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Casey Ryan Kelly

University of Minnesota, ckelly11@unl.edu

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Women's Rhetorical Agency in the American West: *The New Penelope*

Casey Ryan Kelly

University of Minnesota

Abstract

This essay theorizes women's rhetorical agency in the nineteenth-century American West. Contrast between fluid gender norms in frontier life and the Cult of True Womanhood highlights how agency is confined by materiality. Agency is the capacity to recognize and act in moments when material structures are vulnerable to resignification. I offer an analysis of Frances Fuller Victor's novella *The New Penelope* to demonstrate how pioneer women writers reinvented womanhood in light of socio-economic changes.

Keywords: rhetorical agency, habitus, Frances Fuller Victor, Cult of True Womanhood, American West

In Homer's epic poem *The Odyssey*, Penelope, the wife of the main character, Odysseus, king of Ithaca, awaiting her husband's return from Trojan War, refuses and evades repeated marriage proposals. All the while staying faithful to Odysseus, Penelope cleverly deceives, tricks, and delays her suitors by pretending to weave a funeral pall for her father-in-law Laertes, upon which completion she promises to choose a suitor. Further, upon his return after some ten years, Odysseus disguises himself as a beggar and takes up Penelope's seemingly impossible challenge to string his own bow and shoot an arrow through the holes of twelve axes. Although it is not clear from the text, given her acumen, it may be that Penelope understood that only her Odysseus could complete this task and, thus, was aware that the real Odysseus had returned. As a literary figure, she is typically seen as a symbol of fidelity and chastity. As Margaret Atwood (2005) suggests, Penelope is rarely valued for her cunning ability to outsmart her male suitors. As a feminist figure,

however, Penelope refused the forced choice of remarriage, used her chastity as power against her male suitors, and elected to remain in control of her household until she finally reunited with her true husband. The absence of Odysseus offered Penelope power, prerogative, and ability to exercise agency.

In the nineteenth-century American West, some pioneer women found that they shared a great deal in common with Penelope. Particularly during the settlement of California and the Pacific Northwest, women who lost their husbands to the hardships of the overland journey, the seductions of gold mining, or who migrated west on their own to seek a richer life were able to choose independence by refusing to relinquish control over their household affairs to a new husband. Brigitte Georgi-Findlay (1996) explains that the history of these pioneering women is, unfortunately, sublimated to the national myth that westward expansion was "a male activity" (p. ix). A closer examination of the evidence demonstrates that some women played a vital role in the settlement of the American West and were able to exercise power in the absence of the Victorian social structures that kept women confined to the domestic sphere (Rosenberg, 1973). The popular reading of the pioneer woman is much like that of Penelope: she is seen as supportive, submissive, and chaste in the absence of male authority (Rosowski, 1989).

Pioneer writer and historian Frances Fuller Victor (1826–1902) gave voice to this *New Penelope* of the American West.¹ As one of San Francisco's leading writers, historians, and suffragists, Victor inhabited many of the social roles that were typically reserved for men, including becoming the first female editor of the widely circulated newspaper the *New Era*. Victor wrote prolifically to raise awareness among women that they had a place in the settlement of the West and they were not there to simply support their male counterparts. Rather, Victor's writings exhibit that for women migrating west, the unconventional was acceptable. In particular, in her popular book *The New Penelope* (1877), Victor developed a rhetorical figure of womanhood adapted to her new socioeconomic circumstances; this woman exercised a greater degree of autonomy, independence, and agency. Adapting Homer's Penelope to her social context, Victor showed that many pioneer women, including her subject/character Anna Greyfield, chose to retain control of their lives. Victor's writing rhetorically invented an American woman who exercised agency within and against the normal cultural constraints placed on gender.

Victor's project was radical at every level. She appropriated a traditionally male medium of writing in a rhetorical form which sought to elicit common experience among women of the American West. Her rhetoric in *The New Penelope* affirmed women's ability to engage the traditional and confining structures of gender and sexuality. Her rhetoric encouraged women to conceive of themselves as an audience capable of producing social change. Unlike Bret Harte's representation of frontier women as mere objects and literary devices in *The Luck of the Roaring Camp*, Victor's Penelope is an empowered and active agent of change. Ida Rae Egli (1998) writes that Victor "brought her hopes and concerns for the West Coast women's movement together with her practical knowledge of the history of women during the gold rush period" in order to move women to exercise the new agency they were afforded on the frontier (p. ix).

Using the writings of Frances Fuller Victor, I explore the relationship between material structures, gender norms, and the rhetorical agency of women at work during the settlement of California and the Pacific Northwest (1848-1877). Specifically, I argue that radical changes in the structural features of everyday life affected the agency of white women in the American West. While many of these were opportunities afforded to a small number of women who were predominately white, these changes afforded some women opportunities to expand, slowly and with great toil, the definition of woman's space. Such structural changes challenged the cult of domesticity and gendered division of labor that bound women to the domestic sphere. In the west, pioneer women expanded and stretched the cult of domesticity to redefine cultural and moral spheres of women's labor. As articulated by Victor, changes in frontier life encouraged women to leverage a radical critique of the marriage contract and domestic labor in ways that challenged material and symbolic oppression of women.

Through an examination of her discourses concerning the pioneer woman in *The New Penelope*, I explore how Victor used the social status of women in the West to rhetorically invent new roles for femininity in the public sphere. The circulation of such discourse demonstrates how women reconstituted themselves in the West and adapted existing public arguments about the social role of women to earn a greater degree of social and material mobility. First, I examine the historical context of the American West that illuminates the relationship between socialization processes, gender structures, labor, and agency. Next, I argue for a concept of women's agency that is primarily structural. I suggest that agency is the capacity to recognize moments in which socioeconomic and cultural structures are vulnerable to reinterpretation and so groups of individuals may act to resignify the social order. Using the work of sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, I argue that agency is an inventive capacity to act, negotiate, and construct the arrangement, meaning, and use of social and economic space. While agency is as Karlyn Kohr's Campbell (2005) suggests "promiscuous and protean," this analysis demonstrates that it can best be understood as intermediate, located between structure and agent. Third, I analyze how Victor's creative adaptation of alternate literary genres and inventive arguments in *The New Penelope* exhibit changes in gender norms and in the process constituted new horizons for women. I pay close attention to the argumentative texture of Victor's radical critique and reconstruction of marriage and domesticity. I conclude with a discussion of how Victor's writing illuminates the relations among rhetoric, social structures, and agency.

