and Campbell speak encompasses *conciliatory* pathos that reduces hostility and allows one to focus on connections with the audience. Feminized rhetoric does not "strike the mind with the greatest force" (Blair qtd. in Brody 84) but seeks to use participatory reasoning which enables agreement between two divided parties. Instead of controlling the audience, women ascribe passion to their rhetoric, and this rhetoric instills into the audience awe, inspiration, and motivation.

Sarah Grimke resonated this notion within her rhetoric, as she used anecdotal evidence and passionate eloquence to move her audience. But she did not move her audience into submission of ideas, as the historical (and current) paradigm suggests; she moved her audience to understand her ideas in such a way that people questioned their thinking and attempted to transform it. In her essay, "Letters on the Equality of the Sexes and the Condition of Woman," Grimke used passionate reasoning to appeal to her audience. She discussed the position of women during the nineteenth century and the issues each woman rhetor consistently encountered in the public sphere. In this piece, she explained that misogyny confined the roles of women as "private and unobtrusive" (Bizzell and Herzberg 1050) beside man, and she pleaded for her audience to understand the containing nature of masculinized rhetoric:

This has ever been the flattering language of man since he laid aside the whip as a means to keep woman in subjection. He spares her body; but the war he has waged against her mind, her heart, and her soul, has been no less destructive to her as a moral being... [woman] has surrendered her dearest *rights*, and been satisfied with the privileges which man has assumed to grant her. (Bizzell and Herzberg 1051, emphasis mine)

By referencing women's minds *and* bodies, Grimke eloquently creates a direct link regarding the types of containment men project onto women. The establishment of this participatory pathos in feminized rhetoric is missing in typical masculinized discourse. In turn, this monstrous language faces suppression by the patriarchal rhetorical platform. Grimke not only recognizes that women have been conditioned to contain emotional responses because they supposedly block perceptive logic and reasoning, but she also recognizes the need for feminized rhetoric in order to overcome the control and silencing of emotional appeals.

BITCHES, WITCHES, AND NASTY WOMEN

Even though these historical women battled containment, the suppression of women's voices continues. But an even larger issue presents itself: the ongoing rhetorical suppression of women has created what seems like the only open path for women who want their voices heard; in turn, this forces them to adopt aggressive, foreign, and masculinized rhetoric. As Sally Gearhart states "... [women have been] trying not to *be* women, trying instead to scale ourselves to the conquest/conversion model of the speechmaker..." (60). Yet, once women engage with that rhetorical discourse and "scale themselves" to the preferred language, the adopted voice then becomes one that is *also* viewed as unacceptable. It contradicts femininity and portrays an attack on masculinity, and is therefore deemed "monstrous," a voice that, as Karin Anderson states in her article "Rhymes with Rich: 'Bitch' as a Tool of Containment," has "usurped the master's control" (603). Women who adopt the masculinized discourse take on the role of the dominant position in an argument, ultimately flipping the dominant and submissive roles that have been consistent with the current paradigm. This reversal of roles in discourse suggests an imminent threat toward the masculinized rhetorical platform, and a common response to this threat is to

contain the woman who initiates it. By containing women into the idea that their spoken word resists the current paradigm, Gilbert and Gubar's "monster" binary surfaces and a modern, linguistic equivalent is born: this "monster" is a "bitch."

To fully understand the impact of the term "bitch," one must understand its history. In her essay, Anderson gives a brief history of how the word "bitch" originated and how it later transformed into one of the most common public discursive containment words for women. It was first introduced in the 1400s to describe women who were branded as malicious, spiteful, promiscuous, and despicable (Anderson 602). It was then used as a political insult during the suffrage movement in America, and eventually gained momentum in the 1970s; "bitch" became a popular slur used by men to describe women who were "uppity, vocal, and pushy" as they demanded equal rights and treatment. Men also used "bitch" as an insult and used the word as "a basis for the concept of women as male chattel, themes of male conquest, domination, and exploitation" (Anderson 602), which contains women to the idea that they are less than their male counterparts. Moreover, women were compared to a female dog, a bitch that "bites the hand that feeds it" and "has returned to her wild state" (Anderson 602), reducing women to nothing more than a being who feeds from the metaphorical hand of the dominant male. These labels severely impact whether a society hears a woman's opinion and voice. In turn, these labels force women into a rhetorical frame where the narrative of powerful women is skewed into a negative stereotype: strong-willed and outspoken women become "bitches" if they dare to defy the dominant ideology.

The "bitch" stereotype perpetuates a dichotomy which appears in literature and rhetoric. Sarah Appleton Aguiar, author of *The Bitch is Back: Wicked Women in Literature*, discusses the dichotomy of the "Fair Maiden" and the "Dark Lady," resembling that of the angel vs. monster

dichotomy from the work of Gilbert and Gubar. In her chapter on these historical binaries, Aguiar states,

The bitch, by her very definition, is the embodiment of female evil: the foil for literature's icons of morality and the scourge of the male hero. The bitch and her dark, soulless existence act as a potent warning for her female readers: 'There, but for the (patriarchal) grace and (feminine) good manners, go I.' (Aguiar 5)

This embodiment of evil resounds within the ideals set forth by patriarchal standards of the monster which women "need" to control. It depicts the "Dark Lady," the witch of fairy tales, the temptresses of romance novels. The "bitch" plays the role of the heartless monster who indulges her bad behavior without cause or motivation (Aguiar 10). Most often, figures in literature who acquire the label of "bitch" are women who provoke established normalcies of their realms: biblical figures, such as Eve and Jezebel; shrews and outspoken women such Shakespeare's Katharina and Lady Macbeth; and witches, Femme Fatale harlots, and Amazons (Aguiar 34-43). These images of women depicted in literature encompass the social roles to which women are expected to play (Russ qtd. in Aguiar 5), roles which prevent them from reaching the literary and rhetorical platforms they strive to meet. These literary roles translate onto the public platforms of rhetoric, leaving women with the stigma of the "bitch" when she asserts any dominant control of public discourse at all.

The negativity of the word "bitch" repeatedly contains women who fight for agency, and their worth and credibility are subsequently questioned. President Trump has succeeded in stifling a woman's agency on multiple occasions by using his powerful influence, promptly solidifying his role as the projected masculinized norm and the woman as the "Other." In October 2016, Trump made this claim about former Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice:

“...she’s a lovely woman, but I think she’s a bitch...She goes around to other countries and other nations, negotiates with their leaders, comes back and nothing ever happens” (Sieczkowski). Not only does Trump dismiss Rice’s efforts, position, and accomplishments, but he implies that because she is a “bitch,” she cannot successfully negotiate with other (male) world leaders. In this quote, he expands upon the notion that “the threat of the hag, the monster, the witch, the madwoman” (Gilbert and Gubar 79) stifles her ability to achieve anything worthwhile. Furthermore, he attempts to contain her, not only with the term “bitch,” but by calling her a “lovely woman.” This juxtaposition reiterates the idea that women only have use in the realm where they are the “angel” instead of the “monster.” This type of containment further perpetuates the gendered binaries present within the rhetorical sphere.

Part of my research into the word “bitch” involved asking questions directly to the source that never fails to deliver: social media. To reach the maximum number of people, I developed a survey on Survey Monkey, a survey generator website designed for business, classrooms, and numerous other organizations. My survey asked ten questions, mainly open response questions, that would allow participants to speak as freely as they wish. I distributed the survey on my personal Facebook account and again through two discussion groups with which I am affiliated. The survey garnered 237 total responses. “Complete” responses totaled 178 of the 237 responses, denoting those who completed all ten questions. Questions ranged from demographic information (without revealing identity), a person’s overall perception and understanding of the word “bitch,” and their interactions that included use of the word “bitch” spoken by/to them. Responses were overwhelmingly female: 233 people completed the demographic section; of those 233, 215 people identified as female, 12 as male, 1 as gender-fluid, 1 as heteroflexible, and 4 gave no gender response at all (See Table 1).

