Community Literacy Journal

Volume 17
Issue 1 *Special Issue: Access as Community Literacy*

Article 15

Fall 2022

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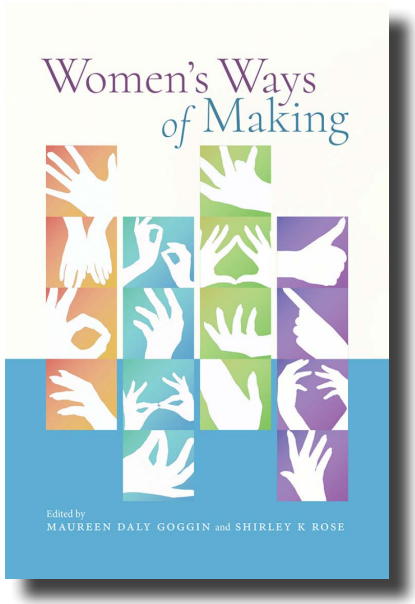
Recommended Citation
Ruccio, Kristen A. (2022) "Women's Ways of Making," *Community Literacy Journal*: Vol. 17: Iss. 1, Article 15.
DOI: 10.25148/CLJ.17.1.010650
Available at: https://digitalcommons.fiu.edu/communityliteracy/vol17/iss1/15

Women's Ways of Making

Edited by Maureen Daly Goggin and Shirley K Rose
UP of Colorado, 2021, 278 pp.



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Betsy Greer's statement that "every act of making is an act of revolution," which serves as the epigraph for *Women's Ways of Making*, sets the stage for this edited collection (3). In popular culture, making often becomes attached to the maker movement, craft communities, or even DIY culture—and all share a basis in materiality and in creation or reclamation. Yet, many of these makings are specifically stratified by gender, with maker communities skewing to actually reinforce(s) an ingrained culture of "white masculinity in the design and deployment of technology while rhetorically claiming universality" (Britton). Craft communities, particularly yarn craft communities, are often associated with femininity, a view reinforced by the popular *Stitch 'n Bitch* and *The Happy Hooker* series of books by Debbie Stoller. Maureen Daly Goggin and Shirley K Rose, names familiar to readers of the *Community Literacy Journal*, present a wide-ranging collection about making that not only focuses on women's ways of making, but also revolutionizes and makes transparent the labor of knowledge-making by women. The continuous thread running through this collection is "that the three ways of knowing [episteme, techne, and phronesis] emerge from experience and work in harmony as embodied acts" (4).

The collection originated in presentations from the October 2015 Tenth Biennial Feminisms and Rhetorics Conference and represents "selected and revised presentations from that event" (4). While both the conference and the emergent collection hold a variety of makings, they are grounded in the study of "feminist rhetoric and writing studies" (4). As a work grounded in feminisms, the collection focuses on the embodied and practical ways making knowledge occurs. The editors skillfully connect these traditions to a long history of considering "epistemic acts" that represent women's ways of making (4–7). The authors of the thirteen chapters included in the collection represent "scholars at every stage of making their scholarly lives in the academy, from graduate students through established senior faculty members, as well as those outside academia. . .That diversity is purposeful and celebrated here" (6).

And while I have correctly described the collection as "wide-ranging," the organization of the chapters into three sections provides a map for the reader to easily follow through these embodied acts of making.

Rachael A. Ryerson's opening chapter, "Remaking the Female Reproductive Body in *Saga*," gives a brief overview of the typical ways "that women's bodies in comics are typically portrayed in hypersexualized, fetishized ways" (17). Her argument that *Saga*'s representation of female reproductive bodies in abject ways "visually centers and celebrates them, and in the process, ultimately reworks discursive norms for these bodies" (18). Ryerson reminds us that the very presence of pregnant bodies in a comic is remarkable because a pregnant body embodies "that which has been defined as abject" (20). In addition to realistic portrayals of birth, which include excrement and other bodily fluids, Ryerson's argument centers on the fact that *Saga* also includes normalized, nonsexual images of both breastfeeding and miscarriage (31–35). While "norms are in flux," Ryerson concludes, comics such as *Saga* are working to change the possibilities of how female bodies can be represented (37).

