REHETERICAL ROOM AT THE 1893 CHICAGO WORLD’S FAIR:
LUCY STONE, MARY CASSATT, AND IDA B. WELLS

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This dissertation examines the slice of history that is the 1893 World’s Columbian Exhibition (Chicago World’s Fair) and the rhetorical strategies employed there by Lucy Stone, Mary Cassatt, and Ida B. Wells. Each of these women actively worked for the freedom of women to reach their full potential as citizens and human beings. They each made rhetorical statements using the means available to them, negotiating and remediating their boundaries and the spaces allocated to them in order to challenge and transform the power hierarchy. I argue using Lucy Stone’s speech, “The Progress of Fifty Years”; Mary Cassatt’s mural, Modern Woman; and Ida B. Wells’s The Reason Why the Colored American Is Not in the World’s Columbian Exposition: The Afro-American’s Contribution to Columbian Literature to show how these boundaries restricted but also enabled these rhetoricians’ acts to be effective. The dissertation shows how these women rhetoricians remediated accepted genres and exploited space and time to make their voices heard and to remap the rhetorical record.

Each of the biographical chapters uses Lindal Buchanan’s topoi that create sites from which to discuss regendering rhetorical delivery. The six topoi—education, access, space, genre, body, and career—form a heuristic by which each woman’s path to the World’s Fair is studied. Of special concern are space and genre, but also provided are historical and social context for each of the individuals, followed by analysis of the particular artifact: a speech, a painting, a pamphlet.
To my husband Dennis

and daughters Hadassah and Adina,

whose unfailing love and support sustain me
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CHAPTER 1: PUSHING THE BOUNDARIES:
THE NINETEENTH-CENTURY WOMAN MOVEMENT
AND THE RISE OF WORLD’S FAIRS

Introduction

When the Chicago World’s Columbian Exposition of 1893 opened, it was to a flurry of innovations and controversies. Among the lighter residual innovations was H. J. Heinz’s use of a “pickle pin’ to attract to his booth” at the fair, the pickle that also adorned Heinz Tomato Ketchup bottles until early in 2009 (Lindeman). Cracker Jack, Cream of Wheat, Quaker Oats, Juicy Fruit gum, and Shredded Wheat were introduced to the more than 27 million visitors who would eventually come (Larson 5). Also initiated was Aunt Jemima Pancake Mix, which was controversial as well as innovative (Davis 192-93).

Among the hundreds of more important innovations was the designing, building, and furnishing of a Woman’s Building entirely by and about women, the first ever at a World’s Fair (Bancroft 257). During the World’s Fair run, the Women’s Congress, led exclusively by women and held daily in the Woman’s Building, featured the aging and ill Lucy Stone, pioneer woman suffragist, whose “The Progress of Fifty Years” was her last public speech before her death (Kerr 239). There, visitors could view a giant mural dwarfed by its distance far above the audience, a mural painted by the rebellious Mary Cassatt. The use of unconventional elements in Modern Woman not only changed mural painting as contemporary patrons know it, but it also changed Cassatt’s view of painting and of women’s place in it. Outside, and across Jackson Park, perhaps even as Stone was giving her speech, journalist Ida B. Wells was pacing the apron of the pavilion where Frederick Douglass presided as Haiti’s delegate (Rydell, “The Chicago World’s” 53). A very different model of African American womanhood than Nancy Green, who in the Food
Building was performing as Aunt Jemima, Wells was distributing a protest pamphlet that iterated the exclusion of African Americans from the decision-making process that preceded the fair as well as the continual lynching of innocent African American men, women, and children. She spent the rest of the fair speaking daily from the stage of the Haiti building, where Douglass had given her space (Davis 192).

This dissertation examines this compelling slice of history for its equally compelling commentary on rhetorical spaces and the women who populate them. Specifically, it analyzes the participation in the 1893 World’s Columbian Exhibition of three women, each of whom actively worked for the freedom of women to reach their full potential as citizens and human beings. At the World’s Fair, women from all walks of life converged to observe, to listen, and to speak. Thousands went for the social and entertainment value they might receive, but hundreds went to make rhetorical statements, using the means available to them and, as Carol Mattingly says, negotiating “expectations restricting them to limited locations and excluding them from public rhetoric in order to challenge and reconstruct the power hierarchy” (xiii). By the late nineteenth century, women were better poised than their foremothers to remediate and navigate the systems in which they lived and worked. However, as Mattingly points out, “limited locations” as well as other social and even practical problems hindered the success of their endeavors. I specifically argue using Lucy Stone’s speech, “The Progress of Fifty Years”; Mary Cassatt’s mural, Modern Woman; and Ida B. Wells’s The Reason Why the Colored American Is Not in the World’s Columbian Exposition: The Afro-American’s Contribution to Columbian Literature to show how these boundaries restricted but also enabled the rhetoricians’ acts to be effective.
Overview

After discussing the personal and scholarly evolution of my interest in this topic, one that examines the rhetorical spaces remediated by Lucy Stone, Mary Cassatt, and Ida B. Wells at the Chicago World’s Columbian Exposition of 1893, as well as ascertains the continuing impact of their rhetorical acts, I review current scholarship on feminism in the late nineteenth century; areas already explored on Stone, Cassatt, and Wells; and foundational scholarship in spatial rhetoric and in genre theory.

The third section explains the focus of the dissertation. Here, I establish the central arguments and embed the questions that remain. Particularly of interest are the ways in which demarcated authoritarial boundaries were challenged by these three formidable women, who are exemplars of their foremothers, their contemporaries, and their protégés.

Evolution of Interest in the Topic

In the introduction to his carefully documented accounting of H. H. Holmes, a serial killer whose “block-long mansion” swallowed countless women who had come to Chicago, drawn “by the fair and by the prospect of living on their own” (6), Erik Larson outlines the immensity of the Columbian Exposition, which had become known internationally as “the White City” for its gleaming stucco alabaster surfaces and well-illuminated nighttime streets. Larson’s extensive details create an emotionally palpable atmosphere that brings this particular World’s Fair to life. When I read *The Devil in the White City* for a book club that is committed to helping us read literature we might not otherwise, I was captivated by the immensity of the undertaking and the breadth of the fair’s influence.

I was introduced to Wells in Dr. Sue Carter Wood’s class on women’s rhetorical practices, Carter Wood knowing that I have a background in journalism. In fact, my teaching
load is split nearly equally between writing courses in the Department of English and Modern Languages and journalism courses in the Department of Communication. A dissertation topic that is immediately cross-disciplinary is therefore especially attractive; that it becomes multi-disciplinary with the addition of Cassatt is even more compelling. At the birth of my husband’s and my first child twenty-six years ago, a friend gave me a poster of Cassatt’s *Mother and Child* to hang over my desk at work, which began an interest in all things Cassatt. Incidentally, the gift was perceived by me to be a reminder of what others (though not the gift-giver) considered to be my “place,” that is, “the home.” Three years ago, at a Feminism(s) and Rhetoric(s) conference, a graduate student presented on Cassatt’s *Modern Woman* mural at the 1893 Chicago World’s Fair. Further research led me to the connection that Wells was at the fair, and though Cassatt did not physically attend, her mural certainly represented her spirit; the presence of Stone emerged when I read that her speech was her last public one before her death. Her positioning as the last of the first generation of feminists on the cusp of a new generation struck me as a compelling argument for her inclusion. As Lillian O’Connor notes in *Pioneer Women Orators: Rhetoric in the Antebellum Reform Movement*, Stone also was “one of the first women to gain a reputation as an antislavery and women’s rights speaker” (qtd. in Johnson, *Gender* 179).

A very early draft of the core of this dissertation was written as a final seminar project for a graduate school class. That seminar paper focused on genre and network theory, but, while these remain immensely intriguing topics, tracking the direct effects of these three women’s efforts on the thousands of women who visited the 1893 World’s Fair would remain highly hypothetical. However, genre and network theory are embedded in my epistemology, as in my conclusions I bring some of that theory to bear on an overview of their impact. Primarily, however, discussion by peers and professors of rhetorical spaces in many graduate classes led to
the possibility that some had been discussed about the presence of these women in this tiny slice of history, but much less about the spaces in which their stories unfolded.

**Review of Scholarship**

There has never been a better time to write a dissertation embracing the scholarship of one’s foreparents, as the last two decades have seen a surge of scholarship that encompasses women’s rhetorical practices and reproduction of women’s rhetorical performances. One of the trailblazers on this particular path is Cheryl Glenn’s *Rhetoric Retold: Regendering the Tradition from Antiquity through the Renaissance*, which provides broad methodology for feminist historiography as well as dealing with key issues of omission and their ethical implications. The Preface to the second edition of Patricia Bizzell and Bruce Herzberg’s *The Rhetorical Tradition: Readings from Classical Times to the Present* notes the addition, “thanks to new scholarship,” of “more work by men and women of color and white women” (v). Jane Donawerth’s *Rhetorical Theory by Women before 1900: Anthology* lengthens the span of historical scholarship. Bizzell additionally provides foundations for research in “Feminist Methods of Research in the History of Rhetoric: What Difference Do They Make?” Also valuable are other anthologies of women’s rhetorics: Joy Ritchie and Kate Ronald’s *Available Means* and Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar’s *Feminist Literary Theory and Criticism*; both of these make primary texts newly available to a college-level reading audience.

**Feminism in the Late Nineteenth Century**

Central to the texts that explicate the women’s movement during the nineteenth century are Karlyn Kohrs Campbell’s *Man Cannot Speak for Her, Vol. 1: A Critical Study of Early Feminist Rhetoric; Man Cannot Speak for Her, Vol. 2: Key Texts of the Early Feminists*; and Shirley Wilson Logan’s *With Pen and Voice: A Critical Anthology of Nineteenth-Century*
African-American Women. Campbell critically historiographs the women’s movement, also connecting what she calls her restoration of this “segment of the history of women, namely the rhetoric of the early woman’s rights movement that emerged in the United States in the 1830s” (*A Critical 1*) with reasons for the movement’s development, particularly its place as “a byproduct of women’s efforts in other reform movements” (4). As a classical rhetorician, she consistently uses the language of rhetoric’s respected tradition to make her case. For example, in the chapter “The Burdens of Afro-American Women,” she writes that Mary Church Terrell gave a speech that “was a long series of examples intended to evoke identification with the plight of Afro-Americans” (151). Later she writes, in a comparison between Wells’s speeches and Terrell’s, “Unlike Wells, in her speech Church Terrell adapted to audience expectations” (153).

Because she is concerned with contextualizing the women’s movement, placing it in history and carving out roads, references to the particular women who participated are hardly exhaustive. In *Key Texts*, however, Campbell continues contextualizing with a very useful Introduction, the rest of the book doing as its title claims, providing *Key Texts of the Early Feminists*, including Wells’s 1892 “Southern Horrors: Lynch Law in All Its Phases.”

Ten years after *Man Cannot Speak For Her, Vol. 1*, Logan wrote *With Pen and Voice*, including brief biographical sketches of each of seven African American women but more importantly providing texts of their speeches, explaining the circumstances under which each was written and given. The introduction to Wells’s speech is especially important, as it includes details surrounding the events of the Women’s Congress at the Chicago World’s Fair that are not readily available.

The book is a primary source, with texts as true to the speeches as possible, while *We Are Coming*, four years later, examines the “public persuasive discourse of nineteenth-century black
women intellectuals” (xi) and includes a chapter devoted to Wells’s anti-lynching crusades (70-97). Logan, like Campbell, approaches the task from a rhetorician’s perspective, concentrating especially on speeches, including those in *With Pen and Voice* but adding others as well, providing incisive rhetorical analysis of primary texts. But Logan’s attention to oral discourse leaves open the door for inquiry into other rhetorical discourse, even in Wells’s case, who began her career as a journalist and pamphletist, the latter of which bears further scrutiny not exhausted in other literature. Logan quotes Herbert Simons in her introduction to provide the reader a sense of her purpose: “This work seeks to identify ‘distinctive and recurring patterns of rhetorical practice,’” which is Simons’s “definition of a rhetorical genre” (xiv). Genre principles related to speech are transferable to written texts like Wells’s pamphlets and newspaper articles.

Both Logan and Campbell mourn the unavailability of “extant nineteenth-century texts to analyze” (Logan, *We Are Coming* xii). This is an issue that rises again and again, bringing to mind the introduction to Joanna L. Stratton’s *Pioneer Women: Voices from the Kansas Frontier*, where Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., notes, “After the drought of 1860, Kansas lost nearly a third of its white population…. In subsequent years the male Kansan received his share of commemoration. The women were, as usual, forgotten” (12). This “depopulation” refers to places that once were inhabited but now are marked, if at all, only by the cemeteries of those who have passed through and passed away. What has occurred in the last ten to fifteen years is one answer to Campbell and Logan’s lament: the digitization of extant archival materials, previously available only to those who could travel to a library and devote their days to hand copying. Since 2002, The Center for Research Libraries has developed a digital and sharing corpus of nearly four million primary sources; in 2004, Harvard University Library launched digitized Open Collections; since 1994, a University of Pennsylvania link, edited by Mary Mark
Ockerbloom and John Ockerbloom, digitally archives hundreds of primary documents on its “A Celebration of Women Writers” site. Collections like these have made possible for scholars the research of primary texts such as Hubert Howe Bancroft’s 1893 publication of *The Book of the Fair; An Historical and Descriptive Presentation of the World's Science, Art, and Industry, as Viewed Through the Columbian Exposition at Chicago in 1893*; and Mary Kavanaugh Oldham Eagle’s edited 1894 release *The Congress of Women: Held in the Woman’s Building, World’s Columbian Exposition, Chicago, U.S.A., 1893*. These social historians and rhetoricians have attempted to recover some of that which was lost, piecing together what remains. Additionally, *Google Books* digitally has made available books in the public domain that are buried in university libraries but too fragile physically to be checked out. My explorations include these and other rhetorics of the time, particularly those produced by Stone, Cassatt, Wells, and their associates, such as Ferdinand Barnett and Frederick Douglass. Elizabeth Schussler Fiorenza also speaks to the need to attend to “the dynamic interrelation between the information gleaned from the sources and the unifying vision of the interpreter” in “Toward a Feminist Model of Historical Reconstruction,” a useful chapter that is part of *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins* (69). Although Fiorenza is focused on rather more ancient (i.e., biblical) feminist historiography, “the problem of women’s history,” of “how to write women into history” (84) are practical principles that may be applied here.

**Lucy Stone: The Progress of Fifty Years**

Among the most important documents extant but not yet extensively explored by scholars is the previously mentioned *The Congress of Women: Held in the Woman’s Building, World’s Columbian Exposition, Chicago, U.S.A., 1893*, an 864-page fundraising compilation of addresses given daily, representing the speeches of nearly two hundred women from all over the world,
minus a few who did not or could not provide notes and plus a few “who prepared papers and were prevented from appearing at the appointed time by bereavements and other good causes,” as the Introduction to the book says (Eagle). Here, Stone’s “The Progress of Fifty Years” encapsulates the history of the first wave of feminism as the aging Stone challenges the next generation to “continue to speak the truth fearlessly” (61).

Primary sources from Stone’s life remain her personal correspondences, including Loving Warriors: Selected Letters of Lucy Stone and Henry B. Blackwell, 1853 to 1893. The letters pertaining to her presence at the World’s Fair are among her last. Alice Stone Blackwell’s Lucy Stone: Pioneer of Woman’s Rights remains a rich source of vivid detail and essential historical data. Katharine Rodier, in her chapter “Lucy Stone and The Woman’s Journal” in Blue Pencils & Hidden Hands: Women Editing Periodicals, 1830-1920, notes that Stone was “[b]etter known as a political force through her oratory skill than as a literary figure” and observes that Stone’s disagreements with Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton eventually led “to her virtual erasure from the public record that celebrated others’ achievements” (99). Biographer Andrea Moore Kerr assists to re-inscribe Stone in the historical record in Lucy Stone: Speaking Out for Equality. She depicts the powerful, “lyrical speech, carefully cadenced, her timing honed by a half a century of experience” in moving detail (239).

Mary Cassatt: Modern Woman

Approaches to dealing with Cassatt’s work have come, of course, primarily from an artistic point of view, rather than a rhetorical perspective. One helpful text is “The Mature Period: (1887-1899)” from Nancy Mowll Mathews’s art history book Mary Cassatt (1987), published in association with The National Museum of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. However, Mathews’s 1998 definitive biography, Mary Cassatt: A Life, provides important
detailed information for the circumstances of Cassatt’s work in the Woman’s Building. Mathews had also collected letters by Cassatt, her friends, and her colleagues in Cassatt and Her Circle: Selected Letters (1984). The most comprehensive treatment of the mural is Sally Webster’s Eve’s Daughter/Modern Woman: A Mural by Mary Cassatt, which was published in 2004. In addition to artistic considerations, Webster notes the mural’s cultural and historical significance:

By the end of the century, suffrage as well as women’s education, professional advancement, and central role in the development of their communities were issues changing the fabric of contemporary society. These Cassatt encoded in a complex allegory that celebrated the new status of women in her own era, one that endures over a century later. (139)

Likewise, another thorough collection, Art and Handicraft in the Woman’s Building of the World’s Columbian Exposition, a tribute to nineteenth-century art, literature, and science by and about women, discusses Mary Cassatt’s Modern Woman mural with nineteenth-century eyes. Another previously mentioned primary text, Hubert Howe Bancroft’s The Book of the Fair; An Historical and Descriptive Presentation of the World's Science, Art, and Industry, as Viewed Through the Columbian Exposition at Chicago in 1893, is pregnant with resources, especially the chapter on the Woman’s Department, which documents the significant historical fact that this fair was the first to have a separate, dedicated Woman’s Building and the first to have that building designed by a woman (257). Reading the text in these pages also provides a sense of how language and nuance played out in 1893; it has a bit of the belles lettres about it.

Ida B. Wells: Protest Pamphlet

Jinx Coleman Broussard’s Giving a Voice to the Voiceless: Four Pioneering Black Women Journalists devotes a chapter to Wells. Broussard’s approach is that of a historian and
journalist, so her focus is largely biographical, with emphasis on Wells’s journalistic endeavors. Although the pamphlet Wells wrote with her future husband Barnett, journalist Penn, and abolitionist Douglass is mentioned, *The Reason Why the Colored American Is Not in the World’s Columbian Exposition* is not contextualized rhetorically; that is, Broussard does not analyze the pamphlet with a view to its effectiveness as a familiar genre, to its appropriateness to the time and place for which it was written, or to its subsequent value to readers in the twenty-first century. These are explored in this dissertation.

*Nineteenth-Century Women Learn to Write* contains Logan’s “Literacy as a Tool for Social Action among Nineteenth-Century African American Women,” which in turn has a section on Wells (179-96). Every difference in point of view—in this case, how perception of her readers’ literacy was related to Wells’s writing—helps the reader to see a little more clearly. Editor Catherine Hobbs’s “Introduction: Cultures and Practices of U.S. Women’s Literacy” provides useful information on the publications available, including ones for which Wells wrote (1-33). And Wells’s posthumously published autobiography, *Crusade for Justice*, is essential for proximal material; likewise, Joanne M. Braxton’s analysis of the book in *African American Autobiography: A Collection of Critical Essays* assists in identifying it as “establish[ing] continuity within black female autobiographical tradition, for this text has distinct characteristics common to both nineteenth- and twentieth-century autobiographies by black American women” (90). Paula J. Giddings’s new biography, *Ida: A Sword Among Lions*, is rich with detail, compiling hundreds of sources in a full rendering of Wells’s life. Her section on the events leading up to the World’s Fair is the most complete to be found.

Perspectives from the African American viewpoint include Duchess Harris, who writes that feminism
has a different relationship to the African American community than it does to the
dominant culture. When one thinks of feminism in Anglo-America, we often
associate it with suffrage. In the Black community, however, feminism has always
been a humanist endeavor associated with racial uplift, with an emphasis on
creating patriarchal family structures within a formerly enslaved community. (56)

Citing a passage from Angeline Weld Grimké’s short story “The Closing Door,” Harris mirrors
the language used in Wells’s demonstration of “Black women’s response to America’s continued
dismissal of Black humanity” (61). In “‘Stage Business’ as Citizenship,” James C. Davis
suggests that Wells’s
decision to produce not just a pamphlet but also her body on the fairgrounds was
particularly responsive to the racialized, commercialized public sphere of the Fair,
and that the minoritized body she produced was neither depoliticized for
consumption nor assimilable to a white political agenda. (193)

These two long quotes provide important backdrops for the conversation, as does Jacqueline
Jones Royster’s chapter in Reclaiming Rhetorica, “The Rhetoric of Ida B. Wells,” where she
affirms that “Wells was a rhetor, a speak and writer whose use of language in public arenas had a
significant impact on the thinking and behavior of the audiences of her day and on the
application of law” (169). According to Alison Piepmeier, Wells “puts into public circulation an
image of a fully civilized, empowered black female embodiment that resonates with and takes
form in connection with her own publicly enactive body” (“The Supreme” 133).

**Spatial Rhetoric and Genre Theory**

One must also be concerned with defining terms, including “text,” observing Mattingly’s
approach that body in time and space are also text, that a woman’s display of her appropriately
dressed body is “especially important for ethical presentation” (6). Barbara Welter’s chapter “The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860,” in Dimity Convictions, has become a widely quoted source for nineteenth-century definitions, including the perception that trousers, among other social changes, were “tantamount to an attack on woman’s virtue” (26). While the most obvious correlation may be between body and text, as Mattingly would have it, one must think of the very practical physical constraints on Cassatt when she painted her mural, on Wells when she was distributing pamphlets in the mud, and on Stone when she mounted the speaker’s platform. Roxanne Mountford’s first chapter in The Gendered Pulpit: Preaching in American Protestant Space, “On Gender and Rhetorical Space,” provides theoretical underpinnings:

“Rhetorical space” can be … [applied] more narrowly to the material spaces surrounding a communicative event. I am thinking here literally of rooms, lecterns, auditoriums, platforms, confession booths, and classrooms, all of which are interpreted by participants through social expectations but which also have material dimensions that affect what we do there. Rhetorical space is the geography of a communicative event and, like all landscapes, may include both the cultural and material arrangement, whether intended or fortuitous, of space. The culture is the grid across which we measure and interpret space but also the nexus from which creative minds manipulate material space. (16-17)

She notes that “cultural or creative intent” does not always explain how these material spaces affect the communicative act and its consequences (17). Nan Johnson likewise speaks to the power and place of rhetorical space in the introduction to Gender and Rhetorical Space in American Life: 1866-1910:
By re-reading the history of rhetoric as a drama about how convention is inscribed and redefined within rhetorical space, we better prepare ourselves to identify where and how circles of rhetorical power are constructed in our own times and to better understand who is drawing those circles, who stands within them, and who remains outside. (2)

Lindal Buchanan deals similarly with these issues in *Regendering Delivery: The Fifth Canon and Antebellum Women Rhetors*. Citing Blackwell, she tells the story of how Stone survived a mob by “wield[ing] the rhetoric of gender to defuse a dangerous situation” (2). She goes on to note that “the most interesting aspects of the event—namely, Stone’s strategic use of gender norms and deployment of space—must go unaddressed because they are not conventionally recognized as components of delivery” (2). Buchanan’s point that “since a speaker’s delivery unfolds in social surroundings, her performance should be read in relation to them” (3) is foundational to the arguments presented herein and is expanded in the pages that follow.

