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I, Rhiannon Scharnhorst, hereby submit this original work as part of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English.

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Willful Objects and Feminist Writing Practices

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In the Department of English and Comparative Literature

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Abstract

In *Willful Objects and Feminist Writing Practices,* I tell stories about the relationships between people and the objects they use when writing. Drawing on archival research and interdisciplinary methodologies, each chapter looks at a different object, including the typewriter, the kitchen table, the end papers in cookbooks, and the hashtag. This work demonstrates how objects are more than inert, passive observers of the writing process, but instead are participants and co-creators alongside the writer, shaping and changing the process of writing along the way. Put differently, the tools we *use* to write help us navigate *how* to write, as well as shape what gets written. Therefore, the objects and writers I study engage in a feminist writing practice, one that rejects the division between subjects/objects and embraces the fuzziness between the human and nonhuman. By navigating this complex materiality of writing, I hope to better understand the embodied, everyday challenges and pleasures of the writing process.

Dedication

For Ben and Lou

Acknowledgements

Nothing like writing a huge project to make you realize how much you rely on lots of people and objects. I couldn't have completed this work without, first and foremost, the guidance of Dr. Laura Micciche. She took my offhand comment—huh, tables are interesting things aren't they—and pushed me to keep poking around at objects. Similarly, Drs. Russel Durst and Samantha NeCamp gave me gentle guidance, kind words, angry emojis and joy when I needed it. Dr. Chris Carter was always willing to let me bend his ear, even when he had a million other things to attend to. Supporters like Drs. Gary Weissman, Tamar Heller, and Leland Person made me a better writer and thinker, and although not on my committee, this work would not look the same without them.

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Finally, thanks to my parents, Richard and Kathy, for instilling in me a love of language and an obsessive approach to collecting stuff. And to my mother Marcine, for giving me the pen that became the spark for this project (and perhaps the intelligence to complete it).

This dissertation could not have been written without many things, including Blackwing pencils, a 2017 MacBook Air, a repurposed notebook whose cover is a unicycling bear, a 2020 iPad + Adonit pen, coffee-scented candles, yellow sticky notes, black ink le pens, yellow legal pads full of old class notes, so many books, heating pads, and knitting needles. When I could no longer write, I taught myself to knit.

Willful Objects
Table of Contents

Willful Objects
List of Tables and Figures

Foreword

With gratitude to Virginia Woolf

But, you may say, we asked you to write a dissertation about writing—what has that got to do with objects? I will try to explain. When you asked me to consider writing about objects for my dissertation, I stood at the built-in desk in my apartment, staring out the window and began to wonder what the word dissertation meant. It might mean simply a few remarks about the rhetorical choices of writers; a few more about writing habits; a tribute to the Robert Connors and Nan Johnsons of composition and a sketch of contemporary classrooms under duress; some witticisms if possible about technology; a respectful allusion to post-process work; a reference to grammar and one would have done. But at second sight the word seemed not so simple. The word dissertation might mean, and you may have meant it to mean, a work simply submitted for a degree, or it might mean a dispute over something important in a discipline; or it might mean a discursive disquisition on any kind of topic, or it might mean that somehow all three are inextricably mixed together and you want me to consider it in that light. But when I began to consider the dissertation in this last way, which seemed the most interesting, I soon saw that it had one fatal drawback. I should never be able to come to a conclusion. I should never be able to fulfill what is, I understand, the first duty of a dissertation, namely, to hand you after many years' worth of writing a nugget of pure truth that could cozy up between the files in your desktop folders and live on your hard drive for ever.

All I could do was to offer you an opinion upon one minor point—objects that live in the orbit of writing, be it a pen or a laptop, table or symbol, *matter* to our writing; and that, as you will see, leaves the great problem of the true nature of writing unsolved. I have shirked the duty of coming to a conclusion upon the nature of writing—the object and my understanding of its

significance to writing in particular, remain, so far as I am concerned, an unsolved problem. But in order to make some amends I am going to do what I can to show you how I arrived at this opinion about writing. I am going to develop in this dissertation as fully and freely as I can the train of thought which led me to think about how objects matter in the first place. Perhaps if I lay bare the ideas, the stories, the process behind this document you will find that they have some bearing upon its meaning.

Therefore I propose, making use of all the liberties and licenses of a novelist, to tell you stories of myself and of the objects that preceded my writing—how, bowed down by the weight of the subject which you convinced me to write about, I pondered it, and made it work in and out of my daily life. I need not say that what I am about to describe has no existence; hashtags are an invention; so are the endpapers of books and the typewriters of yore; 'I' is only a convenient term for somebody doing research and writing. Lies will flow from my lips, but there may perhaps be some truth mixed up with them; it is for you to seek out this truth in the stories I tell and to decide whether any part of it is worth keeping. If not, you will of course throw the whole of it into the waste-paper basket and forget all about it.

Chapter One

Defining Willful Objects

"I believe in my hand, in the pencil, and in the white piece of paper before me."
(Paulo Freire, *Critical Intellectuals on Writing,* 90).[1]

When I was six, I received a journal and pen set as a gift. The journal came with prefabricated questions and lines to write my responses on. I barely used the journal, perhaps in a protofeminist rebellion against the notion that my writing needed to be contained and controlled by an unseen entity. Perhaps I just didn't like the texture of the paper. What I did love was the pen it came with: thicker than the average pen, it was wrapped with blue velvet and topped with a multitude of royal blue feathers. That pen made a statement; it sparked conversations with friends and even began a lifelong joke with my mom Marcine, one that never fails to make me laugh even though I no longer remember the context or meaning of the original joke. The blue pen lived in a cup on my desk with many other pens over the years, and even after it no longer had any ink, I kept it, a writerly token. My reader might be asking right now what's so special about a feathery pen that no longer writes, a childhood object that was in reality a mass-produced piece of junk? That question, in all honestly, was one I asked myself for years. This dissertation is an attempt to answer it.

I have been told I'm a writer since I was six; always a vociferous reader, I remember the first stories I wrote, featuring my beloved cats Evie and Zip in zany adventures. In second grade,

1. I love the epigraph, as you, dear reader, might notice as you read *Willful Objects*. I include epigraphs in much of my writing, as they serve as generative reminders and moments of appreciation in my own thinking/writing process. However, I also think epigraphs are a form of feminist writing practice. The function of the epigraph essentially fulfills, in a quiet, dignified sort of way, a feminist desire for polyvocality in a single-authored text. By incorporating the epigraph, the writer is laying down another important voice alongside their own. The writer is also offering their reader a moment of meditation, a pause of thoughtfulness before beginning the essay or chapter. Might this pause, a short reflective meditation, be a foundational attribute for feminist writing?

we got to put together a book, filling the blank pages in a bound sketchbook with our stories and projects for that year. As I got older, this easy practice, this writing, became more difficult. I still wrote, but I found it more difficult, more complex, more frustrating. By my mid-twenties, I had stopped writing altogether. I wasn't sure what had changed; certainly adult life had gotten more overwhelming, but if the writing was so *a part* of me, where had it gone? Was it possible to lose writing, like losing a pen?

It was only once I got to graduate school that I really began to write again, and even then I found the task arduous, in part because academic language is not user-friendly. However, I began to think more about writing and the blue-feathered pen of my childhood. Both writing and pens are ephemeral things, things I felt like I could lose and find again. If I could hold writing in my hand, grasp it with the same fingers that moved that blue pen across the page, I could change my approach to it. Writing instruction in the field of rhetoric and composition often views the writing process as a skill that can be taught, mastered, tamed. I don't need to look any further than Peter Elbow, whose work stresses how unskilled writers can learn to write with power through enough practice in process. Writing, in this formula, is too often left as something we *do*—an act of skill that changes with practice—as opposed to something that can change depending on what we pick up and use to do it. In my formulation, writing is no longer only a process, a skilled translation of my thoughts onto the page, but also a process that requires different tools for different jobs. An object-oriented approach to writing was a profound shift for me; suddenly, all those objects I had collected over the years, piles and piles of journals, pens, loose papers, erasers, typewriters, computers, sharpeners, even books made sense. They were the constellation of objects that made up the assemblage known as "writing." My original obsession with my blue pen was a material manifestation of "writing"; that blue pen exerted a kind of

willfulness all its own because it was one in a unique assemblage. Just as the pen can be lost, can be found, so can writing. Just as I can pick up an object, anyone can pick up writing. Ultimately writing may be used, made use of, by me, and by anyone.

Another way I envision the willfulness of the blue pen is to recognize that it haunts me, appearing at random moments in a plethora of disguises as various objects all connected to writing practice. The blue pen appears even now, conjured on this page as I write a dissertation nearly thirty years after I first used it. If a seemingly trivial mass-produced object had that kind of power on me, on my writing, I wondered what kind of power other objects might have for other writers. *Willful Objects and Feminist Writing Practices* explores those haunting objects, tracing their histories and illuminating their power to transform the writing process in profound ways.

Defining objects

Depending on who's talking, stuff (like my blue pen) may be known as objects, or as tools, or as things. These differing titles denote different kinds of power: for Jane Bennett, stuff becomes things when they have a vibrancy that reaches beyond themselves. For Cydney Alexis, stuff becomes tools most often when they are conceptualized as objects-at-hand, or objects that are used or made use of by people. For Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, stuff is best theorized as objects in an assemblage, an ever-evolving ecosystem that is made meaningful precisely because of its arrangement at a particular moment, with the understanding that the relationship does change and shift, creating a fluidity of meaning.

For this work, I will use "object" most often when referring to the items under study. I do this for a number of reasons, the most obvious being clarity. But I also think object captures the

broad range of meaning and intention capable within the objects themselves. Tool is a one-way action whereby stuff is used by the human actor. Thing denotes something unknowable, often gross, as in "ew, what's that thing?" and, in Bennett's original usage, thing actually denotes a property of assemblage, as opposed to the stuff that makes up the assemblage itself. Finally, Deleuze and Guattari's focus is on detailing the broad concept of assemblage, and less on the specific pieces that make up one such arrangement. Objects, as I use the term, lends itself more readily to understanding the stuff of assemblages, of which I believe the broad concept of "writing" is one.

Background

Objects populate a variety of discourses and disciplines; only recently have they come under direct observation in the fields of literature and rhetoric. Drawing on Bill Brown's development of thing theory in a seminal issue of *Critical Inquiry*, object studies in literature took root especially in pre-modernist literary studies, where the number of things populate three-decker nineteenth-century novels in a rate arguably more aggressive than contemporary standards of consumption. Victorian literature scholar Elaine Freedgood argues that the proliferation of things in these novels is too often left under-theorized by a focus on the metaphors they might convey. Instead, she develops what she calls a "strong metonymic reading" which methodically traces the historical and material significance of objects to decode other meanings in the text. Ultimately, Freedgood argues, the object has a starring role in ushering in the modernist and post-modern era of literature.

A study of objects from other fields, like anthropology and history, suggest a similar methodological move. Anthropologist Janet Hoskins calls for more attention to the complex

entanglement of humans and objects in her 1988 study of the Kodi people of Eastern Indonesia. These objects, which Hoskins calls "biographical objects," are so intertwined with the identities of their possessor that they have come to "take on a sort of personality, their own face, [. . .] a sort of latent and fantastic willfulness" (1). In her examination of particular objects like the betel bag, Hoskins grounds her epistemology in the material realm, and she offers a counter-history to a grand narrative of a singularly cohesive and constructed subjecthood. By respecting how the Kodi people have not been psychologized in the Western tradition of autobiographical self-confession, she instead listens to how they tell stories through their objects, often turning them into props, devices, or mnemonic tools for the storyteller. Since stories, and by extension storytellers, circulate through their work, the storyteller is always in relation to others and to their objects, making the biographical object an affront to Marxist alienation. It "imposes itself as the witness of the functional unity of its user, his or her everyday experience made into a thing" (Morin qtd. in Hoskins, 137-8). This suggests the biographical object comes to a will of its own that is grounded in the particularity of its life cycle, developed from the object's relationship to a person, to a particular time, and to a particular space. This relationship unsettles the subject-object binary as well, in turn challenging Eurocentric notions of possession and collection that drive object relations, and by extension colonial imperialism (a collection of nation-objects) in the West (Hoskins 12). While Hoskins' narratives of objects in the Kodi tradition is useful for my understanding of the subject-object assemblage, she does not imbue the object with an agency of its own making.

Andrei Guruianu and Natalia Andrievskikh move me closer to developing an object-oriented approach that captures what happens in the contact zone between objects. Writing in *The Afterlife of Discarded Objects* about the entanglement of memory and waste, they reassert

the philosophical idea that there is an importance to studying "the *encounter* between the human and the material, acknowledging a potentially equal exchange of affects and meaning" (31). By using objects as a human method of memory, we "root ourselves" (qtd. Nora 20) in the material world. By focusing on the detritus of everyday life, Guruianu and Andrievskikh emphasize how even objects viewed as trash create their own afterlives through the complexity of "ordinary affects," to borrow Kathleen Stewart's concept.

Ordinary affects call to mind the mundane quotidian of everyday life. Yet the complexity of affective power entails more than just a light consideration of singular moments in time: it requires attention to orientation to understand the composition of everyday life. As Stewart writes: "Like a live wire, the subject channels what's going on around it in the process of its own self-composition. Formed by the coagulations of intensities, surfaces, sensations, perceptions, and expressions, it's a thing composed of encounters and the spaces and events it traverses or inhabits" (79). Objects create a composition, an assemblage of potential meanings that are determined by their orientation to each other. I turn towards (both literally and figuratively) my apartment's built-in desk to illustrate this knotty concept. The desk has a drawer that I constantly run my leg into, which requires me to sit a certain way and not spin around in my chair. Because this is a daily occurrence, even sitting at the desk sparks a momentary feeling of pain, which quickly passes, that suggests the force of the material: "To be oriented in a certain way is how certain things come to be significant, come to be objects for me" (Ahmed, "Orientations Matter," 235). My orientation matters, and the immobility of the desk built into the structure of my building matters: it has its own weight and heaviness and a permanence that I can feel while I am writing. Thus, in the case of my apartment's desk, the surfaces and sensations—the affective texture of its life entangled with mine—requires an acknowledgement, a shift, an

accommodation on my part. My pain and its pain get twisted up together. Just as I imagine myself as an object composed by the environment I live in, so too does my desk imagine itself as a composition of its own material history. There's almost certainly a chunk of its edge missing because of me.

Defining feminist objects

My obsession with objects isn't unique; frankly one could argue that our entire capitalist system is just an obsession with objects. However, the idea that objects can exert their own kind of power and influence is a newer idea, one that has been recently explored in the words of feminist new materialist critics and proponents of object-oriented ontologies. Both theories take objects as their starting place, seeking a new way to investigate the subject-object dichotomy. By beginning with objects, these scholars undermine the western philosophical focus on the subject as the foundation of rational thought, instead arguing for a subject-object continuum that does not privilege one over the other.

The first step for object-oriented thinking is to accept the limitations of being human, particularly the binary way of ordering and making sense of the world. Jane Bennett's earlier work "The Force of Things: Steps toward an Ecology of Matter" provides one way to do this: "My view is that while humans do indeed encounter things only in a mediated way, there nonetheless remains something to be said for the naïveté of naive realism. A moment of naïveté is, I think, indispensable for any discernment of thing-power, if there is to be any chance of acknowledging the force of matter" (357). To lean into naïveté, to accept one cannot encounter the world wholly rationally, is a powerful challenge to Eurocentric notions of possession and ownership of knowledge, particularly as a decolonizing praxis.

Similarly, feminists have also taken up objects, particularly in object-oriented feminisms, a direct response to the failings of speculative realism to address the realities of subjugated peoples. Speculative realism is the starting place of all object-oriented ontologies, and its proponents assert nothing in the world has special status, therefore everything exists equally. Their notion of equal existence, when taken at literal value, has the function of erasing difference and ensuring a kind of blanket white, male hegemonic power. However, if, as object-oriented feminists (OOF) counterclaim, we begin with the idea that everything exists equally, *but that that equal existence is obfuscated by hegemonic forces of intersectional oppression,* then we begin with an idea rooted in hope and possibility. We can identify and alter the power structure to reflect the equality of all things.

OOF claims that women are uniquely positioned to theorize objects because their own treatment as objects in patriarchal systems align them more closely with the object than the subject. While OOF's claim is controversial, particularly when considered alongside the realities of people subjected by multiple forms of intersectional violence, it is useful to me as a way to envision a different kind of future, one that leads to decreasing violence against all peoples, as well as decreasing violence against the natural world and the Earth.

By thinking of the world and all its attendant parts as equal, from the atoms that make up the human body to the elements of the objects around us, we fundamentally recreate our view of the world in a more equitable form. We reject the Eurocentric, Enlightenment-fueled, patriarchal notion of the subject-object binary. Instead, we envision a world where those hierarchies do not exist, and, in doing so, can conceive of new ways to dismantle oppressive hierarchies that continue to disproportionately harm BIPOC, women, and other oppressed groups. OOF's ability to envision new ways of dismantling oppressive systemic structures is akin to Audre Lorde's call

to dismantle the master's house with new tools; by rejecting the subject-object foundation, we reject the foundation of oppression. After all, the hallmark of oppression is one founded on turning the "Other" into an object, whether that "other" is a person, an ecosystem, or any other object. By creating a "subject" and an "object" we create a hierarchical system that replicates like a virus. If the very foundation of our language relies on the subject-object relationship, what kinds of new languages can we devise with a rejection of the subject as primary?

OOF's approach to the world has implications far beyond the status of women; it seeks to turn philosophical imagining into everyday activism. It asks the human to consider how objects can move us to hope, can move us to come play in a world that values everything. Objects are willful in that they could proliferate, promote, propagate, coalesce, adhere, stick, move, shake, and shift us all on their own. By reading objects first in this work, I call upon my own positionality as a woman in a patriarchal system that objectifies her, as well as calling upon my privilege as a white person within a white supremacist society, to advocate for change for all oppressed people. One of the most potentially valuable outcomes of object-oriented ontologies is how it can help humans move beyond the Anthropocene. By dissolving the subject-object binary, humans may treat the environment in a radically new way, one that is important not just to sustain human life but that also respects the lives of all objects on Earth.

What might a "compassionate practice" towards objects look like? If they are no longer impolitic tools, how can we care for our "companion[s] in life experience?" (Turkle 5). Megan Boler writes in *Feeling Power* of the importance of emotions for feminist theorists, particularly in how emotions should not be conceived of as "'natural, private occurrences but rather as reflecting learned hierarchies and gendered roles" (112-113). Her critique extends into feminist practice through an insistence on how the material and economic realities of women's worlds

affect their lived experiences. Boler underlines the importance of developing a genealogy of an individual's positionality and emotional resistances, a practice that seeks to understand the complexity of oppression without denying that understanding it does not resolve the complexity itself. Her move reasserts the power of emotion in feminist theory, but it could extend beyond the individual person to include genealogies of objects too. By developing the web of positionality and resistances vis-a-vie our companion objects, we extend our feminist practice to encompass the complexity of non-human existence without denying the unknowability of other human and non-human experience. We understand the learned hierarchies imposed on us and others from a different position in the binary.

A shift to compassion is in keeping with Alaimo and Hekman's position in *Material Feminisms,* wherein they write "Material ethics allows us to shift the focus from ethical principles to ethical practices. Practices are, by nature, embodied, situated actions" (7). What could an ethical practice towards and including objects look like? How might we embody ethical practices towards objects?

A feminist object-oriented ontology teaches me to move beyond my identity and instead to consider how a feminist writing practice might acknowledge the myriad objects of a writerly assemblage. There might be no better crash landing that shakes up that binary than the material, embodied, and intellectual practice of writing, and of the writing objects themselves.

Writing as assemblage

Scholars in composition studies have tried multiple methods to capture what happens when a writer, particularly a student writer, is writing. From Janet Emig's investigation into the cognitive processes that happen while students write, to Sondra Perl's exploration of "felt sense"

where the body and mind work together, to contemporary studies by Cydney Alexis and Hannah Rule of the micro-practices of writers via close attention to their spaces and tools, composition has long been focused on the subject, the writer. We turn to the human first because it is closer to our own sphere of knowledge, but perhaps by starting with the object we can uncover more embedded traces of cultural practice and historical knowledge that continue to shape writing processes, in ways good and bad. Not only do objects carry our own memories, they carry the memories of their cultural significance, their creation, their lifecycle. By turning our attention to objects, by bringing objects into focus, I shift the study of writing and add another important dimension to understanding writing processes.

Why is it we continue to invent new ways to write, after all? Why do we need new tools to capture our words onto a surface? And even as we invent, we carry over. The computer keyboard, modeled on the typewriter. A sheet of printer paper, tracing its origin to the papyrus scroll. The fountain pen to the tablet stylus. Not only do the histories of these objects matter, as in have a materiality, they promote and embrace particular bodies in practice. The QWERTY keyboard, for example, is a holdover from the typewriter, whose keys were randomly spaced to prevent the mechanical arms from getting caught up as they struck the page (or so one origin story goes). These seemingly simple design choices affect writer and writing, shape the intellectual work produced by shaping the material labor practices of the human.

A common refrain about technology—it has changed our world so much!—is especially true for writers. While word processing systems and cloud-based storage have revolutionized writing practice, it isn't the first invention to do so, nor are concerns about its impact new either. Dive into articles and essays about the typewriter and you'll find many of the same concerns about the deterioration of language from devout scribblers. By moving beyond the staid subject

and beginning instead from the object's viewpoint, I can ask questions about writing processes that are not inherently based on the user of said object. I might ask how those objects get interpolated into particular systems of meaning, and how that interpolation solidifies the subject's understanding of an object's use in practice. I might also consider how the object shaped writing processes differently, which might lead to new ideas about how particular products of writing are shaped by different objects in profound ways.

As an example of the impact of the object, I think about my current students, many of whom write for school on their cell phones. As someone who grew up in a world where cell phones were only seen as distractions, as tools for verbal communication via text, and, however silly it sounds, as telephones, my initial reaction to thinking about writing on a cell phone is to consider it lesser than writing in "formal" spaces like a computer: how can someone type an academic essay on a tool that isn't designed for that kind of use? This antiquated notion of mine, and something I no longer hold to be true, is the same kind of prejudice I think can embed itself in any writing process. Even for those not obsessed with writing objects, feelings about them circulate; those feelings are the "ordinary affects" that shape our world, and they are a source of power in everyday life. Because writing is an activity that nearly everyone engages in to some degree today, be it writing in an academic setting, in an email, or in a simple text, the tools that get used for that practice are meaningful and significant in how that writing is shaped. Objects become inscribed with particular cultural, racial, historical histories and when writers pick up objects, they are entering into that arena, consciously or not.

Meditating on the relationship between objects and writers, and by extension the individual histories of objects, is the goal of *Willful Objects*. I firmly believe the objects we use to write matter, and that their matter shapes our writing in unconscious ways. I value this study

not just for the ways writing has shaped my own life and my understanding of the world, but for the potent realities of the things in my world, and the absence of things in others' worlds. It's easy to overlook how material conditions affect writing processes, in part because the act of "writing" seems abstract, ephemeral, a part only of the intellectual miasma that circulates, ether-like, around the capital-W "Writer." Part of object-centered study is to debunk the notion that writing is only intellectual work, that it participates in the Cartesian mind-body dualism that privileges minds over bodies while ignoring material realities. Feminist theorists like Helene Cixous refuse that dualism, and I take up that refusal and extend it beyond the body to include the material and ecological realities of objects.

Objects encourage us to live in a moment, to develop a mindfulness about the relationship between technologies and bodies. For me, there's a feeling of pleasure—not lost so much as overlooked—when I meditate on the objects I call upon in writing. Marxists might just shove this feeling aside, citing an object fetishism born of global late-stage capitalism. But these objects do not evoke an unanchored pleasure so much as inspire it by a specific form of power in the assemblage.

One approach that might clarify how I make sense of writing as an assemblage comes through written language itself, by visualizing the subject-object relationship of a pleasurable sentence. Diana Fuss tells one illustrative story involving Helen Keller in her work *The Sense of an Interior*. Through an examination of Keller's acquisition of language, Fuss argues for the importance of tactility in language and subject formation, a view that embraces the material world as part and parcel of the learning process: "It was here, in the domestic interior, that a six-year-old Keller received her earliest lessons in symbolic language, arranging and rearranging the furniture into what the adult Keller describes as 'object sentences'" (111). These "object

sentences" do not just turn the world into "material discourse," as Fuss suggests; they reconfigure the relationship between language and materiality by drawing on the affective power of objects to tell stories. Keller turns the act of writing into a material assemblage of objects that she finds pleasurable.

Willful Objects suggests we approach the writing process like Keller, paying close attention to the affective power of objects by reading objects from an "inside-out" position, one that starts with the assumption that all objects, including humans, have autonomy, not that autonomy must be granted by an all-knowing subject. Similarly, Irina Aristarkhova writes about whether we can define a feminist object, and she suggests we pay careful attention to the slippage between subject, object, and subjectivity: "If they [objects] can be objectified, they have subjectivity that could be denied to them. [. . .] When they do have it, in literature or art, that subjectivity is being given to them. But so is the subjectivity of humans being given to them by others (otherwise they, too, could not be objectified)" (59). Some readers might scoff at the notion that humans themselves be thought of in these object-oriented terms, but I find that for my own theoretical position as a woman and a feminist, it offers a new perch on which to make ethical claims about the nature of writing and the world.

To be clear, objects are not lesser than subjects or vice versa; rather the object takes up new meaning and intention fluidly depending on the arrangement of other objects. The same is true for writing; objects, including writers, have autonomy. If writing process is an assemblage, its form, shape, meaning all change depending on the objects arranged within. We cannot escape the hierarchy of subjects and objects, but thinking of all things (including humans) as objects frees us to continue mapping out the complexity of writing processes. Put another way, "all things exist, yet they do not exist equally" (Bogost x).

So how exactly do objects shape writing processes? I don't mean how varying tools help us produce different products; I mean how do the objects themselves end up shaping writing in ways known and unknown, anticipated and unable to be anticipated? For if objects leave traces and impacts, like moon craters, on the writing that gets produced, they are co-creators. Humans create; objects create. In an object-oriented world, creation is an action and reaction to changes in the atmosphere, the affective force, not simply a birthing from a single entity. It is a rhizomatic relationship. When I think of my writing objects, I first think of my Blackwing pencils. Not only do they have a cultural history that promises artistic success—their website touts them as the $40 pencil that "[l]egendary Grammy, Emmy, Pulitzer and Academy Award winners have created with"—they are also materially different from a Ticonderoga pencil. Their function is dependent upon the material—wood, graphite, brass—of their construction, just as I am dependent on it for taking notes. I sharpen my pencil, it is worn down, just as my own body is worn down by the act of writing. Just as I go to write a sharp point, a sharp observation, so too must my pencil be sharp. It seems to demand it, a force outside my own body that derives a kind of joy in sharpness. This sharpness as willfulness: a pointed kind of power that comes from the pencil.

In general, writers love their technology: see the movement from stone tablet to papyrus, from pencil to pen to typewriter, from computer keyboard to virtual phone keyboard. Different materials create differently; perhaps the pencil's nature feels alien, a romantic throwback that is too ephemeral, too easily erased. The pen seems more permanent, with its inky well and refusal of erasure. The move to modern machines like computers seems in line with the move to embrace capitalism, a turn towards the efficiency of the machine to process, share, and profit, leaving behind the physical work of writing that would cause long bouts of thinking while

working (see: sharpening a pencil, changing the typewriter ribbon, refilling the ink). Now the blank page of a word document is always staring, ready and waiting for words to swim across its surface. There's a rush of self-confession, a drive to create and consume, to get the words down and let the machine underline in red the wrong parts. The blinking cursor pushes forward.

