Ryan, Kathleen J., Nancy Meyers, and Rebecca Jones, editors. *Rethinking Ethos: A Feminist Ecological Approach to Rhetoric*. Southern Illinois UP, 2015. 320 pages.

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Rethinking Ethos: A Feminist Ecological Approach to Rhetoric not only provides new insights for the understanding of feminist ethos, but also calls for a reorientation to how ethos is conceived and discussed more generally. In the preface to the collection, editors Kathleen J. Ryan, Nancy Myers, and Rebecca Jones boldly state that the collection is their "effort to disrupt everyday definitions of ethos as 'credibility' or 'character'" (vii). In the introduction, Ryan, Myers, and Jones provide the rationale for the collection and set up the degree to which ecological thinking reshapes the understanding of ethos. More specifically, the authors explain that ecological thinking takes rhetorical theories of ethos construction away from conversations of the "individual" and instead moves the conversations toward the collective. Ultimately, Ryan, Myers, and Jones explain, the collection argues

> for an alternative theory of ethos at the confluence of ecological thinking and feminist rhetorical theory: feminist ecological ethē. This term both describes women's public ethos construction relative to time, contexts, and different relationships and attempts to collect, name, and observe patterns in the dispersed work of feminist rhetorical scholars focusing on ethos. In this sense, women's ethos construction can be read as ecological thinking. (2)

Moving away from a linear relationship between rhetor and audience and moving toward feminist ecological thinking—habits of mind—encourages us as feminist rhetoricians to resist the urge to "place" women's rhetorical practices in a logic that was conceptualized without us in mind or as models for such practice.

The collection is organized in three sections: "Ethē as Interruption-Interrupting," "Ethē as Advocacy-Advocating," and "Ethē as Relation-Relating." Taken together, the works included in each part contribute to a better understanding of the fluid and shifting nature of ethos and the importance of conceiving of ethos as more than a static argumentative strategy that is derived

from an individual author. Instead, the collection urges readers to recognize that "[e]thos is neither solitary nor fixed. Rather, ethos is negotiated and renegotiated, embodied and communal, co-constructed and thoroughly implicated in shifting power dynamics" (11).

In part one, "Ethē as Interruption-Interrupting," interruption "refers to the 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" (23). Analyzing ethos through an ecological lens actively works against the dominant theory that ethos is constructed by the individual rhetor and is dependent on the audiences' ability to directly identify with the speaker/author. Thus, the chapters in this section demonstrate that instead of wholly co-opting strategies or methods of the more traditional and authorized male rhetor, women rhetors have often built their feminist ethos through interrupting the taken-for-granted conceptions of "who" is authorized to speak and "how" speaking is expected to be done.

In analyzing the memoir of Frances E. Willard, Kristie S. Fleckenstein demonstrates how the methods used by Willard to claim her—and by extension women's—right to ride a bicycle in 1895 interrupt traditional notions of ethos construction. Through careful analysis of Willard's photographic memoir, Fleckenstein finds that "the photographic images displayed in her memoir provide evidence of the gradual and systematic process by which Willard claims the male-marked authority to act in public venues" (35). Looking to Willard's memoir as Fleckenstein does offers a complicated version of feminist ethos construction, one that must take into account the use of new technologies, the historical contexts in which they engaged, and both the challenges and strategies of building ethos for women.

Adding to readers' understanding of ethē as interruption-interrupting, Valerie Palmer-Mehta looks at the implementation of radical ethos as embodied by controversial feminist Andrea Dworkin. Palmer-Mehta's captivating analysis of Dworkin and her purposeful rejection of agreeable ethos causes readers to reconceive the sometimes narrow ways scholars speak of ethos. More specifically, Palmer-Mehta analyzes Dworkin's choice to avoid building her own credibility and authority and instead ask her audiences to edify their own. Thus, Palmer-Mehta demonstrates that Dworkin's radical ethos does not depend on building and/or nurturing connections to—or establishing commonplaces with—her audiences.