Charles Bazerman and Paul Prior’s approaches to the effects of rhetorical acts in *What Writing Does and How It Does It*—whether they be writing, speech, or painting—also provide background, especially Philip Eubanks’s, “Poetics and Narrativity: How Texts Tell Stories,” where he says that metaphors are “a way of making meaning,” not merely “a way of making meaning elegant” (43). The pieces chosen for scrutiny contain metaphorical language worth study—indeed, *Modern Woman* is more specifically allegorical—particularly as those metaphors refer “to other stories and metaphors,” as Eubanks says they must (53). One might think here of metaphor as having symbolic meaning, as well, and so have cause to explore how rhetoric served as symbolic action at the World’s Fair. Bazerman’s chapter “Speech Acts, Genres, and Activity Systems: How Texts Organize Activity and People” provides “tools to examine how texts arise
within and influence the living world of people and events,” suggesting “how people using text create new realities of meaning, relation, and knowledge” (309). His is a pivotal article, asking if what he calls “felicity conditions” were met by Stone, Cassatt, and Wells to “lead the relevant audiences to accept [their] claims as true, thus matching the perlocutionary effect with [their] illocutionary intent” (315). That is, what did these women intend, if one can ascertain intention, and how were their intentions received? And once their acts were received, or their audience was acted upon, how did people “take up the acts and determine the consequences of that act for future interaction” (314-15)?

Here is where Karlyn Kohrs Campbell and Kathleen Hall Jamieson’s “Form and Genre in Rhetorical Criticism: An Introduction” (9-22) in Form and Genre: Shaping Rhetorical Action adds to the discussion. These authors recognize “the impact of rhetorical acts on other rhetorical acts” and “the powerful human forces which fuse recurrent forms into genres which, in an important sense, transcend a specific time and place” (26). Their further discussion leads to how “a generic approach” (27) to the speech, the painting, and the pamphlet can be considered. In other language, Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin, in Remediation: Understanding New Media, define a “medium” as “that which remediates”:

It is that which appropriates the techniques, forms, and social significance of other media and attempts to rival or refashion them in the name of the real. A medium in our culture can never operate in isolation, because it must enter into relationships of respect and rivalry with other media. (98)

Although “medium” cannot be substituted arbitrarily for “genre,” their close alignment, and subsequent application of principles related to both, enlighten the discussion.
In her definitions of genre in “Genre as Social Action,” Carolyn R. Miller writes that one can decide their existence and use by a number of features. The features of genre specificity are epistemologically essential to the arguments presented in this dissertation. She writes that “an understanding of genre can help account for the way we encounter, interpret, react to, and create particular texts” (151). She sees genre as being “a point of connection between intention and effect, an aspect of social action” (153). Miller identifies with Bitzer: Gazing from Bitzer’s viewpoint, what might Stone’s, Cassatt’s, and Wells’s actions within their chosen genres mean? Carol Berkenkotter and Thomas N. Huckin describe in “Rethinking Genre from a Sociocognitive Perspective” arguments for “an activity-based theory of genre knowledge” (475), genre study gaining strength from its relationship with activity theory. They list “five principles that constitute a theoretical framework” (478) for genre knowledge as “a form of situated cognition embedded in disciplinary activities” (477). These principles are foundational for understanding what the speech, art, and written acts did and how they did it.

Bazerman writes in “Systems of Genres and the Enactment of Social Intentions” that “[b]y considering the ways in which generic utterances open up [some] pathways…and close off other pathways, we give a new precision to the concept of kairos…. [W]e can start to understand what we can achieve rhetorically at any moment, and what we cannot, and how” (99).

By re-seeing rhetorical acts through the lens of genre specificity in kairos—being at the right place at the right time, which “is not only temporal but spatial,” as Sharon Crowley and Debra Hawhee have it in Ancient Rhetorics for Contemporary Students (52), one may ascertain if Wells, Cassatt, and Stone were in some sense rhetorical organisms in a powerful node, or nexus, of energy. Were they situated in such a place and time that they were able to respond to the electricity (meant metaphorically, though this was also the first fully electrically lighted
exposition) of the first Woman’s Building at a World’s Fair or to the absence of the African American in official positions there? How was their response not just reaction but their own strength imposing on their audience? When the Woman’s Building did not survive and its contents were destroyed by fire, what remained of their efforts that the fire did not destroy but rather, refined? Like the young Christians in Jerusalem, snug in their potlucks, how did the pressures of persecution and trial force them to break away from the comfort of their women’s society and disperse, like the Diaspora, out into the world, evangelizing, as it were, for the cause of social justice and reform?

Other places to make connections, then, are with “the evangelistic features of nineteenth-century social discourse—its … goal of converting readers from various social and political sins,” as Christine L. Krueger writes in The Reader’s Repentance: Women Preachers, Women Writers, and Nineteenth-Century Social Discourse. Krueger reminds readers of the “correspondence between women’s preaching and working-class resistance to industrial exploitation” in her introduction to the book (4-5) As Campbell notes in “The Sound of Women’s Voices,” a prophetic review of books then- or soon-to-be published, to read the texts of speeches by “rhetorical giants,” including Wells, is to be invited to acknowledge “major works by women, the rhetorical significance of a major social movement, and…the rhetorical links between anti-slavery, temperance, labor, and anti-lynching agitation and the development of organized efforts for women’s rights” (212).

Campbell’s mention of protest rhetoric leads to Robert L. Scott and Donald K. Smith’s “The Rhetoric of Confrontation” and to the introduction to Barnet Baskerville’s The People’s Voice: The Orator in American Society. In the former, the authors tell the story of a group of small boys in Watts after the 1960s riots who shouted joyously, “We won!” Asked how they
could say such a thing, in light of their thirty-four fellow African Americans who had died, they replied, “We won because we made them pay attention to us” (7). Scott and Smith’s “confrontation” is much more physically intimidating than Stone’s, Cassatt’s, or Wells’s, but when these women’s work reappeared after all these years, one is prudent to pay attention to them. An irony is that these material resources, the reproduction of texts and photographs of paintings, have become tangible because they are vicariously available. In The People’s Voice, Baskerville calls pamphlets “written equivalents” of speeches, both of which are “the chief sources of insight into certain periods of the American past” (3). This perspective helps adjust the pamphlet’s place in the genre spectrum, if one accepts that proposition.

Central Arguments

By the late nineteenth century, a women’s activism movement was cresting a wave that had been building for centuries but that had been gaining momentum as “black and white women in political groups work[ed] for the abolition of slavery and for women’s suffrage” (Jarratt 113). While Susan C. Jarratt notes that this came to be called the “first wave of feminism” in relationship to the “second wave” that began in the 1960s (113), one may argue that one crest followed another at the turn of the twentieth century, each peaking with the Constitutional Amendment that was its humanitarian goal, neither crashing onto the shore but, rather, heaving the ocean and forever changing the seascape. The Thirteenth Amendment, which in 1865 abolished slavery, was followed closely by the Fifteenth Amendment, which in 1869 allowed U.S. citizens the right to vote regardless of their race, ignoring the exclusion of women of all races, though they were also U.S. citizens. Not until 1920 was the Nineteenth Amendment ratified, giving women of all races the right to vote. This timeline is worth revisiting, for it places the World’s Columbian Exhibition at the cusp of these momentous occasions.
The World’s Columbian Exhibition, also known as the Chicago World’s Fair, opened in 1893 to celebrate the four hundredth anniversary (one year late) of the arrival of Christopher Columbus in what was for Europeans the New World. The sciences—especially the science of statistics—were showcased, including, for example, “statues of the ideal man and ideal woman [that] had been carved to match the average measurements taken from thousands of actual college students” (Wattenburg). World’s Fair historian Robert W. Rydell writes that the fair “was designed to advance the causes of American nationalism, imperialism, and consumerism” (“Editor’s Introduction,” xi), “isms” that permeated the decisions about, and presentations of, the hundreds of exhibits.

In this intellectually heady and circus-like environment, women—educated and uneducated, well-traveled and home focused, American and international—asserted their presence. Susan B. Anthony, Jane Addams, Annie Oakley, Bertha M. Honoré Palmer, Maud Howe Elliott, Helen Keller, Katharine Lee Bates, Lucy Stone, Ida B. Wells, and dozens of others—all used the means available to them to make rhetorical statements. The shapes of these statements were as diverse as the shapes of the women themselves and included architecture, paintings, speeches, sculptures, committee decisions, newspaper and magazine articles, and drawings. Although Mattingly addresses “the ways in which women speakers used appearance to negotiate expectations restricting them to limited locations and excluding them from public rhetoric in order to challenge and reconstruct the power hierarchy” in nineteenth-century America (xiii), I argue that women artists, women speakers, women performers, and women writers and editors, by the late nineteenth century, were in a somewhat better position than their foremothers to use accepted genres to challenge and reconfigure the hierarchies and networks in which they participated. However, Mattingly’s point is well made, as will also be demonstrated,
that “limited locations,” especially demarcated authoritaria boundaries, threatened the success of certain rhetorical acts. More specifically, I argue using Lucy Stone’s final public speech, “The Progress of Fifty Years”; Mary Cassatt’s mural, Modern Woman; and Ida B. Wells’s The Reason Why the Colored American Is Not in the World’s Columbian Exposition: The Afro-American’s Contribution to Columbian Literature as representative exemplars of how these boundaries both constrained and allowed these rhetoricians to make their statements. I also explore Nan Johnson’s assertion in her introduction to Gender and Rhetorical Space in American Life, 1866-1910 that “at the end of the nineteenth century . . . women were still being constructed ideologically within the same confined rhetorical space as their counterparts at the beginning of the century” (14).

Further, the World’s Fair, open as it was from only May through October of 1893, represents for those in the twenty-first century a physical manifestation of a complex, incredibly interesting node from which countless new communities have been populated. Intentions embedded in this dissertation are therefore two-fold. The palmary of these is to show how women rhetoricians remediated accepted genres and exploited space and time to make their “voices” heard, that is, to “remap” the rhetorical record (Glenn 3; Johnson, Gender 7). Because current research has placed Stone, Cassatt, and Wells on the map, one is reminded by Nan Johnson that “remapping the history of rhetoric is an on-going scholarly project that relies for its intellectual integrity on a willingness within the discipline to see the virtues of redrawing the map over and over again” (9). For example, when I was the book club discussion leader for the autobiography Little Heathens: Hard Times and High Spirits on an Iowa Farm During the Great Depression by Mildred Armstrong Kalish, I found a Google map that showed me the location of the village in Iowa. By zooming in, the contours of the topography became apparent. Zooming in
further, I was able to pinpoint the precise location of the properties on which Kalish grew up. When this dissertation is read, I hope the reader will be able to visualize, to pinpoint, the precise locations that were not just context for Stone, Cassatt, and Wells, but which also helped to define their rhetoric. This dissertation is an acceptance of Nicole Tonkovich’s call for “‘more textured studies’ of nineteenth-century women’s lives ‘to account for what one hundred and fifty years of racial and class prejudice has [sic] obscured’” (qtd. in Johnson, *Gender* 13).

Secondarily, I allude to the reproductive effects of Stone, Cassatt, and Wells’s contributions as the World’s Fair closed but its activity lived on. What might one learn, for example, by reading and viewing digitized versions of Stone’s speech, Cassatt’s painting, and Wells’s pamphlet, thus made available to millions? What happens rhetorically when time and space boundaries explode outward? Having situated these women’s rhetorics in the nineteenth century and re-situated them in the twentieth century, I hope to have met the challenge brandished by Cheryl Glenn to fill with human detail the fuzzy outlines of women in history who have previously been “misidentified as holes and bulges on out-of-the way territories” (3) and to recognize the performative nature of this kind of feminist historiography, which “embodies a promise of connecting women and history and rhetoric, a nexus that enables us to (insists that we) write contextualized rather than merely separatist rhetorical histories” (11). This visualization of one’s foremothers’ influence, then, assumes a nonlinear form, as one attempts to see how these individuals came to the World’s Fair; they talked, wrote, painted, designed, built, sang, performed; they left again, going back to homes and schools and places of worship and social settings changed by the contexts in which they just had been.

In many ways, the World’s Fair demonstrates the characteristics of a “large distributed system” with “global behaviors,” as Bernardo A. Huberman describes it (20). Rydell quotes
Potter Palmer in his remarks at the public dedication of the 1893 World’s Fair as saying, “May we not hope that lessons here learned, transmitted to the future, will be potent forces long after the multitudes which will throng these aisles shall have measured their span and faded away?” (qtd. in “The Chicago,” 46). Particularly with the interlude of time between the fair and the present, one might be able to ascertain something of Steven Johnson’s display of “emergent behavior” (18) as practitioners appropriated what they knew well to meet social expediency.

Using network theory language, Nan Johnson notes, “Whenever we read a rhetorical theory or practice as a cultural site, we are locating a nexus where cultural capital and rhetorical performance have become one” (1). Therefore, I bring some of network theory to bear on this discussion and explication.

Thus, although international fairs were being held regularly, their remnants still visible in many large cities (Rydell, “Editor’s Introduction”), the Chicago World’s Fair is notable because, for the first time, a Woman’s Building was designed by and featured the achievements of women. This fair also “marked a generational turning-point in the women’s movement. . . . set[ting] the stage for the next generation of women reformers who professionalized reform and social work” (Women). These two elements—space and time—set the boundaries for what was and was not possible for feminist rhetorical practice in that place and at that time.

Chapter 2, “Lucy B. Stone: The Progress of Fifty Years and the Podium,” focuses on Lucy Stone and the fifty years that led to her speech, including an examination of the speech itself as she reflects on the progress made and what is yet to be done for women. Her place on the platform in the Woman’s Building is her demarcated space: What was it about the events leading to the 1893 exposition that enabled and empowered her to speak with confidence and authority? How did her race and personal, but also public, history affect this particular
communicative event? How was the genre of speech remediated by her choice of words, audience, and the constraints of the material space? Chapter 2 attempts to answer these questions.

Chapter 3, “Mary Cassatt: Modern Woman and a Mural,” tracks Cassatt’s journey to this point in her life and career. An examination of the process of her producing the mural, particularly her remediation of the genre, is important, as she clearly approached the task as a woman constrained by late nineteenth-century expectations, from what she wore when she painted it, to the models and subject matter she chose for it. The elements of the mural itself are discussed, particularly as those elements are metaphorical, even allegorical. The mural’s positions, both within the Woman’s Building and at the fair itself, are examined for their implications for its perceived success.

Chapter 4, “Ida B. Wells: Exclusion Exacerbated,” maps Wells’s dual exclusions as an African American and as a woman, as well as the particular audiences to which these characteristics provided access. Her choice of a pamphlet as the genre in which to present her ideas, as well as the decision to distribute it as she did, is analyzed. Finally, the spaces to which Wells was granted access are discussed with a view to their context within the fairgrounds and within the times.

Chapter 5, “Conclusions: All the World’s a Fair,” summarizes some of what can be learned from this detailed remapping of these three rhetoricians. How have their legacies been resurrected, and how can they be further enhanced and preserved? What do their remediations of rhetorical space tell one about how suppressed individuals respond in order to fly from their cages? What was the audience response to these performative acts, and how has that audience been re-born in a technological society? Chapter 5 begins to answer these questions.
CHAPTER 2: LUCY STONE:

THE PROGRESS OF FIFTY YEARS AND THE PODIUM

I think, with never-ending gratitude, that the young women of today do not and can never know at what price their right to free speech and to speak at all in public has been earned…. The right to education and to free speech having been gained for woman, in the long run every other good thing was sure to be obtained.

—Lucy Stone, 1893

Contemporary rhetoric historian and scholar Lindal Buchanan introduces her book Gender and Rhetorical Delivery with the poignant and telling story of Lucy B. Stone’s inauguration into the public speaking sphere, detailing an encounter with an angry and violence-intent mob, a mob she defused by negotiating her gender and space, making them “so ashamed of themselves that they not only desisted from further violence, but took up a collection of twenty dollars on the spot” to pay for the coat of her fellow anti-slavery agent, a garment that had been torn in half (Blackwell 80-81, qtd. in Buchanan 1-2). Buchanan goes on to review the characteristics of the “traditional fifth canon—variously described as hypokrisis, elocution, and delivery . . . examin[ing] how orators convey their messages in terms of volume and tone, rhythm and speed, gesture, movement, and expression” (2). The “two distinct facets of rhetorical presentation: pronuntiatio, the vocal elements of delivery, and actio, the gestural,” Buchanan notes, assume that the speaker is in a place where she can be heard and in close enough proximity to her hearers that her gestures can be seen (2). But she is not content with research that stops with “the voice, gesture, and expression of the good woman speaking well” (3). Instead, she suggests, as do I, that
we begin the task by recognizing that rhetorical delivery is a socially situated act and that the surrounding context exerts enormous pressure on the speaker, imposing constraints, affording compensating strategies, and establishing audience expectations. Change the speaker, change the space, change the time period, and the surrounding constraints, strategies, and expectations change, too.

Buchanan establishes her arguments for regendering delivery throughout the book, concluding with six topoi that create sites from which to trace “the intersections of variables like gender, sexuality, race, religion, nationality, ethnicity, age, class or disability with power and discourse in particular settings” (160). The six topoi—education, access, space, genre, body, and career—form a heuristic by which Stone’s path to the platform at the 1893 Chicago World’s Fair can be followed, though some, for purposes of focus, receive more attention than others. Of special concern are space and genre, but the inherently overlapping nature of the six topoi must be addressed as well. However, this and the following two chapters are organized by providing historical and social context for each of the individuals (“The Story So Far”), followed by analysis of the particular artifact (in this chapter, “The Speech”). Because the six topoi are so intertwined, unraveling them and treating each separately would be counterproductive; thus, they inform and guide the discussion but are not used as key organizing principles. Rather, they fit within a more linear chronological approach and are embedded in the discussion.

**The Story So Far**

Although comprehensive biographies of Stone do justice to the weight of her work, particularly Alice Stone Blackwell’s somewhat fervent though insightful *Lucy Stone: Pioneer of Woman’s Rights* (1930) and Andrea Moore Kerr’s more scholarly and comprehensive *Lucy
Stone: Speaking Out for Equality (1992), the threads of the life that eventually set the stage for Stone’s appearance there in the summer of 1893 must be summarized, albeit piecemeal. Indeed, Kerr’s book is the author’s response to the awareness that Stone’s massive contributions to the causes of social justice and equality have, until relatively recently, been largely underplayed, a result of the divisiveness that characterized the woman’s movement in Stone’s later years (Kerr 2; Hollingsworth xv-xvi).

First, however, let me offer a tracing of influence, here written as memoir, that is, how I remember the sequence and the intentions of the players. My first overtly feminist act, as a thirteen-year-old freshman in public high school, was to draw up a petition to the administration to start a girls track team, as the high school principal was not interested in following the requirements of the newly enacted Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 if it cost him funding that could go to boys’ sports (AAUW). When it became clear that we had enough girls to comprise a team, he conceded. When we qualified for fall state indoor competition in the two or three meets we had in the spring of my sophomore year, we borrowed the girls basketball team’s uniforms and the boys track team’s dress warm up suits, as we had no uniforms of our own. There were plenty of uniforms; five of us girls were going to State, but only one boy. When the girls set state records at our team’s first appearance in history, the principal said he had thought the team was a great idea all along. Subsequently, the girls track team set school and state records in the next four years, including a first-place win by a relay team in state indoor competition, a team of which my youngest sister was a part.

If there is any sense of the ripple effect of previous acts, one might say that my feminist act would not have been possible without what Hollingsworth calls Stone’s “first feminist act” as a twenty-year-old (Kerr has the date as “[s]ometime in 1838,” but internal consistency of the
chronology would have made it “sometime in 1837”), which was to raise her hand six times in succession as she voted for the right of a clergymen to allow abolitionist Abby Kelley to give a speech from his pulpit, even as her own pastor told her that, as a female member of the church, she could not vote (Hollingsworth ix; Kerr 24-25). But long before that, Stone had acknowledged her father’s physical abuse, particularly under the influence of alcohol; she had decided never to marry, if the Old Testament version of spousal relationship as she understood it was to be her lot; she had rankled against and protested the “woman’s wages” she received as a school teacher; and she had defied her father’s control of the family by selling cheeses on her mother’s instructions (Kerr 19-24). Each of Stone’s decisions, whether it was an emotional response as she cowered under her father’s hand or an intellectual one (though fraught with emotion as well) as she raised her hand a sixth time, was bordered by the space and time in which it occurred, space being one of the sites Buchanan uses to help one trace Stone’s rhetorical relationships with power and discourse.

That is, the space that was her church balcony in the early 1800s was proscribed as being possessed by males, who owned all the decisions that could be made by vote, thus restricting access, another of Buchanan’s sites. Although Roxanne Mountford’s book on the gendered pulpit expounds specifically on preaching in American Protestant spaces as exemplified by the novelists who use the pulpit to “amplify their characters’ gender” (17), it does so by locating the pulpit in what Mountford calls “the sacred geographies of Christian churches” (17). Indeed, Mountford contrasts Herman Melville’s Father Mapple of *Moby-Dick* (1851), climbing a steep ladder into the pulpit—which no woman in a long skirt could have safely or with any decorum accomplished, even if she had been allowed—with Dinah Morris, the itinerant Methodist evangelist of George Eliot’s *Adam Bede* (1859), whose permitted “pulpit” is a transitory horse
cart under a maple tree (qtd. in Mountford 17-18). Mapple’s authority is inscribed in his location in the church pulpit; and Morris’s power, though not her authority, are acknowledged by Eliot’s characters, though she never preaches from the confines of an institutional church.

Between these locations is Stone, holding her hand high as a member of a local congregation, not from the pulpit or the platform, not from the main floor of the sanctuary, but from the balcony. Stone was not out of place; she was not challenging what Susan M. Ruddick describes as “where people/things ought to be” (qtd. in Mountford 23). She was working from what Lorraine Code calls in *Rhetorical Spaces: Essays on Gendered Locations* “an epistemology of everyday life” (xi). In her essays, Code “examine[s] conditions for the possibility of constructing and using knowledge” that move away from emphasis on “what ideal knowers ought to do, and move toward deriving normative principles from what real, variously situated knowers actually do” (xi). Stone was claiming the right to be acknowledged, the right to credibility.

