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Through my examination of mid-nineteenth into early twentieth-century businesses related to fashion involving millinery and sewing, boardinghouses, and restaurants, including fine dining and casual establishments, I detail the ways in which homelike furnishings and positive rhetoric surrounding domesticated public spaces disguise exclusionary practices, reinforce gender roles, and contribute to the oppression of women. By women, I am not only including privileged white women of the upper and middle classes but also women minorities and working-class women. While oppressive, these same homelike public spaces provide openings for subversive agency as women act as consumers, workers, and entrepreneurs.

Overall, my dissertation adds to rhetorical feminist studies in four ways: first, it highlights consumerism as a rhetorical strategy to enact change; second, it focuses on material rhetorics and the ways they operate; third, it adds to the ever-growing body of rhetorical work on American women; and, fourth, it makes visible these spatial and material rhetorics as important for analyzing women's work locations today.

UNCOVERING AGENCY IN OPPRESSIVE NINETEENTH-CENTURY
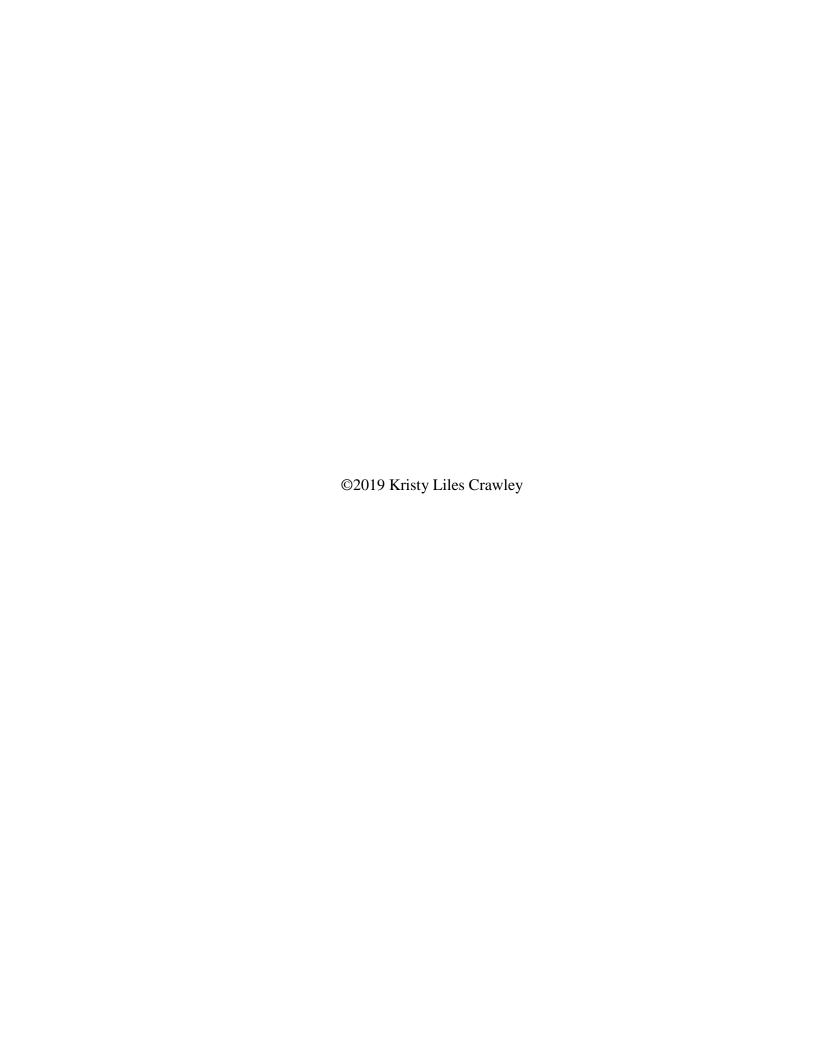
DOMESTICATED WORKPLACES

by

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION:
FINDING AGENCY THROUGH TRUE WOMANHOOD AND RHETORIC

In "Reigning in the Court of Silence: Women and Rhetorical Space," the second

chapter of *Gender and Rhetorical Space in American Life, 1866-1910*, Nan Johnson notes

that parlor rhetoric publications attempt to create the impression that silent women are

powerful and important figures, for they possess the ability to influence family members'

actions through their feminine virtues. As indicated by Johnson's title, the word "reign"

is significant. These silent women assert their virtuous influence within the home as they

raise their children. Then their influence extends to public spaces when their sons carry

the virtues they learned with them into adulthood. Johnson's work illustrates the

deceptively positive rhetoric surrounding home spaces and women's power within home

spaces in the nineteenth century. As more and more women moved into the marketplace

as workers and consumers during the last half of the nineteenth century, the positive

associations with home extend to public spaces that were transformed into domestic

spaces. At first glance, the expansion of domestic space appears to be a step forward in

providing new opportunities for women and minorities. According to Alice Kessler-

Harris, "After the war [Civil War], daughters of impoverished southern farmers took their

places in the urban labor force, as did black women. And genteel widows, North and

South, broke through barriers that had discouraged well-educated and affluent

women from seeking jobs" (108). Domesticated public work spaces afforded women new job opportunities by disrupting the spatial barriers that once distinctly marked a place as public or private. However, through my examination of mid-nineteenth into early twentieth-century domesticated public spaces, I detail the ways in which homelike furnishings and positive rhetoric surrounding domesticated public spaces disguise exclusionary practices, reinforce gender roles, and contribute to the oppression of women. By women, I am not only including privileged white women of the upper and middle classes but also women minorities and working-class women. While oppressive, these same homelike public spaces provide openings for subversive agency as women act as consumers, workers, and entrepreneurs in businesses related to fashion involving millinery and sewing, boardinghouses, and restaurants, including fine dining and casual establishments. In this dissertation, I argue that American women between 1850 and 1920 used the social expectations of domestic spaces as well as literally and rhetorically used domestic space to move into public venues and resist unrealistic expectations.

Furthermore, it is worthwhile to consider goals for domesticating nineteenth-century public spaces. For public spaces that have been domesticated, specific reasons tied to the goals of a particular institution have been put forth as reasons for domesticating a space. Amy Richter notes the layers of meaning that home spaces acquired in the nineteenth century: "The American home maintained its significance as the primary agent of moral instruction while increasingly acting as a site for consumer display and the expression of individual taste" (79).

In "A Woman's Place is in the School: Rhetorics of Gendered Space in Nineteenth-Century America," Jessica Enoch examines the events that prompted nineteenth-century New England schools to transition from masculine, authoritative, punishing spaces to nurturing feminine spaces. New England schools did not simply turn into domestic spaces because women were entering schools as cheaper labor than men. The transition was brought about by leaders like William Alcott, Henry Barnard, and Horace Mann who "rejected traditional pedagogical practice rooted in Calvinist theology and advocated instead for a common, tuition-free school that promoted a moral education in which students were encouraged, cultivated, and cared for" (277-278). Thus, the rejection of Calvinist theology served as a motivating force for New England schools' domestication. Also, the clear connection between moral instruction and individual taste prompted the schools' domestication, for leaders' preference for an educational system rooted in moral instruction influenced their decision to welcome female educators into the new schools. Women's association with purity, piety, and morality made women ideal candidates for the new teaching positions.

From A Separate Sphere Ideology to Blended Realities

To begin, separate spheres ideology refers to "the idea that men and women operated within separate spheres as a result of inherent physical and mental differences" (Amnéus 10). In light of physical differences, women's ability to give birth automatically linked them to domestic spaces, meaning private homelike spaces for them to nurture others and perform domestic labor while men's primary role as providers established their position within public spaces, places of commerce and competition. However, in

connection to mental differences, scholars such as Aileen Kraditor noted that the Industrial Revolution "broadened the distinctions between men's and women's occupations and certainly provoked new thinking about the significance and permanence of their respective 'spheres'" (9). With many women lacking the education or skills needed to apply for new technologically advanced jobs and being tied to domestic spaces due to childcare, men automatically became ideal candidates for jobs within public spaces as many moved from working alongside their wives on the family farm to working in factories. Thus, the divide between men's and women's labor widened, leaving women in the home as men pursued work in public spaces.

While the Industrial Revolution's role in separate spheres ideology makes it appear that all women remained nestled in domestic spaces, numerous lower and lower-middle class women worked in public spaces as unskilled factory workers, maids, cooks, and seamstresses. Lower-class women's presence in public spaces prevented them from completely fulfilling the expectations and ideals associated with the domestic sphere tied to True Womanhood[1]. Barbara Welter describes True Womanhood: "The attributes of True Womanhood, by which a woman judged herself and was judged by her husband, her neighbors, and society could be divided into four cardinal virtues—piety, purity, submissiveness and domesticity" (152). Thus, lower-class women's ties to public spaces weakened their link to domesticity and placed them in view of the male gaze which put their piety and purity into question. However, scholars like Gerda Lerner interpreted True

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[1] Throughout the dissertation True Womanhood will appear in capital letters just like the True Womanhood ideology Barbara Welter outlines in "The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860."

Womanhood "as a *vehicle* by which middle-class women elevated their own status. 'It is no accident,' Lerner wrote in 1969, 'that the slogan 'woman's place is in the home' took on a certain aggressiveness and shrillness precisely at the time when increasing numbers of poorer women *left* their homes to become factory workers'" (qtd. in Kerber 12). Hence, True Womanhood, entrenched in the separate spheres ideology, functions as an ideal for white middle and upper-class women which does not take into consideration lower-class women and women of color. The exclusion of women of color and lower-class women bring to mind Sojourner Truth's speech "Ain't I a Woman." Truth questions the definition of woman as she identifies herself as a woman, yet at the same time is denied the privileges extended to white women due to her exclusion from the domestic sphere and the True Womanhood ideal. She possesses the strength of a man by performing strenuous physical labor but does not have the freedom and privileges men enjoy. Like Truth, lower-class women as well as women of color performed labor that was traditionally performed by men but were not treated as equal to men. In addition, they were not treated the same as middle and upper-class white women either. Their class and race marked them as "other" which placed them in an awkward position between the public and private spheres in a time when the spheres were clearly marked by gender.

Separate spheres ideology, likewise, failed to acknowledge men's presence and control within the domestic spaces. Danaya Wright astutely recognizes men as the designers and beneficiaries of the domestic sphere. Wright states, "Women were to focus on making a home FOR men, on anticipating their needs and providing for them – thus structuring the private sphere to suit male, not female, needs" (50). Thus, women appear

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to control or quietly reign in domestic spaces, but in reality, they serve as instruments in shaping a comforting space for men to retire after laboring in public spaces.

However, men's control over domestic spaces did not extend to men of color. The domestic sphere model neglects to acknowledge nonwhite males' supporting roles within the domestic spaces. Sarah Winnemucca's *Life Among the Piutes* offers a description of males performing duties that are typically assigned to women in the domestic spaces. As a Piute couple prepares for the birth of their child, the husband "assumes all his wife's household work during that time. If he does not do his part in the care of the child, he is considered an outcast" (Winnemucca 340). While assuming the household duties, the Piute husband takes on the role of nurturer as he cares for his wife and child. "The young mothers often get together and exchange their experiences about the attentions of their husbands; and inquire of each other if the fathers did their duty to their children, and were careful of their wives' health" (Winnemucca 340). Like lower-class women and women of color mentioned above, Piute husbands belong in public and private spaces.

Considering the aforementioned weaknesses in separate spheres ideology, it is no surprise that twenty-first century scholars turned their attention to studying the blending of private and public spheres. In light of my focus on domesticated public spaces, the time period between the 1850s and 1910s serves as an important starting point for the blending of the public and private spheres. The Reconstruction period immediately following the Civil War provided opportunities for women of all classes and ethnicities to step into new roles. The war left a space for many widows and women with wounded husbands to explore new opportunities. Similarly, former slaves searched for employment

opportunities and inserted their presence into a separate and unequal world. The presence of women and minorities in domesticated public spaces helped satisfy the needs of commerce while allowing them to gain some agency, even though working conditions were poor and wages were less than their white male counterparts. Women's subversive agency stemming from their roles as entrepreneurs, workers, and consumers provided them with opportunities to slowly gain ground in carving out a position for themselves in the local economies of the public spaces. At the same time, the homelike setting made women's presence in the workplace acceptable due to women's traditional roles in the home as wives and mothers. The domesticated workplace reinforced women's ties to the home, for women performed traditional duties such as sewing, cooking, and cleaning for their customers.

It is worthwhile to recognize the nineteenth century as a starting point for the gradual blending of the spheres. As Cynthia Amnéus explains, "In the Victorian era, however, we first encounter the idea that men's and women's work occupied different spheres. The new ideology supported and maintained a rigid separation between work done in the home and that performed outside the home" (10). As a result of this rigid separation, middle-class women employed their talents in caring for the family and maintaining the household. This separation between work performed in private and public spaces was supported by the social code which marked the domestic sphere as appropriate for genteel women. Women's expanding consumerism, the use of "home" as a stabilizing social influence in public spaces, and physical space offer insight into the ways these spheres blended.

Entrepreneurs transformed their business spaces from public to semipublic in order to attract new customers. As business designers, men utilized spatial rhetoric to control behavior and increase their profits. For example, Richter's explanation for domesticating the interior space of trains illuminates the reasons for train companies as well as other nineteenth-century businesses to domesticate their public spaces. Richter argues that the changing connotation of home spaces coupled with the improvement in railways which made longer journeys possible via train encouraged train companies to make further improvements. Passengers' extended stays on trains transformed the train into a temporary home. Companies became concerned with how passengers would interact with each other and behave in an enclosed space over a longer period of time. With the domestication of the train, the cars' homelike appearance connected it to the values of the domestic sphere. Train companies hoped that the presence of women and the train's homelike atmosphere would encourage passengers to behave in a respectable manner in a pleasant homelike environment. Home spaces' newly acquired associations with consumer display and individual taste served as even stronger reasons for creating a domestic atmosphere in trains. Based on the number of amenities a train possessed, train companies could offer first, second, third, and fourth-class tickets. The train's homelike luxuries allowed train companies to make more money. In turn, wealthy passengers were able to select an atmosphere suited to their tastes, one that protected them from forced interactions with their social inferiors in lower-class cabins.

Women's increasing consumption was compounded by businesses' use of discursive rhetoric to emphasize a homelike atmosphere through ideographs. The

ideograph "home" plays a role in promoting what appears to be a positive atmosphere in domesticated workplaces. To illustrate the ideograph's power of promotion, I employ Enoch's example of the ideograph home in her article "There's No Place Like the Childcare Center: A Feminist Analysis of <Home> in the World War II Era." Enoch examines the government and individual industries' use of the ideograph home to make a connection between home and the new war nurseries during World War II. The positive associations with home helped assure mothers that while they were working and supporting the war effort, their children played and rested in the war nursery's safe, homelike environment. After the war, when many men returned to their jobs, the government and industries no longer included the ideograph home in materials associated with nurseries in an effort to encourage women to reenter the home despite the fact that many women had disabled or deceased husbands and still needed or wanted to hold fulltime, paid employment. According to Enoch, the ideograph home "helped to institute and then dismantle the war nursery, aiding and then denying aid to working mothers in the process" (423).

Rhetorically Blending Public and Domestic Spaces

Similarly, the ideograph home assists in describing many mid-nineteenth-century women's domesticated workplaces. Just as the use of home made war nurseries an attractive option for working women, the homelike workplace appeared as an attractive option for nineteenth-century women. In an era when women, especially white upper-class women concerned with their respectability, did not work, a homelike atmosphere within a place of business allowed lower and middle-class women to support their

families while keeping their respectability intact. However, unlike the war nursery's fall from favor, nineteenth-century workspaces for women do not experience an intentional uncoupling of the ideograph home from the workplace. A woman's workplace remains tightly entwined with the idea of home through the traditional duties involved in the business and through the literal building structure and the inside furnishings. Ultimately, women manipulate the public and private binary to insert their presence in public spaces. Like the businessmen involved in designing homelike trains or war nurseries, women act as designers as they transform private spaces into commercial spaces such as boardinghouses and restaurants. Their spatial transformations rhetorically function to communicate dedication to domesticity while subversively communicating that they are business owners and operators like their male counterparts.

For sewing businesses, boardinghouses, and restaurants, the public and private intersect through the physical building structure. For instance, the upper level of a seamstress's shop in a town square can be converted to an upstairs apartment, transforming a public space into a private space, or a portion of a family's home can be converted into a seamstress's shop which means changing a private space into a public space. Yet, the converted public space contains homelike furnishings such as couches, mirrors, private dressing areas for measurements, and tables for refreshments. In instances involving sewing shops, restaurants, and boardinghouses, the public and private spheres joined as women served as owners, operators, consumers, and employees in these workplaces.

Business places created as homelike spaces promoted women's consumerism while simultaneously masking exclusionary and oppressive practices toward workers and their reinforcement of gender roles. Kenneth Burke's terministic screens provide a way to interpret confined domesticated work spaces. A terministic screen directs one's "attention into some channels rather than others" (Burke 115). The attention to confinement and home in work spaces suggests a patriarchal terministic screen that allows customers to view women in a traditional environment even in the workplace. As mentioned earlier, domesticated workplaces suggest "what we are and can be have already been mapped by somebody else" (G. Rose 9). The somebody else, meaning patriarchal society in this case, envisions women engaging in physical labor in a confined domesticated environment without acknowledging women's creativity and problem solving skills that make it possible to successfully design and sew, order supplies, and maintain a balanced budget.

Roxanne Mountford's "On Gender and Rhetorical Space" serves as a useful starting point for defining rhetorical space: "Rhetorical space is the geography of a communicative event, and like all landscapes, may include both the cultural and material arrangement, whether intended or fortuitous of space. The cultural is the grid across which we measure and interpret space, but also the nexus from which creative minds manipulate material space" (42). Her definition corresponds to my overall intent, for I am examining the cultural and material arrangement of nineteenth-century domesticated spaces with the goal of interpreting spaces. Likewise, other sources, such as Rosalyn Collings Eves's "Mapping Rhetorical Frontiers: Women's Spatial Rhetorics in the Nineteenth-Century American West," offer a helpful guide for understanding place: "1.)

as the physical characteristics of a given site; 2.) the cultural discourses that endow particular places with meaning and dictate 'appropriate' behavior within that site; 3.) and the resulting network of relationships among people, objects, and materials that occupy a given space" (9). In my discussions on businesses, Eves's definition guides my analysis of relationships and behavior within domesticated workplaces.

Additionally, Gillian Rose's theory of paradoxical space undergirds my analysis of each space. Rose clearly describes paradoxical space in *Feminism & Geography: The Limits of Geographical Knowledge*: "This space is multidimensional, shifting, and contingent. It is paradoxical, by which I mean that spaces would be mutually exclusive if charted on a two-dimensional map – centre and margin, inside and out – are occupied simultaneously" (140). As entrepreneurs, employees, and consumers in public spaces, women enter the center, yet their connections to the homelike setting and their work aligned with traditional duties reinforce their marginal positions. Therefore, they occupy the center and the margin simultaneously. To illustrate the simultaneous occupation of the center and margin, Rose references Patricia Hill Collins's example of black women's roles as domestic workers in white households: "There they were on intimate terms with the children of the family in particular, but were also made to know that they did not belong, that they were only employees; they were there but also absent" (152). Similarly, chapter 4 on restaurants points to women's presence as diners in restaurants; however, women diners were limited to specific dining areas and specific dining establishments, especially for women who desired to dine without a male companion.

To further expand on Rose's discussion of paradoxical space, she posits that separation and confinement play roles in assuring the marginal status of those inhabiting the center. As consumers, employees, and business owners move back and forth between their home duties and the duties performed for the public, the sense of confinement to specific homelike spaces suggests that "what we are and can be have already been mapped by somebody else" (G. Rose 147). The patriarchal hand of the invisible mapmaker warns women of the dangers of stepping outside the bounds of domesticated public spaces, for women fear that they would tarnish their reputation. Women's "awareness of embodiment" and "sense of space" create "a threat of being seen and evaluated" (G. Rose 146). To avoid the male gaze and avoid losing their respectability, they confine themselves to domesticated workplaces, places that vouch for their identities as respectable wives and mothers performing traditional duties.

The traditional duties permit women to physically labor, a type of labor considered as inferior to jobs requiring mental labor. In *The Mind at Work: Valuing the Intelligence of the American Worker*, Mike Rose acknowledges the misconceptions attached to physical labor: "It is as though in our cultural iconography we are given the muscled arm, sleeve rolled tight against biceps, but no thought bright behind the eye, no image that links hand and brain" (xv). Although nineteenth-century women workers do not come to mind in Rose's picture of muscled arms, women's confinement to a domesticated space coupled with their confinement to physical tasks illustrates their devalued positions and intelligence. As Rose points out, sadly few connect physical labor to the idea of "competence," for competence involves a mastery of "special terminology,"

"movements of the body," and "knowledge of tools and devices" (xviii). Women's confinement to domesticated work spaces and physical labor reinforced social understandings of women's work as nonessential and inconsequential. Their ties to the domestic sphere render them invisible as illustrated in the second chapter on sewing businesses and the third chapter on boardinghouses. Sewing professionals and boardinghouse keepers' ties to the domestic sphere erased their identities as professionals as they took on a servant's role, a role that fails to acknowledge their mental prowess, a key ingredient to their success as professionals. As noted in the third chapter, "True Womanhood: Transforming Boardinghouses into Boardinghomes", husbands and male relatives often worked in other businesses while women served as the sole managers and operators of boardinghouses; however, women's connection to the domestic sphere made it appear as though their work for the family simply extended to outsiders. Thus, husbands and male relatives frequently assumed the title of proprietor or manager in their local communities and in business publications despite the fact that they were not actively involved in maintaining boardinghouses.

Thus, labor in a confined domesticated environment produces rhetorical constraints for entrepreneurs, workers, and consumers which illustrate that blending the spaces did not completely eliminate women's oppression. The following chapters convey the rhetorical tensions at play in confined domesticated spaces of sewing businesses, boardinghouses, and restaurants. In sewing businesses, entrepreneurs and workers experienced tension between invisibility and visibility as they attempted to attract customers while maintaining their own respectability. Sewing professionals, assuming a

servant-like role while compromising their health to sew and serve customers for endless

hours, made themselves rhetorically invisible in advertising, credit reports, and business

directories to maintain their respectability as housewives in the domestic sphere. For

example, numerous women who operated businesses did not appear in business

directories. Amnéus elaborates on the struggles researchers encounter when trying to

arrive at an accurate count of nineteenth-century dressmakers:

> Many dressmakers never listed themselves in the business section of the city
> directories under the 'Dressmakers' heading; one would have to scour the
> hundreds of thousands of individual listings to determine a more accurate count.
> Even federal census records are unreliable. Women were assumed to be
> homemakers, and their 'occupations' were recorded as such. In some cases, the
> women themselves chose not to divulge their working status, so that they did not
> appear as anything other than respectable housewives. (83)

Just as their businesses were tucked away in the confines of their homes, perhaps, many

women claimed wife or mother as their primary identity while considering dressmaker as

a secondary identity. To protect their reputations, they preferred to be listed in residential

directories as Mrs. along with their husbands. By not publicly declaring themselves as

business owners, they assumed the façade of a housewife or woman of leisure. They

passed their work off as a hobby or merely a way of making a little extra money.

Therefore, the husband, if present, maintained the title of breadwinner within the family

through his work in public spaces while her work remained nestled in private ones.

Yet sewing professionals' need for rhetorical visibility appears as they cross

boundaries. Demonstrating their ethos as fashion experts, sewing professionals adopted

the manners and dress of upper-class women to make a name for themselves by making

clothes for others. Sewing professionals who are generally tucked away in their home

businesses remain invisible, but their creations showcased on consumers' bodies speak to

their intelligence, skill, and creativity. As sewing professionals weave between being

invisible and visible figures, their health deteriorates as material products matter more

than their bodies in this domesticated public space.

Whether rhetorically assuming the visible role of a fashion expert or invisible role

as a seamstress tucked away in the corner of her small home, many sewing professionals

worked in unhealthy environments. Amnéus describes the poor work environment that

contributed to many employees' poor health and even death:

> Many seamstresses worked in cramped quarters with inadequate ventilation and
> poor lighting, and many young women died of consumption after working daily
> under these conditions. The typical workday was ten hours, reduced to nine by the
> early twentieth century, but violations were common. The ten-hour day was often
> extended by an additional five or six hours to accommodate seasonal demands.
> (60)

Sadly, when working in a cramped, poorly ventilated, dimly lit room, employees

experienced vision problems, breathing problems, and possibly back problems while

slumping over their sewing machines for long hours in order to get a closer view of their

work. For work requiring hand stitching, carpel tunnel syndrome could be another

ailment employees encountered due to the repetitive motions involved in sewing by hand.

With a possible fifteen-hour workday, women workers who were malnourished often

failed to withstand the heat from an overcrowded environment and the exhaustion from

prolonged labor without adequate breaks.

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Similarly, female boardinghouse keepers experienced a rhetorical tension between an ethos of mother versus an ethos of a professional business woman. Dissatisfied with clean rooms and meals, boarders wanted more, for they cast women boardinghouse keepers in the role of mother. As women in a domesticated workplace, their bodies represented a domesticated lifestyle that prompted boarders without familial attachment to demand motherly attention. Desiring a mother instead of a boardinghouse keeper and a home instead of temporary lodging, boarders expected boardinghouse keepers to serve as nurses during times of illness, enforce purity and piety by policing boarders' behavior, and provide wholesome entertainment. As business women with limited time and resources, boardinghouse keepers struggled to fulfill the motherly role for boarders while maintaining a budget, cleaning, cooking, and caring for their own families.

Despite boardinghouse keepers' struggles to fulfill a motherly role, nineteenth-century publications supported the idea of a motherly boardinghouse keeper. Nineteenth-century publications often advised women who were considering becoming boardinghouse keepers to possess the following characteristics: "A woman needs to be sharp and shrewd who can cater successfully to a half hundred different tastes, serve them all with equal partiality, listen to their tales of woe, take sides in their domestic differences, and not let her left hand lodger know what the right hand lodger says and does" (Rayne and Thorpe 268). The aforementioned characteristics highlight True Womanhood's cardinal virtue of domesticity. According to Rayne and Thorpe's description, an ideal boardinghouse keeper is motherly. As a caring mother, she listens to boarders' problems. Likewise, she serves her boarders through her household work,

keeping in mind their preferences and satisfaction but understanding that she should treat them all fairly just as she would treat her own children.

Another rhetorical tension appears in restaurants. In restaurants, female entrepreneurs, workers, and consumers encounter tension between containing versus sustaining their bodies. Restaurants' advertisements, furnishings, entrances, and menu items communicated messages of containment as the material world designed by men dictated where, when, and with whom women could dine as well as women's food items and portions. With limited bodily movements and calorie intake, many women struggled to work more than eight hours per day and perform domestic labor in their own homes. For instance, middle and lower-class women with physically demanding jobs needed less expensive and more filling food. Likewise, women workers had a limited time for their lunch breaks. A daily leisurely, expensive meal was not realistic. Thus, the prices as well as the light fare allow restaurant proprietors to welcome a specific social class to their establishments. Tea rooms, specifically, constructed meals suited for upper-class women of leisure: "Afternoon tea is itself an elite meal in that its delicacy and timing between lunch and dinner presumes an absence of hunger. A lettuce sandwich, costing 25¢ at the Hotel Cleveland's Tea Lounge in the early 1920s, could scarcely satisfy a hungry worker. Chicken salad might do better, but at 90¢ it cost as much as three meals" (Whitaker, *Tea at the Blue*, 27). Travel, cost, and low-calorie meals make the tea room an almost impossible choice for working women.

With the aforementioned rhetorical tensions in each domesticated workplace, True Womanhood's ideology looms large as purity, piety, submissiveness, and

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domesticity permeate domesticated spaces that in turn influence women's behavior and tether them to subservient, motherly roles.

Argument and Chapter Summaries

"What we have not been very successful at doing, however, is moving beyond separate spheres to see a more dynamic view of gender history, a view that ironically may very well require that we look not at gender difference but at gender sameness, not at the decisions that were made, but the decisions that were not made" (D. Wright 70). In terms of gender sameness, women entrepreneurs, workers, and consumers functioned in public spaces assumed to be men's spaces. However, laws and attitudes literally and rhetorically formed constraints that women subversively resisted. Using Wright's words as a guiding force for examining gender sameness, I selected to rhetorically examine sewing businesses, boardinghouses, and restaurants as domesticated public spaces where women function as entrepreneurs, workers, and consumers like their male counterparts, for working women often subversively perform the same duties as men. In focusing on decisions that were not made, the following chapters illustrate that the law did not view women entrepreneurs, workers, and consumers as having the same rights as their male counterparts. The law as well as patriarchal society created social expectations which produced competing views of rhetorical embodiment in public spaces. The terministic screens on women's bodies allowed society to view women through a domestic lens casting entrepreneurs, workers, and customers as maternal figures embodying True Womanhood's values. The following chapters address society's expectations and roles for women entrepreneurs, workers, and consumers within specific domesticated public

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spaces and illustrate women's rhetorical agency in resisting unrealistic social expectations in order to accomplish their goals. The subsequent paragraphs provide a brief snapshot of each chapter.

Chapter 2 "Combating Oppression in Sewing Professions through Visibility and Invisibility" highlights businesses related to sewing, designing, and selling clothing and hats. In this chapter, I explore the social expectation and roles of sewing professionals, including workers and entrepreneurs. The oppressive environment addressed in this chapter focuses primarily on home sewing businesses. Many women involved in sewing or selling items transformed part of their homes into a business. In light of the unique space of the home business, owners are laborers working in a space simultaneously participating in the workplace, marketplace, and homeplace. Their unique position places them in an oppressive environment as they shoulder the demands of work and home without clear boundaries. Both employees and owners, with the exception of a few highly successful female entrepreneurs, are exploited by the demands of their work. In a parlor like setting with only women present, the seamstress transforms into a present yet invisible servant as she takes measurements, makes alterations or garments to satisfy her clients, serves refreshments, and toils endless hours. Her physical labor enacted through sewing and service reinforce the disconnect that Mike Rose observes between physical labor and "competence" (xviii). Although sewing and millinery businesses "present different tasks to be solved, calling forth different cognitive processes," patrons and employers view the employed seamstress through the terministic screen of servant (M. Rose xxii).

Overall, workers and entrepreneurs serve in the roles of mother, wife, business owner, boss, worker, and servant. Due to exploitation and self-exploitation, in the case of entrepreneurs, invisible sewing professionals are expected to work more than eight hours a day in cramped, dimly lit rooms with poor ventilation. However, in this chapter, I argue that sewing professionals break out of their oppressive spaces by utilizing their invisibility and visibility as they employ embodied and discursive rhetorics coupled with association and relation.

Sewing professionals break out of their servant roles through embodied and discursive rhetoric as they engage in self-making as well as making others through their fashion advice and garments. Bodies wearing their garments serve as a reflection of the creator, a woman with the power to shape reputations and combat or promote oppressive fashion trends. As illustrated by my example of Elizabeth Keckley, Mary Todd Lincoln's dressmaker, sewing professionals' education in fashion and manners emphasizes the cerebral as clients view them as experts. For Keckley, an African American dressmaker, her knowledge and skill allow her to transcend racial and class boundaries. Keckley utilizes discursive and embodied rhetoric to shape Lincoln's public image through her garments and advice, and she engages in self-making as she establishes her ethos as a well-known dressmaker for powerful women while working behind the scenes.

Similarly, sewing professionals utilize discursive and embodied rhetoric as they make themselves visible in order to break out of their oppressive spaces. From a one woman protest to group protests, sewing professionals utilized discursive and embodied rhetoric to communicate their demands for better working conditions. Individuals as well

as groups such as Dressmakers' Protective Association of America and International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union along with their allies strike, protest, and defend sewing professionals in unjust court cases involving misfit garments. In this chapter, I employ Aimee Carrillo Rowe's definition of association and relation to illustrate how sewing professionals develop ties to the press, associations, religious leaders, and benevolent organizations in order to "rework power through critical and intimate modes of relation across lines of difference" (23). The combined voices and actions of diverse sewing professionals and their allies enable sewing professionals to promote change in their workplaces and ensure that the public continues to care for disabled and elderly sewing professionals.

Whether through invisibility or visibility, sewing professionals employ discursive and embodied rhetoric to accomplish their goals. Entrepreneurs earn financial independence, recognition, and credibility through discursive rhetoric as they persuade others to follow their fashion advice and utilize embodied rhetoric as their customers serve as walking billboards advertising their services and highlighting their expertise as professionals. Workers with their allies' help achieve their goals of having financial independence, agreeable working conditions, and recognition of quality of work through embodied and discursive protests, strikes, and court appearances.