Complementing Fleckenstein and Palmer-Mehta's analyses, Stacey Waite suggests in chapter three, "The Unavailable Means of Persuasion: A Queer Ethos for Feminist Writers and Teachers," that queer theory aids the study of ethos by turning our attention away from what is available in order to imagine what is unavailable. Rather than conceiving ethos as a representation of

"good" and "moral" character (terms that can be troubling for the queer community), Waite argues that ethos is a way of "seeing." By first establishing the connection between queer ethos and Judith Butler's notion of fantasy, Waite contends that "a queer ethos means that constant state of revision; it means that the moment the imagined impossibility becomes our present, we (as writers and thinkers) are called to imagine another fantasy, another way of thinking about what we think we've just answered" (75). Thus, Waite posits that by looking for what is not already believed to be a possibility or "available," queer ethos promotes a "way of seeing" that can reveal the unavailable means of persuasion. In order to further establish her argument Waite shares two classroom activities. One activity asks students to name and describe the moves authors make in their own terms, and the second focuses on a particularly obscure sentence from Judith Butler. Both activities provide opportunities for students to imagine and create new names and language for describing rhetorical strategy rather than relying on terms and notions that are pre-existing (and limited). Thus, Waite asserts that we must look past the familiar, and instead look at what is just beyond reach or understanding to create alternative ways of thinking/seeing.

Chapter four, "Changing Audience, Changing Ethos," is a retrospective of feminism. Beth Daniell and Letizia Guglielmo highlight the differences between the concept of women's ethos as it has evolved historically in order to call for "a new, though perhaps temporary, concept of women's ethos, one that is multivocal, grounded in lived—and shared—experience, facilitated by digital media, and directed at a different audience" (90). The authors find that early feminists had to build an ethos that authorized them to speak, and often did so in spheres that were located in places, such as church, considered appropriate for women. Once the right to speak became more widely accepted, women had to then establish an ethos that was suitable for public address by appealing to the sensibilities and challenges of a predominately male audience. By recounting the efforts of women rhetors from the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the authors further establish that the previous waves of feminist rhetors were necessarily concerned with gaining authorization to speak and inform change from male audiences. After tracing the evolution of women's ethos, Daniell and Guglielmo suggest that, because of the rise of digital media and its potential for bringing women together across cultures, the current women's ethos is one that unapologetically and confidently speaks to and for women. In other words, women generally no longer need to fight an audience of men for the right to speak or to speak in public, but rather must build an ethos that is affective to an audience of women for coalition building.

Similar to part one, part two, "Ethē as Advocacy-Advocating," troubles the "everyday definitions of ethos as 'credibility' or 'character'" (vii) by emphasizing

the challenges feminist rhetors face when advocating within, between, and outside of the groups they are speaking for. Each chapter in part two complicates traditional conceptions of ethos by explicating the precarious work of advocacy. Ryan, Myers, and Jones point out at the beginning of part two that it is less problematic to be an advocate when also a member of the group that the rhetor speaks on behalf of: "Advocating can be riskier when rhetors differ in power, access, and agency such as Harriet Jacobs speaking to white women as mothers or when first world feminists advocate for third world women" (111). Contributors to part two then participate in an important discussion of how women rhetors have participated in sometimes tricky advocacy work and how they were able to construct feminist ethos in ethical and effective ways.

In "Ethos as a Social Act: The 'Unauthorized' Susanna Wesley," Lynée Lewis Gaillet examines Susanna Wesley, mother of John and Charles Wesley, founders of Methodism. Gaillet argues that, as an early feminist, Wesley contradicted her husband and clergymen by teaching and preaching to her children and to large audiences of men and women in her home. Because of Wesley's commitment to acting in the best interest of those she felt responsible for (presumably her children and those who lacked access to an education—primarily women) she was compelled to exert her influence within her local sphere (130). Therefore, Gaillet asserts, "[s]tudying the example of Susanna Wesley's life and work helps present-day readers imagine what an alternative to the patriarchal, religious pedagogues of the eighteenth century might look like" (131).