The shift of objects in an assemblage changes everything, from the ways and means of creation to something as simple as the sounds we hear around us. Objects will and do affect everything. Imagine yourself in a large auditorium with one hundred people, all students typing in response to an essay question. The symphony they create—of typing, the smacking of keys, the sharp staccato of the backspace key—becomes a soundscape. Now imagine that same room but with one hundred pencils scratching across bluebook pages. The sounds of those two rooms are as dissimilar as a Beethoven sonata is to a Miles Davis solo. Just as the sounds in the room are different, so might the feelings in that room be different, and the only change is *one object*.

This focus on objects could have pedagogical implications, particularly in a world where students make use of a variety of tools that are shifting the meaning of writing from physical labor, done by hand and preserved on an object, to digital worlds, where writing can happen just by voice and the material is no longer contained on a physical page but spread throughout the digital world. In "The Haunting Story of J," Sarah J. Sloane traces one student's object-genealogy via case study, wherein J's past experiences with technology "haunt" his contemporary experiences with writing. Written at a moment when computers weren't ubiquitous, Sloane locates in J's anxieties and resistances to computer writing a genealogical line, one that connects his past experiences with composing with paper and pen, as well as his own relationship to other writers and computer users, to his present methods of invention, revision, and composition. By developing this genealogy, Sloane proposes a diachronic look at

writing *as it occurs,* one that relies on tracing the impact of memory and objects through a writer's current actions. By folding in objects as memory's hauntological apparatus, the space and scope of writing studies expands beyond the moment composition happens, enveloping not just the intellectual moment of words to page but the "intellectual and emotional activity of splicing together prior selves, understandings, and experiences" (52). This attention to the localized memory of one student underscores how the splicing happens: even as J sits in a computer lab, his prior selves are gathered around him, a chorus of dedicated paper-and-pen users that are raised from the past by the unfamiliar refrain of the computer keyboard. The ghost in the machine here isn't the computer; it's the unsettling confrontation of all those spliced bits coming together, mental and emotional and physical processes happening simultaneously. If we begin from the object's perspective of writing process, we can assess how the shift not only affects the process but also the perspective of student and object together. Do objects will? By that I mean, do objects have a definite will of their own, a will that we would understand as a kind of wishing and wanting for something, a willing to happen? I think so. And honoring that will is part of what makes a feminist writing practice.

Feminist Writing Practice

Objects can be feminist, and they can be willful. They are not simply containers of human emotion. If, as reported by CNN in 2020, human-made materials now outweigh all living things on Earth, then humans are undoubtably outnumbered, and who knows what our object overlords have planned for us? All kidding aside, the powers that control our world are soon no longer going to be human. With that in mind, how might a feminist writing practice embrace the

objects in its assemblage? For my work, a feminist writing practice can be defined by five key elements. I list them below:

1. Acknowledgement of the embodied labor of human and object
2. Refusal of the artificial splits between intellectual work/everyday work/practical work/emotional work
3. Engagement with contemporary issues of the day
4. Embrace multimodality, multi-genre, multi-voice, or other inventive composing styles
5. Willingness to accept the fragmentary nature of knowledge production

Understanding objects as willful members of a feminist writing practice perhaps requires, more than anything else, an acceptance of the fragmentary nature of knowledge-making and writing processes writ large. Similar to the fragmentary nature of the canonical history of women's writings as a genre, an acceptance of fragments means we should reconsider the value we place on "completeness" and "unity" as markers of rhetorical success. In a shift of rhetorical tradition, I value the fragmentary for its very existence is to challenge completeness as rational. This view is similar to Sara Ahmed's view of the fragment, which she writes about in *Living a Feminist Life*: "When a stone breaks, a stone becomes stones. A fragment: what breaks off is on the way to becoming something else. Feminism: on the way to becoming something else. Shattering: scattering. What is shattered is often scattered, strewn all over the place. A history that is down, heavy, is also messy, strewn. The fragments: an assembly. In pieces. Becoming army" (186). In these words I hear snippets of #MeToo, notes scribbled in cookbooks, narratives built out of trauma, works left undone for reasons unsaid.

This idea of fragments appears again in Lynn Worsham's "After Words: A Choice of Words Remains." Worsham draws on what Ellen Gil-Gomez calls "the feminist practice of

piece-making" to suggest how pieces (i.e., individual identity) come together into a collective subject "capable of mass movement" (329-30). Held in one hand, piece-making is a slow, arduous process: making something piecemeal, piecing together a story, picking up the pieces. But in the other hand, piece-making is a process that stitches together a strong, collective subject, almost like a game of Red Rover, where the player-pieces are united and while some hands may not be strong enough to hold off an attack and they break apart from the team, the entirety of the team is not broken. Instead, the remaining members regroup, grasping new hands to create new bonds.

The work of feminist language is finding those "enunciative moment[s]," where breaks or connections move us to grasp new hands. Hélène Cixous suggests the writing process works exactly the same way, as it possesses "two sides and two aims: to break up, to destroy; and to foresee the unforeseeable, to project" (335). To say this another way: we break into pieces while we collectively project ourselves into new collectives. If I follow this notion of Cixous's, I find the power of writing fragments is in leaving space for the unknowable. I see the mini-narratives of #MeToo forming a new collective that tells a bigger story, a more "complete" narrative, about the history of sexual assault against women in the United States. I see the writerly object shaping sentence choice in ways indiscernible from the human writer. This fragmentary history reconnoiters the framework of what is possible within feminist rhetorics. *Willful Objects* will not examine what I consider "celebrity" objects, in part because their significance as objects come mostly from their association with notable figures. Think Jane Austen's writing desk or Sylvia Plath's pen. Instead, I consider those objects deemed nobodies; the fragments, the workhorses of the writerly landscape long forgotten or difficult to locate or overshadowed within the narratives of feminist history.

Chapter Previews

In chapter two, "The Typewriter," I tell the story of how the typewriter changed writing processes as seen through the nineteenth-century periodical *The London Phonographer.* By attending to the particularities of changing language catalogued by the writers of the magazine, a more robust account of process materializes, and the anxiety about how technology mediates between human thought and written thought comes to the fore.

Chapter three, "The Endpapers," builds on the thick description of writing process by theorizing how the endpapers of a cookbook archive intellectual feminist work. The endpapers—or pages at the beginning and end of a book—are invitational writing spaces for presumably women writers who use the space to capture the embodied work of both cooking processes and writing processes. I craft a detailed microhistory of one exemplary cookbook, the 1889 edition of *Our Home Cyclopedia,* that is housed in the Browne Popular Culture Archives at Bowling Green State University. An anonymous writer covers the endpapers with recipes alongside notes on her experimentations and revisions of prior work. The everyday writing evidenced in *Our Home Cyclopedia* is made possible by the endpapers.

Chapter four, "The Kitchen Table," takes up the importance of everyday writing and argues for the kitchen table as a willful object for black feminist writers/activists like Barbara Smith, Vertaemae Smart-Grosvenor, and artist Carrie Mae Weems. The table acts to reorient the creators' relationships to labor and identity, becoming itself a symbol for their culturally necessary work. Because the table embraces both intellectual and personal practices, it also archives the creators' social justice work alongside their everyday lives. In doing so, the table proclaims the value of writing that intermingles with the tensions of feminist lives.

Finally, in chapter five, "The Hashtag," I pick up the threads of process, everyday work, and collaboration with a turn towards the digital world to consider how an object like the hash symbol (#) exemplifies the possibility for collaborative human-nonhuman writing processes. The hashtag captures the affective potential in public writing, and it publishes that writing as a polyvocal anthology. I study one hashtag—#WPAFeministListservRevolution, which developed in response to long-standing misogyny and racism on the Writing Program Administration list-serv—to illustrate the hashtag's power for gathering individuals into a collaborative writing process. The hashtag was used by a group of feminists within the field of rhetoric and composition to agitate for change and it catalogued a plethora of genres and writing processes from a diverse set of collaborators.

Taken together, the narratives of *Willful Objects* demonstrate how specific objects impact feminist writers, as well as how those writers use the power of the object in their creative process. My hope is that telling these stories opens up new ways of thinking and theorizing about writing process, especially when considering the value of everyday writing, collaboration, and history. By foregrounding the ethical and ecological methods of object-oriented feminisms, we move outside destructive patriarchal structures and begin to forge new paths forward.

Chapter Two

The Typewriter

"Technology is important in the history of the word not merely exteriorly, as a kind of circulator of pre-existing materials, but interiorly, for it transforms what can be said and what is said. Since writing came into existence, the evolution of the word and the evolution of consciousness have been intimately tied in with technologies and technological developments."
(Walter J. Ong, *Interfaces of the Word,* 42)

My first typewriter was a bulky Royal found at a roadside antique mall off Route 66. I was ten, on a family vacation to California. The Royal, big and bulky, embodied my idea of glamour. I imagined myself as a real writer if only I had it, and I convinced my dad to spend the ten dollars, even though it had no ribbon and a few of the keys were sticky. Each night when we stopped driving, he had to heave out that typewriter from the car trunk to reach our suitcases and heave it back in every morning after the suitcases were put away. That typewriter rode with us through fourteen states, before getting pride of place on my childhood desk back home. When I moved to Oregon for college, that Royal went with me. One night, while sad-drunk and homesick, I found a small inscription underneath the carriage I'd never noticed before. It was a date and a set of initials, a sign of a previous owner brought startlingly into life. I was shocked it had held onto its secret for so long.

So why the typewriter? What drew me to that Royal in the first place? Why do I still have it, and why do I imbue it with a mystical power? It goes beyond the typewriter as a generic symbol for "writer." It has a meaning beyond its simple "thingness." It has the kind of thing-power Jane Bennett discusses in *Vibrant Matter*. Writing of an old English law about deodand, she recounts how objects that were part of an accidental crime against a person were held responsible ("became deodand") and sold by the Crown for the victim's restitution. Even though the object itself, like a carriage that tramples someone, was considered the accidental mechanism

for the death, it was still held accountable for the event. Her example draws on Bruno Latour's term "actant," which she redefines with de-centered language as "a source of action; an actant can be human or not, or, most likely, a combination of both" (9). The actant becomes "by virtue of its particular location in an assemblage and the fortuity of being in the right place at the right time, makes the difference, makes things happen, becomes the decisive force catalyzing an event" (9). My typewriter becomes the actant when it helps me to think; when it shares dreams with me, sparks ideas and stories and even connections to others across time and space. It is "a source of action." I firmly believe the tools we *use* to write help us navigate *how* to write, and the typewriter extends this idea even further by suggesting tools that *can* write help us navigate *writing*. We are partners in crime.

The act of writing is itself always determined by the materials of writing; the typewriter helps us navigate writing in ways particular to its materiality. By studying the typewriter, we are also studying writing as a technology, since writing itself is a technology that helps us navigate thought. But how did the typewriter come about?

Invention stories are usually presented as linear narratives, with an origin point—the birth of a new object—and the successive plethora of modifications that follow. What's valued in the origin story, though, aren't the incremental changes conceived over time by users, but who thought up the invention first. What becomes significant in the narrative is what works (the Sholes and Glidden typewriter); what gets picked up and used most (the Remington typewriter); what survives and, in modern cases perhaps, what is best advertised. The invention story of the typewriter follows a twisted version of Darwin's survival of the fittest; the adaptability of a certain trait or characteristic—like the shift key, which switches between uppercase and lowercase letters—taking ownership of the entire historical narrative at the expense of other,

minor traits (many of the first typewriters wrote in all capital letters or had two separate keyboards for upper- and lower-case keys). Typewriters that might have been better suited for particular tasks or even more useful for different bodies are overlooked in the popular imagination. The study of the typewriter today certainly holds this to be true: a quick google search will bring up only the most common Remingtons and their descendants. Yet inventions, or better yet, the act of inventing, just like the writing process, follows anything but a linear path. No design is inevitable—by this I mean that no element in writing technology is a given, a fact illustrated by the sheer variety of typewriters in the nineteenth century. Even though the most common image of the typewriter today looks like the Remington I myself have, assuming the inevitability of its design is a fiction perpetuated by a monolithic narrative of cohesion. Similarly, assuming a cohesive or linear writing process is to assume a kind of inevitability that stifles the variety of possible processes. To question the inevitability of something is to question not only its history and its design, but at its heart to question power.

Feminist interpretations of materiality are especially useful to consider, but I want to be careful here when turning to materiality. As anthropologist K.E. Piquette and archaeologist R.D. Whitehouse remind me in their introduction to *Writing as Material Practice*, "The term 'materiality' can be unhelpful if it is simply used as a substitute for 'material' (see Ingold 2007). However, we suggest it can be useful for distinguishing between a necessarily passive notion of 'material' (substance) that precedes analysis and interpretation, and a more active concept involving material as incorporated subsequently into a narrative of socially situated marking practices. 'Materiality' can thus refer in a general way to the material aspects of artefacts, while also, and importantly, prompting their situation in relation to mutually-informing sets of practices" (n.p.). To study materiality, then, is to study how material is not merely supportive but

active in the construction of meanings. It is to see how the ever-evolving relationship between objects and writing can shape our cultural perceptions. Perhaps this is why when searching for "typewriter" on Wikipedia, every famous writer listed on that page is a man. Perhaps this is why the oft-repeated story that Mark Twain was the first author to turn in a typewritten manuscript in 1874 conveniently ignores that he didn't know how to type[2]. Perhaps too this is where the notion of the "type-writer girl," a sexualized figure that continued to predominate stories about office work from the 1890s to the 2000s (see *Mad Men)* ignores the women who opened typewriting schools, like Marian Marshall, ran their own typewriting businesses, and used typewriters for their own personal work, like novelist Edna Lyall. For too long my own relationship to the typewriter has been dominated by the stories of men, images of writers like Hemingway toiling away with a drink and a cigarette by their typewriter's side. Once I began to read more about typewriters, I realized how many *women* were behind the keys. They worked in professional offices, wrote stories and novels, created art; they were so synonymous with the machine that the term "type-writer" could refer to either the object or the woman! By attending to the bumps and discursive turns along the typewriter's path, a more grounded, informed feminist narrative about the typewriter emerges.

No matter what technology is used to capture thought, writing itself is an act always mediated by *something*, that something at the minimum being a body. Perhaps this mediated body is at the heart of the typewriter story, precisely because the typewriter-as-object and typewriter-as-person confuse the boundaries between mediated body and body as mediator, between body as object and body as subject.

2. In fact, actress and writer Fanny Kemble is commonly believed to be the first to submit a typewritten manuscript for publication in 1875. See Catherine Clinton, *Fanny Kemble's Civil Wars*.

A focus on mediation—not as control *over* but as participatory *alongside*—differs from the common understanding of mediation, with its focus on mastery *over* machine, and by extension, male mastery over women. Obscured by the male narrative about typewriters were women who made a living writing, perhaps not always their own story, but certainly writing nonetheless. The assumption that only male-authored, singular narratives are valuable, as the history of the literature canon has promised for centuries, obscures not just writers who weren't in the privileged category of white maleness, but also induces a myopic view of what counts as "writing," or, writing that's worth study. One way of refusing this narrative is to study the writers "left out" of the canon, authors that have been rediscovered by scholars and readers in the intervening years. Another way, I propose through this chapter, is to track the materials of writing; by following around the typewriter and seeing what it gets up to, a fuller and more accurate conception of "writer" and "writing" emerges. No longer does the mediator simply exist as a conduit, a way station on the line between "idea" and "text"; instead, mediation is an agentic action on the part of object and person. There are distinct advantages to studying agentic technologies like the typewriter, particularly because it is situated in an explosive period of advanced literacy rates and social changes well documented by the periodical presses of the time period. The plethora of material lends itself to an analysis that explores how women and technology create powerful and meaningful partnerships. In essence, the typewriter becomes just one such willful example, an object whose overdetermined history cannot fully encapsulate its agentic materiality, its willful objectness.

Instead of Sholes and Glidden, the first commercially patented typewriter, or the Remington, the first commercially produced, or even Henry Mill's type machine, proposed all the way back in 1714, the history of the typewriter's invention belongs to the women who used it

and improved it. By their work and their suggestions for improvement, we ended up, at least at the turn of the century, with the machine we recognize historically. It is also through their work that we find traces of the multimodal and artistic capabilities of the machine, a machine that women also defended in periodicals not just for its "labor-saving" capabilities, as the businessmen did, but for its use as a tool of thinking, requiring the kinds of education and language skills that they possessed. To be clear, the "they" here, and in this chapter, are most often middle-class white women. Part of male anxiety about typewriter girls, beyond the sexually ambiguous nature of their role in business, is the very fact that educated white women were working as laborers in positions that might get them "dirty." Stories of the typewriter feature women's mechanical know-how, their position in loud and rowdy offices, and the spoilage of oiling and caring for their machine. When educated white women entered the workforce, suddenly their laboring bodies become another site for male anxiety, not just about "pureness" coded as properly feminine, but also about a loss of control over textual production in the public sphere.

As with the writing process movement in the twentieth century, anxieties about how mechanical processes might interfere with the "pure" act of composing were similarly bandied about with the advent of the typewriter, an echo that would reverberate decades later when the computer became popular and writers and teachers of writing were anxious about how the computer would negatively affect thinking and composing (a view those who study technology, like scholar Christina Haas, have disputed since the beginning). In both the case of the typewriter and the computer, the concern is on mediation, or how the technology mediates between brain and surface. Haas, in particular, captures this feeling, suggesting not that technology interferes with some "pure" act, but simply that it is always already different depending on the tools used.

What impact it does have might best be understood through an examination of the culture surrounding writing and how language changes in response to technology (51-73). For example, the ways language gets ordered, the length and style of sentences, are changed depending on the technology used to create written words. In this way the object has a material effect on written language.

What changes with the typewriter is not so much the obvious fact that tools mediate writing practices, but what impact the tools themselves might have on human language. Regardless of material, the physical, embodied process of writing always changes with the introduction of different tools, but the typewriter arguably becomes a companion-in-writing, more so than the pen or pencil. In the case of the typewriter, there is perhaps more emphasis—a loudness—to the body. A hand scrawling across a page, delicately holding a pen, does not have the same feel or sound as fingers pressing down hard on keys, making a loud racket that unavoidably signals the writer at work, just as the sounds and smog of factories signaled the laboring class. Writing becomes obvious labor at the same time writing was becoming a public profession for more people than the Oxbridge-educated white gentry. An uneasiness surfaces especially when women do the loud, public work, whether that's in a factory or at a typewriter.

The rest of this chapter will poke at that uneasiness through the essays and columns in the nineteenth century magazine *The London Phonographer*. By attending to the cultural representations of the machines and their users' writing processes, I challenge the monolithic, inevitable view of the typewriter as a singular writing machine, and, by extension, the notion that technologies impact process in the same ways. As Dennis Baron suggests in "From Pencils to Pixels," writers "have a way of getting so used to writing technologies that we come to think of them as natural rather than technological" (32). By assuming a natural, and therefore, singular

process, we overlook the social, historical, and cultural histories we create via new writing technologies. For women writers, the typewriter had a very distinct impact on process. As the magazine and many of the fictional stories also indicate, people had preferences about their machines, in the same way people have preferences about their computers and operating systems now. We do a disservice, particularly to women writers, in assuming a totalizing view of writing. By attending to the particularities—of machine, of body—a more robust account of writing process materializes.

My methodology might best be described as nimble and recursive: a return, again and again, to the archive. I began my search within *The London Phonographer* simply by reading each volume available digitally from cover-to-cover.[3] I knew I was interested in typewriters as a technology, but beyond that broad notion I had no specific research question in mind. From my close reading, I began to consider more deeply the typewriter's relationship to writing process. I returned to the archive again, this time reading more closely for common insights, concerns, or changes to writing process, pulling pieces that seemed significant or meaningful based on my developing knowledge of technological history. On a third read through I coded my material around four common themes: objects, subjects, style, multimodality. Within each theme were sub-themes that related to particular concerns, like common emotions (weariness) or mediation (via pen, typewriter, body, other). Alongside the magazine I read a few novelized accounts of typewriting women, locating in these fictions the serious anxiety behind women's need for intellectual, middle class work. It is also through these fictional accounts that the real dangers of the work are explored, particularly sexual assault, wage theft, and writing anxiety. Out of this

3. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, I was unable to travel to the United Kingdom to see the issues in person. I am thankful for the HaithiTrust Digital Library providing access during the pandemic, as well as the archivists at the National Library of Scotland who supplied me with a copy of the first issue.

process I have attempted to stay attuned to my material: by focusing and returning to its particularities, I have aimed to develop a thick, robust account of how women's writing process, ever an individual and ephemeral thing, might have changed and developed in response to the typewriter. My focus on women writers is born out of my own selfish interest in their work generally, but it was also born from their sheer numbers and influence within the stenographic workforce, as well as their representation as writers consistently across issues of *The London Phonographer.*

Professionalizing the Typewriter

> "What a lady typist can do": "She can take a manuscript, the chirography of which would make the lid of a Chinese tea chest blush with envy, translate it into the vernacular as she goes along, correct the spelling, and the grammar, and oftentimes the rhetoric, and turn it out—not as the author wrote it—but as he intended to write it. She can type better English than most people can write; she can detect errors of fact, as well as of style." ("What a lady typist can do" 479)

As evidenced by Joli Jenson's 1986 essay on the matter of "Women as Typewriters," women entering the business world was a complicated business. On the one hand, women were expected to retain markers of their femininity in the public workplace but, conversely, must also be absolutely sexless so as to not tempt their co-workers into sexual impropriety. One way to accomplish this is through mimicry: common descriptions of the appropriate attire for women include a black skirt, white shirt blouse, with perhaps a ribbon around the neck as a marker of femininity. Her attire borrows from the typewriter; it mimics the staid colors and minimal decoration of the object. As Jenson points out, manuals of the time encouraged this. The conflation of typewriter-subject with typewriter-object emphasizes how a subject-object alliance becomes a safety mechanism; by turning into just another office machine, women were protecting themselves from unwanted advances and harm. Jenson also emphasizes the limited roles these typewriting women were given; their work simply becoming the taking down of

others' language on a company-owned machine that required no intellectual labor to produce. Jenson writes: "In short, the 'doors of business life' opened on newly created enclosed rooms" (Jenson 43).

Yet another strand of descriptions emerges when we look at the stories, letters, and accounts from professional typists themselves. What emerges is a sense of power—a control over language. Far from feeling divorced from their labor production, women were exhorting the value of the work as a form of intellectual and creative labor; indeed, the ideal typewriter must be intellectually capable to find and keep a job, and her ability to write, edit, and read the social situations as mediated via writing were of utmost importance.

Women took their professionalism seriously and were often credited with the advancement of the profession itself. For example, both Madame Monchablon and her protege Marian Marshall created schools of typewriting within their successful offices (Fig. 1) and are

Figure 1 An interior photo of Ms. Marian Marshall's typewriting office printed in The London Phonographer

credited with the rise of typewriting in England; magazines devoted to the profession, like *The London Phonographer,* employed women writers for their most popular columns*;* and professional organizations like the "Society of Typists" (later the National Union of Typists) were established trade unions women were instrumental in organizing and running.

The London Phonographer

The London Phonographer, published monthly from 1891 to 1895, contained stories, letters, and advice for the rising class of office workers employed as typewriters and phonographers (a subset of shorthand writing) in urban London. On one hand, the magazine's work was to promote Isaac Pittman's brand of phonography, better known as the Pittman method of shorthand today. On the other hand, its chief interest was in the business of typewriting, suggesting in its second volume that "so far as we are aware, no other typewriting journal of any considerable circulation [is] published in Great Britain" ("Fresh Start" 278). The magazine hoped to create alliances among all kinds of skilled writers, emphasizing common interests to advance typewriting as a specialized skill as opposed to the more commercialized goal of promoting a particular brand of typewriter[4]. The magazine was envisioned as a mouthpiece of the workers themselves, chiefly because as editor John Bassett wrote, "Those whose occupation consists in wielding dexterously the pen and pencil, and manipulating the typewriting machine, are not exempt from grievances which require to be ventilated, so as to obtain suitable redress. Moreover, such employees have rights as well as duties, and by means of an organ of their own they can more effectively uphold their rights […]" ("Introductory" 13). Bassett saw a need for an

4. Many of the popular teaching texts were produced by particular typewriter companies, in hopes of securing life-long customers. This included offering free classes on their own models, as the Yost Company did in the 1890s.

official publication whose readership were practitioners and current students of the "twin arts," and he endeavored to make *The London Phonographer* a resource for them by inviting readers to send in suggestions or notes.

The writers themselves were often typists and the magazine most likely circulated among offices and boarding houses for women typists (Wånggren 278). The link between circulation and readership suggests women writers of *The London Phonographer* were aware they were writing for women professionals, perhaps one of the first trade magazines to emphasize the professionalization of women into a skilled trade by other women. *The London Phonographer* itself regularly asserts a positive stance on women typists, rejecting the moniker "typewriter" for "women typists" because the former insults women's intellectual capabilities as subjects. Understanding their audience is important: as literary scholar Christopher Keep reports, Great Britain needed a large pool of typists within its network of information managers because of its large number of overseas colonies and imperialist projects. As Keep, quoting Zimmeck, writes "The total number of female clerks [. . .] rose from 2,000 in 1851 to 166,000 by the end of the century, by which time they accounted for twenty percent of all white-collar workers." The exponential growth of typing bodies signaled a shift in writing processes, a theme the following sections will explore in depth.

The Bodies

The typewriter asks us to look at the human body as an object alongside it, a companion or coworker in writing practice. The typewriter asks through its need for accommodation; it requires a body to fit alongside it in certain ways. Fingers are poised, postures are straight, feet are firmly planted. The typewriter, in ways different from the wayward pen or pencil, places

particular demands on the body that the writer must accommodate. In return, this loud companion produces text that differentiates itself from handwritten notes: it produces a permanence of thought and word only seen through the work of printers at printing presses prior to the typewriter's invention. It offers its companion a sense of accomplishment, a "finished product" without all the effort of drafting/drafting/revising (unless one chooses to do that revision work). The promise of the typewriter is also the promise of the body: proper caretaking ensures permanence, things-all-in-working-order. Yet we all know that promise is a lie, or perhaps not a lie so much as a wish. The typewriter cannot offer permanence any more than the printed book: what stays permanent is what gets valued, not what's created by ink and blocks. Still, it is the sense of permanence that turns the average body into the eternal one; the clackit-clackit-clackit of the typewriter signaling modernity and temporal infinity all entangled in the body of its user.

In studying *The London Phonographer* I am struck by the tension between whole body and body part. On one hand (quite literally), the writers focus on body parts as objects that need tuning and refining, just as the ribbon or type-bar or paper roll need those adjustments. On the other hand, the body as a system is also discussed, most often by women columnists. The tension between part and whole could be considered a feminist prospect; while the bulk of the columnists emphasize the parts—the cogs in the machinery of industry—the women writers focus on the systems themselves, the need for proper care-taking of both machines, typewriter and human body. By emphasizing the relationship between the two machines, women writers also emphasize the essential and embodied process of writing writ large. Without ignoring the individualized needs of writers and typewriters, women writers still take a macro-view of the writing process by paying attention to the micro-scenes of writing workers. Singular examples

are not used to generalize about a whole mass of typewriters, so much as to emphasize the individual networked relationships between bodies and objects. Highly individualized processes and needs are respected as components of the system, and it is the individualized systems that writers in *The London Phonographer* are most interested in capturing through their essays and stories.

