

DISSERTATION

SENSING MATERIALITY'S RHETORICAL FORCE:
BUILDING A DEEPER UNDERSTANDING OF THE RHETORICAL ENTANGLEMENTS
OF MATERIALITY, EMBODIMENT, AND POWER

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In partial fulfillment of the requirements

For the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Colorado State University

Fort Collins, Colorado

Spring 2025

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ABSTRACT

SENSING MATERIALITY'S RHETORICAL FORCE: BUILDING A DEEPER UNDERSTANDING OF THE RHETORICAL ENTANGLEMENTS OF MATERIALITY, EMBODIMENT, AND POWER

In this dissertation, I examine the complex relationship among the rhetorical nature of materiality, embodiment, and power. To do this, I undertake embodied rhetorical analyses of two spaces—a Walmart Supercenter and a Regal Nail Salon—and explore the various ways in which these elements intertwine to structure spaces for the emergence of the Agentic Hand, Hand as Feminized Object, and the Subversive Agentic Hand. In order to more fully understand the ways that these spaces (what I refer to as sensory architectures, composed of circulations of matter-energy co-constituting the space of which humans are a part), structure these emergences, I develop two conceptual contributions: an expanded definition of rhetoric's materiality and an understanding of rhetoric as kinaesthetic.

My first conceptual contribution, an expanded definition of rhetoric's materiality, describes rhetoric's materiality as the suasory, mercurial movements of matter-energy, with two distinct characteristics: (1) matter-energy moves in dynamic, lively ways, and our embodied experience and understanding of these suasory movements is made possible through affect, and (2) the suasory movements of matter-energy are always influenced by directional lineages of power, but never predetermined by them. My second conceptual contribution, an understanding of rhetoric as kinaesthetic, explains how the rhetorical, suasory force of materiality evokes

presence effects that are both relational *and* kinaesthetic, where kinaesthetic presence effects refer to particular senses of one's own embodiment at any point in time.

Ultimately, I argue that these two conceptual contributions offer valuable tools for better understanding the relationships among rhetoric's materiality, embodiment, and power. I believe that they are uniquely useful for two primary reasons: (1) because my expanded definition of materiality is more attuned to the fundamental role of power in materiality than many other conceptual definitions, and (2) because my understanding of rhetoric as kinaesthetic expands current understandings of rhetoric's presence effects to include both relational *and* kinaesthetic effects. For these reasons, I believe that the two conceptual contributions I offer in this dissertation can serve as important analytical tools for continuing the collective scholarly journey to more deeply understand the entanglements of rhetoric's material force, embodiment, and power.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

A note to the reader: this section is admittedly not as short as it could be. I understand if you decide to just CTRL-F your name and skip ahead. However, my dissertation is even longer, so you may have found yourself in a reading hole you might consider climbing out of while you can. If you continue reading, though, I will start by thanking you!

Next, I would like to thank my wonderful committee. I owe so much to all of them. Thank you, Dr. Greg Dickinson, for being my advisor and mentor during the dissertation process and throughout my doctoral program. Your insightful feedback, constant belief, coffees, and supportive guidance continuously pushed me to expand what I thought I was capable of and grow as a scholar and person. I cannot thank you enough for this, as well as the example you set as a scholar who does not shy away from studying rhetorical phenomena that can be both undeniably tangible and theoretically hard to grasp. Thank you for this, and for everything. In addition to all of these things, thank you for introducing me to Dr. Sushmita Chatterjee!

Dr. Chatterjee, I am incredibly grateful to you. I am so glad you agreed to be on my committee. One reason is that you are a brilliant scholar who sacrificed her time to read my work and provide wonderful suggestions for continuing my dissertation research. The other reason is that you brought and continue to bring an energy and presence to those around you that is remarkable. I hope you know how much you have impacted me even in the limited interactions we have had. Thank you!

Dr. Kari Anderson, thank you for your invaluable mentorship, and for demonstrating the enduring passion behind and importance of doing feminist work as a person, scholar, and educator. I have always admired you as a scholar even before meeting you, but over the past few

years of getting to know you and learn from you, I have come to admire and be inspired by you in so many other ways. You are absolutely incredible (I know that the adjective “absolutely” may seem unnecessary, and would likely be cut out if you edited this, but I promise it is [absolutely] essential to communicate the magnitude of incredible-ness!). Thank you so much.

The next and last person on my committee that I would like to thank is also the person I would like to apologize to: Dr. Carl Burghardt. I apologize for pitching a dissertation that involved film but ended up not including it in the end. I swear I did not do it intentionally to sway your decision to be on my committee. However, having you be on my committee and bringing your wonderful spirit, humor, and amazing feedback has been so valuable to me that I cannot say with certainty that I would not have considered pulling this kind of academic stunt if I had the chance to go back. Like all great moral figures, though, I would say that this is really your fault more than mine. If you had not been one of my favorite professors it would not be an ethical boundary I would ever consider crossing. So, thank you, and it is your fault.

I would also like to thank an absolute icon of a woman: Julia Khrebtan-Hörhager. I cannot express how thankful I am for you in my life, as a dear friend, mentor, and wonderful human. I cannot imagine a dissertation-writing experience without your guidance and support, rooftop coffees, work session wine and wisdom, sports rituals (though I owe my abs to laughing so much with you), loving verbal abuse, Top Gun, and most importantly, you. Thank you.

Then there is Brian Ott. Ever since you walked into my undergrad class with Matrix-esque glasses on and started speaking lines from Morpheus (if I remember correctly), I knew you were a different kind of person. As it turns out, you are in more ways than one. It has been and continues to be a privilege to know you; thank you for your passion as a scholar, support as a mentor, and genuine, kind nature as a human. Without your presence in my academic journey, I

am not sure I would be writing an Acknowledgements section of a dissertation at all.

This sentiment is echoed in my thanks to Gordana Lazić. My interest in feminist analysis began with your teaching in the Gender & Voice course. More than this, your guidance in this class was a significant part of my very gradual journey to placing confidence in my voice, literally and metaphorically. Your example as an intelligent and insightful professor, scholar, mentor, and person was a powerful influence, and I will always be grateful to you for this.

Another person who has had a significant and meaningful impact on my life before, during, and after this dissertation process is Shavanna Caruso. Words cannot describe how lucky I am to have had and still have your support and wonderful presence in my life. During my lowest and highest points in my doctoral program, you (and Mae) were there, and you played and continue to play such a huge role in my academic and life journey. Thank you!

Along this academic journey, there were a number of great people in the Colorado State University Communication Studies Department that helped me navigate my way to this point. Dr. Elizabeth Williams, Eliza Wagner-Kinyon, Azumi Solbrig, Zel Gabriel, Khuc Phan, and every professor I had the privilege to learn from and interact with, thank you so much! In addition, thank you to so many of my fellow graduate students for the interesting conversations, laughs, commiseration, and support!

Lastly, thank you to the keyboards and laptops, the many coffee shops and baristas, the Fort Collins Shut Up and Write! groups, and all of the material world whose workings somehow have aligned to make this dissertation possible.

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CHAPTER 1:

INTRODUCING THE RHETORICAL MATERIAL

If you are reading this on a computer and have your hand on the trackpad to scroll down the document, or have your hand resting on a mouse, or maybe just resting on a table or somewhere else while you read, raise it. Raise it enough so that it no longer touches what it rested on previously. Then close your eyes, and imagine my hand is reaching through the keyboard I am touching right now and touching yours, fingertip by fingertip.

You could be very uncomfortable right now. To be honest, I am not sure whether I feel a kind of warm, connected feeling imagining it, or a tense discomfort. Within both of our experiences imagining and viscerally reacting to the imagining of our bodies touching, though, there is something fascinating going on rhetorically. Insofar as “rhetorical” describes a suasive capacity, the material interaction we just experienced is distinctively rhetorical, moving us viscerally and cognitively in unique ways.

We could think of this rhetorical, material interaction as beginning with our hands’ departure from a connection to the computer trackpad to an immersion in the minute molecules in the air. The muscles of our shoulders, arms, and hands engaged as our body enables this change in our material relationship with the world. The next step in our material interaction with the world becomes less straightforward and more difficult to explain. When we imagine our fingers and whole hands touching, an embodied reaction still occurs, grounded in a fusion of cognitive relations to embodied experience in the past, present, and future. We do not touch, yet this imagining of bodily connection holds its own suasive capacity to move us in material ways, fundamentally intertwined with our complex embodied existence in the world. Your individual

embodied existence in the world can influence the nature of your reaction to the imagining of our bodies touching, this embodied existence influenced by structures of society that may position your body as particularly vulnerable to the likelihood of physical interaction as a precursor to bodily harm or intrusion, or possibly your body is positioned as one expected to enact dominance over physical interactions. Whatever it may be, our current embodied, imagined interaction, itself enabled by a material and cognitive interaction with our present environment, is one of many interactions that illustrates the complexity of the rhetorical force of materiality and its ability to shape and be shaped by embodied experience.

The complex relationship between the rhetorical nature of materiality and embodiment is one that I examine in my dissertation, and in this examination, I also analyze how power is intertwined with this relationship. These inquiries are animated by the following research questions:

RQ: What is the relationship between the rhetorical force of materiality and embodiment?

RQa: How can theorizing bodies as formations of matter-energy help explain the relationship between the rhetorical force of materiality and embodiment?

RQb: How is power interwoven into the relationship between the rhetorical force of materiality and embodiment?

My dissertation research provides answers to these questions and facilitates my development of an expanded definition of rhetoric's materiality and an understanding of rhetoric as kinaesthetic, two conceptual tools that I argue are needed for advancing the scholarly study of rhetoric's materiality. In the following sections of this introductory chapter, I begin by providing an overview of these conceptual tools, discussing how my expanded definition of rhetoric's materiality and understanding of rhetoric as kinaesthetic extends scholarly work in the field of rhetoric. Next, I explain how my development of these theoretical contributions during the

course of my dissertation research engages key discussions in the field of rhetoric; namely, discussions of method, theory-building, and the role of the critic in rhetorical criticism. Lastly, I outline the structure of how I develop my conceptual contributions in this dissertation, and how each chapter strengthens my argument for the necessity of expanding the definition of rhetoric's materiality and conceptualizing rhetoric as kinaesthetic, allowing me to answer my research questions.

Conceptual Contributions:

Redefining Rhetoric's Materiality and Understanding Rhetoric as Kinaesthetic

To begin, it is important to clarify that all the conceptual tools and analyses I provide in this dissertation are grounded in a particular understanding of rhetoric as a suasive capacity (which I expand on later in this section). Below, I give a brief overview of the contrast between traditional versus more contemporary understandings of rhetoric, a disciplinary discussion that my definition of rhetoric's materiality enters into.

Extending the Definitional Lineage: Theorizing Rhetoric and its Materiality

The concept of rhetoric has been defined in numerous ways since the advent of the term in ancient Greece, an ever-shifting conceptual history that my own study continues. For most of this history, traditional definitions of rhetoric generally maintain that rhetoric describes methods of persuasion in oratory, building upon Aristotle's foundational definition of rhetoric as "an ability, in each [particular] case, to see the available means of persuasion."¹ However, during the

¹ Aristotle, "On Rhetoric," in *On Rhetoric: A Theory of Civic Discourse*, trans. George A. Kennedy, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 37. For more persuasion-centered definitions of rhetoric, see Hugh Blair, *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres* (London, Printed for T. Tegg, 1845); Wayne C. Booth, *Modern Dogma and the Rhetoric of Assent* (Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1974); George Campbell, *The Philosophy of Rhetoric*, (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1963); Cicero, *De Oratore*, trans. Edward W. Sutton and Harris Rackham (London: Heinemann, 1967); Ralph H. Johnson and J. Anthony Blair, *Logical Self-Defense* (Toronto: McGraw Hill Ryerson, 1977); Chaïm Perelman and Lucie Olbrechts-Tyteca, *The New Rhetoric: A Treatise*

past several decades the definitions of rhetoric in the field have expanded to include considerations of the materiality of rhetorical “texts” in the world, and how they move us on both cognitive and visceral levels.² This idea of “moving us,” in particular, signals a significant departure from previous definitions of rhetoric, since to describe a “text” as rhetorical (under this view of rhetoric) no longer means a rhetorical text is explicitly persuading an audience. Instead, the rhetorical quality of a text refers to its suasive capacity, where suasive capacity refers to the ability of material-symbolic formations of matter-energy to move us in cognitive/embodied, consequential ways.³ This conception of rhetoric is most clearly defined by Brian L. Ott and Greg Dickinson, who describe rhetoric as “*the capacity of the thing-symbol—via its aesthetic qualities and signifying practices—to generate affect and discourse, whose intertwined sensory and cognitive processing elicit presence and meaning effects in a particular space-time.*”⁴

on Argumentation (Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1969); Frans H. van Eemeren and Peter Houtlosser, “Strategic Manoeuvring in Argumentative Discourse,” *Discourse Studies* 1, no. 4 (1999): 479–97; Giambattista Vico, *The Art of Rhetoric (Institutiones Oratoriae, 1711–1741)*, trans. Giorgio A. Pinton and Arthur W. Shippee (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1996); Richard M. Weaver, *Language Is Sermonic* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1970); Richard Whately, *Elements of Rhetoric, Comprising an Analysis of the Laws of Moral Evidence and of Persuasion, with Rules for Argumentative Composition and Elocution* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1963).

² See Scot Barnett, *Rhetorical Realism: Rhetoric, Ethics, and the Ontology of Things* (New York: Routledge, 2017); Celeste Condit, “Contemporary Rhetorical Criticism: Diverse Bodies Learning New Languages,” *Rhetoric Review* 25, no. 4 (2006): 368–372; David J. Maxcy, “Meaning in Nature: Rhetoric, Phenomenology, and the Question of Environmental Value,” *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 27, no. 4 (1994): 330–346; Raymie E. McKerrow, “Critical Rhetoric: Theory and Practice,” *Communication Monographs* 56 (1989): 91–111; Brian L. Ott and Greg Dickinson, “Redefining Rhetoric: Why Matter Matters,” *Berlin Journal of Critical Theory* 3, no. 1 (2019); Ehren Helmut Pflugfelder, “Rhetoric’s New Materialism: From Micro-Rhetoric to Microbrew,” *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 45, no. 5 (2015): 441–61; J. Rickert, *Ambient Rhetoric: The Attunements of Rhetorical Being* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2013); Michael Salvador and Tracylee Clarke, “The Weyekin Principle: Toward an Embodied Critical Rhetoric,” *Environmental Communication* 5, no. 3 (2011): 243–60; Kathleen E. Welch, *Electric Rhetoric: Classical Rhetoric, Oralism, and a New Literacy*, Digital Communication (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1999).

³ Greg Dickinson, Carole Blair, and Brian L. Ott, “Introduction,” in *Places of Public Memory: The Rhetoric of Museums and Memorials* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2010); Ott and Dickinson, “Redefining Rhetoric,” 80.

⁴ Ott and Dickinson, “Redefining Rhetoric,” 54.

While this definition is valuable for understanding how rhetoric functions in both signifying and non-signifying material ways, it does not yet provide an adequate conceptual foundation for my research into the relationship among the rhetorical force of materiality, embodiment, and power. Answering my research questions requires an expanded definition of rhetoric's materiality that explicitly recognizes how rhetorical texts ("thing-symbols") are co-constructed through the power-infused flows of shared materiality, enabling the experience of embodiment. I develop this expanded definition of rhetoric's materiality in this dissertation, outlined below.

Expanded definition of rhetoric's materiality: *materiality as suasory, mercurial movements of matter-energy.*

Two characteristics:

1. *Matter-energy moves in dynamic, lively ways, and our embodied experience and understanding of these suasory movements is made possible through affect.*
2. *The movements of matter-energy are always influenced by directional lineages of power, but never predetermined by them.*

Using this expanded definition to analyze the Walmart and Regal Nail Salon spaces also allows me to develop a conceptual understanding of rhetoric as kinaesthetic, referring to how the rhetorical force of materiality evokes specific senses of one's own embodiment. In this dissertation, I use the term kinaesthetic to describe the holistic sense of one's own embodiment at any moment in time. Because this term stems from Henry Bastian's original theorization of kinaesthesia, I maintain his English spelling in this dissertation out of respect for his foundational theorizing, acknowledging this theoretical lineage as I extend the use of his concept into my rhetorical research.

My development of a conceptual understanding of rhetoric as kinaesthetic and my expanded definition of rhetoric's materiality are explored in more depth in chapter two. To lay

the groundwork for this later discussion, I first reflect on how the overall process of developing these conceptual contributions through my research engages key disciplinary conversations.

Entering Disciplinary Discussions:

Method, Rhetorical Criticism and Theory, and the Role of the Rhetorical Critic

The process of developing both the conceptualization of rhetoric as kinaesthetic and an expanded definition of rhetoric's materiality through my dissertation research is a process that enters into a multitude of ongoing conversations in the discipline of rhetoric. Just as any material interaction in the world occurs within a larger circulation of matter-energy, any process of rhetorical criticism occurs within the larger body of criticism in the field of rhetoric, this body of criticism giving rise to disciplinary discussions of how we understand rhetorical criticism itself. Fully explaining the place of my dissertation in the larger field of rhetorical criticism, then, requires a reflection on how my research engages key disciplinary discussions. Below, I provide this reflection, situating my work within three disciplinary discussions: the relationship between method and studying rhetoric's materiality, the relationship between rhetorical criticism and theory, and the role of the critic in rhetorical criticism.

Method and Rhetorical Criticism

The method of rhetorical criticism I employ in this dissertation is situated within a scholarly discussion on how rhetorical scholars conceive of the relationship between method and rhetorical criticism. This discussion finds its center in a widely-embraced position that argues that method as it is traditionally understood—a systematic procedure for undergoing analysis according to a predetermined set of stages—can limit the analytical insights rhetorical scholars are able to develop through their criticism. In other words, this tradition of thought in the field of rhetoric—largely growing from Edwin Black's famous critique of neo-Aristotelian method (the

dominant method in the field during the time) in his 1965 book, *Rhetorical Criticism: A Study in Method*—conceives of traditional methods as not only unhelpful but inimical to the practice of rhetorical criticism and theory-building.⁵ This characteristic, negative view of method is perhaps most compellingly summed up in Roland Barthes’s statement that there is “no surer way to kill a piece of research and send it to join the great scrap heap of abandoned projects than Method.”⁶ This clear condemnation of method (or “Method” with a capital “M”) makes clear what the practice of rhetorical research should *not* be according to this scholarly position. The perspective on what it *should* be, or what should characterize the process broadly, though, I explain in the rest of this section.

Black, as one of the key voices in the discussion of method’s relationship to rhetorical criticism, advanced a view of what the process of rhetorical criticism should be and how it should be done. In contrast to the acceptance of rigid methods of rhetorical criticism, particularly neo-Aristotelian but also including critical methods that later emerged in the field (pentadic, fantasy-theme, genre, narrative, and others), he argued that the process of rhetorical criticism should instead be characterized by an awareness of the critic themselves as the primary tool of rhetorical analysis. Black describes how,

In the end . . . there are no formulae, no prescriptions, for criticism . . . The only instrument of good criticism is the critic. It is not any external perspective or procedure or ideology, but only the convictions, values, and learning of the critic, only the observational and interpretive powers of the critic . . . The method of rhetorical criticism is the critic.⁷

⁵ Edwin Black, *Rhetorical Criticism: A Study in Method* (New York: Macmillan, 1965); Brian L. Ott and Greg Dickinson, “Entering the Unending Conversation: An Introduction to Rhetorical Criticism,” in *The Routledge Reader in Rhetorical Criticism*, ed. Brian L. Ott and Greg Dickinson (New York: Routledge, 2013), 8.

⁶ Roland Barthes, *The Rustle of Language*, 1st ed. (New York: Hill and Wang, 1986), 201.

⁷ Edwin Black, “On Objectivity and Politics in Criticism,” *American Communication Journal* 4, no. 1 (2000): 103.

These words, “the method of rhetorical criticism is the critic,” reflect a foundational concept for how many scholars understand the relationship between method and rhetorical criticism today. This stance informs the (non)method I employ in my rhetorical criticism; understanding my role as critic underscores my adoption of an embodied approach to rhetorical analysis.

This embodied approach I adopt, a broad method or perspective on rhetorical criticism without specific rules, stems from what Greg Dickinson and Giorgia Aiello describe as a way of “being through there.”⁸ The rhetorical approach of “being through there” is as an extension of rhetorical scholar Carole Blair’s positing the importance of “being there” in rhetorical criticism of spaces/places.⁹ Like Blair, Dickinson and Aiello emphasize the importance of the critic’s embodied interaction with the material spaces themselves in writing rhetorical criticism, but also argue that the method of ‘being through there’ “directs our attention to the centrality of embodied and material movement through space.”¹⁰ According to Dickinson and Aiello, this direction of attention to a critic’s “embodied and material movement through space” requires consideration of materiality, bodies, and movement in any analysis of the communicative nature of spaces.¹¹

How then do rhetorical critics, using the approach of “being through there,” study the communicative nature of spaces/places, and in my case, other rhetorical, material interactions, considering these three elements of materiality, bodies, and movement? According to Dickinson and Aiello, critics must decenter the primary use of vision as a rhetorical tool, and instead engage

⁸ Greg Dickinson and Giorgia Aiello, “Being Through There Matters: Materiality, Bodies, and Movement in Urban Communication Research,” *International Journal of Communication* 10 (2016): 295.

⁹ Carole Blair, “Reflections on Criticism and Bodies: Parables from Public Places,” *Western Journal of Communication* 65, no. 3 (2001): 271–94.

¹⁰ Dickinson and Aiello, “Being Through There Matters,” 295.

¹¹ Dickinson and Aiello, “Being Through There Matters,” 295.

the use of all their bodily senses in exploring rhetorical invitations of the material world.¹² More than this, rhetorical critics must employ their sensory capacities in the process of their “methodical, embodied movement” through the spaces of study, “bring[ing] their empirical selves . . . into experiential contact with the world they are studying.”¹³ This embodied, experiential movement through and attunement to the materiality of the world is central to my perspective on how I undertake the rhetorical study of materiality, embodied experience, and power.

Importantly, my method of rhetorical study, in order to fully address my research questions, also includes an attunement to the “agencies of various material phenomena that encompass both the human body and nonhumans (living and nonliving),” recognizing the body itself as an “active, sometimes recalcitrant, force” inseparable from the rhetorical quality of the environment it co-constructs.¹⁴ This recognition reaffirms the necessity of an embodied method of rhetorical criticism if we seek to better understand the rhetorical nature of the material world. For, as Scot Barnett and Casey Boyle explain, “Accounting for the co-constitutive nature of relations between humans and things is critical to any rhetorical understanding of things.”¹⁵ An embodied method allows for the development of these “rhetorical understanding[s] of things” in the field of rhetoric.

¹² Dickinson and Aiello, “Being Through There Matters,” 294-308.

¹³ Dickinson and Aiello, “Being Through There Matters,” 303.

¹⁴ Joan Faber McAlister and Joshua P. Ewalt, “New Materialities and Precarious Mobilities: Reinventing Studies of Space and Place,” *Women’s Studies in Communication* 41, no. 4 (2018): 340; Stacy Alaimo and Susan Hekman, “Introduction: Emerging Models of Materiality in Feminist Theory,” in *Material Feminisms*, ed. by Stacy Alaimo and Susan Hekman (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008), 3-4.

¹⁵ Scot Barnett and Casey Boyle, “Rhetorical Ontology, or, How to Do Things with Things,” in *Rhetoric, Through Everyday Things*, ed. Scot Barnett and Casey Boyle (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2016), 6.

In addition, this kind of multifaceted embodied method acknowledges the complexity of answering my research question: “What is the relationship between the rhetorical force of materiality and embodiment?” Just as we need to recognize the importance of the body in analyzing the rhetorical invitations of our material environments, we also need to recognize the importance of analyzing our bodily entanglement as part of these rhetorical invitations of the material, power-infused world. My embodied analytical method used in my research recognizes the importance of both, becoming a method capable, and necessary, for developing my theoretical contributions in this dissertation and answering my research question and sub-questions.

Rhetorical Criticism and Theory

My development of these theoretical contributions through my research and embodied method of criticism is a process that enters into another disciplinary discussion in the field of rhetoric: the relationship between the practice of rhetorical criticism and theory. While it is generally agreed upon that the two are necessarily intertwined, the nature of their relationship is understood differently among rhetorical scholars.¹⁶ Below, I discuss the foundational stance that claims that the practice of rhetorical criticism is always grounded in and promotes an assumption or development of a particular theoretical framework. After establishing this widely agreed upon stance within the field, I then provide an overview of some of the different ways rhetorical scholars conceive of the relationship between rhetorical criticism and theory, before situating my own practice of rhetorical criticism within this disciplinary discussion.

The widely held idea in the field of rhetoric that rhetorical criticism and theory are fundamentally intertwined is grounded in an understanding of each element being implicit in the

¹⁶ Ott and Dickinson, “Entering the Unending Conversation,” 9.

other.¹⁷ While rhetorical criticism and theoretical frameworks can be complex and diverse, the relationship between the two elements, on a foundational level, is straightforward: you cannot have one without the other. Black explains:

The relationship between rhetorical theory and rhetorical criticism is complex and fluctuating, but it is also certain. One cannot compose a theory that anyone will recognize as rhetorical without at least implying certain interpretations and judgments of rhetorical discourses, and one cannot compose rhetorical criticism without assuming, consciously or unconsciously, some theoretical frame of reference.¹⁸

While Black refers to discourse as the primary site of analysis for rhetorical criticism rather than both linguistic and nonlinguistic artifacts as objects of rhetorical study (as is now the dominant understanding in the field), his characterization of the relationship between rhetorical criticism and theory describes the foundational understanding that continues to be widely held in the discipline.¹⁹

It is the nature of this intertwined relationship between rhetorical criticism and theory, and what it should be, that has been and continues to be an area of disciplinary discussion. According to Brian L. Ott and Greg Dickinson, because all rhetorical criticism relies upon a theory of rhetoric, every theory of rhetoric also implies a particular way of understanding and undergoing rhetorical criticism. Different ways of understanding rhetoric, then, generate differing views on what the relationship between rhetorical criticism and theory should be.²⁰

There are numerous theories of rhetoric (and their respective, implied theories of rhetorical criticism), but there are theories of rhetoric in the discipline that have been more

¹⁷ James R. Andrews, *The Practice of Rhetorical Criticism* (Longman, 1990), 12.