The third chapter, "True Womanhood: Transforming Boardinghouses into Boardinghomes" reveals that in the space of a boardinghouse, the boardinghouse keeper performs the traditional duties of the typical nineteenth-century wife, but the ambience of the boardinghouse denies lodgers the comfort and warmth of home. Wendy Gamber

describes a boardinghouse's unwelcoming character: "Presided over by 'avaricious' landladies motivated by 'interest, not affection,' boardinghouses sheltered strangers, not private families. Interest tarnished everything it touched, turning cleanliness into filth, order into disorder, and exposing otherwise private homes to the glare of publicity" (*The Boardinghouse* 78). Gamber's words reinforce Richter's discussion on financial gain as being a motivating factor behind the transformation of public spaces into homelike spaces. The warmth and affection put into a mother's care for the family is replaced by a boardinghouse keeper's unsatisfactory household services which are performed for a profit.

The paradoxical nature of the boardinghouse brings to mind Enoch's discussion of home as an ideograph. While many boarders expect a homelike atmosphere and desire the boardinghouse keeper to perform her duties with the care and loving touch of a mother, the ideograph of home disintegrates under the demands a boardinghouse keeper faces as she acts as a manager instead of a mother by maintaining each rental unit, supervising employees, and performing her share of the physical labor. Overall, boarders' dissatisfaction with boardinghouse keepers' performance often derives from the unfair assumption that the boardinghouse keeper automatically plays the role of a mother-like figure in a domesticated workspace.

Therefore, in this chapter, I focus on social expectations for women boarders, entrepreneurs, and workers. Social expectations demanded that boardinghouse keepers and women boarders align themselves with True Womanhood's virtues of "piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity" (Welter 152). Although boarders relied on

boardinghouse keepers' domestic labor, they were expected to maintain True Womanhood's virtues. Similarly, both men and women boarders expected boardinghouse keepers to play a motherly role by performing domestic chores in addition to maintaining a pure and morally sound environment. Such an expectation appears contrary to boardinghouse keepers' identity as business women. Therefore, I argue that boarders and boardinghouse keepers utilized embodied rhetoric to break free from the social expectations tied to True Womanhood. To resist social expectations, women boarders' physical presence within the boardinghouse communicated a resistance to the code of motherhood. According to Lindal Buchanan, the code of motherhood functions as "a shared cultural code and generates powerful persuasive resources that reinforce gender stereotypes and diminish women's complexity, dimensions, and opportunities" (xvii). The boardinghouse's space frees women to pursue intellectual or other interests and provides a space for communal parenting. The boarders' physical presence in the boardinghouse somewhat distances them from their domestic chores and their motherly duties as they pursue interests outside of being a wife and a mother which helps them be independent from domestic space.

However, boardinghouse keepers utilized embodied rhetoric by resisting and embracing the code of motherhood. For example, a resistance to the code of motherhood allowed entrepreneurs like Julia Wolfe to distance herself from her expected motherly role in her physical move away from her husband to a boardinghouse and her move to outside of the home as she occupied herself with land speculation, property development, building materials, and negotiations with contractors. Wolfe used her role as

boardinghouse keeper to loosen her ties to the domestic sphere as she resisted True
Womanhood's virtues. With employees in place, Wolfe utilized the boardinghouse as a
means of unofficially separating from her husband, reducing her childcare
responsibilities, and pursuing her interest of land prospecting. In other words, the
boardinghouse empowered Wolfe to alter her role as mother and wife while pursuing an
interest outside of the domestic realm.

In applying an opposing strategy, some boardinghouse keepers, particularly
women of color, embraced the code of motherhood to gain wealth, fight social injustices,
and help a new generation of immigrants thrive in the United States. For minorities like
Mary Ellen Pleasant, the domestic sphere provided a space for acquiring property and
wealth through her boarders' payments as well as the informal education she gained from
being present during her boarders' conversations on investments. Through wise
investments, she purchased additional boardinghouses, employed African Americans, and
hired lawyers to fight injustices such as discrimination in streetcars. Similarly, immigrant
boardinghouse keepers, like Basque Americans, conformed to True Womanhood's
virtues to create a homelike environment for their fellow immigrants. By serving in a
motherly role, boardinghouse keepers educated immigrants about their new country and
assisted them in their adjustment while providing them with a homelike environment akin
to the one in the old country.

In the fourth chapter, "Restaurants: A Site of Exploitation and Activism," I
explore the social expectations of consumers, entrepreneurs, and workers. For consumers,
social expectations appeared in their material surroundings. Through special entrances,

dining areas, foods, advertisements, and furnishings, nineteenth-century restaurants utilized containment rhetoric to ensure that women consumers, specifically white middle and upper-class women, remained faithful to True Womanhood's ideals by guiding their movements, interactions, appetites, and behavior. The material world made up of city streets, entrances, walls, booths, chairs, food, menus, and advertisements rhetorically shapes gendered ideals and expectations, thus reinforcing True Womanhood's virtues of "piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity" (Welter 152). For example, spatial arrangements and food options served as a few ways to determine whether a restaurant's space was suitable for women. Upstairs or downstairs eateries were improper as proper restaurants were at ground level: "George Foster noted that entering a certain ice creamery required climbing a flight of steps. Since doing so meant lifting one's skirt above the ankles, this means of entry, 'except in cases of a millinery establishment or a shawl loft [is] of course, not to be tolerated in good society.' Nor for the same reason, did respectable ladies descend into restaurants" (Lobel 208).

Food, likewise, determined whether an establishment was suitable for a respectable lady. According to Paul Freedman, "In the 1880s newspaper advertisements for restaurants used terms such as 'home' or 'for ladies and gentlemen' or simply 'ice cream' to indicate that they were safe for respectable women, which tended to mean that they did not serve alcohol" (9). Restaurants' emphasis on home and child-like treats placed restaurants in a female-friendly category. In contrast, the presence of alcoholic beverages implied that a restaurant's adult-like atmosphere was appropriate for men only. Thus, restaurants' foods and advertisements highlight the power of material objects to

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shape social norms and embodied behaviors. As Richard Marback states, "[o]bjects propel us and repel us and even compel us" (57). The pictures of food, furniture, and lighting as well as the words printed on advertisements possess the power to control women's presence or absence in a specific space. Thus, physical objects within a restaurant setting and advertisements depicting the physical setting and expected dining experience serve as rhetoric designed to make women uncomfortable or comfortable depending on the absence or presence of a domesticated setting. Restaurants with female friendly advertisements establish their ethos through their selection of foods, drinks, seating, lighting, and physical location.

In addition to spatial arrangements and foods determining whether restaurants can include or exclude women, a lady's dining companions helped distinguish respectable women from the rest. When women were not dining in a ladies' cafeteria, a female friendly ice cream parlor, or an isolated room or table dedicated to women only, women were required to be escorted by a male to maintain their respectability. Several fine dining establishments in New York admitted ladies without male escorts if they had "impeccable credentials," meaning that male employees only admitted a woman dining on her own if she "looked and carried herself like a lady" (Freedman 14). Rejected women who were offended by this policy began to question men's definitions of respectability and exclusionary practices.

To break out of their containment, women consumers such Harriot Stanton Blatch and Rebecca Israel utilized discursive rhetoric in the form of court cases to question the definition of a lady as well as escort policies. Others, such as club women, employed

indirect rhetoric as they used their roles as housewives concerned with cleaning and food preparation to critique restaurants' settings while acting as informal health inspectors. In utilizing rhetoric to break out of their containment, consumers strived to achieve their goals of attaining respect and obtaining agreeable sustenance in a pleasing atmosphere.

Parallel to consumers' containment and resistance, workers encountered containment rhetoric in their workplaces. With little concern for their health, safety, and respectability, restaurants expected employees to work beyond eight hours each day, continue working during breaks or leave the premises, consume little food, use exits that often lead to dark alleyways, work in certain areas of the restaurant based on race and physical attractiveness, and sleep in overcrowded rooms with little ventilation and light. Overall, workers become "docile bodies," bodies that "may operate as one wishes, with the techniques, the speed and the efficiency that one determines" (Foucault 138).

To resist their containment, workers utilized discursive, spatial, and imagistic rhetorics to break out of their expected roles. To resist worker exploitation, workers formed trade unions and worked with groups such as The Consumer League to voice their concerns through legislative campaigns and produce print materials filled with images of abused workers and facts about their poor health due to abusive working conditions. In other cases, workers employed spatial rhetoric as they formed their own restaurants like the Tip Not to create safe working environments.

Despite women's resistance, social expectations tethered entrepreneurs to their domestic roles. To maintain their respectability, women entrepreneurs aligned their roles with their domestic duties, for they performed their restaurant work within the home, a

place where their expertise in cooking, cleaning, nursing, decorating, and hosting could be used for family and customers. As many acted as workers and entrepreneurs, women often labored anonymously as husbands or male relatives assumed the entrepreneur title, and for African American caterers and restaurant owners, white society expected them to relinquish their roles as entrepreneurs by creating punitive fees and regulations that made operating a business nearly impossible.

To combat their containment, entrepreneurs used discursive rhetoric. For instance, to resist white society's attempts to eliminate African Americans' catering businesses, African American catering families utilized discursive rhetoric as they persuaded other African American caters and restaurateurs to join together to form associations and corporations of caterers in order to pool their resources as they continue to fight for their existence in the business world. In other cases, women entrepreneurs broke away from their home restaurants to form all-female owned and operated restaurants such as the Suffragist Party's restaurant to establish their identity in writing and communicate their values through their menu and advertising materials.

Following chapter 4, the concluding chapter, "The Value of Spatial and Material Rhetorics in Analyzing Women's Work Locations," notes opportunities for entrepreneurs, consumers, and workers' subversive agency in oppressive domesticated workplaces. I highlight multiple examples of women breaking out of their containment such as nineteenth-century court cases and women designing spaces away from the domestic setting to bring forth their own political agenda. In this chapter, I, also, argue for the importance of historians' continuation of analyzing historical spaces to uncover

the tension between oppression and agency in the process of rescue, recovery, and re-inscription.

CHAPTER II

COMBATING OPPRESSION IN SEWING PROFESSIONALS THROUGH
VISIBILITY AND INVISIBILTY

When examining the larger narrative involving entrepreneurs, workers, and

customers in oppressive homelike work environments, the material world's power

emerges. As sewing and clothing connect the three groups, one can easily observe the

power of a simple sewing needle. A simple sewing needle possesses the potential to

exploit or empower sewing professionals. It is powerful enough to have created

entrepreneurial opportunities for women in the past and present. The needle also

possesses the ability to sew clothing that marks an individual as belonging to a certain

social class. As it creates new clothing, the needle shapes others' perceptions, for the

clothing tells a story about the wearer. The same needle serves as a tool of oppression as

women work long hours with little relief until their hands and eyesight are destroyed.

Yet, the same needle can be admired as an early form of technology that we still use

today. Guided by a hand or machine, the needle's existence influenced the lives of people

and the events in history.

In light of the needle's ability to exploit as well as empower, in this chapter, I

argue that nineteenth-century sewing professionals utilize their rhetorical visibility and

invisibility to fight oppression. The first section, "Rhetorically Transforming Home

Spaces into Domesticated Workspaces," introduces readers to the ways in which sewing

professionals blurred domestic and public spaces to create domesticated workspaces. The

second section, "Rhetorical Tensions of Invisibility and Visibility," examines how

entrepreneurs and workers, concerned with their reputations as housewives or women of

leisure, rhetorically utilized invisibility and visibility to fulfill their roles as mothers,

wives, business owners, bosses, workers, and servants in oppressive domesticated

workspaces. In the next section, "Breaking Out: Utilizing Rhetoric to Combat

Oppression," I continue my discussion on rhetorical invisibility and visibility as I argue

that entrepreneurs and workers utilized discursive and embodied rhetorics to break out of

their oppressive spaces and resist exploitation. For instance, I use Elizabeth Keckley,

Mary Todd Lincoln's dressmaker, as a key example. Keckley utilizes invisibility as she

quietly works behind the scenes. Being well informed on matters of fashion and manners,

she dresses and fashions Lincoln as the First Lady. As Lincoln emerges as the First Lady

dressed according to Keckley's specifications, Keckley's visibility becomes apparent in

making Lincoln as well as making a name for herself. In this section, the cerebral

manifests itself as a visible force in self-making, making others, and crossing boundaries.

Additionally, prior to the concluding remarks, the section "Achieving Visibility and

Combating Oppression through Embodied and Discursive Rhetorics" includes examples

of sewing professionals acting collectively utilizing discursive and embodied rhetorics to

combat oppression. For collective examples, I recognize association and relation as tools

for combatting oppression, for the political ties formed between sewing professionals and

their allies "provide a forum in which to rework power through critical and intimate

modes of relation across lines of difference" (Rowe 23). In other words, I argue that

sewing professionals' ties to each other as well as ties to benevolent organizations, unions, religious leaders, and the press allow them to work with others of various races, social classes, affiliations, and goals to create a forum to make their oppression visible and strive to combat oppression.

Rhetorically Transforming Home Spaces into Domesticated Workspaces

Many women involved in sewing or selling items transformed part of their homes into a business to manipulate the public and private binary to insert their presence into public spaces. In light of the unique space of the home business, owners are laborers working in a space simultaneously participating in the workplace, marketplace, and homeplace. The wealthiest and, perhaps, most successful dressmakers could dedicate multiple floors of their large homes to specific parts of their sewing business. In *A Separate Sphere: Dressmakers in Cincinnati's Golden Age 1877-1922*, Cynthia Amnéus refers to the Tirocchi sisters who created a salon in their home:

> [T]he business occupied a considerable portion of the house—all of the second floor and part of the third. Customers entered at the front door and were ushered past the formal parlor and up a flight of stairs. The showroom/billiard room on the second floor was arranged artistically with sumptuous fabrics, giving customers an opportunity to view the available stock of fabrics and trims. Husbands who accompanied their wives on the buying trip could wait here as well. The two fitting rooms were comfortably furnished; here, the customers discussed their orders and had their fittings. The second floor also housed an office, where the bookkeeping was maintained, and an area in which the Tirocchis could meet with salesmen. The third floor held the workrooms and storage for both stock and dress forms. (Amnéus 59-60)

At first glance, the house appears to be divided into public space for the sewing business and private space for the Tirocchi's family.

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However, a closer look at the business reveals that the public business space overlaps with the private space of the home. The placement of the home business on the second floor requires women and in some cases their husbands to climb the stairs to access the business. As clients observe the parlor from the entryway, the home furnishings remind them that they are within a domestic space. The stairs, which lead to the business, may seem problematic at a first glance because respectable women did not generally climb stairs in public spaces. However, the home business provides an exception: "George Foster noted that entering a certain ice creamery required climbing a flight of steps. Since doing so meant lifting one's skirt above the ankles, this means of entry, 'except in cases of a millinery establishment or a shawl loft [is] of course, not to be tolerated by good society.' Nor for the same reason did respectable ladies descend into restaurants" (Lobel 208). Businesses like restaurants and ice creameries which required women to descend or climb stairs were located in public spaces. Because the Tirocchi's sewing business is located in the home, a place primarily for family and women customers, respectable women felt at ease in climbing the stairs alone, with female companions or with their husbands. They were free from an unfamiliar male gaze as they lifted their skirts to descend or climb stairs.

Similarly, the design of the home business controlled the movements of salesmen and husbands accompanying their wives. Second floor showrooms and offices provided a separate space for men. Husbands waiting on their wives remained in the showroom/billiard room. While the showroom contained delicate fabrics for women's dresses, its connection to billiards makes it a partially masculine space. The offices, also

located on the second floor, afford the Tirocchi sisters a public space to conduct business with salesmen. Even within the private space of the home, the office and the showroom/billiard room function as public spaces for commercial financial transactions. In the showroom/billiard room, husbands, perhaps, approve of their wives' selections and pay for dressmakers' services while the Tirocchi sisters negotiate deals with salesmen and pay for materials. Thus, the showroom/billiards room and office serve as public spaces for men and women. In contrast, although the dressing rooms and workrooms are part of the business, they become private areas for women only, areas away from the male view. Also, activities such as sewing, measuring, dressing, and socializing taking place in workrooms and dressing rooms directly correspond to the activities normally happening in the home.

While the Tirocchi sisters operated a successful business, which occupied the majority of the home, their full-fledged business complete with a showroom, fitting rooms, an office, and workrooms is not the typical spacious workplace environment for sewing professionals. In fact, most sewing professionals labored in an oppressive environment as they shouldered the demands of work and home without clear boundaries. For many widows and single women, sewing businesses consumed their small homes: "Milliners and dressmakers usually have rooms on some fashionable street for their business, and eat at restaurants. This dispenses with a kitchen and a servant to live in the house; so by simply dining abroad and sleeping on a sofa-bedstead, this class of breadwinners make all their rooms available for the reception of customers" (Kellogg 285). To afford a business located in a high traffic area, milliners and dressmakers

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frequently sacrificed their personal space for their clients. A lack of servants and family meals in the home indicate an absence of family life. The bedstead once transformed into a sofa disguises the one remaining domesticated space, for they reserved the small space in their homes for customers. Unlike the wealthy Tirocchi sisters, sewing professionals working in small homes cannot afford to dedicate a large space, if any space, for their personal lives. As Amnéus notes, "Some women took this avenue to avoid marriage. Although many women entered the dressmaking trade as widows, especially in the wake of the Civil War, and others as 'legitimate' spinsters who had no other means of support, some clearly, *chose* not to marry" (Amnéus 55). Thus, an absence of a husband and children allowed sewing professionals to sacrifice comfortable home furnishings for fitting rooms and workroom space.

However, for milliners and dressmakers, who have a family to support or do not have the financial means to afford a business on a fashionable street, the domestic setting occupies at least half of the business. In *Occupations for Women*, Frances Willard, Helen Winslow, and Sallie White describe two options for a sewing professional: "[S]he may either go to her own customers by the day, or she may have them come to her house. Good dressmakers who go out get all the way from $3.00 to $4.00 a day, according to their ability and their originality" (82). The mobile sewing professional is compensated for her travel and time that she spends in temporarily transforming a client's home into a business setting.

In contrast to the traveling professional who works to transform clients' homes into a working environment, the sewing professional working in her own home blends the

professional and domestic settings. Susan Ingalls Lewis notes, "Like the artisans of the pre-industrial era, these women: 1) ran both workshops and stores within their own dwelling places, 2) trained apprentices, and sometimes lived in extended households with their employees, 3) hired or worked alongside family members, and 4) mixed domestic tasks with commercial activities throughout the day" (143). In one space, a woman could serve as a business owner, boss, worker, mother, and wife. Employees, likewise, possessed complex identities in the home setting as they fulfilled their household responsibilities as family members or boarders and completed their duties as employees. By business owners and employees residing in the same household and workplace, their level of familiarity differs from the typical professional relationships between business owners and employees in a non-domesticated workplace.

With the ever-present demands of the home, the home often negated the seamstress' or milliner's attempt to create a professional work environment. Sewing professionals were often advised to separate the business from the domesticated parts of the home: "And, above all, let her keep her domestic troubles and the wrangles of her workroom out of sight, and as separate from her business life, as she would the bread and butter of the nursery from her customers' silks and satins" (Rayne and Thorpe 218). Such advice emphasizes the importance of the physical separation between the home and business through the illustration of keeping a nursery's physical objects away from a workroom filled with customers' delicate materials. Many women were able to create a physical divide on a small scale by dedicating a small part of their home to the business. Unlike wealthy dressmakers with large homes or single women who dedicated almost

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their entire living space to the business, married women with children, employees, or apprentices residing in the home could dedicate only a small portion of their home to the business: "Most dressmakers, however, probably managed to contrive only a humble showroom and a screened-off workroom" (Amnéus 60).

While physical separation assists in helping to create a professional environment in a home business, the aforementioned advice calls for a divide between professional and personal lives which demands that sewing professionals avoid talking about domestic matters. The dressmakers' and milliners' professional and personal troubles should not enter into conversations with clients. Thus, the call for a divide between the personal and professional in an effort to focus solely on customers and their needs renders the sewing professional invisible.

Rhetorical Tensions of Invisibility and Visibility

In this section, I argue that entrepreneurs and workers rhetorically employ invisibility and visibility to fulfill their expected roles as mother, wife, business owner, boss, worker, and servant in oppressive domesticated workspaces where material products matter more than the body.

Entrepreneurs

When one reflects on the invisibility of a sewing professional, one may think of the nearly invisible dressmaker in literary works. In many fictional works, "the dressmaker is rarely even mentioned much less featured in any significant way in these stories" (Criniti 310). Similarly, in reality, the dressmaker serves as either an invisible figure akin to a silent servant or a walking advertisement conveyed through a fashionably

dressed body. M.L. Rayne and Rose H. Thorpe comment on the significance of

dressmakers' appearance in "The Etiquette of Dressmaking" section in *What Can a*

Woman Do or Her Position in the Business and Literary World, published in 1893:

> I presume there are three dressmakers out of every twenty-five who present the
> appearance and manners of ladies to their customers. The dressmaker we most
> frequently meet with, even in the highest grades of the profession, is a dilapidated
> looking woman, dressed haphazard in a cheap, ill-fitting costume, who has
> nothing in her own appearance to suggest a single idea of what her work is.
> Instead of being interested in her customers' wants, she begins a doleful story of
> how one girl is sick and another has left her in the middle of the season, without
> giving warning, or relate her own domestic troubles, or the remissness of some of
> her customers. When she finally gives her attention she brings in an armful of
> French fashion papers, and asks the customer to select something, instead of
> selecting and suggesting the styles herself, and the lady, who wants her new dress
> stylishly and fashionably made, goes away with no idea of what it is to be, and
> with no confidence that the dressmaker knows any more about it than she does.
> (217-218)

Although the poorly attired dressmaker complains about the struggles in her personal and

professional life, when she turns her attention to customers, she takes on the role of a

servant as she presents the customers with the French fashion papers and waits for their

selection. The dressmaker fails to place herself in the position of a fashion expert.

Instead, she views the customer, who is more than likely a middle or upper-class woman,

as an expert in matters of fashion. They possess the ability to pay for her services, so they

have the power to choose a dress according to their personal taste without any

interference from a working-class dressmaker. Instead of being a fashion expert, the

sewing professional transforms into a present yet invisible servant as she takes

measurements, makes alterations or garments to satisfy her clients, and toils endless

hours. To entertain her customers, sewing professionals act as hostesses or waitresses as they serve drinks and refreshments: "Certain dress-makers make it a point to furnish their customers with drink, and some of the most fashionable *maisons des modes* are, in fact, fashionable drinking-houses" ("Drunkenness Among Women" 154). Customers become guests. The presence of alcohol adds to the joy of what can be an unpleasant and time-consuming visit. In a homelike environment, dressmakers desire to build a relationship with their customers, for customers spend a lot of time with them in the stages of selecting fabrics, styles, colors and in the fitting and measuring phases.

Furthermore, sewing professionals' invisible servant status becomes prominent in light of the self-exploitation many entrepreneurs experience. To begin my examination of exploitation, I turn now to women working alone or working in a home sewing business accompanied by relatives or a few employees, in which the possibility of self-exploitation seems likely. For example, the fictional "milliner Alvira Slimmens, the 'heroine' of a serialized novelette in *Godey's Ladies Magazine,* was described as cooking, dispensing her own quince jelly, and raising chickens, as well as bleaching bonnets, trimming hats, and selling ribbons" (Lewis 149). Slimmens' business, farm duties, and household chores suggest that she works well over an eight-hour day. As the public and private spaces overlap, it seems impossible to mark a clear beginning and ending to the workday. Although other family members are not mentioned as playing a role in Slimmens' business, many business owners worked alongside their family members or employees to serve more customers. In turn, owners labored in the same environment as their employees and worked the same number of hours as employees. In some cases,

especially during slow seasons, owners may work more hours than employees in order to save money on labor.

Between balancing work and home life, women entrepreneurs labored under stressful conditions, for most were teetering on the edge of financial ruin. As department stores entered the marketplace, the "average milliner operated on such a small scale she could not hope to compete with department stores" (Yohn 424). Despite money saving strategies such as decreasing the number of employees, female business owners could not afford to purchase items in bulk as a money saving strategy like the large department stores. Also, the stress to furnish customers with completed dresses in a short amount of time increased as customers grew accustomed to the quickness and ease of walking into a department store, trying on a dress, and bringing it home on the same day. The following description recounts the lengthy, tedious process that customers endured when they visited a dressmaker's shop:

> First she selects the material she wants, the color, &c. Then she spends considerable time in matching her trimmings, ribbons, buttons, and other accessories, including hooks and eyes, snaps, thread, &c. A trip to the home of the dressmaker follows. She talks for an hour or so about every detail of the garment. Then follow several trips and try-ons, very aggravating for the most part. Alterations are made each time until the garment is made to meet the desire of the woman, as nearly as possible. When it is completed it just screams 'home-made' and does not bear that chic, natty air of a garment designed, cut and tailored by experienced craftsmen and artists. ("Are Dressmakers Becoming Fewer" E7)

The above process involves weeks of work. The customers, after enduring this time-consuming process, often feel dissatisfied with the results. The dress may not compare to

the ones in a department store or to the dresses made by an experienced professional. The numerous sources of competition place dressmakers in a race for time and money.

Like dressmakers, other professionals in sewing businesses struggle with competition because almost every woman during this period could sew. Some women attempt dressmaking and millinery without proper training. As more women enter the field, customers rely on their closest friends and relatives for their work. One milliner observes that the "middle classes—using the term, too, in the liberal American sense— either are independent entirely of the professional milliner or go to her only for their 'best bonnets,' while looking to amateur sources for their others" ("Amateur Millinery" 12). With so many amateur sources in existence, women can rely on themselves or others to repair or refashion old bonnets. They can attempt to copy the latest fashions they see in department stores or millinery shops. If women only visit a professional milliner when they need a bonnet for a special occasion, milliners experience slow periods of business outside of holiday seasons and special social events. Therefore, milliners and dressmakers cannot afford to have numerous employees on hand and must work themselves. Even if it means working longer hours, they must save money because they no longer have a steady weekly income.

Additionally, society as a whole placed stress upon women business owners as they risked being viewed as masculine. While laboring to make a profit, successful women business owners feared for their reputations as they faced a double standard: "Succeeding in business, in entrepreneurship, and in money making marked men, for example, as having achieved manhood. Women entrepreneurs, however, risked being

seen as masculinized if they controlled capital. Hence, for them success was complicated

both by social expectations that they remain feminine but also their desire to make

enough money to remain in business" (Yohn 423). In nineteenth-century society, success

and wealth appeared disconnected to femininity. To attract women customers and

maintain a positive reputation within the business community, women entrepreneurs

walked a fine line between enjoying their success and maintaining their feminine identity.

The power and money associated with operating and owning a business contrasted with

True Womanhood's submissive character. Thus, invisibility prevented women

entrepreneurs from being identified as masculine.

   To further contribute to their goals of maintaining respectability while promoting

their business, sewing professionals continued to utilize their invisibility through

discursive rhetoric by avoiding traditional forms of print advertisements: "Dressmakers

attracted their clientele primarily by word of mouth. Because dressmaking shops were

often located in a home or sequestered in commercial buildings, they were not obvious to

the casual passerby. Few dressmakers opted to purchase advertising space in the

newspapers, local periodicals, or city directories" (Amnéus 61). With only a small

number of women being able to afford advertising, the advertisements posted were often

"notices informing their clients of the geographical moves they were making as they

sought the space in which to make and expand their enterprises" (Yohn 418). Such

advertisements typically belonged to wealthy women who could afford to have

businesses outside of their homes and move to better locations when business declined.

Although most women's small budgets prevented them from advertising in publications, advertisements often took an embodied form.

Along with discursive rhetoric, sewing professionals employed embodied rhetoric as a means of making their products visible to the public. The bodies of sewing professionals and their clients become "walking billboards, testaments to the finery they could create" (Amnéus 61). Dressmakers did not have to use their voices or print advertisements to persuade customers to visit their establishments. Their work displayed on numerous women's bodies informed potential customers of the color, fit, fabric, quality, and style of their clothing.

Furthermore, as women visited others' homes, they employed material rhetoric through their use of objects such as boxes and paper to advertise highlights their ethos as professionals. Willard, Winslow, and White provide professionals with the following advice: "I insist that all trimmed bonnets and hats shall go out in neat boxes, delicately papered, and that nothing about them shall suggest cheapness or carelessness. A badly done-up parcel is a poor advertisement for any house" (393). Although boxes and paper will quickly be tossed aside or thrown away, the packaging materials signify the care that the professional takes in presenting her merchandise to the public. As a woman opens a box, it is like opening a present. The box ensures that the hat does not get mussed or damaged during its delivery to the home. The well-made hat box and fine quality paper coincides with the fine quality of the hat or bonnet.

As papers, boxes, and clothing have the power to render sewing professionals visible, other material objects possess mixed results. Many sewing professionals were

missing from nineteenth-century business credit reports. In "Scarlett's Sisters: Spinsters, Widows, Wives, and Free-Traders in Nineteenth-Century North Carolina," Pamela Nickless concludes that many business women do not appear in credit reports because they "ran small businesses and relied entirely on local credit or operated entirely on a cash basis" (159). For those listed in credit reports, they often were widows or married women who served as a replacement for their husbands. For example, Nickless points out that after the Civil War "the large increase in the numbers of unreliable husbands must certainly indicate some strain on traditional gender relations in the household. Agents recommend in some cases that the wife be given credit---not the husband" (164). After the Civil War, physical disabilities and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder left many husbands, brothers, and sons struggling to adjust to civilian life. Women were left to make ends meet, and sewing served as vehicle for women to support their families. Credit agents, in many cases, had no choice but to include women in their credit reports, for too many men did not meet the credit standards that they desired. Perhaps, a woman's clean slate was better than a husband's poor credit rating.

Workers

Like their entrepreneur counterparts, workers rhetorically employed invisibility and visibility to fulfill their servant like roles in oppressive domesticated workspaces. In light of worker exploitation, for unemployed young women who were on the verge of starvation, employers enticed them with misleading job advertisements. For example, in 1867, Sophia Meyers promised employees steady work if they would make a six-dollar deposit "as a guarantee for the return of the material entrusted to her [them] to be made

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up" ("A New Mode of Swindling" 4). Employees soon realized that Meyers would not

return the deposit or supply them with steady work. Meyers proceeded to take poor

women's money in the following manner:

> Meyers would pay for the labor done—the amount always being $2 or $3 less
> than the sum deposited as security—and put the seamstress off with the promise
> of more work in the course of a day or two. This ordinarily would end the brief
> business arrangement. The poor victim would be unable afterward to get either
> work or deposit, and all demands upon Meyers for redress would be answered by
> abuse and threats. ("A New Mode of Swindling" 4)

Poor seamstresses lacked the resources to pay lawyers' fees and bring Meyers to court.

Meyers, also being a wealthy business owner, possessed the resources to defend herself

from any charges. More than likely the court would find Meyers innocent because the

advertisement did not state the number of jobs a seamstress would receive. Therefore,

Meyers provided employees with only a few sewing jobs, but the few jobs worth only

one to three dollars did not equal the employee's initial deposit. After failing to obtain

more work to gain the deposit plus additional money, unemployed seamstresses were left

with less money than before as result of Meyers's predatory advertising and business

tactics.

Furthermore, wealthy employers add to sewing professionals' misery through

their demand for a long workday and failure to provide an environment suitable for

sewing. For sewing professionals working in clients' homes, they often struggled to sew

garments to their clients' satisfaction due to the old machines they were forced to use.

One dressmaker commented on wealthy clients' refusal to purchase well-running sewing

machines to make her work easier: "[P]eople who have enough to buy clothes that would make Solomon turn green cannot afford decent machines for their home dressmakers to sew on. It's disgusting to see the different kinds of old rattletraps we are asked to work with in many houses, where hundred dollar bills are apparently a superfluity" ("One Woe of a Seamstress" SM12). Poor dressmakers cannot afford to refuse to serve those who do not provide proper equipment to perform their work. The wealthy patrons' efforts to save money by refusing to buy a labor-saving machine lengthen sewing professionals' workday and place obstacles in their way as old sewing machines malfunction. Even the best sewing machines of the nineteenth century were known to run "off the track persistently" (Rayne and Thorpe 215). Thus, the older model sewing machines forced sewing professionals to stop periodically, repair the machine if possible, remove improper stitching, and resew the area.

While forcing their employees to work with faulty equipment, employers succeeded in shaping docile bodies. In his discussion on docility and discipline, Michel Foucault defines the mechanics of power as "how one may have a hold over others' bodies, not only so that they may do what one wishes, but so that they may operate as one wishes, with the techniques, the speed and efficiency that one determines. Thus, discipline produces subjected and practiced bodies, 'docile' bodies" (138). Despite their hunger and pain, trained employees like well running machines submit to routines involving executing sewing techniques in an orderly and timely manner. The mechanics of power, involving the embodied rhetoric of oppression, never takes into account the wellbeing of the worker.

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Workplaces for sewing employees outside of home businesses were equally oppressive. Although some sewing businesses were outside of the home, their businesses were in fact homelike as many businesses provided sleeping quarters for their employees. In 1868, an editor from the *New York Times* reported on the unhealthy working conditions of a large establishment where hundreds of young girls were employed. The girls' unhealthy appearances testify to their unhealthy working conditions. The editor states, "These poor girls—ah! What a sad turning aside from the path of happy, sunny young girlhood!—were simply wretched looking. Two were humpbacked, many weak-eyed, all cadaverous, and not a few vicious-looking. Does over-work and under-feeding ever tend to morality?" ("Servant Girls and Seamstresses" 6). Instead of experiencing a joyful childhood, the young girls' long hours of labor chisel away at their youth and vitality. Their pale complexion and irritability suggest that they do not have time for recreational activities. They remain inside continually without sunlight. Their growing bodies do not receive the sustenance they need to function properly and have a healthy appearance.