Gender Demographics					
Total	Female	Male	Heteroflexible	Gender-Fluid	No Response
233	215	12	1	1	4

Table 1

Most of the respondents live somewhere in the United States, with a total of 173, 42 respondents live internationally (identified here as residing outside the United States), and 18 gave no locale response. Each respondent was required to be at least 18 years old to complete the survey. Ages ranged from 18-57+; the largest response group fell within the 26-30 range with 41 people and the lowest response group fell within the 18-25 range with 16 people (See Table 2).

Age Demographics									
Total	18-25	26-30	31-36	37-41	42-46	47-51	52-56	57+	No Response
233	16	41	36	28	34	22	17	24	15

Table 2

Question 2 garnered the most fascinating and diverse responses. The question, “What is your general understanding of the word ‘bitch’ and how is it used where you live? What are your overall perceptions of the term?” took the most time to evaluate. There were 200 responses to this question, and no answer was exactly alike. Out of the 200 responses, 185 claimed that the word “bitch” denoted a cruel or derogatory description of a woman. Upon searching for key terms within the responses, 57 people used the word “derogatory” in their description; 52 described a “bitch” as a “mean woman”; 47 referenced a female dog; and 13 used the term “nasty” or “nasty woman.” Various types of derogatory synonyms were used to describe a bitch: “unpleasant,” “vindictive,” “overbearing,” “grumpy,” “irritating,” “mean,” “rude,” “selfish,” “spiteful,” “two-faced,” “nagger,” “catty,” “petty,” and “nasty piece of work.” Responses from Question 6 closely related to Question 2. Respondents were asked if they have ever called

someone a “bitch” in a derogatory sense and to explain the context surrounding the situation. Out of the 161 responses to the question, 24 stated they used the derogatory term in an argument and 118 admitted they used the term out of anger or retaliation against women with whom they were upset or women who portrayed a “rude” demeanor. Many of these respondents also admitted that “bitch” was not a term they normally used directly in front of the person with whom they were upset; instead, this term was most often used behind that person’s back as a description of that person’s character.

The most prominent trend within the survey centers upon the term “nasty” to describe a “bitch.” “Nasty woman” and “nasty bitch” are used interchangeably throughout the course of the survey, and this usage reflects deeper issues that affect multiple scales of the rhetorical platform. While some respondents refer to a woman as a “nasty piece of work,” others simply refer to a “rude” woman as nasty, a “woman with nasty behavior,” and a woman who [is] “very tacky, nasty, rude, low class, causes a lot of problems wherever she goes, not liked and often hated.” Others describe the different ways women are referred to as “nasty”: “that stupid bitch, nasty bitch, dumb bitch, fat bitch...the list goes on and on, but it all means a nasty person,” and “I have worked with some women over the years who were nasty, backstabbing, untrustworthy, who put me down or made me feel inadequate.” The negative link between “nasty woman” and “bitch” reflects discursive issues that contribute to the overall hindrance of containing rhetoric against women. By interposing “bitch” and “nasty woman” the discourse allows this synonym of “bitch” to remain at the forefront of monstrous characteristics which many prefer to contain. As Beverly Gross suggests, this use of discourse against women, *by* women, could possibly reflect what women particularly dislike in themselves (148), further perpetuating the harmful use of the term

by both men and women. But this silencing technique of calling a woman a “bitch” does not stop on the smaller rhetorical platform of social media; it has been heard worldwide.

During the final presidential debate in 2016, nominees Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump were in the middle of discussing Social Security funding and tax reform when Trump interrupted Clinton while she was speaking to mutter, “Such a nasty woman” (Ross). While Clinton handled the interruption with grace, the phrase sparked a life of its own, creating internet memes, hashtags, twitter handles, and much more. Women from around the world shared stories on social media of empowerment; feminist groups used the phrase to start social media revolutions; popular culture references were formed in response; and others used this instance as a way to urge people to vote. Still, this weaponized mutter indicates the larger rhetorical issue: the use of the term “weaponized mutter” denotes the rhetorical insult meant to belittle and the interruption of her speech was a literal attempt to silence a woman in power on the rhetorical platform. Trump used one of the most recognized synonyms to call Clinton a “bitch” without uttering that triggering word. By calling Clinton a “nasty woman” instead of a “bitch,” he saved face for his voters and attempted to decry her character. The famous Clinton/Trump scene highlights issues women face when men feel dissatisfied by a woman’s words or actions. This historical moment publicly captures the consequences when a woman displeases a man by also encompassing what women experience every day.

Women’s daily experiences produced a pattern in my survey: many women shared stories of how they were treated when they refused a man’s advances, did/said something to make a man angry, or generally ignored a man in their presence.³ Many of the responses to Question 4

³ For the purpose of this section, I have used features of Survey Monkey that allow access to all answers from a single respondent, including preferred gender pronouns. All examples used from pp. 20-27 have been sexed appropriately for discussion.

“Have you ever been called a bitch? What was the context? How did you react?” were overwhelmingly similar and I have grouped comments into three categories: domestic relationships, unwanted cat-calling or sexual advances, and power responses. These three categories demonstrate how the women who completed the survey are consistently contained by husbands, boyfriends, coworkers, and strangers. As Gross notes, “Bitch, the curse and concept, exists to insure male potency and female submissiveness” (151), implying that men who used the word “bitch” in these responses contained the women who challenged, disrupted, or questioned the men’s masculinized identity.

Gross discusses the ways in which context surrounding the word “bitch” has “metamorphosized,” creating different labels for women throughout history (151). She highlights the three main identities that often encompass women within literature: sexual (promiscuous or carnal), temperamental (angry or malicious), and powerful (domineering or competitive) (151). These identities consistently change throughout literature and can transfer to rhetorical analysis of women. Gross’ idea of “metamorphosis” translates into the three trends I identify within the survey: unwanted sexual advances and cat-calling (sexual), domestic relationships (temperamental), and power responses (powerful) (see Table 3).

Question 4: Have you ever been called a bitch? What was the context? How did you react?	
<i>Gross’ Metamorphosis of Identities</i>	<i>Survey Trends of Containment</i>
Sexual—promiscuous or carnal	Unwanted sexual advances and cat-calling
Temperamental—angry or malicious	Domestic relationships
Powerful—domineering or competitive	Power responses

Table 3

The context of sexuality remains a key aspect of “bitch” usage. Once referred to as the “harlot,” (Gross 151), “bitch” now takes the form of containment for modern women who refuse the advances of men. Many women shared these stories in my survey:

“I’ve had a guy ask me for my phone number and I turned him down, so he called me a fat bitch. I gave him the finger.”

“[I was called a bitch] by someone who didn’t like being turned down in a bar, by a man who didn’t like being told to leave my place of work.”

“Hey bitch why don’t you stop to talk to me?”

“[I’m called a bitch] usually by a man when I’ve been turning down unwanted advances.”