¹⁸ Black, *Rhetorical Criticism*, 132.

¹⁹ Ott and Dickinson, "Entering the Unending Conversation," 9.

²⁰ Ott and Dickinson, "Entering the Unending Conversation," 9.

central in the discussion than others. Three of these central theories differently characterize rhetoric as a way of doing, a way of knowing, and a way of being.²¹ Because every theory of rhetoric is inherently connected to a way of understanding rhetorical criticism, each of these theories advances a specific view of the relationship between rhetorical criticism and theory. When rhetoric is theorized as a way of doing, there is the implicit understanding that rhetorical criticism should be analyzing rhetorical acts as they occur in their unique contexts, and the resulting practical consequences.²² When rhetoric is theorized as a way of knowing, rhetorical criticism is conceptualized as a process of analyzing how rhetorical acts serve to communicate and constitute knowledge, shaping social understandings.²³ Lastly, when rhetoric is theorized as a way of being, rhetorical criticism is expected to be a process concerned with the constitutive power of rhetorical acts, analyzing how rhetorical acts create identities, social roles, communities, and other social configurations that would otherwise not exist.²⁴ All three of these theories of rhetoric advance a theory of rhetorical criticism, promoting different views on the particular relationship between rhetorical criticism and theory.

The perspective that theorizes rhetoric as a way of being, and rhetorical criticism as a way of analyzing how rhetorical acts bring into being certain relations in the world, underscores my own criticism and theorizing in this dissertation. While I acknowledge there are practical, material consequences of these rhetorically-constituted relations that deserve attention, I focus my embodied rhetorical inquiry on understanding how the rhetorical force of the material world

²¹ Thomas W. Benson, "Beacons and Boundary-Markers: Landmarks in Rhetorical Criticism," in *Landmark Essays on Rhetorical Criticism* (Davis: Hermagoras Press, 1993), xi–xxii.

²² Benson, "Beacons and Boundary-Markers," xiv.

²³ Benson, "Beacons and Boundary-Markers," xvii.

²⁴ Benson, "Beacons and Boundary-Markers," xix; Maurice Charland, "Constitutive Rhetoric: The Case of the People Québécois," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 73, no. 2 (1987): 133–50.

invites certain ways of being in relation to forms of matter-energy, particularly how the rhetorical force of materiality influences our kinaesthetic relationship to the form of matter-energy we come to understand as our body. This focus of my research and its implicit view of the relationship between rhetorical research and theory reflects a grounding in both the widely accepted understanding of rhetorical research and theory as inherently intertwined, and a specific understanding of this intertwined relationship that conceptualizes rhetoric as a way of being and, as a result, rhetorical criticism being a way of exploring this constitutive quality.

The Role of the Rhetorical Critic

The discussion centered on the relationship between rhetorical criticism and theory is connected to another relevant disciplinary discussion, one that focuses on the role of the rhetorical critic and their purpose in conducting rhetorical criticism. According to Ott and Dickinson, there are three categories that describe some of the most common disciplinary understandings of the rhetorical critic's role: the critic as interpreter, critic as inquisitor, and critic as interventionist.²⁵ In addition, each of these understandings of the critic's role also implies a particular purpose of the critic's rhetorical criticism. However, these understandings of the critic's role and the purpose of their criticism are not mutually exclusive, as is the case with my own understanding of my role as critic and the purposes of my rhetorical criticism in this dissertation.²⁶ The overlap of the roles of critics and the purposes behind their criticism can be best explained by outlining the three general categories of how different scholars in the discipline understand the role of critics and the purposes motivating their rhetorical criticism.

²⁵ Ott and Dickinson, "Entering the Unending Conversation," 6.

²⁶ Andrews, *The Practice of Rhetorical Criticism*, 10; Benson, "Beacons and Boundary-Markers," xiv; Ott and Dickinson, "Entering the Unending Conversation," 6.

The first category characterizes the role of the critic as an interpreter, whose purpose in criticism is to interpret rhetorical texts to uncover their meanings.²⁷ According to this view, to successfully fulfill this purpose through their criticism, the critic as interpreter must rely on their unique disciplinary knowledge of rhetorical theory. As knowledgeable experts, rhetorical critics are able to illuminate the complex working of rhetorical texts, which are understood as “complex arrangement[s] of rhetorical tropes, devices, and appeals . . . that function to produce a particular meaning or set of meanings.”²⁸ Within this disciplinary understanding of the critic’s role as interpreter, there are discussions of what is or should be involved in the process of the critic uncovering the meaning or meanings of rhetorical texts. For example, scholars disagree on whether or not the analytical process should be animated by the pursuit of one, “true meaning” of the text or should allow for the possibility of uncovering multiple meanings.²⁹ In addition, scholars must face the difficult question of how the creators and audiences of texts figure into the rhetorical production of a text’s meaning (or meanings), and if considerations of authorial intent should be a part of the rhetorical critic’s analytical process.³⁰ While these and other questions constitute sites of disagreement and discussion, they have in common an understanding of the critic’s role as interpreter, a position existing within the larger disciplinary discussion of what the rhetorical critic’s role and purpose is or should be.

The second position, or category, within this larger disciplinary discussion characterizes critics as inquisitors, whose purpose is to use their analytical skills to understand what a rhetorical text is doing, examining how the text gives rise to certain influences or effects (on

²⁷ Ott and Dickinson, “Entering the Unending Conversation,” 6.

²⁸ Ott and Dickinson, “Entering the Unending Conversation,” 6.

²⁹ Ott and Dickinson, “Entering the Unending Conversation,” 6.

³⁰ Andrews, *The Practice of Rhetorical Criticism*, 10; Ott and Dickinson, “Entering the Unending Conversation,” 6.

social, political, personal, and/or other levels).³¹ In contrast to an understanding of the critic's role as an interpreter who analyzes "what a text *means*," understanding the critic's role as inquisitor leads to a consideration of "what a text *does*," and the development of theory to explain rhetorical functions broadly.³² In addition, understanding the critic's role as inquisitor, whose purpose is to examine how a rhetorical text enacts influence or produces effects, avoids many of the questions that emerge from positioning critics as interpreters. In particular, it avoids the question of how to consider authorial intent in relation to a rhetorical text's meaning.³³ Because the critic as inquisitor is interested in how a rhetorical text functions to invite certain effects, there is no need to consider the intent behind the creation of a rhetorical text (what a rhetorical text is *meant* to do), which is separate from how the rhetorical text actually works to produce effects—what it *does*.³⁴

In contrast to the critic's role as an inquisitor, concerned with what a text does, there is the role of the critic as interventionist, the third category in the disciplinary discussion of what the critic's role and purpose is/should be. The critic as interventionist, instead of being solely concerned with what a text means or does, is concerned with "what *criticism* of the text does or can do."³⁵ When a critic embraces the role of interventionist (or what some scholars refer to as the "advocate" role), the purpose of their rhetorical criticism/research becomes promoting and/or

³¹ Ott and Dickinson, "Entering the Unending Conversation," 6.

³² Andrews, *The Practice of Rhetorical Criticism*, 10; Karlyn Kohrs Campbell, "Criticism Ephemeral and Enduring," *Speech Teacher* 23, no. 1 (1974); Ott and Dickinson, "Entering the Unending Conversation," 6.

³³ Ott and Dickinson, "Entering the Unending Conversation," 6.

³⁴ Carole Blair, "Contemporary US Memorial Sites as Exemplars of Rhetoric's Materiality," in *Rhetorical Bodies*, ed. Jack Selzer and Sharon Crowley (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1999), 16–57.

³⁵ Ott and Dickinson, "Entering the Unending Conversation," 6.

creating social change through the analytical evaluation of rhetorical texts.³⁶ In this case, rhetorical research serves what Karlyn Kohrs Campbell describes as a “social function,” where analyses of rhetorical texts and their effects/consequences (evaluated according to one or more criteria; e.g., political, ethical, aesthetic, etc.) enable better understandings of how to change social existence for the better.³⁷ Undertaking rhetorical criticism for this purpose, critics as interventionists use “their critical abilities and perspective[s] to become active *participants* in the solution of problems,” demonstrating a more direct connection between rhetorical criticism and its relevance for our daily lives.³⁸

In my own rhetorical criticism, I understand my role as critic as both an inquisitor and interventionist, following in the footsteps of the many scholars analyzing rhetoric’s materiality from this combined position as inquisitor and interventionist.³⁹ My analyses in this dissertation

³⁶ Andrews, *The Practice of Rhetorical Criticism*, 10-11; Campbell, “Criticism Ephemeral and Enduring”; Stephen John Hartnett, “Communication, Social Justice, and Joyful Commitment,” *Western Journal of Communication* 74, no. 1 (2010): 68–93; Ott and Dickinson, “Entering the Unending Conversation,” 6; Philip Wander, “The Ideological Turn in Modern Criticism,” *Central States Speech Journal* 34, no. 1 (1983): 1–18; Barbara Warnick, “Leff in Context: What Is the Critic’s Role?,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 78, no. 2 (1992): 232–37.

³⁷ Andrews, *The Practice of Rhetorical Criticism*, 10-11; Campbell, “Criticism Ephemeral and Enduring.”

³⁸ Andrews, *The Practice of Rhetorical Criticism*, 10-11.

³⁹ Blair, “Contemporary US Memorial Sites as Exemplars of Rhetoric’s Materiality”; Blair, “Reflections on Criticism and Bodies: Parables from Public Places”; Carole Blair and Neil Michel, “The AIDS Memorial Quilt and the Contemporary Culture of Public Commemoration,” *Rhetoric and Public Affairs* 10, no. 4 (2007): 595–626; Karma R. Chávez and Annie Hill, “The Visual and Sonic Registers of Neighbourhood Estrangement,” *Journal of Intercultural Studies* 42, no. 1 (2021): 68–83; Kundai Chirindo, “Micronations and Postnational Rhetorics,” *Women’s Studies in Communication* 41, no. 4 (2018): 383–93; Scott Haden Church, “Against the Tyranny of Musical Form: Glitch Music, Affect, and the Sound of Digital Malfunction,” *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 34, no. 4 (2017): 315–28; Jennifer Clary-Lemon, *Planting the Anthropocene: Rhetorics of Natureculture*, 1st ed. (Chicago: Utah State University Press, 2019); Mitch Combs, “Consuming a Settler Colonial History: Frontier Authenticity and the Collective Memory of the Fort,” *Western Journal of Communication* 85, no. 5 (2021): 714–34; Michelle Comstock and Mary E. Hocks, “The Sounds of Climate Change: Sonic Rhetoric in the Anthropocene, the Age of Human Impact,” *Rhetoric Review* 35, no. 2 (2016): 165–75; Celnisha L Dangerfield and Christina L Moss, “The Rhetoric of (Re)Marking at the Oscars: Performance of Place in Glory,” *Southern Communication Journal* 88, no. 4 (2023): 298–311; Elizabeth Dickinson, “Displaced in Nature: The Cultural Production of (Non-)Place in Place-Based Forest Conservation Pedagogy,” *Environmental Communication* 5, no. 3 (2011): 300–319; Greg Dickinson, Brian L. Ott, and Eric Aoki, “Spaces of Remembering and Forgetting: The Reverent Eye/I at the Plains Indian Museum” *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 3, no. 1 (2006): 27–47; Greg Dickinson and Brian L. Ott,

are undertaken with the purpose of examining how rhetorical texts function to invite certain effects, and how my analysis of what rhetorical texts do can help us better understand the ethical consequences of these rhetorical functions (and how we might change them, if needed). In the case of my dissertation research, I take on the role of inquisitor as I develop two theoretical tools—an expanded definition of rhetoric’s materiality and an expanded conception of rhetoric as kinaesthetic—to better explain the interrelations of the rhetorical force of materiality, embodiment, and power. The development of these theoretical tools emerges from my rhetorical criticism of the Walmart and Regal Nail Salon spaces, where I investigate what effects these material, rhetorical “texts” invite. During the course of this analysis, I also take on the role of interventionist, examining how my explanation of how these rhetorical texts function and the

“Neoliberal Capitalism, Globalization, and Lines of Flight: Vectors and Velocities at the 16th Street Mall,” *Cultural Studies ↔ Critical Methodologies* 13, no. 6 (2013): 529–35; Justin Eckstein, “Sensing School Shootings,” *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 37, no. 2 (2020): 161–73; Amanda Nell Edgar, “The Rhetoric of Auscultation: Corporeal Sounds, Mediated Bodies, and Abortion Rights,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 103, no. 4 (2017): 350–71; Darrel Enck-Wanzer, “Decolonizing Imaginaries: Rethinking ‘the People’ in the Young Lords’ Church Offensive,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 98, no. 1 (2012): 1–23; Annie Hill, “Breast Cancer’s Rhetoricity: Bodily Border Crisis and Bridge to Corporeal Solidarity,” *Review of Communication* 16, no. 4 (2016): 281–98; Hsu, V. Jo. “Dispatches from a Body on Fire: Slow Death at the Intersections of Race, Gender, and Disability,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 111, no. 3 (2024): 1–10; Jordynn Jack, “Leviathan and the Breast Pump: Toward an Embodied Rhetoric of Wearable Technology,” *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 46, no. 3 (May 26, 2016): 207–21; Jason Kalin and Jordan Frith, “Wearing the City: Memory P(a)Laces, Smartphones, and the Rhetorical Invention of Embodied Space,” *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 46, no. 3 (2016): 222–35. Kalin and David Gruber, “Gut Rhetorics: Toward Experiments in Living with Microbiota,” *Rhetoric of Health and Medicine* 1, no. 3–4 (2018): 269–95; Brian L. Ott, “The Visceral Politics of *V for Vendetta*: On Political Affect in Cinema,” *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 27, no. 1 (2010): 39–54; Brian L. Ott, Eric Aoki, and Greg Dickinson, “Ways of (Not) Seeing Guns: Presence and Absence at the Cody Firearms Museum,” *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 8, no. 3 (2011): 215–39; L. Ott, Hamilton Bean, and Kellie Marin, “On the Aesthetic Production of Atmospheres: The Rhetorical Workings of Biopower at The CELL,” *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 13, no. 4 (2016): 346–62; Brian L. Ott and Gordana Lazić, “The Pedagogy and Politics of Art in Postmodernity: Cognitive Mapping and *The Bothersome Man*,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 99, no. 3 (2013): 259–82; Gayle Salamon, “Boys of the Lex: Transgenderism and Rhetorics of Materiality,” *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 12, no. 4 (2006): 575–97; Casey R. Schmitt, “Contours of the Land: Place-as-Rhetoric and Native American Effigy Mounds,” *Western Journal of Communication* 79, no. 3 (2015): 307–26; Kate Siegfried, “Making Settler Colonialism Concrete: Agentive Materialism and Habitational Violence in Palestine,” *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 17, no. 3 (2020): 267–84; Nathan Stormer, “Mediating Biopower and the Case of Prenatal Space,” *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 27, no. 1 (2010): 8–23; Maggie M. Werner, “Deploying Delivery as Critical Method: Neo-Burlesque’s Embodied Rhetoric,” *Rhetoric Review* 36, no. 1 (2017): 44–59; Luke Winslow, “‘Not Exactly a Model of Good Hygiene’: Theorizing an Aesthetic of Disgust in the Occupy Wall Street Movement,” *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 34, no. 3 (2017): 278–92.

theoretical tools I develop can help us better understand how lineages of power influence how our embodiment is rhetorically shaped in ways that can, sometimes simultaneously, prevent or promote more equitable relations.

Structuring the Argument: Overview of Dissertation Chapters

My roles as both an inquisitor and an interventionist are not separate in the rhetorical criticism I undertake in this dissertation, however. The purpose of both roles animates every step in the analytical development of my argument in this dissertation: that an expanded definition of rhetoric's materiality and an understanding of rhetoric as kinaesthetic is necessary for better understanding the interrelations among the rhetorical force of materiality, embodiment, and power. Understanding these interrelations is at the core of my research question and sub-questions in my dissertation, and in the process of answering these questions in my analyses, I illustrate the need for my expanded definition of rhetoric's materiality and conceptualization of rhetoric as kinaesthetic. My argument for the necessity and value of my conceptual contributions is developed in five chapters, outlined below.

In this first chapter, I introduced the conceptual contributions—my expanded definition of rhetoric's materiality and an understanding of rhetoric as kinaesthetic—that I develop through the process of answering my research question and sub-questions in this dissertation; for clarity, I provide my research question and sub-questions and definition of rhetoric's materiality below:

Research question and sub-questions:

RQ: What is the relationship between the rhetorical force of materiality and embodiment?

RQa: How can theorizing bodies as formations of matter-energy help explain the relationship between the rhetorical force of materiality and embodiment?

RQb: How is power interwoven into the relationship between the rhetorical force of materiality and embodiment?

Expanded definition of materiality: *materiality as mercurial movements of matter-energy.*

Two characteristics:

1. *Matter-energy moves in dynamic, lively ways, and our embodied experience and understanding of these suasory movements is made possible through affect.*
2. *The movements of matter-energy are always influenced by directional lineages of power, but never predetermined by them.*

In the second chapter, I outline the key areas of literature in the study of rhetoric's materiality that my definition of rhetoric's materiality and understanding of rhetoric as kinaesthetic builds upon and extends, establishing how my conceptual contributions provide a needed addition to the field. In addition, I thoroughly explain what each element of my definition of rhetoric's materiality entails, how it supports my conceptualization of rhetoric as kinaesthetic, and how it enables me to answer my research questions in this dissertation.

In the third chapter, I undertake an analysis of the Walmart Supercenter space, using the concept of sensory architecture to describe Walmart's (and the Regal Nail Salon's) dynamic material space. My analysis of Walmart's sensory architecture draws on my definition of rhetoric's materiality to demonstrate how the matter-energy of the sensory architecture, infused by directional lineages of capitalist power structures, invites kinaesthetic effects in the body (specifically, the emergence of what I call the "agentic hand"). Examining this rhetorical, material process emphasizes both characteristics of my definition of rhetoric's materiality and provides an answer to RQ ("What is the relationship between the rhetorical force of materiality and embodiment?") and both sub-questions, but sub-question RQa, in particular ("How can theorizing bodies as formations of matter-energy help explain the relationship between the rhetorical force of materiality and embodiment?").

In the fourth chapter, I analyze the sensory architecture of the Regal Nail Salon. In this analysis, I use my definition of rhetoric's materiality to understand how the matter-energy of the sensory architecture structures spaces for the kinaesthetic emergence of what I refer to as the "hand as feminized object" and the relational emergence of the "subversive agentic hand." Investigating this unique rhetorical process illustrates the necessity of including the two key characteristics of my definition of rhetoric's materiality, and how understanding rhetoric as kinaesthetic is critical to understanding the relationships among materiality's rhetorical force and embodiment (the focus of RQ) and power, the focus of RQb ("How is power interwoven into the relationship between the rhetorical force of materiality and embodiment?"). While my analysis of the sensory architecture of the Regal Nail Salon space provides ways of answering my research question and both sub-questions, the significant directional force of white supremacist, patriarchal, capitalist logics of power at work in the Regal Nail Salon space, in particular, makes this analysis especially useful for providing an answer to this sub-question.

In the fifth and final chapter, I synthesize and review the most crucial elements of my development of two conceptual contributions in my dissertation—an expanded definition of rhetoric's materiality and an understanding of rhetoric as kinaesthetic—and how they allow me to answer my research questions, supporting my argument for the importance and need for these conceptual contributions. In addition, I reflect on the significance of these contributions for continued research into rhetoric's materiality, and how this continued research holds value for uncovering ways to better understand, navigate, and evaluate the material, power-infused entanglements that give rise to our embodied existence.

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CHAPTER 2:

THEORIZING RHETORIC'S MATERIALITY

In this dissertation, I draw on rich bodies of literature to answer my primary research question, “What is the relationship between the rhetorical force of materiality and embodiment?” and, in answering this question, ultimately develop and argue for an expanded definition of rhetoric’s materiality as the suasory, mercurial movements of matter-energy, with two distinct characteristics (that I expand on throughout this chapter). My definition extends previous conceptions of rhetoric’s materiality by defining materiality in a way that is more attuned to the relationship among rhetoric’s materiality, embodiment, and power, allowing for an understanding of rhetoric as kinaesthetic. The primary aim of this chapter is to explain how my definition is grounded in and expands previous scholarly work on rhetoric’s materiality, and why my definition and conceptual understanding of rhetoric as kinaesthetic are valuable contributions to this scholarly lineage.

To accomplish this aim in the chapter, I first specify the area of the field of rhetoric that I am extending, differentiating between the study of materialist rhetoric and rhetoric’s materiality (the area of study I contribute to in this dissertation), before discussing the previous and current conceptions of rhetoric’s materiality that my own definition extends. Second, I provide my definition of rhetoric’s materiality and explain the significance of the elements included within this definition. Third, I discuss the conception of rhetoric as kinaesthetic that this definition supports. Fourth and finally, I examine how these two conceptual tools (my expanded definition and understanding of rhetoric as kinaesthetic) allow me to answer my research question and sub-questions in the dissertation.

Differentiating Scholarly Traditions of Rhetorical Study:

Materialist Rhetoric and Rhetoric's Materiality

The differentiating terms “materialist rhetoric” and “rhetoric’s materiality” are offered by rhetorical scholars Brian L. Ott and Greg Dickinson as a way of describing two different traditions of rhetorical scholarship with distinctive focuses and grounding theories.⁴⁰ These terms draw on Carole Blair’s discussion of the troubles of talking about materiality in rhetorical studies, due to the confusion around its usage (a confusion that compelled me to include a clarifying section in my own dissertation, considering the centrality of rhetoric’s materiality to my research).⁴¹ According to Blair, there are two lineages of rhetorical scholarship whose organizing terms are similar in that they use wording related to the material, but refer to the material in two different ways.⁴² She describes these two lineages of rhetorical theory, stating that there is “a traditional one that insists upon considering the material conditions of discourse . . . [and] another that understands rhetoric as itself material.”⁴³ The first lineage Blair mentions, termed “materialist rhetoric” by Ott and Dickinson, I explain below.

Materialist Rhetoric

The study of materialist rhetoric is guided by a theoretical grounding in the philosophy of materialism. The philosophical view of materialism entails a primary focus on the material

⁴⁰ Brian Ott and Greg Dickinson, “Redefining Rhetoric: Why Matter Matters,” *Berlin Journal of Critical Theory* 3, no. 1 (2019): 49.

⁴¹ Carole Blair, “Reflections on Criticism and Bodies: Parables from Public Places,” *Western Journal of Communication* 65, no. 3 (2001): 288.

⁴² These two uses of the term “material” are also described by Richard A. Engnell, who divides the focus of these scholarly traditions according to a study of “secondary” and “primary” materiality, with secondary materiality being the focus of materialist rhetoric and primary materiality being the focus of scholarly work on rhetoric’s materiality. See Richard A. Engnell, “Materiality, Symbolicity, and the Rhetoric of Order: ‘Dialectical Biologism’ as Motive in Burke,” *Western Journal of Communication* 62, no. 1 (1998): 2-3.

⁴³ Blair, “Reflections on Criticism and Bodies,” 288.

conditions from which discourse arises; a focus that reflects what Stuart Hall describes as the “materialist premise,” which asserts that “ideas arise from and reflect the material conditions and circumstances in which they are generated.”⁴⁴ In rhetoric, the materialist premise is most commonly associated with the work of Karl Marx and his base/superstructure model, which posits that the modes of production in society form the economic base (the material conditions), and this economic base becomes the foundation for the cultural superstructure and its circulation of ideas/discourse, that, in turn, have the power to stabilize or challenge the economic base.⁴⁵ In essence, the materialist argument declares that only when we understand the material conditions/economic base of a society at a certain time, can we then truly understand and analyze the construction of the cultural superstructure (including its institutions and ideologies) and how this cultural superstructure also works rhetorically to influence the material conditions of society.

This materialist argument served/s as an important and impactful theoretical lens for rhetorical scholars. This importance is reflected in Michael Calvin McGee’s contribution of a “material theory of rhetoric”⁴⁶ to the field in 1982, that spurred decades of continuing discussion of what it means to understand rhetoric from a materialist perspective. According to McGee’s material theory of rhetoric, rhetoric itself is “*a natural social phenomenon in the context of which symbolic claims are made on the behavior and/or belief of one or more persons* [emphasis in original].”⁴⁷ In this conception of a materialist rhetoric, the use of symbols (on a micro or macro,

⁴⁴ Stuart Hall, “The Problem of Ideology: Marxism without Guarantees,” *The Journal of Communication Inquiry* 10, no. 2 (1986): 31.

⁴⁵ Karl Marx, *Selected Writings*, ed. L. H. Simon (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company, 1994), 211.

⁴⁶ Michael Calvin McGee, “A Materialist’s Conception of Rhetoric,” in *Explorations in Rhetoric: Studies in Honor of Douglas Ehringer*, ed. Ray E. McKerrow (Illinois: Scott, Foresman and Company, 1982), 25.

⁴⁷ McGee, “A Materialist’s Conception of Rhetoric,” 38.

discursive level)—the traditional realm of rhetoric—cannot be properly understood or theorized about without acknowledging the mutually-influential relationship between the material conditions and practices of society and the rhetorical/persuasive exchange of symbols in that society.

