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The Divine Double Voice: How Female Christian Rhetors Found Rhetorical
Agency through the Voice of God

By

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Introduction

Religion, particularly Christianity, has served as a means both to empower women and prohibit women at various times throughout history, not only through their rights and roles in society, but also through their opportunities for rhetorical engagement. French rhetorician and theorist, Helene Cixous theorizes about women's ability to possess a duality within their written voice—femininity and masculinity. This duality, she claims, allows women the ability to subvert patriarchal constructs, which try to contain women within feminine spheres, and allows them to enter masculine spheres as well through the act of writing. However, in *The Laugh of the Medusa*, Cixous also urges women to deconstruct this duality of the voice by developing the feminine voice through what she dubs “writing the body.” Cixous argues, “Woman must write herself: must write about women and bring women to writing, from which they have been driven away as violently as from their bodies—for the same reasons, by the same law, with the same fatal goal. Woman must put herself into the text—as into the world and into history—by her own movement” (Cixous 1524). Although Cixous herself was not interested in religious contexts, Cixous's theories about the duality of the female voice are apparent in many of the female Christian rhetors throughout history. More specifically, many Christian women utilized their duality of their writing voice to construct a feminine voice and a divine masculine voice.

Prior to Cixous even giving a name to her concepts of adopting a double voice—both masculine and feminine—her concepts had been utilized by female rhetors for centuries. The Christian female rhetors reframed this double voice into a feminine voice and a divine masculine voice in order to subvert the patriarchy in a variety of ways. For earlier women in the Church, they most frequently utilized the duality of their voices in order to inhabit a position of the patriarchy without challenging it in an obvious way. By inhabiting every role or trait that men

did not, women were able to show their own strength and power without challenging the men's roles and traits within society. Due to her rhetorical situation, this is the method that Teresa de Avila most closely adopted in her piece *The Inner Castle*. Through her work, de Avila was able to reinhabit space as a woman within the church, which allowed her to define this space in her own terms. As time went on, women were able to step into their agency a bit more and begin to push boundaries within the assigned roles of the patriarchy. In order to do this, women utilized their divine double voice to demonstrate that they could speak the language of the patriarchy as well as the language of the "other." This then allowed women to embody the position of the other to reclaim it and gain agency to begin deconstructing the existing binaries within the patriarchy.

Due to her religious beliefs as a Methodist woman and their liberal beliefs of women's spirituality, Frances Willard was able to adopt these means within her rhetorical engagements throughout the church, thus enacting change for many women within the Women's Christian Temperance Union. Finally, the ultimate goal of Cixous's theories and her concept of a woman "writing [her] body" is to completely deconstruct the binary of the patriarchy versus the other—in this case, women—to allow women complete and absolute agency over themselves. While many Christian female rhetors did not completely dismantle the binary in this way, Maria W. Stewart certainly pushed the boundaries of what it meant to be an African American woman in the Church and in her oppressive society. Each of these women achieved different levels of success, however, none of their success would have been possible without their reformatting of Cixous's double voice into the divine double voice these women utilized in their rhetorical engagements.

This divine masculine voice was understood to be the voice of God, which often intervened and allowed them the authority to write and speak on subjects in their societies or within their belief systems without the impingement of the patriarchy. In this manner, some women chose to continue to work within the construct of the “double voice” by enhancing the masculine voice they possessed and developing it into the divine masculine voice of God. Teresa de Avila, for example, implemented this divine masculine voice through her own rhetorical moves in order to subvert patriarchal constructs and write a religious text in the 1500s. Other women, such as Frances Willard and Maria W. Stewart, began to utilize the divine masculine voice in order to deconstruct the patriarchal constructs of their Protestant communities, which prevented women from engaging with society rhetorically, and they used the divine masculine voice in order to “write themselves” into an otherwise patriarchal religious space. These three particular women had different approaches to the presence and use of the duality in their female voices. However, they each recognize this duality either by working under the guise of the divine masculine voice or by deconstructing the divine masculine voice in order to make room for their own female voices, which they applied to their rhetorical practices and approaches as a means to subvert their patriarchal societies, while still appeasing some of the more traditionally feminine roles women inhabited.

The duality of the female voice and the presence of divinity in their rhetoric allowed women to begin to find more and more ways to practice rhetoric in order to establish themselves in their societies, thus making their voices heard, while also maintaining their chasteness, which was upheld with the utmost importance in their societies and cultures. While women utilized this duality of their voice in many genres and settings, it is especially apparent in the rhetoric of divine revelations, the study of scriptures, and preaching God’s Word, which are especially

apparent in the work of female rhetors and Christian women, Teresa de Avila, Frances Willard, and Maria W. Stewart respectively. As it was considered unchaste for a woman to write and speak among men, women began to practice rhetoric in religious settings and through religious texts among one another in order to subvert patriarchal social structures in a way that was deemed chaste and devout. This allowed women to commune with each other, and it provided a safe space and subject for them to write and speak on, which was deemed appropriate by men. However, it was still oppressive to women in the sense that women were kept to a sphere that was deemed more “appropriate” for them by the patriarchal constructs of their society. For much of history, when women would find ways to compose, they were either forced to publish their work under a man’s name or anonymously, thus demonstrating the duality of the female voice Cixous theorizes. This allowed them to infiltrate the public spheres that were largely dominated by men, but it still oppressed them due to the fact that they were not acknowledged for their own success and ability as rhetoricians.

As early as the 1500s, women relied upon Christianity as a way to create a rhetorical space and practice for themselves within their social and cultural constructs. Catholic women and nuns specifically, such as Teresa de Avila in particular, often wrote about their experiences with receiving personal visions and messages from God. In these divine revelations, they would often discuss their reluctance to write, but their need to write, because it was God’s will that they do so. In this way, women were able to subvert the patriarchal oppression against women’s reading, writing, and speaking because they were responding to a higher power, which men also responded to.

With the rise of Protestantism, women were afforded more opportunities for reading and writing in spheres that were largely dominated by men, and about issues that had greater impact

on their society. The Protestant denomination of Christianity believed that all Christians, regardless of sex, should be able to read and study the Bible in order to further their own spirituality (Bizzell 987). Prior to Protestantism, the Bible was largely unread by most Christians, as many were not literate due to the fact that the men—rarely women—of higher stature within the church were the only people with access to the Bible. The accessibility of the Bible gave rise to literacy for much of society, and particularly the women in society.

Among the Protestant movement was the Religious Society of Friends, better known as Quakers, which were founded in the early 17th century and received much persecution for their ideology that God is present in every person. This ideology of the Quakers not only encouraged women to read and study the Bible, but it also encouraged women to possess equal stature in and among their church and their society. These Bible studies proved to be crucial in the patriarchal unraveling of society because women were able to find evidence within the Word of God for their equality. The Religious Society of Friends' belief in sexual equality was quite radical for its time, and it began to establish women as not only active participants in their communities, but also as leaders in their communities. The Methodist denomination of Christianity also upheld women to an equal standing with men both within the Church and within their society, which in turn allowed women more opportunities for speaking, writing, and leading congregations of men and women. Women began to take the knowledge they possessed from studying scripture, and they began applying it to social and civil rights movements within their worlds. Most notably, Frances Willard began to take her learnings and understandings of scripture and apply it to the Women's Temperance Movement where she utilized rhetorical practices to advocate for women and encouraged the development of other women's rhetorical practices as well. Over time, as women's causes shifted, so did their rhetorical practices. Women began to preach and engage

with oratorically, as is evident in Maria W. Stewart's rhetorical practices and engagements. Oration and preaching had previously been deemed unacceptable and unchaste for women, which for many women, including Maria W. Stewart, led to persecution and isolation from their societies.

Christianity has been a crucial tool in the development of feminism throughout history, particularly through female rhetors' ability to possess a duality of voice, which is both feminine and divine. In order to better understand the use and deconstruction of the duality of the female voice within the Christian sphere, I will be conducting a close rhetorical analysis with a feminist lens of select works by Teresa de Avila, Frances Willard, and Maria W. Stewart. By studying their rhetorical practices and approaches, it will become more evident how these devout Christian women were able to engage in religiously oriented rhetorical practices to subvert the religious patriarchal construct by utilizing and deconstructing the duality of the female voice thus making themselves subjects to their own divine masculine voice and the voice of God. These women prove not only that they are Christian women, but also that they are feminist rhetors through their ability to engage with rhetorical practices, which might have been deemed unusual by "traditional" understandings of rhetoric and composition. Their unusual rhetorical approaches and practices are exemplified through divine revelation, the study of scripture, and preaching, which were utilized in response to each woman's rhetorical situation. Through these rhetorical practices, they were each able to maintain their "appropriate" roles within their religion by utilizing the duality of their female voices in a manner which subverted the overarching patriarchal constructs of their society, thus illuminating the resilience of the female voice and the manner in which Christianity and feminism can conspire to empower women.

Literature Review

Women have been limited in their ability to use their voices in all aspects of culture and society—but, specifically, in regard to religion—which has successfully oppressed women and “othered” their voices for much of history within the field of rhetoric and composition. This othering is a result of the patriarchal beliefs that women are inferior to men both physically and intellectually. In addition to “othering” women’s voices, the “traditional” view of rhetoric and composition often does not acknowledge the rhetorical practices and genres engaged in by women thus oppressing women further and limiting the understanding of women’s rhetoric. For this reason, continued research and analysis of women’s rhetoric—specifically within religious spheres throughout history—is essential for better understanding and representing female rhetors and their accomplishments both as feminists and rhetoricians. Within the unusual nature of women’s rhetorical practices, the duality of the female voice persists, and more specifically, within the rhetorical practices of Christian women, the divine masculine voice is utilized and deconstructed for the subversion of patriarchal constructs within women’s religious spheres and their societies.

Women’s Rhetorical Practices

Feminist rhetoricians have been working to better incorporate and acknowledge unusual rhetorical practices and genres utilized by women throughout history as valued texts within the field of rhetoric and composition thus redefining the qualifications of practices and genres in the field of rhetoric. For much of history, women’s rhetoric has been overlooked because it has not been deemed “traditional rhetoric.” Jane Donawerth states, “women’s rhetorical theory is a story of moments, not movements” (“Controversial Rhetoric: The Rise and Fall of a Women’s Tradition, 1600-1900” 2). Additionally, Patricia Bizzell urges to “...look in places not previously

studied for work by women that would not have been traditionally considered as rhetoric, and to frame arguments redefining the whole notion of rhetoric in order to include this new work by women” (“Opportunities for Feminist Research in the History of Rhetoric” 52). For much of history, women were not afforded the opportunities for engaging in rhetorical practices that men were, which resulted in women’s creative approach to rhetorical practices. However, these creative approaches to rhetoric have been largely overlooked due to the lack of regard from a more “traditional” understanding of rhetorical practices. Women’s voices have been perpetually “othered” throughout history, not because they were not present, but because they were ignored or deemed unworthy of acknowledgement both due to their genders and their untraditional rhetorical practices and genres.

In an acknowledgement of the way in which women’s rhetoric has been overlooked throughout history, Andrea Lunsford argues in her work *Reclaiming Rhetorica: Women in The Rhetorical Tradition*, that “the realm of rhetoric has been almost exclusively male not because women were not practicing rhetoric—but because the tradition has never recognized the forms, strategies, and goals used by many women as ‘rhetorical’” (6). Lunsford’s argument draws attention to the ongoing issue that women have always engaged in rhetorical practices because of the innate human need to communicate. However, due to the predominant patriarchal constructs within their societies, their rhetorical genres of choice differed from those of the leading men of rhetorical theory and practice, and these differences inevitably led to their rhetorical practices being overlooked or ignored. Women typically used more domestic and conversational genres, rather than the classical and oratorical genres that were commonly utilized by male rhetoricians as is emphasized by leading rhetoricians in the field of feminist rhetoric such as Lunsford among others. These rhetoricians have argued, while the rhetorical moves of women might not be

considered “traditional,” they are very creative and intelligently crafted in order to both fulfill the expectations of their roles as women within a male dominated society and subvert the patriarchal constructs within their societies in order to affect change in their lives and the lives of those around them.