The research methods used by the authors in *Women's Ways of Making* are as varied as the topics of that research, and in chapter two, Christine Martorana presents "The Woman Rhetor and Her Body: A Case-Study Analysis of How a Feminist Zinester Constructs Ethos as a Corporeal Experiential Authority." Martorana does a great job of defining terms such as "ethos" and "corporeal experiential authority" for her audience before moving to the analysis. Authorial moves such as this make this text, while deeply scholarly, accessible to a variety of audiences. Martorana argues that *Here. In My Head* "is a feminist perzine: a zine with an explicit dual focus that is both personal and feminist," which makes it a perfect fit for analysis of both aspects of the case study (44). Martorana presents a clear picture of how Cath, the author of the perzine *Here. In My Head*, moves between the personal and the feminist. "The result is a new way of understanding women's ethos and the strategies available to feminist rhetors" (55). Much of Martorana's argument centers on how feminist rhetors need not rely on physical attributes to create ethos, which contrasts interestingly with Holly Fulton-Babicke's piece in chapter three, "Ripped Goddess: New Ways of Making Women's Fitness," who argues that "identities are increasingly enacted in hybrid public/private spaces, such as internet forums" (57). Ripped Goddess is one of these hybrid spaces, which Fulton-Babicke describes as "a vibrant women's fitness group" that "consistently focuses on self-esteem building and exercise as self-care" as much as it focuses on weightlifting (57). This community, she argues, works as a public sphere in which all spectrums of gender are represented, including traditional, transgressive, and cyberfeminist representations of gender (60–62). Fulton-Babicke deftly provides evidence that Ripped Goddess also overturns norms of how an online women's fitness operates, because it is a community focused on building, rather than confining what female identity can be—and indeed what femininity can look like, whether that replicates or transgresses ideas of normative depictions of femininity.

Lorin Shellenberger's contribution "Building Embodied Ēthe: Brandi Chastain's Goal Celebration and the Problem of Situated Ethos" uses the example of elite athletes, such as Chastain, to argue that the creation of ethos is not solely dependent on

the choices of an individual. Instead, "ethos is determined through a variety of factors, including previous cultural narratives, ongoing media discourses, choices about self-representation, and one's physical body (among others)" (74). She argues that we, as scholars of rhetoric, must attend to these factors, because they "might influence the ability to develop an ethos" (74). Shellenberger offers the term "ēthe" (plural of ethos), to reflect the multiplicity of factors that impact the development of ethos (76). The author uses the image of Chastain's celebration of making a goal to build the argument that Chastain could not build her own ethos in that moment because the image was freighted with cultural expectations, the newness of an image of female joy in that situation, not to mention the still-ongoing discussion of the appropriateness of a female athlete ripping off her shirt—even though that is a common image among male athletes. In the end, the case of Chastain embodies how factors determining ēthe can be imposed *on* the individual rather than chosen by the individual (92, emphasis in original).

Chapters five and six conclude the first section and take yoga as a focus for embodied knowledge making. In "Posed to Emote: Making the Emotional-Embodied Work of Rhetorical Training Observable through Yoga Practice," Jacquelyn E. Hoermann-Elliott recounts her experience of facilitating a Yoga-Zen writing class (96). She focuses on the narratives of three of the students in the class "in order to demonstrate the surprising, often-overlooked role emotions play in embodied writing practices" (96). Hoermann-Elliott provides a literature review about embodied writing and scholarship about the role of yoga in the writing classroom and workshop in this piece—anyone who chooses this subject to research would benefit from reading this piece for the literature review alone. However, the piece also has a deeply personal aspect when the author discusses three of her participants' reactions and writings in the class. Hoermann-Elliott also helpfully provides, in a series of appendices, the course design and learning outcomes, so that readers can design their own course from this piece, which presents the first overtly pedagogical material in the collection. In a shift from the pedagogical to the administrative, Kathleen J. Ryan and Christy I. Wenger take "Yoga as Feminist Techne: Making Space for Administrative Well-Being" as their subject in chapter six. They seek to make their intention clear to "reimagine women's work as writing program administrators (WPAs)" in their contribution (115). Their central claim is that yoga has "profoundly shape[d] how and why we do what we do" and they argue that yoga is "a feminist *techne*, one that provides us a method of doing and making in feminist administration (115, emphasis in original). While there is no shortage of scholarly linkages made in this piece, the writing takes the reader along a narrative path of how each author discovered the impact yoga had on their administrative labor. As a WPA myself, I found their final section "Yoga as a Means of Feminist Intervention" especially relevant. They write: "Yoga consequently helps us approach resilience as a skill that can be learned and applied to WPAing" (125). Anyone who has worked in an administrative position knows that resilience is a skill we all need to maintain well-being.