In addition to an unhealthy work environment, large establishments like the one mentioned above did not provide their employees with adequate living space. The *New York Times* editor observed the following conditions:

> [G]irls as these we have seen earn only from $4 to $6 a week, and pay, at least three of it, for the poorest of board. They sleep in low, unventilated places; oftentimes, three or four of them crowded together in a small room. The majority of them, with no male protectors, are jeered at, and persecuted, and insulted by men, till life is simply a burden. Yet not one of these girls but would feel

indignant if I asked her to come and live with my family as house-servant. ("Servant Girls and Seamstresses" 6)

The crowded, unventilated rooms offered little comfort to the weary worker. With small rooms filled with multiple girls, the rooms did not have space for recreational activities. The rooms provided just enough space for sleeping. In the little time remaining between sleep and work, employers failed to protect their young employees and provide wholesome activities to do during their free time. Due to the absence of protectors in the form of parents or employers, men were able to victimize the helpless young girls through insults as well as sexual advances. To escape her current misery, a girl may give into a man's advances or turn to prostitution to earn more money to avoid starvation.

Despite the misery and possible escape, the *New York Times* editor notes that women often rejected the possibility of quitting their sewing jobs to work as house servants. Many feared losing their status, for sewing was considered more respectable than housekeeping. As a response to young women's insistence on remaining in sewing trades despite their declining health, nineteenth-century publications circulated cautionary tales to inform young women of the dangers of sewing occupations and promoted housekeeping as a better option for young women. In one cautionary tale, a widowed seamstress named Jeanne "was willing to work day and night, to be without food and without sleep, but she was not willing to work anywhere but at home. She knew not how to breathe in rooms of others, and all that resembled servitude was distasteful, horrible, and impossible to her" ("The Seamstress" 19). After a long period of ceaseless work, Jeanne becomes ill and commits suicide, for she knows that she will no longer be

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able to work to support herself. Although Jeanne is not an upper-class woman, her insistence on working in her home mirrors upper-class women who refused to work outside of the home. Inside her home, she is working for herself. Jeanne associates work outside of the home, which typically involves working as housekeeper or servant, with servitude. For Jeanne as well as other workers, the space of the home becomes a rhetorical container that the body conforms to in the way that respectability is confined within the home. Regardless of the consequences, Jeanne's body and reputation conform to the expectations of the confined space. In Jeanne's eyes, a life of hard work that destroys her health is superior to a life of servitude. Yet, through Jeanne's suffering and eventual suicide, publications send the message that a servant's job is a safe alternative to working in sewing businesses.

Thus, publications like the ones mentioned above serve as discursive rhetoric designed to bring poor working conditions and sewing professionals' suffering to the public's attention. Similarly, notable writers like Frances Willard employ discursive rhetoric to warn women about the false connection between social status and specific occupations. Many women's dedication to sewing trades relate to their desire to do work involving art. Although many remain in the home, the creativity involved in sewing divorces it from servitude and links it to art and the mind. Such cerebral work hardly seems like lower-class work. In fact, many women working in sewing trades considered themselves as ladies. However, Willard, Winslow, and White warn women of pursuing a line of work based on its supposed social status:

> Not only were there hundreds, yes thousands of women wanting work, but the majority were anxious to do 'art' work of some kind. Honest work that was genuinely practical found little favor in the eyes of the multitude. They seemed to have an idea that anything that was 'art,' no matter how bad art it was, hadn't the flavor of labor about it. Even if it was work, it was 'genteel' work and 'ladies' could do it. Now girls, honestly, isn't that silly and stupid? If one finds it necessary to do anything for money, why not stand up squarely and face the fact and do the work that comes to be done, whatever it may be, in a straightforward fashion instead of dodging about under all sorts of make-believes? (80)

The façade of genteel work allowed women of all classes to work in sewing businesses. The fact that many women remained in the home behind closed doors allowed them to appear as ladies of leisure when in reality they were working as much, if not more, as employees in public spaces. However, the danger of categorizing work into genteel versus lowly work caused many to cling to sewing trades until their health deteriorated. In reality, as illustrated by the above examples, sewing's genteel luster tarnishes when one takes a closer look at the reality of worker exploitation, disabilities, and death.

Breaking Out: Utilizing Rhetoric to Combat Oppression

In continuing to explore sewing professionals' use of invisibility and visibility as a rhetorical strategy, I argue that invisibility and visibility can be utilized to combat oppression. This section highlights invisibility's role in assisting the sewing professional to move from the status of *servant*, meaning a lowly seamstress who simply takes orders from her clients and creates garments to satisfy their demands, to a *fashion expert*, a modiste who imitates the manners of her patrons while utilizing her creativity. In this section, I point to Elizabeth Keckley, Mary Todd Lincoln's dressmaker, as an example of a sewing professional who maintains her invisibility. In her role as a modiste, a sewing

professional, Keckley transforms into a disembodied mind as she stays behind the scenes

using her powerful mind to create fashions to transform Lincoln into a First Lady while

simultaneously becoming visible as she makes a name for herself. Through her use of

invisibility and visibility as well as her movement from servant to fashion expert,

Keckley engages in border crossing as she undercuts racial and class oppression. Keckley

along with other sewing professionals cross racial and class borders by utilizing the

rhetorical strategy of invisibility by working behind the scenes and employing the

rhetorical strategy of visibility through using a creative mind to fashion products and

people that serve as a reflection of their creator.

Therefore, crossing social class borders often meant the difference between

success and failure. Wendy Gamber highlights the importance of border crossing for

working-class sewing professionals:

> This standard view of working-class entrepreneurs grows increasingly
> problematic when we turn to businesspeople whose occupations entailed the
> crossing of class boundaries. Such was the case with milliners and dressmakers,
> women who accounted for two of the single largest categories of nineteenth-
> century female entrepreneurs, and women who came for the most part from
> working-class backgrounds. With few exceptions, they served middle-class and
> upper-class consumers, not members of their own social class; their work required
> them to imitate (in dress, manners, and deportment) their 'betters.' ("A Gendered
> Enterprise" 196)

Dressmakers who are not from middle or upper-class backgrounds struggle to imitate

middle and upper-class women's dress and manners as evidenced by Rayne and Thorpe's

observation of "three dressmakers out of every twenty-five" are poorly dressed and do

not advise customers on fashion matters (217). In other words, they fail to offer their

expert opinion on matters of cut, color, fabric, and style.

Additionally, the difficulty of border crossing intensifies when race is included in

the equation. How would a lower class African American dressmaker enhance her ethos

by imitating white middle- and upper-class customers' fashion and manners? Prior to

answering the aforementioned question, it is worthwhile to examine African American

women's struggles in owning as well as working in sewing businesses. African American

sewing professionals struggled to combat harmful stereotypes: "Black women shared

with Black men the barrier of entrenched racial attitudes depicting them as lazy,

dishonest, childlike, impulsive, and intellectually lacking" (Jepson 115). Such stereotypes

caused white customers to overlook the talent of hardworking African American sewing

professionals.

Also, African American women's position outside the spheres posed challenges

for them in the business world. Black women

> were granted legitimacy in neither sphere and had to simultaneously build
> identities both as viable agents in the marketplace and as respectable women in
> the face of overwhelming racial and gender assumptions. They were denied both
> the benefits and freedoms of the public sphere and the protections of the private.
> They faced the challenging paradox of building two identities at the same time.
> (Jepson 115)

With sewing businesses incorporating aspects of the private and public spheres, African

American women faced the challenge of being recognized as part of both spheres. As

women and recently freed slaves, many African American women struggled to find work

in the public spaces. They competed against black men and whites for jobs. Similarly,

many African American women's need to work kept them from remaining in domestic

spaces. Although sewing professionals operated home businesses, black women with

limited finances did not possess the money to rent a space or create a suitable space for

customers in their homes. With racism and discrimination ever present, black women

with the means to establish a home business would find it difficult to entice white women

to enter their homes as customers. Likewise, stereotypes related to sexual promiscuity

prevented them from belonging to the domestic sphere and being associated with True

Womanhood's virtues: "piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity" (Welter 152).

According to Jepson, "Black womanhood was used as a kind of counterpoint to white

femininity: Black women were either mammies or Jezebels" (146). African American

women's behind the scenes place in the home as servants, childcare providers, and cooks

granted them a place in domestic spaces "as accessories to and supporters of the private

worlds of white women" (Jepson 159). With a history of playing a supporting role, some

African American women entered into sewing businesses. Like lower and lower-middle

class white sewing professionals, black sewing professionals toggled between their

invisible role as servants who create garments according to customers' demands and

visible fashion experts who wear fashionable clothes, possess upper-class manners, and

advise their clients.

For example, in *Behind the Scenes, or, Thirty Years a Slave, and Four Years in

the White House*, Elizabeth Keckley, an African American dressmaker, writes about her

pre and post-Civil War experience as Mary Todd Lincoln's dressmaker. While Keckley

discloses details about her days in the White House and her role in dressing Lincoln,

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Keckley's silence about her own clothes as well as her personal life signal her invisibility. In commenting on Keckley's biography, Berthold states, "Remarkably, she almost never tells us what she is wearing; her profession seems to have no literal reverberation for her at all . . . Essentially, the visible self is not Keckley's medium, and her own body is mostly, and strikingly, absent from the text" (112). Yet, in light of the fact that Keckley is an African American woman and former slave, she knows that her audience of white readers will be interested to learn more about Lincoln. However, her own invisibility is not just to put Lincoln in the spotlight. Her invisibility is a source of power and control. As mentioned above, the negative stereotypes present African Americans as lazy and unintelligent. To combat these negative stereotypes, Keckley does not make her physical body visible to readers. Berthold explains the significance of Keckley's choice to remain almost invisible in her own biography: "Leaving her body out of the text reinforces Keckley's devotion to a fundamentally cerebral presentation of herself. Thematically, Keckley's disembodiment duplicates the characteristic formal movement in the text out from private forms of narration. This multi-inflected production of a cerebral self is in fact constitutive of Keckley's poetics of impersonality" (112). Keckley directs the audience's attention to her role as an author and modiste, a fashionable dressmaker. She takes their eyes off of her body and focuses them on her mind and accomplishments.

Another reason for Keckley's invisibility connects to her desire for a private life. As a rape victim and former slave, Keckley desires privacy as she attempts to maintain her mental health and her sense of personhood. Relying on the work of Darlen Clark Hine

and Barkely Brown, Jill Jepson emphasizes the importance of secrecy and privacy in

black women's lives:

> Even as they worked hard to create public images for the consumption of the
> white community, they kept the most essential aspects of their lives out of view.
> This strategy of concealment was not unique to the female entrepreneurs: 'Black
> women, as a rule, developed and adhered to a cult of secrecy, a culture of
> dissemblances, to protect the sanctity of inner aspects of their lives,' writes
> Darlene Clark Hine (915). 'Only with secrecy, thus achieving a self-imposed
> invisibility, could ordinary Black women accrue the psychic space. . . needed to
> hold their own.' Barkely Brown concurs, arguing that Black women worked to
> construct an 'invisible womanhood' (144) (qtd. in Jepson 159-160)

The invisible womanhood allows African American women to obtain a mental space of

their own inaccessible to white society. The mental space houses their true identities and

the uncensored stories of their lives that are not rewritten to placate white audiences.

Although Keckley's body appears invisible in her biography, she remains visible

through her accomplishments. Her visibility appears in the form of self-fashioning.

Criniti compares Keckley to Cinderella's Fairy Godmother:

> However, what is more remarkable about Keckley's rise is her move from
> Cinderella to Fairy Godmother in the second rags-to-riches story in Behind the
> Scenes. The protagonist of the second such story is Mary Todd Lincoln, and
> Keckley serves, in some ways, as her 'fairy Godmother.' Not only, then, does
> Keckley achieve modest success as a result of her self-making, but she also has
> the opportunity to help make another. She moves from a self-made woman to the
> maker of another woman—a move that affords her control over the social
> communication and overall public image of the most prominent woman in the
> country. (310)

Criniti traces Keckley's move from former slave to the First Lady's dressmaker. In her rags-to-riches story, she works hard to create a new identity for herself. Her new identity as a dressmaker grants her the power to shape others' identities and reputations.

Keckley transforms Lincoln into the fashionable, sophisticated First Lady that Americans expect to see: "Keckley produced the inauguration dress, arranged it on Mary Lincoln's body, and even dressed her hair. This moment before the inauguration is the classic rags-to-riches, Cinderella moment: the gauche little wilderness girl from Kentucky is now magically transformed into a gleaming young woman fit to be the queen of a nation" (Criniti 317-318). Criniti's description of Lincoln as a "wilderness girl" hints at her lack of sophistication and polish (318). Keckley's choice of hairstyle, materials, colors, and dress pattern help determine the way that Americans will react to the new First Lady. In *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life,* Erving Goffman ponders the control individuals have in shaping others' reactions: "Regardless of the particular objective, it will be in his interests to control the conduct of the others, especially their responsive treatment of him" (3). By dressing Lincoln, Keckley attempts to control others' perceptions of Lincoln as she exchanges her unpolished country look for a polished, stylish appearance. To the outside world, Lincoln's refined appearance suggests that she is classy and intelligent. She belongs in the White House as a close companion and confidant of the President of the United States.

As a result of Keckley's valuable fashion advice, she becomes more than a dressmaker. She becomes a trusted companion. Amnéus clearly describes the intimacy between a dressmaker and client: "Much like today's hairdresser or bartender, who takes

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on the role of *ad hoc* psychologist, customers often unburden themselves to their

dressmaker" (62). As described in Keckley's biography, she acted as a trusted friend

during difficult times such as the death of Lincoln's child and husband.

Furthermore, through her work with Lincoln, Keckley transforms herself into a

modiste. To a twenty-first century audience, modiste, seamstress, and dressmaker appear

to have the same meaning. However, Keckley's work as a modiste goes beyond sewing

clothes for Lincoln:

> She is more than the menial, working class laborer associated with the figure of
> the seamstress; her role as modiste requires that she be in tune with the larger
> theories and movements of fashion. As a result, and also as a result of the cultural
> implications of dress formulated above, Keckley not only crafts the First Lady's
> dresses, she articulates the larger social and interpersonal communication
> signified by the First Lady's choice of dress—a choice in which her modiste has a
> definite say. In this sense, Mary Lincoln's presentation of self is not a
> presentation of herself at all; it is Keckley's presentation of her. (Criniti 319)

Criniti's description of Keckley's important role as a modiste emphasizes the cerebral

part of her job. Unlike a seamstress, who is responsible for merely cutting and stitching a

garment, Keckley's work requires her to research current fashion trends. She must

understand the manners, etiquette, and style of fashionable upper-class women in order to

prepare Lincoln for special events.

Just as the term "modiste" captures the cerebral side of Keckley's job, the term

"dressmaker" implies that one possesses the mental faculties to fit, design, and sew. In

fact, dressmakers in general have been referred to as artists:

> She must have the artist's eye to judge of the effects of color, the sculptor's faculty for form, that she may soften the outlines, turn the figure to the best advantage, and arrange the drapery in harmonious folds. She must know history in order to take from different epochs particular details suitable to various styles of beauty, and to be sure of making no mistake in the matter of accessories; and she must be a poet, to give grace and expression and character to the costumes. (Rayne and Thorpe 217)

Drawing on the skills of artists, sculptors, historians, and poets, the dressmaker uses her imagination and skill to create dresses designed to fit the unique curves of each woman while offering her customers dresses that are in tune with current fashion trends. To accomplish such a feat, the dressmakers frequently obtained education and training. For instance, during a summer term in 1920, New York University offered courses addressing such topics as "elementary dressmaking, trade dressmaking, drafting and dress design, costume designing, embroidery" and "hand and machine sewing and garment construction" ("University Dressmakers" 76). Others relied on apprenticeships to gain knowledge of the aforementioned subjects. Each dressmaker, however, obtained a formal or informal education in order to specialize in certain areas.

Similarly, milliners utilize their mental faculties to create bonnets and hats. Like the description of the dressmaker as an artist, the milliner has a creative process to create unique bonnets and hats. In *Occupations for Women,* an unnamed milliner shares her creative process: "When a customer orders a bonnet or a hat I make a mental picture of it; photograph it, as it were, on my brain, dwelling intently upon it until its image is so indelibly stamped on my memory that I cannot forget it, and can exactly reproduce it" (Willard, Winslow, and White 392). The milliner relies on her mind's eye to hold the image as she works to recreate the hat or bonnet. However, her work goes beyond

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imitation or reproduction. Her original designs stem from a creative process as well. When asked where she obtains her designs, the milliner provided this response: "Literally everywhere. I go to the theatre as much to see the women's headgear as to watch the play. In architecture, in groupings of statuary or single chiseled figures, in pictures, on placards, and posters, in the way fences are built, in everything my eyes fall upon . . ." (Willard, Winslow, and White 393). The mental work required for design and creation overlaps with subjects commonly taught in universities, for she obtains her designs from art, theatre, and architecture. Lines, shapes, colors, and textures of everyday objects serve as fuel for her imagination and creation. Her everyday outings become research for potential projects.

Also, sewing professionals, particularly those who owned and operated their own businesses, employed their mental faculties to make important business decisions. With more women entering sewing businesses and cities growing, business owners "had to remain cognizant of the changing shopping patterns and economic geography. They had to consider the best and most lucrative location for a business given what one could afford to pay in rent" (Yohn 412). Based on past and current experiences, women proprietors predicted areas of future growth and decline. They used their mathematical skills to determine their weekly and yearly budgets in order to see whether it is worthwhile to move to a new location. Also, to ensure their success, they developed communication skills to reach out to those who could help them accomplish their goals: "They also had to maintain personal and social collaborations and relationships with family, friends, and neighbors that resulted in labor and or financial support. And they

had to forge the business alliances that ensured them access to products that would continue to attract loyal clientele" (Yohn 412). Proprietors' access to labor and material goods depended on their continued contact with community members. As they came in contact with suppliers, they engaged in negotiations for the best prices. Their livelihood rested on communication skills that helped them to find a sense of stability in an unstable marketplace filled with competition.

Despite the intellectual effort and skills involved in dressmaking and millinery, some nineteenth-century people associated dressmaking and millinery with lower-class vocations and frowned upon educated women becoming dressmakers and milliners. However, dressmakers and milliners countered such claims with their own experiences and success. One educated milliner states, "Perhaps, if I had turned my attention to what ill-informed persons call a higher vocation, I might now be a newspaper reporter, running around armed with a shabby umbrella, and other accessories to match, anxious to 'write up' some idle woman's wedding trousseau, or describe some actress home toilet. I am very satisfied where I am" (Willard, Winslow, and White 394). While news reporting seemed for some like an acceptable occupation for an educated young woman, the milliner illustrates the frivolous side of the occupation as she mentions silly celebrity new stories and stories involving wedding trifles. Although millinery may appear to involve mere trifles at first glance, as illustrated in the descriptions of milliners, dressmakers, and modistes above, women apply their liberal arts education to their trades.

To illustrate their education's value in millinery and dressmaking, educated women openly supported the idea of women entering these trades and noted that these

trades should not be associated with the lower class. One woman milliner expressed, "I am a classical scholar. I graduated with honors from one of the best colleges, but I have never been sorry that I devoted myself to making bonnets rather than pursuing some of the phantoms women think they must give chase to, if they are educated. My education has been quite as much benefit . . . to me in this calling . . ." (Willard, Winslow, and White 393). The fact that the milliner graduated from one of the best schools indicates that she is not from a lower-class background. Her satisfaction with her career and the application of her studies to work counter the public's assumption that millinery involves little skill and is unsuitable for educated women. To combat society's ignorance, the milliner suggests that women who lack an education fear becoming dressmakers or milliners: "The cowardice of women who are afraid to do this or afraid to do that lest they lose caste, is laughable to me. It is those who have no assured position who are most afraid. They are always indifferently educated, too, you will find. Thorough education rids the mind of all such foolishness" (Willard, Winslow, and White 393). The milliner recognizes that a thorough education broadens the mind to a point of being able to transfer knowledge to almost any context. What many deem as an unskilled job suitable for an educated woman is in fact suitable for a classical scholar.

To further empower young women who desire to enter sewing professions, philanthropic ladies from Brooklyn's Young Women's Christian Association decided to

> give instruction to girls who stand in need of it, and to thus assist them in the
> work they have mapped out for themselves. To this end classes have been
> organized which receive from an hour's to two hours' instruction during the
> evenings of the week. As the members choose, they are instructed in writing, with

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composition; arithmetic, French, German, voice training, choral singing, sewing, dressmaking, millinery, cooking, household training, and calisthenics, with short lectures on physiology. ("Work Worthy of Praise" 14)

Armed with an education which includes dressmaking and millinery, young women possess skills beyond the typical seamstress. They have the option of working for themselves or others. With skills and more job opportunities, women who encounter exploitative employers possess the ability to leave their job, knowing that they have skills that are desirable to other employers. Thus, the Young Women's Christian Association endeavors to educate women and play a role in fighting exploitation by further developing young women's skills and increasing their number of job opportunities.

Through their education, women possess the ability to specialize in a specific area and in some cases support their family. In Poughkeepsie, when a father's eyesight failed and he was no longer able to work, his daughters' education proved invaluable, for each utilized their special skills to support the family through sewing:

> The three women folks, after much deliberation, established themselves as a firm of artistic dressmaking designers. This means that when a customer who wants to look as well as she can look applies for a gown, she is attended to first from the artistic side. The younger girl has a studio session. She looks at her, studies her proportions, considers the colors that she ought to wear and the sorts of fabrics that would hang best on such a figure. Then, if the costume is to be an expensive or elaborate one, she sketches a design for it and colors it in water or oil. This is passed over to the elder sister, who proceeds to embody it in cloth or silk. When the gown has been designed by one and cut and fitted by the other, the two girls consign it to their mother, who is responsible for the making, the button holes, and the seams. The firm gets excellent prices for its work, and its designs are in demand. It has lifted the family from penury to comfort. ("New Lines of Work" 1)

The women's education allowed the family to go beyond merely surviving after their father's vision failed. The women's sewing skills empowered them to create a business where they could utilize their individual strengths. Due to their success, they move from poverty to at least a lower middle-class position, where they are comfortable. Like the family in Poughkeepsie, other families possessed disabled or wounded fathers and brothers who could no longer support their family after the Civil War. Armed with a sewing education, many women became the primary breadwinners of their families.

Prior to the Civil War, an education in sewing assisted slaves in providing for their families, purchasing their freedom, and having a skill to rely on for their livelihood once they were emancipated. Elizabeth Keckley states, "[O]nce my reputation was established [as a dressmaker], I never lacked for orders. With my needle I kept bread in the mouths of seventeen persons for two years and five months" (45). Keckley supported her enslaved family and friends from her earnings as a dressmaker. She later earned enough money to buy her freedom and her son's freedom. After the Civil War, Keckley did not struggle to find employment. Her education made her self-sufficient and empowered her to act within public spaces as a modiste for wealthy women and "a respected instructor and head of the Department of Sewing and Domestic Arts at Wilberforce University" (Jepson 132). Her education allowed her to empower future generations as she taught the skills that made her successful. Keckley's skills and life experiences enabled her to go beyond teaching students how to sew. Through her personal experiences, she taught them sewing as a means of survival as well as a means for social mobility.

Achieving Visibility and Combating Oppression through Embodied and Discursive Rhetorics

Through my examination of exploitation in this section, I argue that sewing professionals employ association and relation to combat exploitation. Aimee Carrillo Rowe connects association and relation to belonging, a term she describes as "the affective, passionate, and political ties that bind us to others" (18). However, what do we accomplish when we form ties to others? Rowe provides an example to answer the aforementioned question: "Transracial belongings are political because they provide a forum in which to rework power through critical and intimate modes of relation across lines of difference" (23). Employing Rowe's explanation of association and relation, I argue that sewing professionals' ties to each other as well as ties to benevolent organizations, unions, religious leaders, and the press allow them to work with others of various races, social classes, affiliations, and goals to create a forum to bring to light oppression and strive to combat oppression. Their use of embodied and discursive rhetorics discussed in this section makes their struggles visible and ignites change.

For instance, many customers, specifically wealthy customers, pose problems for sewing professionals when they refuse to pay for their services. Numerous lawsuits note customers who fail to pay in full for garments that they have in their possession. For example, Alice Wasson, "the wealthy widow of the Wasson Car Manufacturing Company," refused to pay her dressmaker, Maria Nicholson ("A Milliner Wants Her Pay" 3). When Nicholson sued Wasson, the judge discovered that Wasson "came to this city last Fall and patronized the establishment of the plaintiff to the extent of $327, the

items appearing in the bill of appalling length and minuteness. Of this sum she paid only $40" ("A Milliner Wants Her Pay" 3). Nicholson suffers from financial distress as she waits for the remaining balance. The small payment of $40 does not cover the cost of the material or the time that Nicholson and possibly her employees have put into making Wasson's garments. Also, few customers consider shipping costs for transporting precious materials to sewing businesses. While waiting on the money, Nicholson has less money to invest in material for other sewing projects. What little money Nicholson possesses, she must use to pay a lawyer to recover the money that Wasson should have paid when she received the garments.

In Nicholson's case as well as others, sewing professionals risk losing their case. Often dissatisfied customers refuse to pay for a dressmaker's services when the dress does not properly fit. Thus, customers add to dressmakers' misery, for dressmakers are "at the mercy of those wealthy women who have a notion that they want something made a certain way one day, and then, when it is finished, decide that it is not stylish, and call it a 'misfit.' When the poor dressmaker goes to court, the Judge sometimes has the dress tried on before him. How can he tell whether it is a 'misfit' or not?" ("Dressmakers Now Unite" 6). With a lack of knowledge about women's fashion and sewing, judges make uninformed decisions. Unless a customer is unable to get into the dress or the dress completely falls off of her body, the proper fit is subjective. Instead of calling in an expert dressmaker to examine the dress and how it fits on the customer's body, the male judge takes on the role of expert and arrives at a conclusion based on faulty reasoning.

If the dressmaker is fortunate enough to win her case, she may not be fully compensated for her services. In some cases, dressmakers receive the worn garments back without any compensation. "The dressmaker is helpless, even if she recovers the dress, as it has generally been worn and is practically valueless" ("Dressmakers Now Unite" 6). Many times, used clothing cannot be sold even at a discounted rate because the garment's size, color, and style may not appeal to other customers. In other cases, courts order customers to compensate dressmakers with other valuable possessions such as jewels. Although dressmakers can sell the objects they receive as compensation, objects' market values may not be equivalent to the amount that the customer owes.

While some dressmakers possessed the means to pay lawyers' fees to take their clients to court, most dressmakers and other sewing professionals lacked the financial means to do so. Therefore, wealthy clients could easily take advantage of poor sewing professionals. To combat the growing number of clients unwilling to pay for services, dressmakers formed the Dressmakers' Protective Association of America. Recalling Rowe's definition of association and relation in the introduction to this section, I emphasize the fact that the Dressmakers' Protective Association of America created a forum for dressmakers to unite and "rework power through critical and intimate modes of relation across lines of difference" (23). According to a representative, the association serves the following purposes: "What we want to do is to establish an association that will take care of dressmakers in these one-sided affairs. We should have a Committee on Adjudication, and when a complaint is made against a customer by one of our members give that customer an opportunity to respond to the complaint. If a 'misfit' is alleged, we

can offer to examine into the matter ourselves" ("Dressmakers Now Unite" 6).

Dressmakers are no longer willing to simply accept an unexperienced judge's ruling in

misfit clothing cases. The association serves as a collection of experts within the field

who are willing to examine garments and insert their voices into cases. For members who

are unable to pay lawyers' fees, the association provides them with the means "to press

these [misfit clothing] cases" ("Dressmakers Now Unite" 6). With the growing number of

cases and the large number of poor dressmakers, the association predicted they would

soon have "between 4,000 and 5,000 members" ("Dressmakers Now Unite" 6).

Prior to court cases and the existence of the Dressmakers' Protective Association

of America, the customers' exploitation of sewing professionals appeared to be private

matters or squabbles between women behind closed doors. However, court cases and the

association bring the sewing professional's woes to the general public's attention. The

association opens a space for sewing professionals and their allies to combat some forms

of exploitation.

Similarly, sewing professionals in the late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-

century factories faced analogous forms of oppression to the sewing professionals in

home businesses and their need for association and relation emerged. Just as the

Dressmakers' Protective Association of America recognized customers exploiting sewing

professionals, sewing professionals began to organize and bring to light how employers

were exploiting them. Dressmakers soon addressed the inequities in wages and called for

change. In 1929, "non-union negro dressmakers get about half the wages of union

workers and work fifty-two to fifty-six hours a week compared with a five-day, forty-

hour week in union establishments" ("Appeal to Negroes to Join Dress Union" 19). The

differences in union versus nonunion employees inspired both parties to act collectively:

> Plans for the organization of 4,000 negro dressmakers, as part of the preparations
> now under way for a general strike of 45,000 dressmakers in this city in January,
> were discussed yesterday at a conference of officials of the International Ladies'
> Garment Workers' Union and representatives of church, press and benevolent
> organizations of Harlem at the Civic Club, 18 East Tenth Street. ("Appeal to
> Negroes to Join Dress Union" 19)

The discrepancy in wages and working hours for nonunion and union employees no

longer exists as a purely private matter. With the assistance of the press, church,

benevolent organizations, and International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union, nonunion

workers possess allies ready to strike. The strike serves to bring nonunion and union

workers together as well as African American and white dressmakers together. Each

group puts aside their differences and allegiances to work together for the good of all

dressmakers. Their large-scale strike forces employers to engage in a dialogue with them.

In imagining their strike, they utilized embodied rhetoric as their bodies ceased to work.

Whether silent or gesturing angrily with signs while raising their voices, the strike called

attention to their needs. However, striking employees were aware that employers had the

option of hiring new employees but understood that experienced sewing professionals

would be difficult to replace immediately. To avoid a disruption in production and sales,

employers desire a quick end to the strike which means that they must negotiate with

dressmakers and their allies. The International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union and the

Protective Association of America, mentioned above, illustrate the growing need to make private concerns public by making exploitation visible.

Sewing professionals' joint efforts are successful in making their plight visible, for philanthropic efforts coupled with court cases signal an awareness of the exploitation of sewing professionals and a need for society to take action. Rev. S.B. Halliday recognized sewing professionals' inferior housing and decided to make a change. He states, "[T]hirty years ago when I first married my wife and I looked around upon the struggles of working-women, seamstresses, and dressmakers, to find decent homes in which they could be admitted to board, and resolved to do what we could . . . The Trustees of the Five Points House of Industry have purchased and remodeled for this purpose the large and massive building . . ." ("Local Intelligence" 8). The fact that Halliday observes the struggles and sewing professionals' poor housing suggests that workers have succeeded in making their plight more visible to the general public. With newspaper articles on court cases and visible strikes and protests, people like Rev. Halliday cannot ignore their suffering.

Similarly, judges gradually begin to recognize sewing professionals' need for care in their later years. Justice Morschauser finds that a home dedicated to the care of elderly and disabled sewing professionals should not be taxed:

> Justice Morschauser said: 'The late Margaret A. Howard, who came to America a poor immigrant dressmaker, finally accumulated as a business woman in New York City a substantial fortune, and evidently being familiar with the life of dressmakers, the important service they render society, and the small pay they frequently receive, left by her will her residuary estate, amounting to about $400,000, to found a non-sectarian home to take care of poor sewing women over

sixty years of age who had spent a portion of their lives in dressmaking establishments or some similar or kindred occupations, and who may not have sufficient means of support, or who have become incapacitated from earning a living by means of their own work.' ("Court Refuses to Tax" 9)

Justice Morchauser recognizes that the home is needed and applying a tax to the home may cause it to close down. Morchauser makes an informed decision, for he knows about the difficult lives of sewing professionals and their job related health problems that prevent them from working. His decision signals sewing professionals' success in communicating their struggles to the public sphere. Finally those in a position of authority like Morchauser want to help.