With the knowledge that women engaged in rhetoric through different means and genres than men, the analysis of these rhetorical practices and the development of a feminist rhetorical theory is ongoing within the field of feminist rhetoric. In *Rethinking Ethos: A Feminist Ecological Approach to Rhetoric*, Kathleen J. Ryan, Nancy Myers, and Rebecca Jones argue that women “adopt different codes when engaging rhetorically—interrupt, advocate, and relate” (3). With these three codes, Ryan, Myers, and Jones establish a feminist rhetorical theory, which includes the diverse rhetorical traditions women utilized, while also establishing women as “marginalized rhetors” who are a part of the “counterpublic” rather than the “dominant public” (3-4). It is crucial to recognize female rhetors’ rhetorical moves as “counter” or subversive in order to gain a greater understanding of the nature of their rhetorical practices and the accomplishments of their rhetorical moves. Ryan, Myers, and Jones establish a three-pronged reasoning for their theories surrounding women’s rhetorical practices:

- (1) women have traditionally operated outside normative publics; (2) women have often recognized, due to their marginalized cultural positions, connections, bridges, and borders between culture and nature, different races and groups, and even genders; and (3) women have historically and actively appropriated, adapted, and generated new ethos to speak to and within patriarchal publics (4).

Their reasoning and the three codes they developed throughout their theory have been evident throughout women’s rhetorical practices and are especially relevant in regard to Christian genres

and motivations, which women often utilized in order to gain access and to establish agency within the field of rhetoric. Ryan, Myers, and Jones's feminist theory of the codes—interrupt, advocate, and relate—will prove to be illuminating as rhetorical genres and texts by several Christian feminists, such as Teresa de Avila, Frances Willard, and Maria W. Stewart, and how they have utilized these codes within the duality of their female voices are analyzed further. Due to women's ability to develop creative rhetorical practices and genres, women were able to find means to engage with their societies and develop their sense of agency within their public and patriarchal spheres, such as their churches and communities, but also within the more traditionally regarded field of rhetoric.

Women's Agency

Women's ability to find agency within patriarchal constructs proves to be a crucial aspect of feminist rhetoric and the argument. Authors, Ann Brady, Patricia J. Sotirin and Elizabeth A. Flynn contribute to this argument in their article, "Feminist Rhetorical Resilience," wherein they define women's rhetorical practices by women's capacity for resilience, which proves to be relevant in regard to women's agency. They utilize "resilience" as a metaphor to "place greater emphasis on agency, change, and hope in the daily lives of individuals or groups of individuals" (1). However, for many female rhetors operating under patriarchal constructs, this resilient agency was found through God and their understanding of their "place" within society as a "daughter of God." Women utilized this understanding of their place within the greater kingdom of God in order to rise above their lower stature within their patriarchal societies. Brady, Sotirin, and Flynn also comment on women's ability to enact this resilience within their daily lives, and illustrate the importance of also considering how women conducted rhetorical practices within their daily lives. For women, it was essential that they were able to uphold social constructs

about what was expected of their gender--specifically, chasteness--while also attempting to engage in rhetoric, which is why much of the rhetorical practices and genres are related to activities women did in their daily lives—letter writing, Bible studies, conversations, etc. These rhetorical practices, among others, were deemed socially acceptable for women, because they preserved the women’s image of devoutness and chasteness. For this reason, it was commonly seen for women to utilize rhetorical practices such as these, which also accounts for the drastic differences between women’s rhetorical practices and those of their male counterparts.

For contemporary audiences, there is a pervasive ideology that Christianity and feminism are incompatible, specifically in regard to women’s agency, and that Christianity hinders feminists from fully realizing and achieving their goals, especially in regard to reproductive rights in our current political climate. However, Jane Donawerth argues that it is “through biblical conversations that discussion of Women’s Rights first appears” (14-15). Not only did biblical interpretations provide women with the agency to engage in rhetorical practices within their patriarchal societies, but the concept of the voice of God has often been an impetus for female rhetors throughout history. God, whether it be through the Bible or through divine revelations spoken by the voice of God, has allowed women to utilize a “double voice” within their own rhetorical practices, thus providing women with the ethos and the agency they needed in order to engage in rhetoric, which is why many rhetorical practices utilized by women were Christian in nature.

Angie Pears contributes to the argument that feminism and Christianity are compatible when utilized in feminist rhetorical practices, and she argues that the question is no longer if they are compatible, but how: “Critical evaluation now needs to move on from the seemingly compelling question of the compatibility of Christianity and feminisms to identify and assess the

types and success of particular strategies that have been developed by different Christian theologians to enable the creative encountering of feminisms and Christianity” (30). Pears argues for the use of three methods or strategies “by which feminist Christian encounters can be seen to be facilitated in contemporary feminist informed Christian theologies: those of (1) radical reinterpretation; (2) recovery and reconstruction of authentic or original Christianity; and (3) radical contextual queering of Christianity” (31). Rather than fixating on the question of whether or not Christianity and feminism can facilitate each other’s goals and causes, Pears suggests that due to the presence of Christianity and feminism coexisting in the rhetorical practices of women, the question now is how to analyze these rhetorical texts and practices in a way that illuminates the interrelatedness of the two ideologies for women’s advancement in society. Pears’ three methods illuminate how the duality of the feminine voice is present in rhetorical genres practiced by women through the presence of the divine masculine voice, the voice of God.

By understanding the rhetorical situation of the patriarchal Christian church, the development of women’s rhetorical practices and the interrelatedness of Christianity and feminism are revealed within these women’s endeavors. The belief that women are subordinate to men began with the Misogynist Tradition in 500 B.C.E., and this belief began within the Christian Tradition the moment Eve ate the fruit from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. Regardless of religion, women have been subject to oppressive standards and traditions, which were put into practice and upheld within their societies and cultures. As time has gone on, women have attempted to subvert these traditions through various means. Despite the inbred belief of women’s inferiority due to Eve’s original sin, one of the means of women’s subversions to the patriarchy, which proved to be most effective, was through their Christian faith.

Christianity served as a tool for many women to become more educated, and it also provided a space for women to engage with rhetorical practices and genres.

Teresa de Avila

Many women, specifically those within the Catholic faith, were able to distinguish themselves within their societies through the convent. Convents gave women more opportunities for a formal education, while also giving them some stature within their male dominated societies. Due to their stature in society and their sanctity as nuns, some women were able to utilize God's voice and divine revelation in order to engage in rhetorical practices. Teresa de Avila was one such nun, who utilized her divine revelations from God as a tactic of creating a safe space for herself to engage in rhetorical practices by portraying herself as a vessel for God's messages. Teresa de Avila was an Italian, Catholic nun, and she wrote *Interior Castle* in 1577, which recounts her visions she received from God, wherein He showed her how to achieve the sublime or spiritual perfection. Avila's *Interior Castle* guides her readers, which she refers to as her "brothers and sisters in Christ" through the steps a Christian must take in order to achieve this level of spiritual perfection (Avila 49). Throughout her writing, she consistently degrades herself while also saying that God chose to speak through her in a vision, which allowed her to remain humble as a woman within the Church, while also giving merit to the argument she makes through a rhetorical appeal to ethos.

Teresa de Avila's use of God's voice is emblematic of the way in which women practice a divine "double voice" within their rhetorical practices in order to share their knowledge about spirituality in a way that is safe and deemed acceptable by their patriarchal constructs. In "Rhetoric, Paradox, and the Movement for Women's Ordination in the Roman Catholic Church" Carol J. Jablonksi argues:

Traditionally, women have been constrained by religiously sanctioned social roles that have made it difficult for them to speak in public or to address public issues in private. When they have spoken ‘out of turn,’ women have been vilified, ostracized, or condemned for their actions. Yet women have also been regarded as the moral guardians of society. The ‘ideology of true womanhood’ that grew out of medieval Christianity and the cult of courtly love placed women on a pedestal with four quintessentially ‘feminine’ virtues: piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity (164).

When viewing Teresa de Avila and her rhetorical practices, through Jablonski’s ideology, it becomes apparent that Teresa de Avila found that she was able to reconcile the “ideology of true womanhood” with her desire to engage in rhetorical practices by citing the voice of God as her authority through divine revelation. Divine revelation informs Teresa de Avila’s *Interior Castle* and allowed de Avila to maintain her feminine virtues in a manner which glorified God through her rhetorical maneuvers and subverted the patriarchal constructs of her time.

Frances Willard

Historically, great shifts and changes occurred within the Christian faith, which inherently affected rhetorical practices of its followers. This became especially apparent as Protestant ideologies began to become more prevalent throughout society. Protestantism played a crucial role in the increase in literacy, both in society as a whole and also more specifically in women. Previously, the Catholic Churches largely kept Christian followers from being able to access biblical texts. The majority of Christians, for many decades, did not have access to biblical texts, because men with a higher status within the Churches—priests, bishops, etc.—were the only people with access to biblical texts. This allowed them to control their parishioners, because what they preached was considered to be the word of God just as much as

the Bible itself. Protestantism, however, argued that each Christian—regardless of status, sex, or class—should have access to the Bible and should be able to read it for the furtherment of their own spirituality. For this reason, women’s literacy finally became important to society, and as a result, there was a significant influx of literate women, and these literate women were able to implement educational practices for young girls, through the form of bible studies and church schools, thus encouraging more female literacy.

For many women, Protestantism not only increased women’s literacy, but it also encouraged the belief of sexual equality within the Church and in society. Most notably, within the Methodist and Society of Friends dominations, women began to become more actively involved in their churches and their societies because of their access to the Bible and their more progressive understanding of sexual equality. Within their Church communities, many women engaged in bible studies and the study of scripture. This rhetorical practice not only allowed them to strengthen their own beliefs and opinions on the equality of the sexes, but it also gave a safe space for women to engage in rhetorical practices with one another. Through the study of scripture, many women found agency through the Word of God and felt called by God to affect change within their societies—specifically through the Women’s Temperance Movement. By engaging in the rhetorical practice of studying scripture, many women, most notably Frances Willard, equipped themselves with the tools and knowledge they needed in order to assert their divine rights as children of God, and to also speak out about issues within the world around them. This act of Bible study led women to affect change within their own lives and the lives of their families through the Women’s Temperance Movement.

Jane Donawerth cites the significance of Bible study for the advancement of feminist rhetoric when she states, “Although the women before the 19th century seem unaware of previous

defenses, more defenses center on the same three biblical arguments: they cite scriptures showing men and women as equal in God's eyes; they list biblical women who were preachers, prophets, and ministers; and they refute literalist readings of Paul by placing his commands for women to be silent in church in a specific historical context and identifying these commands as inconsistent with his praise of women as 'laborers in the Gospel' elsewhere" (14). By rhetorically engaging with the Bible, women were able to defend themselves within the church and advocate for more leadership positions within their churches and their society.

The initial rhetorical practice of studying scripture allowed women the opportunity for continued growth and development within their rhetorical practices. It is through Bible study that women eventually were able to fight for their place as advocates and abolitionists through the act of public speaking. Willard's feminist rhetoric, especially within the Women's Temperance Movement, relied upon her ability to rhetorically engage with Biblical scripture. In "Frances Willard and the Feminism of Fear," Suzanne M. Marilley argues, "Willard activated women's political participation by coupling temperance goals to women's suffrage and authorizing both goals with innovative interpretations of biblical mandates that called women to exercise public roles as moral authorities" (1). Willard utilized the divine double voice, which she found through her study of scripture, in order to advocate for the need for women to engage in the political and societal concerns of their churches and communities. Similarly, Maria W. Stewart utilized the divine double voice through the rhetorical practice of preaching for the abolitionist movement.