Sean Barnette's chapter, "Hospitality as Kenosis: Dorothy Day's Voluntary Poverty" brings together theories of kenosis, feminist hospitality, and ethos for a productive reconceptualization of how ethos is built and to what ends. Barnette convincingly asks us to consider how the concept of kenosis (an emptying of one's self) and feminist hospitality shed new light on ethos construction. Barnette first explains that hospitality, or hosting a guest, can be conservative or subversive. According to Barnette, most traditional forms of hospitality promote a conservative approach in which a guest may be told to make "herself at home," yet there is a mutual understanding that it is not actually the guest's home, nor will it be a permanent arrangement, thereby establishing a power differential between host and guest (135). In contrast, Barnette contends that feminist hospitality offers one model of subversive hospitality. Drawing on women's studies scholar Maurice Hamington, Barnette explains,

> Hamington identifies four qualities of feminist hospitality that make it potentially subversive: first it is inclusive, in that anyone can participate; second, it is nonhierarchical, in that the host/guest relationship is one of equals, and therefore is dynamic; third, it is based on

> forgiveness rather than on justice and revenge; fourth, it is an embodied, material practice rather than an abstraction. (136)

Further, Barnette argues that early feminist Dorothy Day utilized feminist hospitality as a method to build her ethos. Barnette suggests we look beyond persuasion (influencing an audience) as the desired outcome of ethos construction and consider the alternative motive of shifting ethos of both the rhetor and audience (transforming both speaker and audience). Thus, kenosis is a useful concept to illustrate how a rhetor can establish ethos by "emptying" his/her own identity and shift or transform with the audience. The desired outcome, then, changes from persuading one's audience to changing/advocating alongside one's audience.

In chapter seven "Powerless Repurposed: The Feminist Ethos of Judy Bonds," Mary Beth Pennington details the feminist ethos of Appalachian activist Judy Bonds. Pennington explains that Bonds is a vocal advocate for environmental change and that Bonds' awareness of her location and relationality to the environmental issues builds her ethos. It is precisely because Bonds is a resident in an area affected by mountaintop removal (MTR) that she is authorized to speak about the issue, despite the common prejudices experienced by members of coal mining communities. In other words, Bonds is able to build her ethos, despite not inhabiting traditionally authorized identities, because of the material reality of residing in geographic spaces in which she bore witness to the consequences of MTR (seeing her grandson swimming in a lake filled with dead fish for instance).

In part two's closing chapter, "Strategically Negotiating Essence: Zitkala-Sa's Ethos Activist," Paige Conley closely examines the speech Zitkala-Sa delivered before the General Federation of Women's Clubs (GFWC) in 1921. According to Conley, the rhetorical strategy used by Zitkala-Sa to construct her ethos draws on and then restructures her named identity—or essences. Utilizing Johanna Schmertz, Conley describes essences as "ontological forms of being in the world, which are contingent and reveal themselves fundamentally through language" (177). More specifically, Conley claims, "Fluid forms of rhetorical production—specifically ethos as multiple forms of essence—allowed Zitkala-Sa to engage in key forms of resistance and activism, even as she appeared comfortingly to her GFWC audience to generally support hegemonic ideologies and oppressive cultural discourses" (177). With close examination of Zitkala-Sa's oral performance, Conley finds that she "carefully crafted [her] rhetorical efforts to engage in extended forms of indigenous activism" (177) by performing within the anticipated "Indian" constructions yet also repositioning herself by reminding her audience that she is "educated" (185).

In perhaps the most distinctly ecological approach to ethos analysis, part three, "Ethē as Relation-Relating," offers useful insights for how ethos is built

in conjunction with the self, others, location, and the material world. The deeply reflective and complicated work in this final section demonstrates both the richness and difficulty of working with new and messy conceptions of ethos in order to better represent its fluidity and shifting nature. As the editors explain in the introduction to the section, "Ethē as relation highlight the ethical motives of this feminist ecological approach: reflecting on one's own subjectivity makes a rhetor mindful of others, and working together is understood as necessary and desirable though sometimes difficult" (195).

In "Ethos Righted: Transnational Feminist Analytics" Wendy Hesford analyzes the book *Transnationalism Reversed: Women Organizing against Gendered Violence in Bangladesh* by Elora Halim Chowdhury. Early in the chapter Hesford explains that Chowdhury's book "charts the movement of narratives of multiple actors involved with local and transnational campaigns against acid violence and demonstrates how privilege is consolidated through multiple axes of power and unevenly distributed across these campaigns" (200). Additionally, Hesford asserts that she purposely examines Chowdhury's text because "its methodological and ethical imprint can usefully inform our discussions about ethos in feminist rhetorical studies" (200). Through thoughtful and close analysis, Hesford demonstrates that ethos is not only a social act but is also a mode of inquiry (epistemology) and a site of struggle (political action). Hesford astutely argues that "Transnational feminist perspectives challenge narrow configurations of ethos as an individual attribute (moral character) or audience-conferred recognition (credibility)" (212). Subsequently, Hesford asserts

> Instead of deference to individualist liberal notions of ethos as an acquisition or universalized model of ethos ("global sisterhood"), transnational feminist analytics (relational, comparative, and historical) engender ethos, like rights, as a site of struggle. (212)

Hesford's use of Chowdhury's work brings attention to the messy nature of transnational feminism and alliance building in order to expose the importance of troubling static notions of the public sphere in a global economy.