The fragility of ego for some of these men remains painfully obvious. Resorting to calling one respondent a “fat bitch” implies that he not only wants to subjugate her into submission with the word “bitch” but also attempts to harm her self-esteem by calling her “fat”—perhaps because she inadvertently harms his self-esteem when she turns away his advances. Although her response to his advances does not mean him harm, he resorts to utilizing the violent discourse found within masculinized rhetoric to provoke further response. The response “Hey bitch, why don’t you stop to talk to me?” implies that the respondent was actively moving away from the man; he explicitly uses the “bitch” insult to contain the respondent into the idea that by resisting his advances, she resists his masculine identity. As Gross suggests, “Bitch, like motherfucker, bespeaks something threatening to the male sense of himself, a furious counter to emasculation” (155). When a woman resists a man’s advances, she inadvertently creates the act of emasculation, thereby prompting the man to retaliate with condemning words such as “bitch” in hopes to contain this woman who conforms with his idea of the “monster” he cannot control.

While many of the women who told stories about unwanted advances from men had comebacks like “Thank you!” and “I gave him the finger,” others were not as comfortable confronting the men in question. One respondent states, “When I rejected the advances of a male they [sic] called me [a bitch]. I didn’t react a lot as I *didn’t want a confrontation with an angry male*” (emphasis mine). Another respondent claims, “I’ve been called a bitch in the street when not responding to a man in the way they would like, usually when I have ignored cat calling. I didn’t react, just like I didn’t react to the cat calling as *I didn’t want to interact or encourage further interaction*” (emphasis mine). Because these women refuse to interact with these men, the men’s anger toward the women conjures resentment and produces the containment movement of fear. Displaying aggression toward women invokes a fear response causing women to fear any interaction. Aggression can escalate quickly: one respondent claims, “I was called a ‘white Nazi bitch who deserved to be raped’ because I didn’t say ‘hi.’” Multiple layers of containment are evident in this single phrase alone: containment of fear by perpetuating the idea the woman deserves to be raped; racial issues surrounding the woman’s heritage; and the ever-containing word “bitch,” again used to promote the “lesser-than-men” ideology. By referring to these women as “bitches,” it serves the purpose of what Jo Freeman, author of the “Bitch Manifesto,” describes as “the social function of isolating and discrediting a class of people who do not conform to the socially accepted pattern of behavior.”

Not all encounters with the word “bitch” deal with strange men on the streets. Many respondents in the survey state the majority of their interaction with the word comes from domestic partners. These interactions portray Gross’ idea of metamorphosis that categorizes women as temperamental when they defy the man’s word in a relationship:

“I was being aggressive about my wishes after my ex wouldn’t listen to me. He liked to revert to name calling.”

“[I was called a bitch] mainly by an ex who couldn’t control me.”

“In my previous marriage, I was called a bitch on a daily basis. I felt that it was a way for my ex to try to tear me down and make me feel worthless.”

“My ex-husband was extremely verbally abusive, and it was usually used as ‘stop being a dumb bitch.’”

These women experience the silencing and containing aspects of the word “bitch” in their intimate relationships. As one respondent states above, she feels as though it was her ex-husband’s way to continually lower her self-esteem. As Gross reiterates, the use of the word “bitch” throughout history ties itself to perpetual “satisfying misogyny” and “gives the accusation timelessness and does the job of rekindling old indignation” (147). By using the word “bitch” against women daily, the force of it grows, “rekindling” previous fights between domestic partners and adding rhetorical fuel to a miserable relationship. The controlling use of the word “bitch” perpetuates the upheld dominant masculinized stereotypes of heteronormative marriages and relationships in an attempt to contain and relegate women to the lower class of domestic partnerships. Moreover, this type of language usage in relationships degrades women, as Gross echoes Francis Grose’s notion that it is “the most offensive appellation that can be given...even more provoking than that of whore” (Grose, qtd. in Gross 147), implying that “bitch” has a broader power to subjugate women than questioning their sexual exploits. The metamorphosis to which Gross discusses has come to signify the temperament of a woman in domestic relationships, as she attempts to navigate the treacherous waters of speaking and defending herself without being labeled as an angry, spiteful, or malicious woman.

The last category, power responses, plays a significant role in subjugating women in the business world. Gross' idea of the "bitch" metamorphosis changes from containing a woman's sexuality and temperament to containing her position of power: "As women have become more liberated, individually and collectively, the word has taken on connotations of aggressive, hostile, selfish...Judging by the contemporary colorations of the word bitch, what men primarily fear and despise in women is power" (Gross 151). "Bitchiness" is "a perversion" (Gross 150), a product of patriarchal ego-building in which women must participate to claim their rightful place among men in positions of power. The need for men to label women in power as "bitches" only feeds into the endless cycle of masculinized egocentrism, forcing women into the position where they must exhibit "bitchy" behavior to prove their worth. Many women in my survey recount stories where they were labeled "bitches" for simply exhibiting masculinized characteristics that are traditionally accepted and encouraged in men:

"I disagreed with a man on a particular topic...I was not aggressive in disagreeing and I told him to never call me that again."

"In several instances it is used in a derogatory way to *suggest my inability to go along with male dominance.*" (emphasis mine)

"[I was called a bitch] When a male felt threatened by my leadership or authority."

"I'm a leader in the corporate world and when you don't let people walk all over you then they call you a bitch."

"My male co-worker has told people I work with that I am a bitch."

"I was working on a group project and I overheard a male team member call me that.

Initially, I was shocked, then angry that I felt he only called me that because I was trying to take charge."

The initial usage of the word “bitch” against these women shocks them, but the women’s responses signify they refuse to submit to the masculinized view of power dynamics. Some women recognized the instance for what it was: “[It suggested] my inability to go along with male dominance”; “...he only called me that because I was trying to take charge”; and “a male felt threatened by [my] leadership or authority.” Others broke their silence and made sure the men with whom they were working did not call them that name again. But one respondent’s reply summarizes most of the ordeals women recount in their stories: “Doing anything that makes someone angry when you’re female will get you called a bitch/slut/whore/etc.” The problem with the male/female power dynamic in the workplace, the classroom, the corporate world, still reveals itself as part of the dichotomy prevalent in patriarchal structure: women must portray that angelic quality of silence and cannot tread upon the masculinized world.

Gender stereotypical roles of each sex punctuate the power dynamics between men and women in professional, work-related settings. Men typically control decision-making processes, while women follow their lead. The reversal of these gender roles creates problems in the workplace, as men succeed in obtaining the majority of the power. But when women break these socially constructed gender roles and take control of projects, problems, and decisions we see social resistance to women who dare embody masculinized qualities that helped men obtain that power. Women who exhibit these qualities often acquire the label of the “bitch” even though they portray the control and dominance that men strive to meet. Instead of becoming leaders, hard workers, and “boss material” they become domineering, loud, brash, and aggressive. As Freeman notes, our society defines humanity as inherently masculine and places the feminine among the Other; when a woman insists on claiming that humanity by embodying masculinized traits, she takes on the role of the outsider, the one who does not belong. These (masculinized)

human characteristics exist *only* for man. However, when a woman earns the title of “bitch” by her “intrusion into male certainties” (Disch and Kane 281), she becomes suspended between two identities. If she resides among the masculinized “bitch,” she can no longer reside among the *feminized* woman. Even though she attempts to propel herself out of the position of the feminized Other and into the humanized position of the masculine, she fails to become humanized. Neither the “bitch” nor the feminized is accepted, and therefore she remains suppressed.