Maria W. Stewart

With the nineteenth century, came another shift in women's rhetoric and women's fights for their rights. During this time, many women began to not only argue for their own rights, and for Temperance, but also for the rights of African Americans. Women, such as Maria W.

Stewart, became essential for both the feminist and abolitionist movements within society. In addition to arguing for the rights of both African Americans and women, many female rhetoricians at this time began to also become more outspoken in spheres deemed less appropriate for themselves. At the time, it was considered unwomanly and unchaste for a woman to write, but it was considered even more offensive for a woman to speak to an audience, specifically a mixed gender audience, about her own beliefs and opinions. Despite the unpopularity of this act, many women, such as Maria W. Stewart, felt it was their God given right to speak to audiences about their causes regardless of the audience's gender.

Maria W. Stewart faced adversity as a public speaker about Women's Rights and the abolitionist movement, because she was not only a woman, but she was also African American, which deemed her as unsuitable for public speaking within several social spheres. However, in the face of this adversity, Stewart affected change not only for the abolitionist movement, but also for feminist rhetoric as she utilized both the voice of God and studying scripture in her rhetorical practice of preaching. Lena Ampadu argues that Stewart's rhetorical choice to give speeches that resemble sermons not only adds to the Black sermonic tradition, but also makes a place for her within womanist theory and within "a rhetorical tradition historically dominated by men" (38). Ampadu continues, "As an outspoken advocate for women, she produced a sustained body of political and religious rhetoric directed specifically at liberating women, although her discourse was not always aimed exclusively at women" (38). Stewart's act of public speaking not only establishes her historically as an advocate for the abolitionist movement, but it also entrenches her within the rhetorical tradition of Christian women that utilized their rhetorical and religious practices for the betterment of themselves and others. While many women engaged rhetorically within the construct of the duality of the feminine double voice, Stewart begins to

deconstruct this duality in a manner which asserts her feminine voice rather than using the guide of a divine masculine voice. Given their varied rhetorical situations, the ways in which women engaged by means of their feminine double voices also varied, but Stewart begins to push the limits of the duality of the female voice as she asserts her feminine voice through preaching.

Throughout history, women have been able to find ways to subvert the patriarchy and create a space in which they could practice rhetoric and composition, largely through their Christian faith. It is through their Christian faith that women have found their agency, whether it be through God's ordination of divine revelation or woman's God-given rights as a Child of God, and it is through the duality of their female voices that they have been able to enact this agency by means of rhetorical practices. To better analyze and exemplify the ways in which Christianity and feminist rhetoric are interrelated, the creative rhetorical practices by which Christian women engaged will be studied--divine revelations, Bible study or exegesis, and preaching. These rhetorical genres and practices might not be considered "traditional" within the field of rhetoric but are legitimate rhetorical practices nonetheless. Engaging with feminist rhetorical texts using feminist methodology and considering the role of Christianity is essential in better understanding how Teresa de Avila, Frances Willard, and Maria W. Stewart found the agency to subvert their patriarchal societies by implementing their female double voice and incorporating the presence of the divine masculine voice within their creative rhetorical practices and genres. Their use and application of the duality of the female voice demonstrates the ways in which women both worked within the construct of the divine masculine voices, and also began to assert their feminine voices in an attempt to deconstruct the necessity for a divine masculine voice and celebrate the feminine voice.

Methodology

In an attempt to better understand the duality of the woman's voice and how it has been utilized by Christian women specifically, I will be conducting a close textual analysis of three texts by three women that exemplify the use of and evolution of the female voice. These texts include: Teresa de Avila's *Interior Castle*, Frances Willard's *Woman in the Pulpit*, and Maria W. Stewart's *Lecture Delivered at the Franklin Hall*. When analyzing these texts, I will identify how they have exemplified Ryan, Myers, and Jones' three codes "women adopt when engaging rhetorically--interrupt, advocate, and relate" ("Rethinking Ethos: A Feminist Ecological Approach to Rhetoric" 3). Additionally, I will closely analyze each text by questioning when and how each rhetor utilized the duality of her female voice, and whether her use of her "double voice" is by means of working within the construct or whether it is pushing the boundaries of the construct thus deconstructing the necessity for the masculine divine voice. Additionally, I will consider each rhetorical practice and genre utilized by each rhetor and question how this genre might have subverted the patriarchal construct through a practice deemed "creative" within the more "traditional" sense of rhetoric, while also being a rhetorical practice deemed more "appropriate" for a woman given their rhetorical situations.

I will be utilizing a feminist approach in my research, wherein I approach the research in a manner that lends my own beliefs and opinions to the research at hand. Additionally, I will be incorporating research from leaders of feminist rhetoric within the field of rhetoric, which will inform my understanding of the feminist theories and methodologies, as well as the chosen rhetorical practices and genres of the female rhetors I will be researching. Through this research, a greater understanding of feminist rhetoric and all of the practices and genres that encompasses

will develop, as well as the interrelatedness of the feminist and Christian causes in order to subvert patriarchal constructs throughout history will emerge.

Agency through Divine Revelation: Teresa de Avila

“For when a person is enraptured, you can be sure that God is taking her entire soul to Himself, and that, as she is His own property and has now become His bride, He is showing her some little part of the kingdom which she has gained by becoming so.” -Teresa de Avila, *Interior Castle* (page 147)

Historically, women have been limited in their ability to use their voices in all aspects of their society and culture, especially in the religious sphere, due to the patriarchal constructs placed upon them, which has successfully oppressed women and “othered” their voices for much of history. However, this muting of rhetorical engagement by women was, and still is to this day, often challenged by women in a specific context, which was also one of the most patriarchally dominated—religion. The othering of women’s voices is a result of the misogynistic beliefs that women are inferior to men both physically and intellectually. The belief that women are subordinate to men has been prevalent throughout history for ages. Within the Christian Tradition, this belief began at the moment Eve ate the fruit from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. Outside of religion, women have been subject to oppressive standards and traditions, which were put into practice and upheld within their societies and cultures. As time has gone on, women have attempted to subvert these traditions through various means. Despite the inbred belief of women’s inferiority due to Eve’s original sin, one of the means of women’s subversions to the patriarchy, which proved to be most effective, was through their Christian faith. Although misogynistic beliefs within Christianity attempted to place women in a subordinate role, women still succeeded in finding ways to subvert these societal expectations through their Christian religion and religious practices. Christianity served as a tool for many women to become more educated, and it also provided a space and a genre for many women to read, write, and speak.

Unlike Teresa de Avila, most of her female contemporaries were not afforded the opportunity of an education due to the belief that women were inferior and did not need an education, which also kept the patriarchal constructs of society securely intact. Teresa de Avila, however, did receive an education, which allowed her the opportunity to read and write, as well as learning history and biblical scripture. For quite some time, convents were one of the only spaces which allowed women to be educated, and because Teresa de Avila was an Italian Catholic nun, she received an education and was literate, which was unusual for women at the time. It is possible that due to the vow of celibacy and the understanding that nuns are the “Brides of Christ,” the education of nuns was less threatening to the patriarchy, which is why women of this vocation were allowed to receive education, while so many others were not. However, despite their chastity, nuns, such as Teresa de Avila, Laura Cereta, and Arcangela Tarabotti, still found ways to utilize their education and their voices in order to engage with their society rhetorically. For Teresa de Avila, her subversive rhetorical practices took the form of divine revelation.

In her book, *Interior Castle* (1577), Teresa de Avila successfully utilized her religion and the voice of God rhetorically in order to make her own thoughts and opinions known, which is a rhetorical maneuver seen in much of women’s rhetoric. De Avila is able to invoke both a feminine and a divine masculine voice as she recounts visions she received from God in her book. By referring to her visions as messages from God, she is inherently invoking a divine masculine voice in order to give her feminine voice ethos within her patriarchal society thus, utilizing her “double voice.” The ideology of the duality within the female voice is argued by French rhetorician and theorist, Helene Cixous. She claims that women possess a “double voice” wherein they can invoke both a feminine voice and a masculine voice. For Teresa de Avila,

among other Christian women, this is taken a step further through the invocation of not only a masculine voice, but a divine masculine voice, meaning the voice of God.

In her book and spiritual guide, *Interior Castle*, de Avila writes about visions she has received from God, wherein He showed her how to achieve the sublime or spiritual perfection through a series of steps and spiritual practices. De Avila refers to the “Interior Castle” as a metaphor for the soul, which is comprised of many “mansions,” which surround the innermost “Interior Castle.” Upon reaching the “Interior Castle,” de Avila believes people will experience the sublime based upon her own personal experiences and her visions from God. In her guide, she instructs her readers how to reach this “Interior Castle,” whether it be through prayer or facing internal and external struggles. However, she presents all of her instructions to her readers as visions from God, Himself.

Throughout her writing, she puts herself in conversation with God through the divine revelations and visions she receives from Him, which is a rhetorical maneuver that is seen frequently in women’s rhetoric, specifically within religious spheres as is apparent in not only Teresa de Avila’s work, but in other nuns’ writings as well (Robin, 13). In order for women to engage rhetorically, they often relied on rhetorical practices such as conversation to make rhetorical movements and carry out arguments in a manner that was deemed “appropriate” for them as women. Feminist rhetorician, Andrea Lunsford, recognizes the frequent use of conversation in women’s rhetoric as a “dangerous move” which interrupts the traditional understanding of rhetoric:

In doing so, however, they do not attempt to redefine a “new” rhetoric but rather to interrupt the seamless narrative usually told about the rhetorical tradition and to open up possibilities for multiple rhetorics, rhetorics that would not name and valorize one

traditional, competitive, agnostic, and linear mode of rhetorical discourse but would rather incorporate other, often dangerous moves: breaking the silence; naming in personal terms; employing dialogics; recognizing and using the power of conversation; moving centripetally towards connections; and valuing--indeed insisting upon--collaboration (*Reclaiming Rhetorica*, 6).

In implementing a conversational style within her rhetorical engagements, Teresa de Avila firmly places herself among female rhetors by utilizing a “dangerous move” frequently present in feminist rhetoric, while also presenting a new womanly ethos by presenting herself as being in conversation with God as His submissive messenger.

De Avila utilizes the duality of her voice, demonstrated through her conversational style, in order to establish her womanly ethos, which allows her to engage rhetorically with an audience in a manner that is deemed appropriate and nonthreatening to her society. The following passage exemplifies not only her conversational style, but also her use of the divine masculine voice through God’s will: “I do not mean by this that He speaks to us and calls us in the precise way which I shall describe later; His appeals come through the conversations of good people, or from sermons, or through the reading of good books; and there are many other ways, of which you have heard, in which God calls us” (*Inner Castle* 24). Feminist theorists and rhetoricians Kathleen J. Ryan, Nancy Myers, and Rebecca Jones argue that female rhetors often renegotiate their ethos in new ways while working within and subverting patriarchal constructs. Ryan et al, state, “Women have historically and actively appropriated, adapted, and generated new ethos to speak to and within patriarchal publics” (*Rethinking Ethos* 4). Teresa de Avila adapts and generates a new womanly ethos, which exemplifies her double voicedness, for herself within her writing in a number of ways. By constantly referencing the visions that she has

received from God rather than making her own assertions about spirituality, de Avila is resigning her religious ethos, and is instead placing emphasis on the words of her masculine God and allowing God to speak through her as a messenger, which contributes to her newly negotiated womanly ethos. This resignation allows her to maintain her chastity as not only a woman, but a nun, while also passing her own ideologies about religion and spirituality on to the masses.