Frontier Women and the Cult of True Womanhood

A number of studies have taken up the task of reading women back into the history of the American West (Armitage and Jameson, 1987; Jeffrey, 1998; Moynihan, Armitage, and Fischer, 1998; Peavy and Smith, 1994; Riley, 1992; Roach, 1990; Scott, 1990; Smith and Greig, 2003). Other historians have tried to find women in unexpected places on the frontier where the narratives of women have been ostensibly silent, such as gold rush California where settlement was considered to be primarily male (Egli, 1998; S. Johnson, 2000; Kowaleski, 1997; Levy, 1990; Marks, 1994; Rohrbough, 1997). Fredrick Jackson Turner (1893), credited with the much disputed frontier thesis, did little to discuss the role that women

played in western settlement.² If we take the thesis seriously that the frontier is a unique feature of history that shapes US identity, then scholars should put women's experiences at the center of their analyses of the American West to highlight the ways in which the frontier changed women's lives. For this essay, the term "frontier" will be used to describe liminal geographic and social spaces in the American West where the structures of everyday life broke down as they confronted contingencies. I locate places in the nineteenth-century American West where women were encouraged to adapt confining social structures by virtue of their remote geographical location and renewed importance in the gendered division of labor.

To be sure, the popular culture image of the frontier woman is a significant barrier to such clear analytical understandings of gender. Moynihan, Armitage, and Fischer (1998) argue that even in some scholarly contexts the white frontier woman is "the frail, genteel lady damaged by the harshness and isolation of the frontier, the prematurely careworn drudge of a helpmate, the briefly glamorous bad women soon to meet a bad end—all dependent upon male enterprise and valor for their survival" (p. xi–xii). Even worse, women were understood pejoratively in a "public" context. Public women were prostitutes or promiscuous women who followed miners and pioneers across the frontier. Campbell (1989) explains that within the Cult of True Womanhood, women who entered male public and political domains "lost their 'womanliness' and their claim to purity" (p. xiii). Given the persistence of negative images about women in the nineteenth century and that men authored almost all of the primary published accounts of frontier life, it is difficult to obtain positive accounts of women's contribution to settling the frontier. Thus, the image of the disempowered and dependent pioneer woman persists.

The historiography is mixed on the subject of women's agency in the nineteenth-century American West. Scholarly work on women in the American West is divided over how women managed Victorian concepts of gender.³ Changes in economic conditions, middle-class morality, and westward expansion offered new opportunities for white women to find ways to gain entry in the public sphere. The conditions of everyday life that structured gender norms were radically different in the West from those in the East. In the East, the development of the liberal market economy girded the cult of domesticity by displacing the home as the center of production and reinforcing the sexual division of labor. As a result, upper-class women in the East were relegated to the home and sheltered from the supposedly brutal conditions of public life. In the West, the demands of everyday life in a rough and unforgiving landscape put some women into more versatile family and public roles for purposes of survival.⁴ Many western women were adventurous, nonconformist, and rhetorically savvy. Rebecca Mead (2004) argues that the sophisticated activism of women in the West and their broad alliances with farmers, laborers, and progressive reformers were vital in the struggle for women's suffrage. Some women resisted patriarchal authority and adapted elements of public life as their own.

The changes in social structures gave some groups of women new arguments for entrance into public life that could be used and deployed by women elsewhere. Victorian gender norms proved contradictory and awkward in new settings on the Western frontier where survival trumped the ritualistic and antiquated concepts of women's place. Geographic distance and the new conditions of labor meant that some women had no choice

but to combine their domestic duties with roles traditionally reserved for men. Although the roles first arise out of necessity, new social and economic conditions enabled sustained efforts to appropriate traditionally male roles and exercise higher degrees of personal power and autonomy. The search for new economic conditions brought some women, albeit few, into new spaces where Victorian morality could be adapted for liberating ends.

Frontier California in the 1870s is a particularly useful site at which to examine the relationship between structure and agency because of its fluid social structures and heightened intellectual activity on the part of women. Egli argues that "most frontiers offer heightened opportunity for women and others of minority status, but the California frontier went several steps further . . . the frontier openness, wealth, risk, and the rambunctiousness of the gold rush era had created a free-thinking society where the unconventional was acceptable" (x ii). California was a unique frontier space because its settlement preceded the extension of state and federal law, and the demands of quick economic development required the labor of both men and women, blurring the lines between public and private. California, however, is thought to have been settled by pioneering male Argonauts without the presence of women. To be sure, there were gender imbalances toward men in the first several years of the gold rush. At first, the structural absence of women from the lives of men was grounds for a social critique of women's subordination. The "scarcity" argument was used to support the proposition that men were actually dependent on the labor of women for society to function. When men were without labor of women they were increasingly unable to achieve the level of prosperity and stability they had once achieved in the East.

Susan Johnson (2000) explains that "the increasing separation of home and workplace that accompanied northern industrialization gave some newly middle-class women a standpoint from which to question emerging commercial values—even as the home itself, however paradoxically, became a 'launching pad' for middle class men" (75). As a result, women immigrated to California in high volume from 1852 to 1860. Whereas there was a twelve to one ratio in 1852, the gap narrowed to four to one in just under a decade. By the 1870s, women used the scarcity argument as justification for a more prominent role in the development of the California and the American West. Levy contends that "thousands of women decided that where men could go, they could go. Some women came alone, many more [came] with husbands, fathers, brothers. Some came for the gold, to make their 'pile,' [S]ome came to stay" (p. xxii). However, white pioneer women used their "pious" influence to expand the value of women's work (Ginzberg, 1990). Women's piety and domesticity, women argued, was a way of infusing order into the chaotic life of the mining frontier.

Most importantly, the demands of day-to-day existence required that men and women intermittently violate their gender expectations and the sexual division of labor. Paula Marks (1994) explains that "women of different classes and occupations found their presence and skills valued and enjoyed some of their new environment's freedoms" (p. 338). Women were instrumental in the production of consumer goods in the cottage industries that accompanied mining life. In fact, some women found that their domestic duties could be harnessed as consumer services. Some found by offering washing and cooking services to miners. Other women opened up small businesses, operated saloons, and even farmed and raised livestock. Some educated and predominantly white women, such as Frances

Fuller Victor, took part in the literary boom that followed the gold rush in San Francisco. Some women were the state's leading writers, educators, and historians. At the same time, the demands of frontier life required that some men take on a share of domestic duties to ensure the family's survival. Letters and journals provide ample evidence detailing the sharing of domestic as well as workplace duties between men and women (Marks, 1994, p. 364–65; S. Johnson, 2000, p. 101–183).⁵ The demands of frontier society required men and women to routinely blur the gendered division of labor to guarantee survival. These new labor configurations altered gender expectations and opened up opportunities for women.

