Review of Booher, Amanda K. & Jung, Julie. *Feminist Rhetorical Science Studies: Human Bodies, Posthumanist Worlds.* Southern Illinois UP, 2018. 260 pages.

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Feminist Rhetorical Science Studies: Human Bodies, Posthumanist Worlds takes on the laudable project of building alliances across feminist rhetorics, rhetorics of science, and feminist science studies in order to re-orient posthumanist and object-oriented studies in ways that more responsibly engage cultural factors. The editors situate their book in the contested space between recent work in object-oriented rhetorics—which seek to consider human and nonhuman agents as equal actors in order to challenge human exceptionalism—and feminist materialist responses, some of which argue that object-oriented approaches flatten human hierarchies in violent ways, failing to account for the problems of moving toward thinking of objects as actors when so many humans have only just (or not even) been recognized as actors (and have too long been treated as objects). Amanda Booher and Julie Jung are direct in their critiques: "It seems to us that some scholars of the posthuman/object-oriented are quick to throw off the bodily comportments that orient them in the material world. . . . reinscribing a privileged position that allows one to minimize the body" (3). They thus focus on feminist approaches as a main point of entry with gender/sex, sexuality, race, culture, disability and other aspects of embodiment as related concerns (5). In so doing, Booher and Jung tell one version of an "origin story" for feminist rhetorical science studies, arguing "that *feminist* new materialism offers an especially productive framework for scholars undertaking feminist posthumanist projects in the Rhetoric of Science, Technology, and Medicine (RSTM)" (23).

The editors begin by identifying their own omissions (animal studies, challenges to Western-centrism) and owning their engagement in José Medina's "epistemic neglect," a sort of systemic unknowing (7). They invite readers to note further absences, offering a framework for doing so in an effort to help future work to fill those gaps. Booher and Jung suggest that scholars might engage with their own omissions by turning to works that later fill in gaps as a way of rectifying epistemic neglect. Drawing on the work of Karen Barad, the

editors note that any scholarship makes particular choices and that scholars must be accountable for those choices.

This collection includes a prologue, an introduction, and eight chapters, one of which is a conclusion by the editors. The chapters are, as the editors themselves note, "diverse and at times conflicting" (32), putting into practice the editors' commitment to expand perspectives. The introduction, "Of Complexity and Caution: Feminism, Object-Oriented Ontology, and the Practices of Scholarly Work," put several bodies of theory into conversation. The introduction uses the "conceptual hinges" of posthumanism, feminist new materialism, posthumanist rhetorics, and feminist posthumanist rhetorics to articulate relationships between and among those fields as well as feminist science studies and rhetorics of science. Booher and Jung engage in an important reconceptualization of the edited collection by framing their collection through one of its constituent chapters, suggesting in their prologue that Kyle P. Vealey and Alex Layne's methodology of rhetorical reverberations, as articulated in chapter one, can help us to think about ways to read scholarship more ethically. Specifically, this methodology helps us to note which citations are present and absent and to move forward in ways that pay attention to those absences. (For my own part in the context of a book review, I strive to engage in responsible citation practices here by adapting MLA style to list all authors' full names in the references.)

Vealey and Layne argue for a feminist rhetorical methodology that deals carefully with the practical implications of ontology: "we see a need for a way to attend carefully and cautiously to the ontological impact and consequences of our scholarly practices, including how we cite the work of others" (69). They denote this methodology with the name *reverberations* because this term "conveys a sense of lasting and continuing effects that seem to emanate from a designated origin" (69). Vealey and Layne offer a history of object-oriented ontology and its intra-actions (or lack thereof) with feminisms and with women; they explicitly take on the politics of the field, acknowledging (and supporting) scholars who have pointed out that women scholars have been purposefully excluded and that some of the people who have been doing this work the longest (Hayles, Haraway) have not been consistently cited in the field's literature. Vealey and Layne are "charitable" (72) in their critique, pointing out that it is not always malicious intent that underlies this politics of citation, but also making clear that authors are nevertheless responsible for the reverberations they sponsor.