Nevertheless, Stone’s vote was not counted. Even within the “sacred geography” of her church, a place that may be remembered as being a sanctuary from evil—as H. G. Wells’s *War of the Worlds* so vividly depicts it in “the terrifying climatic scene” of the 1953 movie, shot in the interior of St. Brendan’s Roman Catholic Church in Los Angeles (Berger 85), a parish that in the twenty-first century emphasizes social justice and welcomes attendance in four languages (St. Brendan)—even within this geography, Stone realized, at a very young age, that she was not exempt from gender exclusion. Recalling what Kerr describes as “a flash of righteous anger,” fifty years later, Stone “would still summon the old indignation as she told the story. ‘I had an opinion; I was a member; I had a right’” (qtd. in Kerr 25).
In the fall of 1838, Stone would experience her own first “pulpit,” when she was asked to prepare and read an essay at her select school graduation, along with other students. Kerr writes: “She described reading it from a jerry-built platform below the male scholars’ platform, a placement she regarded as deliberately designed ‘to keep women down a little lower than men.’ Stone’s feminist consciousness was expanding rapidly” (25).

The space that was Stone’s home was proscribed as being ruled by her father, whose capricious ownership of the decision-making process in the household and violent conduct toward the older children, Stone among them, were largely influenced by rages that coincided with mass consumption of rum and hard cider (Kerr 14-16). However, historian Lillian O’Connor warns against describing the woman’s rights movement (with which Stone most closely identified herself) and the temperance movement “as being ‘closely allied,’” as some have (14). Indeed, O’Connor circumspectly notes that only Elizabeth Cady Stanton, “of the five leaders of the conventions held for woman’s rights” held in Seneca Falls, New York; Salem, Ohio; and Worchester, Massachusetts, where the organized efforts for woman’s rights began, “was ever actively identified with the organized work for temperance” (15). Regardless, Blackwell documents that Stone lectured on temperance, in one case to an audience of a “full two thousand” (82) and, in another case, adding the topic of temperance as a fourth lecture in her usual series of three (131). Although temperance was not the focus of Stone’s career, it was a topic she was willing to tackle. As Campbell notes in “The Sound of Women’s Voices,” to read the texts of speeches by “rhetorical giants,” including Stone, is to be invited to acknowledge “major works by women, the rhetorical significance of a major social movement, and . . . the rhetorical links between anti-slavery, temperance, labor, and anti-lynching agitation and the development of organized efforts for women’s rights” (212).
Standing at the site of genre, another of Buchanan’s topoi, one may see additional intersections of the variables that influenced Stone’s “power and discourse in [a] particular [setting]” (Buchanan 160). When Stone stood before an audience of hundreds at the World’s Fair, it was to be her “last public speech, and she died a few months later at age 75” (Lewis). Of all the textual genres with which readers may be acquainted, the speech is among the most familiar. And of the most familiar speeches, the commonplace, in this case, the “American commonplace,” as Crowley and Hawhee refer to the genre (131), is particularly recognizable in the months preceding any national election. Stone certainly knew what she was doing. She had written dozens of editorials in the *Woman’s Journal* over the course of twenty-two years and had traveled all over the United States and Canada in the cause of woman’s suffrage (Stone 58). Her choice, therefore, of “progress” as the “common topic”—Aristotle’s *koina* (Crowley and Hawhee 120; Kennedy, *Aristotle* 50)—would not have been a particularly difficult one. As George A. Kennedy explains it, “*Topos* [topic] literally means ‘place,’ metaphorically that location or space in an art . . . where a speaker can look for ‘available means of persuasion’” as Aristotle, Isocrates, and others before him had used the term (44-45). While Stone’s references to women in recent history do not correspond to, say, portraits in the Great Hall, which would support the use of the word in the context of “mnemonic theory of the physical setting against which an object or idea could be remembered” (45), her listeners, by virtue of the great spaces in which the speech was delivered, would have likely remembered its content later because of their associations with the momentous occasion of attending the Women’s Congress.

Here is encountered a factual dilemma: Kerr, citing Ida Husted Harper’s biography of Susan B. Anthony, notes from the discussion of the World’s Congress of Representative Women that Stone was invited to Chicago as one of its delegates. Kerr’s description of Stone’s speech
places it in that context. The point of confusion is that the World’s Congress of Representative Women, which was held during the week of May 15 to May 22, was convened in various rooms in the Art Palace, with “seven to eighteen in simultaneous progress each day” (Harper 746; Kerr 239). It is true that Stone was a delegate “under the auspices of the National American Woman Suffrage Association” (Blackwell 276) to this auspicious endeavor—one of a total attendance exceeding 150,000, by Harper’s reckoning (746)—but the Art Palace was not the location of the speech under scrutiny here. On May 21, Stone wrote to her husband, “The Congresses are all over, but I have to speak for Mrs. Governor Eagle in the Woman’s Building . . .” (Blackwell 276). So it was at one of the “noon-hour meetings held in the Woman’s Building” to which Harper later refers and at which Anthony also spoke several times (749) that Stone delivered “The Progress of Fifty Years.” In addition, the title of the tome that collects the speeches, including Stone’s, explicitly says that the Congress of Women was held in the Woman’s Building (Eagle, title page). The opening ceremonies for the building were held in “the court of honor, the hall of the rotunda” of the first floor (Bancroft 265), as documented in photographs (Eagle 23); however, the daily meetings were held in the Assembly Room, screened by “an arcaded gallery” and located above the north entrance to the building (Webster 58).

Stone was surrounded on all sides by the productions of her domestic and international sisters. The massive mural Primitive Woman by Mary Fairchild MacMonnies was directly above her and her audience. The speaker’s platform faced west, but all who had mounted the stairs on either the east or west ends would have entered a long corridor through which the expanse of the hall was visible (Elliott, frontispiece). According to Sally Webster, whose 2004 book is dedicated to Modern Woman, the Hall of Honor was “illuminated by a large skylight. . . . [It was] filled with easel paintings, four other smaller murals, statuary, and handicrafts, including laces
lent by the queen of Italy” (57). One can imagine dozens of women, having hauled themselves in their voluminous dresses across the fairgrounds and up the stairs of the Woman’s Building, pausing to fan themselves and gaze over the courtyard and across the way to Modern Woman on the south end of the building, just above eye level from the second floor, a distance of some two hundred feet (Webster 54). Then one can imagine this scene being repeated every day for the length of the fair, as thousands attended the noon sessions. “By most accounts,” writes Webster, “the Woman’s Building was among the most popular at the fair” (58). Whether Stone had this scene in mind when she wrote her speech, one cannot know; but the alignment of the oral with the visual in that space and time created a clear opportunity for her to do so.

The Speech

On the podium at last and using “The Progress of Fifty Years,” as her title and the theme of her text, Stone confronted the commonplace ideologies identified with “change and improvement” (Stone 58). All around her were exhibits, samples, premiers, sculptures, paintings, reenactments, and displays of what late nineteenth-century science, art, and industry considered “progress.” Among the portraits in the building were ones of Frances Willard and Mary Clement Leavitt, pioneers in the Woman’s Christian Temperance Union (Bancroft 284). Among the sculptures were busts of Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton (Bancroft 273). Across the fairgrounds, in a luminous display of power, Westinghouse Electric and Manufacturing was boasting its winning of the battle between alternating current and direct current (Bancroft 408); George Ferris’s magnificent marvel of movement, which “carried forty people in each of its thirty-six railcar-size cabins,” was turning on its axle (Bolotin and Lang 131); and Milton Hershey was buying a “brand-new chocolate-making machine that had been brought over from Germany. . . . He promptly bought the machine and returned home to
Pennsylvania to concentrate on chocolate making” (Overfelt). Before the highlights of the speech are detailed, however, a short review of its substance is in order.

Stone’s speech is largely a summary of all that had been accomplished in the previous fifty years, “that great change and improvement in the condition of women which exceeds all the gains of hundreds of years before,” as she states her thesis in the opening sentence (58). She begins with the founding of Oberlin College, Ohio, in 1833 and moves through the founding of seminaries to educate missionaries and their wives (58). The voices of the anti-slavery cause include Angelina Grimké, Sarah Grimké, and Abby Kelly, whose public personae created a wave of shock (58-59). Stone summarizes her opening remarks and anecdotes of persecution by saying, “The right to education and to free speech having been gained for woman, in the long run every other good thing was sure to be obtained” (59).

Next, Stone revisits how occupations have been opened up for women, providing background on how their “sphere” has been altered from “at home, and only at home” to the marketplace, where ownership was also a right to be recognized (59). She brings to her audience’s memory names with which they were familiar: physicians Harriet Hosmer, Elizabeth Blackwell, and Emily Blackwell; artist Annie Whitney; businesswomen Mrs. Tyndall and Mrs. Young; minister Antoinette Brown; and attorney Lelia Robinson (60).

Then Stone refers again to property ownership and other legal rights that had been attained for women in the previous fifty years: personal property rights for widows, the right to keep wages from her own work, copyrights for works she wrote, the right to sue and be sued. In addition, she notes the “certain amount of political power” that women have acquired, including school suffrage for women in twenty states and state laws allowing various allowances for women to vote at certain levels (60).
She concludes by reminding the women in her audience that they are the reason that all of these changes have occurred in the last fifty years and by calling them “to continue to speak the truth fearlessly, and we shall add to our number those who will turn the scale to the side of equal and full justice in all things” (61).

Against and within the defining events of the World’s Fair to which previously have been referred, Stone calls forth a genealogy of abolitionist and feminist mothers and their daughters that is reminiscent of the Old Testament’s Talmud and of the New Testament’s Matthew, who reminded his readers of the ancestral line of Jesus before beginning the narrative (1:1-17), forms with which her listeners would have been very comfortable, an example of Miller’s “recurrent patterns” (163). In Miller’s understanding, Stone was using the speech genre as a “rhetorical means for mediating . . . social exigence,” connecting the “singular” incidents of individuals who had preceded her audience with “the recurrent” patterns that become apparent over time and so create the historical web that is genealogy.

Stone’s use of biblical allusion to equate the opening of Oberlin College in 1833 to “the coming of the Babe in Bethlehem—in utter poverty” (Stone 58) reinforces her ethos as a woman of character as a woman schooled in Scripture as well as Greek, “a Hicksite Quaker or liberal Unitarian,” as her biography in *The Congress of Women* states, who had been educated at Mt. Holyoke Female Seminary and Oberlin College (Stone 58; Kerr 25). The “utter poverty” of Oberlin College notes its location on the western frontier in the “raw newness” of Oberlin, Ohio, “four unpaved roads and a small cluster of brick buildings—all built on reclaimed swampland” (Kerr 30). This reference also clearly marks Stone’s acknowledgment of another space that had previously been unavailable to women—the space of the college classroom, where a woman might listen and also speak. When Oberlin College “opened its college degree program to
women in 1837,” Stone was already saving money to go there, alternating studying and teaching so that she could pass the entrance examinations (Kerr 23).

Referencing “a new Messiah,” Stone quotes a few lines from James Russell Lowell’s poem “A Glance Behind the Curtain.” Lowell used poetry to argue for the abolition of slaves as well as being a prolific essayist on the topic. The essays he wrote primarily for *The National Anti-Slavery Standard* but also for *The Pennsylvania Freeman* are contained in two volumes but are only representative of his work. A Massachusetts native and a Unitarian, as were both true of Stone, he was her contemporary, having died only two years previously. “A Glance Behind the Curtain” was published in *The Democratic Review* of September 1843 and included in an 1849 two-volume collection, *Poems*, to which Stone would likely have had access. Later, in the introduction to “A Glance Behind the Curtain,” the editor of *The Complete Poetical Works of James Russell Lowell* quotes Lowell’s letter to G. B. Loring in which Lowell refers to the “dashing, ranting Cavaliers, who wished to restore their king that they might give vent to their passions, and go to sleep again in the laps of their mistresses, deaf to the cries of the poor and the oppressed” (qtd. in Scudder 48). Stone’s spelling and punctuation vary only slightly from Lowell’s 1849 version here:

Get but the truth once uttered, and ‘t is like

A star newborn, that drops into its place,

And which, once circling in its placid round,

Not all the tumult of the earth can shake. (169)

Once a truth is spoken, he writes, nothing can shake its place in the universe (Stone 58). Here and in the final lines of her speech, as may be seen momentarily, Stone calls for her listeners to
respond by continuing to speak to the perlocutionary effect of remediating the rooms, the spaces, in which women might be free to move.

One cannot miss the imagined visualization of the wave of Stone’s hand as she indicates Cassatt’s mural across the great hall, calling down an iteration of “progress” that challenges the status quo: “Henceforth the leaves of the tree of knowledge were for women, and for the healing of the nations” (58), which, in Byron Hawk’s complexity theory terms, might well be interpreted as *kairos*, “chance and timing—both the situation’s apparently random ability to seize a rhetor and the rhetor’s ability to recognize the right discourse for a given situation” (837). Charles Bazerman describes these as “‘felicity’ conditions that must be right in order for the speech act to succeed” (“Speech” 314). In Onians’s understanding of *kairos*, the allusion is both to the archer’s need to find an opening, a “loophole” in the armor of the target so that penetration of the arrow is effective and to the weaver’s need to take advantage of the “loophole” created by the parting of threads: “Through the opening, the passage through the warp, should be the path of the shuttle with the woof, as the proper path for the arrow was through the series of apertures in the axes…. The use in weaving will better explain the sense ‘critical time,’ ‘opportunity,’” for “the opening in the warp lasts only a limited time, and the ‘shot’ must be made while it is open” (345-46). The “speech act” to which Stone builds is held until the last sentence of her oration, the entire previous portions of the speech documenting the history of the woman’s movement: “Now all we need is to continue to speak the truth fearlessly, and we shall add to our number those who will turn the scale to the side of equal and full justice in all things” (Stone 61). Until those final words, however, the “act” one may see that Stone intends her hearers to recognize, Bazerman’s “illocutionary act” (“Speech” 314), is “to remember.”
Thus, Stone connects contemporary education of women with the Edenic tree of knowledge, nestling the new and frightening in the security and comfort of the old and certain. One can assume some theological understanding when Stone refers to the tree of knowledge, bearer of the forbidden fruit that resulted in Adam and Eve’s expulsion from the Garden of Eden in the Old Testament account recorded in Genesis 3, particularly when seen in the context of “the coming of the Babe of Bethlehem” (Stone 58), the pivotal initiation of restoration of the world system that in Christian doctrine was encapsulated in the Messiah’s death and resurrection in Matthew 28. Included in Stone’s seminary education would have been the assumption that personal salvation carries with it the responsibility to work for public salvation, that is, social justice of the sort that, for the lack of which, the Old Testament prophet Amos preached condemnation:

Hear this, you who trample the needy
and do away with the poor of the land,
saying,
“When will the New Moon be over that we may sell grain,
and the Sabbath be ended that we may market wheat?”—
skimping on the measure,
boosting the price
and cheating with dishonest scales,
buying the poor with silver
and the needy for a pair of sandals,
selling even the sweepings with the wheat. (8:4-6)
Unitarian doctrine as Stone would have known it emphasized the philanthropic as reflected by Unitarian pioneer William Ellery Channing, who “found the essence of human nature in the moral principle of disinterested justice and benevolence, which is sovereign over the whole self” (Christie 84). Church historian Francis A. Christie notes that the belief that the possibility of a perfect humanity engages their energy in the promotion of culture and of higher social living as requisite for the fullest nurture of the religious spirit. Unitarians see in the life after death the further unfolding of the eternal life now experienced in obedience to the divine will revealed in the holiest human ideals. (82)

Indeed, as her daughter records Stone’s last hours, her mother expressed her desire to see “men and women go side by side to the ballot box” (Blackwell 282), an act that would represent women’s rightful restoration to pre-Fall equality. Among her last articulate words were, as Blackwell writes, “Make the world better!” (282).

But Stone’s reference to the “leaves of the tree of knowledge” also marks Eve’s place in the women’s social and political movement, as Webster notes:

Yet if there is a patron saint of the Woman’s Building and the women’s emancipation movement, it is Eve. . . . For Cassatt and other enlightened women, Eve was a transgressor who broke with male authority.

Progressive women in the nineteenth century who challenged the patriarchal order were Eve’s daughters. As Eve defied God’s injunction not to eat from the Tree of Knowledge, so too did her modern daughters contest social norms to gain higher education, the vote, and personal autonomy. (13)
Calling on the legacies of Sarah Grimké, Angelina Grimké, and Abby Kelley, who had all influenced Stone’s ideology, she further establishes her propriety by using prophetic language to make her point in what Pamela Norris calls a “confident revision of familiar Biblical texts” (qtd. in Webster 13), Stone noting that “these peerless women” spoke “with anointed lips and a consecration which put even life itself at stake” (59). Sarah Grimké had staked her claim to equality of the sexes by using Scripture to persuade her audience, as in her letter to Theodore Weld, her sister’s husband, in which she goes so far as to say that the institutional church “is utterly at variance with the ministry Christ established, tends to perpetuate schism and disunion, and therefore must be destroyed” (Grimké 115). Angelina Grimké Weld likewise quotes liberally from Scripture, including references to God’s judgments on Egypt and on Judea for practicing slavery, as in the address she gave at a dedication ceremony for Pennsylvania Hall (Webb 125), built by the Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society. Although persuasive enough to keep her three thousand-person audience for an hour-long speech outside the hall, the reception to the mixed-gender and -race meeting, a large majority of whom were “respectable and intelligent women” was ill-received (138), as one can decipher from the reporter’s commentary in the text (e.g., “Just then stones were thrown at the windows,--a great noise without, and commotion within” [124]) and from the historical record that Pennsylvania Hall was burned to the ground by an anti-abolitionist mob of an estimated fifteen thousand people the next day. Also destroyed was a shelter for black orphans and slightly damaged was a black church (140).

In the locutionary act of calling forth the memories of what Grimké, Weld, and Kelley had said and done, Stone was fulfilling Miller’s fifth feature of genre as “a rhetorical means for mediating private intentions and social exigence; it motivates by connecting the private with the public, the singular with the recurrent” (“Genre” 163). As has already been seen, Grimké’s and
Weld’s texts called on biblical stories, images, and doctrine to make their point in a climate that held the Holy Writ in high esteem—and to which the masses had access as to no other book. Similarly, Kelley, even in the short remarks she gave to the restive assembly at Pennsylvania Hall on the afternoon before it was torched, calls to her listeners’ recollection the New Testament parable of Lazarus and the rich man, comparing the wealthy and greedy rich man with the North and the hungry, and comparing the ill Lazarus with the South (Webb 126; Luke 16:19-31), the one neglecting the other to the former’s eternal sorrow that he had not listened to wise advice to share his wealth and means.

Even so, Kelley herself refers to the audience to which she addresses her remarks as “a promiscuous assembly” because both men and women were present (Webb 126); and Lucretia Mott’s remarks immediately following Kelley’s are simply to say that the meeting should not be construed to be that of the Anti-Slavery Convention of American Women, as many of its members “considered it improper for women to address promiscuous assemblies” (127). The sequence of events brings to mind Carol Berkenkotter and Thomas N. Huckin’s journal article, “Rethinking Genre from a Sociocognitive Perspective,” in which they observe that just as language itself must accommodate both stability and change, genres must do more than encapsulate intersubjective perceptions of recurring situations. They must also try to deal with the fact that recurring situations resemble each other only in certain ways and only to a certain degree. . . . Individuals have their own uniquely formed knowledge of the world; and socially induced perceptions of commonality do not eradicate subjective perceptions of differences. Genres, therefore, are always sites of contention between stability and change. (481)
Although Stone legitimizes Grimké, Weld, and Kelley by including them in her speech, and while she has no expectation of being heckled (Kerr 50) or “pelted with bad eggs as she stood on the platform” (Stone 59), as had been her experience and that of her socially active sisters, she nevertheless knew that the likelihood that everyone in the audience was in complete agreement with her positions was slim indeed.

No wonder then, that Stone notes that “the young women of today do not and can never know at what price their right to free speech and to speak at all in public has been earned” (59). She cites Kelley’s branding as a Jezebel, considered to be the worst of the Old Testament evil women for her influence on the worst of the kings of Israel: “There was never anyone like Ahab, who sold himself to do evil in the eyes of the Lord, urged on by Jezebel his wife” (1 Kings 21:25). But having earned “the right to education and to free speech” for women, Lowell’s “star new born that drops into its place,” nothing ever would be the same (Stone 58-59).

The aging orator knew her time on earth was limited, that she was speaking in a chronos context of “social exigence” (Miller, “Genre” 163), connecting the individual lives of seminary founder Mary Lyon; abolitionists Angelina Grimké Weld, Sarah Grimké, and Abby Kelley; and sculptor Harriet Hosmer with “the public, the singular with the recurrent” (163). She was connecting as well the seasoned work of the politically active poet and sculptor Anne Whitney, whose “elaborate fountain . . . stood in the center of the hall. It was surrounded by four portrait busts—of Susan B. Anthony, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Lucretia Mott, and Dr. Caroline Winslow—carved by Adelaide Johnson” (Webster 58). Whitney’s bust of Lucy Stone and statue of Leif Erikson were on display in the Woman’s Building, and her plaster statue of Roma was on display in the Fine Arts building (Bancroft 259; Nichols, “Women Sculptors”). Stone was connecting the pioneering, courageous, and tangible work of Whitney, Anthony, Stanton, Mott,
Winslow, and Johnson with the example of physician Elizabeth Blackwell. She was connecting Blackwell with the trials of clergyperson Antoinette Brown (Stone 58-60). She was connecting all of them with the new generation seated before her.

Within the examples of these historically situated women, Stone repeatedly discusses the location of women’s “sphere,” conjuring the vision in twenty-first culture of women moving within a sophisticated and complex bubble not unlike that in Jim Carrey’s 1998 cinematic rendition of Truman Burbank in The Truman Show. In an interview during the show, Christof (Ed Harris), Truman’s creator, is quoted as saying, “We accept the reality with which we are presented,” adding that Truman, if he really wanted to, would discover that he lived in an artificially constructed world and could escape (Truman). Against all odds, Truman unknowingly sails to the limits of the biosphere, pounding in desperation against its walls, then calming himself as he finds the doorway out, bows one last time to his audience, and steps out of the sphere. Truman’s character is not Stone. Rather, Stone is Lauren, the long-lost lover Truman seeks, the woman who cries from her sofa to the befuddled Truman on the screen, “You can do it! You can do it!” and who runs to him when he has the courage to leave the comfort he had always known.

As Michel Foucault says in “Of Other Spaces,” “[S]pace itself has a history in Western experience, and it is not possible to disregard the fatal intersection of time with space” (237). As he promulgates his thesis that the “present epoch will perhaps be above all the epoch of space” (237), he reminds his readers, this in 1967, that our life is still governed by a certain number of oppositions that remain inviolable, that our institutions and practices have not yet dared to break down. These are oppositions that we regard as simple givens: for example between private space
and public space, between family space and social space, between cultural space and useful space, between the space of leisure and that of work. All these are still nurtured by the hidden presence of the sacred. (238)

By using the metaphor of a sphere, Stone challenges specifically the “oppositions” that “our institutions and practices have not yet dared to break down” (Foucault, “Of Other Spaces” 238). In doing so, she confronts the Cult of True Womanhood, as described by Barbara Welter in *Dimity Convictions*:

The attributes of True Womanhood, by which a woman judged herself and was judged by her husband, her neighbors and society, could be divided into four cardinal virtues—piety, purity, submissiveness and domesticity. Put them all together and they spelled mother, daughter, sister, wife—woman. (21)

Stone reminds her audience that every concession made to women’s aspirations, every attempt “to get out of your sphere,” as perceived by the hegemony, “was to fly in the face of Providence, to unsex yourself—in short, to be monstrous women, women who, while they orated in public, wanted men to rock the cradle and wash the dishes” (59). Instead, she cries, “We pleaded that whatever was fit to be done at all might with propriety be done by anybody who did it well; that the tools belonged to those who could use them; that the possession of a power presupposed a right to its use” (59).

