CORPOREALITY AND THE RHETORIC OF FEMINIST BODY ART

A Dissertation in
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by
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ABSTRACT

Rhetorical Studies has only begun to understand the materiality and corporeality of rhetorical texts. *Corporeality and the Rhetoric of Feminist Body Art* aims to draw attention to the intersection between visual rhetoric and visual culture. In so doing, I “look” elsewhere—beyond traditional notions of public address and the rhetorical situation—for women’s rhetorical accomplishments. The invention of visual rhetorics of feminist body artists point to the ways in which the space and time of the rhetorical situation silences the voices and bodies of women as well as other marginalized groups. The Cartesian mind/body split has historically rendered women speechless bodies, despite their being no voice without the body. The study of feminist body art fruitfully interrogates the sites (or representation new and hybrid media) where marginalized individuals articulate their bodies to counter official discourses and center the corporeality of rhetoric.

Chapter one, “Introduction: Feminist Body Art, Space, and Time,” lays the framework for the rhetorical criticism of feminist body art. Exploring some of the most famous feminist body artworks and feminist materialist theories of the body, I detail the rhetorical form and functions of feminist body artworks and determine the five main methodological questions researchers should ask when critiquing feminist body art from a rhetorical perspective. Feminist body artworks are invention-memory vehicles—they refuse binaries, deconstruct acts of remembrance, and interrogate the drive toward fixed identity. Feminist body artworks, as visual rhetorics in their own right, substantiate the corporeality of rhetoric by undoing viewer’s subjectivities and complicating theories of the gaze.

Chapter two, “A Transgendered Gaze toward a Becoming-Body,” argues that Nan Goldin’s performative photography of drag queens from the 1970s and 1990s breaks down the sex/gender/sexuality trinary. By tracing the changes in drag queen aesthetics and the larger GLBT community’s attitudes toward drag queens, Goldin visualizes the plasticity and pliability of the body. In so doing, she also deconstructs viewer’s ability to read sex and gender and to name diverse sexualities. Thus, viewers’ expectations about the ability to “see” sex are undone by Goldin’s tactics of representation, inviting audience members to think of themselves as becoming-bodies, rather than seeing through a knowing gaze.

Chapter three, “A Clinical Gaze toward a Becoming-Body,” analyses three of Goldin’s serials about her friends who died from AIDS-related illnesses. Goldin’s works reconfigure the rhetorical work of memorials to open viewers to the problematics of the act of remembrance. In so doing, she counters official discourses about the AIDS crisis and transports viewers directly into the AIDS wound. Through images of objects, others, and spaces Goldin protects her subjects from the voyeuristic and clinical gazes of viewers. Goldin’s images are haptic. They rely on viewers’ abilities to see-touch the images. Her works invite viewers into a mode of synesthesia wherein their own personal memories work with the artwork to make meaning.

Chapter four, “A Terrorist Gaze toward a Becoming-Body,” critiques Coco Fusco’s *A Room of One’s Own: Gender and Power in the New America,* a rhetorical text designed to invite audience members to become the terrorist Other. In this performance, Fusco plays a military interrogation expert who lectures recruits/audience members about...
sexual interrogation tactics. Invoking images of Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo Bay, Fusco draws out the connections between the discourses of liberal feminism and the U.S. military’s imperialist project. This chapter also centrally addresses the question: In what ways have new media technologies changed the landscape of visual culture with regard to the War on Terror? Fusco’s multi-media performance invites a telechiasmic-becoming gaze, which calls attention to the possibilities and problems associated with the new media. Thus, audience members are transported to women’s new frontline—that of the interrogation room—and are forced to interrogate and become interrogated through means of new communication technologies. Switching subjects positions in this way opens a space for a becoming-body, that of the terrorist and feminist military interrogator.

By way of conclusion, chapter five, “Skin Rhetoric,” documents the necessity of studying the subversive tactics of feminist body artists in order to understand the constraints of space and time on voice-body. This chapter also seeks to identify the ways in which rhetorical critics must move to a phenomenological rhetorical criticism, that of skin rhetoric, in order to theorize rhetoric’s most basic characteristic: a move from materiality to corporeality.
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For Matt Hafer—who insisted that I start becoming.
CHAPTER ONE

Introduction:
Feminist Body Art, Space, and Time

“Feminist Art Finally Takes Center Stage,” reads the New York Times headline for January 29, 2007.¹ In 2007 alone, several feminist art exhibitions toured some of the most prestigious art galleries and museums.² Body art, one of the leading practices employed by feminist artists, enjoys a central position in these feminist art exhibitions. Feminist body art, Helen Potkin explains, “. . . is a practice in which the body of the artist is central or is the medium itself.”³ Body artists employ “forms less burdened with history, such as installation and performance art, forms which seem to offer potential for experimentation and subversion.”⁴ Feminist body artworks and installations usually take place in lesser known galleries, at the artists’ studios, or in other venues like private clubs and public spaces. For instance, feminist body artist Nan Goldin takes snapshots of her own body as well as the bodies of drag queens. She then arranges the snapshots into slide shows with musical overlays. She used to perform her slide shows—or was present to click from one slide to the next—at gay bars and in her loft.

Although “taking center stage” means that the official space of the fine art museum is now sanctioning and recognizing the diverse practices of feminist artists, this “official” recognition threatens to erase the history of feminist art practices. Body art, for instance, “is rooted in the radical and experimental anti-art gestures of the avant-garde. . .” and is specifically anti-establishment and anti-commodification.⁵ As such, feminist body art historically has been exhibited or performed in alternative spaces and times—alternative, that is, to the official space/time of the fine art museum. This project raises
the question: How do feminist body artists resist the official space/time of the high art establishment, as an institutionalized discourse, and what can rhetoric learn from this resistance?

Feminist body art began in the 1960s and 1970s, went underground, disappearing almost entirely in the 1980s, and resurfaced in the 1990s. The inception of radical body art practices in the 1960s and 1970s was followed by the Reagan era, also known within feminist scholarship as the “backlash period.” Amelia Jones and Andrew Stephenson trace the return to body art practices in the 1990s as congruent with the return to the body in feminist theory. Feminist body art returned in the 1990s as a specific rhetorical reaction to the repressive Reagan-Bush era and the controversies surrounding National Endowment for the Arts awards. A rhetorical perspective might explain why feminist art, such as Coco Fusco’s *Operation Atropos*, which condemns U.S. involvement in the Middle East, is receiving so much attention of late. This attention may lead to another return to body art practices. In fact, as I argue in chapter three of this study, feminist body art is resurfacing with more force and possibility in the 2000s as a rhetorical reaction to the implosion of identity politics and to the George W. Bush administration’s policies.

The relationships among space, time, and the body are central to the material practices—the production (making rhetoric) and exhibition (delivering rhetoric)—of feminist body artists generally. And, in particular, feminist body artists utilize spatial and temporal tactics within their artworks to call attention to the absences of voice/bodies in spaces of articulation. In other words, voices and bodies that do not fit the “male-dominated voice of the western rhetorical tradition” are often absent from the rhetorical situation. Several marginalized groups have invented rhetorical resources to voice their
particular histories. Countering official discourses about historical events is one such situation wherein disenfranchised persons have created rhetoric to offset mainstream narratives. Rhetorical studies view these rhetorical events as discourses produced to create counter-memory.\textsuperscript{11} Moreover, it can be argued that the overall purpose of feminist body art is to create counter memories, offsetting official discourses by practicing in alternative spaces and times. Attention to the practices of feminist body artists will assist rhetorical critics in answering to the ways that space and time constrain voices and bodies.

Centered on the body of the artist and utilizing alternative spaces and times to exhibit their works, feminist body artists are credited with the postmodern turn in art critical practices.\textsuperscript{12} These artists specifically question the body of the art genius—presumed to be a white, heterosexual male body with special knowledge and skill—and the status of art as an object of consumption. Feminist body art works rhetorically on audiences to invite epistemological and ontological reconsiderations of the mind/body dichotomy, as well as the sex/gender/sexuality dichotomy. These invitations are nothing less than an opening up of being and knowing as they are currently configured in philosophical theorizations.\textsuperscript{13}

**Dissertation Description**

In my dissertation, *Feminist Visual Rhetorics as Rhetorics of Becoming*, I attend to the “inventional visual rhetorics” of two feminist body artists: the body artworks of Nan Goldin and Coco Fusco serve as my case studies. I understand “inventional rhetorics” to refer to Lisa Ede, Cheryl Glenn, and Andrea Lunsford’s reconsideration of the canons of
rhetoric from a feminist perspective. This means that the authors have identified the ways in which the philosophy of rhetoric historically has rendered women and other marginalized persons as speechless bodies. The authors link the canon of invention with the canon of memory, “for invention and memory constrain and shape both who can know and what can be known.” In terms of invention-memory, then, “Women have . . . sought to include the intuitive and paralogical, the thinking of the body, as valuable sources of knowing, as sites of invention.” Invention-memory involves a making practice, whereas invention-delivery invokes an end product. Thus, the difference between invention-memory and invention-delivery is central to understanding how bodies are materialized in and constrained by the space and time of rhetoric. Ede, Glenn, and Lunsford explain:

. . . the figure of the rhetor has been assumed to be masculine, unified, stable, autonomous, and capable of acting rationally on the world through language. Those who did not fit this pattern—women, people of color, poorly educated workers, those judged to be overly emotional or unstable—those people stood outside of the rhetorical situation, for they were considered neither capable of nor in need of remembering and inventing arguments.

Further, disabled persons and those identified as “unnatural” in terms of sexual preference or gender identity also must be added to the aforementioned list of absences.

Feminist body art is clearly linked to the subject of this study in that invention-memory utilizes the thinking-making of the body as the site for women’s inventional resources. Again, feminist body art is a practice wherein the body of the artist is present in the work or is the canvas itself. Attention to the invetional visual rhetorics of feminist body artists takes account of the absences of women’s and other marginalized groups’ bodies creating a corporeal rhetoric. These inventional visual rhetorics may provide a set
of tactical spatial and temporal tools that can assist future rhetors in critically attending to
the constraints of space and time on voice-body, as there is no voice without the body.  

Critiquing feminist body art answers to Barbara Biesecker’s call to look elsewhere—to spaces other than the public platform—for women’s rhetorical accomplishments. Although there is burgeoning literature about women’s public address, “the inclusion of particular texts spoken by women serve, albeit unwittingly, to perpetuate the demanding fiction that most women simply do not have what it takes to play the public, rhetorical game.” Biesecker contends, “what I find objectionable in the affirmative action approach to the production and distribution of knowledge—an approach not unrelated to, but, in fact, one of the conditions of female tokenism—is its underhanded perpetuation . . . of the center to affirm certain voices and exclude others.” Some rhetoricians have been remiss in counting women’s discourse as worthy of rhetorical criticism because, in most cases, such discourses do not adhere to the space/time considerations of the public sphere, such as a public gathering where one person’s voice is heard or a gathering wherein several individual’s concerns are addressed (an end product or resolution). Therefore, rhetorical critics must critique canon-formation by attending to the way women’s discourses do not fulfill the requirements of the “public rhetorical game.”

A Note on Method

In order to understand the rhetoric of feminist body art I use several feminist theories of the body. Although there is overlap between that of feminist criticism and rhetorical criticism, my project aims to, in Elizabeth Ellsworth’s words, “stage a series of
encounters among specific design elements and qualities that shape particular places of learning . . .”  
In other words, I rely on context and close readings of texts as my interpretative framework. All the while, I incorporate specific feminist theories of the body that help me explain the rhetorical work of feminist body art.

**A Virtual Tour of Feminist Body Art and Feminist Theory**

Before turning to the visual rhetorical scholarship that embodies my dissertation project, I take my readers on a brief visual and theoretical tour of feminist body art. In so doing I provide the theoretical interdisciplinary context for my subject of study, while simultaneously reviewing the literature about feminist theories of the body. Body art practices and feminist theories of the body are concomitant, they influence and are influenced by one another, according to Carey Lovelace.  

What has not been emphasized in the discipline of visual culture are the ways in which feminist art practices and feminist theories of the body may be a direct corporeal rhetorical reaction-to individual and historical socio-political circumstances, circumstances outside of the high art establishment. Further, rhetorical critics seldom speak about their embodied experiences of the texts that they study. These are the disciplinary voids I hope to fill with my dissertation while pointing to the connections between visual culture and visual rhetoric.

Feminist body art supplements, complements, interrogates, adds to, or enacts feminist theories of the body. Poststructuralist theorists Jean Baudrillard, Jaques Derrida, Michel Foucault, Jaques Lacan, and Roland Barthes paved the way for many of the feminist theories of the body to date. Feminist theorists Laura Mulvey, Luce
Irigaray, Julia Kristeva, Simone de Beauvoir, Judith Butler, Donna Haraway, and Elizabeth Grosz, among others, have reconfigured poststructuralist theory from a feminist perspective. These reconfigurations, consequently, have given feminist body artists concepts such as the “male gaze” and “the cyborg” (terms that will be explained later), to explore visually/corporeally. Although feminist body artists may not intentionally work with concepts, their art works rhetorically on audiences to prompt them to question theories of the body. As such, body artworks’ corporeal invitations are the rhetorics (i.e., the dynamics between audience and artist bodies that change or alter one another) of feminist body art. Furthermore, the following body artists’ artworks address the foundation theories for this study.

Laura Mulvey’s explication of the “male gaze” and the “masquerade” from a feminist perspective has influenced the visual/corporeal practices of body artists. According the Mulvey, the male gaze is the normative way in which individuals learn to see women as objects of desire, rather than as subjects. She claims that all individuals all inhabit the male gaze as spectators. Rhetorically speaking, each audience member, whether they identify as male or female or other, is invited to view women as objects of sexual desire. Thus, women learn to view other women in the same respect, because the viewing subject is always already the male subject position. On the other hand, according to Mulvey, the masquerade is when the male gaze is questioned by playing to it or playing the game of objectification all too well. For instance, Cindy Sherman (figure 1.1) overtly performs her female sexuality as masquerade (the strategic posing of the woman on the bed) by simultaneously invoking and commenting on the male gaze. Her artwork explicitly questions the processes of viewing woman as sexual objects of desire.
poses her body for viewers, revealing her camera’s release chord. In so doing, she invites viewers to confront the male gaze and the processes of learning to view in this way, by putting herself on display.\textsuperscript{30}

\begin{figure}[h]
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\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{CindySherman_UntitledFilmStill34_1979}
\caption{Cindy Sherman, \textit{Untitled Film Still} #34, 1979}
\end{figure}

In addition to such foundational concepts as the male gaze and the masquerade, feminist reconceptualizations of psychoanalysis and phenomenology serve as important invention-memory resources for feminist body artists. Luce Irigaray appropriates Lacan’s \textit{jouissance}—sexual enjoyment or pleasure—and Merleau-Ponty’s \textit{chiasm}—a crossing of sight and touch, or the intersections of sight and touch, much like Möbius strip—for feminist ends. Irigaray contends “women have multiple potential sites of pleasure in the body, in distinction to the male’s unitary focus; this leads to a more pluralistic, heterogeneous approach to perception.”\textsuperscript{31} For instance, feminist body artist Ann Hamilton invokes tactility as the primary perception from which to experience her art. She explicitly critiques vision as the primary mode of perception in her work and asks
audiences to experience visuality phenomenologically as tactility. In figure 1.2, Hamilton uses close-up pictures of a woman’s mouth to visualize the outside-inside of the chiasm. In so doing, she questions the privileged status of vision as the primary perception of knowledge production.

Figure 1.2 Ann Hamilton, *Body Objects*, retrieved 2007 (The Museum of Modern Art collection)

Julia Kristeva’s theory of women as “abject” inspired some feminist body artists to take up issues associated with women’s menstruation and victimage. Kristeva explains the abject is “neither subject nor object;” it “is death infecting life . . . it is something rejected from which one does not part, from which one does not protect oneself as from an object.” Kristeva’s theory of the abject lends itself well to a theory of the body as uncontained and leaky. The ways that women’s bodies leak threatens Order itself, because it is construed as impure and unclean. Grosz explains Kristeva’s connection of excrement with that of menstruation, in that menstruating women are the abject. As such, “female sexuality as an uncontained flow, as a seepage associated with what is unclean, coupled with the idea of female as a vessel, a container, a home empty or lacking in itself
but fillable from the outside, has enabled men to associate women with infection, with disease. . .“

Feminist artist Carolee Schneemann, in her bodily explication of the abject, pulls a scroll out of her vagina during menstruation and reads from it (figure 1.3).

Figure 1.3 Carolee Schneemann, *Interior Scroll*, 1975

Similar to Schneeman’s body artwork critiquing the abject, Cindy Sherman visualizes domestic abuse in one of her popular faux film stills. These stills include several self-portraits of Sherman as an abuse victim, where she painted her face to perform “a woman Ordered and contained” (figure 1.4). Nan Goldin’s diaristic slide show, *The Ballad of Sexual Dependency* (1980-1986), on the other hand, documented, in part, her real-life experiences with domestic abuse (figure 1.5). Goldin’s self-portrait is said to mimic Sherman’s faux still and discloses its own context.
Intersectionality, in terms of race and ethnicity, became a key component of feminist body art practices at the turn of the century. Simone de Beauvoir’s theory of the Other was an important concept for feminist body artists exploring issues of race, class, and gender. de Beauvoir’s theory of the Other asks: “What is a woman?” And in rhetorically answering, claims that “men do not ask what is a man, because man as subject is assumed.” Therefore, “He is the subject, he is the Absolute – she is the Other.” Feminist body artists interrogate how women become women or the Other of all binary pairs, thus questioning the mind/body, nature/culture, and sex/gender/sexuality dichotomies.
de Beauvoir’s conception of woman as Other was extended to explain the how individuals become black. Several feminist body artists of color began experimenting with the concept of the Other as a racialized process. For example, Coco Fusco’s cage performances speak to the eroticized and primitivized Other by calling attention to historical and contemporary viewing practices associated with putting non-white peoples on display for colonizers (figure 1.6). The ease with which audiences took to performing the part of spectator and colonizer, surprised both Fusco and her collaborator on the project, Guillermo Gomez-Peña. In reflecting on her cage performances, Fusco recounts how audience members would pay her and Guillermo to eat exotic foods and practice exotic rituals. One woman even asked if she could pay the two to perform their mating rituals, and then was mortified by her own behavior.

Figure 1.6 Coco Fusco and Guillermo Gomez-Peña, Undiscovered Amerindians, 1992

In contrast to performing the Other, Judith Butler questions the performance of Self. Without a doubt, her theory of performativity powerfully charged body art practices and art criticism at the turn of the 21st century. Butler argues, “Gender is the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that
congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being.” In order to prove her claim, Butler deconstructs the way in which gender has been about sex all along. She determines that the act of sex itself is always already a heterosexual act. And, she inquires into the types of “acting out” or “transgressive performances of gender” that seek to uncover the regulatory frame of gender—acts and performances she regards as akin to “drag.” Renee Cox, in her *Yo Mama* Series, poses as a masculinized, racialized religious symbol (the cross or Madonna). Her body artwork calls into question the regulatory mechanisms that link women’s feminine corporeality with that of their natural (bodily) sex. In Butler’s terms, she performs drag. Cox also visualizes the intersections among race, gender, and religion (figure 1.7).

Figure 1.7 Renee Cox, *Yo Mama*, 1993

Another crucial concept explored by body artists is the cyborg status of the body. Donna Haraway explains, “A cyborg is a hybrid creature, composed of organism and
The concept of the cyborg opened a space for feminist body artists to experiment with technology and to interrogate how technologies (which are never neutral) augment the body. Haraway’s concept of the cyborg led to a further fascination with the ways culture and nature influence one another. N. Katherine Hayles contends new communications technologies produce new significations, which then lead to new modes of embodiment.

The concept of the cyborg and experimentation with new technologies is most clearly visualized by an artist who, rather than stand as presence in the artwork (or as the artwork itself), mediates her or himself via live or taped feed. This feed is then shown on a screen as part of the body artwork. The screen in these performances calls attention to mediated skin. New methods of performing the body via mediated communications explore Grosz’s “body as cultural media” and Haraway’s “cyborg.” Feminist body artist Orlan literally reconfigures her body through plastic surgery, also known as carnal art (figure 1.8). Although plastic surgeons now refuse to work with her, she has undergone several facial reconstructive renovations. Her body artworks are highly choreographed surgeries, which are then documented for, and sometimes fed live to, audiences.

Figure 1.8 Orlan, 1992
All of the aforementioned feminist body artists create invention-al visual rhetorics to expand who can know and what can be known. Fusco utilizes invention-memory—or the processes of becoming the Other—to call attention to the ways individuals of color historically have been put on display for colonizers. Cox utilizes religious symbolism as her invention-memory topoi about the intersections of oppressions. Schneeman’s, Hamilton’s, and Orlan’s documented performances add to the ever-expanding representations, mediations, and articulations of bodies within feminist body art practices. Feminist body artists exhibit their works in alternative spaces and times to that of the fine art museum and develop tactical spatial and temporal tools within their works. Schneeman, for instance, performs for small audiences and documents her works. Goldin performs her shows for her subjects in the bar she tends in the evening and at her loft during parties. Orlan performs in doctors’ offices and on stage. All feminist body artworks speak to patriarchal society and counter sexism visually/corporeally. Body artists make present the bodies outside the space/time of rhetoric, or those who do not adhere to or are not welcome in the public platform, hold viewers accountable for their spectator positions, and invite audiences to become something radically different—a non-static being to a becoming-body.

**Exigences: Space, Time, and the Corporeality of Rhetoric**

This project intends to serve as one important correction to rhetorical critics’ relative inattention to the politics of space and time as manifested in women’s recurring material absence (as makers and knowers of speech acts) in rhetoric. Lisa Ede and Andrea Lunsford create a model for the multidimensional interactions between rhetor, audience,
text, and context in “Audience Addressed/Audience Invoked: The Role of the Audience in Composition Theory and Pedagogy.” This sort of circular and multifaceted approach to the rhetorical situation is more in-line with what I understand as the interaction between space (created by the interaction between the audience and artwork) $\leftrightarrow$ artwork (as created by a visual rhetorician) $\leftrightarrow$ audience (materializes and is materialized by both artwork and space). 44

Taking account of the rhetorical reconfigurations of space and time in feminist artworks may clarify how the space/time of the public platform constrains women’s and other marginalized groups’ voices/bodies. Raymie McKerrow observes that rhetorical critics “have treated space and time (as they are manifest in Western thought) as externalities influencing discourse, to be sure, but also as physical entities having no other meaning beyond what appears as commonsense evidence of one’s competence in performing according to community standards.” 45 In other words, speaking at the appropriate time and in the appropriate place “functions in support of the status quo.” 46 We must ask: whose space and whose time are being served by “performing according to community standards?” 47 and more importantly, whose voices and bodies are silenced as a result? 48

Rhetorical critics, like most humanists, tend to exclude or displace the biological processes of communication such as voice production despite the fact that there is no voice (literally or figuratively) without the body. McKerrow argues, “In the process of privileging a rational, male-dominated voice, western rhetoric has . . . focused on the mind to the exclusion of the body. It is perhaps no accident that the mind/body split also separates the sexes.” 49 Attention to which bodies are absent in the space/time of rhetoric
is necessary in order to move rhetoric from a “thing made” or a way of being to a “thing in the making” or a becoming. To think of rhetoric as a becoming—as processural rather than fixed—opens a space for the voices-bodies that do not fit the mold of the “appropriate” voice-body of the western rhetorical tradition.

Some scholars have taken seriously the ways that rhetoric acts on bodies. However, most rhetoricians seldom explore the materiality of their objects of study. Carole Blair explains:

No text is a text, nor does it have meaning, influence, political stance, or legibility, in the absence of material form. Rhetoric is not rhetoric until it is uttered, written, or otherwise manifested or given presence. This, we might hypothesize as a starting point for theorizing rhetoric that at least one of its basic characteristics (if not the most basic) is its materiality.

Greg Dickinson links Blair’s explication of the materiality of rhetoric to the practice of rhetorical criticism. Dickinson states:

One way of taking seriously the materiality of rhetoric is to turn to rhetorical “texts” that resist purely symbolic “readings.” This fosters a desire to turn to non-discursive “texts” like visual and spatial texts. These “non-discursive” texts are not necessarily more material than, say, a political speech. However, when the absence of the word—the ultimate symbol—is missing, a purely symbolic reading is at least more difficult.

While Dickinson is speaking about visual and spatial texts such as monuments, memorials, and museums, I am interested in understanding the space and time created by feminist body artworks. I am concerned with theorizing the invitational visual rhetorics of feminist body artists, which should extend our understanding of the materiality of rhetoric or how rhetoric works on the body. In fact, we shall see the progression from the materiality of rhetoric to corporeal rhetorics in the following chapters, which are
foremost concerned with issues of space, time, and the gendered body. Feminist body art, as texts, also adds another visual form to the study of visual rhetoric.

The visual-rhetorical scholarship about spatial texts starts with the fundamental question of how texts act on bodies, and such work speaks to the materiality of rhetoric. For instance, Blair documents how U.S. memorials and monuments act rhetorically on bodies as invitations to collective memory—invitations, that is, to seek consensus.\textsuperscript{54} Dickinson, Brian Ott, and Eric Aoki contend that museums, through their rhetorical initiations of collecting, displaying, and (re)presenting, teach audiences how to visualize peoples as historically, culturally, and technologically “Other.”\textsuperscript{55} Dickinson also attends to the ways banal spaces, such as grocery stores, shopping centers, and coffee shops, set the stage for creative performances of identity and function in the mode of nostalgia, which stabilizes the body.\textsuperscript{56} This scholarship is particularly useful in framing my study given its attention to spatial structures and its focus on how texts act on bodies.