Organizations, unions, and associations were not the only vehicle for calling attention to exploitation. A single person can use discursive rhetoric to call attention to oppression through her use of emotional appeals to inform, persuade and shame. In 1890, Helen Campbell published *Prisoners of Poverty: Women Wage-Workers, Their Trades and Their Lives* to bring attention to worker exploitation. In the chapter "A Fashionable Dressmaker," Campbell tells the story of a one-woman protest against her employer. Prior to becoming a single protester, the young woman describes long work hours, unpleasant working conditions, and low pay, but what drives her to protest is her employer's failure to pay her ailing coworker the wages that she is owed. As a result of her tardy payment, Jenny died: "Next day Madame brought her ten dollars of the two hundred and twenty she owed her, and Jenny got shoes; but it was too late. I knew it well, for I'd seen my sister go the same way. Quick consumption ain't to be stopped with new shoes or anything but new lungs, and there's no patent for them yet that ever I've heard

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of" (Campbell 63). Instead of continuing to work for Madame, the young woman quits her job and vows to make a public announcement in the newspaper about Jenny's death: "I'm going to put her death in the paper myself . . . 'Murdered by a fashionable dress maker on –Street, in January, 1886, Jenny G—, age nineteen years and six months'" (Campbell 63). Although her vow may not have become a reality, she acknowledged the direct role that her employer played in Jenny's death. Without timely paychecks, Jenny could not pay for food and clothing, the necessities of life. As a result, she died a miserable death at a young age. As a protest, Jenny's coworker stands outside of Madame's home sewing business and provides a warning to each new worker who approaches the house: "Then unless you've got anything else to do and like to give your time and strength for naught, keep away. You'll get no wages, no matter what's promised. I've been there six months, kept on by fair promises, and I know. I'll let no girl go in there without warning" (Campbell 57). The protester proactively protects young girls from the dangers of exploitation by giving them a direct warning. She honors Jenny's memory by ensuring that others do not suffer the same miserable fate.

Also, Campbell's work calls attention to the lack of punishment for employers exploiting their employees. As the young woman recalls Madame's failure to pay employees on the verge of starvation in a timely manner, she thinks about the typical consequences that men as employers face: "If she'd been a man the new law that gives a cheating employer fifteen days' imprisonment might have worked with her as it's worked with many a rascal that never knew he could be brought up with a round turn. But she's a woman and she slides through, and a judgment against her isn't worth the paper it's

written on" (Campbell 58). The young woman references the double standard in punishments for male and female employers. Perhaps, women employers who fail to pay their employees are not considered "real" employers in comparison to men in public spaces. Because many sewing businesses are in the home, it appears like a group of women sewing together. Or, perhaps, women's supposed fragile nature could never withstand the hard work and unpleasant atmosphere of a prison. In the case of Madame, more than likely, her social status keeps her from being placed in prison. Although Madame is never punished, the fact that her lack of punishment is mentioned allows readers to ponder another injustice and consider how to take action.

As noted above, Campbell's story features a one-woman protest. However, one person possesses the potential to persuade others to fight oppression. Similarly, individual sewing professionals' stance on dress reform can lead others to combat oppressive fashion trends such as bustles and corsets. As trusted fashion experts, dressmakers could use their influence for good or evil to endorse practical or impractical clothing: "Fashionable apparel was often linked to females' general ill-health. Dress reformers chastised dressmakers for promoting clothing that limited women's movements, restricted their breathing, and deformed their internal organs. Feminists railed against fashionable attire as a symbol of oppression and social subordination" (Amnéus 54). As dressmakers study fashion abroad and in local settings, they decide which materials to purchase as well as which designs that they should promote in their businesses. Some designs prove harmful to women, for designs often use a one-size-fits-all approach. For instance, by not taking into account women's differing body types,

dressmakers promote popular fashions designed to highlight a woman's small waist. For women without a naturally small waist, they must wear corsets and other restrictive garments to create the appearance of a small waist. Although restrictive garments seem uncomfortable, they are more than uncomfortable; they are dangerous. As stated above, women may have trouble breathing or have damage to their internal organs. This is especially true for young teenagers, who are still growing, pregnant women, and obese women. Due to large social structures' decisions, women sacrifice their health to wear stylish garments. Also, confining clothing, which restricts women's energy and movements, keeps them from leading an active lifestyle.

However, some dressmakers countered dress reformers' claims and used their power for good in order to promote garments that allow women to live an active life. According Willard, Winslow, and White, Cynthia Bates, a dressmaker, persuaded women to replace their restrictive clothing with a loose-fitting waist:

> This [dress reform] began with Cynthia Bates, when she invented the waist that should take the place of corsets; it was to be adapted to the figure rather than force the figure to be adapted to it. Miss Bates was a wise woman; she saw that invalidism for women was rapidly going out of fashion, and that to be healthful was to be correct. She foresaw the generation of golf playing, canoe paddling, horseback riding, bicycling, mountain-climbing girls, devoted to athletics of all kinds, and she wisely made ready for them. Room to develop, room to grow, was the principle upon which she built her waist. She started no crusade against beauty—wise Miss Bates. . . . the best proof of Miss Bates' success is the large number of patent health waists that have been put upon the market since Miss Bates introduced hers, and the numbers that are sold. (81)

To promote change, Miss Bates did not work alone. As Willard, Winslow, and White note, above, a "large number of patent health waists" "have been put upon the market

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since Miss Bates introduced hers . . ." (81). The fact that other sewing professionals created patent health waist garments signifies their ties to Bates as they join her in resisting oppressive fashion trends like corsets. As more professionals produce the patent health waist garments, they are persuading women to wear garments that afford a new lifestyle of movement.

Thus, Bates and her colleagues promote an active lifestyle. They envisioned the New Woman. Unlike the True Woman who is tied to domestic space, the New Woman who plays golf, canoes, and enjoys outdoor activities needs practical and loose-fitting clothing that corresponds to her active lifestyle. Bates' invention and her colleagues' reproductions made way for other changes in fashion such as bloomers. Like Bates' new waist, bloomers enable women to ride bicycles and go horseback riding. With dressmakers and designers' modifications and promotion of new nonrestrictive fashions, they freed women figuratively and literally.

Concluding Remarks

Sewing professionals' use of visibility and invisibility as a rhetorical strategy to achieve their goals in fighting oppression changed women's lives. Invisibility allowed minority and lower-class sewing professionals to remain behind the scenes while making themselves and others, yet the presence of their clients and their garments in the public eye attested to their creativity and professionalism. In other instances, visibility offered sewing professionals an opportunity to promote change by calling attention to poor working conditions, disabilities, low wages, and death through visible embodied and discursive rhetorics through protests, strikes, cautionary tales, and publications. While

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wages and working conditions were slow to change, each individual and collective voice

planted the seeds for change.

CHAPTER III

TRUE WOMANHOOD: TRANSFORMING BOARDINGHOUSES
INTO BOARDINGHOMES

Consumed with a desire for a homelike environment, boarders often casted

boardinghouse keepers into motherly roles. Trapped in the confusion of operating a

boardinghouse versus operating a boardinghome and entangled in the ethos of mother

versus business professional, women boardinghouse keepers utilized rhetoric to gain

agency in their oppressive domesticated workspaces, meaning spaces I refer to as

boardinghomes. I define boardinghomes as spaces that meet gendered expectations and

ideals, for boarders often expected boardinghouse owners to serve as motherly figures

whose dedication to True Womanhood's ideals helped them create a wholesome

homelike environment. The first section, "Rhetorically Transforming Home Spaces into

Domesticated Workspaces," showcases the transformation of domestic spaces into

domesticated workspaces. As a result of the transformation, the oppressive, unhomelike

environments, prompt boarders' longing for motherly figures and purely domesticated

spaces. Thus, in the second section, "Rhetorical Tensions: Ethos of Mother vs. Ethos of

Business Woman," I argue that boardinghouse keepers, as professional working women,

struggle to conform or fight against the ethos of motherhood. The rhetoric of motherhood

found in advertisements, boardinghouse keepers' dresses, and boarders' expectations

aligns boardinghouse keepers with True Womanhood as they are expected to act as

nurturers, maids, cooks, nurses, and protectors who maintain a pure and pious

environment, and at the same time, it downplays their identity as professionals. Near the

end of this section, I illustrate that women boarders face many of the same rhetorical

tensions as boardinghouse keepers, for they are cast in the same motherly roles. After

examining the rhetorical tension involving motherly ethos versus professional ethos, I

argue in the third section, "Breaking Out: Utilizing Rhetoric to Gain Agency and Combat

Oppression," that boardinghouse keepers and women boarders utilize rhetoric to gain

agency. The first half of the section focuses on women boarders and boardinghouse

keepers who resist True Womanhood ethos by utilizing the material space to emphasize

their identities as working professionals. The second half of this section, prior to the

concluding remarks, examines examples of boardinghouse keepers who embrace a

motherly ethos and conform to True Womanhood's values in order to gain agency needed

for racial uplift.

Rhetorically Transforming Home Spaces into Domesticated Workspaces

In an 1856 edition of *Life Illustrated,* Walt Whitman vividly recalls asking a

young girl where her parents lived. The girl disturbingly responds, "They don't *live*; they

BOARD" (Whitman 93). The young girl's response suggests that a boardinghouse is not

a "real" home. Numerous accounts from the nineteenth century corroborate the young

girl's observation. In fact, a closer look at the physical structure of a typical lower-class

boardinghouse reveals that blending the public and private spaces in a home often creates

an oppressive domesticated workspace:

Working-class rooms accommodated many functions. Particularly among poorer households and those who took in boarders, the kitchen became the 'kitchen/eating/sitting-room.' It integrated rather than segregated men, women, children, boarders and family members. The entire household clustered in it, rather than it being the preserve of servants or the woman of the household. It was filled in winter with people seeking the only warmth in the house. In the summer it was steamy and hot from cooking, washing and ironing, a place from which men and children escaped, to work, to the saloon or to the streets and alleyways, but from which mothers had no escape. Working-class homes lacked the spatial separation which enabled the middle class to create soothing environments and private worlds. Doors and windows remained open to the streets, so that everyone saw, heard and smelled what went on in their neighbors' homes. (Kleinberg 154)

The aforementioned description depicts an overcrowded working-class boardinghouse that denies its occupants privacy due to shared space in terms of sleeping quarters and living space. The crowded living conditions promote improper relations between the sexes, for the small number of rooms forces the family and its male and female boarders to sleep and socialize in close proximity to each other. While living close to each other, occupants cannot even enjoy privacy from their neighbors because the open windows and doors designed to welcome in fresh air or dismiss heat provide neighbors with snapshots of the occupants' daily activities. Also, seasonal temperatures coupled with heat-producing household chores force women to labor in extreme temperatures while the men and children leave home for work or recreational activities.

Other accounts attest to the oppressive space of boardinghouses which would encourage any boarder to stay away from home with the exception of mealtime and bedtime. One account reveals "four families keeping house in one room with chalk lines dividing off the floor into four parts, only the width of the chalk line separating family from family" (Veiller11). In another account, boarders do not have the luxury of having a

room or bed dedicated solely to their personal use due to an "arrangement, by which rooms in many houses are occupied by double shifts of workmen, one group sleeping in the rooms and beds by day, the other by night" (Veiller 11). Overcrowding completely diminishes one's privacy as well as increases the potential for discord among boarders, but most importantly it increases the chances of spreading disease in a crowded area where new germs are being continually introduced as boarders move in and out.

With malaria, influenza, and whooping cough in the air, the concern for overcrowding prompted some states to actually issue spatial requirements. "The only requirement to be found in most states is the one that there shall not be less than a certain amount of cubic air space for each occupant in the room" (Veiller 17). Regardless of requirements, "the quality of air, the frequency of its renewal, the possibility of its movement within the room, the kind of room that is occupied—whether it is well-lighted and whether sanitary conditions are observed" tend to be of greater concern (Veiller 17). However, aware that states will more than likely not inspect to ensure that requirements involving cubic air space are satisfied and enforce penalties, most boardinghouse keepers continued to fill their rooms with boarders, for they desired to fill their purses with much needed money for their families.

Rhetorical Tensions: Ethos of Mother versus Ethos of Professional Business Woman
Entrepreneurs

The above descriptions provide a snapshot of the oppressive environment of boardinghouses. In connection to boardinghouses' oppressive environments, boarders' as well as society's complaints about boardinghouses' unhomelike atmosphere reveal a

desire and expectation of a homelike environment. Such unfair expectations impose on

women boarders and boardinghouse keepers a competing ethos, meaning the "mother in

the home" ethos versus the "smart business woman" ethos. By acknowledging the

strengths and flaws of both ethē, women often embrace or reject True Womanhood's

virtues to establish their ethos and gain agency. In this chapter, I argue that the

expectation of a homelike atmosphere tethers women boardinghouse keepers to True

Womanhood's virtues which consist of "piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity"

(Welter 152). Thus, the first two sections "Domesticity" and "Purity and Piety" explore

the burdens imposed on boardinghouse keepers as their boarders' expectations align with

True Womanhood's virtues of domesticity, purity, and piety. In the second half of the

chapter, I examine how boardinghouse keepers gain agency through resisting and

conforming to True Womanhood's virtues. The third section, "Boardinghouses: Openings

for Agency through Resisting True Womanhood's Domesticity," focuses on how women

boarders as well as boardinghouse keepers obtain agency in their resistance to

domesticity. By resisting domesticity, they develop their ethos and in turn gain agency

through interruption: "Interruption refers to breaks, divides, hitches, disruptions,

disturbances, ruptures, or breeches—counters to traditional ways of behaving or

conversing—to change the status quo of dominant values and practices" (Ryan, Myers,

and Jones 23). In countering traditional behavior, boarders, specifically those without

children, sever their ties to domesticity by living in a boardinghouse which affords them

opportunities for intellectual development. Likewise, boardinghouse keepers, refusing to

play a motherly role in boardinghouse management signals an opening for increased

wealth and opportunity for personal growth in forming an identity separate from wife and mother. As a result, women boarders and boardinghouse keepers engage in interruption through their behavior which is contrary to the traditional True Womanhood values. In the final section prior to the conclusion, "Utilizing Domesticity to Gain Agency," I argue that minorities conform to True Womanhood's virtue of domesticity to create an opening for agency that allows them to strive for racial uplift. Unlike the previous strategy of interruption used for gaining ethos and agency, many minorities utilized advocacy as a means of developing ethos and agency. Coretta Pittman captures the significance of advocacy in her work on African American rhetors as she notes that often women "resisted, adopted, and then adapted elite white women's virtues and claimed them as their own" (48-49). Hence, in this chapter, the examples of Mary Ellen Pleasant, an African American boardinghouse keeper, and American Basque boardinghouse keepers illustrate the adoption and adaptation of True Womanhood's virtues in order "to advocate for themselves" and for others who "would not have opportunities to do so" (Ryan, Myers, and Jones 111).

Many boarders envisioned boardinghouses as homelike spaces infused with a mother's touch that extends to furniture, food, entertainment, laundry, and medical care. The mother's touch associated with living space, furniture, food, interactions, rules, and clothing discussed in this section as well as the following section related to purity and piety highlight the competing ethos of the "mother and home" and the "smart business woman." Sadly, boarders' associations with boardinghouse keepers and domesticity created complicated and in many cases unsatisfactory relationships, for many boarders

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could not face an important truth: "boardinghouse keepers labored for profit, not for love" (Gamber, "Tarnished Labor," 192). Thus, boardinghouse keepers encountered the dilemma of conforming to boarders' expectations and playing the role of a mother or defying their expectations and maintaining a strictly professional relationship.

Nineteenth-century publications often advised women who were considering becoming boardinghouse keepers to possess the following characteristics: "A woman needs to be sharp and shrewd who can cater successfully to a half hundred different tastes, serve them all with equal partiality, listen to their tales of woe, take sides in their domestic differences, and not let her left hand lodger know what the right hand lodger says and does" (Rayne and Thorpe 268). The aforementioned characteristics highlight True Womanhood's cardinal virtue of domesticity. According to Rayne and Thorpe's description, an ideal boardinghouse keeper is motherly. As a caring mother, she listens to boarders' problems. Likewise, she serves her boarders through her household work, keeping in mind their preferences and satisfaction but understanding that she should treat them all fairly just as she would treat her own children.

Many advertisements from the period mark the difficult position boardinghouse keepers find themselves in when they act as businesswomen, servants, and sometimes mothers. The humorous advertisement below captures a boardinghouse keeper's rules as it showcases her inevitable role as mother despite her rules which would free her from her motherly position if boarders would simply comply:

> The gentlemen must not put their feet on the mantel in winter, nor out of the window in the summer, and the lady must not write her name on the glass with a

quartz pin. If she uses an airtight, she must regulate the damper herself, and not ring every ten minutes for a chambermaid. The single gentleman must not play the trombone, nor make love to the servants, nor comb his whiskers at the table. If he does, he wont answer. The lady must not turn up her nose at everything on the table, unless she has a natural pug, and none of the party must drink or talk with a mouthful of victuals, nor must they fight for the top buckwheat cake. Terms liberal, board to be paid weekly in advance. ("Boarding House" 493)

The boarders' childlike qualities surface as the boardinghouse keeper describes poor etiquette, fights, dependency, loud music, amorousness, and picky eaters. The boarders appear as children or teenagers the motherly boardinghouse keeper must police through rules which contradict what many advice publications suggest: "In the best boarding house the landlady is never seen, except when business requires her. She has her own room, which is also her office, and boarders go there to see her, engage board, pay bills, or make complaints" (Rayne and Thorpe 270). Even mealtime is not a time for boarders to interact socially with boardinghouse keepers: "Do not try to eat with your boarders. You will be saved much nervous wear and tear if you stay in the kitchen and see that the meals are dished up to look properly" (Krag 34). The boardinghouse keeper ideally functions in a professional capacity and interacts with boarders in the professional space of the office instead of the domestic spaces in the home. While mealtime seems like the ideal time to socialize, boardinghouse keepers overseeing kitchen staff, a job emphasizing a business manager's role, is more important than socializing with boarders. A meal time conversation can easily escalate to a cascade of free-flowing complaints. In taking the advice of popular publications, the nearly invisible boardinghouse keeper

sharply contrasts with the ever-present mother who makes sure that the boarders chew with their mouths closed.

However, when boardinghouse keepers fail to play a motherly role, residents react negatively toward proprietors. Residents' negative critiques of boardinghouse cuisine signal a longing for a mother's home cooking as well as a mother's willingness to satisfy their specific tastes. Rayne and Thorpe advise that a boardinghouse keeper should carefully plan quality meals for her residents:

> She should have her marketing always done a week in advance, or nearly so; that is, she should select her steaks and roasts of beef for Thursday on Monday, and have it hung in the ice-room. The fish for Wednesdays and Fridays should be decided on the same day. The poultry for Thursdays and Sundays engaged regularly from a poulterer who knows his customer and dare not supply an inferior article, and so on with all other supplies. And let her vary the monotony of a uniform day for fish and fowl, by giving her boarders a surprise (272-273).

Like a mother who carefully shops for her family's unique tastes, the boardinghouse keeper shops for quality food with the boarders' tastes in mind and also considers their desire for variation. While a boardinghouse keeper with a sizable income could provide a wide variety of quality cuts of meat, lower-class boardinghouse keepers would find it difficult to maintain a menu to satisfy boarders' varying tastes. In fact, the expense of serving meat for each meal seems nearly impossible for a low-income family.

Yet, the demands for quality food go beyond individuals' tastes. For some, the foods' quality, quantity, cleanliness, and presentation communicate messages about the proprietor's relationship with her boarders, and for others, particularly for proprietors, food is interpreted as part of a business contract in which the proprietor provides basic

nourishment to her customers. The contract does not promise appetizing, mouthwatering cuisine. In comparing her own table to a boarding house table, one woman remarked, "The cheese on this table we know ain't got any 'skippers' in it—the meat ain't mildewed—the butter has not a bit of lard in it—and as for the tea, I know it hasn't got none of that 'villainous Salt Petre' in it, that that wicked man Shakespeer used to make his gun-powder tea out of'" ("Babble about Boarding Houses" 533). The long expired, insect infested foods speak to the proprietor's attempt at saving money with little care for her boarders' satisfaction.

Instead of satisfying meals, boardinghouse keepers' meals provide basic nourishment and energy for working men. Women boarders frequently encountered a light lunch, for boardinghouse keepers noted that nonworking women did not require the same number of calories as working men. A woman boarder stated, "Another drawback to this style of house is the 'scrappy' nature of the luncheon, as it is in every house where the male boarders only eat two substantial meals at home—the heavy seven-o'clock breakfast of beefsteak, buckwheat-cakes, ham and eggs, coffee and hominy, and the regular six-o'clock dinner" ("American Boarding-House Sketches" 455). Despite the women's hunger, the proprietor served food out of necessity. With women boarders presumed not to be expending energy in a workplace or in the home, the proprietor provided a lighter meal for lunch when the men were at work. Although men typically received larger portions, the quality and quantity of the food displeased both male and female boarders. When describing the boardinghouse keeper's money-saving practices, one male boarder noted, "[S]he's got a big tin coffee pot that holds about five gallons,

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which she divides between her forty-seven boarders" ("Babble about Boarding Houses" 533). As illustrated by the proprietor's money saving strategy, men receive a small amount of coffee or they receive a poor-quality, watered-down cup of coffee. The poor-quality coffee is soon coupled with unsanitary coffee when the boarder discovers that the proprietor is washing her "child's feet in the big coffee pot" ("Babble about Boarding Houses" 533).

As proprietors' money-saving strategies and questionable food became commonplace, advertisements publicly insulted proprietors in their references to poor quality food. An advertisement for Bhud Tea clearly distinguishes their quality tea from a boardinghouse's tea: "With Bhud Tea at hand you will be independent of hotel and boarding house concoctions" ("Bhud Tea Iced is Unequalled" 1140). The advertisement implies boardinghouse keepers lack the basic skill of making satisfactory tea. If residents keep Bhud Tea, they will be free from the poor quality tea. Bhud Tea serves as just one example of many that publicly shame boardinghouse keepers for not providing homemade, high quality food and drink for their residents.

Similarly, serving quality food coincides with the expectation of providing quality care for residents. In addition to cooking, cleaning, and washing clothes, proprietors often faced the expectation of caring for sick residents. Proprietors who housed factory workers sometimes agreed to become nurses for sick boarders: ". . . when sickness overtakes them they are sure of an experienced and sympathizing friend in the mistress of the house, who will nurse them as no other, save a mother, could do, and without additional charge" ("Factory Boarding Houses" 389). Instead of maintaining a

professional relationship with residents, proprietors take on the role of a nurse. It is

assumed that the proprietor is a maternal figure who has garnered experience from

nursing her own children back to health. Sadly, the proprietor is expected to not only to

care for ailing boarders in a friendly manner; she is also expected to act as a nurse, a role

outside of maintaining a boardinghouse, without additional pay while risking her own

health as well as her family's health.

However, if an outsider has a contagious disease prior to becoming a boarder, the

boardinghouse keeper acts as a protector rather than a nurse. It is her duty to protect her

family's and boarders' health while also maintaining her business's reputation. The court

case of Smith vs. Baker illustrates the boardinghouse keeper's role as a protector in

keeping her boardinghouse clean and free of disease:

> The defendant took his children while they were suffering with whooping cough
> to a boardinghouse kept by the plaintiff. As was to be expected, plaintiff's child
> contracted the disease, and boarders were kept away from the plaintiff's house by
> the presence of the disease. The plaintiff brought suit against Baker to recover for
> the damages caused by the introduction of a contagious disease in her house, and
> the Court holds that the action will lie, and that defendant is liable to plaintiff for
> all the damages caused. ("Damaged by Whooping-Cough" 655)

The boardinghouse keeper's presence in court signifies her role as protector of the home.

Due to the defendant's failure to disclose that his children had a contagious disease prior

to entering the house, the boardinghouse keeper was unable to protect her children and

her business. However, her presence in court and victory in this case allowed her to

reestablish her business's reputation as a welcoming, clean, disease free establishment.

Without a court victory and a newspaper article to publicly proclaim her victory, her

business would suffer during a time when print advertisements for boardinghouses and hotels informed readers that they were "absolutely free from malaria" ("A Word to Tourists" 114). Thus, the court case serves as an example of discursive rhetoric, for the boardinghouse keeper uses her voice to convince potential clients that her home is clean and disease free.

While the court case provided an opportunity for the boardinghouse keeper to highlight the cleanliness of her home due to her domestic skills, her body attests to her dedication to the domestic sphere through a clean appearance. When advising boardinghouse keepers on their appearances, Krag provides the following warning: "Nothing will so effectively antagonize people as a careless, slatternly appearance in the mistress of the house when she opens the door to them. And I have known cases where prospective boarders were similarly antagonized by seeing yesterday's dust flying about the hall, or a broom and a dustpan left on the staircase, or by smelling the odor of last night's boiled cabbage still permeating the house!" (34). A boardinghouse keeper's sloppy appearance aligns with the messy, smelly house. As a boardinghouse's chief representative, a boardinghouse keeper's appearance serves as embodied rhetoric. Her body, hair, skin, and clothes communicate the care she takes in maintaining a clean and orderly appearance, both qualities potential boarders look for in a house. Thus, Krag advises boardinghouse keepers to

> [d]ress for your work. All your dressing-sacques and kimonos you will do well to make up into dust-cloths; even in your own room it is never safe to wear a dressing-sacque, for the housekeeper, like the fireman, is subject to call at any time. Choose some dark, becoming color for your dress, and a sensible, plain style

of making; and be sure to have a pocket in each gown, as you will need your purse constantly. Decide on an easy, becoming way of doing your hair. You will be in a hurry in the morning and later will not have time to go to your room often to arrange your hair again. (34)

The plain, practical style of dress emphasizes the boardinghouse keeper's domestic role. Her clothes are fashioned for utility instead of beauty. While performing her household chores, she has little time to focus on her hair and clothes. In comparing a boardinghouse keeper to a fireman, Krag notes her role as a servant who is ready at all times. Although her clothes indicate her role as domestic servant, her pockets undeniably suggest she is a businesswoman. Women's clothing past and present contain few, if any pockets. However, the fact that men's pants almost always contain deep utilitarian pockets indicates their possession of money and tools for work. Likewise, the boardinghouse keeper's need for pockets highlights the business side of her job and aligns her with working men despite others' perceptions of her motherly character.

Yet boardinghouse keepers' ties to domesticity and motherhood prevented their work from being recognized and valued. For example, Kari McBride recalls her grandmother's position as the breadwinner of the family during an economic depression: "[T]he economic turmoil that limited my grandfather's (and other men's job) opportunities provided my grandmother with paying customers" (100). Through her new role as breadwinner, McBride's grandmother, Kari Thomasdatter, utilized her domestic skills to develop a successful business that began with a few boarders present in her house and due to her success in operating the boardinghouse, the family decided to progress into hotel management. Despite her success, when the family reflects on their

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tough economic hardships, "nobody ever thought to comment that Grandma's hard work helped carry the family through the depression" (McBride 101). Due to her work's connection to domesticity and motherhood, her work in the boardinghouse appears equivalent to the unpaid labor she performs for her family. In fact, her work appears invisible, for when the family enters into the hotel business, the business cards "omitted her name and effaced her labor with their assertion 'O.O. Solem, Prop.'" (McBride 104). McBride's grandfather's name appeared on the cards signaling a complete erasure of her grandmother's identity as a proprietor. Assumed to be a mother to her boarders, her name never appeared on a business card, a concrete symbol of a professional working in a public space.

Although McBride's grandmother primarily operated the boardinghouse independent of her husband, boardinghouses' associations with home overshadow her labor as a professional. Gamber clearly explains home's damaging associations: "As several historians have shown 'home' had a metaphorical as well as physical meaning; it was a haven from the 'world,' the antithesis of the market, a place where virtue, not self-interest, resided" ("Tarnished Labor" 189). Home's connection with selflessness erases McBride's grandmother's identity and prompts others to devalue her labor. As a private place, opposite of the marketplace, McBride's grandmother is not considered part of the public sphere, a world that her husband inhabits. Inspired by Kessler-Harris' work, McBride acknowledges that women's labor "was invisible both to census takers and to family members" (98). While some may have avoided proclaiming their status as working women, fearing that they would appear of a lower class, women's erasure from

census records, business cards, and ephemera illuminate True Womanhood's role in the devaluation of women's work by aligning even women's paid labor with the home.

The only artifacts remaining to testify to the value of her work are the letters McBride recovers. McBride states, "[T]he image of a woman being martyred by work was also my grandmother's creation, the person she constructed in her letters in an attempt to give purpose to work that was otherwise invisible and unvalued and to make sense of her life" (101). In her own letters, she articulated her day to day life as a boardinghouse keeper, a profession that saved the family from financial ruin during the depression.

In McBride's view, the letters serve as a form of self-fashioning that is necessary in a society that "'values' what is male, public, and 'productive'" (92). McBride's grandmother creates an argument for her value as a productive business woman. Her letters provide an accounting of her labor and value. She discusses in depth her numerous roles, but what is more important is the value attached to her work as illustrated "[b]y performing housework to a particular set of standards, doing it well and correctly, she articulated codes that shored up the identity by which she defined herself" (McBride 95). As the letters have survived over time, readers possess a clear understanding of her identity, an identity that is more than a mother and wife.

Although boardinghouse keepers assumed roles as nurses, cooks, shoppers, money managers, housekeepers, supervisors, and wives and mothers, in some cases, society expected them to serve as protectors, a role that aligns with True Womanhood's emphasis on purity and piety. Purity refers to the boardinghouse keeper's ethos, meaning

her ability to ensure that her residents remain pure. The boardinghouse keeper's purity as well as residents' purity often comes into question due to unmarried and unrelated males and females residing in the same household. In other cases, boardinghouse owners must act as protectors of moral purity to differentiate their homes from prostitution businesses posing as boardinghouses. Regardless of society's expectations, boardinghouse keepers, especially those with large numbers of boarders, struggled to keep a watchful eye on residents due to their numerous household duties.

Prior to examining the boardinghouse keeper's role in protecting the purity of boarders, it is worthwhile to explore the boardinghouse keeper's ethos. For married boardinghouse keepers with children, their purity and piety often come into question due to family members' reputations: "Wives of fraudulent bankrupts, or easy-conscienced widows of free manners with a fast daughter or niece, or, again mothers of gambling, spendthrift sons of doubtful social station, are common specimens of the mistress of such establishments" ("American Boarding-House Sketches" 455). With spendthrift, undependable, and possibly criminal sons and husbands, some women turned to boardinghouses as their means of income. However, the reputations of her family members cast a long shadow over the boardinghouse as potential boarders align the family members' reputations with potential activities taking place in the boardinghouse. For instance, if a husband is known for gambling, will gambling be permitted in the boardinghouse? If a son or husband is known as spendthrift, a boardinghouse's food, furnishings, and services come into question as well, for residents assume that the

boardinghouse keeper will not be able to furnish them with the basic necessities due to their poor money management.

Also, the reputations of widows and their daughters come into question as their relationships with male boarders become complicated. A romantic relationship could quickly tarnish the boardinghouse keeper's reputation, for she or her daughter is residing in the same household with a lover out of wedlock as well as transforming a professional relationship between boardinghouse keeper and boarder into a romantic one that perhaps grants the lover/boarder special privileges that the other boarders are not allowed:

> Some thoughtful, worldly-minded young men, when their bills have run up beyond their means to discharge, straightway fall in love with the landlady's daughter; by which course pay-day is put off indefinitely, to their great relief. There are also sly, shrewd persons, who marry the landlady herself; by which wise measure they not only have their accounts cancelled, but are comfortably provided for during the rest of their lives ("Letter Twenty=Seventh" 504).

The examples above illustrate that the boarders receive special privileges through insincere courtship and marriage as they are free from paying their current rent and their overdue payments. To other boarders, the improper relationship sharply contrasts with the professional relationship involving an exchange of money for a room and board. The exchange for room and board for romance appears to be closely akin to prostitution. Such relationships tether women to True Womanhood's virtues, for women utilize purity and piety to separate themselves and their businesses from morally questionable boardinghouses and their owners.

As boardinghouse keepers attempted to preserve their own reputations, they worked to ensure that their reputations would not be tarnished by their boarders' immorality. Many publications advise boardinghouse keepers to advertise "in a reliable paper, asking for references, as the precaution keeps away undesirable people. List your rooms at the Young Men's Christian Association, or if near a college post a notice on the college bulletin-board" (Krag 34). In light of purity and piety, such advice encourages boardinghouse keepers to only take in presumably white, educated middle to upper-class Christian males. As Virginia Penny points out, "Good boarding houses for workwomen are scarce in all large cities, particularly New York. Most keepers of boarding houses prefer men, because they are less about the house" (416). The false assumption presumes that women will not be able to pay their bills and their dependency will require them to be present in the household throughout the day, which requires boardinghouse keepers to offer additional services to feed and entertain these ever-present boarders. Whereas the "ideal" male boarder who is busy working or busy with his studies at the university will behave in a pious manner and pay his bills.

To attract boarders of a certain race, sex, religion, and class as well as publicly advertise that a boardinghouse and its proprietors are of high moral standing, an advertisement may spell out the boardinghouse keepers' values and expectations. For example, one advertisement lists its rules and the following expectation: "All adult residents should be avowed believers in a liberal, practical and reverent Christianity—in the teachings of Christ . . ." (R. Wright 123). The statement allows boardinghouse keepers to quickly eliminate boarders of other faiths. In other instances, advertisements

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can state not only the ideal boarders' qualifications but also spell out required activities

that will take place in a morally conscious household. One advertisement informs readers

that their boardinghouse is a place "where family worship and religious order at table are

constantly attended" ("Religious Boarding House" 109). An advertisement specifying

required activities would discourage a potential boarder from falsely proclaiming to be a

believer to gain admittance. The family and the boarders not only proclaim their religion;

they practice their religion on a daily basis.