As Harvard University’s *Women Working, 1800-1930* website notes:

The Columbian Exposition marked a generational turning-point in the women’s movement. Leadership was changing from the original group of eastern patrician women typified by Susan B. Anthony, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and Julia Ward Howe. . . . The new leaders were often the wives of Gilded Age industrialists with
their own ideas of social and cultural progress. These progressive women were more soft-spoken, well-mannered, and well-integrated into established Chicago social structures. They included pioneers as Jane Addams, and set the stage for the next generation of women reformers who professionalized reform and social work.

Stone wanted to remind the next generation of women that their freedom had been bought with a price (60), even as the new leaders might be more accommodating rather than oppositional, a stance that had been assumed by more conservative African Americans as well, such as young Booker T. Washington, whose concessions to be conciliatory locked horns with the seasoned Frederick Douglass’s adversarial positioning (Rydell xxxvi-xxxvii). Maia Joseph places women orators in the late nineteenth century in a transitional location as well, a transition from an early focus on the female orator as an individual set apart from the crowd, to an increasing interest in the dynamics of an integrated relationship between orator and crowd. This transition is accompanied by the development of a more democratically informed conceptualization of political action and appeal—one that reflects the acquired “street smarts” of women who have spent a considerable amount of time interacting in the public sphere. (69)

And while Berkenkotter and Huckin explain that the idea of “community ownership” signals a “discourse community’s norms, epistemology, ideology, and social ontology” (478), thus instantiating those assumptions (498), Stone was signaling that this was the new norm, the new ideology, the new social ontology. She used this very common speech genre to stir further the waters that had been troubled by her mothers and sisters of the past fifty years. From her early
teens, then, Stone sought to remediate—correct, adjust, modify, appropriate, reconfigure—the spaces and the elements that proscribed them.

Conclusions

In conclusion, one can see, using Buchanan’s topoi of education, access, space, genre, body, and career (160-62), how Stone came to give her final speech at the 1893 Chicago World’s Fair. Her place there was influenced by her education at Mary Lyon’s Mount Holyoke Female Seminary and at Oberlin College, which admitted women but taught that women “must not speak in public” (Stone, qtd. in Kerr 34). She gained access to the podium by clawing her way through the resistance of the hegemony, remediating spaces all along the way, as when she and fellow Oberlin student Antoinette Brown, disallowed to practice debate in the formal classroom setting, “organized a young women’s debating society” (Kerr 37). Stone used the genre of the common speech to place her call to action into a normative context. Because she was a woman, in a contemporary woman’s clothing, she had done all she could to present herself with propriety, wearing “simple calico gowns and Quaker-type bonnets” in her college years (Kerr 36); and, though loving the physical freedom of Amelia Bloomer’s short dress, abandoning it after nearly four years because the costume drew attention to itself (Kerr 62-63; Mattingly 108-09). For more than fifty years, Stone had made a career of fighting for her rights and other women’s rights, earning her space on the platform but sharply aware of how quickly her work might be forgotten. How this particular space figures into the larger space of the 1893 Chicago World’s Fair and the space of the fair in the larger world is a matter of consideration for chapter 5.

In the meantime, as one turns to the path that led Mary Cassatt’s work to the 1893 Chicago World’s Fair, how similarly and differently education, access, space, genre, body, and career affected her journey can be seen.
CHAPTER 3: MARY CASSATT:
MODERN WOMAN AND A MURAL

An American friend asked me in a rather huffy tone the other day[,] “Then this is woman apart from her relations to man?” I told him it was.

—Mary Cassatt, 1893

One of the many pleasures of contemporary study in rhetoric and writing is its ability to make fine brushstrokes across an enormous canvas. This is certainly the case when considering including a painting in a discussion of rhetoric and writing, for it requires expansion of the definition of “text” as modern readers have been educated to understand it. For example, in *Appropriate[ing] Dress: Women’s Rhetorical Style in Nineteenth-Century America*, Carol Mattingly writes that a woman’s display of her appropriately dressed body is “especially important for ethical presentation” (6). Likewise, Barbara Welter’s chapter, “The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860,” in *Dimity Convictions* has become a widely quoted source for nineteenth-century definitions, including the perception that trousers, among other social changes, were “tantamount to an attack on woman’s virtue” (26). Thus, a woman’s body—or any body, one might add—may be understood as being text or an element of text. The most obvious correlation may be between body and text, as Mattingly would have it, thinking of the physical act of Cassatt painting her mural; but one may also think of the mural itself as text, the enormous canvas upon which Cassatt recorded her message. One also sees how “text” operates in a particular way when it is spoken into a space, as in a speech; how it functions differently when it is written on a page, as in a pamphlet; and how it functions ever more differently when it is painted on the space of a building, as in a mural.
Regardless, there is little argument that Cassatt had rhetorical intention, as shall be seen in this examination of her rhetorical performance. More importantly, she remediated the spaces allotted to her to achieve these rhetorical effects. Whether she was successful remains to be discerned as her work is investigated. This investigation continues the discussion of terms related to the study, particularly an understanding of “text.” The study also provides a backdrop for the path that Cassatt took, from her well-bred, educated upbringing, to her arrival as an internationally known artist. A study of the mural itself ensues, an examination of the strokes on canvas that, analyzed and then synthesized, enlighten the viewer’s understanding of Cassatt’s purpose and product.

Another privilege of current study in rhetoric and composition is that the field is extremely, sometimes wildly, adaptable to change. While the result may sometimes be that modern rhetoricians are fuzzy with definitions because the same word can represent so many different meanings, perhaps the more contemporary perspective is that this is a world of hybridization. A practical parallel—and one closely aligned with the exhibits at the World’s Fair—may help one to understand the ubiquitous nature of hybridization. For example, the multi-colored, tough maize that was offered by Native Americans to starving European incomers, useful especially for making corn meal (Fussell 18-20), does not resemble the Silver Queen white sweet corn hybridized in the 1960s for leaf blight tolerance and melt-in-your-mouth tenderness (Gurney’s 7; Burpee 97). But more than a hundred years ago, the women’s board of Illinois saw some of the possibilities of the uses for corn when it created a Corn Kitchen adjacent to the Assembly Room where Stone and her contemporaries conducted daily lectures (Webster 58; Fussell 319). King Corn ruled in the Corn Kitchen, but it was flanked by subjects, states such as Iowa and Missouri, that “competed side by side in erecting fantasies, deliriums, phantasmagories
of corn. Photographs show corn draperies, columns, obelisks, pyramids, corbels, caryatids, Roman arches, Gothic arches, buttresses, arabesques. . . .a revelation of what could be done with corn” (Fussell 318-19).

Another way of thinking about hybridization is to call on Charles Bazerman’s term “intertextuality” as a differently nuanced synonym. In “Intertextuality: How Texts Rely on Other Texts” in What Writing Does and How It Does It, Bazerman writes that communicators “create our texts out of the sea of former texts that surround us, the sea of language we live in. And we understand the texts of others within that same sea. . . .the sea of words always surrounds every text” (83-84). In botany, corn is called “a ‘hopeless monster,’ for it cannot reproduce itself without [human] help. . . . On the other hand, since corn adapts more readily than other grains to extreme climates and varied soils, it grows in more places than any other of the world’s grains. As an energy converter, it surpasses all—in yield, speed and edibility of the total plant” (Fussell 20). In rhetorical studies, then, text—canvas, speech, pamphlet—relies heavily on intentional human intervention to reproduce. It cannot do so otherwise. On the other hand, since text adapts readily to extreme rhetorical contexts and varied circumstances, one sees, hears, and consumes it everywhere.

Bazerman introduces terms to help clarify the key aspects of intertextuality: previous texts “as a source of meanings to be used at face value”; a recapturing of “explicit social dramas”; “background, support, and contrast”—what those in first-year writing courses might call attributed research; “generally circulated” information; “recognizable kinds of language, phrasing, and genres”; and the “resources of language,” that is, whatever is available to the constructor of the text at that point in history (“Intertextuality” 86-88).
By thinking about Cassatt’s mural as “text,” then, these definitions of intertextuality are made available. Bazerman notes, “Intertextual relations are also usually most easily recognizable when the textual borrowings involve some distance in time, space, culture, or institution” (“Intertextuality” 89). He adds to his list of definitions, among others, “intertextual reach,” “interdisciplinary intertextuality,” and “intermediality” (89-90), all of which come into play later in this conversation.

First, however, some of the background and history that preceded Cassatt’s rendering of *Modern Woman* needs to be recreated.

**The Story So Far**

By the time Cassatt was commissioned to paint a mural for the Woman’s Building, she was nearly fifty years old. Unlike Lucy Stone, for whom working to make a living was paramount to survival, Cassatt was born into a wealthy and socially prominent family, according to art historian Nancy Mowll Mathews (*Mary* 3-28). Because Cassatt’s life moved quickly and permanently “beyond the confines of the Pennsylvania gentry,” Mathews notes, it is easy to ignore the reality that in doing so she “brought certain of its indelible qualities along” (3). Since Cassatt spent four years of her pre-adult life in Philadelphia, longer than anywhere else, the common understanding that she was “from Philadelphia” is not incorrect (15). However, by the time she was fourteen, she had also lived in the Pennsylvania countryside, London, Paris, and Germany (10-11). She had become fluent in French and German, had studied classical French and German literature, and likely had started drawing and music lessons (11).

In sharp contrast to the clear antagonism that Stone had received from her father in her early years, Cassatt’s “parents had encouraged the children to develop their own talents and treated them as equals as they grew up. As a consequence, Mary developed mature interests and
engaged in a lifelong study of literature, politics, and the foibles of modern society” (Mathews, *Mary* 15). In an 1892 letter to Bertha Palmer, responding to an article that said painting was no longer necessary to modern life, Cassatt wrote, “If painting is no longer needed, it seems a pity that some of us are born into the world with such a passion for line and color” (Mathews, *Cassatt* 238; Mathews, *Mary* 336-36). “By the age of fifteen,” says Mathews, Cassatt “knew she would become an artist,” leaving behind her general education, except what was important to life as an artist, such as continuing language studies, to enroll in the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts in Philadelphia (Mathews, *Mary* 15, 18).

In Cassatt’s day, men and women “might often be copying the same works of art side by side” (18) as they set up their easels and stools in the galleries. In 1868, six years after Cassatt finished her studies there, women students at the Academy were for the first time allowed to “’draw from the life,’ as drawing from nude models was euphemistically called,” according to Jeanne Madeline Weimann in *The Fair Women* (281). In the meantime, the concern of Cassatt’s parents in regard to the social propriety of the practice of drawing in mixed company may have been mitigated by the presence of many of Cassatt’s social peers, including her best friend Eliza Haldeman, who “was from as distinguished and upright a family as their own” (Mathews, *Mary* 18). Haldeman’s letters home, especially, depict an amazingly independent lifestyle made possible, at least in measure, to the pairs and groups in which the young women worked and played (18-19). Unlike Stone, who came to feminism in a decidedly defensive and self-protective posture, Cassatt and Haldeman’s defensiveness was high-spirited and cheerful. They “were unabashed feminists when it came to the rights of women in the arts. They knew so many women artists locally and abroad by reputation that they did not feel their sex would prevent them from achieving their goals” (20). In fact, more than 20 percent of the students in Cassatt’s class were
women, including Fidelia Bridges, Anne Whitney, and Emily Sartain (20), all of whom became world-class artists; Whitney, for example, would exhibit three sculptures at the 1893 Chicago World’s Fair (Nichols, “Women Sculptors”).

When Cassatt finished her coursework at the Academy and saw that many of her friends from there were preparing to leave for Europe to continue their studies, she became adamant about going as well, in spite of angry opposition from her father, who “had told her he would almost rather see her dead than have her go to Europe by herself to become an artist” (Mathews, Mary 26). But the disapproval seemed to be less that he did not want her to become an artist and more that he wished to keep his family nearby (26). Cassatt’s choice to pursue the life of an artist was not an insurmountable obstacle; rather, it was a door open to her if she were to close other doors behind her, particularly the ones leading into marriage and motherhood. As Mathews understands Cassatt’s perspective:

If she had wanted to marry, her personal attributes, as well as her family’s standing and wealth, would have attracted serious suitors. It was plain that she, like many young women of her generation, was in no hurry to marry when she had such a compelling alternative in her art career. In her own family, she joined her sister, Lydia, and her cousins Lydia, Catherine, and Mary Gardner in choosing an unmarried life. Unencumbered by a desire for an American home and hearth, Mary Cassatt could board the steamer for Europe with unalloyed joy. (Mary 28)

In fact, Cassatt’s mother chaperoned her journey, and the twenty-one-year-old Cassatt was soon ensconced in the life of Parisian art students (29-31). And while it is true, according to Weimann, that women artists in Europe were not admitted to life-drawing classes until early in the 1890s (281), Cassatt nevertheless enjoyed a lifestyle of artistic freedom, moving easily around Europe
to work with master artists in many different contexts, choosing her classes, as it were, and designing the education that fed her artistic needs. But one must also be reminded of the precarious positioning of the young female artist who is seen copying in the Louvre, “an extremely public occupation” that could easily result in danger to her reputation as a respectable woman (Mathews, *Mary* 34-35). How to measure the weight of Cassatt’s freedom and danger is difficult from behind twenty-first century eyes, but one can surmise that the threat to reputation was not so great that her mother refused to go with her, nor that the rest of the family, in various stages and for multiple reasons, would join Cassatt in Europe and, subsequently, become many of the models in her paintings.

By the time Cassatt was asked by Bertha Honoré Palmer and Sarah Hallowell to paint a mural for the “Woman’s Building of the largest world’s fair ever held” (Mathews, *Mary* 202), she had established herself, in Europe at least, as an Impressionist artist of some renown. In her evenhanded and insightful essay “Issues of Gender in Cassatt and Eakins,” critical art historian Linda Nochlin notes Cassatt’s place in transforming American art “from a provincial, rather limited pursuit into a world-class enterprise” (272). Hallowell believed that Cassatt, who was little known in the United States, was in fact “the finest American woman painter” (Weimann 194). Given this background, one is ready to approach the mural itself—its artist’s intentions, execution, and results.

**Mary Cassatt’s Modern Woman:**

**Lost, but not Forgotten**

For the first time in the history of international fairs, the World’s Columbian Exposition of 1893 featured a specific building devoted to women and their achievements. Further, it was designed by architect Sophia G. Hayden, who won the opportunity as “the result of a national
competition, but of competition only among women,” as the chapter devoted to the Woman’s Department explains in *The Book of the Fair; An Historical and Descriptive Presentation of the World’s Science, Art, and Industry, as Viewed Through the Columbian Exposition at Chicago in 1893* (Bancroft 257). To modern architect Louis Sullivan’s dismay, the major buildings on the fairground had been decided to be built in a derivative “uniform style, neoclassical, meaning the buildings would have columns and pediments and evoke the glories of ancient Rome” (Larson 106). For Hayden, by contrast, the boundaries set by the architects became a prompt to create the Woman’s Building in the tradition of the Italian Renaissance, including “the facades of the first story fashioned in the form of an Italian arcade” and a Corinthian colonnade (Bancroft 259).

These guidelines also meant that the other women who contributed to the building’s interior and exterior decorations would be bound by the genres demanded by the neoclassical, American renaissance style. Alice Rideout, for example, “modeled the compositions on the main pediment and the symbolic groups of the roof-gardens” (259). Bancroft, writing with nineteenth-century male sensibility, notes that Rideout’s “groups are more or less typical of the part that woman has played in the history of the world, of what has been, is, and will be her sphere of duty and influence” (259). Candace Wheeler was made “superintendent of the interior decorations, the most noteworthy of which are the paintings at either end of the rotunda, where is the court of honor” (261). On one end, Bancroft writes, “primitive woman is depicted by Mrs. Frederick MacMonnies” (261), Mary Fairchild MacMonnies. Bancroft mentions the complementary painting on the other end but does not state its artist. Instead, he says it typifies modern woman as “a group of young girls in pursuit of a figure of fame, which is disappearing in the distant blue of the heavens” (261).
This is a portion of the mural that Cassatt painted, a fifty-eight- by twelve-foot monstrosity that originally had been appointed to Elizabeth Gardner, whose traditional style of painting “classical, religious, and peasant scenes polished to a gleaming perfection” had won her the invitation, according to Mathews (Mary 202-03). Gardner had declined, however, “claiming that the enormous amount of work and the necessity of climbing up and down ladders was too physically demanding for her at the age of 55” (203). In fact, murals historically were not commissioned to women precisely because they were so physically formidable. Cassatt, for her part, was “horrified” by the offer, as Mathews records her response: “She had spent her whole career breaking away from traditional forms of art, and the mural was the most traditional” (Mary 204). In Bazerman’s analysis of Edison’s light patent, usefully for us a development also situated in the late nineteenth century, he begins with “What We all Know About Patents” (“Systems” 80), which is analogous to “what we all know about murals”: that is, murals were defined by their large size; by the presence of panels, often as a triptych; and by their application directly to a wall, floor, or ceiling.

By virtue of their size, murals were most often mounted or painted on the surfaces of public buildings where they might be seen by any passersby. The protagonist in Barbara Kingsolver’s novel The Lacuna, which discusses the paintings of revolutionary Diego Rivera, relays conversations among the artists and writers who come to dinner at the Rivera household, arguing, “Which is better, art or philosophy? Easel art for the bourgeoisie, or murals for the public?” (140). That is, easel painting is for private viewing, while “murals [are] for the public” (140). The painter creating “easel art,” then, would have a very different sense of audience than the one creating a mural, the former intended for the restricted, close-up inspection of framed art on a wall, initially, at least, in the confines of a private gallery; while the latter would be
intended, from the start, for a public venue: a cathedral, a city library, a small-town center. In the late nineteenth century, subdued colors, classical figures, and grand themes would have characterized the form.

Earlier, Cassatt had made a foray into printmaking, a very “small-scale medium,” as Mathews notes (“The Mature” 84). In the case of her first solo exhibit, sponsored by art dealer Paul Duran-Ruel, the collection was “the ultimate in non-public art in that [the prints] were designed as a portfolio and were not necessarily intended to hang on a wall” (Mathews, “The Mature” 84). Cassatt’s printmaking was singular in that she was “the first artist to imitate successfully all aspects of the [Japanese-style] ukiyo-e prints, including their color” (84). She had also turned to printmaking, among other good reasons, because, prints being “multiples of the same composition,” they “could serve a larger market” and thus produce more income, an influence that had drawn Degas, with whom she collaborated to produce a print journal, into the medium, but also because prints’ reproduction “appealed to her instinct for self-promotion” (Mathews, Mary 140-41, 147). She had, however, “returned to easel painting after the debut of her prints” at that first solo exhibition in France, which had turned out to be the most significant of her shows in exposing her to public acclaim (Barter 86; Mathews, “The Mature” 76). Even though her work was growing “in scale and monumentality,” according to Barter, including a very then-modern artistic development of the bond between women and earth (86), she was nevertheless concentrating on easel painting, designed for private, close-up viewing, but with room to play with new approaches to traditional and nontraditional themes. When Cassatt considered the offer to paint a mural, she had to have been thinking of her own experience and comfort in easel painting in contrast with the defining restrictions of the genre of mural painting.
As she formulated her plan for executing an allegory of modern woman, Cassatt could not have been thinking of the space where the mural would be located—outer space, that is. Even a mural, if it is mounted or painted at eye level or slightly above eye level, can bear close-up scrutiny. However, Cassatt did not learn “about the height at which her mural would be installed until it was much too late in the process” and had made decisions about details that, from the floor far below, would be difficult for viewers to see (Barter 96). Inexperienced in mural painting, Cassatt had limited ability to distinguish between what was traditional because it was traditional and therefore open to challenge and what was traditional because it was effective in the genre, given the demands of distance, work surface, and environmental conditions. Although she was surprised that the mural was “to be hung high above the central court,” Barter dismisses Cassatt’s concern with a partial quote from the artist’s lengthy letter to Palmer: “Better painters than I am have been put out of sight” (qtd. in Barter 92-93). On the other hand, Weimann explicitly delineates how much the artist was troubled by the height at which the painting was to be hung (qtd. in Weimann 202):

When the work reaches Chicago, when it is dragged up 48 feet & you will have to stretch your neck to get sight of it at all, whether you will like it then, is another question . . . the architects [are] evidently . . . of [the] opinion [that painting is no longer needed]. Painting was never intended to be put out of sight. . . . If painting is no longer needed, it seems a pity that some of us are born into the world with such a passion for line and color. Better painters than I am have been put out of sight.

But the challenges also appealed to Cassatt. As she planned, “she strove for effects that would be a rebuke” to the *Primitive Woman* mural that was to be painted on the opposite end of
the Hall of Honor (Mathews, *Mary* 205-06). The original intention of the Woman’s Building planners, specifically Bertha Honoré Palmer and the Board of Lady Managers (Barter 87-88), had been that *Primitive Woman* “would serve as a counterpoint to *Modern Woman* to show that women have risen to great heights from their original condition of servitude” (Mathews, *Mary* 202). Cassatt understood. Her frequently quoted letter to her friend and art agent Sara Hallowell (which Hallowell quotes in a letter to Palmer) demonstrates the impression that Palmer made on Cassatt, as well as Cassatt’s nascent feminism: “After all give me France—women do not have to fight for recognition here, if they do serious work. I suppose it is Mrs. Palmer’s French blood which gives her her organizing powers and her determination that women should be *someone* and not *something*” (Mathews, *Cassatt* 254; qtd. in Barter 87; qtd. in Sharp 150).

Although Cassatt was not an overt participant in the feminist political movements occurring simultaneously in the United States and France, “she clearly subscribed to feminist tenets,” according to Mathews, “advocating the participation of women in the entire range of human endeavor, and regarded her own life as an example” (“The Mature” 84).

