

CULTIVATING A FEELING FOR FARMING: RHETORICAL STYLIZATIONS OF FOOD
AND FARMING IN CONTEMPORARY CULTURE

by

DUSTIN ALEXANDER GREENWALT

(Under the Direction of CELESTE M. CONDIT)

ABSTRACT

This dissertation project interrogates the intersections of discourses about food and farming as a means of theorizing rhetorical style and mapping the economic logics that compose our current conditions. It argues that an attention to affectively powerful stylizations of food and farming demonstrates how contemporary culture exists at the interstices between the residual stylizations of America as a frontier, the dominant logics of militarism and neoliberalism, as well as the emergent hegemony of the financialized economy. Through its theorization of rhetorical style as the emergence of rhetorical forms that result from repetitions of virtual intensities, moreover, it argues for a reconsideration of contemporary formulations of ideology and the rhetorical situation. The first case study re-theorizes rhetorical style as emerging from interactions between texts and their contexts. It subsequently engages Ree Drummond's *Pioneer Woman* franchise as an exemplar of the frontier style, a collection of rhetorical forms that that resonate with images of the America during the time of westward expansion and reshapes social affiliations around a liberal model of social separation and individualism. The second case study then provides a theory of affective capture, whereby stylized dispositions interact with, and

become modulated by, logics of power to encourage practices that perpetuate hegemonic modes of affiliation. It takes Michelle Obama's Let's Move campaign as an example of how positive dispositions towards fitness practices become captured by logics of neoliberalism and militarism through the development of programs that encourage audiences to render themselves as potential resources for American economic and military power. The final chapter explicates a theory of the rhetorical situation whereby the emergence of hegemonic styles occurs as a result of probabilistic resonances between different layers of publicity. It does so through an analysis of debates surrounding the 2013 farm bill, where stylizations of the insured subject, as part of the broader financial economy, emerged through their resonances with figurations of farmers as rugged individuals and Americans as necessitating healthy food in order to continue to be economically productive. The conclusion then argues for a rhetorical scholarship that speculates about the possibilities for the emergence of alternative food economies.

INDEX WORDS: Rhetorical Style, Food and Farming, Affect, Economics, Rhetorical Situation, Affective Capture, New Materialism

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iv
CHAPTER	
1 INTRODUCTION	1
Food and Farming as a Site of Interrogation	4
Methodology	10
Chapter Précis	19
2 “YES WE PUT BUTTER ON OUR BEEF HERE:’ THE FRONTIER STYLE IN REE DRUMMOND’S <i>THE PIONEER WOMAN</i>	24
<i>Pioneer Woman</i> and Frontier Myth	26
Rhetorical Style in the Key of Affect	31
<i>Pioneer Woman</i> as Frontier Style	52
Conclusions	66
3 AFFECTIVE CAPTURE IN THE STYLIZATIONS OF MICHELLE OBAMA’S LET’S MOVE CAMPAIGN	70
Let’s Move’s Affective Stylizations	74
Logics of Capture in Contemporary Obesity Discourses	84
Let’s Move as Affective Capture	93
Conclusions	106

4	THE BECOMING-HEGEMONIC OF THE INSURED SUBJECT IN FARM POLITICS AS A CHALLENGE TO THEORIES OF THE RHETORICAL SITUATION	109
	Social Change Within Rhetorical Studies	113
	Styles, Virtual Selections, and Hegemony	124
	Debates About the 2014 Farm Bill	132
	Stylizations of Insured Subjects	159
	Crop Insurance Discourses and the Subject of Insurance	166
	Conclusions	176
5	CONCLUSION: A SPECULATIVE MATERIAL RHETORIC AND THE POTENTIALITY OF ALTERNATIVE FOOD ECONOMIES	179
	A Speculative Material Rhetoric	180
	Rhetorics of Capitalism at the Interstices	185
	The Possibility of Alternative Food Economies	188
	Conclusion	194
	REFERENCES	195

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Discourses at the intersections of food and farming are places where rhetoric's intensive materiality interacts with the concrete visceralities crucial to our biological sustenance, cultures, and economies that produce everyday environments. Public texts about food and how it is farmed are laden with cultural and economic significance. Concerns about where and what to eat predominate daily discourses, and every facet of farming, food preparation, and consumption are culturally specific, highly contested, and implicate local economies.¹ Take, for instance, the virulent protests of the opening of McDonald's restaurants in France led by "militant farmer" José Bové during the 1990's and early 2000's.² Bové and his compatriots argued that the spread of McDonald's, an American fast food chain, would open the floodgates for the unmitigated spread of globalization and contribute to the disappearance of French cuisine, including the specialized cheese production for which the country is known. Additionally, discourses about food and agriculture hold substantial sway in the media. As Laura Lindfield notes, "an increasing proliferation of food media across a variety of platforms" and Dozens of food films have entered the market in the USA and abroad."³ Food, and in most societies agriculture, are culturally and economically significant as well as crucial to the constitution of humans' bodily substrates from which the aforementioned practices emerge. Farming and food are thus sites of significant practices that constitute, and proliferate throughout, everyday life.

¹ Massimo Montanari, *Food is Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press), 2004

² Jamey Keaten, "French Farmer José Bové Leads New McDonald's Protest" *The Associated Press* (Monday, August 13, 2001), Retrieved from: <http://www.commondreams.org/headlines01/0813-01.htm>

³ Laura Lindfield, "Can Documentary Food Films Like Food Inc. Achieve their Promise?," *Environmental Communication* 4.3 (2010), 378

In addition to their cultural, economic, and biological significance, food and farming also provide sustenance for theorizing rhetoric's materiality. Perhaps because of their status as crucial to the constitution of our current conditions, practices and discourses surrounding edible matter and its production provide ground for cultivating a better understanding rhetoric's force as well as its relationships to our broader socio-economic processes. Indeed, because these phenomena are simultaneously symbolic and effect change in human and non-human bodies, they are a site where scholars may begin to interrogate the materiality of rhetorical practices as well as the interactions of rhetoric with biology and the material (e.g. non-biological) world.⁴ The relationships between food, agriculture, economics, and discourse thus invite scholarship about material rhetorics and their implications for everyday life.

The importance of rhetoric to farming and food, as well as their imbrication in everyday life, has not gone unnoticed by a broad swathe of rhetorical scholars. Scholars have interrogated these relationships under a variety of existing rubrics such as Burkean theories of identification, narrative theories, the rhetorical rubric of taste and concerns about intercultural communication and place. This dissertation project germinates a theory of rhetorical style for the purposes of building upon these investigations of the rhetoric of food and agriculture. It works to expand on our understandings of discourses of food and agriculture while also embellishing upon contemporary theorizations of the interactions between rhetoric, bodies, power, and contexts.

This dissertation project argues that scholars should attend to the convergence of stylistic features repeated in texts and their contexts in order to understand the potential aesthetic responses, as well as how those responses may come to shape our contemporary conditions. It draws on conceptions of rhetoric as the product of affective forces to define style as the

⁴ For a detailed analysis of the material status of rhetoric, see Celeste M. Condit, "Race and Genetics from a Modal Materialist Perspective," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 94.4 (2008), 383-406.

resonance, and thus sedimentation, of distinctive collections of tropes and forms within audiences.⁵ Resonance is figured here as the creation of virtual yet really existing perspectives that may become actual, or concrete, given the right set of conditions.⁶ These virtual perspectives are subsequently more or less likely to emerge as stylized forms in audience awareness depending on the power of their intensities. Intensities are produced by the repetition of rhetorical forms, as well as their relationship to textual contents, across the the affective milieus that constitute contemporary society. Although styles are distinctive in the sense that they produce rhetorical forms that deviate from other ways of acting, they garner force from the repeatability of those forms in across texts. By calling attention to the interactions between audiences and texts, this perspective will incorporate both text-centered approaches to rhetorical style, as well as observations about the relationships between rhetorical style, culture and politics. Indeed, this dissertation contributes a theory of rhetoric that seeks to re-materialize audiences as the sites where culture and individual texts converge to produce the stylized affectations of bodies.

Through its theorizations of rhetorical style, this dissertation project provides a map of the interactions of texts and audiences in the context of intersecting depictions of food and agriculture. In so doing, it provides another map of the fractured economic and social discourses that together comprise our current conditions. In this introduction, I begin by situating the intersections of food and farming as an important site of theorization insofar as they are

⁵ Tom Conley, for instance, defines style as “a series of singularities and differences that estrange common usages of language and make the world of both the writer and those in which the reader lives vibrate in unforeseen and compelling ways.” See: Tom Conley, “Singularity,” in *The Deleuze Dictionary: Revised Edition* ed. Adrian Parr (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005), 256.

⁶ The concept of the virtual in this essay draws on the work of Gilles Deleuze and Brian Massumi to argue that there are potentialities within the real, material, world that have yet to emerge as actual, or concrete. This understanding is distinct from the theorizations of virtuality as informatics or the image. Indeed, in previous understandings (proffered most notably by Jean Baudrillard), the virtual was associated with the world of fake images. For example, see: Gilles Deleuze and Claire Parnet, “The Actual and The Virtual” trans. Eliot Ross Albert in *Dialogues 2* (New York: Continuum, 2006), 112-114

intimately linked to the production of everyday life. Following this discussion of this dissertation's topic area, I outline its methodological presumption: that *figuration* and *territoriality* as two affectively powerful rhetorical forms crucial to the composition of the contemporary conditions. Finally, I provide a *précis* for the chapters that follow. Here, I argue that attention to the intersections of food and agriculture in contemporary discourses will provide the grounds from which to modulate our conceptions of rhetorical theory while expanding our map of our current economic and social conditions.

Food and Farming as a Site of Interrogation

The intersections of discourses about food consumption and agriculture are a compelling area for interrogating rhetorical style. As noted in the introduction, food and farming are highly contested and stylized practices where rhetoric's materiality and its relationships to material objects become apparent. Unsurprisingly, then, scholars of rhetoric and cultural studies have interrogated the functions and implications of food and farming discourses from a variety of perspectives. Drawing on a range of theories and methodologies from a concern about public discussion, to theories of Burkean identification, and narrative theories, to name a few, scholars have investigated rhetorics within and about agriculture. They have shown how depictions of agriculture are germane to a broad swathe of concerns including environmental sustainability, the ideologies of Western progress, and the maintenance of culturally specific farming practices. Following a discussion of literature about agriculture, I argue for expanding the study of agriculture into places where it is coupled with discussions of food. Such a study, I argue, would provide the grounds for better understanding stylized modalities of affiliation in contemporary society.

Rhetorical studies' broad engagement agriculture can be traced to the discussion movement's interrogation of deliberations and conversations among farmers. Martin P. Andersen's 1951 article "Discussion in Agriculture" demonstrates this concern.⁷ This essay formalizes a program for small group discussion among agriculturalists as a form of deliberation that could help shape public policy about agriculture and spread problem solving skills among farmers. Moreover, according to Andersen, discussion was a crucial mechanism for providing farmers the means to obtain their collective economic and political goals. From its earliest engagements with agriculture then, rhetorical studies as a field has been concerned with the spread of farming practices.

The trajectory set by Andersen's assertion that deliberation will produce better agricultural practices has been taken up most visibly by Tarla Rai Peterson. Peterson's work considers farmers' symbolic and decision making frameworks, such as the Jeffersonian myth that situates them as stewards of the land.⁸ In her studies of farmer's responses to land use conflicts, for instance, Peterson examines how the intersections of Jeffersonian agrarianism and the American frontier myth poses agriculturalists as both caretakers of the land and lone heroes that must master the land.⁹ In so doing, these myths made farmers reticent to adopt prescribed practices for soil conservation. Similarly, when Peterson, writing with Cristi Choat Horton, examined discourses surrounding the Endangered Species Act, they found that a series of conflicting symbolic frameworks such as common sense and a preference for experiential knowledge, an emphasis on independence, and a belief in the human-land connection intersected

⁷ Martin P. Andersen, "Discussion in Agriculture," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 37.4 (1959), 463-468

⁸ Tarla Rai Peterson, "Jefferson's Yeoman Farmer as Frontier Hero: A Self Defeating Myth Structure," *Agriculture and Human Values* 7 (Winter 1991), 9-19

⁹ Tarla Rai Peterson, "Telling the Farmers' Story: Competing Responses to Soil Conservation Rhetoric," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 77 (1991): 289-308

with agrarianism to discredit the regulations on land use.¹⁰ For Peterson, then, the choice of farming practices, as well as farmers' resistance to changing these practices, can be explained by the rhetorical myths with which they identify.

A variety of scholars have similarly called attention to how farmers' identifications and rhetorical frames shape their choice of farming practices. Building on Peterson's work, Mark Meister, Theresa Hest, and Ann Burnett examined how stewardship discourses in agriculture foster cynicism, or widespread mistrust, of weather reporting.¹¹ As such, farmers tend to invest in their own weather forecasting equipment to produce better results. Taking a different tack, scholars such as Garrett M. Broad have called attention to the role of cultural identifications in the selection of farming practices as well as decisions about what produce farmers grow.¹² Broad's study of the South Central Farm in Los Angeles argued that the selection of farming practices and produce aligned with the farmers' South and Central American heritage. Finally, scholars have also outlined how communication within urban farms produces resistive forms of community among women and minorities. Attending to a group of community gardens known as the Detroit Black Community Food Security Network, Monica White argues that in addition to the benefits offered to the black and mostly female participants by access to healthy food, the gardens provide a "safe space" for communication about the forms of oppression they face in their daily lives.¹³ Scholarship about the role of rhetoric in shaping how farmers approach

¹⁰ Tarla Rai Peterson and Cristi Choat Horton, "Rooted in the Soil: How Understanding the Perspectives of Landowners Can Enhance the Management of Environmental Disputes," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 81.2 (May 1995), 139-166

¹¹ Mark Meister, Theresa Hest, Ann Burnett, "Weather-Talk, Cynicism, and Agriculture," *Qualitative Research Reports in Communication* 10 (2009), 61-71

¹² Garrett M. Broad, "Ritual Communication and Use Value: The South Central Farm and the Political Economy of Place," *Communication, Culture & Critique* 16 (March 2013), 20-40

¹³ Monica M. White, "Sisters of the Soil: Urban Gardening as Resistance in Detroit," *Race/Ethnicity* 5 (Autumn 2011), 13-28

agriculture, as well as what they garner from it, has thus spanned from work on the discussion movement to contemporary concerns about power and place.

The focus of this dissertation project, however, is not discourse among farmers but rhetoric about farming. Specifically, this project will attempt to expand on current understandings of what styles and modalities of living are offered by mass mediated depictions of farming. In their review essay about the new rhetoric of agrarianism, Jeff Motter and Ross Singer draw on previous work on what they call “Jefferson's agrarian ideal”¹⁴ as a guiding force among farmers to argue that scholars should work to understand how this discourse justifies the perpetuation or spread of different modes of farming. “Agrarian rhetoric,” note the authors, “supplies the romantic imagery needed to legitimize industrialized and non-industrialized ends alike while simultaneously teaching and entertaining (sub)urban consumers.”¹⁵ Not only, then, do agrarian rhetorics operate as tools for farmers to persuade the public of the legitimacy of a wide range of agricultural practices, they also affect the everyday consumerist practices of people outside the farm. An example of how deploying the agrarian myth has altered public attitudes and habits can be found in Singer's study of *The Garden*, a documentary about the aforementioned South Central Farm.¹⁶ According to Singer, *The Garden* deployed common themes of agrarianism, such as the morality of the farmer, to invite audiences to identify with the families who worked the South Central Farm. Ultimately, these identifications may have produced a reconsideration of the propriety of using urban space for food production. Depictions of farming, alongside rhetorics of agrarianism, may propel audiences toward particular choices and orientations that will alter their political choices and habits in everyday life.

¹⁴ Jeff Motter and Ross Singer, “Review Essay: Cultivating a Rhetoric of Agrarianism,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 98 (November 2012), 440

¹⁵ Motter and Singer, “Rhetoric of Agrarianism,” 451

¹⁶ Ross Singer, “Visualizing Agrarian Myth and Place-Based Resistance in South Central Los Angeles,” *Environmental Communication* 5.3 (September 2011), 344-349

Discourses of farming may gain the most traction with audiences where they intersect with concerns about food. Food preparation and consumption are perhaps the central connections between farming and everyday life in developed nations. With the Earth's population becoming increasingly urbanized,¹⁷ people have fewer connections to rural areas and farming practices. As such, food consumption is one of the few remaining linkages between audiences and agriculture, a quality commented on by rhetorical and communication scholars such as Cindy Spurlock. In her essay about the Piedmont Farm Tour in North Carolina, Spurlock argues that the phenomenological experience of visiting the local farms encourages participants to reconsider their relationships to food consumption.¹⁸ According to Spurlock, the tours encourage visitors to join their Community Supported Agriculture programs and make affectively powerful connections between their food and the farms where it's produced. For Baldwin Van Gorp and Margot J. van der Goot, food advertisements serve as a site for multiple and conflicting ways of framing farming practices as sustainable.¹⁹ For example, organic food is often framed as possessing a "natural goodness" because the farming practices used to produce it lack artificial pesticides and fertilizers. Discourses of food, alongside its consumption, connect audiences to farms and farming practices in an increasingly urbanized world. As such, they may serve as a site for interrogating how the styles and modalities of living offered by rhetorics about farming have changed in the contemporary milieu.

The potential for rhetorics about farming and food to serve as a site for the interrogation of style is bolstered by its connection to the category of taste. Taste is simultaneously an

¹⁷ According to the United Nations, more than 78% of people in developed nations now live in urban areas. United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs/Population Division, *World Urbanization Prospects The 2011 Revision* (New York:United Nations), 2012

¹⁸ Cindy Spurlock, "Performing and Sustaining (Agri)Culture and Place: The Cultivation of Environmental Subjectivity on the Piedmont Farm Tour," *Text and Performance Quarterly* 29 (January 2009), 5-21

¹⁹ Baldwin Van Gorp and Margot J. van der Goot, "Sustainable Food and Agriculture: Stakeholder's Frames," *Communication, Culture, and Critique* 5 (2012), 127-148

expressed preference for particular bio-chemical reactions that result from the ingestion of food, and a rubric for rhetorical-cultural judgment. Although in this context taste most obviously guides choices about sustenance, it also invites other choices affectively connected to farming and food. For geographers Alison and Jessica Hayes-Conroy, “commonly-conceived biological ‘taste’ is transformed in the visceral realm as it connects, rhizomatically, with the material (molecular/chemical) content of ideas, beliefs, and social labels.”²⁰ The chemical power of food, in other words, connects in surprising ways with the concepts and linguistic signifiers on a variety of planes that together guide the development of the cultural category of choice. Drawing on Hayes-Conroy and Hayes-Conroy, Donovan Conley argues that this understanding of taste can provide the grounds for the development of a materialist theory that cuts across mind/body dualisms: “We can achieve this cut by expanding the realm of aesthetics to encompass not simply *these* kinds of objects or *those* sorts of feelings or *this* type of critic but the entire power and manner by which bodies are linked to one another (subjects and objects alike). Taste then becomes an intensifier of material relations: taste-power.”²¹ Unlike Hugh Blair's emphasis on taste as a learned means of enjoying texts, then, these engagements with taste in relationship to food provides a rhetorical linkage between food and farming that avoids re-iterating mind/body dualisms. Discourses about food choice, alongside food choices themselves, are linked to a whole host of material practices, including the types of farming they sanction. The seemingly neutral category of taste thus comes to provide an affective connection between farming and food, making the discourses about food choice and the types of farming they intimate a potentially productive place to interrogate style.

²⁰ Hayes-Conroy and Hayes-Conroy “Taking Back Culture: Feminism, Food, and Visceral Politics” *Gender, Place, and Culture* 15:5 2008 467

²¹ Donovan Conley, “The Good Body, Skilled in Eating,” *Pre/Text: A Journal of Rhetorical Theory* 21 (Spring-Winter 2001), 24

This dissertation project builds on the connections between food consumption and agriculture. In particular, it expands upon our understandings about how they become connected through the rhetorical forms of territoriality and figuration to a myriad of cultural and economic practices such as the capture of positive dispositions towards healthy food consumption, the construction of social space and the production of new modes of economic speculation. In each instance, these practices will be situated as a part of a virtual style that reenforces particular habits amenable to the perpetuation of economic discourses that battle for hegemony in the public. Attending to the virtual styles produced by discourses of food and farming will subsequently offer grounds upon which to understand how rhetoric plays a crucial part in the constitution of everyday life.

Methodology

This dissertation project's attention to rhetorical style in the context of discourses of food and farming takes the specific form of an engagement with the territorialization of space as well as the process of figuration. Both of these rhetorical forms play important roles in organizing the texts that I examine as well as broader social habits and space through their re-enforcement of intensities that resonate with audiences. As such, they serve as important objects of analysis throughout this dissertation project.

The Territorialization of Spaces

The rhetoricity of spaces and places has become a common *topoi* in communication and cultural studies. Perhaps most famously, Michael de Certeau's essay "Walking in the City" called scholarly attention to the role of naming and tropological relations in the production of cities as meaningful spaces.²² For de Certeau, a whole series of relations from the names of places to the

²² Michael de Certeau, "Walking in the City" in *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press), 1984.

ways people walk in cities have a tropology and grammar that shape conscious and unconscious dispositions towards urban spaces. Taking from de Certeau and French sociologist Henri Lefebvre, geographer Doreen Massey has become one of the most notable avatars for the rhetoricity of space. For Massey, discourse produces a variety of ways of imagining geographical spaces and specific places imbued with meaning.²³ By imaging space as representable, according to Massey, academics as well as Western Culture writ large cannot come to terms with the constancy of change over time characteristic of metaphysical reality. Finally, rhetorical scholar Joan Faber McAllister draws on Massey to show how the predominant conceptions of time and space, or *kairotopics*, after September 11th, 2001 have become mediated through the nuclear family.²⁴ These *kairotopics*, according to McAllister, have encouraged the privileging of private values in contemporary forms of citizenship, making them amenable to the perpetuation of a neoliberal disciplining of publicity. Spaces and places are thus thoroughly rhetorical. They reenforce, and are emerge throughout, contemporary discourses that guide both everyday life and national politics.

The conceptions of the rhetoricity of space discussed thus far have tended to privilege the category of consciousness or otherwise only tangentially engage questions of affect. Although they provide important observations about how space and discourses about space should be objects of rhetorical scholarship, they have missed the importance of territoriality, defined as the production of rhythms and affects that transform spaces into personalized places, to everyday conceptions of space and time.²⁵ As Lawrence Grossberg notes: “space is organized as territories, constituted through the repetition of particular components or elements, creating a

²³ Doreen B. Massey, *For Space* (London: Sage Publications), 2005.

²⁴ Joan Faber McAllister, “Domesticating Citizenship: The Kairotopics of America's Post-9/11 Home Makeover,” *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 27 (March 2010), 84-104

²⁵ Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia II*, trans. Brian Massumi (Bloomington: University of Minnesota Press), 1987

resonance or rhythm between milieus, so that aspects or portions of different milieu-contexts come together to construct an expressive assemblage.”²⁶ Through the repetition of particular intensities in rhythm, texts produce spaces with a feeling of coherence and bring together a variety of fragments to produce audiences' sense of place. Everyday life is thus composed of interlocking territories, or places, that resonate together and guide bodies in their navigation of the world.

The affective rhythms associated with territories are seemingly complicated and complex despite the seeming simplicity of the codes associated with these everyday places. According to Grossberg, “everyday life is characterized by simple codings and complex territorialities. It is not organized by systems of rules and meanings, but by distributions of habits and structured mobilizations.”²⁷ The convergence of affective rhythms into a recognizable rhetorical form thus lends itself to substantial variations. There are a broad spectrum of ways to organize and live in any place. The affects, emotions, and memories associated with these spaces are complex and varied. Any text that territorializes a series of affects will likely vary in interesting and singular ways. Yet, the linguistic and material codings associated with the spaces are unlikely to deviate from cultural commonplaces. A school, for instance, may have any number of floor plans, and the possible ways of navigating the school space may vary even more. Yet, schools almost always have a uniform set of rooms with similar names, such as the gymnasium, the art classroom, a main office, ect. Moreover, each of these spaces would have a similar set of material markers, including equipment, different desks, and floor dressings. While each school may be singular in their spatial arrangements, then, the activities that take place in each school and the materials they require are relatively similar. The rhetorical critic must read these codings

²⁶ Lawrence Grossberg, *Cultural Studies in the Future Tense* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 276.

²⁷ Grossberg, *Cultural Studies*, 277

and complex territorialities in order to better understand how everyday spaces are produced through the rhythmic production of intensities.

Territoriality as a means for the rhetorical production of space expands the emphasis on representation of previous theories in favor of a materialist understanding of texts as productive of practices in space. By examining how discourses produce particular territories, then, this dissertation project will show how styles seek to reproduce contemporary society in their images. For example, identifying how texts produce the house as a series of gendered territories may texture our understandings of the distribution of household labor comes to feel normal. Indeed, widespread depictions of women's affectations as concentrated in the kitchen and in spaces of child rearing, and the distribution of male coded affects in spaces of entertainment and manual work implies a distinctly gendered division of household labor. Here, women are shown engaging in the rhythms of food preparation and mothering, while men are traditionally depicted as arriving after their labor is done for the day and eating and engaging in recreating. Attention to these depictions of distributed affects allows critics to interrogate how popular stylizations of food preparation and consumption are implicated in the reproduction assumptions about gender, labor, and home life as just a few of the myriad of spaces where the everyday is lived. Identifying the material and affective productions of place in texts about food and farming will subsequently serve as a means for understanding how rhetorical styles shape audiences' dispositions and reproduce particular social relationships.

Figuration

Figures, understood as material objects or characters in discourse, are produced in a wide variety of texts, from the visual to the merely linguistic. While they may seem to be “contents” or non-formal elements, figures become rhetorical forms when they emanate contextually

powerful affects, or auras, that arrange practices produced in discourse in space. Historically, as well as in some recent treatments, however, figures have been defined as *exclusively* linguistic. For example, in her treatment of the history of figuration, Carol Poster argues for the revival of attention to past uses of linguistic oddities as a mechanism for understanding the function of rhetoric.²⁸ For Poster, who takes from a broad swathe of the history of rhetoric, then, figuration signifies any time linguistic movements gain significance because they break from normal usage to produce aesthetically pleasing or persuasive speech. Such an understanding of figuration, then, situates it as just one part of a style, where a particular collection of figures, once considered unique or an oddity, come to characterize a broader set of discourses through their repetition.

As recent scholarship has demonstrated, however, figures can also be understood as material objects that play a central role in public discourses. For Robert Hariman and John Louis Lucaites, the materiality of figures arises most evidently in visual formats such as photographs. In late modern societies, argue Hariman and Lucaites, the body serves as a central figure because it situates the sovereign individual as the grounds of contemporary society.²⁹ Alternatively, Joan Faber McAlister calls for scholars to consider a broader set of texts and possible objects as sites and objects of figuration. "... Figuration," notes Faber McAlister, "serves as the central mode through which bodies, structures, and spaces (and the relationships among them) are imagined, imaged, represented and performed..."³⁰ For instance, she calls our attention to how the figure of the couple, and particularly the heterosexual pair, became an eroticized trope that shaped a public emphasis on the suburban household, understood as a marital space, in light of a perceived crisis

²⁸ Carol Poster, "Being, Time, and Definition: Toward a Semiotics of Figural Rhetoric," *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 33 (2002), 116-137

²⁹ Robert Hariman and John Louis Lucaites, "Visual Tropes in Late-Modern Emotion in U.S. Public Culture" *POROI* 5 (2008), 47-93, available at: <http://ir.uiowa.edu/poroi/vol5/iss2/2>.

³⁰ Joan Faber McAlister, "Figural Materialism: Renovating Marriage through the American Family Home" *Southern Communication Journal* 76 (September—October 2011), 297

of marriage. For Hariman and Lucaites and Faber McAlister, then, figures are material objects that through their representation play an important role in the production of meaning within contemporary publics. Unlike the classical tradition, these material figures emerge in a variety of textual modalities from images to the merely linguistic.

Where Hariman and Lucaites and Faber McAlister ostensibly resonate with traditional theories of rhetoric is their seeming reliance on the cognitive register to explain the power of figures in contemporary culture. Although figures may certainly serve as a form of representation, for the purposes of this dissertation their power in producing intensities and affects plays a more important role in the production of style. In their discussions of the relationships between aesthetics and philosophy, Deleuze and Guattari explicate the power of figures to affect audiences: “They [aesthetic figures] are sensations: percepts and affects, landscapes and faces, visions and becoming.”³¹ Figures, then, produce the pre-subjective level of percepts as well as the bodily affects that together make up intensities. They move audiences towards a becoming-otherwise that may emerge as a distinct style, as Deleuze and Guattari note further: “The great aesthetic figures of thought and the novel, but also of painting, sculpture, and music produce affects that surpass ordinary affectations and perceptions, just as concepts go beyond everyday opinions.”³² Figures, then, work like any other part of style to move audiences through variations in the intensities that produce perception and awareness. In this formulation their novelty does not rise to the level of singularity, or unrepeatability, as a religious or artistic figure might. They garner salience by virtue of the affects they produce and their widespread recognition as a product of their repetition. Through repeated encounters with figures in

³¹ Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *What is Philosophy?* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 177

³² Deleuze and Guattari, *What is Philosophy*, 65

discourse, then, audiences will likely become affected by their intensities in ways that exceed the power of mundane objects.

More than simply producing stylistically significant affects, culturally significant figures come to organize the social field because of their aura. Rather than simply an interesting image, or peculiar object in discourse, figures are always attached to some idea or value with an aura that exceeds the cultural importance of everyday objects. In their discussion of philosophical figures, Deleuze and Guattari further embellish their previous statements: “This is why the figure has a reference, one that is plurivocal and circular by nature. Certainly it is not defined by an external resemblance, which remains prohibited, but by an internal tension that relates it to the transcendent on the plane of immanence of thought.”³³ Although figures in everyday discourse may not rise to the level of transcendence normally assigned to religious icons, they are hierarchical insofar as they guide or organize other practices. The affects they produce emerge as a whole series of dispositions or practices in the social field. For instance, the figure of the “welfare queen” in conservative discourses emerged to organize many discussions of social services during the 1980’s. Because it emanated repulsive, or negative, intensities, this figure also organized discourses and practices such as policing African Americans that exceeded the concerns about social services. These discourses were situated spatially, as the “welfare queen” was placed in the inner city, organizing elements in relationship to racialized centers of urban poverty. Moreover, even today, the dispositions of many white Americans are still guided by the negative affects produced by the figure of “the welfare queen” in their orientations towards government assistance for the under-privileged, demonstrating its power to rise above ordinary

³³ Deleuze and Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, 89

objects in everyday discourses.³⁴ By tracing how figures function to organize practices and discourses, then, we can better understand how rhetoric functions as a material force throughout the social field.

This theory shows how rhetoric's materiality exceeds the material qualities of signification usually associated with linguistic figures. In their discussion of aesthetic and philosophical figures, Deleuze and Guattari note repeatedly that they “have nothing to do with rhetoric.”³⁵ Although such admonishments may seem to militate against incorporating their understanding of figuration into a theory of rhetoric, they do not account for contemporary expansions of rhetoric beyond the merely linguistic to include materials and images. Deleuze and Guattari's distaste for rhetoric likely has more to do with its popular association with linguistic tropes outlined by Poster rather than an inattention to how images and material objects affect bodies. Moreover, because figures are a means for organizing contents within the social field, figures operate similar to any other rhetorical form. For instance, the figure of “war” provides an organization for a series of contents much like a narrative. In a war, one or more intensive elements are in a conflict. There is a beginning, middle, and end. There are also winners and losers. Moreover, there are a series of affects, such as 'bravery,' 'sacrifice,' and 'valor' that are associated with different parties who are at war. By affects associated with the figure of war, an event that produces intensities in excess of mundane objects, then, a whole order of contents are provided cohesion. More than simply an interesting movement of language, then, figures affect audiences and emerge in consciousness to produce a whole series of dispositions. Deleuze and Guattari's emphasis on the affective power of aesthetic and religious figures subsequently comports with a focus on the intensities produced by rhetorical forms in this dissertation project.

³⁴ Jennifer Bailey Woodward and Teresa Mastin, “Black Woomanhood: *Essence* and its Treatment of Stereotypical Images of Black Women” *Journal of Black Studies* 32 (2005), 264-281.

³⁵ Deleuze and Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, 177

Attention to figuration and the intensities produced by important figures allows scholars to better understand how practices in the social field are organized around objects and images that emanate powerful intensities. This understanding of figures subsequently expands contemporary theorizations insofar as it calls for attention to how they produce forces that work on bodies at levels that exceed cognition. For example, Carol Cohen argues that the phallic figure of the intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM), an image repeated throughout the cold war, produced an unconscious that sexualized nuclear discourses.³⁶ The figure of the ICBM, according to Cohn, temporally organized a whole series of sexualized contents, such as a description of a nuclear silo as “the nicest hole” and the repeated use of the phrase “penetration” to describe the ability of a nuclear weapon to hit underground targets, around the event of a nuclear explosion. Although the theory of figures offered here effaces an engagement with the unconscious as such, the popular phallic imagery of ICBM's role in the organization of nuclear discourses demonstrates the extent to which work to organize practices in the social field. By calling for critical attention to figuration, this method subsequently provides another tool for tracing the role of rhetoric in organizing the social field.

Rhetorical scholars should engage figuration and territorialization in a manner that broadens the scope of close textual analysis to a consideration of their repetitions within the broader context. This method draws upon Michael Leff's call for understanding the “internal dynamics” of texts³⁷ by attending to how these forms organize the contents of intensities as stable elements of a discrete artifact. Yet, it also calls attention to how the text, as a collection of fragments, infolds audiences' contexts into the rhetorical event, a move that comports with Michael Calvin McGee's call for a more detailed account of how media ecologies have collapsed

³⁶ Carol Cohen, “Nuclear Language and How We Learned to Pat the Bomb,” *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 12 (1987), 687-718.

³⁷ Leff, “Neo-Classical Criticism Revisited,” 248.

distinctions between texts and contexts.³⁸ In so doing, this method draws upon Celeste Condit's emphasis on the necessity of attending to texts as the site of criticism while also leaving space for productive theorizations of the functions of rhetoric and the nature of contemporary contexts.³⁹ Rather than attending to more traditional mechanisms such as ideographs, linguistic figures, or arguments, however, this project turns attention to territories and figures as two powerful forms that increasingly produce and order the social field. Territories, such as schools and the home, are spaces often produced through texts that produce powerful depictions of everyday habits. Similarly, figures such as ICBM's, "the war" and the "welfare queen" are objects produced in texts that organize the contents of intensities through their affective power. This dissertation project subsequently attends to how territorialization and figuration operate in texts about food and farming as a means of explicating how rhetoric operates as a crucial force in the constitution of our contemporary conditions.

Chapter Précis

Attention to the styles that emerge within and across texts to depict the intersections of agriculture and food may produce a better understanding of how rhetorical processes emerge to shape our current conditions. Each chapter of this dissertation project engages texts about farming and food, as well as the rhetorical theories that may explain how they function. In so doing, each chapter argues that rhetorical scholars should supplement their work on an important topic in rhetorical theory with an attention to style, understood as the emergence of affectively powerful forms. As a whole, this dissertation project examines how the circulation of different styles, and their occasional interactions in texts, reenforce and modulate assumptions about the social field and economy in the realms of farming and food policy. Thus, the first two chapters

³⁸ McGee, "Text/Context," 1990.

³⁹ Condit, "Rhetorical Criticism and Audiences," 1990.

interrogate the emergence of frontier and neoliberal styles respectively before examining how their interactions have provided the grounds for the becoming-hegemonic of the subject of insurance, and ultimately the financialization of the economy, in America's farm policy.

The first chapter describes and critiques the “frontier style,” a modality of living that offers people the feeling of connection to the era of American westward expansion, in order to provide an alternative to our discipline's sometimes monolithic treatment of myth. Rather than emphasizing overarching narratives about “how the West was won,” the frontier style emphasizes practices that encourage a territorialization of individuals as separate from a community to which they still belong, a further territorialization of the home according to the gendered division of labor, as well as the figuration of the frontier through the regionalization of language and culture. Each of these qualities, I argue, likely resonate strongly with contemporary forms of economic and political liberalism.

To explicate the theory of frontier style, this chapter attends to *The Pioneer Woman* television and blog franchise, a multimedia empire that depicts the daily life of Ree Drummond. Drummond, who lives on a working cattle farm with her family, has a weekly Food Network show, publishes a blog that receives four million unique visitors a month and authors books that have made the *New York Times* best sellers list. In addition to their ever-increasing popularity, season five of *The Pioneer Woman*, as well as Drummond's blog of the same name, present an opportune site for explicating the frontier style because when taken together, they exemplify how a number of practices common to images of the frontier have become stylized and adapted for life in contemporary society. Because Drummond mainly proffers affectations of a rugged lifestyle, rather than a series of interlocking beliefs about westward expansion and untamed wilderness, this chapter argues that rhetorical theorists should supplement their theories of the

frontier myth with a theory of style. This discussion thus sets the stage for an interrogation of the neoliberal style, understood as the corporate and state production of healthy consumers as a means of ensuring the availability of labor, often framed as contrary to the values of individualism and personal freedom espoused by the frontier style.

The second chapter outlines how intertwined stylizations of neoliberalism and militarism function as a series of rhetorical forms that produce healthy bodies as human capital capable of economic activity and war fighting. It argues that rhetorical scholars should supplement their theories of ideology and style with an attention to the process of affective capture, whereby autonomous intensities become modulated through programs designed to render bodies as resources for the national project. Through these stylizations, depictions of farming and food become mechanisms for encouraging audiences to make consumptive choices that will maximize their human capital.

As an example of the neoliberal style, this chapter interrogates Michelle Obama's "Let's Move" initiative as an intervention into obesity, understood as a problem for the nation's economy and war fighting capabilities. As the most visible government response to the problem of childhood obesity, as well as the most controversial because of their interventions into consumer food choice, this campaign is an important place to interrogate how the promotion of public health become the grounds for the development of programs designed to sustain America's military and economy. This chapter begins by attending to how the campaign's television promotions, which rely heavily on a combination of figuration, color, and movement, offer a series of intensities that may produce positive dispositions towards exercise and healthy eating before showing how these forces likely resonate with concerns about the impact of rising obesity rates on America's national strength. It then shows how these resonances emerge in

Obama's speeches at military bases and to policy makers as justifications for the development of programs designed to amplify the nation's reserve of human capital. My re-description of stylizations of neoliberalism as intertwined with militarism, following the discussion of frontier rhetorics, sets the stage for their convergence in contemporary debates about agriculture policy.

The final case study attends to how the interactions between the frontier and neoliberal styles in debates about the Agriculture Reform, Food, and Jobs Act of 2013, colloquially termed 'the farm bill,' provided the grounds for the unexpected becoming-hegemonic of stylizations of the insured subject. In order to do so, it proposes a theory of the rhetorical situation that emphasizes the multi-layered and probabilistic processes through which rhetorics circulate, interact with resonant stylizations, and ultimately emerge to become hegemonic. This theory, it argues, offers an alternative to contemporary understandings of the rhetorical situation which, as a whole, tend to emphasize the determining nature of ideologies, apparatuses, or rhetoric. Specifically, this chapter attends to how, in debates about the farm bill on the Senate floor between January 2012 and March 2013, stylizations of farmers as frontier heroes and Americans as potential storehouses of labor-power resonated with calls to simultaneously decrease the amount of Direct Payments, or guaranteed subsidies, and increase the government's investment in agricultural insurance as a salve to potential catastrophes faced by the agricultural sector. It argues further that these resonances alone might be insufficient to explain how the seemingly entrenched Direct Payments were replaced by agricultural insurance and that an attention to how this policy alternative resonated with broader stylizations of the insured subject, as preparing themselves against anticipated disasters through the purchase of a financial product, might provide a more complete picture of this process. By demonstrating that stylizations of the insured subject, as part of the broader rhetoric of the financial economy, emerged as hegemonic through

its probabilistic, and often contradictory, resonances with the discourses of liberalism and neoliberalism, this chapter calls upon scholars to begin to attend to the probabilistic processes through which the public is constituted.

The conclusion evaluates the possibilities for a speculative materialist rhetoric that sanctions the mapping of both our current conditions and the possibilities for the emergence of alternative food economies that might emerge to modulate our current means of producing and distributing sustenance. It begins by showing how this project, as a whole, provides a prospectus for a speculative materialist rhetoric that may overcome popular objections to the epistemological assumptions of 'new materialisms'. It does so by emphasizing the speculative nature of our encounters with rhetoric as a material object that both produces affect and is situated amongst the material processes that constitute our metaphysical universe. Following this engagement with this dissertation's theoretical precepts it argues that when taken together the case studies demonstrate that scholars should attend to the persistence of a multiplicity of economic stylizations within the public sphere. Rather than positing the predominance of a particular cultural or economic logic, such as neoliberalism, liberalism, or capitalism, it argues scholars should become increasingly attentive to the ways conflicting flows produce a particular conjuncture⁴⁰ as the scene of political and academic intervention. Finally, the conclusion argues that this dissertation project invites scholars to speculate about the possibilities for the stylization, and becoming-hegemonic, of alternative food economies. Doing so might provide a trajectory for future rhetorical scholarship that engages with the politics of food and seeks to reshape our affiliations with the Earth and other humans in a less exploitative manner.

⁴⁰ Grossberg, *Cultural Studies*, 2010.

CHAPTER 2

“YES WE PUT BUTTER ON OUR BEEF HERE:’ THE FRONTIER STYLE IN REE DRUMMOND’S *THE PIONEER WOMAN*

Although life on the American frontier during the era of western expansion was arguably the product of necessity and filled with hardship, this historical period has become stylized through popular practices over a century later. From media franchises, to fashion, home decor, cutlery, architecture, and even new homesteading movements in urban and rural areas, people are increasingly inventing products and ways of life that resonate with a time when much of North America was uninhabited by Europeans. For example, The Old Frontier Clothing Co. from Los Angeles is one of a myriad of fashion outlets that produces frock coats, vests, dresses, hats, and other garb akin to that worn by actors in cowboy films of the twentieth century.¹ The urban homesteading movement is another example of how images of life on the American frontier have become stylized. Pursuing what one advocate calls “modern pioneering,” urban homesteaders aspire to develop habits that revive “traditional homesteading skills in a contemporary setting.”² Finally, television viewers are likely familiar with Nicole Ritchie and Paris Hilton’s failed stint working on an Arkansas dairy farm in their show “The Simple Life.”³ Each of these examples demonstrate that as society is becoming increasingly urbanized and technologized, more rustic styles of living are becoming increasingly stylized.

¹ Their full clothing line, alongside the numerous reviews of their clothing in the national media can be found on their website: <http://www.oldfrontier.com/index.htm>.

² Karin Kliewer, “Living the Good Life in the City: Creating Your Sustainable Urban Homestead” *Natural Life Magazine* Last Accessed 9/4/2013; http://www.naturallifemagazine.com/1006/urban_homesteading.htm.

³ *The Simple Life*, Bunim/Murray Productions (2001)

Another text that exemplifies the stylization of life on the frontier is *The Pioneer Woman*, a multi-million dollar, award winning, cross-media franchise about the life of housewife, chef, and television host Ree Drummond.⁴ A figure of increasing notoriety, Drummond's blog receives about 2 million visitors a year, her books have achieved best seller status on *The New York Times* booklists,⁵ her television show has become a staple of The Food Network and the formation of internet based groups that aim to expose *Pioneer Woman* as a fraud.⁶ Rather than simply proffering some product with a rustic aura or an idyllic image of simple living, like many other stylizations of life on the frontier, this wildly popular franchise offers audiences do-it-yourself tips for living a contemporary life-style with the putative disposition of someone on the frontier. It does so, I argue, by circulating affectively charged depictions of Drummond's day-to-day life on a cattle ranch in Osage County, Oklahoma with her four children and land-owning husband Ladd Drummond, who she dubs "The Marlboro Man." These depictions subsequently produce what I call the frontier style, a series of rhetorical forms that orient everyday life towards the creation of contemporary society as a figural frontier as human societies become increasingly urbanized.