Interestingly, the typewriter itself also often takes up a subject position in the pages of *The London Phonographer.* Perhaps because of the newness of the invention, the typewriter is often accorded an occult status and written about as though it has a mind of its own. For example, one typewriting office owner, Grace Murrell, recounted how "a lady, a few days ago, inquired whether the typewriter would transcribe shorthand notes or not. Just as though a typewriter were endowed with volition, and would transcribe them if it liked, or, if not, leave it alone!" ("Typewriting Offices" 246). Some of these mistakes are due to the obvious unfamiliarity with the machine, but the slipperiness between who is really doing the writing—human or machine—is obvious; other references throughout the run of the magazine include phrases like "when the machine commences to work" ("Our Leading Typewriters" 200); the typewriter "is capable of exceptional conditions of strain" (Tip-Taps 17, 113); and the "typewriter had struck work" (Tip Taps 22, 284). In each of those cases the typewriter referenced is the machine, not the human. The personification of the machine as having a "volition" of its own is perhaps what frightened people unfamiliar with its work; while some stories were humorous, such as the gentleman who rubbed his cold hands over a typewriter to warm them (while the radiator sizzled unnoticed in the corner), more often the stories featured people scared of the machine, 'as though it would bite them.'" ("Tales" 344 + "Our Leading Typewriters" 199). An anonymous writer pens: "Those who have never seen a typewriter look

on while it is being operated upon with a somewhat startled air as if they really thought it an uncanny kind of machine, not to be gone too close to, and when asked to 'try it,' they gingerly touch the keys with their fingers as if it might hurt them" ("Some Experiences," 477).

Combining the act of writing (pain) with the mysterious nature of the typewriter and the fear its uncanniness engenders creates an aura of mystery beyond just the machine itself: it feeds the notion that writing is a sacred act that requires supernatural knowledge, as well as turning the writer into a liminal figure who exists between the realm of the material and the ephemeral. Liminal figures, like the human typist, shatter the socioeconomic and gendered hierarchy of society; as Tip Taps put it "Provincial dames regard the typist with a feeling varying between patronage and fear. People frequently fear or feel awkward in the presence of persons they don't know how to treat" (Tip Taps 24, 347). At the same time, magazines like *The London Phonographer* aren't just working to familiarize the public with the typewriter as machine, but to actively demystify the very act of writing as supernatural. Just as the magazine investigates and extols one particular technology of mediation, it is also exploring the act of writing regardless of mediator; as a whole, the magazine's explorations are less about the typewriter and more about demystifying what writing is, how it happens, where it happens, and why. It is a magazine that uses the typewriter as an object to explore the powerful impulse (human-or-otherwise) to write. What makes the typewriter unique is how it so readily upsets the expected and otherwise routine nature of writing; suddenly, as documented by the magazine, the very *scene* of writing looks very different.

The following pages will explore how this new scene of writing shaped the writing process differently. By considering how bodies and objects get oriented towards writing, I find

new possibilities for theorizing process materially. The material process takes final shape by thinking through what a feminist multimodality looks like with a typewriter as our companion.

Nervous systems of writing

Writers in *The London Phonographer* were particularly concerned with the effect machines would have on the human body's nervous system, as well as how the entanglement of body and machine influenced each other. The nervous system was theorized as a network intimately connecting the human body with its environment; thus, introducing new technology like the typewriter into that environment would necessitate changes in the nervous system.

The human nervous system is like a telegraph system, where electric signals are sent throughout the body as messages and translated via the brain stem. Writers, in particular, rely on their nervous systems to translate thought (in the brain) into some kind of movement to write with a tool, be it a pen, typewriter, computer, voice-text, etc. It's no wonder, then, that the nervous systems of typists—a new kind of professional writer similar to early modern scribes—would be of interest to a magazine like *The London Phonographer:* "In teaching this art we have reiterated the command, 'Learn to strike only the letters you need and none other.' Few young persons reflect that this is an operation carried on by everyone who has learned to write with a pen; here the nerves of the brain direct the nerves and muscles of the hand and require the latter to imprint exactly the letters that are necessary, and not allow others to slip in or take their place" ("Accuracy" 71). Typing requires a simplified neural pathway, according to this writer. Instead of requiring the hand to imprint exact letters, typists must only "strike" the proper keys.

In addition, the typists were most often women, a gender long associated with nervous disorders like "hysteria," and the magazine chronicles rising fears about these "delicate" women

typists. However, similar fears about nervous system breakdowns don't seem to rise with the use of pianos or sewing machines, objects often used to describe the mechanical origins of the typewriter but often associated with properly domestic tasks for women in the nineteenth century. What makes the line between the typewriter and the nervous system special, I contend, is its connection to the specific act of *writing*. It is both physical labor (like in a factory) and intellectual labor.

Even when discussing work done by other objects like the pen, contributors to *The London Phonographer* catalogue maladies—physical and mental—particular to the writer: forearm cramps, wrist cramps, stub fingers, nervous breakdowns, excessive excitement, "slow brains." The maladies call to mind the protagonist of Charlotte Perkins Gilman's "The Yellow Wall-paper" whose acts of writing either accelerate or stave off her descent into madness, depending on how you read the story.

The connection between one's body and its surrounding environment is thinnest, then, when considering the nervous system. Writing incorporates both the nerves and the environment into its process, which means changes to the environment, like changes to the materials used to write, would have a greater impact. Many of the contributions to the magazine grappled with fears that the typewriter would have a negative impact on one's nervous system; there's advice about resting one's hands off the keyboard, bringing an awareness to the fingertips and their connections to the keys so as to avoid fatigue and overuse, and taking breaks away from the office to refresh the mind.

That need for upkeep becomes obvious when observing two common motifs that emerge from these writing scenes: sound and speed. The scene is now loud and fast: the sound of writing is no longer pen thoughtfully scratching but the "clackit" of keys rushing to get dictation down.

In offices, the din is described as "simply maddening" because it sounds like the "heavy shower of rain" or as another woman described it "like a lark singing with a cold in head" ("Examination in Typewriting" 131 and "An Interview" 111). The "clackit" signals a busy office full of hardworking individuals with important jobs, a space of energy and passion:

> We settle ourselves firmly on our seats, take in a good supply of breath—for we have scarcely time for that essential habit in rush work—and off we dash. 'Tick, tick, tick!' goes the office clock in the most calm and collected manner; and 'Click, click, click' go we, not quite so calmly and collectedly. We fly the pages out one after another into the receiving hands of the reader [. . .] The clicking of the machines, the breathless excitement of the workers, the hurried reading of the reader, and the general air of enthusiasm in the office is most bewitching ; and when the work is finished, and with a gasp of relief we watch the disappearing heels of the office-boy flying with express speed to get the work home—for our office-boy's toes must be as nimble as our fingers—we feel as if we had been for a sharp gallop with a spirited horse…" (A.M.B. 212).

The breathless excitement and gasps of relief described above suggest an almost erotic scene, one that equates the "click, click, click" of the workers with the passing time, a remnant of the industrial revolution's impact on everyday work. It also signals how expectations around work were shifting; instead of slow labor practices, the successful person's output had to increase in amount and speed without sacrificing quality.

Yet quickness and visible production can be tied to pleasure as well: as an anonymous author explains, they appreciated the noise as a signal of work: "Ah how often I long for the silence of my study, broken only by the click of the Remington—the most glorious music to my ears in the world, save the whirr of the Hoe machines." Successful writing is a visible and noisy production. Other accounts from actual writers and users of the machine are juxtaposed with essays that detail those loud scenes of writing. Actual users often find the typewriter has a positive effect, noise notwithstanding. One writer suggests as much, after a long day: "But I had a certain amount of quietness in Manchester, and spent three to four hours at the typewriter inditing [sic] the account of my adventures—a delightful method of soothing one's nerves. Ah!

How often I long for the silence of my study, broken only by the click of the Remington—the most glorious music to my ears in the world, save the whirr of the Hoe machines!" (T.P. O'Connor qtd in "Personal" 70).

Another writer whose claim to fame was speed typing, finds the typewriter a balm to failed presentations, breaking a record in the process: "I really don't know how it came; Mr. Nicholson's lecture went wrong on account of the lantern slides, and that fidgeted me and worked me up to a state of such nervous irritation that I just threw it off afterwards on the Remington'" ("An Interview" 109). Finally, a third anonymous woman writes about her experience working in an office as a typist at length. She concludes:

> "I have had six good years' experience as a typist, and am not yet tired of my work. I find great interest and variety in it, and also instruction. [. . .] Possibility I am endowed with less 'nerves' than most women, but certainly I cannot say that since I have been a typist I have become afflicted with them to any great extent. My experience teaches me that there is still a field open to educated women to earn a decent income as typists" (Typist 269).

Her article rightfully points out the realities of typing work in a large office, like poor eyesight developing not because of the keys but because of "bad handwriting," but she suggests more so that many "nervous" cases might be more about an office that overworks its staff, as opposed to something innate to women typists.

Perhaps, as I would contend, for some writers, particularly women writers, the shift to writing on a typewriter meant aligning the physical labor with intellectual work; the mind's work illuminated by the change in physical activity. Because typing connects physical movement and thinking by connecting finger movement with specific letter keys, writing becomes an almost automatic process: "when one comes to think of it, the manipulation of any musical instrument involves the connection of certain ideas with certain movements of the hand. The same connection of ideas and movements holds in the case of the typewriter, and the relation of

movement to idea is just as simple, and becomes just as soon automatic" (Editor 293). The body may interrupt occasionally, as willful fingers disobey the brain, as Tip Taps suggests in issue 13: "Is it that the brain gets stubborn, and wilfully plays tricks upon our fingers, or are the fingers at war with the brain, and refuse to obey the orders from head-quarters" (6) or, as another writes, "It is not uncommon to suggest that the gentleman you are writing is rather "snaky," thus, "Dear Sirp." The letter p being placed next to the comma on one keyboard is partly responsible for this not unfrequent error in beginners" (Q.E.D, 480). Yet perhaps most importantly, the process of typing paradoxically makes the labor of writing more obvious and also more automatized: "'Few people know the amount of manual labor involved in a day's type-writing, or realize the distance the hands travel in a day's work. Probably few of the typists themselves appreciate it. Yet their hands cover a distance they would never think of covering with their legs unless necessity compelled it. [. . .] This is equivalent to 48,000 feet, or a little over nine miles a day. In a week the hands can cover fifty-four miles, and in a year's steady application to business over 2,800 miles" ("Bookkeeper" 168). If the women typists weren't able to travel as easily alone, at least their minds and hands could.

The notion that one's hands could travel epitomizes the effect the typewriter has on the human body. By thinking of the object as one thing in a network of things, we begin to develop a more robust accounting of the networked nervous systems of both. The slipperiness between subject-object in this network also continues when we flip the script and look at the typewriter as a subject. By subject here I mean human-like, although I don't want to simply flip the binary by personifying the typewriter as human or anthropomorphizing it. Instead, I want to continue thinking through the metaphor of the nervous system: as illustrated by the regular columnist

Lina, the typewriter exists not just in the environment to interact with human nervous systems, but has one of its own. Lina writes in one issue:

> "No good work of any description can ever be performed when one is feeling thoroughly tired out, or at least not without putting a strain on one's nervous system, which sooner or later must end in a breakdown. I remember once seeing a typewriter which had had a strain on its nervous system. No, I do not mean a typist, but a typewriting machine; and I think, when I tell you the work it was expected to do, that you will agree with me that *it had a right to refuse to work [italics mine]*. I noticed one day that it seemed to be performing its work in a way that suggested that it was suffering from some grave internal malady—it was quite painful to see it. (158)

Lina ultimately finds out the typist is using her machine to mark her handkerchiefs with ink, and all the while "she had spent her time trying perform this wonderful achievement, with utter disregard for the feelings her machine" (158). By first ascribing a nervous system and feelings to the machine, Lina cleverly creates a link between human rights and machine rights. The "right to refuse work" would logically extend beyond the machine to the typist, a radical view of working life for women in the nineteenth century, one wherein they have the right to refuse work they don't want to do, work that is underpaid or otherwise exploitative.

Both the nerve systems of the machine and of the human respond to stimuli and can be overtaxed. Lina ends her essay making this point clear, "However, to go back to the overworking of our human machinery, let me urge every girl to remember no one should attempt to carry on work all and every evening" (158). While I don't want to ignore the problems aligning people and machines can create, I do want to draw our attention to how that coupling is useful for some feminist work. In this case, a middle-class, presumably white woman aligns her body with her machine to make a common-sense argument about the need for care-taking of the body. It is a rhetorical alignment that powerfully suggests a radical view of working conditions and rights for women. The individuality of each reinforces the need for particular, embodied knowledge for successful intellectual work.

The Body as Object

Having considered the ways in which the nervous system is directly affected by the environmental changes to the writing space wrought by the typewriter, as well as how aligning the writerly body with an object creates new networks, I next turn to how one woman columnist, pseudonymously known as Mimiotype, represents the female human body as an object. In doing so, Mimiotype addresses anxieties about women's position in the social sphere as well as how typing work becomes a part of a new writing process.

Mimiotype's monthly column focuses on the practical needs of the typist, from where to look for affordable housing to proper dress in the office. Adopting a maternal tone, she acts as a stand-in guide for the "surplus" women, whose chances of marriage were low, and who lived without family or business connections in the city. She writes in an article describing various lodging houses for young women: "The writer earnestly hopes that the information contained in this article may prove of use to women living lonely lives in uncomfortable and stuffy lodgings and wishing to 'better themselves,' as the maidservants say" ("Where" 131). Not only does she offer the addresses of a variety of affordable housing options, she also suggests simple decorations for a room that can lift a girl's spirits while not at work. At the same time, her recommendations for dress in the office echo her desire for women to focus on the work; while mostly practical, she advocates for simple, pleasing adornments that won't impede on the worker's job, particularly when working in a male-dominated office. While some of Mimiotype's advice focuses on the need to balance femininity with a non-sexualized womanhood, the vast majority focuses on practical hints that are tied to the job itself. For example, in one issue she gives a number of suggestions for gloves, advocating that gloves should protect women's fingers from ink as well as pain when typing all day. In this case no

consideration is given to what would be appropriate around men, but simply what would be useful for a laboring body.

In essence, Mimiotype is what we might today call a self-care advocate, one whose advice is always geared towards workers' taking care of themselves. As she puts it in issue eight, "I am a strong believer in the policy of taking care of one's self, though an enemy to "coddling.'" (192). Yet the positive affirmations of self-care also enforce the importance of the body as a source of labor—just as machines in a factory must be housed and taken care of, the human body is an object that requires upkeep.

At the same time that Mimiotype explores women's embodied roles in the office, occasional essays linking bodily concerns to the machine appeared alongside her work such as the column 'Is This True?' on the "typewriter's stub finger" in issue ten, which asserts it is the "newest affliction on the books of the doctors of Philadelphia, and it threatens to become one of the formidable evils of modern civilization" turning users' "fingers into thumbs" because the "long hammering upon the little round keys had effectually flattened out their finger tips and given each particular digit above the top joint a grotesquely and vulgarly stubby appearance" (227). The emphasis on embodiment is crucial to understanding the relationship between subject-object in the typewriter; the strong link between the two is what opens up possibilities for new ground in feminist writing.

Frank Smith's essay on typing methods in issue six of *The London Phonographer* explores the competing typing methods in depth, with Smith arguing that both the touch-type (Mavis Beacon style typing without looking) and the fingering method (hunt-and-peck, as we call it today) are insufficient on their own, as his own method combines both. He writes "Every man has his particular touch, just in the same way that most of us prefer a certain kind of pen

which we have found, by experience, suits our hand, really our touch, better than some other pen" (126). By emphasizing individual touch, Smith also emphasizes the individuality of the machine, suggesting that even the mass-manufactured typewriters are individuals just like their operators. Later issues would continue to explore the notion of individualized machines, suggesting that no two operators should use the same machine due to their differences in touch.

Another regular columnist, "Lina," draws together Mimiotype's concern for women's workloads and Smith's emphasis on individuality in her essay "All Work and No Play." Her essay begins with an essentialist view of womanhood—that women are "physically weaker" than men—but goes on to caution women that "attempt to do what no man would—or could" by working full time in an office and returning home to also take care of all the domestic duties. She writes: "*He* never sets to work to make himself new garments, or trim his hat, not he; and it is unreasonable to expect that a girl who leads a sedentary office life can keep well and strong who employs her evenings sitting close at needlework or study" (158). Her suggestions for women workers are on the surface commonsense, but ultimately more radical under the surface. By suggesting women cannot, in good health, do it all on their own, she accepts a reality of womanhood that embraces work outside the domestic sphere. While "Lina," like Mimiotype, doesn't come out and say this about the women in her essay, she does move her more radical viewpoint onto the typewriter.

However, the concern for the human body isn't just practical for production purposes. In a later issue, one Mimiotype column outlines ways typists can turn their knowledge into short stories and essays for publication. While Mimiotype's work endeavors to demystify the unspoken rules of the business world, it also raises the notion that the typist's work is part of the

writing process itself. Instead of a brain-dead job, the work of the typist becomes part of an expanded view of the writing process.

The explosion of print in the nineteenth century, could, then, be attributed not just to increasing literacy rates among the general population, but also the increasing number of casual writers who engaged more deliberately with a writing process that matched their own lives in the age of industrial production. Daily work as a typist becomes instruction in the writing process as a multifaceted process that involves work beyond the "myth" of the lone genius.

Tip-taps and changing style

The change from pen to typewriter altered the scene of writing, a shift that impacts the writing process as a whole. Yet the change also altered the style of writing as well. The entanglement of body and machine brought about this revolution: not only did the typewriter change the experience of writing, it changed how the body approached writing, thus changing how thought was captured and recorded. Depending on what the writer used, the very style of their writing would be altered.

One of the first major concerns with typing was that individuals would not be able to think and write at the same time. The argument suggests that a writer needs the pen and paper to think, that somehow thinking must happen in the pauses or the slow pace of writing by hand. Typists were quick to debunk this idea: "The assertion that a man cannot think and type at the same time is nonsense" ("Is the Typewriter Gaining in Popularity?" 457). Rapidity in typing was certainly a valuable trait if the typist was taking dictation, but the magazine is quick to assert that rapidity is also a boon for the trained writer. An obsession with speed led to multiple demonstrations of fast typing and competitions for the quickest typist, but ultimately the focus in

the magazine is more on how the typewriter is able to capture thoughts more easily: "The facility of thinking with the keyboard under the fingers soon comes, and users of the machine find that it quickly becomes much more of an aid and stimulus to composition than the old-fashioned pen or pencil" ("Typewriting" 117). The response time between thought and recording is shortened, thus capturing words almost instantaneously, decreasing the friction between mind/body and implying a kind of synonymous action.

This differed from the use of a pen, which was now almost universally decried in the magazine as a form of "drudgery." The slow, tedious process of inking words across a page impeded the writer and compounded their physical weariness: "An author who laboriously writes out his great thoughts must hate and fret at the mechanical act of pen-writing" (Marshall 184). The use of the word "mechanical" here is interesting because it suggests that pen-writing creates more physical impediment to writing, thereby inducing even more mental weariness as the body struggles to capture the thoughts as they come. The typewriter instead decreases the lag, aligning body and mind into one instantaneous process. One woman writer captures this feeling of invigoration: "A few days ago we had to make a call on a lady friend, who devotes her leisure to literary pursuits. She was generally found sitting in one particular chair, in one familiar place, scribbling away with a quill. Contrary to her usual custom, she was on this occasion standing near a cabinet, placed so as to catch conveniently most of the precious daylight. 'What are you doing, Vera?' we exclaimed. She smiled, and simply said, 'Typing my latest brain product, instead of writing it. I have only had this machine a fortnight, and although I work six hours a day I never feel weary. In truth, I am so fond of my new friend that I must confess to having a secret dislike to use my pen for MSS any more'" (Unsigned 7, 161). The materials of writing have changed the scene of writing, and thereby the emotions associated with it as well.

Writing by pen gets tied up in the pain of the writing process; the promise of the typewriter is to lessen the writer's resistance to writing, which in turn suggests the typewriter would turn out a better composition. A seasoned writer in Tip Tap's column, a "well-known writer of sensational novels" is an "ardent admirer of the Remington" and finds it a boon to his process. As Tip-Taps writes, "He composes straight off on to the typewriter with very few corrections, showing that his thoughts have been followed up sharply by his nimble and facile fingers. His manner of procedure is somewhat novel. He runs straight on without stopping to punctuate; then, when he has finished the typing, he reads over his proof, correcting and punctuating at the same time" (13, 251). This connection between thought and hand, brain and machine, appears again and again when looking at the "writing machine," almost as though the nervous system of both are connected. Other writers who compose on the typewriter were in good company: "He [Mr. Justin McCarthy] is only one of a considerable number of *litterateurs* who express their thoughts through the medium of the machine in this day. It was at one time supposed that the typewriter would be useless for the purposes of original composition, but this idea has been shown to be groundless. Once the hand is trained to manipulation, there is no more difficulty in directing it to certain keys than in using it to govern the movements of a pen" (Unsigned, 293).

Typing one's thoughts gives them an aura of permanence akin to a formal, published text. At the same time, the typed work's appearance could give the writer a feeling of satisfaction akin to the completion of a published text. This positive affirmation makes sense: because writing can be such a laborious and lonely process, the positive feelings from using the typewriter could contribute to its more frequent use and adoption. Thus, even more work is created, as a reprint from the "Sunday Sun" attests: "I owed my power to produce a great quantity of literary work in

a short space of time to that modern invention, the typewriter, and I thought I would see if other people were wise enough to adopt the same splendid labour-saving machine" ("Growth" 127). And this work is composed with even greater detail because the writer no longer abbreviates anything "owing to the labour involved by the use of the pen, hardly wrote what was absolutely necessary, and the short hasty scrawl from the hand of the man who had not the time to go into detail" (127).

At the same time, some writers considered the typewriter only useful for "business" correspondence, implying that creative or personal work was better if composed by hand: "I think even the stern practical aspect of the little machine would at once freeze and congeal the most glowing ideas and crush the 'soft nothings' like foolish butterflies. But from a 'business' point of view, and even to a woman like myself, who scribbles six or seven hours a day, I consider a typewriter almost imperative" (Coke 324). In particular, some found the idea of typewritten personal letters offensive, a removal of the emotional, human touches of handwriting, just as it was implied original or literary work suffered if typewritten. The magazine is quick to assert that these opinions were staid and incorrect, arguing that the personal touches of one's typewritten work were still there, just different.[5] Ultimately, the ability to easily read the work was considered more beneficial to all then the romanticized notion of personal handwriting.

Editors in particular were regularly interviewed in the magazine, and they often suggested the only way to get a manuscript read was if it was typewritten, in part because they assumed that same attention to appearance would carry over into the writer's facility with language: "Editors are only human, and they are naturally predisposed in favour of the writer the

5. In fact, cases where a will was typewritten were the foundation for this idea. Forensic document examiners were called to ascertain whether a typewritten copy could be matched to a particular machine. Ultimately, they concluded it was possible, although it was still up in the air whether the machine had been used by the person or an imposter.

examination of whose MS. entails a minimum of trouble. It indicates a degree of enterprise, thoughtfulness, progressiveness, and neatness on the part of the writer, which will probably be carried out in the treatment of the article" (Typewriting" 117). Editors now desired to judge "at a glance" whether something was worthwhile or suitable for publication. As one joke put it "Young Writer: "What do you think is the best feature in the play I sent you?" Manager: "The fact that it was type-written" (Unsigned 322).

While on the surface this "at-a-glance" judgement seems overly deterministic, it also suggests how writers themselves could make use of this feature to improve their own style. "Tip-Taps" shares my interest in the ways in which the typewriter affects how people think as they write. As demonstrated by one such story, a local clergyman had adopted a typewriter and ever since "he had become a much better speaker. From being rather jerky and verbose he was transformed into a connected, condensed speaker, not using a single word more than was necessary and putting a lot of meaning into each sentence. Most probably this improvement arose from the fact that one sees a badly constructed sentence in a moment in typed form, whereas when written it is more difficult to do so" (483). The notion that this writer's work was improved by the typewriter—that his facility with language is shaped by his choice of machine—is at the heart of this chapter.

The notion that a well-typed work signaled a facility with language was met as well by its inverse. One joke in the magazine went like this:

> "'You do a great deal of writing, don't you, Gaswell?'
> Yes, I do, Dinwiddle.'
> 'Why don't you use a typewriter instead of a pen?'
> 'Because in that case people would find out how I spell.'" (Unsigned 77).

Now the implication was that writing by hand implied a deficiency of some kind; the educated were typing because the type could show off their clear facility with language without question.

If a typed manuscript could signal a greater facility with language, then it makes sense that users wanted to demonstrate its usefulness; educators argued that the typewriter did more to teach writing than any other tool:

> Those who have used this machine know what a wonderful help it is for learning to spell correctly, using the capital letters and punctuation marks properly, correct spacing and paragraphing, correct arrangement, and the correct use of language. Of all the lessons learnt at school, those are the most important which enable us to write the English language with ease, accuracy, and elegance. Those who use the typewriter find that they can unconsciously accomplish these points easily and within a short space of time, where close application to the study had failed to bring about finished a result (qtd. in "Typewriters in Schools" 500).

Not only does the typewriter help students learn all sorts of basic rhetorical moves, it does so more quickly and with an unconscious, and therefore less interfering, mediator. Although not adopted as quickly in England as in the United States, the *London Phonographer* does take note of the educational benefit: "When typewriters become cheap, says an American paragraphist, a great change will occur in the education of children. There will be little occasion for teaching them how to write. Experiments made with some quite young children show that by the use of one of these instruments they will learn to read, spell, and write in less time than they learn to do one of these things under the present methods of instruction" ("When" 242). The whys behind the change in instruction are not apparent, but the change suggests that a facility with language was more easily obtained via the "truth" of the machine, and the typewriter could somehow encourage or demand "correctness." One such rhyme captures the spirit of potential in the machine:

Ho, all ye teachers, from near or far,
That chance to visit this bazaar,
Hie ye to the corner stand
Where writing's done, not by hand,
But by machines which tell no lies
When crossing t's or dotting I's (N.U.T. Bazaar 223).

The typewriter cannot lie, thereby removing the possibility for deviation in language forms. Later technology scholars like Sue Walker suggest that typewriters also restricted the ability of the writer to make choices about the visual representation of their work, instead limiting the formatting to a limited number of "correct" styles because "on a standard keyboard there are only eighty-eight characters available, spatial variation is limited to fixed vertical and horizontal increments, and changes in weight and size cannot be made." Walker suggests these limitations, when compared with the limitless variety afforded by handwriting, makes typing "very inflexible" (103). When examining the materials represented in *The London Phonographer,* however, Walker's claims come up short. Typists found unique uses that capitalized on the typewriter's power of visual rhetoric, one that made use of the printed style in new and interesting ways.

Multimodality

I end this chapter by considering the multimodal, transformative power of the typewriter as a companion in feminist work. Proper formatting of a typed document, as the previous section iterated, highlighted the value of the written work under consideration, as well as gave a draft the polished appearance of a finished, published work. Taken together, it's obvious that it was important a typist know a variety of genres, a fact emphasized by the following line from issue six: "She must be clever, for all sorts of literary work is included in the MSS. that keep the busy assistants employed. Travels, essays, novels, botanical treatises, dramatic pieces all need brain as well as eye to follow. She must be neat-fingered, too, for there is abundance to do and no time to waste" (Unsigned 137). The need for a familiarity with genre reiterates that typing requires likewise an understanding of visual rhetoric: that the formatting of the work matters. It

communicates to the reader more information about the work, as well as the value of the writer's words. A sloppily typed playscript would suggest a sloppily plotted play. So, understanding proper formatting dependent on genre is, I believe, one way typists also worked within and against convention. As the following examples of "office work" will illustrate, using the typewriter for creative design became a multimodal and genre-fluid response to writing that also made writing intimately material.

The work of multimodality is, at its heart, about process. Jody Shipka suggests as much when she writes about the ballet shoes in *Toward a Composition Made Whole,* offering that her positionality allowed her to "see, and so to understand, the final product *in relation to* the complex and highly rigorous decision-making processes the student employed while producing this text" (italics in original, 3). It should come as no surprise that women professionals pick up this form of composing as an experimental writing practice; creating text art relies on a deep understanding of material processes in typewriting. The art also functions as a pushback against language constructions that prioritize alphabetic forms, disrupting the notion of linearity or simplicity in writing. Instead, by embracing the pictorial power of their machines, women professionals were also embracing the value of multimodal compositions through art bearing witness to their embodied processes.