On the other hand, other boardinghouse keepers avoided advertising. According

to Gamber, "Landlords and landladies rarely appeared in city directories. Preferring to

recruit boarders through word of mouth and fearful of aligning themselves too closely to

the 'market' fashionable boardinghouse keepers refused to advertise their services"

("Tarnished Labor" 183). By advertising through word of mouth, boardinghouse keepers

could more readily attract boarders of a certain race, class, sex, and religion by spreading

the word to specific social groups. If a boardinghouse keeper was well acquainted with a

potential boarder's family, they could easily see if the boarder met their expectations. To

attract their desired clientele, a boardinghouse keeper also avoided print advertisements

as a way to emphasize a homelike environment as opposed to appearing as a professional

business being advertised alongside of company's advertisements. After all,

boardinghouse keepers were legally allowed to discriminate as opposed to innkeepers. In

the 1870 court case Dansey v. Richardson, the court clearly differentiated boardinghouses

from inns: "[I]t was held that a boarding-house was not an inn, the distinction being put

upon the ground that a boarder being received into a house is owing purely to a voluntary

contract, wherever an innkeeper, in the absence of any reasonable or lawful excuse, is bound to receive the guest when he presents himself" ("Legal Definition of 'Inn,' 'Hotel,' and Boarding-House'" 249). Unlike the innkeeper who must welcome all guests into their establishment with few exceptions, a boardinghouse keeper may carefully select boarders, for they were inviting boarders into their homes. The court's definitions set forth a clear divide between the private boardinghouse and the public inn.

While print and oral advertisements assisted boardinghouse keepers in maintaining a sense of purity and piety, their daily chores often kept them from closely observing their boarders' behavior. Many women utilized boardinghouses as matchmaking spaces: "Where there are women in the house who have with them marriageable daughters, flirtation on the part of the girls, and intrigue on the part of the mothers, are both managed pretty openly; for here is a laudable purpose to be attained . . ." ("Letter Twenty=Seventh" 504). As matchmaking and courting take place in the boardinghouse, a busy boardinghouse keeper's reputation becomes vulnerable, for she has little control of the courting taking place under her roof. While mothers, as illustrated by the example above, play a role in matchmaking, there is no guarantee that the young couple's courtship will be supervised. An improper courtship and a pregnant, unmarried teenage girl are all that is needed to sully a boardinghouse's reputation.

However, in other cases, when parents are not present, the boardinghouse keeper's reputation is in jeopardy. A young, unmarried woman who is unaccompanied by her parents looks to the boardinghouse keeper for protection: "I am disgusted with the boarding-house life. The proprietors only wish us to take our meals and lodge with them,

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instead of making for us the home we pay for; if we wish any pleasure we must go out for it. I do not wish to go to the theater or billiard rooms. I am a stranger in the city, and have few acquaintances. I do not wish to go to any place that my mother would object to" (Mar 158). The woman's comments indicate she expects that the boardinghouse keeper provide wholesome entertainment to keep boarders inside of the home. From her perspective, a young woman should not be forced to go alone to questionable theaters and billiards rooms, places where her virtue or reputation may be compromised in a strange city. Her use of the word "home" suggests that she is looking for a homelike environment, a place where she is protected and surrounded by people who are like her own family. Although the boardinghouse keeper fulfills her business obligation by providing meals and lodging, the young woman projects her desire for a home and a protective motherly figure onto the boardinghouse keeper.

Similarly, society expects boardinghouse keepers to provide a wholesome environment for young men. In 1830, *Christian Advocate and Journal and Zion's Herald* published "Sailors' Boarding Houses," an article proposing that boardinghouses serve as a morally sound environment for sailors. The article reveals citizens' expectations: ". . . generous class of fellow citizens have turned their attention to the establishment of suitable boarding houses, where those seamen who come into port may be accommodated with decency, without being exposed to the temptations usually presented to them, and to have their money filched from them by the rapacious keepers of those debasing houses of lewdness" ("Sailors' Boarding Houses" 191). Like the young woman's expectations mentioned above, the article supposes that boardinghouse keepers will provide

wholesome entertainment to keep men away from prostitution businesses. The citizens

propose that boardinghouse keepers go beyond supplying shelter and food; they should

act as protective mothers who keep sailors, stereotypically known for drinking, fighting,

cursing, and carousing while on land, away from immoral activities.

Thus, the boardinghouse keeper without any true authority to tell a rowdy sailor

what he should and should not do is expected to influence a sailor's behavior, but not

with the use of vocal commands or rules. The motherly boardinghouse keeper embodies

virtue and goodness. In fact, her silent, virtuous presence aligns with Nan Johnson's

chapter title "Reigning in the Court of Silence: Women and Rhetorical Space." Johnson

argues that the parlor rhetoric publications attempted to create the impression that silent

women are powerful and important figures, for they possess the ability to influence

family members' actions through their feminine virtues. As indicated by Johnson's title,

the word "reign" is significant. These silent women assert their virtuous influence within

the home as they raise their children, and their influence extends to public spaces when

their sons carry the virtues they learned with them into adulthood. To illustrate this point,

Johnson refers to a passage from B.R. Cowen's *Our Beacon Light, Devoted to*

Employment, Education, and Society: "The laws of the home are the miniature of those

laws and influences which rule the State. There are dropped the tiny seeds, which falling

upon the good soil of receptive minds in after life, 'in the world's broad field of battle'

will grow into a great tree, and be known as public opinion" (qtd. in Johnson 52).

Through their children, mothers influence public opinion. In emphasizing the importance

of a mother's influence in the domestic sphere which gradually reaches the public sphere,

parlor rhetoric publications were once again encouraging women to remain in domestic spaces.

In connecting Johnson's discussion of silent women reigning in the domestic sphere to boardinghouse keepers silently influencing the behavior of sailors, boardinghouse keepers were not only expected to keep sailors away from prostitution businesses; they were expected to "elevate them in to the enjoyments of Christianity and to all those temporal blessings which result from a life of temperance and sobriety" ("Sailors' Boarding Houses" 191). Without direct instruction, the boardinghouse keeper utilizes feminine virtues to influence sailors' behavior just as a mother influences her children's behavior. Citizens hope that the boardinghouse keeper's virtuous character and wholesome home transform sailors into sober, pious individuals.

However, in other cases, boardinghouse keepers went beyond serving as silent promoters of virtue; they acted as watchful eyes and reported any wrongdoing. Factories often enlisted the help of local boardinghouse owners to house their employees and keep factory managers informed of their employees' whereabouts and behavior. To ensure that employees conform to a set schedule, boardinghouse keepers maintain a schedule of their own: "All boarding house keepers are required to rise at the sound of the first bell, which rings at half-past four o'clock, A.M., and prepare a warm breakfast, of substantial wholesome food . . ." ("Factory Boarding Houses" 389). The bell system operates to control boardinghouse keepers' and employees' movements. Their movements according to the bell system coincide with Foucault's description of discipline:

> Discipline, on the other hand, arranges a positive economy; it poses the principle of a theoretically ever-growing use of time: exhaustion rather than use; it is a question of extracting, from time, ever more available moments and, from each moment, ever more useful forces. This means that one must seek to intensify the use of the slightest moment, as if time, in its very fragmentation, were inexhaustible or as if, at least by an ever more detailed internal arrangement, one could tend towards an ideal point at which one maintained maximum speed and maximum efficiency. (154)

The boardinghouse keeper's docile disciplined body goes through the motions of preparing factory workers for their workday in a timely and orderly fashion. The factory workers' bodies move through a routine of using their time wisely on and off the job. The boardinghouse keeper's timetable to prepare factory employees to go to work confirms that every minute is used to benefit the company.

To ensure that workers spend their free time wisely, the boardinghouse keeper ensures that each person returns to the boardinghouse by their assigned curfew: "They are required to close and fasten their houses precisely at ten o'clock P.M., and to report to the Agent of the Corporation the names of any and all boarders who remain out after that hour without reasonable excuse given for such absence" ("Factory Boarding Houses" 389). The curfew guarantees that boarders are not out late at night drinking or participating in immoral activities. The boardinghouse keeper's watchful eyes keep the workers on a set timetable to make sure the workers are in bed and ready to work to their full potential the next day. Similarly, prior to the curfew, the boardinghouse keeper observes workers' behavior and reports any misconduct. "They are also required to discharge from their houses all persons of immoral character and habits, and to report the reason for such discharge to the Agent" ("Factory Boarding Houses" 389). The

boardinghouse keeper serves as an extension of management similar to the panopticonic

surveillance system Foucault describes in *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*:

> Generally speaking, all the authorities exercising individual control function
> according to a double mode; that of binary division and branding (mad/sane,
> dangerous/harmless; normal/abnormal); and that of coercive assignment, of
> differential distribution (who he is; where he must be; how he is to be
> characterized; how he is to be recognized; how a constant surveillance is to be
> exercised over him in an individual way, etc.) (199)

During workers' off time, the company uses the boardinghouse keeper as a judge of

character. She utilizes branding in terms of moral or immoral to judge boarders'

characters. As an embodiment of virtue, the boardinghouse keeper can recognize an

immoral character, dismiss the person on behalf of the company, and report the reason for

dismissal to management. The dismissal connects to who the factory worker is as an

individual in terms of his actions as well as his whereabouts in relation to breaking the

assigned curfew or going to places that would reflect poorly upon his character.

In addition to single women and men, society expects boardinghouse keepers to

serve as protectors of purity and piety for the families residing in their homes. Domestic

troubles reflect poorly on the boardinghouse keeper's character as outsiders question the

immoral acts that she allows in her home. When affairs occur involving married residents

within the home, outsiders become privy to the affair through neighborhood gossip or

newspaper articles if a spouse desires a divorce. The news of an affair often forces

boardinghouse keepers to defend their business' reputation and take sides. For instance,

in 1878 *The National Police Gazette* reported the following case:

> The plaintiff, Mrs. Galbrett, is a fresh, buxom, good-looking lady, while the husband looks like a distinguished foreigner. She testified that he had on frequent occasions struck and maltreated her, swearing that unless she gave up to him the names of her paramours, of whom he supposed she had a number, that he would kill her, and upon the occasion when she caused his arrest, he drew upon her a razor and attempted her life. She denied that she was in the habit of visiting the room of a gay and festive young man named Hewing, a boarder in the house, and that she visited places of amusement with other men. The boarders, the landlord and the landlady of the house all gave her a good name, and said that Galbrett was of a fiery, jealous temper. (A Boarding-House Scandal" 3)

The case depicts the boardinghouse as a place of unrest, a place of violence instead of a homelike space to raise one's family. The supposed affairs coupled with domestic violence paint a negative picture of the couple involved as well as those residing in the home. When the case emerged, the boarders and boardinghouse keepers publicly exposed Galbrett's extreme jealousy and temper which contributed to his abusive behavior. By exposing Galbrett's character, the boarders and boardinghouse keepers shift the focus onto Galbrett, suggesting the house is normally a peaceful, domestic environment; it is Galbrett's presence only that made the boardinghouse a place of domestic violence. In a time when most states lacked substantial domestic violence laws, the public nature of the boardinghouse coupled with the boardinghouse keeper's role as protector of purity and piety assisted domestic violence victims in publicly shaming their abusers. The courts did not hear only one woman claiming that her husband abused her; the courts heard multiple voices as the landlady and her boarders, both male and female, voiced what they witnessed in the home.

Women Boarders

Despite boarders' expectations for a motherly boardinghouse keeper, boardinghouse keepers find themselves at odds with publications that claim boardinghouses destroy families and ruin women boarders' ability to succeed in their domestic roles as mothers and wives. Unlike a mother who passes her knowledge of cleaning, caring for children, shopping, budgeting, and maintaining a household on to her daughters, a boardinghouse owner never takes the time to train children or young women who are paying customers. Thus, numerous nineteenth-century publications blame boardinghouses for not allowing women boarders to develop their domestic skills. One social commentator noted, "The home is the natural field for the young person who desires to fit herself for usefulness either in the kitchen or elsewhere. In the sham of the boarding-house there is no opportunity for learning the things of domestic life which should form a part of every woman's education" ("The Boarding House" 353). A young woman accustomed to a boardinghouse keeper cleaning, cooking, and managing the household will find it difficult to maintain her own household once she leaves the boardinghouse or works outside of the home during a time when most jobs for women required domestic skills. In fact, as one source proclaims, a woman boarder "remain[s] in ignorance of the mode of preparation" and "her taste gets perverted down to the boarding-house standard, and she becomes incapable of distinguishing between good and bad food" ("The Boarding House" 353). Women boarders become out of touch with cooking skills as well as being able to distinguish delicious homemade food from food prepared for the masses for basic sustenance.

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Also, boardinghouse critics fear that women with children will not experience true motherhood. It is a pleasant thought that boarders serve as an extended family for children. However, do boardinghouses prevent mothers from developing parenting skills or are these skills, if existent, dulled by the mother's dependency on others? In a boardinghouse setting, like the one mentioned in the introduction, with only a few rooms present, children spend much of their time outside. With the time children spend away from their parents and the time they spend with other boarders, critics question the time mothers invest in rearing their children. According to one critic, "There is no denying that in hotels and boardinghouses . . . children are coming to be dreaded more and more. As a class, their manners are almost universally bad; their voices are appalling; they eat like savages, and in fact, set at naught all the social amenities" (Rebeque 738). Children's bad manners and etiquette reflect poorly upon their mothers' parenting skills and a boardinghouse keeper's ability to manage her boarders. Dissatisfied boarders, weary of poorly behaved children, look to the boardinghouse keeper to monitor their behavior and set a standard of etiquette for the household.

For young unmarried women accustomed to boarding, many feared that they would be unsuitable wives and mothers. In fact, would they be able to fulfill their marriage contract? According to Gamber, "By refusing to perform the labor that transformed a house into a home, boarding wives *did* violate their marriage contracts, or at least the common law tradition by which women exchanged their unremunerated work for protection and economic security" ("Tarnished Labor" 194). When boarding wives violate their marriage contracts, they may find their marriage in jeopardy as husbands

seek other pleasures: "Symbolically released from their matrimonial bonds and having no homes to which to retire, boarding husbands sought their pleasures elsewhere" (Gamber, "Tarnished Labor" 194). With the violation of the marriage contract and the possibility of husbands seeking pleasures outside of a place that is not truly a home created by the wife, why did some women continue to board?

Breaking Out: Utilizing Rhetoric to Gain Agency and Combat Oppression

In this section, I argue that boardinghouse keepers and women boarders employ rhetoric to combat oppression. The sections that follow illustrate two rhetorical strategies for combating oppression. The first section examines women boarders and boardinghouse keepers who utilized the material space of boardinghouses to actively resist True Womanhood's virtues which tethered them to subservient roles in domestic spaces. The second section focuses on boardinghouse keepers who utilized the boardinghouse's material space to embrace True Womanhood's virtues in an effort combat oppression through racial uplift.

Resisting True Womanhood's Virtues to Gain Agency

For some, lack of money, ill health, or troublesome servants are some reasons for boarding and not practicing their domestic skills, but a more important reason involves intellectual pursuits. Even Sarah Josepha Hale, a staunch proponent of domesticity, "passed much of her life in Boston boardinghouses. Economic necessity initially prompted this arrangement, but boarding also freed her from household responsibilities, allowing her time to write" (Gamber, "Tarnished Labor" 186). While writing like Hale or pursuing other interests, women boarders, particularly those without children, did not

exchange their labor for the materials husbands provide. In *Women and Economics*, Charlotte Perkins Gilman proposes the following question: "If a wife is not, then, truly a business partner, in what way does she earn from her husband the food, clothing, and shelter she receives at his hands?" (208). As Gilman considers possible answers, she concludes that "whatever the economic value of the domestic industry of women is, they do not get it . . . Their labor is neither given nor taken as a factor in economic exchange" (208). Through boarding, women avoid the misleading economic exchange in which women exchange their household services for protection or material goods that a husband provides. While the husband continues to provide money to pay for the boardinghouse keeper's services, the boarding wife is empowered through her freedom from housework to pursue other interests outside of domestic areas. As mentioned above, Sarah Josepha Hale's ability to write unencumbered by housework empowered her to write, edit, and insert her voice into the public spaces when she argued, for example, for Thanksgiving to be recognized as an official holiday and promoted the completion of the Bunker Hill monument.

Likewise, some boardinghouse keepers who resisted True Womanhood's virtues gained agency. Julia Wolfe, Thomas Wolfe's mother and owner of the Old Kentucky Home boardinghouse in Asheville, North Carolina, resisted her motherly and wifely roles that boardinghouse keepers typically assume. During a time when divorce was uncommon, Wolfe unofficially separated from her husband through the use of her boardinghouse. Kraft describes the family's separate living arrangements: "When Julia moved into the house she named 'Old Kentucky Home' the family split, since W.O. was

unwilling to leave Woodfin Street. Julia took Tom while her second daughter, Mabel, stayed with her father. The other children 'were left floating in limbo,' picking up one meal at the boarding house and another at Woodfin Street, sleeping wherever they happened to be at bedtime" (65). The boardinghouse enabled Wolfe to free herself as much as possible from her husband W.O. who was known for "his occasional drunken violence" (Kraft 67). While Wolfe does not shun motherhood, motherhood does not consume her identity. Her identity as a businesswoman emerges as the children roam back and forth between the Old Kentucky Home and their father's house on Woodfin Street, somewhat freeing Wolfe to focus on her business.

The boardinghouse business provides fuel for her to further develop her identity as a businesswoman through land prospecting, a skill she learned from her father. Through her profits as a successful boardinghouse owner, Wolfe continued to invest in land. Wolfe states, "I had foresight about what Miami Beach was going to be, and I bought property after property" (Norwood 188). On another occasion, she discloses her success in increasing her profits: "I picked up a property and paid $10,000 for it. I sold that in forty-five days for $16,000. It was gambling, and I turned it in too soon. Everything I touched, someone else wanted it in less than no time" (Norwood 189). When investing in properties, she did not rely on W.O. or her sons for advice nor did she rely on them for property development. Her loose ties to the domestic sphere enabled to her educate herself about building as well as negotiating with contractors. However, her ties to the domestic sphere aided her in saving money through her thriftiness as exemplified in her negotiations with carpenters:

Well, I built a house on that lot. I planned it and ordered every piece of lumber that went into it. The carpenters said, 'She is the stingiest girl—she has measured everything to the square inch and doesn't allow any waste.' I said, 'I don't mean to have any waste.' I was twenty-one or two then. I hired the carpenters by the day. You know how a house used to be built. I wanted a steep roof, and I built it with the idea that I would take the roof off and raise the house another story later on. I made a broad hall down the front. When I ordered the sheathing that's put on the rafters they said, 'Even to the sheathing she's calculated to the square foot,' and I said, 'I don't expect you to waste any.' They said, 'Suppose a piece splits?' 'Send it back and get a good one,' I said. When the logs were cut there would be a point, and they squared the lumber and there was a little scrap at the end. That wasn't counted in your bill. It was measured from where it measured square. They said, 'Maybe we'll have a wheelbarrow full of scraps.' I said, 'I'll throw it over the fence for Mother to burn in the stove.' Nothing was wasted . . . (Norwood 9-10).

She hires workers, oversees the carpenters, calculates the lumber needed, repurposes excess or scrap lumber, and speculates that a steep roof would allow her to add to the house in the future. Wolfe's knowledge, thrift, and negotiating power set her apart from women of the nineteenth century due to her ability to utilize the domestic space of her boardinghouse as a moneymaking operation to fund other projects. She continues to grow mentally in educating herself about property investment and development, but she is only able to do so by refusing to be consumed by motherly duties.

In spite of her success, Wolfe encountered disapproval from her family for not fully investing herself in a motherly role. Her real estate pursuits and boardinghouse management placed her daughter, Mabel, in a substitute motherly role as she "was often on edge from tending the father and helping out in emergencies at the boardinghouse" (Kraft 67). With W.O. living separate from his wife on Woodfin Street for long stretches in their marriage, he came to resent the boardinghouse, a usurper of family and motherly

love. He "called the boarding house 'a murderous and bloody barn.' He hated the idea that the family's food and shelter should be shared with strangers for profit" (Kraft 66). Like the women boarders who enjoy freedom for intellectual pursuits, yet find society shaming them for their lack of domestic skill, Wolfe's boardinghouse empowered her to pursue her real estate interests, but her pursuits come at the cost of her family's resentment. In viewing the boardinghouse as murderous, W.O. alludes to the demise of the family. Even Wolfe's extended family did not find a motherly gracious host when they visited. Mabel notes "that Julia's own relative, who had enjoyed the hospitality of the Woodfin Street for years, had to pay room and board when they visited her at Old Kentucky Home" (Kraft 67). The business side of Wolfe's character clearly overshadowed her expected role as a motherly host.

However, few, including Wolfe's family, failed to acknowledge Wolfe's reasons for favoring a business life over a domestic life. Kraft astutely observes, "Feeling a long pent-up need to make money, partly because of her lean childhood in the Reconstruction South, partly because her husband was an alcoholic and, as a provider, more lavish than reliable, she set her sights on the boardinghouse at 48 Spruce Street" (65). Financial constraints of the time period and her husband's failure to provide for the family forced Wolfe rely on the real estate skills her land prospecting father taught her. Deviating from women of the time period, Wolfe invests herself into a role that will support the family, even though the role as a businesswoman does not satisfy her family's and society's expectations aligned with True Womanhood. In fact, some people painted Wolfe as a masculine figure. As Norwood visits the Old Kentucky Home to learn more about

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Thomas Wolfe, he describes his conversation with Wolfe: "She drew a step closer and thrust her index finger in the masculine gesture familiar to all who have met Eliza Gant in Thomas Wolfe's first two novels" (3). A simple description of a masculine gesture hints at Norwood as well as Thomas Wolfe's perception of a woman lacking motherly qualities. Her pointing suggests a certain strength and authority that the men see as uncomfortable and foreign. Sadly, this troubling masculine view follows Wolfe to the present as she is known only to the world as Thomas Wolfe's mother. Her masculinity, penny pinching ways, and lack of a full investment in motherhood leave a troubling legacy.

Conforming to True Womanhood's Virtues to Gain Agency

After examining examples of boarders and boardinghouse keepers who resist domesticity in order to gain agency, it is worthwhile to explore examples of boardinghouse keepers who utilize domesticity as a vehicle to gain agency. In this section, I point to examples of minority boardinghouse keepers and argue that unlike their lower and middle-class white counterparts mentioned above who resist domesticity to gain agency, minorities engage in advocacy to construct their ethos. As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, advocacy often involved minority women who "resisted, adopted, and then adapted elite white women's virtues and claimed them as their own" (Pittman 48-49). In other words, they utilized domesticity to acquire agency because their conformity to traditional expectations afforded them the ability to become empowered and engage in racial uplift for themselves and others without encountering resistance from white patriarchal society.

An example of a boardinghouse keeper who utilizes domesticity to gain agency involves Mary Ellen Pleasant, an African American woman who is also known as "Mammy Pleasant." Prior to owning her first boardinghouse, Pleasant worked as a domestic servant for Milton S. Latham, a senator. As scholars question how Pleasant acquired a boardinghouse soon after leaving her domestic servant position, some pose the following questions: "'Could it be that some Latham money financed her or was he just unusually generous with wages?' asks author Lloyd Conrich. Or, he wondered, did Pleasant blackmail Latham?' Perhaps Pleasant did blackmail Latham with secrets she learned in his home. It is just as likely, however, that Pleasant saved her earnings and chose to move into her own home" (Hudson 56). The fact that scholars question how Pleasant obtained the funds to become a boardinghouse owner suggests the underlying expectation that she would continue her ties to domesticity.

While boardinghouses are linked to the domestic sphere, Pleasant utilizes the boardinghouse as a launching pad for acquiring property and wealth. Being well acquainted with Senator Latham and other government officials through her work in Latham's household, she soon attracts the wealthy and powerful to her boardinghouse's central location in San Francisco in 1869: "Her property was strategically placed—near City Hall, the opera, and the largest gambling house—to attract the city's political and financial elite . . . Pleasant's forays to the markets, banks, shops, and courts could be easily observed from the city center, as could the galas and meetings that took place at 920 Washington" (Hudson 56). In hosting elite clientele, Pleasant acquired information about her clientele as well as valuable investment information: "These men frequented

her boardinghouses and revealed information—financial and social—that Pleasant used to increase her own wealth and status. Pleasant's use of seemingly private space to further her enterprise may have played on the assumptions that white men had about African Americans and 'help' in general: that domestics would not understand financial affairs" (Hudson 59). However, while attending to her domestic duties in the boardinghouse, Pleasant attentively listened and applied the financial tips to her life, for "she invested in gold, silver, and quicksilver (mercury) mines" (Hudson 59). The profits from investments that Pleasant acquired allowed her to purchase other boardinghouses and further transform her San Francisco boardinghouse into an elaborate establishment.

Furthermore, by embracing the role of a domestic and mother like figure in her interactions with patrons in her boardinghouse, Pleasant soon learns "the needs of the most successful investors of the day: the Bonanza Kings and their compatriots, who demanded elegant establishments in which to conduct their business" (Hudson 59). Through listening to their conversations, she understands the need for "extravagant fare, including not only food, but also linens, laundry service, and china" (Hudson 57-58). Extravagant furnishings and food ensure that her boardinghouse matches the furnishings of an upper-class home, surroundings quite familiar to her wealthy clients.

Similarly, in observing her clients' desires, Pleasant "may have provided her boardinghouse guests with prostitutes or female companions" (Hudson 60). Although prostitution does not align with True Womanhood's values connected to purity, piety, and domesticity, providing female companions in the context of nineteenth-century mining areas was not uncommon: "Prostitution was central to the mining economies of

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California, Nevada, and other western states, and some of Pleasant's patrons probably expected sexual services along with room and board. However, the legend of Pleasant as black madam obscures the entrepreneurial aspect of her career" (Hudson 60).

Despite attempts to sully Pleasant's accomplishments as an entrepreneur by focusing solely on her possible role as a madam in the boardinghouse or "mammy" in her former domestic position, Pleasant's success as a boardinghouse owner is undeniable. Through her commitment to domesticity within the boardinghouse, she acquired wealth to improve her own social standing as well as the social standing of other African Americans. During the Reconstruction Period, racism prevented many blacks from obtaining employment, so Pleasant hired "an extensive staff of black workers" (Hudson 58). Likewise, Pleasant invested her money and efforts when she "challenged the streetcar companies" in court who discriminated against African Americans (Hudson 55). Pleasant's work as a domestic servant in a senator's household and her later role as a boardinghouse proprietor for the elite placed her in a position of power. With political connections along with possessing "$15,000 dollars in real estate" and "$15,000" in "other assets," Pleasant, unlike most of her fellow African Americans, possessed the money hire lawyers and the ability to call for assistance from her elite white clientele and past employers to fight social injustices (Hudson 59). Her effort to enlist the help of wealthy whites attests to her efforts to engage in racial uplift. In acquiring the help of powerful white leaders and their wives, she assisted them in border crossing as Jacqueline Jones Royster defines the border crosser as one "who can cross boundaries and serve as a guide and translator for Others" (196). Whites acted as a translator and guide through

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legal jargon and the court system. They crossed borders as they were speaking on the behalf of African Americans who were discriminated against on a regular basis, a concept foreign to their privileged lives. However, Pleasant, aware that her voice as an African American was not enough to convince judges during the Reconstruction Period that African Americans are citizens and do in fact have the right to travel in streetcars, enlisted their help, for her voice coupled with their voices served as stepping stones for changes leading to more of a just and equal future.

Another example of boardinghouse keepers employing domesticity to gain agency leading to racial uplift involves Basque Americans, who immigrated to the United States in large numbers "from 1890 to 1930" (Echeverria 43). In my references to Jeronima Echeverria's study of Basque American boardinghouses, readers may find hotel references misleading because this chapter focuses solely on boardinghouses; however, Echeverria notes in *Home Away from Home: A History of Basque Boardinghouses* that she "followed the Basque-American practice of using the terms *hotel,* ostatu, and *boardinghouse* interchangeably" (37).

To begin, Basque American boardinghouse keepers conform to the virtues of True Womanhood to fulfill their motherly roles in their boardinghouse duties as they clean, cook, and care for sick as discussed in the earlier section related to domesticity. However, because the Basque American boardinghouses contain new immigrants who oftentimes do not speak English and know only a few people upon entering the United States, the boardinghouse keepers act as parents who not only provide food and shelter but offer their assistance in helping immigrants adjust to a new country. For instance, "young men

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and women of Euskal Herria, once having established an *ostatu* as their second home, found it comparatively easy to associate the familiar language, foods, and nurturance provided by *hoteleras* with her own mother. Eventually there seems to have been a symbolic acceptance of the *hoteleras* as surrogate maternal figures" (Echeverria 219). Being in contact with another former immigrant eases the transitioning process as young men and women are not completely separated from their culture, for the motherly boardinghouse keeper recreates their old home environment with familiar sights, sounds, and smells from their country of origin.

For younger immigrant boarders, a motherly boardinghouse keeper offers discipline as well as comfort. A boarder describes boardinghouse keeper Leandra Letemendi's approach to her motherly role: "Anyone who showed up late for one of Leandra's meals was subjected to a serious tongue-lashing. Yet one young Basque who learned the importance of punctuality in Leandra's house also benefited from her compassion. When she discovered him alone crying on the first birthday he had spent away from home, Leandra put her chores aside, sat down, and talked the young man through his homesickness" (Echeverria 221). Leandra's firmness and comforting advice provided the young man with encouragement and assured him that he has a support system in his new country. He, like his fellow boarders, will overcome homesickness and adjust.

To assist in the adjustment process and help young people to thrive in the New World, boardinghouse keepers employed Basque immigrants which often led to the new immigrants' courtships and eventual marriage with Basque Americans. "Hotel owners

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often sent to Europe for Basque serving girls to work in their hotels. So frequently did these women meet their future husbands at hotels that the Basque hotels have been referred to as "'marriage mills'" (Echeverria 51). As matchmakers and employers, boardinghouse keepers help launch young people into their adult lives as new citizens. Like loving mothers, they teach the young how to labor and oversee their courtships according to Basque's customs just as their actual parents would do.

In addition to providing discipline, advice, and employment, boardinghouse keepers assist in varying ways with boarders' medical care. In some instances, they simply accompany "customers to dental or physician's appointments" (Echeverria 226). Lacking knowledge of local medical professionals and the ability to speak English, boarders depend on boardinghouse keepers to arrange medical appointments, travel with them, and translate as they converse with medical professionals. Nevertheless, in other instances, boarders' medical needs become more complex. Like the boardinghouse keepers mentioned in the domesticity section above, Basque American boardinghouse keepers act as nurses for sick boarders. However, their involvement in medical care increases when pregnant boarders arrive. As a boardinghouse keeper, Gregoria plays the role of midwife and nurse for numerous boarders:

> Expectant mothers in their final months of pregnancy would leave their Nevada ranches and travel to Elko's Overland so that in case of problems they would be closer to a midwife or physician. By necessity, most of the babies were delivered by Gregoria instead. As Gregoria was known to quip, by bringing so many lives into the world, she specialized in 'rural free delivery.' And when the dreaded influenza epidemic of 1918 struck Elko, the Overland's rooms and hallways were strewn with fifty to sixty afflicted patients. Once again, Gregoria called upon her nursing skills and, as she later boasted, she did not lose a one. (Echeverria 221)

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Unable to travel to a hospital prior to giving birth, boarders relied on Gregoria to deliver their babies. Unlike most hospital staff, Gregoria possesses the ability to speak to them in their native tongue during their struggles to give birth. Gregoria's motherly role in delivering babies and nursing the sick back to health affirms her position as mother. She is present for the most personal events in her boarders' lives. She performs intimate tasks in caring for their bodies.

Just as boardinghouse keepers cared for their boarders' physical health, they cared for their social wellbeing by transforming a boardinghouse into a home. The boardinghouse was not just a place to eat and sleep. Boardinghouse keepers made it a place for celebrations, worship, and mourning, activities that families do together:

> Moreover, Basque hotels often hosted special occasions such as marriages, family celebrations, dances, and wakes. One Stockton Basque reported that when members of her family had a birthday, they expected all local Basques to gather at their favorite *ostatu* to help them celebrate. In small towns where there was no Roman Catholic Church, weddings, confirmations, and baptisms were often performed in the front room or lobby of the Basque hotel. And in a few instances elderly Basques have reported attending wakes and reciting the rosary in the hotel lobbies of remote boardinghouses. (Echeverria 50)

By hosting special events, boardinghouse keepers witness milestones in their boarders' lives and bring the boarders as well as outside members of the Basque American community together. Immigrants experience a sense of continual support as they continue to develop closer relationships with people who once seemed like strangers. They are not just boarders; they are part of a community. Boardinghouse keepers create a homelike atmosphere, a place where Basque Americans laugh, cry, and celebrate together. Thus,

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with the support of boardinghouse keepers, Basque American boarders thrive inside and outside of the boardinghouse in their new homeland.