Contributing to ethē as relation-relating, Risa Applegarth's "Working With and Working For: Ethos and Power in Women's Writing" details correspondence between anthropologist Gladys Reichard and amateur Navajo researcher Frances Newcomb to demonstrate the limitations of a writer in controlling and developing her own ethos. More specifically, Applegarth convincingly argues that the structures of power already in existence and in which the rhetor is operating can and will constrict access to power and authority. Thus, despite Newcomb's proximity, desire, and experience as a researcher, she was not received as an equal contributor to the work she and Reichard collaborated on regarding Navajo songs and spirit drawings.

In "Creating Contemplative Spaces: Ethos as Presence and Rhetorics of Yoga" Christy I. Wenger posits that by conceptualizing ethos through the contemplative eastern practice of yoga we can understand ethos as presence. According to Wegner, presence can be understood as "the space we include," and it "takes into account how our available means of persuasion always includes our bodies" (238). Thus, in recognizing ethos as presence, we better utilize and comprehend our center (inner self) as deeply connected to others (the outer world and community). Wenger argues that by first focusing on the inner self we become more aware of our outer environment. Ultimately, as Wenger contends, "approaching ethos as presence becomes a transformative way for students to respect the functions of their communicative bodies as rhetors and to see how those bodies connect them to others when tuned to the present moment" (253). In her closing sentence, Wenger draws on a reflection from a student in her advanced writing class to emphasize how such an approach moves to action, "as Dennis and his classmates testify, we are often only a 'breath away' from understanding and, therein, responsible action" (253).

Using Gloria Anzaldúa's concept of conocimiento in chapter twelve, "Conocimiento as a Path to Ethos: Gloria Anzaldúa's Networked Rhetoric," Kendall Leon and Stacey Pigg argue that, "Anzaldúa's enacted practice of knowing grounds rhetorical action in strategic connectivity (and disconnection from) different environments, people, and discourses" (257). Further, the authors contend, "Chicana theory can provide vocabulary for understanding women's ethos not only as located or positioned but also interconnected across different relationships with people, spirit, and objects like land" (260). Leon and Pigg introduce Anzaldúa's concept of conocimeinto "as a way of knowing but also of acting in situations that are continually changing, thereby altering who we are and can be" (261). Although useful to understanding ethos and rhetorical strategy, the authors maintain that conceptually conocimeinto is not meant to be used as a linear or hierarchical analytic. Yet, in order to elucidate how it might inform our understanding of ethos, they act as translators and describe the seven elements of conocimeinto in terms that are recognizable in rhetorical studies. Leon and Pigg trouble current conceptions of ethos that conceive of women's ethos as positioned or located and instead posit that "conocimiento offers a model of feminist ethos that is not only positioned within particular environments but also networked across multiple, shifting spaces and stages" (258).

The "Afterwords" section completes the text by honoring a practice from Andrea Lunsford's *Reclaiming Rhetorica* in which the contributing authors reflect on the intellectual work of the collection and look to what this collection has set into motion for future inquiries. The authors' responses are organized

into four sections: "Implications of a Feminist Ecological Subject for Ethos Construction," "On Feminist Ecological Habits of Mind and Pedagogy," "Hopes for This Collection's Contributions," and lastly, "New Visions, Directions, and Questions." Truly a must-read section, it offers candid and interesting insights that can only be ruminated at the completion of a text like *Rethinking Ethos*.

Ultimately, this text offers a variety of lenses to rethink and reconceptualize our understandings of ethos while simultaneously reinforcing the importance of the appeal. The diversity of authors, analyses, and sites of analysis offer incredible resources for a broad audience ranging from advanced undergraduates to seasoned composition and rhetoric scholar/teachers.

About the Author

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