The man who allows the “bitch” to take his place within the power structure now embodies those feminized characteristics of weakness; the “bitch” has stolen that rhetorical, humanizing power from him. However, the suppression marked by the word “bitch” still affects women on a greater scale than men. But many responses from my survey suggest otherwise. While over 70% of respondents clearly state they feel one sex bears the brunt of the word more than the other, 14% explicitly claim “no” and over 15% feel that “it depends.” I gave my respondents the ability to leave a comment if they selected “It depends” as a way to elaborate on their answer. The majority state that the word can refer to both sexes interchangeably, and many believe more contemporary usage of the term fits both men and women. One respondent states, “If it’s a joke, the usage is toward both sexes. If it’s derogatory, [it’s used] towards women,” implying the usage is *only* derogatory if used toward women. Another respondent’s statement conflicts with this one, however, and coincides with issues of power: “Some men are bitches too, but toward a man I think it’s more harsh [sic] because he is literally being called a woman or a girl.” This statement implies that to *be* a woman means to be *lesser-than*, reiterating Freeman’s assumption that humanization only applies for men who hold (rhetorical) power. When someone calls a man a “bitch,” he loses the masculinized qualities that denote power and acquires the role of the powerless, feminized Other. Yet, he still does not face the same suppression as women.

The man only assumes the role of the powerless, feminized Other for a short time; the woman, the perpetual “bitch”—either masculinized or feminized—permanently resides there.

Other questions in the survey reiterate these ideas: “A friend advised me to stop being a bitch and a suck it up,” and “If I backed out of something, people might say ‘stop being a little bitch’” both imply mockery of women as the weaker sex. By labeling these men “bitches” because they refuse to insert themselves into situations that could have damaging mental effects, it creates the illusion that women cannot mentally handle emotional stress. The implication of “bitch” also denotes the supposed inability to stifle one’s emotions: “stop being a bitch and suck it up” literally translates to “stop being emotional and get over it.” Emotion resides among the feminine, and if men portray these emotions, *they* reside among the feminine. Many responses also include variations of the ways in which “bitch,” questions men’s sexuality, strength, emotional aptitude, and character. One respondent even claims, “If a male is called a bitch, it basically means he’s a pussy,” effectively creating a negative connection between the female sex organs and the masculinized body. These responses reflect patriarchal structures and power dynamics that imply power still resides among the masculine—unless the men who hold that power connect with the feminine. But one respondent offers an interesting idea: “I think using [bitch] on [men] when it’s so geared toward women takes some of the power back for us [sic] ladies.” However, while women still strive to equalize the power dynamic, using the derogatory “bitch” against men perpetuates the idea that “bitch” acts as the Other and the abnormal. The inflammatory use of “bitch” against men only contributes to the use of the word in a derogatory sense. We must rid ourselves from the containment of this word, but not at the expense of others. We can only achieve this by altering the discourse surrounding the word itself.

SOCIAL DISCOURSE, SOCIAL INCIVILITY

The continual containment of women's voices and presence insinuates that these parts of women are "less-than" within the rhetorical sphere. The dominance of masculinized rhetoric perpetuates the idea of otherness and reiterates the angel vs. monster binaries that Gilbert and Gubar discuss. Like Gilbert and Gubar, Cixous recognizes the need for a change of binary constructs. She refuses to label *only* women's rhetoric as feminized—thereby proposing the end of the rhetorical Other—and instead proposes that rhetoric form its own language which consists of use by both men and women (Bizzell and Herzberg 1521). This collision of rhetoric would then allow both men and women a chance to personify rhetoric in a true and unwavering form, one which uses the positive pathos that is missing from the current discourse. As Cixous states, "The future must no longer be determined by the past. I do not deny the effects of the past are still with us. But I refuse to strengthen them by repeating them" (1524). She also claims there are no grounds for *destroying* a discourse, but she suggests we break up and destroy the current binaries (1524). And although she is correct that we should rid the rhetorical sphere of the current binaries, the current accepted discourse would still be destroyed in the process. Even though she claims there are no grounds for this action, the modern rhetoric used by many women today makes for a strong argument against the current dominant discourse. Elizabeth Flynn, author of "Composing as a Woman," builds upon Cixous' reconstruction of discourse. She claims that the masculinized presence acts as the dominant external authority and the only model of discourse. While Flynn's assertions remain influential, masculinized rhetoric does not serve as the *only* model of discourse. It reflects the *preferred* model, leaving those who do not wield the aggressive, authoritative voice to drown within the masculinized structure. However, Flynn's emphasis of feminized rhetoric still creates a need which reflects both her and Cixous' work:

feminized rhetoric creates change, altering the “angelic being” to one that allows women to abide by their *own* definitions of rhetorical strength. This redefinition of womanhood mirrors that of Gilbert and Gubar’s work, echoing the concept that illustrates the impact of women and these influences that can break the current dichotomies within the paradigm.

Public figures Tomi Lahren and Ann Coulter exemplify women who adopt the preferred masculinized rhetoric and create an exclusionary discourse taken to the extreme. Gearhart’s notion of “scaling” women to the model of masculinized discourse resounds in the works of Lahren and Coulter because their spoken and written works rely heavily on aggressive, combative tones to gain authority. In one of her more recent posts on Facebook, Lahren berates women who do not support the idea of the nuclear family by using incendiary, offensive language: “Why does the mainstream media, along with the man-hating feminists, feel it necessary to shit on the American nuclear family?” (“Dear Angry Feminists”). Her aggressive rhetoric claims feminists are “psychos” and refers to the left as “retarded” (“Socialism Sucks”). By categorizing feminists as “man-hating,” and “psychos,” she uses negative pathos to command the attention of her audience members who are against feminist ideology. In another post, she refers to liberals as “Bernie morons and nut-jobs” (“Socialism Sucks”). She also claims that the people who participated in the Gay Pride March on June 11, 2017 are “fruit loops” who are just “butthurt” and claims “We get it. You’re gay. We don’t care. Are you too busy waving your rainbows to notice?” (“Gay Pride Parade”). In these examples, Lahren uses the masculinized concept of self-assertion by insulting those who oppose her views. And while Lahren’s rhetoric lacks credibility and uses negative, hate-filled, pathos, she still has an abundance of followers and people around the country who identify and applaud her discourse. Therein lies the issue: social media and social presence accounts for much of what younger generations see as the

socialized norm. Therefore, if celebrities who have no credibility can build a rhetorical empire, their rhetoric will influence those who follow them, and the current paradigm of aggressive rhetoric will continue to flourish.

Coulter echoes this notion. In her essays, she mocks rape victims by calling these issues a “culture of victimhood” (“College Rape Club”). She also promotes racist rhetoric by claiming all Muslims commit mass murder on American soil (“Great Hijab”) and claims, “Minnesota's importation of these *stone-age people* [Muslims] is a completely self-inflicted wound. It's as if the state decided to inject itself with Hepatitis C” (“Pretty White”). Coulter uses degrading, mocking, and aggressive rhetoric when referring to Muslims as “stone-age people” in an attempt to contain this ethnic group into a certain ideology. She also degrades them by insinuating they cause the same effect as the Hepatitis C disease. In the same story, she uses aggressive, racist rhetoric toward Hispanic-Americans, claiming they are all “tax-payer draining, Mexican illegals” who “provide the rich with cheap labor” (“Pretty White”). In another argument the month before, she refers to those who support liberal-minded ideas as “foaming-at-the-mouth lunatics” (“The Left”), using the same mocking rhetoric as Lahren does in several of her posts. Coulter uses rhetoric that consistently perpetuates an idea that if one is against her views, they are “foaming at the mouth” and are prepared to “smash windows and murder conservatives” (“The Left”). But what she and Lahren fail to understand is the importance behind positive pathos and ethos: when they attempt to assert dominance over the reader/audience by using rhetoric which identifies with aggressive and hostile concepts, both women only succeed in further separating those to whom they speak and those they mock. Their use of masculinized rhetoric emphasizes an important need for change that begins with inclusion and unity in order to help destroy the perpetuated binaries.