In chapter two, Jen Talbot offers a specific set of circumstances under which it is important to address "tensions that arise when posthumanist conceptualizations of the social become entangled with feminist politics" (86). Talbot uses a North Carolina law requiring pregnant people to undergo fetal

ultrasound before they can access abortion services to demonstrate conceptual differences between Latour's Actor-Network Theory and Barad's agential realism, arguing that the latter "has greater potential to reconcile asymmetries among human persons ethically and compassionately while still working toward extending personhood beyond the human" (86). Specifically, Talbot argues that agential realism can recognize that fetuses initiate biochemical changes in pregnant bodies and recognize that these actions constitute fetal agency without slipping into the assumption that fetal agency necessitates fetal subjectivity. In contrast, for Latour, a body becomes an actant when it is perceived as doing something—so the sooner action can be attributed to an embryo or fetus, the sooner other actants can argue for fetal personhood (96). Display laws, like the NC law described in the chapter, utilize such logics to bolster pro-life/anti-choice arguments. Thus, Talbot says, "posthumanist frameworks that minimize the phenomenological, such as Latour's ANT, are problematic for feminist rhetorics, since human bodies' experiences of the social . . . drive human action" (88-89). Talbot's application of agential realism further suggests that agents are responsible for their own articulations; thus, those who articulate fetal personhood—and not pregnant women—are accountable for the consequences of that articulation.

Catherine Gouge, in chapter three, also takes on issues of patienthood when she recasts the logics of noncompliance, arguing that we should shift from assigning blame for non-compliance to seeing divergent behaviors as opportunities to make care more contextual. Gouge draws on disability studies (especially the work of Dolmage and Lewiecki-Wilson) as well as new materialist feminisms, medical anthropology, and feminist rhetorical scholarship to introduce a kairology of care which values experience and context. This approach considers care as situated, embodied, rhetorical, and intra-active. Gouge discusses "Compliance 1.0," a model wherein compliance rhetorics assume a standard body and standardized understandings of normalcy and deviance (118). "Compliance 2.0," in Gouge's framework, represents a shift to a "remission society," which builds on Compliance 1.0 but with an additional focus on risk wherein noncompliant patients (those who don't "appropriately" seek to mitigate risk) are accused of being negligent, passive, and weak- willed (119). Gouge's kairology of care, however, points out that noncompliance/divergent behaviors might more logically be seen as evidence of coping and that the causes of non-compliance are not limited to issues of persuasion or trust but also to patients' material lives. Assumptions of compliance can result in biomedicine failing to account for varying treatment options. Logics of compliance treat "health" as a clear goal and assume a linear path to get to that goal, following a logic of progress; Gouge argues that notions of compliance are ableist and to recast them we must challenge existing notions of

disability. Rather than seeing our bodies as "victims of our moral and psychological shortcomings" (124), we might utilize the work of posthuman scholars (especially Barad) to "challenge humanist assumptions about agentic subjects" (127). For example, healthcare professionals routinely ignore that many patients continue to smoke after being diagnosed with lung cancer; however, these patients might benefit from different therapeutic approaches.