In this chapter, I argue that rhetorical scholars should supplement their understanding of the frontier myth with a theory of the frontier style. Rather than a system of meanings, or a historical narrative, the frontier style invites audiences to engage in habits of perception that divide space through the rhetorical forms of figuration and territorialization. Drawing on these and other rhetorical forms the frontier style figures the frontier as a region with a distinctive set of habits and customs and in so doing produces two interlocking forms of territoriality: the

⁴ Meghan Casserly, "Home On The Range With The Pioneer Woman" *Forbes.com* (March 3rd, 2010), <http://www.forbes.com/2010/03/03/blogger-pioneer-woman-ree-drummond-forbes-woman-time-food.html>

⁵ Rene Lynch, "The Pioneer Woman, an Internet and publishing sensation" *The Los Angeles Times* (September 23, 2009): <http://www.latimes.com/features/food/la-fo-pioneer23-2009sep23,0,623229.story>

⁶ For instance, see "The Marlboro Woman" an online community and blog at <http://themarlbrowoman.com/>

spatial separation of families into territories despite their participation in community life and the division of home-life into distinct yet flexible places through a gendered division of labor determined by seemingly natural dispositions. Through the repetition of these rhetorical forms, the frontier style simultaneously offers an attractive way of ordering space in contemporary society.

This chapter engages *The Pioneer Woman* franchise as an exemplar of how the frontier style reinforces dispositions towards society as a series of contiguous regions and territories which atomize bodies into pioneering individuals. I execute this argument first, by bringing *The Pioneer Woman* franchise into conversation with theories of the frontier myth in order to demonstrate that the myth is an sufficient heuristic for explaining the allure of Ree Drummond's lifestyle. Before embellishing my description of the frontier style through an analysis of *The Pioneer Woman*, I explicate a theory of style as the emergence of affectively charged rhetorical forms into audience's awareness as the result of their repetition in texts and across contexts inhabited by audiences. In so doing, I argue that this theory of style provides a novel way of bridging the divide between texts and contexts that has so often been a source of contention in rhetorical studies. I conclude this chapter with a discussion of the relationships between rhetorical style and space. In so doing, I argue that the pioneer style demonstrates how rhetorical scholars should study space as the distribution of affect through discourse as an alternative to more cognitive understandings of space as representation.

Pioneer Woman and Frontier Myth

The mythological framing of the frontier as a space that infuses Americans with the rugged individualism necessary for a successful democracy was first described by history

professor Fredrick Jackson Turner during the late 19th and early 20th Centuries.⁷ Beginning as a novel re-description of history, Turner's figuration of life on the frontier as exceptional has been widely influential in the development of a national origin myth that places Americans at the forefront of liberal capitalism and democracy. The widespread rhetorical impact of Turner's thesis on the American public and academy, first outlined in rhetorical studies by Ronald H. Carpenter,⁸ has been found to be a necessary means for making sense of how a variety of films,⁹ narratives,¹⁰ and political rhetorics¹¹ place America in the world. Although the analysis of representations of American life as situated within the frontier myth continues to help rhetorical scholars make sense of a broad swathe of discourses in American society, this section argues that because the franchise lacks an emphasis on the divisions between the frontier and civilization, and invites audiences to participate in stylized practices rather than requiring ideological adherence or symbolic meaning-making, it is insufficient for understanding the power of *The Pioneer Woman*.

When first encountering the *Pioneer Woman*, scholars may be tempted to critique it as yet another iteration of the frontier myth. Indeed, such a reading of the franchise may help to

⁷ Frederick Jackson Turner, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History," *Report of the American Historical Association* (1893): 199-227. Available at:

<http://www.honorshumanities.umd.edu/205%20Readings.pdf>

⁸ Ronald H. Carpenter, "Fredrick Jackson Turner and the Rhetorical Impact of the Frontier Thesis," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 63 (1977), 117-129.

⁹ Janice Hocker Rushing, "The Rhetoric of The American Western Myth," *Communication Monographs* 50 (March 1983), 17; Janice Hocker Rushing, "Evolution of 'The New Frontier' in Alien and Aliens: Patriarchical Co-optation of the Feminine Archetype," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 75 (1989), 2; Janice Hocker Rushing, "Mythic Evolution of 'The New Frontier' in Mass Mediated Rhetoric" *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 3 (September 1986),

¹⁰ Mary E. Stuckey, "The Donner Party and the Rhetoric of Westward Expansion" *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 14 (2011), 119-260

¹¹ Samuel P. Perry, "Douglas MacArthur as Frontier Hero: Converting Frontiers in MacArthur's Farewell to Congress" *Southern Communication Journal* 77 (September — October 2012), 263-286; Mark West and Chris Carey "(Re)Enacting Frontier Justice: The Bush Administration's Tactical Narration of the Old West Fantasy after September 11" *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 92 (November 2006), 379-412; Leroy G. Dorsey, "The Frontier Myth in Presidential Rhetoric: Theodore Roosevelt's Campaign for Conservation," *Western Journal of Communication* 59 (Winter 1995), 1-19

make sense of how it frames the Drummond family. Throughout the shows, books, and blogs, Ladd, who is nicknamed “Marlboro man,” is depicted as the rough cattleman who is most often seen working the cattle in a pasture. Similarly, Ree could be understood as the stereotypical ‘good girl’ who, in many country-western films is from places more civilized and whose presence, according to Janice Hocker Rushing, “represents societal values associated with family and community.”¹² She was educated at The University of Southern California, an expensive private school in Los Angeles, is in charge of rearing and homeschooling their children, and is a master of social media. On the surface, then, the main characters of *The Pioneer Woman* enact the dialectical tension between civilization and the frontier that dominates many iterations of the frontier myth.

A detailed examination of the franchise demonstrates, however, that it disrupts any coherence to the delineations between the civilizing force of the kitchen and the individuating effects of life as a cattle farmer. One of the central premises of many critiques of the frontier myth is that its dialectical tensions provide it with a claim to coherence. In nearly every formulation, the frontier myth assumes the development of a consistent narrative that explains past and future actions as a product of contravening forces such as individual and community and control and chaos. Yet, both Ladd and Ree are depicted as complicated people who are not clearly associated with neither the wilderness nor the city. For instance, Ladd is often depicted as a family man who spends much of his time driving his children to their sporting events in nearby towns. Furthermore, blog posts and season five of the show show Ree and Ladd renovating a building they purchased in nearby Pawhuska, Oklahoma.¹³ Throughout these posts and episodes, Ladd is shown doing carpentry, conferencing with building contractors, and walking around the

¹² Rushing, “The American Western Myth,” 17

¹³ For instance, see Ree's posts at: <http://thepioneerwoman.com/homeandgarden/category/the-building/>

increasingly finished inside. Ladd and Ree's cooperative work to renovate a previously abandoned building, particularly when the episodes and blog posts are interspersed with images of Ladd working their cattle, tends to blur boundaries between life in the city and that on the ranch. Unlike the cowboy films and historical narratives analyzed by rhetorical critics, he does not appear to suffer from an internal conflict because he occupies both wilderness and civilization.¹⁴ As such, the *Pioneer Woman* blurs the distinctions between the individualizing force of the wilderness and communal environment of town life that often provides the frontier myth with its coherence.

Rather than inviting audiences to participate in the symbolic forms of meaning-making characteristic of most mythologies, moreover, *Pioneer Woman* stylizes the practices and dispositions of frontier life as merely enjoyable habits. That myth is a constellation of signs that allow audiences to make meaning from the world is a central assumption of many theorizations. For instance, Roland Barthes situates myths as second-order signs that provide a context through which individual images, signs and figures come to make sense.¹⁵ Similarly, for Hocker Rushing, the purpose of the frontier myth “is not unconscious wish fulfillment, but expression of spiritual meaning.”¹⁶ Critics of the frontier myth, then, assume that it provides Americans with a sense that it is a site of holy providence that imparts moral virtue on its inhabitants. *The Pioneer Woman*, however, does not mean anything, nor is symbolic meaning necessary to engage with the practices offered by the franchise. There is no discernible narrative arc to the show or blog, and the Drummonds are figured as normal people rather than frontier heroes on an errand in the

¹⁴ Ladd has done several Q&A posts that answer questions from readers of the blog. Although there isn't much discussion of his life as a father, there are several questions about how he sees life on the farm and whether or nor his children would inherit it. Overall, his responses point to the idea that he likes his life, and that the children can do whatever they like for a living. See: <http://thepioneerwoman.com/blog/category/marlboro-man/posts-by-marlboro-man/>

¹⁵ Roland Barthes, translated by Annette Lavers. *Mythologies* (London, Paladin), 1972.

¹⁶ Rushing, “The New Frontier,” 2

wilderness. The audience, furthermore, does not need to place the franchise within a specific constellation of signs. There is little intentional symbolism in the show and the life on the cattle ranch is repeatedly depicted as a normal choice. Although the audience may impute elements of the frontier myth onto the franchise, it is not necessary for them to do so in order to participate in Ree Drummond's world by watching the show, reading the books and blog, and making her crafts and recipes.

Rather than symbols and meaning, then, the franchise primarily proffers a rhetoric of dispositions and practices that exceed the explanatory power of mythological criticism. Both the blog and show repeatedly tell audiences that the franchise, as well as living and working on the ranch, are things they enjoy because their lifestyle fits their dispositions and family history. For instance, on the “About Pioneer Woman” section of her website Ree writes:

Unexpectedly, during a brief stay in my hometown, I met and fell in love with a rugged cowboy. Now I live in the middle of nowhere on a working cattle ranch. My days are spent wrangling children, chipping dried manure from boots, washing jeans, and making gravy. I have no idea how I got here...but you know what? I love it. Don't tell anyone!¹⁷

In this description of Ree's unexpected move to the ranch, she tells her audience that she “loves” the chores associated with living on the farm. From raising the children, to cleaning and cooking, Drummond seems to thoroughly enjoy her stylized frontier existence. As such, the franchise's depictions contrast with the typical pioneer narratives that cast cowboys and farmers as living the rough and tumble lifestyle necessitated by life separate from civilization. Indeed, *Pioneer Woman* invites audiences to participate in its stylized practices because they're pleasurable

¹⁷ Ree Drummond, “About Pioneer Woman” *Confessions of a Pioneer Woman Last Accessed* (September 5, 2013): <http://thepioneerwoman.com/about/>

choices rather than as a result of their privileged place within a broader constellation of meanings.

The Pioneer Woman's invitation to participate in her style calls forth a theory of rhetoric that accounts for the realm of sense in excess of meaning without imposing assumptions of coherence on subjects' lifeworlds, whether mediated or otherwise. As such, the remainder of this essay develops an account of style as a series of affectively powerful rhetorical forms that effectuate the re-organization of contemporary society. The exposition begins by taking a short excursion towards the explication of a new theory of style.

Rhetorical Style in the Key of Affect

Popular reductions of rhetoric to the cannon of style have long plagued attempts to secure the legitimacy of persuasion as a mode of political and social action. At least since Gorgias profaned the drug-like power of charismatic speech and Plato compared it to “mere cookery,” rhetoric has been associated with deceptive discourse. Whether well founded or not, such associations have fueled a historically prolific distrust of rhetoric as an exclusively stylistic endeavor deployed by those with ill intent or lacking a grounding in truth. For instance, the popular phrase “mere rhetoric,” as well as the oft asked (rhetorical) question “does the rhetoric match reality?,” point to a widespread association of rhetoric and deceptive or fancy speech. Moreover, the consistent skepticism of politicians and political speech among reporters and the public is often laden with accusations that their rhetorical flourishes do not match their true intentions or capabilities. Throughout western history, then, the arts of persuasion have been imagined as separate from truthful and genuine engagement, a distinction that has driven attempts to defend rhetorical practice as a part of public life.

Although the most popular strategy for legitimating the study of rhetoric in light of popular distrust has been to turn towards texts that emphasize the linkages between persuasion and logical proofs,¹⁸ a number of scholars have rehabilitated the cannon of style itself, showing how it is a powerful persuasive mechanism crucial to logical argument. Simultaneously, these authors have expanded the scope of style, calling attention to its role in constituting cultures writ large. In the development of close textual analysis as a critical method, for instance, Michael Leff repeatedly demonstrates the importance of formal mechanisms as a means for rendering a collection of arguments into a coherent and persuasive speech.¹⁹ Taking a different tack, Robert Hariman submits rhetorical style to the power of political decorum, understood as a stylized mode of programming reality.²⁰ For Hariman, styles articulate rules for the aesthetic aspects of speech-making within a broader political culture. Although some speeches effectively violate these rules, rhetors generally construct decorous speeches in order to obtain political advantages. Bradford Vivian expands the notion of style from a political regime to a broader cultural mode of feeling and in so doing, breaks from Leff and Hariman's emphasis on the goal-oriented humanist subject as the source of rhetoric.²¹ For Vivian, the rhetorical forms deployed in a given speech tend to emerge from the broader affective and stylistic milieus that constitute contemporary culture. Finally, Barbara A. Biesecker argues that style functions as a means of concrete freedom

¹⁸ For instance, the enduring popularity of Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca's New Rhetoric project reflects a readiness of scholars to turn towards a focus on argument to legitimize rhetoric. See Chaim Perelman and Lucie Olbrechts-Tyteca, *The New Rhetoric: A Treatise on Argumentation* trans. John Wilkinson and Purcell Weaver (South Bend: Notre Dame University Press), 1969

¹⁹ Michael Leff, "Lincoln at Cooper Union: Neo- classical criticism revisited," *Western Journal of Communication* 65 (2001), 232—248; Michael Leff, "Cicero's *Pro Murena* and the Strong Case for Rhetoric" *Rhetoric and Public Affairs* 1 (1998), 61-88; Michael Leff, "Things Made By Words: Reflections on Textual Criticism" *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 78 (1992), 222-231; Michael C. Leff and Gerald P. Mohrmann, "Lincoln at Cooper Union: A Rhetorical Analysis of the Text," in *Readings in Rhetorical Criticism*, 4th ed., Carl R. Burgchardt, Ed., (State College, Pennsylvania: Strata, 2010), 166.

²⁰ Robert Hariman. *Political Style: The Artistry of Power* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press), 1995

²¹ Bradford Vivian, "Style, Rhetoric, and Postmodern Culture," *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 35 (2002), 243-223; Bradford Vivian, "Neoliberal Epideictic: Rhetorical Form and Commemorative Politics on September 11, 2002," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 92 (2006), 1-26.

for rhetors and subsequently implores scholars to trace how stylized texts are taken up across different contexts.²² These contemporary theorists resuscitate style from often divergent perspectives. Yet, each defends rhetoric against the charge that an emphasis on persuasion amounts to deception by demonstrating how this much-maligned cannon is crucial to the functions of texts, cultures, and new forms of agency.

The purpose of this section is to develop an alternative theory of rhetorical style that situates embodied audiences as the site of rhetoric's effectivity. It begins by positing that rhetoric produces audiences insofar as the events of intensive encounters with texts affect bodies and emerge into awareness and can be recognized as forms and topoi. Second, it argues that formal features repeated within texts and their contexts are more likely to become recognized and to produce audience emotions and dispositions. This section concludes by bringing this formulation into conversation with the predominant theories of rhetorical style and arguing that the emphasis on the audience as the site of rhetoric's emergence finesses the divergences between theories that emphasize the primacy of the text (Leff) and those that emphasize the importance of context (primarily Vivian). By attending to the repetition of rhetorical forms within texts and contexts, rhetorical scholars may better understand how and why particular styles resonate with bodies and produce audiences.

Style and the Virtual

The aesthetic power of symbols and images to produce moods, orientations, and practices amongst humans places rhetoric as central to the constitution of contemporary subjectivities and affiliations. Although the relationship between rhetoric and aesthetics has been articulated across

²² Barbara Biesecker. "Michael Foucault and the Question of Rhetoric," *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 25.4 (1992), 351-364.

a variety of works,²³ what has been less explored is the process of resonance whereby rhetoric, and subsequently collective affiliations and subjectivities, emerge as a result of encounters with texts that circulate through a myriad of technologies and practices. For the purposes of this dissertation, I define texts as momentarily discreet assemblages of heterogeneous fragments that emerge from the media flows and which, through the interactions of their rhetorical forms and contents, produce intensive affects.²⁴ To explicate the process whereby encounters with texts produce resonance I turn to scholarship on the force of affect as a precondition to the emergence of traditional rhetorical categories of consciousness, emotion and belief. In so doing, I argue that rhetorical scholars should attend to the complex processes through which *bodies become conscious audiences* through encounters with texts.

Everyday encounters with texts are events that pass as soon as they affect our bodies. For Brian Massumi, the event is like a “lightning flash”²⁵ that exerts external, or extensive, force on our senses and neurological systems. The flash of the event, or an intensity, is defined as the force of the encounter with texts as well as the qualities of technologies of circulation that

²³ Nathan Crick and Jeremy Engels, “‘The Effort of Reason, and the Adventure of Beauty’: The Aesthetic Rhetoric of Randolph Bourne,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 98.3 (2012), 272-296; John Poulakos, “From the Depths of Rhetoric: The Emergence of Aesthetics as a Discipline,” *Philosophy & Rhetoric* 40 (2007), 335-352; Steve Whitson and John Poulakos, “Nietzsche and the Aesthetics of Rhetoric,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 79 (May 1993), 131-146; Bradford Vivian, “The Threshold of the Self,” *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 33 (2000), 303-318; Bradford Vivian, “Always a Third Party Who Says Me’: Rhetoric and Alterity,” *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 34 (2001), 343-354.

²⁴ This definition of a text draws upon a confluence of Deleuze’s concept of an assemblage as a collection of heterogeneous elements that interact to produce affects and Michael Calvin McGee’s assertion that rhetoricians must assemble a text from mediated fragments. The rhetorician notices an assemblage of fragments that emerge and cohere from a variety of media flows. For example, the *Pioneer Woman* and “Let’s Move” chapters draw upon a series of fragments from a variety of media that appear coherent and deploy rhetorical forms that interact with each other. See: Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia Pt. 2* trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press), 1987; Michael Calvin McGee, “Text, Context, and the Fragmentation of Contemporary Culture,” *Western Journal of Speech Communication* 54 (1990), 274-289.

²⁵ Brian Massumi, “Introduction: Like a Thought” in *A Shock to Thought: Expression After Deleuze and Guattari* ed. Brian Massumi (London: Routledge, 2002), xxix

together serve as the grounds of perception and awareness.²⁶ Although the encounter passes with the movement of time and our attention, its force continues to resonate throughout bodies' autonomic systems. "Stimulation" according to Massumi, "turns inward, is folded into the body, except that there is no inside for it to be in, because the body is radically open, absorbing impulses quicker than they can be perceived, and because the entire vibratory event is unconscious, out of mind."²⁷ The stimulation of the event, in other words, is not immediately present to consciousness because its force exceeds our ability to process it.²⁸ Yet, our neurological systems select from the force of the event. According to Massumi, the selective power of our neurology is best demonstrated by experiments that show that people only perceive neurological stimulation if it lasts more than a half second. Any stimulation shorter than a half second becomes infolded and feeds back into other intensities, constituting sensation as a unitary and undifferentiated force. The passing intensities of texts subsequently affect bodies regardless of whether or not they emerge into awareness.

Intensities, as they are infolded through neurological systems, constitute the register of the virtual from which awareness emerges. The virtual is a collection of "real but abstract"²⁹ affects from which actual concrete subjectivity emerges. As Massumi writes,

The virtual is not hidden in the sense of a repressed signified or lost referent. It is

occulted, but as a part of a necessary clearing. For a statement or thought to appear in all

²⁶ As Constantin V. Boundas notes, "they are virtual yet real events whose mode of existence is to actualise themselves in states of affairs." They are the sensations that themselves become the material of conscious recognition. See: Constantin V. Boundas, "Intensity" in *The Deleuze Dictionary: Revised Edition* ed. Adrian Parr (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005), 131.

²⁷ Brian Massumi, *Parables For The Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), 29

²⁸ As Celeste Condit has pointed out, Massumi seems to reduce consciousness to a binary of language and non-language. For the purposes of this dissertation project, awareness and consciousness are synonymous with linguistic recognition after the autonomic processes that constitute the virtual. Although we may be "aware" of the virtual in the nominal sense, and it certainly is a part of consciousness as a category, my purpose here is to maintain the virtual/actual distinction of linguistic subjectivity and pre-subjectival modalities.

²⁹ Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual*, 21

its apparent simplicity and clarity, its complicated genesis must recede into the abyssal shadows from which it came. The virtual is the *unsaid* of the statement, the unthought of thought. It is real and subsists in them, but must be forgotten momentarily for a clear statement to be produced as an evaporative surface effect.³⁰

Virtuality, in other words, is the total set of perspectives that may emerge as thinking and language. These perspectives are real in a material sense. They are forces that are yet to emerge as thought, and remain the very conditions of their becoming into reality. Although bodies serve as the objects of force and the sites of sensation, it is not until the virtual becomes the actual that what we recognize as the subject emerges. Moreover, Massumi's use of the word "statement" in this context situates language use as a product of selective processes that narrow the register of the virtual into the more limited realm of the possible. And, perhaps most important for the conception of rhetoric as style, the process of thinking language is an effect of intensities, or sensations, such as the aesthetic experience of encountering signs. The virtual, as the unthought perspectives on the world, prefigures all consciousness, including the emergence of rhetoric.

From the current perspective, with an acknowledgment of the movement of forces from the event, to intensities, to the virtual, and finally a selection of the virtual into thought and language, we can encounter rhetoric's place in this theory. Rhetorical contents as well as their emotional, ideological, and other persuasive effects, are the outcome of process through which virtual affects become concrete. Using the metaphor of capture to describe the end of the selective processes that result in rhetoric Massumi notes, "the process that picked up the flash and converted it from an autonomous form of expression into a form of content is creative in its own way: of myth. The capture of the content in 'narcissistic' rhetorical structure culminates the

³⁰ Brian Massumi, *A User's Guide to Capitalism and Schizophrenia: Deviations from Deleuze and Guattari* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1992), 46

mythopoeic process.”³¹ Rhetorical forms subsequently emerge as audiences attempt to make sense of their sensations through comparison to their memories. “This second culmination,” writes Massumi, “in the anti-flash of manifested resemblance, is also in fact productive, in a weak (homologous) way. It produces rhetorical figures. These readily form relays among themselves which settle into conventional circuits of association (structural propositions) constituting a self-reproducing system (for example, an oral or literary tradition).”³² The emergence of rhetorical structures as recognized linguistic structures provides the grounds from which genre and other repetitive modalities garner currency. This production of sedimented cultural rituals and repeatable forms is particularly powerful because it affects the set of accumulated associations that audiences had theretofore developed as a result of their encounters with the world. The emergence of rhetoric into consciousness can thus be understood as a part of a broader process whereby meanings and associations are accrued in memory.

The cumulative effect of rhetoric can best be understood as a part of the feedback loop from the concrete to the virtual. In addition to the unidirectional movement from the virtual to the actual, in other words, there is a constant movement between thought and the unthought that is necessary for rhetorical forms to garner their effectivity in excess of the momentary awareness of a text. As Massumi states: “Every event takes place on both levels — and between both levels, as they resonate together to form a larger system composed of two interacting subsystems following entirely different rules of formation.”³³ There are thus two qualities of every rhetorical effect: that which emerges into consciousness, and that which moves from awareness back into the virtual to affect future moods and orientations. An event's futurity, its power in mixing with potential intensities that bodies have yet to encounter, ensures that rhetoric becomes essential in

³¹ Massumi, “Introduction: Like a Thought,” xxv

³² Massumi, “Introduction: Like a Thought,” xxvi

³³ Massumi, *Parables For The Virtual*, 26

the determination of future habits, thoughts, and actions. Not only do the intensities produced by texts emerge as virtual affects and concrete rhetorical figures, these figures feedback into the virtual, affecting the potential of future intensities as well as the future aesthetic reactions to different texts.

The theory of rhetoric offered here privileges the canon of style. Insofar as all texts produce sensations, or the movement of force between the event and its resonance prior to ideology, belief, emotion, or other cognitive effects usually associated with audiences, the aesthetic effects of rhetorical forms contribute at least as much to the production of audiences as the logical exhibition and *logos*. Furthermore, the contents and forms of a text, in this formulation, are only rhetorical insofar as it produces particular intensities for uptake by audiences. Here, rhetorical form is defined as the ordering mechanism immanent to all intensive contents. All contents have a form that allows the recognition of contents as meaningful forces.³⁴ These forms add a temporal, spatial, or some other relationship between the elements of an intensity. Rhetorical critics can subsequently attend to the interplay of intensities produced by the formal elements and contents of texts with their broader contexts. Such an attention to style will provide the grounds for understanding which rhetorical forms are likely to emerge from the selective processes that mediate the virtual and actual registers.

The emphasis on style as the emergence of rhetorical forms offered in this dissertation project bears striking similarity to the theory of taste developed by Eighteenth Century minister Hugh Blair. A part of the Belles Lettres movement, Blair argued that taste was an innate faculty, or “power,” to feel pleasure at encountering arts and nature. Taste, for Blair, is simultaneously sensual, intuitive, and learned. People have an innate faculty of taste that allows them to

³⁴ Here, I draw on Deleuze and Guattari's conception of substance and form. All substances have forms, including contents that produce expressive affects. For me, then, contents always have forms and they produce rhetorical effects. See: Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 44

experience things in different ways. Yet, a broader and more refined palate for texts and experiences can be cultivated through learning. For example, Blair posits that a particularly well constructed figure may evoke the voice of God or nature and produce a sensual response in audiences. As he notes: Such objects [such as poems] often strike us intuitively, and make a strong impression, when we are unable to assign the reasons of our being pleased.”³⁵ Although people can gain more erudite tastes, then, Blair argues that something about this faculty that is pre-cognitive and escapes explanation much like affect's production of often inexplicable dispositions. Indeed, the emphasis on taste as bodily, sensual, and intuitive comports with the theory of the virtual offered here. Yet, Blair's emphasis on learning as a means of improving taste may re-affirm a mind/body dualism that this dissertation project attempts to efface. The assertions that mere learning and practice can improve taste may lend credence to the idea that thinking differently may be able to overcome limitations of the body without a necessary change in neurology. In contradistinction, the theory offered here posits that style is the product of unintentional encounters with contexts and texts prior to cognition. The description of repetition in the next section thus situates the experience of aesthetic pleasures emerges without education or even intent.

The judgment of what styles will emerge from encounters between audiences and texts is perhaps the one aspect of rhetorical scholarship for which Massumi's work is least suited. Because his description of the process of resonance lacks a detailed account of how virtualities are selected and become concrete, the best critics can do is identify the potentialities produced by texts. This restriction would subsequently limit the usefulness of close textual analysis as a means for understanding how rhetoric affects audiences. The following section thus develops an

³⁵ Hugh Blair, “Lecture II: Taste” in *The Rhetorical Tradition: Readings from Classical Times to the Present* eds. Patricia Bizzell and Bruce Herzberg (New York: Bedford St. Martins, 1990), 808

account of how individual events may emerge into concrete awareness. In so doing, it provides the identification of repetition of forms within and across texts as a prominent means through which scholars can map how rhetorical styles likely resonate with audiences.

Repetition and Selection of the Virtual

The previous section's proposition that all intensities resonate with bodies to produce consciousness makes it difficult to identify what rhetorical forms will capture the awareness of audiences or affect them viscerally and become infolded into future events. This section argues that rhetorical critics should attend to the repetition of forms within texts and across contexts in order to better identify effective rhetorical forms. It does so through the integration of Massumi's dispersed commentary about repetition with some contemporary rhetorical theories, as well as neuroscientific observations about the phenomenon of repetition priming, whereby repeated encounters with stimuli increase the cognition of its contents. In so doing, this section posits that the repetition of rhetorical forms and contents is an important selection process through which virtualities become concrete.

The event produces the conditions for subjects to perform logical operations of interpretation and capture that allow the recognition of sensations upon their repetition. This process, that Massumi calls “retrospective ordering,” is a spatial operation whereby our perceptive apparatus breaks down movement to show the precise segments from point to point (an operation similar to that performed in Zeno's paradox). As Massumi explains: “The retrospective ordering enables precise operations to be inserted along the way, in anticipation of a repetition of the movement — the possibility that it will come again. If the movement does re-

occur, it can be captured.”³⁶ Here, the event is converted into a manageable and recognizable phenomenon that, upon repetition, will rise from the level of intensity in its “dynamic unity” to cognitive awareness. This recognition arises from the anticipation produced by previous repetitions, an effect that converts the ground covered by movement into a measurable space. Thinking about events subsequently invites the anticipation of similar intensities, and makes it more likely that bodies will recognize their repetitions.

Bodies recognize and anticipate the repetition of more than spatial phenomenon. During the previous two decades, cognitive neuroscientists studying the neo-cortex have demonstrated that people more readily recognize linguistic symbols as words after multiple exposures. These observations stem, in part, from experiments where subjects are given words or images that they may not already recognize once, and then are shown the words and images again. During the second exposure, scientists measure the response speed and accuracy of identifying words or images. For instance, the “lexical decision task” is a popular experiment where subjects are shown a list of words and word fragments and are supposed to identify if they are words or not. These experiments have repeatedly shown that the speed and accuracy of identifications increase with each repetition because the subjects begin to anticipate, both cognitively and pre-cognitively, the words. Drawing on these observations, scientists have theorized the priming effect whereby both conscious and pre-conscious memory work to invite neuronal anticipation of future stimuli.³⁷ The repetition priming effect thus lends credence to the idea that repetition plays an important role in the selection of virtualities, as our neural pathways begin to anticipate future repetitions making the capture of the event in language more likely. The more often bodies encounter similar intensities, then, the more likely they are to recognize their rhetorical forms.

³⁶ Massumi, *Parables For The Virtual*, 10

³⁷ Stephen J. Gotts, Carson C. Chow & Alex Martin (2012): Repetition priming and repetition suppression: Multiple mechanisms in need of testing, *Cognitive Neuroscience*, 3:3-4, 250-259

Repeated recognitions of rhetorical forms resulting from the pre-cognitive anticipation of stimuli amplifies the intensity of successive iterations and minimizes the force of alternative modalities of becoming. The body, according to Massumi, operates as a “zone of intensity” with ever decreasing ranges of virtuality because of the ways that similar sensations aggregate into higher-level functions that subsequently foreclose alternative modes of feeling. “As behavior patterns develop,” notes Massumi, “the disjunctions become increasingly exclusive: for each threshold reached, another state can be expected to follow with a high degree of probability.”³⁸ Here, the subtractive power of resonance becomes apparent. Repeated sensations minimize the probability that alternative rhetorical forms or interpretations will result from the event despite their immanence to intensive contents. The “memories, habits, and tropisms”³⁹ that resonate with a body subsequently modulate the force of alternative intensities downwards. The anticipation of particular sensations, understood by scientists as the repetition priming effect and by Massumi as the selective power of resonance, thus provides the means of identifying the potential for rhetorical effectivity even if a broader range of virtual outcomes still exist within a given intensity. The repetition of a sensation across time subsequently does not just produce a similar form; it crowds out alternative forms in an increasingly consistent manner.

In addition to the subtractive force of consciousness, the repetition of particular stimuli may constitute cognitive recognition as a habitual process that requires less neural labor. Indeed, studies of the repetition priming effect have demonstrated a second phenomenon known as the repetition suppression effect, whereby neurons do less work with successive exposures to a sensation. The first study to identify the repetition priming effect involved the fMRI scans of monkeys identifying the repetition of images of complex objects. When the monkeys identified

³⁸ Massumi, *A User's Guide*, 70

³⁹ Massumi, *Parables For The Virtual*, 204

the repetition of an image for a second time their neurons fired at a slower rate than after the first exposure, pointing to a decrease in mental activity necessary to identify symbols after prior exposure.⁴⁰ Repetition suppression subsequently points to how bodies anticipate stimuli through automatic, as well as autonomic, processes.

Further evidence of the power of repeated rhetorical forms to shape modes of automatic perception can be found in Michael Calvin McGee's concept of the ideograph. Understood as one word embodiments of ways of interacting in the social realm, ideographs such as <liberty>, <freedom>, and <equality> shape people's epistemology in such a way that their force requires little prior thought or investigation. Although many theorizations of the ideograph remain within the realm of cognition, their force and automaticity lend credence to idea that the habituation of particular rhetorical forms increases the probability that they will produce dispositions in audiences.⁴¹ Rather than products of cognitive effort, then, the emergences of rhetorical forms result from trained modes of perception that can be best characterized as habits akin to the seemingly automatic routines that guide our daily lives.

Ingrained modes of perception become another name for the taken-for-granted habits that capture virtualities, increasing the likelihood that they will emerge as concrete rhetorical forms. Rather than constantly re-coding sensations, a process that occurs over long periods of time, bodies acquire habits of perception that assign autonomic forces linguistic signifiers. "Habit," notes Massumi, "is an acquired automatic self-regulation. It resides in flesh. Some say in matter."⁴² Moreover, as Massumi indicates elsewhere, "Habit spontaneously patterns itself

⁴⁰ Robert Desimone "Neural mechanisms for visual memory and their role in attention" *PNAS* November 26, 1996 vol. 93 no. 24 13494-13499

⁴¹ See: Celeste Michelle Condit and John Louis Lucaites, "Reconstructing <Equality>: Culturetypal and Counter-Cultural Rhetorics in the Martyred Black Vision," *Communication Monographs* 57 (1990), 5-24; Michael Calvin McGee, "The 'ideograph': A link between rhetoric and ideology," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 66 (1980), 1-16.

⁴² Massumi, *Parables For The Virtual*, 11

through repetition, and in so doing adds its own self-structuring to the world of chaos, in which as a result, it always finds more than is 'out there:' *one more ...*⁴³ Habits, then, are embodied interpretations of perceptions that become automatic through the molding of neural pathways. They render chaotic intensities intelligible and in so doing add a new meaning to the world, a meaning that guides further interactions between bodies and their contexts. Habitual modes of perception subsequently guide the emergence of rhetorical forms into concrete existence.

We have arrived, then, at the relationship between repetition and the feedback loop between the actual and the virtual. The formation of habits as the result of repetition is central to the formation of consciousness and the amplification of affects outlined in the previous section. Without habits of perception, and the anticipation they produce, the feedback between the concrete and the virtual would remain a sporadic and unpredictable event. Yet, with the anticipation of intensities and the increasing efficiency with which they are converted into consciousness,

The autonomic tendency received secondhand from the body is raised to a higher power to become an activity of the mind. Mind and body are seen as two levels recapitulating the same image/expression event in different but parallel ways, ascending by degrees from the concrete to the incorporeal, holding to the same absent center of the now spectral — and potentialized — encounter.⁴⁴

Mind and body are thus “resonating levels” that amplify the intensities produced by the event. The habits of perception, which operate at the neurological and cognitive levels, feedback into each other and ensure that the identification of rhetorical forms produces subjects long after their encounters with texts. Feedback between concrete cognitions and the virtual reinforces the power

⁴³ Massumi, *Parables For The Virtual*, 151

⁴⁴ Massumi, *Parables For The Virtual*, 32

of habits and sets a tendency of action for subjects. Repetition of rhetorical forms thus increases the likelihood that cognitions will narrow the number of possible concrete outcomes from the virtual.

This emphasis on repetition of forms as a force through which particular subjective cognitions are produced may resonate with theories of psychoanalysis that have become popular within rhetorical studies. Indeed, for Lacanian psychoanalysis repetition is a form that characterizes the subject. The subject repeats behaviors, words, and slippages in language. Repetition in psychoanalysis is subsequently most often figured as a quality of the signifying chain of language or a compulsion that drives the subject in their relationships with the outside world.⁴⁵ Taking from Lacan, rhetorical scholars situate repetition as the means through which subjects attempt to overcome the absence of a natural relationship between the signifier (word) and the signified (sign/meaning/trace of other words). Subjects do so, according to Lacanians, by repeatedly articulating the sign to the signified and its broader signifying context, making the relationship appear natural.⁴⁶ In contradistinction, the theory of repetition offered here calls for attention to forms that *appear* and feel similar. Although they are metaphysically different by virtue of the movements of time and space, repetitions of form that resemble each other *act on* bodies and habituate them to identifying these resemblances rather than serve as symptoms of particular drives or a relationship to language.⁴⁷ In short, whereas psychoanalytic conceptions of repetition situate it as a form of labor that produces meaning, this project attends to the repetition

⁴⁵ For a chronological discussion of Lacan's theory of repetition compulsion, see Dylan Evans, "Repetition" in *An Introductory Dictionary to Lacanian Psychoanalysis* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 167

⁴⁶ For an in-depth discussion of the Lacanian concept of repetition-compulsion in relationship to rhetoric, see Chris Lundberg, "Position Paper," *University of South Carolina Rhetorical Theory Conference* (2012) available at: <http://www.uscrhetoricaltheory.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/Lundberg-Repetition-Working-Group.pdf>

⁴⁷ For a critique of the idea that repetition in the realm of representation produces concepts and images that are metaphysically the same, see Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition* trans. Paul Patton (New York: Continuum), 1994

of empirically existing and metaphysically different yet seemingly similar rhetorical forms that produce intensities and habituate bodies to their presence.

The claim that repetition produces the automation of habits of perception and an attendant decrease in neural labor may seem to lend credence to claims by scholars that the proliferation of photographs replaces the complexity of original events with simplified and eminently forgettable copies. Indeed, as Barbie Zelizer,⁴⁸ Susan Sontag⁴⁹ and others argue, the easier it is to recognize an image, the less attention to detail it requires to remember and comprehend its referent. For example, Zelizer argues and the proliferation of atrocity photographs in contemporary society has encouraged both the obfuscation of the complexity of the genocides themselves and a propensity for Western culture to forget their importance.⁵⁰ These scholars, however, too easily discount the extent to which the repetition of images still shape individual habit and public discourses. The Holocaust and other atrocities still serve as important figures in the development of state policies and cultural memorials (e.g. Holocaust museums). Moreover, the appropriation of the rhetoric of atrocities by animal-rights groups, and the extent to which these rhetorics trouble audiences demonstrate the ongoing power of the repetition of atrocity images. Most notably, claims that the People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals' "Holocaust on Your Plate" campaign was emotionally disconcerting because of its comparisons between factory farms and Nazi concentration camps demonstrates that images of atrocities still resonate with audiences.⁵¹ Although there is no way to know whether the photographs accurately preserve historical atrocities in sufficiently vivid detail, the sensations

⁴⁸ Barbie Zelizer, *Remembering to Forget: Holocaust Memory Through the Camera's Eye* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), 1998.

⁴⁹ Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (New York: Picador), 1977.

⁵⁰ Zelizer, *Remembering to Forget*, 202-241.

⁵¹ For an example of how the PETA Campaign produced outrage, in addition to other comparisons to the Holocaust, see: Mark Gudgel, "Just Like Hitler," *Prairie Fire* (June, 2013), <http://www.prairiefirenewspaper.com/2013/06/just-like-hitler>.

produced by their repetition have shaped audiences' consciousness. Images of atrocities remain emotionally powerful for individuals and cultures despite the risk that a photograph produces a reality distinct from the events they are often presumed to accurately represent.

Repetition of rhetorical forms within and across texts is subsequently one mechanism that increases the likelihood that they will be selected from the realm of the virtual and emerge into consciousness. Although the process of selection is somewhat arbitrary and remains thoroughly contingent, Massumi admits that the realm of potentiality is limited by that which has already emerged.⁵² The realm of the potential, conditioned by history and power at the macrological level and previous experiences at the level of the subject, is limited to become the realm of the possible. In my formulation, the repetition of rhetorical forms thus acts as a limitation on the realm of potentiality, encouraging particular outcomes to emerge in the future.⁵³ We shall thus begin to place an attention to the repetition of forms amidst a broader understanding of rhetorical practice.

A Program for Rhetoric

An analysis of style requires a probabilistic judgement about the forms that will likely emerge into audience consciousness. Thus far I have posited that the intensities produced by encounters between audiences and texts elicit an aesthetic response. Responses emerge as a result of a complex bodily process whereby the intensities are infolded into the virtual, or lower neurological processes, then filter upwards into the register of concrete linguistic recognition.

The concrete realm is the site of rhetorical effectivity, where stylistic qualities become present to

⁵² Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual*, 9-11

⁵³ This theory of power and history resonates strongly with the Marxist view of society as driven by the historically accreted material circumstances, including the means of economic production. What I want to disavow, however, is the air of determinism and progress that seems to emerge in many contemporary accounts of capitalism. The concept of the virtual, and its limitation to the realm of the possible, still holds onto the idea of radical contingency, whereby the possible may become unpredictably de-limited. See: Karl Marx and Fredrich Engels, *The German Ideology including Theses on Feuerbach and introduction to The critique of political economy* (Amherst, NY:Prometheus Books), 1976.

awareness. I have also explicated the importance of repetition to specify the means through which rhetorical forms are more or less likely to become concrete. Repetition is thus the form of selective processes that mediate the virtual and concrete, as intensities resonate with bodies and contribute to the formation of rhetoric.

What remains to be thought in this explication of rhetorical style as the interactions of intensive forms and bodies is a concrete mapping of the scenes of repetition. That is to say, it is necessary to develop a model through which one can trace the development of rhetorical styles through the circulation of texts. In what follows, I argue that rhetoric emerges to produce audiences through mutual resonance of texts and contexts. By attending to the resonances between forms repeated in texts and their contexts, critics can identify which stylistic mechanisms will likely become concrete.

Texts function as the central site of analysis in my rhetorical schema. They are the sites where subjects engage and are moved by particular intensities. For Brian Massumi, flows of images (broadly construed to be visual objects, sound, and all other aspects of reality) are understood as the means through which power (intensities) works on bodies. Images consist then, of linguistic and non-linguistic contents that produce virtual potentialities. These potentialities are structured in a variety of ways by the form of the image contents that exceed and may be distinct from their symbolic capacities. For instance, language produces intensities not only through its grammatical properties and symbolic meanings, but also as a result of its affectively imbued associations with other images and memories. Similarly, images produce affect through their movement and speeds as well as their contents.⁵⁴ This understanding of texts, as collections of images and language that produce intensities, thus emphasizes their importance as the central site of rhetorical events.

⁵⁴ Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual*, 25

An emphasis on the text as the site of repetition maintains attention to the rhetorical object qua object proffered by neo-classical critics of style while challenging its emphasis on the *ethos* of the speaker and its circumscription of rhetorical contexts. For Michael Leff and his colleagues, for instance, rhetorical styles, moods, organization and figures are evident in the text.⁵⁵ By illuminating the features of texts, scholars can understand their lasting aesthetic qualities as well as their relationship to the immediate occasion. Here, the unit of analysis is limited to a single text or a limited number of texts by a single orator because they offer insights on the creative process and *ethos* of the orator. Leff's attempt to illuminate a "speech as a speech,"⁵⁶ however, severely circumscribes the relationship between texts and contexts. As Celeste Condit points out, the isolation of the text from broader considerations of context leaves the critic with only the fiat power of the "invitation" as a means of understanding how the speeches would influence audiences.⁵⁷ Without a more textured understanding of audiences in context, such as the one offered in this dissertation proposal, critics have little guidance for their judgments about the ways encountering texts interact with audiences' previous experiences. By attending to the text, then, rhetorical scholars can identify which stylistic mechanisms will most likely resonate with audiences within a set of affectively imbued contexts.