While this relationship between the material conditions and practices of society and rhetorical discourse provided an important foundation for further conceptions of materialist rhetorics, McGee’s focus on persuasion as “the primary function of the rhetorical process” was challenged by Ronald Walter Greene in his seminal essay, “Another Materialist Rhetoric.”⁴⁸ For Greene, McGee’s focus on persuasion elided the important relationship between rhetoric and social control. Addressing this relationship, Greene argued for a materialist rhetoric that focuses on how rhetoric functions as a “technology of deliberation,” where rhetorical practices “distribute different elements [like discourse] into a functioning network of power.”⁴⁹ In Greene’s view, rhetorical practices, as technologies of deliberation, are more than just persuasive and co-constitutive of the material/cultural conditions of society. Rhetorical practices “create the conditions of possibility for a governing apparatus to judge and program reality.”⁵⁰ This function of rhetoric, as Greene vividly describes, makes clear the presence and magnitude of rhetoric’s relationship to power and social control. It is this magnitude that underscores continued scholarly work on materialist rhetoric, which has expanded to better understand the material implications and possibilities of rhetorical practices as they function within, reinforce, and potentially remake/fight against the networks of power that shape our everyday lives.

⁴⁸ Ronald Walter Greene, “Another Materialist Rhetoric,” *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 15, no. 1 (1998): 23.

⁴⁹ Greene, “Another Materialist Rhetoric,” 22.

⁵⁰ Greene, “Another Materialist Rhetoric,” 22.

Much more can be said about this view of materialist rhetoric and the important scholarly work extending and discussing materialist rhetorical perspectives, but since this tradition of thought in the field is differentiated from the tradition of thought that focuses on the rhetoric of materiality—the area of the field that my own research draws on and extends—I provide only a brief overview of the central premises and rhetorical implications of materialist rhetorics so that the differences between the two areas of research become clear.⁵¹ With this overview in place, I now turn to the theoretical foundations and development of scholarly work focusing on rhetoric's materiality.

Rhetoric's Materiality

This second tradition of scholarly work in the field of rhetoric that, as Blair states, “sees rhetoric itself as material,” finds its theoretical grounding in new materialism, a distinctly posthumanist philosophy that, of special importance for rhetorical scholars, critiques linguistic and symbolic constructionism.⁵² To explain this critique and how it played a significant role in how rhetorical scholars developed expanded understandings of rhetoric and its material character, I begin by explaining the central assertion and rhetorical implications of the linguistic/symbolic constructionist philosophy that posthumanist/new materialist rhetorical theory challenges.

⁵¹ For more information on the expansion of materialist theories in the field of rhetoric, see Dana L. Cloud, “The Materiality of Discourse: A Challenge to Critical Rhetoric,” *Western Journal of Communication* 58 (1994), 141-163; Matthew Bost and Ronald W. Greene, “Affirming Rhetorical Materialism: Enfolding the Virtual and the Actual,” *Western Journal of Communication* 75, no. 4 (2011), 440-444; Ronald Walter Greene, “Another Materialist Rhetoric,” *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 15 (1998), 21-40; Ronald Walter Greene, “More Materialist Rhetoric,” *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 12 (2015), 414-417; Matthew S. May, “The Imaginative-Power of ‘Another Materialist Rhetoric,’” *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 12, no. 4 (2015), 399-403.

⁵² Blair, “Reflections on Criticism and Bodies,” 288; Ott and Dickinson, “Redefining Rhetoric: Why Matter Matters,” 49.

Rhetoric, Symbolic Constructionism, and the “New Materialist” Turn

From a linguistic/symbolic constructionist perspective, symbols (particularly language) construct our inner and outer reality as humans. According to Susan Heckman, the central argument of a linguistic/symbolic constructionist view is that “language constitutes the reality that we as humans inhabit. It constitutes our social world and the structures that define it. It also constitutes the natural world by providing us with concepts that structure that world.”⁵³

Following this logic, it is of no surprise that the study of rhetoric in communication studies has traditionally focused on symbolic/linguistic discourse as the most important site of rhetorical analysis if we seek to understand our reality as it is constructed through symbolic communication. This belief that symbolic discourse is constitutive of reality underscored the “cultural turn” in rhetorical studies, where dominant analytical approaches and radical constructivist views led to a privileging of discourse, language, culture, and values.⁵⁴

This cultural turn in the field was challenged by the “new materialist” turn, a scholarly shift underscored by the critique of the cultural turn’s linguistic constructionist foundation, asserting that “Language has been granted too much power.”⁵⁵ New materialist thought in rhetoric instead expands beyond the conception of the symbolic as the sole site of rhetorical functioning and offers a more expansive view of rhetoric as a suasive force inherent in the workings of the material world, including the symbols composed of and part of that material world.

⁵³ Susan Heckman, *The Material of Knowledge: Feminist Disclosures* (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2010), 1.

⁵⁴ Diana Coole and Samantha Frost, “Introducing the New Materialisms,” in *New Materialism: Ontology, Agency, and Politics*, ed. Diana Coole and Samantha Frost (North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2010), 3.

⁵⁵ Karen Barad, “Posthumanist Performativity: Toward an Understanding of How Matter Comes to Matter,” *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 28, no. 3 (2011), 801.

This view of rhetoric as inherently material is grounded in the philosophy of new materialist thought, a philosophy (at least, a collection of beliefs that became widely recognized according to this term of categorization in recent decades) that was developed in a number of ways across disciplines. These disciplines include environmental humanities (e.g., Stacy Alaimo, Jefferey Cohen, Astrida Neimanis),⁵⁶ feminist science studies (e.g., Karen Barad, Donna Haraway, Natasha Myers, Kim TallBear),⁵⁷ gender and cultural studies (e.g., Mel Chen, Jasbir Puar, Iris van der Tuin),⁵⁸ affect studies (e.g., Brian Massumi, Kathleen Stewart, Patricia

⁵⁶ See Stacy Alaimo, *Bodily Natures: Science, Environment, and the Material Self*, 1st ed. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010); Stacy Alaimo, *Exposed: Environmental Politics and Pleasures in Posthuman Times* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2016); Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, *Inhuman Nature* (Brooklyn: Punctum Books, 2014); Astrida Neimanis, *Bodies of Water: Posthuman Feminist Phenomenology, Environmental Cultures* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016); Astrida Neimanis, “Stygofaunal Worlds,” *Cultural Politics* 19, no. 1 (2023): 18–38.

⁵⁷ See Karen Barad, “Posthumanist Performativity: Toward an Understanding of How Matter Comes to Matter,” *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 28, no. 3 (2003): 801–831; Karen Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning* (Duke University Press, 2007); Donna Haraway, *The Companion Species Manifesto: Dogs, People, and Significant Otherness* (Chicago: Prickly Paradigm, 2003); Donna Haraway, *When Species Meet* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008); Donna Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene* (North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2016); Natasha Myers, “Animating Mechanism,” *Science and Technology Studies* 19, no. 2 (2006): 6–30; Natasha Myers, “Molecular Embodiments and the Body-Work of Modeling in Protein Crystallography,” *Social Studies of Science* 38, no. 2 (2008): 163–199; Kim TallBear, *Native American DNA: Tribal Belonging and the False Promise of Genetic Science*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013; Kim TallBear, “Standing With and Speaking as Faith: A Feminist-Indigenous Approach to Inquiry,” *Journal of Research Practice* 10, no. 2 (2014); Kim TallBear, “Indigenous Genocide and Reanimation, Settler Apocalypse and Hope,” *Aboriginal Policy Studies* 10, no. 2 (2023).

⁵⁸ See Mel Y. Chen, *Animacies: Biopolitics, Racial Mattering, and Queer Affect* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012); Mel Y. Chen, *Intoxicated: Race, Disability, and Chemical Intimacy across Empire* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2023); Jasbir K. Puar, “Coda: The Cost of Getting Better: Suicide, Sensation, Switchpoints,” *GLQ* 18, no. 1 (2012): 149–158; Jasbir K. Puar, *The Right to Maim: Debility, Capacity, Disability* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2017); Jasbir K. Puar, “Spatial Debilities: Slow Life and Carceral Capitalism in Palestine,” *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 120, no. 2 (2021): 393–414; Iris van der Tuin, “New Feminist Materialisms,” *Women’s Studies International Forum* 34, no. 4 (2011): 271–277; Iris van der Tuin, “Diffraction as a Methodology for Feminist Onto-Epistemology: On Encountering Chantal Chawaf and Posthuman Interpellation,” *Parallax* 20, no. 3 (2014): 231–244.

Clough),⁵⁹ and cultural geography and anthropology (e.g., Kathryn Yusoff, Elizabeth Povinelli).⁶⁰ Considering the range of disciplines and variety of these new materialist theoretical perspectives from them, I follow Sarah E. Truman's terminology of "new materialisms"⁶¹ instead of describing theories of "new materialism," acknowledging this multifaceted development of the category.

Despite the varied characteristics of new materialisms, they have in common the theoretical position that "conceives of [all] matter itself as lively or as exhibiting agency."⁶² This theoretical foundation animates scholarly work focused on understanding rhetoric's materiality; below, I outline significant developments in this definitional lineage, which my own definition extends.

Definitions of Rhetoric's Materiality

The lineage of scholarly work on rhetoric's materiality does not begin with the first rhetorical theorist who explicitly argues for a "new materialist" definition of rhetoric's materiality; instead, we can trace the discussion of rhetoric's materiality to the appearance of

⁵⁹ See Patricia Clough, *Autoaffection: Unconscious Thought in the Age of Teletechnology* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000); Patricia Clough, "The Affective Turn: Political Economy, Biomedicine and Bodies," *Theory, Culture and Society* 25, no. 1 (2008): 1–22; Brian Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002); Brian Massumi, "The Autonomy of Affect," *Cultural Critique* 31, no. 31 (1995): 83–109; Kathleen Stewart, *Ordinary Affects* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007); Kathleen Stewart, "In the World That Affect Proposed," *Cultural Anthropology* 32, no. 2 (2017): 192–98.

⁶⁰ Sarah E. Truman, "Feminist New Materialisms," in *The Sage Encyclopedia of Research Methods*, eds. Paul Atkinson, Sara Delamont, Alexandru Cernat, Joseph W. Sakshaug, and Richard A. Williams (London: Sage Publications Ltd., 2019), 1–15; See Elizabeth Povinelli, *The Cunning of Recognition: Indigenous Alterities and the Making of Australian Multiculturalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002); Elizabeth Povinelli, *The Empire of Love: Toward a Theory of Intimacy, Genealogy, and Carnality* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006); Kathryn Yusoff, "Geologic Subjects: Nonhuman Origins, Geomorphic Aesthetics and the Art of Becoming in Human," *Cultural Geographies* 22, no. 3 (2015): 383–407; Kathryn Yusoff, *A Billion Black Anthropocenes or None* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2018).

⁶¹ Truman, "Feminist New Materialisms," 3.

⁶² Coole and Frost, "Introducing the New Materialisms," 7.

these ideas before the official label of “rhetorical materialisms” that clearly argue for the possibility of conceptualizing rhetoric in terms of its material elements beyond the human. We can recognize the echoes of these ideas of vital materiality going back centuries, of course, but I will highlight a specifically rhetorical theorist that gained recognition for his reflections on rhetoric’s materiality in the contemporary context: George Kennedy.

Kennedy developed an expanded conceptualization of rhetoric’s material nature, which posited that the rhetoric could be used to describe a material, more-than-human persuasion, with or without the presence of human language. In his controversial essay, “A Hoot in the Dark: The Evolution of General Rhetoric,” he examines both how traditional canons of rhetoric could be seen in the sonic communication of animals, and also how the capacity to produce rhetorical communication could be recognized even in nonlinguistic/non-sonic communication.⁶³ The colors of flowers, for example, work rhetorically to attract insects and birds, facilitating pollination.⁶⁴ There is a rhetorical, suasive force at work in this scenario, that traditional symbolic definitions of rhetoric could not account for.

Kennedy accounts for this by suggesting that rhetoric could be defined as a much broader rhetorical force than just a symbolic one; specifically, he defines rhetoric (and, by extension, its material character) as “an energy existing in life.”⁶⁵ Focusing on rhetoric’s materiality as a form of energy, applicable to humans and nonhuman communication, he describes how some “might even seek to identify some quantitative unit of rhetorical energy—call it the ‘rheme’—analogous

⁶³ George A. Kennedy, “A Hoot in the Dark: The Evolution of General Rhetoric,” *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 25, no. 1 (1992): 1–21.

⁶⁴ Kennedy, “A Hoot in the Dark,” 10.

⁶⁵ Kennedy, “A Hoot in the Dark,” 13.

to an erg or volt, by which rhetorical energy could be measured.”⁶⁶ In his work and expanded definition of rhetoric (and its materiality) as a kind of energy intertwined with matter, we see a foundation for new materialist conceptions of rhetoric’s material nature.

Kennedy’s controversial definition of rhetoric (and its fundamental materiality) as a kind of energy had and continues to have a profound influence on the discussions on and development of definitions of rhetoric’s materiality in the field.⁶⁷ This is not to say that all scholars accepted his theorization of rhetoric’s material nature in its entirety; Debra Hawhee, for example, embraced the concept of potential nonhuman, nonlinguistic rhetorics as a kind of material, suasive energy, but critiqued Kennedy’s continued reliance on traditional Aristotelian standards of evaluating rhetoric’s material functioning.⁶⁸ Scholars like Celeste Condit, Diane Davis, and Nathan Stormer agreed with Hawhee’s argument and critique, discarding traditional standards of evaluating rhetoric and theorizing rhetoric’s materiality from a relational, affective perspective.⁶⁹ For Condit, rhetoric’s materiality stems from the very nature of the universe’s composition, consisting of ever-shifting relations between forms of matter-energy. This fundamental composition informs her argument that “all known communication is a matter of physical contact among material particles,” emphasizing rhetoric’s materiality as relational in nature.⁷⁰ Davis further emphasizes this relational and affective nature, arguing that there is an “an originary (or

⁶⁶ Kennedy, “A Hoot in the Dark,” 2.

⁶⁷ Alex C. Parrish, *Adaptive Rhetoric: Evolution, Culture, and the Art of Persuasion* (London: Routledge, 2014); Ehren Helmut Pflugfelder, “Rhetoric’s New Materialism: From Micro-Rhetoric to Microbrew,” *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 45, no. 5 (2015): 441–61.

⁶⁸ Debra Hawhee, “Toward a Bestial Rhetoric,” *Philosophy & Rhetoric* 44, no. 1 (2011): 81–87.

⁶⁹ Celeste Condit, “The Materiality of Coding: Rhetoric, Genetics, and the Matter of Life.,” in *Rhetorical Bodies*, ed. Jack Selzer and Sharon Crowley (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1999), 326–56; Diane Davis, *Inessential Solidarity: Rhetoric and Foreigner Relations* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2010).

⁷⁰ Condit, “The Materiality of Coding,” 328.

preoriginary) rhetoricity—an affectability or persuadability” already existing in our material relations with other entities in the world.⁷¹ Davis’s view of rhetoric’s materiality acknowledges the possibility and presence of suasory nonhuman rhetorics, and extends an understanding of rhetoric’s materiality as fundamentally entwined with our affective experiences of the world in relation to others (what Stormer theorizes in terms of affective, relational networks).⁷²

The increasing attention to the role of affect in defining rhetoric’s materiality influenced Jenny Edbauer Rice’s call for rhetoricians to more deeply engage and build upon the work of scholars in Critical Affect Studies (CAS), defined by Diane Keeling as “the interdisciplinary study of affect and its mediating force in everyday life.”⁷³ One of the most foundational concepts in this research area that influenced the study of rhetoric’s materiality is Brian Massumi’s understanding of affect as “a degree of intensity that is prior to an indexed or articulated referent;” essentially, affects as visceral reactions (resulting from our human interaction with the world) that we experience prior to our linguistic description of and meaning we ascribe to them. This understanding of rhetoric’s materiality as affective, relational, and existing before and beyond the bounds of human symbols or language inspired further considerations of how rhetoric’s materiality functions within our relational environments.

Specifically, this understanding of rhetoric’s materiality as affective, relational, and pre-discursive underscored the growing focus on the suasory nature of material-symbolic interactions and our affective experiences of these interactions in our environments. Jenny Edbauer describes

⁷¹ Davis, *Inessential Solidarity*, 2.

⁷² Davis, *Inessential Solidarity*; Nathan Stormer, “Articulation: A Working Paper on Rhetoric and *Taxis*,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 90, no. 3 (2004): 257–84.

⁷³ Jenny Edbauer Rice, “The New ‘New’: Making a Case for Critical Affect Studies,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 94, no. 2 (2008): 200–21; Diane Marie Keeling, “Posthumanist Rhetoric: Theory and Criticism for the More-than-Human” (PhD dissertation, University of Colorado at Boulder, 2012), 31.

these rhetorical, material-symbolic environments as “ecologies” composed of social networks through which affects circulate.⁷⁴ These networks are simultaneously material (and, as a result, affective) and discursive. This idea and the recognition of rhetoric’s materiality as intertwined with symbolic, social elements in environments is echoed in rhetorical studies of embodied experiences of film, music, mobile audio-visual media, social interactions, built spaces, and more.⁷⁵

These studies of rhetoric’s material and discursive nature influenced the development of Brian L. Ott and Greg Dickinson’s expanded definition of rhetoric (acknowledging its material nature), which provided a much-needed theoretical tool for continued scholarly study of

⁷⁴ Jenny Edbauer Rice, “Unframing Models of Public Distribution: From Rhetorical Situation to Rhetorical Ecologies,” *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 35, no. 4 (2005): 5–24.

⁷⁵ As just a small sampling of this vast area of research, see Carole Blair, “Reflections on Criticism and Bodies: Parables from Public Places,” *Western Journal of Communication* 65, no. 3 (2001): 271–94; Michelle Comstock and Mary E. Hocks, “The Sounds of Climate Change: Sonic Rhetoric in the Anthropocene, the Age of Human Impact,” *Rhetoric Review* 35, no. 2 (2016): 165–75; D. Robert DeChaine, “Affect and Embodied Understanding in Musical Experience,” *Text and Performance Quarterly* 22, no. 2 (2002): 79–98; Greg Dickinson, Brian L. Ott, and Eric Aoki, “Spaces of Remembering and Forgetting: The Reverent Eye/I at the Plains Indian Museum,” *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 3, no. 1 (2006): 27–47; Greg Dickinson and Giorgia Aiello, “Being Through There Matters: Materiality, Bodies, and Movement in Urban Communication Research,” 2016, 1294–1308; Greg Dickinson, “Space, Place, and the Textures of Rhetorical Criticism,” *Western Journal of Communication* 84, no. 3 (2020): 297–313; Justin Eckstein, “Sensing School Shootings,” *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 37, no. 2 (2020): 161–73; Amanda Nell Edgar, “The Rhetoric of Auscultation: Corporeal Sounds, Mediated Bodies, and Abortion Rights,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 103, no. 4 (2017): 350–71; Kristie S Fleckenstein, “Materiality’s Rhetorical Work: The Nineteenth-Century Parlor Stereoscope and the Second-Naturing of Vision,” in *Rhetoric, through Everyday Things*, ed. Scot Barnett and Casey Andrew Boyle (Tuscaloosa: University Alabama Press, 2016), 125–38; Joshua Gunn, “Maranatha,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 98, no. 4 (November 1, 2012): 359–85; Jennifer Lin LeMesurier, “White Tears,” *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 54, no. 1 (2024): 6–19; Amy J. Lueck, “Haunting Women’s Public Memory: Ethos, Space, and Gender in the Winchester Mystery House,” *Rhetoric Review* 40, no. 2 (2021): 107–22; Jaishikha Nautiyal, “Becoming a *Detour de Force* : Dehierarchizing Directionality and Mobility in Rhetorical Research,” *Women’s Studies in Communication* 41, no. 4 (2018): 430–40; Brian L. Ott, “The Visceral Politics of *V for Vendetta* : On Political Affect in Cinema,” *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 27, no. 1 (2010): 39–54; Brian L. Ott and Diane Marie Keeling, “Cinema and Choric Connection: *Lost in Translation* as Sensual Experience,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 97, no. 4 (2011): 363–86; Brian L. Ott, Hamilton Bean, and Kellie Marin, “On the Aesthetic Production of Atmospheres: The Rhetorical Workings of Biopower at The CELL,” *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 13, no. 4 (2016): 346–62; Raka Shome, “Space Matters: The Power and Practice of Space,” *Communication Theory* 13, no. 1 (2003): 39–56; Kate Siegfried, “Making Settler Colonialism Concrete: Agentive Materialism and Habitational Violence in Palestine,” *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 17, no. 3 (2020): 267–84; Luke Winslow, “‘Not Exactly a Model of Good Hygiene’: Theorizing an Aesthetic of Disgust in the Occupy Wall Street Movement,” *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 34, no. 3 (2017): 278–92.

rhetoric's materiality and how we might understand its relationship to affect and relationality, as well as rhetoric's symbolic and discursive qualities. This definition recognizes the complex nature of rhetoric and its materiality, incorporating a traditional understanding of rhetoric as symbolic and discursive, while also embracing an understanding of rhetoric as simultaneously material. Importantly, Ott and Dickinson's explanation of rhetoric's material character provides a conceptual lens that brings together and draws attention to the multifaceted qualities of rhetoric's materiality that previous rhetorical scholars have studied.

Ott and Dickinson's conceptualization of rhetoric (and its material nature) as a capacity of "thing-symbols," through their perceivable aesthetic qualities, to generate affect and invite presence effects emphasizes a number of characteristics important for rhetorical scholars to consider. First, the term "thing-symbol" indicates an understanding of rhetoric as extending beyond the realm of the human, recognizing the rhetorical force of other formations of matter-energy (that need not be produced by humans). Second, the definition recognizes the crucial role of affect as generated by and part of our understanding of rhetoric's materiality. Third, the definition draws attention to the relational and embodied facets of rhetoric's materiality. From this perspective, our embodied experiences of affect in any particular moment are generated by the suasive force of other formations of matter-energy in our environment. The ever-changing nature of our relational environment and our embodied experience of affect, reflected in the use of the phrase "in a particular space-time," directs our focus to a fourth characteristic of rhetoric's materiality: the dynamic, agentic nature of matter-energy itself.

The emphasis on these characteristics of rhetoric's materiality, conceptualized and explored within rhetorical studies over time, underscores the utility of Ott and Dickinson's definition of rhetoric including its materiality. However, I believe an explicit and expanded

definition of rhetoric's materiality is needed, one that emphasizes not only these characteristics, but also how power is an inextricable part of the rhetoric's materiality, and how rhetoric's materiality gives rise to kinaesthetic presence effects in the body. Previous and current definitions of rhetoric's materiality, or rhetoric and its material nature, were useful in the process of my dissertation research, but these did not provide an adequate conceptual foundation for me to fully answer my research questions. Because of this, I began what Keeling describes as an "inquiry into conceptualization," a scholarly process that arises "when disciplinary tools for theorizing rhetoric are not readily reconfigurable for the 'new' questions we must ask."⁷⁶ Through this process, I developed an expanded definition of rhetoric's materiality that enabled me to discover answers to my research questions, a definition that addresses the integral element of power in understanding materiality, and that allows for an expanded understanding of kinaesthetic presence effects.

While many rhetorical scholars have considered power in relation to material rhetoric, definitions of rhetoric's materiality have generally left out any explicit mention of power, instead beginning with a definition of rhetoric's materiality, and then later considering how power functions in relation to the materiality of rhetorical "texts." While this approach can and has been used to generate valuable research, it also implicitly reaffirms the idea that power is only a conceptual lens through which we can analyze rhetoric's materiality, rather than an inextricable characteristic of rhetoric's materiality. Using a definition of rhetoric's materiality that does not explicitly consider power at the foundational level, while still useful in many areas of rhetorical inquiry, prevents us from more deeply understanding the relationship among rhetoric's materiality, power, and embodiment. My definition of rhetoric's materiality is a conceptual tool

⁷⁶ Diane Marie Keeling, "Of Turning and Tropes," *Review of Communication* 16, no. 4 (2016): 328.

that can help us achieve this deeper understanding. In the next section, I detail the foundational components of my definition that, together, allow us to do this.

Extending the Lineage: Expanding a Definition of Rhetoric's Materiality

My expanded definition of rhetoric's materiality, like the definitions before my own, is built upon a new materialist foundation. The core new materialist stance that argues that matter-energy is lively and agentic is reflected in my grounding definition of rhetoric's materiality as the *suasory, mercurial movements of matter-energy*. This definition is succinct but is informed by two characteristics that explain the multifaceted nature of rhetoric's materiality that I analyze in this dissertation. The value of my definition for rhetorical scholars lies in the expansion of materiality's definition to include all of these characteristics, which, as I will demonstrate in my dissertation analyses, provide insight into materiality's rhetorical nature and its connection to power and embodiment. Below I reintroduce this definition:

Expanded definition of materiality: *rhetoric's materiality as suasory, mercurial movements of matter-energy.*

Two characteristics:

1. *Matter-energy moves in dynamic, lively ways, and our embodied experience and understanding of these suasory movements is made possible through affect.*
2. *The suasory movements of matter-energy are always influenced by directional lineages of power, but never predetermined by them.*

Because these characteristics are central to my definition of rhetoric's materiality, I will explain both in this section, separating the first and second clauses of each characteristic for clarity.

First Characteristic, Clause One: "Matter-energy moves in dynamic, lively ways."

Following previous foundational scholarship, my definition begins from the idea that all forms of matter-energy are dynamic and have agency regardless of specifically human

interventions in nonhuman forms of matter-energy.⁷⁷ In this view, matter-energy is always already infused with vitality and agency (agency defined as “responsivity . . . the capacity to engage with other agents and respond by doing [or not doing, as the case may be] something”),⁷⁸ a characteristic that describes the matter-energy that composes human and nonhuman formations.⁷⁹ More than this, human and nonhuman formations of matter-energy are intertwined with and co-compose the material flows of our world.⁸⁰

The material cosmos of which all beings are a part is inherently dynamic, replete with processual change and becoming, and at the same time, is characterized by temporal periods of both material equilibrium and disequilibrium.⁸¹ As a result, collections of matter-energy in the cosmos cannot be conceptualized as static, permanent “things,” “mere matter.”⁸² Formations of matter-energy always have a vitality that enables matter-energy to exceed the “forms imposed on it”⁸³ and our labels for these forms.