Gender and Rhetorical Agency

The instability of frontier socioeconomic conditions is an example of the material-structural conditions that both constrain and enable women's rhetorical agency. The stark contrast between the fluidity and informality of gender in frontier life and the rigidity of circumscribed social roles of the American East highlight how changes in socioeconomic structures encouraged some women to creatively reinvent their social roles. This unique moment of rupture in women's rhetorical history provides an opportunity to theorize the problematic relationship between rhetorical practices and material structures. The rapid transformation of white women's roles as expressed on the frontier was embedded in socioeconomic conditions and the material structures of consciousness that constrain gender norms. I argue that there is a mutually reinforcing relationship between rhetoric and structure in which changes in the socioeconomic conditions of everyday life enable women without taken-for-granted access to the public sphere to reinvent ossified social roles and transform conventional norms. To frame this essay's analysis of Frances Fuller Victor's writings, I bridge what Campbell (2005) suggests is a "vast chasm" between classical, humanistic, and post-modern theories of agency (p. 8). While each theoretical investment provides important insights, examining the rhetorical practices of women on the frontier highlights creative and sometimes misunderstood expressions of agency and creative engagements with material and symbolic structures.

Agency is a disputed and troubled concept in rhetorical studies. Critical interventions that decenter the speaking subject as a modernist autonomous individual pose a unique challenge to the project of recovering women's voices. Some theorists suggest that the concept of rhetorical agency is illusory and suffers from naive humanistic assumptions about the capacity of the subject to act and use reason to shape reality (Gunn and Lundberg, 2005). Dilip Gaonkar (1997) critiques what he calls the "ideology of agency" in rhetorical studies in which speakers are understood as "origin rather than articulation, strategy as intentional, discourse as constitutive of character and community, ends that bind in common purpose" (p. 263). This critique of subjectivity challenges simplistic notions of agency that overdetermine an individual's ability to construct or even transcend their material conditions through rhetorical power.

Although rhetorical power is limited within a field of structural constraints, agency still serves an important rhetorical function in the historical transformation of the socioeconomic roles of women. For example, white pioneer women were able to negotiate changes

in the gendered division of labor by engaging in discursive practices that reshaped femininity and prevailing notions of womanhood. Such rhetorical acts demonstrate that agency is possible within the bounds of structure and that rhetorical choices shape the ways in which those material structures are signified. Cheryl Geisler (2004) suggests that the challenge for critics is to comprehend how individual speakers and discourse communities alike enact and perform meaningful political action without "merely recuperating the humanist individual" (p. 2). In this essay, I take up this challenge.

Rather than conclude that agency is a mere illusion, I explore how the ways in which it is structurally bound. I suggest that agency is the individual or collective capacity to recognize moments in which structures are open to reinterpretation and then act to resignify the social order. This position recognizes the material constraints on rhetorical agency (Cloud 1994, 1996) but also acknowledges the ways in which some women used rhetoric to adapt and resignify changes within the structural order (N. Johnson, 2002; Triage, 2000). Rhetorical agency should be theorized contextually as a situated rhetorical interplay between structure and agent, as opposed to either theoretical abstraction on the one hand or complete structural determinism on the other. Sonja Foss (2006) suggests that binaries obscure dynamic interpretations of rhetorical agency. I concur with Foss's argument for an intermediate and pragmatic perspective in which "agency is located neither exclusively with an agent nor determined by structure but lies in the interplay between the two" (p. 375-76).⁶ Agency is constrained and enabled at times by material structures and communal practices. Campbell (2005) further extends this intermediate approach by arguing that there may be points at which emphasizing either material structure or textual artistry may highlight different insights. She contends, however, it is important to analyze agency with attention to the relations between the two: "authors/rhetors are materially limited, linguistically constrained, historically situated subjects; at the same time, they are 'inventors' in the rhetorical sense, articulators who link past and present, and find means to express those strata that connect the psyche, society, and world, the forms of feeling that encapsulate moments in time" (5). Put differently, rhetorical agents are linked to both culture and collectivities in ways that require negotiation within and against institutional power structures.

While women's rhetorical agency is not fixed, it is intimately tied to the economic structure of patriarchy and processes of gender socialization, particularly that at work in the Cult of True Womanhood. Pierre Bourdieu's (1984, 1990) theorization of *habitus* illuminates the disposition of human agency within a social field of acquired habits, such as the Cult of True Womanhood. For Bourdieu, *habitus* is a tendency, propensity, or inclination that reflects an internalized and inherited social conditioning manifest in cultural practices. Bourdieu argues that domination is the result of intimate relationships between economic capital, cultural, or symbolic capital, and acquired habits of meaning-construction. For nineteenth-century pioneer women, agency was strongly tied to patriarchy and its attendant social and economic practices. Sociologist Allan Johnson (1997) explains that patriarchy is historically rooted in the "deep structures inside each of us—webs of belief, experience, and feeling that help shape the pattern in our lives" (p. 16). In this way, patriarchy is not just a series of societal or political arrangements but a culturally imbedded and deeply structural set of beliefs and socialization processes that place prior limitations and

constraints on the possibilities for gender and womanhood. Given that such cultural structures and socialization processes determine the possibilities of agency, any theory of women's agency must problematize the relationship between culturally imbedded structures of patriarchy and corresponding practices that enable and constrain the realm of possibilities for women (Freeman, 1971).

While such material structure is primary for Bourdieu (1990), he suggests that reinterpretation of the structural order is possible through inventive capacities or competency in the communication practices of situated communities:

I wanted to emphasize that this "creative," active, inventive capacity was not that of a transcendental subject in the idealist tradition, but that of an active agent. . . . I wanted to insist on the "primacy of practical reason" that Fichte spoke of, and to clarify the specific categories of this reason (pp. 12–13).

This inventive capacity is enacted through the artistry or *techne* reflected in what Campbell (2005) calls "the heuristic skills that respond to contingencies," which includes "stratagem, flair, subtlety, and the like as well as habits of mind learned through practice" (p. 7). Agency emerges within material structure through the stylized resignification, reinterpretation, and reiteration of the social order. Similarly, Foss (2006) suggests that rhetorical practices enable "the agent to engage but also to develop creative responses to structural or material conditions in a negotiation between self and structure" (p. 376). Such rhetorical practices resist and appropriate icons and arguments that sustain the subordination of women and its mutually reinforcing economic, ideological, and intellectual structures. Thought of in this way, the rhetoric of white pioneer women marshaled the new social roles of women on the frontier and evidence of women's competence to fashion a different image of women imbued with agency.