However, none of the aforementioned works acknowledges the specificities of the bodies acted upon by rhetoric, leaving unanswered the question: Does an audience have to espouse a white male body to be acted upon by rhetoric? Lisa Flores’ theorization of discursive space acknowledges the specificities of bodies acted upon by rhetoric. In “Creating Discursive Space through a Rhetoric of Difference: Chicana Feminists Craft a Homeland,” Flores argues that Chicana feminists create a discursive space or home in their creative works. Such discursive spaces are built by a rhetoric of difference, which includes the rejection of mainstream stereotypes, the creation of new history or the centering of marginalized materialities, the construction of community, and a building of
bridges. Moreover, the creation of discursive spaces creates what ultimately can be called safe spaces for people with “like” identities.

I could argue that the type of texts I treat in my dissertation do, in fact, create a discursive space. However, my research suggests that the case studies I have chosen do not espouse a particularized identity; rather, they “play” with gendered embodiment and the loss of subjectivity. In other words, the body artworks of some feminist body artists are at odds with Flores’ “creation of home” or of the “being” a particularized identity, teleologically speaking. For Flores, Chicana identity is a fixed state of being, or an end in itself, whereas some feminist body artists create spaces in which identity is both questioned in terms of legitimacy and pointed to as a constructed performance. Thus, methodologically speaking, the literature about spatial visual rhetoric, like that of Dickinson and Blair, is a deconstructive act, pointing to the ways that identity is stabilized by monumental, official, and banal space. Flores’ discursive space formation, while a reconstructive act, stabilizes identity all the same.

This dissertation specifically is concerned with feminist body artworks (reconstructive acts) and how these corporeal rhetorics act on audience bodies (a deconstructive act or the destabilization of identity, gender, sexuality and Otherness). But, ultimately, my project is concerned with how feminist body artists might invite audiences to become open-ended, unfixable in terms of identity, radically possible, responsible, experimental, and present while fragmented. Starting from the body as a rhetorical text, to which feminist body art so aptly lends itself, may deepen our understanding of the corporeality of rhetoric and answer to the constraints of space and time on voice-body. Artists Coco Fusco and Nan Goldin and their artworks serve as
important case studies for analyzing the tension and radical openings between the text-body and the audience-body.

**Research Questions: Rhetorical Mediations**

In order to critique feminist body art from a rhetorical perspective, and specifically the works of Goldin and Fusco, I identified five research questions to guide such a study. Through close attention to the rhetorical work of body art, these five research questions encapsulate the material and rhetorical practices of feminist body artists. These questions are: 1) How do feminist body artists use invention-memory (again, making as a process) as a rhetorical resource to articulate (and therefore materialize) their bodies or the bodies represented in their works? 2) How do bodily representation, mediation, and articulation take form in the multimedia and/or multi-sensory installation or performance? 3) What tactical spatial and temporal tools develop within the artwork, or what is the space and time of the artwork? 4) What is the significance of the body artwork’s material existence and does the body artwork comment on other texts as a means to disclose its context? 5) How do body artworks (as speaking bodies) work on audience bodies, and what do they invite audiences to become as a result of their rhetoric? In the following analysis I explain each of these questions in more detail and use several examples of feminist body art to shed light on some of the material and rhetorical practices of feminist body artists. It is with these points of departure that I conduct the case studies in this dissertation.

1). How do feminist body artists use invention-memory as a rhetorical resource to articulate (and therefore materialize) their bodies or the bodies represented in their works (i.e., who can know and what can be known)?
Feminist body artists often utilize several genres, such as self-portraiture and installation, or create hybrid genres in order to create alternative spaces and times to visualize bodies deemed outside the rhetorical situation. Karlyn Kohrs Campbell states, “Like the social roles implied by gender, genres frame symbolic behavior in ways that enable audiences to understand its meaning and to know what kinds of action to expect and what sorts of responses are appropriate.”59 The point of several body artworks is the inappropriateness of marginalization, exclusion, and absence. Campbell continues, “The double-bind [of gender and appropriate public performance] ingraticates women to use invention resources. The double-bind or schizophrenic call aims at incoherency of the marked norm of articulation.”60 This means, spatial and temporal tactics of articulation must be created in order for women and other marginalized bodies to give voice to their particularized ways of being in the world, while simultaneously pointing to the destabilizing nature of identity altogether.

Although speaking about speech acts and the use of language, Campbell argues that “the principle of rhetorical invention is subversion. . . “61 Thus, a rhetor or feminist body artist must use invention resources to subvert patriarchal claims on the art establishment, as well as to subvert the status quo’s hold on the appropriateness of speech in the public sphere. Hannah Wilke’s juxtapositioning of herself as a young woman, the object of the male gaze and beauty, with her diseased mother, body ridden with cancer, oscillates between the appropriate and inappropriate (figure 1.9). Wilke also juxtaposes images of herself as a young woman with those of her dying of cancer (the INTR-VENUS Series 1992). Utilizing subversive ends (juxtaposing) enabled her to move from the quintessential female nude form to the becoming body, a body dying. The history of her
particular body and the processes by which we learn to view women as objects are put into motion calling to audience members to “see” her in all of her bodily complexity.

![Figure 1.9 So Help Me Hannah Series: Portrait of the Artist with her Mother, Selma Butter 1978-81](image)

2). How do bodily representation, mediation, and articulation take form through the multimedia and/or multi-sensory installation or performance?

Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson explain the invention-memory form of feminist body art through a thematic of four elements. The most important element for this research question is the concept of relationality. The authors explain relationality as the interfaces among image, sound, and texture. For instance, the word and the image may be set side-by-side, where one is no longer subservient to the other. The image and the word converse and neither can express the entirety of the dialogue. In other words, not only do body artists refuse to hierarchize forms, they do not valorize a specific sense organ or genre. Rather, they play with the ubiquity of forms.

Tracey Emin’s installation, *My Bed*, relies on the interfaces among bodily excretion, objects, and several tactile surfaces to make meaning with audience members’ memories (figure 1.10). Contextually, the installation also includes a noose, one would
assume as a gesture of suicide. The glass jars and photographs scattered about the rug, as well as the stuffed animal and condom wrappers allows audiences members to utilize their own memories in order to make sense of the scene. Relationally speaking, the objects and liquids speak to one another, but neither can tell the entirety of the story line of Tracey’s bed.

![Figure 1.10 Tracey Emin, My Bed, 1998](image)

3). What tactical spatial and temporal tools develop within the body artwork or what is the space and time of the body artwork?

Embedded within the diffuse-form feminist body art are spatial and temporal tactics whose purpose is to open audience bodies to the constraints of the space/time on voice-body. According to Marsha Meskimmon, feminist body artists comment on the sexualization of space through tactics of multiple layering and depth. In fact, several artists have used such layering practices to turn two-dimensional artworks into three-dimensional ocular experiences. Also, the sexualization of time is represented by tactics such as gutter work (the blank space between frames, which moves the audience’s
imagination to fill in the gaps of the story), serialization, and sequencing. These tactics which are often telescoped collapse image and word as in a permeable boundary. Temporality may include pausing, an alternative movement of the eye through the artwork, or an oscillation through the senses.63

Diane Borsato’s Artifacts in my Mouth series create a history of taste (figure 1.11). She licks the objects usually held under lock and key in the official space of the museum. Adding to the memories of these objects and taxidermy, that which was once alive or in use, and in-corporating them into a performance calls attention to the ways in which space and time work to preserve, exhibit, and create knowledge through the visible. Furthermore, the interface created between Borasto and the objects changes both the body of the object or species and her own body (i.e., the taste held in her mouth).

Figure 1.11 Diane Borsato, Artifacts in my Mouth, 2003

4). What is the significance of the artwork’s material existence and does the text comment on other texts as a means to disclose its context?
Although several body artworks are performed for small audiences, most of these artworks are documented for larger audiences. Understanding the contexts in which the artwork comes to life and in response to what circumstance is an important factor of all criticism. However, most body artworks are ephemeral in their very nature. Thus, process becomes an end in itself. Body artists play with the concepts of space and time and, therefore, the context works a bit differently for these artworks. In other words, visual culture scholars such as Amelia Jones argue that experiencing a representation or documentation of a live performance or installation is still a valid endeavor; there is no qualitative distinction, only a difference in interpretation or experience of the piece.

As stated previously, juxtapositioning is utilized by feminist body artists as a tactic of subversion. Other such subversive tactics, like parody, work rhetorically to express a means of disclosure. In other words, body artists often comment in their works on other artworks deemed praiseworthy by the high art establishment (see Renee Cox’s *Yo Mama’s Last Supper*, for example). Also, several artworks may not appear as art at all, but rather a processual moment commenting on the masterpiece status of displayed objects.

5). How do body artworks (as speaking bodies) work on audience bodies and what do they invite audiences to become as a result of their rhetoric?

Although feminist body art relies on individual experiences in audience members to make meaning, relational and contextual information must be established with regard to critiquing these works. I will identify the particular contextual, relational, spatial, and temporal tactics of each of my texts. However, I also will rely on my own experience with the artworks in order to further facilitate critiques of the pieces under review. Let me
be clear, although I identify myself as a white female academic, I do not claim to speak for all women, all academics, or all feminists. My critiques are mine alone. I acknowledge that I know only a little—that which my body is invited to reflect upon and become. This is a tricky form of criticism in rhetorical studies. Carole Blair, Julie Brown, and Leslie Baxter have noted rhetoric critics’ inability to publish when their own experiences with their texts are voiced in their critiques. Rather, an objective voice is used in most academic journals. But, as Vivian Sobchack, a feminist film critic, ruminates, “. . . I am struck by the gap that exists between our actual experience of the cinema and the theory that we academic film scholars construct to explain it—or perhaps, more aptly, to explain it away.”

I am attempting to produce critiques through a rhetorical-phenomenological lens. Sobchack explains, “Phenomenological criticism begins with rich descriptions, wherein they may resonate with another’s experience of inhabiting the space of the text.” Although I often rely on the artist’s own words and critiques waged by academics in the disciplines of art history, visual culture, and philosophy to explain the artworks under investigation, my experiences with the texts is the “key” finding of my critiques In other words, the goal of a rhetorical-phenomenological criticism—what I also refer to in my chapters as skin rhetoric and corporeal criticism—is to gather what sorts of responses audiences members are invited to participate in as a result of coming into contact with a text. Sobchack furthers my mission by stating:

. . . although in historical and cultural existence particular experiences are lived idiosyncratically, they are also, and in most cases, lived both generally and conventionally—in the first instance, according to general conditions of embodied existence such as temporality, spatiality, intentionality, reflection and reflexivity, and in the second instance, according to usually transparent and dominant cultural habits that are not so much determining as they are regulative.
Thus, much like rhetorical criticism, phenomenological criticism “means not only attending to the content and form of embodied experience but also to its context.” The end, of course, is to identify how the audience is changed by and changes the text.

Rhetorical Bodies: Critical Case Studies

Nan Goldin and Coco Fusco explicitly think-feel bodies. In so doing, they visualize absences and give voice to counter-memories, counter-realities. I chose these body artists and their body artworks as the critical case studies in my dissertation because their performative practices and issues of concern are diverse, yet interrelated. By choosing such different artists I hope to account for—but by no means fully represent—the breadth and depth of body art practices to date. Of course, every issue of concern and performative practice cannot be accounted for in this or any other work, still my case studies should assist rhetorical scholars in identifying how some voices-bodies are silenced or altogether absent in the space/time of the rhetorical situation. These artists’ bodies (and bodies of work) speak of the gendered and sexed body, with specific attention on the transsexual, medical, and terrorist gazes.

Given the male gaze or the normative male subject position, we learn to look at bodies, especially the bodies of women, in specific ways. Utilizing Judith Halberstam’s theory of the transsexual gaze, Michel Foucault’s theory of the clinical gaze, and Henry Giroux’s theory of the terrorist or spectacle gaze, I will show how Goldin and Fusco break down these gazes and invite audiences to experience their works multi-sensuously. By this, I mean that Goldin and Fusco, like several other artists mentioned previously,
refuse vision and the primary sense through which we come to make sense of the world and perceptions of the world. Rather, these artists work with the bodies of audience members, making present certain sensations that may not be able to be explained through vision alone. Also, the visual/corporeal practices of these body artists can be said to disclose their immediate socio-political contexts: the sexual revolution and its aftermath (1960s and 1990s), the Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) crisis (1980s), and our contemporary war in Iraq.

In the following overview I answer to each of my research questions with regard to my critical case studies. I then go into more detail in each of the chapters to follow. Although I do not claim that all feminist body art can fit neatly into any methodological box, study after study attests that body art “speaks” specifically about space, time, and voice-body. Each case also begins a trend of breaking down the mind/body, sex/gender, and nature/culture dichotomies, as well as inviting audience participants to see-feel their artworks.

Chapter Two: A Transgendered Gaze toward a Becoming-Body

In *The Other Side*, Nan Goldin documented the lives of drag queens in Boston, New York, and Thailand. She considered her subjects her friends and family, and often lived with them over the course of several years. *The Other Side* specifically acknowledges the differing relationships and socio-political issues that affect the lives of her subjects. For instance, the drag queens she roomed with in Boston in the ‘70s were ostracized by the larger Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender (LGBT) community. The drag queen’s body threatened the processes of recognition being advanced by the gay male subject at this
historical juncture. Yet, drag queens in New York City in the early 1990s were becoming a recognizable body within the LGBT community due to their shared losses caused by the AIDS crisis.

Whereas U.S. drag queens forge new communities and new families, drag queens in Thailand inhabit a different kind of familial life. Even though Thai queens are considered an embarrassment culturally, they are the primary financial supporters of their immediate and extended families. Commodifying themselves, Thai queens serve a segment of the sex industry trade. *The Other Side* documents the specificities of bodies within cultural contexts and also speaks to issues associated with the diseased body (and the body in pain; losing the battle with AIDS and drug addiction) and the plasticity of the body.

Goldin performs her photography as a slide show with musical overlay. The naming of the show, the musical overlay, the individual slides as well as the montage created by the slide show as a whole, all work together to shape the artwork. Also, the sound of the slide projector clicking from one slide to the next, the changing genres of musical overlay, the movement from black and white slides to color, and the often blurry individual slides add to the ways the artwork’s rhetoric acts on audience bodies. Each of Goldin’s subsequent performances were reordered: the order of the slides changes as does the musical overlay, thus creating new narrative developments and new memories of events and lives past for future audiences.

Goldin performed her works on a blank wall in the bars she tended or at her loft in Greenwich Village, and her audiences featured the subjects she photographed. As her audiences grew so too did her name recognition. In 1993 she was invited to exhibit in
The Whitney Museum of American Art’s Biennial. Goldin holds the rights to her artworks in that she holds the rights to rearrange the narrative structure of her slides. Thus, her spatial and temporal tactics, which are developed in her live performances, are employed in her semi-permanent exhibits. These tactics, which amount to the invention of new memories or ways of remembering events, losses, and bodies, are performed by the reordering of slides and re-editing of musical overlay.

Goldin captured a subculture fighting for bodily recognition and, literally, their lives. Her displays, as critical art practices that challenged cultural norms, articulated a different history or counter-memory (counter, that is, to the official discourses about promiscuity and the gay male body), and reinvigorated the radical possibilities of political art. Goldin’s work, as with the works of Serrano and Mapplethorpe, also sparked the controversies surrounding the distribution of National Endowment of the Arts (NEA) awards. She presents for audiences counter-memories of a generation lost to the AIDS crisis and drug addiction. She also documents the plasticity of the body (i.e., the literal ease with which biological men become women) and the complexity of relationships, especially relationships outside binary pair structures. Audiences may be invited to think critically about vision as the primary source of knowledge and to interrogate what secondary sex characteristics actually disclose. Her visual rhetoric makes present some of the bodies that are absent in the space and time of rhetoric, specifically the transsexual body, which is by far the most abject of all bodies because of its inability to fall into a specific dichotomy.
Chapter 3: A Clinical Gaze toward a Becoming-Body

Nan Goldin’s *Alf Bold grid, Cookie Mueller Portfolio* (1976-89), and her series of Gilles and Gotscho (Paris, 1992-93) are the case studies in chapter three. Each of the pieces works through the devastation of AIDS. Rather than objectify the bodies of the victims of the disease, Goldin utilizes images of objects, others, and spaces to protect her subjects from the medical gaze and the voyeurism of viewers. The *Cookie Muller Portfolio* visualizes the life and death of Cookie through a series of fourteen photographs. The Alf Bold grid incorporates nine images into a single panel wrought with gutter work moving the audience through different phases of Alf’s disease. The Gilles and Gotscho series exposes audiences to the relations between the two men and Gilles’ disease through a series of ten photographs. All of Goldin’s AIDS work appears in *I’ll be Your Mirror* a collection of her works taken over two decades.

Spatially and temporally speaking, Goldin offsets contemporary notions of these concepts through her use of serialization, blurring, pausing, and the sense of movement and flow between images. She retheorizes that the collective memory must be understood as an embodied individual flow of personal and collective experience. Goldin opens audience members to their recollections of the AIDS crisis, as well as to personal memories involving the senses. She does so by incorporating images of objects, others, and spaces into her visual AIDS works, offsetting objectification and inviting audiences into the space and moments of loss.
Chapter 4: A Terrorist Gaze toward a Becoming-Body

Moving from the sexual revolution to its aftermath, this chapter will seek to understand how differing technologies and sex roles influence visual rhetoric. In her most recent performance, *A Room of One’s Own: Women and Power in the New America* (2005), Fusco dons army fatigues and lectures to an audience about the practicality of sexual torture on prisoners of war. She creates an eerily sterile Abu Ghraib-esque scenario to elaborate the ways U.S. American women are winning the War on Terror. In *A Room of One’s Own*, Fusco utilizes a PowerPoint presentation to discuss the logistics and effects of sexual torture, while also interrogating a male captive behind the scene. The male captive wears an orange jumpsuit and his head is covered with a black sack. The female military officer uses several torture tactics to get the male captive to disclose or “leak” his secret knowledge. Implicitly, Fusco advances a theory of the sexual and racial specificities of bodies and comments on the ways in which women use their “official” space within the military to torture bodies abroad.

Fusco’s multimedia and multi-sensory performance also may represent the globalized/technologized processes of power bodies moving through space. This mediation harkens the body’s nervous system as akin to the information super highway wherein information and weapons technologies (beholden with their bodily traces) are used for atrocious ends. In other words, power works through a series of bodies, but each body must be implicated in the outcome: in this case, the sexual torture of prisoners abroad. Interestingly, Fusco performed *A Room of One’s Own* at the Symposium on Feminist Art at the MoMA. This means she was a part of the “Feminist Art Finally Takes
Center Stage” or feminist art’s official recognition overviewed in my introductory comments and Holland Cotter’s *New York Times* article. On this day of celebration, however, she spoke at the “wrong place” and at the “wrong time,” by critiquing feminism for its empowering tenets and for the movement’s complicity with the War on Terror.

Clearly, Fusco is commenting on Virginia Woolf’s *A Room of One’s Own* and re-visualizing the atrocities at Abu Ghraib. She plays live feed from a gitmo cam. As a Cuban artist, she implicates her own ethnicity and nationality in the war in Iraq. She also uses her own body to represent how women in power in the U.S. military use their spaces to conduct sexual torture on prisoners abroad, which is also a critique of the empowerment of liberal feminism. In effect, she performs high-ranking military women’s roles in the War on Terror. Implicitly, she comments on the state of the art in feminist theory. Fusco’s performances hold audiences accountable for their inaction, whether in *Undiscovered Amerindians* or *A Room of One’s Own*, thereby making viewers confront their own spectatorship positions in terms of the atrocities inflicted upon bodies. In this sense, audiences may become increasingly more aware of how their bodies perform labors for their masters. Consequently, audiences also may become aware of how their bodies enact globalized/technologized communications systems, which make possible current-day warfare.

**Chapter Five: Conclusion**

In the concluding chapter of my dissertation, I will discuss the possibility of moving from understandings of the materiality of rhetoric, which critics such as Blair, Dickinson, Ott, Aoki, Armada, and Zelizer have so aptly documented, to a conception of a corporeal
rhetoric or of the gendered experiences of bodies in the space and time of rhetoric. McKerrow calls for corporeal attention to rhetorical discourses and my dissertation attempts to answer to his call, as well as the calls of Biesecker, Blair, Baxter and Brown, concerning the space and time of women’s discourses as well as the body of the critic. I review my findings concerning space, time, and the body in my critical case studies while reciting my own corporeal experiences with these body artworks. In recapping the socio-political, historical, and individual circumstances that may have led these artists to invent their works, I proffer a relational way of doing rhetorical criticism, a corporeal rhetorical criticism, which takes account of the gendered experiences of texts and pays special attention to space and time constraints. The several connections between visual culture and visual rhetoric also are outlined in the concluding chapter. Thus, as Smith and Watson contend, “Given the multiple sites of the autobiographical not only in visual, aural, and textual media but at their intersections, no single-discipline model is sufficient to address the complex interweaving, explicitly or implicitly, of image, word, and voice in twentieth-century women artists’ self-representation.” A corporeal rhetorical criticism is based in phenomenology and takes place at the intersections between rhetorical criticism and critical rhetoric.
CHAPTER TWO

A Transgendered Gaze toward a Becoming Body:
Time and Nan Goldin’s Corporeal Rhetoric

. . . Kairos, as timing and praxis, invites aesthetics and creative agency into historical processes. This does not suggest aestheticising history, but intervening in ways which acknowledge materiality and the bodily locus of knowledge.

Marsha Meskimmon, *Women Making Art*[^73]

In order to examine how the constraints of space and time on voice and body are transgressed in feminist body artworks, I attend to the inventional visual rhetoric of *The Other Side*, a performative slide show and published collection created by Nan Goldin over twenty years. By “inventional visual rhetoric,” I refer to the ways in which Goldin opens audience members to new ways of viewing her subjects. Elucidating the embedded spatial and temporal transgressions within her work complicates kairos or the standards by which a speaker/artist is judged as speaking at the appropriate time and in the appropriate setting.[^74] Rather than continue the trend of applying kairos as it is currently configured in rhetorical studies—as that which is subservient to space—we might want to think more critically about why certain voices and bodies remain silent or altogether absent in most rhetorical situations. Marsha Meskimmon argues, “Kairos is not simply the reversal of the dualistic logic of Chronos/Aeon, nor is it a concept of temporality derived from some utopian space outside the ‘web’ of histories and material conditions.”[^75] Rather, she continues, kairos “is a modulating temporality, connected to the processes and practices of specific historical formulations, yet not beyond change and the potential of the ‘new.’”[^76] Here, we can begin to think of kairos as a process and praxis.

[^73]: 73[^73]
[^74]: 74[^74]
[^75]: 75[^75]
[^76]: 76[^76]
Goldin visualizes some of the bodies considered outside of the space and time of appropriate and/or fitting speech. In a broader theoretical sense, Goldin visualizes the politics of possibility—or an opening up of being to becoming and knowing to feeling or touching—that feminist theorists of the body champion. She does so by creating a body artwork that complicates the sex/gender and space/time dichotomies, wherein one term is always already subsumed by the other. In this chapter, I first identify the theoretical underpinnings of the chapter, what I refer to as a transgendered gaze toward a becoming-body. Next, I contextualize both Goldin as an artist and Goldin’s artwork, *The Other Side*. I offer readings of three of the images taken from this work and, by way of conclusion, I answer to rhetorical critics’ calls to look outside the space and time of the public platform to access women’s rhetorical contributions.

**A Series of Gazes toward a Becoming Body**

Many are familiar with Laura Mulvey’s conceptualization of the male gaze or the ways in which we learn how to view women as objects of male desire. Following Mulvey’s conceptualization, several feminist theorists have posited the question: Can there be a female gaze? Bell hooks and Judith Butler have taken the discussion further by introducing the concept of a lesbian gaze with regard to Judy Livingston’s 1990 film, *Paris Is Burning*. Both Butler and hooks determine that Livingston’s camera acts as a phallus, thanks to her “objective” lens. In other words, both authors would have liked to have seen Livingston “intruding” into the scenes, so that a lesbian gaze could have been developed further.
Judith Halberstam laid the groundwork for theorizing a transgendered gaze when she discussed the implications of the “two Brandons” scene in the 1999 film, *Boys Don’t Cry*. She explains:

When Lana is sequestered to visually—verify Brandon’s castration, she refuses this violent form of looking. Lana creates a female gaze—a willingness to see what is not there. Thus, when Tom and John “expose Brandon’s body in front of the crowd, Brandon is able to rescue himself for a brief moment by returning to the gaze created by he and Lana. Appearing in the crowd then, the second Brandon is clothed and he impassively returns the gaze of the tortured Brandon. Thus, if the shot/reverse-shot both usually secures and destabilizes the spectator’s sense of self, according to Kaja Silverman, then the shot/reverse-shot involving the two Brandons now serves both to destabilize the spectator’s sense of gender stability and also to confirm Brandon’s manhood at the very moment that he has been exposed as female/castrated.  

Thus, Brandon becomes a man in the gaze of the viewers. As I will argue, by visualizing the processes of women-in-the-making, Nan Goldin’s *The Other Side* takes the transgendered gaze even further by employing what can only be called a becoming-gaze. Because Goldin “intrudes” in her own collections, her body becomes one of the objects of desire, thus offsetting the “falling short” that both hooks and Butler warn against. Also, rather than grant her subjects the “ends” of a specific gender as in the two Brandons scene, she opens her audiences to a knowing and becoming of gender in the making, of a never-ending gender-in-process. Goldin invites her audiences to approach her works with a becoming-gaze, a gaze which may very well reconfigure the becoming and knowing of audience members’ bodies.
Nan Goldin’s Corporeal Rhetoric

It is as if my hand were a camera.