The beginning of section two provides a completely different research topic in "Elizabeth I and the Rhetoric of the Marriage Crisis," written by Jane Donawerth.

Donawerth argues that "who would marry the queen" was a dominant topic of public discourse during the reign of Elizabeth I (135). The main argument of the piece is that Elizabeth I, instead of being a "master rhetor" who persuaded her audiences by her clever use of rhetoric, was actually a collaborative, interactive, and imitative rhetor who worked with her audience (135–136; 144). Donawerth takes nothing away from the rhetorical skill of Elizabeth I, but does humanize the queen by providing research that points to Elizabeth I's dissatisfaction with her marriage being part of public discourse for twenty-five years.

Chapter eight provides one of the topical swings (while still connecting to the theme of the section) that makes reading this collection compelling; the reader does not have a chance to get bored. Andrea J. Severson writes in "Fleur de Force: Beauty, Creativity, and *YouTube*," of the beauty community on *YouTube* and focuses her research Fleur de Force, a British YouTuber who has "built a highly successful career from her beauty-and-lifestyle-themed-channel, with over 1.4 million subscribers" (150). Severson draws connection among feminist rhetorical practices and creativity in online beauty communities and recounts the history of feminist interventions into these topics (152–156). With the in-depth analysis of Fleur de Force's rhetorical and creative choices, Severson reminds us that online beauty influencers are not just "amateurs sitting around talking about makeup," but are entrepreneurs who make complex business decisions for their own "personal brand" (157). The end of the article predicts, accurately, where future research of beauty vloggers and influencers could lead—the challenges of sponsored content and the interactive element of online influencers and their followers (160). Those debates currently surround the topic of social media-based beauty communities, which shows Severson's considerable foresight.

Kathleen Blake Yancey's chapter, "A Study of Making-Ness: Texts, Memory, and Art," provides a breath of narrative fresh air because it begins with an italicized first-person account that details a break-in at her home and some of the objects that were lost in the process (161). The piece then transitions to non-italicized text and an erudite discussion of scholarship about memorializing loss and the functions of eulogy (162). As a way to memorialize the loss, Yancey created an "artist's book" as a visual account/eulogy—spurred by the CFP for the 2015 Feminisms and Rhetorics Conference, which included a category for exhibition pieces (166–167). Yancey describes the process of creating the exhibition book as "intimidating in a way giving a paper, for me, is not" because of the emotional content and the sharing of a personal event with strangers (167). Yancey shares the process of making the artist's book in personal vignettes that are interspersed with discussions of epistemic creation, Cartesian duality in the Western tradition, and writing from artists about the process of making art. Yancey includes, in a clear and engaging chapter, a vast amount of diverse scholarship. This piece could also serve as a model or inspiration for ways of integrating personal sharing and embodied storytelling into a piece for an academic audience.

The most visually-engaging chapter of the collection is "Red Tent: Creating Art and Our Lives in Jail through Feminist Rhetorics" The piece chronicles The Red Tent Women's Initiative, which "provides a weekly support group for nonviolent female offenders within the Pinellas County Jail in Clearwater, Florida" and is co-authored by

Jill McCracken, Amanda Ellis, Melissa Greene, and Charlese Trower (176). The piece analyzes the incarceration system and how it impacts women in our society, but also discusses empowering and supporting women through groups like Red Tent. The authors' claim that "Red Tent is a mechanism through which feminist rhetoric occurs" is supported through the images, descriptions, and narratives of participants in Red Tent (179). The ways in which the personal narratives about making begin with the creation of objects sewn, yet end with commentary about the incarceration system itself is particularly persuasive. The descriptions of the rhetorical messages of the jail itself—a space designed to decrease intimacy and to punish—in contrast with the Red Tent Room—a space designed to uplift and to create community—exemplify the contrasts between these two spaces (186–190). Scholarship, such as this piece, invites readers from outside academia because it is based in community engagement and in empowerment, which feel relevant to all.