Frances Fuller Victor's *New Penelope*

In 1877, Francis Fuller Victor published *The New Penelope and Other Stories*, a small novella of ten short stories and forty poems. The featured and most popular story of the volume was the opening narrative *The New Penelope*, which chronicles Victor's interview with a white pioneer woman Anna Greyfield. Although the other stories in the volume feature dynamic and powerful female characters, *The New Penelope* is of particular interest for critics invested in women's agency because it featured a "real" nonfictional character who embodied some of the empowered traits of women in the American West.⁷ *The New Penelope* was perhaps the most successful and widely read of her more serious and historical writing because the themes and characters reflected the concerns of the women's movement on the West Coast. Throughout her literary career, Victor conducted extensive interviews with women miners and pioneers about their experiences. She was impressed with their stories of success, perseverance, and independence. While Victor's writings were extensive, *The New Penelope* animates several important rhetorical dimensions of the interplay between structure and agent. In the remainder of this essay, I analyze the rhetorical

features of *The New Penelope* in which Victor sought to reinvent nineteenth-century womanhood. Her arguments elicited empathy and emulation by her imagined female audience and dismantled prevailing patriarchal concepts of marriage and domesticity in light of new socioeconomic conditions. Organizing this analysis into four categories, I explore how Victor: 1) elicited empathy and enacted agency through her choice of genre, 2) offered a radical critique of the marriage contract, 3) politicized marriage and domesticity, and 4) recovering marriage as an egalitarian institution. I argue that attending to the form and texture of Victor's rhetoric and the subtle construction of *The New Penelope* highlights the complex relationship between text, form, and the material structures that encouraged women to conceptualize themselves as agents of social change and reinvent the concept of true womanhood.

Agency and Empathy through Genre

Victor's generic choice of an interview enacts women's agency and elicits audience empathy for her frontier interlocutor in creative ways. Many rhetorical scholars argue that genre can dramatically affect the way in which texts are received by their audiences (Fisher, 1980; Jamieson and Campbell, 1978; Miller, 1984; Simons and Aghazarian, 1986). Campbell (2005) argues that agency derived from generic choices is "linked to audiences and begins with the signals that guide the process of 'uptake' for readers and listeners, enabling them to categorize, to understand how a symbolic act is to be framed" (p. 7). The selection of particular generic conventions and textual movements are epistemic. They can be understood as a set of guiding cues for the production of knowledge. Foss (2006) extends this point by arguing "Choice is the basic mechanism by which the world is made manifest" (p. 378). Victor's choices of the dialogic form (an interview with a real pioneer woman) invited audiences in a nonhierarchical, conversational, and educational manner. She elucidated women's serial relationship to conditions of oppression in the nineteenth century and asked her audience to empathize with her interview subject. The genre of the *New Penelope* highlights the unique rhetorical form of argument enacted by nineteenth-century women writers in lieu of access to traditional oratorical spaces. As an alternative argumentative structure, the interview form is not persuasive by traditional evaluative standards; it is highly personal, intimate, confrontational, radical, nonhierarchical, and is without platforms or programs.⁸ In Victor's case, the generic choice mimics a process of mutual understanding and empathy that Victor seeks from her female audience. The form of an interview accomplishes this goal in three ways.

First, the interview format provides an accessible, real-life character with whom women could empathize. Victor's interview subject, Anna Greyfield, stands out from all other characters because she was a "real" woman exercising agency in ways that other women in similar situations could emulate. While it is unclear if Greyfield is in fact a real person, the story unfolds as if to chronicle a real interview experience between her and Victor. The interview also proceeds through narrative conversation that details the struggle of a pioneer woman to achieve empowerment, independence, and agency. While the character and the interview may be a literary invention, the unfolding of agency through an intimate conversation frames Victor's arguments in ways that attempt to elicit empathy and connect to the audience through personal narrative. This effort, accentuated by Victor's genuine

attempt to empathize with her subject and understand her unique experience, rather than to just obtain information for research. In fact, a genuine bond forms between the subjects as they express friendship throughout their encounter. Rather than direct argument, the interview format invites the audience to understand and connect with the interlocutor.

Second, through the dialogic form of an interview, Victor invites her audience to recognize the structural possibilities available to all women. Her interview with Greyfield chronicles the supposedly real experience of a lone woman who overcame oppression at the hands of her husband. Throughout a series of intimate questions targeted at defining the contours of Greyfield's path to empowerment, Victor employs symbolic embodiment and demonstrative presentation to sketch a model of replicable experiences for her audience. Furthermore, the audience is invited to read themselves into the story. Due to its realistic nature, the rhetorical features of *The New Penelope* provide Victor's female audience with tools to renegotiate their agency within social structures. Through the use of exhibition and example, Victor suggests that her interview is an analytical exercise designed to define the contours of the new pioneer women and her abilities. She asserts: "I may as well avow myself in the beginning as that anomalous creature, a woman who loves her own sex and naturally inclines to the study of their individual peculiarities and histories in order to get at their collective qualities" (p. 1). Victor suggests that the purpose of the interview is to demonstrate the powerful traits of pioneer women. She suggests that her experience with Anna Greyfield teaches "the moral greatness that is often coupled with delicate physical structure and almost perfect social helplessness" (p. 1). Victor highlights for her audience the structural constraints on women's agency and then offers her subject Anna Greyfield as true-to-life evidence that there exist new positive female roles. Victor's text utilizes these tools to mobilize women to support gender equality. As Campbell (1999) explains, such a rhetoric "must transcend alienation to create 'sisterhood,' modify self-concepts to create a sense of autonomy, and speak to women in terms of private, concrete, individual experience, because women have little, if any, publicly shared experience" (p. 128). Victor mixes her personal experiences with similar recollections from the life of Mrs. Greyfield and gives direct political application of that personal experience. Victor's style is nonhierarchical, personal, intimate, and does not make overt arguments or bold policy proposals.