Subsequently, as counterpoint to MacMonnies, who chose “soft, harmonious colors, Cassatt chose a bright blue and green palette with accents of purple, pink, and gold,” modeling her colors and figures after Giotto (Mathews, *Mary* 206), although both artists were influenced by Sandro Botticelli (Barter 91). Whereas MacMonnies used “generalized draperies and nude figures” to give her characters a sense of timelessness and unidentified place, Cassatt “stressed the importance of costume in expressing the ideals of the age and ordered dresses made for her models at such prominent Parisian houses as Doucet and Worth” (Mathews, *Mary* 206). In fact, Cassatt’s attention to modern fashion, her desire “to represent those fashions as accurately & as much in detail as possible,” as she explained in a letter to Palmer (Mathews, *Cassatt* 238; qtd. in
Barter 95; qtd. in Webster 81), reflected no awareness of dress reform, according to Barter (95). Webster, on the other hand, contextualizes the quote by referring to the reason for the letter: Cassatt had responded to her receiving a clipping from a New York paper in which art critic Mariana Van Rensselaer, referring to Cassatt’s instructions about how to proceed with the mural, said the subject “was to be . . . ‘The Modern Woman as glorified by Worth!’ That would hardly describe my idea” (Mathews, Cassatt 237; qtd. in Webster 81). Even though Worth was “the best-known fashion designer of the day and one favored by rich American women,” Webster argues, Cassatt’s models “are attired in day dresses made of soft fabrics, loosely structured, with lace or contrasting fabric at the neckline and for the sleeves. While often fitted at the waist, these are uncorseted dresses and as such reflect the health concerns of the dress reform movement (81). In the late 1800s, much had been accomplished in this regard, as historian Lois Banner observes: “Who could resist the tide of change when even the Ladies’ Home Journal, the venerable organ of middle-class female opinion, in 1893 endorsed the right of women to choose their own clothes on the basis of comfort?” (qtd. in Kinsey 362).

In fact, although early dress reform focused “primarily on the unhealthy effects of popular clothing” (Mattingly 39), citing such horrific examples as the long-term effects of tight-laced corsets, including “bent or fractured ribs, displacement of the liver, and uterine prolapse (in some cases the uterus would be gradually forced, by the pressure of the corset, out through the vagina” (Ehrenreich and English 120), it also was the practicality and sensibility of dress reform that would have appealed to Cassatt, had she been more aware of it as she prepared for her first and only venture into mural painting. Dress reform had led, for example, to dress reformists who were convened at the 1893 World’s Fair to endorse The Jenness-Miller Magazine’s “American Costume, a wool tunic covering a divided skirt” (Kinsey 362).
The impracticality “of climbing up and down scaffolding in order to paint the fifty-foot expanse of canvas designed for the mural struck Cassatt as unnecessary,” says art historian Jay Roudebush (69). Instead, she arranged to have an addition built on her studio, “an immense glass-roofed building at her summer home, where, rather than work on a ladder, she arranged to have the canvas lowered into an excavation in the ground when she wished to work on the upper part of its surface,” according to Palmer (qtd. in Webster 66). She was not the first to accommodate the bulk of a canvas in this manner: Monet also had had a trench dug in his studio in order to paint Women in the Garden (Nochlin 271). The “excavation” was a sixty-foot trench, approximately six feet deep (Mathews, Mary 210). The arrangement “allowed her to work at ground level and to move the canvas up and down as needed” (Roudebush 69) without having to navigate said ladders in a floor-length dress and without having to maintain the somewhat precarious position of painting while standing on a step ladder.

Paint colors and volume chosen and ordered, models hired and attired, studio in place, Cassatt was ready to begin.

The Mural

Of the three panels of Modern Woman, only the central section of the central panel has been reproduced in color as seen here (Nichols, “Mary”). This panel, Young Women Plucking the Fruits of Knowledge or Science, according to Cassatt’s contemporary, Chicago-based art critic Lucy Monroe, depicts the prevailing color of the entire mural:

Figure 1. Colored center of Young Women Plucking the Fruits of Knowledge or Science (Nichols, "Mary").
“‘bright grass green,’ with the complementary colors of yellow and violet appearing in the right-hand panel, *Art, Music, Dancing*” (qtd. in Webster 73). The left-hand panel, *Young Girls Pursuing Fame*, leads the eye into the central and right panels and uses the same predominantly bright, intense hues.

Mathews delineates the mural’s allegorical meaning(s), writing that the theme of the central panel, *Young Women Plucking the Fruits of Knowledge or Science*, seen in its entirety, above (Nichols, “Mary”), “spoke to the growth of education for women that [Cassatt] had witnessed in her own lifetime and was in full flower in 1892” (Mathews, *Mary* 207). In this scene, the young women are depicted as passing the fruits of knowledge and science from one generation to the next, which is the theme of the panel (Webster 73). Cast in a serious mood, the women convey Cassatt’s belief in the burden that education brings with it: the responsibility to go forth with that education and make one’s way in the world as a professional woman. Yet the simultaneous emphasis on fashion in her mural as well as the scenes of caring for babies and children indicates Cassatt’s recognition of a “feminine sphere” that education should not take women away from. . . .
It certainly could not be read without reference to the biblical Eve who
plucked the fruit and brought about the collapse of her own safe world. (Mathews,
*Mary* 207-09)

As Mathews continues her interpretation, Cassatt “was willing to risk expulsion from
‘paradise’ in order to found a new civilization based on principles of equality for women, but she
did so with firsthand knowledge of the sacrifices and perseverance that must go with it” (*Mary* 209). Webster explicates these ideas in much greater detail, providing background for
understanding how readily viewers would associate the portrayal of women’s picking apples
with the story of Eve’s picking and eating the fruit of “the tree of the knowledge of good and
evil” (Gen. 2:17).

This is clearly an example of Bazerman’s intertextual borrowing, made “easily
recognizable” because the “textual borrowings involve some distance in time, space, culture, or
institution” (“Intertextuality” 89). In addition, “intermediality” (89-90), a merging, or
hybridization, of media—the written text of the Old Testament Scriptures coming to life on the
mural canvas through Cassatt’s metaphorical re-interpretation—creates a portrayal of the Garden
of Eden not previously seen. Sans Adam, to whom the command not to eat of the tree in the
middle of the Garden of Eden was originally given, and sans the crafty serpent, which convinced
Eve to pick the fruit (Gen. 2:16-17; 3:1-6), the ancient Garden of Eden is transformed into “a
modern Garden of Eden. . . . This reconfiguration of the Temptation story is the most radical
aspect of Cassatt’s narrative since it advances a reinterpretation of Eve’s transgressions as a
precursor to women’s emancipation” (Webster 74). Because woman was created after man,
according to the biblical story, theologians have pervasively and consistently argued that man is
superior to woman, a viewpoint that Lillie Devereux Blake incisively and logically counters in
Elizabeth Cady Stanton’s *The Woman’s Bible*, an 1895 commentary (19): “It cannot be maintained that woman was inferior to man even if, as asserted in chapter ii, she was created after him without at once admitting that man is inferior to the creeping things, because created after them.”

The absence of Adam did not go unnoticed. In a scathing criticism, Frances Willard, president of the Women’s Christian Temperance Union in 1893, commented on the un-American aspects of the mural—its colors as “pronouncedly Japanese” and its canonicity as French (Weimann 314). Willard had told Susan Anthony that “she was highly suspicious of women who disliked men, and there were no men in the mural,” according to Weimann (314).

But if there are no men or boys in the painting, there are healthy, robust women, working together to pluck and pass on the fruit of their labors. This portrayal in itself kicks against the goads of late nineteenth-century cultural norms, as Helena Michie argues in *The Flesh Made Word: Female Figures and Women’s Bodies*. In the chapter unabashedly titled “Ladylike Anorexia: Hunger, Sexuality, and Etiquette in the Nineteenth Century,” Michie connects the Edenic story of the Fall with “the problem of female hunger” (14-15) and describes the “use of inflated Fall rhetoric as a warning to women against eating too much or eating the wrong kind of food” (16). A “delicate young lady” (17), weak, pale, and anti-food, is a classy lady, a respectable woman: “Her femininity and her social position are defined quite literally by negation; denial of hunger is an affirmation of a precarious class position” (18). Even the handling of food by women is restricted. In an influential conduct book, *Good Society*, the “safest way for ladies” to eat cherries, for example, is to “press out the stone with a fork” (Countess 170, qtd. in Michie 18-19). Michie explains:
Again, the word “safe” has moral connotations; lapses from etiquette become dangerous to the reputations of the young women involved. It is probably not a coincidence that most of the examples of “unsafe” behavior which lead to this domesticated version of the Fall revolve around fruit; one advice manual warns men, “Don’t touch fruit with [your] fingers when preparing it for a lady” (Countess, p. 170), as if the offering of fruit with the hands is too close a reenactment of the moment of temptation in the garden. (19)

However, Cassatt’s women are not only strong enough to climb ladders and carry baskets of fruit, but they are also handling the produce, embracing it, and handing on the produce to their female children. Cassatt thus remediates the space that is her mural, as Nochlin asserts, arguing that it is clear from textual evidence of approximately the same time that she intended to demonstrate that in her garden the picking of the fruit of knowledge by women was not a condemned activity: on the contrary, it was to be strongly encouraged. The promoters of the Woman’s Building had stated their purpose as follows: “We [women] have eaten of the Tree of Knowledge and the Eden of Idleness is hateful to us. We claim our inheritance, and are become workers not cumberers of the earth.” (272)

By re-envisioning the Garden of Eden as a location where those who hold the power to decide that which is forbidden—the fruit of the tree of knowledge and science, that is, education, independence, humanity, equality—are off-canvas, off-stage, and therefore powerless, Cassatt places her women in a benevolent and luscious environment where they are free to work, to raise
children, and to commune with one another and with nature. Cassatt raises Eve from her fallen position as the evil temptress who caused Adam to eat the apple from the Tree of Knowledge in defiance of God’s law, but has her and her daughters picking the fruits of knowledge to enhance their understanding of the larger world and as an escape from the drudgeries of domestic life. In this way Cassatt acknowledges that women are entitled to knowledge and that women are neither guilty of nor responsible for original sin. (Webster 77)

In a discussion of their literary characters, Michie notes, invoking Charlotte Brontë, George Eliot, and Louisa May Alcott’s novels, among others, “The Victorian women authors who obsessively rewrote the Fall myth were simultaneously transgressing in their hunger to write and to know, and translating trespass into the source of their power” (28). This is remediation of rhetorical space.

The two end panels of the mural, seen below (Nichols, “Mary”) were “related only tangentially to the central theme,” according to Mathews (Mary 209). Three young girls are placed in a landscape setting, chasing “a small flying figure above the horizon” who, according to Cassatt, personifies fame (Mathews, “The Mature” 85). Cassatt was frankly attacking “the image of young middle-class women as demure and self-effacing, a challenge to the...
powerful and seductive Victorian ‘cult of true womanhood,’ which sought to define women’s role as subservient and to confine her to the domestic, maternal, and religious spheres of life” (Webster 85). In Cassatt’s view, “fame is an ideal to be pursued, an aspiration for young women” (85). However, even the girls’ vigorously and exuberantly running after fame, rather than daintily approaching it, “threatened the social order.” In his 1871 conduct book, physician Dio Lewis challenges the absurdity of class associations with robustness and delicacy: “The fragile, pale young woman . . . is thought, by many silly people, to be more of a lady, than another with ruddy cheeks, and vigorous health” (66). If a woman “looks strong, and moves with a will, she will be mistaken for a worker, for a servant. If she looks delicate, and moves languidly, it will be seen at once that she does not belong to the working class” (70). This perception, argued Lewis, needed to change; Cassatt, likewise, argues for the change by depicting her young girls as enthusiastically and robustly running after their dreams.

The third panel represents, perhaps, mature versions of the girls in the first panel, “the women who the three girls in the left-hand panel may aspire to be” (Webster 91). From left to right, Dance, Music, and Art are contemporarily portrayed, Dance “performing a modern skirt dance” (91), a social dance that, “in contrast to ballet, was seen as a healthful exercise and a ‘means of teaching grace, manners, and a sense of form’” (Ruyter, qtd. in Webster 96). Webster continues, “[T]his regime of graceful exercises lifted the onus from physical exercise as an unladylike pursuit and, as a form of aesthetic calisthenics, such exercise became acceptable to genteel society” (96). Meanwhile, the personification of Music plays a banjo, another thoroughly modern image, as the traditional attribute of the patron saint of music, St. Cecelia, is the hand organ (96). Art simply observes, representing “the moment of inspiration before creation. She slips the bounds of allegory and is a link between the mural and the viewer” (96-
In an aesthetic sense, *Modern Woman* allowed Cassatt “to demonstrate to an American audience mural painting’s potential and effectiveness in decorating and ennobling interior public spaces” (Webster 112). Moreover, viewed together, the three panels represent Cassatt’s own life and the lives of women everywhere, showing “the three ages of woman: the child, the young woman, and the mature adult” (112). However, they are not shown “in their domestic roles as girl, wife, and mother but as aspiring scientists, intellectuals, and artists. These aspirations, traditionally associated with men, Cassatt claimed for herself and in Chicago for all womankind” (112).

The narrative of the mural, according to Philip Eubanks’s discussion, “Poetics and Narrativity: How Texts Tell Stories” in *What Writing Does and How It Does It*, can be seen as “conceptual metaphor,” using the ideas of George Lakoff, Mark Johnson, and Mark Turner: “[M]etaphor creates meaning. It is impossible to maintain that metaphor is just a tool that speakers [artists] call upon for effect. . . . Instead, metaphors set in motion a complex, meaning-making interaction between domains of activity” (44). Conceptual metaphors, he says, “have cultural origins and implications” (45). Cassatt’s painting depicts women picking fruit, what Lakoff and Johnson might argue is not a specific expression “women picking fruit”; rather, “metaphoric expressions recruit larger metaphoric concepts, such as Love Is A Physical Force, The Mind Is a Container” (qtd. in Eubanks 44). Song lyrics playing in one’s head may be conceptual metaphors: “Life is highway / I wanna ride it all night long” (Cochrane). When one “recruit[s] the metaphor in the abstract and make[s] use of it in highly specific ways,” one also attaches “specific actions and values” (Eubanks 45). These are not just “women picking fruit”;

97). These elements “are evidence that the artist was very conscious of her American audience” (96).
rather, they are a metaphor for Education Is a Forbidden Fruit (But Now You Can Have It). As Eubanks notes, the “young girls pursuing fame” are a metaphor for, as the 1979 graffiti, now widely attributed to Gloria Steinem, notes, “A woman without a man is like a fish without a bicycle” (Speake 338). These statements “set in motion” all kinds of ideas in their viewers’ and readers’ minds, ideas that challenged the ways that women perceived their position in society, contextualized in an appropriately painted mural, a “docile body,” as Foucault says, defined by its posture, but using that posture to rebel against systemic degradation (Mattingly 7; Foucault, Discipline 152-53).

Indeed, Cassatt’s experience had included her practicing her painting in the galleries of the Louvre, where painting in public, particularly if one was working to earn money as well as to hone one’s skills, as was Cassatt, was perceived in much the same manner as women’s speaking in public. Novelist Henry James portrayed in The American, for example, a young woman copyist whose “combination of public posturing and offering something for sale add up to a refined type of prostitution” (Mathews, Mary 15-16). By 1893, however, in her adopted France, Cassatt was an accomplished and well-known artist who, now in the United States, skillfully could appropriate the man’s domain of mural painting to further the ends that social contingency demanded. As Berkenkotter and Huckin note, “[A]nalysts should pay attention to ways in which genre users”—in this case, Cassatt—“manipulate genres for particular rhetorical purposes” (476). Even in her choice of models, Cassatt is deliberate, demonstrating what Bakhtin calls an “intentional dimension” (qtd. in Berkenkotter and Huckin 476). She ordered new Paris gowns for her models to promote the sense of their modernity, but the actual models were robustly healthy local women hired to pose for her (Webster 106), their elegant dresses making no attempt to disguise “the large, powerful bodies underneath” (Mathews, “The Mature” 90-91).
Cassatt’s intentions should not be read anachronistically, however. As Barter warns her readers, “Focusing on the contemporary female’s role as creator, nurturer, teacher, and muse, *Modern Woman* was in line with the generally apolitical yet progressive view of womanhood prevalent in Cassatt’s class and time” (96). This view encouraged women not to seek equality with men “in their sphere of activity”; instead, they “should be encouraged to move freely in the feminine realm and be respected for their skills and achievements” (96). In a letter to Palmer, who espoused this view, Cassatt explains her “emphasis on the specifically feminine role of women” (Barter 97): “An American friend asked me in a rather huffy tone the other day[,] ‘Then this is woman apart from her relations to man?’ I told him it was. . . . [I]f I have not been absolutely feminine, then I have failed” (Mathews, *Cassatt* 238). As Barter assesses Cassatt’s perspective, she notes, “Thus, in her desire to be ‘absolutely feminine,’ even while engaged in such a traditional unfeminine venture as painting a monumental mural, Cassatt aligned herself with a less-than-radical point of view” (97). That alignment, as may be seen, would not-much-later shift into explicit allegiance with suffragists and the feminist movement of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

**Conclusions**

The power of Cassatt’s mural in many ways is not measurable; one can only infer from the statistics related to the fair how many people saw, absorbed, interpreted, and were in some way affected by their encounter with it among the thousands of other attractions. Because it was “skyed”—elevated fifty feet in the air—when seen from below, it “became a jarring pattern of bright colors that was out of sync with the rest of building” (Mathews, *Mary* 211). Nevertheless, the painting “was the beginning of a process of reevaluating the mural to make it adapt to new ideas in art and become once again a vital art form for expressing modern ideas” (213), a genre
“chang[ing] over time in response to [its] users’ sociocognitive needs” (Berkenkotter and Huckin 478).

When the Woman’s Building was later pulled down, Cassatt’s mural was lost, though she had made in the process of creating it a host of new pictures and ideas for color prints, all using the same models and the same garden setting, with many continuing the themes of plucking fruit and playing the banjo. These works, formulated without the restrictions of the mural format, were some of the strongest and most beautiful Cassatt had ever done. (Mathews, *Mary* 213)

Thus, Cassatt’s mural may be seen as transgressive rhetoric, introducing the theme of women’s liberation from men’s strictures, themes that were repeated in her later art and which support the view that, even as she painted, she became more conscious of her own feminist ideals and moves.

One may also witness Cassatt in later life: She began the second decade of the twentieth century with diabetes, rheumatism, and cataracts (Mathews, *Mary* 291, 305). Nevertheless, in 1915, she and Degas joined forces to promote an exhibition “for the benefit of women’s suffrage,” where she showed eighteen works she had painted, all of them completed after 1900 (306).

Revisiting Buchanan’s topoi of education, access, space, genre, body, and career, one can see that Cassatt had all the advantages and concurrent disadvantages of an upperclass American woman of European descent. Her multi-continent education, enhanced by uninhibited travel abroad, afforded her a self-confident entrance into the artistic world dominated by men. She gained access to the halls of the Woman’s Building by working persistently to hone her craft,
access her creativity, and market her wares. Because she was a woman, in a contemporary woman’s clothing of voluminous skirts, she accommodated the challenges of painting on great swaths of canvas by bringing the canvas to her, on ground level. In remediating the space of the decorative mural, she changed its purpose from mere decoration to overt social statement.

But for African American women and men, the opportunities to participate in the planning and even construction of the fair were severely limited, an exclusion to which that community responded variously, Ida B. Wells among them. As with Stone and Cassatt, Wells’s journey was affected by her education, access, space, genre, body, and career.
CHAPTER 4: IDA B. WELLS:

EXCLUSION EXACERBATED

Why are not the colored people, who constitute so large an element
of the American population, and who have contributed so large a
share to American greatness, more visibly present and better
represented in this World’s Exposition?

—Ida B. Wells, 1893

In Wendy Dasler Johnson’s “Cultural Rhetorics of Women’s Corsets,” she writes that
“[n]ineteenth-century sensationalist rhetoric . . . . made possible the appearance of feisty, preachy
women such as Lydia Sigourney and Marmee Marsh who then argued against the corset” (224-25), with all its physical, cultural, and social restrictions. “Feisty” and “preachy” are also fitting
adjectives for another nineteenth-century woman, Ida B. Wells, an African American journalist
who became an international spokesperson for the enforcement of laws protecting all
individuals’ rights to due process. She wore her sensate armor differently than did Mary Cassatt,
“gird[ing] herself to do battle with the world” (218), and maximizing the shape and contours her
“corset” produced; she was willing to “contend! contend!” as Frederick Douglass wrote in the
Introduction to The Reason Why the Colored American Is Not in the World’s Columbian
Exposition (15), which had been co-written by Wells, Douglass, Irvine Garland Penn, and
Ferdinand Barnett, the last of whom Wells would later marry (15; Duster 239).

However, Wells was impelled “to carefully address ethical appearance,” a task made
more complicated by her necessarily defensive posture, as Carol Mattingly notes in
Appropriate[ing] Dress: Women’s Rhetorical Style in Nineteenth-Century America (125). To
“test the limits of the feminine roles proscribed for [her],” as Johnson says (“Cultural” 225),
Wells strapped herself into the discipline of the genres available to her as a journalist, including editorials, news stories, speeches, and pamphlets, producing “disruptive power” (Matthiessen, qtd. in Johnson, “Cultural” 205) to speak to issues of racial and gender inequalities.

The last in this list, “a carefully prepared pamphlet,” as Douglass wrote in a fundraising appeal to be publicly circulated (qtd. in Rydell, “Editor’s” xxv), emerged from African Americans’ perception that “the racism at the World’s Columbian Exposition mirrored, framed, and reinforced the larger horrors confronting blacks throughout the United States where white supremacy meant segregation, second-class citizenship, and sometimes lynching” (xli).

Even though African Americans participated in significant ways, those opportunities were very few; some, such as the embodiment of “Aunt Jemima,” Nancy Green, who “wore a red bandanna and flipped pancakes outside the company’s exhibit booth, designed in the shape of an enormous barrel of flour while she told nostalgic stories of plantation life,” were somewhat suspect (xix). Advertising the new self-rising Aunt Jemima Pancake Mix, “a slave, in a box,” as Maurice M. Manring writes, Green, “who might have been the first walking, talking trademark” (343), became an “emblem of a fair that made the promise of easier living for whites in America’s future contingent on blacks remaining in a subordinate position in U.S. society” (Rydell, “Editor’s” xx). As Manring writes in his incisive essay, “White housewives did not aspire to be Aunt Jemima; they aspired to have her. They were buying the idea of a slave, in a box” (356). “All one needed to do,” he notes, “was add water” (356). Before continuing in this vein, however, one may wish to backtrack from the 1893 World’s Fair along the path that began nearly thirty years earlier in Holly Springs, Mississippi, where Wells was born.
The Story So Far

Born into slavery in 1862 to a father who was a skilled carpenter and a trustee of what became Rust College and to a mother who was a cook, Wells began fighting for the best interests of others at a very early age. Her parents, who had married as slaves and then remarried as free individuals after the Emancipation Proclamation, valued education. In her autobiography, Wells notes, “Our job was to go to school and learn all we could” (Duster 9). Later, during the long evenings away from home, Wells would read widely and deeply from classical literature, including the Bible and Dickens, both of which feature cries against social injustice and the need to restore the downtrodden to their rightful place in humanity; the reading sustained and fed her active mind (21-22).

Wells’s parents died within twenty-four hours of each other during a plague of yellow fever that swept from Memphis, Tennessee, where it eventually took more than five thousand lives, into the unquarantined Holly Springs community (Duster 7-14; Giddings, Ida 15). When the epidemic was over, Wells’s nine-month-old brother had died as well, leaving her the oldest of six children. She was fourteen years old (15). Even though homes for the children were offered among the Masonic brothers, of whom Wells’s father was a member, Wells refused to allow the family to be scattered. Instead, she said, if the Masons helped her find work, since the Wells family owned the house, she would support her brothers and sisters (16). She became a “country school-teacher,” assisted by her grandmother until her grandmother’s stroke, then by a family friend, who stayed with the children during the week (17-18). The next teaching term, Wells found a classroom job in Shelby County, Tennessee. She kept her two youngest sisters with her, while another sister, who was severely physically disabled, and the two brothers went
to live with her mother’s sister, who herself had been widowed by the yellow fever plague (15, 18).

