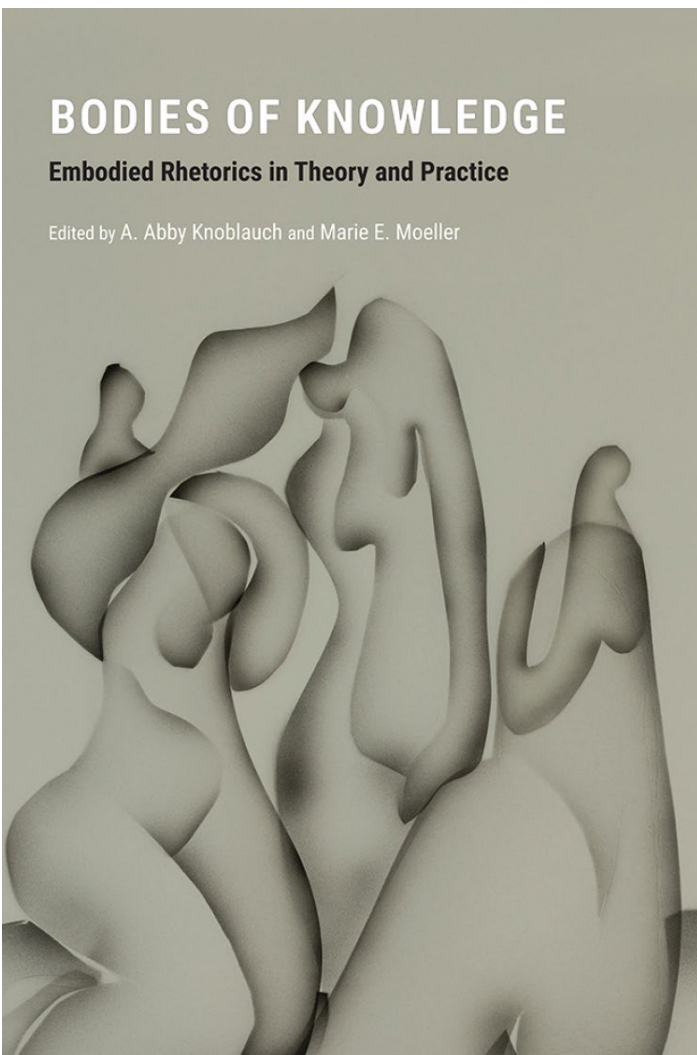


Review of Abby A. Knoblauch and Marie E. Moeller's *Bodies of Knowledge: Embodied Rhetorics in Theory and Practice*

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Bodies of Knowledge: Embodied Rhetorics in Theory and Practice, edited by A. Abby Knoblauch and Marie E.

Moeller, is an exceptional survey book for scholars invested in learning how embodied rhetoric is applied across English's subdisciplines. The book's fourteen chapters are divided into three distinct categories of "Affect," "Activism," and "Modality." Offering a demonstration of textual analysis where a text is the body of a rhetor, the contributors orient the audience toward various ways to read a person's body as a text in and of itself. Reading the body-as-text—a text that speaks, talks back, exists in relation to other bodies and materialities—is a major point of innovation within this collection. The collection builds on arguments from scholars like Jacqueline Jones Royster and Gesa E. Kirsch, who argue that rhetoric must take a turn toward the relational to show how and when "lived experiences... powerfully inform" the intersections of daily living (Royster and Kirsch 93). The collection argues that rhetorical scholarship must move away from pure objectivity and into the realm of subjectivity to account for the lived experiences of rhetoricians. Reading from a relational perspective legitimizes the embodied arguments professed by rhetors as far back as the 19th century. *Bodies of Knowledge* gives the reader permission to include subjectivity in their rhetorical reading and highlights the importance of considering rhetors, past and present, as threads in a social tapestry.

Embodied rhetoric is a study of entanglements stemming from the question "where do 'our' bodies begin and end?" within affective economies (7; see also Ahmed, *The Politics of Fear* 386). This is a central thread running through the entire collection. Every chapter starts from a point of entanglement and most authors undo their specific threads to show the reader how affective economies are created at the intersections of daily life (Ahmed, "The Politics of Fear" 386). For example, Scot Barnett's chapter challenges readers to consider how touch can be violent, followed by Megan Strom's exploration of how passive and dehumanizing language primes readers to think of child immigrants from Central and South America. Other chapters invite the reader into the intersections, such as Vyshali Manivannan's chapter that shows the reader how affective economies are, in Sara

Ahmed's terms, "sticky" (*The Cultural Politics of Emotion* 4). The collection as a whole invites readers to notice how and when bodies contribute to a rhetorical situation. Noticing how bodies orient toward texts and other bodies creates epistemological knowledge where rational arguments fail. In this way, *Bodies of Knowledge* shows readers how to verbalize their gut feelings about the material world.

In one standout chapter, Julie D. Nelson writes about embodied rhetorical strategies used by The International Civil Rights Center and Museum (IRCRCM) in Greensboro, North Carolina to move visitors "on a bodily level" (75). Nelson details the IRCRCM's recreation of the Woolworth lunch counter where the Greensboro Four staged an illegal sit-in to protest a racist Jim Crow prohibition (76). In the IRCRCM's recreation, visitors are encouraged to experience a partial, fictional rendering of what it might be like to move their bodies through segregated spaces (75). "Visitors," Nelson writes, "are not passive observers but active participants in creating meaning in museums" where their lived experiences come into contact with the lived experiences of others (82). Nelson's reading of the IRCRCM's embodied approach to enacting their educational goals demonstrates how privileging gut feelings, or affect, in museums encourages audiences to reflect on their physical well-being after the mock experience (82). An embodied approach to teaching history benefits rhetoric studies because it creates an opportunity to teach rhetorical listening through the senses and imagination. Audiences who are taught to listen with the intention of experiencing a gut feeling are prepared to acknowledge factors like hatred, disgust, despair, and resilience in their close subjective reading of past and current activism moments.