Third, the dialogic form relies on enthymemes to elicit a strong connection between the audience and Greyfield. The conversational format between the two women takes a form in which they share similar personal experiences to highlight the common nature of their oppression. Similar to a Socratic dialogue, the audience is invited by enthymeme to articulate what they already know about their condition. While Plato's dialogues presumed a universal truth would emerge through the enlightenment of his interlocutors, this dialogic form invites a deliberative and personal response to the themes and allegorical messages contained within. The dialogic form mimics a type of reasoning that is deliberative. Victor never tells the audience that they should abstain from or reconceptualize marriage. She never gives them a direct command to engage in political activism. Rather, Victor presented characteristics to emulate as well as promoted awareness that women's current condition of servitude was neither natural nor inevitable. Victor offered her audience ways to conceive of themselves as self-aware women who were capable of confronting their oppression and producing social change. Through their collective experiences, Victor and

Greyfield became archetypes of women's agency in the West. Egli (1998) notes that "Personifying the lone women in a pioneer western setting, Anna Greyfield became the voice of the suffering 1870s woman—as did Penelope in the classic myth" (p. xviii).

Free Love and the Marriage Contract

Victor's interview dealt directly with Greyfield's suffering under the heavy hand of an oppressive and deceptive husband. Victor's selection of marriage as a site of contestation has important consequences for her audience because it intersects the material and symbolic structures that mediate women's agency. In the nineteenth century, inequality in marriage served as one of the primary vehicles for women's exploitation. In 1825, William Thompson published an essay calling marriage a "white slave code," an exploitative contract that dissolves the women's property and identity into that of the man (Pateman, 1988, pp. 123–124). In her 1837 essay "Legal Disabilities of Women," abolitionist and women's rights activist Sarah Grimke compared the marriage contract to the institution of slavery, arguing that "the very being of a woman, like that of a slave, is absorbed in her master. All contracts made with her, like those made with slaves by their owners, are a mere nullity" (para. 3). For nineteenth-century women's rights activists, the marriage contract was one of the central antagonisms of their time (Handley, 2002).

The critique of marriage that unfolds in the dialogue between Victor and Greyfield is logically similar to the rhetoric of the Free Love movement that emerged in the middle of the nineteenth century. The movement's leaders, such as Mary Gove Nichols, Mary Wollstonecraft, and Victoria Woodhull, developed a radical critique of marriage as an unequal contract, comparing it to the institution of slavery. They emphasized the centrality of women's claim to agency over their bodies and property. The movement was heavily influenced by both the anarchist and civil libertarian traditions that rejected all forms of coercion in governance and personal relationships. Free Lovers also argued for dress reform, the repeal of obscenity laws, and resistance to spousal rape as well as inequality in divorce law. While many supported the abolition of marriage all together, John Humphrey Noyes, credited with coining the term *free love*, preferred a reconstructed version of "complex marriage," rooted in both Christian and natural rights philosophies that rejected legal formalism and institutional inequality (Blatt, 1990; Cott, 2002; Goldsmith, 1998; Passet, 2003; Sears, 1977; Stoehr, 1977). Pateman notes that other activists argued that the contractual nature of marriage should be inverted as a transparent sexual labor contract that would take the form of universal prostitution.

Victor's critique demonstrates that marriage is both symbolic and material, an institution that absorbs women's property and identity into men. While Victor portrays marriage in much the same ways as abolitionists, her critique is accompanied by a recovery or reconstruction of the concept of marriage that more clearly aligns with Noyes expression of complex marriage. Along with the circulation of new concepts of marriage, the overland journey to the West created the conditions of economic independence that enabled Victor to rethink and reconstruct marriage within and against patriarchy. Victor explained that pioneer women, like the lone figure of Penelope, had the opportunity to break the traditional mold and seek independence and autonomy both within and outside of the marriage

contract. Although Penelope finally reunited with Odysseus, it is only after constant struggle with her deceptive and persistent suitors that she finally finds her equal. In Victor's *New Penelope*, her subject Mrs. Greyfield relates a long and torrid narrative of her attempts to evade and eventually escape her malicious and domineering suitors. In the end, her triumph represents the possibilities of resistance and a marriage and social life that resembled equality.

Victor's critique unfolds throughout the interview with a series of questions directed at Greyfield's evolution throughout two separate marriages. After she receives word of her husband's death in the overland journey to the West Coast, Mrs. Greyfield decides that she will not remarry and will raise her child on her own. Victor recalls how, like Penelope, Mrs. Greyfield evades, deceives, and turns away foolish suitors who demand that she fulfill the social conventions. Greyfield describes her suitors as being silly and carnivalesque as "they rode a spotted Cayuse up to the door with a great show of hurry, jangling their Mexican spurs and making as much noise as possible" (p. 11). During the interview, Greyfield says that "Most persons—in fact, every body that I talked with—said I should marry. But I could not think of it; the mention of it always made me sick that first winter. I was recovering my strength and was young, so I thought I need not despair" (p. 9). She recalls the pressure she resisted to become dependent on a man, "everybody said I must marry, and the reasons they gave were that I must have somebody to support me, that it was not safe for me to live alone, that my son would need a man's restraining hand when he came to be a few years older" (p. 10). Victor argues that Mrs. Greyfield made the same pragmatic choice as Penelope: to control her own household in absence of her equal. In fact, Greyfield humorously recalls the uselessness of one suitor: "I did not know what use I had for him, unless I should put him behind the stove and break bark over his head" (p. 13). Greyfield makes the case that as she became self-sufficient she had no need to marry. Greyfield ignored her "young ladies manuals" and chose the path that suited her interests. Greyfield, however, finally selects an unassuming suitor named Mr. Seabrook, who, while cleverly disguised, in the end embodies the worst dimensions of patriarchy.

At first, the new conditions of the frontier initially enable her to resist marriage. Victor explains that "pioneer life brings to light striking characteristics; because in the absence of conventionalities and in the presence of absolute and imminent necessities, all real qualities come to the surface as they never would have done under different circumstances. In the early life of the Greeks, Homer found his Penelope; in the pioneer days of the Pacific Coast, I discovered mine" (p. 1). While Victor demonstrates that women can also take advantage of structural reversals, this was not a task to be accomplished through a simple dismissal of patriarchy. Greyfield does not exercise agency without first suffering the extreme hardships of marriage and engaging patriarchy directly. Believing it was in her interest, Greyfield accepts a marriage proposal from Mr. Seabrook, a seemingly gentle man who helped managed her boarding house after living with her as a tenant. Seabrook, fifteen years her senior, was disarming and gradually assumed "more the air of proprietor than of boarder, but as he was so much older and wiser, and had been of so much service to me, I readily pardoned what I looked upon as a matter of no great consequences" (p. 19). While she had not yet considered marriage, Seabrook made a particularly deceptive move. He convinces Greyfield that because her boarders are male and she is unmarried,

the community gossips about her chastity and moral virtue. He then makes a plea for marriage: "Dear Mrs. Greyfield, permit me to offer you the love and protection of husband, and stop these gossips' mouths" (p. 21). While at first she was resistant, she agreed to marriage when shunned by people of her community. By this time, she contends that her "demoralization was complete" (p. 24). Seabrook had leveraged the oppressive social attitudes of the Cult of True Womanhood to coerce her into marriage.