Additionally, she casts herself as an unwilling writer, who has been called by God to share the message that He has bestowed upon her. By casting herself as God's reluctant messenger, de Avila keeps her womanly ethos intact and makes her double voice, namely her divine masculine voice, all the more believable as her feminine voice appears to be humbled and somewhat embarrassed by God's choice of messenger. De Avila's claims of her supposed embarrassment and ineptitude are apparent throughout *Interior Castle* thus disparaging herself and elevating God in the process, "And although the Lord has thrown some light upon many matters of which I have written, I do not think I have understood some of them, especially the most difficult, as well as I do now. The trouble, as I have said, is that, before I can get to them, I shall have to explain many things that are well known--it is bound to be so when a person is as stupid as I" (de Avila 12-13). The humility that de Avila demonstrates in her own feminine voice pacifies the patriarchy, while also surreptitiously subverting the patriarchy through her divine masculine voice by allowing her to share her message with her audience by means of her newly found rhetorical agency.

Teresa De Avila's utilization of and invocation of her rhetorical audience of her Christian sisters and fellow nuns is evidence of her awareness of her rhetorical agency and her understanding of how to enact it within her society's contexts. By appealing to this specific rhetorical audience, she is able to refer to her audience in a familial way, which creates bonds

between her and her audience, and contributes to her appearance as a demure and unassuming nun. De Avila's humble feminine voice is further demonstrated by the way she consistently refers to her readers as her sisters and daughters, "Even with these desires that God gives us to help others, sisters, we may make many mistakes, and thus it is better to attempt to do what our Rule tells us--to try to live ever in silence and in hope, and the Lord will take care of his own." (de Avila 49). In this passage, her rhetorical choice contributes to the womanly ethos she is attempting to portray as she is specifically encouraging other women to be compliant with God, who is inherently a patriarchal figure, and by speaking specifically to a female audience, she is not engaging rhetorically with a contextually inappropriate male audience. Additionally, the rhetorical choice to refer to her readers in a familial way places herself and all of her readers in equality as the children of God, while also invoking Jesus' practice of referring to God in a familial way, which would have been familiar to her audience. This rhetorical choice to refer to her audience as equals due to a shared parentage furthers her rhetorical message of God's visions and subverts the patriarchal constructs of her society in an unassuming way, while also subverting Jesus' rhetorical practices for her own message.

De Avila's attempts at equality within the Church do not stop with the way she addresses her audience, rather her desire for equality can be seen throughout her message in *Interior Castle*. Throughout her spiritual guide, she attempts to share with women a guide on achieving perfect spirituality, giving women a Christian and theological education they had likely not received elsewhere. *Interior Castle* demonstrates that de Avila believed that not only men, but also women were capable of achieving this sort of spirituality. In this way, she makes herself an example of the level of spirituality women are able to attain through the help and guidance of God. In this manner, she presents a way for women and men to find equality through their shared

divine parentage and their shared ability to achieve spirituality through her spiritual guide. However, this shared equality as “brother and sisters in Christ” is only possible because of an inferiority that both men and women share. Rather than presenting herself as inferior to men, she presents herself as an equal to men due to a shared inferiority to God. This shared inferiority not only reminds men of their place within the world and God’s kingdom, but it also emphasizes God’s superiority, which was a rhetorical tactic utilized by de Avila frequently throughout *Interior Castle*. De Avila heightens God’s superiority throughout her writing, which allows her to continue to present herself as a servant of God rather than a spiritual rhetor. By speaking as a servant of God, she is allowed to safely compose a spiritual guide as a woman within the contexts of her society.

One manner in which de Avila heightens God’s superiority in her writing is by consistently degrading herself and placing herself in a submissive role within her own text. While degrading herself, she is also presenting herself as a servant of God, whom God has chosen to speak through in a vision. De Avila’s presentation of God as a masculine figure is prevalent in each of the ways in which she refers to God. At times, she presents God as God the Father within the Divine Trinity placing herself in the diminutive role of “daughter,” while at other times, she refers to God the Holy Spirit and herself as a vessel for its message, and finally she even refers to herself as the “Bride” or “Spouse” of the Lord, which also frames her as a submissive subject of God.

In addition to the inferior role she possesses in her relationship with God, she also refers to herself in lesser terms: “Whenever I think of myself I feel like a bird with a broken wing and I can say nothing of any value” (de Avila 38). She continues to diminish herself and her influence as a rhetor as she refers to her “natural weaknesses” as a woman and claims that she possesses a

“weak imagination” and “little power” (37, 38, and 43). By making these claims, she is ridding the audience of any suspicions they might have of her as a woman who is intentionally subverting patriarchal constructs and offering advice to her superiors—males—on religion. Instead, she establishes her newly negotiated womanly ethos, which allows her to present herself as weak and inferior, while also sharing her message about how she has successfully attained a superior spirituality. Additionally, she presents all of her claims as divine revelations from God, thus giving her spiritual guide ethos and merit within her society’s constructs as they are presented as the words of God and not the words of a lowly woman. Without de Avila’s continued insistence at her lack of abilities due to her womanhood, she could have been perceived as a threat to men both inside and outside of the Church as she makes claims about her own spiritual superiority and attainment of spiritual perfection.

Teresa de Avila’s adapted ethos within her book demonstrates the claims feminist rhetorician, Carol J. Jablonski makes about the paradox that is women’s rhetoric. Jablonski argues:

Traditionally, women have been constrained by religiously sanctioned social roles that have made it difficult for them to speak in public or to address public issues in private. When they have spoken “out of turn,” women have been vilified, ostracized, or condemned for their actions. Yet women have also been regarded as the moral guardians of society. The ‘ideology of true womanhood’ that grew out of medieval Christianity and the cult of courtly love placed women in a pedestal with four quintessentially ‘feminine’ virtues: piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity (164).

De Avila adapts the “ideology of true womanhood” into her ethos and agency as a rhetor in order to present herself as a chaste and devout woman, within her “religiously sanctioned social role”

as a nun. In her writing, she consistently contributes to this “ideology of true womanhood” with the manner in which she presents herself throughout *Interior Castle*, which is apparent in her passage: “For when a person is enraptured, you can be sure that God is taking her entire soul to Himself, and that, as she is His own property and has now become His bride, He is showing her some little part of the kingdom which she has gained by becoming so” (*Inner Castle* 147). In this passage, she defines and defends the divine revelations she has received from God, and she defines her place as the receiver of the revelation and uses words to qualify herself, which inherently connect to her womanhood as it is understood within the patriarchal construct. Her claim that “God is taking her entire soul to Himself” contributes to her claims as being a mere servant of God. This phrase grants God ownership of not only her body, but also of her soul, which places the blame for her receiving these divine visions, rather than a more “qualified” man, on God rather than herself. When she was “enraptured,” she clearly did not possess volition or control over herself; instead God, the omniscient Christian God, possessed control over her, which leads the reader to not place blame on de Avila, while also encouraging readers to not cast doubt on God’s choices.

This “ideology of true womanhood” is furthered when de Avila makes the claim, “she is His own property and has now become His bride” (*Interior Castle* 147). By utilizing words such as “property” and “bride” and placing them under possession of a divine male pronoun, she is masking her own power and voice with the patriarchal constructs that have been chosen for her within her society. Masking her own voice and validity in this way presents her in a nonthreatening manner to an audience—who would have likely taken her choice to not only engage with her society rhetorically, but to do so by means of a spiritual guide—as a threat to the patriarchy. However, while masking her voice and power through traditionally submissive

female roles such as “His bride” and “His property,” she also makes a strong claim for power in the very same sentence. She makes the claim that God has chosen to “[show] her some little part of the kingdom which she has gained by becoming so,” thus placing herself above others and within the kingdom of God, which is rightfully hers due to God saying it is so (de Avila 147). Had de Avila not prefaced this claim by presenting herself as a “bride” and “property” of God, she might have been vilified as many women were for engaging rhetorically and for making claims about God’s divine choices.

However, de Avila wisely made rhetorical choices, which not only presented her in a nonthreatening way, but also appeared to uphold the same values of the patriarchal constructs and expectations of her society. Jablonski refers to this as a “managerial style of rhetoric,” meaning de Avila “embraced the values of the system, accepts that the order has a code of control which must not be destroyed, while at the same time striving to gain acceptance of that which will perfect the system” (164). This managerial style of rhetoric is apparent in the way in which de Avila presents herself and designs her own womanly ethos, as an inferior servant of God, while also presenting her own claims about how she attained spiritual perfection and how she will guide her readers to do the same. By utilizing her divine masculine voice as an authority for all of the knowledge she wishes to share and by casting herself as weak and powerless “property,” she successfully embraces the values of the patriarchal system at work in her society and culture. While she recognizes that this “code of control...must not be destroyed” in order for her to remain safe within her patriarchal society, she also attempts to “perfect the system” by lending her feminine double voice to a spiritual guide, which surreptitiously promotes equality and spiritual perfection (164).

The problem, however, with a “managerial style of rhetoric” is that it contributes to the paradox of women’s rhetoric, rendering the female rhetors’ voice contradictory in the face of their own argument. Jablonski asserts, “In adopting the managerial style, however, women reinforced the structures of thought and language that have traditionally made their position as reformers so difficult” (164). By de Avila utilizing the patriarchal constructs of her society through terminology such as “bride” and “property,” she is contributing to the belief system that women’s value is derived from their traditionally submissive female roles thus rendering her voice as a woman powerless. Rather than being a woman who has attained spiritual perfection and developed a powerful voice due to her accomplishments, she is only deemed worthy because a male figure deems her as such—in this case, God. She utilizes her female double voice, in order to present herself as a weak and inferior woman in possession of a feminine voice, while also conjuring a divine masculine voice in order to give validity to the claims she makes in regard to spiritual perfection, while also providing herself the protection that God’s divine revelation affords. However, it is important to note that her rhetorical choice of utilizing the managerial style of rhetoric was still a bold act of subversion on de Avila’s part within the context of her time, while in our time, it might be considered lacking in agency and authority.

Throughout women’s rhetoric feminist rhetoricians Kathleen J. Ryan, Nancy Myers, and Rebecca Jones have identified ways in which women have adopted different codes while engaging rhetorically. They have identified these codes as “interrupt, advocate, and relate” (*Rethinking Ethos* 3). Of these three codes, Teresa de Avila most closely embodies the code “relate.” Ryan et al, define the use of the code “relation-relating” as “draw[ing] attention to the ways in which women’s ethe are socially constructed; rhetors construct their identities and texts in relation to others and their environments. Subjectivity is better characterized as

intersubjectivity, and relation-relating invokes a range of relationships: collaboration, connection, coalitions or alliances” (195). As de Avila utilizes a “managerial style of rhetoric,” she similarly utilizes relation-relating in order to emphasize her role within her patriarchal society as a woman. This emphasis allows her to construct her womanly ethos, thus casting herself as a powerless weak-willed woman, while casting God in the dominant male role, which she continues to portray with the use of her double voice, featuring both a weak, feminine voice and a divine masculine voice.

Due to the time period and the social context in which de Avila lived, it is likely that she found more success through this managerial style of rhetoric and her attempts at relation-relating than she would have if she had adopted another more dominant code such as interrupter or advocate. By relating to her social and cultural contexts and their inherent misogyny, she was able to pass her message on to more people than if she had flagrantly disregarded the patriarchy in more overt and aggressive ways. Additionally, her attempts at relation-relating, “invoke a range of relationships” as Ryan et al suggest.

Through the use of the relation-relating code, she forges relationships that contribute both to her womanly ethos and to the rhetorical message and cause she is pursuing. Her choice to use divine revelations and visions of God creates a collaborative dynamic between de Avila and God. De Avila presents herself as an obedient servant—which contributes to her womanly ethos—who has been chosen by God as a collaborator to present and share His message with His followers through her. Additionally, she creates connections between herself and her reader, by relation-relating to each other through their shared divine parentage, “brothers and sisters in Christ.” This connection not only emphasizes her inferiority and God’s superiority, but it also makes her equality with man apparent to the reader. Utilizing her womanly ethos and creating

connections with her readers allows her to maintain that she is an inferior subject to God, while also allowing her to claim equality with man as a woman and “sister in Christ.” Finally, through her use of the relation-relating code, she creates alliances not only with other Christians, but more specifically with other women, as she presents to them a spiritual guide in which they can not only attain spiritual perfection, but they can also achieve equality with men in their patriarchal society.