Similarly, the reproductive capabilities of this form of artwork allows for unlimited dissemination and adoption by anyone with a machine. Others could pick up and experiment with the form easily, requiring only the specialized knowledge of typewriter operation. This becomes particularly important for women like those who resided at St. Mary's Asylum for the Female Blind, where the typewriter made writing and design work more possible for blind and

deaf users ("Items of Interest" 528).[6] The women at St Mary's designed and made programs for their concert.

In the semi-regular feature of later issues of the *London Phonographer* titled "Designs for Office Work," contributors submitted images and other pictorial elements created using their typewriter. These creations have a long history, with contemporary examples on Twitter and in other digital spaces known as ACSii, or the American Standard Code for Information Interchange . This "keyboard art," as its commonly called, draws upon text characters to create an image (Fig. 2).

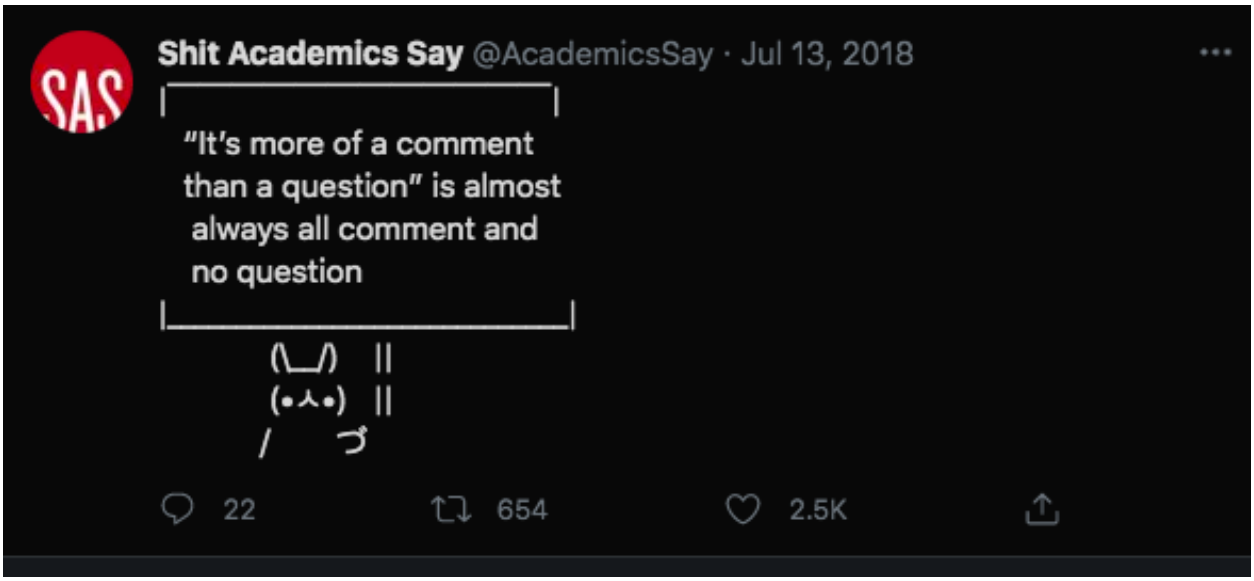

Figure 2. A screenshot from the Shit Academics Say Twitter page which demonstrates ACSii. A bunny is holding a sign that reads "'It's more of a comment than question' is almost always all comment and no question."

Similarly, the genre of concrete poetry relies on the affective power of typographical elements to convey meaning. Typographical art's long history should come as no surprise, and yet the labor of creating these images', and the women who performed that labor, are often dismissed in the history of computational art. Viewed as simplistic or unoriginal in histories of

6. The original invention of the typewriter by Sholes and Glidden was also influenced by other early inventors who were specifically looking to extend writing to the visually impaired, according to Christopher Keep in his "Introduction of the Sholes and Glidden Type-writer, 1874."

the craft, much of the art world's focus is on later creations by men. Alan Riddell's foundational book *Typewriter Art* affirms that viewpoint, calling the early work of Flora Stacey weak; her "sketch of a butterfly [. . .] could just as well, and far more easily, have been done with pen and ink, and one which denies rather than affirms the instrument with which it was made" (10-11). The "monstrous regiment of typists," in Riddell's words, were amateurs. But the obsessive detail required to create these original images at the crux of a new genre of art that marries technological prowess with artistic sensibility is illustrative of both the operator's technical skillset and her deep understanding of her materials.

Yet, whether contemporary or historical, textual art like this is often dismissed as simply "decorative" and requiring no serious or intellectual work to create. In the *London Phonographer,* the debate raged on in their letters section. In issue eight, Frank Smith suggested "that the time devoted to the development of ornamental typing might be better spent in something more useful" ("Longhand" 178). Viewpoints from other magazines were also summarized, such as the *Reporters*' *Journal* August 1893 issue where the editor "properly calls attention to the foolishness of attempting to make sketches by means of typewriters, and strongly deprecates the practice. Some of our American contemporaries indulge largely in facsimiles of this class of work, and this has no doubt tended to foster the absurd custom. At best, such designs are agonising to the artistic eye, and the time absorbed in executing them is absolutely wasted." The magazine agrees with this assessment, "Speaking for ourselves we believe that the production of 'artistic' work with the typewriter is a misuse of the machine," calling it time "simply wasted" ("Typewriter Artists" 512). The "absurd custom" had its admirers though, particularly among women respondents, and obviously the magazine itself sponsored a number of competitions for best designed work.

One of the most well-known winners of those contests was Flora Stacey. Stacey was an accomplished typist who specialized in the "decorative" work so criticized, eventually winning international acclaim for her work. While decried by businessmen as frivolous and a waste of time, the decorative work Stacey and other women created is an art form unto itself. In today's parlance, we might consider them multimodal compositions as well as forms that refuse to make use of the typewriter in "correct" or established ways. Stacey wrote back to the critics in *The London Phonographer,* asserting similar views and her own title of "artist":

> SIR,-As one of the 'typewriter artists,' I venture to write in protest against what appears to me unfair and uncalled for remarks made upon the above. My experience is altogether contrary to yours. You appear to look at the matter from an entirely CITY point of view. CITY work is not *nearly* all of a "typewritists" end and aim. The fashionable and *dilettante* world has now to be considered, and every ornament that can please the artistic eye has to be brought into use. The typewriter is not merely a business office machine. It has in *these* parts to be used much as the types of the printer, and the more ornament the better for those whose taste lies in that direction. If the printing machine must print ornamental lines and designs, why is the typewriter to be behindhand? And where is the difference except that drawings can only be done on machines with visible writing? I am sorry the *London Phonographer* is as it were going back upon itself, and forgetting the good old days of design and illustrations,—and remain, yours regretfully, (Signed) FLORA F. STACEY. [We will endeavour to reform.—ED.] (Stacey 530).

Stacey effectively argues that there's a long history of this work, and by ignoring that history in favor of only one "approved use" of the typewriter, the critic overlooks the ingenuity of the typewriter artist. Stacey's own work, highlighted in issue fifteen of *The London Phonographer*, adds dimension to the writing process by highlighting how form and style inform one another.

Multimodal compositions serve multiple purposes. In some cases, like the composition illustrated by Figure 3, they seem purely decorative.

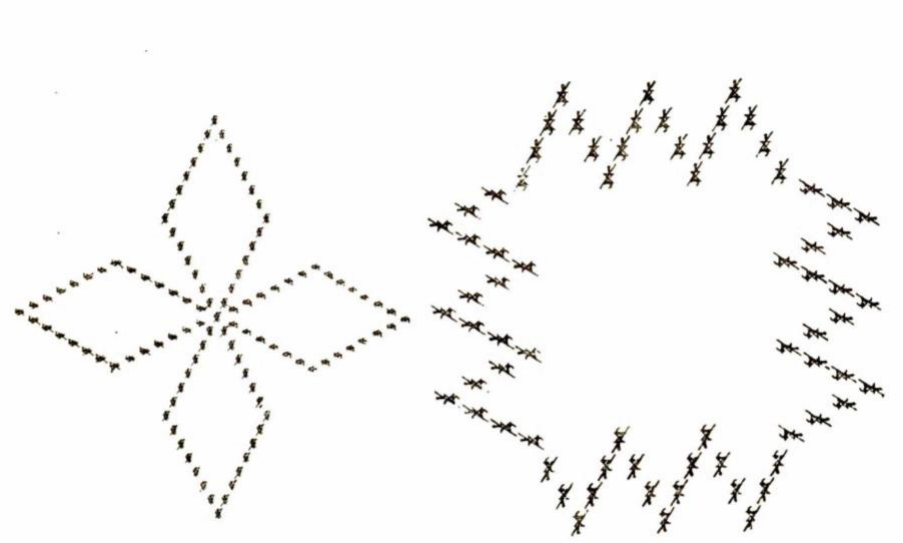

Figure 3. Examples of typewriter art created for The London Phonographer

The writer asserts: "No doubt many of our readers will find them very useful" (267). Yet to what end do they propose readers use them? That part is left unclear. Later examples, on the other hand, are clearly designed for specific uses, either for business (Fig. 4) or in personal correspondence.

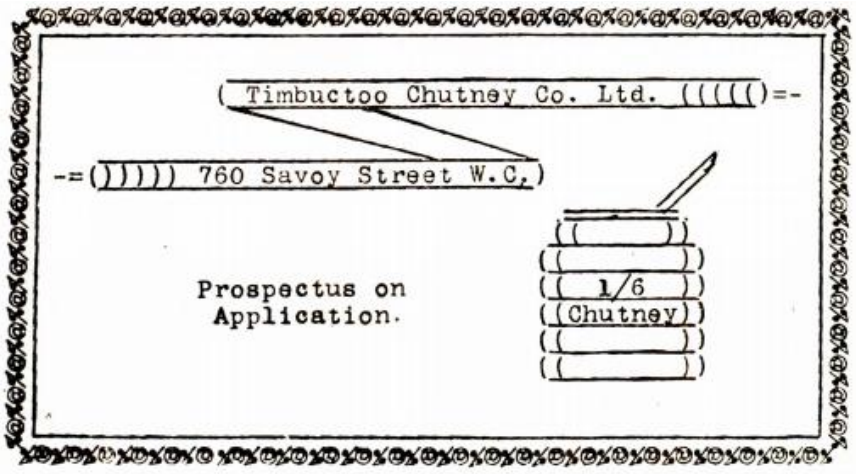

Figure 4. A business card created for a typewriter art competition in The London Phonographer

The decorative borders act as frames for written material and communicate a visual sophistication. Finally, some of the art created by typewriters published within the periodical itself seem strictly to serve aesthetic purposes, as Figure 5 below illustrates. No mention is made

of the illustration of the editor in the article's text, implying that readers were intended to take the creation on aesthetic value alone.

Figure 5. Typewriter art that creates the figure of a bearded man

In all cases, the multimodal compositions add an additional dimension to textual creation. Similar to doodles on a handwritten letter, they personify the writers' taste and aesthetic values, while setting apart the text from other machine-produced texts. They become markers of a particular composer, just as handwriting would signal a letter from a particular person.

The typewriter artworks also call attention to the very means and material of their production; they demand readers take a moment to appreciate the manipulation of keys to create particular effects using only letters and symbols. Instead of emphasizing the sameness of typed text, they make that text become individual and material.

One final example of the multimodal composing power in uniting woman and machine comes from an early issue of *The London Phonographer.* In a column by Mimiotype in issue nine, the permeable relationship between woman and machine is exemplified by a photograph of a "Remington Dress" (Fig. 6). The photo showcases, according to Mimiotype, "what the ingenuity of a fertile mind can accomplish when it sets to work to evolve something that has not

Figure 6. The Remington Typewriter Dress

yet been done in these 'fag-end-of-the-century days" (197). Created by a young typist named Miss Bence, the dress in question mimics the style of the typewriter, with plain white skirt, black-and-gold lined bustier top, and sleeves of paper along with a "Remington" sash, as well as a head-dress (not pictured) that included the "case, keyboard, and paper cylinder made in japanned tin in reduced size. An inkstand and quill pen are perched upon each shoulder" (197).

Miss Bence's dress is a multimodal composition that also uses her typewriter: the text on her sash is typed from her own Remington. Bence embodies her machine at the same time that she comments on the interconnected relationship between objects and writing, as demonstrated by her inclusion of a quill pen. The writing body is inextricable from its writing objects (or is it the writing objects are inextricable from the body?). Writing marks, or inscribes, our bodies, just as we leave marks or inscriptions on material.

Conclusion

This chapter has explored the kinship between the woman typist and the typewriter; importantly, the intimacy that develops between a writer (human) and a writer (object) calls our attention to materiality, or the "mutually-informing sets of practices" that humans and objects engage in during the writing process (Piquette and Whitehouse). My examination of *The London Phonographer* has attempted to capture the historical, embodied practice of type-writing through an emphasis on the body, both of the individual typewriter and of women writers. In the same way that typists are not just straightforward word-for-word copying machines, typewriters are not instruments divorced from the social realities of nineteenth-century London. The typewriter is embedded in writing process, and our psyches, through its impact on the physical labor of writing. By attempting to capture the historical, embodied practice through my analysis of one periodical, I have aimed to uncover the genealogy of the typewriter, and, along with it, the pain and the pleasure it brings to writing processes. Changing the tools of labor change the product of that labor; in the case of the typewriter, women writers were able to use technology in inventive ways to accomplish a variety of goals in the fin de siècle. Chief among them was the feminist power inherent in the assemblage of bodies and machines.

Chapter Three

The Endpapers

"Things concentrate at the edges"

(Richard Wilbur, "Marginalia")

One day in the spring of 2019, I taught myself how to make a book. I've never been particularly good at arts and crafts, but I wondered, as a researcher, if knowing how to physically make the "thing" I've spent years studying might help me see it differently. After all, if I couldn't make a book, what made me think I understood the book's experience as a thing in the world? I needed to make one (practice) to know one (theory). It was only after cutting, folding, refolding, sewing, gluing, and waiting that I came to realize the significance of bookmaking to the writing process. Much like writing, my adventure into bookmaking required a patience and a willingness to revise when things don't come out just right. It also made me see the form of the book differently, as opposed to other forms of writing like the scroll or hypertext. The "book" in this case would be a blank codex, the most common form of the book and the most familiar. If you've picked up a modern paperback, you've read a codex. When making a book, you fold leaves (paper) in half, gather the leaves into a signature, and bind a stack of signatures into the book block. A sturdy cover is then wrapped around the block and attached by using the endpapers and glue. While the endpapers technically refer only to the blank pages attached to the front and back covers of books, in colloquial terms it has come to mean all the blank or mostly

blank pages at the front and back of a printed book (in some references it includes pages with paratext like title pages, advertisements, etc.).

The endpapers are a by-product of the craft of book-making, a necessary component in book binding because without the endpapers, a book could completely fall apart. They are designed to "take up the strain" that happens when a reader opens a book, taking pressure off the block's spine and protecting the material inside (Roberts and Etherington). When making my first book, I realized the significance of the endpapers in part because attaching them to the cover is one of the last steps before a book *feels* like a book.

Although endpapers aren't created until one of the last steps of bookmaking, they, conversely, are the first pages a reader will encounter when opening the book, creating a bridge between author, bookmaker and reader. What is possible in a space that acts as a temporal bridge while at the same time "takes up the strain" upon every use? The tension in this space leaves behind an affective trace, similar to what Kathleen Stewart captures in *Ordinary Affects,* where "thought is patchy and material" (5). I began to wonder if there could be further significance to writing that lived in the endpapers. Endpaper writing is often included in the category of marginalia—most often defined as notations in the margins of printed texts—even though there is nothing marginal about it. In a space characterized by paradoxical meanings, the act of writing on the endpapers takes on significance.

The study of marginalia tends to focus on the notes of canonical writers. How, for example, did Herman Melville read Shakespeare, ask the editors of the archive "Melville's Marginalia Online" (Olson-Smith)? Books with notes from well-known people are known as association copies in library parlance. More recent scholarly projects like Andrew Stauffer's Book Traces project at the University of Virginia document the marginalia of anonymous library

book users. The majority of the texts catalogued by Book Traces are housed in the law, philosophy/psychology/religion, or literature sections of UVA ("Book Traces"). Other projects in literary studies tend to focus on discrete categories of readers, like Kate Flint's *The Woman Reader 1837-1914* or HJ Jackson's *Romantic Readers*. The recovery of historical reading practices is a near impossible task, which is why studies of marginalia are so important. They offer one of the few ways to concretely document how a reader engaged with a text.

Not much is said, however, about the significance of marginalia as a writing process, the implication being that the act of writing is less important than the commentary it offers on the text. The notion that someone *wrote* is in and of itself not under study; it is the act of reading that is. Because marginalia is most often considered as notations alongside a printed text, it makes sense that scholars first area of study would be about the relationship between the printed text and the commentary offered by a real, presumably contemporaneous reader.

But consider instead that marginalia is not only or always evidence of reading; as literary scholar Leah Price writes in a 2008 *London Review of Books* essay, often the notes left in margins indicate boredom, distraction, or little if anything to do with the text itself. In that case, the writing is less about the intellectual engagement with reading the text and more about the intellectual engagement with writing. If we consider these kinds of notes as an important kind of everyday or ordinary writing practice, then we can ascertain that they capture the ephemeral practices of everyday people.

This chapter picks up this thread through a close examination of the significance of the endpapers in a space primed for ordinary writing practice: the cookbook. Because cookbooks are embedded in the dynamic space of the kitchen, their use as paper for writing further entangles the twin embodied knowledge making practices of cooking and writing. As with the other

chapters, I turn towards a specific archival holding to think through this idea. In this case, I examine in-depth one cookbook housed in the archives of Bowling Green State University's Browne Popular Culture Library: *Our Home Cyclopedia*.

I chose this cookbook for a few reasons. The BGSU archives house over 400 cookbooks, dating from the 1870s to the 2000s. In the summer of 2018, I paged through them all with no clear objective in mind. What I discovered was a playground of everyday writing. Multiple volumes, particularly those from 1870-1920, feature extensive writing within their pages. I closely examined any texts that I deemed of medium use (with writing on four or more pages). Of the initial eighteen I considered for closer study, all made extensive use of the endpapers. For this chapter, I ultimately settled on one volume that offered plenty of material for a thick description, an 1889 edition of *Our Home Cyclopedia: Cookery and Housekeeping*. My reasoning for this choice is intentional; while the archival holdings broadly construed mostly represent a presumably Midwest, middle-class readership, this book contains writings that hint at interesting contradictions to the printed text. In addition, the archivists preserved any ephemera in place, which led to a number of findings of ephemera still stuck in the text, and perhaps left in place by the original owner. The scraps range from newspaper clippings about the 1904 World's Fair to antidotes for common poisons. Combined, this material provided enough information about the everyday life of the writer/s to allow me to theorize about their writing process and capture the collaborative and embodied experience of writing in a cookbook.

I will next offer two glosses on important elements—paper and archive—to understanding how I theorize the endpapers within the writing process. From there I will turn to the ways in which the endpapers of *Our Home Cyclopedia* capture an intellectual history of writing process and how ordinary writers themselves are also archivists of the everyday. The

importance of this everyday work is drawn from ideas I first encountered in French philosopher Michel de Certeau's *The Practice of Everyday Life Volume Two*, where he writes "The everyday work in the kitchen remains a way of unifying matter and memory, life and tenderness, the present moment and the abolished past, invention and necessity, imagination and tradition...Good cooks are never sad or idle—they work at fashioning the world...women's gestures and women's voices that make the world livable" (58).

Paper and Archive

The endpapers are first and foremost just paper, but paper is a material that Carla Bittel, Elaine Leong, and Christine von Oertzen argue highlights the "complex ways in which knowledge, gender, and materials are 'mutually constitutive'" in a socio-material negotiation of power (3). Socio-material, in their text, delineates the continuous negotiation between objects and people, which shape and reshape both through their interactions. In other words: not all paper is the same. The raw materials used to create paper, as well as the diverse uses of paper detailed in their text, turn paper into an object of scholarly interest precisely because of its role in "making and keeping" knowledge. Paper matters[7], by which I mean it both has a material heft and an epistemological heft. Although Bittel et al want to move the study of paper past its relationship to textual history, it makes sense to return to paper when discussing writing because its ubiquity as a writing technology lets it fade into the background. Writing studies has not contended with the socio-material impact paper choice could have on writing process[8]. At the same time, even electronic word processing programs mimic the blank sheet of paper upon which writing happens, a design choice that seems inevitable yet isn't.

7. Just ask any graduate student who's had to print out a thesis on special watermarked paper.
8. How might writing on heavier, watermarked linen paper compare to plain printer paper?

Specifically, for this chapter, looking at the writing on paper *within* books as socio-material is new. The most common explanation for writing on paper in an already-bound book, according to early book histories about the western world, was that paper was expensive. Therefore, it follows that using and reusing available scraps, like the endpapers in books, was a choice made out of necessity. As the cost of paper and thereby books went down, the need for reusing paper decreased. However, I challenge this notion, particularly when considering how writing in books continued long past the scarcity of the paper supply. In that case, writing in books in the nineteenth century onward must have some sort of epistemological or socio-material benefit.

I argue the blank endpapers are significant for writing because they are *invitational.* They invite writing to happen because of their proximity to the already-written, and the writer can take up the authority afforded by the printed book to give their own writing permanence. Writing in a printed book crosses the threshold between public/private space, between the domain of reader/writer. Just as the endpapers live between the unwritten and written, between the bound and unbound, so too do books exist as living objects—like houses they come alive through the relational interactions that happen within.

By thinking of the book as a living object like a house, the endpapers become entryways, another kind of invitational space, one that can be a space to traverse before getting to the printed text. Gerard Genette would agree; writing in 1991, he called elements like introductions, dedications, and similar errata the paratext of the book: "Rather than with a limit or a sealed frontier, we are dealing in this case with a threshold, or—the term Borges used about a preface—with a 'vestibule' which offers to anyone and everyone the possibility either of entering or of turning back" (261). Similarly, endpapers are liminal objects in both a spacial and temporal

sense; they exist in-between the outside world and the material world of the book, both an entrance and an exit space from the book world. They can set the tone of the book for the reader, as education theorists Sipe and McGuire argue in their essay on children's picture books, which often use decorative pages to extend and frame the inner narrative. In a temporal sense, the endpapers are always unstable, a space where tension can literally undue the book's binding. As Deidre Lynch writes in her essay "Paper Slips: Album, Archiving, Accident":

> Once we consider it as scrap, slip, or loose leaf, the page represents something more complicated and rebellious than a synecdoche of the book; *the* book in turn seems a more provisional object than that definite article might lead us to expect, as though we should anticipate instead the undoing of the *gathering* and *binding* that undergird that ontological stability. (102)

Building on that ontological instability of the book itself, the endpapers are not just blank pages, but pages designed not only "to take up the strain" of the book as an object, but also to take up the strain of defining "the book." Thus, when someone adds writing to the endpaper, they ensconce their writing at a site of ontological instability. They write *into* the book their own history. This writing, too, could be conceived of as a strained process. To take the strain: to assume a burden, take a responsibility (OED). A strain can also be a genealogy, a record of ancestry. Or, in the case of cooking, it can be a filter, a way of extracting something via pressure.

To that end, the strained process becomes a feminist process. To do feminism, to practice feminist writing, is to take up the strain of memorializing. It is to accept the invitation of the blank pages of the book, to accept the instability of memory and history. What the endpapers do, when a writer takes up their invitation, is archive.[9] That is, they participate in a reciprocal socio-material relationship with the writer. At the same time the writer records, commemorates, or witnesses something via writing on the endpaper, the endpapers house the everyday moment.

9. *To archive*—a verb form the *Oxford English Dictionary* only traces to 1934—means to determine something's value and to house it, literally or figuratively, for safekeeping.

Ellen Gruber Garvey's *Writing with Scissors* is foundational to understanding the significance of everyday objects and writing; her work examines American scrapbooks from the Civil War and after and theorizes about their contribution to everyday knowledge-making and information management. The scrapbook is both a personal archive and a written record: the choices in juxtaposition, clippings to save, and the occasional marginal comment all contribute to Garvey's reading of scrapbooks as alternative histories. For Garvey, creating a scrapbook is akin to "performing archivalness" wherein the actions of clipping and saving are themselves meaningful. By creating these scrapbooks, people were harnessing the power of the book to capture and protect their history; in Garvey's words, they "express the will to save, organize, and transmit knowledge through a homemade archive" (20). The gestures that occur when performing archivalness—cutting, pasting, assembling—are similar to the gestures editors and writers perform. Thus, performing archivalness becomes an act of writing the body into the archive; the focus is less on the archive created and more on the embodied actions of the creator.

Archives themselves are always political sites established with an intent and purpose in mind; to archive is similarly a political act. Theorizing what it means *to archive* in the cookbook's endpapers is to theorize politically about the significance of ordinary writing as a feminist act. Even if the anonymous writers are inadvertent archivists—writers who were not necessarily thinking of their recording as history to be studied—it is still important to recognize their *action* as "performing archivalness," with all its associated political weight. A term other than inadvertent archivist that might be more applicable to understanding the significance of this writing comes from media theorist Abigail de Kosnik: "rogue" archivists. De Kosnik uses "rogue" to delineate how digital archivers are recreating cultural memory through their openness, thereby shifting the power of history away from institutions. Instead, the rogue archive is a site

where the labor of archiving by everyday people is made plain. Thus, the act of writing the ordinary into a printed book is a radical act. By writing in a book, the printed text is shaped differently; by literally writing themselves into the text, a writer changes the frame through which it can be read. These same writers challenge the notion that printed objects impose a specific form on readers; instead, these writers demonstrate agency by interacting physically with their books, thereby challenging the notion that books are "stable, fixed objects" (Lynch 97). The rogue archivists capture the everyday through their writing, but they also turn the everyday object, like the cookbook, into a uniquely situated storehouse of information and history.

If paper, at the juncture of the nineteenth and twentieth century, is an ordinary object, then the kind of writing happening in a cookbook could be considered the most ordinary. Cooking is often considered a domestic labor, one that is notable precisely for its dailiness, and by extension, its drudgery. As folklorist Janet Theophano argues in *Eat My Words*: *Reading Women's Lives through the Cookbooks They Wrote,* the curious act of recording elements of a daily task is precisely the point:

> Does writing [recipes] make this act of labor less of a drudgery? Does record keeping transform the tedium into an important resource for the practical information it conveys, for even the unpleasant memories it encodes, and for the release it provides? Does the act of writing give women's onerous chores dignity? In the act of inscribing their knowledge, women exalt the ordinary work that they do in the routines of everyday life (146).

Although the cookbook I examine was lifted from its ordinary life to be saved in an archive, I would not insist that the writing in books from the BGSU archives is somehow extra-ordinary; I think the opposite. It's the very fact that it is ordinary that makes it valuable and significant for my study.

Most immediately, the anonymous writers within the cookbooks I've examined preserve the writing of everyday people, a genre notoriously difficult to study since it's most often considered unimportant or insignificant. As Jennifer Sinor writes in *The Extraordinary Work of Ordinary Writing*, "Rather than the fullness found in character, motivation, dramatic tension, selective detail, and metaphoric language, the matter of ordinary writing is almost non-existent, intentionally less crafted, and much closer in form to something like testimony—which also arrives in fits and starts and is never closed, narrated, and whole" (14). Ordinary writing is considered unremarkable because it does not "story" according to Sinor. Instead, it drops the reader into the middle of the action, offering no sense of coherence, unity, climax, or progression.