Typically, conservative rhetoric tends to emulate masculinized discourse. Both women are forced by rhetorical context and have chosen the best outlet they deem appropriate for reaching the maximum audience; if conservative viewers react to masculinized discourse, Coulter and Lahren will adopt masculinized discourse to be heard. Although Coulter and Lahren both identify as Republican conservatives, their rhetoric, however, does not signify a conservative vs. liberal issue. But by choosing to use masculinized rhetoric that further separates two parties instead of uniting them, they perpetuate a vicious circle which strengthens the angel vs. monster binary that still remains detrimental to women: in order to be heard, they adopt aggressive, masculinized rhetoric, which then ironically pushes them into the realm of the “bitch” and “monster.” By stepping into the Medusa-like and monstrous rhetoric that women have been conditioned to keep suppressed, they challenge the current socially constructed and discursive paradigm, yet their use of aggressive rhetoric insinuates an attack on the authority of masculinized discourse.

The result of this challenge is the act of containment. Lahren filtered the comment sections on her Facebook and Twitter pages because people called her a “racist white bitch” after her opinion of the Black Lives Matter movement went viral (Hannaford). A song about Lahren titled “F—You Tomi (Shut up, Bitch)” gained attention on YouTube and the artist calls her a bitch forty-five times in four minutes (Young Star). Comedian Jimmy Carr called Coulter “One of the most repugnant, hateful, hatchet bitches alive” in 2016 after he advised her to kill herself (“Rob Lowe Roast”). Lahren and Coulter actively participated in masculinized discourse to be heard and were consequently contained by the “bitch” ideology. And while it may seem as though this creates a victimhood for these women, the real issue still lies within the angel vs. monster binaries, the act of containment when women step outside their constructed norms, and

the “bitch” ideology. Even though they “scale themselves” to the accepted rhetorical discourse that reflects their own conservative views and audience, they are still contained because they succeed in obtaining rhetorical power. They ultimately release the hidden “monster” and suppress the socially acceptable angelic discourse, a discourse that does not question societal authority and one that is confined by the patriarchal guidelines. To ultimately break this vicious circle, we must break the angel vs. monster dichotomy.

Breaking this cycle does not come easily. Social media comment sections can attest to this: even when women use the preferred mode of rhetoric on any social media platform, they consistently face backlash from others who feel as though they should have no voice. The idea of the angel vs. monster binary becomes prevalent within these factions simply because men prefer to deny women entry into conversations where the former feels the latter do not belong. To do this, many men use the combative techniques with which they are accustomed to stifle a woman’s voice on this platform. In June 2018, I experienced these aggressive repercussions firsthand when I attempted to join a conversation on Facebook regarding the Parkland school shooting in Florida and students’ rights to protest for stricter gun laws. The discussion heated quickly—as most concerning firearms and school shootings do—and one commenter attempted to silence my opinions with violence, claiming he would “pop an AR-15 round right between [my] eyes from 300 meters” (Anonymous Mar. 22). When I called attention to his violent threat, the rhetorical ethics to which he violated, and the lack of argument, he declared, “Bitch you don’t know me! ...If you try to assume how myself or my daughters [sic] mom have raised her then I’m going to put a stop to it. If your views violate my God given rights, I will do everything in my power to stop you” (Anonymous Mar. 22). His emphasis on “I will do everything in my power to stop you” not only reverberated in his use of threatened violence, but in his use of the

word “bitch” as a containment tool against me. Because I refused to acknowledge his asserted dominance over the conversation and I refused to lower myself to his level of rhetorical projection, he chose to demonize me in the hopes that it would silence my voice. When he realized he could not silence me with aggressive name-calling and verbal abuse, he “blocked” me on social media, using power to silence my views.

These examples demonstrate aggressive and combative rhetoric used daily on social media platforms. But his attempt to retract his statement later in the conversation denotes a larger issue: by claiming *he* would not shoot me in the head, but *his ex-wife* would “get the job done” (Anonymous Mar. 22) it allows him to use his ex-wife as a distraction from his own intentions. This commenter effectively turns the monstrous identity away from himself and inflicts it onto his ex-wife in an attempt to dominate the conversation and the women who surround him. By turning his ex-wife into the mirror of his own (monstrous) inadequacies (Disch and Kane 287), he essentially claims only his (monstrous) ex-wife would commit such atrocities against another human being. His antagonistic behavior reflects that of typical social media behavior which, according to Kamil Demirhan and Derya Cakir-Demirhan, “encourages the hegemonic discourses and traditional power relations in society” (308). His ex-wife became the witch, the scapegoat; she became the monster who could silence other monsters.

The aggressiveness of voices throughout social media continues to grow. We see the detrimental effects aggressive discourse has upon celebrities who attempt to step onto the masculinized rhetorical platform. But women who attempt to create their own platform—much like what I attempted during my encounter with the aggressive commenter—with their own voices experience silencing techniques by commenters on social media. Not only do women face verbal attacks from strangers on the internet because of their viewpoints, but they also face

verbal attacks for simply *existing* as women. For instance, in a response to the destruction of Donald Trump’s Hollywood Walk of Fame “star,” one woman commented, “It really isn’t that big of a deal. Yes, it was bad that the city’s property was damaged, but it can be fixed. What Trump is doing to America will take years to fix after he’s gone” (Anonymous June 17). The responses to this comment vary in degrees of aggression: “You’re a vile piece of trash”; “Someone put this buffalo bitch back in it’s [sic] cage”; “animal bitch in heat”; “You’re a nasty bitch that shouldn’t be aloud [sic] in public”; “what a pig. A dog. Not even human”; and “You bitch are an animal! Go to fucking hell! ...Dumb cunt!” (Anonymous June 17, 11:38—1:56 a.m.). Insults hurled at the woman for stating her opinion all connect to one idea: the “bitch” as less-than, non-human, an animal, a monster. They signify attempts to dehumanize her and create perpetuated illusions of the Other. This correlates with some of the answers from my social media survey: many respondents refer to bitches as “snappy” women, implying that a woman who voices her opinion, discomfort, or general dislike for anything is relegated to that of the dog, an inhuman version of man. Social media discourse asserts that a woman who does not meet the angelic expectations of the silent and docile figure only contributes to the “less-than” version of herself: the “bitch.”

Women on the public platform of social media face this backlash every day. The issues pertaining to women’s speech reflect in the reactions their speech garners. Use of the term “bitch,” “animal,” “nasty woman,” or “vile” contributes to the overall detrimental rhetoric which implies that women should face backlash for expressing themselves and for participating in public discourse. As scholar Christopher Schneider claims, “When something becomes a matter of discourse, it becomes more than merely words, but contributes more to a perspective or orientation of the world” (45). The world’s view of women remains remarkably skewed, so much

in fact, that every move women make becomes scrutinized in the eyes of social media and the public. Upon observing the comment sections of various pages on social media—from Facebook to Twitter and article comments—the overall perception of women’s motives and actions emphasizes patriarchal standards which many still follow.