As if supporting her family at such a young age were not heroic enough, on a day early in May 1884, Wells made her mark in history with an incident precipitated by her sitting in the ladies’ car on the train ride to Memphis to teach at her school (Duster 18). The social expectation was that she would sit in the colored car, where the rules against smoking, drinking, and swearing were often ignored and where African American women sat if they were not accompanying a white mistress and her child. She had gone through the colored car, where she saw “an inebriated white man . . . and telltale curls of smoke,” so she had continued into the first-class ladies’ car, where the rules for smoking, drinking, and swearing were enforced. Wells’s ticket also entitled her with admittance to the ladies’ car (Giddings, *Ida* 62). My father repeats a favorite saying, “Some people are just born in the objective case and the kickative mood,” which could well describe Wells, for she had already stated rather forcefully that she had every intention of continuing to ride in the ladies’ car as she had in the past (62). When asked by the conductor to move to the colored car—twice—she twice refused. According to court records in the lawsuit that Wells brought against the railroad, as Giddings notes (*Ida* 62-63):

> [T]he conductor attempted to physically pull her out of the seat, tearing the sleeve off her dress in the process. . . . Ida, determined not to be taken, hooked her feet under the seat in front of her, began scratching the conductor with her nails, and then bit his hands deeply enough to draw blood. The conductor asked for help from the passengers and they readily complied. Two of them sitting in front of Wells turned the seat around so that she could no longer hold on to it with her feet. Two others helped the conductor pry Ida out of her seat and drag her to the
platform between the cars. But Wells refused to be forced into the colored car and chose instead to get off the train. With the cheers of the white passengers echoing in her ears, she disembarked, disheveled but determined.

Wells won the lawsuit she brought and was awarded $500, but the “railroad appealed the case to the state’s supreme court, which reversed the findings of the lower court,” Wells writes, “and I had to pay the costs” (Duster 19-20).

The civil rights significance of these events is important to the broader sense of history, viewed in light of hers being “the first case in which a colored plaintiff in the South had appealed to a state court since the repeal of the Civil Rights Bill [in 1883] by the United States Supreme Court” (Duster 20), thus opening the door for state-enacted laws restricting public access to African Americans; the significance was “not lost on the Tennessee Supreme Court” (Giddings, When 23). Nearly nine decades later, the provisions of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 would restore most of the laws that had been enacted by the Civil Rights Act of 1875 and then nullified in 1883 (“Major”).

Two additional points of significance are notable, however. First, from the outset of her public life, Wells’s forceful, stubborn, and bellicose personality set her at odds with other members of the African American community, a point of which Wells seemed to be aware. She had her teacher’s salary to help her with the court costs she had incurred, having refused a compromise settlement that would have given her a portion of the $500 original decision. But she received no help from the African American community since, as she says, “None of my people had ever seemed to feel that it was a race matter and that they should help me with the fight” (Duster 20-21). Wells was no people-pleaser; her crusade was justice, not Pablum. But the result was that she often felt alone in her endeavors.
Second, even though Wells was not motivated by the need to please others, she was well aware of the power of deportment in making her case, beginning with the testimony that she gave at her court hearing. Writing about the development of black women’s organizations that began only a little later in Wells’s life, Mattingly notes, “If white women speakers felt the need to carefully address ethical appearance, concern for dress and appearance among African American speakers, though necessarily more complicated, was equally acute” (123). As Elizabeth L. Church writes in her 2010 dissertation, quoting Patricia Sullivan, Wells’s concern for creating and presenting a strong and righteous ethos cannot be overstated. She seems to make every effort to present herself as a “a person of good will (eunoia), good sense (phronesis), and good moral character (arête)” (Sullivan 113) not only in her writing, but also in her work as a teacher and journalist, and in her social relationships. (80) Indeed, Giddings affirms, “One of the first items of business on the Black leaders’ agenda was to defend their moral integrity as women” (When 85; Mattingly 123). The sentiments of the white community would be articulated loudly and clearly by many voices, among them John W. Jacks’s, who “claimed that black women were ‘wholly devoid of morality and that they were prostitutes, thieves, and liars’” (Logan, With 12; qtd. in Mattingly 123). Confirming “the fact that there was smoking, drunkenness, and white men in the colored car,” as had been testified by several witnesses, Wells acted so that her courtroom “demeanor was no doubt more important than the words themselves,” according to Giddings (Ida 65). Unlike Sojourner Truth, who had bared her breast to refute the argument that she wasn’t a woman (Hayward, qtd. in Truth, Gilbert, and Titus 139), Wells was more likely, according to Mattingly, to dress “modestly and usually after the fashion assumed by white middle-class women. [Black women] hesitated to draw
attention specifically to their bodies” (124). The words of the conductor, who had tried to make
the case that Wells had not acted like a lady, fell on deaf ears when the judge saw that “she was
dressed impeccably, and her petite, barely five-foot frame would make it difficult not to
sympathize with her” (65). Wells already was remediating the spaces in which she lived and
worked.

Shortly thereafter, Wells “began writing a column for the Living Way on a regular basis,
and her articles, about everything from compelling national issues to local community ones,
became so popular that they were picked up by other Black newspapers throughout the
country” (Giddings, When 22). She joined a teachers’ lyceum, “which had its own newspaper, the
Evening Star, of which Wells quickly became editor,” signing her name “Iola” (Diggs-Brown
136).

Wells received her first pay for writing when she was hired by the Rev. William J.
Simmons, who led work among African Americans for the American Baptist Home Missionary
Society; for the next three years, she was “on the staff of the American Baptists” (Duster 31-32).
Simmons was also president of what would eventually be called Simmons College of Kentucky,
the oldest black college in the state (Holloway 146); the fifth president of the National Baptist
Convention (National); and editor of the National Negro Press Association (Washington, 417;
Duster 31). In an 1875 speech to the State Convention of Colored Men of Kentucky, he speaks
with startling prescience of Wells’s encounter on the train to Memphis: “We are robbed by some
of the railroad companies who take our first-class fares and then we are driven into smoking cars,
and, if we demur, are cursed and roughly handled. Our women have been beaten by brutal
brakemen, and in many cases left to ride on the platforms at the risk of life and limb” (qtd. in
Turner 48-49). In the same address, he issues an early call to end lynchings: “When charged with
grave offenses, the jail is mobbed, and the accused is taken out and hanged” (49). Simmons mentored the young woman, claiming, according to Turner, that “ideal manhood and womanhood cannot be narrowed down to any one sphere of action, but that the whole being—every faculty with which we are endowed—must receive proper development” (Turner 46) and encouraging Wells “to be a newspaper woman” (Duster 32). As Wells writes, “[W]hatever fame I achieved in that line I owe in large measure to his influence and encouragement” (32).

When Wells was elected as secretary of the National Negro Press Association in 1899, she had already written for more than a dozen magazines and newspapers and was the editor and a one-third owner of *Free Speech and Headlight* in Memphis (Duster 33-35).

Pivotal to Wells’s career in journalism and lifetime aspirations was the lynching of three of her acquaintances in March 1892 (Giddings, *When* 17); she was “very closest friends” to one of the men, Thomas Moss, and his wife, and godmother to their daughter (Giddings, *When* 20; Duster 47, 50).

Until the men’s execution, Wells, as with many of her contemporaries, thought that there was room for sympathy with angry whites who brought African American male rapists of white females to their deserved end, even though the means skirted the justice system (Giddings, *When* 28). In her autobiography, Wells writes, “Like many another person who had read of lynching in the South, I had accepted the idea meant to be conveyed—that although lynching was irregular and contrary to law and order, unreasoning anger over the terrible crime of rape led to the lynching; that perhaps the brute deserved death anyhow and the mob was justified in taking his life” (Duster 64).
However, that perception was based on the premise being promulgated by the white press, giving the impression, first, that all of those lynched were African American males, when at least a few were women and children (Wells, Red 153; Wells, “Lynch” 32-33).

Second, the premise was assumed to be true that all of those lynched were guilty of sexual crimes, when in fact the issues were complicated by white women’s refusal to acknowledge their consensual liaisons with African American men and by their husbands’ or male champions’ refusals to acknowledge that such liaisons could be consensual. In A Red Record, Wells writes:

The Southern white man says that it is impossible for a voluntary alliance to exist between a white woman and a colored man, and therefore, the fact of an alliance is a proof of force. In numerous instances where colored men have been lynched on the charge of rape, it was positively known at the time of lynching, and indisputably proven after the victim’s death, that the relationship sustained between the man and woman was voluntary and clandestine, and that in no court of law could even the charge of assault have been successfully maintained. (78-79)

Third, the assumed premise was that all of the crimes leading to lynchings were of a sexual nature, when in truth, many of the “crimes” had nothing to do with sex. Instead, the accusations ranged from rape to “conjurin” to “writing [a] letter to [a] white woman” to “introducing smallpox” (Wells-Barnett, Red). In the case of Wells’s friends, from Wells’s perspective, their real crime was that they had infringed on the monopoly held by a white store owner in the black neighborhood where the black-owned People’s Grocery Company had been established (Giddings, When 17); thus the African Americans had become a threat to the fiscal
well-being of their white competition. What began as latent hostility from the white grocer grew into a mob scene when a group of African American boys “got the better of the fight which followed” a dispute with a group of white boys over a game of marbles outside the black-owned grocery store (Duster 48). So began a series of events that would steer Wells’s life in a particularly specific direction. In cahoots with the media, a break-in by white men, who were repelled by the armed businessmen and their friends, was twisted into “how officers of the law had been wounded while in the discharge of their duties”; subsequently, more than a hundred African American men “were dragged from their homes and put in jail” on conspiracy charges (49).

On the third night of the disturbance, when the crisis seemed to have quieted, a white mob stormed the jail where the three owners of the People’s Grocery Company were incarcerated. The three men were taken out of the city limits and shot to death, but not before Moss could plead for the life of his wife, daughter, and unborn child and ask his murderers to “tell my people to go West—there is no justice for them here” (50-51). These words would be quoted by Wells in her first editorial after the lynchings, reechoed throughout Memphis, and alter the racial texture of the city for decades, as more than two thousand African Americans heeded Moss’s advice and moved to Oklahoma, Kansas City, and other points west (52-53; Broussard 38). Wells later estimated that six thousand, or nearly twenty percent, of the African Americans in Memphis left in the exodus that followed the media storm she had created (Giddings, Ida 200).

The store was subsequently vandalized by the mob, and within a few days, the white grocer had succeeded in putting “an end to his rival Negro grocer as well as to his business” (51-52). Giddings writes, “The increasing violence toward Blacks had little to do with their alleged
criminal behavior; rather lynching was the tool of the new caste system being imposed by the South” (*When* 26). The lynching in Memphis, Wells writes, “changed the whole course of my life” (Duster 47).

Indeed, although Nellie Bly (Elizabeth Jane Cochrane Seaman) of Joseph Pulitzer’s *The World* fame is often referred to as a first among American investigative journalists, once disguising herself as a lunatic to gain entry into an insane asylum and thus to expose the horrific treatment and living conditions prevalent in such institutions in 1887 (Bly), during the same time period, Wells was conducting extensive detective work herself, beginning with “an investigation of every lynching” she read about (Duster 64). The death of her friends, she said, had “opened my eyes to what lynching really was. An excuse to get rid of Negroes who were acquiring wealth and property and thus keep the race terrorized and ‘keep the nigger down’” (64).

In one case, Wells posed as the widow of a man who was brutally lynched in order “to get a stunning amount of detail about the … lynching” (Giddings, *Ida* 274); in another, she hired a white Chicago detective who, disguised as a hog-cholera medicine salesman, learned all he could from interviews and passed the information on to Wells, who published his findings in *Lynch Law in Georgia* as a complete chapter (Giddings, *Ida* 408; Wells-Barnett, *Lynch*). In the latter case, collecting information was not difficult, as the detective, Louis Le Vin, describes his efforts: “I found no difficulty in securing interviews from white people. There was no disposition on their part to conceal any part they took in the lynchings. They discussed the details of the burning of Sam Hose with the freedom which one would talk about an afternoon's divertisement in which he had very pleasantly participated” (Wells-Barnett, *Lynch* 13).

Wells’s investigations, however, went even further than the horrific details—details piled like bones in a photograph from the liberation of Auschwitz—to column after column of
statistics and page after page of detailed facts that she gleaned from newspapers—both black- and white-owned—across the nation, as well as from first-hand reports from private detectives and her own observations, as shall be seen later in this chapter in the analysis of the pamphlet that was published for distribution at the 1893 Chicago World’s Fair (Wells, A Red 82-87; Wells, “Lynch” 29-43).

At the Fair:

Exclusion Exacerbated

Into an environment where African Americans perceived that “the exclusionary and derogatory policies of the exposition management functioned as the cultural counterpoints to the assaults occurring on blacks across the South at the hands of white lynch mobs” (Rydell, “Editor’s” xx), Wells arrived in Chicago, joining her longtime friend Frances Ellen Harper, whose published poetry and work for abolition had made her widely popular (Giddings, When 28; Giddings, Ida 130, 209). The lack of black representation was a step back from other expositions; for example, the previous New Orleans Exposition had “separate Negro exhibits” (Giddings, Ida 244).

The issues surrounding the inclusion of African Americans at the Chicago World’s Fair were complex, reflecting the disparate views of those involved in the planning. While some black groups wanted African Americans to have separate exhibits from whites, including both men and women (Weimann 104), others wanted the genders separated by exhibits, that is, white women’s and black women’s accomplishments exhibited together, but separate from men’s. Representing yet another faction, Weimann notes, “Some Ladies may well have been unsure that ‘colored women’ should have a segregated exhibit, just as many of the more radical women did not want a segregated Woman’s Building. Frances Dickinson’s suggestion that a black Lady
Manager be appointed was undoubtedly aimed at drawing black women into the exhibits in general” (104). Dickinson’s attempt to be inclusive was rebutted by a “Southern Lady Manager,” who replied, “We will speak to negroes [sic] and be kind to them as employees, but we will not sit with them” (qtd. in Weimann 104).

The situation was complicated by the infighting of four separate black women’s groups (118), by the Board of Lady Managers’ being comprised of too many representatives from Southern or border states (seven of twenty-five) for the comfort of the African American groups (110), and by scarce representation by blacks of either gender on the Columbian Commission (123). The flurry of letters among the participants, particularly between the members of the Board of Lady Managers, reads like a script from a soap opera—there is a great deal of drama, but very little actually happens (109-16). In defense of the Board of Lady Managers, the National Board argued that the former was “endeavoring to show the work of industrial women for all countries in the world without discrimination as to race, or color, and it will certainly feel an especial interest in securing such a representation from the colored women of the country as will fully illustrate their rapid advancement since the emancipation of their race” (qtd. in Weimann 123).

In the end, only one state board would appoint an African American representative. Joan Imogen Howard, a New York City schoolteacher, “was appointed to the New York Board of Women Managers” (121). She collected “samples of the best” of African American women’s work, as well as writing a book compiled from statistics about their accomplishments from the responses of more than a thousand women across the United States to whom she had personally written (121-22). One may recall the size and dimensions of a large high school trophy case to envision The Afro-American Exhibit in the Woman’s Building that eventually contained the
artifacts that Howard collected (122, 269; Giddings, Ida 248). Its installation was supervised by Fannie Barrier Williams, an African American activist appointed by the Board of Lady Managers (Giddings, Ida 248).

In addition, the World Congress of Representative Women scheduled several African American women to speak under its auspices, including Anna Julia Cooper (Sewall 2:711-15); Hallie Quinn Brown (2:724-29); Harper, whose “Woman’s Political Future” is widely anthologized (1:433-37); Fannie Jackson Coppin (2:715-17); and Williams (2:696-711). Cooper also spoke at the Congress of Women held in the Assembly Room of the Woman’s Building, where Stone presented her landmark speech (Eagle 296). Following Coppin’s remarks, Douglass, the only man to speak at the World Congress of Representative Women, was called extemporaneously to the platform, where he also made a few glowing statements (Sewall 2:717-18).

Also represented at the fair were a “Hiawatha” sculpture by Edmonia Lewis, exhibited in the Woman’s Building library; a painting, “Yucca Glorioso,” by George Washington Carver; and several exhibits for the Palace of Liberal Arts and Education that were organized by African American colleges (Rydell, “Editor’s” xviii-xix; Giddings, Ida 270-71).

“But the White City was a white city in more ways than one,” as Weimann notes:

In response to pressure, the Columbian Commission appointed one black man as an alternate from the state of Missouri. Three blacks held clerical positions on the Fair’s administrative staff. There were no black guards at the Exposition. Embarrassingly and lamely, in retrospect at least, August 25, 1893, was declared by the Directors to be “Colored People’s Day.” (123)
Colored People’s Day, or “Jubilee Day,” as it was variously called, was originated with a consensus of fair authorities and “a handful of Boston-area African-American ministers and women’s club organizers” (Rydell, “Editor’s” xxvi). The African American group had wanted “to demonstrate African-American cultural achievements since Emancipation” (xxvi). It would have been better, Barnett would later write the *The Reason Why*, if employed at the Fair more than “two colored persons could be found whose occupations were of a higher grade than that of janitor, laborer and porter, and these two only clerkships” (Wells, et al. 80).

Just a year earlier, Wells had left Memphis to visit Harper in New York, having submitted an editorial for publication in *Free Speech* that would, once again, change the direction of her life. In the editorial, she cites the lynching of eight more African Americans in a week’s time:

> five on the same old racket—the new alarm about raping white women. The same programme of hanging, then shooting bullets into the lifeless bodies was carried out to the letter. . . . If Southern white men are not careful, they will over-reach themselves and public sentiment will have a reaction; a conclusion will then be reached which will be very damaging to the moral reputation of their women.

(qtd. in *A Red* 79)

In retaliation, “a committee of leading citizens” went to the *Free Speech* office, ran the business manager “out of town, destroyed the type and furnishings of the office, and left a note saying that anyone trying to publish the paper again would be punished with death” (Duster 61-62). Like the biblical Joseph, who was warned in a dream not to return to Nazareth after the birth of Jesus but rather to flee to Egypt (Matthew 2:13), Wells was warned not to return to Memphis; she would not again set foot in the South for thirty years (Giddings, *Ida* 210). Her sojourn in New York
opened new doors, and funded by African American clubwomen in the metropolitan area, in late 1892, she published her first pamphlet, *Southern Horrors: Lynch Law in All Its Phases* (Wells, *Southern* 50).

Now, in 1893, Harper was preparing to give a speech at the World’s Congress of Representative Women, where she would plead with women of all races to take advantage of their opportunities and to make new ones in “Woman’s Political Future” (Sewall 1:433-37). Wells, who was on her way back to the United States from a speaking tour in England, was in Chicago, working with elder statesman and male feminist Frederick Douglass to produce a protest pamphlet, written in the convoluted context of the absence of broad African American representation at the World’s Fair, as well as in the shadow of the horrific statistics Wells would quote, including that “[t]hree hundred human beings were burned alive in civilized America during the first six months of this year (1893). Over one hundred have been lynched in this half year. They were hanged, then cut, shot and burned” (Wells, “Lynch” 30).

As with the genres represented by Stone and Cassatt—the commonplace speech and the mural, both of which were remediated by their creators as challenges to the status quo and as calls for acknowledgment of societal upheaval—a pamphlet could be innocuous unless it too was remediated by its creator. Such was the case of the pamphlet begun by Douglass and Wells but carried through to completion by Wells. In a simple comparison, if the writers of *The Reason Why the Colored American Is Not in the World’s Columbian Exposition* were members of a relay team, Wells was the last leg, deftly receiving the baton and dashing across the finish line.

The production of the pamphlet was a laborious one, fraught with conflict. Douglass was treasurer of the “pamphlet project,” but he was preoccupied with his responsibilities as “the only black American in charge of a pavilion”—the Haitian Pavilion (Giddings, *Ida* 268-69). Further,
he had assumed some responsibility for finding employment for the likes of job-seekers such as “a near-starving poet by the name of Paul Laurence Dunbar, a future Chicago newspaper publisher, Robert Abbott, and the soon-to-be-published novelist James Weldon Johnson” (269). He was also setting himself up for conflict with Wells by implicitly approving of “Colored People’s Day” by choosing to host a program at the Haitian Pavilion on that day (269).

Indeed, Wells’s preference, and that of a small minority of black Chicagoans, including Ferdinand Barnett, would have been to boycott the exposition altogether (269-70; Rydell, “The Chicago” 52 ). But the “pageantry, pride, and patriotism that the fair had taken such pains to display” was enticing (Giddings, Ida 270). And, since some concessions had been made for representation of black women, particularly during the Congress of Representative Women, many African Americans received gladly what Giddings describes as “narrow beams of light that had managed to come through” (273). If Douglass and Wells were to publish a pamphlet “informing the rest of the world of the travails of black Americans in both North and South,” argued the black media, it would “increase white hostility and disgrace blacks before foreign visitors” (Rydell, “The Chicago” 52).

The nature of the divisions within the African American community would continue for decades. These different approaches to the race question were seen most clearly between those who wanted immediate action and nonviolent but explicit confrontation, such as Wells and Barnett, and those who desired slow assimilation and systemic change, to “make do” (Rydell, “Editor’s” xxviii), as did the experienced but weary Douglass. A much younger Booker T. Washington, who would later clash with Ferdinand Barnett and his wife Ida B. Wells-Barnett (Giddings, Ida 433), promoted a message of “conciliation, not agitation” (Rydell, “Editor’s” xxvii). Seventy years later, in 1963, Martin Luther King, Jr. wrote “Letter from a Birmingham
Douglass told Wells that “all we have ever received has come to us in small concessions, and it is not the part of wisdom to despise the day of small things” (qtd. in Rydell, “Editor’s” xxviii; qtd. in Giddings, *Ida* 274). Wells notes that Douglass “thought it better to accept half a loaf than to have no bread at all” (Duster 118).

However, Wells and Barnett could not ignore “the more negative aspects of the exposition” (Giddings, *Ida* 273). In particular, the Midway Plaisance truly represented the spaces proscribed for African Americans in the late nineteenth century. In the wash of the wide acceptance of evolutionary theory among the scientific community, Harvard professors Frederick W. Putnam and Sol Bloom organized “a mile-long strip of ethnological exhibits that lifted evolutionary theory off the pages of social science texts and brought it to life. . . . . [T]he strip was organized according to the prescribed racial order,” with Europeans at the top (273). Writes Gidding, “At the very end of the Midway—and scale of civilization—was a Dahomeyan village where sixty-nine Africans,” dressed androgynously in scanty grass skirts, danced to the beat of a tom-tom (273-74). A *New York Times* reporter noted, “In these wild people we easily detect many characteristics of the American Negro” (qtd. in Giddings, *Ida* 274).