Nan Goldin, *The Ballad of Sexual Dependency*[^82]

Nan Goldin “began to take photographs when the memory of her older sister, who had committed suicide, began to fade.”[^83] Goldin believed her sister ended her own life because she was a lesbian living in a society where she would never be accepted. Goldin recalls, “I started when I was 15 or 16 taking pictures of my friends. I didn’t know then, that I was doing it to preserve memory. It was more subconscious and I wasn’t aware of that motivation till later.”[^84] She then ran away from home and established a new family in the 1970s drag scene in Boston. There, she was introduced to the subjects who would become the canvas through which her rhetorics of sex and gender would take form. According to D.Z., “Goldin’s own youth, drug abuse, bisexuality, and her relationships with gays and transvestites placed her squarely in the middle of what would become known as the AIDS crisis.”[^85] In the discipline of art history, Goldin’s legacy centers on her dynamic images that document a subculture lost to AIDS and drug abuse. Especially powerful are her series of long-time friends Cookie Mueller, Gilles, and Alf Bold, and their corporeal deterioration and eventual deaths from AIDS. However, in a more popular sense, Goldin is best known for *The Ballad of Sexual Dependency*, a performative slide show that documents the battle between the sexes, which was created over two decades and was eventually published as a book in 2005.

Like many feminist body artists, Goldin uses the visual as an autobiographical voice of self-discovery and recovery. As D. Z. explains, she “thinks of her camera as a veritable eye that stores impressions and experiences. For her, photographs have become

[^82]: Nan Goldin, *The Ballad of Sexual Dependency*.
[^83]: Nan Goldin “began to take photographs when the memory of her older sister, who had committed suicide, began to fade.”
[^84]: She then ran away from home and established a new family in the 1970s drag scene in Boston. There, she was introduced to the subjects who would become the canvas through which her rhetorics of sex and gender would take form. According to D.Z., “Goldin’s own youth, drug abuse, bisexuality, and her relationships with gays and transvestites placed her squarely in the middle of what would become known as the AIDS crisis.”
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Goldin calls her slide show photography a “visual public diary.” She says that she often does not know how she feels about a person until she photographs him or her. Goldin often documents couples’ lives and the problems of coupling. In fact, she is often invited into the most intimate settings of the couples she photographs: their bedrooms. But, she also takes snapshots of herself and her own lovers during intimate encounters, effectively counting herself in on the voyeuristic impulse. The contents of her visual public diary range from subjects looking in mirrors, urinating, bathing, or masturbating to transformations of gender, sex, and identity.

Although her aesthetic often is likened to those of Cindy Sherman and Diane Arbus, Goldin explains that, “these pictures come out of relationships, not observation.” Like Arbus, though, Goldin’s “pictures present the very subjects considered outside the socially regulated realm.” She documents both the monumental and mundane of her daily life by taking snapshots of those around her—subjects who are always already aware of the ways sex and gender collide, confuse, and can be created anew. James Cuno contends, “Arguably no artist, and certainly no photographer, of this era has created a more symbiotic relationship between life and art than Nan Goldin.”

Feminist body artists often are known for their presentation styles rather than merely their technical abilities. As such, Goldin is most noted for her performative slide shows, which are made up of an accumulation of snapshots “in concert with (or in ironic counter-point to) the lyrics or mood of the music.” Goldin’s slide shows include *The Ballad of Sexual Dependency; Cookie Mueller; The Other Side; Sisters, Saints, and Sybils;* and *STARDUST.* Every show is “re-arranged . . . for each presentation so as to
keep with changes in mood, feeling, impressions and memories.” Moreover, each show is an alternative history because of the rearrangement and juxtaposition of the images and sound.

Along with her slide shows, Goldin directed a film entitled *I’ll Be Your Mirror*, wherein her subjects were able to speak for themselves and describe their relationships with the artist. She took part in several collaborative installations both in the United States and abroad. Importantly, Goldin curated *Witnesses Against Our Vanishing* (November 16, 1989-January 6, 1990), an exhibition of works by HIV/AIDS-positive artists or artists who lost friends to the disease. She also published several of her collections, such as *The Ballad of Sexual Dependency* (1986); *The Other Side* (1972-1992); *Ten Years After* (1986-1996); *Couples and Loneliness* (1999); *I’ll Be Your Mirror* (1996); and *The Devil’s Playground* (2003).

*The Other Side*

Goldin’s inventional visual rhetoric *The Other Side*, whether in slide show or collection form, unhinges viewers’ abilities to trust vision as the primary sense through which sex and gender are determined. In so doing, she complicates status quo understandings of knowing as a visual enterprise and being as a system of dichotomies. By taking viewers behind the scenes and into the dressing room, gay bar, and bedroom of gender construction, *The Other Side* invites viewers to consider and, at some level, visually-touch the plasticity and pliability of the body. Goldin’s photographs disturb vision, because viewers are unlikely to be able to guess, or know for sure, the sex of all of the subjects photographed. Occasionally, this is due in part to the fact that the subject has
changed his or her sex. In other cases, the subject is biologically a man or a woman, but his or her positioning within the montage of the artwork—perhaps between an extended-sequence of drag queens “staging” their gender performances—disturbs viewers’ immediate ability to categorize secondary sex characteristics.

While Goldin’s curated exhibition *Witnesses Against our Vanishing* visualizes deterioration and death caused by the AIDS crisis, *The Other Side* is a celebration and documentation of some of the very same bodies in the making—bodies, that is, deemed inappropriate for or outside of the space/time of articulation. According to Elisabeth Sussman, “*The Other Side*, published in 1992, is a compilation of her photographs of drag queens, from the early black-and-whites of 1972 through her later work, taken in New York, Berlin, and Asia.”

Interspersed within *The Other Side* are three series of photographs showing Greer, Kim, and Joey. Both Greer and Joey are male-female (or a man who transitions into a woman through surgery and hormone therapy) and are the very same subjects who appear in many of Goldin’s works. *The Other Side* most generally explores the staging and euphoric effects of an ever-changing gender identity. Sussman argues, “In these works, Goldin dislocated photography’s transgressive narrative of female glamour by exposing its offstage domesticity and intimacy and by exploring the subject of men who live as women.”

In moving from the 1970s black-and-white to the vibrant, colorful, but sometimes dinghy 1990s photographs, as well as from the local (Boston and NYC) to the global (Berlin and South Asia), Goldin makes visible the changing dynamics within the gay community. In the 1970s Goldin lived with a group of drag queens in Boston. She was introduced to the group by her long time friend David, who was a performer. Goldin fell
in love with Ivy, one of her roommates, and later learned her love affair was unclassifiable, psychologically speaking. In other words, there were no naming devices to solidify Goldin’s sexuality and, at the time, her sexuality would have been considered deviant. Goldin’s aesthetic in the 1970s photographs is similar to that of high fashion and glamour. The same can be said of the 1970s drag queen aesthetic, and specifically Ivy’s aesthetic (Goldin’s subject). Although the staged bodies and beauty of the queens alludes to the images of models on the covers of Vogue, many of Goldin’s roommates could not find work and turned tricks or sewed costumes for one another. Gay bars, drag balls, nightclubs, and friends’ apartments became the places where drag queen identity was staged, performed, and in-corporated.

While drag queens in the 1970s were often ostracized by the larger gay community, however the AIDS crisis of the 1980s created an atmosphere of collective pain. New opportunities arose for men who lived as women, in terms of employment and visibility. This change in attitude is highlighted in The Other Side by the change from black and white to color photography. Gender play and a diversity of coupling options also increased as men-women gained wider acceptance. For example, Goldin’s later friends of the 1990s were gay boys by day and drag queens by night. Some transgendered individuals in her cohort changed their sex altogether. Rather than cling to stylized conceptions of female glamour, the queens in the 1990s exude a playfulness and flamboyancy that only comes with a sense of humor, a sense of comfort. Blue and pink wigs, bodies covered with rhinestones, feather boas, and contemporary and historical cross-dressing parodies are all featured as part of the 1990s drag queen aesthetic.
Significantly, *The Other Side* is Goldin’s only work that contextualizes changing attitudes within the gay community toward drag queens. Also, a section of *The Other Side* contrasts the cross-cultural family dynamics of drag queens from South Asia to the friend-family relations of U.S. drag queens. Goldin makes visible these histories and cultural differences through the bodies of the queens in the photographs. Thus, her inventional visual rhetoric is clearly concerned with a space-time dynamic or kairos. For the purposes of this chapter, which seeks to articulate the radical reconfigurations of space and time on voice and body in feminist body artwork as opposed to the space/time of the western rhetorical tradition, I attend only to Goldin’s inventional visual rhetoric of drag queens in the United States. Although her images of South Asian drag queens must be critiqued for their cross-cultural import, because of my own space constraints I am unable to attend to these images in the following analysis but will treat those in my later work.

**Corporeal Rhetoric, Space and Time**

An in-depth critique of three images taken from *The Other Side* will help elucidate the spatial and temporal tactics at work within Goldin’s body artwork. Although the numerous slides and blurring of musical genres in *The Other Side* work together to help audiences make meaning, understanding the spatial and temporal tactics at work within single shots taken from the published collection also may clarify how Goldin transgresses the space/time of the rhetorical situation in a way that corporealizes the bodies of her subjects.
I read Goldin’s images for their unraveling and complexification of issues of representation, such as codes and signifiers of gender normativity. Goldin uses formalistic historical antecedents to create a photographic aesthetic, while her subjects similarly rely on historical antecedents to create a corporeal drag aesthetic. Goldin’s images, then, are at once iterable—readable and repeatable—and transgressive—critical of normative gender identity—as are her subjects.

Figure 2.1 Nan Goldin, *Christmas at The Other Side*, Boston, 1972

*Christmas at The Other Side*, one of Goldin’s most famous and aesthetically complex photographs, discloses its own context in terms of where the image was shot and the impetus for naming the collection and slide show (figure 2.1). The Other Side was a small gay bar in Boston where Goldin’s roommates socialized and performed, and where she tended bar. Goldin often performed her slide shows at The Other Side for her subjects, many of whom also were artists themselves. Eventually, some prominent artists
and curators turned up at the bar to see the latest Goldin show. The fervor created by her shows led to an invitation to exhibit her body artwork, *The Ballad of Sexual Dependency*, at the Whitney Museum of American Art and resulted in several grant and exhibition opportunities abroad.  

In figure 2.1, Ivy, Goldin’s roommate, lights a gentleman’s cigarette. The two figures are contiguous and the smoke from the man’s cigarette swirls above their heads. The swirling smoke hints at a blurring of the figures in the image. The match, or vantage point, illuminates the figures, highlighting the man’s feminine features and Ivy’s distinguished characteristics—high cheek bones, Adam’s apple, darkened lips and painted eyes, and broad shoulders—as well as her pearl necklace. The four-tiered pearl necklace, a symbol of high fashion and upper class status, draws attention to the staged glamorousness of femininity. The man, reminiscent of Clark Gable, Cary Grant, or Gary Cooper, exudes femininity. He is svelte, his facial features and clothes are manicured—his suit is pressed, eyebrows plucked—and he also appears to be wearing the slightest bit of lipstick and mascara. The male figure leans inward, hands on cheeks, as if to accept Ivy’s gesture: “need a light?” Ivy’s slightly larger hand and open bodily contortion stand in contradistinction to the male figure’s closed comportment, alerting viewers to the complexities of their gendered dynamics.

The black space in the upper right hand corner of the photograph discloses the dislocation between the figures: the queen, who actually exists in the present space-time of the photograph, 1972, and the male figure, a painted representation of the 1950s Hollywood, male archetype. While the male figure stares longingly into Ivy’s eyes, she stares at her task, lighting his cigarette. The uncanny three-dimensionality of the image is
aesthetically complex, as are the gender performances of the figures. The male figure’s amazingly feminine features—slightly pouty lips, long eye lashes, and thin nose—juxtaposed to the queen’s corporeal male-sex markers, complicate the meaning of gender normativity.

Both figures are representations of gender in a specific place and time. However, they are spatially and temporally contiguous, alerting viewers to their interconnectivity as well as their singularity. The figures literally appear next to one another with similar features: The male figure’s femininity and Ivy’s femininity are interconnected as the feminine, but each femininity is different in terms of what it represents. One figure is perfectly “appropriate” in terms of gender normativity, or the masculinity of the 1950s, whereas the other has no mainstream space or time of “appropriateness.”

Although bodies are their own spaces or singularities, bodies are known to the world and to others only by the flesh in a space of appearance. The male figure appears in his own space of appearance and Ivy is his witness. Ivy appears in her own space of appearance and the viewers of Goldin’s photograph are the witness. The male figure is both a representation in space and a representation, or painting, whose framing also seems to invoke an enclosed system, that of the body of the painting. Similarly, Ivy is a representation in space as well as a representation pictured in Goldin’s enclosed body-photograph. Goldin confronts viewers with the complexity of representation as well as the porousness of any enclosed system (i.e., bodies looking at bodies), which interconnects all representations. The viewer becomes part of this chain as he or she becomes the next body looking at bodies, which are perceptual representations. In this
sense, the viewer is made to become Ivy’s witness, to confess of her existence. And, the
viewer may ask: does the male figure exist as a living-breathing body?

Temporally, Ivy performs her drag as a man who lives as and, therefore, becomes
a woman—in the sense of undoing and redoing appropriate and/or normative sex/gender.
The male figure, historically considered a masculine representation, also performs a sort
of drag because of his effeminate qualities. The male figure undoes contemporary
conceptions of the sex/gender dichotomy for the viewers of Goldin’s image. In this
sense, the male figure is not man/masculine as the sex/gender dichotomy is currently
configured; rather he is man and feminine. Ivy is both intelligible and transgressive,
which means that her transgressive performance of gender is iterable through the context
of her historical antecedent, the male figure. She builds off of the very codes of male
gender normativity in his era—a rather feminine masculinity—to become a woman
contemporaneously in the space-time of the artwork. Ivy is transported by the male figure
into a complex gendered landscape of representation. She becomes the logical femininity
of her historical antecedent. The viewer also may become a part of this gendered
landscape in the space-time of the present.

The juxtaposition of subjects who are the space-time of the photograph with
representations of subjects in the space-time of the past is a favorite Goldin tactic. This
temporal tactic also can be seen in figure 2.2: Ivy with Marilyn, Boston, 1973. In figure
2.2, Ivy poses for Goldin underneath an Andy Warhol rendition of Marilyn Monroe. Ivy’s
stare, in the direction of the viewer, mimics that of Marilyn’s, as do her curls, black
eyeliner, and painted lips. However, Ivy’s mole appears on the opposite side of
Marilyn’s, alerting viewers to her mirror opposite positionality. This means Ivy is
Marilyn’s negative in the photographic sense. She is a representation of Marilyn, who herself is a re-representation. The effect of Ivy’s posing as Marilyn’s negative again alerts viewers to the complexity of representation: Marilyn is Warhol’s re-representation of a celebrity idol, while Ivy is Goldin’s reinterpretation of the very same idol.

Figure 2.2 Nan Goldin, *Ivy with Marilyn*, Boston, 1973

After Marilyn’s death in 1962, Warhol memorialized her with his serialized pop art rendition (seen in figure 2.2). Although the original image of Marilyn was taken during the filming of *Niagara*, Warhol used it to create one of the most highly visible images in contemporary visual culture. Using silk-screening techniques and nonrepresentational color, Warhol calls attention to the unnatural way in which the body of the celebrity becomes a highly visible and well-choreographed performance of, in this
case, archetypal feminine beauty. Warhol, whose aim was to produce art for the masses, believed that there was no such thing as an original image. Interestingly, Warhol’s anti-commodification avant-garde tactics created the very beast of commodification in the high art world as we know it today. After all, several works of art may be purchased in mass-poster form. Critique and playfulness are held in tension in most avant-garde works of art. The double irony at play in Goldin’s image is that her subject poses as an idol and her photographic aesthetic nods to another idol—an idol who wanted nothing more than to deconstruct the very impulses that place some persons and artworks on pedestals while ignoring others.

In both images, *Ivy with Marilyn* and *Christmas at The Other Side*, Ivy relies on historical antecedents for her transgressive performances. The Marilyn reproduction is merely a fragment of Warhol’s nine-panel spread, of which only two-panels appear in Goldin’s version. Thus, Ivy becomes a fragment of the reproduction as well as Marilyn’s negative, drawing attention to the necessity of iterability for transgression to occur. Our very ability to read a performance as drag, or as different from prevailing visual codes of gender normativity, must also be readable or understood within the context of gender normativity. Much as Ivy transgresses Marilyn’s performance of gender, Goldin transgresses the formalistic impulses of high-fashion photography with a nod to Warhol’s avant-garde tactics.

Four women are featured in *Ivy with Marilyn*: Ivy, two Marilyns, and a doll (in the lower right hand corner of the image). Marilyn is merely a repeated head, while Ivy becomes an ambiguous torso. The fur that surrounds Ivy’s torso, a symbol of elegance and upper-class status, reveals her pectoral cleavage and hairy arm. The hair on her arm
is textured like the fur that embraces her upper torso, alerting viewers to the transgression of such textures and corporeal sex markers. The doll, which is usually a symbol of femininity, stares in the direction of Ivy’s crotch. The doll is anatomically neutral and, thus, becomes the synecdoche of Ivy’s and Marilyn’s conflated genitalia.

Goldin’s aesthetic during the 1970s relies on the formalistic tenets of high-fashion photography, such as positioning her subjects in fashion trends, balancing and lighting her subjects, and creating visually stirring vantage points. All of these tenets rely on the readability of high-fashion photography by viewers. She also incorporates specific avant-garde historical antecedents such as Warhol to further aestheticize her images, which makes her photography transgressive and critically playful, rather than normative. Similarly, her subjects disturb the “natural” codes of gender by drawing attention to the complexity of representation. Goldin’s aesthetic changes in the 1990s, as does the style and marginalized status of the queens she photographs, such as Misty and Jimmy Paulette (figure 2.3). These queens of the 1990s, while still shot in the context of intimate settings like the gay bar and home, also are shot in more public spaces.

Fixed within a series of shots “staging gender” (literally getting ready, putting on make-up, stuffing bras, and securing male bulge), Misty and Jimmy Paulette take a taxi to the gay pride parade. Jimmy Paulette’s Madonna-esque wig and outfit, with stuffing hanging out of her golden brassiere, as well as Misty’s blue hair and overly large breasts, signal a sort of playfulness absent in the 1970s drag queen aesthetic. However, missing in the 1990s aesthetic were the literal re-representations of historical antecedents, though antecedents are clearly invoked. Modeling themselves after performers such as Cher and the “material girl,” the 1990s drag queens move from a rhetoric of the pose—which is
always already an object of the gaze, like the 1970s queens,—to a playful reinterpretation of gendered codes and signifiers. Confined to safe and more private spaces, the 1970s drag queens operated in a wholly alternative space and time to that of mainstream America.

![Figure 2.3 Nan Goldin, Misty and Jimmy Paulette in taxi, NYC, 1991](image-url)

Again, the AIDS crisis of the 1980s changed the prevailing attitudes within the larger gay community toward drag queens because shared experiences of loss opened a space of acceptance. Thus, queens like Misty and Jimmy Paulette appear in public in 1991, during the space/time of mainstream America, to participate in a community-sponsored event. Their participation, however, does not mean that drag queens were accepted by the community at large. Images of police officers rolling their eyes at the queens as well as voyeuristic stares from bystanders reflect the prevailing judgments of inappropriateness still felt by many members of the mainstream community.  

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Misty and Jimmy Paulette’s reactions seem to imply a sort of aloofness, a sense that Goldin photographs them as would anyone whose friends dressed up for a night on the town; but in that normative gendered performance the girlfriends would be smiling or posing for the camera. However, Misty’s “natural” hair protruding out underneath her wig as well as Jimmy Paulette’s visible stuffing call into question this very performance of gender normativity. Far from denying their desires to dress as women, Misty and Jimmy Paulette appear to be playfully deconstructing gender normativity as they construct their own (not wholly unique) genders. Cher, Misty’s antecedent and a representation of “unnatural” beauty, is best known for her plastic surgeries and overly elaborate costumes. Similarly, Madonna, Jimmy Paulette’s antecedent, often challenges appropriate gender norms regarding women, power, and sexuality by dressing as a man. In this way Misty and Jimmy Paulette’s antecedents already are readable as transgressive. Their further transgression via the imperfections of their drag performances call into focus the notion of repetition with a difference or a parodic repetition as discussed by Judith Butler.107 Rather than perform drag to become a feminine archetype, Misty and Jimmy Paulette appear to critique the repetitive quest of gender normativity while playfully submitting to their desires.

The images of Ivy stand in contrast to those of Misty and Jimmy Paulette, not only because of Goldin’s use of color photography but also because of her subjects’ ironic costumes. Although Goldin’s 1970s photographs include pictures of multiple queens together in social environments such as the gay bar, her 1990s photographs invoke a more public and social experience. Ivy always appears alone and staged in private or empty public spaces. Ivy is framed with contiguous historical antecedents
assuring her performance’s iterability, whereas Misty and Jimmy Paulette are photographed without such literal markers, as historical antecedents have become enthymemetic, and in a public taxi on the bustling streets of New York City. Viewers may become aware of Misty and Jimmy Paulette’s antecedents by being familiar enough with them to recognize their parodic repetitions: high-end glamour of furs, hats, gloves, and pearls are replaced by low-brow lycra, pleather or faux leather, and unnatural wigs. The latter fabrics, although ostentatious for some, become a representation of the banal because they are so cheaply acquired. In this sense, the 1990s drag queen aesthetic is less about valorizing glamour, which is already out of reach for most, and more about questioning the very performance of gender itself; the queens are not all lipstick and pumps, but rather the grind of daily life—the dirt, the fluid of urbanity. Again, Misty and Jimmy Paulette appear to offer a more radical critique of gender normativity than Ivy; but Ivy, too, appears to critique and play with gender codes and signifiers. By posing Ivy with Marilyn and with the male figure, Goldin visualizes Ivy as an embodiment of the avant-garde—of the desire simultaneously to critique while ironically submitting. By juxtaposing Ivy with Misty and Jimmy Paulette, Goldin’s rhetorical artwork enables audiences to become aware of their own performances of gender-in-the-making.

Goldin photographs her subjects as particularized, albeit transgressive, genders in the spaces and times that structure their daily lives. The operations of space and time in Goldin’s images along with her tactics of exhibition, such as reordering slides and blurring musical genre, combine to critique normative conceptions of the way space/time functions as the structure by which appropriate or fitting speech comes into being. Rather than documenting a history of “progress,” or from the 1970s black-and-white closeted in
private space to the 1990s color photographs on the streets of NYC, Goldin exhibits The Other Side as a celebration of the multiplicity of gender difference. These differences include men who change their sex, gay men who perform drag, heterosexual men who dress as women, and transgendered individuals whose sexualities resist dichotomies.

Goldin’s body artworks function for audiences as a multiplicity of operations of space and time. Time functions in Goldin’s images as that which chronicles, contextualizes, and historicizes representations. Within the montage of her shows, time also functions as the constant recreation of drag queen history and memory. Drag queens’ bodies carry cultural and corporeal antecedents, because Goldin’s images are living histories of representation as well as performances of genders-in-the-making. This means drag queens carry their histories while moving forward into the future as becoming-bodies. The movement implied by the images creates a sense of duration rather than that of digestible units: past, present, and future. As the histories and memories of drag queens’ daily lives change, so do their bodies. Therefore, the drag queens visualized by Goldin call attention to the ways culture and nature seep into one another—or the processural ways in which individuals embody hybridity. Goldin’s images also draw attention to the contiguousness of bodies in spaces of appearance, and effectively count the viewer in on this performative and open-ended encounter because a viewer is a body looking at bodies. Space/time and sex/gender order reality. Goldin reconfigures these abstract categories and invites viewers to question the corporeality of space and time and sex and gender as operations that structure their daily lives.
The Other Side, Feminist Body Art as a Rhetoric of Becoming

Although the rhetorical studies discipline has begun to take seriously women’s rhetorical accomplishments, we must continue to question canon formation by asking, “which women have been added and why?” In fact, it might be of use to heed Barbara Biesecker’s warning to resist the tokenistic impulse of adding some women to the canon who fulfill the requirements of the appropriate and fitting—those who can play the “public rhetorical game.” The operations of space and time at work within Goldin’s corporeal rhetoric combine with her exhibition tactics to shed light on the complexity of representation and, specifically, the representational tenets of transgression.

The overall rhetorical work of The Other Side questions gender normativity by opening up “being” to becoming and “knowing” to touching as processual categories. Being and knowing have functioned in the space/time of sex/gender. When sex/gender is reconfigured via the performance of drag, so is the functioning of space/time to that of kairos. Space and time become the operations through which viewers are able to read Goldin’s body artworks as bodies in process—bodies becoming. These images invite viewers to open being and knowing to a politics of possibility. A politics of possibility is also a rhetoric of becoming, wherein each and every individual is in-process both corporeally and in terms of their articulations of identity politics. Goldin’s images are confrontational, for they in-corporate the viewer into a complex representational encounter with the subjects photographed, what Judith Butler explains as the critic or viewer entering a phantasmatic chain of desire. Thus, rhetorical critics must ask: which women and why?
When viewers are simultaneously invited and confronted by Goldin’s images, they are challenged to contextualize representation—to take account of their own historical antecedents—and to think critically about how they operate in space and time as becoming bodies that carry histories and futures. Feminist body artists visualize the materiality of their subjects and selves in accord with their own ways of being and knowing in the world. Critiquing feminist body art, as a practice, answers Carole Blair’s call to theorize rhetoric’s most basic tenet: its materiality.\textsuperscript{110} Body art makes the process of understanding the corporeal traces of any rhetorical text more apparent, as the text is the body itself. Thus, body artists, such as Goldin, create rhetorics of corporeality.