Repetitions within texts are unlikely to resonate for a sufficient duration and intensity to become concrete without similar forces working within the broader context. Insofar as bodies serve as reservoirs of potentialities produced by the contexts and experiences that shaped bodies theretofore, an individual text would need to amplify these already existent forces in order to

⁵⁵ Leff, Michael C., and G. P. Mohrmann. "Lincoln at Cooper Union: A Rhetorical Analysis of the Text." *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 60 (October 1974): 346-58. Michael Leff. "Cicero's Pro Murena and the Strong Case for Rhetoric." *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 1.1 (1998): 61-88

⁵⁶ Leff and Mohrmann, "Lincoln at Cooper Union," 347

⁵⁷ Celeste Condit. "Rhetorical Criticism and Audiences: The Extremes of Leff and McGee," *Western Journal of Speech Communication* 54.3 (1990): 330-345

affect consciousness. “The body doesn't just absorb pulses or discrete stimulations;” writes Massumi, “it infolds *contexts*, it infolds volitions and cognitions that are nothing if not situated. Intensity is asocial, but not presocial — it *includes* social elements but mixes them with elements belonging to other levels of functioning and combines them according to a different logic.”⁵⁸ The non-discrete intensities produced as social contexts thus become a part of, and tinge, the force of the event. They may amplify or diminish its power, or call forth new resonances that comply with an unpredictable logic of interaction.

The logic of interaction between texts and bodily reservoirs of intensity may be more predictable than Massumi lets on. Contexts garner intensity insofar as bodies repeatedly encounter particular rhetorical forms, as he notes: “Only if the *trace* of past actions, *including a trace of their contexts*, were conserved in the brain and in the flesh, but out of mind and out of body understood as qualifiable interiorities, active and passive respectively, direct spirit and dumb matter. Only if past actions and contexts were preserved and repeated, autonomically reactivated but not accomplished; begun but not completed.”⁵⁹ The forces produced by contexts thus remain in the virtual, waiting to be activated by, and interact with, resonant intensities in texts. By attending to rhetorical forms that repeat throughout the cultural context, scholars may identify which forms of the text will resonate with audiences. This theory of rhetorical style subsequently expands upon the theories of rhetoric as an exclusively textual enterprise.

By mapping how rhetorical forms within texts are repeated across contexts, rhetorical scholars can account for popular cultural styles that shape bodies while negotiating concerns that attention to individual artifacts relies on humanist theories of intent. In his reformulation of style, for instance, Bradford Vivian argues that rhetorical scholars have yet to attend to an increasing

⁵⁸ Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual*, 30

⁵⁹ Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual*, 30

“postmodern tribalism” whereby communities are increasingly invested in aesthetic modes of collective belonging.⁶⁰ Indeed, as Vivian notes, “Rather than a consensual agenda or utilitarian rationale, the emerging animus of society is most evocatively described as a sentiment, passion, or collective effervescence.”⁶¹ The predominant mode of social cohesion is a collective affective structure that characterizes the communication within and between groups. These sentiments subsequently take on a particular form that encompasses the fractured and tribalist styles that characterize contemporary society and gives value to the particular practices. “In this context,” notes Vivian, “rhetoric encompasses something other than transparent or autonomous communication. It is an aesthetic (rather than conceptual) rhetoric; an affective (not rational) communication; a collective (instead of individual) expression.”⁶² Rhetorical scholarship in this conceptualization subsequently calls upon the critic to show how styles work within broader contexts, as in Vivian's analysis of the epideictic as the speech genre *par excellence* within contemporary culture. Indeed, according to Vivian, the September 11th memorials were powerful because they complied with, and moved, our collective practices of commemoration in the neoliberal economy.⁶³ Attention to the repetition of rhetorical forms within contemporary contexts subsequently allows critics to identify the extent to which parts of texts will resonate with audiences.

By situating the body, as the site of rhetoric's effectivity, between the text and context, the method offered in this dissertation project ameliorates concerns that attention to texts will retreat into a kind of naïve humanism. As Vivian notes in his criticism of Robert Hariman's conceptualization of style, a reliance on classical theories of rhetoric necessarily maintains a

⁶⁰ Vivian, “Style, Rhetoric, and Postmodern,” 2002

⁶¹ Vivian, “Style, Rhetoric, and Postmodern,” 228.

⁶² Vivian, “Style, Rhetoric, and Postmodern,” 238.

⁶³ Vivian, “Neoliberal Epideictic,” 2006.

conception of artistic autonomy that poses rhetors as intending subjects who engage in essentially rational forms of communication.⁶⁴ Yet, the model offered in this dissertation project argues that bodies, and thus their stylistic choices, are largely prefigured, but not determined, by the forces of event and context. In short, the artistic value of texts is worthy of engagement because they are a part of the process whereby rhetoric emerges within bodies and incites action. By calling attention to how rhetoric emerges as an effect of their encounters with the world, this theory of style subsequently calls for an analysis of the likely effects of texts and their formal construction.

Situating bodies as the sites of rhetorical style maintains attention to both the text and context and in so doing may ameliorate concerns that a focus on a particular artifact may retreat into an attention to artistic autonomy as a remnant of the humanist subject. Rhetorical forms within texts are more likely to emerge into audience awareness if they are repeated across texts and the contexts that shape everyday life. Critics should thus attend to the possible resonances between the virtualities produced by texts (understood as affectively powerful rhetorical forms that are repeated across time) and the broader rhetorical context (framed here as the cultural styles that are themselves repeated in a variety of instances). This theory of style subsequently provides a means for the interrogation of *Pioneer Woman* in this chapter, as well as the reconsideration of important rhetorical theories in later ones.

The Pioneer Woman as Frontier Style

In a world characterized by increasing urbanization and an attendant suburbanization of the American frontier, Ree Drummond offers her audiences tips and ideas that may simultaneously improve their craft of homemaking and resonate with feelings associated with a more rustic life-style. Insofar as the franchise figures Drummond as the happy homemaker and

⁶⁴ Vivian, "Style, Rhetoric, and Postmodern," 225

mother, then, it entices audiences to organize their everyday spaces as affectively powerful frontiers, both as a figural place associated with particular forms of communication, and as really existing territories marked by a peculiar distribution of affiliations and affects. The purpose of this section is to interrogate *The Pioneer Woman* and identify how its over-arching rhetorical forms are both produced through the forms and contents of the show, as well as how these forms likely resonate with audiences.

This analysis attends to season five of *The Pioneer Woman* television show which aired in 2013, as well as Drummond's blog, in an effort to explicate how the frontier style contributes to the re-organization of contemporary society. I argue that the frontier style emerges through the franchise's repetition of linguistic habits that contribute to the materialization of the frontier as a governing figure in contemporary society, its emphasis on the spatial separation of family units, as well as its further division of territory along gender lines. In order to demonstrate how Pioneer Woman exemplifies these stylizations, I my attention first to the figure of the frontier.

Figuration of the Frontier

More than any other cultural trope, *The Pioneer Woman* likely contributes to the reinforcement of the frontier as a figure that organizes the production of space in contemporary society. For many people, the word “frontier” likely summons images of rough and tumble produced the place known as “the old west.” These images of American society during the period of westward expansion, as Greg Dickinson, Brian L. Ott and Eric Aoki argue, may evoke an entire series of public memories that celebrate narratives that include the extermination of indigenous people and cleanse the nation of any wrong-doing.⁶⁵ To be sure, Pioneer Woman reiterates the belief in the frontier as a space bereft of signs of the genocide of native Americans

⁶⁵ Greg Dickinson, Brian L. Ott, & Eric Aoki, “Memory and Myth at the Buffalo Bill Museum,” *Western Journal of Communication* 69 (2005), 85-108

through the disappearance of all non-whites and the celebration of white masculinity in the form of the Marlboro Man. What is unique about its relationship to “the frontier,” however, is that it figures it as a distinct region by offering linguistic practices, such as dropping the “g” at the end of gerunds and the repetition of the word “ranch,” rather than a system of belief. The figure of the frontier in *The Pioneer Woman* subsequently invites audiences to feel as if they live on the frontier because through the reenforcement of stylized dispositions rather than their geographical location.

Ree and Ladd's consistent exclusion of “g's” at the end of gerunds in spoken discourse offers the audience on prominent means through which they can begin to stylize themselves as living on the frontier. In every episode of the fifth season, for instance, Ree turns the word cooking into “cookin,” providing this mundane activity with a rustic aura. Similarly, in one of the most memorable sequences of the season, where Ladd is featured cooking steaks on a grill for the Fourth of July event the Drummonds hold on their farm, he drops the “g” from several crucial gerunds. For instance, when commenting on the steaks he notes, “They're comin along nicely.” Moments later, he repeated a similar affectation with the word “looking” as he tells the audience: “Oh man, those tenderloins are lookin good.” These audible repetitions of the habit of “g-dropping” from gerunds provides audiences with a relatively innocuous means of organizing themselves around the figure of the frontier.

By turning the “g” into an “in” sound at the ends of gerunds, the Drummonds provide audiences a practice that likely resonates with previous figurations of the frontier. For instance, the phrase “cookin',” as an abbreviation of “cooking,” is most often accompanied by “country,” particularly in the names of southern and western themed restaurants.⁶⁶ Similarly, their habit of

⁶⁶ For instance, “Country Cookin” is the name of a restaurant chain in Virginia that serves a distinctly rustic menu. Similarly, “Andrea's Country Home Cookin” is the name of a cookbook that is sold online. On the front of the

dropping the “g” likely resonates with memories of “Rawhide” the eponymous theme song for a 1950's western sitcom starring Clint Eastwood. The song, which continues to resonate in popular culture through its repetition in films such as *The Blues Brothers*,⁶⁷ *An American Tail: Fievel Goes West*,⁶⁸ *Shrek 2*,⁶⁹ and *Happy Feet 2*,⁷⁰ includes lyrics such as “Move 'em on, head 'em up” and “Rollin', rollin', rollin', Though the streams are swollen, Keep them doggies rollin.”⁷¹ Finally, dropping the “g” from the end of gerunds is a common trope in country music; a genre widely associated with figurations of “the West” and rustic affectations. Notably, “Folsom Prison Blues” by Johnny Cash, a song covered by a myriad of contemporary artists and featured in the trailer for the biopic *Walk The Line*,⁷² repeats this affectation with words such as “rollin,” “comin,” “draggin,” and “movin.”⁷³ By shortening their gerunds, then, Ree and Ladd may reproduce figurations of the frontier that proliferate in contemporary culture, providing an easily replicable means through which audiences could begin to similarly organize their lives.

This discussion of the habits of pronunciation that characterize the worlds of *The Pioneer Woman* demonstrates how the franchise participates in the stylistic figuration of the West, but it does not sufficiently evidence my claim that such figures encourage the organization of space. A prominent example of how colloquial language can contribute to the stylized organization of space around the figure of the frontier is the repetition of place names within the text. “The Ranch” is perhaps the most prevalent place name in both the blog and the television show. For instance, the titles of Drummond's blog posts between November 2012 and August 2013 include:

cookbook, there is a picture of a barn and a wagon, two images usually associated with the Western parts of The United States. See: <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Andreas-Country-Home-Cookin/342465729635>.

⁶⁷ John Landis, *The Blues Brothers*, (Los Angeles: Universal Studios), 1980.

⁶⁸ Phil Nibelink and Simon Wells, *An American Tail: Fievel Goes West* (Los Angeles: Universal Pictures), 1991.

⁶⁹ Andrew Adamson, Kelly Asbury, Conrad Vernon, *Shrek 2* (Glenwood: Dreamworks), 2004.

⁷⁰ George Miller, Gary Eck, David Peers, *Happy Feet Two* (Los Angeles: Warner Brothers), 2011.

⁷¹ Ned Washington and Dimitri Tiomkin, “Rawhide” (Los Angeles: CBS), 1956.

⁷² James Mangold, *Walk The Line* (Los Angeles: 20th Century Fox), 2005

⁷³ Johnny Cash, “Folsom Prison Blues” *Folsom Prison Blues* (Nashville: Sun Records), 1955.

“A Busy Time on the Ranch,”⁷⁴ “Working at the Radcliff Ranch,”⁷⁵ “When Snow Hits the Ranch,”⁷⁶ “Meanwhile Back at The Ranch...”⁷⁷ and “Ranch Games.”⁷⁸ Each of these posts contains images of the green range as well as images of the Drummond family and their cattle, helping reinforce connections between the place-name and the space of the ranch. Moreover, every episode of the show begins with Ree reciting a monologue about how she loves life on the ranch as a montage of horses running on a colorful green range juxtaposed with images of her family walking down a dusty road bookended by cow fences, which belie the and set against a setting sun in the background. Before this opening sequence ends, it segues to a preview of the show with the phrase “Here's what's happening on the ranch...” This short sequence features vivid colors and the fast movement of horses, amplified by quick cuts of the montage, that may amplify the repetitive power of the place-name. Audiences may subsequently feel that the Drummonds inhabit a place associated not only with the colors and affectations depicted on both the show and blog, but also with the intensities of their previous encounters with places they call ranches.

The repetition of “ranch,” as just one example of the constant use of stylized place-names in *The Pioneer Woman*, may produce intensive figuration of the frontier for audiences. The name, here, functions to reduce a multiplicity of possible ranches to a seemingly unitary figure that emanates intensities of fast paced camera work, running horses, as well as the deep greens and blues issued from the bucolic landscape featured in both the television show and blog posts.

⁷⁴ Ree Drummond, “A Busy Time on the Ranch” *The Pioneer Woman* (May 16, 2013): <http://thepioneerwoman.com/blog/2013/05/a-busy-time-on-the-ranch/>

⁷⁵ Ree Drummond, “Working at the Radcliff Ranch,” *The Pioneer Woman* (May 14, 2013): <http://thepioneerwoman.com/blog/2013/05/working-at-the-radcliff-ranch/>

⁷⁶ Ree Drummond, “When Snow Hits the Ranch,” *The Pioneer Woman* (February 25, 2013): <http://thepioneerwoman.com/blog/2013/02/when-snow-hits-the-ranch/>

⁷⁷ Ree Drummond, “Meanwhile Back at the Ranch,” *The Pioneer Woman* (February 7, 2013): <http://thepioneerwoman.com/blog/2013/02/meanwhile-back-at-the-ranch/>

⁷⁸ Ree Drummond, “Ranch Games!,” *The Pioneer Woman* (January 25, 2013): <http://thepioneerwoman.com/blog/category/country-life/>

Indeed, as Deleuze and Guattari point out, names both reduce a multiplicity of objects to a seemingly unitary figure and simultaneously leave a trace of the intensities produced by previous encounters with the objects.⁷⁹ Through *The Pioneer Woman*, a myriad of ranches and a multiplicity of ranges may become associated with a single image that emanates their collective intensities. In so doing, the franchise audiences to associate their own homes with these intensities, most notably through the purchase of “ranch style” houses, and to subsequently stylize themselves as connected to the figure of the frontier.

The repetition of both gerunds without their final “g” and “the ranch” as a place-name subsequently draw on the non-signifying powers of language to produce the figure of the frontier. Neither deviation from the normal usage invites a particular cognitive meaning. A gerund without the “g” is a regional affectation that passes by with little consideration, and “the ranch” is an often taken for granted name for a place where people raise cattle. Instead, these figurations offer a particular sense of the frontier, rather than a particular geographical space, and a stylized collection of practices that resonate with the images of ranches, horses, and modalities of living that are repeated throughout contemporary culture and emerge in *Pioneer Woman*. This does not imply that audiences don't *believe* in the frontier as a set of beliefs and historical narratives, but rather that the organizing force of the figure of the frontier does not necessitate a mythology, only a set of affects and dispositions that produce everyday action. We don't need to believe in the frontier, or even live in the Western United States, to adopt the ways of naming and speaking offered by *The Frontier Woman*.

⁷⁹ For instance, in their critique of Freud's reading of the case The Wolf Man, they note: “The proper name can be nothing more than an extreme case of the common noun, containing its already domesticated multiplicity within itself and linking it to a being or object posited as unique. This jeopardizes, on the side of words and things both, the relation of the proper name as an intensity to the multiplicity it instantaneously apprehends.” Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia II* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 7-8

Individuals in Space

Despite its production through a series of affectively powerful dispositions and habits, the frontier *qua* figure does not provide audiences guidance for how they should affiliate with others in empirical space. In order to understand the model of collective affiliation provided by *The Pioneer Woman*, this section investigates how the Drummonds establish a peculiar form of territoriality whereby intensities associated with the ranch and its surrounding areas are individuated as their own despite their maintenance of ties with a tight-knit community. This observation draws upon the assumption that territoriality is defined by the temporal distribution of affects in everyday lived spaces and that these distributions guide the flows of everyday practice.⁸⁰ In other words, people's lives are guided by particular feelings about places and what should occur there, a quality that has been called an everyday routine. The daily life of Ree, Ladd and their family, for instance, is characterized by an individualizing privacy and spatial distancing of themselves from others that is only disrupted by the special occasion, a facet of the franchise that encourages audiences to live apart from each other, with common space or interaction reduced to familial events and holiday celebrations.

The space of the ranch is marked by a distinct set of positive, yet private, intensities throughout both the show and the blog. In the aforementioned “About Pioneer Woman” section of the blog, for instance, Ree says she *loves* the ranch and then jokingly pleads for the audience to “not tell anyone.”⁸¹ Although this admonishment may have been lighthearted it demonstrates the extent to which the territory of the ranch is marked by individuating affects, a series of feelings for her home that shouldn't be disclosed. Another blog post that features a poem about rain on the ranch highlights Ree's private dispositions towards the ranch. The poem contains one

⁸⁰ See Lawrence Grossberg, *Cultural Studies in the Future Tense* (Durham:Duke University Press), 2010.

⁸¹ Drummond, “About Pioneer Woman,” N.P.

verse composed of 13 lines, most of which feature short statements, such as “It never makes us gloomy,”⁸² that highlight her welcoming disposition towards the rain. Similar to her admonishment in the “About” section, this poem highlights the idea that she and Ladd have a private disposition towards the ranch than others insofar as they quietly accept the rain when others may disdain its interruption of their daily routines. For instance, at one point she notes: “When we hear people lament rain, *we quietly think* ‘Please don’t say that!’,”⁸³ followed by “When we hear people say ‘I sure hope it doesn’t rain!’ *we quietly think* ‘No! You don’t mean it!’”⁸⁴ Drummond closes the poem simply by noting that they see rain as crucial to life on the farm. This poem, alongside the statement in the about section, thus invite audiences to feel that their dispositions towards their homes are unique and inaccessible to others. Only the audience would know how to feel about the places they inhabit, and only they would welcome the seemingly disruptive rhythms and intensities associated with a place.

In a fashion similar to Ree's disclosure of her private dispositions towards the ranch, repeated sequences of the Drummonds and their friends driving across the ranch may reenforce individuating tendencies by associating energetic intensities with social separation. In nearly every episode of season 5, the show features a sequence of Ree driving from the guest house, or “Lodge,” where she films the show, to some other part of the ranch or nearby town. In these sequences, she talks to the camera from the driver's seat as the green range passes quickly in the background. The sequences usually end with shots of the truck driving away from the audience on the omnipresent dusty road on the Drummond's ranch. Here, the speed with which the background passes, as well as the deep green colors in many of the sequences likely produce

⁸² Ree Drummond, “How We Feel About Rain,” *The Pioneer Woman* (April 10, 2013), <http://thepioneerwoman.com/blog/2013/04/how-we-feel-about-rain/>

⁸³ Drummond, “Feel About Rain,” N.P.

⁸⁴ Drummond, “Feel About Rain,” N.P.

sensations in the audience. As Patricia Pisters points out, movement and speed likely amplify the power of organic and anorganic bodies in film to affect audiences.⁸⁵ These sequences offer a *feeling* of the geographic separation of the Drummonds from other members of their community as speed of the movement and camera work modulate audiences' perceptions of space and time. This may subsequently produce intensive dispositions towards social separation through the marking of empty space as an affectively powerful part of one's territory.

Despite the individuating power of the Drummond's territory, its borders are permeable as they occasionally broaden their affiliative network and share the feeling of life on the ranch with their friends and family. From friendly visits, to ritual gatherings on holidays such as the Fourth of July, the ranch opens intermittently such that the intensities and pleasures of The Pioneer Woman's life are shared with a select group. One visit that repeats the trope of driving between houses as a means of producing, and in this case dispersing, individuating affects is featured in episode six of season five, entitled "Five Girls and a Baby." This episode is mostly composed of a protracted sequence featuring a limousine collecting Ree's friends (who she met at a homeschooling conference) from their large houses in what appear to be geographically separate suburban neighborhoods and delivering them to the ranch. During much of this sequence, the frame cuts between the inside of the limousine, where Ree's growing group of friends are talking, and shots of it driving away from an external perspective. Here, similar to the sequences of Ree driving in her truck, the audience may develop a disposition towards spatial separation from others because of the intensities produced by the movement between the suburbs and ranch. The colors, speeds, sounds, and many of the images thus likely resonate with the

⁸⁵ Patricia Pisters, *The Matrix of Film Culture: Working with Deleuze in Film Theory* (Stanford:Stanford University Press), 2003.

individuating intensities that characterize the sequences of Ree driving, amplifying the likelihood that audiences become disposed towards arranging their lives as separate from others.

Unlike the sequences featuring Ree driving, however, the friends' journey broadens the experience of the intensities to a larger number of bodies, inviting the audience to be affected by them and to feel as if there are times when their individuated territories should be shared with select others. For instance, there is a notable shot where Ree's friends look out their window at the green pastures of the ranch and are fixated on a cow as they drive by. The green pasture, the brown cow, and the movement of the frame combine here to produce affects similar to those in the aforementioned sequences. Yet, because there are multiple bodies in the frame, the audience may feel an embodied disposition towards affiliating with more bodies on their own frontier. Moreover, in the third and fourth segments of the episode, Ree shares her food and time on the ranch with her friends, letting them in on the feelings that she has previously demarcated as owned exclusively by herself and her family. Although the franchise likely constitutes audiences as individual subjects who prefer to be separated from others and maintain a set of private intensities, the community occasionally punctuates and disperses those intensities, provisionally expanding their circle of affiliation.

The territoriality of the Drummond ranch invites audiences to live their lives separated from the broader public, only affiliating with others who adopt similar styles for parties and other private social gatherings. By constituting her life world as a private set of pleasures, then, Ree invites audiences to be disposed towards evacuating consistent social affiliations with people outside her hand-picked group of family and friends. Through the materialization of the figural wilderness, then, the frontier style works to constitute individuals in society as relatively atomized and private, with mundane interactions typically limited to the immediate family. How

the space inhabited by families is organized is subsequently the subject of the final section of analysis.

Spatialized Divisions of Gendered Labor

Not only is the territoriality of the ranch characterized by an individuation of the Drummond's as a private unit, it is divided further by the places where Ree and Ladd perform gendered modalities of labor. Indeed, throughout much of the show and many of the blog posts, Ree inhabits the kitchen and takes care of the kids, while Ladd works the fields and occasionally grills steak. At first, this strict division of gendered labor may seem archaic because, as Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri note, the lines between affective labor, usually marked as feminine, and non-affective material labor, normally considered the bedrock of the male public sphere, are disappearing with the increasing dominance of "immaterial" and interpersonal labor in an information economy.⁸⁶ Yet, as this section argues, the frontier style stipulates a double movement that comports with women's continuing responsibility for the overwhelming majority of affective labor at home while simultaneously being incorporated into the workforce. Ree, for instance, stylizes herself as the bread-maker at home and the bread-winner in public despite The Marlboro Man's much appreciated contributions on the range. In so doing, she invites audiences to divide their habits into similar spaces and situates women as bearing the majority of the affective burden for social reproduction.

One of the consistent features of *The Pioneer Woman* is the repetition of a divide between Ladd and Ree's territories, a demarcation amplified by the different styles of interaction they display. True to his "Marlboro Man" nickname, Ladd mostly inhabits the range and is rarely shown indoors. In the few sequences where he is depicted inside the house, he is shown either cutting meat to be put on the grill or helping Ree entertain guests. Moreover, his affectations

⁸⁶ Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Commonwealth* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press), 2009.

seem appropriate for his preference for the range. Ladd rarely speaks, and when he does, he only utters a few words about a preference for butter and salt on steak, how to properly vaccinate cattle, or how their children should learn to work. In contrast, Ree is most often depicted either in the warm-lit kitchen of their guest house or taking care of the children. In both territories, the frame produces welcoming intensities. For instance, the kitchen is always bright and clean. The audience's vision is most likely drawn to the intensely colored painting of horses in the background or the movement of Ree in the kitchen that usually occupies the foreground of the frame. Adding to the color and movement are Ree's warm affectations and country accent that may produce a welcoming feeling absent from depictions of Ladd. The kitchen-territories usually associated with women's affective labor are thus provided with an inviting twang in the Pioneer Woman, while the gruff and lonely life produced by Ladd's physical labor may seem less promising or valuable.

The trope of the stern male who engages in physical labor juxtaposed with images of a nurturing female character has proliferated in American culture to such an extent that it provides The Pioneer Woman with a resonant reservoir of virtualities to harness. For instance, the relationship between Jane Seymour and Joe Lando on the highly rated television show *Dr. Quinn Medicine Woman* featured Seymour as the warm frontier doctor and Lando as a taciturn mountain-man.⁸⁷ Similarly, the classic television show *Little House on the Prairie* centered around Michael Landon as "Pa" Ingalls, who constantly performed physical labor on the homestead and Karen Grassle as "Ma" Ingalls, a loving and attendant mother whose space was the house.⁸⁸ Finally, the plot of the classic film *Old Yeller* is driven by the absence of the cowboy father, played by Fess Parker, and the struggles of his family, including the loving mother Katie,

⁸⁷ Beth Sullivan, *Dr. Quinn Medicine Woman* (Colorado: CBS), 1993-1998.

⁸⁸ Blanche Hanalis, *Little House on the Prairie* (Los Angeles: NBC Productions), 1974-1983.

played by Dorothy McGuire.⁸⁹ Each of these media artifacts features a tacitun male character whose space is outside the home or town, and a female character whose territory is the house or broader civilized town. Moreover, much like *The Pioneer Woman*, each resonates with the affective divisions of labor as a spatial phenomenon. The house or town are places of emotional and interpersonal labor, and the wilderness requires a physical acumen that doesn't necessitate emotional display or even language. The gendered division of labor throughout the franchise may subsequently resonate with pre-existing virtual territories that proliferate throughout contemporary media.

Perhaps the most enticing part of Ree's house-territory is her intimate relationships with her children. Whereas the children only occasionally join Ladd in the pastures, Ree's everyday life is characterized by habitual interactions with her children. Her blog is littered with photographs and stories about the time she spends homeschooling, hanging out with, and throwing parties for her children. Moreover, season 5 of the show features several episodes where she functions as the primary caretaker for her children, including most notably episode 12, where Ree throws a surprise 16th birthday party for her daughter Alex. Throughout this episode, Ree and her other daughter Page prepare the food and desserts for the party while the younger boys play football in the yard, and Ladd “keeps her busy” by taking Alex shopping for new boots. The final sequence of the show subsequently features images of Alex's friends and family alerting her to the party as she arrives home by jumping up and yelling “surprise” and then intermingling as they eat food. This final scene, which is reproduced in still pictures on the

⁸⁹ Robert Severson, *Old Yeller* (Anaheim: Walt Disney Productions), 1957.

blog,⁹⁰ amplifies the intensities produced by Ree's life in the kitchen-territory that proliferate throughout the franchise.

The final sequence of the “Alex's 16th Birthday” episode invites audiences to become disposed towards maintaining the gendered division of labor by amplifying the powerful intensities usually associated with Ree's housework. The visual frame throughout this sequence is characterized by excited bodies in close proximity and brilliant colors as all of the girls are wearing bright pink in the well lit house. The brilliant colors and interactions of bodies, which are present on a smaller scale throughout the myriad of other interactions between Ree and her children on the show and blog, may produce powerful affects. Indeed, for Gilles Deleuze the interactions of bodies is crucial to the production of affects as their energies amplify their internal potentialities, altering their very composition.⁹¹ Here, the audience's encounters with the colorful bodies moving on the screen likely constitutes a perception event that contrasts with images of Ladd's life in the pasture, where the slow bodies of cows, alongside the greens, browns, and occasional blue colors offer affects of a lower intensity.

The sounds of this sequence add an additional power to images of Ree's territory. In contrast to the quiet cow pastures, the party guests' conversations and the shouting of “surprise!” create a sonorous intensity that amplifies the power of images of the kitchen. Indeed, the voices in conversation, as well as the ritual shout, punctuate the colorful intensities that characterize this sequence's visual frame. As Paricia Pisters points out, “The refrain, sounds, voices, and music relate to territorializing and deterritorializing forces.”⁹² Sound, then, “tends to dissolve and

⁹⁰ Ree Drummond, “Surprise Party!” *The Pioneer Woman* (August 16, 2013), <http://thepioneerwoman.com/blog/2013/08/surprise-party/>

⁹¹ Gilles Deleuze, *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy* (San Francisco: City Lights Books), 1988.

⁹² Pisters, *Matrix of Film Culture*, 188

connects with other elements easily in a machinic way..⁹³ Voices, with their vibrations that issue from other bodies, have the power to move audiences towards territories, amplifying the intensive powers of the accompanying images. The episode featuring the surprise birthday party subsequently amplifies the intensities associated with homemaking and child-rearing repeated throughout the show and blog, inviting audiences to labor in their own kitchen-territories.

Through a complex mixture of intensities, *The Pioneer Woman* invites its audience, who are mostly women, to constitute the kitchen and house as their territory in contradistinction to the realm of physical or public labor, reaffirming gendered divisions of work that have long persisted as a part of human societies. Unlike Ree, who is a multi-millionaire celebrity, however, the majority of her audience must regularly leave the house to work in the public. In an economy where all workers increasingly engage in affective labor the gendered division of labor requires women to perform double duty, something *The Pioneer Woman* does not dispute. From the juxtaposition of affects that characterize the pasture and the house, understood as territories with their own habits, to the production of intensive affects associated with homemaking and child-rearing, the franchise invites audiences to divide their lives in a way that amplifies the gendered effects of the contemporary economy.

Conclusions

The Pioneer Woman exemplifies what I have called the frontier style. The frontier style emerges in audiences to figure the frontier as an affectively powerful object that organizes audience habits, such as linguistic traits. It also produces a virtual disposition whereby audiences could organize their life into two overlapping territories. First, they are invited to organize their lives around a private set of affects distributed throughout the spaces they regularly inhabit, such as a ranch, or more likely their suburban homes. Second, they are invited to further territorialize

⁹³ Pisters, *Matrix of Film Culture*, 188

their space into places where distinct modes of gendered labor occur. With each movement, bodies become increasingly individuated subjects; they adopt particular habits of speech, dress, and interaction. Then, they separate themselves from others who are not members of their immediate family except for the occasional get-together. Finally, they adopt a gendered identity by performing particular forms of labor in spaces that already carry cultural connotations. Audiences are thus invited to perform stylized identities whether or not they believe there is a frontier “out there” ready to be tamed by civilization.

This chapter proffers a theory of the frontier style as a mechanism through which rhetorical scholars can begin to reconsider previous assertions that audiences or speakers *believed* in the frontier as part of a coherent system of ideological or mythological precepts. From this vantage point, for instance, we may begin to reconsider critiques of Urban Cowboys of the 1980's, modern scientists, and political figures such as George W. Bush. Whereas rhetorical scholars have situated each of these within the realm of a belief that their geographical, social, or intellectual frontiers are spaces to be explored and mastered, this essay calls for a careful consideration of the extent to which our discipline has brought artifacts under the umbrella of the frontier myth without a consideration of style.

Insofar as the frontier style does not require a coherence of belief, it can become a powerful heuristic for rhetorical scholars who care to “map”⁹⁴ the distribution of practices in both figural and empirical space. Whereas attention to the frontier myth or ideology may allow scholars to understand particular actions, or see how the rhetor is orientated towards space, this theory of style allows for the identification of rhetoric's role in the production of interlinked spaces created because of the dispositions in bodies. It does so by forwarding the dual

⁹⁴ Lawrence Grossberg, *We Gotta Get out of This Place: Popular Conservatism and Postmodern Culture* (New York: Routledge), 1992.

mechanisms of figuration and territoriality. Although the relationships between these formal elements may differ in every artifact, each offers a similar organization of affect in space. By attending to how figuration organizes practices through its affective power, and how affects and rhythms are distributed in space, scholars can come to better understand how rhetoric is implicated in the production of everyday space.

This mode of mapping space provides a new means for engaging the rhetorics of space and place. In rhetorical studies, space and place are usually figured as categories of representation. Whether through the media, public memorializations, or even empirical space, it is usually figured as a site of symbolization. Yet, as Doreen Massey points out, the reduction of space to representation cannot come to terms with how time renders the sensation events produced by any place ephemeral.⁹⁵ This theory of style, in contradistinction, allows scholars to understand how rhetoric produces subjects with particular intensive dispositions towards space, effectively circumventing the impulse to assign spaces some pre-determined symbolic function or meaning. It negotiates the tension inherent in simultaneously studying space and challenging a reliance on its representation by positing the frontier as a figure rather than an empirical space, and situating territories as a distribution of affect as opposed to a specific space. In so doing, this essay situates style as one means through which the spaces everyday life emerge as observable feelings and realities.

This chapter, moreover, developed a theory of style that is generalizable beyond concerns with the frontier. By positing that style is a product of the resonance of intensive repetitions within texts and across contexts, it offers a means of understanding style in any a broad swathe of public discourse. As such, this chapter provides grounds for the reconsideration of a myriad of styles throughout this dissertation project. Given the myriad of spatial organizations and

⁹⁵ Doreen Massey, *For Space* (New York: Sage Publications), 2005.

rhetorical forms that have yet to be understood, this theory of style also intimates a project well beyond the scope of the current manuscript.

CHAPTER 3

AFFECTIVE CAPTURE IN THE STYLIZATIONS OF MICHELLE OBAMA'S LET'S MOVE CAMPAIGN

Stylizations of exercise and proper eating as a means of self-empowerment or regaining a militaristic *ethos* occupy an increasingly prominent place in America's media and popular culture. Once a niche occupied by weight loss and exercise-centric subcultures, wildly popular television shows such as *The Biggest Loser*¹ and *Extreme Weight Loss*² increasingly stylize personal fitness as a means through which participants can gain esteem from families, friends, program hosts, and audiences. In addition to these reality television offerings, extreme exercise movements increasingly proffer physical activity as a means of obtaining the camaraderie and general *ethos* associated with military service. One such movement, Tough Mudder, claims to instill “a true sense of camaraderie that, sadly, is rarely seen outside of the military these days”³ through participation in its extreme obstacle courses. Another organization, Crossfit, markets itself on its popularity among service people. It does so by regularly advertising with testimonials from former soldiers,⁴ featuring affiliate gyms on military bases on its website, including pictures of service members on the sidebar,⁵ and publishing blog stories about participants who die in combat missions.⁶ Whether they depict exercise as an avenue to self-

¹ Dave Broome, Mark Koops and Benjamin Silverman, *The Biggest Loser* (Universal City: NBC), 2004 — 2013.

² 3 Ball Productions, *Extreme Weight Loss* (Los Angeles: ABC), 2011 — 2013.

³ “History of Tough Mudder,” toughmudder.com (2012), <http://toughmudder.com/history-of-tough-mudder/>.

⁴ For example, Stephanie Cooperman, “Getting Fit, Even if It Kills You,” *The New York Times* (December 22, 2005), http://www.nytimes.com/2005/12/22/fashion/thursdaystyles/22Fitness.html?pagewanted=1&_r=3.

⁵ See, “Welcome to Crossfit: Forging Elite Fitness,” *Crossfit.com* (2014), <http://www.crossfit.com/>.

⁶ *Crossfit.com*, “Thursday 131226” (December 26, 2013), <http://www.crossfit.com/mt-archive2/009075.html>.

empowerment and esteem, or proffer physical activity as a militaristic enterprise, these programs and movements belie the growing prominence of stylizations of fitness in contemporary culture.

Although these cultural phenomena portend their growing popularity, stylizations of fitness as a crucial part of social life and America's militaristic *ethos* have indelible linkages to recently re-invigorated government exercise programs that first emerged during the Cold War. Indeed, prompted by reports of a lack of fitness among the nation's children,⁷ President Dwight D. Eisenhower signed Executive Order 10673 in 1956 to establish numerous committees meant to promote the “fitness of America's Youth.”⁸ Aside from two *Sports Illustrated* articles written by John F. Kennedy in 1960 and 1962 that proclaimed the importance of national fitness to victory in the Cold War,⁹ however, such claims did not attain lasting salience until after the terrorist attacks on September 11th, 2001.

After September 11th, the mutually resonant fears of the increasing circulation of concerns that rising obesity rates would diminish America's economic and military power lead to the re-invigoration of government fitness programs. Described as a “pandemic,”¹⁰ the potential cause of economic “Armageddon,”¹¹ a threat to “the overall health of America and the future strength of our military,”¹² and “the terror within,”¹³ rising obesity rates prompted George W. Bush to sign Executive Order 13265 to establish the “President's Council on Physical Fitness and

⁷ Hans Kraus and Ruth P. Hirschland, “Muscular Fitness and Health,” *Journal of the American Association for Health, Physical Education, and Recreation* 24.10 (1953), 17-19; Hans Kraus and Ruth P. Hirschland, “Minimum Muscular Fitness Tests in School Children,” *Research Quarterly: American Association for Health, Physical Education and Recreation* 25.2 (1954), 178-188.

⁸ James R. Morrow, Jr., et. al., “1958-2008: 50 Years of Youth Fitness Tests in the United States,” *Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport* 80.1 (March 2009), 1-11; Ross W. Jobson and Peter M. Antell, “Editors' Foreword” in *President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports: The First 50 Years: 1956-2006* eds. Ross W. Jobson and Peter M. Antell (Tampa, Florida: Faircount Press, 2006), 17.

⁹ John F. Kennedy, “The Soft American,” *Sports Illustrated* (December 26, 1960), 15-19.

¹⁰ Ed Vulliamy, “Bush Declares War on Fat America” *The Observer* (June 23, 2002), 1.

¹¹ Shannon Brownlee, “Too Heavy, Too Young” *Time* 59.2 (January 21, 2002), Gallileo Discovery Service.

¹² John M. Shalikashvili and Hugh Shelton, “The new national security threat: obesity,” *The Washington Post* (April 30, 2010), A19.

¹³ Anthony Caroma, Quoted in *CNN Health*, “Surgeon general to cops: Put down the donuts” (March 2, 2003), <http://www.cnn.com/2003/HEALTH/02/28/obesity.police/> (Accessed, 12/11/2013)

Sports.”¹⁴ Aimed at overhauling the exercise programs initiated by Eisenhower and building “a healthier and stronger America,”¹⁵ this program was billed by one reporter as Bush turning “to the war on fat, using his own body as a model for America to get fit.”¹⁶ Expanding on Bush's efforts, Barack Obama added “Nutrition” to the Council's name in 2010 in a bid to promote “good nutrition” among American youth.¹⁷ These government programs, as with the popular discourses about exercise and empowerment, stylize national fitness as a means of preserving the self, the nation, and a seemingly lost militaristic *ethos*, in the face of the threat of rising obesity rates.

One highly visible iteration of these stylizations which seemingly departs from an emphasis on the linkages between personal fitness and national power is “Let's Move,” a public health campaign promoted by First Lady Michelle Obama that encourages children, adults, schools, and communities to take responsibility for rising obesity rates through an emphasis on the affective, emotional, and affiliational benefits of exercise and proper eating.¹⁸ Although measuring the effectiveness of its lunch programs in schools, funded public service announcements, and numerous celebrity endorsements is difficult, the press regularly declare Obama's program a success. Journalists credit Obama with “using her bully pulpit to bring issues of food and nutrition to national attention,”¹⁹ laud her “ability to score private-sector commitments to promote healthier messaging at a time when limiting junk food marketing to

¹⁴ George W. Bush: “Executive Order 13265 - Presidents Council on Physical Fitness and Sports,” June 6, 2002. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=61361>

¹⁵ George W. Bush, “President's Radio Address,” Office of the Press Secretary (June 22, 2002), <http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2002/06/20020622.html>.

¹⁶ Vulliamy, “Bush Declares War,” 1.

¹⁷ Barack Obama, “Executive Order 13545--President's Council on Fitness, Sports, and Nutrition,” (June 23, 2010), <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/executive-order-presidents-council-fitness-sports-and-nutrition>.

¹⁸ A summary of the publicly stated goals of this campaign can be found at: Let's Move, “Learn The Facts,” (Accessed November 27, 2013), <http://www.letsmove.gov/learn-facts/epidemic-childhood-obesity>.

¹⁹ Bridget Huber, “Michelle Obama's Moves: Has the first lady's anti-obesity campaign been too accommodating toward the food industry?,” *The Nation* (October 10, 2012), <http://www.thenation.com/article/170485/michelles-moves#>.

kids is politically impossible,”²⁰ and claim the program is changing “the way the food sector — producers, restaurants and grocery stores — approaches its youngest customers.”²¹ Proffering alluring figurations of moving bodies and healthy families, “Let's Move” stylizes America's children and their caretakers as taking charge of their fitness in the service of limiting their risk of becoming obese.

Although “Let's Move” offers seemingly benign rhetorics distinct from those proffered by many fitness programs, I argue that when the campaign engages specific audiences and contexts its stylizations may nevertheless encourage the development of programs that capture positive dispositions towards exercise within within the mutually re-enforcing logics of neoliberal economics and national security. Rather than reproducing openly ideological behaviors or beliefs, its programs capture, or differentially include and hierarchize,²² practices and affective dispositions according to the axioms of economic efficiency and masculine strength, which are values privileged by neoliberalism and militarism respectively. Through their role as axioms, or “particular norms or commands”²³ that work across contexts to organize and assign meanings to intensities and practices, these logics operate together to capture stylizations of national fitness, rendering bodies as human capital, as sites of potential resources for maintaining America's economic and military power. “Let's Move,” then, re-iterates intensities that may emerge from the virtual to affect participation in programs and practices that encourage an increase in the economic efficiency of bodies' food consumption choices and

²⁰ Helena Bottemiller Evich, “First lady enlists Subway in childhood obesity fight,” *Politico.com* (January 23, 2014), <http://www.politico.com/story/2014/01/michelle-obama-subway-childhood-obesity-102516.html#ixzz2sW74BIZX>.

²¹ Ezekiel J. Emanuel, “Let's Move, She Said — and We Have,” *Opinionator: Exclusive Online Commentary from The Times* (February 13, 2012), <http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/02/13/lets-move-she-said-and-we-have/>.

²² Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia II* trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press), 1987.

²³ Alberto Toscano, “Axiomatic” in *The Deleuze Dictionary: Revised Edition* ed. Adrian Parr (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), 22.

maximize their physical strength, qualities crucial to their potential inclusion within the mutually resonant logics of neoliberalism and security.

In this chapter, I take the potential capture of “Let's Move” as an opportunity to expand our theoretical understandings of the relationships between rhetorical styles and the reproduction of contemporary forms of national and capitalist power. While condemning the campaign as necessarily entwined within these axiomatic logics in the first instance would provide a neatly enclosed narrative about the overwhelming force of ideology, I begin by demonstrating that, to the contrary, “Let's Move” reinforces dispositions towards fitness that may escape their capture. Prior to demonstrating how some of the campaign's intensive potential may become captured once it emerges as a set of concrete proposals meant to invigorate support from particular audiences, however, I show how the contemporary context makes this incorporation more likely. Demonstrating how contemporary obesity discourses work to encourage the development of human capital under the auspices of reproducing America's economic and military power may provide arable ground from which to interrogate the problematic effects of “Let's Move.” Through their synergy with its contexts, the campaign's stylizations of fitness may ultimately reinforce practices and subjectivities amenable to the mutually re-inforcing axioms of neoliberal economics and national security.