Concluding Remarks

Although deemed an oppressive institution by boarders who suffer from overcrowded rooms and unsanitary food and boardinghouse keepers tethered to True Womanhood's virtues in an effort to maintain their ethos, boardinghouses have provided agency for vulnerable populations of women like widows, minorities, and immigrants. Their agency dependent on their resistance or commitment to True Womanhood's virtues enable them to deviate or conform to their roles as wives and mothers as they pursue intellectual interests, acquire money to fight injustices, provide employment to those unemployed due to discrimination, and prepare immigrants to be successful Americans.

As illustrated by the aforementioned examples, the boardinghouse keepers possessed the potential to transform lives during a difficult time in American history. During the Reconstruction Period, a time of great divide, boardinghouses brought people together. Although boardinghouses are not harmonious spaces for boardinghouse keepers and their boarders, "it did require them to set aside their differences to preserve domestic peace. Under the best of circumstances, it could even instill a communal mentality among virtual strangers—this, despite President Lincoln's speaking of an American 'house divided,' . . ." (Faflik 120).

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CHAPTER IV

RESTAURANTS: A SITE OF EXPLOITATION AND ACTIVISM

"Throughout the city, women and men negotiated the same public spaces of streets and public transportation, shopping districts, and places of amusement, although this sharing often conflicted with the imagined ideal gendering of these spaces" (Sewell xvi). For restaurants as well as many other public spaces in the mid-nineteenth century to the early twentieth century, the imagined ideal connects women to spaces based on the idea of True Womanhood. As Barbara Welter explains, "The attributes of True Womanhood, by which a woman judged herself and was judged by her husband, her neighbors, and society could be divided into four cardinal virtues—piety, purity, submissiveness and domesticity. . . Without them, no matter whether there was fame, achievement or wealth, all was ashes. With them she was promised happiness and power" (Welter 152). With the image of True Womanhood looming large, nineteenth-century women utilized True Womanhood's cardinal virtues to enter domesticated public spaces such as restaurants. The material world made up of city streets, entrances, walls, booths, chairs, food, menus, and advertisements rhetorically shaped gendered ideals and expectations, thus reinforcing True Womanhood's cardinal virtues.

In this chapter, through a close examination of restaurants as domesticated public spaces, I emphasize the rhetorical connections between female friendly restaurants and

parlor like settings while also drawing attention to their exploitative nature that often fuels resistance and activism. The first section, "Rhetorically Transforming Home Spaces into Domesticated Workspaces," examines how the blurring of restaurants' domesticated and public spaces made way for women to act as entrepreneurs, workers, and customers. In "Rhetorical Tensions of Containing vs. Sustaining," I argue that the material world made up of special entrances, dining areas, foods, advertisements, and décor are rhetorically designed to sustain and contain women's bodies. In other words, the material world rhetorically shapes gendered expectations and reinforces the True Womanhood ideal which tethers women to domesticated spaces and underscores separate spheres theory, a theory suggesting that women belong to the private sphere while men belong in the public sphere. However, Danaya C. Wright contends that separation "reflected a social and political ideal" (49). Although an ideal, the perceived separation of spheres shaped society's negative attitudes toward working women in the nineteenth century. Therefore, the section is divided into three parts dedicated to discussing entrepreneurs, workers, and customers. Prior to the concluding remarks, in the section "Breaking Out: Utilizing Rhetoric to Gain Agency and Combat Oppression," I argue that entrepreneurs, workers, and customers employ discursive and embodied rhetoric to break out of restaurants' oppressive domesticated public spaces.

Rhetorically Transforming Home Spaces into Domesticated Workspaces

As more women entered the public sphere as workers and shoppers, their presence posed the complicated question of when, where, and with whom to dine. With many women living far away from shopping and business districts, it seemed impossible

for them to interrupt their work or shopping to return home for a quick meal. Over the century a variety of female friendly dining options emerged: tearooms, department store restaurants, confectioners, bakeries, ice cream parlors, women's lunchrooms, vegetarian restaurants, family restaurants, and designated tables or private dining rooms for women only.

Regardless of the type of establishment, each female friendly restaurant possessed a homelike atmosphere to align with women's traditional place in the home. Some restaurants resided within places that were already deemed female friendly such as department stores and drug stores. Department stores filled with clothing and home furnishings corresponded to women's roles as homemakers. Restaurants in famous department stores like Macy's and Wanamaker's offered women a nearby space for refreshment and a brief break from shopping. By extending women's stay, department stores utilized their dining area as a physical advertising space, for they often displayed their homewares in restaurants. As spatial and material rhetorics, these spaces and objects subtly persuaded the women shoppers to buy the offered home products. Women consumers became captive audiences for their wares. While waiting for their food, women diners admire artwork, mirrors, and table linens that are for sale. As they enjoy their food, they use dishes and flatware that can be purchased for their homes. By seeing, touching, and, in some cases, using items for sale, consumers' public dining experience appears to be a domesticated experience as they find themselves surrounded by homewares. Consumers make an unconscious connection between store's domesticated setting and their homes, for they can easily imagine using the same wares in their homes.

For some female restaurant owners, their business never left the physical home, for a portion of the home was transformed into a restaurant or catering business. In the early 1900s, as more people traveled via automobile, women created country roadside tearooms. The tearooms, often located in a family's home or a remodeled barn, provided a clean, respectable place for travelers to stop for refreshments and relaxation as opposed to stopping at a questionable roadhouse: "Middle-class travelers disdained roadhouses. 'In this country one rides for hours without finding anything, but the old unpleasant roadhouses,' complained a New York City dietitian in 1913. Perhaps she, like many others, found roadhouses objectionable because of their disreputable clientele and the amounts of alcohol they dispensed" (Whitaker, "Catering," 17). "Respectability," as a sign of True Womanhood, became a rhetorical trope for women entrepreneurs across the US, one they could advertise to travelers whether women or families. With a family already living on the grounds of the roadside tearoom and a woman proprietor operating the establishment, patrons expected a space free of inebriated, rowdy men and prostitutes. Women customers and their families felt at ease as they enjoyed a family style dining experience and home cooked meals.

To create a country roadside tearoom, little work was needed because women could use items from their homes as rhetorical reinforcement of respectability: "The roadside business was presented as a natural one for women. Almost no capital was needed, stories advised. A 1911 *Ladies Home Journal* story is typical: Two sisters turn their uncle's old barn into a tearoom simply by scrubbing it clean and setting up a few kitchen tables and chairs. They hang sunbonnets from pegs and artistically arrange wild

flowers in baskets, and presto . . ." (Whitaker, "Catering," 17). Trusting housewives'

expert cleaning skills, travelers dined in a clean and comfortable atmosphere where they

could wash their hands before dinner and relax in rocking chairs. As one can imagine, a

money saving housewife turned entrepreneur displays flowers from her garden on each

table and uses vegetables from the garden and perhaps, meat from a farm to provide a

nutritious, affordable homemade meal. The material rhetoric of domestic spaces is

relocated in public roadside restaurants.

While women entrepreneurs made money from their thrifty home restaurants, the

home restaurants served as a launching pad for other businesses or money-making

opportunities. In fact, advice books such as *Occupations for Women* cite examples of

women successfully adding gift shops to their tea rooms: "In connection with her [Mrs.

Stearns'] tea room she opened what she quaintly calls 'a gift shop,' and this name defines

itself. She keeps on sale all sorts of dainty, pretty novelties, suitable for birthday,

wedding and holiday presents, many of them things that one cannot buy at the regular

shops" (Willard, Winslow, and White 122). Gift shops featuring handmade quilts,

embroidered table linens, handicrafts, art work, and other homemade materials combine

women's entrepreneurial skills with traditional domestic work adding to the material

rhetorical reinforcement of True Womanhood.

Rhetorical Tensions of Containing vs. Sustaining

Entrepreneurs

While department stores' wares automatically supplied a homelike setting for a

female friendly restaurant, other restaurant owners relied on women to supply a homelike

touch to restaurants. Charles Walgreen, original owner and founder of the famous Walgreen's drug store chain that still exists today, enlisted the help his wife Myrtle Walgreen to transform an empty space adjoining the drug store into a dining establishment. Women customers, who were already present in the drug store to see the latest perfumes and cosmetics or purchase medicine for their ailing children, could easily walk a few steps over to the adjoining restaurant. Again, by using an adjoining space, away from male customers, women were rhetorically coerced into not only buying Walgreen's products but also its food. Women as consumers were rhetorically welcomed both as buyers and diners.

Hence, Walgreen's drug store contained a female friendly atmosphere. Myrtle Walgreen cooked food in her kitchen and relied on a porter to deliver the food to the restaurant. In her autobiography *Never a Dull Day* she remarks, "Charles never let me help out at the store" (108). Although Myrtle was the food supplier and driving force behind the restaurant, the Walgreen's upper-class status made Myrtle's public appearance as a working wife seem unfounded, so Myrtle worked and managed from the home. Her material existence as chef and manager of a restaurant did not fit the rhetoric of the True Womanhood model. As Myrtle completes tasks for her family and the restaurant, she serves as an example of Gillian Rose's paradoxical space, for she occupies both center and margin. Rose posits that separation and confinement play roles in assuring the marginal status of those inhabiting the center. As consumers, employees, and business owners move back and forth between their home duties and the duties performed for the public, the sense of confinement to specific homelike spaces suggests that "what we are

and can be have already been mapped by somebody else" (G. Rose 147). In this case, Charles Walgreen following the mores set by upper-class society confines Myrtle to the home, for Myrtle embodies upper-class society. The Walgreens fear they will tarnish their reputation within the community, so Myrtle's restaurant work remains invisible. Unfortunately, she leads a double life as she keeps the appearance of an upper-class wife in the home while she acts as a restaurant manager, entrepreneur, and cook. The rhetoric and expectations surrounding white upper-class life causes her success in the restaurant business to be attributed to her husband. The upper-class patriarchal society, acting as an invisible mapmaker, warns women of the dangers of stepping outside the bounds of domesticated public spaces, for women fear that they would tarnish their reputation. Women's "awareness of embodiment" and "sense of space" creates "a threat of being seen and evaluated" (G. Rose 146). To avoid the male gaze and avoid losing their respectability, women like Myrtle Walgreen confine themselves to domesticated workplaces, places that vouch for their identities as respectable wives and mothers performing traditional duties.

Through her role as a domesticated restaurant operator, Myrtle carefully planned her day of shopping, cooking, and managing employees:

> Because my ice box was small I couldn't keep things over night, so I'd get up early and go buy the chickens and the day's roast. I'd be home by seven-thirty and put the whole chickens on to cook. Whole chickens could be more easily sliced and the wings and backs could be used for chicken salad. At first I threw away the skin which hurt my economical heart but then one day I ground the skin and put it in the corner of the pan. I called the girl at the soda fountain counter and suggested she try a little of that rich skin in the chicken salad. That night she

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called back to say she never had so many compliments on the chicken salad, so after that I never threw away any skin. (Walgreen 108)

Myrtle's homemaking instincts fostered her money-saving strategies as evidenced by her resourcefulness in saving skin for chicken salad. Her rhetorical resistance to the True Womanhood model is demonstrated in how she ran the restaurant from a distance. Although her husband did not allow her to physically work in the restaurant, her phone calls to restaurant employees ensured that they were operating in an economical manner and serving the food just as she would in the home. Possessing an inventor's spirit and the shrewdness of a business woman, Myrtle's material rhetoric evolved from her newly engineered items for the restaurant: "Many things sold at the stores have come from some idea at home. The chocolate roll made with a layer of chocolate cake, a layer of ice cream, another layer of cake, then rolled up, sliced and served with whipped cream was one of my desserts. Charles would say, 'This is so good I don't know why we couldn't sell it at the store!'" (Walgreen 108). Myrtle's ideas translated into reality for the public to consume attest to the simple way she used the home as a means to harness rhetorical credibility and power as a woman in business. Her rhetorical authority extended into other areas as Charles asked her to provide feedback on products to sell in the drugstore. As the restaurant gained renown, customers placed takeout food orders. Via the restaurant whole pies moved from Myrtle's kitchen to customers' dining rooms. The small drug store restaurant literally became an extension of the home.

Though Myrtle successfully manages and operates the restaurant, she maintains a modest tone throughout the autobiography. She seems to see herself as simply pleasing

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her husband and doing what she normally does as a housewife. Her downplay of the physical, creative, and rhetorical labor reflects society's devaluation of traditional women's duties. The traditional duties permit women to physically labor, a type of labor considered as inferior to jobs requiring mental labor. In *The Mind at Work: Valuing the Intelligence of the American Worker*, Mike Rose acknowledges the misconceptions attached to physical labor: "It is as though in our cultural iconography we are given the muscled arm, sleeve rolled tight against biceps, but no thought bright behind the eye, no image that links hand and brain" (xv). Although nineteenth-century women workers do not come to mind in Rose's picture of muscled arms, women's confinement to a domesticated space coupled with their confinement to physical tasks illustrates their devalued positions and intelligence. As Rose points out, sadly few tie physical labor to the idea of "competence," for competence involves a mastery of "special terminology," "movements of the body," and "knowledge of tools and devices" (xviii). Due to rhetorical notions of True Womanhood, women's confinement to domesticated work spaces and physical labor that many women learn to do reinforce women's work as nonessential and inconsequential. Myrtle's work as economist, manager, shopper, chef, inventor, and critic was anything but inconsequential as the small drugstore restaurant succeeded for many years.

In addition to restaurants and gift shops, the home served as a space for caterers to prepare and serve meals. Some budding caterers and eventual restaurant owners discovered their culinary skills and entrepreneurial talents, transferring their rhetorical material rhetoric of home-cooked meals to other establishments sometimes to other

women's homes and sometimes to public dining establishments. For instance, Frances Willard shares the astonishing story of Mother Smith, a janitor's wife and restaurant owner who became "one of the most prosperous women in New York" (Willard, Winslow, and White 124). While caring for a sick girl named Laura, Mother Smith cooked for Laura's mother and her lunch circle in her home. As more women desired to join the lunch circle, Mother Smith, struggling to cook for such a large number of women, hired help. Eventually, her home became too small to accommodate so many women patrons, so she opened a restaurant "west of Broadway"; however, despite her success, she "has not left off her habit of mothering sick girls. The little sofa, the cup of tea, the timely medicine, are all within their reach" (Willard, Winslow, and White 124-125). Mother Smith begins her career as an entrepreneur in a home setting. Although her home catering business transforms from a home to a restaurant in a building in the city, the restaurant maintains a homelike setting and Mother Smith remains faithful to her domestic role by continuing to cook and nurse sick girls back to health. The chapter never reveals Mother Smith's real name. The fact that she is commonly known as Mother Smith highlights her mother like qualities which overshadow her identity as a professional. The homelike furnishings attest to her commitment as a nurse like mother, for a domesticated restaurant containing couches provides a homelike space for patrons to lounge beyond the dining hours. The rhetorical material space of True Womanhood's domesticity has moved from the home into women's businesses in public settings.

At first glance, the success stories of Mother Smith and the owners of countryside tea rooms make the home appear as a welcoming destination for women

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consumers and a wonderful business opportunity for female entrepreneurs. However, in

addition to the homelike spaces tethering women to their traditional domestic roles,

homelike spaces offer further restrictions for women of color, particularly African

American women. As illustrated by the examples above, lower-class restaurant owners

and caterers often housed their restaurants in the home or used their home as a place for

preparing food that would be served in customers' homes. Customers, specifically middle

and upper-class customers who could afford caterers or dine in a restaurant, welcomed

white women caterers into their homes and felt at ease in dining in a restaurant operated

by white women. Unfortunately, African American women caterers and restaurant

owners did not receive the same welcome: "With changing food tastes and racial attitudes

in post-Civil War America, elite black caterers were no longer a status symbol for the

rich, a factor that contributed to the demise of the black caterer [meaning both male and

female African American caterers]. . ." (Walker 132). The positive benefits of True

Womanhood's rhetorics in public spaces were for white women only. After the Civil

War, former slaves often competed for jobs with poor whites. With more white men and

women entering the restaurant business in the late nineteenth and early twentieth

centuries, white patrons who could afford to dine selected white owned businesses.

African American women who cooked and served meals to white families for many years

prior to the Civil War were still hired as cooks in the home; however, whites' "catering

needs were increasingly provided by whites" (Walker 134). Like catering businesses,

black owned restaurants faced a grim fate, for "racial attitudes and mores discouraged

white support of black business . . ." (Walker 134). The negative rhetorics of race superseded the rhetorics of True Womanhood for African American women.

Unlike the stories of white proprietors like Mother Smith and countryside tea room owners, many African American women did not have the resources to establish a restaurant or catering business on their own or with female partners. In fact, a review of research materials on African American caterers and restaurant business owners reveals a few women's names mentioned only in connection to their husbands' or male relatives' restaurant and catering businesses. In the *Encyclopedia of African American Business History*, Juliet Walker informs readers that "[a]s black catering enterprises expanded in number, they remained family enterprises, some of which continued into the twentieth century, with catering families often intermarrying" (129). With males being the head of the household, men have been credited with being leaders of catering families while wives, mothers, and daughters frequently served in supporting roles. Thus, within the family unit, women struggled alongside of family members to pay for expensive food and equipment as they competed against white men and women who were in the restaurant business. The material conditions of race and finance kept African American women from being able to rhetorically persuade the white consumer audience. Their only support was in banding together in collectives.

As the number of competitors increased, the number of restaurant regulations and fees increased within certain states dealing a mortal blow to poor African American and white caterers and restaurant owners:

By the late 1880s, several states, including Pennsylvania, required caterers to post a $2,000 bond to secure a liquor license in addition to paying an annual license fee that ranged from $500 to $900. Yet even if black caterers could afford those costs, there were also laws that required that liquor could only be sold in a business that was permanently located. Black caterers just did not have the facilities, nor could compete with the food services provided by European chefs in the new restaurants and luxurious hotels. There were, of course, always exceptions. (Walker 132-133)

With the rising cost of doing business, many astute black catering families banded together well before the regulations and fees that were imposed in the 1880s in an effort to save money: "In 1869, 12 black caterers founded the Corporation of Caterers, which was incorporated, and also the Public Waiter Association. The major purpose was to maintain professional standards. Also, they recognized the need to pool their resources, silver, china, and crystal, if they were to continue to meet the demands required in catering large parties and banquets" (Walker 132). Unfortunately, despite the efforts of associations like the Corporation of Caterers, "black caterers declined both in numbers and in income. By the late nineteenth century, less than 10 black caterers had annual incomes that ranged from $3,000 to $5,000" (Walker 132). Regardless of their incomes and abilities, African American women functioned more as workers than entrepreneurs.

Workers

While restaurants opened the doors for new employment opportunities for women, racism kept African American women as well as other women of color from being hired as waiters by white restaurant owners. Just as some restaurants placed black diners behind screens, white employers placed black employees behind the scenes. As embodied and discursive rhetorics, waiters represent establishments as they directly

interact with customers. An 1867 article which thoroughly evaluated types of waiters

neglects to mention black women as an option for a waiter. While women are mentioned,

the author of the article does not consider African American women as part of the

category. Instead the author briefly mentions that many female waiters are Irish

("Waiters" 134). The only mention of black waiters is in reference to men:

> As for the full-blooded African, we cannot think him at all an eligible person to wait at table. There are numbers of saloons, or eating-houses, in this city in which the attendants are negroes of the darkest hue. The black man has never been accused of want of politeness, but in his capacity of waiter his politeness is often of an overpowering and patronizing kind. There is a superfluous flourish in all his movements. He never puts down a plate upon the table but he 'feathers' it like an oar. His hands are naturally large and coarse, and they do not form an agreeable contrast with a white napkin ("Waiters" 134).

The author insultingly critiques the male African Americans' manners and physical

features. While the author deems the black male as a suitable waiter for a saloon or eating

house, rowdy establishments with lower-class male patrons with an absence of etiquette

and decorum, he resolves that African American men are not suitable for mid-to-upper

tier restaurants. This rhetorical dismissal and containment extend to African American

women by race rather than sex. In light of the author's negativity toward African

American males, it seems clear that the author and restaurant managers would view

African American females as waiters in a similar light. Due to discrimination, the

presence of African American women as restaurant employees in any capacity seems

miniscule: "In 1900 and 1920, approximately 40 percent of all black women, however,

were paid employees, and they would remain employed for their entire adult lives,

relegated, for the most part, to jobs as domestic laborers in white households" (Patterson 12).

Rhetorically, African American women's presence in white households and in businesses as domestic laborers signifies their place within the margins and center of the public sphere. Applying the theory of paradoxical space to illustrate the simultaneous occupation of the center and margin, Rose references Patricia Hill Collins' example of black women's roles as domestic workers in white households: "There they were on intimate terms with the children of the family in particular, but were also made to know that they did not belong, that they were only employees; they were there but also absent" (152). African American women's roles as domestic laborers in whites' homes and businesses place them behind the scenes. Like Rose's example, they are present yet absent. Their presence in homes, businesses, and city streets render them rhetorically visible and part of the center of the public sphere. However, black women become rhetorically invisible as they are not visible as customers and waiters. They are forced to remain behind the scenes. Although enacting True Womanhood in domestic spaces as workers, African American women are rhetorically contained materially and discursively both inside and outside the home.

Compared to African American women, other women of color, being outside of the recent history of the Civil War, found an easier time locating employment in the restaurant business due the existence of numerous restaurants owned by recent immigrants. Material and discursive social rhetorics affected them negatively as well. Although many female immigrants worked for family members, their wellbeing was not

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ensured in a family friendly environment, for employers frequently took advantage of their employees' ignorance: "Living as they do among their own people these young peasants have no opportunity to absorb American standards and customs. Their ignorance makes it easy for employers to exploit them, demanding hours of labor and paying wages to which no American girl would submit" (The Consumers League of New York City, "Behind the Scenes" 8). Female immigrants, ignorant of the "ten-hour law" that many states like Illinois had recently adopted, labored while continually standing well beyond ten hours per day which took its toll on women's feet, legs, and backs (Bowen).

Similarly, the homelike spaces of hotels did not offer immigrant women healthy workspaces, so this exploitation reinforced both the rhetorical messages of lowliness in position and of possible removal if complaining or resisting. The Juvenile Protective Association investigated fifty hotels in 1912 to uncover the treatment of "young foreign girls who work in hotels" (Bowen). In addition to working long hours, the association discovered disturbing trends in female employees' housing arrangements and unwholesome food during rare breaks in the workday: "In some hotels the employees are obliged to eat the 'comebacks' from the guests' meals. In others the food is served in such an unappetizing manner that the disgusted girls are not able to eat it. Many times they have no dining room and eat in a storeroom or cellar. Of the 50 hotels visited only six provided good food for their employees" (Bowen). With women eating unwholesome or little food, it is easy to imagine employees experiencing unhealthy weight loss and lack of energy due to working long hours without adequate refreshment.

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A lack of adequate refreshment coupled with a lack of rest challenged even the strongest of the restaurant workers in hotels. The material conditions of living space reinforced the lowly place of the female worker. The Juvenile Protective Association exposed a troubling violation: "Most of the hotels violate the State Board of Health ordinance which requires 400 cubic square feet of air for each occupant of a room. Many of the rooms assigned to these hotel employees never get any sunshine and very little light" (Bowen). With little light and air, the overcrowded sleeping area sometimes consisting of "four to six girls" in a "small room originally designed for one bed" becomes an uncomfortable setting for little to no sleep (Bowen). While hotels strive to create a homelike setting as they supply guests with plentiful food and comfortable furnishings for rest, women employees grapple to find food, rest, fresh air, and privacy. Unfortunately, these rhetorical attitudes about class and ethnicity carried material ramifications for women workers in the form of deteriorating health and wellbeing.

In desperation to break away from the oppressive environment, women employees often fell prey to male customers who through their rhetorical coercion provided a brief escape from constant work and confinement. Although men offering to show working girls a good time lured women of all types, foreign women seemed at a particular disadvantage, for "[t]hey are ignorant of our standards and are easily persuaded that judgement for a moral lapse is less severe in America than it is in the old country" (Bowen). Being young and naive, any girl could fall prey to a male customer, but a young immigrant could be completely unaware of the social and physical consequences of a one-time rendezvous with a young man. With little opportunity to engage in healthy

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recreational activities and a daily struggle to earn a living wage, some young employees

gradually turned to prostitution as a means of financial support.

As male customers took advantage of young women through word and deed,

employers profited from some employees' attractive appearance. Oftentimes, a woman's

appearance, as embodied rhetoric, determined her placement within a restaurant: "The

manager often regards a pretty girl in the light of an attraction for his restaurant. In one

place the pretty girls were put downstairs, where the men were served, and the homely

girls were put upstairs, in the room reserved for women customers" (Bowen). Such

strategy implies that male customers, typically having more money to spend on dining

than women patrons, prefer to interact with attractive waitresses and lured by their beauty

will continue to come back. Embodied rhetoric had its disadvantages too. In other

restaurants, employers counted on waitresses to maintain their beauty or be replaced. In

an interview conducted by The Consumers League of New York, a waitress stated,

"When the girls get to looking bad, they are laid off and someone else is put in their

place'" (The Consumers League of New York City, "Behind the Scenes" 6). The threat of

losing their jobs weighed heavily on many waitresses as they struggled to maintain a

beautiful appearance in light of working long hours, consuming unwholesome food, and

functioning with little rest.

Thus, waitresses walked a rhetorical tight rope as they strived materially to

maintain their beauty in order to keep their jobs and gain plentiful tips, strived bodily to

protect their virtue by keeping interested male customers at a distance, and strived

discursively to keep their employer recognizing that they were doing both in unhealthy

working conditions. Yet, Louise Bowen and others feared that the tipping system placed young women in harm's way: "In the hands of a vicious man this tip establishes between him and the girl a relation of subserviency and patronage which may easily be made the beginning of improper attentions. The most conscientious girl, dependent upon tips to eke out her slender wage, finds it difficult to determine just where the line of propriety is crossed" (Bowen). For customers looking for dates, a kind word or gesture could easily be interpreted as flirting for tips which could escalate to performing sexual actions for tips. While many escaped some restaurants' predatory environments, others succumbed to the temptation of money and escape that some male customers promised.

The discursive rhetorical strategy of losing one's reputation operates as a counter to these all-women establishments. While peace predominated this dairy lunch room, reporters' news stories about alcohol serving restaurants posing as ordinary women's establishments struck fear into the public and generated cautionary tales about entering into deceptive restaurants or dens of vice. The *Christian Observer* in 1903 featured a cautionary tale about two young country girls, Lizzie and Janie, falling prey to a deceptive job advertisement that read: "Wanted—Girls to serve customers in a quiet, respectable place. Best of wages. Business for women only" (Howard). After discovering that the respectable women's only restaurant is a place for women to eat, smoke, drink, and gamble, Lizzie and Janie seek help from a local church and find that traditional domestic service is the best employment as they spend their days serving as domestic workers in a Christian home (Howard). The cautionary tale warns young women of the deceptive nature of restaurants as well as job advertisements as it pushes women back to

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the safety of home. The tidy moral to the story reinforces True Womanhood values, for it suggests domestic work taking place in a private setting protects women from tarnishing their reputations in restaurants or even semipublic women's only restaurants.

In spite of entrances serving as a means of controlling patrons' movements and providing a true or deceptive rhetorical framing of a restaurant's interior, some entrances designed for women employees differed from the safe, respectable entrance for lady patrons. In contrast to the safe, respectable ground-level ladies' entrance for women customers only, many restaurants failed to provide a women's only entrance for female restaurant workers. Bowen calls attention to the dangers hotel employees, including restaurant staff, encounter when entering and exiting the building:

> In many hotels the employees come and go through a separate exit and many of these exits lead to dark alleys. Suspicious characters loiter in these places and the girl who might like to go somewhere in the evening is afraid to go out alone. She is obliged to seek the protection of an escort and oftentimes this escort is a man who has been persecuting her with his attentions. In many hotels the manager makes no attempt to prosecute the man employee who is responsible for the ruin of the girl employee. (Bowen)

Just as restaurant and hotel management controls the movements of female patrons, they control the footsteps of their employees. Unlike the valued women customers who are termed as ladies, the women restaurant workers' entrance into a dark alley suggests a lack of care and protection for working women of the lower class. The same management that insists on women dining with a male companion, meaning a trusted father, relative, or close family friend, turns a blind eye toward the young female employee who must navigate the dark alley alone or select a fellow male employee based on availability. In

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the management's eyes the purity and piety associated with True Womanhood does not seem to apply to lower-class women employees. The rhetorics of respectability and reputation reinforcing the True Woman ideal apply to only some women.

Customers

While being pushed out of restaurant and catering businesses materially and rhetorically, African American women were not welcomed as customers or employees in female-friendly restaurants. In 1907 *The Independent* featured an article titled "What it Means to be Colored in the Capital of the United States" by an anonymous African American woman "of much culture and recognized standing" (181). This anonymous African American woman writer rhetorically resists the exclusion and containment by restaurants. The article's kairos is acknowledged through its publication during a time when Senator Foraker "brought before the Senate the dismissal without honor of the negro battalion" ("What it Means" 181). Thus, Senator Foraker's move to strip honor from the "negro" battalion prompts *The Independent* to obtain a first-hand account from an African American woman on what it is like to be an African American in Washington, D.C., a city that "has been called 'The Colored Man's Paradise'" ("What it Means" 181).

The anonymous author bears a greater burden than white women when seeking a meal in restaurants, owned and operated by whites, including restaurants designed for ladies. She rhetorically claims about her material existence, "As a colored woman I may walk from the Capitol to the White House, ravenously hungry and abundantly supplied with money with which to purchase a meal, without finding a single restaurant in which I would be permitted to take a morsel of food, if it was patronized by white people, unless I

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were willing to sit behind a screen" ("What it Means" 181). Behind the screen she is

separated from men and women, which identifies her as other, a material rhetoric of

containment. When she is not offered a seat at a ladies' table or ladies' dining area, white

proprietors clearly communicate that she is not considered a lady. Both physically and

discursively, African American women of means were excluded from restaurants.

She recalls other instances in which black women were not offered the option of

sitting behind a screen but were asked to leave a restaurant:

> Tired and hungry after a morning's shopping a colored school teacher, whose
> relation to her African progenitors is so remote as scarcely to be discernible to the
> naked eye, took a seat at one of the tables in the restaurant of this Boston store.
> After sitting unnoticed a long time the colored teacher asked a waiter who passed
> her by if she would not take her order. She was quickly informed that colored
> people could not be served in that restaurant and was obliged to leave in
> confusion and shame, much to the amusement of the waiters and the guests who
> had noticed the incident. Shortly after that a teacher in Howard University, one of
> the best schools for colored youth in the country was similarly insulted in the
> restaurant of the same store. ("What is Means" 181)

The author lets readers know that race, regardless of the percentage of African blood in

one's body, overshadows a person's manners, education, and social position. The author

and her female companions' dining experiences give credence to what W.E.B. Du Bois

refers to as "double consciousness," a concept that Francesca Gentile terms a "second

sight" that "positions the embodied experience of blackness in America as a qualification

for rhetorical action in the sense that it 'gifts' black men and women with a perspective to

which others have no access" (Gentile 143). As black women approach restaurants, they

utilize double consciousness to imagine the way that they appear in the eyes of white

restaurant owners and imagine the end results of their encounters with whites. With the majority of businesses owned by white proprietors located in prime real estate areas, African American women did not always have the option of dining in establishments owned by African Americans. As illustrated by the teacher mentioned above, black women shopped and worked in the cities, contributed to the economy, yet they struggled to find welcoming dining establishments near their workplace.

The rhetorics of The True Womanhood ideal also shaped the attitudes and conventions of a respectable woman's ability to choose where to eat and what to eat. Material spaces of dining establishments operating as a rhetoric of opportunity, the ability to eat in public spaces, and containment, the limitations of where a woman could eat and what she could eat, is illustrated through the steps of female patrons who determine where to eat by considering an establishment's food options and carefully viewing their advertisements. Thus, the spatial and material rhetorics of public restaurants were reinforced through discursive rhetorics of advertising and menu options. Food determined whether an establishment was suitable for a respectable lady. According to Paul Freedman, "In the 1880s newspaper advertisements for restaurants used terms such as 'home' or 'for ladies and gentlemen' or simply 'ice cream' to indicate that they were safe for respectable women, which tended to mean that they did not serve alcohol" (9). Restaurants' emphasis on home and child-like treats placed restaurants in a female friendly category. Whereas, the presence of alcoholic beverages implied that the restaurant's adult-like atmosphere was appropriate for men only.

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A closer look at mid-nineteenth and early twentieth-century restaurant menus reveals popular dishes designed for women as well as repetitive adjectives coloring the food and establishment as feminine. Restaurants, specifically tea rooms dedicated to serving women, have menus for the lighter appetite. A 1906 menu from a tea room located inside of Wanamaker's department store contains a small selection of meats for entrees, but over half of the menu consists of lighter fare. For instance, the lighter food categories include eggs; salads; sandwiches; pasty, fruits, and dessert; and ice cream (Rare Book Division). The meats and entrée categories offer non-red meats. Seafood and chicken appear within soups, pies, broths, and patties. All of the meats in various forms satisfy the appetite of a hungry shopper or worker, but the female customer will not leave the tea room overly full. The light fare provides fuel for the upper-class shopper or lady of leisure.