Yet, even simple notations like lists demonstrate a familiarity with genre, purpose, and audience; after all, as Ann Berthoff reminds me, "listing is the composing process in a nutshell." Berthoff goes on to write:

> One meaning of meaning is *mediation*; another is *purpose*. To ask what a list means is to ask what it says and what it is for, what purposes it serves. A list can be used to remind you of what's to be done or to record what has been done. When you check off a list, it's like making another list. The composing process involves this kind of comparison between intention and achievement, between purposes that have been fulfilled and those that are still unrealized. (62)

A list of ingredients for a recipe records both the purpose (to gather material) and the potentially unrealized outcome (to transform material). It can be both a record of what one did in the kitchen, as well as a reminder of what's yet to be done.

To further complicate Berthoff's point, cooking as a practice, and by extension writing recipes as a practice, are both acts that strike a balance between purposes: on the one hand, feeding oneself and staying alive, and, on the other, imagining new dishes that may not ever be

prepared or consumed[10]. Cooking itself is like writing: it engages with revision, organization, experimentation, and embodied practice. Both cooking and writing require a creator and a consumer/reader (or, at least, pretend to). So, when I consider the marginalia writing that occurs in cookbooks, I am observing the composing process as an embodied experience that captures hands writing and hands making. This "kitchen literacy," according to domesticity scholar Wendy Wall, is the foundation for a broader "artisanal literacy," which she defines as the knowledge derived from experience and labor within domestic spaces. "Making" in this sense ties together writing and cooking through the embodied process of multimodal composing ("Literacy and the Domestic Arts" 386). Thus, cookbooks, like the early modern handwritten manuscripts Wall studies, functioned as sites of literacy practice, where a growing population of writing-literate women could practice their writing by showcasing their artisanal and cooking literacy.

When considering the artisanal literacy required to "write cooking," cookbooks become a rhetorically complicated genre and a rhetorically complicated object; they "do not merely record practices, but testify to ways of speaking, persuading, and thinking" (Wall 5). Wall also suggests through this complex rhetorical performance the writer must regularly negotiate and reassess their ethos and audience. Just as poetry, philosophy, and religious texts were important to developing constructions of gender and selfhood in the early modern period, they were also genres that were "a template through which a reader might imagine a being in time and in relationship to persons and institutions." Recipes were a genre similarly weighty with meaning. Wall writes of early modern recipe culture in *Recipes for Thought:*

> Given abundant historical evidence of recipe circulation, we are in a position to see that their rhetorical operations fashioned and theorized epistemologies. Necessarily

10. *In Memory's Kitchen* is a prime example of how a cookbook might be more about the imaginative practice than the straightforward process of eating to stay alive.

> positioning a speaking subject in relation to past source, practice, witnesses, and the implied receiving "you," recipes distributed verification—as a recurrent process—across persons, speech acts, and labors. (238)

Through the process of writing and sharing recipes, knowledge-making becomes a collaborative enterprise, one that disperses knowledge across time and invites the future reader into the process. Published cookbooks receive the same sort of treatment; women can and do critique published work through their marginalia, changing ingredient amounts or offering commentary. At the same time, they invite in potential readers to "verify" or judge their corrections and potentially contribute their own knowledge. Thus, even minimal marginalia captures an embodied process of knowledge-making carried out via labor in the kitchen and in the mind and bodies of self and others who take up the work**.**

Although Wall does not use this term, another way to think about how recipes circulate knowledge is through remix culture, which Lawrence Lessig helpfully defines as read-write (RW) culture (as opposed to read-only (RO) culture).[11] In RW culture, individuals can both "read" something and "write" over it; in other words, they can interact with received material in new ways, literally reading and re-writing data. As Lessig writes, "RW culture extends itself differently [than RO culture]. It touches social life differently. It gives the audience something more. Or, better, it asks something more of the audience. It is offered as a draft. It invites a response. In a culture in which it is common, its citizens develop a kind of knowledge that empowers as much as it informs or entertains" (85). When considering marginalia in this light, it becomes a writing process that is empowering precisely because it embraces the recursiveness of its practice. Re-mix (with a hyphen) is a return to mixing again and again—like a batter for cake—a continual re-vision of process and knowledge as it is acquired, regardless if that

11. Lessig's example draws on data storage: originally disks were read-only, whereas later storage devices like CDs could be RW, rewritten.

knowledge comes from printed books, experimentation, or other people. Re-mix in this sense is the writer refusing to see a printed book as a static, unchanging object. Instead, the book is valued as a living document. It implies the printed cookbook is not infallible, a tome sanctioned by some higher authority with irrefutable knowledge. Just as a higher altitude changes the time it takes for water to boil or cakes to rise, re-mix emphasizes the experimentation and play of the individual writer, as well as the ongoing, always hyphenated, continual re-ifying re-doing re-conceptualizing inherent in grounded knowledge-making practices.

Thus, the greater utility of ordinary writing is just that: it is every day, commonplace, useful instead of carefully crafted and composed: "Ordinary writing, writing produced *in* the moment rather than *of* the moment, captures the in-betweenness of lived experience" (Sinor 20). What we see in ordinary writing is the minutiae of lives, often women's, considered too boring or too insignificant for serious study. Perhaps it's no coincidence that this writing lives in-between the covers of a printed book, where the endpapers are themselves an in-betweenness of the book. Yet, just as paper, the in-betweenness of writing *matters,* perhaps on an infinitesimally smaller scale, but it still matters. To sit with ordinary writing, to read it on its own terms, is to ponder the value of the everyday, to ponder the value of writing as an ordinary action.

Case Study: Our Home Cyclopedia: Cookery and Housekeeping

A marked-up 1889 edition of *Our Home Cyclopedia: Cookery and Housekeeping* by Edgar S. Darling lives in the BGSU Popular Culture Library. The marginalia writer within the text is unknown, but assumptions about the common readers and users of cookbooks for the time period, as well as the intended audience imagined by Darling, have led me to assume the writer is a woman. I highlight my assumption here to provide the context for how I read the text; while

I don't want to ignore how assigning gender to an anonymous writer creates a possibility for mis-gendering, I do want to acknowledge the socially constructed categorization of the genre of cookbooks as "female." The historical reality supports that most women in Western cultures were regulated to domestic roles at some point in time and that the particular genre of cookbook writing and reading was composed with them in mind. Indeed, some of the first published bestsellers were cookbooks, like Hannah Glasse's famous *The Art of Cookery Made Plain and Easy* in 1747, which went on to dominate the Western kitchen through the eighteenth century. At the same time, I will not ascribe a label like feminist to an anonymous writer whose choices I cannot know. Instead, I will only describe how I read certain *actions* as feminist, thereby emphasizing my own reading of the experience while preserving the anonymous writer's historically situated and unknown identity. I model this practice after Garvey's "performing archivalness" mentioned previously, wherein the performance of scrapbooking is akin to the act of archiving, so too is the performance of writing down recipes akin to an act of feminist archiving.

I begin with a thick description of the materiality of this particular edition of *Our Home Cyclopedia*. I do this because, as Nicola Humble suggest in *Culinary Pleasures: Cookbooks and the Transformation of British Food*, the specifics of a particular cookbook transform it into a palimpsest, wherein "the original text [is] overlaid with personal meanings and experiences, the spines broken by use and by the mass of extra matter forced between their pages. Some - the most used - also bulge with the literal remains of the feasts they have conjured up, their stained pages entombing ancient crumbs and morsels" (3). Put another way, the multi-layered material record of this particular edition of *Our Home Cyclopedia* is important to its understanding as an object of the writing process.

Describing Our Home Cyclopedia

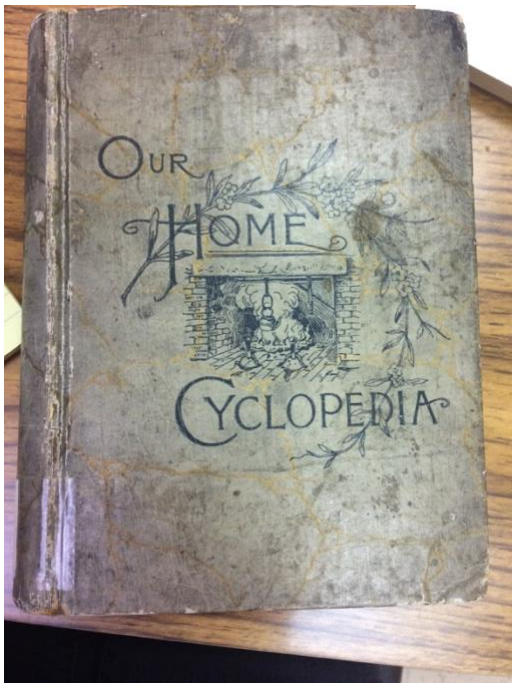

Figure 7 A photograph taken by Rhiannon Scharnhorst of the cover of Our Home Cyclopedia housed at the BGSU Popular Culture Library

To begin, the cover is a worn, marbled brown and gold color, and the book's spine shows evidence of repeated use through many cracks. The illustration on the cover is a half wreath of flowers circling a kitchen hearth, where a teapot is hanging from a mantle over a blazing fire (Fig. 7). A note on the copyright page inside indicates the image is of George Washington's Mt. Vernon hearth, a reference that aligns "our" home with one belonging to a founding father of America. The illustration evokes a sense of warmth while still staying fairly generic; the emphasis is on the stylized title that surrounds the drawing, with "our" slightly set off from the other words on the page. Immediately a reader is implicated by the title: it is "our" book, "our" home, not simply "a" book.

Upon opening the book, the reader encounters the well-used endpapers, covered as they are in penciled recipes. Written on the verso side of a pasted-down endpaper, which BGSU has partially covered with a bookplate sticker and which adds to the multi-layering effect, is the recipe "Pie Crust for 4" along with what appears to be a recipe for an egg wash for the crust. The facing page is a list of ingredients for an untitled dish, which appears to be another kind of crust or cake. The following endpages list recipes for "Doughnuts," "Ginger Cake" and "(Bread) Hattie's." The first two recipes are more like lists of ingredients than traditional recipes with steps, but the recipe for Hattie's bread stands out as unusual from most of the other writing in the book. It is written in a narrative style, almost as though the writer is taking it down as testimony

from Hattie herself. There are no editing marks or additions, but there are parentheticals throughout that indicate side commentary about the steps for making bread. I will reproduce the narrative in whole here, which covers both the front and back pages (verso and recto) that are closest to the title page of the book itself. I have also included an image of one page of "(Bread) Hattie's" so the reader can see the handwriting of the anonymous writer (Fig. 8).

> (Bread) Hattie's
> When you have mashed potatoes for dinner, take a large kitchen spoonful, to a large dipper hot water. Let cool, till milk warm then add 6 cups (before sifting) of flour (not heaping) half cup sugar, into the water & potato, before putting in flour, teaspoon salt (level). Let flour and water (cool) then add yeast, (1 1/2 cakes) previously soaked in luke warm water till real soft). Then in the morning - put in lard big as a hen's egg. Then add as much flour gradually a little
> [page 2]
> at time till stiff enough to mould, out on board till it wont stick any more on the board (using <u>little</u> flour to [twist?] to mould) then set back in the <u>crock</u> to raise. When grown poke your fingers in the dough and the dough comes up any air and fills up the dough made with finger, then its light enough to mould for raising for pans. When light by pressing finger a going as before, its ready to bake. ~~Fill pans~~. Make 3 loaves, 2 if mould [looses] air, rest of the other.

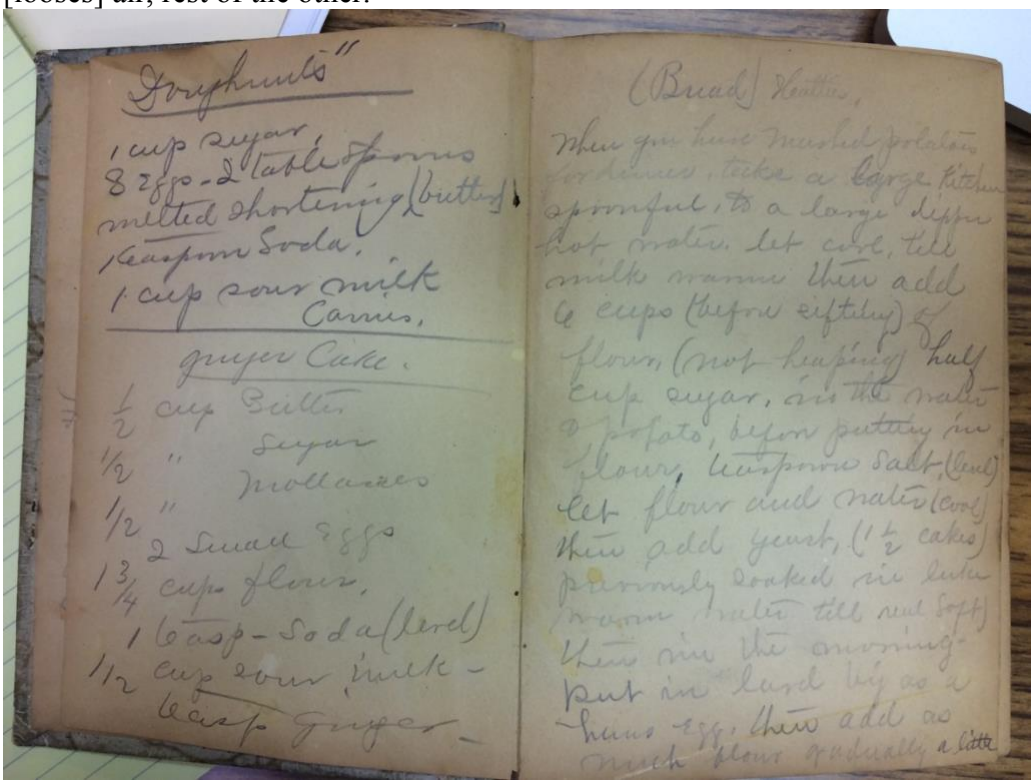

Figure 8 A photograph taken by Rhiannon Scharnhorst of the endpapers of Our Home Cyclopedia

The recipe is for a potato-based bread which also seems to make use of everyday meal preparation; for example, the command to make this bread "when you have mashed potatoes for dinner" implies that it isn't something you make for its own sake, but something you make when already having potatoes as a side dish. There are also measurement idiosyncrasies, like to use lard as "big as a hen's egg." Many of the parenthetical references provide additional context that imply a listener asking clarifying questions, like adding a specific amount of yeast, as opposed to the assumption the baker knows how much to use. In trying to reanimate this possible conversation between Hattie and the writer, I'm reminded of Jean Duruz's essay "Haunted Kitchens" in *Gastronomica.* Duruz traces the ghosts that "dodge through the pages" of culinary biographies, ultimately finding figures of good and bad mothers populate the most pages. She renames this spectral figure the "Cooking Woman," and determines that Cooking Woman haunts women writers, not just as ghost of mothers past, but as writers of the cookbook form who've been denied their rightful distinctions as novelists (64). Just as contemporary feminism grapples with its own legacy figures, I must also struggle with the spectral figure of the writer of Hattie's bread. As she continues to fill the endpapers of *Our Home Cyclopedia,* I chase her through the text, trying to catch glimpses of her identity or to make sense of her writing's purpose.

Following the testimony/recipe for Hattie's bread, we encounter the title page of the printed book. It shows yet another hearth illustration, this time with a cauldron hanging over an unlit fireplace mantle. A caption reads "Fireplace in the home of John Howard Payne, the author of 'Home, Sweet Home.'" Payne was an internationally famous actor and composer, whose 1822 song "Home, Sweet Home" was wildly popular. Choosing a line drawing of his hearth signals the book's preoccupation with defining "home." With just a few elements—the cover, title page, and visuals—the text emphasizes how a home should convey simplicity, coziness, comfort, or in

the words of Payne's song, "Mid pleasures and palaces though we may roam/Be it ever so humble, there's no place like home." Read in context alongside the recipes on the endpapers, which the reader encounters before the title page, it seems home is less of a concern for the writer than celebration and collaborative writing/making, as recipes for pies and cookies, as well as the testimony of Hattie, indicate.

Curiously, the dedication of the book that follows the idyllic home scene on the title page suggests not all is well in home-land. The dedication reads: "To those housewives who consider married life a failure/this book/is affectionately dedicated,/with the hope that it will make/married life a success." Surrounding that dedication, and on the opposite facing page, the anonymous writer has covered the pages with penciled recipes for more sweets. There are Maggie's cookies, Emma's cookies, ginger cookies, frosting, and just plain cookies.

It is in the juxtaposition of the recipes and the book's dedication where the reader encounters a site of tension. Just as the endpapers function as a liminal space where the strain between the material world and the textual world is apparent, the juxtaposition of a presumably woman writer and the male author of the printed text collide. Here, the tension lies between the realities exposed by everyday writing and the idyllic scene of domesticity, as represented by the repeated motif of the hearth, and the difficult realities of married life, gestured at in the dedication. As both the book and the copyright are in male names (Edgar S. Darling and Frank Burton), the implication is that the men are fantasizing about the perfect hearth and signaling to their wives that they understand domesticity is difficult: if only she takes up their book, she can ensure a successful marriage. The writer, on the other hand, literally writes around this supposition, as though she is indifferent to their desire. What her ordinary writing suggests is a

composer more interested in capturing her and her friends' or family members' contributions than in ensuring the men are satisfied with her domestic work.

Following the prefatory material is an image of a milk maid and an introduction to the book itself, presumably written by the author Darling. He seems to be speaking to an imaginary frustrated housewife in the introduction, where the use of third person plural (we) implies a coterie of authorities on the kitchen, as opposed to a more invitational "we" that inculcates the reader as well. The authority and control extend, as well, to the care and design of the book itself, as the introduction begins by emphasizing the utility of the printed book: it has been designed to save the housewife time by arranging recipes alphabetically within a series of subject headers, eliminating the need to use a table of contents. Darling also emphasizes how their recipes promote health and economic cooking practices by focusing on the practical, as opposed to epicurean or artistic. He has also included "general directions" at the beginning of each section, another innovation that prescriptive methods of making/cooking are best. Darling's focus on utility extends to the physicality of the book itself. He writes: "In the mechanical arrangement of this volume, the publishers have made it far excell any other cook book ever published. The type is large and clear, the leaves are broad, and the book is so bound that it will remain open at any point desired, thus saving one's time in frequent opening, as is the case with books of narrow pages" (2). The book is thus always ready to be cracked open, an implication that the reader will need to reference it repeatedly and not that she has her own storehouse of knowledge ready at hand.

The cookbook represents a time when growing emphasis was placed not on domestic work as unskilled work but on the skilled work of "domestic science" (Enoch). As was common for late nineteenth and early twentieth century printed cookbooks, the emphasis for cooking is on

utility and economy, not pleasure or artistry. That shift in focus coincides with the rise of domestic science, a newly created discipline that was intended to legitimize women's education in domestic skills. Turning cooking into science makes sense when one considers the breadth of interdisciplinary knowledge needed to be successful in the kitchen, as well as skills in management and organization, and above all a curiosity to turn raw material into food "compositions." As Wendy Wall suggests, recipes themselves "are founded on the transformation of natural elements into 'made' worlds—through labor, contrivance, artifice, *techne*" (3). In other words, cooking is a rhetorical act where raw elements are arranged into "made" compositions. Similarly, recipes function as rhetorical acts; they are instructors or suggestions for a composing process.

Understanding recipes as rhetorical gives credence to the need for understanding the differences between Darling's recipes and the anonymous writers. Darling does take on an expansive view of the cooking process, extending the idea of "recipe" beyond ingredients to include various steps and knowledge before cooking happens. One example is for canning fruit; the book gives instructions on "preparing the cans, the tops, the rubbers, the kind of cans to be used, heating the fruit, [. . .] the quantity of sugar required per quart, and the time for boiling any kind of fruit." By including this material, Darling suggests there are scientific steps to canning that are broadly applicable, as opposed to the more localized knowledge often passed through oral communication. Neither the scientific method nor the informal method is inherently better, but Darling's version does ignore (or simply doesn't recognize) that a network of knowledge-sharing is already happening, as is also evidenced by the anonymous writer's notes in the endpapers about other processes.

Finally, Darling ends his introduction to the cookbook by returning to the motif of hearth and home. He closes by reminding the reader that the mission of the book is to bring "happiness, peace, and contentment" to the home. Crucially, this mission can only be achieved if the husband "sits at the table with a smiling and satisfied countenance" and the wife by extension feels less anxious. The implication of dissatisfaction and violence is tied together in a closing two-line poem:

"Get a husband what he likes,
And save a thousand household strikes."

I have not traced the poem to any other text, and it seems likely it was written for the introduction by Darling. I cannot help but read "strikes" in this instance as referring to physical violence. If the home is the domain of domesticity, what would the husband, in this case a man who presumably works outside the home, have to "strike" for? The notion that the poem implies a labor strike does not make sense with the rest of the text, which arguably only addresses one laborer in the home—the wife.

This protracted accounting of the material book is necessary; to fully understand the value of this piece of everyday writing, its context must be accounted for. The writing on the endpapers is itself *striking*. When juxtaposed with the printed text, it advocates for a different kind of cooking process. There are no long lists of instructions (beyond Hattie's testimonial bread). There is no singular recipe, but instead a succession of recipes, often for the same dish, that indicate experimentation and play. There's also no clear indication of meals that Darling would consider economical; the food histories captured by the writing are both scientific baking experiments and foodstuffs that occasion celebrations or events, not healthful meals. I cannot help but read a subtle, even unconscious, pushback in the writings included in the endpapers.

That pushback becomes more apparent through the marginalia sprinkled throughout the text itself. On page 65, a recipe has been amended by the author's hand, and on page 39 a recipe for "Apple Dumplings" clipped from a newspaper has been inserted over the top of similar recipes for gems, or cookies. In both cases, the writer is asserting their dominance over the text by literally rewriting it. These moments of marginalia also show the writer engaging with the printed text itself, which negates the idea that the book was written in because, for example, it was the only source of paper in the household. Instead, the choices for writing in this particular book are deliberate.

This assumption on my part holds true for other cookbooks, as well. Food studies historian Rachel Snell found similar annotations in her study of cookbooks at The Una Abrahamson Canadian Cookery Collection at the University of Guelph, Guelph, Ontario, Canada: "Of ninety-two total annotations, fifty-four modified to recipes related to entertaining (cakes, fruit preserves, wines, etc.), while just sixteen annotations related to everyday cookery and even fewer to keeping house and home remedies." Snell theorizes this discrepancy lies in a disconnect between the printed text's author and the writer of the annotations. She concludes: "Their annotations mark them as experts rather than learners; they modify the text to suit their needs and experiences. Despite the stated purpose of the cookbook authors and the opinions of those who decried the influence of women's education on domestic endeavors, most women did not depend on cookbooks as instructional manuals for the daily practice of domesticity, but turned to them for special occasions and entertaining." While the anonymous writer of *Our Home Cyclopedia* challenges this viewpoint because their writing emphasizes celebration and desserts, Snell's point that readers were approaching the text as "experts" rather than students holds true.

About halfway through *Our Home Cyclopedia* is an open-ended section titled "Additional Recipes," which includes blank pages presumably for the reader to write in their own recipes. Although a few of these pages do have recipes, the bulk of pages do not, further emphasizing how the endpapers of the text were more inviting and useful to the writer. One of the recipes within the "Additional Recipes" section is interesting because it captures the writer's revision and editing practice clearly. The recipe for "Baking Bread" is illustrative of the writer making multiple attempts to set down the instructions correctly. There are numerous edits, including at least three instances where sentences are rewritten, a clear indication of complete erasure in one section, a couple of words crossed out, and six different places where text is later inserted. Oddly, the writing also circles around the cramped edge of the page instead of going on to the next blank page. What "Baking Bread" captures is a making and writing process in tandem; the additions indicate perhaps more clarification after making the bread, or even further clarification from the original recipe writer, such as the repeated insertion of "in crock" in the latter half of the recipe to indicate where the bread should still be resting.

The final recipe written into the text is aptly titled "My Success with Cake" (Fig. 9).

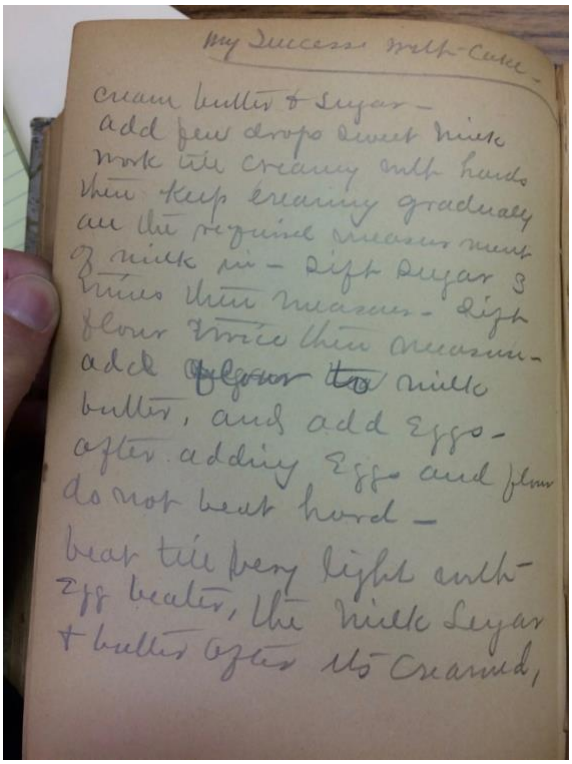
My Success with Cake -
cream butter & Sugar -
add few drops sweet milk
work the creamy with hands
then keep creaming gradually
all the required measure milk
& milk in - sift sugar 3
times then measure - sift
flour twice then measure -
add ~~flour to~~ milk
butter, and add Eggs -
after adding Eggs and flour
do not beat hard -
beat till very light with
Egg beater, the milk Sugar
& butter after its Creamed,

Figure 9 A photograph by Rhiannon Scharnhorst of the handwritten recipe "My Success with Cake" in Our Home Cyclopedia

It's interesting to juxtapose "My Success with Cake"—the only recipe with a title beyond the name/food referenced—with Darling's dedication in the opening pages of the book. As a reminder, Darling's dedication reads: "To those housewives who consider married life a failure/this book/is affectionately dedicated,/with the hope that it will make/married life a success." By naming her recipe "My Success with Cake" does the writer mean to indicate success at cake is more important than making married life a success[12]? It's unclear, but what is clear is that through the writing into the text, the writer cares less about Darling's commandment and more about their own experimentation and legacy. For what does "My Success with Cake" imply but an experiment tested again and again until perfection and then set down into the record of *Our Home Cyclopedia,* as is also shown through the number of different pages titled with

12. Thanks to participants at the 2021 Archival Kismet conference for this insightful observation.

some variation of "cake"? The full text of the recipe that was left in the book is reproduced below:[13]

> Cream butter and sugar—
> Add few drops sweet milk
> Work the creamy with hands
> Then keep creaming gradually
> All the required [pieces?]
> Of milk in—sift sugar 3
> Times then measure—sift
> Flour twice then measure—
> Add flour to milk
> Butter, and add eggs—
> After adding eggs and flour
> Do not beat hard—
> Beat till very light with
> Egg beater, the milk sugar
> and butter after its creamed,

More a list of actions than ingredients, the success cake recipe is poetic in form. Embodied actions sweep across lines, with breaks and long dashes reminiscent of poetry by Emily Dickinson. Just as Dickinson's poetry captures the emotional extremes of womanhood, or Garvey's scrapbookers were "performing archivalness," the anonymous writer of *Our Home Cyclopedia* captures her cooking practice in language. She literally writes herself, her life and her body, into this unconventional archive. Instead of considering the gaps left behind by her anonymity, my reading of her work has been one attempt to pay homage to her agency as a writer who utilizes the endpapers for inventive composing practice.