“Let's Move's” Affective Stylizations

As a series of intensive stylizations of bodies engaged in exercise and healthy eating, “Let's Move” produces powerful affects that initially escape capture by broader sociopolitical forces. Although intensities are always modulated by traces of their contexts, they affect bodies' virtual registers temporally prior to their capture by the axiomatic logics that guide cognitive and

collective decisions. They are, as Brian Massumi would have it, “autonomous.”²⁴ Despite forming the substrate for, and bleeding into, consciousness, they cannot be reduced to, or even read “alongside,”²⁵ the effects of their capture. Taking this autonomy seriously, then, enacts a reversal of the common precept that a text's hidden, and often ideological, substructure is determining and necessarily antecedent to the myriad of unpredictable meanings negotiated by audiences. An analysis of affect and rhetorical style should begin, as does this section, by attending to how a text engenders virtual potentialities that may later become captured by the axiomatic logics. Rather than demonstrating that “Let's Move” is intrinsically ideological, then, I begin by attending to how its depictions of active bodies and its attempts to energize children through the figure of Big Bird, each of which may amplify dispositions towards healthful practices as intrinsically enjoyable and productive of positive social affiliations.

Active Bodies

Promotions for “Let's Move” may reenforce associations between energetic intensities and physical activity through their repeated figurations of moving and active bodies as glamorous, happy, and funny. Broadcast on daytime and late night television, one series of promotions reenforces these associations by depicting Michelle Obama engaging in unexpected physical activities such as slam dunking a basketball into a hoop held by LeBron James, jumping double-dutch with Kelly Ripa and a youth jump-rope team, as well as dancing or competing in fitness events with comic Jimmy Fallon. Although they differ in their specific contents, each of these promotional videos features moving bodies, bright colors, music, and audience laughter, that together may encourage dispositions towards exercise among its adult audiences.

²⁴ Brian Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), 35

²⁵ Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual*, 35.

The most widely circulated of these promotional videos, “The Evolution of Mom Dancing,” exemplifies how they produce intensities through its use of comical exercises performed by vigorously moving celebrities. Initially aired on *Late Night with Jimmy Fallon* in February, 2013 and further circulated on video sharing site YouTube,²⁶ it features Obama and a cross-dressing Fallon energetically demonstrating moves with names such as “The Get Up, Go Shopping” and “The Happy Snapper.” As the only figures in the spotlight that takes up much of the visual frame, Obama and Fallon's moving bodies may impart a magnetic force on viewers. The video begins with Fallon moving back and forth slowly on the stage before Obama appears and they begin to move back and forth, quickly gesture, and shake their bodies at a much quicker pace. As the promotion continues they begin to move faster in a loosely choreographed series of dances ranging from frenetic gyrations and gestures to a much calmer two-step where they wave their hands in front of their faces. On occasion, their bodies collide and separate, fall out of sync, and turn towards each other. These images of movement, as well as the interactions of bodies, offer kinetic energies that likely work on the virtual, prior to their entrapment by the logic of meaning often assigned to image-flows featuring raced and gendered bodies. Writing about the force of similar performances in cinema, Elena del Rio notes that “each time bodies come together, they try out their powers of affection on each other. As a body relates to another body, it acts out its capacity to affect, and be affected by, the other body.”²⁷ Obama and Fallon's performance potentially activates their affective capacities, offering a mesmerizing sequence that may work on the virtual to dispose audiences towards exercise as a means of activating similar bodily intensities.

²⁶ As of January 22, 2014, “The Evolution of Mom Dancing” was viewed 16,863,972 times since being uploaded to YouTube in 2013. See: *Late Night With Jimmy Fallon*, “Evolution Of Mom Dancing (w/ Jimmy Fallon & Michelle Obama)” (February 22, 2013), <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hq-UR19F17Y>.

²⁷ Elena del Rio, *Deleuze and the Cinemas of Performance: Powers of Affection* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008), 116.

In “Mom Dancing,” Obama and Fallon are wearing colorful cardigans that, when highlighted by the spotlight, likely amplify the intensive power of their movements. Fallon is wearing a buttoned salmon cardigan over a white shirt with khakis that expose his ankles and white shoes, while Obama's unbuttoned sweater is emerald green with a black square pattern. She is also wearing a grey shirt with black dots, black pants, and pink shoes. While under normal lighting these colors may not be bright, under the spotlight they synergize with the movements and amplify the force of the visual frame insofar as the increase in light increases their contrast with the black and white background. The moving bodies and arms, when highlighted in this manner, become even more mesmerizing. For Patricia Pisters, moreover, “Colors are pure affect: they have their own independent quality and invisible movement.”²⁸ The salmon, white, emerald, and black, in other words, take on a force of their own that, like movement, offers a range of virtual intensities that potentially animate audiences' virtual registers. Although they are “cool” colors and do not offer the cutting intensities of “warmer” reds, yellows, or oranges, they nevertheless expand within occupy the visual frame, making the space feel full and alive with movement. The synergy of color and movement throughout this promotion may work, then, prior to its capture with meaning and power, to amplify the intensive resonances between exercise and powerful affects that animate bodies.

The music playing throughout “Mom Dancing,” as well as the audience laughter, may provide additional layers of intensity as they vibrate throughout the visual frame. Played by famous hip-hop group The Roots, serve as the house band for *Late Night*, the slow disco beat, accompanying keyboard melody, and occasional crescendo punctuated by the cymbals, add multiple layers of intensity to the video. Notably, it adds a feeling of coherence to the video as

²⁸ Patricia Pisters, *The Matrix of Visual Culture: Working with Deleuze and Film Theory* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), 151.

Fallon and Obama move and gesture in sync with the beat throughout much of the promotion. At times this synchronization appears to animate the dancing, providing it with its energy, as they move their hips and shoulders to the beat, and their bodies appear to be hypnotized. At other times, Fallon and Obama break from the beat. Here, their movements become frenzied or out of sync as the constant beat and melody work together to maintain a coherence to the seemingly disorganized frame. Taken together, these tendencies of interaction between the bodies and music may amplify the force of the promotion by working to enact what Deleuze and Guattari call “a rhythm associated with a character, subject, or impulse”²⁹ on a visual landscape. By working both in sync with, and at odds against, the moving figures, these moments amplify the overall magnetic force of “Mom Dancing” by providing the visual frame with a constant vibration that simultaneously synergizes with and escapes the rhythms of the dancing itself. Audiences may, in turn, become entranced at some moments, and at others energized beyond the affective potential offered by the moving bodies alone.

The intermittent laughter and cheering of the *Late Show's* studio audience may provide a punctuation to the rhythmic dancing, amplifying its power to entrance audiences by intermingling with its multi-sensory force. This laughter, which corresponds with the alteration of Obama and Fallon's patterns of movement rather than the change of the on screen text that labels each dance, may add to “Mom Dancing's” rhythm, providing an additional layer to its hypnotic pulsation that may garner force from what Deleuze and Guattari call “intermingling the nonmusical sound of the human being to form a block with the becoming-music of sound, for them to confront and embrace each other like two wrestlers who can no longer break free from each other's grasp...”³⁰ When they cheer for Obama first appearing in the frame, or when they

²⁹ Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 318.

³⁰ Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 309.

laugh at Fallon's inability to dance the “Dougie,” a move popularized by the group Cali Swag District in their music video “Teach Me How to Dougie,”³¹ the noise adds a force that may work on audiences prior to capture. The cheering and laughter, in other words, most likely functions to acclimate bodies to the periodic changes in movement, rather than adding a cognitive meaning to the music. Through their figurations of active bodies as part of a broader visual and sonic landscapes, these promotions likely amplify intensive resonances between animating affects and exercise as a series of embodied activities. They might, then, encourage virtual dispositions towards exercise among their adult audiences who ostensibly are members of families with children.

Healthy Children

In addition to promotions aimed at encouraging adults to engage in physical activity, “Let's Move” has funded several promotions that seek to modulate children's eating habits through the use of powerful figurations of child-like bodies that model the prescribed consumption habits against intricately colored and carefully lit backgrounds. Notably, these commercial's affective potentials are best demonstrated by the two public service announcements from 2013 that feature Obama and the popular Sesame Street character Big Bird. “The new PSAs” notes a press release about the commercials, “feature Mrs. Obama and Big Bird in the White House showing kids how easy and delicious it is to eat healthy snacks like fruits and vegetables and demonstrating fun ways to get active like dancing and jumping.”³² Circulated by 320 PBS stations, and posted to YouTube, these commercials exemplify how the campaign stylizes children's everyday lives as a form of participation in national fitness initiatives through

³¹ Yolande Geraldts, Cali Swag District, “Teach Me How to Dougie” (2010), available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E7kgHRIUIHc>

³² Office of The First Lady, “Big Bird and Michelle Obama: Healthy Eating Can Be Easy” *WhiteHouse.gov* (February 21, 2013), <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2013/02/21/first-lady-michelle-obama-and-big-bird-team-help-get-kids-healthy>.

the use of color and texture, camera work, dialog, and the use of Big Bird, a figure that likely resonates with audience members.

Both commercials reenforce positive dispositions towards fitness by providing well lit, deeply textured, and intensively powerful landscapes that may mesmerize audiences and, in so doing, encourage predispositions towards the practices modeled therein. The PSA entitled “Healthy Eating Can Be Easy,” begins with a medium shot of Obama standing in the White House kitchen next to Big Bird.³³ Their proximity and bright colors establish a focal point for the commercial as Obama is dressed in a rose colored shirt and cardigan that has a flower of the same color attached to the left shoulder, while Bird Bird is adorned in golden yellow feathers, white eyebrows and magenta eyelids. Additionally, this PSA features several close-up shots of brightly colored vegetables. About fifteen second into the commercial, the frame focuses on a basket that is garnished with a leafy green vegetable and contains red and yellow bell peppers, bananas, oranges, and red apples. This basket becomes a focal point of the remainder of the commercial, as Obama and Big Bird occasionally pick fruit from it to hold up for the audience. The bright lighting throughout the PSA may also the colors' intensity. The scene is brightly frontlit such that the steel pan rack and the pans themselves shine. By illuminating Obama and Big Bird from the front, the colors become harder and gain a textural quality where they might otherwise soften under natural or exclusively overhead lighting. Big Bird's feathers, the flower on Obama's cardigan, as well as the fruit and vegetables, become multi-textured, providing the colors shading, as well as a layer of intricate detail, that together encourage further engagement with the images. The combination of texture and bright colors, as Laura U. Marks points out, add a level of intricacy that exceeds the representational qualities of the video and invites intensive

³³ *Let's Move*, “Let's Move! with Big Bird at the White House” *YouTube.com* (February 21, 2013), <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5rKUUAvfzIU&feature=youtu.be>.

and bodily forms of engagements with moving images, making it more likely that the commercial will affect audiences.³⁴ It, alongside the bright colors, provides the fruit and vegetables with an intensive allure and likely encourages a positive disposition towards the choices and habits that the commercial stylizes as healthy.

The repeated close-ups of the vegetables throughout “Healthy Eating Can Be Easy” likely amplify the power of the prescribed consumption habits, as they further sediment associations between the figures and healthy foods. The four close-ups of vegetables focus, at different times, on the basket as a whole, red apples and bell peppers, an orange that Obama is grasping in order to pick it up, as well as a banana being held up by Big Bird. The fruits become more detailed in each of these shots, encouraging audiences to intensively engage with their textures and intricacies. The image of the banana being held by big-bird, for instance, renders its textural quality evident in a manner that was previously unavailable. Like many bananas it emanates a yellow a few shades brighter than Big-Bird's golden coloration, has brown spots on the corners of the skin and is pockmarked from aging and transportation. As it occupies the frame for a full two seconds and provides one of the most vividly textured images throughout the video, the banana, which is directly associated with the stylization of healthy eating, may be the most powerful figure in the PSA aside from Obama and Big Bird. The close ups of the banana, as well as the orange and bell peppers, may subsequently amplify the force of the explicit stylizations of healthy eating prescribed by the narration.

While the close-ups of the vegetables, colorful palate, and lighting, that compose the PSA's visual frame offer powerful intensities, the most explicit stylizations of healthy eating choices emerge in the narration, which relies on the use of the first-person “I” and the tonality of

³⁴ Laura U. Marks, *Touch: Sensuous Theory and Multisensory Media* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press), 2002.

Obama's and Big-Bird's voices to provide a model for audiences. Obama begins the narration with "Hi! We're here in the White House kitchen looking for a healthy snack to eat" before Big Bird responds by proclaiming in a wonder: "Gee! I bet you can get just anything you want in this kitchen." These opening moments both set the subject and tenor for the remainder of the commercial. Here, Obama affects an excited tone while proclaiming her desire for, and benefits of, healthy food choices, while Big Bird performs enthusiastic amazement at the possibilities offered by fruit and vegetables. Moments later, for example, Obama responds to Big Bird's claim that you could find anything in the kitchen by extolling her love of vegetables in a statement that highlights their sensuous qualities: "But, do you know what I like to reach for? Healthy, colorful, snacks like juicy fruits and crunchy vegetables." Big Bird then confirms this statement by noting: "Those look good!" These fragments of narration work to associate the affective power of the visual frame with healthy eating practices, encouraging the audience of children to choose fruit and vegetables as a snack. Through the use of the first person "I" in her statements, which are confirmed by Big Bird's responses, Obama adds to what Bradford Vivian calls "the fund of available aesthetic modalities with which one may rhetorically compose one's self."³⁵ She offers the audience, in other words, another set of practices after which they may stylize themselves as healthy consumers. Synergizing with the descriptions of fruits of vegetables as delicious, colorful, and convenient, this narrative element likely accentuates the power of the visual frame and encourages audiences to adopt healthy consumption choices as a part of their everyday lives.

The commercial's power to encourage the adoption of healthy eating practices may be amplified insofar as the figure of Big Bird occupies a privileged place within, and is repeated throughout, media targeted at young children. Sesame Street, the classic children's television show from which he originates, plays an important role in American childhood. Although ratings

³⁵ Bradford Vivian, "The Threshold of the Self" *Philosophy & Rhetoric* 33.4 (2000), 314.

for the PBS show fluctuate from year to year, including sinking to the 15th most popular children's show in 2009,³⁶ it is consistently “rated preschoolers' favorite show.”³⁷ Moreover, numerous spin-off products, the popular theater act “Sesame Street Live!,”³⁸ as well as partnerships between Sesame Workshop, which produces the show, and government agencies and corporations figure Big Bird as an important part of popular culture.³⁹ Indeed, as Mavis Reimer contends, Sesame Street is among many of the “prime examples of texts that are structured as repetitions with variations and whose presence in the lives of their readers and viewers is likely to be of long duration.”⁴⁰ The use of Big Bird in “Healthy Eating,” then, may resonate with these repetitions, amplifying the power of the commercial's colors, lighting work, and camera work, to modulate the young audiences' dispositions towards consuming fruits and vegetables. “Let's Move” subsequently stylizes healthy habits through the circulation of affectively powerful images of moving bodies and fruits of vegetables, the intensities of which are modulated through multiple rhetorical forms that likely resonate with audiences. Although these intensities become captured within the axioms of contemporary militarism and neoliberal capitalism, they likely remain autonomous in the first instance and modulate dispositions towards healthful practices by encouraging exercise and the consumption of fruits and vegetables rather than carbohydrates and sugars.

³⁶ Lisa Guernsey, “How Sesame Street Changed the World” *NewsWeek.com* (May 22, 2009), <http://www.newsweek.com/how-sesame-street-changed-world-80067>.

³⁷ Georg Szalai, “Sesame Street' hits highest ratings in years” *The Hollywood Reporter* (May 24, 2010), <http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/news/sesame-street-hits-highest-ratings-23940>.

³⁸ As of the time this essay was written, “Sesame Street Live!” listed over sixty upcoming tour dates on their website. See: *Sesame Street Live*, “Tickets” last accessed January 25, 2014, <http://sesamestreetlive.com/tickets-0>.

³⁹ Sesame Workshop, “Partners,” *SesameWorkshop.org*, last accessed January 25, 2014, <http://www.sesameworkshop.org/partners/partners/>.

⁴⁰ Mavis Reimer, “Tell Me How to Get to Sesame Street,” *Jeunesse: Young People, Texts, Cultures* 5.1 (2013), 11.

Logics of Capture in Contemporary Obesity Discourses

While “Let’s Move” offers numerous intensities that may escape capture, their entrance into the register of sensation also marks their emergence into rhetorical contexts that will play an important role in their capture. This process of emergence, argues Massumi, invites “the intervention of a transcendent operation”⁴¹ through which “The dimension of play is reduced to a repetitive space of disciplinary regulation.”⁴² Intensities that, in the first instance, constitute a whole field of aesthetic potentialities, become regulated by the first principles of economic efficiency and personal fitness such that the practices of physical activity and healthy eating become institutionalized and regulated. To demonstrate that “Let’s Move’s” intensive potentialities likely become captured once they emerge as persuasive messages to particular audiences, I interrogate the discourses surrounding the contemporary obesity crisis and physical fitness. In so doing, I argue that they have become nearly inseparable from concerns about economic efficiency and the need for healthy bodies to secure American military dominance.

Obesity as an Economic Threat

Aside from the concerns about the harm of obesity to individual health, much of the public discourse about the nation’s weight problem focuses on the negative economic effects of individual’s consumption habits. These discourses, many of which echo fears generated by the 2008 economic crises, exemplify neoliberalism’s “consistent expansion of the economic form to apply to the social sphere, thus eliding any difference between the economy and the social.”⁴³ They do so, in part, by submitting the analysis of food consumption and exercise choices to the axiom of economic efficiency, whereby individuals are encouraged to maximize their potential labor-power with every decision. By modulating individual’s prior dispositions towards decisions

⁴¹ Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual*, 78.

⁴² Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual*, 79.

⁴³ Thomas Lemke, “‘The Birth of Bio-Politics’: Michel Foucault’s lecture at the Collège de France on Neo-Liberal Governmentality,” *Economy and Society* 30.2 (May 2001), 197.

that comply with this transcendent rationality in hopes of furthering their future economic productivity, this axiom renders their lives, as Michel Foucault puts it, “into a sort of permanent and multiple enterprise.”⁴⁴ This tendency to submit concerns about rising national obesity rates to the axiom of economic efficiency emerge in discussions of future healthcare costs and worker productivity, as economists, politicians, and the popular press express fears about the long term consequences of individuals failing to look after their weight, which serves as a proxy for their economic costs and potentialities.

Concerns over the burden of healthcare costs on a fragile economy are one of the most widely circulated means through which obesity discourses become captured within logics of economic efficiency and the enterprising subject. Notably, in a 2009 editorial published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* and recirculated in blogs⁴⁵ and newspapers,⁴⁶ David S. Ludwig and Harold A. Pollack argue that increasing rates of obesity are attributable to the economics of farming, which encourage the production cheap and unhealthy foodstuffs, as well as a the changing social context in which families are increasingly financially strained. Although these explanations for rising obesity are far from novel, their concerns about rising healthcare exemplifies the tendency to impute discussions of health problems with an analysis of individual economic decision making. As the authors note: “The economic downturn can be

⁴⁴ Michel Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at College de France 1978-1979* ed. Michel Senellart, trans. Graham Burchell (New York: Picador, 2008), 241.

⁴⁵ Shari Roan, “Economic crisis, meet obesity crisis” *The Los Angeles Times Booster Shots* (February 3, 2009), http://latimesblogs.latimes.com/booster_shots/2009/02/economic-crisis.html (Accessed 12/12/2013); *Y Public Health Nutrition*, “Obesity and the Economy: From Crisis to Opportunity” (February 6, 2009), <http://yphnutrition.blogspot.com/2009/02/obesity-and-economy-from-crisis-to.html> (Accessed 12/12/2013); *Journal of Nursing*, “Downsizing Obesity in a Lean Economy: Crisis and Opportunity” (February 1, 2009), <http://www.asrn.org/journal-nursing/517-downsizing-obesity-in-a-lean-economy-crisis-and-opportunity.html> (Accessed 12/12/2013); *Ask Doctor T Blog* “The effect of Obesity on the Economy” (2010), <http://www.cardiachealth.org/effect-obesity-economy> (Accessed 12/12/2013); Elizabeth Cooney, “Obesity and a lean economy? Let's cure both,” *The White Coat Notes* (February 3, 2009), http://www.boston.com/news/health/blog/2009/02/obesity_hold_ti.html (Accessed 12/12/2013).

⁴⁶ Katrina Trinko, “Political cowards love the sin tax; Raise loads of money while hitting society's most vulnerable. What's not to like?” *USA Today* (September 21, 2010), 11A;

expected to reduce nutrition quality and physical activity, worsening obesity prevalence when society is least able to bear the escalating financial burden.”⁴⁷ Decisions that affect personal fitness, in other words, are said to be directly influenced by the economy, and in turn, directly influence the social and healthcare costs incurred as a result of rising obesity rates. While in this case the analysis takes a mostly moderate tone, its emphasis on the economic analysis of everyday decision making, and of social problems more generally, lends itself to figurations of the enterprising subject that emerge in popular discourse.

These concerns of the economic impact of rising obesity rates have, in many iterations, lend themselves to proclamations of the need for greater personal responsibility on the part of obese individuals qua enterprising subjects. An interview between *Washington Post* journalist Jennifer LaRue Huget and Yale Professor and author Kelly Brownell, who advocates taxing unhealthy foods, exemplifies the tendency of obesity discourses to become soliloquies on the need for personal responsibility.⁴⁸ Akin to Ludwig and Pollack's essay, this article claims that healthcare costs as a result of obesity rates will total the seemingly enormous figure of “\$147 billion.”⁴⁹ For Huget, who editorializes throughout the story, the obese have a personal responsibility for their weight and are subsequently obligated to remedy problem because it potentially affects everyone: “I'll concede that if we individuals are supposed to take charge of our own weight, too many of us are shirking that duty. And obesity's impact on health-care costs makes it everyone's problem, like it or not.”⁵⁰ Throughout the article, moreover, Huget uses a vague concept of government intervention as a foil to repeat her claim that obesity rates are a

⁴⁷ David S. Ludwig and Harold A. Pollack, “Obesity and the Economy: From Crisis to Opportunity,” *Journal of the American Medical Association* 301.5 (February 4, 2009), 533.

⁴⁸ Jennifer LaRue Huget, “Can We Fight Obesity by Slapping a Heavy Tax on Soda?,” *The Washington Post* (August 11, 2009), HE03.

⁴⁹ Huget, “Can We Fight Obesity,” HE03.

⁵⁰ Huget, “Can We Fight Obesity,” HE03.

matter of personal responsibility: "... Brownell's approach smacks of paternalism and over-reliance on government intervention. Shouldn't diet and weight be a matter of personal responsibility, not the government's concern?"⁵¹ Posed here as a question, Huget's rhetoric of personal responsibility figures obese bodies as insufficiently concerned with the economic implications of their everyday activities. Overweight bodies become a problem because their actions fail to adhere to an economic rationality which mandates a proper diet and regular exercise. They fail, in other words, to properly carry out the responsibilities of the enterprising subject who seeks to consistently maximize economic outcomes in every sphere of activity.

In addition to calls for individuals to take responsibility for the economic impact of their health decisions, another series of discourses explicitly concern themselves with the damage to human capital caused by obesity. This widely circulated perspective,⁵² which posits that obesity comes with social stigmas and health problems that prevent children, and especially young girls, from maximizing their earning potential, figures its subjects as irrational economic decision makers. For instance, in a *The New York Times* article, economists Christy M. Glass, Eric N. Reither, and Steven A. Haas claim that when compared to their male counterparts, overweight women "were less likely to earn college degrees — regardless of their ability, professional goals or socioeconomic status."⁵³ To arrive at this conclusion, the authors attempt to adopt "the subjective vantage point of the person doing the work"⁵⁴ as a means of incorporating social

⁵¹ Huget, "Can We Fight Obesity," HE03.

⁵² Gortmaker SL, Must A, Perrin JM, Sobol AM, Dietz W. Social and economic consequences of overweight in adolescence and young adulthood. *N Eng J Med* 1993;329(14):1008—1012; Kaestner R, Grossman M, Yarnoff B. Effects of weight on adolescent educational attainment. 2009 May. Available from: <http://www.nber.org/papers/w14994.pdf> Accessed December 13, 2012. Geier AB, Foster GD, Womble LG, et al. The relationship between relative weight and school attendance among elementary schoolchildren. *Obesity* (Silver Spring). 2007;15(8):2157—2161 Sabia JJ. The effect of body weight on adolescent academic performance. *Southern Econ J* 2007;73(4):871—900.

⁵³ Christy M. Glass, Eric N. Reither, and Steven A. Haas, "Heavy in School, Burdened for Life," *The New York Times* (June 3, 2011), A23.

⁵⁴ Lemke, "The Birth of Bio-Politics," 199.

factors into their economic calculus. Within this framework, interpersonal interactions, along with nearly every decision, become subject to an economic analysis that seeks to understand the causes of obesity. Despite the sympathetic tone of this essay, it nevertheless posits that numerous social interactions that contribute to obesity work to diminish subjects' economic productivity. In so doing, it figures these social interactions and the bodies that participate in them as outside the realm of economic rationality. They become, throughout this essay and numerous others, objects of concern, problems to be captured and corrected.

These concerns likely synergize with fears about rising healthcare costs insofar as they both express fears that the nation's weight problem will operate as a drag on overall economic growth, further encouraging the capture of fitness practices within contemporary neoliberal capitalism. In the aforementioned article, for instance, the authors conclude that underachievement by overweight women constitutes "... a drain on the human capital and economic productivity of our nation."⁵⁵ Moreover, Ross A. Hammond and Ruth Levine generalize this conclusion, arguing that the overall "Effects of obesity and overweight on educational attainment — both quantity and quality of schooling — also represent a potential economic impact, one that may become increasingly significant as rates of childhood and adolescent obesity climb."⁵⁶ As with the discourses about rising healthcare costs as a result of obesity, studies that proclaim its effects on humans' potential labor-power do not assign bodies an intrinsic worth, express concerns about their diminished quality of life, or concern themselves with the intricacies of healthy living. Instead, obese bodies are figured as harbingers of a catastrophic economic future. These concerns, then, likely synergize and contribute to the capture of discourses of exercise, ensuring that they become a means of ensuring economic

⁵⁵ Glass, Reither, and Haas, "Heavy in School," A23.

⁵⁶ Ross A. Hammond and Ruth Levine, "The Economic Impact of Obesity in the United States" *Diabetes Metab Syndr Obes.* 3 (2010), available at: <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3047996/>.

productivity, efficiency, and the production of human capital, rather than merely a means of supporting one's quality of life. By situating rising obesity rates as primarily a problem of healthcare costs and human capital, they work together to submit this social and health problem to the neoliberal logics which encourage subjects to turn their fitness and consumption choices into an economic enterprise.

Obesity as a Security Threat

In addition to the submission of concerns about rising obesity rates to the logics of neoliberalism, many discourses surrounding the nation's weight problem situate as a threat to axioms of masculine strength that organize conceptions of national security. Centered around concerns about the long-term sustainability of the United States' fighting-force, many public discourses about obesity tend to pose it as a insipid force that is producing bodies unable to fight in conflicts or defend the homeland. Such discourses likely resonate, then, with the axioms of masculinity that guide contemporary conceptions of national security which, as Anthony Burke notes, seek to exclude and hierarchize bodies along the lines of “a gendered dichotomy between (masculine) public and (feminine) private, strength and passivity, war and peace, violence and submission.”⁵⁷ Through the repetition of war metaphors to describe the nation's weight problem as well as characterizations of obesity as a threat to fit bodies, these discourses seek to exclude obese bodies from the public and may subsequently become captured within the axiomatic system of national security.

Metaphorical descriptions of rising obesity rates as the object of a war or as a form of terrorism are one widely circulated means through which concerns about the nation's weight problem become captured within the system of national security discourses which privilege fit bodies. Notably, popular reports about George W. Bush's obesity and fitness rhetorics between

⁵⁷ Anthony Burke, *Beyond Security: War and Violence Against the Other* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 5.

June 20th, 2002 and June 22nd, 2002 described his policies as a war akin to the conflict in Afghanistan while upholding Bush himself as the exemplar of a fit body necessary to preserve security.⁵⁸ An article in *The Observer*, for instance, posits obesity rates as a “pandemic”⁵⁹ and describes Bush's shift of attention as a turn from one war to another while explicitly posing him as the model of fitness: “President George Bush turned from his war on terror yesterday to the war on fat, using his own body as a model for America to get fit.”⁶⁰ When paired with the nearly omnipresent crisis and war discourses, as in this example, the proliferation of obese bodies becomes posed as a threat in need of discipline. Moreover, by figuring Bush as a model of proper fitness these discourses capture concerns about obesity within the dichotomous system of masculinity that favors models of strength and virility as potential resources in the national struggle. While Bush becomes the privileged figure who fights the metaphorical war and exemplifies an attention to fitness which all audiences should aspire, obese bodies are posed as a threat to America's strength. Through this description of the fight against the nation's weight problem as a war, fit bodies may become privileged figures capable of participate in this conflict.

Insofar as they pose overweight bodies as a potential threat to national security, these descriptions of the fight against obesity as a war likely synergize with related metaphors that describe it as a form of terrorism. Here, however, the metaphors may reenforce the differential exclusion of obese bodies as threats rather than the privileging of fit bodies as exemplars of

⁵⁸ George W. Bush, “Executive Order: Activities to Promote Personal Fitness” Office of the Press Secretary (June 20, 2002), <http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2002/06/20020620-4.html>; George W. Bush, “Executive Order: President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports” Office of the Press Secretary (June 20, 2002), <http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2002/06/20020620-5.html>; Office of the Press Secretary, “Fact Sheet: President Bush Launches HealthierUS Initiative” (June 20, 2002), <http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2002/06/20020620-6.html>; Office of the Press Secretary, “Facts and Figures on the President's Fitness Challenge” (June 21, 2002), <http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2002/06/20020621-2.html>; George W. Bush, “President's Radio Address,” Office of the Press Secretary (June 22, 2002), <http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2002/06/20020622.html>.

⁵⁹ Ed Vulliamy, “Bush Declares War on Fat America” *The Observer* (June 23, 2002), 1.

⁶⁰ Vulliamy, “Bush Declares War,” 1.

national strength. One of the most widely circulated instances of this metaphor emerged just twenty days before the United States invaded Iraq in 2003, when Attorney General Carmona analogized obesity to the seemingly urgent threat of a non-conventional terrorist attack sanctioned by Saddam Hussein: “When you look at obesity, what I call the terror within, a threat that is every bit as real to America as the weapons of mass destruction, obesity as an epidemic is ... growing.”⁶¹ Carmona again compared obesity's effects to terrorism in 2006 by describing it as a threat of a worse magnitude than the September 11th attacks: “Obesity is the terror within. Unless we do something about it, the magnitude of the dilemma will dwarf 9/11 or any other terrorist attempt.”⁶² In both examples, the phrase “the terror within” poses obese bodies as potential threats in need of discipline. It does so, in part, by implying that the systems of differential inclusion and discipline taken against ethnic minorities to counter potential violence by non-state actors might provide a guiding logic for understanding and controlling these bodies.⁶³ Although Carmona may have been attempting to simply increase the perceived salience of obesity through these comparisons, they likely resonate with rhetorics of national security that encourage the exclusion of weak or threatening bodies.

Depictions of rising obesity rates as threat to the ready supply of strong bodies, which are figured as necessary to sustain America's military dominance, are another means through which these discourses may become captured within systems of national security. Most notably, widely publicized reports published in 2010 and 2012 by Mission: Readiness, an organization composed of former generals and admirals, predicted that rising obesity rates will deplete the available

⁶¹ Quoted in *CNN Health*, “Surgeon general to cops: Put down the donuts” (March 2, 2003), <http://www.cnn.com/2003/HEALTH/02/28/obesity.police/> (Accessed, 12/11/2013)

⁶² Quoted in Gina Pace, “Obesity Bigger Threat Than Terrorism?” *CBS News* (March 1, 2006), <http://www.cbsnews.com/news/obesity-bigger-threat-than-terrorism/> (Accessed, 12/11/2013)

⁶³ For another example of this analogy, see: Derrick Z. Jackson, “All Quiet on the Fat Front,” *The Boston Globe* (October 11, 2002), A23.

surplus of healthy bodies that may join the armed forces' fighting force.⁶⁴ A *precis* of the first report, published in *The Washington Post*, for instance, explicitly outlines the historical linkages between childhood obesity and the depletion of the nation's fighting force: "When the National School Lunch Act was first passed in 1946, it was seen as a matter of national security. Many of our military leaders recognized that poor nutrition was a significant factor reducing the pool of qualified candidates for service."⁶⁵ The article then concludes by analogizing this historical recognition of the threats of obesity to the fighting force to the contemporary situation: "Obesity rates threaten the overall health of America and the future strength of our military. We must act, as we did after World War II, to ensure that our children can one day defend our country, if need be."⁶⁶ This article and the broader report pose obesity as a threat to healthy bodies, which are themselves figures of national strength and security. In this way, obese bodies become counterposed as signs of national weakness and insecurity in need to discipline and differential exclusion through exercise and modified lunch programs in schools. Concerns about obesity, then, become more likely to encourage the development of programs that discipline overweight and weak bodies as a means of preserving America's fighting force.

These claims about the necessity of strong and fit bodies to maintain national security also emerged throughout civilian discourses, increasing the likelihood that obesity programs may become directly tied to the preservation of America's fighting force. A letter-writer to *The Washington Post*, for example, fears that "the obesity crisis in our nation"⁶⁷ will damage its strength, understood as the aggregate of individual's health: "How can we be truly strong and

⁶⁴ Mission:Readiness, *Too Fat to Fight* (2010), http://www.missionreadiness.org/wp-content/uploads/MR_Too_Fat_to_Fight-11.pdf; Mission:Readiness, *Still Too Fat to Fight* (2012), <http://missionreadiness.s3.amazonaws.com/wp-content/uploads/Still-Too-Fat-To-Fight-Report.pdf>.

⁶⁵ Shalikashvili and Shelton, "The new national security," A19.

⁶⁶ Shalikashvili and Shelton, "The new national security," A19.

⁶⁷ *The Washington Post*, "Dear Abby: After a breakfast ..." (August 18, 2002), F03.

healthy as a nation when we are comprised of individuals who are not strong and healthy?”⁶⁸ Reiterating this appeal to national strength, she concludes with an appeal to a patriotic duty to fight terrorism: “Seeking health and strength should be not only our personal goals, but would enable us to unify and defend against terrorists in a way that would do more good than simply waving the flag.”⁶⁹ Here, the appeal to national strength that underlies the General's report becomes even more explicit. Fit and healthy bodies become figured as crucial to the aggregate strength and security of the United States in a manner that explicitly links it to the ability to defend against threats of violence from non-state actors. The author even poses the practices of fitness and health as forms of patriotism, a sentiment that figures obese bodies as excluded from what she depicts as the potential for a unified nation. This letter, and similar discourses, may amplify the probability that concerns about rising obesity rates become channeled into programs and practices that maintain healthy bodies as resources for national security. As one of the prominent contexts for Let's Move, contemporary obesity discourses may have subsequently become caught up within the mutually reinforcing logics of neoliberalism and militarism, increasing the likelihood that the campaign's affective force will be put to use to sustain America's economic and military dominance.

Let's Move as Affective Capture

Although Let's Move offers a myriad of initially autonomous affects that merely encourage positive dispositions towards exercise and healthy eating, once they circulate within particular contexts and are taken up by the popular press they become captured by the logics of neoliberalism and militarism. When Obama, government officials, and the press, promote the

⁶⁸ *The Washington Post*, “Dear Abby,” F03.

⁶⁹ *The Washington Post*, “Dear Abby,” F03.

campaign to military families, policy makers, and other audiences outside of the general public, in other words, their rhetorics amplify the force of calls to use the fight against obesity as a means of producing bodies as ready-made resources for the maintenance of America's economic and military power. The affective potentialities of these speeches and promotions, as well as those offered by the campaign writ large, become actualized as practices and programs that encourage people to take charge of their fitness through appeals to personal and corporate responsibility, the nation's economic growth, figurations of military families as well as the privileging of strong bodies as apart of America's fighting force. To demonstrate the resonances between the rhetoric of Let's Move and these logics, I engage texts produced by advocates for the campaign as well as news stories that increase their range of circulation and, through the power of repetition, may amplify the likelihood that they become captured.

Let's Move as Economic Discourse

The economic impact of obesity, rhetorics of choice and responsibility that encourage bodies to become enterprising subjects, as well as the potential for monetizing healthy consumption habits while simultaneously amplifying corporate prestige, play an important role in promotions for the campaign that seek to motivate financial participation and support from policymakers and business people. While these rhetorical strategies rarely emerged in combination, such that Obama and her proxies explicitly called upon individuals to take responsibility for the economy, taken together they nevertheless likely amplify the calls for potentially obese subjects to adopt habits necessary to maintain themselves as resources for American economic power.

One strategy used to proffer Let's Move echoes concerns about rising healthcare costs, as Obama consistently predicts that their potential impact will be catastrophic for employers as well

as the broader economy. Take, for example, her speech to the National Governor's Association in 2010, where Obama labeled childhood obesity a “crisis”⁷⁰ and emphasized its' future impact on state budgets: “Because if we think our health care costs are high now, just wait until 10 years from now. Think about the many billions we're going to be spending then.”⁷¹ Later that year, Obama deployed a similar strategy when addressing the National Grocer's Association by appealing to the potential effects of obesity on corporate profits: “And I know you’re well aware of the economic consequences: how we’re currently spending billions of dollars treating obesity-related conditions — costs that many of your companies pay in the form of rising health care expenses; expenses that will only continue to rise and affect your bottom lines if we fail to act.”⁷² In both speeches, moreover, Obama's emphasis on the economic impacts of obesity are accompanied with discussions of how the program might work together with organizations to encourage children and families to make healthier decisions. During the former speech, for instance, Obama calls upon the state governors to join her in helping “families and communities make healthier decisions for their kids”⁷³ and to broaden the availability of healthy food for schoolchildren because “kids are faced with poor choices in the school cafeteria.”⁷⁴ As figured during these speeches, the campaign aims to encourage subjects might begin to take responsibility for their role in creating the rising healthcare costs. Although Obama's rhetoric takes an empathic tone, her emphasis throughout these speeches on providing children and families healthy “options” in terms of food, the knowledge necessary to make decisions that may improve their fitness, as well as developing programs that encourage them to change their habits,

⁷⁰ Michelle Obama, “Remarks by The First Lady to the National Governors Association” (February 20, 2010), <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/remarks-first-lady-national-governors-association>.

⁷¹ Obama, “National Governors Association,” np.

⁷² Michelle Obama, “Remarks by the First Lady at a Grocery Manufacturers Association Conference” (March 16, 2010), <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/remarks-first-lady-a-grocery-manufacturers-association-conference>.

⁷³ Obama, “National Governors Association,” np.

⁷⁴ Obama, “National Governors Association,” np.

likely resonate with contemporary assumptions of personal economic responsibility. The emphasis on habits and choice, in other words, puts responsibility for healthcare costs at the feet of individuals while positioning the audience as agents with the power to encourage the proper habits. As such, her rhetoric amplifies the likelihood that the affective force of Let's Move becomes captured within programs that encourage subjects to take responsibility for the potential economic impact of their consumption and exercise choices.

In addition to seeking to ameliorate rising obesity rates as a means of saving healthcare costs, Let's Move also aims to foster individuals as enterprising subjects who make healthy decisions in order to improve their potential labor-power. It may, then, encourage the capture of its affective potentialities within the contemporary logics of neoliberal capitalism which seek to maintain the supply of healthy workers in order to preserve the national economy. In a 2013 speech delivered at The Partnership for a Healthier America Summit, Obama calls on corporations and government agencies to “offer parents clear information at the moment when they’re actually deciding what to buy, cook and order for their kids”⁷⁵ as a means of altering “the information landscape that shapes our choices every day.”⁷⁶ She also calls for “responsible marketing”⁷⁷ as a means of getting “our kids excited about eating healthy.”⁷⁸ While these goals may amount to simply encouraging people to be healthy to improve their lives, for Obama, “It’s how we will ensure that our kids can fulfill every last bit of their God-given potential. And finally, it is also our patriotic obligation to our country. It’s how we will raise the next generation of workers and innovators and leaders who will continue to make America the greatest nation on

⁷⁵ Michelle Obama, “Remarks by the First Lady to the Partnership for a Healthier America Summit” delivered at George Washington University Washington, D.C., White House Office of The Press Secretary (March 8, 2013), <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2013/03/08/remarks-first-lady-partnership-healthier-america-summit>.

⁷⁶ Obama, “Partnership for a Healthier America,” n.p.

⁷⁷ Obama, “Partnership for a Healthier America,” n.p.

⁷⁸ Obama, “Partnership for a Healthier America,” n.p.

Earth.”⁷⁹ In these passages, Obama draws an explicit connection between the campaign's affective components and the calls for programs the discipline participants' bodies. The positive dispositions towards eating fruits and vegetables offered by the campaign, here posed as excitement and ease of decision making, become actualized as a means of encouraging individuals to take responsibility for their future labor-power. Indeed, Obama premises her appeals to these corporate food producers on the idea that it is necessary to change advertising and the availability of information to encourage children and adults to make healthy decisions. One of the actualizations of Let's Moves intensive power, then, involves the development of programs and advertisement campaigns aimed at rendering bodies as enterprising individuals who take responsibility for their role in preserving America's economy.

While ameliorating concerns about rising healthcare costs and diminishing labor power provide a long-term impetus for Let's Move, its programs and advertisements may more immediately serve to amplify the resonances between intensive dispositions towards fitness and corporate brands. In so doing, the campaign may inadvertently expand corporate control of the food economy despite its pretensions to encourage the consumption of foods grown in local gardens and purchased at farmers markets. In a 2013 editorial in *The Wall Street Journal*, for instance, Obama claims that “According to the conventional wisdom, healthy food simply didn't sell—the demand wasn't there and higher profits were found elsewhere—so it just wasn't worth the investment.”⁸⁰ However, she notes,

But thanks to businesses across the country, today we are proving the conventional wisdom wrong. Every day, great American companies are achieving greater and greater success by creating and selling healthy products. In doing so, they are showing that

⁷⁹ Obama, “Partnership for a Healthier America,” n.p.

⁸⁰ Michelle Obama, “The Business Case for Healthier Food Options” *whitehouse.gov* (February 27, 2013), <http://online.wsj.com/news/articles/SB10001424127887323884304578328682206937380#printMode>.

what's good for kids and good for family budgets can also be good for business.⁸¹ Notably, Obama points to the synergy between the dispositions towards nutritious sustenance and the improvement of profit for the corporations, such as Walmart, that many critics argue are directly responsible for undermining local food economies.⁸² The campaign, then, may provide neoliberalism with a means of incorporating the perceived crisis of obesity rates within what Massumi calls neoliberalism's "metastable" processes whereby potential disruptions become the means through which it "frees itself to further its own process."⁸³ By figuring programs that encourage healthy food consumption as a means of amplifying corporate profits, in other words, Let's Move offers a means through which contemporary economic processes might become increasingly dominant at the expense of alternative food economies.