Through the duality of her feminine voice, Teresa de Avila is able to find the agency to engage with her peers rhetorically about spiritual matters, and she is able to utilize creative and unconventional rhetorical practices, such as spiritual guides and divine revelation in order to do so. However, she finds success with utilizing the duality of her voice, and rather than deconstructing the divine masculine voice, or the necessity of a masculine voice at all, she operates under the divine masculine voice, thus suppressing her own writing with a patriarchal figure. In later years, Christian women found ways to implement the divine male voice, while also celebrating their own feminine voice, and began even questioning the need for the divine male voice. However, that was not the case for Teresa de Avila, which is likely due to the oppressive and conservative nature of society in the 1500s. Teresa de Avila demonstrates how her possession of her double voice allowed her to present herself as chaste and devout, while also allowing her to argue for her own value. She found her value through her spirituality, in a manner that was both becoming as a woman, and subversive to the patriarchal constructs both within her church and her society.

Agency Through Exegesis and Bible Study: Frances Willard

“We need women commentators to bring out the women’s side of the book; we need the stereoscopic view of truth in general, which can only be had when woman’s eye and man’s together shall discern the perspective of the Bible’s full-orbed revelation.” –Frances Willard,

Woman in the Pulpit (page 1126)

Although women’s voices have been muted and silenced throughout much of history, progression and growth throughout society and within the Church over time has allowed for more women’s voices to be heard. Throughout the Protestant Church’s history, multiple denominations began to develop due to differing understandings of biblical scripture, and some denominations began to take more liberal views on social issues, particularly pertaining to women. The Methodist Church, specifically, encouraged women’s education and founded the Women’s Christian Temperance Union (WCTU)—of which Frances Willard was a key figure. The WCTU focused not only on alcohol prohibition, but also on the empowerment of women in facing social issues.

The concept of differing understandings of biblical scripture became a crucial piece of Frances Willard’s advocacy for women, as she believed that exegesis should be conducted not only by men, but also by women in order to have a more complete understanding of the Bible. Within the Church, men utilized hegemonic interpretations of the Bible in order to make women’s roles more submissive in the Church and in their societies. Much like the hegemonic ways in which white slave owners utilized their own interpretations of the Bible to justify the oppression of African Americans and slavery, women were also subjected to these prejudiced biblical teachings.

Willard finds agency for herself and other women within biblical scripture and her interpretations of them. The Word of God becomes integral not only for Willard's messages, but also for her voice as a rhetor. French Rhetorician Helene Cixous argued that, unique to women, the female voice is a double voice, which allows for women to invoke both a masculine and feminine voice. Christian women often utilized this double voice, making it a divine double voice and allowing God to speak for the divine masculine invocation of the voice. In this manner, she uses the Word of God as the divine male component within her double voice, which is apparent in her public speaking as well as her biblical interpretations. For Willard, the divine double voice she invokes through God's Word allows agency in not only speaking to women publicly, but also to men, and allows for her to advocate for women in her work with the Women's Christian Temperance Union.

With the aid of the Women's Christian Temperance Union, Willard expanded the work of the union to include a variety of issues including women's suffrage and racial and sexual equality. In "Frances Willard and the Feminism of Fear," Suzanne M. Marilley argues, "Willard activated women's political participation by coupling temperance goals to women's suffrage and authorizing both goals with innovative interpretations of biblical mandates that called women to exercise public roles as moral authorities" (1). Willard reasoned that her beliefs regarding women's rights and equality were founded within biblical scriptures and argued that biblical scripture should be translated more liberally and should be translated by women in addition to men. This is a central argument to her work *Woman in the Pulpit* (1888), which espouses her beliefs of a woman's role within the Church and argues for women to hold more leadership roles within the Church. Through Willard's rhetorical acts of bible study and biblical exegesis, she

recognized not only women's ability to affect change within their societies and communities, but she also advocates for women's worth and necessity within the Church.

Frances Willard was born in Churchville, New York in 1839 to a Methodist family. She graduated college from Northwestern Female College and worked as a teacher. Although the social expectations of women at this time were to marry and have children, Willard chose not to marry because she wanted to dedicate herself to her work as a women's educator. Through her work, she became a leader in the Women's Christian Temperance Union, which was the largest mass movement of women ever in the United States, and the organization worked to empower women and help them succeed in facing social issues. Through the efforts of Willard and other leaders of the Women's Temperance Christian Union, the organization became "the largest and most effective organization for teaching women rhetorical skills in the 19th century" (Bizzell and Herzberg 1117).

In the Women's Christian Temperance Union, women were given more opportunities to speak to audiences, including mixed gender audiences. When speaking to her audiences, Willard possessed a rhetorical style that was very feminine and womanly in nature. Her keynote of her speeches was always conciliation, which was well received within the Church while also contributing to her feminist messages of racial and sexual equality. By presenting herself as traditionally womanly to her audiences, Willard invokes the feminine aspect of her double voice, which allowed for her to appear unassuming and appropriate for her audiences. Her appearance to her audience, specifically when publicly speaking to mixed gendered audiences, would have been of the utmost importance, because women speaking publicly was still largely frowned upon in society at this point in time. Many people believed for a woman to speak publicly calls her

chastity into question, and for Willard, presenting herself in a manner which reflects traditional womanly ethos would allow for her to appear as less of a threat to her audience.

Willard's womanly presentation aligns with Carol J. Jablonski's argument for the "ideology of true womanhood," which is present in much of feminist rhetoric. Jablonski argues that women have been "constrained by religiously sanctioned social roles that have made it difficult for them to speak in public or to address public issues in private" and when women have spoken, they are often "vilified, ostracized, or condemned for their actions" even though women are simultaneously regarded as "the moral guardians of society" (164). Jablonski believes the "ideology of true womanhood" places "four quintessentially 'feminine' virtues: piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity" as expectations on women and how they should act within their societies. Willard's society placed similar expectations of women and upheld these ideologies of true womanhood, which she seems to be aware of as she uses this ideology to her advantage as she too presents herself in this manner throughout her rhetorical acts, whether they be public speaking, writing, or exegesis. The irony of this rhetorical style is that Willard did not assume traditional female roles in her personal life, as she chose to dedicate her life to the teaching and empowering of women rather than marriage and child-rearing. However, her rhetorical choices in presenting herself in this manner led her to great success within her causes and allowed her to reach broad audiences, because of her establishment of her womanly ethos, and her ability to veil the threat of a woman speaking to mixed gender audiences (Bizzell and Herzberg 1117).

Willard's womanly ethos and rhetorical style is not beholden to her public speaking, however, and it makes an appearance throughout her writing, more specifically in *Woman in the Pulpit*. In *Woman in the Pulpit*, Willard draws attention to the crucial roles women hold within

the church, and advocates that they need to become more involved in the Church through exegesis and biblical scripture study in order for the church as a whole to be successful. Willard informs the audience of ways that women are kept out of leadership roles in the Church, namely through preaching to the mixed-gender congregation and through exegesis, while also showing how women already hold power in the Church through positions that men have deemed appropriate for them, such as Sunday school teachers.

However, as Willard states these positions, she challenges traditional understandings of womanly ethos by presenting herself as humble and reasonable, rather than arrogant and emotional. In this manner, she uses her voice to create a new womanly ethos, presenting herself as a woman who utilizes reason rather than emotion, while still upholding her humility, which is a tenet within traditional understandings of womanly ethos. For example, when discussing the predominantly male led exegesis within the Church, she states, “I do not at all impugn the good intention of the good men who have been our exegetes, and I bow humbly in presence of their scholarship; but while they turn their linguistic telescopes on truth, I may be allowed to make a correction for the ‘personal equation’ in the results which they espy” (Willard 1126). In this passage her conciliatory message is apparent as she acknowledges men and their work, and her role as advocate is also present as she also humbly suggests that she might also possess some insights to offer as a woman. Both of these maneuvers serve to help her maintain her womanly ethos. Additionally, she repeats the word “reasonable” throughout her speech and emphasizes common sense as she analyzes and offers her own insights into biblical scripture and their possible meanings, which helps her to maintain ethos as she makes it apparent that she is basing her understanding on a logical analysis of the biblical texts rather than on her own emotions. At the time, men often cited scriptures that they felt showed that God did not intend for women to

be in positions of power within the Church, and Willard references these scriptures and others as she makes the case that men choose to be more literal in their exegesis of scripture regarding women, while being more liberal in their exegesis of scripture regarding men.

In fact, in her piece *Woman in the Pulpit*, she constructed a table of several verses often utilized by men to place women in submissive roles both inside and outside of the church, and she provided other verses, which proved that women have held positions of power and stature within their communities and churches as early as the Old Testament. For example, when given the verse 1 Timothy 2:11 by male pastors as a reference for women's submission, "But I permit not a woman to teach, not to have dominion over a man, but to be in quietness;" Willard responds by referencing Judges 4:4-5, "Now Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lappidoth, she judged Israel at that time...And the children of Israel came up to her for judgment" (1127). In this comparison, she juxtaposes a verse that emphasizes women's submissiveness with a verse that discusses the judge Deborah, who was deemed worthy of judging both men and women in the Old Testament. She continues to reference powerful and influential women in the Bible as she also urges her audience not to forget that Jesus first appeared to women--not men--during his resurrection, and those women responded by serving him and protecting him.

Throughout *Woman in the Pulpit*, she is utilizing the literal Word of God—the Bible—as her divine double voice, which not only gives her argument credibility, especially among her audience, as it is based on biblical scriptures, but also allows her to maintain her own womanly ethos, as a caregiver and conciliatory figure within the Church. Additionally, while she argues for equality of sexes due to biblical scriptures, she is still remaining submissive to God, which casts her as a humble figure and contributes to her overall message of equality and conciliation as men and women are both submissive to God. In this manner, she surreptitiously equates

women and men within the Church without appearing to be a blatant threat to the patriarchal constructs within the Church.

Willard's use of biblical scriptures and her concepts of liberal exegesis are representative of a feminist rhetorical maneuver that began to be utilized more frequently by women in the 19th century. Feminist rhetorician Jane Donawerth states,

Although the women before the 19th century seem unaware of previous defenses, more defenses center on the same three biblical arguments: they cite scriptures showing men and women as equal in God's eyes; they list biblical women who were preachers, prophets, and ministers; and they refute literalist readings of Paul by placing his commands for women to be silent in church in a specific historical context and identifying them as inconsistent with his praise of women as "laborers in the Gospel" elsewhere ("Controversial Rhetoric," 14).

Throughout Willard's *Woman in the Pulpit*, she consistently utilizes these three rhetorical maneuvers when discussing women's involvement in Church and the need for more leadership roles for women in the Church as is seen through her liberal interpretations of biblical scriptures and her comparisons of biblical texts when discussing the roles women possess.

While many male leaders within the Church utilize the story of Adam and Eve as a point of reference for women's intended submission to men by God's ruling, Willard focuses more closely on God's words in an effort to make man and woman's equality apparent: "God said, 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion...so God created man in his own image, in the image of God created him; male and female he created them'" (1125). Through this verse, Willard is emphasizing that *both* male and female were created in God's image, and *both* are given dominion by God. Willard utilizes the rhetorical practice of

biblical scriptural study and exegesis in order to recontextualize the meaning behind biblical scripture in a manner that empowers women within their Church and communities, rather than placing them in a position of submission as was most common in this era due to male led exegesis.