The vitality and agency of matter-energy formations (that exceeds the forms/labels we impose on these formations) supports a rejection of anthropocentrism and the anthropocentric binary of human/nonhuman, in particular. From this posthumanist, new materialist perspective—following the previous work of many Indigenous materialisms, which already presumed/s the

⁷⁷ Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987).

⁷⁸ Astrida Neimanis and Rachel Loewen Walker, “Weathering: Climate Change and the ‘Thick Time’ of Transcorporeality,” *Hypatia* 29, no. 3 (2014): 558–75.

⁸⁰ Donna Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016).

⁸¹ Connolly, “The ‘New Materialism’ and the Fragility of Things,” 400.

⁸² Coole and Frost, “Introducing the New Materialisms,” 7.

⁸³ Connolly, “The ‘New Materialism’ and the Fragility of Things,” 400.

world is filled with nonhuman agency and material connections not delineated by the human/nonhuman binary⁸⁴—because all material things are composed of flows of matter-energy, including humans, there is no fundamental distinction between human and nonhuman matter.⁸⁵ Stacy Alaimo refers to this intermingling of human and nonhuman matter as intercorporeality, that “emerges from a sense of fleshy permeability,”⁸⁶ “eroding a human-centric understanding of the world.”⁸⁷ This is not to say that any differences between human and nonhuman matter are nonexistent, but that these differences stem from humans being matter-energy formations that are “composed of a *particularly rich and complex* collection of materiality”⁸⁸ and potentially share in a disposition to “enact agency in particular ways,”⁸⁹ rather than being a fundamentally different substance. This understanding does not “erase the human subject,”⁹⁰ but instead recognizes the intimately intertwined nature of nonhuman and human matter-energy, offering a conception of the materiality of bodies that avoids placing humans at the traditional, anthropocentric center of inquiries into materiality and academic work, in general.

Productive academic inquiries into rhetoric’s materiality also require an acknowledgment of our positionality within the material cosmos, and how this shapes how we understand both

⁸⁴ Rosiek et al., “The New Materialisms and Indigenous Theories,” 336.

⁸⁵ Jane Bennett, *The Force of Things: Steps Toward an Ecology of Matter*, *Political Theory* 32, no. 3 (2004): 347–372.

⁸⁶ Stacy Alaimo, *Exposed: Environmental Politics and Pleasures in Posthuman Times* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2016), 78.

⁸⁷ Stephanie Springgay, “‘How to Write as Felt’ Touching Transmaterialities and More-Than-Human Intimacies,” *Studies in Philosophy and Education* 38, no. 1 (February 2019): 59.

⁸⁸ Bennett, “The Force of Things,” 339.

⁸⁹ Rosiek et al., “The New Materialisms and Indigenous Theories,” 342.

⁹⁰ Connolly, “The ‘New Materialism’ and the Fragility of Things,” 400.

materiality and its rhetorical force (on humans). Our research and knowledge of rhetoric's materiality is always experienced through sense perception and the resulting affects in the body. Below, I explain this element of my definition of rhetoric's materiality.

First Characteristic, Clause Two: "...our embodied experience and understanding of these suatory movements is made possible through affect."

This second clause is intimately connected to the first, because the dynamic, lively, and often unpredictable nature of the movements of materiality becomes apparent when we recognize that our study of materiality is always experienced through affect. As humans and rhetorical critics, in particular, any knowledge of materiality's rhetorical qualities is achieved through our embodied processing of the mercurial movements of the material world of which we are a part. Our bodies register the movements of matter-energy flowing through, composing, and changing our own matter-energy, these movements eliciting our affective reactions (as many queer feminist affect theorists have noted).⁹¹ We cannot separate affect and our experience of materiality; our understanding of rhetoric's materiality requires consideration of how the movements of matter-energy are not only changing, fickle, lively, unpredictable, but also generative of embodied presence/kinaesthetic effects as we study them as rhetorical critics.⁹² Building on previous rhetorical definitions of rhetoric's materiality, this element of my definition

⁹¹ See Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (New York: Routledge, 2004); Lisa Blackman, *Immaterial Bodies: Affect, Embodiment, Mediation* (London: Sage, 2012); Mel Y. Chen, *Animacies: Biopolitics, Racial Mattering, and Queer Affect* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012); Anne Cvetkovich, *An Archive of Feelings: Trauma, Sexuality, and Lesbian Public Cultures* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003); Jasmir K. Puar, 2009. "Prognosis Time: Towards a Geopolitics of Affect, Debility and Capacity," *Women and Performance: A Journal of Feminist Theory* 19, no. 2 (2009): 161–172.

⁹² Nathan Stormer, "Rhetoric by Accident," *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 53, no. 4 (2020): 353–76; Ott and Dickinson, "Redefining Rhetoric," 49.

explicitly acknowledges the role of affect in making possible our human experience of the rhetorical nature of materiality and its connection to embodiment.

As I demonstrate in the analyses of this dissertation, the expanded definition of rhetoric's materiality I offer is able to facilitate a better understanding of the rhetorical nature of materiality and its connection to embodiment (answering RQ) in large part because of this emphasis on the affective foundation for our embodied experience of rhetoric's materiality. In my later analyses in chapters three and four, I illustrate how embodied analysis attuned to the affective workings of materiality and informed by theory not only reveals characteristics of materiality, but also provides insight into how these affective resonances of matter-energy can be seen as particular kinds of rhetorical "presence effects"⁹³ that are distinctly kinaesthetic.

In this way, my conception of rhetoric as distinctly kinaesthetic expands Ott and Dickinson's definition of rhetoric and explanation of its materiality. As stated in the preceding chapter, they define rhetoric as "*the capacity of the thing-symbol—via its aesthetic qualities and signifying practices—to generate affect and discourse, whose intertwined sensory and cognitive processing elicit presence and meaning effects in a particular space-time*" [emphasis in original].⁹⁴ According to this definition, our experience of materiality, experienced through our sensory processing of affect (indicated in the second clause of my first characteristic of materiality as I define it), elicits presence effects. In Ott and Dickinson's use of the word "presence effects," they refer to "presence" as it is conceived by Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht: presence as a "spatial relationship to the world and its objects."⁹⁵ Based on this conceptual

⁹³ Ott and Dickinson, "Redefining Rhetoric," 49.

⁹⁴ Ott and Dickinson, "Redefining Rhetoric," 54.

⁹⁵ Gumbrecht, *Production of Presence*, 176.

foundation, they define presence effects as “material inducements to altered bodily states activated by spatially proximate forms of matter-energy.”⁹⁶ Essentially, presence effects describes the suasory capacity of thing-symbols (composed of matter-energy) to elicit bodily states in relation to the formations of matter-energy within the surrounding environment. For example, the affective impact of a baseball coming toward your body would most likely influence your bodily relationship with the material world in your immediate environment. Maybe you would move away, maybe you would grab a baseball glove and catch the ball. In any case, the movement of the ball, its interaction(s) with and through the air and eventually with your body, would induce a particular bodily state in relation to your rapidly changing environment. Here, we can see just one example of materiality’s rhetorical force and the creation of relational presence effects through this force.

However, there is more depth to be explored with these presence effects. The body and its relation the material world is complex, and it is this complexity that leads me to expand a conceptualization of rhetoric as not only producing one kind of presence effect—a relational presence effect that constitutes our embodied relation to other formations of matter-energy in a particular environment—but also a kinaesthetic effect that structures a visceral sense of our own bodies as formations of matter-energy. For example, in the previous scenario of a baseball flying through the air toward your face, you would likely experience a shift in presence effects involving your embodied relation to the baseball, but also involving your embodied relation to and awareness of your own body, what I refer to as a kinaesthetic presence effect. Before perceiving the baseball’s movement, you might have been peacefully walking through the park, your embodied awareness directed toward the feel of the sun warming the skin of your face and

⁹⁶ Ott and Dickinson, “Redefining Rhetoric,” 76.

the sensation of the light breeze playing with your hair. After you perceive the baseball flying toward you, though, this kinaesthetic awareness of your embodied self might drastically change. The potentially dangerous movement of matter-energy might invite the kinaesthetic presence effect of you suddenly becoming hyper-aware of the location of your hands (a kinaesthetic presence effect), activating them to protect your face (an external-relational presence effect). Your kinaesthetic awareness of your face also might change, the baseball's material, rhetorical force evoking a shift in embodied attention away from your skin's molecular interaction with the sun to the way your eyes now feel dry, stinging as you squint to view the baseball moving through the air. This is just one example of how kinaesthetic effects shape our ever-changing experience of inhabiting a body, producing a visceral awareness of certain physiological parts of the "self" as part of a material formation that becomes labeled a "body."

My theoretical addition of a second kind of presence effect—a kinaesthetic effect—recognizes this visceral relation to what we experience as our body, a significant element of human embodiment that rhetorical scholars often devote less attention to.

This understanding of kinaesthetic effects is supported by my definition of rhetoric's materiality and its two characteristics, particularly the first characteristic that considers the mediating role of affect in materiality's suasive force in/with/through the "body." The other element of materiality's rhetorical force producing kinaesthetic effects—how it enables ways of experiencing and understanding oneself as a material "body"—is further supported by the second characteristic of materiality that I offer in my definition, that *the suasive movements of matter-energy are always influenced by directional lineages of power, but never predetermined by them.* In the following section, I discuss the two clauses of this second characteristic and their importance as part of my definition of rhetoric's materiality.

Second Characteristic, Clause One: “The suatory movements of matter-energy are always influenced by directional lineages of power...”

As discussed previously, materiality, as the mercurial movements of matter-energy, is characterized by vital agency and experienced by humans through mediating affects in the body (producing presence and, in particular, kinaesthetic effects). At the same time, the mercurial movements of matter-energy that compose the material environments of which we are a part and co-construct are always influenced by directional lineages of materialized power. These material environments (described as “objects—bodies—spaces”⁹⁷ by Carol A. Taylor, emphasizing the shared matter-energy of these environments) come to be particular kinds of matter-energy formations through the transtemporal influence of materialized power structures. For example, in the material environment of a courtroom, the judge’s elevated seat, positioned higher in the space than the seats of the audience, defendants, lawyers, etc., forcing the bodies below to physically attend to a materialized hierarchy of authority, did not just come to be that particular formation of matter-energy without any influence. This and all material environments are shaped by materialized histories of power structures that permeate compositions of matter-energy; in this case, the judicial power of the State, a power that is both communicated through language and visual symbols and materialized in the space of the courtroom. Even when the movements of matter-energy composing environments are not explicitly or intentionally directed and influenced, because of the fundamentally intertwined nature of formations of matter-energy on small- and large-scale levels, there is no material environment that is completely closed off from the workings of materialized power over time.

⁹⁷ Carol A. Taylor, “Objects, Bodies and Space: Gender and Embodied Practices of Mattering in the Classroom,” *Gender and Education* 25, no. 6 (2013): 689.

No matter what the space, the movements of matter-energy always “operate in relation to power”⁹⁸ and power’s directional force.

This characteristic of materiality, that *the suatory movements of matter-energy are always influenced by directional lineages of power*, is particularly important to consider when analyzing the rhetorical force of materiality and its relationship to embodiment (RQ). The rhetorical force of materiality that produces kinaesthetic effects—ways of understanding ourselves as a body in general, and a particular body in relation to other formations of matter-energy—is always influenced by lineages of materialized power that invite certain kinaesthetic effects. The way we understand the boundaries of “our” bodies and the kind of bodies we have is a result of materiality itself always being influenced by materialized power structures. For, as Elizabeth Grosz states:

. . . [the body is] a concrete, material, animate organization of flesh, organs, nerves, and skeletal structure, which are given a unity, cohesiveness, and form through the psychical and social inscription of the body’s surface. The body is, so to speak, organically, biologically ‘incomplete’; it is indeterminate, amorphous, a series of uncoordinated potentialities that require social triggering, ordering, and long-term ‘administration.’⁹⁹

This “incomplete” body becomes recognizable to us as a particular body—“my” body— through the social and sensory triggers in material environments, the movements of matter-energy composing these triggers influenced by the directional force of power structures that underlie these directed movements of matter-energy.

More than this, the ability to recognize ourselves as embodied subjects depends on sensory-social triggers in these environments, material environments of which our material body

⁹⁸ Kate Siegfried, “Making Settler Colonialism Concrete: Agentive Materialism and Habitational Violence in Palestine,” *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 17, no. 3 (2020): 273.

⁹⁹ Elizabeth Grosz, *Space, Time, and Perversion: Essays on the Politics of Bodies* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 104.

is a part.¹⁰⁰ When I walk down a street in downtown Denver during the day, my feet tread along concrete sidewalks materialized several decades ago to allow for pedestrian (sometimes only normatively-abled pedestrians, when the sidewalk's width does not allow for the movement of wheelchairs, itself an illustration of how logics of power become materialized and direct the movements of matter-energy in certain [unequal] ways) travel for the purpose of working/producing profit, shopping, socializing. As I move, my understanding of my body as white is unconsciously reaffirmed by the perceptual intake of visual triggers of the material bodies around me, and the fact that the bodies I recognize as white compose the majority of bodies moving through this environment further solidifies my understanding of my body as “normal” or able to be socially recognized as belonging in this space.

This continual interaction among the movements of matter-energy, social inscription/reinscription, and the emergence of kinaesthetic effects (embodiment as a “normal” body at ease within the space) occurs in the present, but also illustrates an important transtemporal aspect of the first clause in the second characteristic of materiality (*the suatory movements of matter-energy are always influenced by directional lineages of power*). While the movements of matter-energy in an environment may occur and be considered in a particular moment, the flows of matter-energy composing that environment are the result of past, often repeated and normalized, movements of matter-energy influenced by power structures. In my example, I am able to move through most, if not all, public spaces of the material environment of Downtown Denver because the constructions of matter-energy enabling easy movement, like sidewalks, were influenced by ableist power structures. I experience my body as a composition

¹⁰⁰ Greg Dickinson, *Suburban Dreams: Imagining and Building the Good Life* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2015), 106.

of matter-energy at ease, comfortably “normal,” in large part because institutional and cultural practices of exclusion and violence have historically been perpetrated against certain bodies marked as non-white and worked to prevent these marked bodies from co-constructing this material environment in equal numbers. Because of this transtemporal characteristic of power’s influence on the continual composition of our material environments, I include the phrase “lineages of power” to draw attention to this quality. This transtemporal quality is important for understanding materiality’s relationship to power in general, but also understanding the relationship between the rhetorical force of materiality and embodiment specifically. For, as Gayle Salomon states, “the body is always *subtended by its history*,” ever entangled with/in larger structures of power.¹⁰¹ We may be aware of our bodies in the present, but these particular kinaesthetic effects are made possible through the inextricable nature of materiality and the directional influence of materialized lineages of power.

However, this inextricable nature does not mean that, in any sensory architecture (whether they are particularly oppressive/problematic or not) the movements of matter-energy, our affective perception of them, and the kinaesthetic effects produced, are set in stone. As I reference in the second clause of the second characteristic of materiality as I define it, movements of matter-energy are never predetermined by the directional lineages of power that influence them.

Second Characteristic, Clause Two: “The suasory movements of matter-energy are always influenced by directional lineages of power, but never predetermined by them.”

¹⁰¹ Gayle Salomon, “Boys of the Lex: Transgenderism and Rhetorics of Materiality,” *GLQ* 12, no. 4 (2006): 583; Sushmita Chatterjee, “Beefing Yoga: Meat, Corporeality, and Politics,” in *Meat!: A Transnational Analysis*, ed. Sushmita Chatterjee and Banu Subramaniam (Durham: Duke University Press, 2021), 96–120.

As I discussed in the previous section, the movements of matter-energy are always influenced by lineages of power, lineages of power that hold a directional force in material environments over time. However, there is an important rejoinder to this characteristic of materiality: the movements of matter-energy are never predetermined by the directional force of these lineages of power. For, when we consider the first clause of the first characteristic of materiality—*Matter-energy moves in dynamic, lively ways*—emphasizing the unrestrainable and mercurial nature of the movements of matter-energy, we can understand how the second clause of the second characteristic—*The suatory movements of matter-energy are always influenced by directional lineages of power, but never predetermined by them*—holds true. While a bodily formation of matter-energy may depend upon the material environments of which it is a part (that are always influenced by materialized lineages of power) for the kinaesthetic experiences of embodiment, the dynamic movements of matter-energy composing that environment can never be completely contained within the boundaries of past and present directional influences of power. It is materiality’s vital, agentic nature that creates the possibility of present and future change, the possibility of escaping the stranglehold of materialized lineages of power.

The dynamic, agentic character of materiality that allows for the flows of matter-energy to follow, reshape, or exceed the directional influence of power is particularly salient when analyzing materiality’s rhetorical force and its relationship to embodiment. For example, in the previous example of my own body as a material formation (that I come to inhabit as a certain type of “normal” body while moving through downtown Denver) materialized lineages of power in that environment influence but do not predetermine the movements of matter-energy composing the space that result in these kinaesthetic effects. In my movement through the material space, my kinaesthetic awareness of my body as a “normal” body, a material formation

at ease, changes when I encounter sensory triggers that remind me that I inhabit a “woman’s” body. There are visual triggers of dresses in women’s clothing store windows that mirror my own dress, my bodily awareness now being directed to the pleasant feel of the dress’s fabric that drapes across my body. There are also the sensory forces of the leering gazes of certain men (as they avoid the recognition of sameness that meeting my eyes might bring) reminding me that the material formation of my body is, indeed, still a “woman’s” body, a composition of matter-energy marked as a site of consumption and violence.¹⁰² Moving through the street, encountering other movements of matter-energy like “catcalls,” I continue to carry the visceral weight and awareness of what a woman’s body means—and feels—like. The rhetorical movements of matter-energy inviting this kinaesthetic effect—the visual flows of objectifying gazes and the sonic forces of catcalling—are influenced by the directional force of patriarchal power, and the continued rematerialization of this structural power (in the form of stares and catcalls) seems to be assured as long as these particular men have a desire to do so.

However, as the second characteristic of my definition of rhetoric’s materiality states, the suatory, mercurial movements of matter-energy, while influenced by the directional force of power lineages, are not determined by them. From one moment to the next, there is the potential for matter-energy to exceed the bounds of this influence and give rise to different kinaesthetic effects. As Edmund Husserl writes, “perception . . . is related only to the present. But this present is always meant as having an endless past behind it and an open future before it.”¹⁰³ In one

¹⁰² The primary use of vision and power to use this perceptual capacity in certain ways is itself influenced by its own masculinist, Western, colonial history: see Jaishikha Nautiyal, “Becoming a *Detour de Force*: Dehierarchizing Directionality and Mobility in Rhetorical Research,” *Women’s Studies in Communication* 41, no. 4 (2018): 430–40; Megan Burke, *When Time Warps: The Lived Experience of Gender, Race, and Sexual Violence* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2019).

¹⁰³ Edmund Husserl, *The Crisis of the European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology: An Introduction to Phenomenological Philosophy*, trans. David Carr (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1970).

moment a man may take in a breath, filling his lungs in preparation for the creation of a movement of matter-energy composing a “catcall,” a sonic trigger that might evoke a kinaesthetic awareness of my body as a feminized, vulnerable body. In the next moment, though, the matter-energy co-constructing the material environment around me (of which I am a part) can disrupt or prevent a lineage of patriarchal power from materializing in this sonic trigger. The sound of the light rail or bus moving by the street can prevent this sonic trigger, cutting off the directive pull of patriarchal power. The kinaesthetic effect of the potential catcall is prevented, and there is the possibility of the rhetorical force of materiality to support the emergence of embodiment in different or new ways. While this is a small example, it illustrates how the first characteristic of materiality, that *matter-energy moves in dynamic, lively ways, and our embodied experience and understanding of these suasory movements is made possible through affect*, enables the rejoinder of the second characteristic, that the suasory movements of matter-energy, while always influenced by directional lineages of power, are *never predetermined by them*.

Understanding Rhetoric as Kinaesthetic

This and the other characteristics that compose my definition of rhetoric’s materiality, a definition attuned to the relationship among rhetoric’s materiality, power, and embodiment, also allows for an expanded understanding of the presence effects that result from rhetoric’s materiality. Scholarly considerations of our affective experiences of the material world and the resulting presence effects have largely focused on the production of embodiment as the production of certain ways of understanding of our bodily relation to the matter-energy around us. This is undoubtedly a crucial area of research in the study of rhetoric’s materiality. However, research on how rhetoric’s materiality enables affective experiences that invite particular embodied relations to our physiological-cultural “selves,” a category of presence effects that I

refer to as kinaesthetic effects, is equally important, especially when we recognize power as a fundamental characteristic of rhetoric's materiality. Examining the relationship among rhetoric's materiality, embodiment, and power, then, entails a conceptualization of rhetoric as kinaesthetic.

This conceptualization of rhetoric as kinaesthetic relies upon a specific definition of kinaesthetic; in this dissertation, I use the term “kinaesthetic” to refer to a sense of one's own embodiment at any point in time. While not commonly used in the field of rhetorical studies, this term has an interdisciplinary history spanning over a century. Because the term has been defined in various ways throughout this history and has largely become synonymous with the term “proprioception,” I will contextualize the definition that I use in this dissertation and explain why the term kinaesthetic is best suited for my characterization of rhetoric.¹⁰⁴

Defining Kinaesthetic Embodiment: An Interdisciplinary Venture

The theorization of kinaesthesia is a scholarly project that expanded and continues to expand across interdisciplinary boundaries, its value recognized in diverse fields such as physiology, neurology, psychology, anatomy, sport and exercise medicine, phenomenology, dance and movement studies, art, architecture, and hypermedia.¹⁰⁵ This important and vast

¹⁰⁴ Francis J. Clark and Kenneth W. Horch, “Kinesthesia,” in *Handbook of Perception and Human Performance*, eds. Kenneth R. Boff, Lloyd Kaufman, and James P. Thomas (New York: Wiley, 1986), 11-62; Richard A. Schmidt, *Motor Learning and Performance: From Principles to Practice* (Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics Books, 1991); Frank Steinicke et al., “Perceptually Inspired Methods for Naturally Navigating Virtual Worlds” (New York: ACM, 2011); Barry C. Stillman, “Making Sense of Proprioception: The Meaning of Proprioception, Kinaesthesia and Related Terms,” *Physiotherapy* 88, no. 11 (2002): 667–76.

¹⁰⁵ Jia Han et al., “Assessing Proprioception: A Critical Review of Methods,” *Journal of Sport and Health Science* 5, no. 1 (2016): 80–90; Esen Gökçe Özdamar, “Kinaesthetic Perception and Architecture,” *Barcelona Investigación Arte Creación* 9, no. 3 (2021). For further reading on the use of “kinaesthetic” in various disciplines, see William A. Cohen, “Kinaesthesia and Touching Reality,” *19: Interdisciplinary Studies in the Long Nineteenth Century* 19, no. 19 (2014): 1-27; Louise Dupraz et al., “Involvement of Visual Signals in Kinaesthesia: A Virtual Reality Study,” *Neuroscience Letters* 786 (August 2022): 136814; Edmund Husserl, *Thing and Space: Lectures of 1907*, Edmund Husserl Collected Works (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1997); Harpa Ragnarsdottir et al., “The Effect of a Neck-Specific Exercise Program on Cervical Kinesthesia for Patients with Chronic Whiplash-Associated Disorders: A Case-Control Study,” *BMC Musculoskeletal Disorders* 25, no. 1 (2024): 346–346; Roger Smith, *Kinaesthesia in the Psychology, Philosophy and Culture of Human Experience*, 1st ed. (United Kingdom: Taylor and Francis, 2023).

interdisciplinary theorization began with the creation of the term by anatomist and pathologist Henry Bastian in 1887.¹⁰⁶

Bastian’s term “kinaesthesia” was derived from the Greek words “kinein” (move) and “aesthesia” (sensation), and referred to the “body of sensation which results from or is directly occasioned by movements . . . by means of this complex of sensory impression we are made acquainted with the position and movements of our limbs.”¹⁰⁷ One of the key features of this definition is that it conceptualizes kinaesthesia as a “body of sensation” that includes both embodied position and movement senses. The inclusion of both senses as defining elements of kinaesthesia became a site of contention in the decades that followed, with scholarly stances on the matter falling into two broad categories or “sides” (though there is always nuance in each category, as in all scholarly debates).¹⁰⁸

On one side of the debate, researchers argued that kinaesthesia should only refer to sensations of body movement but not positioning, separating sensations of movement and position.¹⁰⁹ According to this stance, the process of sensing one’s body movement would fall under the category of kinaesthesia, and the separate process of sensing one’s body position

¹⁰⁶ Henry Charlton Bastian, “The ‘Muscular Sense:’ Its Nature and Cortical Localisation,” *Brain* 10, no. 1 (1887): 1–89.

¹⁰⁷ Bastian, “The Muscular Sense,” 5; Han et al., “Assessing Proprioception,” 80.

¹⁰⁸ Han et al., “Assessing Proprioception,” 80–90.