Conclusion

> "Nothing here but kitchen things, he said, with a little laugh for the insignificance of kitchen things." (Susan Glaspell, "A Jury of Her Peers")

13. It seems like a page following this one might have been torn out or is simply missing, which is why the recipe ends with a comma. At the same time, it could be the writer was interrupted and never got to finish setting down the successful cake recipe. A depressing thought.

The anonymous writer of notes in *Our Home Cyclopedia* archives her everyday life through her recipes and notes. By writing the endpapers, she flips the power balance in her favor, shifting the reader's focus from Darling's scientific approach to one that is local, collaborative, and embodied. The writing in this cookbook always calls to my mind Susan Glaspell's short story "A Jury of Her Peers," which hinges on two women correctly "reading" the detritus of a kitchen after a murder. Another woman has killed her abusive husband, and while male detectives stomp around the house theorizing about who could've hurt him, her friends (the "jury of peers") piece together the "trifles" in her kitchen that allow them to make sense of what happened. They choose to say nothing, judging her justified in her act. These "trifles," a half-filled bucket of sugar, a poorly sewed quilt block, and a broken bird cage, are the most important elements in the story; it is within the language of "trifles" that the narrative is created and read by the women. The same notion of "trifles" appears in anonymous ordinary writing. In piecing together the significance of writings like "(Bread) Hattie's," "Baking Bread," and "My Success with Cake," I have come to value the feminist gesture of archiving the "trifles" of everyday lives. Without them, I would have a less nuanced understanding of how the writing process can be feminist archival work.

Coda

When I first worked on a version of this chapter in the summer of 2018, I shared the story of what I found at BGSU with my de facto mother-in-law, Peggy. In a story that I would like to think the anonymous writer would enjoy, Peggy shared this story with friends, and, through serendipity, I ended up with a recipe box in my possession from a woman I've never met (Fig. 10). It contains, according to the letter included by the woman who inherited it, recipe cards that belonged to her aunt who was born in 1912. The letter details some of her memories of her aunt's food as well as how exchanging the recipe cards was a major part of her aunt's social life. She concludes, "The cards are like a little journal or diary." I intend to further honor this gift, and the work therein, in a future work of my own.

Figure 10 The recipe box

Chapter Four

The Kitchen Table

They were women then
My mama's generation
[…]
Across mined
Fields
Booby-trapped
Kitchens
To discover books
Desks
A place for us
How they knew what we
Must know
Without knowing a page
Of it
Themselves.[14]
(Alice Walker, "In Search of Our Mother's Gardens")

My family's kitchen was originally too small for a table. When I turned twelve, the 8x10 foot room was remodeled with a small addition of bar seating at one end, and it was at the bar I sat most evenings and watched my mom Kathy cook. I remember this house by the before and after of that kitchen. Before—I was always underfoot, or the cats were tripping Kathy as they milled about in search of droppings, and I was banished to the living room, where I only caught glimpses of her through the pass-through window. After—I was a part of the live performance, sitting at the bar where I could see her move about, hear her "yowzah" when picking up a hot pan lid, and try to sneakily nab a taste of something in the making. The soundtrack to my writing was the kitchen. Eventually, after my mom was confined to her bedroom with neuro-endocrine cancer, the bar was where my dad and I worked side-by-side, he writing emails and me writing

14. In online reprints/representations of this poem, the word "kitchens" has inexplicably been replaced with "ditches."

term papers, all the while keeping an eye on mom's sleeping form through a baby monitor. When I visit home now, it's just me and my dad. We mostly sit at the bar, as though the only room in that house is the kitchen. I share this personal history because it illustrates a truth for me—surfaces *matter*. It isn't just the memories that are housed in the kitchen, housed in rooms, but the memories that we composed and were composing alongside the everydayness of our writing lives are embedded in the same surfaces we use every day. As Michel de Certeau reminds me in *The Practice of Everyday Life,* "Our successive living spaces never disappear completely; we leave them without leaving them because they live in turn, invisible and present, in our memories and in our dreams. They journey with us. In the center of these dreams, there is often the kitchen…" (vol 2, 148).

This chapter picks up that matter to make a simple observation: some women do their writing at kitchen tables. I wonder why. I wonder what the kitchen table offers these women that desks or offices or comfortable beds cannot give them. I wonder how the kitchen shapes their writing and whether the kitchen table itself has any impact on how or what they write. In other words, can I feel the table behind the page? I think of the table as the figurative surface, the site upon which women write about their lives by using language to capture thoughts, images, and emotions that are particular to their histories. But I also wonder about the table in a literal sense: does its surface, whether smooth or sticky, scarred wood or scratched plastic, impact the writing of those who use it? Do the words stand taller by resting on the stability and weightiness of the table? Or do they feel like rushed, dashed-off sentences written in haste between making dinner, talking with friends, and being interrupted because the kitchen is the heart of the home? I wonder, too, whether the table supports difficult sentences, winding sentences that pour out from

the page, like a glass of water spilled across its surface, rushing, rushing, rushing to cover the whole surface before it reaches an edge and spills over onto the floor.

How is the kitchen table different from a desk or a table in a dining room? Is a kitchen table different from a piece of plywood balanced across two bricks or Jane Austen's fancy writing box, now housed in the British Library? Objects do things for writers; they have an impact, and that impact can be felt, meaningful. Writing boxes, for example, were small, portable cases that housed writers' accoutrement, and they, as writing scholar Laura Micciche has argued, "created an aura around writing, investing tools with an energy and power that enabled writers to gain pleasure from writing—or from the idea of writing, which might be equally gratifying." Just as tools of writing shape the writer, the kitchen table shapes writing in ways that set it apart from other writing on other surfaces in other spaces.

Turning the kitchen table into a composing space may be considered a privilege in the same way that having a desk of one's own suggests an intellectually privileged space. Yet, historically, the kitchen table has not been given the same consideration as the desk. In the field of writing studies, the desk is still paramount, even when scholars turn to other writing spaces. For example, Nora Weinerth's "A Desk of One's Own" mentions a writer working at a kitchen table, but her analysis ends by suggesting the table as just another desk. She does not pay homage to the table as a space integral to the work produced, the table as differently shaping the writing that happens on its changing surface (529-530). As the materiality of writing spaces changes, and continues to change, so do my questions.

I don't know that I can answer all of these questions about the kitchen table yet, or if they are answerable to any degree of certainty. This chapter suggests that one starting point is to look at some of these tables through photos, poems, essays, publishing presses, letters, and stories.

What follows is a series of meditations on different kitchen tables and their impact on the writing processes of feminist writers.

I open this chapter with Alice Walker's poem "They were women then" because my focus on kitchen tables is intimately tied to the struggles of the women who I found most often work across its surface: black feminist writers. The association of kitchens and literacy to the black community is unique precisely because of the history of slavery and racism in the United States. As Walker's poem suggests, kitchens could be booby-trapped sites of oppression, but it is also through the kitchen as the final stop in the poem that the speaker can "discover books/desks/a place for us." Although the various stories of this chapter are interwoven through my voice here, they are also the artistic practices of diverse and individual women, and I do not want to conflate their work and their feminisms into one monolithic narrative. I also do not mean to minimize the importance of culinary artisanship, but I want to focus on art coming from the kitchen that is not strictly culinary writing. In each of the works I analyze, black feminist women writers use the kitchen, and particularly the kitchen table, as the canvas upon which they create expressive work that does not include food as its primary focus. This is not to say I want to divorce culinary or domestic work from the artistic forms of expression I analyze—just that my analysis does not originate from sole attention to culinary and domestic work. By starting at the table, we can ask larger questions about materiality and meaning: who uses the kitchen table? Who abandons it? What gets put on, taken off, pushed aside from it? Who is around it, and who isn't?

A note here about my citation practice: in crafting this essay, I listened, a few times, to Toni Morrison's 1993 "Nobel Lecture in Literature" and walked away chanting: "Oppressive language does more than represent violence; it is violence; does more than represent the limits of

knowledge; it limits knowledge" (419). To wit, I see citational practice as one avenue to deny oppressive language. Thus, following Sara Ahmed in *Living a Feminist Life* (2017), I claim citation as "feminist bricks" and "feminist memory," or "materials through which, from which, we create our dwellings" (15-16). In that spirit, this dwelling was created by reading work by women, and especially by reading work by women of color. I cite them to signal my own debt to their knowledges but also because any contribution I make toward feminist scholarship has been profoundly shaped and influenced by their words. Because of my positionality as a white woman scholar, I want to use my voice to support the scholarship of women of color not only in this chapter but across my own work, to pass the microphone as much as possible. To them, I give deep thanks.

Defining the feminist table

A writing practice that takes place at the kitchen table does not divide the weightiness of lived experience from the intellectual work of writing. Instead, the writer takes the images and emotions and weight of life and writes right alongside them. I imagine here Audre Lorde's *Zami: A Biomythography* claiming itself as literature, myth, biography (32). Lorde's work refuses categorization just as writing at the kitchen table refuses the division between writing and not-writing, instead claiming not-writing as integral to practice. Or I hear Gloria Anzaldúa, writing in a letter to third world women writers:

> Forget the room of one's own—write in the kitchen, lock yourself up in the bathroom. Write on the bus or the welfare line, on the job or during meals, between sleeping or waking. I write while sitting on the john. No long stretches at the typewriter unless you're wealthy or have a patron—you may not even own a typewriter. While you wash the floor or clothes listen to the words chanting in your body. When you're depressed, angry, hurt, when compassion and love possess you. When you cannot help but write. (168).

Writing at the kitchen table folds person and writer into one, demystifying the notion that writing can only happen in particular spaces or for particular people. Writing happens because it must happen, it needs to happen. Writing, then, becomes a tool for feminists; it gathers emotion together with writing practice and combines them into one.[15]

In the vignettes that follow, the kitchen table combines the act of creation with the act of memory; it reaches back at the same time as it reaches forward into history. Because kitchen tables bear the weight of our lives in motion, they function as ephemeral archives. By an ephemeral archive, I mean a record, even fleeting, of the things that matter, that need tending to, that are important enough not to throw away yet, that need to be handy. They bear the detritus of everyday living alongside the work of ourselves and others within our communities. Things and ideas become interwoven, twined together, inseparable. The work intertwines with interruption, making the table a space of constant change. While this parallelism could suggest a stagnant binary, I instead see it as laying bare the labor that goes into the writing process. Writing alongside ideas that do not seem integral becomes a part of the very story itself. Writing with the interruption becomes part of the ebb and flow of process.

I turn to the work of contemporary queer scholars of color, like Sara Ahmed, who writes in *Queer Phenomenology* (2006): "The table is not simply what [Virginia] Woolf faces but is

15. In a previously published version of this chapter, I focused first on Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* to orient myself and the reader in the materiality of writing. Upon revising that essay for this chapter, I realized beginning with Woolf signaled a prioritizing of my own white voice and Woolf's over that of writers of color. In the published essay I wrote that my style was to "move in and out of different stories, particularly those of women of color, to make sense of how objects like the table also become spaces upon which we shape our writing and our writing shapes us. I use the vignette style not to separate these stories from each other but to offer multiple sites of beginning and not to privilege my own narrative as a white academic woman." The notion of moving in and out of stories of writers of color while prioritizing Woolf's work early in the essay, as well as the notion that my own narrative wouldn't always in some ways determine the reading, was a move on my part that, while used to make sense of my own scholarly journey, does a disservice to the black feminist writers this chapter considers and celebrates. For this revision, I am highlighting my own awareness to the problematic choice I made previously as a way to model revision for future scholarship. For any readers who felt uncomfortable with my original choices, I apologize and will continue to reflect on ways I can do better work in the future.

also the 'site' upon which she makes her feminist point: that we cannot address the question of women and fiction without asking the prior question of whether women have space to write" (61). Writers bring their work into spaces, like rooms, but they also make their points upon those spaces, the tables. As writing happens, the surface of the table is changed, in ways small (like errant pen marks) and large (like the stacking of page upon completed page, raising the table). Kitchen tables, then, become archives of feminist tensions. They are objects that feminists often associate with patriarchal oppression because of their relationship to ideologies of domesticity. But for women who bring their writing to these tables, especially writing that they consider feminist, their surfaces are changed. The writers physically mark the tables' surfaces with their points of feminist tension. It is through these acts that the tables change from domestic objects to feminist objects. No wonder some women writers need large spaces and strong surfaces to hold up their work.

Carrie Mae Weems' intersectional table

The scarred top of a well-used kitchen table records feminist tensions alongside personal attachments, which in turn also shape the surface of feminist tables and by extension, the feminists themselves. Photographer Carrie Mae Weems captures the intertwined identities of personal and political life in the *Kitchen Table Series* (1989–1990), a series of twenty photographs and fourteen accompanying text vignettes that position the table at the heart of one Black woman's life, with Weems herself filling the role.[16]

16. This style is the partial inspiration for my essay. As Carrie Mae Weems reflects in an interview with *W Magazine* thirty years after *Kitchen Table Series*: "But you know, I've always thought that both the photographs and text operate quite independently, and together they form yet a third thing, something that is dynamic and complex and allows you to read something else about the photographs. I don't think of them as being necessarily dependent on one another. Rather, they exist side by side, in tandem." See Stephanie Eckardt, "Carrie Mae Weems Reflects on Her Seminal, Enduring *Kitchen Table Series*," *W Magazine,* April 7, 2016.

The table creates a space vibrating with intimacy, and around that intimate space, Weems purposely stages actors and objects (a makeup mirror, a photo of Malcolm X, a notepad). While seemingly organic snapshots of everyday life, Weems intentionally constructs the images to tell the story of a self-possessed Black woman with a "bodacious manner, varied talents, hard laughter, multiple opinions."[17] The series was groundbreaking in its representation of one Black woman's interiority and life as a feminist artist, identities that Weems explores around the multi-purpose surface of the kitchen table.

The table is the focal point of the room and of the photographs, and it is around and on the table we see women writing, teaching, sharing stories, having sex. As Weems recounts in a 2018 interview with Megan O'Grady: "Life is pretty messy stuff. Can we use this space, this common space known around the world, to shine a light on what happens in a family, how it stays together and how it falls apart?" She turns the table from an object into a space, as it fills the frame of each of the photographs to the point that there is no other space surrounding it. The table becomes the space.

Within this space, Weems locates one Black woman's identity. Indeed, her conceptualization for the series as a whole appears to be about identity. Art historian Sarah Lewis writes in the forward to a recent publication devoted to Weems's series: "How were women going 'to image themselves'? This was Weems's guiding question during the earliest movements of conceiving the *Kitchen Table Series* as she reflected on the corpus of photographic images of women up to the 1980s and what wasn't there" (6). Put another way, what stories are women going to tell—not imagine—about themselves? This telling is founded

17. Carrie Mae Weems, "She'd been pickin em up and layin em down, moving to the next town for a while, needing a rest, some moss under her feet, plus a solid man who enjoyed a good fight with a brave woman…" *Kitchen Table Series,* 1990, screenprint on paper, National Gallery of Art.

on the idea that women of color deserve to see and create everyday representations of their lives. As Weems says of the series in a 1996 interview with Dana Friis Hansen: "I was trying to respond to a number of issues: woman's subjectivity, woman's capacity to revel in her body, and woman's construction of herself, and her own image" (6). Instead of crafting fictions that disempower Black women, as many racist images have, Weems strives to create a new image of a multifaceted but everyday Black womanhood.

Each of the photographs in the *Kitchen Table Series* is the same size, and the kitchen table does not move, always extending past the bottom frame and out towards the viewer. Weems, as the unnamed woman, appears in all of the images, but the other actors change. The woman is alone in five of the images; in another nine, she is joined by female friends or a young girl; in six, she is joined by a man. Weems uses her Black female body in each image to interrupt the methodically arranged and simple background of each photograph, for she is always the focal figure, most often positioned directly across the table from the viewer. She tells a new story about Black womanhood that pays homage to the messiness that takes shape on the table, and in turn, is shaped by all that it can hold. The intimacy shared by the people around the table also supports the table's powerful purpose in Weems's work; as the table extends out of the frame towards the viewer, we are implicated into the process going on around the table.

In one of the most striking images, the woman stands alone, with her hands placed on the table, directly staring at the viewer.[18] Although the table is charged with multiple, sometimes conflicting, emotions, her gaze invites us into the space, invites us to feel all that she herself is feeling. Weems wants the viewer to participate in her development of a Black woman imagery with a feminist objective. She suggests the table itself can bear the weight of this proposition; it

18. Weems, "Untitled (Woman standing alone)," *Kitchen Table Series,* 1990, platinum print, National Gallery of Art.

can hold not only the detritus of everyday life, it can also become the space through which everyday life is shaped.

The images of the woman and the man are often tense, suggesting Weems's own concerns with monogamy, which are echoed in the text vignettes of the series. One of the vignettes begins, "She felt monogamy had a place but invested it with little value. It was a system based on private property, an order defying human nature."[19] Because of this statement, the images in which the woman shares her life with other women resonate, particularly a triptych of the woman and a young girl as her daughter.[20] The first image shows the woman reading, with her daughter standing behind and to the left of her, staring at the book on the table. The second image shows them in a standoff, presumably arguing over the homework laid out on the table in front of the daughter. The final image of the triptych shows them working side-by-side, the woman writing and reading while the young girl also writes in her own notebook. In this triptych, the table unites different generations of Black women through literacy and education. It becomes a space of support, shaped by the tensions between mother and daughter.

This support is part of Weems's storytelling quest: the table occupies a space where intersections of identity, as well as daily life and work, are located. The table bears the weight of Weems's stories while also acting, in Adrienne Edwards's words, as a "support mechanism for daily life" (11). It is both refuge, homeplace, and revolutionary, resistant place. It is in the kitchen, and upon the table, where many rituals are shared among women, and it is through this collective experience, as Weems argues, that women eventually define and redefine their own image of feminist womanhood.

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19. Weems, "She felt monogamy had a place but invested it with little value," *Kitchen Table Series,* 1990, screenprint on paper, National Gallery of Art.

20. Weems, "Untitled (Woman with daughter)," *Kitchen Table Series,* 1990, triptych, platinum print, National Gallery of Art.

The Kitchen Table Press

Think of the kitchen table as a surface that evokes the feelings of a "homeplace," the space that bell hooks describes as "the construction [by Black women] of a safe place where Black people could affirm one another and by so doing heal many of the wounds inflicted by racist domination" (42). Through hooks's theorization, the table becomes a surface upon which Black women can both express care for themselves (through writing) and care for their communities (through storytelling). It is a surface that shapes Black women and their stories and that Black women shape for their own needs. hooks continues this notion in "An Aesthetic of Blackness: Strange and Oppositional" (1990), where she describes how an object can tell a story about a community of Black women. She writes: "This is the story of a house. It has been lived in by many people. Our grandmother, Baba, made this house living space. She was certain that the way we lived was shaped by objects, the way we looked at them, the way they were placed around us" (103). In this configuration, objects themselves shape individuals and shape houses into spaces for living. If we extend this understanding of objects, it follows that the way writers make use of the kitchen table as a surface for expression also shapes the expressions themselves.

Significantly, the table is not just a stand-in for community work: it is a uniquely woman-centric space. Anthropologist Maria Elisa Christie makes this distinction clear in her ethnography *Kitchenspace: Women, Fiestas, And Everyday Life in Central Mexico* where she writes about the lives of native Mexican women: "Inside the home, kitchens are not community spaces. It is there that individual women assert control over their world. The kitchen is one of the few places where men listen to women. And so, women tell their stories over and over, to each other, to their children, perhaps to themselves" (2-3). Control is exerted at a micro-scale at the site of the table, but even in looking closely scholars must keep in view the traditions and

communities that complicate broad, uncomplicated notions of community. I do not think it is a coincidence, then, that Barbara Smith, Audre Lorde, hattie gusset, and Cherríe Moraga started a publishing house in 1980 and named it Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press. Indeed, their reasoning behind the name posits the kitchen table as an important emblem of resistance against white, male, and heteronormative publishing houses. As Barbara Smith wrote nine years after the founding of the press:

> Freedom of the press belongs to those who own the press . . . [and] On the most basic level, Kitchen Table Press began because of our need for autonomy, our need to determine independently both the content and the conditions of our work and to control the words and images that were produced about us. As feminist and lesbian of color writers, we knew that we had no options for getting published except at the mercy or whim of others—in either commercial or alternative publishing, since both are white dominated. (11).

The press's name also emphasizes that while individuals may experience oppression differently, feminist work begins in a shared place, such as around a kitchen table. Seeing the importance of the kitchen table to women of color in particular locates it in a history of feminist resistance demanding individual autonomy also rooted in community support, especially since that support is necessary for many women who do not come from the sort of privilege that white women writing into white-dominated publishing do. The press operates as the antithesis of the white woman writer locked away in her own room. As Alethia Jones and Virginia Eubanks recount in *Ain't Gonna Let Nobody Turn Me Around: Forty Years Of Movement Building With Barbara Smith*, it takes "alternative institutions like Kitchen Table [to] create vibrant counterpublics, which don't simply withdraw from mainstream life but agitate and organize to push the boundaries of public discourse" (140). The kitchen table—both object and press—operate as feminist counterpublics that prioritize writing by women of color.

By naming their press after the kitchen table, Smith, Lorde, gusset, and Moraga make visible the labor that goes into creating an emblem of resistant cultural work. As Smith writes: "Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press is a revolutionary tool because it is one means of empowering society's most dispossessed people, who also have the greatest potential for making change" (13). While there is evidence to suggest that Smith originally felt a dissonance between the grueling, on-the-ground work of activism and the intellectual and cultural work of the press, she found the success of their publications, like *This Bridge Called My Back* (1981), to be indicative of the need for women of color, particularly queer women of color, to have a press devoted to their cause. By creating a space where women of color can respond to a culture that tries to oppress them, the press practices resistance that is just as integral to initiating change in the publishing world, both politically and socially. The press, in a sense, becomes the literal expression of the kitchen table of its namesake, operating as a feminist space for writing.

Kitchen Table Press "emerged in an effort to keep *Bridge* in print," as Cherríe Moraga recounts in the Afterword to the 2015 edition of *This Bridge Called My Back* (251). The anthology, which was the first major publication of Kitchen Table Press, is still in print today.[21] By keeping *Bridge* from going out-of-print, the voices of the anthology, many of which focus on the importance of writing and collective action, were given shelter. At the same time, even anthologies which were ultimately not published by Kitchen Table Press—a long, convoluted history of one such anthology is recounted in Jennifer Gilley's article "Ghost in the Machine: Kitchen Table Press and the Third Wave Anthology That Vanished"—were sheltered by the dedicated editors and writers who collaborated on this important work. As Gilley writes, quoting Ednie Kaeh Garrison, the ghost edition of *The Third Wave: Feminist Perspectives on Racism*

21. The anthology is now published by SUNY Press.

under the umbrella of Kitchen Table Press still left a critical legacy in its absence, stating that "although this book never materialized, the desire for it is such that people do speak as though it exists" (147). The interwoven history of Kitchen Table Press with *Bridge* as well as anthologies like *The Third Wave* suggests the importance of the table as a space of creation, a shelter for voices that need to speak and that need to be heard. The spectral anthology-that-never-was continues to haunt feminist studies through the legacy of kitchen table publishing. As Smith concludes, the table disrupts the hegemonic narrative of a singular voice crafting a singular history:

> We chose our name because the kitchen is the center of the home, the place where women in particular work and communicate with each other. We also wanted to convey the fact that we are a kitchen table, grassroots operation, begun and kept alive by women who cannot rely on inheritances or other benefits of class privilege to do the work we need to do. (11).

It was through the collective work of feminist artists who did not have access to the privileges engendered by race, class, and heteronormativity that Kitchen Table Press succeeded, publishing nine books from 1980 to 1996, including the two anthologies that are still in print today, *This Bridge* and *Home Girls*. Both anthologies collect myriad voices and genres into one volume, mimicking the sort of conversations that happen around kitchen tables.

It is with the emblem of the table that Smith, Lorde, gusset, and Moraga honored that process, bridging the need for women to have a space to communicate with each other while also creating a volume filled with radical writing from a myriad of personal experiences. They made a new "image" of publishing through the evocative use of the table, extending in the form of a publishing house devoted to writings by women of color another possibility for hooks's "homeplace" to take shape in the world. One such homeplace took shape in direct response to Kitchen Table Press. In an excerpted interview housed online with the Poetry Foundation from

2012, poet-scholar Alexis Pauline Gumbs pays homage to the legacy of Kitchen Table Press on the founding of her own press: "That idea that the oppression we experience, our falling apart, our trauma that we are working through has a dynamic relationship with the beauty of our healing presence on this planet really struck me, so I named the press BrokenBeautiful, which of course could be a way of describing a conversation around a kitchen table." The impetus to lay trauma alongside healing is a key component of the kitchen table writing process. Anthropologists Tami Navarro, Bianca Williams, and Attiya Ahmad explicitly locate the affective work they do as women of color scholars under the label "kitchen table" work, which they use to call attention to the various kinds of scholarly labor they engage in outside classroom spaces. They do this not to devalue the work itself, but to address how departments don't recognize it as valuable:

> Inadequately encompassed by the term 'service work,' our labor is crucial to shifting racist, sexist, and heteronormative paradigms of thought, and to addressing oppressive institutional structures. Yet it is precisely because of this work that we are questioned, chastised, and viewed as less serious teachers and researchers, especially during the tenure process. (448)

Kitchen table work is critical work, both in activist and academic circles. The work requires labor that is willing to engage with oppressive, systemic problems, and to do so as an attempt to change the spaces feminist women writers occupy. Without the labor of these writers and scholars, the necessary changes would be left on the proverbial table. Making this work visible and valuing it as labor is, in and of itself, a potent form of resistance.

Vertaemae Smart-Grosvenor's table

I turn in this final section to a writer for whom storytelling through the kitchen is a potent form of power. Consider what happens when you throw a party: where does everyone end up?

Even when there is not enough room or it is too hot or too crowded or you cannot get to the other side of the room, where does everyone go? The answer, especially for "culinary griot"[22] Vertaemae Smart-Grosvenor, is the kitchen, where family and friends alike gather to debate and laugh and eat and cry and drink. The kitchen itself becomes a joyous space of transformation, where food becomes a meal, where stories become books, and where strangers become friends. Perhaps no one else captures this joyous feeling, the constantly evolving and changing space of the kitchen, better than Smart-Grosvenor. As a self-defined Geechee girl (a reclaimed pejorative term for Creole women in lowland South Carolina), Smart-Grosvenor catalogues her life and culinary heritage through her writing, art, and work in public radio. Storytelling is an especially important tool for African-American writers, as Psyche Willams-Forson argues in her preface to the 2011 edition of Smart-Grosvenor's arguably most well-known work, *Vibration Cooking* (xiii). Through stories, individual feminist consciousness is developed alongside the cultural work of community building and the tools necessary for resistance.

In the 1970 cookbook-memoir-travelogue *Vibration Cooking*, Smart-Grosvenor recounts how people pass by and through her life as she remembers and records all the places that she has lived and all the food that she has cooked and eaten along the way. The work is, as her author's note suggests, a synthesis of her varied experiences both here and abroad and utilizes recipes as call-and-response within the narrative. Reading it is like listening to her tell the story, where names, places and ideas conjure up recipes and thinking of recipes conjure up particular people. Just as the kitchen table supports ephemeral bits of living, her work combines the political and the personal through its multi-layered approach to genre.

22. A longtime contributor to shows on NPR, her obituary says she self-described as a "culinary griot." While an apt description, I have yet to find whether this self-description is documented somewhere.