While Obama's rhetoric alone demonstrates how Let's Move encourages the capture of both exercise and healthy eating initiatives, the public circulation of the campaign's economic discourses amplified the likelihood that these programs might be targeted towards encouraging individuals to improve their human capital. By repeating the connections between fighting obesity and economic performance, in other words, the public reception of the campaign likely amplifies the urgency and importance of implementing its programs. Numerous articles, for instance, simply paraphrased Obama's discussions of the linkages between rising obesity rates and the nation's economic outlook before discussing the campaign. For instance, an article in *USA Today* began by directly linking Let's Move to the economy: "Calling obesity an epidemic and one of the greatest threats to America's health and economy, first lady Michelle Obama said Wednesday that she would launch a major initiative next month to combat the problem in

⁸¹ Obama, "The Business Case," n.p.

⁸² c.f. Stacy Mitchell, "Will Wal-Mart replace the supermarket?" *Salon.com* (Mar 28, 2013), http://www.salon.com/2013/03/28/will_wal_mart_replace_the_supermarket_partner/.

⁸³ Brian Massumi, "National Enterprise Emergency: Steps Towards an Ecology of Powers," *Theory, Culture & Society* 26.6 (November 2009), 140.

childhood.”⁸⁴ The article that follows, as with similar reports, provides further support to Obama's calls for youth fitness programs through the use of expert testimony and statistics. In so doing, they may provide force to Obama's calls and increasing the likelihood that they are taken up by larger audiences. Evidence of this increased force can be found, in part, in the numerous letters written to newspaper editorial boards across the United States. Take, for instance, a letter published in *The Washington Post* in 2010 that declares that “... I hope she [Obama] can lead our children to more healthful habits.”⁸⁵ The source of the letter-writers' concern becomes apparent in a final paragraph that echoes the economic rhetoric of Let's Move: “Since obesity drains \$147 billion from our economy every year ... it is past time to get serious.”⁸⁶ Through their repetition of Obama's calls, these stories may amplify the perceived urgency of developing fitness programs that put the positive affects associated with exercise towards the preservation of the nation's human capital. Working in concert with Obama's calls to remedy obesity's drain on the nation's healthcare system, as well as its threat to the reserves of human capital, they may increase the likelihood that positive dispositions towards fitness and exercise become captured within the orbit of neoliberal stylizations of subjects as healthy workers always looking to expand their potential labor-power.

Let's Move and the Preservation of Military Power

Alongside her calls to implement fitness programs in service of preserving the economy, Obama proffered Let's Move as a means of ensuring the sustainability of America's military power. She did so by figuring the families of service members as excited participants in the campaign, situating herself, through the rhetorical form of enactment, as a model for her audiences to follow, and by posing the military as leaders in fitness and a central force in society

⁸⁴ Nanci Hellmich, “Michelle Obama to fight child obesity at grass roots” *USA TODAY* (January 21, 2010), 4D.

⁸⁵ Charlie Garlow, “‘Let's move' on obesity — seriously” *The Washington Post* (February 16, 2010), A12.

⁸⁶ Garlow, “Let's Move on obesity,” A12

writ large. These moves amplified the likelihood that their positive dispositions towards exercise and healthy eating, as well as those of broader audiences, will become captured within programs designed to produce future members of America's fighting forces. Throughout the campaign, figurations of military families as “the force behind the force,” or as a part of the crucial support system for America's armed forces, serve as a means of cementing the affective capture of exercise and fitness within logics of militarism. Take, for instance, a speech delivered by Obama delivered on the South Lawn of the White House at the annual President's Council on Fitness, Sports and Nutrition Event in 2011.⁸⁷ Attended by the children and families of active and reserve service people, the event provided Obama with the opportunity to pose Let's Move as a means of supporting the the US Military and pose exercise and healthy eating programs as an important part of the national project.

Throughout this speech, Obama's positions Let's Move as a means of maintaining the strength of military families who she figures as a part of America's military infrastructure, a move that implies that the campaign is necessary to maintain the strength of the fighting force. She claims during the elongated introduction, for instance, that “It [Let's Move] has to do with one of my other top priorities as First Lady, and that's all of you — America's extraordinary military families. ... You all — I've said this before — are truly the force behind the force.”⁸⁸ “So” she later continues, “it is incumbent upon all of us to step up in some way to make sure these families know that we're proud of them. So today, I am pleased to announce three new 'Let's Move' commitments that are specifically designed for military kids and military

⁸⁷ Michelle Obama, “Remarks by the First Lady at President's Council on Fitness, Sports and Nutrition Event” The White House Office of The First Lady (May 9, 2011), <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2011/05/09/remarks-first-lady-presidents-council-fitness-sports-and-nutrition-event>.

⁸⁸ Obama, “Remarks at President's Council,” online.

families.”⁸⁹ The campaign, in other words, offers fitness programs as a means of sustaining the infrastructure necessary for military personnel to function. Not only, then, do fit military families become a tool for sustaining our fighting force, but the practices offered by Let's Move play some part in supporting the “force behind the force.” Moments later, Obama emphasizes that daily life for military families constitutes a “sacrifice”⁹⁰ for which Let's Move constitutes a show of “gratitude for”⁹¹ their “contributions to this nation.”⁹² Her figurations of military families as a crucial part of the fighting force itself, then, provide the grounds through which Obama works to pose Let's Move as crucial to maintaining fit bodies that “sacrifice” in support the fighting force itself. The campaign subsequently becomes figured as a means of maintaining fit bodies ready to “sacrifice” in order to sustain the American military, further encouraging associations between stylizations of fitness and logics of militarism.

To accompany her figuration of Let's Move as a means of supporting the families of service people, Obama deploys the rhetorical form of enactment to figure participation in the campaign as enjoyable and empowering. One of the most notable instances of this emerges when she discusses the President's Active Lifestyle Award, or what she calls the PALA. Here, Obama points to how audiences should be excited to participate in the program because they will receive an award: “The idea here is very simple: If kids do an hour of physical activity a day, five days a week for six weeks, they get an award from who other than the man in the Oval Office, the President of the United States. What more could you want as a kid? An award from the President!”⁹³ By affecting excitement, which is evident here from the combination of her rhetorical question and the use of an exclamation mark, Obama seeks to model the dispositions

⁸⁹ Obama, “Remarks at President's Council,” online.

⁹⁰ Obama, “Remarks at President's Council,” online.

⁹¹ Obama, “Remarks at President's Council,” online.

⁹² Obama, “Remarks at President's Council,” online.

⁹³ Obama, “Remarks at President's Council,” online.

that her audience should take towards the program, something that becomes evident a few paragraphs later: “So I’m proud to say that this past fall, I earned my PALA award, which I am very proud of. My trainer oversaw it. And I know that all you grownups and all of you kids can do the same thing.”⁹⁴ By providing herself as a model for the audience, as someone who is excited about participation in the fitness programs, Obama deploys enactment, “in which the speaker incarnates the argument,”⁹⁵ a rhetorical form said to amplify “the force of her speech.”⁹⁶ By performing her excitement for the audience, in other words, she encourages the audience to be similarly engaged with the programs offered by Let’s Move. While the effectivity of this gesture is far from certain, it does demonstrate the extent to which the campaign stylizes fit bodies in an effort to capture audiences’ excitement for exercise and healthy eating. Their positive dispositions towards healthy living become a means through which to increase participation in programs, such as PALA, designed to produce healthy bodies ready-made to support the nation’s military.

In addition to her speech on the South Lawn, Obama has visited several military bases on her Let’s Move Tour where she delivered speeches about the importance of improving nutrition for service people, and the population writ large, in order to preserve America’s military readiness. Notably, in a 2012 speech delivered at Little Rock Air Force Base, Obama repeats popular concerns about the threat of obesity rates to the future supply of healthy bodies necessary to sustain the nation’s fighting force while simultaneously figuring members of the

⁹⁴ Obama, “Remarks at President’s Council,” online.

⁹⁵ Karlyn Kohrs Campbell and Kathleen Hall Jamieson, “Form and Genre in Rhetorical Criticism: An Introduction” in *Readings in Rhetorical Criticism 4th edition* ed. Carl R. Burgchardt (State College: Strata, 2010), 444.

⁹⁶ Campbell and Jamieson, “Form and Genre,” 444.

military as leaders in the adoption of the healthy habits.⁹⁷ After announcing the a series of commitments by the Department of Defense to improve the diet of active duty troops, Obama launches into a paragraph about the threat of obesity that may work to amplify resonances between Let's Move and the logics of militarism:

This is truly a national security issue. According to a recent Army study, more than a quarter of our nation's 17- to 24-year-olds are too overweight to serve in our armed forces today. And even those who make the cut often struggle in basic training. One Army general told me that after years of inactivity and poor nutrition, many recruits are just out of shape and they're more likely to injure themselves in basic training.⁹⁸

Insofar as she repeats the widely circulated concerns about obesity rates as a threat to military readiness, Obama figures the campaign as a means of increasing the supply of fit bodies that may serve as a resource for sustaining the American armed forces. Much like the public reports, moreover, Obama also expresses concerns about how “the military is spending more and more money on obesity-related injuries, health problems — and dental care, which was a surprise to me; the cost of dental care because of poor nutrition has gone up.”⁹⁹ While the campaign may be concerned with individuals' health generally, as Obama is at pains to demonstrate throughout her speech, it likely resonates with concerns about the strength of potential and current military personnel by encouraging both civilian children and current service members to better attend to their fitness.

Adding force to these associations between Let's Move and logics of militarism, Obama also figures her audience of service members, as well as Little Rock Air Force Base, as

⁹⁷ Michelle Obama, “Remarks by the First Lady at Little Rock Air Force Base on Let's Move! Tour” The White House: Office of the First Lady (February 9, 2012), <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2012/02/09/remarks-first-lady-little-rock-air-force-base-lets-move-tour-little-rock>.

⁹⁸ Obama, “Little Rock Air Force Base,” online.

⁹⁹ Obama, “Little Rock Air Force Base,” online.

exemplars of fitness. Posing them as both organizing figures within the American public and objects of congratulatory praise for their participation in the program, these figurations likely reinforce the role of affective capture as one of the guiding means through which Let's Move ensures the continuation of America's military dominance. Notice how, immediately after reiterating concerns about the effects of obesity on the future fighting force, Obama poses service members as role models: "And I want to emphasize that in doing so, you're not just sending a powerful message throughout the military community. You're sending a message to our entire country. And that's one of the reasons I wanted to be here, because whenever our men and women in uniform step forward, America takes notice."¹⁰⁰ While Obama's use of the second person article "you" refers to her present audience of service people, its function as a mass pronoun also works to pose them as a "possible world"¹⁰¹ that comes into existence marked by the congratulatory intensities that issue from her tone throughout the speech. Moreover, her explicit positioning of this possible world as a central force and social signal likely amplifies the persuasive power of Let's Move by reinforcing their association with the "foundational figure"¹⁰² of the soldier. Akin to the excitement embodied by fitness movements that proffer a return to a militaristic *ethos*, Obama's moves may work to cement the capture of positive dispositions towards exercise by ensuring that the campaign's programs are inextricably linked with the affective power of the soldier and the military more generally.

The affective potential of Obama's rhetoric, as well as the likelihood that Let's Move increases the capture of positive dispositions towards exercise within contemporary logics of

¹⁰⁰ Obama, "Little Rock Air Force Base," online.

¹⁰¹ For Deleuze and Guattari, the use of indicative language posits a possible world that, while constructing phenomenological reality, exists only at the level of figuration. Within such a framework "the other appears as an expression of the possible," materializing as a form of intensive expression. Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *What is Philosophy?* Trans Hugh Tomlinson and Graham Burchell (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 17.

¹⁰² Nicola Cooper and Martin Hurcombe, "The Figure of the Soldier" *Journal of War and Culture Studies* 2.2 (2009), 103.

militarism, may become amplified by the widespread circulation of these associations between the campaign and figurations of military families and the soldier. By amplifying the force of her rhetoric, these circulating repetitions subsequently increase the likelihood that Let's Move further instantiates contemporary American military power. Take, for example, an Associate Press article republished by *The Huffington Post* that discusses Obama's visit to Fort Jackson in North Carolina. The article begins by noting that "First lady Michelle Obama said Thursday that the military's push to turn recruits into health-conscious warriors could be a model for making people across the U.S. more focused on fitness and nutrition."¹⁰³ It follows this short introduction with several quotes from the First Lady about how rising obesity rates constitute a "national security issue," as well as a discussion of the efforts of the U.S. Army to improve the diet of their soldiers. Similarly, an article published by *Politico*, an internet news source, quotes Obama's claim at a South Carolina Army base that "You have to get the whole country behind this because it's affecting our ability to protect our freedom"¹⁰⁴ before repeating her claim, multiple times, that the military are public leaders on the issue of fitness. Additionally, a Reuters story republished by *Fox News* exemplifies how many sources repeated Obama's claims alongside discussions about the shortage of healthy military recruits.¹⁰⁵ Interlaced with quotations similar to those in the previous articles, it also details in some depth the claims that "According to the White House, more than one quarter of 17- to 24-year-olds are too overweight to serve in the military. Active members of the military are also becoming more overweight, a Pentagon official said, and that causes a 'readiness problem.'"¹⁰⁶ These and similar articles, then, repeated Obama's

¹⁰³ Susanne M. Schafer "Michelle Obama's Obesity Fight Takes A Cue From The U.S. Army" *The Huffington Post* (January 27, 2011), http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/01/27/michelle-obamas-obesity-f_n_814711.html.

¹⁰⁴ Michelle Obama quoted in Amie Parnes, "Michelle Obama: Obesity Affects National Security" *Politico.com* (January 27, 2011), http://www.politico.com/click/stories/1101/flotus_obesity_affects_national_security.html.

¹⁰⁵ Reuters, "New plan to cut the fat of the military" *FoxNews.com* (February 9, 2012), <http://www.foxnews.com/health/2012/02/09/new-plan-to-cut-fat-military/>.

¹⁰⁶ Reuters, "New Plan," Online.

claims to broader audiences, inundating them with both claims that obesity threatens American military power and associating Let's Move with the figure of the soldier as a leader in the movement to increase national strength. In so doing, they increase the likelihood that positive dispositions towards exercise among military families, as well as the public writ large, become captured within contemporary logics of militarism that proclaim the need for healthy bodies as a means of sustaining the American fighting force.

Conclusions

Widely praised for its role in stemming rising obesity rates among Americans, Michelle Obama's Let's Move campaign circulates a myriad of affects that may energize audiences to encourage habits essential to bodily fitness and well being. In the first instance, these intensities populate the virtual as autonomous forces. They energize audiences to “move” by making changes in their consumption and lifestyle habits that certainly improve their qualities of life. Yet, when they emerge into particular contexts from the virtual these intensities become captured within the logics of neoliberalism and militarism as audiences are exhorted to join fitness programs or look after their health as a means of ensuring their future potential as workers or members of America's fighting force. This essay has argued that this process of capture ensues when Let's Move is promoted in a myriad of contexts that invite rhetorical maneuvers including figurations of individuals as responsible decision makers, corporations as allies in the fight against obesity, and service members and their families as leaders who demonstrate the importance of fitness to the broader public. In so doing, I have argued that, while many of the intensities produced by the program's promotions may ultimately escape capture, Let's Move may work to shore-up threats to the long-term futures of neoliberalism and militarism.

This analysis, then, calls for scholars to turn their attention to the processes through which rhetoric becomes captured within the logics of power rather than assuming that particular texts are captured within the ideological matrix from the first instance. To assume that texts serve as tools of socio-political power in the first instance risks missing their virtual potentialities and the subsequent lessons they may hold for those seeking to constitute the social otherwise. In contradistinction, carefully attending to the processes through which these affects become captured within the logics of power offers a glimpse of how the contemporary conditions work to constitute the economic, racial, and gender inequalities that shape everyday life. In this study, for example, I have attended to the processes through which the intertwining logics of neoliberalism and militarism impose on the affective potentialities of a public health campaign to encourage individuals to take responsibility for their personal fitness. This study shows how, without an attention to the circulation of rhetoric through contexts, one might very well overlook the crucial moments at which sociopolitical forms of power impose themselves on seemingly neutral attempts to encourage exercise and the consumption of healthy foods. Rather than taking ideological capture as a prior assumption in the act of rhetorical criticism, then, scholars should engage the processes through which rhetoric becomes a tool for sustaining the contemporary conditions as a means of better understanding the workings of these socioeconomic logics.

The importance of attending to the processes of capture, then, point to the simultaneous danger and potentiality of rhetorical style as one of the means through which the contemporary conditions are constituted. While many of the rhetorical styles circulating within the public tend to encourage affective capture, the intensities they produce may nevertheless escape, a potentiality that provides rhetorical scholars with the means to invent new modes of engagement, resistance, and practice that might work against the reductions that constitute our discipline's

most popular objects of criticism. Such a potentiality, then, may provide one avenue through which we might pursue “an alternative politics”¹⁰⁷ that, according to Ronald Walter Greene, may make possible “a common creativity and invention, a productive excess and joy, the material immanence of democracy.” Attention to the *process* of capture, rather than its product, provides additional resources for such a politics, as doing so may enhance our knowledge of the types of styles that may escape contemporary logics of domination.

¹⁰⁷ Ronald Walter Greene, “Rhetoric and Capitalism: Rhetorical Agency as Communicative Labor” *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 37.3 (2004), 204.

CHAPTER FOUR:

THE BECOMING-HEGEMONIC OF THE INSURED SUBJECT IN FARM POLITICS AS A CHALLENGE TO THEORIES OF THE RHETORICAL SITUATION

Audiences are increasingly inundated with stylizations of individuals who financially insure themselves against potentially catastrophic events. Take, for example, how the seemingly omnipresent advertisements for automobile coverage, many of which depict the aftermath of a car accident, stylize individuals who properly ensure themselves against these risks as savvy consumers.¹ Similarly, discourses about terrorism insurance in a post-9/11 world increasingly encourage owners of famous buildings and new construction to hedge against the threat of potential violence by non-state actors on their property.² Contemporaneously, environmental groups and the insurance industry have become leading proponents of global climate change coverage as scientists make increasingly dire predictions about its possible catastrophic effects.³ And, even more salient discourses about the Affordable Care Act proclaim the necessity of health insurance given the seemingly prohibitive costs borne by individuals and society when the

¹ For example, see: State Farm Insurance, "Jingle 2.0 Road Trip" (September 6, 2012), available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mBRmlVEvQO4>.

² Prashant Gopal, Christopher Condon and Jack Fairweather, "Boston Marathon Bombings Make Some Rethink Terror Insurance" *The San Francisco Chronicle* (April 19, 2014), <http://www.sfgate.com/business/article/Boston-Marathon-bombings-make-some-rethink-terror-5415409.php>

³ David Tuft, "Global Warming Heats Up the Insurance Industry" *NRDC: Climate Facts* (October, 2007), <http://www.nrdc.org/globalwarming/files/insurance.pdf>; Eduardo Porter, "For Insurers, No Doubts on Climate Change" *The New York Times* (May 15, 2013), B1; Allen Frances, "Why Aren't We Buying Insurance Against Global Warming?" *The Huffington Post* (February 24, 2014), http://www.huffingtonpost.com/allen-frances/why-arent-we-buying-insur_b_4827597.html.

uninsured seek treatment.⁴ By stylizing fearful subjects as securing themselves in anticipation of the economic and social costs of potential disasters, these discourses exemplify some characteristics of the rhetorics of insurance that occupy an increasingly hegemonic place in contemporary society.

A similar instance of insurance rhetoric emerged to affect policy change with the passage of a comprehensive agricultural disaster assistance package⁵ in the Agricultural Act of 2014, colloquially known as 'the farm bill.' As part of the quinquennial renewal of the United States' farm policy, and reflecting a growing preference for subsidizing insurance premiums as a means of supporting America's farmers, this latest farm bill decreased the size of the Direct Payment program and shifted government support to regime of disaster assistance. Whereas Direct Payments provided farmers guaranteed pay-outs indexed to the historical rate of production, the disaster assistance program resonated with contemporary stylizations of the insured subject insofar as it is designed to limit "producers to risk management tools that offer protection when they suffer significant losses."⁶ At first glance, then, this shift to a regime of crop insurance may appear to simply signal the growing hegemony of stylizations of the insured subject as well as the financial economy writ large.

⁴ Juan Williams, "Love it or Hate it, Start of ObamaCare is Big Deal in American History" *FoxNews.com* (September 30, 2013), <http://www.foxnews.com/opinion/2013/09/30/love-it-or-hate-it-start-obamacare-is-big-deal-in-american-history/>; Liz Neporent, "Obamacare Deadline Extended, but Should You Wait?" *ABCNews.com* (March 27, 2014), <http://abcnews.go.com/blogs/health/2014/03/27/obamacare-deadline-extended-but-should-you-wait/>.

⁵ The phrases "disaster assistance" and "disaster relief" are used in the lower case throughout this chapter, in part, because they refer to numerous specific crop insurance subsidy programs. Many of these programs, however, have proper names that include each of these words on their own.

⁶ The Office of Frank D. Lucas, "House-Senate Conference Committee: Agricultural Act of 2014" (2014), last accessed 4.20.2014, <http://agriculture.house.gov/sites/republicans.agriculture.house.gov/files/pdf/legislation/AgriculturalActSummary.pdf>

One might reasonably take such an explanation as persuasive grounds for a critique of the farm bill's ideological precepts, particularly because the disaster relief program amounts to a subsidization of insurance companies and the shift occurred alongside cuts to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) that provides food assistance to impoverished individuals. However, such a simple explanation would likely ignore the extent to which this shift in farm policy was a seemingly abrupt and unforeseen occurrence. First instituted by the 1996 Freedom to Farm Act as an extension of the Federal Government's direct subsidization of farmers, they were the subject of widespread debate and derision as bipartisan attempts to slash the subsidies were regularly stymied by the powerful farm lobby. Indeed, the passage of the disaster relief program was popular with “Just about everyone, that is, except the powerful farm lobby and its allies in Congress, which every five years or so since the Depression has managed to fight off any meaningful reforms and actually increase farm subsidies.”⁷ In light of this seemingly abrupt decline of the farm lobby's power to preserve Direct Payments, prompts my pithy inquiry: What changed? Or, more loquaciously: What conditions or processes provided for a shift in the political atmosphere and popular discourse such that stylizations of the subject insured against contingency could emerge to affect changes in a seemingly unmovable area of Federal policy?

In this chapter, I take this shift as an opportunity to further my theoretical inquiry of rhetorical styles as distinct affective modalities of practice, speech, and affiliation that shape the constitution of the present. In particular, I investigate debates surrounding the latest farm bill as exemplary of the contemporary passage from the residual and dominant rhetorical stylizations⁸ of Americans as pioneers on the frontier and as fit bodies ready for the contemporary workplace.

⁷ James B. Stewart, “Richer Farmers, Bigger Subsidies” *The New York Times* (July 20, 2013), B1.

⁸ For an in-depth discussion of the concepts of the residual, dominant, and emergent, which are essential to my investigations in this chapter, see: Raymond Williams, “Dominant, Residual, and Emergent” in *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford:Oxford University Press, 1977), 121-128.

In their place, emergent images of subjects anticipating the irruption of disasters and subsequently purchasing insurance are becoming an increasingly hegemonic, or taken-for-granted, mode of stylizing individual behavior. These stylizations proffer the purchase of insurance as a means of protecting oneself from virtual threats while simultaneously offering subjects positive affective benefits of realized goods by enabling their participation in activities such as driving, owning a home, and receiving medical care.⁹ The rise of these stylizations signal, then, a growing synergy between subjects' enjoyment of their purchase of virtual goods and the ongoing transition towards investment practices and the control of risk as crucial to economic value production in contemporary capitalism.¹⁰

This inquiry also seeks to reformulate contemporary rhetorical theories and the tools they offer for explaining the emergence and becoming-hegemonic of new discourses, styles, and political regimes. I argue that shifts in public policy and contemporary hegemonies, such as the emergence of stylizations of the insured subject and Federal Disaster Relief, occur through multi-layered and probabilistic processes of resonance between interlocking virtual and actual planes of publicity. At each plane, from informal groups of already constituted individuals, to publics, and at the level of The Public, where hegemonies emerge, the bevy of potential styles become selected through their synergy with their contexts to emerge as part of the recognizable plane of the actual. In turn, each plane of actualized styles becomes the virtual register for the larger scale of publicity. This theory of emergence modulates contemporary theories of the rhetorical situation, ideology, and publics, insofar as it provides a probabilistic account of social change that emphasizes that rhetoric's effectivity is uncertain yet still subject to varying degrees of

⁹ Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from The Prison Notebooks* trans. and eds. Quintin Hoare and Geoffery Nowel Smith (New York: International Publishers), 1971.

¹⁰ Christian Marazzi, *The Violence of Financial Capitalism* trans. Kristina Lebedeva and Jason Francis McGimsey (Boston:MIT Press), 2010.

determination. This chapter subsequently explicates the relationships between rhetoric and social change, illustrating the potential for rhetorical scholars to map the interactions of dominant, residual, and emergent styles as they jostle for position on the actual and virtual planes. My goal in so doing is to understand how some styles become hegemonic while others remain minor, and still others never even become actualized.

This chapter attends to congressional debates about the Agricultural Act of 2014 and discourses of crop insurance within the broader rhetorical context to demonstrate how rhetoric produces social change through the probabilistic synergies between the virtual and actual. To justify my theoretical inquiry, I begin by arguing that popular rhetorical theories tend to discount the contingent and probabilistic complexities that complicate our ability to understand how new styles emerge to become popular, widespread, and even hegemonic. This opening foray sets the stage for my proposition that styles emerge from the virtual and become hegemonic through a multi-layered process of selection, the potential veracity of which I demonstrate in the subsequent three-part interrogation of the debates surrounding the contemporary farm bill, as well as stylizations of the insured subject within contemporary capitalism and the circulating rhetorics of crop insurance with which they resonated prior to the passage of the Act. As I suggest, attending to synergies between rhetorical stylizations and particular modes of value-production may provide grounds for better understanding the emergence of financial capitalism.

Social Change within Rhetorical Studies

Although issuing from a bevy of diverse perspectives, most contemporary rhetorical scholarship about social change shares a restrictive, and potentially pessimistic, conception of the possible sources from which new styles or modes of affiliation may emerge. As a discipline, we spill uncountable pages about the dominance of economic, social, or political structures while

offering the performances of virtuosic speakers or *kairotic* movements as the most likely salve for these determining forces. For Catherine Chaput, this restrictive view of social change emerges from our collective tendency to “ground rhetoric within a communicative agency — either historical agency or human agency — circumscribed within a liberal logic of one-to-one influence of cause and effect.”¹¹ From considerations of the rhetorical situation, to the classical Marxist formulations that have for so long dominated our discussions of ideology, and even in contemporary discussions of publics, scholars have assumed that social change emerges through clever interventions by talented rhetors or well organized movements. In light of these disciplinary dispositions, I cautiously risk the assertion that rhetorical studies has yet to come to terms with that which stylizations of insured subjects attempt to grapple: that rather than issuing exclusively from intentional acts, disruptions or changes in our contemporary conditions most likely emerge from probabilistic and contingent forces.

The Rhetorical Situation

While widely popular theories of the rhetorical situation productively call attention to contexts beyond the immediate speaking situation, their assumption that well-constructed speeches alone are sufficient to produce their intended effects exemplifies our disciplinary tendency to attribute social change to the *metis* of virtuosic rhetors. Lloyd Bitzer's 1968 article “The Rhetorical Situation,” inaugurated the journal *Philosophy & Rhetoric* by famously positing that rhetorical artifacts are created to respond to observable and pre-constituted exigences, audiences, and constraints.¹² In responding to the exigences, or the events or facts that a rhetor seeks to alter, an artifact garners the property of fittingness if it properly navigates the constraints

¹¹ Catherine Chaput, “Rhetorical Circulation in Late Capitalism: Neoliberalism and the Overdetermination of Affective Energy,” *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 43.1 (2010), 10.

¹² Lloyd F. Bitzer, “The Rhetorical Situation” *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 1.1 (1968), 1-14.

to reach audiences, or “only those persons who are capable of being influenced by discourse and of being mediators of change.”¹³ For Bitzer, social change emerges as a result of rhetorics that manipulate the right audiences into taking some specified action.

Despite their significant departures from Bitzer's emphasis that the rhetorical situation exists prior to the speech, many responses to his initial formulation amplify this emphasis on the singular power of a speech to produce change. Most notably, Richard E. Vatz extended the power of rhetors by positing that situations themselves are created through, rather than prior to, rhetorical performances. In “The Myth of the Rhetorical Situation,” Vatz critiqued Bitzer for situating the meaning of events prior to the power of symbols to create the phenomenological realities of speakers and audiences.¹⁴ Such a view, he argues, has irrecoverable implications for our discipline's ostensible monopoly on studying the creation of meaning and necessitates an emphasis on the power of rhetoric to create public understandings of events. Vatz subsequently concludes that: “It is only when the meaning is seen as the result of a creative act and not a discovery, that rhetoric will be perceived as the supreme discipline it deserves to be.”¹⁵ Although Vatz departs significantly from Bitzer's formulation by positioning the creative choices of individuals as prior to meaning in the world, he nevertheless ascribes a determining force to rhetorical performances.

By ascribing a linear effectivity to speeches, these theories of the rhetorical situation tend to substitute a simplified judgment about the cunning virtuosity of rhetors and social movements for a consideration of the effectiveness of discourses in terms of relative degrees of probability. This proposition is similar to Barbara A. Biesecker's perceptive observation that both Bitzer and

¹³ Bitzer, “The Rhetorical Situation,” 8.

¹⁴ Richard E. Vatz, “The Myth of the Rhetorical Situation,” *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 6.3 (Summer, 1973), 154 — 161.

¹⁵ Vatz, “The Myth,” 161.

Vatz submit rhetoric to a “logic of influence” whereby either speakers and audiences are sovereign subjects constituted temporally prior to their interactions, and rhetoric functions to exert persuasive power at the level of cognition.¹⁶ For Biesecker, the logic of influence elides rhetoric's power in constituting subjects through the contingent encounters between rhetors and audiences. Importantly, Biesecker's critique of Bitzer and Vatz calls attention to the force of indetermination within rhetorical interactions. Insofar as few changes in the speaker, audience, or situation, are foreclosed in advance of their encounters with texts, outcomes are more or less likely to emerge. A revision of theories of the rhetorical situation should subsequently account for these probabilistic relationships in order to provide a more nuanced explanation of the relationships between rhetoric and social change.

Rhetoric, Capitalism, and Social Change

In light of this chapter's attention to shifting stylizations of economic life, it may be useful to note that rhetorically inflected classical Marxism(s) attribute a determining effectivity to texts and their contexts, understood as capitalist institutions and ideologies. In so doing, they tend to discount the possibilities for social change engendered by identity groups or other rhetorics that are not centrally anti-capitalist. Dana L. Cloud's work exemplifies this move insofar as it seemingly reduces all potential outcomes of mediated representations of race and gender to a function of their ideological contexts. In her essay “Hegemony or Concordance? The Rhetoric of Tokenism in 'Oprah' Winfrey's Rags-to-Riches Biography,” for example, Cloud critiques Oprah's public persona by submitting it to the lens of tokenism, an ideological-rhetorical construct that figures achievements by individual minorities as necessarily re-affirming

¹⁶ Barbara A. Biesecker, “Rethinking the Rhetorical Situation from Within the Thematic of *Différance*,” *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 22.2 (1989), 110-130.

myths of economic neutrality and mobility.¹⁷ Within this framework diversity initiatives are framed as only helping “those voices chosen to speak”¹⁸ (chosen by whom? Media executives? Ideology? Apparatuses?), a pessimistic outlook that is exemplified by Cloud's assertion that any analysis that scholars who “would seek some authentic aspect of the 'Oprah' phenomenon”¹⁹ are unlikely to find “some word or gesture that is not mired in the dominant ideology and its contradictions.”²⁰ Within this depiction of rhetoric and social change, the nexus of ideological rhetorics and economic power are unfailing and determinant.

Classical Marxisms' ascription of an unbending and largely linear power to ideology extends to its conceptions of changes within economic systems and the social field. Within such an understanding, changes to economic practices become reduced to non-events, undermined by “an observably motivating and conditioning economic order.”²¹ Even when new economic modalities emerge, they are often disregarded as sociologically insignificant compared to the overall structure of the economy. For example, when debating Ronald Walter Greene, the scholars Cloud, Steve Macek, and James Arnt Aune disregard Greene's claim that rhetoric functions as a form of immaterial labor and value production because jobs in information technology and communication centric fields “are not yet the dominant sector of the U.S. Economy.”²² This dismissal of the importance of emerging modes of economic practice in favor of an exclusive analysis of the dominant trends, measured by the number of workers in a given sector, demonstrates the extent to which such understandings invite scholarship that poses the

¹⁷ Dana L. Cloud, “Hegemony or Concordance? The Rhetoric of Tokenism in 'Oprah' Winfrey's Rags-to-Riches Biography,” *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 13 (1996), 115-137.

¹⁸ Cloud, “Hegemony or Concordance?,” 132.

¹⁹ Cloud, “Hegemony or Concordance?,” 130.

²⁰ Cloud, “Hegemony or Concordance?,” 130.

²¹ Dana L. Cloud, Steve Macek, and James Arnt Aune, “‘The Limbo of Ethical Simulacra’: A Reply to Ron Greene” *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 39.1 (2006), 80.

²² Cloud, Macek, and Aune, “‘The Limbo of Ethical Simulacra,’” 77.

capitalist order as monolithic and devoid of emergent and residual trends. Within such a framework, alterations in contemporary capitalism become dichotomized; they are figured as either ideologically pure and anti-capitalist events or simply a veneer of change that amounts to a distraction from motivated economic forces.

This dichotomization of social and economic changes guides a rhetorical criticism that judges the ideological purity of discourses rather than attending to the relative probability that they will escape determination or otherwise modulate contemporary conditions. In particular, this brand of criticism tends to valorize ideologically pure or revolutionary rhetorics, such as labor unions and anti-capitalist organizers, at the expense of identitarian discourses. Even when they do consider concerns of identity, for instance, Cloud's works about social change tend to center around studies of strikes and other forms of economic resistance.²³ Although an anti-capitalist politics is essential to my prescriptions for social change in this dissertation, an undeconstructed understanding of class as economic tends to preclude the consideration of alternative forms of collective politics and risks erasing the particularity of groups participating in resistance. As Celeste M. Condit reminds us, "Classical Marxist dogma held that the best way to produce social change was to efface these [identitarian] differences in the name of a single 'working class.' Such a rhetorical strategy does violence to the particularity of different groups."²⁴ Within such frameworks, in other words, there is little room for forms of resistance that are not centrally anti-capitalist, nor is their space for a significant evaluation of the differences among working groups. The rhetoric of identity groups becomes largely discounted,

²³ For examples, see: Dana L. Cloud, *We Are the Union: Democratic Unionism and Dissent at Boeing* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press), 2011; Dana L. Cloud, "The Null Persona: Race and the Rhetoric of Silence in the Uprising of '34" *Rhetoric and Public Affairs* 2.2 (1999), 177-209; Dana L. Cloud, "Fighting Words Labor and the Limits of Communication at Staley, 1993 to 1996" *Management Communication Quarterly* (2005), 509-542.

²⁴ Celeste M. Condit, "Hegemony, Concordance, and Capitalism: Reply to Cloud" *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 13 (1996), 383.

despite the probability that such groups may open new modes of economic practice and affiliation that disrupt the current order. Classical Marxisms subsequently leave rhetorical scholars unable to recognize the variations in capitalist practice or the possibilities for social change engendered by ideologically impure rhetorics.

Contemporary Publics and the Problem of Investment

As a timely and productive alteration of contemporary theories of publics, Christian Lundberg's engagement with the rhetorical musings of Jacques Lacan offers another site for interrogating our disciplinary tools for understanding social change.²⁵ At first glance, Lundberg's theory departs significantly from the understandings of rhetoric offered by either formulations of the rhetorical situation or Classical Marxism. However, akin to the latter formulation it limits our attention to possible changes in hegemonic styles by positing an all-encompassing context, the Lacanian Symbolic Order, as a determining force.

The Symbolic Order, according to Lundberg, is both prior to all speech acts and largely inaccessible to subjects. Rhetorical acts, in his formulation, garner force as a result of an economy of significations that reside in Symbolic register, where metonymic and metaphorical associations between signs form the "formal properties of discourse that precede, constrain, and make language possible."²⁶ In other words, language is only forceful or meaningful insofar as it complies with or issues from a prior set of associations that form the proper context for our systems of public discourse.

Admittedly, the Symbolic Order, which provides subjects with affectively invested assurances of their self-presence and coherence, emerges through the accretion of tropological

²⁵ Christian Lundberg, *Lacan in Public: Psychoanalysis and the Science of Rhetoric* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press), 2012.

²⁶ Lundberg, *Lacan in Public*, 28.

relationships and therefore is neither immovable nor a historical. According to Lundberg, it forms through the repetition of the tropological associations between words such that they eventually become naturalized. This repetitive labor provides the historically accreted Symbolic Order with an element of plasticity insofar as subjects often invent new words, usages, and associations. More than just products of history, however, Symbolic associations become invested with affect as the repetitive association of words provides a form of enjoyment as subjects' seemingly successful attempts to use signs to create meaningful discourse provides them with an illusion of coherence which Lundberg dubs a "feigned unicity." Symbolic investments emerge as, in the process of a subject's recognition of themselves as apt communicators, "what is recognized and acknowledged on this account is not the voice of the other, but rather the way that the voice of the other manifests the Symbolic in speech."²⁷ In addition to eliding the tropological economy upon which signification relies, rhetorical practices, as well as subjectivity itself, emerges as an effect of historically accreted investments in the Symbolic.

By situating a largely undifferentiated and inaccessible Symbolic Order as a prior condition for all speech, Lundberg relegates nearly all alterations of our contemporary conditions to mere epiphenomena. Writing about similar theories, Gilles Deleuze notes that they posit "a symbolic order, irreducible to the orders of the real and the imaginary, and deeper than they are."²⁸ These approaches to the social, argues Deleuze, likely reproduce the unmoving nature of the Symbolic in their readings of objects and therefore risk not recognizing social change when it occurs. In so doing, they offer little means of accounting for transitions between Symbolic

²⁷ Lundberg, *Lacan in Public*, 32-33.

²⁸ Gilles Deleuze, "How Do We Recognize Structuralism?" in *Desert Islands and Other Texts: 1953-1974* trans. Christopher Bush, et. al. (New York: Semiotext(e), 1994), 173.

Orders and subsequently risk muting attempts to theorize rhetoric's potentiality for producing effective change. By situating Symbolic economies prior to, and determining of, Imaginary utterances, some brands of Lacanian inflected rhetorical theory leave little to probability or contingency.

Despite the the utility of this understanding for many purposes, Lundberg's insistence on shifting attention to the Symbolic as the sanctioning force behind rhetorical events risks minimizing our ability to understand social change. In his formulation, public practices are situated squarely in the imaginary and emerge as an effect of the interaction of the Symbolic Order writ large (The Public) and specific Symbolic economies cohered around a specific object or text (publics). In summarizing what he calls “the most important implication I draw from Lacan's work,”²⁹ Lundberg claims that scholars “have focused too intently on that which appears to be the rhetorical situation — the subject, its speech, and the effects that this speech has on an audience — at the cost of thinking that which is in advance of the situation, the context of the rhetorical context, or the prophetic Symbolic.”³⁰ Attention to publics within this schema may thus discount new Imaginary practices and alterations within contextually specific tropological economies as mere epiphenomena prophesied “in advance” by the broader Symbolic Order. In other words, by figuring modulations in rhetorical and political practices as already foretold by the Symbolic, this formulation invites scholars to show how potentially novel alterations to our contemporary conditions merely portend a repetition of prior investments in the governing order.

At this point, readers may object to my engagement with Lundberg's theory on the grounds that it ignores both the Lacanian Real and his discussions of politics. First, such an objection would rightfully note that I have ignored the function of the Real, understood as “that

²⁹ Lundberg, *Lacan in Public*, 183.

³⁰ Lundberg, *Lacan in Public*, 183.

which the Symbolic cannot encounter,”³¹ which many psychoanalytic theories position as a possible source of social change because of its potential to irrupt our perceived unicity and interrupt the Symbolic Order writ large.³² Lundberg's theory, however, does not explicitly incorporate a discussion of how the Real might provide such a disruptive function. He only asserts that such moments may occur. By way of conjecture, this may be attributed to the seemingly overwhelming force of subjects' investment in their feigned unicity within Lundberg's system as they are likely to go to great lengths in order to restore a veneer of coherence to their life-world. My theory, by providing a probabilistic account of interactions between the virtual and actual, will incorporate an account of the interruptive force of affects that escape contemporary systems of symbolization often situated by Lacanian scholars as part of “The Real.” This account may better highlight the potential for already actualized rhetorical styles to change as a result of their interactions with forces from outside the dominant order.

Second, the objection that I fail to account for Lundberg's theory of politics, seems significantly less salient than the first. His engagements with anti-globalization movements *do* theorize demands as primarily acts of enjoyment that both re-instantiate the power of insufficient institutions and re-affirm contemporary capitalism through everyday acts of identification and consumption. However, this theory, in practice, amounts to a seeming elision of hope for social change as it judges all previous social movements as insufficient and offers only the untested practice of measuring demands against the desire for an explicitly described new world as an alternative.³³ With little description of the interruptive power of the Real, or an example of when

³¹ Lundberg, *Lacan in Public*, 22.

³² For an exemplary take on the role of the Real as a disruptive force in our contemporary order, see: Barbara A. Biesecker, “Whither Ideology? Toward a Different Take on Enjoyment as a Political Factor” *Western Journal of Communication* 75.4 (2011), 554-540.

³³ Lundberg, *Lacan in Public*, 165-177.

some form of politics has emerged, Lundberg's theory may obfuscate the really potentialities for recognizing or producing social change offered by other psychoanalytic formulations.

Each of these theories make invaluable contributions to our understandings of rhetoric and the processes of persuasion. Indeed, my theorization of social change is indebted to their calls to broaden our attention to contexts, to criticize the force of global capitalism, and to engage with affective forces that exceed the actual. However, insofar as they position rhetoric as a linear process of persuasion or ascribes some all-encompassing power to the broader context, each seemingly fails to account for the probabilistic relationships between texts and their contexts that contributes to alterations in the hegemonic stylizations of contemporary social life. This chapter sets forth a theory of social change that accounts for these relationships and, in so doing, affirms two important tenets. First, as Deleuze and Guattari would have it, even the most well oiled machines of economics, ideology, and communication, often break and produce unforeseen effects despite the absence of contradictions or fissures within their seemingly smooth functioning.³⁴ Whether communication is understood as practices of signification, or as the production of flows of affect, the degree of uncertainty immanent to its effectivity provides a potential source of change. And, secondly, drawing again on Deleuze and Guattari, “There is only one kind of production, the production of the real.”³⁵ Affect, in other words, is immanent to bodies. The virtual and actual interact in a dynamic and mutually constitutive manner rather than one determining the other. An alternative explanation for the relationships between rhetoric and social change must subsequently account for the role of probability in communication processes, situate the contexts from which styles emerge within the phenomenal world, as well as

³⁴ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia I* trans. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem, and Helen R. Lane (New York: Penguin Classics, 1977), 31.

³⁵ Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, 22.

emphasize the mutually constitutive nature of interactions between texts and their virtual and actual contexts.