While he helped Mrs. Greyfield, he poisoned her reputation in the community by spreading rumors of her male boarders. Seabrook quickly turns against her, using every structural tool at his disposal to trap her in marriage; deception, manipulation of her economic assets, intimidation, legal ambiguities, and community disapproval. Greyfield recalls the shock she felt "at the discovery of his perfidy" (p. 26). As is revealed later in the interview, Seabrook married Mrs. Greyfield illegally, while he had a wife and children residing in Ohio. From Greyfield's account, Seabrook married her to exploit her property and resources. After they married, Seabrook transformed into a domineering and parasitic taskmaster. While managing her money, Seabrook siphoned off most of it for himself. At the same time, he would abscond for long periods of time on business, leaving her totally dependent but without the love and protection he offered. As time went on and Seabrook's nefarious schemes worsened, Greyfield explains that she could no longer embrace passivity and needed to marshal the strength to change her condition. She argues that "I was morally a coward and could not possibly face the evil spirit of detraction. Therefore, the morning found me feverish in body and spirit" (p. 22).

Greyfield details the painful process of how she lived under Seabrook's thumb yet eventually subverted his authority to gain freedom. Greyfield explains her victimization to Victor: "For years after he knew that I knew he was *what he was*, he lived in my house and took my earnings, yes, and ordered me about and insulted me as much as he liked" (p. 40). Like some proponents of the Free Love Movement, Greyfield goes on to compare the marriage contract as a condition of slavery: "Although there is nothing in the wording of the marriage contract converting the woman into a bond slave or a chattel, the man who practices any outrage or wrong on his wife is so seldom called to account. I belonged to him, and there was no help for me" (p. 41). She recounts the synergistic impact of Seabrook's domination with that of the patriarchal community. When asked by Victor if she sought help, Greyfield replied: "Your view of their sentiments presupposes the nonexistence of what I should call chivalry. There may be in men such a sentiment as you would call chivalry, but I never yet have seen the occasion where they were pleased to exercise it" (pp. 41-42). Explaining her failed attempts to escape her marriage and seek help from the local community she contends that "I was all the time like a wild bird in a cage, and the continual attempts to escape I was making only bruised my wings" (p. 54).

As her situation worsened, Greyfield notes that she even fantasized about murder as an option for escape. The ways in which Seabrook employed the services of others to keep Greyfield in an oppressive marriage demonstrate the ways in which agency is communal, enabled, and constrained by a community that "confers identities related to gender" (Campbell, 2005, p. 3). Patriarchy is not merely an individual practice but an ideology sustained through a constellation of communal institutions invested in masculine authority. Even other women in the community would not offer help. Greyfield laments that "the

inertia of women in each other's defense is immense" (p. 40). Greyfield details her requests for help from other isolated women who unsympathetically replied: "I should have thought of all that before I married" (p. 40). Greyfield's experience reflects how deeply patriarchal socialization processes splinter oppressed communities and cause women to adopt the interests of the male ruling class as their own.

Greyfield pauses at great length in the middle of her narrative to reflect on the communal roots of women's oppression:

While some women are so weak and so foolishly fond of men to whom they became early attached as to be willing to overlook everything rather than part with them, a far greater number yield an unwilling submission to wrongs imposed upon them simply because they do not know how to do without the pecuniary support afforded them by their husbands. The bread-and-butter question is demoralizing to women as well as men, the difference being that men have a wider field to be demoralized in, and that the demoralization of women is greatly consequent upon their circumscribed field of action. (p. 47)

Her experience elucidates the theoretical workings of agency as it is constrained by community and *habitus*. The communal and socialization dimension of oppression can erase the structural possibilities for resistance. Greyfield argues that "when you reflect that we are born and bred to this narrow view of ourselves, as altogether the creatures of sex, you cannot but recognize its belittling, not to say depraving, effect or fail to see the temptation; we have to seize any base advantage it may give us" (pp. 47-48). Greyfield goes on to lament that there was little she could do to challenge the patriarchal community:

Whether I sewed or cooked, or whatever I did, they were the paymasters to whom I looked for my wages. How, then, was it possible to escape contact with them or avoid being misunderstood? In one breath I resented, with all the ardor of my soul, the impertinence of the world's judgment, and in the next I declared to myself that I did not care, that conscious innocence should sustain me, and that I had a right to do the best I could for myself and child. (p. 22)

The tacit approval of marriage by both the men and women of the community foreclosed many opportunities for Greyfield to escape.

Greyfield's experience demonstrates, however, that agency is dynamic and open to drastic reversals. Even though the communal structures thwart her at every turn, Greyfield eventually outmaneuvers her husband, "fleeing from my master to a land of freedom" (p. 49). When Greyfield receives a visit from a friend from Vancouver aware of Mr. Seabrook's businesses dealings, she discovers that Seabrook was married. While Seabrook denied his crime, he remained in the house as Greyfield searched for a way out of the marriage. Seabrook denied his crimes by claiming that there was a conspiracy against him. Greyfield remarks that she did not believe his "cock and bull story" (p. 40). The evidence suggested that he was guilty. When she turns to a local ministry for help, they inform her that she has many options to escape her condition of servitude. The ministry offered to help her obtain

divorce. Her marriage was in fact nullified by virtue of Seabrook's previous marriage. The ministry informed her that the laws in the West were actually on her side and that she would, and eventually did, triumph in the contest. From most accounts, this representation is historically accurate. Women were able to achieve divorces easier in Western states than in the East (Hurtado, 1999). Once she escapes her marriage, she observes Seabrook's "abject humility when I at last had the acknowledged right to put him out of my house!" She explains feeling "free and happy . . . as light as bird and wondered why I couldn't fly?" (pp. 56–57).