Due to her beliefs, which were founded in scripture, that women are equals to men both inside and outside of the Church, Willard felt that women should also partake in exegesis as men most often used exegesis as a means to continue the suppression of women, which she did not believe was God's intention for women. Willard claimed, "We need women commentators to bring out the women's side of the book; we need the stereoscopic view of truth in general, which can only be had when woman's eye and man's together shall discern the perspective of the Bible's full-orbed revelation" (1126). Willard's ultimate goal of conciliation is present even in this statement as she argues that "woman's eye and man's together" should conduct exegesis. Women have held pivotal roles throughout the Christian tradition, as Willard argues, and at the time of Willard's *Woman in the Pulpit*, women made up the majority of the Church's congregations throughout America and women held more positions as teachers and Sunday school teachers than men. Willard argues that women have voices within the Church through the pivotal roles they inhabit, and their voices should be utilized, so that the Church itself has a more fully formed understanding of how to best serve God as Christians. She argues that the only way for this to be the case is by giving women more progressive roles in the Church and allowing them to study scripture and partake in exegesis.

Willard advocates for women to partake in exegesis and argues that male-led exegesis can often be misleading and not what God intended for women as He has created them to be in His image, as man's equal,

From all of which considerations the plain wayfaring woman cannot help concluding that exegesis, thus conducted, is one of the most time-serving and man-made of all sciences, and one of the most misleading of all arts. It has broken Christendom into sects that confuse and astound the heathen world, and to-day imposes the heaviest yoke now worn by woman upon that most faithful follower of Him who is her emancipator no less than humanity's Savior (1126).

Her statement, again, echoes her overarching message of conciliation as she believes that the lack of female intervention in exegesis has "broken Christendom into sects," implying that were women to be given more active roles within the Church, the Church would begin to be more whole. Additionally, she emphasizes the submissive role in which women have been placed in their homes, communities, and churches, as she states that the "heaviest yoke" is now worn by women. Her message of downtrodden women also aligns with many of her messages within the Women's Christian Temperance Union, as she argued that alcohol had become a woman's problem because men spent their money on alcohol rather than providing for their families.

Willard advocated for women of a variety of social and cultural contexts, including women of other races, and even women who were prostitutes or imprisoned, because she had dedicated her life's work to empowering women. In "Rethinking Ethos: A Feminist Ecological Approach to Rhetoric," Kathleen J. Ryan, Nancy Myers, and Rebecca Jones argue that women adopted different codes as they engaged rhetorically. Ryan et al. argue that the three codes that are evident within feminist rhetoric and are utilized by women rhetors are interrupt, advocate, and relate. When discussing advocates, Ryan et al. define "the dilemmas of advocacy" as entailing "rhetors advocating for their own right to speak authoritatively and negotiating the complexities of speaking for others" ("Rethinking Ethos"111). In her rhetorical endeavors,

Willard frequently utilizes the “advocate” code, and her leadership role within the Women’s Christian Temperance Union placed her in a position to become an advocate for many women, and the argument can be made that her advocacy affected change in many women’s lives during her time of leadership in the WCTU.

Due to Willard’s advocacy, women within the WCTU were given opportunities for education and rhetorical skills that many women outside of the WCTU at the time would not have been afforded. While advocacy can be helpful and can bring about change, advocacy can also be problematic. As Ryan et al. explain, advocacy can oftentimes be a crucial agent for change, especially when speaking on behalf of those that share the same social stature; “Being an advocate seems less problematic when one member of a group speaks on behalf of other members of the same group who might not encounter publics otherwise”—which was often the case, as Willard spoke on behalf of the women she led within the WCTU (“Rethinking Ethos” 111). Unfortunately, Ryan et al. also discuss the ways in which advocacy can become more problematic, which happens most frequently when rhetors differ from those they are advocating for, whether it be through power, access, or agency.

While Willard’s motivations behind advocating for women of other races or women of other social statuses were likely benevolent in nature, she cannot truly advocate for those women, because their personal struggles and lives are unknown to her. However, when reflecting upon the social and cultural contexts of Willard’s era, the voices of women of color were even more suppressed than those of white women, and it may be that in Willard’s advocacy of women of color, she began a conversation about gender and race equality that might not have been started otherwise, especially among white audiences. For women at this time, it was unacceptable for them to express themselves through public speaking and this was even more so

the case for African American women. Willard's advocacy for women and African Americans set precedents for African American female rhetors, such as Maria W. Stewart, to possess roles as advocates without having the problematic situation of lacking understanding of the personal struggles of the African American people.

Ultimately, Frances Willard's rhetorical maneuvers and biblical basis for her arguments served to allow her to bring her conciliatory messages and advocacy for women to broader audiences, which enabled her to affect change in the lives of many women. The conciliatory spirit she maintains with the Church is representative of what Carol J. Jablonski, feminist rhetorician, would deem a "selectively orthodox stance." Jablonski defines the selectively orthodox stance among female rhetors as, "identifying strongly with the institutional Church, hoping to reform it by enlarging women's and men's awareness of female spirituality, and when practical, by urging institutional authorities to reform the priesthood and to admit women to the Church's sacramental ministry" ("Rhetoric, Paradox, and the Movement for Women's Ordination in the Roman Catholic Church" 165). This stance is easy to identify throughout Willard's *Woman in the Pulpit* and throughout many of her other rhetorical endeavors with the Women's Christian Temperance Union. Her conciliatory messages show her devotion to the institutional Church, and her suggestions for women's leadership and involvement show her desire to better the Church for both men and women. While this stance does not aggressively address the issues women faced within the Church, as it still maintains the devotion to the institution of the Church itself, this rhetorical style did allow Willard to appear womanly in her ethos, which ultimately led her to more success for her cause, and allowed her to enact change within her community for many women, specifically in regard to women's education and rhetorical opportunities. Frances Willard's adoption of the divine double voice through the use of

God's Word and her presentation of her womanly rhetorical style throughout her own exegesis of the Bible allowed her to lend her voice to women's causes and to pursue women's rights both inside and outside of the Church. Frances Willard successfully brought about change for thousands of women in the 19th century Church and established herself as a leading feminist rhetorician whose voice is still heard today.

Agency through Preaching and the Abolitionist Movement: Maria W. Stewart

“I believe, that for wise and holy purposes, best known to himself, he hath unloosed my tongue, and put his word into my mouth, in order to confound and put all those to shame that have rose up against me.” -Maria W. Stewart, “Mrs. Stewart’s Farewell Address to Her Friends in the City of Boston”

While women’s voices have been othered for much of history, theirs are not the only voices that have been historically othered. Historically, in all societies and cultures, women have faced oppression and prejudice. However, in American culture, this othering was extended and amplified among African Americans, and especially among African American women. African American voices have been silenced and othered for much of American history, as institutional slavery and ingrained prejudices have revoked the rights and liberties of their people. For African American women, this othering and silencing is even more magnified as they face prejudices not only for their race, but also for their gender. However, despite being faced with racist and patriarchal constructs, women still fought to be heard. More specifically, Maria W. Stewart made her voice heard and known as she spoke in support of the abolitionist movement as not only a woman, but also as an African American.

As an African American woman in the nineteenth century, Stewart was faced with patriarchal and racial constructs both within her society and her church, which limited her ability to use her voice in support of her people through the abolitionist movement. Even among other African Americans, as a woman, her public speaking was not celebrated or welcomed within the abolitionist movement, thus leading her to leave Boston and give her final public speaking engagement, “Mrs. Stewart’s Farewell Address to her Friends in the City of Boston” in 1833.

Despite the oppression she faced, Stewart found agency to use her voice both rhetorically and oratorically through her use of the voice of God, most often found in scriptures. As is evident in other female rhetoricians, such as Teresa de Avila and Frances Willard, and now Maria W. Stewart, women frequently utilized feminist rhetorician, Helene Cixous's concept of the female voice as being a double voice. Cixous describes the female voice as being a double voice because women are able to access both feminine and masculine traits within their writing, which allows them more success as women's writing is often overlooked due to their gender. Maria W. Stewart, and many other Christian women--specifically Teresa de Avila and Frances Willard--utilized this double voice but altered it to make it more successful within the church setting specifically. These women alter the double voice to be not only a traditional feminine voice and a masculine voice, but they shift the masculine voice to become a divine masculine voice--the voice of God. Each woman utilized various rhetorical devices in order to pass on their messages and beliefs through the voice of God. As Maria W. Stewart was both a woman and an African American, she was frequently othered in American society. Unique to Stewart, however, is that her use of her divine double voice allowed her to find agency among both black and white mixed gender audiences. Stewart's frequent use of the voice of God through biblical scriptures to support her public speaking on behalf of women and the abolitionist movement allowed her to reach audiences and enact change in her culture and society, despite her race and gender.

Maria W. Stewart was born to free African American parents in Hartford, Connecticut in 1803. However, after being orphaned at the age of five she entered into indentured servitude and served as a domestic servant until she was fifteen years old. Unlike many other African American women of her time, Stewart attended Sabbath schools as a young girl, which allowed

for her to develop a literacy based entirely upon being able to read the Bible and write reflective journals. Historically, when women were given an education, it was for the purpose of being literate enough to read and discuss the Bible. This was even evidenced through many of the nuns' educations they received in as early as the 1500s, and Teresa de Avila more specifically. After marrying her husband, James W. Stewart, a successful businessman and activist in the abolitionist movement, Stewart's own education and involvement in both the Church and the abolitionist movement began to increase. Stewart found success in writing essays about the abolitionist movement, such as *Religion and the Pure Principles of Morality* (Bizzell and Herzberg, 1031). However, she began to gain notoriety and the attention of others' through her public speaking.

Through her writing and her speaking, Stewart encourages feminist and abolitionist messages, such as her belief that African American women should be involved in their community in addition to their homes and families in order to facilitate improvements for their race. Additionally, she frequently challenged people's beliefs about women's chastity by speaking publicly to mixed gender audiences, which was not supported by either white men or black men. For female rhetors, public speaking engagements were always a precarious situation to maneuver rhetorically. In Frances Willard's case, she faced adversity among her white audiences; however, for Stewart, she faced adversity from both white and black audiences. Despite facing adversity from both white and black audiences, Stewart's race also gave her agency within her community and the abolitionist cause that other white advocates lack. Among white audiences, women that used public speaking to support abolitionist movements, such as Willard and Stewart, were considered to be the most unchaste (Bizzell 56).

Like her Christian female rhetorical predecessors, Stewart frequently denounced her own abilities as a public speaker, and rather put the glory--or blame--on God as she claimed that He spoke through her and chose her for this duty. Her bashful approach to her agency for speaking publicly and engaging rhetorically is not uncommon in female rhetors. Her reluctance to engage rhetorically, but her agency to do so due to her subservience to God, is also seen in feminist Christian rhetors, Teresa de Avila and Frances Willard, among others. Christian women often found success in claiming that their own rhetorical agency was a by-product and duty of their relationship with God. Despite Stewart's claims of her devotion to God and her defense of her right to speak on behalf of her people, her public speaking was not well received--especially not by white audiences, but not by black audiences either. As a result, in 1833, Stewart announced she would be leaving her work as a public speaker behind, with "Mrs. Stewart's Farewell Address to Her Friends in the City of Boston."

In her "Farewell Address," Stewart makes one final defense for her rights to speak publicly due to her divine ordination by God. Much like Teresa de Avila, Stewart makes several claims that she has been divinely chosen by God to speak publicly on matters such as the abolitionist movement, despite her own trepidations: "I felt as though I was commanded to come out from the world and be separate; to go forward and be baptized...I was at last made willing to be anything or nothing, for my Redeemer's sake" (Stewart 1040). For female rhetoricians utilizing the divine double voice of God, it is imperative that they maintain their own womanly ethos in order to appear chaste and womanly to their audiences, while also subverting patriarchal constructs within the church.