¹⁰⁹ Dan I. McCloskey, “Differences between the Senses of Movement and Position Shown by the Effects of Loading and Vibration of Muscles in Man,” *Brain Research* 61 (1973): 119–31; Uwe Proske and Simon C. Gandevia, “The Kinaesthetic Senses,” *The Journal of Physiology* 587, no. 17 (2009): 4139–46; Kathleen A. Swanik et al., “The Effects of Shoulder Plyometric Training on Proprioception and Selected Muscle Performance Characteristics,” *Journal of Shoulder and Elbow Surgery* 11, no. 6 (2002): 579–86; C. Buz Swanik, Scott M. Lephart, and Harry E. Rubash, “Proprioception, Kinesthesia, and Balance After Total Knee Arthroplasty with Cruciate-Retaining and Posterior Stabilized Prostheses,” *JBJS* 86, no. 2 (2004): 328–34.

would fall under the category of proprioception.¹¹⁰ However, researchers on the other side of this debate argue that these embodied processes are fundamentally intertwined; the sensing of the position of different parts of one's body occurs in tandem with the sensing of one's body movement (or the perception of a state of non-movement of the body, despite the matter-energy composing our bodies being constantly in varying states of activity), and vice-versa.¹¹¹ For instance, in the movement of one's leg to kick a ball, the sensing and awareness of one's limb and other parts of the body moving is made possible through the same physiological system that allows for the sensing of one's body positioning, where the sensing of the leg's movement is accompanied by felt sensations that provide a sense of one's leg position changing and the other parts of the body changing as a result. Considering this phenomenon and the physiological system connecting sensations of bodily movement and position, many researchers have chosen to continue using the term kinaesthesia as an umbrella term to refer to both the process of sensing one's bodily movement and position rather than conceptualizing them as fundamentally separate processes.

While this divide between the two stances regarding the category of kinaesthesia and its relation to sensing bodily movement and position continues to appear in academic work, the stance advocating for one umbrella term (e.g., "kinaesthesia") describing sensations of bodily movement and position has gained prominence. Both kinaesthesia and proprioception now have

¹¹⁰ Swanik et al., "The Effects of Shoulder Plyometric Training," 579–86; Swanik, Lephart, and Rubash, "Proprioception, Kinesthesia, and Balance," 328–34.

¹¹¹ Francis J. Clark et al., "Role of Intramuscular Receptors in the Awareness of Limb Position," *Journal of Neurophysiology* 54, no. 6 (1985): 1529–1540; J. E. Gregory, David L. Morgan, and Uwe Proske, "Aftereffects in the Responses of Cat Muscle Spindles and Errors of Limb Position Sense in Man," *Journal of Neurophysiology* 59, no. 4 (1988): 1220–30; Dan I. McCloskey, "Kinaesthetic Sensibility," *Physiological Reviews* 58, no. 4 (1978): 763–820; Stillman, "Making Sense of Proprioception," 667–76; Janet L. Taylor and Dan I. McCloskey, "Ability to Detect Angular Displacements of the Fingers Made at an Imperceptibly Slow Speed," *Brain* 113, no. 1 (1990): 157–66.

the ability to serve as this umbrella term in scholarly literature across disciplines, where the terms are often considered synonymous.¹¹² Considering how uncommon both of these terms are in the discipline of rhetoric, however, what motivates my choice of one term—kinaesthetic—as a fundamental characteristic of rhetoric and its material quality?

Characterizing Rhetoric as Kinaesthetic vs. Proprioceptive

My choice to characterize rhetoric as kinaesthetic versus proprioceptive when both terms technically refer to one’s sense of embodiment (emerging from body movement and position), is informed by my consideration of the ways that language provides us with frames through which we interpret phenomena. Kenneth Burke reflects on this power of language, describing how “Even if any given terminology is a *reflection* of reality, by its very nature as a terminology it must be a *selection* of reality . . .”¹¹³ In this case, while the terms kinaesthetic and proprioceptive both reflect reality and refer to the same thing on a denotative level, their cultural-linguistic histories provide them with connotations that support a selective attention to different facets of the same reality.

By using the term kinaesthetic instead of proprioceptive, I am encouraging a selective, directed attention to the often non-conscious quality and effect of sensing/perceiving one’s embodiment. The term kinaesthesia has traditionally emphasized this more than the term proprioception, (excluding historical patterns of usage in the field of psychology).¹¹⁴ This

¹¹² Clark and Horch, “Kinesthesia,” 11-62; Richard A. Schmidt, *Motor Learning and Performance: From Principles to Practice* (Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics Books, 1991); Frank Steinicke et al., “Perceptually Inspired Methods for Naturally Navigating Virtual Worlds” (New York: ACM, 2011), 1–193; Stillman, “Making Sense of Proprioception,” 667–76.

¹¹³ Kenneth Burke, *Language as Symbolic Action; Essays on Life, Literature, and Method*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966), 45.

¹¹⁴ Roger Smith, “Kinaesthesia and a Feeling for Relations,” *Review of General Psychology* 24, no. 4 (2020): 355–68.

emphasis on the non-consciousness quality of sensing one's body is reflected in the original creation of the term kinaesthetic in 1887, and in the term's use for over a century since then. Bastian, in his original definition of the term, sees this quality as a fundamental characteristic and effect of kinaesthesia, defining kinaesthesia as "The body of sensation which results from or is directly occasioned by movements . . . by means of this complex of sensory impression we are made acquainted with the position and movements of our limbs . . . by means of it the brain also derives much unconscious guidance in the performance of movement generally."¹¹⁵ The definition and use of the term kinaesthesia continued/s to explicitly emphasize this non-conscious characteristic, with scholars like Uwe Proske and Simon C. Gandevia echoing Bastian's original sentiments, describing kinaesthesia as "a mysterious sense since, by comparison with our other senses such as vision and hearing, we are largely unaware of it in our daily activities."¹¹⁶ Kinaesthesia, the process of sensing one's own bodily position and movement, is able to function without our conscious awareness, much like the suatory, rhetorical force of materiality that gives rise to kinaesthetic effects.

My choice of the term kinaesthesia instead of proprioceptive to describe rhetoric, then, is based on the term's long tradition of explicit characterization as a process that functions in conscious and non-conscious ways. Recognizing how rhetoric evokes particular kinaesthetic effects—ways of sensing our own embodiment—in conscious and non-conscious ways underscores the importance of analyzing this rhetorical phenomenon. Understanding rhetoric as kinaesthetic is to understand how materiality's rhetorical force can, often without our conscious consent, shape our embodiment in ways that are always influenced by materialized power

¹¹⁵ Bastian, "The Muscular Sense," 5

¹¹⁶ Proske and Gandevia, "The Kinaesthetic Senses," 4139.

structures (as I will discuss throughout this dissertation). With this term, I direct scholarly attention to both the conscious and non-conscious characteristics of rhetoric's material force to better understand its functioning, and the implications this has for our embodied existence.

The Necessity of Theorizing Rhetoric as Kinaesthetic

So far, I have explained the meaning of the term kinaesthetic as I use it in this dissertation, the term referring to the sense of one's own embodiment at any particular time. In addition, I discussed my choice to use this specific term, kinaesthetic, to characterize rhetoric instead of the similar term, proprioceptive. However, there remains the broader disciplinary question of why there is a need to characterize rhetoric as kinaesthetic at all.

I argue that conceptualizing rhetoric as kinaesthetic is needed because current scholarly work on rhetoric, materiality, and embodiment mainly focuses on how the rhetorical force of materiality structures our sense of embodiment in relation to other forms of matter-energy, devoting less attention to how the rhetorical force of materiality also structures our sense of embodiment in relation to the form of matter-energy that we experience as our body. Conceptualizing presence effects as the resulting embodied states we experience in relation to our material environments is, of course, invaluable to the study of materiality's rhetorical force and its connection to embodiment. After all, to ignore the role of rhetoric in the production of relational, embodied states would be to ignore a fundamental element of our embodied existence as part of an endlessly rhetorical, material world. However, characterizing presence effects as embodied states experienced only in relation to other forms of matter-energy is to ignore an equally fundamental element of our embodied existence: the kinaesthetic sensing of what we consider our "body." In our continuous physiological processing of affective experience, we do not just sense our embodied relation to other forms of matter-energy in our environment; we also

sense the movements of matter-energy that form what we experience as our body. If we are to better understand the relationship between the rhetorical force of materiality and embodiment, the scholarly venture at the heart of this dissertation, we must expand our limited conceptualization of rhetoric's presence effects. It is out of necessity, then, that I develop the conceptualization of rhetoric as kinaesthetic in this dissertation, acknowledging the complexity of rhetoric's presence effects (both relational and kinaesthetic) as they constitute our embodied, material existence.

Building On and Expanding Theory:

Defining Rhetoric's Materiality and Conceptualizing Kinaesthetic Effects

In the previous sections, I explained the core elements of my expanded definition of rhetoric's materiality and discussed the conceptualization of rhetoric as kinaesthetic that my definition of rhetoric's materiality supports. The definition of rhetoric's materiality I contribute in this dissertation—rhetoric's materiality as *suasory, mercurial movements of matter-energy*—is not unique because of how it defines rhetoric's materiality according to the movements of agentic matter-energy; as discussed previously, this is not new theoretical territory in the study of rhetoric's materiality. What makes my definition of rhetoric's materiality unique is my inclusion of two fundamental characteristics of materiality, both attuned to the relationship among rhetoric's materiality, embodiment, and power. Because of this attunement, the definition is particularly useful for rhetorical scholars.

To review, this definition and two characteristics are:

Expanded definition of materiality: *materiality as suasory, mercurial movements of matter-energy.*

Two characteristics:

1. *Matter-energy moves in dynamic, lively ways, and our embodied experience and understanding of these suasory movements is made possible through affect.*

2. *The suasory movements of matter-energy are always influenced by directional lineages of power, but never predetermined by them.*

Defining materiality in this way, highlighting these two fundamental characteristics, supports a conceptualization of rhetoric as kinaesthetic, and allows for a deeper understanding of rhetoric's material nature and its relationship to power and embodiment. This relationship forms the focus of my central research question and sub-questions in this dissertation (listed below).

RQ: What is the relationship between the rhetorical force of materiality and embodiment?

RQa: How can theorizing bodies as formations of matter-energy help to explain this relationship?

RQb: How is power interwoven into this relationship?

Considering the first characteristic of rhetoric's materiality as I define it is particularly helpful for answering RQ. The first characteristic included in my definition—*matter-energy moves in dynamic, lively ways, and our embodied experience and understanding of these suasory movements is made possible through affect*—emphasizes the dynamic, agentic nature of all matter-energy, and also recognizes that our human experience of these material movements are made possible through affects produced and enacting a suasory force in the material body. This human experience of materiality and the role of affect is important to recognize when using a rhetorical lens to study the connection between materiality and embodiment. When we examine the presence effects resulting from the rhetorical, affective experiences of material bodies, there is a specific kind of presence effect that arises: a kinaesthetic effect, a bodily awareness of oneself as inhabiting a body in a particular way (a phenomenon that will help answer RQa: *How can theorizing bodies as formations of matter-energy help to explain this relationship?*).

Considering how human bodies experience rhetoric's materiality through affects, which invite

presence and kinaesthetic effects, provides one way of understanding materiality's rhetorical force as it relates to embodiment. In this way, the first characteristic of rhetoric's materiality in my definition is intertwined with my contribution of a conceptualization of rhetoric as kinaesthetic, a conceptual lens that can help scholars better analyze the rhetorical nature of materiality and its complex connection to embodiment.

The second characteristic of my definition of rhetoric's materiality also enables scholars to better analyze the relationship between the rhetorical force of materiality and embodiment, and, more than this, also consider how power functions in this relationship (providing a conceptual lens to help answer RQb: *How is power interwoven into this relationship* [between the rhetorical force of materiality and embodiment]?). The second characteristic of materiality as I define it—*the suatory movements of matter-energy are always influenced by directional lineages of power, but never predetermined by them*—provides a way of understanding materiality that acknowledges how power functions and holds directional force at material levels, and how the mercurial movements of matter-energy can never be fully determined or controlled by this directional force. And, when considering the body as a formation of matter-energy whose ability to experience particular kinds of embodiment is the result of kinaesthetic affects (made possible through the mediation of affect), we can also better understand how currents of materialized power flow through and shape our sense of our bodies as parts of material environments of which they are a part. At the same time, because materiality's agentic movements are never fully contained by the transtemporal influence of lineages of power, we can recognize possibilities for the co-construction of different material environments and embodiments.

My expanded definition of rhetoric's materiality, a definition more deeply attuned to the power-infused nature of materiality, and my conceptualization of rhetoric as kinaesthetic are two theoretical tools that can help us rhetorically analyze and enable the actualization of these possibilities. In the next two chapters of this dissertation, I demonstrate the value of these conceptual tools for answering my research questions and, ultimately, for doing this kind of rhetorical, analytical work geared toward transformation.

The case studies in chapters three and four demonstrate the value of my central conceptual contributions—an expanded definition of rhetoric's materiality and understanding of rhetoric as kinaesthetic—through analyses of two material spaces: a Walmart Supercenter and Regal Nail Salon. These analyses, enabled by my conceptual tools, illuminate crucial elements of the relationship among the rhetorical force of materiality, embodiment, and power. To thoroughly explore this relationship in my dissertation research, I use a term that allows me to analyze materiality's rhetorical force and the entanglement of power and the sensing body in the co-construction of material environments: "sensory architecture." Sensory architecture expands upon Brandon LaBelle's description of architecture as "a technology *and* a living system pushing and pulling under the dynamics of multiple forces . . . an *atmospheric pressure* modulated by visible and invisible forces." The term sensory architecture further integrates and focuses on the role of the sensing, human body in co-constructing this architecture, providing a term that is particularly helpful for rhetorical analyses of material environments and the embodied, kinaesthetic effects they invite.¹¹⁷ In chapters three and four, I use this term to describe the complex material environments of a Walmart Supercenter and Regal Nail Salon, providing me with a lens through which I can analyze the rhetorical and embodied nature of these material

¹¹⁷ Brandon LaBelle, *Acoustic Territories: Sound Culture and Everyday Life* (Bloomsbury Academic, 2019), 143.

spaces. In essence, it offers language from which I can begin and explain the development of my analyses, analyses that ultimately demonstrate the explanatory value of the conceptual contributions my dissertation offers.

In chapter three's analysis of Walmart as a sensory architecture, I use my expanded definition of materiality to analyze how the rhetorical, power-infused nature of this sensory architecture evokes a kinaesthetic awareness of an agentic hand. Using my expanded definition of rhetoric's materiality in my analysis also reveals how Walmart's sensory architecture naturalizes the directional influence of capitalist logics of power, working to prevent other forms of kinaesthetic embodiment. These elements of my analysis illustrate key features of my expanded definition and conceptualization of rhetoric as kinaesthetic and begin to answer my central research question and sub-questions.

In chapter four, I continue to answer my central research question and sub-questions by analyzing the sensory architecture of the Regal Nail Salon located inside the Walmart space. Drawing on my expanded definition of rhetoric's materiality and its emphasis on power, I examine how Regal Nail Salon's sensory architecture simultaneously structures the kinaesthetic awareness of the hand as feminized object and the appearance in awareness of a subversive agentic hand. Through this analysis, I demonstrate how patriarchal, white supremacist, capitalist logics of power direct but do not determine embodied experience. Together with my case study of the Walmart Supercenter in chapter three, these analyses show how my research question and sub-questions can be answered, and why my expanded definition of rhetoric's materiality and conceptualization of rhetoric as kinaesthetic is needed to better understand the complex interrelations among rhetoric's materiality, embodiment, and power.

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CHAPTER THREE:
THE MATERIALITY OF SENSORY ARCHITECTURE AND THE RHETORICAL
STRUCTURING OF EMBODIMENT

Everyday prices on a broad assortment—Anytime, Anywhere.

-Walmart Inc., *About*

Everyone deserves to look and feel their best—at an affordable rate.

-Regal Nails Salon and Spa, *About Regal Nails*

Afford. What an odd word. In one moment meaning to “have enough money to pay for,” and in another moment, meaning to “provide or supply (an opportunity or facility),”¹¹⁸ the word plays a linguistic game with its double meaning, conjuring associations with both paying and giving. In the case of my weekly Walmart shopping trips, however, the word’s association with giving seems a bit less altruistic. In this context, the word’s double meaning describes both the opportunities to spend my money that the Walmart Supercenter affords and some of the items within this space that I can afford to pay for. For a container of oatmeal that is thirty cents less than Target’s price, though, I do not mind that Walmart’s CEO Doug McMillon is most likely offering me this product, in this space, for his own profit and not out of deep care for my life situation. Since that container of oatmeal stays affordable in the me-paying-money-for-it sense, though, I push my cart through Walmart every Friday.

Nearly every Friday for the past nine years, no matter where I lived in Colorado or Texas, I visited my local Walmart for my groceries. On one particular Friday visiting the Walmart in Loveland, Colorado, I pushed my cart through the aisles as usual and proceeded to the self-checkout, scanning my items, swiping my credit card, and congratulating myself on a shopping

¹¹⁸ *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. “Afford (v.),” accessed January 11, 2024, https://www.oed.com/dictionary/afford_v?tab=meaning_and_use#9195703.

trip efficiently completed. As I pushed my way out of the self-checkout area (passing by the other shoppers who had yet to finish their transactions with the speed and efficiency that I had) I paused in front of one of the open-faced businesses enclosed in the Walmart space. With no walls, no doors, no barriers to entry, these businesses felt like a natural (and literal) next step after completing your shopping. Normally I breezed by them, though, reminding myself that whatever they afforded was not really a necessary expense. However, that particular day was different. I looked down at my hands and looked up again. For whatever reason, the large sign displaying the relatively low price of a manicure at the Regal Nail Salon (and the mental image of me having glamorous nails) drew me in. I signed in, asked for a manicure, and left with nails painted with a bright red nail color labeled “Hollywood Bombshell.” Now my shopping trip was complete.

I left the Regal Nail Salon and the Walmart Supercenter that day with more than just groceries and elegant hands, however. A somewhat unsettling feeling lingered after I left, one that I could not label, any more than I could label its cause. I returned to these two places again and again, trying to discover what this feeling was that my body could detect but that I could not name, and how it was created. In chapters three and four, I offer the findings of this sensory and mental investigation, an understanding of the rhetorical force of the Walmart Supercenter and Regal Nail Salon’s material, sensory architectures that illustrate two important characteristics of materiality that can help us explain the relationship between materiality’s rhetorical force and embodiment.

In this chapter, I focus specifically on the sensory architecture of the Walmart Supercenter space, arguing that the rhetorical force of this material environment, influenced by the directional flow of capitalist logics of power, structures a particular kinaesthetic effect—a

bodily awareness of what I call an agentic hand—while simultaneously “disappearing” materialized capitalist logics.

To support this argument, my essay proceeds in the following way: first, I review my expanded definition of rhetoric’s materiality and the concept of rhetoric’s kinaesthetic effects, before reflecting on the significance of hands as material-social formations of the body. Second, I analyze the sensory architecture of Walmart and how the rhetorical, power-infused nature of its materiality structures the kinaesthetic appearance of the agentic hand. Third, I discuss how the rhetorical force of Walmart’s material, sensory architecture naturalizes the directional influence of capitalist logics of power, which works to prevent other kinaesthetic effects/forms of embodiment from appearing, and the implications of this. Fourth and finally, I discuss how this analytical case study ultimately helps to answer my research question and sub-questions.

Setting the Foundation:

Rhetoric’s Materiality, Kinaesthetic Effects, and the Social-Material Hand

My analysis of Walmart’s sensory architecture is developed through the use of my expanded definition of rhetoric’s materiality, conceptualization of rhetoric as kinaesthetic, and an understanding of the hand as a particularly significant element of the material-social body. I review the first two elements below.

Expanded definition of rhetoric’s materiality: *materiality as suasory, mercurial movements of matter-energy.*

Two characteristics:

1. *Matter-energy moves in dynamic, lively ways, and our embodied experience and understanding of these suasory movements is made possible through affect.*
2. *The suasory movements of matter-energy are always influenced by directional lineages of power, but never predetermined by them.*

In addition to this expanded definition, the analysis is also grounded in a conceptualization of rhetoric as kinaesthetic, where the suasive force of materiality (resulting from the first characteristic of rhetoric's materiality) evokes presence effects that are both relational and kinaesthetic, generating a particular sense of one's own embodiment.

In my analysis of Walmart's sensory architecture and the rhetorical kinaesthetic presence effects it invites, there is a specific element of the body whose kinaesthetic emergence is particularly meaningful: the hand. The hand, according to Sara Ahmed, is often a "crucial site" in disorienting experiences and is "crucial to phenomenology in general."¹¹⁹ Ahmed's claim that hands form "crucial sites" in our phenomenological experience of the world, which includes our embodied experience, underscores the significance of examining the rhetorical, kinaesthetic emergence of hands in awareness.¹²⁰ Our hands so often are the bodily extensions of our selves into the world; they experience the intimacy, the strangeness, the sensorium of touch that flows through our bodies and space. As material extensions, they become part of what Ahmed calls our "bodily horizon," a "space for action, *which puts some objects and not others in reach.*"¹²¹ The kinaesthetic emergence of the hand in awareness, then, is simultaneously an appearance of our bodily horizon, the space in which some objects are (or are not) in reach.

In this chapter, I examine the relationship between this kinaesthetic appearance of the hand/bodily horizon and the power-influenced, material flows of sensory architectures that structure these kinaesthetic effects. Considering the significant ability of sensory architectures (always influenced by the directional forces of materialized power structures) to provide the

¹¹⁹ Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*, 165.

¹²⁰ Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*, 165.

¹²¹ Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*, 66.

“long-term ‘administration’”¹²² of bodily matter-energy, and their ability to shape certain appearances of the body and the bodily horizon, the importance of understanding this relationship becomes clear. If our biologically “indeterminate” bodies become *our* bodies only through entering a relationship with material space, merging into and co-constructing the sensory architecture, then analyzing these elements and the power structures that support them is not only a rhetorical inquiry into the rhetorical quality of material spaces, but an inquiry into the formation and regulation of our bodies as particular formations of matter-energy.

The following analysis provides insight into this relationship among the rhetorical force of sensory architectures, kinaesthetic effects, and the influence of materialized lineages of power by examining the sensory architecture of a Colorado Walmart and the kinaesthetic emergence of the agentic hand within this sensory architecture. While this analysis is distinctly autoethnographic in nature and, as such, could be met with the common critique of it being less rigorous than other forms of research, it transcends this criticism by using analytical, embodied reflection to illuminate the sensory workings of larger structures of experience. In this way, my analysis is guided by the principles of what Elissa Foster describes as analytical autoethnography, where “the personal narrative cannot be dismissed for its ‘n of 1’ but rather reaches its full potential through its connections to broader social and cultural context.”¹²³ In the following analysis, I aim for my own personal narrative to reach this full potential through such connections as they manifest in sensory architectures.

¹²² Elizabeth Grosz, *Space, Time, and Perversion: Essays on the Politics of Bodies* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 104.

¹²³ Elissa Foster, “Communicating Beyond the Discipline: Autoethnography and the ‘N of 1,’” *Communication Studies* 65, no. 4 (2014): 447.

Inviting the Agentic Hand to Appear: The Kinaesthetic Emergence and Regulation of the Body Through Walmart's Sensory Architecture

The sensory architecture of Walmart that structures the kinaesthetic appearance of the agentic hand is composed of multiple sensory forces, but I argue that the most significant forces shaping this appearance are the sonic and visual. These two sensory forces intertwine to energize and regulate the (initially dysregulated) body of the Walmart shopper, supporting the appearance and movement of an agentic hand. This agentic hand, with access to seemingly endless objects of desire that become “within reach,” can facilitate ownership of these objects through the sensory interaction marking the checkout space, enabling the becoming of a consumer “self.” To explain this transformation into a consumer self—made possible by the kinaesthetic appearance of the agentic hand—I discuss the sonic and visual flows of Walmart. I begin this discussion by analyzing how the sensory surround of the Walmart space initially invites dysregulation of the body, but also provides certain sonic flows (of Muzak) that can regulate and sustain the shopping body to eventually reach consumer self-hood, an achievement reinforcing capitalist power structures. I then discuss how the sonic force of Muzak interacts with the visual flows of Walmart, constructing a space for the kinaesthetic emergence of the agentic hand. Lastly, I examine how the agentic hand's sensory interaction with the sonic and visual forces of the checkout space, specifically the checkout “beeping” and the visual presence of the scanning laser, form the site of becoming for the consumer self.

Inviting Bodily Dysregulation: Walmart's Sensory Surround

Crossing the threshold into the Walmart space, an experience you might be familiar with, is similar to the jolting bodily change that occurs when diving into a cold pool. I step in through the automatic doors, and I am immediately immersed in a jarringly different sensory

environment. Suddenly there are sounds swarming around and through me as I walk into the space, my eardrums working to register the vibrating chorus of people pulling out clashing carts, talking throughout the store, the overhead paging system calling an associate to the sporting goods section, an occasional phone beeping, pop music in the background, a child throwing a tantrum, ventilation sounds overhead, floor cleaning machines nearby, and the frying, sizzling sounds of the inside food retailer (in this particular Walmart, a Burger King). The sounds collectively form a sonic environment experienced as a kind of low-level shock to my previously relaxed body (the shock only dulled by my experience entering the Walmart space before, knowing what to expect).

These circulating sonic forces are compounded by other sensory appeals being taken in and omitted from shopping bodies as they move through the store: the smell of fast food, the crisp scent of produce, the savory smell of the deli, the aroma of the bakery, contrasted with smells of cleaning products being used in other parts of the store, the earthy fragrance of the garden area, and the countless, shifting body odors of shoppers and workers. At the same time, my capacity for visual perception is strained to accommodate and constantly respond to the presentation of colorful products as far as the eye can see, and the shifting and swarming movements of bodies and carts around the corners, aisles, and rare wide spaces of the store (in addition to various other visual stimuli). My capacity for processing tactile perception is also taxed, not just by the tactile forces flowing through the interactions between hands and products, but also by the tactile negotiations needed as the shopping body moves through an enclosed and evolving space filled with strangers. For example, at one moment I may feel the need to switch to a new tactile connection with the environment when a group of strangers larger or more intimidating than me comes down an aisle where I was previously alone, maybe triggering a

tactile impulse to clutch my purse or wallet closer, to turn my head to assess them, or maybe widen my stance and strengthen the tactile connection between my feet and the ground, confidently asserting my claim to that space in the face of possible intrusion. At other times, I may be moving through a space like the produce section that requires more bodily navigation and awareness, given that there is not a strict division of the space into aisles. On this day, I might move through the space more open to numerous bodily repositionings, exchanging smiles with other shoppers as we try to avoid running into each other in a smaller space. These tactile negotiations are also, at the same time, negotiations of my bodily relationship to the vast multitude of sensory forces mentioned previously.