But the book ends in her kitchen, about which Smart-Grosvenor writes: "I would explain that my kitchen was the world" (xv). Subsequent editions of *Vibration Cooking* have included poems, eliminated particular words, and changed the "To Be Continued" section to a section titled "Continued…" after the body of the memoir. The book changes shape just as the kitchen table takes on different shapes; the most recent publication included a new forward from Smart-Grosvenor along with an appendix of previous forwards, a move similar to the appendix of introductions of *This Bridge* in the SUNY press edition. By honoring not only her personal history but the history of publication, Smart-Grosvenor and the editors of *This Bridge* emphasize the messiness of writing and revision, as well as honor the previous iterations of their work. Smart-Grosvenor references the importance of revision in her second introduction (1986), wherein she also calls out her own problematic use of language after a postcard from an angry reader alerted her to it: "In the chapter called 'The Jet Set and the Beautiful People' I found what offended the postcard writer. I used the word 'faggot.' I should have said 'homosexual.' I apologize for that and for 'Roy Wilkins Sauce'[23] on page 100, but the rest stands. The book is honest. It's what it is, what it was, and I live with it" (xix). In acknowledging her use of hateful speech, Smart-Grosvenor models the value of storytelling for healing; she remakes the hurtful remark into the story of the book itself, fashioning a new path forward that lays bare the surfaces upon which narrative is constructed.

But it is not until the very end of the memoir, in the "Continued…" section of my 1986 Ballantine Books edition, that the reader actually gets a glimpse of Smart-Grosvenor's kitchen table. In a short prose poem, she celebrates the way the kitchen functions as a space of creation.

23. Smart-Grosvenor's intertextuality is thick, but unless the first edition eliminated it (which doesn't seem likely based on the 2011 reprint), there never was a Roy Wilkins sauce. This seems to be a subtle bit of signifyin' on her part.

While the table lurks in the shadows, it seemingly appears as the surface behind the text (and yes, the following text is reproduced in all capital letters, just as it is in her work):

> THE KITCHEN IS THE MOST IMPORTANT ROOM IN MY HOME.
> TIS THE PLACE FROM WHICH I DO MY THING.
> I EAT IN THE KITCHEN.
> WHEN FRIENDS DROP IN SOMETIMES WE NEVER LEAVE THE KITCHEN.
> I JUST DO EVERYTHING IN THE KITCHEN.
> I WROTE THIS BOOK IN THE KITCHEN.
> WHEN I SEW IT [sic] SET UP THE SEWING MACHINE IN THE KITCHEN.
> I IRON IN THE KITCHEN.
> THE OTHER DAY I TRIED TO MOVE THE PIANO IN BUT COULDN'T GET ANYONE TO HELP ME.
> THE CHILDREN DO THEIR HOMEWORK IN THE KITCHEN.
> SOMETIMES THERE IS SO MUCH HAPPENING IN THE KITCHEN THAT I CAN'T GET TO THE STOVE TO COOK AND WE HAVE TO CALL CHICKEN DELIGHT. (210).

The surfaces upon which all this creation happens—writing, sewing, piano-playing, learning—are not made explicit, but the embodied nature of creating certainly is. We can feel the vibrancy and motion in all the kitchen activities that Smart-Grosvenor lists, which highlight a creative life in motion. Even with the absence of the table in the poem, there are so many activities crisscrossing over each other that we can sense the table behind the words, holding up the sewing machine, the iron, the homework pages, and plates. It is an object that I can feel behind the pages, supporting and teasing out the relationships between creative acts and mundane, everyday acts of living. Just as the founders of Kitchen Table Press choose their name, the globe-trotting Smart-Grosvenor ultimately finds her "homeplace" in her kitchen, and her creative work—and life—most supported by the table that resides there.

The Next Table

Writer Catherine Jagoe's piece "Kitchen Table c. 1970" serves as a profound reminder of the importance of gazing directly at the objects that shape our most basic needs. In it, she recounts her own battle with anorexia, drawing on the metaphor of the family table as a way to record her own history of eating alongside that of her family's. It is through the table, which frames her essay, that she is able to write about a recovery from anorexia that has only just now allowed her to begin grappling with her own parents' failing health. This painful but necessary gaze at the kitchen table—a space she thought she had lost—opens up possibilities for thinking through and with anorexia as anchored by the object, as opposed to reinscribing the same stark divide that prevents her from nourishing herself, be it through food or, in this case, through writing. It is through the objects we have in view—the objects that we use and prioritize—that we orient ourselves towards a certain way of being/becoming.

What does it mean to turn toward something in writing? To write your way across a table? To write a new way? The artistic works considered in this essay draw our attention to the surface of the table as one such space. This material turn emphasizes that writing is an emplaced activity, a thinking, communicating, ever-evolving practice that requires and is shaped by the surfaces upon which it happens. It also suggests that these surfaces have power, that they shape the women and the works that happen around them. In thinking through my own experiences and in thinking through the writing of this essay, I have come to believe a few things to be true about the kitchen table. I list them here, a kitchen table manifesto:

1. Things intermingle on kitchen tables in ways that they do not on more clearly demarcated spaces like desks.

2. A kitchen table typically has more than one seat, if not a full circle of seats. We can talk and write and share around the table.
3. The table can spark new ideas through this gathering-in-placeness, of objects, of people, of labors.
4. It brings together diffuse, multiple forms of labor—domestic, academic, personal, public—onto a single surface.
5. It can be an object that anchors the home—the heart of the home is in the kitchen. But what happens around the table is also transitory—people pass by, stop in for a second, and continue on. It vacillates between stagnant object-ness and ephemeral space-ness.
6. The kitchen table most often lives in a space that is shared (not private or locked away).
7. When people come into a home, they do not ask permission to go into the kitchen.
8. Writing at the kitchen table refuses the notion that writing is a rarefied act enshrined in mythos. The kitchen table loudly proclaims writing is happening *here,* in a mundane, everyday world.
9. The kitchen table can be covered in material, literally made into a space where a woman can expand because she can spread out. Women-spreading, writing-spreading.
10. You can lay across a table. It can hold your whole body up when you're too tired to keep at it.

Kitchen tables are so rarely described in any detail by the artists and writers who make use of them, a conclusion I came to rather late in this writing process. Kitchen tables are often just there, waiting for change to happen upon their surfaces. Why is it that a space that lurks behind the paper is so rarely described in any depth? Why is it that people know the minutiae of many writers' kitchens, of many chefs' kitchens, but not how they make use of kitchen tables? I

do not have an answer to this question, but I do have a suggestion. Perhaps, instead of continuing my lament that people cannot see all the tables in these artists' lives, I can acknowledge that I do see the work that comes from them. While the table is not listed in the acknowledgements or thanked in a forward, it is there in all the different voices, speaking in their own ways across the table to one another. The writers who use the table are, metaphorically, laying each of their stories upon it, creating a surface that holds stacks and stacks of thoughts expressed in all matter of media. As Sara Ahmed observes in *Queer Phenomenology*,

> Consciousness itself has been imagined through the metaphor of the table: tabula rasa, the blank slate. The table is what 'waits' for writing, for the very 'marks' that transform the potentiality of life into the actuality of being. Life becomes writing on the table, which evokes futurity as a present mark: when we say 'the writing is on the table' we imply that a specific future has already been decided. (182).

Ahmed's turn towards futurity implies the possibility for change; it indicates that "the terms of its appearance will be different. It might be that quite a different table comes into view" (62). Instead of assuming a meaning for the kitchen table before the composing practice has begun, we might allow its future to remain open. We might see the kitchen table as an undecided space, a space open to fluidity in use and definition. It might also be that the kitchen table, as a surface, influences and shapes the figure of the feminist writer differently than the lone writer locked away in her room. Put another way, I begin this essay by gazing directly at a commonplace object and lingering over its possibilities. In doing so, I am struck by what the table tells me, how it challenges how I see the world, and how it can suggest what is missing. It has become much more than just an object. As I began this chapter with poetry, so I end it with a line from Joy Harjo's "Perhaps The World Ends Here": "The world begins at a kitchen table. No matter what, we must eat to live.

Chapter Five

The Hashtag

Look fellas
whiteness at work
the learned responses
they're bone and blood
harnessing the energy
digital interruption
mad women on the listserv
truth to power
pshew![24]

#Intro #metaverse

Recent announcements in October 2021 about the "metaverse"— or the transformation of the internet into a fully immersive virtual reality— promise a digital world made material. In thinking through the implication of virtual and material, I've come to consider how digital objects might shape writing processes in ways similar to how material objects like the typewriter or table do. Although I cannot hold a digital object in the palm of my hand, developments like the "metaverse" promise a future where that could be possible. What might writing be like if it were to evolve in the metaverse, where I could compose by virtual hand on a virtual sheet of paper with a virtual pen in a virtual office? The digital and material are not so divorced after all; as our minds and senses are remade in virtual spaces, our bodies continue to exist in the "meatspace."[25] Because the concept of the metaverse is still in its nascent stages, it wouldn't be feasible to study writing with a metaverse for this chapter. The promises made by the metaverse

[24] (A poem I composed in response to a workshop with Kate Vieira on applying creative methods to research data)

[25] Or, if you don't recognize the term, "real" world.

aren't new, however. The very nature of the world wide web has created perhaps the most writerly society in existence, where anyone and everyone is writing, documenting, and sharing their compositions with others online. Compared to the relatively small circulation of works like *The London Phonographer,* the sheer volume of digital writing would be enough to overwhelm even the most capable typist. One way to sort through this Alexandria library's worth of writing is through the digital object known as the hashtag.

Readers might be most familiar with the hashtag via its popularity in social justice movements on Twitter like #BlackLivesMatter or #MeToo. The hashtag is built by combining the hash symbol (#), also known as the pound symbol, with a string of text that acts as an anchor. The textual anchor is what allows users on platforms like Twitter, Instagram, and TikTok to search for related content via the hashtag, which collects all the public and available posts that use it. On Twitter, the textual anchor is part of the "tweet," a form of microblogging with specific genre constraints. Tweets have limitations like character length (180 originally, now 230), tone, and style, all of which impact how readers perceive the content. Because a tweet relies on its condensed form, pithy or catching responses and humor are the most successful strategies for being "retweeted" or shared by other writers.

One major downfall of this system is how a tweet can be lacking in nuance or complexity, especially due to its length. One method writers use to avoid oversimplification is the hashtag. When done with intention, the hashtag functions as an object for collaborative writing, wherein the individual contribution is knowingly added to a collective story. For example, with the hashtag #MeToo, writers could contribute their own stories of harassment or assault to the growing collaborative archive of such experiences on Twitter. By adding the hashtag, women were telling their individual story *at the same time* as they were adding it to a

collaboratively created body of work called "#MeToo" that was able to capture more nuanced and intersectional stories of harassment.

The role of the hashtag as a collaborative writing object developed out of its many origin stories, as recounted by Tara L. Conley in her chapter "Hashtag Archiving." One such story tells how the hashtag function developed out of early internet relay chat services that used it to create sub-groups focused on specific topics. It slowly drifted into social media spaces, and by 2007—as another story goes—after Chris Messina popularized its usage on Twitter, the hashtag expanded to become a tool for social justice movements and activism online. This development led to users being able to document events in real-time, such as the 2007 San Diego forest fires or large-scale public protests. As journalist and editor Elizabeth Grenier writes in her 2017 article for *Deutsche Welle:* "During the 2009-2010 Iranian election protests, social media users widely used the symbol in their posts, turning the practice into an international style of writing." Twitter eventually legitimized the hashtag's usage as a tool on their site in 2009 by adding a hyperlink to the # function which allowed users to click on a hashtag to easily search for related content. In addition, the hyperlink created a new way to quickly sort through all tweets by creating a continuous scroll of tweets with the same hashtag from users around the world (options to further sort within the hashtag today include "latest", "most liked", "people", and "media").

The hashtag, then, is really an element of metadata—or data about data—that archives digital writing. However, this metadata is not stable. Users or corporations can delete tweets or make them private, removing those tweets from the site and creating an unstable archive. So, while a quick keystroke can let users trawl the internet archives of social media, sifting through the data to visualize past conversations and narratives, the archive can also be deceptive about

what it really captured. This is precisely why studying hashtags is important, and why the act of hashtag archiving, is a political necessity. In Conley's terms,

> Hashtags help the tellers build stories about the worlds in which we live. For this reason, I propose the term hashtag archiving as a human- centered approach to capturing discourse in an era of uncertain hashtag data. [. . .] Hashtag archiving involves annotating, indexing, and curating in order to build repositories—whether across interactive media platforms or in the form of text-based documentation—for public retrieval. (272)

It is around artifacts like the hashtag that history gets oriented, just as we create narratives about humans of the past and their actions through the traces they leave behind them. We can date them, same as we can use the hashtag to organize and filter the increasing metadata about individual lives and wholesale political movements online. For all that, we still don't know the entire agentic potential of the hashtag. The utility of it has been explored in scholarship on social movement rhetorics and contemporary media studies, particularly in journals like *Feminist Media Studies*. No discipline, though, has approached it as an object that uniquely captures digital writing processes in the twenty-first century. The hashtag must *do* something alongside writers for its ubiquity and its power. Therefore, the hashtag must acquire its own agency through its repeated use, like an idea that becomes fact alongside the strength of many voices.

#Overview

Throughout this chapter, I argue the hashtag is a unique digital object precisely because it intertwines the utilities of publication, archive, and collaborative human-nonhuman embodiment. As an object born out of kairotic moments, the hashtag captures a swirl of thoughts and feelings, an affective potential, that circulates between writers digitally. As a collaborative form of writing and publishing, it operates outside mainstream control, notwithstanding the valid concerns about

how the popularity of twitter hashtags are controlled by Twitter the company, and in turn how that metadata is potentially manipulated[26] for their users.

Put another way, the hashtag makes writers lay their writing alongside others'. It does not privilege singular viewpoints or identities, but demands writers contribute to a polyvocal anthology of writing. If a writer includes a hashtag, they turn a singular personal story into a political contribution that is also always gathered alongside others, shaping a writing process that is collaborative in its very bones, perhaps even before fingers touch keys. Similar to traditionally published anthologies that seek to analyze and fight oppression, the hashtag archives feelings, genres, and ideas into one continuous scroll of writing. By adding the hashtag, the writer is turning a self-publication into a collective publication. Perhaps it is within this act of self-publication that I find the hashtag to be another kind of writing object; it is a printer's mark and a public declaration. The hashtag is, if Martin Luther were still around, the nail that holds the 49 Theses to the door.

By creating an archive of one particular hashtag, perhaps scholars can make sense of this unique form of collaborative digital writing. I attempt to do just that in this chapter, making judicious use of Conley's theory of hashtag archiving as I wade through the data that surrounds the hashtag #WPAListservFeministRevolution. Conley writes, "No matter the technique or theory used to inform gathering hashtag data, it is therefore necessary for hashtag archivists to incorporate reflective practices when building archives that capture the stories of our time"

26. These are important discussions for social movement studies (for an in-depth discussion of Twitter's proprietary AI-algorithm formula see Evan Qiang's recent article "Behind the Algorithm: How AI Silences Small Creators" in Daily Pennsylvania's *34th St Magazine*). But for this study of the hashtag, I am less concerned with the popularity of particular movements and more concerned with the intertwining of writing and publishing collaboratively.

(271). I have included those moments of reflective practice along with my analysis that follows, in hopes that both can highlight the importance and nuance of this form of digital writing labor.

#OOO #posthuman

Male theorists of object-oriented ontologies (Morton, Harman) emphasize the networked relationships between humans and non-human bodies yet have turned little attention so far to the digital possibilities their theories profess. Alongside this work, feminist new materialists (Haraway, Braidotti) have returned the importance of gender to discussions of materialism and posthumanism, suggesting, as Braidotti and Åsberg do: "It is high time for versatile research practices that can account for such a human and more-than-human situation, a kind of perfect storm of intermingled human and nonhuman forces" (2). These nonhuman forces in most posthuman research focus on environmental forces, but there is a growing body of scholarship on the relationship between technological force and the human.

If, as Cheryl Glenn asserts in *Rhetorical Feminism and This Thing Called Hope*, "[a]gency is embodied and kairotic, dependent upon both the rhetor's identity and the context (the material conditions, tradition, audience) within which the rhetor acts, reacts, and interacts" (81) then transitioning our thinking to consider the hashtag as agentic in Glenn's theorization turns our attention to how nonhuman actors can also act rhetorically. By this I mean that digital objects like a hashtag in social media environments can take on the role of rhetor, creating its own identity and context for action, reaction, and interaction with both human and nonhuman participants. Because the hashtag speaks to people, to computers, and to data, it relies on multiple forms of language to be legible. For feminist writers in particular, the kinds of questions raised by the relationship between technological and human bodies are growing even more

important in digital spaces that increasingly intertwine the two. As hostile attacks like #GamerGate and other forms of doxing attest, feminists need to create safe spaces in an internet that's regularly hostile to their very existence. The hashtag is one such object around which to gather; it can be a companion that acts to collectivize writers into a collaborative writing body.

Current studies of hashtag social movements online have developed linguistic frameworks to make sense of its usage. Linguistics professor Vyvyan Evans considers the hashtag a rhetorical tool similar to a period or exclamation mark, "punctuating and so nuancing the meaning of language in written narratives." Similarly, linguist Kate Scott suggests the hash denotes a speech act, a metaphorical call-and-response between writers and readers. In both cases, the hashtag's purpose extends beyond social media into offline spaces, where its function in language exceeds its intended usage. Offline, the hashtag has also been studied for its exclamatory potential as metacommentary and its relationship to emotional power. Yet these studies limit our understanding of the hashtag beyond its function as a simple tool of grammatical denotation appended to the end of a singular narrative.

Theorizing beyond the grammatical, Elizabeth Losh draws on Judith Butler's theory of gender performatives to suggest hashtags perform the work of assembly as well as speech, living a "quantitative as well as qualitative existence" through their dual life as expressions of individual identity and their aggregation and indexing by big data networks. It is from Losh's work that I make sense of the hashtag as agentic rhetor. She writes, in essence, that "hashtags *gather* in online environments" (65), signaling both a gathering of individual voices and data points that make up the performatives of socially-constructed identities. At the same time, the hashtag disciplines and orders bodies, providing a larger networked framework through which to make sense of identities like "feminist."

While scholarship on the hashtag to date has focused on what a user *does* with a hashtag, viewing it in essence as an inert tool that organizes data, this chapter takes the approach of the hashtag as a doer, a feminist writer, unto itself. Building upon Losh and, by extension, JL Austen's theory of utterances as performatives, the hashtag is not just an inert piece of metadata but an agent in its own right, one that shapes and impacts writing practices in the twenty-first century. If we begin by questioning what a hashtag *does,* whether alongside a human or not, we begin not with the hashtag as solely a performative gesture but as a step towards the entangling of human and nonhuman embodiment. One illustrative example is the #ALSIceBucketChallenge, which had users pouring buckets of ice water on themselves to raise funds for ALS research. The hashtag in this case not only gathers voices about an experience and is collected by big data; it also has real-world impact beyond the digital space it occupies by getting humans to pour ice water on themselves. Movements like #MeToo end up bringing about real-world consequences for abusers, while also rhetorically shaping the genre of the #MeToo story, changing how many people write or share their stories of abuse.

The collective writing body created by the hashtag are really giant assemblages of human/nonhuman publication networks. To publish something is an act of making something public; it is an act that participates in a network of knowledge-making long thought to only be the domain of rational human subjects. Philosophy professor Andreas Matthias writes of the hashtag's role in publication in an essay in celebration of the hashtag's birthday (another example of how intertwined our human and technological bodies have become: we celebrate a digital object's birthday): "The hashtag here became both an identifying symbol for the group that used it (so that it ended up on T-Shirts and mugs, where, of course, it is not functional at all), and a means of connecting to and contributing to a particular discourse. In this way, a hashtag

creates a virtual, on-the-fly publication that is focused on one particular topic and that is open to contributions from anyone, without the possibility of exercising any editorial control." While editorial control may come into play depending on the network's algorithm (like Twitter's mysterious "Trending" widget), the hashtag itself is a non-discriminating publisher. It accepts all, privileges no voice (beyond whatever is most recent in the thread), and returns our understanding of publishing to the materiality of the scroll[27]. As rare book historian Katie Bergen reminds me in her substack newsletter "The Rare Commons," the scroll is just one of many ways to read information, and the ways we consume information teaches us something about it: "Thinking about how we access information physically, even down to the way our hands hold our phones, can help us think critically about the way that information gets served to us and absorbed by us." As a scroll, reading the entirety of one hashtag "publication" is how a cacophony of voices can become a singular anthology of writings.

Similar to works like those discussed in the chapter on kitchen tables, the hashtag itself is an anthology. As Jennifer Gilley writes of the publishing house Kitchen Table Press, and a sentiment that I find is especially applicable here when thinking of the hashtag: "[A]nthologies are not just random collections of multiple voices and writing styles, however; they are consciously edited into what Jane Gallop calls 'organized choruses.' These organized choruses have frequently been used to 'constitute new communities of and for women who share the identities to which the anthologies give voice.'" (145). The next section will provide a close examination of one such 'organized chorus' in the form of the hashtag #WPAFeministListservRevolution, developed out of frustrations within the community of writing scholars and professionals.

27. For more on the role the scroll plays in writing and history, see Katie Bergen's *The Rare Commons* issue three.

#microHistory #WPA-l

The hashtag, then, is a co-creator of history. The hashtag collects and narrativizes the individual accounts of writers; it also serves as an open invitation to submissions from a variety of people, often united mainly by their passing connection to the hashtag itself. This passing connection would be true especially of prolific hashtags like #BLM, but it can also be true within bodies like professional networks, whose members are spread across geographic space, as well as embedded in different sub-disciplines and familiar with different professional discourse networks. The use of the hashtag outside of formalized professional networking spaces can especially give a platform and voice to those routinely marginalized or silenced in the formal spaces. By creating a hashtag, members of a professional network can both unite outside of the formal space and use that to agitate for change within the formal networking space.

For this chapter, the formal space under study is the Writing Program Administration listserv, an international email-based channel of communication which served as the virtual space for writing scholars across the field of Rhetoric and Composition to communicate from 1993 to 2021. In 2021, the listserv was ended because the listserv owner, Barry Maid, retired, and the long-standing issues with the listserv's lack of professional guidelines was addressed. A new listserv (Writing Studies-l) was started by Holly Hassel and Sam Stinson, who collectively developed a set of rules and guidance for posting to Writing Studies-l, which is still heavily moderated as of December 2021. However directly or indirectly, the new listserv developed out of conversations about the purpose and role of the listserv for the profession. Multiple times over the years of the WPA-l, conversations about racism, misogyny, ageism, and other forms of silencing on the listserv occurred. These debates highlighted the fragile seams of the profession;

for all its professed engagement with social justice and equity, there was never any escaping from the discipline's roots as a tool for White language dominance.

While conversations about these concerns often happened on the listserv, they were also happening offsite, be it in hushed discussions at conferences, passing conversations in hallways, and similar informal spaces. This is particularly true for contingent and precarious faculty—graduate students, non-tenure track professors, and adjuncts—and doubly true for faculty of color. Through these informal spaces, zones of safety were created to discuss racism and misogyny in the profession which ultimately allowed knowledge about unsafe places and people to spread.

The advent and adoption of social media by similarly concerned writing scholars transformed the informal discussions happening in offline spaces by moving them into online spaces that could be conceivably entered by anyone, including those not yet "in the know" about issues in the profession. Instead of finding like-minded scholars by coincidence, for example, social media created a zone where listening for those conversations was easier. Tools like the hashtag could facilitate finding those conversations that were otherwise limited in scope and geographic perspectives. Instead, a user could "eavesdrop," on conversations to locate allies and hear from new voices and perspectives in the field.[28] At the same time, those hostile to the discussion could potentially eavesdrop too. But, as Patricia Ticineto Clough makes clear in her introduction to *The Affective Turn,* technological-human alliances can reorient bodies, moving us beyond hierarchical relationships and into networked assemblages that go beyond the actions of one human body:

> Affect is not only theorized in terms of the human body. Affect is also theorized in relation to the technologies that are allowing us both to 'see' affect and to produce

[28]. The first encounter I had of Twitter as a platform for "eavesdropping" came to me via the *Smithsonian Magazine* article "A Decade Ago, The Hashtag Reshaped the Internet."

> affective bodily capacities beyond the body's organic-physiological constraints. The technoscientific experimentation with affect not only traverses the opposition of the organic and the nonorganic; it also inserts the technical into felt vitality, the felt aliveness given in the preindividual bodily capacities to act, engage, and connect—to affect and be affected. The affective turn, therefore, expresses a new configuration of bodies, technology and matter. (2)

Thus, technological objects like the hashtag can create new affective networks that allow us to see our world in, and our writing, in more connected and inventive ways.

#Mansplain

In October 2018, a discussion about "mansplaining" erupted on the listserv. Following a condescending response to Dr. Michelle Lafrance's initial query about assessment practices ("Rubrics to Assess Writing Assignments"), multiple people, including LaFrance, wrote in to challenge the sexist viewpoints espoused by writers including Ed White, Chris Anson, and Irvin Peckham. The conversation continued beyond the initial issue into a broader discussion regarding the repetitive pattern of oppressive behavior many observed on the listserv. Elizabeth Wardle likened the initial responses to LaFrance's query as typical. The sheer volume of writing that spilled out of the listserv made its way into higher education news sites like *Inside Higher Ed,* which featured an article about the listserv titled "More Than Hateful Words."

In addition to the listserv emails, there were many more engaged users utilizing backchannels like Twitter to contribute to and critique the discussion. It was with a hashtag—#WPAListervFeministRevolution—that these conversations were tagged and archived. The collective use of a hashtag like #WPAListervFeministRevolution transformed a plethora of hushed conversations that might've happened weeks or months later into a real-time critique and collective narrative that demanded change. Importantly, it was also a narrative that could be read by anyone online, including those not subscribed to the listserv. By uniting disparate voices

outside the formal channels of communication of the broadly conceived field of Composition and Rhetoric, the hashtag created new coalitions of scholars, as well as sparked many different genres of writing beyond the tweet or email.

The flurry of emails on the listserv following LaFrance's initial query could be considered a "feminist snap," to borrow Sara Ahmed's term:

> And when I think of snap, I think of a twig. When a twig snaps, we hear the sound of it breaking. We can hear the suddenness of a break. We might assume, on the basis of what we hear, that the snap is a starting point. A snap sounds like the start of something, a transformation of something; it is how a twig might end up broken in two pieces. A snap might even seem like a violent moment; the unbecoming of something. But a snap would only be the beginning insofar as we did not notice the pressure on the twig. If pressure is an action, snap is a reaction. (188-189)

LaFrance's response is the snap, but the snap is not the beginning but the reaction to a long line of similar messages. Embedded within that snap is hope. In *Failure Pedagogies,* LaFrance recognizes this power of hope (although she doesn't call it that as such): "[B]ecause of the nextGen Listserv folks and the conversations I continue to have with others about our work, I cannot read our return to business as usual as a 'failure.'" (171). She continues, "And, too, women in the field continue to talk (on FB, in person, through texts such as this one). We are writing and re-encountering our own ideals of feminist activism, a little less afraid of speaking out, speaking to power, and holding one another accountable for our learning and our failures" (172). The feminist rhetoricians of Twitter who also did this work demonstrate how to embrace 'failure' as a form of willful hope and ultimately survival. After all, the feminists using the hashtag again in March 2019 are still engaging, still envisioning possibilities for a future that embraces a newly formed community space or that eradicates the misogyny from the list itself. The dogged hope of a space that could be reformed (even if that reformation meant the

destruction of the previous infrastructure) is itself a sign of the hope of the writers who contributed to #WPAListservFeministRevolution.