Women, especially those in the process of becoming women, have been given little, if any, space in which to articulate their own ways of being and knowing in the world. Elizabeth Grosz argues, “. . . there has never been a space in culture for women as women. Women only ever have been represented as lack, the opposite, the same as or the complement of the one subject, the unique human subject.”\textsuperscript{111} This does not mean, however, that there is one way to be or know “woman;” rather, all women, all men, and everyone in-between are in processes of becoming. Opening ourselves to this possibility opens new knowledges and ways of becoming in the world. Feminist body artists such as Goldin utilize the visual as a theoretical lens through which ontologies and epistemologies (with their flows of duration and futurity) come into focus with bodies in the making.\textsuperscript{112} Therefore, by its very “nature,” feminist body art (like that of Goldin’s) operates in spaces and times of becoming, and such openings are articulated by inventional visual and, thus, corporeal rhetorics.
In *Disciplining Gender* John Sloop argues that the absence of representational categories or the inability of an individual to invent his or her own gender identity disciplines bodies and sexualities into what can be known.¹¹³ He also recognizes that “there is clearly a critical need to highlight transgression and alteration” of this norm.¹¹⁴ At stake in the rhetorical criticism of feminist body art, then, is a continuous and perpetual questioning of who gets to know and what can be known. In this sense, feminist body art can be read for its transgressive and alternative modes of understanding bodies as corporeal rhetorics, via kairos or the space-time dynamic. The possibilities of studying these types of texts may in fact open rhetorical criticism to the articulations of bodies that cannot be categorized within dichotomies. If rhetoric is literally about voice (and visual rhetoric about visual voice), but only those voices of appropriate or fitting speech are heard, then which bodies in the making are we silencing?
CHAPTER THREE

A Clinical Gaze toward a Becoming Body:
Nan Goldin’s Visual AIDS, Haptic Visuality, and Synesthesia

The important thing for the remembering author is not what he experienced, but the weaving of his memory, the Penelope work of recollection. Or should one call it, rather, the Penelope work of forgetting?

When we awake each morning, we hold in our hands, usually weakly and loosely, but a few fringes of the tapestry of lived life, as loomed for us by forgetting.

Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations*\(^{115}\)

This chapter is about the rhetoric of public memory, or the way in which discourses come together to create coherent narratives about the past. Stephen Browne argues that “the custodians of public memory seek to convince others to collaborate in strategic and stylized conceptions of the past.”\(^{116}\) Public memory is “often the very battleground upon which are fought contemporary issues of concern,” according to Carole Blair and Neil Michel, even though public memory aligns itself with collective remembering.\(^{117}\)

Although public memory may seem to perform a collaborative function on the surface, the creation of coherent narratives always already silences or erases some bodies. Browne continues, “preoccupation with what ought to be remembered and how shapes our politics in significant ways.”\(^{118}\) Even though public memory is often false, with its inclination to erase individual memories of events and persons for coherent and collective memory, it is created nonetheless.

Public memory finds one of its sites in the memorial. In other words, the building of a space (memorial) as an act of commemoration creates an object of memory. The rhetorical power of memorials hinges on the selection of whom or what should be remembered and the official discourses created to ensure public memory about a person
The selection of whom or what to commemorate is usually made with regard to the standards by which a community envisions its legacy. The creation of official discourses or coherent narratives comes into being through the strategies used to represent and, therefore, re-materialize the subjects or events “worthy” of remembrance.

Like Blair and Michel, I am interested in the subversive ends of memorials. How do some memorials function to subvert official discourses about the past? The re-materialization of subjects and events is never neutral, because these re-materializations occur in the space-time of the present and determine who can be in attendance for such an act of remembrance. The where and when of public commemoration should lead cultural critics to question the constitution and constraints of the space and time of public memory, because the distance between a historical event or a subject’s death is altered by the hindsight invested in the act of remembrance. The action of remembrance fills in the gaps of memory (which usually amounts to a simplification) in a historical record to create a unified, fluid discourse. Critics must also be concerned with the structuring, support, and deconstruction of subjectivity by the space of the memorial. In order to contemplate the subversive ends of some memorials, I want to reflect on some artists’ counter-memorializing of the “official” or governmentally sanctioned discourses about the AIDS crisis. In fact, I want to critique how one artist, Nan Goldin, corporealizes, rather than merely re-materializes, the bodies of her subjects.
Artists’ Responses to the AIDS Crisis

Reflecting on the numerous memorials he attended during the onset of the AIDS crisis, David Wojnarowicz states, “What made me angry was realizing that the memorial had little reverberation outside the room it was held in. A TV commercial for hand wipes unfortunately had a higher impact on the society at large.” The tireless efforts of artists, such as Wojnarwicz, whose mission was to deconstruct governmental discourses about the AIDS crisis, resulted in an archive of visual and written artworks. Rather than allow official discourses about the AIDS crisis to become an archived, governmentally sanctioned history, some visual artists “wedged” their own gap in the archive by either counter-memorializing seropositive subjects and diverse sexualities or problematizing the act of remembrance altogether.

Through their autobiographical visual works, artists such as Kiki Smith, Peter Hujar, David Wojnarwicz, David Armstrong, and Nan Goldin have counter-memorialized those they have lost (and continue to lose) to the HIV virus. Some of these artists also have documented their own seropositive status. Of specific interest for this chapter are Nan Goldin’s autobiographical visual works: The Cookie Mueller Portfolio, the Alf Bold grid, and the serial of Gilles and Gotscho. These three works will serve as the case studies in the following analysis and have been reprinted in Goldin’s I’ll Be Your Mirror, a collection of her images taken over three decades (many of which also appear in her performative slide show The Ballad of Sexual Dependency). Goldin’s AIDS crisis visual works function as fragments of her magnum opus. The visual works are a part of the “story-telling” she performs with regard to her own and her family’s histories.123
Analyzing the three works individually teaches us something about how invention-memory vehicles, as “living” artworks rather than posthumous treatises, might work to activate sensory or bodily memory in viewers, drawing explicit connections between public and individual memory. By the invention-memory vehicle, I refer to Barbie Zelizer’s notion of the differing types of memory work each artifact is capable of invoking in audiences. Goldin’s artworks offset or deconstruct the narrative fluidity of coherent memory altogether and are, thus, inventional by their very nature. Further, the connection of invention with that of memory, canonically speaking, invokes a notion of process rather than product.

Goldin subverts official practices of memorialization by resisting the urge to create a coherent narrative about a subject’s life or death. Her works also question her relationships to her subjects and the problem of knowing the subject altogether. Although we look at the subjects in the visual works through Goldin’s eyes, we are always aware of her presence and what that presence might mean in the situation. Goldin’s resistive aims, such as offsetting the desire to know the subject, take form through multi-sensory tactics. These multi-sensory tactics are incorporated into her artworks and work to complicate acts of remembrance and discourses of fluid memorialization. Goldin specifically traces the destructive narratives of identity, sexuality, and history in her visual AIDS memorial works.

Goldin’s medium is hybridity: from performative slide shows with accompanying sound to assemblage and serialized montage. This form allows her to visualize the utter unknowability—or openness, indeterminacy—and singularity of memory. For instance, Goldin continuously rearranges her slides and arranges assemblages of seemingly
unrelated images. What results from her works may be said to be the very deconstruction of collective memory itself. In other words, Goldin counteracts viewers’ abilities to enthymematically read her works in terms of commonly held assumptions and meanings.  

While there is a growing body of work on AIDS discourses, the rhetorical import of Goldin’s visual works has not been explored in rhetorical studies. This chapter seeks to rectify this absence by calling attention to Goldin’s AIDS crisis visual works while simultaneously “wedging a gap” in disciplinary history that has, more often than not, eschewed the voices and bodies of marginalized speech. In other words, rhetorical studies, and especially visual rhetoric as a sub-field often trace the materiality of texts, such as bodily comportment. However, the gendered and sexed embodiment of subjects is rarely the subject of study. Also, the critic erases his or her own body from the scene (i.e., the article or book chapter) in order to outline an objective standpoint from which to speak about materiality. I will take account of the ways in which my body, as the critic, enters into the text and how the text enters into me, and how this interface creates a new way of understanding the corporeal rhetorical work of Nan Goldin and feminist body art.

This chapter also seeks to explore the following sub-questions with regard to the discipline of rhetorical studies: What is the rhetorical impact brought about by visual artists who counter-memorialize—thereby refusing to erase or re-materialize via mainstream community standards—those subjects and events that have been officially archived? Rhetorical studies often focus on the great white male or female speaker and the number of audience members present for speech, in order to determine the scope of speech acts. Thus, a small group of artists from the Bowery developing counter
discourses would not generally get the attention of the field or be considered worthy of study. How do Goldin’s visual works of the AIDS crisis deterritorialize acts of remembrance, and how do they work rhetorically to give multi-sensory “voice” to unofficial and singular but, nevertheless, significant histories of loss? Rhetorical studies give official voice to those speech acts that logically or coherently conform to community standards, or the standards by which a community envisions itself through language. Rather than continuing this trend of logocentricity, I want to experiment with a corporeal rhetorical criticism or a thinking-feeling of discourses and how these discourses might explicitly work on the whole body of audience members. Lastly, how has the inattention to multi-sensory rhetorics, such as Goldin’s, been complacent in erasing the disintegrating bodies and silencing the voices of seropositive subjects, while simultaneously reifying fluid AIDS crisis discourses (as if the crisis were over)? After all, those deemed (by community standards) unable to perform—such as women and individuals who have been unable to attain citizenship rights—are considered illegitimate as speakers.¹²⁸

This chapter unfolds in four sections. First, I trace the rhetorical properties of Goldin’s visual works as invention-memory vehicles. I do so by building off of Barthes phenomenological conceptualization of the rhetorical work of images and feminist visual culture scholars’ reconfigurations of identification (also known in rhetorical studies as symbolic action or the way rhetoric functions and moves through spaces of articulation).¹²⁹ Second, I contextualize Goldin’s activism and artworks as they relate to the AIDS crisis. This contextualization helps identify how some visual artists worked together to force gaps in the official histories of the crisis. Third, I critique the multi-
sensory rhetorical work of three of Goldin’s visual AIDS memorials. These works fruitfully shield her subjects from the voyeuristic or clinical gazes of viewers. Thus, images of objects, spaces, and others prevent such an “observational” gaze by viewers—as Goldin’s subjects die from AIDS—and open audience members to what can only be called a becoming-gaze (which may lead to a becoming-body). Last, I conclude by exploring skin rhetoric, a multi-sensory or synesthetic study of articulations, in order to force a gap in a disciplinary history that has, until very recently, rendered women and seropositive subjects speechless bodies.

**Seeing/Feeling AIDS through Memory Vehicles: Counter-Memory as Time-Images, and Haptic Visuality**

Explicating Pierre Nora’s concept “lieux de mémoire” or sites of memory, Barbie Zelizer explains, “different vehicles of memory offer different ways of making sense of the past.”¹³⁰ This means that the memory work of images and film is different from the memory work of architectural structures, like monuments and memorials. However, some hybrid or invention-memory vehicles question the very notion of the knowability of memory through their refusal to work within the constraints of “vehicular” form. In other words, these vehicles are not a direct reproduction of identifiable memory-forms (e.g., film, images, and architecture).¹³¹ I want to explore Goldin’s visual diaries of the AIDS crisis as invention-memory vehicles, open-ended forms that work as becomings. By becoming, I refer to Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari’s notion that identity is not a fixed or static construct. Rather, identity and the body work as open systems extended throughout time and space. The authors state:
It could be said that the orchid imitates the wasp, reproducing its image in a signifying fashion (mimesis, mimicry, lure, etc.). But this is true only on the level of the strata – a parallelism between two strata such that a plant organization on one imitates an animal organization on the other. At the same time, something else entirely is going on: not imitation at all but a capture of code, surplus value of code, an increase in valence, a veritable becoming, a becoming-wasp of the orchid and a becoming-orchid of the wasp. Each of these becomings brings about the deterritorialization of one term and the reterritorialization of the other; the two becomings interlink and form relays in a circulation of intensities pushing the deterritorialization ever further.\(^\text{132}\)

In a different light, audience members touch and are touched by the very texts they come into contact with. Goldin all but explicitly details this process through her use of haptic images, instead of those images deemed optical only. Haptic images function like middle voice verbs, it creates a back and forth between audience members and the text. In other words, Goldin explicitly takes photographs that we can consider more tactile than optical and allows her audience members to touch and be touched by her images. For example, several of her photographs are blurry, relaying on her audience’s ability to make “sense” of what the image is depicting.

Goldin’s memory vehicles are “inventional” because of their hybridity and rhizomatic patterns: they invite an openness to becomings, an openness to touch. The visual works are neither photography (Goldin claims single images hold little meaning), nor film (though her works are often referred to as such, thanks to her attention to movement and multiplicity of images).\(^\text{133}\) Goldin’s invention-memory vehicles are actualized in and through the body of audience members. The body, as far as this chapter is concerned, is that which mediates all texts and other forms of knowledge. Goldin’s visual AIDS works take form through the bodies of audience members and their own hybridity, between that of photography and film.
Although Zelizer discusses the rhetorical work of memory with regard to the visual as vehicular form, her explication of “recurrent visual tropes” is particularly useful as a starting point for understanding the rhetorical work of Goldin’s invention-memory vehicles. Using the metaphor of voice, Zelizer explains how the visual becomes a mode of “relay” about historical events and, hence, the symbolic action or rhetorical movement of memory. This relay is further addressed through Barthes’ notion of the third-meaning, what Zelizer describes as recurrent visual tropes that “connect people to places and times.” Visual tropes, according to Zelizer, enable audiences to connect memories with images and, thus, read images collectively. However, I want to problematize Zelizer’s reading of Barthes by also acknowledging his phenomenological understanding of the interconnection between viewer and object/subject viewed. I do so for the purposes of critiquing the multi-sensory aspects of Goldin’s invention-memory vehicles, all of which invoke a sort of specificity and non-compliance with Zelizer’s explication of the collective properties of third-meaning. In other words, visual tropes cannot account for personal memories of subjects or events. Further, Goldin’s works are neither photography nor film, which leaves unanswered: How does the body of an audience member become a part of the vehicle?

In Camera Lucida, Barthes explains, “Not only is the Photograph never, in essence, a memory . . . but it actually blocks memory, [and] quickly becomes a counter-memory.” When Barthes speaks of the “Photograph,” in this way, he is describing the ultimate singularity of the images that “prick” him most (or the images that have the most profound subjective affect on him as a viewer). The prick of a photograph is at once a collectivity and a singularity. He states,
The photograph is literally an emanation of the referent. From a real body, which was there, proceed radiations which ultimately touch me, who am here; the duration of the transmission is insignificant; the photograph of the missing being, as [Susan] Sontag says, will touch me like the delayed rays of a star. A sort of umbilical chord links the body of the photographed thing to my gaze: light, though impalpable, is here a carnal medium, a skin I share with anyone who has been photographed.¹³⁹

The photograph connects the object/subject imaged to the body of the viewer. However, “prickly” images are ultimately singular in that some images only can affect a viewer on a subjective level. Barthes explains, “I cannot reproduce the Winter Garden Photograph [an image of his mother taken as a child]. It exists only for me. For you, it would be nothing but an indifferent picture, one of the thousand manifestations of the ‘ordinary’ . . . for you, no wound.”¹⁴⁰ Thus, third-meaning is not only what we can collectively identify (with) in an image—also known as Zelizer’s recurrent visual tropes—but also that which is singular—or the wound in Barthes’ words—and its affect on the viewer herself.

Third-meaning then, not only describes recurrent visual tropes which ensure collective readability by viewers (e.g. “I know this is death by AIDS via the frail white bodies of gay men”), but also can explain the ultimately singular embodied affect in viewers or the counter-memory (e.g. “how I have been affected by the AIDS wound”). It is interesting to note, with regard to the photograph, Barthes cannot articulate the utter unknowability of the subject in the image. He never knew his mother in the photograph, she was only a child; but her being could only be articulated in this image. Similarly, I cannot know the seropositive subjects of Goldin’s diaries, though I am familiar with her images and her relations with these individuals. Rather, they hold for me the utter unknowability of the AIDS wound and they transport me into the wound’s center.
On the one hand, I want to critique the specific single images in Goldin’s visual works that “prick” me. On the other hand, I cannot remove single images from the context of the works and from the AIDS crisis generally. Thus, there is a sense of movement invoked in Goldin’s works. Although Barthes says film and other movement images cannot open us like single photographs because film leads us or fills in the gaps of what could ultimately be singular, some intercultural films do in fact provide such moments of pause wherein the viewer can insert their own individual memories. Therefore, Laura Marks’ reconfiguration of the singularity of memory with regard to intercultural film helps explicate further this apparent lapse in Barthes conceptualization of the rhetorical work of images. Marks’ theorizations of the rhetorical work of recollection-objects, bodily memories, and sense memories get closest to the multisensory rhetorical work of Goldin’s AIDS diaries. Specifically, the tactics Goldin utilizes in order to represent the gaps in memory—or the gaps of space and time—are similar to those of intercultural experimental filmmakers.

Reconfiguring Deleuze’s and Benjamin’s cinematic and aesthetic theories, Marks proffers a re-conceptualization of time-images as haptic visuality, or sight-touch. Whereas the use of movement-images work to produce action and thus identification within a viewer (such as eating, sleeping, and copulating), according to Deleuze, time-images invite viewers to pause and search for meaning outside of their current knowledge system. Deleuze reiterates:
The movement-image can be perfect, but it remains amorphous, indifferent and static if it is not already deeply affected by injections of time which put montage into it, and alter movement. ‘The time in a shot must flow independently and, so to speak, as its of boss’: it is only on this condition that the shot goes beyond the movement-image and montage goes beyond indirect representation of time, to both share in a direct time-image, the one determining the form or rather force of time in the image, the other the relations of time or of forces in the succession of images (relations that are no more reducible to succession, than the image is to movement).¹⁴¹

As such, there is no clear sense of immediate identification occurring in the time-image. Time-images may be said to evoke pure affect, or a pausing wherein a viewer cannot connect an image to a memory. A viewer’s own memories must fill in the gaps. In other words, the moment of the time-image does not stop at the viewer’s inability to connect an image to memory. Rather this inability “moves” or oscillates between the viewer’s senses—synesthesia—until the viewer ultimately can fill in the gap with individual memory. Whereas movement-images function like narrative flows, time-images break the narrative and allow for a subjective entering-into the text.

Marks convincingly disagrees with Deleuze when she states that time-images do not stop movement altogether. She contends that a theory of haptic visuality brings us closer to understanding the actual inner workings of the time-image as a synesthiatic response. We can see the same sort of haptic visuality occurring in Goldin’s invention-memory vehicles. Marks explains:

In haptic visuality, the eyes themselves function like organs of touch. . . . The works I propose to call haptic invite a look that moves on the surface plane of the screen for some time before the viewer realizes what she or he is beholding. Such images resolve into figuration only gradually, if at all. . . . The haptic image forces the viewer to contemplate the image itself instead of being pulled into narrative.¹⁴²

In essence, there is a pause and then a movement into individual memory.
Goldin’s attention to space and time or movement and location invoke differing memories, both individual and collective, from one AIDS memorial to the next. Thanks to Goldin’s attention to lighting and intensity, pausing, gutter work, and the amount of time it takes to turn the pages, each of the visual works unfolds as a singularly meaningful artwork. Each also is interconnected through Goldin’s tactics embedded in her use of haptic visuality. Goldin shows us that time-images move into synesthatic motion through individual memory, and that this “movement” or oscillation occurs by means of the time-image doubling in on itself. As a deconstructive act, this doubling in on itself questions the very act of “visual” remembrance as the primary sense through which memory occurs. This deconstructive act is the very multi-sensory response invited by means of haptic visuality (in Goldin’s case, employing images of objects, others, and spaces). It is precisely in the attempt to represent the unrepresentable (i.e., that is, the singularity of loss) that Goldin’s AIDS memorials deconstruct collective memory. They do so by activating the unknowable—that which cannot be represented in words or images—within viewers. These gaps, spills, and fissures, represented by imaging of spaces, others, and objects, rather than frail bodies infected with the deadly virus, may in fact provide the most profound slippages or moments of contact between the surface of Goldin’s text body and the surfaces of viewers’ bodies. This we may surmise is the umbilical chord of connection, or that which oscillates between collectivity and singularity.

Therefore, in the following critique, I am most concerned with the moment at which the body is stirred and searches for a memory to grasp in order to make meaning out of what it seeing (the search for the assist or rhetorical moment of memory). I am
inclined to call this moment profoundly rhetorical—the moment that opens the body to both movement and time—as precisely that which allows the viewer to become conscious of the corporeality of rhetoric. Here I define the corporeality of rhetoric as a subjective assist in the action of remembrance. Rhetoric works both internally and externally on the body of audience members. I shall call this form of criticism, with a consideration of gendered embodiment and the text, a corporeal rhetorical criticism.\textsuperscript{143}

**Goldin’s Invention-Becoming Vehicles of the AIDS Crisis**

I am not at all concerned here with art as commodity but as an articulation, as an outcry, and as a mechanism for survival. This is not intended to be a definitive statement about the state of art in the era of AIDS but as a vehicle to explore the effects of this plague on one group of artists in a way that hopefully will speak to all survivors of this crisis.

-Nan Goldin, excerpt from *Witnesses: Against Our Vanishing*

As early as 1981, some of Goldin’s friends became infected with HIV, what the mainstream knew as “gay cancer.”\textsuperscript{144} Although Goldin and her community had little sense of what the disease was and how it would eventually affect their community, she began documenting the deterioration of her friends’ bodies. Goldin immediately turned her grief into political activism. For instance, she created *Positive*, a 16-panel grid, which “turned the diagnosis of HIV into a positive study of moments of lovemaking, happiness, and loneliness among people facing the disease.”\textsuperscript{145} Goldin became one of the founders of “Visual AIDS: a day without art,” where museums closed their doors in remembrance of AIDS victims. To date, Visual AIDS is now celebrated world-wide. Goldin donated four “signature Polaroids” to *Unframed*, a not for profit organization that donates its proceeds from art sales to the AIDS Community Research Initiative of America.
(ACRIA). She also collaborated in many group shows to collectively mourn the victims of her community. One such exhibit was entitled Dire Aids, wherein she wrote, “I consider myself a person living with AIDS. Even if I am hiv-negative at the moment. .

Perhaps most significantly, Goldin curated Witnesses: Against Our Vanishing, an exhibition that began visualizing the affects of the AIDS crisis on artists and the art community. The exhibition’s subsequent NEA controversy is of particular interest, as it created an even greater impetus for Goldin and her collaborators to create counter-memorials and seething critiques of the ways in which the government was ignoring and erasing AIDS victims. This controversy is intriguing because the Helms’ amendment had already been defeated in Congress. Peggy Phelan relates, “Curated by Nan Goldin and featuring the work of 23 male and female, straight and gay, racially diverse contemporary artists, the show was designed to illustrate the impact of AIDS on the art community.”

As Douglas Dreishpoon explains, “Since the mid-1980s a number of exhibitions have unflinchingly confronted the AIDS crisis to ask difficult questions. . . . Nan Goldin’s Witnesses Against Our Vanishing, installed at Artist’s Space in 1989, is […] notable because of its date, thorny content, and the controversy around its NEA funding.”

Although Witnesses was eventually allowed to keep its funding, Susan Wyatt, director of Artist’s Space, was obligated to include a disclaimer in the published collection. The disclaimer stated that the NEA did not hold the views of the artists participating in Witnesses. Wyatt not only placed this disclaimer in the collection, she also hung it and copies of all of her correspondence with John Frohnmayer, the director of the NEA, in the exhibit. Therefore, Witnesses was literally framed by
governmentally sanctioned discourses about the AIDS crisis—discourses steeped in heteronormativity—that pointed to their own absurdity. The artists themselves worked through this framing to wedge a gap in the archive [read: governmentally sanctioned discourses] by exploring the complexity of memorializing diverse sexualities and seropositive persons, all of which the NEA was attempting to erase. In the collection, Goldin argues, “The influence of the New Morality and the effective use of AIDS as the most powerful tool for sexual repression makes it even more imperative to continue to create and exhibit art that portrays sexuality as a positive force.” The rhetorical impact brought about by visual artists attempting to counter-memorialize subjects the government and the NEA were trying to silence resulted in an archive of works about seropositive subjects; consequently, there exists a conglomeration of texts that visualize the problem of collectively memorializing the AIDS crisis.

The controversy surrounding Witnesses is interesting in its own right, thanks to the very public articulations of the government with regard to the “culprits of the disease” [read: the gay community at large]. However, Goldin’s visual works, which were created after the controversy, and with very different aims, focus the audience’s attention on the singularity of loss and the particularity of memory. In other words, while Witnesses is self-evidently about collaboration and collectively held memories of victims, Goldin’s visual works of Cookie, Alf, and Gilles’ seropositive statuses, and eventual deaths, opens viewers to the materiality of rhetoric or how rhetoric works in, on, and through the body. Goldin specifically attempts to deconstruct collective memory as a coherently shared narrative. Rather than create counter-memories, which may well produce an alternative, but still fluid discourse, Goldin deconstructs the act of remembrance as that which can be
re-materialized collectively. In so doing, she problematizes identity politics and the
“subject” as something knowable through the act of sight.

Although my descriptions of Goldin’s visual works may be construed as coherent
narratives, we must remember that the artist herself breaks apart any attempt at a
narrative by inserting images of objects, others, and spaces into her serials. In so doing
she undoes the knowability of the subject and protects her subjects from viewers’
voyeuristic impulses, or what I also refer to as a clinical gaze. In other words,
observational scrutiny of AIDS patients is an unfortunate by-product of Goldin’s artistic
subject. However, she breaks with the clinical gaze by inserting images of objects, others,
and spaces, rather than string together a series of images of the same subject. Also, this
pausing or undoing of the knowability of her subjects opens viewers to their own multi-
sensory memories. Thus, viewers may use their own memories to fill in the gaps of the
narrative. This filling in of gaps, which actually betrays fluid discourse construction, is
highly subjective and, therefore, deconstructs the act of remembrance as something that
can be shared collectively. In the next section, I discuss the theoretical underpinnings of
this deconstruction, as well critique the specific images that hold such ruptures. These
ruptures only can be discussed through my own performative interpretations—I have to
write about how they affect me, how I touch and am touched by the images. I conclude
by suggesting that rhetorical critics must address singularity, and downplay the notion of
“objective” criticism. In other words, we need to address how we touch and are touched
by the images we critique: this is what I am calling “skin-rhetoric,” a type of corporeal
rhetorical criticism.\textsuperscript{154}
Nan Goldin’s *Cookie Mueller Portfolio*

Elisabeth Sussman reports, “At the same time that the Artist Space exhibition (*Witnesses Against our Vanishing*) opened, Cookie Mueller died of AIDS.”