Nan Johnson describes the social dichotomies present within literature, connecting literary characters and her views of women in public. She states, “[Mrs. Lindsey] points to a woman asserting her rhetorical voice in public as the unfortunate consequence of a woman losing sight of her true nature” (224). Although Johnson refers to literary works in much of her article, her point still resonates with women who engage on the social media platform. The examples that follow highlight how containment of women exists on multiple levels within social media. Women endure name-calling for simply refusing to move out of a photo: “What a bitch! What happened to showing kindness to others?” (Anonymous July 5). Women acquire the label of bitch for refusing to accept a stranger’s compliment on her eyes: “Moral? Never compliment a strange woman. She may be a total bitch” (Anonymous July 20). Women face scrutiny for reacting to an invasion of personal space toward her body: “What the fuck is wrong with this crazy bitch! I would have beat her!” (Anonymous Aug. 15) And women acquire the label of “bitch” for simply existing: “There is no way that bitch lost 18 pounds by following that diet!” (Anonymous July 3). Commenters in these specific instances attempt to contain these women into patriarchal confines of the angel vs. monster dichotomy, denying them access to their bodily autonomy and their free will. This rhetoric also contains them into the “true nature” to which Johnson references. But the women to whom these commenters refer step away from their constructed roles and become women who refuse to acknowledge unwanted attention, women who refuse to accept unwanted physical contact from another person.

POWER IN PEDAGOGY

The use of masculinized rhetoric within social media and news/media discourse only scratches at the surface of outdated rhetorical strategies. The dated discourse used within the public sphere exemplifies the *face* of rhetorical discourse; however, pedagogical aspects found at the more intimate university level assist in the creation and perpetuation of this dominant rhetoric. My first year of graduate school, I secured a graduate assistant position as a tutor in the university's writing center. While my work primarily consisted of tutoring graduate students, I revised several undergraduate papers during the course of that year. Upon reviewing many assignments and course syllabi, I realized that masculinized rhetoric still dominated classroom instruction. Combative language used to sway one's audience from one viewpoint to the other still remains as a titular point in writing courses, especially when students are asked to defend their theses. And while the thesis remains an important aspect of preparing students for rhetorical situations, the combative nature of the *defense* still resonates within student papers. Many students I tutored simply were not aware of the various discourses they could use to defend their theses, nor did they understand the detrimental effects of combative language use. The majority of students I tutored simply constructed their papers like an act of combat: one must win over the opposing side, only acknowledging the opposing side to refute it, and asserting rhetorical authority over one's audience became the ultimate goal.

As part of my research, I interviewed a law student about her experiences as a woman within a male-dominated field. She currently attends John Marshal Law School in Chicago, IL and her experiences reflect what many women encounter in masculinized areas of study. While discussing the topic of inclusion, I asked her if she ever felt as though she needed to change anything about herself, such as her voice or demeanor. She answered with an exasperated "yes"

and claimed, “I have to change everything about myself. I speak louder and make my voice a little deeper than it is naturally; my tone is more stern [sic] and assertive (on the verge of aggressive).” She goes on to say that she hates it, and hates having to play into that role: “But it’s all about shock and awe. Everything is a competition.” As Connors suggests, oral rhetorical delivery was physically easier for men, as their deep voices could carry longer distances (28) and the student’s interaction with this rhetorical strategy forces her to play a role that negates her identity as a woman. And even though she may be incorporating social binaries into her own womanhood (soft-spoken, timid, docile) without realizing it, this still places her in a compromising position. She must compromise her identity and *her* definition of womanhood by exhibiting characteristics which mimic that of socially constructed masculinized identity in order to excel in her field.

Rhetorical classrooms also become battlegrounds. Women must change their identity to conform to that of a champion, one that, as Connors describes looks more “clever, honest, manly and believable than his opponent” (29). The student also described facets of competition between herself and those who seek her help during tutoring sessions. She claims that the male students whom she tutored would constantly question her suggestions and would turn every session into a debate or an argument. She further states, “When I’m having conversations with my male colleagues, the focus shifts from ‘making my point’ and ‘expressing my opinion’ to ‘proving him wrong’ and ‘*earning my spot*’ (emphasis mine). The idea that a female student needs to “earn her spot” among her male colleagues emphasizes the act of competition and greatly diminishes the intellect of the student and her right to a place among the rhetorical sphere. Furthermore, male colleagues not only question her rhetorical aptitude, but they question her identity as a woman

rhetor; subsequently, they question her ability as a *woman* to reach the top of the rhetorical platform where they believe they reside.

The students who interacted with my interviewee expose the dominant teaching methods of numerous colleges and universities. This monologic method of teaching stifles students' abilities to promote effective change and silences voices inconsistent with the current paradigm that portrays competition and combativeness. To change these methods from monologic to dialogic, students must have the ability to address conflict, but instructors also must allow students' respective, individual voices to present themselves. Students must acquire the knowledge to argue their stance but must do so in a manner which does not convey combativeness, but inclusivity. Catherine Lamb attests to this, claiming "When we practice and teach monologic argument as an end, we are teaching students that conflict can be removed by an effort that is fundamentally one-sided" (18). In an effort to move classrooms toward dialogic arguments which shift argumentation from competition to open dialogue between both sides, we must employ better understanding of thesis defense, of rhetoric, of combative and aggressive language. Additionally, how students may contribute to the discussion should become a top priority by university educators. By shifting future pedagogies to a more dialogic approach, students will gain a better understanding of the ways in which they can simultaneously contribute their own voices to the conversation and create change when they step outside the classroom.

To shift from monologic argumentation to dialogic, universities must incorporate more instructors who promote these ideas within their classrooms. Monologic argumentation revolves around masculinized rhetoric and competition, and therefore, the implementation of women in rhetorical classrooms provides an ample outlet for feminized rhetoric to claim its place within rhetorical instruction. But the number of women who reside within these classrooms remains

limited. As the 1980s approached, the integration of female rhetors in the classroom was still limited and created apprehension of tokenization (Lauer 545). Women who had successfully gained employment in rhetorical classrooms or published in rhetorical journals were questioned of their achievements, leaving many to wonder if they had gained these successes only because of affirmative action (Lauer 545). Furthermore, including women into rhetorical classrooms would mean including feminization, personal experience, and varying ways of teaching that could reveal authoritarian agendas behind patriarchal-based instruction. As Cheryl Glenn notes, including women into rhetorical teaching “interrogates the availability, practice, and preservation (or destruction) of historical evidence, [and] simultaneously exposes relations of exploitation, domination, censorship, and erasure” (389). In order to promote inclusive rhetoric and overturn the traditional standards of argumentation within the classroom, more women must teach rhetorical instruction. While composition instruction remains a key element to rhetorical teaching, strictly rhetorical classrooms remain masculinized, leaving little room for feminized rhetoric to break through predominantly masculinized modes of teaching.

Feminist scholars Pamela J. Annas and Deborah Tenney explain how women gained permission to enroll in colleges in 1837 but did not have permission to take courses in rhetoric because they were women. They state “...learning how to argue was a privilege limited to men, perhaps on the grounds that only men would need to learn the skills of articulating, explaining and defending a position... Women were permitted to learn but not permitted to display their learning in a public forum” (qtd. in Hunzer 215). Socially constructed gender binaries prohibited women from taking courses with men and from teaching rhetoric-based instruction. Robert J. Connors highlights these gender binaries from a U.S. Supreme Court case against Myra Bradwell in 1873, forty years after women were permitted to enroll in colleges. Bradwell advocated for

women to become attorneys and the Supreme Court ruled that because she was a woman, she was unfit for the role: “The natural and proper timidity and delicacy which belongs to the female sex evidently unfits it for many of the occupations of civil life” (qtd. in Connors 41). Not only does this ruling contain women into the role of the docile and delicate, it reiterates the idea that women are “less-than” by referring to women as “it.” The ruling also states that women should fulfill the duties of wife and mother, further contributing to stereotypical gender binaries and denying women the right to actively participate in the public sphere. We see these containing labels placed upon women faculty who attempt to break out of composition and into rhetorical instruction. The imbalance of male and female instructors within this decade further instills the need for change in university instruction. In order to create change within classroom settings, larger and more prominent universities must set examples that reflect varying teaching strategies and diverse faculty.