Stewart attempts to keep her womanly ethos intact by making claims that despite her own reluctance, because of her flawed human nature, she has been chosen by God to spread His

word--not her own--to the masses through speaking publicly. By pointing out her own flaws as a public speaker and acting reluctant to engage with her audiences, Stewart is bolstering her womanly ethos by appealing to what feminist rhetorician, Carol J. Jablonski, refers to as the “ideology of true womanhood” (164). Stewart is not alone in inhabiting this role of the ideological woman, as Willard and de Avila also establish their womanly ethos in this manner. In her piece, “Rhetoric, Paradox, and the Movement for Women’s Ordination in the Roman Catholic Church,” Jablonski demonstrates the paradoxical way in which women are regarded within the church. Women who speak in public are often “vilified, ostracized, or condemned for their actions,” and yet, “women have also been regarded as the moral guardians of society” (164). Jablonski identifies the role of moral guardian which women inhabit as the “ideology of true womanhood,” which suggests women possess four “quintessentially feminine virtues: piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity” (164). While challenging patriarchal constructs through public speaking, Stewart also appeals to this ideology of true womanhood by presenting herself as a submissive to God, which helped her to uphold her piety and purity as she faced mixed gender audiences in her public speaking engagements.

Despite her presentation of herself as reluctant and flawed, she has been called upon by God and she responds accordingly, which makes her appear to be submissive to God first and foremost, and not destructive to the patriarchal paradigm within the church. Knowing that the reception of her message would depend upon her audience perceiving her as being in line with the ideology of true womanhood, Stewart often prefaces her arguments about her rights as a woman of color by also arguing through her double voice that she is only capable of public speaking because God has empowered her as his subject: “And thus for wise and holy purposes, best known to himself, he has raised me in the midst of my enemies, to vindicate my wrongs

before this people; and to reprove them for sin, as I have reasoned to the of righteousness and judgment to come” (Stewart 1040). In this statement, she utilizes her double voice by emphasizing God’s ordination of herself, while also presenting herself as a flawed, but forgiven follower of God, which would resonate with her Christian audiences despite their discomfort at her untraditional role.

In addition to arguing for her right to speak because of God’s ordination, she borrows another rhetorical move from other female Christian rhetoricians. Many female rhetoricians within the Church, most notably Frances Willard, also used biblical passages which featured women who were also called by God to inhabit a less traditional female role. As Jane Donawerth demonstrates in her work “Controversial Rhetoric,” female rhetoricians often based their defenses of women’s roles within the church by centering their message on three biblical arguments: “they cite scriptures showing men and women as equals in God’s eyes; they list biblical women who were preachers, prophets, and ministers,; and they refute literalist readings of Paul” (14). Within Stewart’s “Farewell Address” she utilizes each of these rhetorical tactics by citing biblical scriptures. In this way, biblical scriptures and the Word of God become the divine masculine part of her double voice.

Biblically, women have been placed in influential roles within the church--Deborah was a judge of Israel, Mary Magdalene was the first to find Jesus after the resurrection. In a similar rhetorical move as Willard, Stewart brings attention to these women and the nontraditional roles they possessed as examples of God’s desire for women to have a place within society and the church beyond being wives and mothers. She argues, “is not the God of ancient times the God of these modern days?” (1041). Stewart questions, if the God of ancient times and the God of modern times are one in the same, why would he not want women to become more integral to

their church and their society presently? Using these biblical female figures as evidence, Stewart turns her attention specifically to the abolitionist movement and commands to men, “Be no longer astonished then, my brethren and friends, that God at this eventful period should raise up your own females to strive, by their example both in public and private, to assist those who are endeavoring stop the strong current of prejudice that flows so profusely against us at present” (Stewart 1041). Her statement not only justifies her actions by God’s will and biblical scriptures, but she also attempts to appeal to her audience through familiar language, such as “brethren” and “friends” as is a common rhetorical move within the Church.

By utilizing this familiar language, she is presenting herself as a Christian ally to her male counterparts, rather than as an enemy to the structure of the church. This language was not only common in and among churches and biblical scriptures, but also within the African American community and the abolitionist movement. Stewart’s use of familiar language was very strategic, because as rhetorician Lena Ampadu claims, “Her speeches resemble sermons and contribute to the Black sermonic tradition...As an outspoken advocate for women, she produced a sustained body of political and religious rhetoric directed specifically at liberating women, although her discourse was not always aimed exclusively at women” (“Maria W. Stewart and the Rhetoric of Black Preaching” 38). Making her public speaking addresses resemble sermons allowed her mixed gender audiences to be able to relate to her more readily, even if they were not initially inclined to agree with her. Additionally, her sermonic delivery allowed her to access her divine double voice by citing and referencing the voice of God. However, by incorporating aspects of preaching, “call-response, testimonials, and citing scripture,” Stewart was able to convince her audience of her cause and begin conversations that would lead to change for women and for the abolitionist movement. This empowerment for women and African

Americans as a group was a result of Stewart's unique situation of being able "to collaborate with black nationalists and white abolitionists" as Christina Henderson explains in "Sympathetic Violence" (2). Stewart's unique voice, rhetorical style, and identity as a Black female abolitionist allowed her to inhabit a role as an advocate that was ultimately beneficial to her abolitionist cause.

While many white women at this time, Frances Willard most notably, advocated for African Americans and the abolitionist movement, their lack of understanding due to their race did not allow them to be the best advocate for the movement. As Ryan et al. discuss in "Rethinking Ethos," "Being an advocate seems less problematic when one member of a group speaks on behalf of other members of the same group who might not encounter publics otherwise. Advocating can be riskier when rhetors differ in power, access, and agency" (111). Although Willard had the best intentions in advocating for the abolitionist movement, her advocacy lacked in agency and awareness due to discrepancies in her race and those she was advocating for. For Stewart, however, her race granted her understanding and agency that Willard required and her familiar and conversational style appealed to broad audiences, thus making her able to reach more people on both sides of the racial debate and inciting collaboration.

One way in which women upheld their womanly ethos while still using rhetoric to incite change within their societies was through collaborative conversation. This familiar language would not only have been recognized by her audiences due to their shared community of the church, but it also encourages collaboration and a conversational style. Jane Donawerth explains this conversational style of feminist rhetoric: "They put conversation as a model for all discourse, urging speaking and writing that is collaborative, not antagonistic in relation to the

audience, seeking consensus, not domination as the goal of communication...” (“Controversial Rhetoric” 16). While appealing to audiences through public speaking was received unpopularity for Stewart, she still utilized conversational styles and collaboration in an attempt to foster good will among her audiences to encourage them all to work together for the greater good of the abolitionist movement.

Despite Stewart’s best attempts and intentions, her messages were not always well received by her audience, thus prompting her to eventually leave Boston after giving her “Farewell Address.” This is likely due to Stewart’s adoption of the “interruptor” code she frequently used in her speaking engagements. In “Rethinking Ethos,” Ryan et al. determine most female rhetoricians “adopt different codes when engaging rhetorically” (3). They define these codes as “interrupt, advocate, and relate” (3). In much of Stewart’s rhetorical engagements, she adopts the interrupt code. Ryan et al claim,

Interruption refers to breaks, divides, hitches, disruptions, disturbances, ruptures, or breeches--counters to traditional ways of behaving or conversing--to change the status quo of dominant values and practices. Women who are members of counterpublics interrupt as a means of ‘tactically speaking in strategic loci’...Historically, women who ‘interrupted’ gained reputations as nonconformists, rabble-rousers, and traitors to the ‘feminine ethos’. (23)

Maria W. Stewart embraced this role of interruptor and challenged beliefs in regard to women’s public speaking. By facing audiences and claiming her rights to speak due to being chosen by God, as not only a woman, but an African American woman, she was frequently pushing boundaries and challenging beliefs among not only white Christian audiences, but black Christian audiences as well. Stewart was aware of this position she put herself in, but she felt that

she was called by God to continue to spread his messages on behalf of her people through her, “Dearly beloved, I have made myself contemptible in the eyes of many, that I might win some” (“Farewell Address” 1043). In this manner, Stewart also utilized the rhetorical style Carol J. Jablonski identifies as the “selectively heterodox” rhetorical style.

The selectively heterodox rhetorical style and the feminist rhetorical code of interruptor serve each other well as they place the rhetorician both within the community and also on the edges of the community, allowing the speaker to comment on the flaws within their own community. By adopting this rhetorical style, Jablonski suggests,

those who assume the selectively heterodox stance distance themselves from the institutional Church without separating from it. Defining themselves as a liberation movement within and on the edges of the institutional Church, they see their efforts transform the Church in the context of a broader movement that embraces the principles of both feminism and liberation theology” (“Rhetoric, Paradox, and the Movement for Women’s Ordination...”, 165).

While Stewart utilized conversational and familiar styles that would appeal to her community through their African American culture and also maintain her womanly ethos, she adopts this rhetorical style as she chastises her own African American community about prejudice. In her “Farewell Address,” she suggests that the abolitionist movement would be more successful if African Americans, like herself, spent time bettering themselves and supporting those in their community rather than casting people out based on their outspokenness and their gender. Stewart believes, as she has been chosen by God, that the abolitionist movement would have been more successful had her own community not turned against her due to their prejudices against women: “Wherefore, my respected friends, let us no longer talk of prejudice, till prejudice becomes

extinct at home. Let us no longer talk of opposition, till we cease to oppose our own” (1042).

Despite the adversity Stewart faced among her own community and the white community as well, her messages were those of hope and her resilience as a feminist rhetorician is a hallmark of both the women that preceded her and the women that followed.

Maria W. Stewart’s desire to enact change in her community and her agency to utilize her divine double voice to do so in the face of much adversity, due to both her gender and her race, demonstrates her use of what Ann Brady calls, “feminist rhetorical resilience.” Brady defines feminist rhetorical resilience as “including actions undertaken by rhetors, usually women, who with varying degrees of success, discursively interact with others, resulting in improved situations despite contexts of significant adversity” (“Feminist Rhetorical Resilience” 2). This resilience is evident as Stewart concludes her “Farewell Address,” “I believe that a rich award awaits me if not in this world, in the world to come...The bitterness of my soul has departed from those who endeavored to discourage and hinder me in my Christian progress; and I can now forgive my enemies, bless those who have hated me, and cheerfully pray for those who have despitefully used and persecuted me” (1044). As Stewart closes her address, she maintains her womanly ethos by forgiving and praying for her enemies, which was a practice her Christian audiences would have been familiar with from Christ himself as he forgives those that have crucified him. Her forgiveness also demonstrates her desire for collaboration among her people, and ultimately her desire to see her people--African Americans and women--given the rights and equality they deserve. The feminist rhetorical resilience is demonstrated not only by Maria W. Stewart, but all Christian female rhetoricians that endeavored to use their divine double voices to enact change in their churches and their communities, thus leading to a brighter and more equal future for women.

Conclusion

“Woman must write herself: must write about women and bring women to writing, from which they have been driven away as violently as from their bodies--for the same reasons, by the same law, with the same fatal goal.” -Helene Cixous, *The Laugh of the Medusa* (Bizzell and Herzberg 1524)

Women’s voices have been silenced in all aspects of society for centuries. However, women have utilized their double voice, which Helene Cixous describes in *The Laugh of the Medusa*, in order to break through patriarchal constructs in all aspects of their lives. Cixous describes a woman’s double voice as her ability to possess both a traditionally feminine voice and also a masculine voice, in order to appeal to both male and female audiences. The duality of the female voice and its ability to gender-bend is evidenced through the countless female authors throughout history that chose to use pseudonyms or publish their work anonymously, which often resulted in their audiences assuming their gender as male. This duality shifts, however, among many Christian female rhetors, more specifically, Teresa de Avila, Frances Willard, and Maria W. Stewart. These women, among other Christian female rhetors, utilized their double voices and instead shifted the masculine voice to become a divine masculine voice, thus creating the duality of the feminine voice and the voice of God. By creating this dichotomy within their own voices, they surreptitiously argued for their own rights and equality as women in the Church and used the word of God to support their claims, thus disrupting patriarchal constructs both within the Church and within society.