Although Douglass was repulsed by the spectacle, he perceived Colored Day as an opportunity to “make a statement” about what blacks in America had achieved (274). In fact, Douglass’s eloquent oration and subsequent musicians and speakers, including a career-making poetry reading by Dunbar, redeemed the day, though Douglass nearly boycotted his own program after seeing the watermelon vendors set up on the fairgrounds (276). A chagrined Wells read about it in the papers on the following day. In her autobiography she writes, “I went straight out to the fair and begged his pardon for presuming in my youth and inexperience to criticize
him for an effort which had done more to bring our cause to the attention of the American people than anything else which had happened during the fair” (Duster 119).

And, despite his misgivings about its reception, Douglass also agreed to proceed with the publishing of the pamphlet. Among the reasons to read The Reason Why, Rydell notes, is that “it provides insight into the different strategies that African Americans developed to counter the racism embedded in a cultural event that functioned as an engine of American nationalism” (“Editor’s” xxxix). With that introduction, a further perusal of the content of the pamphlet is in order.

The Pamphlet

The Reason Why begins with a preface by Wells, “To the Seeker After Truth,” setting the tone for the pamphlet in three languages: English, French, and German (3-6). Because African Americans have always done the “labor of one-half of this country,” Wells writes, surely foreign visitors to the World’s Columbian Exposition will ask: “Why are not the colored people, who constitute so large an element of the American population, and who have contributed so large a share to American greatness, more visibly present and better represented in the World’s Exposition?” (3-4). The pamphlet that follows intends to answer these and other questions, Wells says.

Douglass’s “Introduction,” the first chapter in the pamphlet, sets up the “truths” he would like to extol—moral progress, liberty, equality, impartiality, human rights, and justice. He would like to say “that to the colored people of America, morally speaking, the World’s Fair now in progress, is not a whitened sepulcher” (7-9). But “nothing of all this can be said . . . without flagrant disregard of the truth” (9):
We have long had in this country, a system of iniquity which possessed the power of blinding the moral perception, stifling the voice of conscience, blunting all human sensibilities and perverting the plainest teaching of the religion we have here professed, a system which John Wesley truly characterized as the sum of all villainies . . . . That system was American slavery. Though it is now gone, its asserted spirit remains.

Douglass uses ethos to argue for his readers’ allegiance to religion and for their acknowledgment of his own reliability as a former slave. Then he moves into the rationale supporting the treatment of blacks. Until the African American life is rendered to be sacred, that is, human, and “the character of the Negro” is perceived as moral and virtuous, he argues, the “[o]utrages upon the Negro in this country . . . are not only credible but entirely consistent and logical” (10-11). Clearly, the rationale must change. Nor can the African American afford to remain passive; instead, writes Douglass, “He must embrace every avenue open to him for the acquisition of wealth. He must educate his children and build up a character for industry, economy, intelligence and virtue. Next to victory is the glory and happiness of manfully contending for it. Therefore, contend! contend!” (15).

The next three chapters are by Wells: “Class Legislation,” “The Convict Lease System,” and “Lynch Law,” though the first two were not titled in the pamphlet that was distributed; likely, too, is that “Albion Tourgée provided the statistics for the chapters—if he didn’t write them himself” (Giddings, *Ida* 178). In “Class Legislation,” the author uses statistics to demonstrate how keeping blacks from registering to vote skews the law, leaving “the entire political, legislative, executive and judicial machinery of the country in the hands of the white
people. The religious, moral and financial forces of the country are also theirs” (Wells, “Lynch”18-19). This power resulted in legislation,

shown by the existence in most of the southern states of the convict lease system, the chain-gang, vagrant laws, election frauds, keeping back laborers’ wages, paying for work in worthless script instead of lawful money, refusing to sell land to Negroes and the many political massacres where hundreds of black men were murdered for the crime (?) of casting the ballot. (18)

The next chapter, “The Convict Lease System,” explains in no uncertain terms the immorality of the legislation in a dozen states—not all of them southern—that allowed for convicts to be “leased out to work for railway contractors, mining companies and those who farm large plantations” (23). In short, they are slave labor in thin disguise, a practice exposed in shameful detail in Douglas A. Blackmon’s 2008 book Slavery By Another Name: The Re-Enslavement of Black People in America from the Civil War to World War II.

Wells’s final chapter, “Lynch Law,” stacks statistics in deadly columns, statistics compiled from major newspapers (30-33). She includes a “table published by the Chicago Tribune January, 1892,” which she submits “for thoughtful consideration” (30). Between this and other statistical tables, including the 241 persons lynched in 1892, divided by the states in which they were lynched and the charges for which they were killed, she writes vivid narratives detailing the events surrounding several lynchings. Wells re-tells story after story from newspaper accounts, some of them verbatim, of the inhumane treatment of men, women, and children (30-43). In this way, she turns the weapon of the media on itself, just as the Old Testament prophet Amos had done when he began his accusations of injustice on the fringes of his audience’s circle, cycling in until the finger of judgment rested on them, smugly listening in
their home town. Wells’s familiar litany from previous newspaper editorials she had written was sharpened by the addition of photographs and “vivid, detailed descriptions of several lynchings that had occurred in July since the opening of the World’s Fair” (Giddings, *Ida* 279). She thus reminds her readers of the immediacy of the problem and highlights that some lynchings had devolved from a “spontaneous outburst of passion” to planned circus-like events, with Wells even being invited to attend “to write it up” (280; Wells, “Lynch” 38).

Royster notes that “Wells crafts her argument from good sense, reason, and logic, and she documents her account through sources that her audience would find reliable, more reliable than the word of a young black woman” (“To Call” 180). As journalism historian David T. Mindich says in *Just the Facts: How “Objectivity” Came to Define American Journalism*, “Ida B. Wells, through careful research and impassioned pleas, confronted ‘objectivity’ and showed that mainstream journalists, while professing their ‘objectivity,’ were operating under flawed and culturally biased assumptions” (qtd. in Piepmeier, “Notes” 240).

In the penultimate chapter, “The Progress of the Afro-American Since Emancipation,” I. Garland Penn also uses statistics, beginning with the noteworthy figure that the African American population in the United States had more than doubled, from 3.6 million, to 7.5 million, in the forty years since Emancipation (44). He details the steady climb of African Americans in the professions, especially “the ministry and teaching” as well as in literature, journalism, church, business interests, as “tradesmen and general laborers,” and in art and music (47-64). A list of “sixty patented inventions by blacks, which could have easily been included in the industrial pavilions” was also published (Giddings, *Ida* 279):

The inventions included a cornstalk harvester, a locomotive smokestack, a ventilator for railroad cars, a lasting machine for shoes, and a fire escape ladder.
Of particular note were the inventions of Granville Woods, who had conceived the apparatus for the transmission of messages by electricity that was assigned to the American Bell Telephone company, and his patents for a telephone transmitter.

Implicit in the black press historian’s arguments is a challenge to the hierarchy of the evolutionary ladder represented on the Midway in clear contradiction to the creativity, genius, work ethic, character, skill, integrity, and religious devotion represented in the African Americans listed in Garland’s essay.

The final chapter is by Ferdinand L. Barnett, who clearly explains “The Reason Why.” Step by step, he reiterates the attempts made by African Americans to be more included in the governance and planning of the Exposition, particularly in light of their population in the United States (Wells, et al. 67). Copies of the letters sent to attempt to remediate the situation, as well as the unsatisfactory responses to them, are included (67-79; Giddings, Ida 279). He concludes that the Fair “draws to a close and that which has been done is without remedy,” but the authors wanted “to tell the reason why we have had no part nor lot in the Exposition” (Wells, et al. 81).

When Wells wrote her portions of the pamphlet and when she worked persistently to see that it was published, the already internationally known journalist “chose truth as her shield,” as Kathleen Kennedy notes in “Ida B. Wells’s Campaign for Peace and Freedom” in Women Who Speak for Peace (25). As Johnson says, “With a corset, she had girded herself to do battle with the world” (“Cultural” 218). Wells’s metaphorical corset equipped her to defend herself even as she went on the offensive, “armed with statistics” to prove that “black males were not vicious sexual monsters,” as white society, especially white men but also white women, would have them believe (Broussard 44).
A study in contradictions—or complexity, perhaps—Wells “operated in a field that males dominated. Her . . . interactions were mainly with men who became her mentors” (Broussard 45). Nevertheless, she held to the “concept of the ‘true or ideal woman,’” as she says in “The Model Woman: A Pen Picture of the Typical Southern Girl,” “especially in the face of derogatory perceptions of women,” and especially of African American women. “Character,” writes Wells, is the “typical girl’s only wealth,” and “her first consideration was to preserve that character in spotless purity” (qtd. in Broussard 46). While the logic may seem archaic in the early twenty-first century, Evelyn Hammonds explains in “Toward a Genealogy of Black Female Sexuality: The Problematic of Silence” in *Feminist Theory and the Body*:

> White women were characterized as pure, passionless, and de-sexed, while black women were the epitome of immorality, pathology, impurity, and sex itself. . . . Buttressed by the doctrine of the Cult of True Womanhood, this binary opposite seemed to lock black women forever outside the ideology of womanhood so celebrated in the Victorian era. (qtd. in Piepmeier, “The Supreme” 154)

Piepmeier argues that “[Sojourner] Truth dealt with this binary by sidestepping it, identifying her body with a different model of corporeality—the tall tale,” while “Wells addressed the binary and argued forcefully against it by identifying white women with sexuality. In so doing, Wells destabilized the cultural narratives defining black and white womanhood” (154).

And in so doing, Wells “acted boldly and tenaciously in the interest of social change,” as Jacqueline Jones Royster writes in “To Call a Thing by Its True Name: The Rhetoric of Ida B. Wells” (171). In the genre known as a pamphlet, a document used for persuasion, its recurring theme being, “You need to change your mind about something,” Wells wrote to “[break] the
silence on lynching” (Royster, “To Call” 175) to enlighten the public that would be attending the world’s Tower of Babel to science and statistics.

As Royster adds, “Wells articulated for a race, a nation, and a world the complexities of this problem so that those with the power to do so could act responsibly, and she pointed her readers toward what for her was the obvious thing to do” (‘To Call’ 175):

The real need is for a public sentiment in favor of enforcing the law and giving every man, white and black, a fair hearing before the lawful tribunals…. [T]he Negro has as good a right to a fair trial as the white man, and the South will not be free from these horrible crimes of mob law so long as the better class of citizens try to find excuses for recognizing Judge Lynch. (Wells, et al. 43)

Conclusions

As with Cassatt’s Modern Woman, Wells’s The Reason Why was not necessarily a public success. In spite of Douglass’s and Wells’s international prominence and the respectability of their co-authors, “world’s fair authorities and their supporters in the white press paid it no attention” (Rydell, “Editor’s” xiii). But African Americans were divided on the wisdom of its publication as well, asking if it was the best strategy for responding to the fair’s racism. As a result, until the last ten years or so, The Reason Why, as Rydell says, “has never received its due as an important work of social and cultural criticism” (xiv). The pamphlet is available to contemporary readers because it has been recovered and reproduced in reliable formats such as Rydell’s 1999 edited The Reason Why the Colored American Is Not in the World’s Columbian Exposition: The Afro-American’s Contribution to Columbian Literature, which contains the pamphlet in its entirety, in addition to Rydell’s helpful and substantive introduction to the text. Rydell writes, “[C]ultural representations matter because of their power to define social identities
and to project and limit meaning,” and *The Reason Why* is a “cultural text,” a pamphlet opposed to another cultural text, the World’s Fair (xv).

For her part, Wells was not easily discouraged, as “memories of the White City, far from immobilizing Wells, led her to redouble her fight for civil rights and social justice” (xxxvii). In 1893, as Stone was at the end of a long and illustrious career and as Cassatt was at the peak of her artistic career, Wells was launched into a journalistic career. She would spend the rest of her life speaking against the abuses wrought on African Americans; infiltrating enemy lines to gain access to primary sources; and writing magazine stories, newspaper articles, and pamphlets that remain models for contemporary investigative journalism.

Following in the paths emblazoned by these three women, one may, as Johnson admonishes the reader, make genres and the discourses and places defined by them “transformative rather than embrac[ing] again some one corset as the line of truth or beauty” (“Cultural” 228). The figurative corsets encountered—the “glass ceiling,” the “traditional family,” the approaches to scholarship and “rhetorical systems that have been coded masculine” (228)—are available to exploit, to test, to push against, discourses and places where new realities can be produced, new “domains of objects and rituals of truth” (Foucault, qtd. in Johnson, “Cultural” 203), which sounds a lot like David R. Russell’s Vygotskian cultural-historical activity theory, that genres are, quoting Bazerman, “forms of life, ways of being, frames for social action” (Russell 7; Bazerman, “Systems” 79). As Bazerman puts it in another essay, “Participation is the other side of rhetoric: the art of influencing others through language in the great social undertakings that shape the way we live” (“From Cultural” 62). Philosopher John Austin wrote that “the issuing of the utterance is the performing of an action” (6), and Bazerman summarized Austin’s assertions about the “performative utterance” (Austin 6) in order to
indicate the formative, creative power of rhetorical acts: “[W]ords not only mean things, they do things” (Bazerman, “Speech” 313).
CHAPTER 5: THE PROGRESS OF 120 YEARS

It is our nation’s faith in a more perfect union that allows a Puerto Rican girl from the Bronx to stand here now. I am struck again today by the wonder of my own life and the life we in America are so privileged to lead.

—Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor, 2009

On the day that President Barack Obama honored Sonia Sotomayor, “the first Latino to be confirmed to the Supreme Court,” he also distributed to sixteen civilians his choices for the Medal of Freedom. Among the living recipients were retired Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O’Connor, the first woman to serve on that court; Nancy G. Brinker, breast-cancer activist; Billie Jean King, women’s tennis pioneer; Janet Davison Rowley, cancer researcher; and Mary Robinson, Ireland’s first female president, “for her advocacy of women’s and human rights” (Talev). Women may be ready to say, with the old Virginia Slims commercial, “You’ve come a long way, baby,” if for more profound reasons than the right to smoke in public and, ostensibly, to be gorgeous while doing so; indeed, one 1969 cigarette commercial depicts a woman snipping off the constraints of her tight dress and revealing her midriff, freeing her from “the old days,” when she was “laced in, hemmed in” (“Virginia”).

The symbolism of that advertisement is powerful and persuasive. In the nineteenth century, complemented by the Delsarte corset, the Delsarte System of Expression, a course in oratorical performance, divided the human torso into zones (Johnson, “Cultural” 205-06). In “the curves of a line of beauty,” the chest, the “mental zone” (Stebbins 121) is protected—or caged—in the bones, wire, and fabric of a corset. Stebbins notes that “the best carriage throws the moral zone”—the chest—“into prominence” (122). The result is that the “vital zone: seat of the
appetites” (122) is pulled in by the corset, keeping a woman’s appetites “well under control” (Johnson, “Cultural” 211). That the images of corseting used in the late twentieth century were so apropos to, and so widely and immediately understood by, their audience affirms Nan Johnson’s assertion that “the imposition of the cult of true womanhood on the rhetorical fortunes of white, middle-class, American women lasted far longer and was deployed by more avenues than we have realized” (6).

Even as women continue to celebrate their freedom from constraint and to embrace the responsibilities of ever-changing decisions about how to use that freedom, the Institute for Women’s Policy Research reports that in 2009, women in the United States received an average of 80.2 cents for every dollar earned by men (Hartmann, et al. 2). And the Institute for Research on Poverty writes that in 2008, 8.1 million families in the United States lived in poverty. Of all family groups, “poverty is highest among those headed by single women,” a figure that comprises 4.2 million families (“Who?”).

Many questions may follow a presentation of these statistics, but this historiography calls for an answer to one in particular: On the sea of time, how has remediation of their rhetorical space by Lucy Stone, Mary Cassatt, and Ida B. Wells rippled the surface of the water to the shores of the early twenty-first century? This chapter addresses the issues related to this question by first revisiting the lasting social and cultural impact of the 1893 Chicago World’s Fair. Next, the rhetorical dynamism of the fair and its participants is addressed by applying a smattering of emergent behavior and complexity theory. Third, the trail left by those who were at the fair is followed, although in a cursory and necessarily truncated fashion, focusing especially on Stone, Cassatt, and Wells. Fourth, the possibility of progress in the 120 years since the Chicago World’s Fair is summarized. Conclusions of the study follow, including a reiteration of the
study’s overall purpose, the theories brought to bear, its contributions to studies of women’s rhetorical practices, and its limitations and subsequent possibilities for further work.

Wendy Dasler Johnson embraces the “current expanded understanding” of rhetoric (204) as “an omnibus term meaning the entire field of language and literature” (Bigelow 34), an “‘omnibus term’ with verbal codes as just one passenger on that bus” (Johnson “Cultural” 204). This helps the reader to see that “rhetoric can work as metadiscipline”; indeed, as Jane Tompkins says, “Rhetoric makes history by shaping reality to the dictates of its political design; it makes history by convincing the people of the world that its description of the world is the true one” (141).

All the World’s a Fair:
The Exposition’s Indelible Mark

In order to synthesize how these nineteenth-century women and their rhetoric made history, one must again return to the 1893 Chicago World’s Fair for its unique position as a flagship of how Americans would “define [their] social reality” (Rydell, “The Chicago” 39). For many, the White City was “a manifestation of what was good in American life and . . . an ennobling vision Americans should strive to effectuate” (40). For others, particularly in relationship to the Midway Plaisance, the fair was an “ethnological, scientific sanction for the American view of the nonwhite world as barbaric and childlike and gave a scientific basis to the racial blueprint for building a utopia” (40).

The Chicago World’s Fair closed its doors in October 1893, just six months after opening (Rydell, “The Chicago” 68). As Rydell understates it, the “World’s Columbian Exposition left a lasting imprint on the American cultural landscape” (68). In Remediation: Understanding New Media, Bolter and Grusin note that the fair was perceived to be the archetype for the “first
American theme park” (173; Adams, *The American* 19-40). “Theme parks,” Bolter and Grusin say, “remind us that the city is a space that is both highly mediated and itself a kind of grand narrative” (173). Indeed, the vision for Oz—Frank Baum’s and artist and business partner William Wallace Denslow’s gleaming white city—was generated by their attendance at the fair (Larson 373). Baum was covering the anticipated exhibits for the fair as a reporter for Chicago’s *Evening Post* when Thomas Alva Edison called a news conference to titillate the audience about the secret contraption he would reveal—a precursor to a motion picture projector (Schwartz 214, 222). Baum describes it this way:

> As he entered the Auditorium Hotel this morning the throng that filled the rotunda parted to let him pass. . . . Nearly all recognized his strong, clean-cut features. Of medium height is the wizard of Menlo Park, whose finely shaped head and frank, open countenance, brightened by a pair of gentle intelligent eyes, sits on a frame square-shouldered, stout, erect and sturdy as an oak. He speaks in a low, clear, distinct voice and illuminates his utterances with a smile. (qtd. in Schwartz 215)

Edison’s “massive head,” so disproportionate to the rest of his body, foretold the disembodied “Head” of the Wizard of Oz (215).

Likewise, Walt Disney’s conception of the Magic Kingdom may have been born, at least in part, in response to the stories his father and older brothers told, his father having been a carpenter and furniture maker for the fair although the connection remains speculative (Adams, *The American* 88; Larson 373). More defensible, as Judith A. Adams notes in *The American Amusement Park Industry: A History of Technology and Thrills*, the fair’s “successful merger of entertainment, engineering, and education within a clearly sectored landscape provided a model for Disney and theme park designers,” combining, as Adams quotes architectural critic
Montgomery Schuyler, “unity, magnitude, and illusion” (19). Disney “would embrace the unified and complete planning concept, with its reliance on technology,” Adams writes, “that was so brilliantly incorporated by the World’s Columbian Exposition” (36).

The 1893 Chicago World’s Fair was also a prototype of an enclosed site that achieved its effectiveness as a result of “city planning, architecture, and technology” (19). Adams expands the idea:

The White City was the first presentation of a model modern city where all services, including transportation, sanitation, water, power, and protection, could be systematically organized to insure maximum comfort, safety, efficiency, and beauty in an urban environment. It gave impetus to the City Beautiful movement, which would become the cause of the exposition’s ruling architect, Daniel Burnham. (35)

A Dynamic Street in a Living City

If Stone, Cassatt, and Wells were merely stones in the streets of Chicago’s New Jerusalem—a one square-mile model of the New Testament prophet John’s visionary planned city, built on a 1,400- by 1,400-mile square—like John’s “street of the city” (Larson 5; Rev. 21:16-21), these three women were nevertheless golden. However, in order to understand the relationship of the stones to the street to the city to the world, a short excursion into Steven Johnson’s “emergent behavior” (18), previously alluded to in the first chapter of this text, may prove useful.

In Emergence, Johnson discusses at length the similarities between slime mold, ant colonies, cities, and software. All these systems share, says Johnson, the ability to


solve problems by drawing on masses of relatively stupid elements, rather than a single, intelligent “executive branch.” They are bottom-up systems, not top-down. . . . [T]hey are complex adaptive systems that display emergent behavior. In these systems, agents residing on one scale start producing behavior that lies one scale above them: ants create colonies; urbanites create neighborhoods; simple pattern-recognition software learns how to recommend new books. The movement from low-level rules to higher-level sophistication is what we call emergence. (18)

Stevens especially studies forms of emergent behavior that respond “to the specific and changing needs of their environment,” that is, they are “dynamic”; “they form patterns in time as well as space” (20). When John Holland created “the genetic algorithm,” Johnson writes, he took “the logic of Darwinian evolution and built it into code” (58). From Holland’s creation came an “impressive” genetic algorithm system, developed by David Jefferson and Chuck Taylor. Johnson paraphrases Jefferson: “[I]n order to watch Darwinian evolution in action, all you need are objects that are capable of reproducing themselves, and reproducing themselves imperfectly, and having some sort of resource limitation so that there’s competition” (60).

The applications of this complexity theory, especially in computer software development, resulting in massive new paradigms about intelligence, social relationships, and entertainment (e.g., Artificial Intelligence, match-making, and SimCity [Johnson, Emergence 66]), are hallmarks of the twenty-first century. The 2010 television series Criminal Minds, Covert Affairs, and Lie to Me, for example, all rely heavily on pattern recognition, the first two depending on socially idiosyncratic but well-adapted computer wizards running highly sophisticated software, the last, on physical observation of human behavior.
Fascinating as the modern applications of emergent behavior theory may be, the reader is reminded of ancient wisdom, which also speaks to “form[ing] patterns in time as well as space” (Johnson, *Emergence* 20). In Plato’s *Phaedrus*, for example, Socrates argues that “every discourse must be organized, like a living being, with a body of its own, as it were, so as not to be headless or footless, but to have a middle and members, composed in fitting relationship to each other and to the whole” (Bizzell and Herzberg 159). The function of rhetoric, writes Aristotle, “is not to persuade but to see the available means of persuasion in each case” (Kennedy 36). Every discourse—oration, painting, text—must conform to the needs of the time and space in which it is to be “performed” in order to persuade the hearer, viewer, or reader “to a certain action or belief—when [s]he has acquired all this, and added thereto a knowledge of the times for speaking and for keeping silence . . . then, and not till then, will [her] art be fully and completely finished,” says Socrates (Bizzell and Herzberg 163-64). Jamieson and Campbell’s discussion of rhetorical hybrids comes into play, as they see genres as “not only dynamic responses to circumstances,” but rather, that “each is a dynamis—a potential fusion of elements that may be energized or actualized as a strategic response to a situation” (146).