Creating an even greater urgency, Cookie’s death marked the calamity felt in the Bowery. One year after Cookie’s death, Goldin began her infamous *Cookie Mueller Portfolio*. The *Mueller Portfolio* begins with a hand-written letter by Goldin addressing her relationship with Cookie. The letter unfolds by announcing the style of Cookie, a tobacco road, B- movie star—inspired by acting in John Waters’ camp films. Goldin explains the process of becoming Cookie’s friend—of taking her picture in order to become intimate with her. Goldin and Mueller lived together throughout the years and often traveled together for Goldin’s shows abroad. When Goldin went into a rehabilitation center for her drug and alcohol abuse, Vittorio, Mueller’s husband, died of an AIDS-related illness. Afterward, Goldin relates, “Cookie kind of gave up.” When Goldin left her rehabilitation program, Mueller was already sick and died just six weeks after Vittorio. Goldin ends the letter by contemplating the goal of the portfolio: “I put together this series of pictures of Cookie . . . to keep her with me. In fact they show me how much I’ve lost.”

The hand-written letter is then followed by fifteen single-page images spanning the 13 years of their friendship. In this sense, timing is slowed down in the portfolio to mimic Cookie’s complexity and the amount of time Goldin knew her. The series begins with a single shot of Cookie with her son, Max, across the fold from Goldin’s hand-written letter. Cookie dances with her ex-girlfriend Sharon in a bar and then smiles playfully for Goldin in the adjacent image. The next series of images reveals Cookie and
The next set of images depicts Cookie laughing uncontrollably while bracing herself on a white wall, followed by a shot of Cookie and Vittorio exchanging vows at their wedding. Goldin and Cookie stare at the camera in the first image in the next sequence. Goldin had just been attacked by another photographer and her nose is swollen and broken. The women stare at the camera and testify about the attack. Next to this image is another of Cookie gazing longingly into the camera. She is shot in a bar bathroom, walls covered with graffiti, yet she appears beautiful against the grainy and chaotic backdrop.

Halfway through the portfolio, Cookie’s illness rears its ugly head. Cookie sits and looks down in contemplation, as her cane leans against the back of her seat. In the other image (figure 3.1), Sharon, Cookie’s ex-girlfriend, sits on the corner of Cookie’s bed. Cookie lies in pain in the shadows. A framed picture of Vittorio and Cookie’s wedding hangs in the background behind the two women and acts as the focal point of the shot. The print of Cookie’s wallpaper matches her sheets and comforter. In fact, it is difficult to see Cookie under so much patterning and color, not to mention Sharon’s look of grief. The next series begins with an image of Cookie mourning at Vittorio’s funeral. His open casket announces the fatality of the disease. Then, Cookie, Max, and Beauty (their dog) pose for Goldin in a sort of family portrait, while Vittorio is, of course, absent. Goldin’s next series of images reveal Cookie’s tragic death. The first image is of Cookie surrounded by shadows, they reach over her body enfolding her into black nothingness, while a few shadow-lines dissect her face and mouth. Interestingly, Cookie lost her
ability to speak right after Vittorio’s death. This set of images ends with a picture of Cookie in her casket. The light from the candles reflects off of the cross on Cookie’s chest and the jewels she donned each day, jewels she was being buried with. The red filter and chibachrome finish—a bleaching technique used to make photos pop—add a surreal blending of iconography to the image. This religious iconography is further emphasized by the crown of flowers placed upon Cookie’s head.

The last two images in the Mueller Portfolio are an attempt to document Cookie’s absence. The first is of Max and a family friend carrying a bouquet from Cookie’s funeral. Max stares at the ground holding back his tears. The other image is of Cookie’s empty living room—where she and Max had just posed for a family portrait. Framed pictures of Cookie hang on the walls of the empty living room, as if to suggest she only lives on as a representational image. Thus, the end of the portfolio opens back in on itself, questioning the very nature of representing a subject’s life and death. In other words, Cookie is framed on the wall and in the invention-memory vehicle itself.

Figure 3.1 Nan Goldin, Suzanne and Cookie
The images of Cookie’s death unfold as heart-wrenching tragedy—as a set of moving images—but one image specifically breaks apart the narrative in order to invite me to contemplate the complexity of Cookie’s life and relations and the contingency of remembering her altogether. The image of Cookie in her bed with Suzanne sitting in grief (figure 3.1), specifically, invites a multi-sensory response from me, through its attention to a recollection-object (which also is intertwined with both space and other). The recollection object, Marks explains, is “an irreducibly material object that encodes collective memory.”\textsuperscript{158} These objects condense time within themselves and are used by filmmakers and other visual artists, “as mute witnesses to a character’s history.”\textsuperscript{159} The framed photograph of Cookie and Vittorio’s wedding is one such recollection-object. Placed above Cookie’s bed, the photograph becomes the vantage point and directs my eye toward Cookie; it discloses her presence in the scene and in others (both Vittorio and Suzanne). Above Cookie’s head, the photograph of her wedding is a reminder of how little time Vittorio and Cookie were able to spend together. His absence in the scene also recalls his death.

Although the photograph of Cookie and Vittorio may open me to the collective and individual experience of a wedding ceremony, Suzanne’s presence within the image complicates the heteronormative affect of such an occasion. Suzanne and Cookie were once intimate partners, as can be seen in one of the opening photographs in the \textit{Cookie Portfolio}. Thus, Suzanne’s presence represents not only the complexity of Cookie’s sexuality and her relations with her friends and family, but also the affect-response sutured into the photograph itself. The image further turns in on itself by transporting me
to not only the space and time of Suzanne’s mourning, but also to that of the wound itself, Cookie’s eventual death.

Much like the use of object and other to create a time-image, Goldin enfolds me into a space of loss. The space of Cookie’s bedroom, reminiscent of the Garden of Eden (a visual trope induced by Cookie’s wallpaper and bedspread) further complicates the movement and memory work of the image. The two women, as well as Cookie’s diagnosis, act as the fatal sin or eating of the apple. As such, this image functions in the set of movement images (the portfolio) and stands as the time image within the series—inscribed with an inflection on an object, other, and space—breaking apart the narrative of Cookie’s death.

**Nan Goldin’s Alf Bold Grid**

Goldin’s *Alf Bold grid*, named after her best friend in Berlin, is a 9-panel grid presented in her famous serial-style triptych (figure 3.2). This style, in many ways, mimics the formal elements of her earlier performative slide shows. In this case, Alf’s death from an AIDS-related illness is documented as nine serialized images, printed on one double-page spread in *I’ll be Your Mirror*. The *Alf Bold grid* is a quick, but extremely complicated and reflective, read. Much like Goldin’s attention to objects, spaces and others in the image of Suzanne and Cookie, the voyeuristic or medicalized gaze of watching as Alf dies is offset by Goldin’s haptic tactics, which create moments of pause and recalcitrance.

In the first image, Alf stares out his hospital window. He is surrounded by bright colored flowers. Reading from left to right, the next image is of an asylum-like hospital, presumably where Alf is awaiting his impending doom. In image three sits David
Armstrong, Alf and Goldin’s dear friend. David holds a bouquet for Alf and appears to be attempting to brighten his mood with a smile. The middle section of the series begins with Alf lying in his hospital bed starring out the window, yet again. This image is followed by a picture of an object, the central image in the grid. A painted red, sculptural heart and two photographs of young children hang on a purple wall. The heart is lit by two kitsch candelabras. In the next image, Alf sits on the floor leaning on the side of his hospital bed. He has lost a significant amount of weight and the end appears inevitable. Alf makes no attempt to catch the gaze of the camera in any of the images in which he appears.

The last row of the grid begins with an image of headstones. The gray, crumbling stones inscribed with the names of those lost and the aging mold surrounding these stones might invite viewers to smell the scene. The graveyard is followed by Alf’s dead body. His head is wrapped in dressings, his body covered with a white, stiff, hospital-issued sheet. Dead roses have been placed atop his corpse. The series ends with an image of David, presumably walking away from the hospital where he learned his friend’s fate. David burrows down into his jacket and attempts with all of his energy to walk forward. No matter how the series is read—up, down, or right to left—or what narrative comes from the montage of images, the end is always the same: Alf dies and David appears devastated.
In contrast to the image of Cookie and Suzanne which holds within itself the complexity of movement and of time, Goldin uses single images of objects, others, and spaces, held together in a grid form, to tell Alf’s story. Although the entirety of the grid functions like that of the single image of Suzanne and Cookie, it uses several photographs strung together with a gutter—or a space wherein the audience connects the images—to do the work of the haptic image. For instance, a recollection-object, two spaces, and others appear in the Alf grid.

A recollection-object acts as the central image in the serial. The object, a sort of paper mache bright red heart hung on a purple wall, displays an old-fashioned photograph of two small children. The children confuse the narrative of Alf’s death. Although the image of the heart is clearly focused, it is by far the most difficult to see. This is partially because of the fold or crease through the center of the image. The same fold dissects the
image of Alf’s dead corpse in row three, and disallows both the objectification of his body and of the heart-object. I am unable to clearly see the images of the children and am left to search for a memory that will allow the narrative to continue. As Marks explains:

“The inability to recognize an image encourages us to confront the limits of our knowledge, while the film’s refusal to extend into action constitutes a refusal to explain and neutralize the virtual image... Because the viewer cannot confidently link the optical image with other images through causal relationships, she is forced to search her memory for other virtual images that might make sense of it.”160

I am enfolded into the recollection image of the children but also forced to insert my own memories, thus I am becoming part of the *Alf Bold grid*.

Also, the right edge of the recollection-object exposes its own presence. In other words, the right-edge of the film is exposed and this exposure calls attention to the image’s imageness: We are not watching a man die, but a representation of a dying man—something that has been. Interestingly, only four of the images in this diary actually represent Alf; the other five images represent others, objects, and spaces. Two images of David appear as well as two images of spaces: the graveyard and hospital.

The images of David slow time and force me to confront his grieving. According to Deleuze, optical images such as the ones of David in the *Alf Bold grid*, “[provoke] evocative contemplations whose temporality takes a spiral path through circuits of memory rather than the forward motion of action.”161 Hence, the rest or motionlessness invoked in the images of the recollection object, as we have seen, as well as the optical images of others, and spaces actually lend themselves to the work of single images (as Barthes notes) or the time-image (as Deleuze explains). In other words, the images of
David work as pauses in the narrative sequence and they transport viewers to the experience of loss, the moment of mourning.

Two spaces enfold me into a chain of multi-sensory memory in Goldin’s Alf Bold grid. First, the asylum-like hospital that appears in the center of the first panel and, second, the graveyard that appears as the first image in the third panel. The hospital, presumably the place where Alf awaits his death, is shot at an awkward angle and appears a bit blurry. I cannot quite make out what the building is for sure, but for me it is a representation institutionalization. Thus, as an institution, the hospital is an any-space-wherever image (Deleuze). Any-space-wherever images open viewers to personal memory of such spaces. The institutional setting may in fact open viewers, like me, to feel the warmth of over-heated hospitals or the cold breeze of sterility. Also, the hospital invokes a scent of cleaning products that burns my nostrils.

Second, the graveyard, although significant for Goldin, acts as an any-space-wherever for viewers. The graveyard may even invoke the haptic sense of smell in viewers. For me, the wet ground and mossy headstones covered in moss, invite a multi-sensory experience with the image. Also, the unfamiliar etching on the gravestones resembles an any-space-wherever connecting the me to my own personal histories of this space, like my great-grandmother’s burial. Much like the Cookie Portfolio, the Alf Bold grid oscillates between movement and time images, breaking up any sense of a coherent narrative about Alf’s death.
Nan Goldin’s Serial of Gilles and Gotscho

Goldin’s work about Gilles, her art dealer in Paris, and Gotscho, his partner, appears as a serialized montage (8 images extended over two, two-page spreads) with two attached single-page images. Goldin’s AIDS memorial of Gilles begins with an image of the two men staring confidently into the camera at a restaurant. Both men appear happy and healthy. In the next image, Gilles and Gotscho, once again, stare directly into the camera, which focuses on the men from above. The third image is of Gilles and Gotscho on their bed. Gilles looks off into the distance as Gotscho lies behind him staring at his back—a rather intimate moment shared between three friends. Gilles’ naked torso reveals his tattoos as well his patron saint pendant. The final image on the first double-page spread reflects another intimate encounter: Gilles and Gotscho embracing.

Startlingly, the second double-page spread begins with an image of Gotscho starring in pure horror at the camera (figure 3.3). Leaning on his fist, he steadies himself over an empty plate of food. This image is followed by Gilles dying in his hospital bed. The viewer is confused by the juxtaposition of these images. Gotscho appears in the same shirt as the previous images. It is as if the disease takes hold of Gilles the following day and eats away at his body. The wall over Gilles’ hospital bed is adorned with a Philip DiLorca print of a young boy. The speed with which the disease takes hold of Gilles’ body is uncanny, and the juxtaposition of the DiLorca print and the dying man is unbearable. The next image in the spread (below these two) displays the hallway of Gilles’ hospital ward—blank, cold, and sterile—the space represents the total loss of control over the body. The final image in this spread is of Gotscho at a movie theater, perhaps escaping the misery that surrounds him for a few hours’ reprieve.
The last two images, which get their own page spreads, become the synecdoche of Gilles’ deterioration. The first depicts his frail arm, a literal object of deterioration or the epitome of the living corpse (figure 3.4). This frail limb, which once belonged to a healthy man, now represents the ravages of the body brought about by the disease—the literal way in which the disease eats the body of its victim. The sleeve of his tee-shirt is preposterously large for such a small appendage. Gotscho kisses Gilles in the last image, for what appears to be the last time (figure 3.5). Gilles’ eyes, sunken in and lifeless, and his skeletal remains signal as much. Gilles’ pendant reassures the viewer that this is, indeed, the same man. Interestingly, David Wojnarwicz’s “Postcards from Hell”—a seething critique of the government’s inattention to the crisis specifically with regard to the gay community—follows Goldin’s diary of Gilles and Gotscho in I’ll be Your Mirror. This is the very same text that most profoundly sparked the Witnesses NEA controversy. Again, Goldin refuses a coherent narrative about Gilles’ death through images of objects, others, and spaces.

As I move from the images in the narrative of Gilles and Gotscho embracing, it appears I am viewing a love story. But, as we turn the page, we see the fate of Gilles expressed in Gotscho’s face. Wearing the same shirt as when the two men were embracing, Gotscho expresses the simultaneity of loss and love, stopping the narrative in time. He leans his heavy head and heart on his arm, and stares directly at the viewer. This image is stacked upon an image of the hospital corridor, presumably where Gilles awaits his impeding death. Juxtaposed, then, to these stacked images, Gilles lies in bed like a frail corpse. This picture is stacked upon another of Gotscho, who appears less haunted by the situation. Diagonally, we see the hospital corridor and Gilles dying. From the other
side, we see Gotscho in two time images. I am confused by the justapositioning and pause to make sense of Goldin’s intentions. Also, much like the *Alf Bold grid*, this serial utilizes the any-space-wherever image of the hospital reconnecting the series to the panel and then back to the *portfolio*.

Figure 3.3 Nan Goldin, *Gilles and Gotscho*
Although the actual frailty of the dying body is the most exposed feature in this series and might allow for some sort of a clinical gaze, Goldin refuses to allow viewers to participate in this sort of voyeurism. For instance, Gilles’ arm acts as the recollection object in the serial. Resting on his hospital-issued, starched white sheets, Gilles’ frail arm carries a history of touch, a collective memory for all those who touched or were touched by him. The clarity with which Gilles’ arm becomes the synecdoche of the disease, on the one hand, objectifies his body. On the other hand, however, his arm becomes the object through which personal memories of loss and suffering come into play in the minds of viewers. I have seen this arm before in a different context. I attach that memory to Gilles’ arm and to everyone he has touched.

Figure 3.4 Nan Goldin, *Gilles’ Arm*
As I have shown, movement-images and time-images work rhetorically in Goldin’s invention-memory vehicles to open viewers to the unknowability of some objects, others, and spaces. Whether these objects, others, and spaces are familiar, in the sense of visual tropes, they rely on personal memories to move the narrative forward, Goldin shields her subjects from voyeuristic eyes. In so doing, she creates a sense of haptic visuality, wherein viewers are able to see-touch her images. This means Goldin synesthetically (the oscillation between several sense memories) opens viewers to a becoming by effecting an oscillation among different senses and different memories. Viewers make meaning with the structure she supplies. Goldin deals with the actuality of death, which opens and transports viewers to the moment of loss, grief, and mourning.

Although Goldin’s mission wedges a gap in official discourses about the AIDS crisis, she resists the urge to narrativize the deaths in a coherent or fluid discourse of remembrance. She seems to acknowledge the problematic nature of memorialization and is not afraid to signify the gaps in (her own) memory thus inviting viewers to focus on the singularities of their bodily-sense memories. Given that her images of objects, others, and spaces encode memory (those who are familiar with Goldin’s work may be able to identify them) they break apart the narrative of the subject’s death, pointing the viewer to other spaces and times visualized in Goldin’s magnum opus. This tactic also protects the subject photographed from voyeuristic impulses of viewers, allowing for both the time and movement images to connect to both collective/public and individual/private memories.\textsuperscript{163}
Goldin’s AIDS works create a site at which rhetorical scholars can begin to think about rhetoric as a skin—a porous organ that opens us to the world of communication—rather than as a surface to be diagnosed. In all three of the case studies analyzed in this chapter, Goldin transports viewers to the space of the AIDS wound. And, in Barthes terms, we cannot mourn the “prickly” pictures of AIDS victims; rather we see-feel the wound itself (figure 3.5).

Figure 3.5 Nan Goldin, *Gilles and Gotscho*
CHAPTER FOUR

A Terrorist Gaze toward a Becoming Body: Coco Fusco’s Telechiasm

“. . . if we can allow or encourage ourselves to be open to the fact that we are founded on lack (our flesh is the flesh of the world, continually defined and experienced in relation to everyone around us) rather than attempting to veil this fact by projecting our fear outward onto the field of the other, we can, indeed, reorganize the way we experience subjectivity.”

Amelia Jones, *Self/Image*


Identified within the performance by the discourses of liberal feminism, interrogation tactics are used to access information from “supposedly” terrorist prisoners of war. Fusco, who plays the lead female interrogation officer, acts as facilitator and participant in a two-screen multimedia dialogue. She stands at a lectern and points the audiences’ attention to two different screens, one to her right and one to her left. Screen one, a closed-circuit television feed, is the “action” part of the performance; while screen two, a PowerPoint slide show, describes and analyzes the action of screen one. In other words, Fusco’s performance is of a new media (a mixture of communications technologies) “show and tell.” The television feed visualizes the “behind the scenes” of Gitmo (or Guantanamo Bay) and, specifically, female intelligence officers’ interrogation tactics in action. Fusco literally leaves the room and “performs” the tactics herself with the help of a colleague. She then reenters the stage and lectures her audience (participants) about her tactics with the power point slide show. All the while, Fusco corresponds with her
colleagues, one offstage and one onstage, via two-way radio and directly with her audience and her prisoner.

Thus, *A Room’s* audience may at once embody the skin (from her body to ours) of a parodic, militaristic PowerPoint slide show in the “safety” of America, while simultaneously being transported synthesthetically by the digital or live-feed skin (screens) to the interrogation room. By skin, I am alluding to the ways in which rhetoric works in, on, and through our bodies. Our skin opens us to the world while simultaneously holding our organs in place. As bodies we are at once enclosed and porous. Similarly, the screens Fusco’s uses in her performance can be thought of as skins, opening themselves to us so we may embody or in-corporate their information into our very beings. This opening ourselves to information, action, and other beings [read: the “terrorist”] and making choices based on these openings is precisely the theory of rhetoric practiced in the chapter. Rhetoric not only is developed in language and flows from the mouth or television screen, as has been previously theorized. Rather, rhetoric flows through our bodies, the bodies of others we come into contact with, and the images we see/feel on a daily basis.

Cara Finnegan argues that images themselves are arguments, and, thus, have persuasive (rhetorical) power. They teach individuals how to view others, remember events, and embody other spaces and times. I want to take this argument even further by exploring the ways in which some images invite us to become-with, a sort of being done to and doing between image and audience body. In other words, I want to explore the reciprocity some images hold with audience members.
Rhetoric is not merely a logical or mindful process of evaluation, contemplation, and persuasion; in addition, we feel rhetoric working on, in, and through our bodies, teaching, inviting, and persuading us, and we make choices according to these feelings and logics. Here, I am suggesting a corporeality of rhetoric—the foundation of the phenomenon of rhetoric itself—which has been little explored and remains an underdeveloped line of inquiry in rhetorical studies. Fusco’s performance allows me to elaborate on the corporeality of rhetoric and to come to a more synesthetic (the oscillation between several of the senses) and, therefore, comprehensive (full-bodied) theory of rhetoric as a phenomenon of daily life.

As a feminist visual rhetorician, I am intimately concerned with the ways that the rhetorics of visual images teach individuals how to become gendered beings and, thus, how to treat and interact with others. Although several visual rhetoricians have identified the ways that space and time work to comport bodies and, thus, how they react or become citizens, consumers, etc, rhetoricians have too infrequently asked which “gendered” bodies we are critiquing. Fusco however, confronts us with the gendered body, while simultaneously inquiring about the space and time of visual rhetorics. Hence, the interrogation room, what Fusco calls “women’s frontline,” is a space usually housed within detainee camps. Such spaces have been the site of much controversy as of late, such as the 2004 digital images of sexual torture at Abu Ghraib performed by women. They also had been a space inaccessible to women until the current war.

Fusco denies her audience the cathartic pleasure of solely identifying with the terrorist Other or the laughable “cracker feminist” military interrogator she satirically performs. Instead, her performance invites audience members to toggle back and forth
between two very differently embodied subject positions: that of the terrorist Other and that of the liberal feminist military interrogator. As such, Fusco’s new media performance reconfigures the politics of space, time, and the gendered body, and proffers what only can be called a theorization of the materiality of new media’s rhetoric—itself composing a massive and diffuse body politic.\textsuperscript{172} In this chapter I first provide a background on Fusco, the artist, and discuss the ways she prepared for \textit{A Room}. Then, I turn to the performance itself, discussing and describing my embodiment as a spectator. I do so in order to focus my critique on the experiences I had as an audience member. Lastly, I analyze the performance using several theoreticians’ conceptualizations of the potentials and problematics of the new media, keeping in mind the material ways individuals are re-learning to see as new media enfolds itself into contemporary visual culture.

\textbf{Coco Fusco and Latinidad}

Fusco, an American-born Cuban, first took center stage in the late 1980s with her cage performances. As a young performance artist, she collaborated with Guillermo Gomez-Peña, a Mexican-born artist and writer. Together they produced several installations, performances, and pirate radio pieces.\textsuperscript{173} Their cage performances, properly named \textit{Two Undiscovered Amerindians}, reenact the historical legacy of viewing the Other on display (figure 4.1).\textsuperscript{174} For instance, early European explorers would kidnap individuals of color (occasionally promising salvation from poverty) and display them for paying customers like animals at fairs, museums, and theaters. Also, early physicians would “explore” the bodies of these captives (usually women) for “scientific” purposes and wrote several “medical treatises” about their captive’s differences in body (biology) and mind.
(intellectual capacities). Interestingly, Fusco and Gomez-Peña’s performance became a reverse ethnography—or the mission of their observational performance was overturned—because Fusco and Gomez-Peña discovered that several audience members actually believed they were “real” undiscovered Amerindians.¹⁷⁵ Although the cage performance traveled all over the globe, Fusco recalls that their worst experiences with racism occurred in the very places where the history of the display legacy should have had the strongest resonance. For instance, their audience in Argentina had three very distinct reactions: they ignored the performance altogether; were appalled by the performers’ choices because they did not understand the mission—which was, of course, to critique the display legacy; or, once again, the audience came to believe that the performers were “real” undiscovered Amerindians.¹⁷⁶

Figure 4.1 Fusco and Gomez-Peña, Image from Undiscovered Amerindians

The reason I spend so much time detailing only one of Fusco’s many performances speaks to the fact that she became known as “The Cuban, feminist performance artist,” and thus doubly commodified within high art circles. Again, Fusco had performed and published well before Two Undiscovered Amerindians. An interdisciplinary writer, artist, and filmmaker, she also holds an associate professorship at Columbia University. She teaches courses in the Department of Spanish and in the Center for the Study of Ethnicity and Race. Of her many scholarly works and projects attempting
to deconstruct ethnic stereotypes, Fusco edited a collection entitled *Corpus Delecti: Performance Art of the Americas*. She did so in order to present the works and words of several marginalized Latina/o artists. About the collection she relates, “I wanted to break the tropicalist stereotypes about Latin American performativity and to unhinge the tokenistic approach that characterized much ‘cultural diversity’ programming, limiting it to the repeated presentation of one or two ‘name’ artists.”

Following from her own theorizations, which come directly from her reflections about her performances, Fusco articulates a *Latinadad* aesthetic. This aesthetic includes: the tendency in gesture toward melodramatic exaggeration (e.g., interactivity, commonly known as a strategy utilized in theater for the working class); the performance of rituals specific to place; and the use of religions as sources of corporeal vocabulary (meaning that only those who share or know these belief systems are “in,” corporeally speaking, on the actions and dialogue of the performers).

Fusco also performs and writes in response to issues related to the spatialization of power. In her article “Ethnicity, Politics and Poetics,” Fusco states:

> The names created for us are governmental conveniences, we [Latina/os] are not a race, nor is our culture unified. The danger of our being added to representational technologies [such as stereotypical virgin/whore representations or caricatures in film and other forms of pop culture] is that it has as much to do with commodification in pomo post-industrial society as it does with activism [visa-vi liberalism].