Jennifer Bay focuses chapter four on what we teach technical communication students, drawing on the work of posthumanist theories and taking readers to the classroom, smartly pointing out that "we must still attend to practice" (142). She takes on the important problem of how to better prepare and mentor female technical communication students; further, she enacts that work by including research conducted with an undergraduate student, Trinity Overmyer. Bay and Overmyer first followed Thompson's (1999) work by doing a keyword search in field journals and then juxtaposing those results with data from the U.S. Census Bureau, ultimately finding that female technical writers are disproportionately engaged in part-time work and in work that does not make full use of their expertise and abilities. Unfortunately, the keyword search portion of the study misses a fair amount of important scholarship (Koerber, 2000; Lippincott, 2003; Rohrer-Vanzo, Stern, Ponocny-Seliger, & Schwarzbauer, 2015; Wolfe & Alexander, 2005), even discounting book reviews (Davis, 2007; Salinas, 2000) and comments (Sauer, 1999), and this missed scholarship includes Thompson's follow-up to the article the study is based on (Overman Smith & Thompson, 2002). However, these omissions do underscore Bay's point that different approaches focus our attention in different ways. Bay uses her experience in this research study to imagine new and richer approaches that consider "how the databases we used and their material-technological frameworks worked to construct the bodies of technical communicators" (157). Bay discusses how this research project would have been made more productive by using a feminist new materialist approach and she offers specific suggestions for operationalizing a feminist materialist approach to the lived experiences of women who work as technical communicators, including examining the ways workplace technologies manage time, paying critical attention to gendered identity formation, and re-thinking what constitutes professionalism.

In "How Good Brain Science Gets That Way," the fifth chapter in the collection, Jordynn Jack argues that some recent neuroscience research aligns with feminist and humanist concerns about perceived objectivity in scientific research. Jack first reviews two psychological studies to demonstrate that neuroscience experiments can challenge beliefs about sex and gender by accounting for how expectations may lead participants to offer responses drawn from their own pre-existing beliefs and how the experimental materials themselves

are never free of bias (172). Next, Jack discusses the process whereby she and a research assistant coded 49 neuroscience studies dealing with sex or gender wherein 31 articles demonstrated sex/gender differences, 14 studied phenomena specific to men's or women's brains, and 4 questioned sex/gender differences (173). Studies in this last category, Jack finds, "seek to understand how stereotypes work in the first place" (175) and suggest "that researchers who seek to understand how it is that we ascribe gender differences to others can help depolarize male and female brains by refusing the antithetical reasoning foundational to so many other studies" (178). These articles represent opportunities for coalition and collaboration for feminist rhetorical science scholars. Jack seeks to move us—feminist humanities researchers—from the position of critics to the position of collaborators, to "open up possibilities for entanglement" (166).

In chapter six, Daniel J. Card, Molly M. Kessler, and S. Scott Graham engage the question of how postmodernism, in "positioning language as that which constructs reality without admitting or engaging the agency of material forces" (184), has failed to challenge modernism's basic premise. Meanwhile, some feminist researchers have been suspicious of the material and its potential to lend legitimacy to biologically essentialist arguments. Arguing that political and epistemic representation are inextricable, the authors provide a model for feminist new materialist scholars to engage/compare both a politics of *who* and a politics of *what*. Utilizing the FDA's Patient Representative Program (a program in which the FDA looks to patients and caregivers as knowledge sources) as a site of inquiry, they evaluated 167 meetings between 2009 and 2012. A politics-of-who approach, which focuses on people, showed that patient representatives were present but not significantly involved in driving conversations; a more in-depth politics-of-what approach, focusing on concepts, demonstrated a set of concurrent ontologies and that patient representatives, surprisingly, most often enacted the lab ontology (as compared to home, clinic, or market and accounting for ontologies that were enacted simultaneously). Card, Kessler, and Graham ultimately conclude that their own discomfort with a politics-of-what leads them to suggest that "feminist science studies scholars might find a synthesis between who and what a politically productive tool" and that "the two cannot and should not be uncritically disentangled" (200).

Liz Barr uses chapter seven to analyze the FDA's 2012 Antiviral Drugs Advisory Committee meeting on approving Truvada as a PreP therapy through the lens of embodied vernacularity. (PrEP, or pre-exposure prophylaxis, is a prevention strategy aimed at protecting HIV-negative patients who may be at risk for contracting HIV.) This lens "accounts for the speaking body in addition to the spoken word" (206). Barr argues that community members at the hearing, lacking access to the scientific ethos used by medical participants,

developed an "embodied vernacular authority" as an implicitly rhetorical and feminist response/resistance to dominant discourses at the meeting. In other words, community members leveraged their embodied, material experiences as a source of expertise. Barr further argues that even when embodied vernacularity fails to persuade—as it did in this case—it still counters the erasure of bodies, elicits affective responses, and can offer strategies for negotiating asymmetrical power relationships. Barr's analysis not only offers specific strategies for future rhetorical action that recovers material entanglements, but it also extends the rhetorical power of the community representatives who are quoted in the chapter, functioning itself as a means of "listening to bodies" so as to result in better future practice (222).