However, middle and lower-class women with physically demanding jobs needed less expensive and more filling food. Likewise, women workers had a limited time for their lunch breaks. A daily leisurely, expensive meal was not realistic. Thus, the prices as well as the light fare allow restaurant proprietors to welcome a specific social class to their establishments. Tea rooms, specifically, constructed meals suited for upper-class women of leisure: "Afternoon tea is itself an elite meal in that its delicacy and timing between lunch and dinner presumes an absence of hunger. A lettuce sandwich, costing 25¢ at the Hotel Cleveland's Tea Lounge in the early 1920s, could scarcely satisfy a hungry worker. Chicken salad might do better, but at 90¢ it cost as much as three meals"

(Whitaker, *Tea at the Blue*, 27). Travel, cost, and low-calorie meals make the tea room an almost impossible choice for working women.

Due to the aforementioned factors, working women sought out affordable, filling meals while attempting to maintain their respectability. "For this they could patronize respectable mixed-gender restaurants, including family restaurants in their neighborhoods, reform lunchrooms for working women, and by the 1910s, cafeterias downtown" (Sewell 75). With men being present in mixed restaurant settings, larger servings and the presence of whole pieces of meat as opposed to small pieces of meat in soups and sandwiches prevailed for those needing energy for the second half of their physically taxing workday.

As hungry working women dined alongside men in family friendly restaurants, women, aware of the male gaze, must not appear to eat large portions for fear of judgment. In 1885, when a *New York Times* reporter interviewed a "long-time" restaurant patron, he inquired about the identity of "women lunchers" ("Fair Women" 4). The male patron described an overweight female patron, whom he referred to as a "Texas cattle queen" as he recited a list of foods she consumed in one setting: "beef," "chicken pie," "partridge," "vegetables," and a "[b]aked apple dumpling" ("Fair Women" 4). Without concern for the woman's feelings, he described the woman as a "combination of the giantess Anna Swan and the fat woman Hannah Battersby" ("Fair Women" 4). To conclude his blow-by-blow description of the woman's meal, he remarked, "As she moved away from the table it didn't seem as if she could ever leave the place by way of

the small door by which she had entered. Perhaps, it was only imagination about her having grown so rapidly while eating that 'nice little lunch'" ("Fair Women" 4).

The male patron's derisive comments provide a testament to men's eyes carefully watching all women diners. Although this patron is in shock and repulsed by this complete stranger, he cannot take his eyes off of her. Her image and a detailed food inventory remain in his mind as he takes on the role of spectator, a "holder of rights and as their distributor to those who are unable to claim them independently" (Hesford 4). As "holder of rights," a man can consume the same foods as the female patron and never be criticized, for his appetite would be viewed as a hearty, healthy appetite for a working man (Hesford 4). His male privilege allows him to determine the appropriate portion of food for this woman as well as how much space her body should take up in this setting, and this woman, according to his idea of dainty, fragile women, has crossed the line. The female patron's respectability is questioned only because she eats heartily and is physically large, so she does not fit the male observer's ideal of True Womanhood.

Because the male patron's comments are recorded in the newspaper, it seems that the anonymous writer of the article found his rhetorical critique to be amusing and worthwhile to print due to its shock value. After all, the patron is compared to a "giantess" and a "fat woman," two famous sideshow women, so the newspaper views this woman as just another spectacle serving as a cautionary tale ("Fair Women" 4). Despite restaurants' allure, the horrifying description of the female diner persuades women readers to be more aware of the eyes watching them and encourages them to practice strict portion control to avoid experiencing the same fate as the unfortunate female patron

in the news story. However, from readers' reactions *The New York Times* soon

discovered that women do not need a cautionary tale. Women readers have experienced

the male gaze first hand. Soon after the publication of the male patron's comments, an

anonymous woman, who felt a sense of empathy for the woman patron, responded to the

New York Times editor: "I have frequently left my lunch half eaten, because it took away

my appetite to have every mouthful taken note of by my masculine vis-à-vis . . . You

have been pleased to note not only where we eat, how we eat, and what we eat, but

whether we tip the waiters and use finger bowls . . ." ("Ladies Want a Restaurant" 2). The

reader's supporting commentary highlights men's surveillance of women in public spaces

and their unfair judgments without viewing women as individuals with differing body

types and unique dietary needs. Regrettably, female customers with hearty appetites are

not viewed as people satisfying their hunger; like the woman in the news story, they are

portrayed in animalistic terms as being impulsive and lacking restraint. In the

aforementioned newspaper examples, both writers utilized discursive rhetoric to reinforce

and contain women. Also, both writers influenced women's eating, for the *New York*

Times reporter provided a negative critique of a hungry woman and the female

responder's testimony illustrated that the critique prompted her to modify her behavior in

public spaces to avoid the male gaze.

Many critics employed discursive rhetoric to portray a women's appetite for food

negatively: "According to critics, restaurants and other similarly potent delicacies

actually overstimulated the senses and provoked pernicious eating without appetite, much

as pornography and lewd thoughts prompted dangerous masturbation. Relying on a

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tradition begun with Plato's *Gorgias*, moralizing critics likened culinary artistry not to perfection of painting or sculpture, but to overblown eloquence and feminine ornamentation" (Spang 82). Women's appetite for sexual activity and appetite for food mirror each other as critics claim that neither is natural. Both are to be controlled, but restaurants act as a negative influence on women, for they overstimulate the senses by generating mouthwatering smells, beautiful spreads and delightful textures to persuade the female consumer to eat and come back for more.

Therefore, to control women's appetites, doctors in the eighteenth century, which may have carried over to the nineteenth century, frequently recommended light and bland foods based on the assumption that women were inactive:

> By one physician's account, women's vulnerability stemmed not from their naturally overactive minds, but from their profound mental and physical laziness. With no occupation other than the pursuit of 'the silliest amusements,' women yielded easily to their passions and fancies, both dietary and sexual. In their search for stimulating pleasures, they often rashly ate strongly flavored items which had particularly deleterious effects on their inactive and easily irritated stomachs. Even though experts traced women's susceptibility not to their fast-paced intellects but to their general physical and mental indolence, the recommendation remained the same: gentle, light foods in small quantities. (qtd. in Spang 40-41)

The physician imagines the idle woman and fails to consider the physical household labor performed by women in the home as well as women workers in public spaces. Sadly, the medical community considered the female weak in body and mind. The childlike mind seems equivalent to childlike indulgence. Female friendly establishments such as ice cream parlors, bakeries, and confectioneries appealed to this childlike indulgence. Then

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the lighter fare supplied by tea rooms, another establishment with almost all female customers, adhered to the idea of the inactive woman of leisure. Furthermore, the light fare also served as a contrast to all male establishments, particularly lower-class restaurants such as eating houses where dinner was "built on a sturdy foundation of protein" (Erby 8).

In addition to the light fare discouraging working women from visiting ladies' restaurants, restaurant owners frequently used food to alienate lower and middle-class customers of both sexes. For instance, the Waldorf-Astoria "offered several choices, including exotica such as frog legs and escargot that few Americans would have encountered on their dinner plates at home. The restaurant owner George Rector admitted that the menu 'was based more on the vanity than on the palate of our diners. Dining out had become an exercise in cosmopolitanism'" (Cocks 83). Fine dining establishments like the Waldorf-Astoria set themselves apart with exotic cuisine. Refined upper-class world travelers accustomed to ordering and sampling exotic cuisine dined for pleasure and excitement. Food became a channel to experience a small part of another culture.

Upper-class patrons' desire for adventure and exotic foods did not end at fine dining establishments. In fact, lower-class ethnic restaurants' exotic foods in the midst of an atmosphere filled with foreign people, exotic customs, and alcohol in some cases enticed upper-class patrons to visit. As in their visits to fine dining restaurants, upper-class patrons maintained their respectability in lower-class ethnic restaurants, for their "class position allowed them to remain unsullied" (Sewell 170). Their social status coupled with their presence in an exotic restaurant allowed them to socialize with lower-

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class people, eat exotic foods, and drink alcohol, all things that they would not normally do. Upper-class women temporarily suspended their decorum and mores because they "imagined" themselves as being in "a foreign country," where "women could temporarily follow the rules that governed that country" (Sewell 86). The next day they could easily return to their daily lives without harming their reputations. On the contrary, a single night of drinking and dining with foreigners in an exotic restaurant would easily sully the reputation of a middle-class woman. Lower and middle-class working women desiring to satisfy their hunger did not long for excitement; they longed for filling meals.

Containment through Advertising

Restaurants' foods and advertisements highlight the rhetorical power of material objects. As Richard Marback states, "[o]bjects propel us and repel us and even compel us" (57). The pictures of food, furniture, and lighting as well as the words printed on advertisements possess the power to control women's presence or absence in a specific space. Thus, the physical objects within a restaurant setting and the advertisements depicting the physical setting and expected dining experience serve as rhetoric designed to make women uncomfortable or comfortable depending on the absence or presence of a domesticated setting. Restaurants with female friendly advertisements establish their ethos through their selection of foods, drinks, seating, lighting, and physical location.

Just as food possesses the power to determine a woman's presence or absence in a restaurant, adjectives used to describe restaurants in menus and advertisements persuade women to attend or refrain from entering. A 1907 advertisement from The Albany, a New York hotel with a restaurant, mentions the following words to grab the attention of

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middle-class women: "Ladies' Restaurant," "Popular Prices," and "Plenty of life—but home-like" ("The Albany" 826). After reading the aforementioned key words, middle-class women are aware that they will be welcomed at an affordable place, for "Popular Prices" means competitive prices or prices that are similar to surrounding establishments ("The Albany" 826). As consumers reflect on the social life at The Albany, management promises that the restaurant and hotel's popularity draw many people, but the crowds are not so overwhelming as to take away from the home-like ambiance. The emphasis on "home-like" provides a nod of approval as women patrons will not be out of place; they will be in a domesticated public setting.

Other welcoming words for upper-class female patrons come in the form of words that paint a picture of the ambiance and activities taking place in a formal dining space. Churchill's, a fine dining establishment in Manhattan, emphasized in its 1914 advertisement "Dancing in New York's Handsomest Ballroom" (24). Dancing communicates to patrons that the establishment is for males and females. Ballroom, which is obviously associated with ballroom dancing, informs patrons that formal dancing will take place, which differs from popular "animal dances" such as the "bunny hug, grizzly bear, turkey trot, and kangaroo dip" (Whitaker, *Tea at the Blue*, 25). In other words, Chuchill's offers a space for elegant dancing versus the unsophisticated "animal dances" young people started doing in 1912 (Whitaker, *Tea at the Blue*, 25).

Dancing coupled with an elegant atmosphere ensured the patronage of the wealthy, for the advertisement appeals to "those who appreciate supreme artistic beauty combined with good taste" because "Churchill's is regarded as New York's most

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beautiful restaurant" ("Churchill's" 24). Churchill's emphasis on beauty hints at the large

investment it has made in fine furnishings to mirror the splendor of an upper-class home.

The stylish, well-made furniture coupled with high quality food makes Churchill's

"popular with the discriminating" ("Churchill's 24). The advertisement's use of the word

"discriminating" highlights upper-class patrons' refined tastes or preferences in food,

dress, music, dance, drink, artwork, flowers, furniture, and service.

Additionally, Churchill's advertisement appeals to female patrons through its

special attention to the luncheon: "Churchill's is also held in distinctive favor by New

York's smart women for Luncheon—both for it's a la carte service and for its Special

Luncheon, 75¢, which marks a striking innovation in view of its unequaled merit for the

charge" ("Churchill's" 24). The a la carte service allows women to select only one or a

few dishes for a light lunch at a reasonable price. Fashionable women, as denoted by the

term "smart" and also depicted by the picture of three women wearing stylish hats dining

together, can enjoy each other's company during lunch, and then return with their escorts

for dining and dancing for dinner as illustrated by the two pictures of dining couples

("Churchill's" 24).

Interestingly, restaurants, specifically fine dining establishments, used language

as a symbol of social status as well as a tool for discouraging middle and lower-class

people from attending: "Eating out became an urbane practice requiring special expertise.

Americans had to learn to read and order from the long, complex menus. The

unfamiliarity of many of the items and hotel keepers' tendency to use French instead of

English terms ('menu' instead of 'bill of fare') compounded the difficulty" (Cocks 83). In

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addition to dress and manners, foreign language added another obstacle for lower and middle-class patrons to overcome. Mispronouncing a menu item or having to rely on the waiter to translate menu items made the lower and middle classes visible. The intended embarrassment kept many away.

Likewise, a restaurant's name contains the power to welcome or discourage attendance. Sometimes restaurant names imply the type of food they serve which allows female patrons to determine if the restaurant is female friendly. As suggested by the above discussion of childlike treats and light foods for delicate bodies, restaurant names containing words such as tea, dairy, bakery, or vegetarian denote that the restaurant caters to women. Also, words associated with a feminine connotation through its connection to women's traditional roles or symbolism such as flowers, home, hearth, and family carry a female friendly seal of approval. While other restaurant names send messages about social class: "A 1923 tea room correspondence course suggested that high-class tea rooms should choose names like White Peacock or Silver Pheasant, which suggested a fashionable or smart atmosphere. Do not use unattractive names like Tubbs' or Blodgett's or silly names like Kill Kare or Dew Come Inn, said another tea room expert" (Whitaker, *Tea at the Blue*, 30). Sophisticated names versus light-hearted or silly names distinguish upper-class restaurants from lower-class restaurants. The silly restaurant names emphasize informality and a lack of decorum which sometimes translates into an informal setting where restaurant slang may be present in menus or used by waiters. For instance, Boston waiters in lower-class eating houses composed of all men patrons, used "'restaurant calls,' a kind of precursor to diner slang" such as "'Boston strawberries'

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(baked beans), Cincinnati quail (pork), 'sleeve balls' (fishcakes, authentically, a piece of

fish between two potato slices), and 'stars and stripes' (pork and beans)" (Erby 11). The

colorful restaurant calls sharply contrast with the elegant French menus and dainty

delights in fine dining establishments and tea rooms.

Although restaurant names appearing in advertisements compel or repel

customers as they imagine the interior spaces, the absence of an advertisement has a

unique allure for upper-class women. "Some of these feminine haunts were remarkably

discreet. For example, the Tea Cup was not listed in the *Crocker—Langley San Francisco

Directory*, and the Women's Exchange was listed only in the alphabetical listing of

residents and businesses. Presumably women who ate at these tearooms would be

introduced to them through acquaintances, thus assuring that the clientele remained

appropriate" (Sewell 71). Advertisements subtracted from restaurants' exclusivity. As

many people faithfully read daily newspapers, it was easy to entice the general public to

visit. With word of mouth traveling through a single proprietor or a select group of

patrons, a restaurants' customer base could be built rhetorically on the discriminating

tastes or whims of a select few.

Containment through Entrances

Based on a restaurant's advertisements and food selection, a woman patron may

choose to enter a restaurant, but she must be aware of the location of the proper entrance.

Material rhetoric again influences a woman's respectability. Advertisements and menus

reveal that special entrances were common for restaurants catering to men and women.

For instance, the cover of a 1901 dinner menu from Smith & McNell's notes a "Ladies'

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Entrance" at "201 Washington Street" (Rare Book Division). The specified ladies'

entrance controls the flow of street traffic as it ushers ladies to their designated places

within the building. One may assume the entrance serves to protect women's reputations

or to provide physical protection, for if women are dining alone, they are not interacting

or entering the building with strange men.

Not only which entrance but the placement of that entrance also mattered.

Upstairs or downstairs eateries were improper as proper restaurants were at ground level:

"George Foster noted that entering a certain ice creamery required climbing a flight of

steps. Since doing so meant lifting one's skirt above the ankles, this means of entry,

'except in cases of a millinery establishment or a shawl loft [is] of course, not to be

tolerated in good society.' Nor for the same reason, did respectable ladies descend into

restaurants . . ." (Lobel 208). When restaurants offered women patrons a ground-level

entrance, they enforced a code of decency as well as code of dress, for the entrance

assumes one is wearing a dress or skirt. Bloomers, a controversial alternative to skirts that

some women cyclists wore, symbolized an active woman, a New Woman. In contrast to

the True Woman, a representation of "piety, purity, submissiveness and domesticity"

(Welter 152), the term New Woman described "women more broadly than suffragist or

settlement worker, while connoting a distinctly modern ideal of self-refashioning"

(Patterson 2). In fact, Martha Patterson recognizes multiple types of women as falling

under the category of New Woman: "suffragist, prohibitionist, clubwoman, college girl,

American girl, socialist, capitalist, anarchist, pickpocket, bicyclist, barren spinster,

mannish woman, outdoor girl, birth-control advocate, modern girl, eugenicist, flapper,

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blues woman, lesbian, and vamp" (2). The New Woman types differed from the traditional True Woman in appearance, beliefs, and lifestyle. Opposed to the bloomer wearing New Woman, restaurants' ground level ladies' entrance signaled that restaurants welcomed the traditional True Woman.

However, the New Woman was not absent from restaurants. The famous tabloid *The National Police Gazette* in 1895 highlighted infamous bloomers in "Bloomers at the Bar" featuring Fannie Dee, a "bloomer girl" and "new woman," who "stood her wheel against the saloon door, walked to the bar, planked down the necessary price and asked for whiskey" (6). Fannie's unladylike dress, independent demeanor and desire for alcohol place her in a separate category from the True Woman or lady. The fact that Fannie's story appears in a tabloid creates the rhetorical framing of society's definition of a lady by defining what a lady is not. Tabloids typically feature stories related to shocking, unbelievable, or disgusting events. After reading a tabloid story, most readers react with horror or disapproval at the outrageous events tabloids present. Fannie's story is designed for such a reaction, for bars and saloons were considered all male establishments with the exception of prostitutes and women of ill repute. While the article does not term Fannie as a prostitute, the tabloid's rhetoric encourages readers to consider Fannie, one representation of the New Woman, as unladylike, a woman that readers would not want to encounter in fine dining establishments. Therefore, the use of the word "ladies" on menus and signs advertising ladies' entrances at first glance make it appear that only upper-class ladies are welcome. However, lady is a term that restaurant managers and the

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public struggled to define as illustrated in my discussion of women's dining companions in the second half of the chapter.

Containment through Décor

After considering food, advertisements and entrances, the presence or absence of homelike lighting and décor possessed the rhetorical power to welcome or discourage female patrons from dining in restaurants. Women's growing concern for restaurant cleanliness fostered an appreciation for well-lit rooms as well as light-colored furnishings which easily reveal a clean or dirty appearance: "Lightweight bentwood chairs were easy for women customers to move, added to the clean, light filled appearance, and had no upholstery to collect dirt and odors. Tiled floors often added a hygienic touch, in combination with brass rails and the stainless steel and glass of the steam table, as well as the clean white aprons worn by the women and men serving the food" (Sewell 80-81). Being the primary cleaners in the home, women recognized glass, metal, and tile surfaces as being easy to clean surfaces. Their transparency or shininess quickly show patrons' food particles, smudges and stains which allow the patrons to make an informed decision to stay or leave a restaurant based on its cleanliness. Likewise, a quick inspection of a restaurant employees' white apron or uniform could tell a story about an employee's hygiene.

Furthermore, the lightweight chairs described above allow delicate, dainty women to move them with ease, but what is more important is their movement reveals a clean or dirty floor beneath. Unlike the light movable chair, booths possessed both negative and positive connotations. While the booth "protected women from other diners" and

"shielded them from the policing gaze of waiters," its allowance for privacy and intimacy in the form of curtained booths, suggested a potential place for sexual activity in a "restaurant that served liquor" (Sewell 82-83). Similarly, other forms of chairs such as stools or backless seats which were often attached to the floor placed ladies in an inappropriate position. Tall stools forced ladies to lift their skirts up to sit on an elevated seat while stools or backless chairs affixed to the floor at a distance from the table promote bad posture as ladies must lean forward to reach their food. Stools and backless chairs' connection to saloons and eating houses firmly connected backless seats to masculine lower-class spaces, spaces free of tableware and decorum:

> According to one reluctant patron of a cheap eating house in 1844, 'the back-less seats were nailed to the floor so far from [the tables] that the epicures who patronized the establishment dined at an angle of forty five.' Silverware was rarely supplied, either because proprietors couldn't afford to purchase it or because they worried their patrons would abscond with it. Some customers brought their own utensils, but many preferred to just rely on their hands; pocketknives could also be useful tools for conveying food to mouth. Napkins were unheard of, though toothpicks, by all accounts, were in great demand and available for an extra charge (Erby 10).

The backless seat situated in all male establishments conjure an image of the lower-class patrons who dine solely to satisfy their hunger. Posture, manners, and cleanliness do not factor into the lower-class male world of eating houses. Even the name eating house strictly spells out its intended purpose. Thus, the lightweight chair for female patrons outranks the booth and backless chair, for the lightweight chair allows ladies to maintain their modesty in a strictly upright position.

To complement lightweight, delicate chairs, fine dining establishments and tearooms possessed delicate tableware. For those considering opening their own tearoom, an 1899 article in *Harper's Bazaar* provided the following tips: "The cooking must be excellent; the china must be delicate and dainty, and consequently both expensive and fragile; the silver, handsome and tasteful; the napery, of fine quality, and always spotless; and finally, the service must be first class" ("Tea-Rooms" 490). The expensive, fragile china and other fine tableware mirror the fine china and silverware found in upper-class women's homes. Likewise, many upper-class patrons, accustomed to servants serving tea in the home, expected a similar service in tea rooms and restaurants. The dainty china as mentioned above indicates the mild nature of the foods it contains and the careful manner in which food will be served as in the example of a restaurant patron describing the daintiness of a meal: "It was 'dainty'—that is, not highly spiced and fastidiously presented" (Whitaker, "Catering," 22). Overall, proprietors' investment in fine tableware and trained staff ensured rhetorical continuity between the patrons' homes and a homelike tea room or restaurant, a place that persuaded customers to regularly visit a home away from home. Material, spatial, and embodied rhetorics work as a network to reinforce the appropriateness of the dining establishment for respectable ladies.

Just as fine tableware communicates a message to upper-class patrons, restaurants' color schemes welcome certain patrons. The light colored, clean furnishings in the well-lit rooms of female friendly restaurants contrasts with the dark colors and décor of an all men's establishment: "[D]ark materials and masculine symbols such as beer steins, trophy heads, and hunting paraphernalia, w[ere] used to mark primarily

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masculine spaces" (Sewell 80). The presence of objects associated with alcohol and

hunting mimic masculine places in the home such as a man's den or private study as well

as public domesticated places such as hunting lodges. Whereas the décor of women's

restaurants or dining areas often includes feminine furniture with floral prints and flowers

and plants on tables and surrounding areas. In fine dining establishments, the prevalence

of flowers escalated to point that "[o]ne hotel manager said that his flower bill was larger

than his bill for the servants he employed in the tea room" (Whitaker, *Tea* 22).

While flowers fill women's dining establishments by adding a homelike touch,

restaurants' services provide women with a place to not only dine but rest: "[T]he tired

shopper also finds a place where she may rest while writing a letter, reading the

newspaper, or looking at the latest magazines, and where, in addition, she may send her

packages, with the certainty that they will be taken care of for her and promptly delivered

. . ." ("Tea-Rooms" 490). Window seats or couches for rest and an abundance of reading

materials encourage women to delay their stay and refresh themselves prior to finishing

their shopping. Just as they do at home, women put away their shawls and parasols in a

closet prior to resting. In some establishments, women patrons reclined with their lapdogs

or checked in their lapdogs upon arrival. Aware that beloved pets make a restaurant feel

like home, many upper-class establishments and tea rooms provided treats for dogs.

Waiters often complained about the great effort they put forth in pleasing a pet owner:

"The most annoying women cranks I know of are those who have pet dogs. They want all

the scraps saved, they want a paper to put the scraps in, they want the dog tied to the table

leg, they want just a small extra bone, and if you charge them 5 cents extra they have a

fit. Confidentially, we can bluff the male cranks, but the women defy us" ("Odd

Restaurant Characters" 13). Despite the trouble of serving patrons and their pets, waiters

acknowledge that good etiquette and business practice forbids them from denying a polite

request from a lady.

Furthermore, the writing desks mentioned above suggest that homelike restaurants

furnish a place for women to conduct business whether it is personal errands or official

club business. Writing desks furnished with pens and paper allow women to catch up on

letter writing as they write on behalf of their clubs or write to maintain contact with

distant relatives. Once their rest comes to an end, they do not have to lug heavy packages

home, for employees have made sure that the packages made their way to patrons' homes

or to their intended destinations.

Breaking Out: Utilizing Rhetoric to Gain Agency and Combat Oppression

Entrepreneurs' Rhetorical Agency

Women entrepreneurs were able to resist this rhetorical containment and labelling

by claiming the agency of spatial rhetoric. Those of the upper class who were easily

defined as ladies possessed the power to open restaurants and craft their own special

entrances. In 1907 the New Colony Club created a special entrance and room for men and

nonmembers: "One room will be set apart and known as the strangers' room. To this a

member may invite her husband or escort, but he may not go any further into the

precincts of the club. A separate entrance will be provided for men who visit the house on

the invitation of a member" ("New Colony" 9). Club members maintain a private space

for ladies to dine and socialize while also controlling when and with whom this private

space will be made public. The ladies' entrance in many fine dining establishments resembles the men's entrance to their club, for the entrance and special room for strangers guide men's footsteps while limiting their access to private spaces within New Colony's building. The entrance, strangers' room, and the presence of members accompanying male guests at all times ensure that male guests' footsteps fall along the path from the strangers' room to the dining area.

Similarly, women proprietors' ability to control entrances enables them to create spaces that are normally forbidden to women. A 1911 *New York Times* article sheds light on a dairy lunch room which appears be a place for female customers only, but alcohol and gambling set this establishment apart from the typical female eating establishments. The *New York Times* reporter discovers that the dairy lunch room is not a hidden, secretive space. Instead, the reporter describes it as containing "a broad door a few steps in from the street and wide open" ("Poolrooms Run" 1). Passersby could easily observe women patrons coming and going as well as the occasional male employee. Unlike a fine dining establishment or a distinguished tea room, the dairy lunch room's plain space provided neutral space for women of all classes: "The great number of women appeared to be of the eminently respectable homekeeping type. Others were obviously of another class. One woman must have been well over 70" ("Poolrooms Run" 1). With gambling and drinking taking place, one might imagine the dairy lunch room to have a rowdy atmosphere like a saloon; however, the calm and pleasant atmosphere made it identical to an ordinary dairy lunch room: "Many women had copies of newspapers containing racing news. All of them had pads or bits of paper and pencils. Everybody knew everybody, and

there was a most unusual democracy for even the simplest kind of a restaurant”

(“Poolrooms Run” 1). From the outside it appeared that women were peacefully dining,

reading newspapers, and socializing. Without close inspection, no one could discern

between the milk drinkers and the beer drinkers.

Workers and Consumers' Rhetorical Agency

Recognizing women employees' growing need for a safe work environment,

rhetorical resistance arises with women workers' collectives across the nation. The

Women's Trade Union League in 1909 created a restaurant called Tip Not where “no tips

are to be permitted” and waitresses receive “union rates” (“Feeding the Working Girl” 9).

Union wages supply women workers with a stable paycheck without having to place

themselves in danger by primarily working for tips from male patrons. For Tip Not

employees and customers, “luncheons” are provided “as cheaply as possible in a space

that welcomes male customers but is “clearly planned to attract feminine patronage”

(“Feeding the Working Girl” 9). Local working women can dine in an affordable,

comfortable space with other female patrons. In word and deed, the League resisted the

True Womanhood ideal, giving working women a material public space to earn a living

wage without having to rhetorically cater to their employers or patrons with their

language or bodies.

Although the Tip Not as well as a few other restaurants offered women employees

a safe place to work with union wages, the need for more safe spaces continued as

evidenced by organizations' efforts to improve working conditions. The Consumers'

League of New York City published findings concerning women restaurant employees'

long work hours, lack of breaks, and lowered "resistance to disease" in order to urge "the 1917 Legislature to remedy these unjust conditions" (The Consumers League of New York City, "Who Will Put"). To persuade readers, The Consumers' League compares the "54 hours" per week that women work in factories and stores to the 84 hours per week women restaurant workers accrue by working "a 12 hour day" in a "7 day week" (The Consumers League of New York City, "Who Will Put"). Although the numbers are astounding, the Consumers' League uses visual rhetoric to illustrate a typical day in the life of a restaurant worker to highlight the absence of breaks in a long workday. The cover of the publication features a picture of an aged restaurant worker at twenty-one years old whose long hours in a restaurant have erased any sign of youth. After presenting readers with astonishing statistics coupled with the visual imagery showcasing employees' weariness in mind and body, The Consumers League produces a call for action by asking readers to mail a check to the provided address to invest in their legislative campaign. The urgency to act is present in their call to "[i]nvest now in better health and opportunity for these thousands of girls" (The Consumers League of New York City, "Who Will Put"). The pathos generated from the aged woman's face prompts readers to act as thousands are suffering under harsh workplace conditions. The domesticated restaurant rhetorics of the True Womanhood ideal operated through spatial arrangement, material objects, and embodiment both to provide and constrain an individual woman's agency as entrepreneur, consumer, and worker. Only when women employed their rhetoric collectively through word and image were they able to expose and change the oppression within their working conditions.

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Within the tensions of agency and opportunity set against containment and oppression for women entrepreneurs, consumers, and workers across domesticated dining establishments, altruistic women employed rhetorical strategies individually and collectively to change the mistreatment of women in those spaces as a form of goodwill. While some women like the suffragists mentioned in the concluding chapter directly align with the definition of activism as they intentionally strive in their words and actions to bring about change. Others, such as club women serving as unofficial health inspectors, may not identify themselves as activists but rather as altruistic women. Following Charlotte Hogg who has explored the slippery ground of placing historical women in categories such as feminist and antifeminist and has discovered that Jacqueline Jones Royster and Gesa Kirsch's "ethics of hope and care" is a useful phrase to describe women who "fall outside our feminist frameworks," I use "goodwill" to describe the kind actions of those who may not directly fall into the activist category (Hogg 393). Thus, the following section describes the rhetorical actions of those involved in eliminating exclusionary practices in restaurants and those dedicated to improving restaurants' domesticated public space. As the examples demonstrate, women used rhetorics of physical action, the law, and collective activism to make visible, and sometimes change, the injustices of the rhetorics of the True Woman ideal as it is enacted in dining establishments.

While spatial arrangements and foods determined whether restaurants included or excluded women, a lady's dining companions helped distinguish respectable women from the rest. When women were not dining in a ladies' cafeteria, a female friendly ice

cream parlor, or an isolated room or table dedicated to women only, women were required to be escorted by a male to maintain their respectability. Many establishments required an escort for ladies during a certain time of day. For instance, in Delmonico's unescorted ladies "were served in the restaurant up to the dinner hour" (Thomas 199). However, the management's control of time and space were challenged. In *Delmonico's: A Century of Splendor*, Lately Thomas recounts the history of Delmonico's as he reflects on Charles Delmonico's reaction to violators. When a dowager and her daughter visited Delmonico's unaccompanied after a shopping trip, Charles Delmonico refused to serve them in the dining room. Acknowledging that he knew them well, he politely responded to the two women: "'That makes it all the more difficult for me to carry out a rule which we find imperative, and which is made for the protection of just such ladies as you are,' replied Charles. 'I will serve you in a private room, or will send a meal to your home without extra charge, but I cannot serve you here'" (Thomas 200). Some ladies, like the ones in this example, viewed the rule as just, for they valued Delmonico's discriminating demeanor which protected the reputations of the elite: "To her credit, the rebuffed lady left without further fuss, and later recounted the experience as a good joke on her forty years of irreproachable marriage and maternity, and also as a compliment to Mr. Delmonico and his excellently moral establishment" (Thomas 200).

Furthermore, in other instances many upper-class women may opt for an upper-class man to serve as an escort. However, in the early twentieth century many publications concerned with etiquette questioned the "wisdom of married ladies dining alone with married men and bachelors at fashionable hotels and restaurants" ("A Social

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Question" 39). Once again the ladies' morality is questioned. The article appearing in a 1903 copy of *Pictorial Review* never questions the bachelors' or married men's wisdom and morality even though they made the decision to dine with a married woman. Instead the married woman is left with the moral quandary and fear of being judged by onlookers as they observe her dining with a married man or bachelor who could simply be a friend.

Likewise, additional moral quandaries surfaced as more women along with their families chose to dine in restaurants due to a lack of kitchens in apartments and homes. In 1904 *Harper's Bazaar* featured "Home without a Kitchen," a story about two Scottish women's reactions to the absence of kitchens in America. "In every place they had been, they said, the meals had been sent in, and they really believed that no cooking was done in American houses, but that restaurants and caterers supplied both rich and poor households. The fact that many new flats are equipped only with 'kitchenettes,' instead of kitchens is illuminating" ("Home Without a Kitchen" 536). At the end of the story, the ladies argued that restaurants "cannot replace home-made and wholesome meals. Children never yet were reared in vigor and health on restaurant food, whose combination of cheap materials and exaggerated seasoning is trying even to adult digestions. The kitchenette is a mistake in social economics" ("Home Without a Kitchen" 536).