Three of the top English departments in the country reside within some of the most well-known schools world-wide: Harvard, Stanford, and University of California-Berkeley. Each of these schools have been established for over a century, with Harvard as one of the leading and oldest schools in the country established in 1636 (“About Harvard”). Stanford and UC-Berkeley follow close behind, both established in the 1800s—UC-Berkeley in 1868 (“About Berkeley”) and Stanford in 1891 (“About Stanford”). The rhetorical instruction valued within each university reflects that of outdated and gender-imbalanced teaching that has not progressed to include more female faculty into male-dominated fields of study. The exclusion of female faculty at these universities in the twenty-first century perpetuates patriarchal ideals that women cannot—and should not—teach at such a prestigious and intellectual level. To better understand the English departments at each of the three schools listed above, I conducted a small investigation into

faculty, rhetorical instruction, and departmental setup. Even though the investigation is limited, these three universities are some of the most well-known in the nation for their academic achievement and distinction. This type of academic prowess places the universities in positions of power that allows them to emulate what other universities strive to meet.

UC-Berkeley has its own rhetoric department, which resides outside the English department and operates as its own entity. There are ten men and seven women classified as faculty within this department, with two men and two women classified as lecturers. There are nine previous instructors classified as Emeriti (honorary retirees) comprised of five men and four women. A man currently holds the position of department chair. Stanford, however, differs from UC-Berkeley as their number of women outweigh the number of men 6-2 in an undergraduate department of composition and rhetoric. This department, like the rhetoric department at UC-Berkeley, sits outside the standard English department and does not offer as many courses. Upon inspection of the course list, however, more composition classes were offered than rhetoric, and subsequently, the only four rhetoric classes that were offered within the last five semesters were taught by the two male instructors, save for one. Even though women faculty outweigh men in this department, men are still favored for rhetorical instruction. The exclusion of women from rhetoric-heavy courses further perpetuates the idea that universities value masculinized voices over feminized. Harvard does not have separate rhetorical instruction. However, when I searched the term “rhetoric” on the school’s website, it prompted pages for three factions of the school: Classics, Theory, and Harvard Law. The Classics portion of the English department consisted of only two faculty, both male. While their specialties mostly listed literature-based instruction, both also specialized in rhetoric. Upon looking at the courses offered, they were the only two

instructors in the spring 2017 semester to offer any classes that specifically referred to rhetorical instruction in the class title.

Harvard's Theory department does not operate separately but as a sub-category of their English department. No women teach theory courses at Harvard, leaving only eight men to cover this area. While theory courses do not directly revolve around rhetorical instruction, these classes are still pertinent to the overall knowledge gained when dealing with rhetoric courses. The critical and literary theory instruction for these courses demonstrates various angles to which a student may view pieces of scholarly work, thereby creating a foundation of certain lenses in which the student perceives the information. Feminist theory, an important critical theory taught within these courses covers information pertaining to women's rights, accomplishments, and history. This critical information regarding women in history allows students to understand the pertinent roles women played throughout history and how these roles have affected gender equality. And while men certainly have the capability to teach feminist theory, the personal connection women have to the subject matter contributes to the overall dialogue of why feminist theory exists, therefore effectively allowing students to maneuver the course material through personal experiences. These personal connections allow instructors to tailor their course material in order to convey the importance of feminist theory. Therefore, the lack of female instructors within Harvard's theoretical division of the English department contributes to the current gender binaries where male instructors ineffectively teach female experiences, leaving students without the personal connection that enables them to grasp concept material.

Harvard's perpetuation of binary gendered discourse culminates within Harvard Law. While Harvard Law does not deal directly with rhetorical instruction within their English department, the inclusion of this rhetorically-heavy field of study remains pertinent to the overall

idea of rhetoric instruction within universities throughout the country. The faculty employed at Harvard Law demonstrate discrepancy between male and female instructors, both current and previous. Male instructors outweigh female instructors in this program 93-32; this means that 73% of instructors who teach at Harvard Law are men. This equates to a 3:1 ratio of male vs. female instructors, leaving female instructors to account for only 26% of faculty. The gender discrepancy between male and female faculty begs the question of whether feminized voices could thrive in a masculine-dominated classroom, as students are less likely to receive feminized discourse and instruction which would help diversify their views.

Law instruction within other institutes further contributes to gender binaries and some even participate in forms of containment for female instructors. I spoke with a former law student of Texas A&M School of Law about rhetorical instruction in his courses. He verified the competitiveness of the classroom, claiming, “Almost every single one of my classes were focused on argumentation of some kind—and it was brutal.” He remarks how difficult some classes were for female faculty who had to adhere to masculinized rhetoric just to be heard. If they could not adopt the masculinized rhetoric or participate in the combative argumentation, they floundered: “One of the female professors was younger and was an English lit major. She knew the philosophy of law, but that was it; she couldn’t argue it. When someone would attempt to argue with her in class, she would become frazzled, and couldn’t argue back.” He states that women adopted the role of the “bitch” to gain rhetorical power in the classroom. However, labeling women who could engage in rhetorical discourse as “bitches” insinuates further containment into socially constructed gender binaries. Female instructors must negotiate their way into power by adhering to a more aggressive tone and by claiming the masculinized characteristics as their own. This adoption of the performative “bitch” role further contributes to

the angel vs. monster dichotomy where neither can function as socially acceptable. Women in this role disrupt constructed gender roles and rhetorical norms, discomforting outliers whose presence marks social threat and uncertainty. This vicious circle of performativity plays a large part in pedagogical construction.

The Marshal Law student I interviewed gave interesting insights into a female instructor who taught rhetorically-based classes required for students to graduate. She stated that the female instructor always had to fight for respect in the classroom even though she believed it was one of the most well-constructed classrooms she experienced. She claimed students in the class frequently interrupted the instructor, filed complaints against her, and did not listen to her while she was lecturing. This experience differs significantly for male instructors however; the student claimed that rhetoric courses taught by white, older men went uninterrupted and other students listened to them more intently. This particular example denotes ways in which women and their voices are consistently ignored. The students in the female instructor's class actively attempted to silence her, both by interrupting her and undermining her power as an instructor by filing complaints with those above her. If silencing women continues as the norm, classroom pedagogy will continue to reflect patriarchal and gender-biased instruction.

As we continue to construct different pedagogies in post-secondary education, such as teaching through a feminist lens and incorporating the Irenic and Rogerian methods, students will not only learn how to sway the power dynamic between author and reader, but they will be able to do so in a passionate manner, one that uses inclusivity instead of aggression. Students will eventually be able to find solutions to problems without having to decide which extreme they would rather associate themselves, and they will understand that there are alternative ways to accommodate conflict. They shall recognize ways that promote inclusivity, and the use of the

author's own experiences and emotions into their research (Bizzell 13). By incorporating feminist ideas and feminized voices in our pedagogies we can teach students that "...a good 'argument' is founded on *more* than defending your ideas to the death or on creating a thesis that...is a 'kind of affront to somebody'" (Hunzer 214). And to echo Gearhart's sentiments, we as rhetoricians have the power to use our skillsets in persuasion as tools for change (54). Instead of attributing rhetoric and writing to "a place of combat, a 'contest' and a dream of 'victory'" (Brody 150), current and future instructors can change their pedagogies to allow non-combative and non-aggressive instruction to dominant their classrooms, leaving room for students to argue in language and tones that not only contribute to change within society, but teach them that their individual voices *matter*. It would teach them that the traditional mold to which they have been formed can be broken, allowing their own identities and emotions to shape their arguments and become visible throughout their academic careers and future endeavors.