Although Greyfield's story may seem to support the proposition that frontier structures limited women's agency, it demonstrates the degree to which women's agency is possible once women become aware of the possibilities. Through shared experience and personal compassion, Greyfield learns that she already possesses valuable characteristics and the ability to appropriate the structures of her bondage for empowerment. She notes that while she had endured abject oppression and cruelty, she "felt armed in almost every point" (p. 57). Even in the presence of structural opportunities, many women of Victor's time period were socialized to believe they were incapable of constituting themselves as agents of change (Campbell, 1989, p. 128). Within the context of the American West, the possibilities for appropriation were substantially greater than those in the East. Victor shows that once women understood the nature of their oppression, there were remedies available to them. Greyfield could return to the autonomy she had once experienced when she had refused to allow her husband and suitors to control her destiny. For Victor, the hope was that women could awaken to the possibilities for agency available to them in their new social context.

Politicizing Marriage

Victor cleverly enacts her criticism of marriage in other subtle ways. Victor dissolves the split between public and private at the root of the marriage contract. Victor notes in conversation:

Women have a certain value among men when they can be useful to them. In the old States, where every man has a home, women have a fixed position and value in society, because they are necessary to make homes. But on this coast, in early times, and more or less even now, men found they could dispense with homes; they've been converted to nomads, to whom earth and sky, a blanket and a frying pan, were sufficient for their needs. Unless we came to them armed with endurance to battle with primeval nature, we became burdensome. Strong and coarse women who could wash shirts in any kind of tub out-of-doors under a tree and iron them kneeling on the ground to support themselves and half a dozen little, hungry, young ones, were welcome enough before the Chinamen displaced them. (p. 4)

In this passage Victor argues that women's position in the home is a product of ideology, economics, and politics. Women's position in the domestic sphere is fixed for the political and economic necessities of men. The entire concept of home is rooted in an unequal sexual division of labor. I suggest that this is a subtle yet quite radical move given Victor's historic

al context. One scholar argues that reclaiming domestic spaces was significant in pioneer women's writing because it helped them envision a safe place or refuge from the gendered politics of individualism (Floyd, 2002, pp. 124–144). The reconstruction of women's spaces as positions of power, rather than domesticity, radically reframed the personal labor in the home as political labor. This act changes the meaning of the women's work within the marriage contract to be one of equality instead of dependence.

The reframing of personal marriage as a political contract has important consequences for women's agency. This concept is fundamental for women's activist politics because it shows that the suffering of women in the home is at its core a political experience. Once the realm of the personal is recognized as inherently political, women possess power to resist, dissent, and transform the political through the micro-practices of everyday life. Greyfield explains the personal importance of her awakening:

The worst effect of all this talk about marrying was that it prepared me to be persuaded against my inner consciousness into doing that which I ought not to have done. My truer judgment had become confused, my perceptions clouded, from being so often assailed by the united majority who could not bear to see the poor, little minority go unappropriated. (p. 14)

Greyfield grapples with her awakening by challenging her ingrained sense of self-loathing, or the conditioned habitus. Once empowered, she realized that she had been deceived for so long into believing in the necessity of marriage and woman's natural dependency. The answer to women's desperate condition was to arm them with the knowledge that their husband's authority was arbitrary and they could resist the oppressive character of marriage and domesticity, even in the most subtle ways. When Victor asks: "Do you think that the enlargement of a woman's sphere of work would have a tendency to elevate her moral influence?" Greyfield responds that the only possibility for gender justice is a ruthless critique of the structures of oppression and the emergence of a new concept of what it means to be a woman. Greyfield argues emphatically:

The way the subject presents itself to me is that it is degrading to have sex determine everything of us: our employments, our position in society, the obedience we owe to others, the influence we are permitted to exercise, all and everything to be dependent upon the delicate matter of a merely physical function. It affects me so unpleasantly to hear such frequent reference to a physiological fact that I have often wished the word *female* stricken from our literature. (pp. 47–48)

Greyfield's argument demonstrates that the constraints of women's agency are both discursive and material. The basis of Victor and Greyfield's politics was to educate women about the ways in which patriarchal habitus reflects an internalized self-loathing that results in women's dependence, weakness, and submissiveness. According to the two, women needed to reject the "narrow view" of themselves. This type of agency is possible only when women can envision themselves as actual engines of social change.

Recovering Marriage

Victor's critique results in a recovered version of marriage that more closely reflects the Free Love movement's version of complex marriage. Victor's story concludes with Greyfield's return to marriage, albeit in a different form that reflected equality and companionship. While she does not reject it entirely, Greyfield attempted marriage for a final time but on her own terms. As such, Victor argues that in a mysterious way, Mrs. Greyfield eventually reunited with her Odysseus, her first husband, Arthur. Greyfield, thirty years after her marriage to Seabrook, discovered much to her surprise that her husband Arthur survived the overland journey. Mrs. Greyfield received a letter that chronicled Arthur's own odyssey in which he was left for dead, rescued by gold miners, and traveled to California to find his wife and child. Arthur claimed that while he finally located her in Portland, his poverty prevented him from making the journey. After being away for so long, he decides it was best to migrate east, where he married and had a daughter, Nellie. After his wife dies, Arthur writes a letter asking for forgiveness and another chance to make a life together. While Mrs. Greyfield is confused and ambivalent about whether she can accept Arthur's proposal after such a long period, in the meantime she adopts Arthur's daughter Nellie because she "could not bear to leave her motherless" (p. 66). Over time, Greyfield's son, Benton, grows close to his long-absent father. Arthur persists with his courtship and Mrs. Greyfield decides that she will accept Arthur to "commence a new life," to redeem a marriage that had once been based on love and reciprocity. Mrs. Greyfield contends that despite the awkwardness, her acceptance of Arthur was inevitable. Greyfield recognizes the mythical parallel of her situation by suggesting that "the most artistic bit of truth in the *Odyssey* (you see I have read Homer since you called me Penelope) is where the poet describes the difficulty the faithful wife had in receiving the long-absent, and now changed, Ulysses as her true husband." Victor interrupts, "But she did receive him, and so will you" (p. 67).