Helene Cixous claimed that women must exercise the duality of their voices in order to create a place for themselves in society. She believed that the act of writing allowed women more agency and autonomy not only in their societies, but also in their own bodies, as she argues

that women's bodies are confiscated from them by men. Cixous instructs women, "Women must put herself into the text--as into the world and into history--by her own movement" (Bizzell and Herzberg 1524). In this claim, Cixous is emphasizing the need for women to utilize their double voices and create a world in which they are equal to men, and the only way to find this agency is through writing.

Within the church, patriarchal constructs have always placed importance on men possessing leadership roles, and women possessing passive and submissive roles. However, despite this ingrained oppression, as early as the 1500s, women--more specifically Teresa de Avila--were utilizing the duality of their voices in order to suggest the importance of their role within society and the church. Through the invention of the divine double voice, women "put [themselves] into the text, into the world, and into history" (Cixous 1524). However, while the double voice does serve to create a place for women within the world and within the Church through the ordination or permission from God, one must wonder if the double voice continued to confine these women or whether it allowed women to celebrate their voices and their cause. Through the development of the divine double voice and the evolution of this duality, explored through Christian female rhetoricians Teresa de Avila, Frances Willard, and Maria W. Stewart, it becomes evident that while the divine double voice might have had confines for earlier rhetors, it inevitably led to the liberation and celebration of women's voices.

Of these three women, our earliest rhetor, Teresa de Avila, operated well within the confines established by the double voice. In her piece, *Inner Castle*, de Avila explores her divine revelations from God in order to give people--both women and men--a guide to inner peace through God. Throughout her work, de Avila casts herself as an unworthy choice for God's revelations, making it clear to her reader that she believes God had more optimal options, and

thus establishing her feminine ethos. However, since God has chosen her to be his messenger, she must not deny him, since she is a good, Christian follower, and always puts God's causes above her own. Her portrayal of herself as a traditionally feminine woman--submissive, passive, and unworthy--allows her to find her agency in order to subvert patriarchal constructs and assert her own spiritual beliefs without being threatening to her male audience.

While de Avila accomplishes her goal of sharing her own spiritual messages with an audience of mixed gender Christians, she works well within the confines of the divine double voice she has created, and she does not push the boundaries of this voice. By writing herself into the text and into history in this manner through the guise of the voice of God, she is not celebrating the female voice and the agency it possesses. However, she is creating a new rhetorical tradition and rhetorical strategy for Christian women to utilize both inside and outside of the Church, which inevitably leads to the newfound agency of Protestant women and Frances Willard, more specifically.

Over time, within the Protestant Church, women were afforded more agency and leadership roles, especially when interacting with one another and children. While this clearly operates within the confines of patriarchal society, wherein women are responsible for child rearing, this also created a shift in the importance of women's education, which led to more rights for women. In earlier times, women followed men's understandings and preachings of the Bible, which allowed men even more control over women's understanding of the Bible and its messages. However, among Protestant churches, it was believed that women should be educated so that they could interact with the Bible on their own and become devout followers of God. This denomination allowed for Frances Willard's rise as a leader among women and the Women's Temperance Christian Union and allowed her to take on the cause of educating women.

Amid arguing for women's causes, Willard also argued that men should not be solely responsible for the leadership roles in the church or in the exegesis of biblical texts. In order to assert the importance of women's roles within the Church, Willard argued for the need for women to also partake in leadership roles and exegesis. In support of these claims, she utilized the Word of God and biblical texts to show the various leadership roles women have inhabited throughout biblical history. By citing biblical scriptures, Willard is demonstrating the duality of her divine double voice while arguing for women's rights within the church. While Willard did not inhabit many traditional female roles in her own life, as she was a single, childless woman and a leader among Christian women, she did utilize her femininity in order to appeal to her audience. Her feminine portrayal of herself and her messages of conciliation within the church allowed her to create change in her society and subvert patriarchal constructs in the church, while also appearing unassuming to her audiences. Willard firmly believed in her message of conciliation and the importance of women partaking in exegesis, because she believed it was the only way for the church to be more successful and for Christians to be more at peace with one another.

Willard pushed many boundaries throughout her rhetorical engagements, arguing for the role of women in the pulpit, and demonstrating her own agency as a leading female rhetor. She utilized her leadership role within the Methodist church and continued to push boundaries for the sake of women of all backgrounds. Willard frequently worked with women on the fringes of society and the church working to educate prostitutes and women in prison, and also fighting for the abolitionist movement and the equality of blacks in American society. While her causes and her efforts were admirable, her lack of understanding of the black experience in America did not

allow her to fully advocate for the abolitionist cause. However, it did allow for black women, such as Maria W. Stewart, to possess more agency and support for their own abolitionist causes.

Although Willard still operated within the confines of her divine double voice, she pushed the boundaries of her feminine ethos, and asserted herself as not only a passive subject of God as de Avila did, but also as a Child of God with the right to sharing her own beliefs and understandings of God's Word. Willard worked within the duality of her voice to show that she was capable of being a leader of women, but her main cause was conciliation in the church and among its members, both male and female. In *The Laugh of the Medusa*, Cixous argues for the need for a "universal woman subject who must bring women to their senses and to their meaning in history" (Cixous, 1524). Through her work in the Methodist Church and the Women's Christian Temperance Union, Willard brought women to their senses through educating them and showing them, through biblical texts, their place in the church and in society throughout biblical history. While still occupying a feminine role as a leader of women, and women only, Willard's use of her divine double voice certainly takes a shift as she is much more celebratory in her delivery and less apologetic of her female nature than Teresa de Avila was in her work *Inner Castle*. In this manner, Willard achieved many of her goals as an educator and an advocate for women, and she also created a path for other women to follow as a Christian woman in possession of her own agency to interact with a public Christian audience, thus allowing for a more marginalized group of women to become their own rhetorical agents of change through their divine double voices.

While women's voices were othered for much of history, it is arguable that no voices were marginalized to the same extent as those of African American women. African American women faced oppression due to both their race and gender, and their voices are largely unheard

for much of history due to social and patriarchal constructs, as well as a lack of education. For Maria W. Stewart, however, an educated African American woman, she found agency in her divine double voice and the abolitionist movement. Stewart utilized the divine double voice through the biblical scriptures and through messages she had received from God, wherein he was calling her to act and speak on his behalf to her people. Similarly to de Avila and Willard before her, Stewart upheld her feminine ethos by presenting herself as a submissive servant to God. However, she challenged many of the confines she faced as both a woman and an African American. Despite being an African American woman, Stewart claimed she had been called by God to share messages to her people, and she believed her messages of sexual equality would be a great impetus to their causes within the abolitionist movement. It was her claim and her account of God's claims that supported these beliefs and suggested that women must be incorporated and allowed leadership roles in order for the abolitionist movement to ever find success.

Maria W. Stewart pushes boundaries far more than her predecessors as she is working within the duality of her voice to overthrow both racist constructs and patriarchal constructs within her society. Not only was her rhetorical work revolutionary for these reasons, but her delivery of her work was also revolutionary, as she chose to engage oratorically rather than through written texts, and she spoke to mixed gender audiences rather than to only women. At the time, it was difficult for women to engage rhetorically; however, it became more common for women to engage rhetorically through writing, as it was considered unchaste for women to speak to mixed gender audiences. Stewart, however, chose to adopt a "preaching" style as she engaged oratorically with her mixed gender audiences, which was considered both scandalous, and for

some audiences, inflammatory for her time. As a result, she felt the need to leave the city of Boston where she had been engaging oratorically with frequency.

Although Stewart was discouraged from sharing her message by utilizing her spoken voice, she was still able to make a great impact and connect with broader audiences, while also speaking of her own personal experiences as an African American woman. With the duality of her divine double voice, she was able to use the Word of God to defend her actions, and she was able to adopt an oratorical style that would have been familiar for her audience, all while asserting her feminine ethos. Cixous emphasizes the need for women to write when she says, “She must write her self, because this is the invention of a *new insurgent* writing which, when the moment of her liberation has come, will allow her to carry out the indispensable ruptures and transformations in her history...” (Cixous 1527). Despite their unpopularity with some of her audiences at the time, Stewart’s rhetorical actions reached a broad audience and enacted change in her world. The use of her divine double voice led to Stewart’s “liberation” and created “indispensable ruptures and transformations in her history” (Cixous 1527).

Of these three Christian female rhetors, each woman found agency through the utilization of their divine double voice and discovered ways to subvert patriarchal constructs within their societies and their churches due to their womanly ethos and their claims of divine support and ordination from God. Due to their varying rhetorical situations and contexts, each woman utilized her divine double voice differently. Teresa de Avila, for example, is very confined by her divine double voice. She does not seek to celebrate her feminine voice, and rather, she seems to cower behind God’s ordination as she makes her appeals. However, she served a very important purpose as one of the earlier female rhetors to enact this double voice in her writing, and she paved the way for more rhetors to follow.

Through the evolution of Christian female rhetors and their use of their divine double voices, Frances Willard was able to begin to find more ways to celebrate the feminine voice, while still appealing to broad audiences due to her womanly ethos. By possessing leadership roles within the Church among women, Willard is beginning to test the boundaries of women's roles in the Church and she suggests more active roles for women in the church through her essay, *Woman in the Pulpit*. In her essay, she argues for the necessity of women to be involved in all aspects of the Church including in exegetical readings of biblical texts, and she made claims that women's exegesis would be the only way to reconcile the Church. As she places importance on women's roles in the Church and she demonstrates her own knowledge and abilities as a rhetor, she is celebrating women and their capability, while also challenging men to rid the Church of some of the more oppressive patriarchal constructs. However, she still possessed a more traditional womanly ethos, and did most of her leadership work among women, which would have been considered more acceptable by men at the time. In this manner, she works within the confines of her divine double voice through the voice of God and biblical scriptures, while still pushing the boundaries of what it means to be a female follower of Christ.

Among these three rhetors, however, the evolution of the divine double voice and the celebration of the feminine voice is most complete with Maria W. Stewart. While still adopting many of the rhetorical maneuvers as her predecessors--by defending her messages because of God's ordination--Stewart challenged the confines of her divine double voice and the confines of her racist patriarchal society. As not only a woman, but an African American woman, Stewart faced much oppression, and she utilized her divine double voice in order to fight against oppression both as a woman and as an African American. The rhetorical medium she chose as

she faced her oppressors, which was public speaking and preaching, also demonstrates her belief that the female voice should be heard and celebrated by not only other women, but also by men.

However, Stewart's predecessors were imperative for the development of not only Stewart's own celebration and development of the female voice within the contexts of the Church, but also for our understanding of the female voice and how it operates within the church today. Unfortunately, the research for this project was unable to capture all of the Christian feminist rhetors and the ways in which they too contributed to changes in their churches and in their world. Further research might consider looking for more ways in which women have utilized their divine double voices through various means and genres, not discussed here, in order to show a more thorough understanding and unabbreviated timeline of the development and evolution of the divine double voice of women in the Church. While Teresa de Avila, Frances Willard, and Maria W. Stewart are able to demonstrate not only the variety of genres the female double voice can utilize, but also the resilience of a woman's voice, they are unable to demonstrate the complete evolution of the female voice and its divine duality due to their differing time periods and contexts. Another topic of further research might be to study how women working within the Church today utilize their feminine voices, and whether or not the divine duality of their voices is required for the audience to place value in their words.

Through their determination to create a space for women's voices in the church through their own agency due to the use of their divine double voice, de Avila, Willard, and Stewart brought about change for their contemporaries, and they also created movements toward change for generations of women succeeding them. Due to their leadership both as Christians and rhetors among women, they were able to instill important changes for women in their communities: de Avila advocated for women's spirituality, Willard advocated for women's

education and for women to engage with the Bible exegetically, and Stewart advocated for African American men and women and for their rights. These women successfully instilled change in their church and in their world, all while quietly fighting against patriarchal constructs through their rhetorical engagements. Due to these women's rhetorical engagements, women are educated rhetorically, women can seek their own spirituality, women can speak on behalf of others, and most importantly, women's voices can be heard both inside and outside of the Church.

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