These material, sensory forces can only be described as *sensory* forces (the term I use throughout this analysis) when we consider the nature of materiality itself and its first characteristic: *matter-energy moves in dynamic, lively ways, and our embodied experience and understanding of these sensory movements is made possible through affect*. In any experience of materiality, including my embodied rhetorical analysis explained in this chapter, the movements of matter-energy are experienced through visceral, affective sensations. My embodied experience of Walmart's sensory architecture, then, is formed through sense perception and the resulting affective sensations in my body. Considering the sheer number of material, sensory forces my body must perceive and viscerally experience, my affective response involves a tensing of my body, the muscles prepared for quick changes in action, my heart beating quicker, and other physiological effects that result from my sensory overload. While some bodies may respond to this sensory load by incorporating it into an energizing response, making the shopping

experience more manageable and even enjoyable, my (and many other bodies)¹²⁴ experience this sensory overload as physiologically taxing. When being in this space demands so much of our sensory capacities, where each “movement of spending”¹²⁵ can potentially drain so much bodily energy, how can our bodies continue to shop (and even enjoy shopping)?

Providing Bodily Regulation: Walmart’s Sonic Stabilization

These movements can be made sustainable, and even enjoyable, through the sonic and stabilizing force of Muzak. In an environment where my shopping body becomes incorporated into the chaotic sensory architecture of Walmart, where numerous penetrating and unpredictable sensory forces can invite dysregulation, Muzak provides a consistent organizing rhythm to regulate my dysregulated body. While my body is continuously presented with and permeated by material flows that often tax my sensory capacities and disrupt my body’s normal equilibrium, I keep moving through the space (and sometimes even take pleasure in spending a few extra minutes browsing products). Instead of reacting to my state of bodily dysregulation and sensory overwhelm by leaving the Walmart space, a movement of matter-energy falling out of line with the capitalist imperative to consume (and remain in an environment of consumption), I stay.

My departure is prevented because, as I continue moving deeper into the sensory architecture of Walmart, my bodily formation is continuously animated by the stabilizing, consistent rhythm of Muzak that taps into my body’s natural inclination to return to a state of regulation and equilibrium (Merleau-Ponty, 2002). Instead of needing to engage in more difficult forms of self-regulation to stay in this space (e.g., using breathing techniques to decrease my

¹²⁴ Russell Aylott and Vincent-Wayne Mitchell, “An Exploratory Study of Grocery Shopping Stressors,” *International Journal of Retail and Distribution Management* 26, no. 9 (1998): 364.

¹²⁵ Brandon LaBelle, *Acoustic Territories*, 124.

heart rate and relax the tension of my muscles, closing my eyes to minimize sensory overwhelm, etc.), my bodily formation of matter-energy can achieve regulation just by being exposed to the external, regulating auditory forces of Muzak, the collective heartbeat of this sensory architecture. Without my conscious awareness, the muscles, tendons, and other elements of my body become aligned with this Walmart's Muzak, composed of popular songs from the 90s and 2000s. I navigate the ever-changing movements of other shopping bodies in the frozen foods aisle without becoming overwhelmed, all the while my vocal cords producing humming sounds that follow the rhythm of Britney Spears's "Oops, I did it again." Later during my shopping journey, I find myself standing in front of shelves of candles, taking in the visual pull of their numerous colors, my agentic hand reaching out and holding the objects up to my nose to explore the diverse olfactory flows of their scents, imagining each candle in my home as something I could own. As I do this, I realize that, despite not liking the song "Rockstar" by Smash Mouth and not even noticing it was playing, my foot is tapping along with the beat. I consciously correct this bodily betrayal of my taste in music and stop the tapping. Moments later, though, my bodily formation will fall in line once again with the Muzak. My kinaesthetic awareness will return to my agentic hand, and the circulations of matter-energy composing my body will again align with the materialized imperatives of consumer capitalism, Muzak's quick beat energizing my body as it finds regulation in the movement of shopping.

Muzak's ability to provide a stabilizing, bodily equilibrium on a fundamentally material level demonstrates not only the first characteristic of materiality but also the second: *the suatory movements of matter-energy are always influenced by directional lineages of power*. In particular, the sonic force of Muzak demonstrates how the directional influence of materialized

power structures exists as part of a temporal lineage. With Muzak, its history illustrates the enduring, transtemporal influence and relationship between power and materiality.

The movements of matter-energy composing Muzak have been influenced by the directional force of materialized capitalist imperatives since its very inception. Muzak was created and originally deployed in the 1920s for regulating bodies in factory work, this form of labor and mass commodity production emerging with the rise of the industrialism in the United States.¹²⁶ As a common example of a labor institution that supports capitalist power hierarchies, where workers are exploited in service of creating profit for the bourgeoisie (and thus, maintaining class differences),¹²⁷ factory labor and the use of Muzak within this setting offers a particularly illustrative example of how the sensory movements of materiality and the directional influence of power structures are intimately intertwined.

To understand this characteristic of materiality, as evidenced by Muzak's movements of matter-energy and how its materiality is influenced by a lineage of capitalist directives, it is helpful to understand what constitutes Muzak and the process of its creation. Muzak describes a type of music that is characterized by the "light pattern of melodies, the recurring movement of soft rhythms, [and] the forms of harmony accentuating song structures."¹²⁸ These compositions of rhythmic, familiar songs were originally created as a way of managing workers (and, as a result, decreasing their rising protests and unionization) and increasing their efficiency. The effectiveness of this materialized, bodily discipline was established by researchers examining worker physiology and psychology, who reported that Muzak gave workers "an auditory frame

¹²⁶ Brandon LaBelle, *Acoustic Territories*, 123.

¹²⁷ Görkem Akgöz, Richard Croucher, and Nicola Pizzolato, "Back to the Factory: The Continuing Salience of Industrial Workplace History," *Labor History* 61, no. 1 (2020): 1.

¹²⁸ Brandon LaBelle, *Acoustic Territories*, 123.

through which bodily rhythms, the repetition of physical tasks, and the often monotonous passing of time could be eased.”¹²⁹ In essence, the sonic, material flows of Muzak exerted a kind of animating pressure throughout workers’ bodies, providing a directional force that worked to align the movements of matter-energy (composing the workers’ bodies) with the materialized imperatives of capitalist power structures, facilitating the integration of workers into an environment of routinized labor that primarily benefitted those who exploited them.¹³⁰

The use of Muzak’s material, suasive (rhetorical) force to encourage the alignment of bodies with capitalist imperatives was eventually extended beyond factory workplaces, however. Considering the effectiveness of this regulatory tool of capitalism, the use of Muzak expanded into a variety of consumer spaces (particularly large stores containing mass-produced products) and Muzak itself was altered to influence behavior, i.e., the purchase and consumption of commodities. Instead of the softer melodies and rhythms used previously, Muzak included a steady stream of contemporary, popular songs with upbeat rhythms, energizing the collection of material shopping bodies and encouraging their sustained searching, browsing, and purchasing of commodities. LaBelle comments on this modified form of Muzak and its function in consumer spaces (specifically shopping malls), describing how the “psychological and physiological drama of the shopping body might . . . find support through a steady stream of music, programmed in relation to the architecture of the mall, and the ebb and flow of energy attached to the movements of spending.”¹³¹ This use of Muzak’s regulating, sensory force may be different than the original use in the factory workplace, but still works to align the movements of matter-energy with a

¹²⁹ Brandon LaBelle, *Acoustic Territories*, 122.

¹³⁰ Jerri Ann Husch, “Music of the Workplace: A Study of Muzak Culture,” Dissertation, University of Massachusetts, 1984.

¹³¹ Brandon LaBelle, *Acoustic Territories*, 124.

lineage of capitalist imperatives; in this case, influencing and energizing bodies to encourage the consumption of products, particularly in environments containing mass-produced commodities (environments that conceal the social realities and labor conditions behind the production of these commodities).

Muzak's sonic force—animating the movements of my body to make possible the appearance of the agentic hand—is also intertwined with the visual flows of the Walmart space. As I move through the grocery aisles in particular, the light hitting bright labels and varying shapes of products sharply enters my eyes, my brain must rapidly process an environment teeming with visual forces pulling my attention. These forces vary in their visual pull, the brighter, flashier products laying claim to my attention first and forcing me to consciously try to avoid them and locate the product I am looking for. In this case, I try to guide my eyes to find the visual I am looking for in the cereal aisle, the familiar blue and white label covering the Great Value oat container.

At the moment of visual recognition, my eyes' gaze examining the familiar label of the Great Value oat container, my hand reaches out toward it. In this movement, my hand appears in my awareness in a significant way as it extends my bodily horizon, placing the oat container in my reach and giving me agency in controlling it. This emergence of my agentic hand in awareness transforms this material thing in the environment into an object to be examined, displaced, controlled, and eventually owned. I am no longer simply a shopping person whose body is animated by the sonic force of muzak and directed by the visual flows of the store. These sensory forces have structured the possibility for this moment of kinaesthetic awareness, but it is the movement of my agentic hand enacting control over an object that provides my shopping, embodied self with a feeling of distinct subjectivity. My hand, transforming this oat container

into an object of control, at the same time transforms me into a superior subject. I am not lost in an uneasy relationship with my environment; instead, a hierarchical relationship between my human self and “things” stabilizes and justifies my entire embodied journey through this space. This subjectivity is reaffirmed again and again as my agentic hand reappears in kinaesthetic awareness throughout my shopping trip. It is only at the end of my shopping trip, though, that my agentic hand provides me with an intensified and seemingly more fulfilling subjectivity, that of the consumer “self.”

Transforming the Shopping Body into a Consumer Self: The Checkout Space

This promise of the eventual becoming of a consumer self (though a feeling of this self not occurring until the end of the shopping trip) is materialized in the sonic “beeps” of the checkout space that extend into the entire sensory architecture of Walmart, permeating my entire, embodied shopping experience. The moment my soon-to-be-shopping body enters through the doors to Walmart and passes by the checkout spaces near the entrance/exit, the tones and vibrations of these checkout “beeps” reverberate through me. Normally, I never give any attention to this familiar sound. It fades into the background of my experience. And yet, this sonic force and its visual association with the checkout area, infused with the promise of a fulfilled consumer self, is one that supports my perception of products as objects to eventually be owned. The “beeps” of the checkout area meld into a naturalized sonic background, aligning and reminding my body to follow the flows of consumption to the eventual endpoint of purchase.

When I reach this endpoint, in my case walking up to a self-checkout station, I stand before the threshold of achieving a seemingly fulfilled, consumer self. In preparation for crossing this threshold, my agentic hand appears in my awareness once again; this time, though, it enacts the ultimate agency of a consumer subject. No longer extending my bodily horizon to just obtain

objects within reach, my hand extends my bodily horizon to place objects in the space to be scanned, changing the purchasable object into a purchased/owned object. It is in this moment of purchase that my shopping body is transformed into a consumer self. I accomplished my shopping goals. I now own what I need (food like oats). I also own what I do not need but desired (e.g. black ballet flats). My consumer self has, at least momentarily, achieved a feeling of fulfillment in ownership, a fulfillment facilitated by the agency enacted by my hand.

However, my transformation into a seemingly fulfilled consumer self, facilitated by my agentic hand, is only made recognizable through the sensory architecture of the checkout space. Two particular forces of this sensory architecture—the visual force of the red scanning laser and the sonic force of the checkout “beep”—mark the emergence of my new consumer self. As my agentic hand reaches into my cart to place a box of pasta on the scanner, the force of the red scanning laser directs my gaze and awareness to the exact place where fulfillment through ownership can happen. My hand follows this visual pull, aligning the barcode of the pasta box with the laser, and placing the object into the bag on the other side. It is mine to own. I know this, though, only because I encounter a sonic force at the same time my hand enacts control over and ownership of the product.

The simultaneous forces of the red laser with the sonic “beep” of the checkout mark the success of my hand’s agency in controlling and owning the objects I have chosen. If I swipe my box of pasta over the red laser but the ping of the “beep” is not produced, I cannot experience that moment of fulfillment in ownership. My brow furrows, I look for the item name on the checkout screen and try again. My hand moves the box across the laser again, but this time a “beep” reverberates through the air, adding one more sound to the chorus of “beeps” in Walmart, but individually signaling that my agentic hand has done it! This object, this box of pasta which I

imagine myself cooking for dinner and enjoying, is mine. That is who and what I want for myself tonight, and my ownership of this object marks my ability to make this happen as a consumer subject. My transformation into this seemingly fulfilled consumer self, a self that becomes a little lighter with expectation and accomplishment, emerges in the checkout space, the movements of my body, the kinaesthetic appearance of my agentic hand, the visual pull of the red laser, and the sonic production of “beeps” intertwined in a powerful sensory architecture. Together, they transform the agentic hand of my shopping body into the agentic hand of a momentarily achieved experience of a seemingly fulfilled consumer subject. If consumer capitalism offers the existential promise of “to have is to be,”¹³² commodity consumption as the very foundation of identity and selfhood,¹³³ the movements of matter-energy that form the sensory architecture of the Walmart checkout space offer me the opportunity to purchase my social being, a materialized sense of self/subjectivity enabled by the kinaesthetic appearance of the agentic hand.

However, at the same time that this sensory architecture functions as a rhetorical invitation to transformation into a feeling of consumer selfhood, the sensory architecture also serves to disappear the capitalist logic of isolation that makes this transformation possible.

¹³² Helga Dittmar, *The Social Psychology of Material Possessions: To Have Is to Be* (Hertfordshire: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1992).

¹³³ Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, *The Meaning of Things: Domestic Symbols and the Self* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981); Mike Featherstone, *Consumer Culture and Postmodernism*, 2nd ed. (London: Sage Publications, 2007); Grant McCracken, “Culture and Consumption: A Theoretical Account of the Structure and Movement of the Cultural Meaning of Consumer Goods,” *The Journal of Consumer Research* 13, no. 1 (1986): 71–84. Grant McCracken, *Culture and Consumption: New Approaches to the Symbolic Character of Consumer Goods and Activities* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988).

Structuring Disappearance:

Sensory Architecture and Capitalist Regulation of the Body

The kinaesthetic appearance in awareness of the agentic hand, emerging from and co-constructing the sensory architecture of Walmart, is supported by an ideological promise of fulfillment. Unfortunately, this promise is grounded in capitalist logics of isolation and inequality. These logics have a directional influence on the movements of matter-energy that compose the sensory architecture of Walmart; however, there are other logics that could direct these and/or other sensory forces composing this space. More than this, an alternate sensory architecture could structure and support the kinaesthetic emergence of alternative hands, hands animated by more egalitarian promises of fulfillment. In the following paragraphs, I examine these realities/possibilities, illuminating the elements of Walmart's sensory architecture that support the disappearance in awareness of the capitalist logics structuring the kinaesthetic appearance of the agentic hand, and exploring an alternative logic and the kinaesthetic appearance of the interconnected hand that is prevented from emerging.

Disappearing a Capitalist Logic of Isolation and Preventing the Appearance of the Interconnected Hand

Currently, Walmart's sensory architecture structures a space that, instead of inviting a subjectivity grounded in connection with other formations of matter-energy, is infused with a capitalist logic of isolation that invites a subjectivity and sense of fulfillment based on hierarchical relations to material products. The rhetorical force of Walmart's sensory architecture produces a site in which the kinaesthetic appearance of the agentic hand is constructed as the most natural way of grasping a sense of fulfillment and subjectivity, a consumer fulfillment that can only be achieved through capitalist regulation of the body's extension.

A significant element of Walmart's sensory architecture that presents a consumer subjectivity as the natural path to fulfillment, and makes invisible a capitalist logic of isolation, is the widespread visual erasure of the material processes by which the products we purchase are created and distributed, how they come to exist in the sensory architecture of which we are a part. Walmart's sensory architecture lacks visual flows (e.g., written and/or illustrated descriptions of the product origins, processes of creation, distribution, community significance, etc.) that could elicit recognition of our connection to the material journeys of other formations of matter-energy, consideration of our ethical or unethical involvement in these journeys, and a subjectivity grounded in our fundamental connection with other human and nonhuman formations of matter-energy. In essence, Walmart's visual erasure works to prevent an alternative, connected subjectivity, one made possible by the structured emergence of the interconnected hand.

The interconnected hand, instead of being animated by a promise of fulfillment through consumer subjectivity, would be guided by a promise of fulfillment in a shared subjectivity, a type of subjectivity described by Jo Labanyi as a "subjectivity that is based on relationality with others and with things."¹³⁴ This subjectivity would be based in the value of collective being, of existing with and co-constructing the sensory architecture of the material world. In a sensory architecture that supports the kinaesthetic emergence of the interconnected hand, the human bodily formations of matter-energy entering the space might experience an awareness of their bodies differently. A kinaesthetic appearance of the interconnected hand, while still facilitating purchase of products, would be supported by perceptual cues of our lived connection with the

¹³⁴ Jo Labanyi, "Doing Things: Emotion, Affect, and Materiality," *Journal of Spanish Cultural Studies* 11, no. 3/4 (2010): 223.

products, and of how a hierarchical relationship to them is not necessary for experiencing a sense of subjectivity and fulfillment.

Considering the promising possibility of this alternative subjectivity, the question of how we can create a sensory architecture that structures the emergence of the interconnected hand and the subjectivity it supports becomes paramount. One way of creating this sensory architecture would involve the integration of visual cues triggering recognition of the material journeys of the formations of matter-energy we see as products. Walking down the aisles of the store, we might not only glance at the price tag, a visual reminder of the financial requirement for eventually owning the product before us, but also see a written or visual reminder of the origin of these products, our own interaction with the product as only one part of their journey. We might read descriptions and/or see the photographic depictions of the sights/sites of production, the human and nonhuman communities involved, the process by which these products make their way to us. Instead of a few select companies that create product labels that announce the geographical community origin of the product and their company's free trade or sustainable practices (a marketing strategy that also implicitly announces that this is not the norm, hence the need to state these origins and practices), we would expect that this kind of current and past information be listed for every product.

This placement of visual triggers for each product may seem impractical and unnecessary, but might this be because we have fallen in line with a naturalized, hierarchical relationship to these products, where the only connection we are perceptually invited to feel or recognize is the product's use/pleasure value in our lives? What if we existed in a society where knowing the material journeys of the forms of matter-energy (human and nonhuman) that help support our existence is expected, just as we expect the visual presence of nutrition facts and

ingredient labels on food products? We can exist in and help build a society where knowing the material journey of products and the ethical nature our connection to them, possibly through the visual reminders previously mentioned, is seen as an integral part of our interconnected relationship to the products and our purchasing decisions.

In my own shopping trips at Walmart, if the consistent perceptual pull of these visual reminders of interconnectedness was present, would my agentic hand still swiftly and routinely reach to enact control over products as mere objects separate from my “self” as a consumer subject? Would I purchase those M&Ms if I knew that my hands might be reaching for formations of matter-energy that came to exist in this sensory architecture through the laboring hands of child workers, as was/is the case in the Mars brand’s continuing history?¹³⁵ Or would I sense the hesitant positioning of my hands suspended in the air by the sides of my body, their perceived non-movement arising from a sense of interconnectedness established between myself and the formations of matter-energy in my environment? This sense of interconnectedness could become a guiding physiological force that could not only help prevent my material involvement in perpetuating unethical relations, but also support a deeper and more ethical engagement with the products I do purchase.

If Walmart’s sensory architecture was co-constructed with these required and expected visual reminders of the material journeys of products, then the kinaesthetic emergence of the interconnected hand, in my case and in others, could become a reality. And, with it, the subjectivity the interconnected hand supports, one grounded in our fundamental connection with human and nonhuman formations of matter-energy. Unfortunately, this potential kinaesthetic

¹³⁵ Amelia Lucas, “Mars, Accused of Using Child Labor in Its Supply Chain, Says It Aims to End the Practice,” CNBC, November 30, 2023, <https://www.cnbc.com/2023/11/30/mars-accused-of-using-child-labor-in-cocoa-supply-chain.html>.

appearance of the interconnected hand is largely prevented when materialized capitalist logics of isolation permeate and materially structure the sensory architecture of spaces like Walmart. This significant prevention, and the disappearance in awareness of the capitalist logics influencing the sensory interactions in the Walmart space, carries with it implications that, to use the well-used term with its double-meaning, matters.

Materializing Embodiment Within Sensory Architectures:

Structuring the Appearance of the Future

When we recognize the significant rhetorical force of Walmart's material, sensory architecture, influenced by the directional force of a materialized lineage of capitalist power structures, structuring the kinaesthetic appearance of the agentic hand, and disappearing the capitalist logics of isolation and inequality (that permeate the flows of matter-energy enabling this kinaesthetic appearance), it becomes clear that the mercurial movements of matter-energy composing this sensory architecture provides a capitalist "administration" of bodies that invites material alignment with exploitative imperatives of capitalist power structures. Considering how this material alignment and administration is naturalized and often disappears from awareness, making invisible alternative bodily formations (e.g., the interconnected hand), how can we make alternative possibilities of kinaesthetic appearance visible, and what is lost if we cannot?

The answer to the first question lies in a reconceptualization of the relationship between bodies and the rhetorical force of materiality in spaces. A more complete understanding of either theoretical entity, bodies, or spaces, can only be achieved by dismantling the conceptual division that denies their shared materiality. My term, sensory architectures, allows us to do this. Bodies, as indeterminate material formations that "require social triggering, ordering, and long-term

‘administration,’¹³⁶ cannot accurately be understood without examining the environments in which they are formed, the sensory architectures that co-construct the kinaesthetic appearances of bodies as certain types of bodies with cultural meanings. At the same time, the sensory architecture of space that regulates this kinaesthetic appearance of bodies cannot be fully understood without analyzing how the structured emergence of certain bodies/bodily elements co-constructs the sensory architecture of which it is a part. Considering the complex ways material bodies and spaces shape and form a sensory architecture of which they are both a fundamental part, a reconceptualization of their relationship using a concept like sensory architecture is needed to understand how alternative appearances of the body can become visible.

The second question (“What is lost when alternative appearances of the body are not made visible?”) is illuminated by the analysis I provide in this paper. If we cannot make visible new appearances of the body, reworking the sensory architectures of the world around us to allow for the formation and appearance of new bodily elements, then many bodies will continue to be regulated by capitalist logics that position us along hierarchies of inequality. In addition, if we cannot fully recognize the unique power of traditionally minoritized bodies to emerge in phenomenological awareness and subvert these capitalist logics (this emergence offering an even greater ability to subvert and rework sensory architectures grounded in capitalist, gendered, white supremacist logics) the ability to understand more of the possibilities of changing these sensory architectures is lost. At present, our society, our country as a vast and varied sensory architecture itself, remains one structured by an often exploitative, unequal capitalist system, while a more egalitarian future is possible.

¹³⁶ Elizabeth Grosz, *Space, Time, and Perversion*, 104.

What is lost, then, by not spatializing our understanding of the body and not recognizing the body's construction of space, and subsequently not understanding the nature of sensory architecture to change it? Answered more succinctly, what is lost is the appearance in awareness of a better future itself, a future where our bodies are no longer formed and regulated by a system characterized by hierarchical devaluation.

Rhetorical Interventions: Conceptualizing Change

We cannot afford this loss. So, what can rhetorical scholars do to prevent it and the sensory architectures of which we are a part? One way we can do this is to use the conceptual tools we have to better understand the complexity of the problem and how change is possible; providing helpful conceptual tools is essentially one of the main goals of my dissertation, underscoring my research questions. In this chapter, I provide analytical evidence to support the value of these conceptual tools—particularly my expanded definition of materiality and conceptualization of rhetoric's kinaesthetic effects—and how they help to answer my research questions.

To review, my main research question asks: “What is the relationship between the rhetorical force of materiality and embodiment?” Through my analysis, I argue that one of the distinguishing characteristics of this relationship can be made clear by expanding our understanding of rhetoric to include the connection between materiality's rhetorical force and the particular forms of bodily awareness that these forces enable (what I term kinaesthetic effects). Specifically, the relationship between materiality's rhetorical force and embodiment can be better understood by characterizing rhetoric as kinaesthetic, with a prime example being that of the agentic hand and how the rhetorical force of Walmart's material, sensory architecture structures this kinaesthetic awareness.

In addition, this conceptualization of rhetoric as kinaesthetic is supported by the first characteristic of materiality according to my definition: that *matter-energy moves in dynamic, lively ways, and our embodied experience and understanding of these suatory movements is made possible through affect*. Any human material interaction is experienced through sense perception and the resulting affects; we cannot study or fully understand the rhetorical force of materiality without acknowledging this crucial and inescapable relationship to our bodies, and the kinaesthetic effects of this relationship.

This fundamentally intertwined relationship between the rhetorical force of materiality and embodiment (indicated in the first characteristic of materiality as I define it) is also infused with the sensory flows of materialized power. In my analysis of Walmart's sensory architecture and the directional force of the materialized capitalist power structures that co-construct this architecture, I illustrate the first clause of the second characteristic of materiality: *the suatory movements of matter-energy are always influenced by directional lineages of power*. This second characteristic (I will discuss the second clause of this characteristic in the next chapter, where it is particularly important for understanding the rhetorical force of the sensory architecture of the Regal Nail Salon) helps us understand and answer my second sub-question (RQb): "How is power interwoven into this relationship [between the rhetorical force of materiality and embodiment]?" Because materialized lineages of power structures exert a directional influence on the material flows of sensory architectures, as illustrated by Walmart's sensory architecture, and because the rhetorical force of these material, sensory architectures are inherently kinaesthetic (structuring the particular kinaesthetic appearances of the body in awareness, like the agentic hand), the continuation of the material, directional force of lineages of power is illuminated in this relationship between materiality and embodiment.