In their concluding chapter, Booher and Jung directly address critiques of feminist new materialism that allege it fails to produce social justice action. They respond to this critique by articulating *habits* as a guiding concept for change: feminist rhetorical practices might disagree with sexist, racist, ableist and other exclusionary habits by interrupting normalized, sedimented patterns of discourse/action. Booher and Jung suggest we might think about persuading habits rather than people: "When we help to enact changes in ways of relating among elements in a system, other ways of doing things become possible" (231). The editors then offer a recounting of the chapters in the collection and specific ways in which they lend themselves to changing habits of domination. In the final pages of chapter eight, Booher and Jung articulate the #BlackLivesMatter movement, Wells's *Our Bodies, Ourselves and the Work of Writing*, and Pezzullo's *Toxic Tourism: Rhetorics of Pollution, Travel, and Environmental Justice* as examples that demonstrate that feminist new materialist rhetorical practices are, indeed, concrete political actions. Each of these examples helps audiences to mark patterns that have been assumed as normal or correct. For example, #BlackLivesMatter calls attention to unchecked habits of racism; it has sparked conversation aimed at reframing patterns of violence against people of color enacted by police as not normal, not correct. Ultimately, Booher and Jung's theory of feminist new materialist rhetorical practice suggests the following tactics: "identify habits of exclusion and domination; make a material thing that renounces those habits; share that thing with others; and then pay attention to how the thing as a phenomenon becomes rhetorical" (237). This set of tactics, and other theories of the posthuman, "retains the possibility of and the need for feminist intervention in the work of social justice" (242).

This collection has significant potential, especially for use in graduate courses. The contributors grapple productively with big ideas, putting bodies of theory into conversation with each other (and with material bodies that may have been missing from some theories) in ways that help readers to make

connections and theorize dissonances they may have felt but were unable to articulate; for example, Booher and Jung point out that object-oriented ontologies and feminist new materialisms "are frequently lumped together under various headings (for example, posthumanist studies, speculative realism, new materialisms, object-oriented philosophy, and the material turn) which elides significant differences between them" (33). The collection's editors and authors have clearly been responsive to the kairotic moment into which the book intervenes, as so much of this book focuses on the problems that object-oriented ontologies encounter with feminist and social justice scholars and scholarship. Positioning this text in a graduate course alongside, for example, Black Lives Matters's *Healing in Action: A Toolkit for Black Lives Matter Healing Justice and Direct Action* might yield important rearticulations of some of the objects of inquiry while also practicing a purposeful politics of citation.

Perhaps one of the most exciting aspects of this collection is the earnestness with which it engages its central questions. While much of the text does grapple with object-oriented approaches, it does so with great caution and an obvious willingness to reach whatever conclusions the analyses authentically lead to, as Booher and Jung make clear in their introductory chapter: "[W]e believe FRSS scholars need to engage with these frameworks [posthumanist frameworks such as ANT and object-oriented ontology] cautiously, if at all" (33). Ultimately, this collection does "challenge depoliticized uptakes of posthumanism in rhetoric studies" (1). As a whole, *Feminist Rhetorical Science Studies* is an important collection that practices what it advocates—the text itself is a "concrete political action," a "thing" that the authors have made that renounces particular exclusionary habits and offers models for other habits. Readers can expect that the authors will, as promised, observe the uptake and circulation of this text so as to see what phenomena it sponsors and the myriad ways in which it becomes rhetorical through both its own contributions and omissions.

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