Upon the conclusion of the interview, Greyfield dismisses any discussion of the past between her and Arthur. The past context no longer serves any purpose for Mrs. Greyfield. She gestures to a future where "the 'talking over' is *tabooed*" and asserts "that is why we going to travel—to have something else to talk about" (p. 68). To this end, Greyfield proposes a European adventure to create new memories for the estranged family. While this is a beautiful and uplifting end to the narrative, it also sustains the textual and argumentative structure of the story. Anna, Arthur, and their two children reunite to constitute a new future that throws off the pain inflicted over the years of separation. The couple reunited in a new model of marriage based on choice, love, and companionship. They also start time anew, breaking with a past that cannot be recovered. For so long, Mrs. Greyfield was haunted by her past. When she was trapped in marriage with Mr. Seabrook, she only had the possibility of longing for the love of her supposedly dead first husband. After Mr. Seabrook, she lamented how she could have ever been deceived into believing she had to accept her conditions of oppression. Her renewed vows with Arthur explicitly sever ties with the past. The narrative conclusion is iconic. Her break from the past represents a break from the traditional structure of patriarchy. While Greyfield rejects her structural oppression, she also reconstructs a new and unconventional form of marriage. Her reiteration of marriage is not a recuperation of traditional marriage. She breaks with the past and brings

marriage into a new context. Victor's new marriage disassembled old meanings and invites new and empowering versions of marriage. In her egalitarian or complex marriage to Arthur, she was able to engage the contract directly as opposed to dreaming of escape. Greyfield argues that like all social structures, marriage itself was still redeemable and ripe for appropriation: "I believe in marriage; a single life has an incomplete, one-sided aspect, and is certainly lonely" (p. 59). Within the text, a new type of agency within marriage unfolds. In the end, the story concludes with word of Seabrook's death in Nevada, "old, poor, and alone" (p. 67). The conclusion is a fitting and symbolic death to the story's patriarchal icon.

While it may appear that Greyfield acquiesced to the social pressures of marriage, her renewed romantic relationship with Arthur represents a subtle yet significant recovery of the institution. Greyfield recovered or reclaimed marriage as an institution of love and companionship rather than an exploitive economic contract. Her remarriage and renewed love for Arthur contrasts with the exploitive husband embodied by Mr. Seabrook. Greyfield is persuaded by Arthur's promise of companionship as opposed to the threats and extortion of Mr. Seabrook. Although it is not a complete reconstruction of marriage, Greyfield's new marriage demonstrates that marriage can be engaged as an institution that offers love and mutual respect. What's more, Victor's new construction of marriage and women's labor demonstrates that agency within patriarchal structures is attainable through symbolic reiteration and engagement with material structures. Agency is exercised by creative interplay that adapts discourses and institutions such as marriage and labor to refashion women's social roles. While she does not entirely escape marriage altogether, she does articulate a challenge to its basic oppressive character. Victor's text is both literary and practical. She invited audience empathy and interplay, constructed women as agents of change, and fashioned the argumentative tools required to advance new visions of marriage and domesticity.

The Challenges of Rhetorical Agency

This essay explored the challenges of rhetorical agency in women's history on the American frontier through Frances Fuller Victor's *New Penelope*. I argue that this analysis makes two contributions to an ongoing conversation on rhetorical agency. First, by examining an understudied area of women's rhetorical history, I demonstrate the diversity of historical episodes, geographical locations, and rhetorical mediums in which individuals struggled to expand women's space, expression, and agency. The American frontier is worthy of sustained criticism because Westward expansion is too often understood as a male enterprise. The agency women exercised on the American frontier provides an example of, through stark contrast, the ways in which women creatively engaged changes in material structures and expanded women's space in fluid economic and living conditions outside Victorian social norms.

Second, this analysis articulates the ways in which rhetorical agency is structurally bound and rhetorically negotiated. The historical challenges embodied by the figure of Anna Greyfield highlights the salience of patriarchal practices and structures in the everyday lives of pioneer women. At the same time, Greyfield's struggle to break free from her oppressive husband, assert her independence, and reencounter marriage as an institution

of love and equality, demonstrates that exercising agency required direct engagement with material institutions, their symbolic practices, and the ubiquitous forces of patriarchy. These structures cannot be easily dismissed or entirely transcended. Exercising agency requires arduous work and involves direct challenges to patriarchal institutions and practices at both a material and symbolic level. As demonstrated by this essay's reading of Victor's text, exercising agency requires identifying the opportune moments in which material structures are open to restructuring and reinterpretation. At these moments, such as the historical episode in which Victor's wrote, the social order can be reformed and re-signified by symbolic and material practices that engage the deep structures of patriarchy and its attendant practices.

Moreover, rhetorical agency is enacted in creative and often misunderstood ways by individuals and communities that do not have taken-for-granted access to traditional mediums of public discourse. Criticism of such rhetoric provides interesting and unique insights into the artistic pathways by which such communities enact agency. In particular, Victor's critique of marriage engaged the institutions sustained by the symbolic dissolution of women's identity and the material exploitation of women's labor and property. Greyfield provided a pragmatic and intermediate model for some women who may have been unaware of the structural opportunities available for them to reclaim domestic spaces, enter public spaces, and rewrite the marriage contract. Although it is impossible to determine, the presence of arguments for women's empowerment, such as those presented in *The New Penelope*, perhaps explains why some women on the frontier were able to adapt to their circumstances in order to exercise new agency both within and outside of the domestic sphere and Cult of True Womanhood.

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Notes

1. Victor was born in 1826 in Rome, New York, the first of five daughters. She attended school until her family migrated to Wooster, Ohio, in 1839. Victor was of above-average intelligence and continued her self-education, studying history, popular culture, and of most importance classical Greco-Roman literature and philosophy. She also worked for Hubert Howe Bancroft's infamous "history factory," traveling across the Pacific Northwest and California collecting stories from West Coast notables. She is still popularly known as the "mother" of Oregon history (Bube, 1997; Martin, 1992).
2. Fredrick Jackson Turner. The significance of the frontier in American history: A paper presented at the meeting of the American Historical Association in Chicago July 12, 1893.
3. Campbell (1989) explains that Victorian ideas of womanhood dictated that women were biologically suited for domestic responsibilities. Women, being pure, pious, and submissive by nature, were the guardians of morality in the sanctuary of the home or the private sphere.
4. There are disagreements among scholars about to what degree the changes in social structures enabled women to exercise new types of agency. Julie Jeffrey (1998) and Glenda Riley (1992),

- among others, argue that women actually brought Victorian domesticity to the frontier, which in turn reproduced the confining gender structures of the East.
5. S. L. Johnson (2000) notes that many men did not necessarily feel emasculated by their new domestic tasks and often bragged to their wives about their new proficiency in cooking and other duties that contributed to the overall success of the household.
 6. Foss (2006) expresses an intermediate concept of agency drawn from work in sociology.
 7. Victor claimed to have met and befriended her character, Anna Greyfield. The story, with some literary embellishment, is a transcript of a friendly late-night conversational interview she conducted with Greyfield.
 8. Many feminist rhetorical scholars argue that historically, the rhetoric of women's liberation was not "traditionally" persuasive. Women's rights advocates sometimes employ a rhetorical style that is highly intimate, personal, and invitational (Foss and Griffin, 2005; Campbell 1973).

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