**The Living City**

**as a Nexus of Energy**

Thus, if one thinks of Stone crafting her speech and Cassatt designing her mural and Wells writing her pamphlet—if one thinks of each of these genres as being a “fusion of elements” that was “actualized as a strategic response to a situation” (146)—then one can also begin to think how each performance in its particular medium was related to the larger situation, that is, the White City. Studies of how cities are organized show that the “city is complex because it overwhelms, yes,” writes Steven Johnson, “but also because it has a coherent
personality, a personality that self-organizes out of millions of individual decisions, a global order built out of local interactions” (39). It is thus possible to envision one of Johnson’s giant dirt cities populated by millions of ants (Ant Lucy, Ant Mary, Ant Ida), all communicating with one another, as “convincingly proved” by Edward O. Wilson, a Harvard entomologist, “and coordinat[ing] overall colony behavior . . . by recognizing patterns in pheromone trail left by fellow ants” (Johnson, Emergence 52). To quote Bolter and Grusin, that which remediates “appropriates the techniques, forms, and social significance of other media and attempts to rival or refashion them in the name of the real. A medium in our culture can never operate in isolation, because it must enter into relationships of respect and rivalry with other media” (98). In short, that which remediates follows the trail left by others and adapts. That is, it changes and refashions the medium; it remediates the medium.

Those who attended the fair, those who knew Stone, Cassatt, and Wells, and those who have vicariously experienced the aforementioned, as is the case with the contemporary reader and viewer—all of them have moved away from the nexus of the White City, carrying evidence of their encounters and subsequently remediating their own space in time. While much evidence of the effects of the trails leading from the White City is anecdotal, suppositional, and inferential, other evidence is supported by clear documentation; it is this last portion that bears further scrutiny here.

Following the Trail
from the City Node

Having re-seen their rhetorical acts through the lens of genre specificity in kairos, “an opening that is limited in respect to space as well as time,” as ancient philosopher Gorgias denotes the term (Consigny, Gorgias 43; Onians 345-47), the reader can see that Wells, Cassatt,
and Stone were in some sense rhetorical organisms in a powerful node, or nexus, of energy. In discussing Mitch Resnick’s computerized slime mold simulations, Steven Johnson notes:

> With only a few minds exploring a given problem, the cells remain disconnected, meandering across the screen as isolated units, each pursuing its own desultory course. With pheromone trails that evaporate quickly, the cells leave no trace of their progress—like an essay published in a journal that sits unread on a library shelf for years. But plug more minds into the system and give their work a longer, more durable trail—by publishing their ideas in best-selling books, or founding research centers to explore those ideas—and before long the system arrives at a phase transition: isolated hunches and private obsessions coalesce into a new way of looking at the world, shared by thousands of individuals. (64)

What is provocative is that 27.5 million people attended the fair, representing all the major countries and the United States, whether through exhibits, individual participation, or both (Larson 5). The total number represents “an attendance nearly equal to the yearly gate count of thirty million or so visitors at Walt Disney World nearly a century later” (Adams, “The American” xix). These millions of people physically attended, observed, bumped into one another, and went home again. They were changed. As Ray Ginger writes in “White City in the Muck,” “Even a sophisticate like Hamlin Garland, a young writer on the way up, wrote to his aging parents on their Dakota farm: ‘Sell the cook stove if necessary and come. You must see this fair.’ At Jackson Park an old man was heard to comment to his wife: ‘Well, Susan, it paid, even if it did take all the burial money’” (21). Now, nearly two billion people—a number that changes moment-by-moment—can, via the World Wide Web, virtually visit the fair, interacting with others from around the globe (“World”). And so the system “arrives at a phase transition”
(Johnson, *Emergence* 64), the one made possible by digitized media and by virtual social networks, resulting in a “longer, more durable trail” (64), one marked not by linear movement but by merges and re-merges of clusters of networks, by mediation and re-mediation.

Lucy Stone’s trail leads the explorer directly to her daughter, Alice Stone Blackwell, who was born exactly one hundred years before I was. She and her mother “were among the first mother-daughter members” of what is now the American Association of University Women (Hollingsworth xx). A hundred years later, I am a member of what began as an AAUW book club and which has as its participants several mother-daughter members, the daughters now providing leadership as the mothers pass along the baton.

Blackwell’s biography of her mother also documents the statements made at the International Council of Women held in Washington in 1888. There, Susan B. Anthony, Julia Ward Howe, and France E. Willard “all told how they had been converted to woman suffrage by Lucy Stone” (266). Blackwell herself continued to produce the newspaper her parents had started, the *Woman’s Journal*, which was published until 1931 (Kerr 248). “To this day,” writes Kerr, “it stands as the most complete archival source for the work done by nineteenth-century women to secure legal and political rights” (248). Blackwell also helped to form the League of Woman Voters (Kerr 247).

Kerr writes that even if Alice Stone Blackwell’s mother

was single-minded to a fault and inclined at times to righteous rigidity, Stone possessed a bedrock integrity, an overarching intelligence, and an undefinable gift for touching the hearts of those who came in contact with her—whether by the thousands in the great lecture halls of the nineteenth century or in a moment’s audience in a railway carriage. (2)
As Harriet Winslow Sewall writes of Stone, “[H]er sex can never show enough gratitude to her” (qtd. in Kerr 2).

If Stone’s speech was an immediate success, Cassatt’s mural was less so. Palmer loved it, considering it “by far the most beautiful thing that has been done for the Exposition” and predicting for it “the most delightful success” (qtd. in Barter 96). But the press was less kind, panning it for its intense, “bold palette, which included vivid pink, apple green, purple, and gold” (96), the very elements that distinguished “late nineteenth-century decorative painting[’s] . . . break with naturalism” (Webster 124). Cassatt’s deliberate “choice of bright, well-saturated color” was what “most distanced” her work from that of more traditional mural painting (124). However, the mural’s discontinuity with the rest of the Woman’s Building neoclassical architectural and decorative conventions was not well received. Had Cassatt pursued additional mural work, writes Webster, “her work might have become more harmonious and refined” (124).

The immense effort required to produce the mural, the “logistical and contractual difficulties, and general disorganization of the fair administration soured Cassatt on the event,” writes Sharp (150). Even though she was invited to “participate in the opening celebration . . . and serve on the jury for the fine-arts exhibition,” she declined to do so, choosing instead to continue to develop her following in France, where she had less opposition as a female artist (150).

Nevertheless, Cassatt’s painting marks the beginning of widespread mural painting in the United States, along with the participation of more than thirty painters who decorated other buildings at the Exposition (Webster 117). More importantly for Cassatt and the legacy she would leave, she finished the year “with a host of new pictures and ideas for color prints, all using the same models and the same garden setting, with many continuing the themes of
plucking fruit and playing the banjo. These works, formulated without the restrictions of the mural format, were some of the strongest and most beautiful Cassatt had ever done” (Mathews, *Mary* 213). The resulting exhibits in France enabled Cassatt to pluck the fruit of her own labor.

The mural itself is lost. Having been stored in what is now the Museum of Science and Industry, the former Fine Arts Building, the only building remaining from the White City, it eventually landed in Bertha Palmer’s possession, according to Webster’s fine detective work (133, 136). There is no evidence whatsoever that the mural was in storage in the Woman’s Building or in a warehouse on exposition grounds when the White City performed its last act, going up in flames on July 5, 1894, at the height of the Pullman Strike, to an audience of “more than a hundred thousand Chicagoans [who had] gathered in Jackson Park to watch a three-hour holocaust that ‘exceeded anything of the kind that had occurred since the Great Fire of 1871’” as a *Chicago Tribune* reporter recorded the event (qtd. in Miller, *City* 550). Rather, as Webster surmises, the mural may “exist somewhere high on a library wall, covered in grime, in some Midwestern college building within a hundred-mile radius of Chicago” (138-39).

In 1915, late in the active years of her life, Cassatt was asked to participate in “a benefit exhibition at Durand-Ruel’s New York gallery, the proceeds of which would go to the Woman Suffrage Campaign Fund” (Sharp 168). By then, Sharp notes, she had become a “passionate supporter of the suffrage movement” (169). In fact, the sponsor of the exhibit was Louisine Havemeyer, Cassatt’s old friend who had subsequently become her patron. When Havemeyer visited Cassatt in Paris, Cassatt told her, “Go home and work for the suffrage. . . . If the world is to be saved, it will be the women who save it” (qtd. in Sharp 169).

Unlike Stone, who went largely ignored in the history of woman suffragists (Kerr 1), Cassatt has never been “lost” to historians (Mathews, *Mary* 330). “Reflecting current feminist
ideals,” Mathews says, “she is now seen as a feminist herself, consciously using her art and her eloquent speech to advance the cause of women in her own day” (333):

The most faithful chronicler is the one who uses all the sources available and interprets them in a convincing manner, but who, at the same time, acknowledges her human complexity and the complexity of the circumstances under which she lived. The only possible goal is to make her live as vividly in words as she did in her life and to pass on the baton to the next decade or generation. That that baton has been eagerly accepted by all generations since her death bodes well for the immortality she worked so hard for—and may yet be hers.

Of the three rhetoricians being studied here, Ida B. Wells’s efforts at the 1893 World’s Fair have received the most attention, and for very good reasons. This assertion is not to diminish the power of Stone’s legacy and life, encapsulated in her final public speech; nor does it diminish the strength and influence of Cassatt’s statement for women’s freedom and independence in her mural. But Wells’s pamphlet was written to preserve the dignity of human beings at a time when African Americans were being mutilated, tortured, disfigured, and killed even as law enforcement ignored or participated in their deaths (Wells, “Lynch”).

The observation that Wells’s work should rise to the forefront in the early twenty-first century is no coincidence, as three images rise to my mind in horrible clarity, depicted here in the order in which the events occurred in history. The first image is that of the 1840 surrender of Matilda Lockhart, an Anglo woman who had been captured by Comanches a year earlier, in Lone Star Justice: The First Century of the Texas Rangers, which I am reading because my grandfather was a Texas Ranger. In her memoir, Mary Maverick describes Lockhart’s condition:
Her head, arms, and face were full of bruises, and sores, and her nose actually burnt off to the bone—all the fleshy end gone, and a great scab formed on the end of the bone. Both nostrils were wide open and denuded of flesh. She told a piteous tale of how dreadfully the Indians had beaten her, and how they would wake her from sleep by sticking a chunk of fire to her flesh, especially to her nose. . . . (qtd. in Utley 25)

The second image of that of the torture and murder of Lee Walker in 1892, the lynching to which Wells was invited ten hours before it occurred (Wells, “Lynch” 38). Quoting verbatim from the *Memphis Commercial*, Wells recounts that Walker “was cut almost to ribbons” before he was hanged (35-36). The body was allowed to “hang for half an hour, then it was cut down and the rope divided among those who lingered around the scene of the tragedy” (36), much as the soldiers at Jesus’s crucifixion “took his clothes, dividing them into four shares, one for each of them” and then casting lots for his undergarment (John 19:21-24). Walker’s body was then set on fire, and although “the majority of the mob left,” a number stayed to watch intently, including a man and woman who brought their young daughter to the spectacle. When the ashes cooled, relic hunters collected “teeth, nails, and bits of charred skin” (Wells, “Lynch” 36). The corpse was further abused until it was finally collected for burial in a potter’s field (37-38).

The third image is the cover story of *Time* magazine for August 9, 2010, portraying a photograph of a beautiful young woman—except for the hole in her face where her nose should be. She looks very much as I imagine Lockhart must have appeared to her redeemers. A year ago, the Taliban dragged Aisha, eighteen, from her bed “to a mountain clearing near her village in the southern Afghan province of Uruzgan, ignoring her protests that her in-laws had been abusive,” which was why she had run away from her husband’s house (Baker 20). “Aisha’s
brother-in-law held her down while her husband pulled out a knife,” Baker writes. “First he sliced off her ears. Then he started on her nose. Aisha passed out from the pain but awoke soon after, choking on her own blood. The men had left her on the mountainside to die” (22).

The remembered pasts of Lockhart, whose story is recorded by Mary Maverick, and Walker, whose story is re-told by Ida B. Wells, are united in their similarities with Aisha, whose story is told by Aryn Baker. Here is clearly an example of women’s “experience of solidarity and unity as a social group” that is “not based on their biological differences from men but on their common historical experience as an oppressed group struggling to become full historical subjects,” as Fiorenza discusses the hurdles incipient in “how to write women into history” (86). For Wells, gender issues are complicated with issues of race, as her purpose was not to just defend the integrity of women, but also to raise to consciousness the cause of African American women and of African American men, who were subject to oppression in ways both similar with, and different from, Anglo women and men, particularly “with reference to patriarchal relationships of inequality within the private and the public spheres” (Fiorenza 86). As Ann D. Gordon, Mari Jo Buhle, and Nancy Schrom Dye note in “The Problem of Women’s History” in *Liberating Women’s History*:

> The current interest of women in their history is analogous to black Americans’ interest in uncovering their past. . . . The search to understand collective conditions and the relation of race to the dominant society has enabled blacks to locate their strengths, their social importance, and the sources of their oppression. Furthermore, this process has provided an analytical framework for recognizing their unity through historical experience, rather than simply through their racial difference from the ruling caste. (85)
Thus, for Wells, the problem was how to write African American men, women, and children “into history” by their being publicly and legally dignified as human beings of equal stature with Anglo men and women.

As was mentioned in the first chapter of this text, in *The Reader’s Repentance: Women Preachers, Women Writers, and Nineteenth-Century Social Discourse*, Christine L. Krueger reminds the reader of “the evangelistic features of nineteenth-century social discourse—its secular adaptations of the sermon form, homiletic rhetoric, and goal of converting readers from various social and political sins” (3). One cannot help but see the correspondence between Stone’s oratory, Cassatt’s symbolism, and Wells’s subject matter with Krueger’s “women’s preaching and working-class resistance to industrial exploitation” (4-5), highlighting the ways that Stone’s, Cassatt’s, and Wells’s tasks, as with those of their sisters and brothers in other woman’s movements, were, at their core, about dignity and humanity—less about victimization and more about social justice. Unless systems changed, attitudes would not change; unless attitudes were challenged, oppressive systems would remain intact. To read the texts of speeches and editorials and study works of art by “rhetorical giants,” as Campbell calls them in “The Sound of Women’s Voices,” is to be asked to acknowledge “major works by women, the rhetorical significance of a major social movement, and . . . the rhetorical links between anti-slavery, temperance, labor, and anti-lynching agitation and the development of organized efforts for women’s rights” (212).

From this study, one can see that John Austin’s “felicity conditions,” the conditions that must be in place in order for the rhetorical act to succeed, were unevenly met (14-15; Bazerman, “Speech” 314). Although Austin is referring specifically to “some at least of the things which are necessary for the smooth or ‘happy’ functioning of a performative” (14), one may apply similar
principles to acts such as Stone’s speech, Cassatt’s painting, and Wells’s pamphlet, each by nature of its genre history bearing the expectations of “an accepted conventional procedure having a certain conventional effect” (14). Stone’s illocutionary act, the act she intended her hearers to recognize (Bazerman, “Speech” 314) in the remediated space in which she stood—a public podium before a mixed-gender audience—was for her feminist sisters and daughters to continue the cause for which she and they had been striving; they did so. Cassatt’s intentions were less successful, for her inexperience in remediating the space of her mural in the context of the vastness and traditionalism of the Woman’s Building came into play. Nevertheless, the “perlocutionary effect”—“[h]ow people take up the acts and determine the consequences of that act for future interaction” (314)—can be seen in modern analysis and understanding of Cassatt’s intentions.

But the results of Wells’s “speech acts” were almost immediate. Bazerman explains that “the matter of arguing for the truth of propositions becomes a matter of meeting those felicity conditions that will lead the relevant audiences to accept your claims as true, thus matching the perlocutionary effect with your illocutionary intent” (“Speech” 315). Wells’s intention was to place “the facts before the American people and later before the world,” writes Royster in her introduction to Southern Horrors: “Her primary effort was not really to change the law, though she certainly felt that the protection of all citizens within the law was the ultimate imperative. Her chief purpose was instead to intervene boldly in public discourse and to change public opinion so that the application of justice for all could prevail” (40).

The law did not change, but the number of lynchings in the United States, which had reached an all-time high in 1892, dropped significantly between 1892 and 1900, during the height of her written anti-lynching campaign (Royster, “Introduction” 40-41). She “dropped an
anti-lynching pebble into the pond of American public sentiment, and for the first time placed mob violence on the American agenda and established a pathway to change” (41). Thus, people used her text to “create new realities of meaning, relation, and knowledge” (Bazerman, “Speech” 309).

Conclusions

As stated in the introductory chapter, the purpose of this dissertation was to flesh out the sketches available from the 1893 Chicago World’s Fair with three of the women who populated that rhetorical time and space. Each of these women forcefully and energetically strove to assist other women in their quest for the opportunities to reach their full potential as citizens and human beings. This study demonstrates how they used the means available to them “in order to challenge and reconstruct the power hierarchy” (Mattingly xiii). While it has been argued that women were in a better position than their foremothers to remediate and navigate the systems in which they lived and worked, one can also see from this study that Mattingly’s “limited locations” (xiii), social barricades, and practical issues impeded their progress. Nevertheless, I show how these boundaries restricted but also enabled the effectiveness of Stone’s last public speech, Cassatt’s radical mural, and Wells’s assertive protest pamphlet.

By showing how women rhetoricians remediated accepted genres and exploited space and time to make their “voices” heard, that is, to “remap” the rhetorical record (Glenn 3; Johnson, Gender 7), I hope to have contributed to the “on-going scholarly project that relies for its intellectual integrity on a willingness within the discipline to see the virtues of redrawing the map over and over again” (Johnson, Gender 9). This was accomplished by using Miller’s features of genre as social action (“Genre” 163) as well as Buchanan’s topoi of education, access, space, genre, body, and career (160-62) as heuristics to frame the arguments.
Herein lie the accomplishments and limitations of the study: The carefully drawn map, for all the valuable information and compelling insights it offers, is subject to redrawing, whether that redrawing be in response to new information, another point of view, or because this is one kind of map—a topographical one, for example, showing the contours of the land—and the next most important map may be, for example, a political one. To the delight of the explorer and historian, one might say that the map-drawing and redrawing is never finished.

Nevertheless, the heuristic provided by Buchanan has proven to be a manageable and useful one, and so one might consider the multitude of unsurveyed women rhetoricians present at the 1893 Chicago World’s Fair as well as other studies of women’s rhetorical practices, particularly when one sees how applying the concept of remediation can be helpful in observing such practices and analyzing their effects.

Thus, one may see the ways in which Wells, Cassatt, and Stone were rhetorical organisms in a powerful node of energy that evolved outward, shaping history in the late nineteenth century and then shaping it again as their texts were made available to listeners, viewers, and readers in the twenty-first century.

The Possibility of the Progress

Of 120 Years

What progress has been made in twelve decades? In 2010, in “The End of Men: How Women Are Taking Control—of Everything,” Hanna Rosin cites an “economic and cultural power shift from men to women,” some of which she attributes to “the wreckage of the Great Recession, in which three-quarters of the eight million jobs lost were lost by men” (60). But the recession simply unveiled and intensified what has been occurring economically globally for at least thirty years, she says:
Earlier this year, for the first time in American history, the balance of the workforce tipped toward women, who now hold a majority of the nation’s jobs. The working class, which has long defined our notions of masculinity, is slowly turning into a matriarchy, with men increasingly absent from the home and women making all the decisions. Women dominate today’s colleges and professional schools—for every two men who will receive a B.A. this year, three women will do the same. Of the 15 job categories projected to grow the most in the next decade in the U.S., all but two are occupied primarily by women. Indeed, the U.S. economy is in some ways becoming a kind of traveling sisterhood: upper-class women leave home and enter the workforce, creating domestic jobs for other women to fill.

The postindustrial economy is indifferent to men’s size and strength. (60)

When I lay the documents cited at the beginning of this chapter—the Institute for Women’s Policy Research’s fact sheet and the Institute for Research on Policy’s answers to frequently asked questions—side-by-side with Rosin’s article and then add the feminist (dys)topian novel Herland, by Charlotte Perkins Gilman (or The Shore of Women, by Pamela Sargent), I begin to understand my own cognitive dissonance. What progress has been made in 120 years? Setting up a counterpoint, Rosin writes, “In feminist circles, these social, political, and economic changes are always cast as a slow, arduous form of catch-up in a continuing struggle for female equality” (60). Perhaps the Great Recession, for men, and Hillary Clinton’s declaration of her candidacy for president of the United States, for women, as Amanda Fortini has it, triggered a tsunami that has become the Fourth Wave of Feminism, pushing women out of the placidity of a “postfeminist era” and into action. As Fortini writes, “Even those of us
who didn’t usually concern ourselves with gender-centric matters began to realize that when it comes to women, we are not postanything.”

Indeed, in a ubiquitously computerized century, the language of the God of the Old Testament, who told Moses to say to the Israelites, “I AM has sent me to you” (Exod. 3:14), makes complete sense, for chronos and kairos, time and moments in time, may be seen, not just as linear—past to present to future—but also as cellular, nuclear, progressing (and retreating) outward, forward, around, and through. Thus, “progress” may be made for a time in space, with the woman’s suffrage movement coming to fruition with the passing of the Nineteenth Amendment to the Constitution, and with the Civil Rights Act of 1964 restoring rights to African American men and women that they had legally held in post-Civil War America. But what has been occurring in the United States among its cells of influence bumps into the unmoved cells of oppression of women and children in Afghanistan not until forty years after the Civil Rights Act of 1964, for example, with the intervention of Greg Mortenson and his widely published campaign to build schools in Three Cups of Tea; with the writing of Kite Runner, by Khaled Hosseini; and with Aryn Baker’s reports from a safehouse in Kabul.

When the contemporary problem solver approaches a new problem, when the modern rhetorician approaches a new rhetorical situation, if he or she has studied rhetoricians in their social and historical context, as Stone, Cassatt, and Wells have been analyzed here, “the rhetor will have a repertoire of options and the freedom to select ways of making sense anew in each case, disclosing the problems and finding means of attaining their solutions” (Consigny, “Rhetoric” 64). Lucy Stone’s last words of her speech to the Congress of Women serve well (61):
By what toil and fatigue and patience and strife and the beautiful law of growth
has all this been wrought? These things have not come of themselves. They could
not have occurred except as the great movement for women has brought them out
and about. They are part of the eternal order, and they have come to stay. Now all
we need is to continue to speak the truth fearlessly, and we shall add to our
number those who will turn the scale to the side of equal and full justice in all
things.
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