Fusco is also quick to curb claims about authenticity and status. She explains, “I live between two possibilities—that my relationship to ethnic otherness makes my knowledge either too subjective or too authoritative—knowing I do not have the ultimate power to determine which one it is.” Issues related to ethnicity, culture, space, power, gender, and authenticity are key ingredients in all of her performances and writings. A short list
of her other performances include: *Votives*, *Stuff*, written and performed with Nao Bustamante; *Norte Sur*, written and performed with Gomez-Peña; and *Mexicane International: Ethnic Talent for Export*. Fusco is also a prolific writer: she has edited several collections, written two books, and published several scripts and reviews in *Theater and Drama Review (TDR)*.

![Figure 4.2 Nao Bustamante and Coco Fusco, still from Stuff](image)

In response to September 11, 2001, and, specifically, President Bush’s preemptive strike thereafter on Afghanistan, Fusco decided to respond with a performance. After spending much time contemplating what her response might look like, the images of Abu Ghraib surfaced. From these images she imagined “A Room.” To prepare, Fusco underwent a two-week training session led by a group of ex-military interrogation officers. This group, the Delta Force, has as its mission teaching individuals how to survive interrogation and torture situations. Although the training sessions are meant for high-profile individuals who are actually at risk of being kidnapped, Fusco wanted to feel what it was like to be incarcerated and, thus, to inhabit the space of the prisoner of war (POW). With the aid of Delta Force, she experienced interrogation tactics first-hand. She re-performs these tactics and “genders” them according to the recent controversies at Abu
Ghraib in “A Room.” Her film, *Operation Atropos*, documents the entirety of her experience as a captive, as well as those she invited to join her. All of the participants were given “secret information,” and swore to protect the information at any cost. For instance, in figure 4.3, one of Fusco’s colleagues loses control and reveals the information she swore to protect. Even though all of the participants, including Fusco, knew they could leave the premises at any time, and that the “game” would end eventually, several individuals “cracked” under the pressure.

![Figure 4.3 Coco Fusco, Still from *Operation Atropos*, cocofusco.com](image)

Fusco’s performance asks several important questions in relation to contemporary visual culture and the war on terror. Rhetorically speaking, the interplay between the content and the form of the performance specifically addresses the relationship among space, time, and the gendered body. As such, this interplay works with the audience to make meaning, so much so as to proffer a theory of the materiality of new media’s rhetoric. For instance, Fusco’s formal use of multiple screens and digital visual and audio technologies asks the question: How have new media technologies, especially those used by U.S. soldiers, changed the landscape of visual culture? How do these technologies

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teach soldiers to be tourists and, when their images and videos are disseminated worldwide, how do they teach individuals to read the war visually?

The “captive” within the performance, outfitted with orange jumpsuit and black sack, invokes (or tropes) the images of the prisoners at Abu Ghraib. In what ways has the proliferation and dissemination of digital images of sexual torture—or the “leaks” from places such as Abu Ghraib—transformed the war spatially? On a related note, how do we know (sexual) torture when we see it; and, consequently, where does this corporeal treatment take place and who is accountable for performing such torture? In other words, and in accord with Fusco’s performance, the “rooms” or spaces where such torture takes place and the availability of the new media technologies to document it may, in fact, reconfigure what is meant by “the frontline” altogether.

![Figure 4.4 Coco Fusco, Still from Operation Atropos](cocofusco.com)

Finally, in what ways have the discourses of liberal feminism been usurped by the U.S. military to, on the one hand, grant women access to the armed forces and, on the other hand, to undermine this access in order to justify the war? In other words, Fusco specifically cites Janis Karpinski and Condoleezza Rice to make clear that their uses of liberal feminist tenets are justifying the United States’ actions abroad. Even Laura Bush speaks frequently about liberating the women in Afghanistan, usually followed by images
of women with and without the burka or veil. Spreading Western liberal feminism around the world is antithetical to feminist solidarity, not to mention it entertains an entirely imperialist project in itself, and may very well support Bush’s WWIII. Therefore, we might want to heed Dana Cloud’s argument in her article “To Veil the Threat of Terror,” which is worth quoting here at some length:

> The <clash of civilizations> rhetoric [translated as: we save brown women from brown men] disregards women’s oppression in the United States . . . . The condemnation on the part of U.S. leaders of women’s oppression only in those countries that are the targets of nation building is thus somewhat hypocritical. In a visual rhetoric of abjection, only another society’s women are visible as the oppressed.

We, in the U.S., are to believe that feminism is dead, the liberal project complete, and equality a “natural” way of life. As such, we must spread our newfound freedoms worldwide. Fusco draws attention to women’s inaccessibility to the frontline while satirically performing the “new” gendered frontline. I now turn to the performance itself.
In order to discuss the visual-material and synesthetic rhetorical import of Fusco’s performance, and the way the performance answers to the research questions posed above, I describe the piece in its entirety, addressing my own embodiment as a spectator/participant while simultaneously analyzing the language and visual images of the performance. In order to elucidate Fusco’s material theory, or her conceptualization of new media’s rhetoric, I turn to several visual scholars’ theories about new media and visual culture. Fusco’s own theory of the corporeality of new media’s rhetoric relies on a reconfiguration of space, time, and the gendered body as an outcome of contemporary visual culture and, specifically, the ways in which we learn to see/feel through the use of new media technologies. As several theorists agree; space, time, and the body are integral to the processes of relearning how to view/read images. Fusco’s interrogation of these categories, as a feminist body artist performing the part of a female interrogation officer, offers her audience the opportunity to engage in an ethics of viewing (what I refer to as...
the “telechiasmic-becoming gaze”) and suggests a way to acknowledge the corporeality (or incorporeal-workings) of new media’s rhetoric.

A Room begins with the stage manager explaining that Fusco has to take care of some unfinished business before her briefing. The manager asks the audience members to sit tight. Then, Fusco breaches the theater, stage left, and asks her subordinate (who sits at a table with a computer onstage) if she looks okay. She poses in front of a huge American flag and signals to her subordinate that it is time to tape her. He brings over a camera and tripod, and adjusts the lens. Invoking the image of General Patton, Fusco reads a kitschy poem to “Condi” in honor of her birthday. With lines like, “She leaves the hapless liberal left forlorn” and “She lifts our souls to heaven,” the audience bursts into laughter. Fusco ends the scene with a big “Happy birthday, madam secretary,” and the lights go down. Fusco then moves to the lectern, where she begins to address the audience. She states that before tonight’s briefing, she wants us to watch a special report from Guantanamo Bay. Following this announcement, we will view a “window onto reality” through close-circuit television. In other words, she invites us to watch interrogation tactics in action and assures us that we will be “safe” in our chairs. She exits stage left, then screen one focuses on a digital feed of a military officer.

The special report begins with the officer describing and showing the cell space and military-issued items given to inmates at Gitmo. The digital feed of the officer is blurry, large pixilated chunks zoom in and out on delay; and the digital audio feed also is delayed. The officer explains the difference between basic and comfort items. For instance, toothpaste, clothing and shoes are basic items, while prayer rugs and mattresses are comfort items. Each room is outfitted with a Koran written in the inmate’s language.
The Korans are hung in medical masks and the guards are told not to touch them. Call to prayer is sounded five times daily, and each prisoner shackles himself to the “bean hole” (or the slot used to pass food into prisoners’ cells) for call to prayer or to use the showers. Also, a black arrow pointing to Mecca appears in each cell, which is said to make the prisoners feel at home. The officer goes on to explain the variety of ways the guards attempt to be respectful of their prisoners’ culturally specific needs.

Thus, before the performance even starts, the audience has been transported behind the scene—or stage—and into the space of the captive. Then, immediately following the announcement, Fusco reappears and starts a two-way radio dialogue with personnel behind the stage. She asks (codename) “Peppermint Patty” to prepare the “haystack” for delivery. She then moves to show us the prisoner “being delivered” [read: hands and legs shackled with black hood over his head] into the interrogation room on screen one. The military officer offstage transports the prisoner, donned with orange jumpsuit, down a hallway and into the interrogation room. Peppermint Patty responds, using the two-way, “Haystack delivery complete, over.” An onstage military officer replies, “Little Bo Peep to Pocahontas (Fusco’s codename), over. [pause] Confirming haystack shipment, over.” Fusco then leaves the stage and appears on screen one, walks down the hallways and into the interrogation room where her captive awaits her. Screen one metonymically represents a two-way mirror, where the audience can see the “goings on” behind the mirror, but the captive cannot see the audience (figure 4.6).
Fusco begins the interrogation: “#497, Mr. ahhh Haji,\textsuperscript{188} whatever your name is. Answer me! Hello, sit down, sit down, Og-ia, Og-ia [her attempt to speak Arabic]. Thirsty? Up-john?” The man replies in his language, Domari, not Arabic; although, he can clearly understand some of the words she is using. Fusco proclaims, “#497 shut up. If you want…shut up…man shut up. Alright, stand up, arms up. Okay, now, if you want that hood off, you be good. I’ll be back soon.” She exits the interrogation rooms, moves down the hallway and disappears. She reappears on stage and screen one shows the prisoner alone in the interrogation room. An image of the flag overlaid with bald eagle appears on screen two, the PowerPoint screen.
She exclaims, “All rise,” and the audience follows her command (figure 4.7). Kitsch, patriotic music blasts through the theater as Fusco and her on-stage comrade salute the flag. The song lasts for over two minutes and some of the audience members grow impatient and sit before the end of the tune. Fusco announces, “Good evening and welcome to tonight’s briefing. It was the great British writer, Virginia Woolf, who argued that every woman needed a room of her own in order to manifest her strengths.” Screen two juxtaposes an image of Woolf with images of interrogation rooms. She continues:

At the onset of the new millennium the war on terror offers an unprecedented opportunity for the women of this nation. Our nation is giving us the support we need to prove that we are the linchpin in the world wide struggle for Democracy, furnished with nothing more than a desk and a couple of chairs. And in these sanctorum of liberty, women are using their minds and their charms to save American lives. We are ridding the world of terror and carving a place for ourselves in history.

Thus, the discourses of liberal feminism—or the belief in equality between the sexes without a critique of the power structures that enforce hierarchies between men and women—frame the action of what will take place throughout the rest of the performance.

Returning to “patriotic images” or visual metaphors of U.S. nationalism on screen two, Fusco exclaims:

I would like to start tonight with an observation. Just because we are defending equality, as an American value, does not entail seeing all societies of the world as equal in value. You might ask how, especially because all humans are capable of culture. But nothing says that all cultures are equal. One of the greatest truths is that some cultural expressions are better than others. At least this is what our critics say. We are just more free. It is the absence of freedom in the Middle East, what is referred to as the freedom deficit that allows people to fly airplanes into buildings.
While screen two visualizes the planes crashing into the towers on 9/11 (figure 4.8), screen one shows the prisoner on his knees praying. He has defied Fusco’s command to keep his arms up. Fusco continues, “Our mission is to give them freedom, so we can do away with this deficit. Let me pay a visit to our prisoner.” Walking offstage and returning to the interrogation room, Fusco appears on screen one and shouts: “#497, who told you it was prayer time? Who told you to lower your arms? Arms up, keep the arms up.” Then, she repeats herself in Arabic. Although the prisoner has clearly disobeyed her orders, she removes his hood and exits the room.

Fusco walks back onto the stage and announces, “We are here this evening to shed light on interrogation tactics in general and the tactics of female soldiers in particular. Interrogation has reemerged in the 21st century as the central element against the dark forces: we perform what is known as human resource exploitation.” “Human resource exploitation” appears in bold on screen two. “While the civilian community might be alarmed at the use of force against captives,” Fusco relates, “we know it is integral. The interrogator’s job is to extract data and save lives, ours and yours.” In an abrupt tone change, Fusco shouts, “Let me make myself clear: our intelligence experts do not engage in what the world knows as torture. Don’t bandy the term about. When liberal
media says this they put us in danger.” The prisoner on screen one finds a chair and sits in the interrogation room. He stares longingly at the ground and shuffles his feet.

Now explaining the principles of interrogation tactics to the audience she states, “Inflicting physical pain is ineffective. Those terrorists are hardened and don’t hold anything for human life. Those tactics have produced a stream of false confessions. The way to exploit human sources effectively is to produce stress, not pain. Mental and physical pressure by experts: Pressure, that’s it. Pressure makes illusions more realistic.” She shows the audience, using her slide show, several animated images of prisoners being interrogated by sensory methods. For instance, in one image we see the prisoner on a cot while a female interrogator shines a flashlight in his face. We also see an image of a prisoner plugging his ears because he has been placed next to a loudspeaker, which presumably blasts loud sounds. Fusco continues, “The war on terror is not the kind of war we are used to—we are dealing with the mind of the Islamic fundamentalist.” A slide of the Islamic phrenology appears and the audience bursts into laughter. Fusco continues, “His conviction is not rooted in righteous goals but in nihilism. His state makes him hate the things we cherish, his beliefs call for the total annihilation of the civilized world.”

[⋯]

Switching from the Islamic phrenology slide and scrolling through several more animated images of prisoners and female interrogation officers, Fusco suggests, “Through de-patterning we restore their desire to communicate. We intervene by using isolation and a total assault on the senses! We make him want to communicate with his interrogator. We use psychological methods, too.” As she says this last line, an image of a female interrogation officer with one hand down her pants and the other smearing red
menstrual blood on the prisoner’s face appears. She continues, “We aim for generalized submission. This is the groundwork for the growth of democracy in the Arab world.” Fusco switches on her two-way and demands: “Prepare for haystack wash down, over.” Peppermint Patty replies, “Roger, over.” Fusco walks offstage and back into the interrogation room (screen one). She salutes her comrade and says “honor bound.” Peppermint Patty replies, “To defend freedom.” Peppermint Patty exits the room and Fusco continues her interrogation. “So, #497, 497, ready to talk now? Little hap-shish maybe? The prisoner replies in his language. Thirsty? Op-shoun? Peppermint Patty returns and splashes the prisoner with bottled water. Then, both women leave the room. […]

Turning back to her two-way as she reenters the stage, Fusco asks, “Peppermint Patty, do you read me? Prepare to flip haystack, over.” Peppermint Patty appears on screen one in the interrogation room with the prisoner. She exclaims, “Down, down, don’t look at me,” as she pushes the prisoner to the ground. She leaves the room and the prisoner goes back to praying on his knees. Fusco, who has been watching the encounter from the stage, turns back to the audience and continues her lecture. “Now I have been asked to shed light on the use of sexual innuendo by female interrogators. What, in the intelligence community, is known as tactical creativity!” Her PowerPoint slide show runs through images of a blonde, white caricature of a woman in military fatigues interrogating a “brown” prisoner, donned with orange jumpsuit. While the prisoner sits in a chair, the blonde straddles him. She wears only a pink bra and her camouflage pants. Fusco (as Pocahontas) explains:
We are trained to build a rapport with our prisoners and to dismantle their
perverted sense of Islam. Academic studies note that, in general, a tradition-bound
mentality, coupled with rigid child rearing practices where men’s contact with
women outside families is highly restricted, results in Sexual Repression
Frustration Regression Syndrome. This is a culturally generated cultural
condition, but it can be disarmed through the tactical use of lewd language and
gestures [she teaches the audience how to say “fuck you,” “your sister’s vagina,”
and “dick sucker” in Arabic], preferably performed by an interrogator in her 20s,
who is physically fit. Thanks to our society’s embrace of modern values, our
women are capable of acting brazen without threatening their own psychology.
Restraints don’t allow our sources to make physical contact [with interrogators].

A mix of laughter and total dismay comes over the audience. Fusco pauses in order to
allow the audience to contemplate the entirety of slides presented.

Rather than dwell on the atrocities presented, Fusco suggests, “It’s the Arab
world’s cultural condition that allows us to do this.” For Pocahontas, the military’s
skillful deployment of sex weakens culturally specific vulnerabilities. Female
interrogators are not to blame. She continues:

In most combat situations, non-coercive tactics are sufficient. We are not dealing
with a conventional POW situation. Our detainees are extremists. We have to use
coercive tactics: pressure works because interrogators make detainees want to
triumph. The interrogator is the sole supplier of affection and needs. It is not
unusual- for warm feelings to develop. Therein lays the “rub,” so to speak.
Fundamentalists are to see female interrogators as in power and to come into
contact with them (both of which are against their code). Therefore, our captives
find themselves caught between immediate needs and their rigid moral
framework. We exploit their internal conflicts, thereby weakening their beliefs.

Fusco turns on her two-way and demands, “Peppermint Patty, come in, over.”

Peppermint Patty responds, “Peppermint Patty to Pocahontas, over.” Fusco answers,
“Unpack the haystack, over.” Peppermint Patty replies: “Roger.” Fusco leaves the stage
and enters the interrogation room with Peppermint Patty and a large dog. As the prisoner
speaks, the two women push the dog on him. The prisoner backs into the corner and
hunches over. Fusco responds, “Stay back Haji or I’ll leave you in here with the dog alone.” The man weeps and the women exit the room with the dog.

She reappears onstage and states, “Remember ladies and gentlemen, war came to us, not the other way around.” Again, the image of planes crashing into the towers appears on the PowerPoint screen. She continues, “When we were attacked, we realized we had to have a different Middle East if we were to have peace. Our strategies must adapt to changing threats of terrorist tactics. They won’t be stopped by weapons alone, but through interrogators who can commit themselves.” Alluding to the leaks about the treatment of prisoners at Abu Ghraib, Fusco continues, “Much has been said about the treatment of the prisoners—accusations about torture have been circulated. People who fall prey to hyperbolic claims of counterintelligence are the same people who are persuaded by the hyperbolic Arabic language.”

In order to reassure the audience, Fusco states, “Female interrogators know what her parameters of treatment are when with her sources,” as she clicks to slide showing a female interrogator using a dog in a bikini to harass the prisoner (figure 4.9). She continues, “We don’t engage in mock executions (like those at Abu Ghraib). We give them their Koran’s, their army-regulated goods, and their toothbrushes. We treat them as humans even though our secretary of defense and the president have told us, time and time again, that the people we are holding are of, shall we say, another order.”
Fusco emphasizes, “As interrogators, we have the right to do whatever it takes to ensure your liberties. We make them undress in front of us and shave their heads, so you can enjoy your liberties in a free world. We offer them bribes and offer them just about anything to keep America safe.” Thus connecting the control over bodies to the spatialization of power, Fusco reemphasizes, “Let us not forget that U.S. detention centers are American territories, no matter where they are located. And we do not have to follow their rules. We allow them to be trapped by their own cultural imperatives. Some find our tactics exciting, they dare not admit to such feelings but their own bodies betray them.” Interestingly, Fusco motions to the uncontrollability of bodies in spaces of incarceration. She continues, “So ladies and gentlemen, I would like to suggest that you think of our work as theater: like actors we assume roles. Like directors, we light our stages for dramatic effect, score of hours of improv. While your theater captivates the audience, our audience is already captive. Our job is to make them see themselves as the main character of the drama we create for them.” Although attempting to be humorous, Fusco motions to the performativity of the roles of both interrogation officers and captives, and the material structure of detainee camps as a whole.
Recovering from her all-too-telling metaphor, Fusco explains, “So, what about #497? He appears harmless. We received notice that he is encoding a message that he is sending to his mother. This provides the opportunity to demonstrate [to you] how we should control him.” Fusco motions to her PowerPoint and a list if the types of interrogation tactics appear. “I have been observing the source as to determine the correct approach. He has already been interrogated using repetition and rapid fire and fear of harsh. I’ve been taking a softer approach with him. He has been offered water and we’ve taken off his hood. He knows he is going nowhere unless he talks.” Leaving the stage abruptly, Fusco reappears on screen one: “#497 arms up, arms, up, up ready for some conversation” She shows him the letter and repeats her earlier comment in Arabic. He says he doesn’t speak Arabic. She screams back at him in Arabic and then in English states, “Okay Haji. She reaches for her two-way and demands, “Peppermint Patty come in, over. Haystack packaging over.” Peppermint Patty enters the room and puts the prisoner’s hood back on. Leaving the room, Fusco coyly states, ‘You asked for it Haji.”

Fusco returns to the stage and draws the audiences’ attention to screens one and two simultaneously. The audience is to observe the prisoner while contemplating a series of slides detailing the tactical strategies employed by interrogation officers. She begins, “You will notice he is in excellent condition—we have witnessed him working out. So, we can eliminate pain. He thinks he has outsmarted us. We have to employ pride and ego-down and then exploit a cultural phobia and then move onto futility.” Raising her two-way radio to her mouth Fusco commands, “Peppermint Patty to Pocahontas, haystack in need of hose down.” Peppermint Patty replies, “Roger that!” Peppermint Patty enters the interrogation room and insists that the prisoner stand. She then moves to
undress him. He pleads with her and she orders him, “arms down!” As the audience sits on the edge of their seats (presumably waiting for the Abu Ghraib scene in real time), Fusco looks to her onstage comrade and demands that he turn off the screen.

After a long pause Fusco announces, “Ladies and gentlemen, this scene might be difficult for you to witness. You might wonder how we can do things like this and then sleep at night. We do these things so you can sleep at night.” Again, a chilling pause fills the theater, followed by sounds of helicopters flying in the background. Synesthetically the audience becomes aware that they are not in a theater at all; rather, they are at Gitmo behind a two-way mirror. Now speaking in a softer, more emotional tone, Fusco relates:

I’d like to add a more personal note here. It is not something I often do, but I feel it is appropriate. Ladies and gentlemen, all our men and women in uniform know it is an honor to serve our country. We sacrifice ourselves in the name of freedom. We know there is nothing more honorable than to save our comrades. For some reason, the men we work with don’t trust us to watch their backs. They tell us we lack their strength; our presence is a political concession, and that we constitute a liability. You ladies out there I ask you, how would you like to hear that from your co-workers everyday? We need these new opportunities to do something for our country that our fellow soldiers cannot do. Every time she [the female interrogation officer] gets information she knows she is saving lives. She is reducing the number of causalities and crippling injuries and avoiding unsightly amputations. This is the greatest form of heroism we know and for this we will give unpleasant orders. After all, we too are soldiers.

She motions to her slide show where an image of a veteran, eye blown out, appears. The caption under the image alerts the audience that he is a veteran of the current war. She orders screen one to be turned back on and exits the theater.

Beginning another round of interrogation, Fusco asks, “#497. 497. Remember that letter to your mother? We’re not going to send it. You are not cooperating.” She tears the letter in front of the prisoner while he sobs and then she walks out of the interrogation room. Fusco raises her two-way and states, “Pocahontas to Peppermint Patty.”
Peppermint Patty replies, “Peppermint Patty to Pocahontas, over.” Fusco orders, “Haystack ready for transport.” As the prisoner continues to plead with the interrogators, Peppermint Patty puts his black hood on and leads him out of the room—and presumably back to his cell—a cell the audience was privy to during the opening briefing.

Fusco reenters the theater, returns to her lectern, takes a deep breath, and states “Ladies and gentlemen, the strategic deployment of female interrogators represents an advancement of womankind. We share the value of promoting equality for women worldwide. As you are aware, bringing democracy to Afghanistan means we will liberate the Afghan women.” Her slide show juxtaposed Afghan women in veils with Afghan women without veils. Then, she describes how soldiers have been protecting the women by supervising voting booths and escorting them. Images of Afghani men fighting with U.S. soldiers are juxtaposed to Afghani women in a voting booth. Continuing her tribute to spreading a sort of liberal Western feminism around the globe, Fusco explains, “We are contributing to American women’s advancement in public life through intelligence and interrogation. Our main obstacle has been that we have been barred from joining our brothers in the field. Without practice on the frontline, we cannot excel.” Returning to the images of interrogation rooms, Fusco rejoices, “Well, now we are on the frontline. It’s time to say hello again to the tiny rooms where the unspeakable crimes against our country can be prevented. Victories of the future will not be ensured by displays of force alone. The U.S. needs female intelligence to pierce through the veils of secrecy.” An extended pause leads to her closing statement: “Finally, we too can be warriors, we too can be heroes. Thank you, and goodnight.” The theater explodes with a patriotic ditty and Fusco exits the stage for the last time.
In the next section, I analyze the literature that speaks specifically to Fusco’s performance and the interplay of visual culture and the war on terror. I rehearse Susan Sontag’s concept of the “soldier as tourist” and complicate Giroux’s concept of “the spectacle of terror.” In so doing, I contemplate how visual culture is being shaped by U.S. military soldiers’ use of new media technologies as a form of documenting their experiences. Fusco’s performance troubles Sontag’s and Giroux’s explications of politics as visuality by proffering an alternative way of viewing the Other and the self as contiguous beings, something akin to what Amelia Jones calls the televisual gaze. Further, the televisual gaze undoes what Allen Feldman’s theorizes as the actuarial gaze, something he says we cannot recover from in a post 9-11 world. Each of these theorists, including Fusco herself, identifies the ways in which the interconnections among space, time, and the body are complicated or reconfigured in contemporary visual culture. However, Fusco (via Jones’ theories) confronts her audience with a synesthetic (full-bodied) theory of contemporary visual culture, while Sontag, Giroux, and Feldman offer little in the way of coping with, or theorizing the corporeality of, new media’s rhetoric. Again, the organizational structure of this essay appears to go against the logics of scholarly essays, I needed to begin with the performance in order to make my reader understand the embodied-politics of the performance, and the aftermath of its effects on me and other audience members as spectators.

**Contemporary Visual Culture and the War on Terror:**
**The Corporeality of New Media’s Rhetoric**

In a post-industrial society, with the exponential growth of new media technologies, the task of identifying the inner workings of visual culture becomes increasingly more
difficult. Although several scholars have developed schemas for the study of historical visual images, and each speaks of the necessity of contextualization—or the historicity of visuality or visual culture practices—their theories problematize this particular project.\footnote{192}

For instance, the new media technologies are the “here and now” of visual culture and they change and morph with each new day (not to mention their potential for interactivity, which further complicates critics’ abilities to name and identify producers and consumers of media), and they necessitate my admission that what follows is based on one case study and by no means suffices as a generalizable theory of the indefinability of contemporary visual culture. Further, to claim that Fusco’s performance can ultimately define the corporeality of new media’s rhetoric also would be to misrepresent the complexity of the new media. That having been said, a proliferation of literature concerning the usages and potentials of the new media recently has flooded communications. Relying on only those texts that address the specificity of new media’s materiality—its space, time, and body—as well as the war on terror, I turn to theorists who speak most directly to issues raised by Fusco’s performance.