Styles, Virtual Selections, and Hegemony

An account of rhetoric's role in the dynamic movement of intensities between the virtual and actual registers offers a possible explanation for how new styles emerge and become hegemonic. Rather than assuming that communication is linear, that particular contexts are motivated and determining (e.g. "Neo-Liberal Ideology," "The Capitalists"), or that rhetorical force issues from a deeper or external realm (e.g. "The Symbolic"), attention to the virtual-actual distinction positions the effectivity of rhetoric as emerging from the contingent synergies between circulating texts and the affective energies that are immanent to bodies and publics.³⁶ While circulating texts and the styles they embody exist in the actual, Matthew Bost and Ronald Walter Greene argue that "on the plane of the virtual, a potential storehouse of rhetorical techniques and technologies jostle to be invented, actualizing (quantitatively and qualitatively) political events as organizations of power."³⁷ Rather than existing in some noumenal and inaccessible realm, these rhetorical potentialities reside within bodies and publics as affects that modulate the force of rhetorics on the actual. Thus, for Greene and Bost, scholars can begin tracing a map of "the ways bodies affect and are affected by rhetorical techniques and

³⁶ For Deleuze and Guattari, the virtual-actual relationship describes "the real machinic (machinique) element which constitutes desiring-production, and the structural whole of the Imaginary and the Symbolic, which merely forms a myth and its variants." This machine of desiring-production embodies the processes through which intensive affects emerge from the virtual to constitute our social relationships, habits, ideologies, and languages, to produce the connections, amplifications, and resonances that emerge as distinct rhetorical styles and subjectivities. It encompasses the tropological connections that, according to Lacanian theories, reside in the Symbolic as well as the explicit rhetorical acts said to exist in the Imaginary. Yet, unlike the Symbolic-Imaginary distinction, the virtual-actual couplet positions our affective substrates and our explicit rhetorical styles within the phenomenal world. It offers a heuristic for understanding the means through which social change occurs without resorting to a deeper and inaccessible realm. See: Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, 83.

³⁷ Matthew Bost and Ronald Walter Greene, "Affirming Rhetorical Materialism: Enfolding the Virtual and the Actual," *Western Journal of Communication* 75.4 (July–September 2011), 443.

technologies to compose organizations of power.”³⁸ Understanding why and how bodies are affected by particular rhetorical techniques, they argue, requires an attention to the virtual where potential practices reside. By pointing to resonances between the virtual and affectively charged stylizations on the actual, we might begin to understand the processes through which hegemonic rhetorical and social forms emerge.

This section seeks to texture our understanding of these processes as a necessary condition for an effective criticism of public discourse. Without a more detailed understanding of how virtual styles become actual, and therefore potentially hegemonic, critics are left to only speculate about the potential force of actual rhetorical forms without a means of judging which intensities may render their effectivity more likely. Without a more developed understanding of how they become actualities the project of tracing a map of rhetoric's force would be robbed of its explanatory and persuasive potential. As a means of supplementing the available tools for mapping rhetorical effectivity, I posit that hegemonies emerge through multiple layers of selection whereby the each actualized scale of publicity, beginning with the interaction of one or more bodies, becomes the collection of virtual potentialities from which broader systems of circulation emerge. Each level, as simultaneously an actualized form of circulation and a virtual register, becomes selected through a complex process of resonances such that a narrower set of styles emerge as part of the broader level of publicity. From the interaction of practicing bodies, to the formation of publics, and finally with the emergence of hegemonies at the level of The Public, an ever dwindling number of styles are circulated as taken-for-granted forms of social affiliation and rhetorical performance.

³⁸ Bost and Greene, “Affirming Rhetorical Materialism,” 444.

The emergence of rhetorical styles at each level of publicity can best be understood as a passing of thresholds of intensity produced by both the force that a text may garner through circulating texts and its resonance with the virtualities that inhabit their contexts. Each threshold is constituted by a region of the virtual with a particular distribution of intensities with which styles are more or less likely to resonate and pass onto the next level of salience. Manuel Delanda provides a pertinent explanation of the actual-virtual distinction as “genetic.”³⁹ This figuration ascribes a probabilistic relationship between the observability of entities (their very recognizability) and “invisible processes governed by differences of intensity.”⁴⁰ In the same manner that a population's predominant characteristics are governed by a particular intensity of genetic contents, and severe storms materialize as an effect of the differential intensities (heat) of air molecules within particular regions, so too are emerging rhetorical styles governed by the relationships and resonances of virtual intensities within a region of circulation. The probability that a style will emerge amongst audiences for a sufficient duration and affect the social composition is subsequently modulated by its degree of synergy with other intensities.

Rather than a uni-dimensional or linear interaction, these processes may each be figured as a double movement past two thresholds of intensity after which the dwindling number of virtual styles that resonate with the corresponding actual register emerge to form an increasingly coherent level of publicity. The selective force of this process, as with the virtual-actual distinction as a whole, works in a manner similar to what Ernst Mayr describes as “population thinking:”

Every species produces vastly more offspring than can survive from generation to generation. All the individuals of a population differ genetically from each other. They

³⁹ Manuel DeLanda, *Deleuze, History, and Science* (New York: Atropos Press, 2010), 116.

⁴⁰ DeLanda, *Deleuze, History, and Science*, 116.

are exposed to the adversity of the environment, and almost all of them perish or fail to reproduce. Only a few of them, on the average two per set of parents, survive and reproduce. However, these survivors are not a random sample of the population; their survival was aided by the possession of certain attributes that favor survival.⁴¹

In the first movement, a diverse (although usually not completely heterogeneous) collection of individual intensities, figured here as individuals of a species with different attributes partially produced by their genetic makeup, populates the virtual. Individual intensities that surpass the second threshold towards reproduction possess qualities that ensure their survival and ability to reproduce. Those that reproduce often possess similar characteristics that become markers of species or subspecies. From bodies' encounters with their increasingly heterogeneous milieus, to the mingling of bodies as a public, to the interaction of multiple publics as the virtual plane for the public, the resonance of disparate intensities with past and future rhetorical events allows them to surpass a second threshold past which styles cohere, circulate, and even become hegemonic.

Re-figuring this double movement in geo-physical terms, as the thresholds of the molecular and molar, further demonstrates its importance in the production of coherent subjects and popular styles. Dramatizing their theory of emergence through a description of a speech given by the fictional character Professor Challenger, Deleuze and Guattari posit that seemingly coherent or coherent collections tend to emerge through a process of “*double articulation*.”⁴² Accompanied by the cheeky slogan “God is a Lobster, or a double pincer, or a double bind,”⁴³ this theory figures the composition of concrete subjects, languages, cultures, populations, and

⁴¹ Ernst Mayr, *What Evolution Is* (London: Phoenix Books, 2002), 129.

⁴² Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia II* trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 40.

⁴³ Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 40.

even an-organic formulations, as the product of two steps of selection. At the first level, that of the virtual, a bevy of rhetorical forms emerge to provide order and relationality among the communications that circulate among bodies and audiences. Afterwards, these forms of affiliation begin to take shape as solidified and identifiable sociological structures such as communities, publics, and The Public. Reworking the concept of the double selection through geo-physical terms may subsequently add an emphasis on the relationships between emergent rhetorical forms and hegemonic styles that collectively compose contemporary public life.

In the first articulation, intensities emerge into the virtual, or molecular register, and are connected through resonant rhetorical forms to compose each level of publicity as a succession of relationships. As Deleuze and Guattari write, “The first articulation chooses or deducts form unstable particle-flows, metastable molecular or quasi-molecular units (*substances*) upon which it imposes a statistical order of connections and successions (*forms*).”⁴⁴ From the often undifferentiated and passing flows of affect, some intensities are taken up because they synergize with forces that shape the bodies' molecular composition. At the level of heterogenous populations, this first movement describes how individuals adopting particular stylistic dispositions come together into audiences that are increasingly homogenous and connected as a result of their adoption of particular rhetorical forms through probabilistic encounters and interactions. For instance, a group could become defined by their collective adoption of a narrative to explain a collection of events and facts or their use of particular normative means of deliberation and argumentation. Similarly, publics regularly emerge because of their collective engagement with a particular set of texts that are defined by the repetition of particular rhetorical

⁴⁴ Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 40.

forms. In this first instance, popular rhetorical forms and styles of affiliation provide grounds for the connection of bodies into social groups.

The second threshold, past the population of the virtual, marks the emergence of molar formations. The molar describes the emergence of stable and coherent subjects, the production of dominant styles within publics, or the emergence of hegemonic social forms. Here, Deleuze and Guattari provide another concise formulation: “The second articulation establishes functional, compact, stable structures (*forms*) and constructs the molar compounds in which these structures are simultaneously actualized (*substances*).”⁴⁵ This second threshold marks the passage towards increasing stability, as habits and stylized modes of affiliation become increasingly stable and pervasive. Groups and publics take on predominant, and often seemingly coherent, sets of characteristics that define their identities. Molar formations, then, include identifiable communities and groups, subcultures or publics (e.g. scientific communities, audiences of daytime talk-shows), and The Public, each of which are characterized by their circulation of enduring rhetorical forms and modes of engagement. These formations subsequently become the site where socio-economic forms of power become easily identifiable and hegemonies form.

Molar formations at the level of the public become the hegemonic stylizations that guide, differentiate, and serve as a metric for the differential exclusion and production of everyday practices and performances along class lines. The role of the second articulation in producing these classed hierarchies is best exhibited by the resonances between Antonio Gramsci's use of the Italian idiom *ceti*, or strata,⁴⁶ to describe classes, and Deleuze and Guattari's figuration of the

⁴⁵ Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 41.

⁴⁶ The footnote on page five attests to the difficulties of translating a text first written in coded language. Although my move relies on a knowing turn of language, and potential mischaracterization of Gramsci's characterizations, relying on such a standard of reading would both foreclose the productive possibilities demonstrated in this paper

second articulation as the formation of “a stable functional structure”⁴⁷ crucial to the duration of “geological stratum.”⁴⁸ After the second selection differing stylistic mechanisms become hierarchized and cemented such that class differences, economic or otherwise, emerge and become solidified: “Although the first articulation is not lacking systematic interactions, it is in the second articulation in particular that phenomena constituting the overcoding are produced, phenomena of centering, unification, totalization, integration, hierarchization, and finalization.”⁴⁹ As styles resonate with differing intensities, they are sorted along a hierarchy that determines the relative acceptability and value of particular forms of labor and performance. This sorting and hierarchization, as Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri point out, is accompanied by the reproduction of particular forms of performance, or labor.⁵⁰ These forms of labor become associated with intense affects and may exert increasing force throughout the social field, making it increasingly likely that these hegemonic modes of labor and performance are reproduced as taken-for-granted aspects of everyday life. Styles that move past the second threshold into The Public, as a sociologically identifiable range of circulation, likely become hegemonic and contribute to the hierarchization and reproduction of particular modes of labor and performance.

Although this model of public formation engages many of the forces that are often posed as determining our collective outcomes, attention to the genetic conceptualization of the virtual-actual relationship further demonstrates is emphasis on the probabilistic nature of these outcomes. For evolutionary theory, “Chance rules supreme.”⁵¹ Chance inflects the emergence

while committing my project to an understanding of authors as intending subjects. Gramsci, *The Prison Notebooks*, 5.

⁴⁷ Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 41.

⁴⁸ Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 41.

⁴⁹ Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 41.

⁵⁰ Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire* (New York: Penguin Books, 2004), 199-202.

⁵¹ Mayr, *What Evolution Is*, 131.

and inheritance of genetic material through the somewhat arbitrary sharing of chromosomal content, as well as the force of time and, importantly, environmental factors that modulate the processes of development for individuals and species. Success in the second movement similarly necessitates “a mixture of chance and determination,”⁵² as a host of contingent environmental and social factors may affect the chances of any individual. Deleuze and Guattari note that outcomes of phylogenesis, the formation of species, are akin to “statistical results,”⁵³ whereby the selection of specific qualities or forms result from a probabilistic process in which possibilities and contingencies are always at play and may modulate seemingly predictable outcomes. Whether or not a particular style becomes characteristic of a public, or resonates with the hegemonic order, is the product of a series of relatively predictable, yet not completely determined, interactions at the time emerges. While some interactions are relatively predictable, as the public is defined by some constant forces, others are the product of the complex interactions of rhetorical forms with chance events.

By positing that modulations in the hegemonic order occur through a multi-layered and probabilistic process of selection, this theory calls for attention to the contingent resonances between actual levels of publicity and their virtual counterparts in order to understand why particular styles emerge and become dominant. The remainder of this essay performs a mode of rhetorical criticism sanctioned by this re-working of the relationships between rhetoric and social change. It does so through a three-step process, beginning with a description of congressional debates about farm policy, as synecdoche for the public, in order to understand how stylizations of the insured subject resonated with dominant and residual styles in order to become hegemonic. I subsequently speculate as to the virtual contexts which synergized with discourses

⁵² Mayr, *What Evolution Is*, 132.

⁵³ Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 48.

of crop insurance such that they could surpass the first threshold and become the raw material for congressional policy debates. Finally, I demonstrate how circulating discourses of crop insurance resonated with these contextual factors as a means of confirming my theoretical speculation in the previous section. This inquiry may subsequently explicate one important part of the broader processes through which the insured subject, as stylization crucial to the rise of the financial economy, is emerging as a hegemonic social form.

Debates About the 2014 Farm Bill

Perhaps paradoxically, the Agricultural Act of 2014 was simultaneously long delayed, hotly contested, and widely popular. Debates and hearings about the bill lasted from 2009 until New Year's Eve 2013, as members of Congress from both political parties and chambers desperately sought to find a replacement for The Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008. This previous farm bill expired at the beginning of 2013 and, to the surprise of many, Congress was only able to pass a one-year extension of its programs as part of a larger financial package that staved off a government shutdown during the summer of 2012. Although “for 75 years, Republicans and Democrats alike mostly declined to question the underlying idea behind farm policy,”⁵⁴ Molly Ball writes that, “In 2012, that tradition of bipartisanship suddenly and shockingly collapsed.”⁵⁵ As an almost a direct result of the Tea Party's rise to prominence since 2008, “... House leaders, reportedly worried that passing a bill with a trillion-dollar price tag would draw criticism from small-government conservatives, would not even put the bill on the floor for a vote.”⁵⁶ This decline of support for expensive farm policies among House

⁵⁴ Ball, “Republicans Lost the Farm,” online.

⁵⁵ Ball, “Republicans Lost the Farm,” online.

⁵⁶ Ball, “Republicans Lost the Farm,” online.

Republicans, many of whom represent rural areas that would most benefit from their passage, portended a more significant shift in the Agricultural Act of 2014.

Debates about the 2014 bill were also significant insofar as their outcome belies a decline in agricultural lobbies' dominance of American politics. The new Act, and its shift towards Crop Insurance, has been widely characterized as a “compromise”⁵⁷ that even garners support from members of the agricultural lobbies.⁵⁸ This compromise stemmed, in part, from a recognition that Direct Payments had “become one of the most vilified aspects of farm policy—especially after a year when the Agriculture Department says farm income likely hit its highest level in four decades.”⁵⁹ This shift, according to some commentators, marks a noticeable decline in the political clout of agricultural interests. Indeed, when situated alongside the declining power of diminishing rural populations, the intense “infighting among rival commodity interests”⁶⁰ over the preservation of preferential treatments in the previous policies, the necessity of the 2012 extension,⁶¹ as well as the exclusion of language loosening regulations on ranchers,⁶² the shift

⁵⁷ For just some examples, see: Krishnadev Calamur, “House Passes Compromise Farm Bill,” *The Two Way: Breaking News from NPR* (January 29, 2014), <http://www.npr.org/blogs/thetwo-way/2014/01/29/268238623/house-passes-compromise-farm-bill>; Conan Miller, “Farmers and Ag Experts React to New Farm Bill” *The Epoch Times* (February 22, 2014), <http://www.theepochtimes.com/n3/523453-farmers-and-ag-experts-react-to-new-farm-bill/>; Kristina Peterson, “Direct Payments to End, but Farm-Bill Policy Questioned” *The Wall Street Journal Online* (January 2, 2014), <http://online.wsj.com/news/articles/SB10001424052702304361604579288802238911742>.

⁵⁸ Bob Stallman, “Statement Regarding Urging Passage of Farm Bill” *The Voice of Agriculture* (January 28, 2014), <http://www.fb.org/index.php?action=newsroom.news&year=2014&file=nr0128.html>.

⁵⁹ Peterson, “Direct Payments to End,” online.

⁶⁰ David Rogers, “Intense Lobbying Threatens Farm Bill” *Politico* (December 3, 2013), <http://www.politico.com/story/2013/12/farm-bill-intense-lobbying-agricultural-congress-100610.html>.

⁶¹ Mary Clare Jalonick, “Farm Bill Extension Evidence Of Agriculture Sector's Lost Political Clout,” *The Huffington Post* (January 3, 2013), http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/01/03/farm-bill-extension_n_2405822.html.

⁶² Erik Wasson, “Meat Industry Rebuffed in Farm Bill Push,” *The Hill* (January 27, 2014), <http://thehill.com/blogs/on-the-money/agriculture/196520-meat-industry-to-oppose-farm-bill-after-lobby-push-rebuffed>.

towards a regime of insurance might signal previously unforeseen movements of the grounds of federal agriculture policy.⁶³

Although these shifts in the legislative landscape surrounding the farm bill may have opened room for a change in agricultural policy, they are insufficient to explain why disaster assistance emerged as a widely popular alternative to Direct Payments. This shift in policy to crop insurance, I argue, may be best explained by the resonances between emergent stylizations of insured subjects and rhetorics of the frontier and national fitness. In what follows, I trace how the dual stylizations of farmers as frontier heroes and all Americans as fit bodies circulated throughout the debates and provided grounds for the emergence of rhetorics of the insured subjects.

Yeoman Farmers, Rugged Individuals, and the Frontier Style

The debates about the Agricultural Act of 2014 are littered with figurations of farmers as rugged individuals whose status as inheritors of the legacy of America's period of westward expansion renders them righteous recipients of government aid. Despite widely circulated reports noting that small and family farms play a diminishing role in food production,⁶⁴ these figurations remain endemic to most discussions of agricultural policy in the contemporary era. In debates about the 2014 Act, their ongoing centrality to discussions of agriculture is exemplified by Debbie Stabenow's speech, as Chairperson of the Senate Agriculture Committee, on the Senate

⁶³ Stewart, "Richer Farmers, Bigger Subsidies," B1; Neena Satija, "New Farm Bill Spells Big Changes for Texas Ag," *The Texas Tribune* (February 5, 2014), <https://www.texastribune.org/2014/02/05/new-farm-bill-spells-big-changes-texas-ag/>; Rogers, "Intense Lobbying," web; Wasson, "Meat Industry Rebuffed," web;

⁶⁴ For just some examples during the last decade, see: James MacDonald, Penni Korb, and Robert Hoppe, "Farm Size and the Organization of U.S. Crop Farming Overview," *USDA Economic Research Report No. (ERR-152)* (August, 2013), <http://www.ers.usda.gov/publications/err-economic-research-report/err152/report-summary.aspx#.U1TTOFd7bTA>; Gilbert M. Gaul, Sarah Cohen and Dan Morgan, "Federal Subsidies Turn Farms Into Big Business," *The Washington Post* (December 21, 2006), A01; Phyllis Korrki, "The Family Farm, Also Battling the Downturn," *The New York Times* (October 4, 2009), BU2.

floor on December 31st, 2012. Described by reporters as “angry”⁶⁵ and “incensed,”⁶⁶ the speech, and an exchange with Senator Jeffery Merkley that follows, exemplify figurations of farmers and ranchers that proliferated throughout both the congressional debates and public discourses.

Through the repetition of the mass noun “farmers and ranchers” their discourse may have evoked images of rugged individuals and exceptional pioneers on the American frontier. Likely amplifying the force of these images, Stabenow also juxtaposed sympathetic depictions of small farmers as injured by the delays in passing the farm bill against portrayals of the supporters of Direct Payments as contemptuous agents of the injuries. Together, these strategies portrayed small farmers as subsidy deserving recipients while simultaneously providing grounds for the emergence of stylizations of the subject of insurance.

The widespread repetitions of the mass noun “farmers and ranchers,” the official designation for the 3.13 million stakeholders addressed by the 2014 act,⁶⁷ in the congressional debates may have figured agriculture workers as endowed with exceptional qualities insofar as they likely resonated with popular images of America's frontier. In her speech and the question and answer session, Stabenow uses “farmers and ranchers,” or some combination thereof, ten different times.⁶⁸ In his five questions alone, moreover, Merkley uses the phrase four times and the phrase “orchardists and ranchers” once.⁶⁹ The phrase also proliferates throughout congressional testimony and hearings about the 2014 Act. In congressional testimony during 2012, for example, Tim Weber and Steve Rutledge, both representatives of crop insurance

⁶⁵ Ellyn Ferguson, “Farm Bill Extension Is Added to Fiscal Agreement,” *Roll Call* (December 31, 2012), http://www.rollcall.com/news/farm_bill_extension_is_added_to_fiscal_agreement-220437-1.html.

⁶⁶ Felicia Somnez, “Farm Bill Remains in Limbo,” *The Washington Post* (December 31, 2012), <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/post-politics/wp/2012/12/31/farm-bill-remains-in-limbo/>.

⁶⁷ U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, “Demographics,” *Ag 101* (April 14, 2013), <http://www.epa.gov/oecaagct/ag101/demographics.html>.

⁶⁸ Stabenow, “The Farm Bill,” online.

⁶⁹ Jeffery Merkley, “The Farm Bill,” *Congressional Record* (December 31, 2012), <http://www.c-spanvideo.org/videoLibrary/transcript/transcript.php?id=212646>.

companies, each used “farmers and ranchers” sixteen times.⁷⁰ It was also used nineteen times during a joint House-Senate meeting on Agriculture Reform in 2013,⁷¹ fourteen times in the collected hearings about the Commodities Futures Trading Commission,⁷² and twelve times in one House hearing about the farm bill in 2012.⁷³ The widespread repetition of “farmers and ranchers” in congressional debates, government documents, and news stories,⁷⁴ likely added or maintained force to the ongoing materialization of independent farmers and ranchers as deserving recipients of government subsidies.

Insofar as they resonated with popular images of the America as a frontier populated with rugged and exceptional individuals, repetitions of “farmers and ranchers,” likely positioned these figures as worthy recipients of government subsidies. Attending to what is often called “the frontier myth,” numerous rhetorical scholars have demonstrated the prominence of associations between farmers, ranchers, and other agriculturalists with popular images of Americas period of

⁷⁰ Steve Rutledge, Testimony before the Committee on Agriculture of The House of Representatives Subcommittee on General Farm Commodities and Risk Management (May 17, 2012), <http://democrats.agriculture.house.gov/testimony/111/h072210/Rutledge.pdf>; Tim Weber, Testimony before the Committee on Agriculture of The House of Representatives Subcommittee on General Farm Commodities and Risk Management (May 17, 2012), <https://agriculture.house.gov/sites/republicans.agriculture.house.gov/files/documents/Weber120517.pdf>.

⁷¹ *CQ Transcriptions*, “Rep. Frank D. Lucas Holds a Joint Meeting on Agriculture Reform” (October 30, 2013), *Lexis/Nexis*.

⁷² *CQ Transcriptions*, “Rep. K. Michael Conaway Holds a Hearing on Future of the CFTC: Commission Perspectives” (July 23, 2013), *Lexis/Nexis*; *CQ Transcriptions*, “Sen. Debbie Stabenow Holds a Hearing on the Reauthorization of the CFTC: Panel 1” (July 17, 2013), *Lexis/Nexis*; *CQ Transcriptions*, “Sen. Debbie Stabenow Holds a Hearing on the Reauthorization of the CFTC: Panel 2” (July 17, 2013), *Lexis/Nexis*; *CQ Transcriptions*, “Rep. Frank D. Lucas Holds a Hearing on Future of the CFTC: Commission Perspectives” (May 21, 2013), *Lexis/Nexis*.

⁷³ *CQ Transcriptions*, “Rep. K. Michael Conaway Holds a Hearing on Farm Bill — Commodity Programs/Crop Insurance” (May 17, 2012), *Lexis/Nexis*.

⁷⁴ For example, see: Rob Stallman, “US Farmers and Ranchers Reach Out to Consumers,” *Financial Times* (August 22, 2011), *Lexis/Nexis*; Edward Colimore, “N.J. Farm Bureau Cultivating Younger Members With Revived Program” *The Philadelphia Inquirer* (December 2, 2013), *Lexis/Nexis*; Joe Rubino, “Boulder Offering 2 Open Space Properties for Lease to Farmers, Ranchers” *Daily Camera* (November 26, 2013), *Lexis/Nexis*; *Indian Banking News*, “USDA - Natural Resources Conservation Service: California Conservation Investment by NRCS, Farmers and Ranchers Surpasses \$200 Million in Federal Fiscal Year 2013” (November 21, 2013), *Lexis/Nexis*.

westward expansion.⁷⁵ These images, which issue from a myriad of sources including popular histories and country-western films, depict the American frontier as an exceptional space where farmers, cowboys, and other rugged individuals performed the virtues of freedom and self-sufficiency that continue to underlie our idealized national *êthos*. Repetitions of “farmers and ranchers” throughout the congressional discourses may have resonated with these enduring disposition towards envisioning America as a space inhabited by rugged individuals whose existence exemplify popular conceptions of freedom. The proliferation of the mass noun may, then, have amplified the calls for the passage of a new farm policy by summoning associations between figurations of farmers and the national *êthos*, further situating them as worthy of government assistance.

At first glance, positioning farmers who stand to benefit from subsidies as self-sufficient individuals is counter-intuitive insofar as the 2014 Act would provide them with government assistance. However, by juxtaposing figurations of farmers as injured bodies, and therefore worthy of sympathy, against depictions of Direct Payment supporters as the contemptuous agents of their injuries Stabenow posed the Act as crucial to preserving their status as exemplars of freedom. These figurations of farmers may have amplified the force of calls to pass the bill insofar as they resonated with virtual dispositions towards bodies as sites of what Debra Hawhee calls “sensual intensities.”⁷⁶ Perhaps the most notable example of these figurations positions them as injured and limping bodies, and therefore implicitly worthy of concern, emerges during Stabenow's monolog:

⁷⁵ For some prominent examples, see: Perry, “Douglas MacArthur,” 2012; West and Carey “(Re)Enacting Frontier Justice,” 2006; Dorsey, “The Frontier Myth,” 1995.

⁷⁶ Debra Hawhee, *Bodily Arts: Rhetoric of Athletics in Ancient Greece* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2004), 191.

This is not about procedure or budget points of order, it is about whether we mean it when we say we want to reform agriculture subsidies; whether we mean it when we say we care about rural America and farmers and ranchers who want to know that they can have the certainty of a 5-year farm bill and not just limp along. I can see it coming, limping along, limping along, extension after extension, just like we seem to see happening everywhere here.⁷⁷

Here, Stabenow's use of "limping," a very particular form of unhealthy movement, may conjure images of farmers and ranchers as injured bodies victimized by Congressional indifference.

When Stabenow answers Merkley's final question she makes it clear that this indifference has been met with disapproval, as she figures farmers as shaking their heads at Congress in disapproval: "I mean, the farmers and ranchers across the country, like every other American right now, are shaking their heads: What is going on?"⁷⁸ Figured in this manner, the farmers take on palpable qualities that may have emanated auras otherwise absent in discussions of farm policy. Unlike more abstract descriptions of "farmers and ranchers," these images of farmers limping and shaking their heads lend them a level of detail that may have resonated with the affective aura attributed to bodies as crucial sites of learning, socialization, and proper performance in contemporary society.⁷⁹ Because audiences are animated by bodily forms of learning and performance, these figurations may become more palpable as they are invited to care about the farmers' plight. Although these dispositions remain in the virtual, they offer Stabenow's figurations the potential to affect audiences, to invite them to feel sympathy for the farmers.

⁷⁷ Debbie Stabenow, "The Farm Bill," *Congressional Record* (December 31, 2012), <http://www.c-spanvideo.org/videoLibrary/transcript/transcript.php?id=212646>.

⁷⁸ Stabenow, "The Farm Bill," online.

⁷⁹ Hawhee, *Bodily Arts*, 194.

This potential may have been amplified by Stabenow's expressions of sympathy and care for the farmers' situation, a facet of her performance that provides an exemplar of the proper disposition towards their injuries. The speech is filled with statements such as "I am deeply concerned"⁸⁰ and "I have been spending the day expressing grave concerns. I will continue to do that."⁸¹ As with the passage quoted at length above, Stabenow also equates her concern with caring: "... for those of us who care about many things but want to make sure agriculture is not lost in this, I am deeply concerned."⁸² By consistently using the first person pronoun in combination with "concern" and "caring," this speech offers audiences a powerful model that may turn the farmer's limp into a site of positive intensities. Echoing Cicero's conceptions of the primary source of emotion in *De Oratore*, Erik Gunderson notes that "the journey of affect into the soul"⁸³ enacted by oratory is a "function first of emotions first felt by the speaker himself [sic]."⁸⁴ Stabenow's expression of caring, in other words, may affect audiences by modeling her preferred disposition towards farmers. Their deformations and disapproval, themselves affectively powerful, may become further evidence that they deserve government support, the means of caring available to members of Congress. Although Stabenow's expressions of emotion are unlikely to have a linear effect on audiences, her speech offers powerful stylizations of a sympathetic disposition towards farmers' suffering that may have reenforced her calls to pass a new farm bill.

The force of Stabenow's calls for sympathy towards farmers and ranchers was potentially amplified by her contrasting depictions of the Republican defenders of Direct Payments as

⁸⁰ Stabenow, "The Farm Bill," online.

⁸¹ Stabenow, "The Farm Bill," online.

⁸² Stabenow, "The Farm Bill," online.

⁸³ Erik Gunderson, *Staging Masculinity: The Rhetoric of Performance in the Roman World* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000), 90.

⁸⁴ Gunderson, *Staging Masculinity*, 91.

contemptuous agents of injury who seek to expand the federal budget by delaying the healing salve of the 2014 Act. Throughout her speech, she consistently affirms the need for disaster assistance while emphasizing that, because of current budget shortfalls, “the country cannot afford to pay to farmers who do not need them.”⁸⁵ In her exchange with Merkley, furthermore, Stabenow accused Direct Payment supporters of attempting to maintain unjust levels of subsidies: “But in good times you should not be able to get a government check when prices are high, which is what some in agriculture have been doing and getting and it is wrong, and it is fully continued in what the Republican leader has proposed.”⁸⁶ Adding to this sense of injustice, Stabenow accuses her opponents of circumventing open debate in order to injure American taxpayers and small farmers alike. She notes, for instance, “It is amazing, you know, how it happens that the folks who want the government subsidies find a way to try to keep them at all costs. Not in the light of day.”⁸⁷ And, similarly, that “This is certainly not about fairness. It is not about an open process”⁸⁸ because “those who behind the scenes have been trying to continue to get the government money appear to have been successful, at least with the Republican leader.”⁸⁹ By characterizing supporters of Direct Payments as willing to disregard public processes, while putting taxpayers and small farmers “at a disadvantage,”⁹⁰ Stabenow worked to pose lobbyists for corporate farms and their Republican allies as agents of injustice and injury. These depictions, then, pose a strong contrast to the figurations of small farmers as injured bodies, a juxtaposition that extends to Stabenow's expressions of contempt towards her opponents.

⁸⁵ Stabenow, “The Farm Bill,” online.

⁸⁶ Stabenow, “The Farm Bill,” online.

⁸⁷ Stabenow, “The Farm Bill,” online.

⁸⁸ Stabenow, “The Farm Bill,” online.

⁸⁹ Stabenow, “The Farm Bill,” online.

⁹⁰ Stabenow, “The Farm Bill,” online.

Completing her juxtaposition of small farmers with agricultural lobbyists and their Republican allies, Stabenow modeled expressions of outrage and contempt as the proper response to her opponents. One notable example of this contempt comes in an exasperated flourish where she calls the Republican refusal to pass the new bill “absolutely outrageous.”⁹¹ Similarly, Stabenow repeatedly claims that this gambit “makes no sense”⁹² and “is certainly not about fairness.”⁹³ She further amplifies these expressions with an ironic passage in which calls the Republican gambit “amazing.” “They are trying to stick in an extension that only extends part of the farm program and keeps 100 percent of the direct subsidies going. That is amazing to me, I have to say. That is absolutely amazing to me.”⁹⁴ The repetition of “amazing” in this passage likely reenforced her expressions of outrage through their ironic comparison of the current situation to the righteous position of openness and deliberation which Stabenow attributes to her allies. Although one might pose this ironic flourish as inviting a reversal of perspectives, here it may simply evoke a sense of derision. At different points in *A Rhetoric of Motives*, Kenneth Burke aligns irony with derision and controversy as it can be used when the rhetor is “seeking to discredit whatever had favored the adversary,”⁹⁵ and “is particularly effective with audiences if it is used in a conversational tone, not rantingly.”⁹⁶ Stabenow's use of irony may thus have reenforced the sense of contempt for her opponents, as her repetition of “amazing” attributes an air of controversy and vitriol to the current state of the farm bill. These expressions of outrage completed Stabenow's juxtaposition of small farmers and supporters of direct payments, as they modeled contempt as the prescribed emotional disposition towards her

⁹¹ Stabenow, “The Farm Bill,” online.

⁹² Stabenow, “The Farm Bill,” online.

⁹³ Stabenow, “The Farm Bill,” online.

⁹⁴ Stabenow, “The Farm Bill,” online.

⁹⁵ Kenneth Burke, *A Rhetoric of Motives* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), 69.

⁹⁶ Burke, *A Rhetoric of Motives*, 67.

opponents in a manner similar to her performance of caring and concern for the beneficiaries of a new farm bill.

This juxtaposition likely garnered force through its resonance with similar depictions of the contrasts between corporate agriculture and small farmers circulating in the media before, during, and after, debates about the 2014 Act. Take, for example, an article from *The Washington Post* that sought to criticize the Direct Payments regime for distributing subsidies for landowners who are far removed from the work of farming.⁹⁷ Beginning with a description of Lisa Sippel, an absentee landlord of farmland in Missouri, whose “building is one of the finest on Central Park West”⁹⁸ and who “isn’t exactly sure why”⁹⁹ she receives Direct Payments, it goes on to argue for the repeal of the program that subsidizes “the idle, the urban, and occasionally the dead.”¹⁰⁰ This article and a myriad of similar stories and documents,¹⁰¹ tend to valorize family and small farms, while posing Direct Payments as injurious to the economy, taxpayers, and even other farmers. By stylizing these sectors of the farm economy in a manner similar to Stabenow's speech, they may have generated the virtual grounds with which her juxtapositions could have garnered force and materialized to encourage audiences to pass the 2014 Act. While the repetitions of “farmers and ranchers” as well as the ensuing juxtapositions of these rugged

⁹⁷ David A. Fahrenthold, “‘Temporary’ Farm Subsidy Program May Finally Meet the Reaper” *The Washington Post* (June 2, 2013), http://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/temporary-farm-subsidy-program-may-finally-meet-the-reaper/2013/06/02/3e20d25e-c25b-11e2-97fa-0f57decebbbf_story.html.

⁹⁸ Fahrenthold, “‘Temporary’ Farm Subsidy Program,” Internet.

⁹⁹ Fahrenthold, “‘Temporary’ Farm Subsidy Program,” Internet.

¹⁰⁰ Fahrenthold, “‘Temporary’ Farm Subsidy Program,” Internet.

¹⁰¹ For some notable examples, see: Jeff Flake et. al., “Letter to Harry Reid and Mitch McConnell” (September 27, 2013), http://www.flake.senate.gov/public/_cache/files/0a188ee8-4779-4a80-86e6-a68acd4b702d/direct-payment-letter-to-sen-reid.pdf; Chris Edwards, “Agricultural Subsidies,” *CATO Institute: Downsizing the Federal Government* (June, 2009), <http://www.downsizinggovernment.org/agriculture/subsidies>; *The Chicago Tribune*, “Plow ‘Em Under: Time to End Farm Subsidies” (September 26, 2011), http://articles.chicagotribune.com/2011-09-26/opinion/ct-edit-farm-20110926_1_end-farm-subsidies-farm-programs-farm-bill; Charles Abbott, “Report Warns of Farmers Gaming U.S. Subsidy Programs” *The Chicago Tribune* (October 08, 2013), http://articles.chicagotribune.com/2013-10-08/news/sns-rt-us-usa-agriculture-subsidies-20131008_1_farm-management-charles-abbott-subsidy-payments.

individuals against the recipients of Direct Payments were not necessarily linked to an alternative policy, they may have provided an important contingency for the re-stylization of farmers qua pioneers as properly ensured subjects.

Stylizations of Healthy Bodies

Stylizations of healthy bodies as crucial parts of a fit and productive nation constitute the second prominent discourse contributing to the emergence of insurance rhetorics. Becoming hegemonic alongside emerging concerns about America's rising obesity rate, discourses of national fitness, as I argue in the previous chapter, stylize bodies as eating and exercising appropriately, whether voluntarily or as the result of pedagogical interventions on the part of government programs. In debates about the 2014 Act, these stylizations are most evident in the conference reports circulated by the bicameral committee tasked with negotiating a bipartisan bill. For its success, this committee has been praised as “a solid compromise,”¹⁰² a necessary outcome of “a start-and-stop affair that required a variety of tough compromises and key leadership”¹⁰³ from Stabenow and Representative Frank Lucas, and even, “nothing short of a miracle given the political atmosphere in Washington.”¹⁰⁴ In light of their importance, I attend to the conference reports circulated by the committee on October 30, 2013¹⁰⁵ and January 30, 2014¹⁰⁶ as exemplars of how the broader congressional discourses stylized consumers, including families and children, as eating vegetables and healthy food while simultaneously depicting America as a landscape of small farm-territories with specific histories and rhythms of

¹⁰² Erin Voegelé, “Conference Committee Passes Farm Bill, Votes Expected Soon” *Biomass Magazine* (January 28, 2014), <http://biomassmagazine.com/articles/9960/conference-committee-passes-farm-bill-votes-expected-soon>.

¹⁰³ Steve Vied, “Farm Bill Passage Required Compromise,” *Messenger-Inquirer* (February 23, 2014), *Lexis/Nexis*.

¹⁰⁴ Andy Eubank, “Lucas says Conference Committee Work a Legislative Miracle” *Hoosier Ag Today* (January 28, 2014), <http://www.hoosieragtoday.com/lucas-says-conference-committee-work-a-legislative-miracle/>.

¹⁰⁵ *CQ Transcriptions*, “Joint Meeting on Agriculture Reform,” *Lexis/Nexis*.

¹⁰⁶ *US Official News*, “Conference Report on H.R. 2642, Federal Agriculture Reform and Risk Management Act of 2014” (January 30, 2014), *Lexis/Nexis*.

cultivation. By figuring bodies as ready consumers of the fresh produce farmed by American agriculturalists, these committee meetings posed Direct Payments' bias towards staple crops as antithetical to the production of a healthy populous.

Stylizations of adults and children as consumers of healthy food emerged throughout the meetings as Congresspeople reenforced ongoing efforts by contemporary food movements to modulate collective standards of taste. For example, Representative Jim Costa depicted Americans as increasingly interested in consuming produce as a part of his calls to subsidize vegetable farmers. These subsidies, he notes, would be crucial to meeting growing market demand for organic food: “As consumers increasingly turn to organic products throughout this country, I think the Organic Certification Cost Share Program supports our producers and maintains the integrity of the industry in the United States.”¹⁰⁷ Costa followed this statement by shifting from a third person description of consumers to a first person plural depiction of a collective love for “specialty crops.” “Now, that's a technical term. We're talking about fruits and vegetables. We all love our fruits and vegetables.”¹⁰⁸ In both statements, Costa's use of the descriptive modality belies the extent to which they function a stylized depiction of Americans' taste for fruits and vegetables. Notably, his use of the pronoun “We,” which implies “attributive or predicative agreement,”¹⁰⁹ with the adjective “all,” which evokes a “large bodies of human beings,”¹¹⁰ in the second quotation effaces potential differences in collective tastes. Although many members of his audience may “love” fruits and vegetables, he repeatedly implies that they, and whoever else is included in the amorphous body of “we all,” are in universal agreement

¹⁰⁷ Jim Costa, “Rep. Frank D. Lucas Holds a Joint Meeting on Agriculture Reform” *CQ Transcriptions* (October 30, 2013), *Lexis/Nexis*.

¹⁰⁸ Costa, “Joint Meeting,” *Lexis/Nexis*.

¹⁰⁹ *Oxford English Dictionary*, “we, pron., n., and adj.,” (2008), *Gallileo*.

¹¹⁰ *Oxford English Dictionary*, “all, adj., pron., and n., adv., and conj.,” *Gallileo*.

about their preferences for eating healthy. Through statements such as these, which operate as stylized depictions more so than descriptions of audiences' tastes, the congressional hearings presented an image of Americans as healthy consumers .

These stylizations likely synergized with similar pronouncements of growing public demand for organic produce proffered by contemporary food movements. Insofar as these groups' stylizations of consumers as increasingly demanding organic are characterized by a limited range of circulation, they exemplify how publics often constitute the virtual grounds from which emergent hegemonic discourses, such as congressional calls to subsidize vegetable farmers, garner force. A 2012 press release by the Organic Trade Association, for example, is notably similar to the congressional discourse as stylizes audiences as “increasingly engaged and discerning,”¹¹¹ aware “about health and environmental concerns,”¹¹² and valuing food that is “produced using practices that are good for their families.”¹¹³ Likewise, “green news” website *EcoWatch* appeals to the draw of collective affiliations by labelling organic food the “fastest-growing items in America’s grocery carts.”¹¹⁴ The essay then declares that “once you look closely at the practices and hazards of so-called 'conventional' food and farming, are literally matters of life or death,”¹¹⁵ a claim it emphasizes with a list of ten, mostly macabre, reasons “consumers” or “people,” purchase organic food. An advertisement for the popular *Organic Manifesto* opens by claiming that “Organic matters, to all of us. Red state, blue state, churchgoer or atheist, soccer mom or single bachelor, what our society does to the soil (or allows to be done

¹¹¹ Barbara Hauman, “2012 Press Releases: Consumer-driven U.S. organic market surpasses \$31 billion in 2011” *Organic Trade Association* (April, 2012), http://www.organicnewsroom.com/2012/04/us_consumerdriven_organic_mark.html.

¹¹² Hauman, “2012 Press Releases,” internet.

¹¹³ Hauman, “2012 Press Releases,” internet.

¹¹⁴ Ronnie Cummins, “10 Reasons Consumers Buy Organic” *EcoWatch.com* (April 24, 2014), <http://ecowatch.com/2014/04/24/10-reasons-consumers-buy-organic/>.

¹¹⁵ Cummins, “10 Reasons Consumers Buy,” internet.

to it) directly affects our health.”¹¹⁶ Akin to Costa's rhetoric, the essay is also filled with appeals to the first person plural that stylize audiences as food activists, such as “We're the ones in trouble if things don't change,”¹¹⁷ and “we have to take action now.”¹¹⁸ By deploying the plural possessive and descriptions of consumer demand for organic produce, these and numerous similar reports¹¹⁹ deploy a stylistic strategy remarkably similar to the visions of a public composed of bodies with a taste for healthy food. In so doing, they provide the affective grounds from which increasingly hegemonic visions of American consumers emerged to modulate policy outcomes.

By reinforcing the intensive affiliations constituted by a collective taste for fruits and vegetables, congressional discourses may have encouraged associations between the 2014 Act and an increasingly hegemonic stylization of fit subjects. The use of “we all” and similar phrases efface the potential differences in preferences among consumers and may reiterate the extent to which a taste for organic food, as well as fruits and vegetables more broadly, function as a site for what Celeste M. Condit has called the “affect-based construction of affiliations.”¹²⁰ These affiliations, according to Condit, can be understood as collective forms of relationality that emerge through the rhetorical production of “a positive shared affect.”¹²¹ To become members of this group and garner its affiliational affects, posed as “love,” one must stylize themselves as adopting its tastes. In so doing, one may participate in the collective process of what Allison and

¹¹⁶ Leah Zerbe, “Why We All Need an Organic Manifesto” *Rodale News* (March 15, 2010), <http://www.rodalenews.com/organic-manifesto-0>.