Another important chapter, titled Fannie Barrier Williams's Citizen-Woman: Embodying Rhetoric at the 1893 Columbian Exposition by Kristie S. Fleckenstein, uses an embodied rhetorical lens to analyze Williams's speech at the 1893 World's Fair. Looking at the exhibits working to discredit Williams as well as excerpts from her speech that developed her ethos, Fleckenstein's chapter focuses on "*bodying*: a phenomenon [where] any single body serves as a contingent expression of a tangle of corporeal relationships with other bodies" (124). Williams sought to embody the aspirations for education, equality, and citizenship which lived in the bodies of Black women to demonstrate the values of free Black women and encourage integrated collaboration from White abolitionist women (128). Fleckenstein demonstrates how embodied rhetorics paired with race and feminist theory can expose unarticulated arguments whose focal point is a rhetor's body. Swirling around Williams' body are ideas about Black women's bodies which Fleckenstein identifies as paratext, the surrounding information that can affect an audience. She writes, "Williams... took her place on the dais as a professional freeborn Northern Black female body paradoxically speaking for herself and for Southern Black women who were born into slavery...she is simultaneously a muddle of bodies" (126). Putting this paratext in conversation with the White bodies listening, the Black bodies on exhibition at the fair, and Williams' body which encompassed both, Fleckenstein models how to identify and read a text-less text at the intersections of feminist, racial, and class divides when one body stands for many.

Furthermore, Vyshali Manivannan writes the most compelling chapter of the collection, titled The Successful Text is Not Always the One that Murders Me to Protect You (183). In this chapter, Manivannan talks directly to the reader to critique the hesitance of the publishing industry to walk-the-walk of embodied rhetorics (183). Manivannan's forthright conversation with the reader on the shortcomings of scholarly writing shines a light on an opportunity for improved understanding of embodied rhetoric in publishing houses. Manivannan's argument is that the style of standard publishing formats does not do enough to include the lived experiences of the scholar. For example, Manivannan writes that "the successful scholarly text does not display pain, even if/when the author radiates nothing but" (187). Writing from their experience of living with chronic pain, Manivannan implicates the audience in the style and delivery method that leads to pain, writing "you were involved in that intersubjective construction of my pain, whether you like it or not" (192). Manivannan points out that writing

about embodied rhetoric is still void of the scholar's body; that is, the scholar living with pain is still expected to purify their writing of that pain, even though each word on the page is imbued with it. Manivannan writes: "With the body made invisible, identity, process, and experience disappear as well" (191). Ultimately, this chapter draws our awareness to places where the body is still rendered invisible even when it's a text's primary subject. This chapter is full of teaching and learning moments that force the reader to ask themselves how academic writing can become more equitable for scholars living with disabilities.

Bodies of Knowledge is targeted toward experienced readers who want snapshots and speculations about the state of the discipline, not necessarily input on how to teach it. The authors aren't concerned with classroom application, but they make up for it by leaning heavily into showing and not telling. For instance, Ruth Osorio's chapter shows the reader how to read the body-as-text of Senator Tammy Duckworth. Osorio explains their intersectional methodology and then reads at three intersections, demonstrating how data drawn out of the body can bolster arguments. Osorio's focused reading is a template for new readers of bodies-as-texts and is a sample I myself plan to use in future composition courses. This is a consistent pattern through the collection: the contributors demonstrate how to read a textless-text with precision and clarity, showing the reader how to do it themselves in a series of shifting rhetorical situations. Readers who pick up this collection will leave with an understanding of how bodies are a particularly unstable genre that require intersectional reading strategies.

Bodies of Knowledge's contribution to rhetoric and composition studies is its reimagining of writing practices that prioritize the lived experiences of individuals with a goal "to look beyond typically anointed assumptions in the field in anticipation of the possibility of seeing something not previously noticed or considered" (Royster and Kirsch 72). Built on a foundation laid by Royster and Kirsch, the contributors echo the arguments of collections like *Sharing Breath: Embodied Learning and Decolonization* by Sheila Batacharya and Yuk-Lin Renita Wong and *Teaching with Tenderness: Toward an Embodied Practice* by Becky Thompson, both focused on allowing materiality and material circumstance to stand as primary sources. However, we need better vocabulary and practices to accomplish this. Even though embodied rhetoric comfortably inhabits mainstream rhetoric studies, the discipline will have to expand its definition of acceptable evidence to make room for bodily knowledge. The knowledge created by and held in the scholar's body orients us to remember humans are behind scholarly work and the labor of that body need not be invisible.

An important question remains, then: what could this mean for writers in college classrooms? One answer is that it legitimizes their bodies and experiences as points of invention. For teachers and students participating in first-year writing courses, this could be an essential tool in their pedagogical repertoire. While I don't foresee many instructors bringing a specific practice from this collection into their classes, I can see instructors asking students to foster awareness of their bodies while writing. Students who can write from their experiences can then include themselves in the ranks of rhetors, giving rhetoric studies an opportunity to be a more inclusive discipline.

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