In sum, this analysis provides a beginning foundation that strengthens my argument for the value of my conceptual contributions in this dissertation, and how they emerge from the processes of answering my research questions. In the next chapter, this foundation continues to be built through an analysis of the sensory architecture of the Regal Nail Salon inside the same Walmart, examining how the rhetorical force of the material environment invites the kinaesthetic appearances of the hand as feminized object and the subversive agentic hand.

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CHAPTER FOUR:
SENSORY ARCHITECTURE, MATERIALIZED POWER, AND STRUCTURING
EMBODIED APPEARANCES

In the previous chapter, I described my journey through Walmart’s sensory architecture and the consumer subjectivity offered and achieved at the checkout stations; however, this is not where my embodied, rhetorical analysis ended, nor was a consumer subjectivity the final subjectivity I was offered. A very different kind of subjectivity, one based on self-commodification, was offered by the sensory architecture of the Regal Nail Salon within Walmart and near the exit, a sensory architecture in which my hands as feminized objects appeared in my awareness, as well as the subversive agentic hands of the nail technicians I encountered inside this sensory architecture.

In this chapter, I argue that the Regal Nail Salon’s sensory architecture simultaneously structures two material appearances of different hands: the kinaesthetic appearance of my hand as feminized object and the appearance in relational awareness of the subversive agentic hand. The movements of matter-energy enabling these emergences are influenced by the directional force of patriarchal, white supremacist, capitalist logics, but, as I will demonstrate, never predetermined by them. In this way, my analysis vividly illustrates the second characteristic of materiality as I define it: *The suasory movements of matter-energy are always influenced by directional lineages of power, but never predetermined by them.* My analysis also demonstrates how conceptualizing rhetoric’s materiality in this way helps us to better understand materiality’s rhetorical force and the kinaesthetic effects it invites. Ultimately, the analysis of this chapter helps to answer RQ (“What is the relationship between the rhetorical force of materiality and

embodiment?") and RQb ("How is power interwoven into this relationship?") by explaining how the interrelations among the rhetorical force and characteristics of materiality, embodiment, and power are complex, but can be better understood through the conceptual definitions I provide in this dissertation.

I develop this argument in the chapter in the following way: first, I analyze the sensory architecture of the Regal Nail Salon and how its sensory flows—influenced by directional lineages of capitalist, patriarchal logics—structure the kinaesthetic appearance of the hand as feminized object, illustrating the first clause of the second characteristic of materiality (*the suasory movements of matter-energy are always influenced by directional lineages of power*). Second, I examine how the sensory flows directed by capitalist, white supremacist logics are simultaneously appropriated and destabilized, enabling the emergence in awareness of a subversive agentic hand, which demonstrates the second clause of the second characteristic of materiality (*the suasory movements of matter-energy are always influenced by directional lineages of power, but never predetermined by them*). Third and finally, I discuss how this analytical case study helps to answer my research question and sub-questions.

Structuring the Kinaesthetic Appearance of the Hand as Feminized Object:

Regal Nail Salon's Sensory Architecture

Regal Nail Salon's sensory architecture is composed of particularly complex circulations of sensory forces, given its permeable boundary between its own space (in the sense of what is officially designated as the nail salon "space") and the space of Walmart. This permeable boundary supports the fluid movements of the sensory forces that co-construct the sensory architecture of the nail salon. This sensory architecture structures a space for the kinaesthetic appearance of my hands as feminized objects, an emergence in bodily awareness animated by the

promise of a capitalist subjectivity based on self-commodification. While this emergence of my hands as feminized objects is enabled by numerous sensory flows, in the analysis that follows, I focus on three sensory flows that are most significant in facilitating this emergence: tactile, auditory, and visual flows. The tactile rhythms of the nail technician's agentic hands acting upon me, the auditory forces of the Walmart Supercenter composing a silencing surround, and the visual flows guiding objectifying perception all combine to form a space in which my previously agentic hands transform into feminized objects. This successful transformation, enabling a subjectivity based on the purchased production of oneself as feminized commodity, begins shortly after I achieve the kind of consumer fulfillment enabled by my purchase of other objects/commodities in Walmart's sensory architecture, so this is where I will begin.

As I officially finish my shopping and walk out of the self-checkout corral, I immediately face the opening of the Regal Nail Salon. There is no large physical barrier or door into this space, allowing me to observe a few women getting their nails painted. I see the prices in large print on a sign in front of the salon and the relatively low price for a manicure, my eyes then drawn away from the sign to the dozens of nail colors and types displayed on (white) hand mannequins and nail color "trees." I consider my own nails, painted with a clear coat as usual. Then I consider my old professor and friend, always with classy, polished nails, and various other women with their nails seeming to match their equally polished lives. The prospect of transforming myself into these women makes me hopeful for a pick-me-up after a long day; it also makes my shoulders slightly slump as I raise my hands, reminding myself how different in comparison I currently was. Looking up, though, the visual invitations of the small nail salon space—colorful nails on hand mannequins, the image of a glamorous woman's face and nails taking up the entire height of a wall, and wall canvases with models whose nails are

highlighted—beckon me to enter and purchase a subjectivity based on self-commodification. With one financial transaction, I can obtain this subjectivity enabled by the transformation of my previously agentic hand into a feminized object.

I decide to initiate this transaction and eventual transformation. I walk up to the small check-in stand, where the woman is distracted and facing the other direction in her chair. I look down at the sign-in paper on the clipboard in front of me, not wanting to interrupt in case she would interpret it as rude. I sign in, writing down my name and “basic manicure” as my service wanted. After completing this, I look up again, waiting a moment. She still has not noticed my presence, so I let out a gentle “hi” to get her attention. She proceeds to greet me with an affectless demeanor and ask what I would like done. I respond, and she directs me to the nail polish racks and instructs me to choose one. I browse through them, considering my options. My hands caress the bottles and it is almost a calming experience, choosing the color that would communicate what kind of woman I would be for the next week. Amidst this reflection, the lady from before steps by me, asking me if I have chosen. I tense up with the sense that I have done something wrong, but also a tinge of indignation twitches at my lips as I respond “no, not yet, but I’ll hurry.” She walks away as I force myself to quickly choose from the options I was considering, picking up a bright red polish. I turn, signaling that I decided; I pay for the manicure, and she leads me to the nail station.

Handling the Product: Regal Nail Salon’s Tactile Forces

I sit down on the seat as the nail tech sits down on the other side of the nail station and plexiglass barrier between us. Through it, the nail tech asks, “manicure?” I answer “yes, please” and hand over the nail polish through the small open space at the bottom of the plexiglass barrier. Without another word, he begins, signaling for me to put my hands through the space. I do, and

he places the nails of one hand into a small dish of water to soak in as he brings out his tools for trimming cuticles. He grabs my hand and places the other hand in its place in the dish, and begins to push back and trim each cuticle, looking closely and precisely moving the instrument. After this step in the process, he pumps out some lotion, grabs one of my hands, and starts massaging my hand and wrist.

The massage is rough, rushed, and almost mechanical, as if my hands are products needing to be prepared for the improvement process. There is no gentleness in his touch, no feeling of warm, tactile connection between humans, only an uncomfortable feeling as I wonder if the massage is going to get worse and if I should ask him to stop. I know that short hand massages are part of most manicures, based on the descriptions of friends' experiences over time with manicure massages (that felt "amazing" and "sooo nice"), based on watching chatting middle-upper class women have their hands gently massaged in TV shows and films, and based on the website descriptions of nail salons that I sporadically read over the past several years, whenever I considered a manicure. Descriptions of relaxing hand massages with x or y oil, sometimes followed by a classy wrapping of the hands in a steamed towel before the manicure. These previous symbolic-material experiences built an expectation that existed both on a cognitive level and a visceral level. On this visceral level, the expectation permeated my body and particularly my hands, which were calmly prepared to be handled with care so that the eventual sensation of relaxation and release of muscle tension (the sensation my friends had so happily described) would occur.

In this sensory space, though, the controlling, tactile force of the technician's hands does not contribute to this sensation, but instead to a sensation of discomfort. In contrast to my expectation of gentleness and relaxation, this massage is rough, fast, and efficient. During this

rough massage, the tactile force of the nail technician's hands co-constructs a space in which my hands emerge as feminized objects in my sensory awareness. As my hands are acted upon and controlled, I begin to lose the sense of agency that previously animated them in Walmart. My bodily memory of this sensation fades as the kinaesthetic awareness of my hands as controlled objects emerges, shaped by the accumulation of rigid and efficient tactile movements, movements that push and pull the flesh as they prepare my hands as products. I nevertheless let this process continue, unconsciously holding on to the promise of a subjectivity as feminized commodity that this process offers.

Sonic Production of the Object: Regal Nail Salon's Silencing Surround

I wait for this almost-painful massage to end and watch as he stops, puts my hands (as prepped products) down, and opens the bottle of nail polish for the manicure. I sit quietly as he takes control of my hands again and carefully but efficiently paints each nail, going through the various coats of polish. My state of stillness and near-complete silence during this process (my brief, futile attempt to change this state is discussed later in this chapter) reinforces a sense of discomfort, my kinaesthetic awareness focusing even more on my hands as they are handled and prepared for transformation into the purchased product. The technician's agentic hands control my own, the movement of my hands limited to what the technician allows; this dependence on an external agency supports the transformation of my hands, as extensions of my body and self, into purchased commodities. My hands, in order to become completed products, must not move as a result of my own bodily agency, and neither can most of my body, lest I interfere with the nail technician's active control of my hands. If I even turn a finger slightly or turn to look at the source of the sounds behind me, my hands as beautiful, feminine commodities could be ruined.

In this way, the movements of matter-energy composing my body fall in line with the materialized directive to submit to the bodily control of agentic hands producing my own hands as feminized objects. In this situation, I could theoretically choose to enact a different kind of bodily agency by choosing to engage in conversation and have some kind of vocal or interpersonal agency, but even this is largely denied. The sonic flows of Walmart—the cacophony of checkout sounds, speaker announcements, people talking, children occasionally screaming or crying, etc.—co-construct the sensory architecture of the nail salon space in which my hands emerge in kinaesthetic awareness as feminized commodities, an extension of my body as object. I register the sonic force of these noises as I become aware of my body’s comparatively weak capacity to produce sounds that could significantly alter the makeup of the sensory architecture, sounds that would reflect my agency as a subject that has power to disrupt the dominant sonic forces circulating around and through me. For, as R. Murray Schafer notes, power is associated with the ability to produce sonic forces that dominate or disrupt the sonic surround; power reflects “having the authority to make [the loudest noise] without censure.”¹³⁷ Sitting in the sensory architecture of the Regal Nail Salon space, my inability to demonstrate power as a subject through vocal agency mirrors my body’s lack of physical agency, both states intimately connected to my hands’ kinaesthetic emergence as feminized objects.

The sensory architecture of Regal Nail Salon that enables this kinaesthetic emergence, a sensory architecture constructed through the tactile forces of agentic hands controlling my own and the silencing sonic surround, is also co-constructed with the visual flows circulating in and between the nail salon space and Walmart.

¹³⁷ R. Murray Schafer, *The Soundscape: Our Sonic Environment and the Tuning of the World*, (Rochester: Destiny Books, 1994), 76.

Viewing and Becoming the Feminized Object: Regal Nail Salon's Visual Flows

The sensory architecture of Regal Nail Salon that enables the kinaesthetic emergence of my hand as feminized object is not only constructed by the tactile forces of agentic hands controlling my own and the silencing sonic surround, but also by circulating visual flows. These visual flows contribute to and mark the attainment of a subjectivity grounded in self-commodification, the subjectivity that motivated my purchase of the transformation of my agentic hands into feminized objects.

Sitting in my chair in the nail salon space, I watch as this purchased transformation nears its completion. My gaze follows the gliding movement of the nail polish brush as the technician applies the final coat of polish, signaling the end of the manicure. I raise my hands to admire their transformation. They no longer appear in my bodily awareness as agentic hands, enacting control over objects to be purchased and owned. Instead, my hands emerge in my bodily awareness as beautiful, feminized objects. They are laid across the table, a space where, like the space of the Walmart checkout scanner, objects are acted upon by agentic hands; though, in this case, my hands emerge as the objects that are acted upon and transformed into commodities.

This transformation of my hand into a feminized object/commodity is a material transformation that permeates my entire body, my hand now an extension of a feminized, embodied self, an “inferiorized body.”¹³⁸ A body visually portraying femininity is not inherently inferior to other material-social bodies, but in a culture structured by masculinism and consumerism, the feminized body is characterized in terms of appropriately satisfying a presumed heterosexual male gaze, a consuming gaze that determines the value of her body as “an

¹³⁸ Sandra Lee Bartky, “Foucault, Femininity, and the Modernization of Patriarchal Power,” in *Feminist Theory Reader*, ed. Carole Ruth McCann and Seung-Kyung Kim, 5th ed. (Routledge, 2021), 103.

object of vision, a sight.”¹³⁹ The structured kinaesthetic emergence of my hands as beautiful, feminized objects of vision signal that my hands as commodities, extensions of my material-social body, are now worthy of consumption according to the standard of the male gaze.

This symbolic male gaze infuses the material visual flows co-constructing the sensory architecture of the Regal Nail Salon, these visual flows not restricted to the presence of men manifesting the visual force of the male gaze. My own gaze, a visual force present in the sensory architecture, draws on the perceptual logics of capitalist (gendered) commodification in service of the male gaze. The visual force of my gaze reflects a split self: an internalized male surveyor and a surveyed self as a woman.¹⁴⁰ As a surveyor, my internalized male gaze functions as a lens through which I visually perceive and consume the emergence of my feminized hands as objects/commodities, measuring their value according to the ruler of the male gaze. As the surveyed, I embody my material-social self as a feminized object of the consuming male gaze (internalized in myself and others). These dual elements of my self animate the visual flows I co-create within the sensory architecture, influenced by the force of the materialized, capitalist logic of self-commodification.

As I continue to visually consume the embodied emergence of my hands as feminized objects/commodities, I experience a sensation of pleasure. The pleasure permeates me, arising from my achievement of the consumer subjectivity as feminized commodity that the manicure process promised. In contrast to the consumer subjectivity offered by Walmart’s sensory architecture, grounded in the capitalist logic of “to have is to be,” this subjectivity is grounded in

¹³⁹ Yangtianyue Han, “The Male Gaze and Its Impact on Women’s Public Living Space,” *Communications in Humanities Research* 5, no. 1 (2023); Laura Mulvey, “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema,” *Screen* 16, no. 3 (1975); John Berger, *Ways of Seeing* (London: British Broadcasting Corporation, 1972), 47.

¹⁴⁰ Berger, *Ways of Seeing*.

what could be referred to as the gendered and capitalist logic of “to be worthy of having is to be.”¹⁴¹ The achievement of this subjectivity, enabled by a sensory architecture that supported the transformation of my previously agentic hand into a feminized commodity, delivers pleasure through the embodied understanding of what self-commodification as feminized object means for one’s material-social existence as a woman in society. As John Berger describes, “She [a woman] has to survey everything she is and everything she does because how she appears to others, and ultimately how she appears to men, is of crucial importance for what is normally thought of as the success of her life.”¹⁴² As I gaze upon my beautiful red nails, I feel closer to embodying a vision of myself as a successful woman, a feeling that seems to affirm the value of the subjectivity as feminized commodity that I purchased.

However, this subjectivity as a feminized commodity is offered at the expense of a subjectivity grounded in a connection to the formations of matter-energy we co-exist with, the same subjectivity that animates the possibility of the interconnected hand discussed in chapter three. This kind of connective subjectivity could harness what Elaine Scarry calls the “ethical alchemy of beauty:” the power of beauty to invite a “radical decentering” of ourselves.¹⁴³ Radical decentering, as a response to encountering beauty, compels us to “give up our imaginary position at the center [of existence],” recognize our inseparable connection with other things in the world, and embrace a lateral versus hierarchical regard.¹⁴⁴ Because of this, the emergence in

¹⁴¹ Helga Dittmar, *The Social Psychology of Material Possessions: To Have Is to Be* (Hertfordshire: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1992).

¹⁴² Berger, *Ways of Seeing*, 46.

¹⁴³ Elaine Scarry, *On Beauty and Being Just* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1999), 113; Scarry, *On Beauty and Being Just*, 94.

¹⁴⁴ Simone Weil, *Waiting for God*, 1st ed., Routledge Classics (United Kingdom: Routledge, 2021), 159; Scarry, *On Beauty and Being Just*.

our awareness of beauty has the ability to direct us closer to a subjectivity of expansive connection.

Instead of harnessing the evocative power of beauty to redirect our somatic and cognitive awareness beyond ourselves, leading to radical decentering and connection, the consumer subjectivity as feminized object that the Regal Nail Salon's sensory architecture offers is one based on an isolated recentering. While the achievement of a subjectivity as feminized commodity may invite pleasure in meeting social expectations according to the external and internalized male gaze, this achievement is one that distances rather than connects us to others. Obtaining this subjectivity, in this case marked by the kinaesthetic appearance of the hand as feminized object, is premised on becoming a "spectacle of pleasure to the male gaze," inspiring envy from other women as competitors for the social value accorded to women who perform femininity better than others.¹⁴⁵ Becoming beautiful to the male gaze and evoking envy, however, is a "solitary form of reassurance."¹⁴⁶ Being evaluated and found valuable as a feminine object, and thus enviable, "depends precisely upon not sharing your experience with those who envy you."¹⁴⁷ This kind of subjectivity, based on an isolating, capitalist logic of self-commodification, disconnects us from others and from a subjectivity based on expansive connection.

The capitalist logic of self-commodification is one that held a directive force as it influenced the material flows of Regal Nail Salon's sensory architecture, materializing a promise of eventual fulfillment through a subjectivity as feminized commodity. As the production process of the manicure progressed, the kinaesthetic appearance of my hands as feminized objects

¹⁴⁵ Han, "The Male Gaze and Its Impact on Women's Public Living Space," 36.

¹⁴⁶ Berger, *Ways of Seeing*, 133.

¹⁴⁷ Berger, *Ways of Seeing*, 133.

emerged as extensions of myself as a commodity ready for visual consumption. While the kinaesthetic emergence of my hands as feminized objects in the Regal Nail Salon illustrates how the intertwined nature of sensory architectures, embodiment, and materialized power can support problematic power structures, the appearance in awareness of a different hand—the subversive agentic hand—demonstrates how this intertwined character of sensory architectures can enable a subversion of problematic capitalist logics.

Structuring the Appearance of the Subversive Agentic Hand: Embodied Refusal in Regal Nail Salon's Sensory Architecture

The appearance in awareness of the subversive agentic hand in Regal Nail Salon's sensory architecture emerges alongside the kinaesthetic appearance of my hand as feminized object, a material, sensory emergence influenced, but not predetermined by, capitalist and white supremacist logics. In the nail salon, my hands as feminized objects appear in my bodily awareness during the material process of production (the manicure), and, across the nail station, the skilled hands of the nail technician (hands that control my own) emerge in awareness as subversive agentic hands. These agentic hands draw on and co-construct a sensory architecture in the space that enables a sensory subversion of white supremacist, capitalist logics and a refusal of a subjectivity determined by these logics. There are three sensory forces that are particularly significant in enabling this subversive agentic hand and its connected bodily refusal: the auditory flows of Walmart permeating the nail salon space, the counter-circulation of subversive sonic forces in the salon, and the unique tactile rhythms of bodily labor. In the nail salon space, I engaged in embodied study of these sensory forces, my bodily formation of matter-energy immersed in them (and them immersed in my material body) as I analyzed their rhetorical function. This viscerally resonant, subversive rhetorical function can only be explained, though,

by first discussing the white supremacist, capitalist expectations that underscore cultural understandings of how a nail salon experience should be and feel like (and, essentially, how these lineages of power structures should materialize in these particular sensory architectures).

In my own experience of these expectations, before my first time even entering the space of the nail salon to analyze the sensory forces, I had some idea of what a nail salon experience must be like. Though I had never been to a nail salon, I assumed it would resemble the experiences I viewed in films and television shows. A woman enters the salon, usually staffed by Asian women (e.g., like I viewed in the many seasons of *Sex and the City* I used to ritually watch), and a nail salon technician leads the patron to a station. In the media I watched and in the descriptions my friends provided, nail salon technicians would often engage in friendly chatting with the patron and invite them to talk about their lives.

One of the media depictions of manicure service characterized by warm, personal exchanges between the nail technician and patron I remember from my viewing of the film, *Legally Blonde*. The main character in the film, Elle Woods, enters a nail salon after an emotionally upsetting day and sits down at the station of the nail technician, asking her if she is available, since “It’s an emergency.” The nail technician replies, “Bad day?” and Elle responds with a tearful “You can’t even imagine.” The technician responds with a simple, emphatic “Spill,” which begins a conversation where both women end up lamenting their particular situations with a man in their lives, though it is mainly focused on Elle and her troubles. This conversation, characterized by personal disclosure and warm sympathy, is the first of many interactions in the film where Elle receives a manicure that is unfailingly accompanied by an invitation for her to share details of her life.

I did not feel like this kind of treatment was owed to me, of course, but I entered the space and purchased the manicure originally expecting some version of a friendly space infused with positive, warm affective flows between patrons and technicians. In essence, I entered the nail salon expecting a service characterized and influenced by a privileging of consumer comfort (as depicted in *Legally Blonde*), that often intersects with the racialized hierarchy of prioritized white patrons and Asian workers (as depicted in shows like *Sex and the City*). This privileging of white consumer comfort in the context of nail salons takes the form of intertwined affective and manual labor, both material processes involving movements of matter-energy. The manual labor is the skilled physical work required to transform patrons' nails and hands into feminized objects, and, according to Katherine Hanson, the affective labor is the unspoken requirement that the technician must take on the role as "confidant and image-developer"¹⁴⁸ for every patron. This repeated and expected provision of "beauty 'therapy'"¹⁴⁹ becomes a purchased service on its own, a service involving an affective investment of the technician's material body: directing their gaze to maintain a visual connection with the client, orchestrating the movements of the tongue, mouth, breathing, to create the right sounds, with the right tone, the right accent, paired with the right words and the right silences to provide the desired prompts and responses each patron expects. More than this, a technician is expected to coordinate the muscles and tendons of the face to create a welcoming, blank canvas, reflecting an open, embodied being to take on the weight of the affective flows of the patron's emotions and life.

¹⁴⁸ Katherine Hanson, "Beauty 'Therapy': The Emotional Labor of Commercialized Listening in the Salon Industry," *International Journal of Listening* 33, no. 3 (1999): 152.

¹⁴⁹ Hanson, "Beauty Therapy," 152.

Unsurprisingly, this embodied labor takes its toll in physical and psychological ways, often resulting in what Hanson describes as a “negative emotional transformation for the practitioner through the emotional labor of commercialized listening.”¹⁵⁰ While there is also a chance that a genuine bonding experience can happen, the hollow appearance of this bonding (without the patron’s actual investment in listening and establishing an equal friendship) is usually the foundation of the expected service. The performance of the affective labor to take on the emotions and portray a bond with every customer, more often can result in short-term effects like emotional and physical exhaustion and long-term effects like “emotional detachment, [negative] self-esteem, and cynicism.”¹⁵¹ However, in the unique space of the Regal Nail Salon, three material flows—the auditory forces of Walmart’s sensory architecture, the technicians’ counter-circulations of sonic flows, and the tactile rhythms of their bodily labor—enable a materialized refusal of this affective labor and the subversion of the materialized capitalist, white supremacist logics of power that direct these flows of affective labor.¹⁵² Below, I begin examining how these three material, sensory flows accomplish this refusal and subversion through the co-construction of a space in which the subversive, agentic hand emerges.

Disrupting Sonic Service: The Distancing Force of Walmart’s Auditory Flows

The subversion of the materialized capitalist, white supremacist norms of nail salon affective labor became apparent as I began my salon experience. My interaction at the front desk area, described previously, was not particularly friendly. Still, I had the idea in my mind that

¹⁵⁰ Hanson, “Beauty Therapy,” 152.

¹⁵¹ Hanson, “Beauty Therapy,” 152.

¹⁵² In claiming that these sensory flows subvert the force of materialized capitalist, white supremacist lineages of power, I rely on a definition of subversion as an act “to undermine without necessarily bringing down (an established authority, system, or institution); to attempt to achieve, esp. by covert action, the weakening or removal of . . . [that established authority, system, or institution].” See: *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. “Subvert, v., Sense 2.c” (Oxford University Press, 2023), <https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/8093296336>.

perhaps the felt environment would change as I sat down at the technician's nail station, that through warm conversation my body would ease into relaxation, my shoulders and neck relaxing, face transforming from a neutral to a positive, smiling composition, head slightly tilting as I listened and talked back and forth cheerfully with the technician. However, my manicure process stood in stark contrast to this expectation.

Once I sat down at the nail station the technician sat down as well, and, through the plexiglass barrier, asked the one-word question, "manicure?" to confirm the service I purchased. I could not hear him very well as his voice was partly covered by Walmart's numerous auditory forces continuously filling the space of the salon. I answered "yes, please," trying to project my voice, and he began without another word as he reached over to grab the nail polish I had selected. The manicure process proceeded silently. I viscerally felt the absence of the unspoken requirement of the affective labor involved in the performance of beauty "therapy." Feeling unsure of how to position my body or my gaze, how to use or not use conversation to create something like the friendly environment I had expected, the lack of rules for how to act in this space was oddly unsettling. I retreated into my thoughts, working through this experience in an inner monologue:

Should I say something? I'm not even sure if he will hear me . . . or if I'll be able to hear him. But am I being rude if I don't try to make small talk, like I expect him to talk just because he works here? Is that me subtly demanding to be talked with even though it might be annoying asking each other to repeat sentences we cannot hear? Will he see me as genuinely being interested in connecting? Maybe I'll say something first, and if he asks a question back, I'll interpret that as him wanting to talk more...