The third and final section opens with another chapter that focuses on the work of WPAs; "Renewing Feminist Perspectives on Women WPAs' Service and Leadership" by Hui Wu and Emily Standridge. The section begins by exploring the central role rhetoric and composition play in the survival of English departments, but end with the transformative potential of WPAs who will likely be shifting the focus and the future of the academy. Their meticulously crafted argument lacks the often-pedantic tone of debates about the professional status of composition, which makes for a refreshing change. For those of us who teach composition and/or who are WPAs, Wu and Standridge's discussion of the ways in which the field has tried to shun the service nature of composition reminds us that our work is largely service-based, but that we should not internalize that as a detriment to our knowledge-making as teachers and as administrators. They conclude by arguing that since leadership work is (and always has been) service work and because WPAs are engaged in leadership every day, there is a unique opportunity and responsibility for WPAs in ". . . transforming the structure of academia. Only after the structure is changed can the academic culture, style of thinking, and labor division change" (216). A weighty charge, indeed, but one that seems possible as this chapter clearly maps that this is making that WPAs have already been doing.

The penultimate chapter, "Other Ways of Making It: Transcending Traditional Academic Trajectories," written by Theresa M. Evans, Linda Hanson, Karen S. Neubauer, and Daneryl Weber requires a disclaimer from me. I hit the academic job market and got my doctorate when I was in my late 40s; it was very difficult for me to read this chapter dispassionately, because it reflected so much of my lived experience. The work that became this chapter began out of a series of conversations and shared experience they had as "nontraditional" students in academia (221). Their stated goal is to look at how women whose work in rhetoric and composition outside the expected norms—that is to say women who work outside the tenure-track, highly-published, highly-polished norms of our field—are making their way. The authors also discuss the intersections of gender, age, and career expectation (222). The focus of this work rests squarely on active participation of nontraditional academics who are making their way in the academy, rather than "passively hoping the system will

change" (224). The authors collected their data from a survey (helpfully reproduced in an appendix) and by arriving at a definition of "nontraditional" (224). They found that most of the women they surveyed were aware of the risks of entering academia at an age older than the norm, but that most said they would do it again (226). Moreover, ageism is difficult to pinpoint in the academy because work outside or before entering academia is typically undervalued, but the intellectual curiosity of nontraditional women is valued (232–235). Further, the authors argue that there is a need for more study of nontraditional labor and ways of making it in the academy (238). Because the organization of the piece is extremely strong, this could serve as a model for work by readers of the *Community Literacy Journal*. But this piece also reminds us that the conversations we have with colleagues, peers, and friends can be viable starting points for research.

The collection ends strongly, just as it began strongly with "Making It as a Female Writing Program Administrator: Using Collective Action and Feminist Mentoring Practices to Transgress Gendered Boundaries," written by Angela Clark-Oates, Bre Garrett, Magdelyn Hammond Helwig, Aurora Matzke, Sherry Rankins-Robertson, and Carey Smitherman Clark. This work takes as its focus the "abysmal" failures of academic traditions to foster inclusion and diversity; these traditions have particularly failed women of color (245). The authors describe the need for an "intersectional army" to combat these traditions of exclusivity and exclusion and they specifically discuss the "necessity of intra- and interinstitutional, micro-co-mentoring to promote feminist leaders, structures, and communities of well-being" (246). After a robust literature review of specific ways higher education has failed to create diversity across its structures (246–249), "the six authors offer vignettes of experiences. . .that we have encountered and shared with one another during our time as WPAs" (249). These vignettes offer a varied (and frustrating) window into the world of women WPAs, but the authors all shared one common experience, "we each have experienced varying degrees of difficulty at the hands of senior females in positions of power across our campuses" (253). This common experience signals that not only are structures of inequality damaging to us all, but that there is more work to be done. In the remainder of the article, they offer several strategies for alternative leadership and for making it as female WPAs, which include co-mentoring with other WPAs, participating in workshops for WPAs, and an invitation to collaborate with the authors because WPAs know what it is like to work as a WPA, so we can offer each other support that other academics might not understand.

That invitation at the end Chapter thirteen echoes the entire collection in *Women's Ways of Making*. There is work that remains for all of us, but as this collection exemplifies, and at times exhorts us to, we can do this work together, by collaborating and mentoring and attending to the embodied ways of making in academia. I would hope to see other collections such as this because there are more ways of making it in the academy than I could have imagined.

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