**The Soldier as Tourist: Digital Video, Audio, and Photography**

As a reaction to the atrocities represented in the Abu Ghraib photographs and the media frenzy surrounding these leaks, Susan Sontag’s “Regarding the Torture of Others” supplies a seething critique of the military/media industrial complex as well as the Bush Administration.\footnote{193} Sontag’s article moves from a condemnation of Bush’s preemptive strike and the images of Abu Ghraib, through the history of imaging atrocities. She then analyzes the performativity of contemporary culture, wherein we live to pose. She
explicates the processes of sentimentality or the way in which individuals’ reactions to images are “the” action—the feeling sorry for the Other as an end in itself—rather than a call to action. Her lengthy article ends with a conceptualization of the soldier as tourist—a concept useful for explicating Fusco’s use of the new media in her performance.

Sontag’s article aptly begins, “The Western memory museum is now mostly a visual one.” Moreover, our image-based historical record changes over time because of technological advancements. For instance, etchings, paintings, and drawings have made way for the more “real life” snapshots of “worthy” historical traumas. Pictures are fragments of history—usually taken at the mid-moment of action, what Barbie Zelizer refers to as the subjunctive voice of photography—however, new media technologies have made possible a real-time record of historical events. I am not arguing that film cannot record what we commonly call “history,” nor am I claiming that moving-images represent reality or some other form of authenticity (after all, editing equipment programs via the Internet have become rather accessible); rather, like historians who pick and choose what to write about in their “official” history books, new media technologies allow for the appearance of real time—of the “being there”—that is unique to their (pseudo-documentary) form.

Although Sontag’s assessments regarding the desire to see or document the Other in pain are quite interesting for their historical significance, I disagree with many of her theories—especially those collapsing the rhetorics of Holocaust images and lynching-trophy etching/photographs—which conflate the Holocaust, U.S. slavery, and the war on terror, and because of her inattention to the differing rhetorical workings of form-technologies. In other words, early black and white photographs depicting heaps of
gassed dead bodies are not the same (in content or form) as etchings of lynching victims; nor are either of these two types of images the same as the digital photographs of Abu Ghraib. What all of these images do have in common is the intentional attempt to freeze bodies, times, and spaces as a politics of visuality—a politics of power-over.

Sontag’s analysis of the interplay of new media’s changing formalistic role in contemporary visual culture, within the context and specificity of the Abu Ghraib controversy, is worthy of consideration however. She argues:

The pictures taken by American soldiers in Abu Ghraib . . . reflect a shift in the use made of pictures – less objects to be saved than messages to be disseminated, circulated. A digital camera is a common possession among soldiers. Where once photographing war was the province of photojournalists, now the soldiers themselves are all photographers – recording their war, their fun, their observations of what they find picturesque, their atrocities – and swapping images among themselves and e-mailing them around the globe.  

Sontag reveals several important implications related to new media’s ability to record, as well as to create, events worthy of representation and dissemination. In her earlier works, such as On Photography, Sontagcontemplates the connections between family life, travel, and the ability to freeze space, time, and bodies in the image. She traces the history of the portable camera and the desire to travel; therefore, the “proving you were there” impulse becomes “the experience” itself. She also contends that family life goes hand-in-hand with documentation. The bourgeoisie practice of snapshot photography—especially as a means of documenting family travel or togetherness—partially contributed to the normative performativity of the nuclear family as we, in the U.S. (regardless of visa status), perform the role today.

Thus, the processes of new media dissemination confuse modes of visuality in a digital world. Sontag relates, “The pictures [of the abuses at Abu Ghraib] will not go
away. That is the nature of the digital world in which we live. Indeed, it seems they were necessary to get our leaders to acknowledge that they had a problem on their hands.”

The clear connections between representing experience (as the experience itself) and family/military-life, as theorized by Sontag, take on new meaning and forms in an age of digital enhancement, dissemination, and manipulation. These images, imprinted on each and every computer (and several hand-help devices), refuse to go away. They can be altered, enhanced, erased from individual hard drives; parents can even disable sites where these images “pop up.” And yet, as Sontag’s acknowledges, “The media may self-censor [or be censored] but, as Rumsfeld acknowledged, it’s hard to censor soldiers overseas, who don’t write letters home, as in the old days, that can be opened by military censors who ink out unacceptable lines. Today’s soldiers, instead, function like tourists, as Rumsfeld put it, ‘running around with digital cameras and taking these unbelievable photographs and then passing them off, against the law, to the media, to our surprise.’”

In the end, as Sontag so aptly states, “the pictures will not go away” and, rhetorically speaking, they are the proof, the documentation of the experience of the picturesque (figure 4.11). Whether met with voyeuristic impulses or sentimental inaction by viewers, these images can be ascertained immediately—they are the “at hand” of contemporary visual culture—rather than the sealed and hidden inaccessibility of trophy image-atrocities.
Fusco, through her use of the new media, gives her audience the adventure of travel and tourism. Through her images and digital feed we experience, first-hand, the atrocities done to the terrorist Other. She literally appeals to the historicity of visuality—the desire, that is, to see the Other in pain. We, in the audience, are eye-witnesses; thus memory serves an altogether different function in the theater-space, than it would when viewing historical events of which we were not apart. The new media, at least as Fusco uses it, necessitates participation—a synesthetic action in the image itself—in a way that sentimental viewing cannot attain. Through her PowerPoint lecture, which, of course, make the audience knowledgeable subjects, and through our participation in the interrogation room as informed subjects, we become the soldier-tourist.
Similarly concerned about the dissemination of the Abu Ghraib photos, as well as the video of a U.S. reporter’s beheading by Al Qaida, Henry Giroux’s theorizes the new media as that which has created what only can be called the “spectacle of terror.” For him, “the terror of the spectacle” is very different than “the spectacle of terror,” in that one controls through the power of consumption, while the other begets the consumption of fear. The spectacle of terrorism builds nationalistic commonality around the imaging and repetition of fear. His arguments are worth rehearsing here at some length. Giroux explains, “As the war on terrorism takes aim at justice, democracy, and political autonomy, images of hatred, violence, and destruction become enshrined in the special effects made possible by new media technologies such as camcorders, mobile camera phones, satellite television, digital recorders, and the Internet.” Thus, the new media makes possible an uncontrollable stream of images, images that create commonality based around a perceived threat of terror—of the “what could happen”—rather than engaging with terrorism and the reasons the phenomena occur in the first place.

Not only does Giroux agree with Sontag’s nihilistic conclusion about the abuse of new media technologies and the dissemination of Abu Ghraib images, he also offers a reconfiguration of uses of the new media to oppose oppressive regimes. Giroux surmises, “…the new media can be critically engaged in terms of their radical possibilities as part of a cultural politics and public pedagogy that allow for a more imaginative and rigorous grasp of the promise of a democratic future organized through a plurality of democratic discourses, values, identities, and public spheres.” For instance, groups such as the
World Trade Organization (WTO) have organized themselves through the use of the new media. Access, on the other hand, seems to be the main issue left to resolve if we are to truly grasp the possibilities of the new media’s radical politics.

What interests me most is Giroux’s explication of “fear” as that which hardens the problematics of the new media. Giroux explains:

[... ] my argument is that the new media provided the conditions, within the existing global war on terrorism and culture of fear, for an extension of the logic of militarism to the realm of the symbolic and that the central elements of the spectacle of terrorism are unlike anything we have seen in the past—given their enshrinement of hyper-real violence, their unadulterated appeal to fear, their diverse forms of resistance to state power, and their elevation of the image to a prominent feature of social and political power. 204

If fear is the emotive bond that exemplifies American politics and community in a post-9/11 world—which also is highly invested in politics as the image—then is safety our way out of such a politics? For Fusco, politics as the image of “safety,” in my opinion, is the penultimate critique she proffers in her performance. She “plays with” or parodies safety as if to negate Giroux’s claims about the power fear and the image. The audience is “safe” in their chairs, while simultaneously participating in interrogation tactics. We absorb the knowledge of such tactics while safely in-corporating the information on the PowerPoint screen. We assume safety in the presence of individuals in uniform and via the technological two-way that controls the body of the terrorist prisoner. Yet, for all this safety and assurance, there is a synesthetic uncontrollability that takes hold of our bodies as audience members and demands our utter discomfort. Thus, before concluding this section of analysis, I want to take a moment to ponder the differences between safety and fear.
While most of us might understand safety and fear are binary opposites or cause-and-effect logics, I want to deconstruct this understanding. Safety, as I embody and experience it, is precisely that which makes me comfortable, ready for change, it is that which opens me to the world, to others, and most importantly, to myself. Fear, on the other hand, is precaution, an attempt to control the unknown—a desire to have things stay the way they are—an uncomfortability about what possibilities may or may not arise. Fear is precisely the embodied performativity of the attempt to be “in-control.” Turning fear on its head and refuting its power with a parody of safety, Fusco unfreezes and reconfigures the binary opposites: fear/safety.

Although championing the openings created by new communications technologies, Fusco confesses, “I am extremely wary of the ways that the celebratory views of the virtual domain elide pressing political questions about the toll that globalization enacts upon the millions of displaced, disenfranchised, and brutally exploited people.” Sontag and Giroux seem also to share this concern, at least at some level. Interestingly, though, many of Fusco’s performances utilize the new media, albeit never without a critical or satirical edge. She uses these very technologies to parody either social issues or the technologies themselves. We see this specifically in her latest performance, *A Room*, through the screen-culture of a satirical PowerPoint slide show, as well as a malfunctioning time-lapse closed circuit feed (not to mention the poor quality digital feed of the opening briefing from Gitmo). Fusco employs the very same screen culture that captivates and teaches the viewing practices of fear. But, she does so as a means to exploit the new media’s power-over and to undo the spectacle of terror itself. In other words, whereas Giroux theorizes “the spectacle of terror” as a fear-based
phenomenon, Fusco’s performance invites audiences to contemplate the openings of safety (albeit after much consideration and critical thought). In so doing, she literally inverts the viewing practices of the audience—learned through the use of new media technologies—to develop a new way of seeing/gazing-with the spectacle synesthetically.

In order to explicate Fusco’s gazing-with the spectacle, I must first elucidate Allan Feldman’s theory of the actuarial gaze. To bring his heady theory down to earth (for just a moment) he discusses (as does Giroux) the ways in which we have come to learn new ways of seeing in a post-9/11 world. As a postmodern nihilist, however, Feldman does not offer any tools to get out of this self-defeating voyeurism of fear (or in Giroux’s words, the spectacle of terrorism). Therefore, I eventually will turn to Amelia Jones’ concept of the televisual gaze—something with which I argue Fusco invites her audience to participate. The televisual gaze is a phenomenological concept based on the notion of losing oneself in the sight of the other—of letting oneself “become” by relinquishing power and control—as opposed to dividing or separating oneself from the Other. The televisual gaze is about holding oneself accountable for these images [read: digitally disseminated atrocities] and melting into them (whether through the computer, television, or hand-held device, all commonly referred to as contemporary screen/visual culture) as a process of not only embodying the Other and feeling their pain, but also experiencing a sort of intersubjectivity that makes one aware of their own skin screen (or the porousness of their own flesh).
Allen Feldman: On the Actuarial Gaze

The processes of dissemination and repetition have indeed changed the ways individuals see and experience others and events in the world. Allan Feldman’s insightful article, “On the Actuarial Gaze: From 9/11 to Abu Ghraib,” details these processes and the histories involved in such material changes. Accordingly, he theorizes the actuarial gaze—the financial impacts of risk and uncertainty management as visualized by the repetition of the planes crashing into the twin towers (or financial district)—a retheorization of Beck’s “cinematics of risk” and Foster’s “screening on and off.”

Feldman explains:

The actuarial gaze is not only preemptively deployed, as in the orchestration of the invasion of Iraq, but also practices an aesthetics of space/time compression that renders unfolding disaster serviceable to the expansion of this scopic regime. [...] The actuarial aesthetic of televisial witnessing used mechanical repetition and digital manipulation, such as freeze-framing, and slow motion, to reverse, spatialize and petrify violence; thereby extracting the event known as 9/11 from chaotic temporal debris and from the affective flows of terror and disorder [...].

Thus, we can assume from Feldman’s assessment that 9/11 was produced and directed—it was performed. This does not, however, negate the fact that many individuals lost their lives, families have been devastated, and that terrorism or any other act of hate should go unpunished. Rather, the choreography of atrocity should be articulated fully, especially in a digital age. Feldman continues,

The temporal fragments of the attack were instantaneously assembled as a narrative, a reconstruction that was serviceable as an ‘arche’ or origin point for a new global risk reduction agenda: ‘the war on terrorism.’ [...] This technical instrumentation of reproducible trauma is now embodied in the prosthetics of the emerging forensic state apparatus, in the advanced technology of Shock and Awe warfare, in the negative optics of collateral damage, and, most recently, in the Abu Ghraib torture regimen and photography. I would contend that the actuarial gaze, which screens, repeats and screen-off shock and trauma, has been
progressively institutionalized as a technical order of total spectrum dominance. [...] What is screened out of this traumatic repetition frequently becomes the terrain of human rights violation.

We see Feldman’s claims so readily in the aftermath of the leaks from Abu Ghraib, especially in the U.S. government’s and media’s attempt to censor the images—to no avail. As Sontag puts it, the images would not go away, they would not disappear. Fusco, in her own way, then, explicitly performs the work of Feldman’s actuarial gaze by conducting a satirical critique of the performativity of the new media by doubly employing the repetitions and manipulations that created what we now visually understand as 9/11: that is, planes flying into the Twin Towers in slow motion. What is more, Fusco invites audiences to move from being managed via the actuarial gaze to an embodied responsibility for these images and their aftermath.

Amelia Jones and Coco Fusco: On the Televisual and Telechiasmic-Becoming Gazes

In so problematizing the inner-working of the actuarial gaze, Fusco opens us to what Amelia Jones refers to as the televisual gaze. Jones explains:

…we must learn to engage with televisual bodies in ways that encourage rather than suppress [our desire to grasp] our own objectivity and otherness while embracing the subjectivity of the other... new technologies of visualization require new modes of interpretation and engagement [...]. A rapidly growing number of people in the world spend more time negotiating televisual bodies and texts than they do out on the streets or in other public spaces.

How, then, can we engage with and be engaged by televisual bodies? Fusco rhetorically answers this question in her performance through her reconfigurations of space, time, and the (gendered) body. Put simply, if we add imagination-creativity (the toggle between two very differently embodied subject positions) and humor to Jones’ theory of the televisual gaze—a practice of learning to melt into the digital body of the other—we
come to Fusco’s telechiasmic-becoming gaze. In other words, we open ourselves to the possibility of screen-skin transportation—to the very space and time compressions of the new media—effectively sharing experiences, melting into and out of each other, and the events and circumstances that have kept us all apart for far too long. Consequently, this transformative potential of the telechiasmic-becoming gaze may allow us to learn to see/feel with the spectacle, with others; something akin to Deleuze’s intensities, positivities, and flows as these concepts might be reconfigured to theorize new media. This sort of becoming-with, while remaining attentive to the chiasmic corporeality of the new media, defines the corporeality of Fusco’s performance and that of the telechiasmic-becoming gaze.

The Telechiasm

Coco Fusco’s most recent performance, *A Room of One’s own: Gender and Power in the New America*, explores the ways in which new media technologies, used specifically by U.S. soldiers, have changed the landscape of contemporary visual culture. New media relies on the principles of interactivity, thus isolating producers and consumers is a difficult challenge. Fusco utilizes a PowerPoint slide show, digital closed-circuit televisions feed, and a digital-audio technology (all of which are highly choreographed, but represent the allure of reality) in order to call attention to the viewing habits and practices of audience members who are relearning how to see/feel through the new media.

She has also enabled audience members to become tourists (as per Sontag’s conceptualization of the soldier as tourist) in the face of the proliferation and
dissemination of sexual torture images at Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo Bay. In other words, she synesthetically transports us into the interrogation room at Guantanamo Bay through live digital feed. She enters and exits the stage and interrogation room, productively turning the theater into a two-way mirror. Invoking the metaphor of sexual torture at Abu Ghraib, as her prisoner is outfitted with orange jumpsuit and black sack over his head, Fusco presents audience members with a communal memory of the controversy. In the performance she goes so far as to declare, “we do not perform mock executions,” which, once again, alerts the audience, albeit verbally, to the Abu Ghraib controversy. Fusco calls for a hose down, which inevitably refers to sexual interrogation tactics within the performance. She turns the screen off at this moment and the audience is left to flip through the images of Abu Ghraib already burned into their collective memory banks.

Fusco’s performance, and especially her attention to the compression of space and time as the corporeality of new media, recorded the ways in which the war was transformed spatially. Significantly, not only do audience members become participants in sexual innuendo and other forms of gendered interrogation tactics, we come to learn that the new frontline belongs to women (as sexed/gendered bodies). Although women have been barred from the frontline thus far, by using their bodies to control “terrorists’” minds in interrogation rooms, some have come to believe that they are saving lives and serving their country, naturally, as woman-body. In other words, female intelligence officers are using their bodies to hurt other bodies and/or control the minds of (male) terrorists. Fusco, unable to reconcile for the audience with whom they should be identifying, acknowledges that men do not trust their female comrades in uniform. Thus,
“tactical creativity,” or sexual interrogation tactics, serve to prove that women can, in fact, serve alongside their male counterparts.

The language of liberal feminism has been usurped by the U.S. military, most recently as a means to recruit individuals into what seems likely to be an unending war—and, interestingly, women keep moving up the military hierarchy as fewer and fewer individuals “sign up” to defend their country. The discourses of liberal feminism also are being used by the government to justify the war itself. After all, are we not liberating women around the world? Fusco also confronts her audience with the fact that we rarely, if ever, discuss women’s sexual liberation (in the U.S. at least) as something that can be used as a form of violence. In the “talk-back” session directly following the performance of *A Room* Fusco claims that Karpinski and Rice honestly believe they are spearheading a feminist revolution in the armed forces. She goes onto suggest that we often believe that women are incapable of being the perpetrators of sexual violence and, rather, assume their victimization and submission. Fusco’s telechiasmic-becoming gaze opens us to melt into both the liberated woman who uses her sexuality-body to interrogate the terrorist suspect and the terrorist Other. As audience members, we have no choice but to participate in both the act of interrogation and to become the recipient of such violent actions. Thus, Fusco promises a new way of seeing/feeling that of the telechiasmic-becoming gaze, which is, in itself, the corporeality of new media’s rhetoric.
CHAPTER 5

Conclusion:
The Rhetoric of Feminist Body Art as Corporeality

It has taken a sensual revolution to turn the tables and recover a full-bodied understanding of culture and experience. . . .From a sensory standpoint, the rhetorics of logocentricity do seem unbearably artificial and rigid.

David Howes, Empire of the Senses

Feminist body art, as a set of texts, represents an opportunity for rhetorical critics to theorize the constraints of space and time on voice and body. Throughout the previous chapters, I have shown how some feminist body artists use their bodies and the bodies of the marginalized as rhetorical resources to produce becomings in audience members. Body artists articulate bodies through hybrid genres with subversive ends. For instance, body artists challenge viewers’ abilities to use the sense of sight as that which makes gender iterable. Body artists offset the desire of voyeurism and invite audiences to walk-with or become the Other. By using bodies in this way, feminist body artists consider the fundamental characteristic of rhetoric, its materiality, and push this materiality even further to a conceptualization of corporeality. These artists use multiple or hybrid forms, such as installation and performance, to articulate bodies and, as a result, spatial, temporal, and contextual tactics are embedded within their works. Thanks to their attention to space and time on voice and body, feminist body artists invite audience members to become differently configured (i.e., woman, wound, Other) as a result of the artwork’s corporeal rhetoric.
The Rhetoric of Feminist Body Art

Feminist body artists use bodies as invention-memory devices in order to articulate the constraints of space and time on voice. Linking the canon of invention with memory confirms women’s and other marginalized groups’ epistemologies and ontologies. As a rhetorical resource, the body as invention-memory opens audiences to new ways of knowing and becoming in the world. One body’s knowledge or reality is never enough, and feminist body artists say as much through their works.

In the Other Side, Nan Goldin visualizes herself by staging her own gender and effectively “intruding” into the scene. In other words, she uses her own body to offset the voyeuristic impulse of observational documentation. As such, Goldin’s own body, as well as the bodies of her subjects, drag queens, becomes the text under investigation. Similarly, then, Goldin’s subjects as well as audience members become the canvas on which sex and gender are staged, constructed, performed, and regulated. Audiences literally become differently configured as a result of making meaning with The Other Side’s undoing of the sex/gender dichotomy.

Goldin’s invention-memory vehicles of the AIDS crisis take form through loosely constructed memorials. By “loosely” I refer to the gaps that exist within her series of images that work to signify the gaps in memory. Her memorials function as living artworks rather than as posthumous treatises. She documents her friends’ deaths by AIDS in order to synesthetically transport viewers to the AIDS wound. In the end, this form of counter-memorializing her subjects works at the nodal point, or the in-between, of the time-image and the movement-image, creating a sense of “entering into” the texts.

Goldin’s use of haptic visuality (the rhetorical assist between text and audience body)
invites audience members to make meaning with the memorials, as well as to be transported to the site of the AIDS wound synesthetically.

Coco Fusco’s invention-memory vehicles, her own body, as well as the body of the terrorist Other, synesthetically transports audience members back-and-forth between the safety of a studio in America to the interrogation room at Guantanamo Bay. The screens she uses, a live-feed television screen and a PowerPoint screen, invoke porous organs, or skins, that open audiences to the world of the Other. Fusco opens viewers through her performance, between real-time and digital feed, in order to contemplate women’s frontline: or sexual interrogation tactics in action. Fusco is also interested in the processes by which supposed terrorists become the Other, and she invites her audience to do the same.

Linking invention with memory means that some women and marginalized rhetors use their bodies and their intuitive knowing as processural sites, rather than as end productions. In other words, body art is ephemeral (as is identity) and changes (like the body) with each performance or documentation. The audiences for these works grow with time, while the texts and audience members themselves change as a process of coming into contact and making meaning with the text. The intuitive knowing-feeling of feminist body art defies the logocentricity of being as it is currently configured in rhetorical studies. Thus, feminist body artists open audience members to becomings: something radically different, corporeally and epistemologically.

Feminist body artists represent, mediate, and articulate their bodies through multi-sensory installation, performances, and other works. For example, Goldin’s *Other Side* takes form at the intersections of photography and video. She incorporates historical
antecedents into her works to ensure readability. Her attention to gutter work, serialization and montage produce a text-body that consciously creates and documents the alternatives spaces and times of the drag queen body. The interface between her text-body, as well as the audience-body, makes clear an invitation to becoming. In other words, audiences become aware of the plasticity and pliability of the body, reconfiguring (a reassessment of embodiment) for themselves the sex/gender dichotomy.

Goldin incorporates images of objects others, and spaces into *The Cookie Muller Portfolio*, the Gilles and Gotscho serial, and the *Alf Bold grid*, in order to shield her subjects from the voyeuristic-clinical impulse of viewers. In so doing, she incorporates or creates pauses in her work—such as gutters, blurry fissures, and sequencing—to challenge audience members to fill in the gaps of memory with their own recollections. Goldin’s memorials rely on audience’s individual and collective memories in order to make meaning and, thus, the audience becomes part of the narrative about the AIDS wound. Goldin works between the time-image and the movement-image. The time-image invites viewers to use their own memories to fill in the gaps of the narrative, while the movement-image moves the narrative forward through collective means. Laura Marks describes this in-between, between that of movement-images and time-images, as haptic visuality. Haptic visuality is a tactic wherein audience members are invited to search through their own sense memories to create the memorial.

Fusco uses multiple layerings of her body, the body of the PowerPoint screen, and the terrorist’s televusal body in order to create a sort of relationality or overlay between communications technologies and audience corporeality. Thus, audiences are invited to embody all three subject positions—that is, their own experience of the performance, the
terrorist Other, and the female interrogation officer—and to make meaning through the parody of the performance. To be clear, audience members are transported back-and-forth between the U.S. and Guantamno Bay and asked to embody their own subject position, that of the female interrogator, and that of the terrorist suspect. She literally makes audiences aware of the politics of Othering and the crimes of those who swear to protect the United States.

The interplay of text and body mediated through their diffuse texts, sets feminist body art apart from other forms both spatially and temporally. Feminist body artists use several spatial and temporal tactics in their artworks to create a space-time configuration for the marginalized. Body artists work with a conception of kairos as the space-time: time-space relationship. This means that feminist body artists create an alternative space and time to that of mainstream culture, so that marginalized persons receive a space-time of appearance. Marsha Meskimmon explains that Kairos

\[ \ldots \text{moves from a liner, causal mode of historical explanation to a set of strategic practices designed to engage with historical processes as open-ended and creatively enacted in the present. It is not surprising that feminist reconceptualizations of subjectivity, agency, and history have produced processual and embodied models of temporality, since mechanistic time has both effaced sexual differences and been unable to account for change.}\]

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In other words, kairos is a process and praxis that takes account of the marginalized and silenced, rather than being a product or an end based in a mainstream conception of space/time. Instead of being subsumed by space, as most articulations of temporal mechanisms have thus far been, space and time work in unity, as a simultaneity, much like other dichotomies within feminist body art. Instead of reconfiguring time as the hierarchical term, feminist body artists work with a conception of space-time: time-space.
History, for instance, can be changed or altered, as Goldin so aptly articulates through serialization, montage, and rearrangement. She also uses formalistic historical antecedents to ensure the readability of her works while simultaneously defying chronological coherence. Goldin relies on the aesthetics of *Vogue Magazine* and, her predecessor, Andy Warhol to ensure the readability of her images. Her subjects similarly rely on antecedents, such as the feminine archetypes, Marilyn Monroe, Cher, and the “material girl (Madonna)” to ensure their bodily readability. The past and the present are held in a space of contiguousness, altering both in Goldin’s *The Other Side*. Furthermore, Goldin documents the spaces and times of drag queen appearance, like that of the drag bar and gay pride parade.