The decline of the kitchen brought forth questions about nutrition as well as concern about the decline in family time around the dinner table in a private family home and the displacement of wife and mother, for the kitchen allowed women to provide nurturing food for their families. The kitchen's possible disappearance struck fear into many because of its ties to the traditional True Woman, a figure that many fear will be

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replaced by the New Woman. Some articles argued that the economy is to blame. "Restaurant Life in San Francisco," a magazine article published in 1868, warns readers about the dangers of families dining regularly in restaurants:

> A mistaken notion of economy may drive husband and wife to the restaurants or induce them to submit to the indignity of being fed by errand boys, but the apparent savings is secured at an alarming sacrifice. Even large families have tried the experiment of restaurant life in San Francisco, and I have seen the head of such a family marshal his partner and seven children from lodgings to restaurant twice a day, to the great admiration of numerous beholding neighbors. These frequent such places for repast as have private rooms for families and ladies, where they secure such partial seclusion ("Restaurant Life" 465).

The writers warn that the restaurant's cheap prices are not worth sacrificing the private family dining room in the home. The cheap unhealthy meals will take its toll on the children's developing bodies.

Thus, the threat of restaurants infringing on private home space sparked activism on the part of many women who desired to not only communicate their fears, but also, take action to prevent the decline of the family dining time, improve restaurants, and open restaurants with women supplying wholesome food. One response to unhealthy family dining came in the form of food-supply kitchens which are usually "under the patronage of women's clubs or industrial and educational unions" (Frentz 606). "By the food-supply kitchen is meant, not as a restaurant, although many have restaurants attached, but a place where customers can buy cooked food to take home" (Frentz 606). "They offer good openings to the intelligent and ambitious, although perhaps untrained girl who desires to make the furnishing of food her permanent occupation" (Frentz 606).

Their menu consists of "cooked meats of several kinds, soups, stews, baked beans, fish-cakes, various kinds of bread and pastry, baked apples and other cooked fruits, and cake" (Frentz 606). The food-supply kitchen ensures that families receive wholesome food while being able to dine in the privacy of the home, a place for bonding with family. Similarly, single women, specifically women of the middle and lower classes who cannot afford fine dining establishments or fear rejection from establishments with escort rules, can enjoy a balanced meal without having to visit restaurants or have a kitchen in their house or apartment. Because food-supply kitchens help train girls for a future in the food industry, patrons benefit from the nutritious food as well as know that they are investing in young women's futures by contributing money to a training program.

While some activists responded by supplying the public with wholesome meals, others, aware that Americans' love affair with restaurants would not be short lived, decided to protect American families by acting as health inspectors. Just as mothers wash their hands, food, cookware, and utensils to ensure that their families are safe from foodborne illnesses, women viewed their traditional roles in the kitchen as consistent with a new sanitation supervisory role that was needed in restaurants, for some restaurants resorted to money saving strategies in exchange for unsanitary food: "In the cheapest of places, hash was rumored to be composed of uneaten bits of food that had been left on patrons' plates and subsequently gathered up, reheated, and served again to someone else. Proprietors of the cheapest venues were also accused of purchasing and serving spoiled meat and rotten eggs . . ." (Erby 11-12). Other violations involved food as well as restaurant location and employees' health conditions: A 1911 *Journal of Home*

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Economics cited the following violations: "proximity of restaurants to stables, workers with skin diseases or tuberculosis, tainted food, unsanitary kitchens and a host of unsavory practices" (qtd. in Whitaker, "Catering," 19).

To actively combat many restaurants' unsanitary conditions, women from a variety of groups served as official and unofficial health inspectors: "In a number of cities and a few states women are serving as official food and market inspectors. In some cities, organizations such as women's city clubs and women's municipal leagues carry on supplementary or 'follow-up' inspections" (Adams 130). Utilizing their knowledge of cleaning, women opened the doors to another profession that remained consistent with their home caring duties while increasing their power in the public spaces as they advise male and female workers and restaurant owners on hygienic practices. Employing the bodily and discursive rhetorics of action, these women demonstrated rhetorical agency and goodwill to protect the public from harm.

As women worked to ensure sanitary conditions in the restaurants, other women publicly voiced their concerns about restaurants' atmospheres. Women actively involved in the temperance movement clearly communicated their desires for alcohol-free, family-friendly restaurants through their voices and deeds. Because so many excellent sources detail the events of the temperance movement, I instead offer an example of women's early activism against smoking. In Seattle in 1915 Charlotte F. Jones, fueled by a desire to improve restaurants' atmospheres, submitted a draft of a proposed ordinance to the council which, she says, is in line with Judge Everett Smith's order against smoking on street cars" ("Woman Would Stop" 3). Considering the 1915 time period when health

professionals knew little to nothing about the harmful and possibly deadly effects of smoking, Jones's stance against smoking comes from a moral standpoint, for she categorizes those who would object to the ordinance as being part of "the hoodlum element, chiefly cigarette fiends, who are unworthy of any consideration" ("Woman Would Stop" 3). An additional point, although unstated in the article, may be that Jones detested the smell of cigarettes mixed with the aroma of freshly cooked food and the lack of clean air in a poorly ventilated restaurant filled with smoke. Although Jones unfairly stereotypes all smokers as morally questionable trouble makers, she intelligently draws on the ethos of a legal authority to support her claim: Judge Everett Smith. Using logic, she reasons that if legal authorities like Smith are in favor of cleaning up the smoky interior of streetcars, then government officials will follow his example and abolish smoking in restaurants. Although her bill fails as restaurants are granted the right to make their own policies, Jones's efforts serve as a stepping stone for future cases against smoking in restaurants and other public spaces.

Just as women were gaining ground in their supervisory roles of health inspectors and shaping restaurants' atmospheres into morally upright spaces with clean air, women called attention to men infringing on trades associated with women's traditional roles. In the1887 article "The Effects of Civilization upon Women," the author's name appears as "By a Woman," suggesting that the author feels that her concerns are not a personal grievance. Instead she is writing on behalf of other working women who are experiencing the frustration of finding employment and discovering that men are occupying trades that women have been working in for centuries (45). While the author calls attention to

clothing industries as well as specific food industries being usurped by men, she upsets the stereotype of working women being masculine: "The question is understood; women have not become manly, but men have become effeminate. In consequence of all their time-immemorial employments having been gradually taken from them, women in this nineteenth century are absolutely driven to seek some outlet for their energies, or necessities, in new lines of work" ("The Effects"). The author suggests working women who are frequently accused of stepping outside of the traditional trades aligned with domesticity are forced to do so as men are usurping jobs in food and clothing industries. While the domestic jobs have been considered womanly for centuries and devalued in comparison to traditional male jobs involving mental labor, the author offers a rebuttal to show that what was once women's work involves great mental and physical skill: "There is reason to think that the women of twenty years ago were cleverer than the present race. No fool could carry in her head the knowledge of at least some fourteen trades, any of which would fail unless accurately performed. Even to bake, to brew, to cook, spin, and iron (to do these ill was to gain the contempt of the world) required more brain-power than our so-called modern culture . . ." ("The Effects"). The fourteen trades that she attributes to the average housewife suit women for numerous occupations in public spaces. In other words, women may be new to the workforce, but they are experts through their hands-on experience and in some cases, their formal educational training in home economics. Thus, in "The Effects of Civilization upon Women," the author argues for the embodied rhetorical agency of women through labor by emphasizing the correlation between women's life experiences and trades involving domestic skills.

As a testament to women's skill and training, women carved a space into the restaurant terrain through their work as employees and entrepreneurs. Their prior experience in working with food in domestic spaces coupled with their need to ban together to create restaurants for female shoppers and workers as well as places to train future generations of women workers fueled women's participation as rhetorical actors in public space. For instance, in office buildings, some women joined together to form a co-operative lunch club. They located an empty storage space to transform into a regular dining area. Rotating cooking and serving roles, women independently maintained their lunch space "by contributing thirty-five cents each a week" to "keep the lunch-room supplied with canned meats, tea, sugar, milk, vinegar, etc." (A Co-operative" 630). Each woman benefits from the participating in the lunch club because it provides "an opportunity for the play of housekeeping instincts" and fosters "a sense of ownership in their lunch-room" ("A Co-operative" 630). The co-operative lunch club allows women to maintain their respectability as they dine privately, away from the male gaze, while maintaining control over the operation and maintenance of their own dining space.

When stepping back to examine True Womanhood's rhetorical influence in shaping women's roles as entrepreneurs, consumers, and workers in restaurants, stories of agency, inclusion, exploitation, and exclusion emerge. Through a network of spatial, material, embodied, discursive, and visual rhetorics, dining establishments used respectability as a means to draw women consumers while containing and restraining them in that role. Women entrepreneurs and workers worked to create an independent lifestyle while the rhetorics of respectability made them invisible and thus open to

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exploitation. Women workers' connection to the home in their roles as wives and mothers suggested to many employers that women were working to supplement their husbands' incomes. Thus, their employment appeared to be temporary which prompted many employers to exploit their employees. Long work hours, low wages, sexual harassment, improper nutrition, and little rest paint a clear picture of restaurant workers' exploitation. Similarly, women entrepreneurs endured exploitation as well. For entrepreneurs like Myrtle Walgreen and Mother Smith, True Womanhood's ties to domesticity limited their agency. With Myrtle managing from home, she became invisible to the public sphere. Customers enjoyed her food and employees took her management advice. However, Myrtle's ties to the home robbed her of the credit she deserved for making Walgreen's what it is today. Similarly, Mother Smith's connection to nursing sick girls back to health continued as she operated her New York restaurant. Like Myrtle, Mother Smith's link to the domestic sphere overshadows her role as an entrepreneur.

In contrast to stories of entrepreneurs' exploitation, roadside entrepreneurs in the country and women's organizations acting as entrepreneurs possessed agency, meaning the ability to shape their environment in terms of working conditions and inclusivity. For instance, countryside tearoom owners controlled their hours of operation, wages, breaks, ambiance, and entrances. They had the power to decide who occupied their restaurants' space in terms of employees and customers. Escort rules and separate entrances never figured into most female entrepreneurs' establishments. Yet, a close examination of women consumers' agency reveals agency in the form of activism and goodwill. As noted above, some women's groups acted as health inspectors in formal and informal

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capacities to ensure restaurants maintained sanitary environments. Overall, women

consumers' rhetorical voices and actions signified their emergence as public rhetors who

were capable of igniting change in society's understanding of respectability for women in

public spaces.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION: THE VALUE OF SPATIAL AND MATERIAL RHETORICS IN
ANALYZING WOMEN'S WORK LOCATIONS

Overall, the dissertation highlights consumerism as a rhetorical strategy to enact

change; second, its focuses on material rhetorics and the ways they operate; third, it adds

to the ever-growing body of rhetorical work on American women; and, fourth, it makes

visible these spatial and material rhetorics as important for analyzing women's work

locations today. To conclude the discussion of domesticated workplaces in the form of

nineteenth-century sewing businesses, boardinghouses, and restaurants, I emphasize the

opportunities for subversive agency in the roles of entrepreneur, consumer, and worker

that emerge despite the oppressive qualities of each domesticated workplace, and I argue

for the importance of historians' continuation of analyzing historical spaces to uncover

the tension between oppression and agency in the process of rescue, recovery, and re-

inscription.

While businesses such as restaurants placed restrictions on women, businesses'

goal of profit and the growing need to thrive among fierce competitors forced owners to

think about the identities and needs of their expanding diverse customer base. For

example, restaurants were initially able to keep women in their place, but soon their place

expanded. Owners could not confine women to a specific table or room. Women such as

Harriot Stanton Blatch, Elizabeth Cady Stanton's daughter, brought forth a campaign

against restaurants, a campaign that "coincided with the efforts by suffragists who demanded not only the right to vote, but that women be considered full public actors in public spaces" (Freedman 13). Thus, women's power as consumers pressed restaurants to consider women's taste in food and their need for a space to dine after a shopping trip or a space to socialize with friends and family.

By the same token, the expansion of the domestic sphere afforded women agency through entrepreneurship. Although most entrepreneurs, regardless of sex or race, faced multiple challenges and labored well beyond the eight-hour workday, entrepreneurship, possible through the transformation of the home into a business, offered women new pathways for earning a living and possessing disposable income to spend in the marketplace, bolstering their status as consumers. Many female business owners had their own customer base. Their gender and racial identities allowed them to make and sell products that appealed to customers of their own race and gender.

In addition to recognizing the agency of consumers and entrepreneurs, it is important to also consider the agency of the material world. Roxanne Mountford perceptively acknowledged the need for scholars to study the material world's significance: "The material—a dimension too little theorized by rhetoricians—often has unforeseen influences over a communicative event and cannot always be explained by cultural or creative intent" (42). Through my dissertation, I contribute to the scholarship on the material world and the messages that material objects communicate. The physical walls, tables in restaurants, needles, sewing machines, and decorative furniture, all of the objects that make up places, communicated messages to nineteenth-century people who

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encountered and interacted with their material world. Interestingly the nineteenth-century material world continues to communicate messages to twenty-first century audiences. The aforementioned objects tell stories about labor, opportunity, exclusion, identities, exploitation, racism, and sexism.

Thus, the communicative qualities of objects illustrate the rhetorical power of objects and the pressing need for humans to give objects their due. Richard Marback produces a call for action as he recognizes objects' power: "Opening and extending the hand of embodied rhetoric by giving the object its due requires of us that we embrace mutual vulnerability and forego the claim to agency we make when we project our sovereignty over objects" (59). In the process of examining the objects that provide a homelike atmosphere in public spaces, I have recognized the power these objects possess in shaping the lives of nineteenth-century people as well as influencing history.

As scholars look to the past to uncover snapshots of nineteenth-century spaces and people, spatial analysis of individual workplaces often reveals forgotten women who played an important part in history. Scholars such as Xiomara Santamarina have discovered nineteenth-century entrepreneurs who harnessed agency and independence through their entrance into domesticated workspaces. As editor of Eliza Potter's *A Hairdresser's Experience in High Life,* Santamarina sheds light on Potter's fascinating entrepreneurial journey. While working as a domestic servant and traveling abroad with her employer, Potter learned about European culture and learned to dress hair. When she returned to the United States, women desired her services, and she taught them about fashion and womanhood abroad. Thus, her autobiography offers a story of agency and

social mobility through entrepreneurship. Hairdressing provided Potter with economic independence and her knowledge of the fashion and manners of women abroad allowed her to assist white women with newly acquired wealth to blend in with the wealthy through their dress and manners. Therefore, Potter served as a teacher, for she established herself as a "'beauty' expert" and an "expert in elite femininity" (Santamarina xix). She could not have improved her social standing without employing discursive, visual, material, and spatial rhetorics.

Like Potter's story, numerous histories and rhetorical strategies of enterprising women and minorities are left undiscovered. The previous chapters build on the work of scholars like Santamarina who explore past spaces and rescue and recover figures like Potter in order to create a fuller picture of the past, meaning a diverse multivoiced panoramic picture.

When studying nineteenth-century women, it is easy to overlook figures who appear to have failed in using their agency to ignite change. Yet, a closer look often reveals that what appears to be failure is in fact a step toward change. For instance, some female customers considered the escort rule as unjust and utilized restaurants as a site for change as they employed their rhetorical skills. Women employ the rhetorics of space in dining establishments as a means to create legal discursive arguments, advocating for change. In 1900, Rebecca Israel sued Ignatz H. Rosenfeld for $500 after she visited Café Boulevard and was refused service "on the ground that she had come without a male escort, that she left the place without having been served, and that the humiliation she suffered made her physically ill" ("Restaurant Keepers' Rights" 3). Although Israel lost

her case, her testimony allowed the public to hear, reflect, and discuss their thoughts on women's presence in restaurants. Likewise, a more important issue emerged from Israel's complaint concerning women's status as citizens:

> The plaintiff based her complaint upon the provisions of Chapter 1,042 of the Laws of 1895, commonly known as the Civil Rights bill, which originally was intended for the protection of colored persons against the 'color line' drawn by a certain class of proprietors of public resorts, and providing 'that all persons within the jurisdiction of this State shall be entitled to the full and equal accommodations, advantages, facilities, and privileges of inns, restaurants, * * * and all other places of public accommodation or amusement, subject only to the conditions and limitations established by law and applicable alike to all citizens. ("Restaurant Keepers' Rights" 3)

It seems logical that Israel would be considered as part of "all persons" and possess the right to "full and equal accommodations" ("Restaurant Keepers' Rights" 3). Nevertheless, Justice Greenbaum sided in favor of Rosenfeld due to a section of the law that maintained that "regulations barring out a certain class of intended patrons are admissible and perfectly lawful if they are equally and impartially enforced against all comers" ("Restaurant Keepers' Rights" 3). Israel could not prove that other women were treated differently. However, if Israel were able to make such a claim, it would be interesting to see if the court further divided the class of women patrons based on social class and race.

What is more disturbing is the question of citizenship in this case. In addition to the aforementioned regulation, the court sided with Rosenfeld for other reasons: "This failure on the part of the complainant, together with several other technical deficiencies, among them a failure to show that Miss Israel was a citizen, caused Justice Greenbaum to

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nonsuit her" ("Restaurant Keepers' Rights" 3). Israel's failure to show her citizenship

brings to the forefront the law's failure to protect noncitizens in the United States. The

fact that Justice Greenbaum labeled the case as a "nonsuit" illustrates noncitizens'

inability to pursue litigation for any wrong doing. Thus, Israel's status as a noncitizen

woman cripples her agency. Yet, her voice being heard in court brings two important

issues to light: the rights of noncitizens and women.

Prior to the 1875 women were not considered citizens. "The U.S. Supreme

Court's 1875 decision in *Minor v. Happersett* marked a new era in American women's

citizenship. As it declared women citizens but concluded that their citizenship did not

entail the right to vote" (Maddux 105). As illustrated by Israel's case, which occurred

after the 1875 ruling, and the Blatch case that I discuss below, the rights of citizen and

noncitizen women were not resolved by the 1875 landmark case. Women's rights and the

rights of male restaurant owners become at odds with each other. Although many

attempted to silence women's voices with verdicts, their voices were still heard, and their

grievances ignited conversations throughout public spaces.

As similar suits followed, other women became more inclined to speak out

against the unjust policies of restaurants. Women such as Harriot Stanton Blatch,

Elizabeth Cady Stanton's daughter, brought forth a campaign against restaurants, a

campaign that "coincided with the efforts by suffragists who demanded not only the right

to vote, but that women be considered full public actors in public spaces" (Freedman 13).

"During a visit to The Hoffman House in 1907 with Mrs. Hettie Wright Graham, Blatch

checked with the front desk before entering the elevator. Presumably the clerk was

unaware of the time, because he signaled that the women should go up, although the

Hoffman House prohibited unaccompanied women who were not staying in the hotel

from dining in the roof garden after six" (Haley 145). After checking in their parasols and

sitting down, the waiter refused to serve them. Blatch demanded to see the manager,

James Clancy, who provided the following response: "[T]he hotel's policy was for 'the

protection of just such ladies as you are'" (Haley 146). Blatch did not appreciate the

manager's flattery or his attempt to maintain The Hoffman House's exclusivity.

Soon after the incident, Blatch filed a suit against The Hoffman House. Blatch

did not sue The Hoffman House for need of money; her suit questioned the definition of

lady:

> But Blatch's decision to file suit was not only about a woman's right to dine; it
> was also about how aristocratic restaurants defined respectability. 'It does seem
> strange that women, whose respectability is apparent, may not satisfy their
> hunger,' Blatch explained, 'while men, no matter what their characters may be,
> are admitted anywhere . . . I do not think that a restaurant owner has the right to
> refuse a woman a meal at any hour. There are numbers of women working as
> physicians and in other professions. They should be permitted to eat whatever
> they choose and whenever they choose.' For Blatch and Graham, a court victory
> would give women the freedom to dine where they chose and, equally important,
> ensure that the respectability of the middle-class women who dined in public
> could not be called into question. (Haley 145)

Blatch's claim that management continues to question women's characters while failing

to question men's characters rings true in many accounts from the time. For instance,

when a Delmonico's waiter informed Victoria Woodhull and Tennie C. Claflin,

"sensational 'lady stock brokers,'" that they could not dine unescorted during dinner

time, Claflin "signaled the driver of a horse cab outside, brought him in, and seated him

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at their table. In a firm but ladylike voice, Victoria then ordered, 'Tomato soup for three.' They were served—and Delmonico's reaped the benefit of the laughter that swept the room'" (Thomas 200-201). Although all involved enjoyed a good laugh, the male escort's credentials were not questioned. The humorous incident testifies to the ladies' cleverness by simultaneously abiding by the escort rule and undermining the rule's intention by bringing a lowly driver into an elite dining establishment.

As illustrated in the aforementioned examples, the definition of man or gentleman never enters the conversation; however, the definition of a lady seems more complex. Intrigued by Blatch's suit against The Hoffman House, many reporters interviewed restaurant managers to see if management and restaurant employees could produce a uniform definition. One manager was nearly left speechless as he grasped for the right words: "Why, my dear Sir—why, a lady, my good fellow, is a—um—lady, hey?" ("Any Woman's a Lady" 8). Similarly, a night clerk struggled to put it into words: "You can tell by the way she sits, by the way she orders, by the way. Oh, man, a lady is a lady, don't you see?" ("Any Woman's a Lady" 8). The clerk's impassioned response suggests the assumption that a definition is not needed. It appears to the clerk to be a silly question. Yet, the answers differed for each person, and restaurants that made exceptions to their escort rule were not able to spell out the characteristics that make one a lady. Several fine dining establishments in New York admitted ladies without male escorts if they had "impeccable credentials," meaning that male employees only admitted a woman if she "looked and carried herself like a lady" (Freedman 14).

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Although the newspaper reporter as well as restaurant patrons never discovered a uniform definition or policy, multiple restaurant managers desired to make a case by case decision without spelling out qualifications or credentials appeared uniform. Likewise, Judge Spiegelberg failed to directly address the specifics of The Hoffman House's definition of lady or dinning policy. Instead, the judge focused on the restaurant's space, influencing the jury's decision: "With the judge instructing the jury 'that the women were entitled to be served when they applied for dinner in some part of the house, but not necessarily to roof garden,' the jury needed only minutes to find in favor of the Hoffman House. Blatch's attorney moved for a new trial, but the case was never pursued" (Haley 147). The jury's verdict reveals that restaurant owners maintain the right to provide or withdraw permission to use certain spaces within a restaurant. Restaurant owners, therefore, maintain the right to decide the placement and containment of each customer on a case by case basis.

Although management's unspoken rules and definitions prevailed, cases like Israel's and Blatch's set the wheels of change in motion as allies for women's right to unescorted dining surfaced. Powerful allies such as clergymen amplified the ethos surrounding their arguments. After a famous unescorted female novelist struggled to find a restaurant to admit her during her stay in New York, Dr. H. Pereira Mendes, a well-known Hebrew rabbi, reflected on the sad message that the escort policy sends about humanity: "Humanity is not religionized if women need an escort at night" ("Dr. H. Pereira Mendes"). To follow Mendes' comment, the anonymous author of the 1887 article in *The Christian Recorder* stated, "He [Dr. Mendes] might have added that a city

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is not civilized so long as women without an escort must go hungry in its streets of a

night, as a woman novelist, whose name is known all over this country and Europe, has

done in New York within a fortnight, because no restaurant, until she could provide

herself with a male acquaintance would serve her a meal" ("Dr. H. Pereira Mendes"). The

writer and rabbi employ pathos to rhetorically persuade readers to reflect on what the

escort rule says about their beloved city. Residents want their city to be a safe place.

When an escort rule is in place, it is equivalent to the city saying that the escort provides

women patrons with protection against the dangerous city.

Thus, these lawsuits and rule breakers illustrate nineteenth-century women's

agency in unmasking women's containment. Regardless of the outcome of the court

cases, women applied their rhetorical agency in attempt to change laws and policies.

Although change did not happen immediately, their voices ignited conversations and

served as small steps toward change.

Along with legal recourse, nineteenth-century women employed rhetoric to break

out of their containment in domesticated spaces. In some cases, women's restaurants

transformed into sites of activism imbued with a political agenda. In 1911 the Fifteenth

Assembly District Association of the Suffragist Party announced its plans to include "a

lunch room for the hungry" in its headquarters, a leased four-story house ("Suffragists

Lease" 13). A "lunch room for the hungry" sends a clear message that the restaurant is

for male and female patrons ("Suffragists Lease" 13). Their announcement lacks the

implication of daintiness or light fare; instead it simply makes a statement about

satisfying hunger. However, the food in the suffragists' dining areas communicates its

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own messages. The restaurant's announcement in the *New York Times* teases readers with a preview of the delicious seasonal items to come while reinforcing the cause: "The basement will be the suffrage restaurant, lunch and tearoom, and red hot suffrage beverages can be obtained there made of solid-as-the-cause materials on the order that 'mother used to make.' The Summer[sic] dishes served will be cooling and refreshing, as frigid as the attitude of some politicians to woman suffrage, the women who are to look after the lunch room say" ("Suffragists Lease" 13). Their intriguing political points weaved into menu item descriptions with a touch of humor grab potential patrons' attention and encourage them to visit. Although playfully designed, the restaurant serves as a gathering place for supporters of suffrage and possibly an open space for the curious or undecided to learn more about the cause in the nonthreatening, inclusive rhetoric and atmosphere of the suffragists' restaurant.

Moreover, additional businesses strived for inclusivity as they dismissed gender-specific dining areas, escort rules, and class separation. Around 1910 Greenwich Village populated with an interesting mix of "writers, radicals, feminists, and 'ultramodern' couples, produced a lively, fun-seeking culture, with plenty of clubs, salons, and tea rooms to hang out in" (Whitaker, *Tea at the Blue*, 38). The tea rooms existing in the early years of Greenwich Village served as a counterculture to the upper class all women's tea room. Like the suffragists' restaurant mentioned above, the presence of radicals and feminists produced an atmosphere filled with lively conversations about diverse political ideologies. The lively atmosphere contrasted with the tame atmosphere filled fine china, dainty food, and elegant women having a luncheon in the traditional tea room. The

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diverse Greenwich Village patrons dined on "colorfully painted tables" and "debat[ed] red wine" (Whitaker, *Tea at the Blue*, 40). The Greenwich Village patrons' lack of decorum created a bohemian tea room with a loose moral code: "Almost any kind of unconventional behavior—disregard for wealth and social status, smoking by women in public, informality in clothing, looser sexual mores—was regarded as a sign of incipient or actual bohemianism" (McFarland 190).

Despite the contrasting behavior between the bohemian tea room and the traditional upper-class tea room for women, both offered the rhetorical space of home. While a woman patron in a traditional tea room makes herself at home by sipping tea on a comfortable couch slightly past the lunch hour, patrons in Greenwich Village frequented the tea rooms throughout the day and night: "Villagers lived in tiny furnished rooms, spending so much of their time in clubs and tea rooms they would often give them for their address. Some tea rooms accommodated these odd habits, such as the Black Parrot, whose hours were 8:30 P.M. to 1 A.M., and another that advertised, 'Open all night and frequently during the day'" (Whitaker, *Tea at the Blue*, 38). With these patrons' limited home spaces, restaurants became an extension of their home. The tea room became a place for an exciting night life rather than a temporary source of refreshment after a long day of shopping. The counterculture located in Greenwich Village's tea room ushered in an unrestricted space of inclusion.

In order to create a fuller picture of the past, the reasons for women's erasure must be considered along with unique approaches that scholars must take to rescue, recover, and re-inscribe. When studying women's labor, women become invisible due to

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their connection with the domestic sphere. Frequently, husbands and male family members eclipse their identities as business owners and workers. For instance, the third chapter references Kari Thomasdatter's erasure as a boardinghouse keeper. As some family members recall the past, they fail to remember Thomasdatter's contribution to the family during tough economic times. Sadly, the material world further supports her erasure when her granddaughter, Kari McBride, discovers business cards that "omitted her name and effaced her labor with their assertion 'O.O. Solem, Prop.'" (McBride 104). Often husbands and male relatives who are involved as business partners or not involved in any degree use rhetoric to take credit for women's labor.

Thus, women's erasure in labor history aligns with women's erasure in the canon. In *How to Suppress Women's Writing*, Joanna Russ notes a similar problem. On the cover of Russ's book, the following words appear: "She didn't write it. She wrote it but she shouldn't have. She wrote it, but look what she wrote about. She wrote it, but she wrote only one of it. She wrote it but she isn't really an artist, and it isn't really art. She wrote it, but she had help. She wrote it but she's an anomaly" (Russ). Like Russ's observations, without feminist and rhetoric scholars' recovery efforts, women entrepreneurs' and workers' identities can be explained in connection to males in a similar fashion: She didn't work. She worked, but she had help. Her husband or son managed the business. She was just there to help him. She managed the business, but she is an unusual woman living in the nineteenth-century.

Coupled with women's connection to men, their presumed primary identity as mothers, daughters, and sisters downplay their roles as entrepreneurs, managers, and

workers. For women like Julia Wolfe, owner and operator of the Old Kentucky Home Boardinghouse, it is easy for scholars to recognize her only as Thomas Wolfe's mother just as Myrtle Walgreen is recognized as drug store chain owner, Charles Walgreen's wife. Although Walgreen and Wolfe are famous men, their fame should not extend to usurp credit for the business accomplishments of Julia Wolfe and Myrtle Walgreen. Similarly, women's erasure can connect to any unsavory or potentially unsavory details connected to their businesses. As pointed out in the third chapter, Mary Ellen Pleasant's possible connection to prostitution discourages some scholars from recognizing her as one of the greatest entrepreneurs of the nineteenth century. Despite her outstanding skill as an entrepreneur and investor, her contribution to civil rights, and her employment of African Americans, Pleasant's reputation as a madam in a time when prostitution was common in mining communities overshadows her work in business.

The aforementioned examples serve as just a few of the reasons that women entrepreneurs and workers are erased from history. By acknowledging the reasons for women's erasure, feminist and rhetoric scholars can move forward in their rescue and recovery efforts as they examine the material artifacts that tell the stories of their workplaces and entrepreneurial endeavors. In examining sewing needles, clothing, booths, letters, advertisements, menus, hat boxes, and business cards, scholars explore women's available means. Available means brings to mind Aristotle's definition of rhetoric: "Rhetoric may be defined as the faculty of observing in any given case the available means of persuasion" (24). By examining the material world, scholars

understand women entrepreneurs' available means in terms of establishing ethos as well as persuading contemporary and future generations of their work's value.

When reflecting on her grandmother's work as a boardinghouse keeper, McBride states, "Reading my grandmother's account of her work helps me to understand women's erasure from the economy not as a disembodied problem for academicians but as the day-to-day struggle of women like her to claim their worthiness in a world that devalued them, to make their work visible in a world that ignored it" (McBride 110). A patriarchal world contributes to women's erasure through denying their identity as entrepreneurs or attributing their success to others or claiming it as an anomaly, yet, as McBride discovers through her grandmother's letters, the material world tells another story. Nineteenth-century women's writings and materials attest to women's rhetoric, work, and worth.

By examining women's available means of persuasion in building a case for their work's value, scholars must use nontraditional methods in the exploration. Nontraditional methods involve what Clifford Geertz refers to as "tacking out" combined with Royster and Kirsch's "critical imagination" (x). After researchers build on the information that they have gathered through traditional means, then they use their critical imagination to note absences and state probabilities or possibilities. For example, based on the information that I have, what actions may have taken place? What objects, practices, or people influenced the women that I am studying? Furthermore, Royster and Kirsch suggest other ethical techniques such as using strategic contemplation to learn more about their research subjects. For instance, researchers may conduct fieldwork by visiting the location of a nineteenth-century woman. Through the visit, the researcher gathers

information from their observations as well as their embodied experience at the site. They handle artifacts, observe the atmosphere, and reflect on possibilities. After their quiet reflection and observation, researchers may ask questions of the texts or artifacts. At this point scholars may note absences or potential attempts at erasure.

After recognizing nontraditional methods of examining the value of women's work in the past, it is worthwhile to also consider the value of spatial and material rhetorics for analyzing women's work locations today. The practice of domesticating public spaces has persisted from the nineteenth century to the present. Although the blurring of domestic and public spaces has opened doors for women and minorities to participate in the public spaces, the oppression and exploitation in the past continues to the present. Without clear boundaries, work persists throughout the day and every day of the week. While many workers still commute to their workplaces, technology tethers them to their workplace as they check their online accounts, make phone calls, and complete online work-related tasks from home. For women, the blurred boundaries between work and home provide little time for family, household tasks, or other pursuits beyond the domestic. Although household tasks and childcare in the twenty-first century are often shared with partners or extended family members, the stress of being a worker, mother, and wife still weigh heavily on women's shoulders. The blending of domestic and public spaces has come at a high cost. I am by no means suggesting that we should embrace separate spheres ideology, with women belonging to the domestic sphere and only men participating in the public sphere. With the current blend public and domestic spaces, the homelike warmth and comfort get usurped by the intruding demands of the

work world. As researchers continue to study the impact of blending the public and private spaces in today's world, it is worthwhile to call attention to oppression and search for avenues of agency in our twenty-first century domesticated workplaces.

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