¹¹⁷ Zerbe, “Why We All Need,” internet.

¹¹⁸ Zerbe, “Why We All Need,” internet.

¹¹⁹ Caitlin Bowling, “Local Consumers Embracing Organic Foods” *Louisville Business First* (April 28, 2014), <http://www.bizjournals.com/louisville/print-edition/2014/03/28/local-consumers-embracing-organic-foods.html?page=all>;

¹²⁰ Celeste M. Condit, “Pathos in Criticism: Edwin Black’s Communism-As-Cancer Metaphor,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 99.1 (February, 2013), 15.

¹²¹ Condit, “Pathos in Criticism,” 18.

Jennifer Hayes-Conroy identify as “the production of embodied (eating) subjects,”¹²² whereby subjective preferences emerge as a result of complex interactions in both the visceral and cognitive registers. As subjects participate in the “love” that underlies the consumption of fruits and vegetables, their preferences may traverse virtual and actual such that the embodied aspects of taste become criss-crossed with the traces of collective affiliations. These depictions of consumers and audiences thus worked on the virtual and actual simultaneously, reenforcing attempts to modulate collective taste as a crucial part of increasingly hegemonic stylizations of fit bodies.

Figurations of children and families as healthy consumers in discussions about SNAP benefits and the school lunch program in the farm bill may have reenforced these affiliations, as their stylizations of a taste for fruits and vegetables resonanced with contemporary discourses about a national obesity crisis. In what is perhaps typical fashion for debates about national policy, the conference reports are filled with figurations of families. Stabenow, for instance, calls for cutting down on benefits fraud “to make sure that every single dollar goes to families that need it.”¹²³ Detailing the impact of SNAP cuts on “a poor family,”¹²⁴ Congresswoman Gwen Moore proclaims that “SNAP benefits already do not meet nutritional needs throughout the month, and this change will mean that real food will be off real tables and out of the stomachs of current recipients.”¹²⁵ And, Representative Rosa DeLauro warns that cutting SNAP threatens “working families who will face an empty fridge and a gnawing pain in their stomach for weeks

¹²² Allison Hayes-Conroy and Jessica Hayes-Conroy, “Taking Back Taste: Feminism, Food and Visceral Politics” *Gender, Place and Culture* 15.5 (October, 2008), 466.

¹²³ Debbie Stabenow in “Conference Report on H.R. 2642, Federal Agriculture Reform and Risk Management Act of 2014” *US Official News* (January 30, 2014), *Lexis/Nexis*.

¹²⁴ Gwen Moore in “Conference Report on H.R. 2642, Federal Agriculture Reform and Risk Management Act of 2014” *US Official News* (January 30, 2014), *Lexis/Nexis*.

¹²⁵ Moore, “Conference Report on H.R.,” *Lexis/Nexis*.

and weeks.”¹²⁶ In total, as congresspeople mentioned families or family farms thirty-three times during the first hearing and forty eight during the second. By comparison, the term “children” is only repeated fifteen times during both Conference Reports. However, insofar as each figuration is connected to discussions of hunger and health, they likely reenforce the associations between the farm bill stylizations of fit bodies. In her discussion of the school lunch program, Congresswoman DeLauro notes that “Children who will go hungry and spend all the next day at school. They will go to bed hungry, spend the next day at school unable to concentrate because they are thinking about food.”¹²⁷ Congressman Jeff Denham, moreover, explicitly poses this concern in terms of healthy eating habits: “You know, our school lunch program should be based on nutrition — making sure that our kids have the healthiest lunch possible, making sure that the foods that they get — the fresh fruits and vegetables — are an important part.”¹²⁸ Throughout these discussions, families and children are posed needing assistance from programs in the farm bill in order to ensure they eat a healthy diet. Although Americans as a whole have a taste for fruit and vegetables, in other words, the habits of families and children are a central concern insofar as they serve as important indicators of our collective fitness.

These figurations of families and children may have garnered force, in part, through their consonance with concerns that Direct Payments encouraged the overproduction of crops responsible for rising obesity rates, a synergy that likely reenforced the associations between the 2014 Act and stylizations of fit bodies. The comments in the Conference Reports echo, for example, a *Scientific American* article that claims that because Direct Payments lower the price

¹²⁶ Rosa DeLauro in “Conference Report on H.R. 2642, Federal Agriculture Reform and Risk Management Act of 2014” *US Official News* (January 30, 2014), *Lexis/Nexis*.

¹²⁷ DeLauro, “Conference Report on H.R.,” *Lexis/Nexis*.

¹²⁸ Jeff Denham, in “Rep. Frank D. Lucas Holds a Joint Meeting on Agriculture Reform” *CQ Transcriptions* (October 30, 2013), *Lexis/Nexis*.

of commodity crops, “Between 1985 and 2010 the price of beverages sweetened with high-fructose corn syrup dropped 24 percent, and by 2006 American children consumed an extra 130 calories a day from these beverages. Over the same period the price of fresh fruits and vegetables rose 39 percent. For families on a budget, the price difference can be decisive in their food choices.”¹²⁹ Similarly, David Wallinga writes in *Health Affairs* that:

For thirty-five years, U.S. agriculture has operated under a "cheap food" policy that spurred production of a few commodity crops, not fruit or vegetables, and thus of the calories from them. A key driver of childhood obesity is the consumption of excess calories, many from inexpensive, nutrient-poor snacks, sweets, and sweetened beverages made with fats and sugars derived from these policy-supported crops.¹³⁰

In short these articles, as exemplars of the public discourses about the effects of Direct Payments on public health, called attention to the role of Direct Payments in encouraging families to eat foods “linked to heart disease,”¹³¹ childhood obesity, and a myriad of other health problems. Although they do not explicitly depict families and children as healthy consumers, they likely functioned as the virtual grounds from which linkages between the 2014 Act and stylizations of healthy children and families could become increasingly salient. Indeed, figurations of families and children as healthy consumers resonated with these discourses and, in so doing, may have amplified the perceived importance of passing a new farm bill.

Throughout the Conference reports, moreover, congresspeople positioned the new farm bill as crucial to assist agricultural operations that produce a ready supply of healthy food for

¹²⁹ *Scientific American*, “For a Healthier Country, Overhaul Farm Subsidies” (May 1, 2012), <http://www.scientificamerican.com/article/fresh-fruit-hold-the-insulin/?page=1>.

¹³⁰ David Wallinga, “Agricultural Policy And Childhood Obesity: A Food Systems And Public Health Commentary” *Health Affairs* 29.3 (March, 2010), *Proquest*.

¹³¹ *Scientific American*, “For a Healthier Country,” online.

consumers. Characterized by specific names, habits, crops, and traditions, these farms are positioned as intensive territories where active bodies work on a landscape as part of the growing assemblage of fit bodies. Take, for example, Senator Carl Levin's highly detailed and jovial account of his family farm: "Our family owns some agricultural acreage, just a little bit. There's some apple trees that are always filled with worms. We have a raspberry patch that went bad, and picked a few asparagus that they call in this agricultural area, as Debbie Stabenow knows, 'speargrass'."¹³² Levin's statement paints an intensive image of a bucolic, overgrown, and even quaint, farm where his family works to produce vegetables. His list of particular crops, use of "spear grass," and description of the status of the raspberry patch, impart it with a palpable aura as the farm-territory gains a specificity that only amplifies its allure. Similarly, Michigan Representative Dan Benishek claims that "Northern Michigan is home to a number of centennial family farms, meaning they have been in the family for over 100 years — farms like the Bardenhagen's in Suttons Bay, where they grow asparagus, apples, cherries, and potatoes."¹³³ Similarly, "Wagner's in Grawn,"¹³⁴ a farm "a short drive down the road,"¹³⁵ cultivates "corn, wheat, soybeans, and raise beef cattle for their neighbors."¹³⁶ For Oregon Representative Suzanne Bonamici, moreover, the bill "will help a wide variety of food producers in my district, from blueberry and hazelnut farms to vineyards in the world-renowned Willamette Valley wine region."¹³⁷ These descriptions, with their short but vivid images, may produce intensive

¹³² Carl Levin, in "Conference Report on H.R. 2642, Federal Agriculture Reform and Risk Management Act of 2014" *US Official News* (January 30, 2014), *Lexis/Nexis*.

¹³³ Dan Benishek in "Conference Report on H.R. 2642, Federal Agriculture Reform and Risk Management Act of 2014" *US Official News* (January 30, 2014), *Lexis/Nexis*.

¹³⁴ Benishek, "Conference Report," *Lexis/Nexis*.

¹³⁵ Benishek, "Conference Report," *Lexis/Nexis*.

¹³⁶ Benishek, "Conference Report," *Lexis/Nexis*.

¹³⁷ Suzanne Bonamici in "Conference Report on H.R. 2642, Federal Agriculture Reform and Risk Management Act of 2014" *US Official News* (January 30, 2014), *Lexis/Nexis*.

landscapes populated farmers actively working their family plots that provide the vegetables necessary to feed the growing population of fit bodies.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, these descriptions reflect the imagery in many statements made by active farmers during the Congressional hearings in the years prior. Notably, Charles Wingard's testimony before the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry in 2011 provides images of his families' historical and ongoing relationships to farming: "Three generations of our family have farmed in this area since the 1920s, and nine family members oversee our operations today in a hands-on manner. We specialize in southern leafy greens such as collards, kale, mustard & turnip greens, and also produce a variety of summer vegetables in season along with a few other year round vegetable crops."¹³⁸ In addition to the details about his familial history and the catalog of crops, this description envisions the temporal patterns of agriculture through the mentions of seasonal plantings at the end. These images, then, may impart a sense of farmers' labor as active and situate them as bodies joining in the collective movement towards a healthy lifestyle. This and the similar descriptions throughout congressional discourses paint vivid images of landscapes rife with farm-territories, where with colorful crops and rich histories serve as backdrops for active bodies cultivating healthy food.

These visions may garner additional intensity insofar as they resonate with widely-circulated depictions of organic farming as an activity primarily performed by small operations that have emerged with the increasing visibility of what Michael Pollan famously dubbed the "food movements."¹³⁹ An article in the *San Francisco Chronicle* about a recent food safety controversy, for instance, begins with vivid pictures, each with a lengthy description, of workers

¹³⁸ Charles Wingard, "Testimony before the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry" *CQ Congressional Testimony* (July 28, 2011), *Lexis/Nexis*.

¹³⁹ Michael Pollan, "The Food Movement, Rising" *The New York Review of Books* (June 10, 2010), <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/2010/jun/10/food-movement-rising/?pagination=false>.

picking carrots and walking in a field of bright green plants, as well as produce being sold at a local market.¹⁴⁰ The following sections, including one entitled “A Changing Landscape,”¹⁴¹ discuss the reactions of owners of farms such as “Three Hearts Farm near Bozeman, Mont[ana]”¹⁴² and “the 350-acre, organic-certified Full Belly Farm in Yolo County [California].”¹⁴³ Much like the descriptions in congressional debates, specific farms come alive with the rhythms of cultivating bodies. Indeed, by depicting America as a landscape peppered with bodies laboring in farm-territories, reports about food safety regulations,¹⁴⁴ the growth of organic agriculture in different localities,¹⁴⁵ sustainable diets,¹⁴⁶ and a myriad of other topics,¹⁴⁷ may have provided the virtual groundwork from which similar congressional discourses garnered force.

By drawing on the power of linguistic depictions of landscapes as intensive territories populated by laboring bodies, these Congressional and popular discourses worked together to amplify the salience of fruit and vegetable producers who were usually not subsidized with

¹⁴⁰ Carolyn Lochhead, “Food Safety Act Sows Anger with Small Farmers” *San Francisco Chronicle* (November 24, 2013), <http://www.sfgate.com/science/article/Food-safety-act-sows-anger-with-small-farmers-5006768.php#photo-5502017>.

¹⁴¹ Lochhead, “Food Safety Act,” Internet.

¹⁴² Lochhead, “Food Safety Act,” Internet.

¹⁴³ Lochhead, “Food Safety Act,” Internet.

¹⁴⁴ For examples, see: Evan Halper, “Planned Food Safety Rules Rile Organic Farmers” *Los Angeles Times* (February 22, 2014), <http://articles.latimes.com/2014/feb/22/nation/la-na-food-safety-20140223>; Dan Charles, “Organic Farmers Bash FDA Restrictions On Manure Use” *The Salt on NPR.com* (November 21, 2013), <http://www.npr.org/blogs/thesalt/2013/11/21/246386290/organic-farmers-bash-fda-restrictions-on-manure-use>.

¹⁴⁵ For examples, see: Kevin G. Demarrais, “Hooked on Organic Farming,” *The Record* (April 16, 2006), *Lexis/Nexis*; Ben Weathers, “Gambrills Farm Tenants Get Short-Term Lease,” *The Capital* (March 29, 2014), *Lexis/Nexis*; Marian Fry, “The View From Sunrise Farm” *The Capital* (March 2, 2014), *Lexis/Nexis*; Eric Florip, “Growing Organic Food Just Part of Husband-Wife Team’s Mission,” *The Columbian* (February 23, 2014), *Lexis/Nexis*; Heidi Gaiser, “Conference Highlights Valley’s Organic Growers,” *Daily Inter Lake* (December 15, 2013), *Lexis/Nexis*.

¹⁴⁶ For examples, see: Zsarlene B. Chua, “Focus: Going Organic,” *Business World* (April 25, 2014), *Lexis/Nexis*; Tom Philpott, “Organic Milk Proves Higher in Healthy Fats,” *MotherJones.Com* (Dec. 13, 2013), <http://www.motherjones.com/tom-philpott/2013/12/organic-milk-proves-higher-healthy-fats>; Amy Nile, “Local Organic Food Producers in Business of Healthy Eating” *The Chronicle* (July 11, 2013), *Lexis/Nexis*.

¹⁴⁷ Jonathan Knutson, “Fraternity of Farming,” *Agweek* (March 10, 2014), *Lexis/Nexis*; Richard Mullins, “Whole Foods to Start Produce Pickup” *The Tampa Tribune* (November 15, 2013), *Lexis/Nexis*; Eric Brown, “Organic Production not Keeping Up With Demand” *Greeley Tribune* (May 13, 2012), *Lexis/Nexis*.

Direct Payments. The descriptions of farming practices, discussions of wildlife on farms, and the use of specific place names, as Ronald Bogue puts it, function “as visions, as images projected into the real and imbued with a life of their own, and such images would seem to have no necessary relation to narratives, even if some of them are ‘fabulations’.”¹⁴⁸ Although they do not offer fabulations of a future “to come,” these images depict farm-territories as rife with the intensive labor and histories. They show how fruit and vegetable farms, ostensibly harmed by their exclusion from Direct Payments,¹⁴⁹ are constituted through laboring bodies participating in the stylized visions of fit subjects. These rhetorical landscapes, brought alive by vivid visions of specific places, alluringly stylize intensive farm-territories as sites for the production of healthy food and bodies, providing for further grounds for the refutation of Direct Payments. They combine, along with stylizations of a collective taste for healthy food and subsequent figurations of families and children as consumers of fruits and vegetables, to stylize fit bodies as a site of subjectification for Americans.

Crop Insurance

Emerging as a bi-partisan alternative to Direct Payments, crop insurance and stylizations of the insured subject emerged as a part of the hegemonic Public insofar as they resonated with both visions of America as a nation of farmers on the frontier and depictions of the nation populated by fit bodies. These resonances emerged, for the most part, in congressional discourses that posed stylizations of the American public and farm economy similar to those used to criticize Direct Payments as justifications for the choice of agricultural disaster assistance

¹⁴⁸ Ronald Bogue, “The Landscape of Sensation” in *Gilles Deleuze: Image and Text* eds. Eugene W. Holland, Daniel W. Smith and Charles J. Stivale (London, Continuum, 2009), 22.

¹⁴⁹ Alli Condra, “Why Fruits, Vegetables Are Excluded from Farm Subsidies” *Food Safety News* (November 9, 2011), <http://www.foodsafetynews.com/2011/11/fairness-why-fruits-vegetables-are-excluded-from-farm-subsidies/#.U7WdFLFCyOI>.

as their alternative. In particular, congressional discourses were rife with attempts to associate recipients of disaster assistance with figurations of healthy families, and families in general, as well as stylizations of these beneficiaries as deserving of support. These stylizations emerged, in part, through the resonance of rhetorical forms with the virtual intensities populated by the criticisms of Direct Payments traced in the previous sections.

Throughout the conference reports, congresspeople worked to render the recipients of crop insurance and figurations of healthy families as a seemingly natural pair. This move, which emerged as a result of reminders that the policy would support food production as well as the repeated use of “families” and “farms” in the same sentence, likely resonated with the stylizations of fit bodies that emerged as a central grounds for refuting Direct Payments. Because crop insurance was posed as crucial to subsidizing farmers, including cultivators of fruit and vegetables, figuring these recipients as crucial to feeding families emerged as a popular tactic in debates about the 2014 Act. In an exemplary instance of this rhetoric, Representative Scott claims that crop insurance ensures that farmers will produce “the food, the nutrition, and the fiber, not only for America but for the rest of the world.”¹⁵⁰ They do so, according to Scott, such that “Americans — when they go to the grocery store, will get more for their dollar than any other country as they seek to feed their families.”¹⁵¹ Similarly, Congresswoman Suzan Delbene declares that the 2014 Act “is good for our farmers and families”¹⁵² because it “will create jobs, help our farmers, and preserves access to healthy food.”¹⁵³ Congresswoman Marcia Fudge also

¹⁵⁰ Austin Scott in “Conference Report on H.R. 2642, Federal Agriculture Reform and Risk Management Act of 2014” *US Official News* (January 30, 2014), *Lexis/Nexis*.

¹⁵¹ Scott, “Conference Report on H.R.,” *Lexis/Nexis*.

¹⁵² Suzan Delbene in “Conference Report on H.R. 2642, Federal Agriculture Reform and Risk Management Act of 2014” *US Official News* (January 30, 2014), *Lexis/Nexis*.

¹⁵³ Delbene, “Conference Report on H.R.,” *Lexis/Nexis*.

claims that because “Farmers and families across the country deserve certainty and stability,”¹⁵⁴ the farm bill “recognizes the undeniable link between feeding and farming.”¹⁵⁵ Each figuration poses farmer's success through crop insurance as crucial to providing the kinds of foods necessary for families' potential healthy eating habits. They may, in turn, resonate with stylizations of children and families as healthy consumers, as well as discourses of national fitness more broadly. In their repetition, farmers and families may become linked through the insensitive and intuitive connection that food consumption relies on the movement of crops to supermarkets and dining rooms.

Congresspeople may have also reenforced the resonances by continuously using the terms families and farming within the same or spatially contiguous sentences. In so doing, these sentences reenforced this connection through the conjunctive powers of language. Congresswoman Delbene's call to “... deliver a farm that's good for our farmers, our families and food supply” exemplifies this popular move. It also emerges in claims that the current bill contains “agricultural policies that work for families and farmers,”¹⁵⁶ that it “is important for farms and hardworking families in Northern Michigan”¹⁵⁷ and that “our farmers, their families, and small towns all across America have waited too long for a new farm bill.”¹⁵⁸ Here, families and farms take on mutually resonant affects through the conjunctive power of language. The use of lists, the close spatial associations between words in the sentences, as well as the use of “and,”

¹⁵⁴ Marcia L. Fudge in “Rep. Frank D. Lucas Holds a Joint Meeting on Agriculture Reform” CQ Transcriptions (October 30, 2013), *Lexis/Nexis*.

¹⁵⁵ Fudge, “Joint Meeting,” *Lexis/Nexis*.

¹⁵⁶ Debbie Stabenow in “Rep. Frank D. Lucas Holds a Joint Meeting on Agriculture Reform” CQ Transcriptions (October 30, 2013), *Lexis/Nexis*.

¹⁵⁷ Benishek in “Conference Report on H.R.,” *Lexis/Nexis*.

¹⁵⁸ Mike McIntyre, in “Conference Report on H.R. 2642, Federal Agriculture Reform and Risk Management Act of 2014” *US Official News* (January 30, 2014), *Lexis/Nexis*.

a conjunctive that, for Deleuze, “brings in all relations”¹⁵⁹ to upset “being, the verb,”¹⁶⁰ all work together to blur their mutual intensities. As linguistic units, their intensities are, for Deleuze and Guattari, call the “inherently connective.”¹⁶¹ These repetitions, then, may complicate distinctions between their intensities until they come to affect each other and become indelibly associated. Even in the simplest sense, families rely on farms and are altered through the availability of foods they produce, while farms would adopt a whole series of new measures for selling their food abroad without American families.

In addition to drawing associations between disaster assistance and a collective taste for healthy food, congresspeople also worked to figure the recipients of crop insurance as deserving of government support. Importantly, these moves may have reenforced resonances between the new policy and similar figurations at work in Stabenow's speech. Perhaps the most straight forward examples of this move posed Crop Insurance as assisting small farms, or otherwise helping at risk farms stay afloat. Senator John Boozman, for instance, claimed that “Crop insurance is an important tool for our farmers to manage their risk ...,”¹⁶² and that, in working on the new bill, Congress was “doing the work that our farmers, ranchers and agriculture economy so desperately deserves.”¹⁶³ They claimed that crop insurance will “protect producers in times of need,”¹⁶⁴ and that it will serve as “a valuable risk management tool that needs to be there for

¹⁵⁹ I am indebted to Bradford Vivian's “The Threshold of the Self” for pointing out this passage where Deleuze provides a clearer explanation than he has elsewhere. See: Gilles Deleuze, *Negotiations, 1972-1990* trans. Martin Joughin (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 44.

¹⁶⁰ Deleuze, *Negotiations*, 44.

¹⁶¹ Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, 5.

¹⁶² John Boozman in “Rep. Frank D. Lucas Holds a Joint Meeting on Agriculture Reform” *CQ Transcriptions* (October 30, 2013), *Lexis/Nexis*.

¹⁶³ John Boozman in “Rep. Frank D. Lucas Holds a Joint Meeting on Agriculture Reform” *CQ Transcriptions* (October 30, 2013), *Lexis/Nexis*.

¹⁶⁴ Saxy Chambliss in “Rep. Frank D. Lucas Holds a Joint Meeting on Agriculture Reform” *CQ Transcriptions* (October 30, 2013), *Lexis/Nexis*.

producers.”¹⁶⁵ Speaking in support of the new policy, moreover, Paul Ryan claimed that “We should help the little guy — the family farm that's in need. We shouldn't bankroll the big guys. ... On the whole, I think this bill will do some good because “It will provide some much-needed certainty to family farmers.”¹⁶⁶ Each of these statements positions the recipients of crop insurance subsidies as somehow worthy of public support through the language of risk and need, phrasings that echo the language of injury deployed to describe farmers' conditions under the regime of Direct Payments. Crop insurance subsidies, in other words, help those who are harmed by the ongoing continuations of the previous bill by providing them certainty and protections against the risks inherent to the cultivation of crops.

Insofar as they implied that crop insurance would prevent farmers from suffering injury or, in this case delinquency, repetitions of the phrase “safety net” may have contributed to the figuration of its recipients as deserving of public support. In total, the phrase is repeated twenty-two times over the course of both Conference Reports, however, statements by Congressman Austin Scott exemplify how it may have worked to define recipients of crop insurance as needing support:

Our producers need choices and the safety nets. As my grandfather always said, the farm bill should only be for the bad times, not the good times. Nothing that we do should guarantee anybody a profit. Thus, providing producers with a choice of revenue, safety net and price support programs is extremely important.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁵ Ronald Kind in “Conference Report on H.R. 2642, Federal Agriculture Reform and Risk Management Act of 2014” *US Official News* (January 30, 2014), *Lexis/Nexis*.

¹⁶⁶ Paul Ryan, in “Conference Report on H.R. 2642, Federal Agriculture Reform and Risk Management Act of 2014” *US Official News* (January 30, 2014), *Lexis/Nexis*.

¹⁶⁷ Austin Scott, in “Rep. Frank D. Lucas Holds a Joint Meeting on Agriculture Reform” CQ Transcriptions (October 30, 2013), *Lexis/Nexis*.

Drawing on the force of images of performers falling only to be rescued from hitting the ground, the metaphor of a “safety net” implies that the programs are designed, not to provide profitability, but rather to prevent farms from falling under the line of financial viability. Although figurations of the safety net emerged as early as the late Nineteenth Century and are instantiated in a variety of ways,¹⁶⁸ each iteration likely evokes empathy insofar as it implies that the mechanism offers safety as a last resort.¹⁶⁹ Its repetition in these debates, then, may have reinforced the associations between farmers receiving crop insurance and images of downtrodden, and therefore deserving, bodies who resort to government programs as a last resort rather than as a means of profiting at the expense of the public budget. The recurrence of the phrase “safety net” may have subsequently resonated with the figurations of farmers as harmed by the continuation of Direct Payments, as it likely evoked images of an apparatus necessary to prevent injury to seemingly helpless bodies.

Importantly, these stylizations of crop insurance as a crucial safety net for all farmers, on face, seemingly work against the division between deserving small farmers and undeserving corporate producers insofar as they posit that disaster assistance provides a degree of certainty for the entire farm economy. Yet, close attention to Stabenow's speech shows how, at least to some extent, her figurations of injured farmers may simultaneously produce positive dispositions towards independent agriculturalists and resonate with the assumption that crop insurance would provide economic certainty for all producers. Stabenow's call for a new farm bill such that “they [farmers] can have the certainty of a 5-year farm bill and not just limp along,”¹⁷⁰ for example,

¹⁶⁸ Oxford English Dictionary, “safety net, n.,” (2011), Galileo.

¹⁶⁹ Mike Konczal, “The Conservative Myth of a Social Safety Net Built on Charity,” *The Atlantic* (March 24, 2014), <http://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2014/03/the-conservative-myth-of-a-social-safety-net-built-on-charity/284552/>.

¹⁷⁰ Stabenow, “The Farm Bill,” online.

may reenforce both the figuration of small farmers as injured bodies and assumptions that even corporate operations need the economic predictability provided by crop insurance subsidies. Moreover, when proffering the necessity of insurance, she poses the entire agricultural sector worthy of concern because of ongoing drought conditions: “The majority of the counties in this country suffering from severe drought, cherry growers in my State being wiped out, other fruit growers having problems — nothing for agriculture.”¹⁷¹ Although Stabenow likely intended to exclude agricultural corporations from the category of deserving recipients, by emphasizing the need for certainty as well as the precarious situation of all agriculture in the contemporary context her speech may have reenforced the virtual grounds from which crop insurance, as a policy that subsidizes all producers, emerged as the hegemonic policy option. In light of ongoing drought conditions and the economic uncertainties inherent in the agricultural economy, then, all farmers could potentially be figured as deserving of support despite Stabenow's pretensions. Emerging through resonances with arguments against Direct Payments, these figurations of crop insurance as a necessary means of providing farmers economic security and promoting healthy bodies subsequently contributed to the increasing hegemony of stylizations of the insured subject at the level of The Public.

Stylizations of Insured Subjects

Crop Insurance and attendant stylizations of farmers anticipating and securing themselves against possible disasters did not emerge simply as a result of resonances within congress alone. They also emerged, in part, because of the resonances between rhetorics of crop insurance and pre-existing virtual stylizations of the insured subject that constituted their context. For Catherine Chaput, attention to the circulation of affective stylizations outside of the immediate rhetorical

¹⁷¹ Stabenow, “The Farm Bill,” online.

context is crucial for understanding the contemporary force of hegemonic social practices: “As a continuous process linking disparate actions, sensations, and events, affect operates within a transsituational and transhistorical structure and energizes our habituated movements as well as our commonsensical beliefs.”¹⁷² To better understand how stylizations of the insured subject became hegemonic, in other words, we should attend to the resonances between the publics and virtual attractors that existed prior to their emergence. Agricultural insurance emerged as a 'common sense' policy, in part, because of its synergy with the intensive anticipation of meteorological threats and the security offered by insurance products. By figuring individuals as anticipating future disasters and securing themselves by purchasing a virtual commodity that offers the intensive pay-offs associated with fully realized products, these discourses stylize subjects as enjoying their participation in the financialization of capital as they exchange labor-power for peace of mind and social benefits offered by insurance policies.

Stylizations of the secured subject have emerged, most notably, in relation to the proliferation and circulation of predictions about catastrophic threats. Contemporary media, from 24-hour news channels, to newspapers, and the internet, inundate audiences with predictions about the looming potentials for disaster. They offer a diverse array of threats that most often remain virtual and do not materialize into catastrophes. As Massumi puts it, “We live in times when what has not happened qualifies as front page news.”¹⁷³ Audiences aren't just offered one looming threat, the future event could come from anywhere at any time. Rather than emanating from any specific place, everything increasingly becomes threatening. Threat is thus

¹⁷² Chaput, “Rhetorical Circulation,” 8.

¹⁷³ Brian Massumi, “The Future Birth of the Affective Fact: The Ontology of Threat” in *The Affect Theory Reader* eds. Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Seigworth (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009), 54

“ambient,”¹⁷⁴ what Massumi calls “a *felt quality*, in much the way that the color red is a quality independent of any particular tint of red, as well as of any actually occurring patch of any particular tint of red.”¹⁷⁵ Subjects feel the force of threats despite their seeming vagueness because their proliferation increasingly produces an autonomous quality of threat. Each threat compounds until its force emanates from everywhere, rendering every possible aspect of our life-world wrought with negative affects. Audiences become inundated with potentialities against which they may seek to insure themselves against.

The increasing prominence of weather predictions, now available 24-hours a day on television and the internet, is becoming a particularly pertinent source of ambient fear insofar as it constitutes one of the primary threats against which farmers, as well as organizations throughout society, seek to insure themselves. Mediated depictions of disasters, such as the 1996 film *Twister* and the 2004 global warming epic *The Day After Tomorrow*, the nearly around-the-clock availability of meteorological reports on the local television and cable news, as well as the emergence of weather applications on cellular phones, are just a few examples of the increasing ubiquity of threat predictions that constitute the weather as an omnipresent source of potential fear. For Toby Miller, this proliferation of meteorological threats has become an important site of stylizing contemporary life.¹⁷⁶ For him, the proliferation of news media reporting about the weather encourages “sensationalism”¹⁷⁷ and “causes unnecessary hysteria”¹⁷⁸ as individuals increasingly micromanage their morning commutes, daily attire, the predicted costs of home renovations, and their use of electronics that could be damaged in the event of a lightning strike,

¹⁷⁴ Massumi, “The Future Birth,” 62.

¹⁷⁵ Massumi, “The Future Birth,” 61-62.

¹⁷⁶ Toby Miller, “Television Weather: Tomorrow Will Be . . . Risky and Disciplined” in *Cultural Citizenship: Cosmopolitanism, Consumerism, and Television in a Neoliberal Age* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2007), 144-176.

¹⁷⁷ Miller, “Television Weather,” 146.

¹⁷⁸ Miller, “Television Weather,” 146.

around the threatening, however unreliable, forecasts. This ambient threat also serves as an economic index, for futures markets, energy conglomerates, and even insurance companies. For farmers, this abstract fear of threatening weather, amplified by new predictive technologies, encourages adaptive practices including the modification of traditional planting patterns, the cultivation of drought resistant plants, as well as the reliance on crop insurance to guard against meteorological catastrophes.¹⁷⁹ Circulating meteorological predictions constitute one source of virtual threats from which stylizations of the insured subject draw their force in becoming hegemonic.

The proliferation of discrete threats and their ambient force alone may be insufficient for these stylizations to surpass the second threshold and become a taken-for-granted phenomenon. Indeed, without the expectation of future threats there would be little reason to insure against their potentialities. Threat's function, according to Massumi, entails this aspect of futurity in its production of fear. As he notes, "Fear is the anticipatory reality in the present of the threatening future. It is the felt reality of the non-existent, looming present as the *affective fact* of the matter."¹⁸⁰ Threat never dissipates and is only "deferred,"¹⁸¹ inviting the anticipation of future threats. The failure of one thunderstorm to materialize does not erase the force of the warnings. They continue to resonate with audiences who become concerned about predicting the potentiality of a catastrophic storm in future instances. The sight of dark clouds actualizes the force of threats that ruminate in the virtual. Similarly, one year of heavy rain is unlikely to ease the anticipation of future droughts as a myriad of genetically modified crops, irrigation techniques, and water supply preservation technologies are adopted as farmers constantly seek to

¹⁷⁹ For example, see: Victoria Wagner Ross, "New Satellite Data Will Help Farmers in Drought" *Examiner.com* (August 19, 2014), <http://www.examiner.com/article/new-satellite-data-will-help-farmers-drought>.

¹⁸⁰ Massumi, "The Future Birth," 54.

¹⁸¹ Massumi, "The Future Birth," 54.

guard against future threats. Through the circulation of threats, subjects are stylized as anticipating the future against which they must insure their security.

The anticipation produced through the circulation of meteorological predications is likely amplified by its resonance with similar affects across the social field. Rather than a discreet force, limited to concerns about the weather, prediction has become a widespread affect that propels numerous regions of the social field. Notably, the life sciences and public health services are largely driven by a disposition to determine the future through the prediction of disease outbreaks and the potential efficacy of new medical technologies. With the popularization of concepts such as biosecurity and biodefense, for example, global health regimes have become increasingly directed toward anticipating the likelihood of a disease mutation or epidemic in particular regions of the world.¹⁸² Similarly, much of the financial economy relies upon the anticipation of future events, both within the economy itself and in the broader environment, as a means of producing value. The recent growth of derivatives markets exemplifies this trend. As a class of assets traded in markets across the globe, derivative investors attempt to calculate the potential prices of goods based on numerous predictions and then purchase assets in anticipation that they may gain value after a specified amount of time. Derivative markets subsequently allow companies to create value and lower their risks by anticipating the possibility that their products will be worth less than predictions when they sell their assets.¹⁸³ Audiences may become directed towards a threatening future as a crucial predicate to their adoption of practices of insurance.

The generalization of anticipation as an affective response to circulating threats invites responses that seek to secure against these predictions of catastrophe. One response to the

¹⁸² Vincanne Adams, Michelle Murphy, and Adele E. Clarke, "Anticipation: Technoscience, Life, Affect, Temporality" *Subjectivity* 28 (2009), 247.

¹⁸³ Jakob Arnoldi, "Derivatives: Virtual Values and Real Risks" *Theory Culture and Society* 21.23 (2004), 23 — 42.

anticipation of threats has been to engage in pre-emptive violence, particularly in the War on Terrorism. However, a far more popular response has been to stylize subjects as insuring themselves against future financial risks through the purchase of a policy that simultaneously assuages their fear and enables their participation in the reproduction of contemporary social relations. Since the late 18th Century, purchasing insurance has served as a response to the fear generated by the anticipation of catastrophe. From fire insurance, an early precursor to the now perfunctory homeowners insurance, to health insurance, life insurance, commercial insurance, auto-insurance, and the recently popularized terrorism insurance, subjects are constantly invited, and sometimes required, to financially insure themselves against future threats. Although many forms of insurance are now required to gain the benefits of contemporary society (such as auto-insurance and health insurance), its benefits in assuaging the force of anticipation remain a crucial part of its allure. As Brian J. Glenn writes, “Insurance gives a peace of mind that few other financial instruments can confer. Yet it does more than just facilitate the good life, insurance also defines the boundaries of it.”¹⁸⁴ By purchasing a policy through the expenditure of capital, in other words, insured subject garner what Antonio Negri has identified as “the power to act”¹⁸⁵ enabled by the value of commodities. The acquisition of insurance plans both assuages subjects' fears of catastrophe and offers them the potential to participate in the reproduction of the social sphere as a full-fledged member of society. They garner this power, which Negri, following Baruch Spinoza, associates with the affective intensities that propel the political economy, through the purchase of insurance alone. Insurance enables subjects to drive cars, own houses, and participate in a myriad of activities that, together, constitute the contemporary social

¹⁸⁴ Brian J. Glenn, “The Shifting Rhetoric of Insurance Denial” *Law and Society Review* 34 (2000), 782.

¹⁸⁵ Antonio Negri, *Value and Affect* trans. Michael Hardt *Boundary 2* 26.2 (1999), 85.

sphere.¹⁸⁶ More than a discrete solution to the problem of anticipation, then, stylizations of insured subjects may function to encourage the reproduction of contemporary social relations.

These stylizations may garner further force from their resonances with the intense allure of insurance plans as realized commodities whose monetized exchange enables subjects to garner positive affective benefits from their participation in the expansion of the financial economy. Although, on face, insurance only embodies a virtual-use value insofar as it protects against the financial losses incurred by probabilistic events, its purchase still embodies what Karl Marx called the “sensuous”¹⁸⁷ aura associated with real goods. Insured subjects may become affectively empowered consumers who, through their exchange of capital for protection from future catastrophes, have purchased a realized good complete with certificates, membership benefits, a myriad of services offered by their insurers, and a sense of security. Moreover, the capital exchanged for these realized manifestations of virtual commodities becomes a crucial part of the virtual economy writ large as the Director of the Federal Insurance Office explains: “insurance is a significant sector in the U.S. economy, providing not only essential asset protection tools for families and businesses, but also serving as a critical participant in the capital markets and financial service industries.”¹⁸⁸ The joy of consumerism embodied by insurance as a real commodity operates to extend the capture of labor-power (here exchanged for virtual products) within what Christian Marazzi calls “the process of extracting and appropriating value

¹⁸⁶ For a discussion of the importance of this network in the production of subjects, particularly as it relates to the allure of insurance discourse, see: Claudia Aradau and Rens van Munster, “Insuring Terrorism, Assuring Subjects, Ensuring Normality: The Politics of Risk after 9/11” *Alternatives* 33 (2008), 191 — 201.

¹⁸⁷ Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy, Volume 1* trans. Ben Fowkes (New York: Penguin Books, 1982), 165.

¹⁸⁸ Michael McRaith, “The Federal Insurance Office’s Report on Modernizing Insurance Regulation,” testimony before the House Financial Services Subcommittee on Housing and Insurance (February 4, 2014), 1, <http://financialservices.house.gov/uploadedfiles/hhrg-113-ba04-wstate-mmcrraith-20140204.pdf>.

over the entire society”¹⁸⁹ embodied by the financial economy, which increasingly expands value through its very circulation and exchange on stock and futures markets. Through the purchase of insurance, in other words, subjects are offered positive affective benefits for their contribution to the further dissociation of capital production from labor-power. It offers them a means of enjoying and participating in the financialization of the economy. In addition to offering assurances against the fear of circulating threats, stylizations of the subject of insurance likely resonate with subjects' desire to participate in the reproduction of society and to buy realized commodities. Together, these intensive resonances likely entreat subjects to exchange their labor-power for participation in the further financialization of the contemporary economy.

Crop Insurance Discourses and the Subject of Insurance

Despite their resonance with several powerful virtual attractors, it is unlikely that stylizations of the subject of insurance within the 2014 farm bill debates, and the subsequent shift from a policy of Direct Payments to one of subsidized crop insurance, emerged *ex nihilo* to become hegemonic. Indeed, they emerged as the taken for granted solution to the problem of Direct Payments, in part, because of virtual resonances between public discourses about crop insurance and these hegemonic stylizations prior to the congressional debates. By showing how crop insurance discourses prior to passage of the farm bill promised a reprieve from the anticipation that threats would materialize to destroy farmer's livelihood and property, this section demonstrates how the new policy passed the second threshold to become a part of the hegemonic public order by resonating with broader stylizations of the subject of insurance. Here, the omnipresence of predictions that weather patterns will threaten crops, and the consequent anticipation that the future will be filled with similar threats, render insurance as an attractive

¹⁸⁹ Marazzi, *Violence of Financial Capital*, 113.

means through which farmers could protect their finances and continue to participate in the reproduction of the social by cultivating crops.

Several years prior to the passage of the Agricultural Act of 2014, farmers and public were inundated with descriptions of, or warnings about, threatening drought conditions. Often accompanied by predictions of an ongoing catastrophe that belied a synergy with discourses of global warming, these circulating threats likely amplified the intensity of everyday meteorological reports. Calling these drought conditions across the American South and Southwest an “unseasonably early and particularly brutal national drought that some say could rival the Dust Bowl days,”¹⁹⁰ the *New York Times* proclaimed that it “could go down as one of the nation's worst”¹⁹¹ dry periods and, perhaps most ominously, that “this dangerous weather pattern could revive in the fall.”¹⁹² Similarly, news stories covering debates about ethanol content requirements for gasoline repeatedly predicted that a flood or drought would be catastrophic for farmers in the American Midwest. One particularly ominous article cites farm economist Steve Myer, who warned of “a widespread drought and crop failure” that could lead to “A 12% drop in corn production, roughly half as large as what happened during a drought in the 1980s, would cut the harvest under 12 billion bushels.”¹⁹³ The article then repeats Myer's assertion that such a catastrophe is nearly inevitable: “We're living on borrowed time from a sometimes-fickle Mother Nature.”¹⁹⁴ A year after this ominous warning, predictions of a drought and a subsequent drop in crop production for the growing season materialized. In August 2012,

¹⁹⁰ Kim Severson and Kirk Johnson, “Drought Spreads Pain From Florida to Arizona,” *The New York Times* (July 12, 2011), *Lexis/Nexis*.

¹⁹¹ Severson and Johnson, “Drought Spreads Pain,” *Lexis/Nexis*.

¹⁹² Severson and Johnson, “Drought Spreads Pain,” *Lexis/Nexis*.

¹⁹³ Philip Brasher, “Tight Grain Supplies Bring Calls to Weaken Ethanol Mandates” *USA Today* (September 19, 2011), *Lexis/Nexis*.

¹⁹⁴ Steve Myer quoted in Philip Brasher, “Tight Grain Supplies Bring Calls to Weaken Ethanol Mandates” *USA Today* (September 19, 2011), *Lexis/Nexis*.

“the US Department of Agriculture slashed its forecast for corn production to 275m tonnes - a 17% reduction on an already-lowered estimate”¹⁹⁵ in response to what London newspaper *The Times* called “America's worst drought in half a century.”¹⁹⁶ With their comparisons to famous historical droughts, predictions of crop failures, and warnings about the unpredictability of weather, these reports likely amplified the power of threats already circulating. The force of everyday meteorological predictions lives may have intensified alongside the amplified levels of certainty about the looming calamities.

Although most of these proclamations do not explicitly mention a culprit for the possibility of long-term drought conditions, they likely synergized with circulating predictions of global climate change. In so doing, they may have brought the force of these predictions of systemic meteorological alterations to bear on the re-stylization of farm policy. For some time, scientists¹⁹⁷ and notable public figures, such as former Vice President Al Gore,¹⁹⁸ have proclaimed the threat posed to agricultural production as a result of rising temperatures and the increasing unpredictability of weather that resulting from climate change. Despite their limited uptake when they were initially circulated, these and similar warnings provided the groundwork for a recent proliferation of threat predictions. In the period between 2009 and 2014, numerous newspaper and magazine articles linked the widespread drought conditions to global warming and predicted that weather patterns would likely only become more severe and unpredictable in

¹⁹⁵ Danny Fortson, “US Corn Bites the Dust in Drought” *The Sunday Times* (August 12, 2012), *Lexis/Nexis*.

¹⁹⁶ Fortson, “US Corn Bites,” *Lexis/Nexis*.