Collective and individual loss, place, and time are invoked in Goldin’s AIDS memorials, through her insertion of images of objects, others, and spaces. This insertion also invites audiences to move from a clinical, objectifying gaze, to that of a becoming-gaze by means of haptic visuality. In other words, if we accept the invitation of the text, we are synesthetically transported through our own sense memories to make “sense” of the visual work. Thus, we make and are made by the AIDS text-body. Attention to lighting, the gaps, spills, and fissures of memory imaged through blurriness, pausing, and gutter work move and pause audience members and prompt a making of meaning with the text.

The interrogation room becomes the frontline for female military interrogation officers in Fusco’s *A Room of One’s Own: Gender and Power in the New America*. Fusco shows audiences that the discourses of liberal feminism are being usurped by the U.S. government in order to facilitate a sexual assault on supposedly terrorist prisoners of war.
Fusco takes audiences from the studio to Guantanamo Bay, Cuba where we participate in sexual interrogation tactics in action. Also, audiences become part of the communications transportation through digital feed. We identify with both the terrorist POW, as well as the military interrogation office, Fusco. Relaying on the collective memory of events such as Abu Ghraib, we witness, in real time, sexual interrogation tactics in action.

Although feminist body artists’ artworks comment on their socio-political contexts, several of these artworks also point to current day events and issues. In other words, feminist body artworks are “timeless,” because of their larger concerns with the constraints of space and time on voice and body, while they also hold past and present in complementary tension. Performing for small audiences does not negate the impact of feminist body art. These artworks are often documented and appear in edited collections or as installations in lesser known galleries (sometimes even at well known or prestigious galleries). Thus, ephemerality becomes part of the form of feminist body art. This lack of concreteness invokes process rather than product. Also, juxtapositioning and parody are strategies utilized by artists to subvert the high art establishment.

Nan Goldin’s works disclose the powerful before and aftereffects of the AIDS crisis. For instance, The Other Side documents the changing nature of the drag scene within the larger context of the gay community. AIDS created a space wherein drag queens were more accepted by the larger queer community, thanks to a shared loss. Goldin lived with several individuals infected with HIV/AIDS. Thus, she uses her works as a form of recovery, documenting and re-documenting her relations with these individuals. She documents the loss of memory and the re-memory of recollection. Also, Goldin was right in the middle of the NEA controversies and used the controversy as a
subversive tactic in her exhibit, *Witnesses Against Our Vanishing*. She and several other artists from the Bowery created counter-discourses to memorialize their friends and to deconstruct the act of remembrance altogether.

Undergoing a two-week training session with the Delta Force, many in Fusco’s crew broke under the pressure of the simulated POW camp. Within the performance itself the orange jumpsuit and black hood are read by audience members as the torture victims at Abu Ghraib. This collective readability had become iterable by the endless video display of the atrocities. Contemporaneously, as well as in the previous Reagan administration, we have seen a resurfacing of feminist body art practices. We might want to ask about the constraints of space and time on voice body and why some artists have returned to such a radical avant-garde practice, especially during administrations that seek to take away freedoms and rights.

Feminist body artworks open audience bodies to a variety of becomings. They also ask critics to take responsibility for the ways in which their bodies touch and are touched by the works (or texts under investigation). Thus, several methodological questions come to bear on the appropriate way to perform rhetorical criticism of feminist body art. In *Disciplining the Feminine*, Blair, Baxter, and Brown bemoan the impossibilities of getting works published that take into account the critic’s experience with the text. However, and as I have shown, this is a key element in the rhetorical criticism of feminist body artworks. In fact, we would be missing the whole point of these types of texts if we did not feel the ways in which feminist body art works on our bodies.
For example, Goldin’s *The Other Side* moves from a transgendered gaze to a becoming-gaze. This means that audience members look, not so much at the drag performance, but feel the performance of becoming woman. The very sexes of our bodies are unraveled by the performative dimensions of Goldin’s women-in-process. Thus, audiences are invited to contemplate the becomingness of their own bodies and specifically, their sexes and genders. Goldin un hinges viewers’ abilities to trust vision as the primary sense through which sex and/or gender are determined, fully articulating the relationship between both. She invites us to visually-touch the plasticity and pliability of the body and to understand identity as something in-the-making.

We become the AIDS wound by touching the bodies, objects, others, and spaces of AIDS victims. Goldin invites audience’s to touch rather than see through her use of haptic visuality. This form of touching-seeing incorporates both individual and collective memory into the narrative, thus in-corporating the audience synesthetically into the text. Because of Goldin’s attention to individual memory processes, I have inserted my own sense memories into chapter three. I did so in order to feel-show my readers the openness of Goldin’s AIDS memorials.

Fusco’s performance, *A Room*, invites a sort of toggle back-and-forth, which synesthetically interpolates viewers to become the terrorist Other, the military interrogation officer, and the witnesses of sexual torture tactics. Amelia Jones refers to this kind of becoming of the Other as the televisual gaze.\(^{220}\) The televisual gaze is a process wherein audience members touch and are touch by the subjects viewed.\(^{221}\) There is an ethics of viewing assumed by the televisual gaze, wherein we touch the way we
want to be touched. Thus, we become the terrorist Other as much as we take responsibility for our part in the sexual torture tactics at Gitmo and Abu Ghraib.

**Corporeal Rhetorical Criticism**

Before concluding, I would like to take some space-time to ruminate on the rhetorical criticism/critical rhetoric dichotomy, thereby suggesting a different starting point for critics.  

I do so not to disrespect or refute either camp, but to map out/in where my project fits into the matrix of the discipline. If we take rhetorical criticism to its logical end, that of the specificity of the rhetorical work of a single text, there is rarely a consideration of how that specificity fits into the larger world in context. In contrast, critical rhetoric, taken to its logical end, produces works that fall away from any practical understanding of the ways in which cultural artifacts may work for individuals on the ground (thus offsetting a theory of rhetoric as a practical art-form). We might also say that while one—rhetorical criticism—consumes the text and explains it away, the other—critical rhetoric—explains the theory of the text away. Utilizing both the text and the theory, as well as entering into the text as the critic in an attempt to take responsibility for the ways in which I touch and am touched by the text, is exactly the type of phenomenological-rhetorical criticism I am calling for, and that I attempted to the best of my ability to produce in this project.

Feminist body art invites a contemplation of the question of methodology, because it opens a space for those bodies not invited by mainstream texts. What I am proposing is an in-between, a phenomenological-rhetorical criticism that takes account of text-body, critic’s-body, and body of theory, in order to investigate texts. On a similar
note, when we speak about invitation, or a text inviting certain responses, it is absolutely our job to identify what bodies we are speaking about, and how our bodies change, as critics, as a result of coming into contact with the text-body. Here I do not wish to argue the static nature of the critic’s body-identity as something fixed. Rather, I am suggesting that critics take responsibility for their criticism; in other words, to say that something “invites us,” as critics, means that we need to identify “who” or “what” is invited and by whom. I have used the phrase “audiences are invited” throughout my dissertation. I assure my readers that this phrase was used for the purposes of readability. My critiques are mine alone: they come from one very specific subject position that is in a constant state of flux. We must begin taking responsibility for our own bodies as critics, as well as the text-body under investigation (figure 5.1). We can begin this task by answering a relatively simple question: What is the space-time of the text?
A Corporeal Rhetoric: An Opening

In conclusion, my dissertation asks for a continuation of the theorizations about space, time, and the body of rhetoric. Isolating the particular constraints of space and time on voice and body in texts is one avenue that we can begin to take in order to understand rhetoric’s “most basic foundation—its materiality—and move to an understanding of rhetoric’s corporeality.” In other words, we need to move from understanding rhetoric as an embodied phenomenon to an understanding of gendered-embodiment working within a text. In so doing we can begin to ask ourselves how space and time regulate, enforce, and demarcate marginalization. And, as Barbara Biesecker has noted, we must continue to critique canon formation that includes some voices (and bodies) while discounting Others (voices/bodies).

This warning should also speak to the feminist artists taking center stage in 2007. Centering avant-garde tactics unite feminist art practices with institutionalized high-art discourses, wherein essentialistic conceptions of feminism, women, and the body enjoin the liberal humanist project. Also, by centering feminist art, the practices of these artists must adhere to the space/time of the high-Art museum, a space inhospitable to women’s and other marginalized groups’ bodies. For instance, the controversies surrounding the NEA recurrently have deemed certain bodies inappropriate for the rhetorical situation of the fine art museum.

Finally, we should be alarmed by Holland Cotter’s 2007 New York Times article, “Feminist Art Finally Takes Center Stage,” wherein he stated that the audience for the
opening ceremonies at the MoMA’s recognition of feminist artists was almost entirely white women. He goes on to explain that only one of the panelists, all of whom were being recognized for their artworks, was black. Again, the question remains for both corporeal rhetoric and feminist art: which “women” and why? The type of phenomenological-rhetorical criticism called for in my dissertation will not explain texts or theory away, but rather it will yield results of the kind often overlooked in this discipline and beyond. In the end we can begin to grant some of the marginalized voice, a space of appearance, and a time of acceptance without emplacing identity.
Bibliography


Notes


4 Ibid.

5 Ibid.


7 Ibid., 4.


15 Ibid., 412-413.

16 Ibid., 412.


19 Ibid., 143.

20 Women’s discourses that do not enter the public sphere are seen as invalid examples for rhetorical criticism, because rhetoric is about the public sphere. Karlyn Kohrs Campbell determines that women often have to use invention and a blurring of genre to be heard in the public sphere (Karlyn Kohrs Campbell, “Gender and Genre: Loci of Invention and Contradiction in the Earliest Speeches by U.S. Women,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 81, no. 4 [Nov. 1995]: 479-95).

21 Biesecker, “Coming to Terms,” 143.


23 Lovelace, “Shaking the Ground,” 3-18 (see n. 6); Potkin, “Performance Art,” 75-88 (see n. 3).


25 My reader should notice that I only cover major threads and developments in feminist performance art as it is practiced in the U.S. Due to space constraints, my various interdisciplinary points of departure, and the amount of material I am working with, I cannot possibly cover all of the developments within feminist art practices. In my overview I focus on those developments that not only speak to my case studies (as the artists represented in my dissertation are U.S. citizens or based in the United States), but also coincide with major shifts in contemporary U.S. feminist theory.

26 Lovelace, “Shaking the Ground,” 7 (see n. 6).

27 There is a large body of criticism that uses theoretical concepts that are not considered feminist theories of the body to explain body art practices. Most notably, Merleau-Ponty’s notion of the chiasm acts as a point of departure from which all feminist

28 Lovelace, “Shaking the Ground,” 7 (see n. 6).

29 Amelia Jones, *Body Art/Performing the Subject* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), 73.

30 My reader will notice that throughout the body of this text I change from “viewer” to “audience members.” I do so for the ease of readability.

31 Luce Irigaray, cited in Lovelace, “Shaking the Ground,” 9 (see n.6).

32 Grosz, *Volatile*, 391 (see n. 11).

33 Ibid., 206.

34 Lovelace, “Shaking the Ground,” 11 (see n. 6).


37 Ibid., 205.

38 Ibid., 207.

39 Potkin, “Performance Art,” 75 (see n. 3). Jones, “Introduction,” 2 (see n. 8).


41 According to Judith Butler, sex is always already gender, at least in so far as sex is culturally understood. See Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, (New York: Routledge, 1990), 10-11. Butler notes that sex is always already gender as determined by the dichotomy sex/gender. Thus, performing the gender of the other sex has subversive potential.


McKerrow, “Space and Time,” 271 (see n. 12).

Ibid., 272.

Ibid.

Ibid.


Elizabeth Ellsworth argues, “Knowledge, once it is defined, taught and used as a “thing made,” is dead. It has been forced to give up that which “really exists:” its nature when it is a thing in the making, continuously evolving through our understanding of the world and our bodies’ experiences of and participation in that world.” In my dissertation I want to experiment with rhetoric as a thing in the making, rather than a thing made (something known and taught). To think of rhetoric as thing in the making, is to open rhetoric to possibility—to pay attention to the experiences of bodies not known to it. See Elizabeth Ann Ellsworth, *Places of Learning: Media, Architecture, Pedagogy* (New York: RoutledgeFalmer, 2005), 1.


58 My reader will note that the scholarship about space is about physically existing space. In other words, the critic has access to the space, whether the space is Starbucks or The Civil Rights Memorial, and can return to the space for further examination. Flores, on the other hand, reconstructs the discursive space within Chicana’s creative works. Although discursive space “actually” exists, the space is qualitatively different than a physical space. The same issues arise with the creative works of body artists. I will address this issue at length in Chapter One of my dissertation.

59 Campbell, “Gender and Genre,” 479 (see n. 20).

60 Ibid., 480.


66 Ibid., 5.

67 Ibid.

68 Ibid.
Here, I am moving from sight as the primary sense to a theory of synesthesia (or full-bodied experience). The gaze and body dichotomy might appear as follows: gaze/body, like sex/gender. I borrow the “transgendered gaze” from Judith Halberstam, the “clinical gaze” from Michel Foucault, and the “terrorist/spectacle gaze” from Allen Feldman and Henry Giroux.

See, for example, Marsha Meskimmon, “Embodiment: Space and Situated Knowledge,” “Performativity and the Inscribed Body,” and “The Place of Time: Australian Feminist Art and Theory,” in Women Making Art, 75-90, 91-109, 168-184 (see n. 63).

See, for example, Penelope Deutscher, “Three Touches to the Skin and One Look: Satre and Beauvoir on Desire and Embodiment” and “Robotic Skin: The Future of Touch?” in Thinking Through the Skin, ed. Sara Ahmed and Jackie Stacey (New York: Routledge, 2001), 143-159, 223-236.

Smith and Watson, Interfaces, 21 (see n. 62).

Meskimmon, Women Making Art, 170 (see n. 63).

McKerrow, “Space and Time,” 272 (see n. 12).

Meskimmon, Women Making Art, 170 (see n. 63).

Ibid.


See Judith Butler, Bodies that Matter (New York: Routledge, 1993), 121-140.


88 Issues concerning the voyeuristic impulse and essentializing “the body” always come into play when visualizing bodies deemed inappropriate and/or abnormal in terms of bi-gender normativity. Although Susan Sontag once argued that to photograph someone was to violate and exploit them, she says of Goldin’s work: “Nan Goldin takes unforgettable photographs. They make a point, a liberating point . . . about sensuality, about candor, about affection. They combat moralistic bullshit. I admire her spirit and I admire her art” (back cover of The Other Side). See Nan Goldin, The Other Side 1972-1992 (Scalo Publishers, 2000).


90 Cuno, “Director’s Foreword,” 59.

91 Ibid.


94 I was able to see The Other Side in slide show form, winter 2006, at the Matthew Marks Gallery in Soho.

On the back cover of *The Other Side*, Goldin states, “The pictures in this book are not of people suffering gender dysphoria but rather expressing gender euphoria. This book is about new possibilities and transcendence. The people in these pictures are truly revolutionary; they are the real winner of the battle between the sexes because they have stepped out of the ring.” (See n. 88.)


Ibid., 6.

Ibid., 7.


According to Judith Butler, sex is always already gender, at least in so far as sex is culturally understood. Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 10-11 (see n. 10).

See also “Ivy with wig stand, Boston 1973;” “Marlene at home with Venus de Milo, Boston 1974;” “Roommate in the kitchen, Boston 1972” (old-fashioned picture of a little girl); “Cody at her mirror, NYC 1991” (Ken and Barbie); “Cody in the dressing room at the Boy Bar, NYC 1991” (Edie Sedgwick); and “Kim at home, Paris 1992” (abstract representational painting); all of which appear in Goldin, *The Other Side* (see n. 86).


See Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 179 (see n. 10).

Biesecker, “Coming to Terms,” 142-143 (see n. 18).

Blair, “Contemporary U.S.,” 18 (see n. 49).

See Grosz, *Time Travels*, 174 (see n. 77).

This may lead to what Elizabeth Grosz champions as the “becoming-art of politics.” This type of politics is “linked to invention, directed more at experimentation in ways of living than in policy and step-by-step directed change, a politics more invested in processes than in results.” See Grosz, *Time Travels*, 2, 197-214 (see n. 77).

John Sloop argues that cases of “gender trouble” usually are reemphasized as aberrations of “bi-gender normativity” and that there is a “vital need to note discipline and containment.” Sloop, *Disciplining Gender: Rhetoric of Sex Identity in Contemporary U.S. Culture* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2004), 2 and 24.


Browne, “Remembering Crispus,” 169 (see n. 13).

Blair, in “Contemporary,” asks what has changed thanks to the memorial’s existence (see n. 49).

Blair goes on to suggest that critics also should ask of monuments: What are the materials used to construct the space? Interestingly, the AIDS quilt is a disintegrated memorial.


See, for example, Browne, “Remembering Crispus,” 169 (see n. 13).

Here, I refer to the irreducible singularity of images.


However, an exception to this rule can be seen in Edwin Black’s critique of the Coatesville address, where only three audience members attended the speech. See Edwin Black, *Rhetorical Criticism: A Study in Method* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1965), 78-90.

See Glenn, Ede, Lundsford, “Border Crossings,” 413 (see n. 14).


See Campbell, “Gender and Genre,” 479 (see n. 20).


Again, I am not trying to nail down Goldin’s form as either photography or film, but rather to experiment with her form as that of invention-memory.


Ibid.

138 Barthes, *Camera*, 91

139 Ibid., 80-81

140 Ibid., 73.


143 I experience these texts as they appear in Goldin’s *I’ll be Your Mirror* (see n. 155).

144 The common thought was that AIDS was a cancer, and that it only affected gay men.


148 Phelan, “‘Money Talks,’” 12 (see n. 9).

149 Ibid.


151 Much of the controversy was about David Wojnarwicz’s piece, “Postcards from America: X-Rays from Hell,” where he indicts the government and the media for their inactivity with regard to the AIDS crisis. See Nan Goldin, *I’ll Be Your Mirror*, ed. Nan
Peggy Phelan notes that the curator for *Witnesses* hung her correspondences at the start of the exhibit so, literally, the works were framed by governmentally sanctioned discourses.


Skin rhetoric, as I am defining it, is a type of corporeal rhetorical criticism which relies on individual or subjective criticism with haptic images.

Sussman, “In/Of,” 38 (see n. 94).

Goldin’s letter to Cookie appears on page 256 in *I’ll be your Mirror* (see n. 150 or 94). Also, Barthes states that one cannot mourn a prickly image; rather such an image would transport a viewer to the wound itself (see n. 137).

There is a conflict about who hit Goldin in this image. Weinberg says it was her boyfriend, David, who hit her; while Sussman suggests it was another photographer. I am inclined to go with the latter given that her hair was red when she documented her domestic abuse, wherein she was almost blinded. In this image her hair is bleached blonde. It is relevant to note that collective memory takes us to her domestic abuse nevertheless.

Marks, *Skin*, 77 (see n. 142).

Ibid., 81.

Ibid., 46

Ibid., 48.

Michel Foucault explains this sort of a gaze as clinical. He states, “The clinical gaze is not that of an intellectual eye that is able to perceive the unalterable purity of essences beneath phenomena. It is a gaze of the concrete sensibility, a gaze that travels from body to body, and whole trajectory is situated in the space of sensible manifestation. . . . The glance, on the other hand, does not scan a field; it strikes at one point, which is central or decisive; the gaze is endlessly modulated, the glance goes straight to its object.” Michel Foucault, *The Birth of the Clinic: An Archeology of Medical Perception* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), 120-121.

Here, I refer to the suspensions and suspendings of memory; the slips and fissures that constantly deconstruct our own memories. Rhetoric and memory create a narrative
that is always easier to remember as a whole. Feminist visual rhetoricians use bodies to tell incoherent narratives. The objects, others and spaces they use to tell such stories draw the viewer into the signification of the narrative, thus allowing them to take part in the making while becoming conscious of the gaps and singularity of memory. Also, we have to excessively misremember in order to be a part of a community.


165 I was able to attend the performance at the Philadelphia Fringe Festival, 2008.

166 Lisa Gitelman and Geoffrey B. Pingree explain, “It is now obvious to anyone who uses a computer that intellectual exercises as basic as reading the newspaper or doing research have become fundamentally different activities largely because of the internet. So too have our view of communication in general; the very notion of globalization, so consuming in today’s world, is predicated on the possibilities engendered by a technology barely twenty years old. Such is the nature of the ‘new media.’” See Lisa Gitelman and Geoffrey B. Pingree, eds., “Introduction” in *New Media 1790-1915* (Cambridge, The MIT Press, 2007), xi.

167 Although it is interesting to note that she performs “A Room” outside of the United States.

168 See Marks, *Skin*, 19-20 (see n. 142).


171 After all, we are saturated with visual images almost all waking hours of the day

172 Rather than spaces of consumption or nationalism, she invites us to interrogate the materiality of communications technologies.

Such examples would be Venus Hottentot, and several other Native South American men and women.


Fusco, on the Argentinean audience.


The intention of the performance was to parody, via repetition, what Judith Butler often refers to as “repetition with a difference” in her books *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Per formative* (New York: Routledge, 1997) and *Bodies That Matter* (see n. 80).


Ibid., 304.

Fusco described this process during the “talk back” session following the performance of “A Room of One’s Own,” at the Philadelphia Fridge Festival, September 14, 2007.

See http://www.cocofusco.com to order a copy of the documentary.

Recorded during the “talk back” session following the performance of “A Room of One’s Own,” Philadelphia Fridge Festival, September 14, 2007.

See, for example, Susan Sontag, Henry Giroux, and Cara Finnegan, all of whose theories will be addressed in greater detail in the next section of the chapter.

The female interrogation officer appears androgynous, just like the Peanuts cartoon character.


Taking on the ethnic stereotype, Fusco performs this caricature subversively. Considering her own commodification in the art world as “the” Cuban feminist, she exploits codename Pocahontas. Although she plays a cracker [her word] in “A Room,” she cannot erase her difference.
My reader should note that when Fusco speaks Arabic, she intentionally pronounces the words phonetically to sound like the “cracker” character she is playing. Therefore, I intentionally spell out what she says phonetically.

Interestingly, the second night I viewed the show the audience did not rise.

At this point, she is referencing the high art establishment and the backlash against feminist performance artists. A representation of a Picasso painting appears on the PowerPoint, and she speaks directly to the high art establishment, momentarily.

Henry Giroux explains, “Enabling modes of spectatorship that cannot be collapsed into a monolithic mass, they deploy unheard-of powers in the shaping of time, space, knowledge, values, identities, and social relations,” when referencing the concept “new media.” See Henry Giroux, *Beyond the Spectacle of Terrorism: Global Uncertainty and the Challenge of the New Media* (Boulder: Paradigm Publishers, 2006), 20.


Barbie Zelizer argues that each invention-memory vehicle, such as film, photography, or architecture, does its own rhetorical work in the world, and that photographs taken mid-action or the subjunctive (like falling rather than lying dead on the ground), are those images that usually become icons. See Zelizer, “The Voice,” 157-186 (see n. 58).


Giroux explains, “…a visual culture of shock and awe has emerged, made ubiquitous by the Internet and 24-hour cable news devoted to representations of the horrific violence associated with terrorism, ranging from anesthetized images of nighttime bombing raids on Iraqi Cities to the countervailing imagery of grotesque killings of hostages by Iraqi fundamentalists.” Thus, this anesthetized imagery as politics is the spectacle of terrorism. See Giroux, *Beyond the Spectacle*, 21.
202 Ibid., 2.

203 Ibid., 16.

204 Ibid., 12.

205 Coco Fusco, *The Bodies That Were Not Ours and Other Writings*, (New York: Routledge, 2001), xvi


207 Ibid., 212.

208 Ibid., 213.

209 Jones, *Self/Image*, 139 (see n. 162).

210 Reconfiguring Merleau-Ponty’s concept of the chiasm, Grosz writes, “Flesh is being’s reversibility, its capacity to fold in on itself, a dual orientation inward and outward, which Merleau-Ponty has described—not unproblematically as ‘invagination.’ […] Between touching and being touched, between seeing and being seen, there is a fundamental reversibility. See Grosz, *Volatile*, 100 (see n. 11).

211 As Grosz explains, “In place of plentitude, being, fullness, or self-identity is not lack, absence, rupture, but rather becoming (165). Thus, to live a life of intensities and flows, and to come into contact with others and objects in the world in such ways is the very essence of becoming.” See Grosz, *Volatile*, 160-183 (see n. 11).


214 To read more about this irony, see Dana Cloud’s, “‘To Veil the Threat of Terror’: Afghan Women and the <Clash of Civilizations> in the Imagery of the U.S. War on Terrorism,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 90, no. 9 (2000): 285-306.


Marks, *Skin*, 162-163 (see n. 142).

Blair and Michel, “The AIDS Memorial Quilt” (see n. 118).

Blair, Brown, and Baxter, “Disciplining the Feminine,” 383 (see n. 64).

Jones, *Self/Image*, 139 (see n. 162).

Ibid.


See n. 218 and 219.

Blair, “Contemporary,” 18 (see n. 49).

See Michael Kammen, *Visual Shock* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2006), 78-79, 171, and 277-280. Kammen describes the Serrano and Mapplethorpe N.E.A controversies, a controversy of which Goldin was a later player. She accepted an N.E.A award in 1991, but the committee asked her to tone down her explicitly gay work. She refused. For more information, refer to Nan Goldin (sound recording), *Seminar with Artists Series*, The Whitney Museum of American Art, produced by the Education Department, 1993. Also, *Witnesses Against Our Vanishing* (1989-1990) was funded by the N. E. A, but when John Frohnmayer took over as head of the N. E. A he attempted to thwart the exhibition’s publication. See Sussman, “In/Of,” 38 (see n. 94).

Cotter, “Feminist Art Finally,” 1 (see n. 1).
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