BREAKING DICHOTOMIES, DISRUPTING CONSTRUCTIONS

A solution to this dichotomy issue ultimately lies within the fluidity of feminized rhetoric. Virginia Woolf cites an issue which persists still in the minds of women and perpetuates societal norms. In an excerpt from *A Room of One's Own* entitled "Professions for Women," Woolf describes a "phantom woman" whom she deems the "Angel in the House"⁴ that metaphorically roams the house in which Woolf resides, invading her mind when she attempts to write newspaper reviews for male authors. For Woolf, this Angel possesses traits which embody patriarchal constructs of the proper, submissive, and non-threatening woman:

⁴ Woolf's use of the "Angel in the House" stems from Coventry Patmore's poem "Angel in the House," written in 1854 (Freiwald 539).

She was intensely sympathetic. She was immensely charming. She was utterly unselfish. She excelled in the difficult arts of family life. She sacrificed herself daily...in short, she was so constituted that she never had mind or a wish of her own but preferred to sympathize always with the minds and wishes of others—she was pure. (Woolf 1254)

This Angel of which Woolf speaks marks the same type of angelic being that the current, binary-constructed paradigm reflects. In this passage, Woolf describes the parallels between the Angel and the typical view of the patriarchal rhetorical sphere; the Angel depicts the type of woman which should reside at home because she embodies the personal sphere more than the public. Furthermore, when the meta-embodiment of this Angel toys with Woolf's mind as she attempts to write, it uses rhetoric which echoes the script for women's discourse on the masculine-dominated platform: "...she slipped behind me and whispered: '...Be sympathetic; be tender; flatter; deceive; use all the arts and wiles of our sex. Never let anybody guess that you have a mind of your own. Above all, be pure'" (1254). By demanding Woolf "use all the arts and wiles of our sex" the Angel illustrates the myth that women are only as good as their bodies and that they can only move an audience by deception instead of persuasion.

Cixous cites a similar identity in her own essays as she connects the uncanny stranger with women's bodies. She claims the stranger represents the "ailing or dead figure, which so often turns out to be a nasty companion, the cause and location of inhibitions" (Cixous 1527). The uncanniness of the stranger, the dead figure, the companion, reflects a woman's angelic identity, an identity imposed upon her by patriarchal constructions. She struggles to separate what identifies *her* and what identifies the patriarchal standards that have been forced upon her because these three figures represent the same being: the embodiment of patriarchal control. Additionally, the "nasty companion" in this case does not signify the modern "bitch" that

dissatisfies man. It imitates what dissatisfies a woman when she personifies what men desire. She uses the word “nasty” to contain her dissatisfaction of her *forced* identity. Furthermore, this “dead figure” prohibits a woman rhetor’s speech and writing. It confines her to the idea that her success and her identity remain in the shadow of a man’s success. Cixous’ ideas encompass Gilbert and Gubar’s anxiety of authorship, as she claims, “As a woman, I’ve been clouded over by the great shadow of the scepter and been told: idolize it, that which you cannot brandish” (Cixous 1530). This phallic representation of men’s success limits who can hold power. If a woman cannot brandish the scepter, she cannot claim rhetorical power, and will therefore remain in the shadow of men’s successes.

Woolf’s solution to this problem demonstrates what needs to occur in modern rhetoric in order to push against the societal norms for women in the rhetorical sphere: we rid ourselves of the Angel. This meta-physical embodiment still lives in many women today and reflects the current issues regarding containment of women in the rhetorical sphere, containing them to the notion that their voices and their preferred rhetoric do not belong. Women must find a voice that resides between the Angel and the adoption of masculinized rhetoric. We must find a voice that we can claim as our own, one that can overcome domination, but one which uses positive ethos and pathos in order to address issues which affect both men and women. Grimke and Cixous both perfected the use of feminized rhetoric during their lifetimes and somehow, women have lost sight of how to use this rhetoric as an adaptation of their own.

Joy Ritchie and Kathleen Boardman cite an excerpt by Robin Lakoff in her 1975 book *Language and Woman’s Place*, to facilitate this discussion about the need for lost feminized voice. In this excerpt, Lakoff reveals that “...women, by using a lady-like middle-class language, contributed to their own oppression” (qtd. in Ritchie and Boardman 591). Her solution was to

use the “dominance” approach to women’s language that *she* attributed to the feminist movement. While Lakoff’s assumption regarding “lady-like” language contains some truth, her suggestion to use a dominant approach does not work, as women like Lahren and Coulter have demonstrated. And as Shelia Ortiz Taylor emphasizes, feminized style of argument only remained suppressed because society refused to validate it (Ritchie and Boardman 592) and instead, contained voices like Clinton’s and Obama’s. Therefore, the issue not only lies within women to find a balance between the Angel and “monster” which personifies effective rhetoric, but she must find a route to validation that does not consistently end in suppression.

As women fluctuate from voice to voice and attempt to find what suits them in a sea of masculinized rhetoric, these actions remind us that women who choose to step outside the social construct of the idealized quiet and submissive resemble what Gilbert and Gubar deem as the “witches” and what modern rhetoric deems as the “bitches.” Women who creatively attempt to move audiences are defined as “monsters,” the terrible objects such as “Gorgons, Sirens, Scyllas, serpent-Lamias, Mothers of Death or Goddesses of Night” (Gilbert and Gubar 79). But the feminized voice simply resides as one which “seeks the power of self-articulation” (Gilbert and Gubar 79) and attempts to break free from the patriarchal dominance of the current paradigm. By forcing these negative and fictitious images from the persona of the female rhetor and by shoving the threat of the “monster” away from what parallels their discourse, women proclaim their right to agency in the rhetorical sphere. This, in turn, will ultimately open the doors for women to fight the patriarchal norms and successfully fight for validation.

Instead of using masculinized rhetoric to gain rhetorical agency like Lahren and Coulter, women such as Michelle Obama attempt to use a different language that has not been validated before. They attempt to create their own language, one that creates empowerment, strength, and

personal connections. Creating our own rhetoric in this form must come from women who are the most visible to set an example: women educators, women in the media, and women in power. These women need to step into the leadership roles for this fight to remove ourselves from the constrictions of the angel vs. monster dichotomy. The dominance of the author/speaker over the reader/audience needs to transform into a collaborative project that will ultimately allow women the ability to gain their own agency. But, as Linda Kerber points out, “As women acquire new degrees of power and autonomy, they [will be] confronted with new forms of subordination” (24). The violation of patriarchal cultural norms will not only find resistance from powerful men who feel threatened on the rhetorical platform, but it will come from women who refuse to break these traditions of conditioned and submissive habits, women who still listen to their own “Angels in the House.” But powerful women have heard the calls of others: they have heard the calls of the “freedom shriekers” (Johnson 235) of Christine Blasey-Ford; they listen to the voices that exhibit the “pioneers, the vanguard, the spearhead” (Freeman); and they confront labels such as “bitch” and flip it, ultimately creating identities that resemble women who were “the first social revolutionaries...the first to organize other women” (Freeman). By creating our own discourse that breaks the monster and angel duality, that rids us of the disease of anxiety of authorship, and by harnessing our untapped power, the patriarchy will no longer be able to play these binaries against each other to contain our rhetorical agency.

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