¹⁹⁷ For example, see: D. Deryng, W. J. Sacks, C. C. Barford, and N. Ramankutty, “Simulating the Effects of Climate and Agricultural Management Practices on Global Crop Yield” *Global Biogeochemical Cycles* 25.2 (2011), *Wiley Online Library*.

¹⁹⁸ Gore famously wrote a book and film about climate change. See: Albert Gore, *An Inconvenient Truth: The Planetary Emergency of Global Warming and What We Can Do About It* (Rodale Press: Emmaus, Pennsylvania), 2006.

the ensuing decades.¹⁹⁹ A *Newsweek* article, for example, demonstrates the extent to which these warnings may synergize with the depictions of short-term drought conditions.²⁰⁰ Glibly entitled “The Pasta Crisis,” it echoes references to the Dust-Bowl of the 1930's while amplifying the intensity of threat rhetoric by claiming that “Conventional agriculture is a losing strategy against climate change”²⁰¹ and that the potential temperature increases will be “would be incompatible with civilization as we know it.”²⁰² Systemic weather changes as a result of global climate change, in other words, may render permanent the drought conditions that are portrayed as the more immediate phenomena. Taken together, the circulating predictions of droughts and climate change offer mutually resonating threats of an intensity well beyond the ambient force of day to day meteorological reports. They may, in turn, amplify the fear of crop failures and property loss that already guide contemporary agriculture.

The circulating threats of drought and climate change, much like everyday meteorological reports, produce fearful anticipations and subsequent adoption of new practices among audiences. Unfortunately for farmers, investors in agricultural markets, and governments concerned with feeding their citizens, the intensity of threat produced by these predictions precludes simple alterations, such as wearing a jacket or planting crops the following day in response to a potential thunderstorm. Instead, anticipation of forthcoming weather related catastrophes has spawned widespread debates about the need for more sustainable agricultural practices and the possibility for the adaptation of current practices to the changing atmosphere.

¹⁹⁹ For some examples, see: *The Capital*, “Letters to the Editor” (October 22, 2010), Lexis/Nexis; *The Johnson Pioneer* “Scientists Encourage Citizens To Heed Signs Of Climate Change” (October 25, 2012), Lexis/Nexis; Steven Pearlstein, “For the Farm Lobby, Too Much Is Never Enough” *The Washington Post* (June 26, 2009), Lexis/Nexis; Robert Carlson, “The Time to Create an Effective Climate Policy is Now,” *The Bismarck Tribune* (May 18, 2009), Lexis/Nexis; *Technology Times*, “Climate Change: A Threat to Agriculture” (May 18, 2014), Lexis/Nexis; Mark Hertsgaard, “The Pasta Crisis” *Newsweek* (December 17, 2012), Lexis/Nexis.

²⁰⁰ Hertsgaard, “The Pasta Crisis,” Lexis/Nexis.

²⁰¹ Hertsgaard, “The Pasta Crisis,” Lexis/Nexis.

²⁰² Hertsgaard, “The Pasta Crisis,” Lexis/Nexis.

Taken together, these debates demonstrate how, much like the everyday anticipations of meteorological events, circulating threats to agricultural production have produced practices and discourses about the proper responses to potential catastrophes.

Similar to broader stylizations of the insured subject, this intensification of meteorological threats invited farmers' anticipation of future disasters as investigations into the potential for sustainable and organic agricultural practices to mitigate the effects of global warming have garnered increased attention. The potential for organic farms to absorb excess carbon pollution and continue producing crops during extreme weather conditions, had been the subject of academic debates well before the intensification of meteorological threat discourses.²⁰³ As the threat discourses have intensified, however, these debates have been taken up in the popular media. A *New York Times* article reporting on 2012 debates about the Farm Bill, for instance, makes the case that “the diversified landscapes of organic agriculture”²⁰⁴ could “boost resilience to climate change.”²⁰⁵ Another article in *The Christian Science Monitor* proposes the revival of the Civilian Conservation Corps in order to remedy unemployment while simultaneously reducing “GHG emissions caused by degenerating land (one of the largest sources of America's carbon dioxide emissions).”²⁰⁶ Finally, an earlier article in *The New York Times* proclaims “livestock one of the most serious near-term threats to the global climate”²⁰⁷ because of its methane and carbon production. In so doing, it details the potential for organic livestock as a means of mitigating the threat. These and similar calls for a transition to organic

²⁰³ Adrian Muller and Claude Aubert, “The Potential of Organic Agriculture to Mitigate the Influence of Agriculture on Global Warming—A Review” in *Organic Farming, Prototype for Sustainable Agricultures* eds. Stéphane Bellon and Servane Pervern (New York: Springer, 2014), 239- 260.

²⁰⁴ Mark Hertsgaard, “Harvesting A Climate Disaster” *The New York Times* (September 13, 2012), *Lexis/Nexis*.

²⁰⁵ Hertsgaard, “Harvesting A Climate Disaster,” *Lexis/Nexis*.

²⁰⁶ Steven Apfelbaum, “Dirty Jobs: The Key to America's Economic and Environmental Renewal” *The Christian Science Monitor* (September 20, 2010), *Lexis/Nexis*.

²⁰⁷ Leslie Kaufman, “Greening The Herds: A New Diet To Cap Gas” *The New York Times* (June 5, 2009), *Lexis/Nexis*.

agriculture, which are often mundane and outside of public contestation, evidence the intensity of public anticipation of meteorological threats to the food supply. Yet, the attention to organic farming as a potential mitigant to the threat of global warming portends growing anticipation of its negative effects.

In addition to the calls for the adoption of organic agriculture, public speculation about the potential for industrial agricultural practices to be adapted to the changing conditions has intensified as a result of ongoing drought conditions as well as the circulation of global warming discourses. *The Gazette* from Eastern Iowa, for instance, recently detailed how “some farmers are looking to soil-conservation practices to revive their drought-stricken fields and pastures.”²⁰⁸ *The San Francisco Chronicle* also recently proclaimed that farmers will have to increasingly “do more to adapt to what many experts fear will be a more drought-prone environment.”²⁰⁹ Similarly, a *Washington Post* article that warns of eventual crop losses as a result of climate change typifies widespread discussions of the potential for “adjusting planting schedules or moving to cooler locales”²¹⁰ in regions most affected by the new weather patterns. *The Huffington Post* also points out that farmers have started to adapt to changes as a result of global warming “with a new generation of hardier animals and plants specially engineered to survive, and even thrive, in intense heat, with little rain.”²¹¹ Although they may not express intense fears often produced by the threat of tornadoes, floods, and hurricanes, circulating calls for adaptation

²⁰⁸ The Gazette, “Eastern Iowa Seed Retailers Looking Past the Drought of 2012” (May 5, 2013), <http://thegazette.com/2013/05/05/local-seed-retailers-looking-past-the-drought-of-2012/#sthash.RNW6rM7Q.dpuf>.

²⁰⁹ Carolyn Lochhead, “California’s Drought-Prone Pattern Forcing Farmers to Adapt” *The San Francisco Chronicle* (March 5, 2014), <http://www.sfgate.com/science/article/California-s-drought-prone-pattern-forcing-5300681.php#page-1>.

²¹⁰ Brian Vastag and Juliet Eilperin, “Report: Climate Change is Hurting Crops” *The Washington Post* (May 6, 2011), *Lexis/Nexis*.

²¹¹ David Pitt, “Agricultural Adaptation To Climate Change Sought By Farmers” *The Huffington Post* (October 8, 2012), http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/08/10/agriculture-climate-change_n_1757026.html.

to climate change or the adoption of organic agriculture portend growing concerns about uncertain weather conditions. In so doing, they point to how stylizations of the insured subject, posed as crucial to preserving the economic productivity of the agricultural sector in the event of a disaster, may intensely resonate with farmers as well as the public writ large.

By proffering a means of securing the livelihoods and property of those anticipating meteorological catastrophes, public discourses of agricultural disaster insurance likely synergized with stylizations of the subject of insurance as it emerged as the dominant means of subsidizing farmers. One of the most widely circulated depictions of crop insurance figured it as an essential means of offering farmers a relief from the threats that drought and global warming pose to their lifestyle. Exemplifying this strategy, an article in *The Bismarck Tribune* calls crop insurance “critical”²¹² for start-up farmers because “It’s about managing exposure and risk.”²¹³ The article then extends its claim that crop insurance would allow farmers security by noting that: “Crop insurance gives those willing to take the risk of starting up a farming operation a degree of protection.”²¹⁴ Much like its auto or homeowners analogs, crop insurance is posed as a crucial mechanism of providing assurance against threats. It leaves farmers free to continue “feeding ourselves as a country.”²¹⁵ A similar article in the *The State Journal- Register* from Springfield, Illinois stylizes crop insurance as an assurance against the affective force and psychological effects of meteorological threats. Crop failure, according to the article, makes farmers “sad” as they “take crop losses personally.”²¹⁶ Yet, crop insurance “allowed them to put their worries on the back burner and focus on what they could do right then to make things

²¹² *The Bismarck Tribune*, “Don’t Take Crop Insurance Over the Cliff” (December 20, 2012), *Lexis/Nexis*.

²¹³ *The Bismarck Tribune*, “Don’t Take Crop Insurance,” *Lexis/Nexis*.

²¹⁴ *The Bismarck Tribune*, “Don’t Take Crop Insurance,” *Lexis/Nexis*.

²¹⁵ *The Bismarck Tribune*, “Don’t Take Crop Insurance,” *Lexis/Nexis*.

²¹⁶ Tim Tothoroh, “Crop Insurance Helped Make this Year’s Bounty Possible” *The State Journal- Register* (September 12, 2013), *Lexis/Nexis*.

better.”²¹⁷ Further highlighting its role in providing confidence, the article also claims that “Farmers who last year appeared shell-shocked are hopeful and optimistic”²¹⁸ because crop insurance provides “a backstop when Mother Nature pulls the rug out from under them.”²¹⁹ Here, insurance is explicitly figured as a means of alleviating the force of threats. The shock resulting from previous disasters and the anticipation of threats, as well as the depictions of relief, likely synergize with popular stylizations of the subject of insurance as experiencing relief as a result of being insured. It also provides a means of participating in society by providing the certainty necessary for them to produce food without concerns about risk of financial loss. Agricultural disaster assistance is stylized as a necessary means of alleviating the felt-force of threats to the continuity of everyday life, likely amplifying its resonances with the hegemonic subject of insurance.

These resonances are potentially also intensified by circulating discourses about the value of crops that will be lost with the materialization of a long-term drought or permanent climate change. In addition to its role as a part of the force of meteorological threats, the allure of crops as commodities likely resonates with the affectively imbued network of property relations that underwrites much of contemporary society. One particularly popular means of figuring crops as commodities in discussions of crop insurance is the repeated reminder of the economic costs of previous disasters. For instance, *The Daily Oklahoman* noted that “A catastrophic dry period in 1988 cost farmers \$78 billion,”²²⁰ *The Valley Morning Star* claimed that “the Federal Crop

²¹⁷ Totheroh, “Crop Insurance Helped Make,” *Lexis/Nexis*.

²¹⁸ Totheroh, “Crop Insurance Helped Make,” *Lexis/Nexis*.

²¹⁹ Totheroh, “Crop Insurance Helped Make,” *Lexis/Nexis*.

²²⁰ *The Daily Oklahoman*, “Row Crops: Farmers Face Disaster for 2 Straight Years” (August 22, 2012), *Lexis/Nexis*.

Insurance Program to pay out a record-breaking \$17.3 billion for crop losses last year,”²²¹ a total that made the growing season “the worst for farmers since 2006,”²²² while *The Bismarck Tribune* called the weather “the most severe and extensive in 25 years”²²³ while reporting that “In drought-laden 2012, indemnities paid to farmers totaled almost \$17 billion.”²²⁴ Although each of these comparisons differed in their historical assessment of the ongoing drought, their proliferation may amplify the felt magnitude of the losses. Not only are the losses quantitatively overwhelming, their historical significance likely emphasizes their value relative to the agricultural sector itself. These comparisons may subsequently resonate with the affective allure of economic value as a force within society insofar as they provide an essential context for audiences to measure their importance.

Another widely circulated strategy that likely resonates with the affective force of value is the repeated emphasis on the role of crop insurance within an entire network of economic activities. Within such discussions, crop production becomes figured within the broader system of value production and begins to garner a force in excess of a mere commodity. An article in *Agweek* engages in this strategy by indicating that insurance contracts “give lenders the confidence to finance crop production,”²²⁵ an activity that is “built into the economic system — land values, multi-year rental contracts and equipment investments.”²²⁶ Similarly, the *Iowa Farmer Today* declared that “Any claim paid to a farmer or rancher will create dollars that can be used to cover operating loans from their bank, to pay for fuel, crop and machinery costs — all

²²¹ *Valley Morning Star*, “Groups Urge ‘Low-Risk,’ Water-Smart Farming in Valley” (September 1, 2013), *Lexis/Nexis*.

²²² *Valley Morning Star*, “Groups Urge ‘Low-Risk,’” *Lexis/Nexis*.

²²³ Woddy Barth, “Opinion” *The Bismarck Tribune* (June 27, 2013), *Lexis/Nexis*.

²²⁴ Barth, “Opinion,” *Lexis/Nexis*.

²²⁵ Mikkel Pates, “Crop Insurance” *Agweek* (August 20, 2012), *Lexis/Nexis*.

²²⁶ Pates, “Crop Insurance,” *Lexis/Nexis*.

of which flow through the economies of our countries small towns and rural communities.”²²⁷ By figuring crop production as an important practice within the economy, these statements may amplify the force of threats by positioning it as the potential downfall of a potential the network of commodity-values that underwrite contemporary dispositions towards private property. Rather than a means of preventing the loss of livelihoods for a limited number of people, crop insurance becomes a crucial means of preserving that network. These resonances may also be amplified by the myriad of repetitions of the phrase “farm economy” as a mass noun that describes farms and all economic interactions to which they are metonymically connected. A *Roll Call* story about the overall effects of crop insurance performs this strategy by claiming that “the overall farm economy has recently been a bright spot in the U.S. economy”²²⁸ *The Washington Post* explains that although “It’s too early in the season to assess the full impact on the local farm economy,”²²⁹ in the event of catastrophic drought conditions “farmers only recoup a percentage of their losses if they have crop insurance.”²³⁰ Similarly, *The Norfolk Daily News* proclaimed that “Crop insurance has been a factor in keeping the farm economy healthy for the past five years.”²³¹ Here, this mass noun works to situate the individual farmers, who are often the subject of news stories, amidst an entire set of economic relations. These relations, although unspecified, likely garner a force from their collective value that resonates more intensely with audiences than the losses to farmers alone. Taken together, these discourses of agricultural disaster assistance likely

²²⁷ John C. Thaemert, “Crop Insurance Most-Important Aspect of New Federal Farm Bill” *Iowa Farmer Today* (November 3, 2011), http://www.iowafarmertoday.com/news/opinion/crop-insurance-most-important-aspect-of-new-federal-farm-bill/article_20fcb7d0-063a-11e1-bde5-001cc4c002e0.html.

²²⁸ Jon Scholl, Garry Niemeyer and Chandler Goule, “Reform Farm Policy, but Keep Safety Net” *Roll Call* (October 27, 2011), *Lexis/Nexis*.

²²⁹ Zoe Tillman, “Farmers Suffer as Heat, Dryness ‘Zap Everything’” *The Washington Post* (July 29, 2010), *Lexis/Nexis*.

²³⁰ Tillman, “Farmers Suffer as Heat,” *Lexis/Nexis*.

²³¹ Steve Jordon, “Crop Insurance Payments, High Grain Prices are Set to Boost Farm Income” *Norfolk Daily News* (September 16, 2012), http://norfolkdailynews.com/news/crop-insurance-payments-high-grain-prices-are-set-to-boost/article_7beff774-0021-11e2-a4e7-001a4bcf6878.html?mode=jqm.

emerged through their intense resonances with stylizations of the insured subject, as they offer a means of assuring farmers of their way of life and the protection of private property more generally in the face of the anticipation of meteorological disasters.

Conclusions

The shift to crop insurance as the predominant strategy of farm subsidization in the Agricultural Act of 2014 emerged as a result of complex interactions between sometimes conflicting stylizations of contemporary economic relations and social life. Within the congressional debates, competing stylizations of farmers as rugged individuals and the public as fit bodies simultaneously contributed to the demise of Direct Payments and established the virtual grounds with which calls for crop insurance resonated. Yet, without the resonances between discourses of agricultural disaster assistance and the prior stylizations subject of insurance within the broader public, the policy would have likely remained one of many possible options rather than becoming the taken-for-granted means of subsidization. Indeed, in order to understand why crop insurance, and not another policy, emerged as an alternative to Direct Payments, we must look to its resonances with hegemonic stylizations within the broader public.

The interrogation of crop insurance discourses throughout this chapter expands our disciplinary understanding of the relationships between rhetorical style and the financial economy. It extends G. Thomas Goodnight and Sandy Green's observation that contemporary financial economies work through the stylization of particular forms of behavior by showing how insurance discourses encourage individuals and governments to make economic investments as a means of insuring against property loss, assuaging their anticipation of potential

catastrophes, and enabling their participation in the reproduction of contemporary society.²³² As 177
part of the overall trend towards the financialization of the economy, these stylizations expand the consolidation of capital in trading markets by rendering the virtual good of protection from future disasters as a realized commodity that invites subjects to enjoy the exchange of labor-power for the benefits of their insurance plans. The capital supplied by insured subjects, in other words, provides insurance companies the means to further profit through the growing commodification of risks on the future markets that, themselves, are a crucial part of the hegemony of the abstract affect of anticipation in contemporary society. Further attention to the interactions between styles and the financial economy may subsequently help expand our understanding of the complex relationships between rhetoric and the changing conditions of modern capitalism that have occupied our discipline for some time.

In addition to its contributions to discussions of the nexus between style and financial capitalism, this chapter has pointed to a map that may provide a better understanding of the role of rhetoric in social change. Rather than relying on linear or determinative models of change that attribute monolithic agency to rhetors, directly related material conditions or ideologies, or singular pre-conscious structures, scholars should attend to the contingent interaction of all of these factors. This essay proposed that social change occurs through a three step process. First, the population of possible styles, or intensities, emerge into contemporary discourses at the level of publics. In the second movement, circulating styles resonate with virtual dispositions within the broader public with greater or lesser intensity. Finally, those styles that resonate with sufficient intensity become hegemonic. They become taken-for-granted styles that guide the normative modes of behavior in public life. Social change occurs, then, through a complex,

²³² G. Thomas Goodnight and Sandy Green "Rhetoric, Risk, and Markets: The Dot-Com Bubble" *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 96.2 (2010), 115-140.

dynamic, contingent, and multi-level process that exceeds the possible explanatory power of previous models.

In reviving the role of complex and contingent processes in the production of hegemony, this chapter invites scholars, activists, and political commentators to attend to the possibility that social change might emerge from unexpected and sometimes counter-intuitive places. The increasing untenability of Direct Payments, along with the interaction of stylizations in the congressional debates, opened emergence for a previously unanticipated change in policy because of the interactions between the hegemonic stylization of the insured subject and the discourses of agricultural disaster assistance. Although this change has been recognized retroactively, it nevertheless opens the possibility for observers to begin the work of mapping emergent styles and the potential to become hegemonic in other areas. If, indeed, rhetorical practice is about *kairotic* inventions, then activists and scholars alike should attend to the ways in which stylizations synergize with the virtual and the potential openings when these interactions might garner the most intensity.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION: A SPECULATIVE MATERIAL RHETORIC AND THE POTENTIALITY OF ALTERNATIVE FOOD ECONOMIES

Cultural stylizations of food and farming, as this dissertation project attests, have much to teach us about both rhetorical theory and our contemporary socio-economic conditions. Each chapter has addressed a particular question in rhetorical theory, from the status of the canon of style as a particular affective disposition (chapter 2), to the process through which ideological power is reproduced (chapter 3), as well as the composition of rhetorical situations (chapter 4). Taken together they also trace a map of our contemporary conditions as a fractured amalgam composed of the economic and social discourses of classical liberalism qua the frontier style (chapter 2), the entwinement of neoliberalism and militarism (chapter 3), as well as emergent figurations of the financialized economy (chapter 4). In addition to offering these methodological and substantive insights, they constitute a plan for a rhetorical studies that speculates about how particular rhetorics might alter the food economies, and ultimately the multiplicity of capitalisms, within our current conditions.

In this concluding chapter, I attempt to trace a map of this plan that seeks to set rhetorical studies on a trajectory towards participation in the circulation of alternative rhetorics that might bring forth alternative food economies. I do so through the development of three interlocking proposals. First, I propose a mode of materialist rhetorical scholarship that focuses on speculations about the potentialities engendered by rhetoric as a material object. Such a mode of

scholarship, I argue, might provide a crucial means of navigating the epistemological skepticism that continues to pervade our discipline in the wake of the linguistic and psychoanalytic turns. Then, I show how this dissertation project, under the guise of this speculative scholarship, has called for a reconsideration of how rhetorical studies tends to address capitalism as a monolithic discourse that works at the level of ideology. Finally, I show how the previous proposals might provide the grounds for the emergence of scholarship that focuses on circulating and offering improvements on alternative food economies that might emerge to challenge the hegemonic modes of production and distribution. I speculate that these economies might be grounded in the amplification of collective forms of democracy rather than being guided by the axioms of efficiency and profit that ground the current ways in which our food is grown and distributed. Taken together, it is my hope that these proposals might provide the grounds for the emergence of rhetorical scholarship focused on challenging corporate capitalism's grip on the food chain from which most people garner sustenance.

A Speculative Material Rhetoric

Each chapter within this dissertation project forwards a perspective about the ontology of rhetorical style. Or, more specifically, each chapter meditates on topics in rhetorical theory from the perspective of a speculative materialism that inquires about the capacities of figures, territories, and other rhetorical forms, as important parts of our social and metaphysical universes. Characterized by an emphasis on the role of non-human forces in constituting audiences, an attention to the homologies between the processes of rhetoric and those that constitute other objects, as well as a speculative mode of engagement with the world, this species of rhetorical materialism calls for an interrogation of the virtual as a means of escaping the

epistemological dilemmas posed by our discipline's linguistic turn. In so doing, it offers the means through which we might speculate about the possibilities for a rhetorical criticism of contemporary capitalisms as well as the potentialities for alternative food economies.

Throughout this project, speculations about the role of material forces in, as well as their homological relationships to, the force of style play an important role in understanding rhetoric's functions, as well as its relationships to the broader world of objects. Notably, each chapter explicates further our understandings of rhetoric's material force, its potential to affect bodies in a manner that exceeds the boundaries of the human subject. These inquiries, which interrogate the potential of repetition as a means of producing the subject (chapter 2), the process of capture through which logics of neoliberalism and militarism modulate intensities in a manner that reenforces American national power (chapter 3), and the role of circulating virtualities in the emergence of hegemonies (chapter 4), attest to how “the capacity for affecting and being affected”¹ resides in the virtual, rather than being the property of individual subjects. A speculative materialism, then, attends to rhetoric's “thing-power,” what Jane Bennett describes as “the strange ability of ordinary, [hu]man-made items to exceed their status as objects and to manifest traces of independence or aliveness, constituting the outside of our own experience.”² Although rhetoric, as well as the logics and apparatuses of power, issue from humans, their effectivities exceed the limited intents with which they were crafted. *Pioneer Woman* may be crafted simply as a cooking and lifestyle blog. Yet, it emerges as a broader assemblage of forces working to re-constitute a traditional liberal society. Similarly, Let's Move's exhortations to exercise and eat well take on new life when they interact with the contemporary contexts of militarism and neoliberal capitalism. By attending to rhetoric's “thing-power,” and taking

¹ Gilles Deleuze, *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy* (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1988), 123.

² Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), xvi.

seriously our discipline's claim to take it as an object of study, speculative materialism seeks to undermine long-held assumptions about rhetoric as the providence of human intention.

Wrestling style from the jaws of human intent provides grounds for speculative materialism to situate our discipline's object as a part of the broader metaphysical universe by tracing the homologies, or structural similarities, between the functions of rhetoric and those of similar processes. The fourth chapter, for instance, traces the structural similarities between the emergence of hegemonic styles, the constitution of regularities among species through natural selection, and the emergence of geological formations. Although there are slight differences in each, their similarities point to an understanding of the virtual, of a common set of structuring processes from which the actual becomes concrete. Tracing these similarities builds on the disposition towards situating rhetoric as an object among many by showing how its emergence shows us something about the virtual world. Indeed, as Manuel Delanda points out, "once we have revealed the intensive process behind a product we still need to continue our ascent towards the virtual structures that can only be glimpsed in that process but which explain its regularities."³ By showing how our understandings of rhetoric converge with theories of evolution and geo-physics, in other words, a speculative materialism might be able to show how our discipline's work points to broader metaphysical propositions about the nature of the virtual. In so doing, we might open a new world of speculation about the nature of our object as well as the world writ large.

The final characteristic of speculative materialism is its divergence from the seeming certitude of historicisms and reductionist realisms through an emphasis on speculation about the nature of the virtual as a mode of engagement with rhetoric. While this characteristic is implied

³ Manuel Delanda, *Intensive Science and Virtual Philosophy* (New York: Continuum, 2002), 68-69

by the previous two, their discussions about tracing objects and processes invites the impression that this dissertation project constitutes an enterprise of naïve realism or scientific reductionism that seeks to know the world with absolute certainty. However, such an impression misses that this engagement with the virtual emphasizes what Delanda calls the “tendencies and capacities”⁴ of an object in addition to their definable characteristics. Speculating about the possibility for bodies to affect and be affected by rhetoric, as well as rhetoric's similar potentialities, strays from the realist impulse to define objects simply by their identifiable existence, towards an attention to what they *may become*. Additionally, unlike many reductionist approaches, speculative materialism's focus on the world of potentialities invites an engagement with virtual entities, those things that might exist now or may emerge in the future. As Delanda puts it, “Whereas properties are always actual, capacities and tendencies can be real without being actual.”⁵ Although *Pioneer Woman* exists as a show with a series of defining characteristics, it is uncertain whether it will affect dispositions towards social separation, the gendered division of domestic space, or an intensive attraction towards the idea that the United States writ large is a frontier. What we do know, however, is that these effectivities constitute an immanent capacity of the franchise, particularly when it circulates in particular contexts. This emphasis on the tendencies and capacities of objects, including rhetoric, may modulate contemporary dispositions towards epistemological skepticism that pervade contemporary rhetorical studies.

Indeed, the upshot of a speculative materialism is that it inquires about the potentialities of things, rather than attempting to identify the objects themselves, a distinction that it may help to circumvent some persuasive criticisms of the epistemology of metaphysics issued by

⁴ Manuel Delanda, “Ontological Commitments” *Speculations IV: Speculations: A Journal of Speculative Realism* (June, 2013), 71.

⁵ Delanda, “Ontological Commitments,” 71.

contemporary advocates of the linguistic, deconstructive, and psychoanalytic, turns in rhetorical studies. Joshua Gunn, for instance, posits that the emergent school of Object Oriented Ontology is motivated by a “drive toward mastery” of the things they purport to encounter and describe. Although Gunn acknowledges the importance of the implicit ethical demand to respect the singularity of objects at work in many of these ontological inquiries, he concludes that they cannot ever escape the mediating power of language which prevents humans from ever inquiring objects in themselves. While many philosophies that self-consciously adopt the label Object Oriented Ontology certainly fail to sufficiently account for the mediating power of language, speculative materialism does not seek to know things in themselves. Instead, it establishes speculation about possible occurrences as the grounds for a type of rhetorical inquiry that asks about what might emerge within the symbolic world. This type of speculation, as Delanda points out, is necessary for any inquiry that seeks to posit the existence of the world itself: “There is simply no way to specify the contents of an autonomous world without speculating, since this world may contain beings that are too small or too large, and becomings that are too fast or too slow, to be directly observed.”⁶ In short, speculation about the possibilities engendered by rhetoric qua object may be one of the few tenable grounds for inquiry into the production and modulation of audiences in light of Gunn's rightly placed concerns about the impossibility of escaping the limits of human perception. This dissertation project has subsequently traced a map of the potentiality for this speculative materialism, a mode of rhetorical inquiry that speculates about how the affective force of rhetoric both modulates audiences and points to a map of the virtual processes that constitute the actual. In so doing, it may ground novel theorizations of

⁶ Delanda, “Ontological Commitments,” 71.

contemporary capitalism as well as speculations for the possibilities for the emergence of alternative economies.

Rhetorics of Capitalism at the Interstices

Taken together, these essays use this speculative materialism to trace a map of how the fragmentary and transitional stylizations of economic relationality at the beginning of the twenty-first century emerge in discourses about food, farming, and fitness. They posit that while the logics of classical liberalism and neo-liberalism still play important roles in the formulation of economic and social relations in the United States, the financial economy is fast becoming a hegemonic force throughout society. This complex map of contemporary society subsequently invites a reorientation of the rhetorical study of capitalism towards interrogating the multi-layered, disparate, and changing forces that contribute to our social composition. This scholarship, then, might begin to develop a sensitivity to the multiple forces at play in the composition of texts, expand the interrogation of the nexus between affect and the expansion of economic logics in everyday life, and finally work to broaden our disciplinary interrogation of contemporary capitalism from the often singular focus on neoliberalism. These potential avenues of interrogation for rhetorical critiques of capitalism may, as I argue, provide a necessary precondition for tracing maps of possible alternative economies.

Perhaps paradoxically, one of the themes that unites each of this dissertation's case studies is an emphasis on how scholars should attend, with precision, to the fractured and disparate economic discourses that comprise our contemporary conditions. Together they posit that the hegemonic discourses of liberalism, neoliberalism, and the financial economy comprise a mutually resonant map that is always fluctuating. While the frontier style, as exemplified by

Pioneer Woman (Chapter 2), proffers a mode of relationality characteristic of classical liberalism insofar as it is characterized by the social separation and individualism, *Let's Move* (Chapter 3) reenforces neoliberal subjectivization insofar as it encourages audiences to take responsibility for their own health qua economic futures, a stylization that may also resonate with contemporary discourses of militarism. The final case study of the 2014 farm bill (Chapter 4) then shows how these stylizations likely provide the virtual substrates for the emergence of stylizations of the insured subject as a part of the growing hegemony of the financial economy. As a whole, then, they demonstrate the need for rhetorical scholars to, as Lawrence Grossberg puts it: “see the complexity and multiplicity of economies, rather than reducing the field to a singular 'the economy,' which is in turn often identified with a singular notion of capitalism.”⁷ That is not to say that a critique of capitalism, in which this project takes part, is problematic in itself. Rather, that rhetorical scholars should increase the precision with which they outline the discourses and other material forces that provided for the emergence of their objects. Capitalism is a fractured and complex amalgam of discourses with often contradictory effects. Attending to the particular conditions of texts' emergence offers one means of speculating about the possibilities for the emergence of alternative economies that resonate with the affective substrates that constitute everyday life.

This project's engagements with how the multiple logics that constitute contemporary capitalism modulate the intensities from which everyday life may, then, offer an additional itinerary for rhetorical scholarship. Whether through an attention to stylizations of liberal subjects living on the frontier (Chapter 2), the capture of intensive dispositions towards personal fitness (Chapter 3), or through figurations of the insured subject (Chapter 4), each case study

⁷ Grossberg, *Cultural Studies*, 102.

traces how audiences' affective capacities are increasingly modulated in ways that are amenable to particular economic discourses. In so doing, they follow up on the works of scholars such as Grossberg and David Johnson Thornton⁸ who call our attention to the role that the modulation of affect has in reinforcing practices that resonate with these hegemonic logics. From the reinforcement of particular child-rearing techniques designed to improve children's human capital, to the dominance of popular anxieties over crime that authorize the policing of the inner city, nearly every aspect of everyday life is increasingly dominated by capitalist logics that, for Brian Massumi, "can grasp matter at its point of emergence from the virtual,"⁹ at the level of the body and everyday habits. Rhetorical scholars might then benefit from broadening their attention from the seemingly mundane texts that stylize subjects in a manner amenable to the reinforcement of habits and modes of affiliation amenable to contemporary capitalisms. Such a move might work to expand our map of the current conditions beyond a mere attention to the circulation of affects within apparatuses of power while simultaneously calling further engagement with the multiplicity of logics at work in daily life.

Interrogations of the intensive powers of the multiplicity of capitalisms invite a modulation of our current disciplinary obsession with neoliberalism as a singular discourse, calling instead for an attention to the particularities of context and the specificity of the economic logics with which texts interact. To say that rhetorical studies is obsessed with the discourse of neoliberalism, often used as a monolithic stand-in for capitalism more generally, might be an understatement. From studies of neoliberalism as a determining factor in the processes of circulation, to its role in rhetorics of identity, to even studies about the extent to which public

⁸ "Neuroscience, Affect and the Entrepreneurialization of Motherhood." *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies*, 8(4), 2011, 399-424.

⁹ Massumi, *A User's Guide*, 134.

address has come to reflect its seeming envelopment of all contexts, rhetorical scholarship about this economic logic seems to be increasingly pervasive in our journals and books. Although much of this work addresses the rhetoric of neoliberalism as a specific discourse, as does my analysis of *Let's Move*, the tendency to reduce capitalism writ large to this singular discourse nevertheless persists throughout contemporary rhetorical analysis. This dissertation project simultaneously incorporates many of the important insights of these works while tracing a map of the possibilities for attending to how intensities become modulated by a myriad of socio-economic discourses. Indeed, it shows how neoliberalism operates simultaneously with militaristic discourses (Chapter 3), as well as classical liberalism (Chapter 2), and the emergent financial economy (Chapter 4). In so doing, it points to how rhetorical scholars might proceed in showing a more detailed and precise image of texts and their conditions of emergence. Such a task, which implies an attention to the multiplicity of really existing economic logics and their potential to modulate virtual intensities, may provide the grounds from which we might begin to identify alternative economies that might emerge to reshape our collective modes of affiliation.

The Possibility of Alternative Food Economies

This dissertation project's attention to stylizations of food and farming, as an enterprise of both expanding contemporary materialist theories of rhetoric and interrogating the complexities of our current conditions, points, in no small part, to the necessity of tracing a map of the virtual possibilities for alternative food economies. Indeed, tracing a map of the rhetorical figurations of alternative food economies would seek to identify the possible alternatives to the hegemonic stylizations of farmers as rugged pioneers, bodies as unfit or otherwise needing to take charge of their fitness, and industrial agricultural corporations as in need of publicly subsidized insurance.

Although such alternatives may be problematic in their own right, and are unlikely to completely escape some of these stylizations that have dominated the public for so long, this project of mapping might provide one means of activating what Matthew S. May calls “the living and active forces of mutual aid and cooperation”¹⁰ through which we might “create a world beyond capitalism.”¹¹ Such a process might attend to amplifying the affective potentialities of healthy food consumption, and identify rhetorics that promise the expansion of joyful, as well as more democratic, modalities of food distribution. These potentialities can be found, I argue, in the emergence of rhetorical campaigns by cooperative grocers that emphasize local food production. I conclude that the process of tracing similar alternative rhetorics might be one means of positioning rhetorical studies as a crucial part of the actualization of new democratic futures.

Although our contemporary food systems are, for the most part, dominated by unsustainable forms of production and corporate modes of distribution, the possibilities for different modes of affiliation around, and interaction with, food already reside in the virtual. Indeed, the first two case studies point to affective potentials that remain immanent to food itself, as a source of health and sensation, as well as food consumption and preparation as a cultural practice. By proffering alternative modes of food production, such as gardening in schools and communities, as well as emphasizing the taste and nutritional power of fruits and vegetables, Let's Move demonstrates that further possibilities for alternative rhetorics of food and farming may yet reside in the virtual, waiting to be selected. Similarly, *Pioneer Woman* points to the possibilities for cultural food traditions, as well as food cultures more generally, to become the grounds for rhetorics that encourage widespread stylizations of particular forms of affiliation. As

¹⁰ Matthew S. May, “Spinoza and Class Struggle,” *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 6.2 (June 2009), 206.

¹¹ May, “Spinoza and Class Struggle,” 206.

Michael Pollan suggests, the contemporary corporatization and industrialization of our diet invites us to forget that “Food is ... about pleasure, about community, about family and spirituality, about our relationship to the natural world, and about expressing our identity.”¹² Insofar as food is about more than simple sustenance, potentialities remain that might yet emerge to reshape our contemporary cultures and economies. Re-figuring food, and food cultures, might subsequently provide one means of modulating our broader modes of economic and cultural affiliation.

Although the case studies in this dissertation project point to the rhetorical potentialities immanent to food, some of which might contribute to modulating our contemporary conditions, the texts themselves are likely counterproductive to the goal of formulating more democratic food economies. Indeed, any alternative rhetoric that hopes to accomplish this difficult task must emphasize a politics of joy as the basis for affiliation, rather than social separation and individualism, as well as democratic modes of food production and distribution, as opposed to the tacit acceptance of corporate control of agriculture. Joy, or what Baruch Spinoza calls “that *passion by which the mind passes to a greater perfection*,”¹³ is immanent to, and perhaps the driving force, behind the practices of food consumption. Even when food is consumed for mere sustenance, it amplifies the potentialities of a body through its nutritional value. Understanding joy as a “primary”¹⁴ affect that amplifies our “power of acting”¹⁵ and propels the body and mind towards feelings of pleasure, moreover, highlights the cultural and affiliational aspects of food that exceed its power to simply sustain life. Taste, or the qualitative pleasure derived from food,

¹² Michael Pollan, *In Defense of Food: An Eater's Manifesto* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2008), 8.

¹³ Benidict de Spinoza, *A Spinoza Reader: The Ethics and Other Works* Ed. and trans. Edwin Curley (Princeton:Princeton University Press, 1994), 149.

¹⁴ Spinoza, *A Spinoza Reader*, 169.

¹⁵ Spinoza, *A Spinoza Reader*, 169.

exceeds the carnal judgment of our satisfaction with the skill of the cook. As *Pioneer Woman* attests, whole cultures develop around taste. An alternative rhetoric of food might, then, seek to emphasize collective modes of production, distribution, and consumption, that amplify our collective joy. This emphasis would take advantage of what Deleuze calls the “dynamic”¹⁶ property of bodies. For Deleuze, who follows Spinoza, bodies' power to affect and be affected necessarily involves a relationality to others that may amplify the potential for joy within a given body. We might subsequently seek a rhetoric of food that emphasizes not only its taste in the carnal sense, but also its power to encourage cooperative forms of affiliation that amplify our collective joy.

A rhetoric of collective joy that seeks to reformulate our contemporary food economies and modes of affiliation, moreover, would necessarily emphasize the expansion of democratic control of production and distribution. It would stray from the tendency in contemporary society to consolidate these practices under the power of a few agricultural corporations and grocery chains. For Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, the Spinozist concept of joy forms the basis of their political theory of happiness that focuses on the expansion of democratic rule as a part of the process of freeing our affective potentialities from contemporary system of capture.

According to them:

Happiness is not a state of satisfaction that quells activity, but rather, a spur to desire, a mechanism for increasing and amplifying what we want and what we can do. Humans, of course, are not born with fully developed capacities to govern ourselves, to resolve conflicts, to form lasting, felicitous relationships, but we do all have the potential for all

¹⁶ Gilles Deleuze, “Spinoza and Us” in *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy* trans. Robert Hurley (San Francisco:City Lights Books, 1988), 122-130.

that. Finally, then, happiness is the process of developing our capacities of democratic decision making and training ourselves in self-rule.¹⁷

Turning toward a rhetoric of joy in the context of food, in other words, is one means of encouraging the expansion of cooperative farming and food distribution. It would seek to amplify the importance of democratic food cultures that, while building on the styles and concerns about health that drive *Pioneer Woman* and Let's Move, would place the utmost emphasis on social belonging and the democratization of labor power. Such a rhetoric might reach, then, toward actualizing the virtual possibilities for what Ronald Walter Greene has called “the immanence of democratic becoming.”¹⁸

“Stronger Together,” a campaign for the National Cooperative Grocers Association, is an example of a rhetoric that might point to the possibilities for alternative figurations that emphasize local food, self governance, and a more democratic economy. Composed of a few videos of moving infographics, as well as an informative website, the campaign seeks to increase the visibility of grocery cooperatives by posing them as more sustainable alternatives that provide better, and more environmentally friendly, food. According to the campaign, “co-ops are owned and governed by member-shoppers and rooted in principles like community, voluntary and open membership, economic participation and cooperation. Because of these principles and practices, food co-ops inherently serve and benefit the communities where they are located.”¹⁹ It evidences this claim by pointing to the proclivity of cooperative grocers to stock locally sourced, fresh, and organic, or “Healthy and Sustainable,” food at a ten percent or greater rate compared to national grocery chains. It also claims that “Co-op employees also earn an

¹⁷ Hardt and Negri, *Commonwealth*, 377

¹⁸ Ronald Walter Greene, “Orator Communist,” *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 39.1 (2006), 206.

¹⁹ NGCA, “Healthy Foods, Healthy Communities” *Co+op: Stronger Together* (2014), <http://strongertogether.coop/food-coops/food-co-op-impact-study/>.

average of nearly \$1.00 more per hour than conventional grocery workers when bonuses and profit sharing are taken into account,”²⁰ and that these grocers are more likely to fund local economies compared to their competition. Although the campaign may be unsuccessful in challenging grocery store chains' dominance of food distribution networks, it does point to the possibilities for emergence of concrete alternatives. Attending to such alternative rhetorics, and potentially improving on them, might be one task for the future of rhetorical studies.

Speculating about the potential for these alternative rhetorics to resonate with broader publics, and perhaps offering improvements to increase the likelihood that they do so, may be one way in which rhetorical scholars might play a part in harnessing the “powers of mutual aid and cooperation” that May figures as crucial to challenging the dominance of capitalist economies writ large. Indeed, our discipline might begin to take up its potential as a weapon in the enactment of a more democratic world by simply engaging the possibilities for the emergence of alternative food economies. Taking up these alternatives, improving on their rhetorical strategies such that they may more effectively work on the affective register, and contributing to their circulation provides an avenue through which we could move from Greene's belief in the potentialities of democratic becomings to the enactment of what William E. Connolly calls “the *democratic politics of becoming*,”²¹ a move that involves embracing our impulse to circulate new rhetorics through “which new events, identities, faiths, and conditions are ushered into being.”²² While Connolly's phrasing positions the alternative food economies as a lofty or revolutionary endeavor, this dissertation project highlights the extent to which it might be located in the circulation of alternatives to the mundane habits and stylizations that guide

²⁰ NGCA, “Healthy Foods, Healthy Communities,” n.p.

²¹ William E. Connolly *Neuropolitics: Thinking, Culture, Speed* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), 173

²² Connolly, *Neuropolitics*, 173.

everyday life. Moving from speculations about the possibilities for rhetorical figurations to their improvement and circulation offers, then, one means through which our discipline may begin to activate the potentialities for collective joy beyond contemporary forms of capitalism.

Conclusion

Through a reconsideration of rhetorical style in the key of affect, this dissertation project has gestured towards a mode of speculative inquiry that asks us to trace a map of the possibilities for, and help render probable, new food economies. Such a project, which I have outlined in this conclusion, might provide one means through which our discipline might play a part in activating potentialities for collective affiliations beyond the world of contemporary capitalisms. Doing so requires speculation of the affective potentialities engendered by rhetorical forms as objects in themselves, rather than approaching rhetoric as an ephemeral mask for the conditions that seem to be more material. It also necessitates an eye towards how the multiplicity of capitalisms that constitute our contemporary conditions shape everyday life while turning away from our collective tendency to regard the apparatuses of power as a monolithic force under the sign of “neoliberalism” or “capitalism.” This project invites, then, a mode of rhetorical inquiry and politics oriented towards new futures that are emerging at the level of the everyday.

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