Research about the WPA-l and the "snap" has so far mainly focused on the language and pattern of emails within the listserv space, the corpus of text saved in its archives. This includes Zachary Beare's 2021 examination in *Composition Studies* that focuses on how affect circulates on the listserv. The conclusion to the essay makes a tacit appeal to reform (as opposed to burn down) the listserv itself. Beare suggests one reason for keeping the listserv open is that it allows for a less controlled and therefore insulated exchange of ideas. Beare writes: "When one posts on Facebook or Twitter, one typically has more control over who reads and responds to a message. There is more possibility for insulating yourself with like-minded individuals, more social filtering available, more ability to shut down threads" (57). I challenge this viewpoint by emphasizing how many tweets from #WPAFeministListservRevolution *alone* are publicly available. Indeed, writers of some of those tweets also *publicly* discuss the stalking, attacks, and harassment they experience on the platform and elsewhere! The notion that individuals can insulate themselves is an apologia that ignores how the very boundaries deemed "insulating" are often necessary for safety and protection of marginalized peoples. As writing studies scholar Cara Marta Messina, who participated in #WPAFeministListservRevolution, put it in a tweet: "For me, being included in a digital space means I have no fear of receiving condescending messages about my ideas–especially private condescending emails from known sexual assailants." There is a difference between insulated networks of white supremacists and the ability of marginalized peoples to set boundaries around how and where their ideas are shared. As Messina later wrote in a collaborative response (with Mandy Olejnik) in a response for *Xchanges*:

> Establishing moderation boards, ethical guidelines, and infrastructural boundaries can lead to better overall practices. While many scholars will have moments of ignorance, moderation boards can intervene and practice calling *in*, inviting scholars to think through some of their unintentionally harmful actions and discussing methods to avoid harm in the future. These infrastructures exist to protect vulnerable groups in the community when these mistakes happen, and, more importantly, during rare moments when harm is intended.

The notion that the listserv is somehow "promoting" a freer exchange of ideas is contestable. While I don't want to downplay the important role the listserv filled for many scholars over the decades, the notion that other forums, like Twitter, can't also fill that need is not true, at least from my own admittedly anecdotal experience.[29]

Further, Beare suggests that the rise of social media usage is tied to "generational" differences. He writes: "[I]t is possible the platform has outlived its usefulness or that its functions are now being fulfilled primarily by other digital spaces. [. . .] Email and listservs are older technologies that feel at odds with the increasingly mobile composing practices most of us rely on now." (57). His emphasis on how emails and the listserv are "at odds" with mobile composing practices makes an assumption about writing that isn't necessarily true. The implication that mobile composing practices are only for "short" pieces of social media or simplistic requests is an unearned assumption about composing practices as they happen now. In fact, when examining how the variety of genres of writing, hyperlinks, and multimedia interact on Twitter, one could easily argue that the listserv is no longer useful precisely because it doesn't allow for the kind of sophisticated reading strategies platforms like Twitter demand. Users can layer meaning through the use of GIFS, images, text, hyperlinks, and tags that require an individual engagement with language that goes beyond the straightforward genre of the email.

29. For those new to Twitter, there are a number of rhetoric and composition hashtags that fill the role of reading/admin/teaching related questions (as well as more academia-wide ones). A few of my favorites include: #rhetcomp, #teamrhetoric, #WPAlife, just to name a few.

Digital literacy requires an informed—and, if not informed, research-savvy—reader who appreciates the multimodal capabilities of Twitter composing and understands the affordances it provides.

Regardless of Beare's fears, the hashtag #WPAFeministListservRevolution demonstrates that similar, frank discussions about disciplinary knowledge and purpose still occur. Because the hashtag itself developed out of long-standing frustrations with patriarchal language and condescending responses to queries from early career scholars, particularly women on the WPA-l, the content was initially skewed towards feminist concerns (particularly white feminist concerns). However, later uses of the hashtag emphasized the need for intersectional coalitions, including the birth of #WPAlistservantiracistrevolution, as well as repeated call-outs of the need for white allies to speak to the racism on the list. This kind of writing is not insulated; it is participatory and knowledge-making in profoundly new ways simply not possible within an unmoderated listserv. As Sara Ahmed makes clear in *Living a Feminist Life,* hope and survival are always tightly bound: "Survival can also be about keeping one's hopes alive; holding on to the projects that are projects insofar as they have yet to be realized. You might have to become willful to hold on when you are asked to let go; to let it go. Survival can thus be what we do for others, with others. We need each other to survive; we need to be part of each other's survival" (235). If that survival is not possible in one space, we need to let it go so together we build back a new house.

In turning towards the writing outside the listserv space, I am fashioning an alternative microhistory that relies on seeing how the hashtag facilitates a robust and myriad body of writing, primarily by women. The emphasis on feminist writing is intentional; as Simone Fullagar, Diana C. Parry, and Corey W. Johnson stipulate in their chapter "Digital Dilemmas

through Networked Assemblages": "Such forms of hashtag activism produce new, loosely affiliated collectives that voice people's diverse views in ways that clearly contest norms of niceness, pleasantness, accommodating traditional normative gender and sexual expectations" (229). It is through the hashtag #WPAListservFeministRevolution that diverse works are born, and it is also through the hashtag that collective writing and celebration happen. This isn't to downplay the serious and often overlooked role that venting and frustration also play in the use of hashtags; however, I want to focus on what the hashtag enables beyond immediate, reactionary responses (as important as they are), beyond the singular kairotic moment. What genres were written and tagged as part of the canon known as #WPAListservFeministRevolution? What stories does the hashtag tell? And, ultimately, to reframe a question LaFrance asks: Is the field of composition/rhetoric feminist?

#Study

To enable a robust qualitative analysis of the tweets associated with #WPAListservFeministRevolution, I've used a multitude of tools to make sense of the data. My need for variety stems from the variety of media associated with the hashtag itself: from memes, gifs, and YouTube videos to hyperlinks, quotations, and emojis. To that end, I will detail my method and tools to situate the reader in my approach to digital media research. By taking up the hashtag as an object for study, I found an entire corpus of material that was genre-inclusive, coalitional, and hopeful.

To examine the hashtag, I first mined all the publicly available individual tweets that included #WPAListservFeministRevolution and saved them into a traditional word document

file.[30] These tweets were from September 21, 2018 through October 29, 2020. While the hashtag was often attached at the beginning or end of a Twitter thread (a nested series of comments that expand a user's writing beyond the character limit), I limited my analysis to tweets that explicitly included the hashtag. Because my study is interested in what kinds of writing get associated with the hashtag, this meant I wasn't looking at nested conversations or long threads of writing (or individual responses to tweets). I also cut out any tweets that were simple retweets so as to focus on newly composed work.

Once I had mined all the tweets, I uploaded them into a variety of free textual analysis tools. A small sampling of these include WordWanderer, Voyant Tools, SketchEngine, and Dedoose. The narrative told via each of those tools shaped my analysis in differing ways, which was precisely why I experimented with them. The experimentation helped me develop ideas for this chapter that were initially obfuscated; my method allowed me to return to the data again and again, which deepened my understanding of the complex network of social and written data. It ultimately necessitated a readiness to always be open-minded and a willingness to be surprised.

I ultimately settled on using Quirkos, a U.K.-based qualitative analysis tool first developed in 2013. The company emphasizes accessibility and affordability in research, particularly for those working for social justice and equity. I primarily chose Quirkos because it allowed me to visualize and determine codes in a format that differs from less visual tools like Nxivo, which model more traditional and linear thinking. By creating codes as bubbles, called Quirks in the application, and then physically manipulating text through physical actions like dragging text to the Quirks, I was able to see the text differently. By differently here I mean that

30. This approach perhaps gave me a less complete data set, but it allowed me to bypass Twitter's difficult and arduous process to gain API access. It also meant I was only collecting tweets from users who I follow or who currently make their tweets publicly available.

my relationship to the text itself changed. It brought me closer to an embodied approach to data analysis that required my own body and mind to physically rearrange, drag, click, and move around. I became more attuned to the individual words and less focused on the networked relationships emphasized by Twitter. You can see what the initial network of Quirks looked like in Figure 11.

Figure 11. A screenshot of my work in Quirkos

It was through the embodied process of manipulating the data with Quirkos that I discovered exciting new areas of analysis previously overlooked in my research process. The freedom to create and link Quirks helped me visually make sense of the connections between the hashtag, the writing process, and publishing. Initial broad codes related to writing, emotion, and collaboration eventually expanded into narrower areas like labor, genre, anger, whiteness, and others. By the end of my analysis, I had created 25 different "quirks" or broad areas of analysis

and coded 1,173 segments of data. I continued to narrow my analysis to focus on the writing process and the hashtag's unique affordances as a writing object. The narrowed codes revealed how the writing process is visualized as multifaceted and necessary labor by the contributors, how the writers themselves use the hashtag to link, integrate, and expand upon multiple genres of writing, and how the hashtag links those individual narratives into a complex anthology of voices. The hashtag as a digital object, then, enacts a micro-writerly space that can be safe and collaborative in ways impossible on the listserv precisely because it is shaped through a differently oriented macro system of values that begin first and foremost in feminist ideologies.

#genres #labor #assemblage

A single tweet can be a multimodal project, not only because of its ability to engage with text, image, and film but because it also draws on source material from such a variety of human writing practices via the hyperlink. It can link to articles already published, those being currently written, shared google documents of collaborative writing, public speeches and video, petitions and other listservs, the list goes on. It also enacts, in real time, a politics of citation. Twitter was initially described as a microblogging service, which I believe is often overlooked in the current age of social media. The microblog can be read as a single, complete piece of writing (such as all the tweets of user @rhi_mixed), and it can also be read as a collaborative piece of writing (as is the case with #WPAListservFeministRevolution). To that end, the boundary between personal and collaborative writing dissolves as individuals contribute to, retweet and share, and forge new coalitions across shared writings.

I discovered how many different genres were being referenced when I began coding all tweets that mentioned some form of writing, genre, or process. This resulted in a total of 407

individual lines. From there I began to break down the "writing" code into subsequent codes, which ultimately resulted in the genre code including a total of 67 identifiable lines. As presented below in table one, I further grouped tweets into smaller quirks, or categories, of genre.

Table 1. A breakdown of genres catalogued by #WPAListservFeministRevolution

Genre	**Example**
Personal essays/nonfiction	*Bad Feminist*, Audre Lorde
Quotations from academics and/or public scholarship	"We are all free to be assholes, but we are not free to do so without consequence," Mary Elston, Brenda Glascott, Kate Manne
Visual objects (analog)	"I'll just keep print outs in my office to save me time," Bingo card, poster,
Twitter timelines of other hashtag users	"I've found some amazing new-to-me voices by following #WPAlistservfeministrevolution."
Found poetry	"My found poem was quoted!"
Curriculum	"Turn it into curricula. Make it #intersectional.", Grading
Comp/Rhet Scholarship: Written	Dialogue in Composition Studies, bibliography of feminist scholarship, article on editing as inclusive activism, interchapters on 'our body of work', dissertations, keynote speeches, Blog carnival
Comp/Rhet Scholarship: Spoken	Dialogue session at Council of Writing Program Administrators conference, Symposium address, conference cfps, lectures, future speakers' series
Administrative	Participation guidelines, survey of community standards, proposals to boards, conference engagement standards, google survey, task list, working document, instructions to unsubscribe

Activism	Social justice petitions, disciplinary petitions, personal mantras for change, NEXTGEN service work, "Rhet/Comp Feminist Fight Club shirt", Informal polling
Visual gags (digital)	New Yorker cartoon, memes (dumpster fire ones especially), gifs (eye-rolling)
Public	Letter to the editor, comments on Inside Higher Ed essay, public responses by organizations
Digital	Wikis, Google group by @tengrrl, WPA-l archives, other hashtags like #communicationsowhite
Email	"typing, deleting, retyping an email to send in"

By cataloguing the different genres mentioned, I found that use of the hashtag emphasized the value of a network of genres that are often dismissed or not even considered when discussing "serious" writing. For example, a regular genre mentioned again and again, due to the obvious nature of the discussion, was the emails being sent to the listserv. While numerous tweets focused on critical evaluations or expressed anger or shock at the racist emails on the listserv, many others were metacognitive reflections about composing response emails themselves. For example, one user wrote on "typing, deleting, retyping an email" to send to the listserv. By writing *about* writing to the listserv, the feminists were valuing the embodied labor and reflection behind the words sent publicly. In emphasizing writing as labor, they were also valuing the collaborative nature of feminist work behind the scenes. Similar tweets shared frustration or anxiety about emails, and writers chimed in with tweets of support and appreciate for salient points they found while reading. Their recognition was always tied up in the acknowledgement of the invisible and often unacknowledged labor, not only in writing emails, but also in the labor of trying to change the oppressive structures of academia.

Writing work, as the hashtag sees it, includes more mundane things like to do lists, meeting notes, or lists of book recommendations. In placing value on these everyday genres, and then linking them together via the hashtag, the writers demonstrate the value of the work they do. It isn't only in journal articles, or conference keynotes, or other more visible areas of writing, but it is also in all the quotidian, as one writer put it: "How many hours of labor have been devoted to the #WPAlistservfeministrevolution discussion(s)? Highly visible in risky ways; invisible in dossiers. And: hours well spent. This is vital."

At the same time, other genres were circulating and being reconfigured offline. Letters received via the postal service were added to the hashtag as a form of cataloguing instances of microaggressions and finding support from other writers through humor. Interestingly, in some cases tweets and responses were printed off, making the digital material again to "hang in offices" and "post" offline. One user exclaimed they were keeping printouts of a particularly salient message to hand out to repeat offenders. The hashtag even extended to clothing, including t-shirts made (and reprinted) for contributors and supporters (Fig 12).

Figure 12 A t-shirt with the slogan "Feminist Fight Club Rhet/Comp Chapter"

When considering the publication #WPAListservFeministRevolution, the assemblage of so much material enacts an embodied form of history-making, not unlike the physical process of creating history through the historically feminine labor of sewing, weaving, and quilt-making. Writing is no different. When writing is viewed as labor, and when the intertextuality of all genres, no matter how mundane, are taken into consideration, it enables a collective and collaborative composing practice that is feminist at its roots.

#FutureResearch

One issue of trying to study hashtags and writing practice is their spontaneous ubiquity. When they are born out of kairotic moments like the #WPAListservFeministRevolution, capturing the thinking process of writers, and the ways the hashtag impacts that thinking in the moment, presents researchers with a real difficulty. One way around this problem, educational scholar Benjamin Gleason suggests, is by studying the literacy practices of individual groups, like teenagers. Another could be to study a hashtag that is developed by the researcher, as opposed to one born organically from an individual writer. The issues with both kinds of studies create obvious problems for capturing nuanced writing practice that develops out of need, desire, or necessity on an individual basis. It turns the focus from how the hashtag creates collaborative publications and isolates it as a tool simply for archiving past feelings or future ones; trying to the capture the "now" as it gets published is practically impossible.

A better practice, albeit one that is still difficult to implement, would be to study the writing process as it happens when a hashtag just begins to gather myriad voices. That would require both a deep familiarity with the area under study as well as the flexibility to develop research plans on the fly. In the case of #WPAListservFeministRevolution, I would have needed more familiarity with the profession, its long-standing issues, the listserv's history, the wherewithal to stumble upon the hashtag early on, and the foresight to know the hashtag would gain enough traction for study. However, these issues do not preclude a researcher from being able to study how the hashtag might impact writing process as it happens; it just requires a theoretical approach grounded in the community under study. That approach could more easily develop out of collaborative approaches to research, wherein multiple members of a community like the WPA-l are prepared to create partnerships with users and creators of hashtags.

Finally, in a future iteration of this study, I would like to expand my analysis beyond the alphabetic focus on language and instead include more analysis related to the visual, aural, and multimodal texts created by the users. A lack of access to Twitter's API features makes collecting that data in an accessible way nearly impossible, but for a complete analysis of #WPAListServFeministRevolution as an anthology, it would be necessary.

Even when thinking of the future work that could be borne of this kind of digital writing analysis, it is important to remember the genesis of hope it inspires. As Cheryl Glenn writes in *Rhetorical Feminism and This Thing Called Hope*, "Rhetorical feminism compels us to maintain hope. Maintaining hope is not the same as wishful thinking or mindless optimism. Rather, hope is *will*ful thinking combined with willful action, for 'to take on hope,' as Paula Mathieu writes, 'is to take on risk and responsibility while maintaining a dogged optimism" (emphasis in original; 129). The act of writing about the hashtag seriously, in a scholarly dissertation, is my way of valuing and contributing to the hard work and dedication of so many women writers. I cite their words and their thoughts because the work they did was—and is—valuable. I don't want to spend time reading the sexist emails on the listserv because someone else can do that work. I would rather spend my time reading of the words of resistance fighters who demonstrate the value of reflection, of anger, and of an intersectional community that is always trying to embrace hopefulness.

To conclude here, I return to the discussion of the metaverse that I brought up in the introduction to this chapter. While the possibilities and affordances of a metaverse are unknown, the notion that writing might change within that world is not. We already see that objects impact the writing process, virtual or otherwise. The idea that writing could develop differently in the metaverse is not so far-fetched. After all, if people had known about digital games and activities

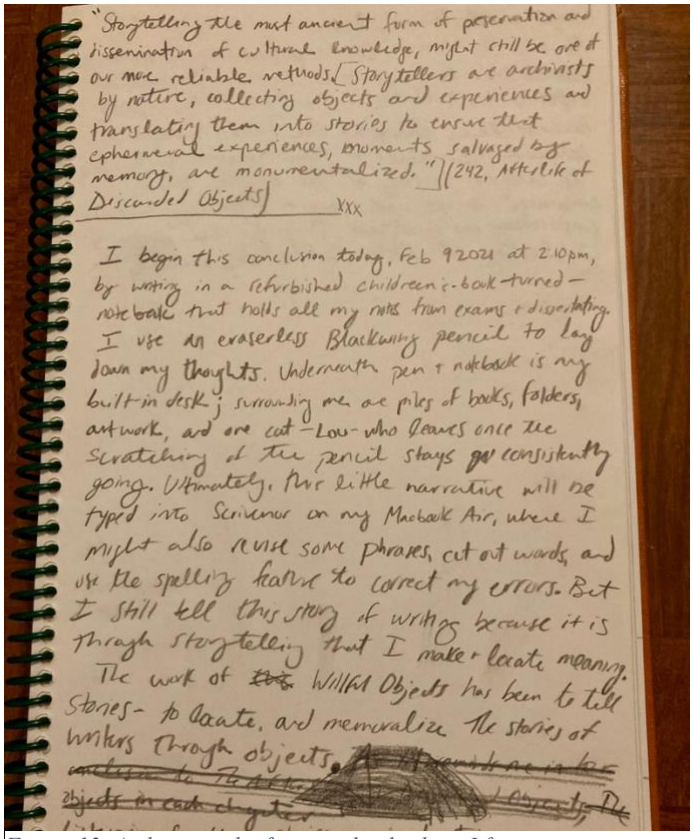
decades before their development (Wii Bowling is one example), they would have found the idea preposterous. The larger questions we should be asking about writing processes are not whether it will change with developments like the metaverse. What we should be asking is how it will change our processes and how or where those changes will show up in our writing going forward.

Chapter Six

Conclusion

"Storytelling, the most ancient form of preservation and dissemination of cultural knowledge, might still be one of our more reliable methods. Storytellers are archivists by nature, collecting objects and experiences and translating them into stories to ensure that ephemeral experiences, moments salvaged by memory, are monumentalized." (Andrei Guruianu and Natalia Andrievskikh, *Afterlife of Discarded Objects* 242)

February 9, 2022: I begin this conclusion today by writing in a refurbished children's book-turned-notebook that holds all my notes from exams and dissertating. I use an eraserless Blackwing pencil—where DID that eraser go?!—to lay down my thoughts. Underneath pen and notebook is my built-in desk; surrounding me are piles of books, folders, artwork, and one curious cat named Lou, who smells the pencil and leaves once its scratching stays continuous. Ultimately, this little narrative will be typed into Scrivener on my 2017 MacBook Air laptop, where I might also revise some phrases ("curious cat named Lou," "2017," "where did that eraser go?!"), cut out words ("go," "2:10 pm"), and use the spelling feature to correct my errors ("Scrivenor," "continous"). I tell this


"Storytelling the most ancient form of preservation and dissemination of cultural knowledge, might still be one of our more reliable methods. Storytellers are archivists by nature, collecting objects and experiences and translating them into stories to ensure that ephemeral experiences, moments salvaged by memory, are monumentalized." (242, Afterlife of Discarded Objects)

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I begin this conclusion today, Feb 9 2021 at 2:10pm, by writing in a refurbished children's-book-turned-notebook that holds all my notes from exams + dissertating. I use an eraserless Blackwing pencil to lay down my thoughts. Underneath pen + notebook is my built-in desk; surrounding me are piles of books, folders, artwork, and one cat—Lou—who leaves once the scratching of the pencil stays go consistently going. Ultimately, this little narrative will be typed into Scrivenor on my Macbook Air, where I might also revise some phrases, cut out words, and use the spelling feature to correct my errors. But I still tell this story of writing because it is through storytelling that I make + locate meaning. The work of ~~this~~ Willful Objects has been to tell stories- to locate, and memorialize the stories of writers through objects.

Figure 13. A photograph of my notebook where I first wrote my conclusion

story—and retell this story—each time I write. It is through the act of writing and rewriting—of telling, retelling—that I make, locate, and find meaning (Fig. 13). And it is the objects that I use—the notebook, the pen, the computer—that anchor my stories and provide a window to the ephemeral nature of memory and being.

The work of *Willful Objects* has been to tell stories, to locate, memorialize, and write the stories of objects and their impact on writing. Listening for these stories requires patience, a trait I apply more easily to archival research than live interactions. In large part, I think, I find archival work easier because it allows me the space to be unsure, to listen without knowing exactly what I'm even listening for. The longer I listened to the archives that housed stories about the objects in each chapter, the more "disturbingly lively" the objects themselves became (to borrow Donna Haraway's phrase). At the same time, I listened to my own objects and saw how their liveliness changed my process. Comparing the work my notebook does against the work of the typed letters on this page shows me a different side of writing process, one that is able to affect my thinking just as much as my words themselves change shape.

None of the writing practices—mine or those I discuss in the work—would look the same, or perhaps even have been possible, without the willful objects that lived alongside the writer. In the same way that my conclusion begins and begins again with different materials, the writing process itself is mediated differently depending on what objects we bring into the assemblage, by the specifics of time and place we write. We often feel this change in process most acutely when we consider space. When I ask students to describe what their writing process looks like, they invariably begin my describing a space: the library, a home office, a couch. Changing those spaces brings about changes in process; this was most dramatically demonstrated for me by the ongoing global health crisis of COVID-19. This dissertation, instead of being

written in libraries, alongside friends in cafes, or in different cities across the US, was primarily written in my apartment, at my desk, during a time of great stress, anxiety, and loneliness. I'm sure the words on these pages capture a different kind of writing than what I initially envisioned. At a minimum, my limited access to material outside my own small city apartment meant I turned towards research subjects accessible to me via digital archives or my own prior historical work. If nothing else, I ultimately found some comfort during the pandemic in reading about and envisioning the world from the object's perspective.

The chapters themselves developed over time and weren't written in any obvious order. The research for the endpapers chapter happened first; the kitchen table chapter was the first fully realized article that morphed into a chapter here last; the longest and darkest months of the pandemic were spent reading *The London Phonographer;* both the endpapers chapter and the hashtag chapter were dipped into and dipped out of whenever the rush of anger or frustration got to be too much. The final edits were made in an empty apartment while I sat on a Coleman cooler at my built-in desk. The recursive process and the objects themselves are, I hope, evident in the ultimate conclusions I draw about the importance of everyday writing, collaboration, and process.

In chapter one, I define an object-oriented ontology in relation to writing studies and feminist materialism. Drawing on the work of Bennett, Boler, and other feminist writers, I see the archival work I do as a form of compassionate practice that redefines the network of actants within the structure known as "writing process." By paying close attention to the objects we use in writing, I believe we can better capture what process is and how different tools affect those changes on the page.

Chapter two highlights the importance of the typewriter to feminist writing process as evidenced through the typewriter's representation in the pages of the nineteenth-century periodical *The London Phonographer*. The women typists represented in its pages tell stories about how the typewriter changed the style and shape of writing, just as it changed the economic landscape for some women workers at the fin de siècle. Columnists like Mimeotype describe the nervous systems of writing machines, demonstrating how the environment impacts both the machine and the body who operates it. Other figures like Miss Benson turn their bodies into literal typewriters, further dissolving the division between human subject and object and showcasing how the writing object inscribes our bodies, just as we inscribe ourselves onto the page. To understand process requires a deep engagement with the objects in the composing assemblage, and one way to develop our understanding of process is through a historical approach that treats the object as equally interesting as the person.

Chapter three builds upon the work of chapter two by turning towards an object—paper—and the significance of endpapers to writing process in a specific cookbook, *Our Home Cyclopedia,* housed in the Browne Popular Culture Library. The writer/s in the cookbook are anonymous, which refocuses attention on the relationship between object and process. Their anonymity also reinforces my belief in the value of studying everyday writing, a genre often lost or overlooked because of its unintelligibility to a clear historical record. I theorize the endpapers function as invitational objects because of their relationship to the book-as-object, and the anonymous writers utilize these sites of tension to craft feminist archives of emotion and embodied intellectual work.

Chapter four takes up the theme of embodied intellectual work and turns towards the black feminist writers who created Kitchen Table Press, as well as black feminist artists like

Carrie Mae Weems and Vertaemae Smart-Grosvenor, who all center the kitchen table in their work. The table functions as an important site of gathering and conflict, and it provides a large surface for the writing process to happen, spill, and spread across intellectual, emotional, and domestic boundaries. The table is also a reminder of the importance for collaboration with other writers, and the power of genres like the anthology to gather disparate voices into one story.

The final chapter considers how scholars might see digital objects like the hashtag (#) within the framework of writing process. Through a qualitative study of one specific hashtag—#WPAListservFeministRevolution—I posit a theory of process that is born-digital but never solely just online. Instead, the hashtag gathers a variety of genres, styles, and voices into a collective anthology that speaks back to the racism and misogyny of the profession. By registering moments of process through the hashtag, the feminist writers are also demonstrating collectively the power and importance of writing in genres associated with service work (a women-dominated area of academic life). The hashtag transforms moments of thought into moments of public action.

Implications

Studying history from an object-first, OOF-inflected philosophy means centering objects in the narratives we create about writing process. For feminists in particular, this approach offers another way into thinking and theorizing how to be more ethical and ecological humans as we develop ways of thinking and doing within/outside patriarchal structures. Beginning with objects does not necessitate we ignore the real plight of human women, nor does it mean we abandon the important work of equity and equal rights for all. It is simply one more method in the feminist

toolkit, a way of shifting perspective and standpoint to better understand all the actants in the composing assemblage.

So much of archival work focuses on people, yet in describing their work historians like Arlette Farge seem most enthralled by the objects they encounter. In her classic translated text *The Allure of the Archives,* she writes of one such discovery, a file containing a letter from a country doctor, who attests of a young woman whose breasts discharge seeds every month, and a pouch of seeds as proof. Carefully opening the pouch, Farge describes how "a few seeds escape and rain down on the yellowed document, as golden as they were on their first day, a brief burst of sunshine" (10). Discovering the seeds two centuries later, Farge reflects on the power they hold, how they are "everything, because they can be astonishing and defy reason" and how they are simultaneously "nothing, because they are just raw traces, which on their own can draw attention only to themselves" (11). *Willful Objects* has embraced the everything and nothing; it sees the sunshine in brief glimpses of the typewriter through the pages of a long-forgotten periodical, and it also embraces the unknowability of the object, the hauntological existence of the ephemeral process of writing.

The idea for my work is found first in objects, but it is ultimately dedicated to the women typists featured in *The London Phonographer,* who captured the liveliness of their process in part because they embraced the fuzzy boundaries between themselves and their typewriters; to the feminists who embraced the kitchen table as a workspace and homeplace—crafting a mutually constitutive writerly mythology; to the anonymous women writers who accepted the invitation implied by the cookbook's endpapers to write their embodied practices into the book, and finally to the digital feminist activists who utilized #WPAFeministListservRevolution to historicize a moment in the field of rhetoric and composition and to collectively write a new future.

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