I tried to think of something to say that was not a painfully boring statement like “it’s busy in here today.” God, not that. I decided to ask, loudly, what the orange and black device was on his nail station. Thankfully he heard me and looked pleased as he pulled it out to show me, explaining that it was a radio. He turned it on, with it already pre-set to a U.S. American “oldies” station. We sat and listened to Cyndi Lauper; the conversation ended. Instead of spurring more conversation, this introduction of a new musical force just amplified the flows of Walmart’s cacophony of interruptive sounds, preventing any kind of easy conversation, and, because of this, also creating a sensory space of refusal. This sensory space of refusal creates a disruptive distance not in physical terms, but a disruptive distance in terms of refusing to construct a compulsory, sonic connection between technician and customer. The affective labor involved in creating an auditory bridge (at the heart of providing “beauty therapy”) is rejected, allowing for the construction of a sensory architecture in which the sonic circulations of Walmart and Regal Nail Salon, influenced by lineages of white supremacist, capitalist logics of power, are used to undermine and prevent the further materialization of those same logics in the form of affective labor. In this unique sensory appropriation/subversion, the second characteristic of materiality—*the suasory movements of matter-energy are always influenced by directional lineages of power, but never predetermined by them*—becomes particularly clear.

Displacing the Dominant: Counter-Circulations of Sonic Force in Regal Nail Salon

The sonic flows of Walmart were not the only auditory forces that enabled a refusal of affective labor grounded in a privileging of the comfort of the white consumer patron, though. The Vietnamese nail technicians did not just draw on Walmart’s interruptive auditory forces as a resource for undermining and preventing the material continuation of the white supremacist, capitalist logics underscoring the expectation of affective labor (whether or not it is a conscious

act). The technicians also created sensory flows emanating from their auditory conversations in their native language, a materialized reversal of the hierarchical rules of what and when the sounds of the foreign “Other” are allowed, and what sounds these sonic flows prevent.

The technicians’ conversations in Vietnamese became a sensory force piercing through the English language and the U.S. American pop music of the Walmart that flowed through the salon. This circulation of sound made the normalized sonic rules/logics of the white supremacist, consumer space of Walmart explicit in their absence (the strength of the directional influence of these logics significantly weakened, fading as sonic flows in Vietnamese became the most salient in this space). The Vietnamese conversations as material, auditory flows claimed and co-created space and value in the sensory architecture of the salon, subverting the material influence of capitalist, white supremacist lineages of power.

The first time I experienced this circulation of Vietnamese auditory flows and their subversive effect was shortly after my manicure began. During the silent work of the technician, surrounded by the sonic streams from Walmart, my attention suddenly darted to a new auditory flow: a conversation between the technician and a woman doing a pedicure. They talked loudly over the Walmart sounds, but the volume of these conversations did not make the specific, linguistic meaning of this conversation any more transparent to myself and other white patrons. The ability of the body as a formation of matter-energy to recognize the linguistic meaning and feel a particular bodily experience in response to that deeper meaning was only available to the Vietnamese technicians, rejecting an imperative to prioritize the comfort of white patrons.

The sonic flows of this materialized, reversed hierarchy reverberated through me as my brain searched for deeper meaning. Through glances, I attempted to observe nonverbal clues to determine some amount of deeper meaning. I visually engaged with their bodily interactions and

processed them as best as I could, guessing that at least the interaction seemed positive, while still knowing that I lacked the ability to perceive the linguistic meaning in this circulation of sonic flows. This circulation enacted control over the amount of auditory force me and other patrons were allowed to contribute to co-create the sensory architecture, all the while using the (mostly) white, consumer sounds from Walmart as a material resource to support this sonic control and reversed hierarchy. In my case, I only produced a sonic utterance in between these auditory circulations in an attempt to engage in conversation with the nail technician, which ultimately failed to enable a sustained auditory “bridge” of connection. My body, denied an expected affective release through beauty “therapy” (even if I did not feel like I had a “right” to it, and just aimed for connection), had to questioningly navigate an environment with new sensory rules, experiencing in my body a disruption of the engrained white supremacist, capitalist hierarchies normally regulating nail salon spaces and the movements of matter-energy within them.

Using and Subverting Capitalist Logics: Tactile Rhythms in Regal Nail Salon

My body registers this disruption as facilitated by another distinct sensory flow: the efficient, tactile rhythms of the technician’s subversive agentic hands. These agentic hands emerge in awareness throughout my manicure process, an extension of the nail technician’s material, bodily formation. The technician’s subversive agentic hand, as a unique part of the technician’s bodily formation of matter-energy, demonstrates an especially significant use of white supremacist, capitalist-infused logics to subvert their sensory dominance.

In particular, the emergence of the technician’s subversive agentic hand, facilitated by the performance of skill and control over the feminized hand as object, is also intensified by the efficient tactile rhythms of these hands animated by capitalist logics. The efficient rhythms of the

technician's hands that worked on my manicure demonstrated a rapid enactment of skilled movements, but these movements followed a capitalist logic of prioritizing the maximization of profits by making more efficient the completion of paid services (opening up time to perform more paid services for other patrons).

This routine, factory-like labor, transforming hands into feminized objects, rejected the prioritization of white, consumer comfort by establishing a norm of labor that reinforced a position of lower value for the mainly white clientele of the salon. The emergence in awareness of the patrons' hands as feminized objects, physically controlled by agentic hands and serving as extensions of the gendered body, is structured by a sensory experience that denies white racial or consumer privilege and prevents the logics of white supremacist capitalism from materializing in the form of intensive affective labor. This sensory experience reinforces a position and subjectivity of the patron as object to be produced and not as a subject enacting control and a claim to privilege in the sensory environment.

At the end of the process of producing my hand as feminized object I am reminded of this new embodied position in the sensory architecture, the technician standing the second the manicure is complete and ushering me to the drying station on the outskirts of the salon (quickly turning toward the new patron to begin the efficient production of a new feminized object). In this movement through the sensory environment of the nail salon, my body, an extension of my hands as feminized objects, is displaced from the center of the salon and moved to the margins. The spatial terminology of center-margins is apt in this case, as this movement in the nail salon's sensory architecture is a spatial one, but also one structured by differential value. In the very space (a nail salon space) where racialized labor in service of the white patron is traditionally expected, a space where the white patron figuratively resides at the center of social value while

the racialized laborer is placed at the socially devalued margins, there arises a materialized, spatialized reversal of this racialized hierarchy of value, and a disruption of what groups are able to determine value of bodies.

In the Regal Nail Salon space, the technicians determine the value of those within the sensory architecture, ushering in those bodies who have already paid and are profitable so long as the haptic process of the manicure is being completed, and directing outward those patrons that have already become the promised feminized commodities. As finished, no-longer-profitable commodities, these patrons hold little value in taking up space in the center, where the technicians, as bodily formations of matter-energy co-constructing the sensory architecture of the nail salon, enact agency and sensory subversion through their labor and through their directive movements of bodies in and out of the salon space. If the bodies as finished commodities wish to stay, they can sit on the outskirts of the salon waiting for their nails to dry, accepting a marginalized location in the sensory architecture (knowing that they are not the ones able to enact agency in differently-assigning value to their inhabited locations). Through their simple directive movements (movements of matter-energy also structuring the emergence of the subversive, agentic hands in my awareness), the nail technicians spatially subvert and prevent the materialization of a racialized hierarchy central to white supremacist, capitalist logics and their influence on the flows of sensory architectures like nail salons. While this unique subversive sensory architecture still enables distinctly patriarchal, capitalist valuations and social inscriptions of bodies (and other problematic elements), this quality further demonstrates the dynamic complexity of sensory forces flowing through, used by, and co-constructing bodies within sensory architectures.

When we analyze how material, sensory architectures structure the emergence in awareness of elements of the body—in this case, the subversive agentic hand—we can begin to see and feel the multifaceted rhetorical force of sensory architecture, and of materiality itself. The tactile sensory rhythms of the nail technicians’ hands, emerging in awareness as subversive, agentic hands, along with the sonic forces flowing through and from material bodies (that these hands extend), demonstrate the second characteristic of materiality: *The suasory movements of matter-energy are always influenced by directional lineages of power, but never predetermined by them.* This second characteristic of materiality helps us understand how the rhetorical force of Regal Nail Salon’s sensory architecture invites both the kinaesthetic appearance of the hand as feminized object and the appearance in awareness of the subversive, agentic hand, both appearances a testament to just how mercurial, unbounded, and rhetorical materiality is.

Rhetorical Interventions: Conceptualizing the Complexity of Materiality’s Rhetorical Force, Directional Lineages of Power, and Embodiment

The analyses offered in this chapter reveal how the sensory architecture of the Regal Nail Salon simultaneously structures two different appearances of the hand: the kinaesthetic appearance in awareness of the hand as feminized object, and the appearance in awareness of a subversive agentic hand. Both appearances are structured by particular circulations of sensory flows, flows influenced by the directional force of patriarchal, white supremacist, capitalist logics. At the same time, while the sensory architecture of Regal Nail Salon may be significantly influenced by these logics, the constituent material forces of the nail salon are not predetermined by the directional force of these logics (and there exist possibilities for different forms of embodiment and affective-emotional experience beyond these directional forces, flowing beyond what I focus on in my analysis). Instead, the rhetorical entanglements of sensory forces,

materialized logics of power, and forms of embodiment that emerge within the sensory architectures they co-construct, are too complex to be contained within static, all-encompassing labels like “progressive” or “oppressive” that traditional ideological critique of materiality offers.

This is not to say that ideological terms are not useful; after all, in this analysis I rely on ideological terms to better explain certain logics of oppressive power structures influencing the circulation of sensory flows. The (productive) difficulty comes when we realize how complex sensory architectures are and how, as rhetorical scholars, the project of studying the relationships among materiality, embodiment, and power can be uncertain and unpredictable. Considering this difficulty, what do we do with this realization that the complexity of sensory architectures can exceed our assumptions or expectations, and troubles the categorization of spaces according to traditional ideological labels? As rhetorical scholars, we celebrate! We embrace the multifaceted rhetorical quality of the material, sensory world and the kinaesthetic effects that emerge within and from it. My analysis in this chapter focuses on these kinds of multifaceted entanglements of sensory force, materialized power, and embodiment, illustrating one way of embracing and examining the rhetorical nature of sensory architectures. In addition, the analysis also illustrates how my expanded definition of materiality and conceptualization of rhetoric as kinaesthetic are valuable conceptual tools for studying sensory architectures.

The usefulness of the expanded definition of rhetoric’s materiality I offer in this dissertation—rhetoric’s materiality as *suasory, mercurial movements of matter-energy*—is particularly evident in this chapter. More specifically, my analysis highlights how the second characteristics of materiality as I define it is crucial for better understanding the rhetorical, material forces of sensory architectures. The second characteristic—*the suasory movements of matter-energy are always influenced by directional lineages of power, but never predetermined*

by them—comes to light when examining how Regal Nail Salon’s sensory architecture, while infused and influenced by patriarchal, capitalist logics of power that make the kinaesthetic appearance of my hand as feminized object possible, also functions to subvert the directional force and further materialization of white supremacist, capitalist logics, structuring a space for the appearance in awareness of a subversive agentic hand. Ultimately, the use of my expanded definition of materiality and these characteristics in my analyses of Regal Nail Salon’s sensory architecture allows for a more nuanced understanding of the rhetorical force of materiality and its relation to embodiment and power.

It is this kind of nuanced understanding that helps me to answer my central research question and one of my sub-questions:

RQ: What is the relationship between the rhetorical force of materiality and embodiment?

RQb: How is power interwoven into this relationship?

I explore these questions in this chapter’s analysis and demonstrate how, by using my expanded definition of materiality to answer RQb, I can also provide one way of answering RQ. When considering the significant directional influence that materialized lineages of power hold in structuring sensory architectures (illustrated by the kinaesthetic emergence of my hand as feminized object in Regal Nail Salon), and also how sensory architectures are never fully predetermined by the directional force of materialized lineages of power (illustrated by the emergence in awareness of the subversive agentic hand in Regal Nail Salon), it becomes evident that sensory architectures, in light of their material nature and the inherent characteristics of materiality, have agency and a rhetorical, kinaesthetic force that can exceed the constraints of power’s influence on materiality and its relation to embodiment.

This rhetorical force, with its ability to exceed the constraints of the directional influence of lineages of materialized power, comes to the fore in this analysis, answering RQb and, ultimately, RQ. As discussed previously, my analyses in this and the previous chapter have illustrated how my expanded definition of materiality and its characteristics sheds light on how power is interwoven into the relationship between the rhetorical force of materiality and embodiment (answering RQb). In using this expanded definition of materiality to answer this sub-question, though, it also provides a better understanding of materiality's rhetorical force as it exists within sensory architectures. The analysis of Regal Nail Salon's sensory architecture in this chapter not only illustrates the rhetorical, suatory force of materiality, but also demonstrates how this suatory force characterizing sensory architectures becomes the material foundation for certain kinds of embodiment and awareness of other bodies. In essence, the analysis describes the visceral and perceptual experience of the relationship between the rhetorical force of materiality and embodiment (the focus of RQ) and illuminates how conceptualizing rhetoric as kinaesthetic enables a better understanding of this relationship and experience, providing one way of answering RQ.

In the next chapter, I conclude the dissertation by discussing how the rhetorical analyses of both the Walmart and Regal Nail Salon sensory architectures, and the three appearances of hands that they structure the emergence of, provide ways of answering RQ, RQa, and RQb. In addition, I explain how my term "sensory architectures," my expanded definition of rhetoric's materiality (and its characteristics), and my conception of rhetoric as kinaesthetic are all conceptual tools that make answering these research questions possible and allow me to extend scholarly research on rhetoric's materiality.

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CHAPTER 5:
EMBRACING ENTANGLEMENT: RHETORIC’S MATERIALITY, EMBODIMENT,
AND POWER

Something huge and impersonal runs through things, but it’s also mysteriously intimate and close at hand. At once abstract and concrete, it’s both a distant untouchable order of things and a claustrophobically close presence, like the experience of getting stuck in a customer service information loop every time you try to get to the bottom of things.

—Kathleen Stewart, *Ordinary Affects*

This dissertation is an academic venture and, of course, a personal one. It is my attempt to “get to the bottom of things,” to get closer to touching the “untouchable,” whatever circulations of matter-energy that, with or without my conscious consent, evoke unique senses of “my body” and “your body” as we exist in the world. I would like to believe that this ordering of mercurial circulations of matter-energy can be both felt and better understood through scholarly inquiry, inquiry animated by an openness to a multiplicity of understandings rather than a desire for a single explanation of these circulations. Scholars in many disciplines, with their unique analytical perspectives, are connected in this pursuit of understanding. I believe rhetorical scholars, though, have a particularly rich analytical foundation to support their inquiry into the realm of the material, which is, in essence, both the substratum and substance of existence. Understanding the rhetorical force of the material is to understand the suasive capacity that enables its connection to embodiment and power, a distinctly rhetorical understanding I pursue in this dissertation.

My analytical pursuit is guided by my central research question and two sub-questions:

RQ: What is the relationship between the rhetorical force of materiality and embodiment?

RQa: How can theorizing bodies as formations of matter-energy help to explain the relationship between the rhetorical force of materiality and embodiment?

RQb: How is power interwoven into the relationship between the rhetorical force of materiality and embodiment?

My central research question reflects careful consideration of how the phrasing of this one question would guide my dissertation research. It does not ask from the outset whether or not I am “right” about a theory (though in the process of trying to provide an answer to this guiding question, I develop an answer I argue for), or ask why this relationship is what it is, presuming we already know all we can know about the relationship. Instead, my question comes from a place that recognizes how much we have yet to learn about this relationship and begins with a word that makes space for expansive inquiry: “what.”

I chose this word, that begins the question animating the entirety of my research in this dissertation, because it creates an openness of inquiry that allows space for different conceptualizations to emerge in the process. As rhetorical scholar Diane Marie Keeling describes, “‘What’ is an interrogative pronoun, adverb, and sometimes adjective or noun that invokes figuration and conceptualization. It is inquisitive rather than declarative.”¹⁵³ By asking the central research question guiding my dissertation research—“What is the relationship between the rhetorical force of materiality and embodiment?”—I began an analytical inquiry that invoked conceptualization, eventually leading to two conceptual contributions, in particular.

The first conceptual tool I contribute in this dissertation is an expanded definition of rhetoric’s materiality that includes consideration of two important characteristics:

¹⁵³ Diane Marie Keeling, “Of Turning and Tropes,” *Review of Communication* 16, no. 4 (2016): 327-328.

Expanded definition of rhetoric's materiality: *materiality as suasory, mercurial movements of matter-energy.*

Two characteristics:

1. *Matter-energy moves in dynamic, lively ways, and our embodied experience and understanding of these suasory movements is made possible through affect.*
2. *The suasory movements of matter-energy are always influenced by directional lineages of power, but never predetermined by them.*

The second conceptual tool I contribute is an understanding of rhetoric as kinaesthetic, where the rhetorical, suasory force of materiality (resulting from the first characteristic of rhetoric's materiality) evokes presence effects that are both relational and kinaesthetic, generating a particular sense of one's own embodiment. Both conceptual contributions arose out of necessity as I pursued answers to my research question and sub-questions, arriving at the following answers (three of many possible answers) to my research question and sub-questions:

RQ: What is the relationship between the rhetorical force of materiality and embodiment?

The rhetorical force of materiality, always influenced by directional flows of power lineages, structures both relational and kinaesthetic presence effects that constitute our experience of embodiment.

RQa: How can theorizing bodies as formations of matter-energy help to explain the relationship between the rhetorical force of materiality and embodiment?

Theorizing bodies as formations of matter-energy helps explain this relationship by recognizing that bodies as formations of matter-energy are always enmeshed in and co-constituting sensory architectures that structure both relational and kinaesthetic presence effects.

RQb: How is power interwoven into the relationship between the rhetorical force of materiality and embodiment?

Power is interwoven into the relationship between the rhetorical force of materiality and embodiment as a fundamental element that exerts a directional (but not determining) force on the movements of matter-energy and, by extension, the relational and kinaesthetic effects that constitute our experience of embodiment.

These answers are the result of my embodied, analytical inquiry detailed in this dissertation, made possible through the development of an expanded definition of rhetoric's materiality and an understanding of rhetoric as kinaesthetic. Below, I recount the analytical journey that led to the development of these conceptual tools and how they allowed me to answer my research questions.

Following Where Questions Lead:

Conceptualizing Rhetoric's Materiality

To best explain this analytical process, I will examine how I answer my research question and sub-questions through my case study analyses of the Walmart Supercenter and Regal Nail Salon spaces, demonstrating how my conceptual tools enable the development of these answers and, ultimately, support my argument for the necessity of these concepts to advance scholarly understanding of rhetoric's materiality. To begin, I will start by examining how my analysis of the Walmart Supercenter's sensory architecture provides a compelling case study that helps answer RQa in particular. Next, I discuss how my analysis of the Regal Nail Salon's sensory architecture serves as a particularly illustrative case study that allows me to answer RQb. Lastly, I reflect on how these case study analyses combined enable me to answer RQ.

Analyzing Walmart's Sensory Architecture and Answering RQa

To review, RQa asks:

How can theorizing bodies as formations of matter-energy help explain the relationship between the rhetorical force of materiality and embodiment?

Through my dissertation analyses, I develop the following answer:

Theorizing bodies as formations of matter-energy helps explain the relationship between the rhetorical force of materiality and embodiment by recognizing that bodies as formations of matter-energy are always enmeshed in and co-constituting sensory architectures that structure both relational and kinaesthetic presence effects.

My process of developing this answer began in chapter two, where I established the theoretical foundation grounding my analyses, providing my expanded definition of rhetoric's materiality that allows for a conceptualization of bodies as formations of matter-energy. Defining materiality as the mercurial movements of matter-energy, with the first characteristic indicating that this matter-energy moves in dynamic, lively ways and that our human experience and understanding of these movements is made possible through affect, supports the view that human bodies are fundamentally composed of and share in the matter-energy flowing through all things. At the same time, this definition of materiality with its first characteristic recognizes that humans, while sharing in this universal flow of matter-energy, exist as unique formations that have particular affective experiences of this shared matter-energy (making the analytical term "sensory architectures" ideally suited for the analysis). These diverse experiences of shared materiality, made possible through materiality's production of affect, compose our sense of embodiment in relation to our own bodies (kinaesthetic presence effects) and other formations of matter-energy (relational presence effects). These elements of my definition rely upon a conceptualization of bodies as formations of matter-energy, which ultimately allows me to provide a way of answering RQa through my analyses of Walmart Supercenter and Regal Nail Salon's sensory architectures, explaining how conceptualizing bodies as formations of matter-energy, enmeshed in sensory architectures, helps explain the relationship between the rhetorical force of materiality and embodiment.

My two-part analysis of the Walmart Supercenter's sensory architecture in chapter three is particularly well-suited for answering RQa for two reasons. First, my analysis of this specific sensory architecture is well-suited because Walmart's sensory architecture is composed of especially diverse sensory elements that structure a unique space of kinaesthetic emergence, an

analysis enabled by conceptualizing bodies as formations of matter-energy. Second, the last part of my analysis in this chapter relies heavily upon this view of bodies, allowing me to envision how alternative rhetorical forces co-constituting this sensory architecture could structure different spaces for kinaesthetic embodiment.

In both parts of my analysis in chapter three, I focus on how bodies within the Walmart Supercenter co-constitute what I term the sensory architecture of the space, where bodies as formations of matter-energy compose and are composed by the shared circulations of matter-energy (as indicated in the first characteristic of my definition of rhetoric's materiality). In pursuing these areas of analysis, the analytical term sensory architecture proves to be ideally suited in large part because of its emphasis on and recognition of the first characteristic of rhetoric's materiality: *matter-energy moves in dynamic, lively ways, and our embodied experience and understanding of these suasory movements is made possible through affect*. While other analytical terms can still be useful for examining rhetoric's materiality, sensory architecture, when seeking to understand how certain material environments invite particular kinaesthetic effects, provides an analytical lens that recognizes how the rhetorical force of the material world is only accessible to humans/able to be studied by humans through material, sensory flows, which our human bodies co-constitute. This foundational understanding and orientation to any rhetorical research project requires the researcher to become attuned to their embodied role in any material environment, which supports a heightened attention to the ever-changing kinaesthetic presence effects that a sensory architecture invites. Using the term sensory architectures, in my analysis, then, provided me with an orientation that supported a deeper understanding of how Walmart's sensory architecture, co-constituted by bodies as formations of matter-energy, invites certain kinaesthetic presence effects, helping me to answer RQa.

Specifically, my analysis in chapter three provides a way of answering RQa by examining the rhetorical force of Walmart's sensory architecture, co-constituted by bodies as formations of matter-energy, and how this sensory architecture invites the kinaesthetic emergence of what I term "the agentic hand." The emergence of this agentic hand is a kinaesthetic presence effect which directs one's physiological attention to the hand as a crucial part of the body, animated by the pursuit of a consumer subjectivity. This consumer subjectivity, enabled by the kinaesthetic emergence of the agentic hand, is supported by particular sensory flows influenced by the directional force of capitalist power structures, circulating in and co-constituting the Walmart sensory architecture. These sensory flows circulate through and are influenced by the bodies as formations of matter-energy, their material influence supporting an affective encounter of shared materiality that gives rise to a unique sense of kinaesthetic embodiment.

This analysis is complemented by an analysis that uses this conceptualization of bodies as forms of matter-energy to conceive of alternative sensory architectures that, because of the nature of rhetoric's materiality (specifically the first characteristic of my definition, combined with my understanding of rhetoric as kinaesthetic), further demonstrates how conceptualizing bodies as formations of matter-energy helps us understand the relationship between the rhetorical force of materiality and embodiment (supporting my answer to RQa). In addition, this additional analysis illustrates how my answer to RQ, enabled by my answer to RQa, helps rhetorical critics to both understand current sensory architectures but also imagine alternative, transformed sensory architectures with different kinaesthetic effects. In this case, understanding how changing certain perceptual flows of the sensory architecture can invite alternative kinaesthetic

effects like the emergence of a “the interconnected hand,” facilitating a formation of a communal, connected subjectivity.

Analyzing Regal Nail Salon’s Sensory Architecture and Answering RQb

After the analyses of chapter three, I undertake the analysis of Regal Nail Salon’s sensory architecture in chapter four, developing the following answer to RQb:

RQb: How is power interwoven into the relationship between the rhetorical force of materiality and embodiment?

Power is interwoven into the relationship between the rhetorical force of materiality and embodiment as a fundamental element that exerts a directional (but not determining) force on the movements of matter-energy and, by extension, the relational and kinaesthetic effects that constitute our experience of embodiment.

Chapter four’s two-part analysis of Regal Nail Salon’s sensory architecture—focusing on the emergent kinaesthetic presence effect of the hand as feminized object and the relational presence effect of a subversive agentic hand also emerging in awareness—is a particularly illustrative case study when examining how power is interwoven into the relationship between the rhetorical force of materiality and embodiment (RQb). My analysis of Regal Nail Salon illuminates how the rhetorical force of materiality, and the particular forms of embodiment that arise from this rhetorical force, are always influenced by the directional force of power lineages (as demonstrated by the kinaesthetic emergence of the hand as feminized object) but never completely constrained by these directive flows of materialized power (as evidenced by the relational emergence of the subversive agentic hand).

The answer to RQb arising from this analysis is made possible through the use of my expanded definition of rhetoric’s materiality (as the mercurial movements of matter-energy) and its second characteristic, in particular (that the movements of matter-energy are always influenced by directional lineages of power, but never predetermined by them), and my

understanding of rhetoric as kinaesthetic. To demonstrate this in chapter four's analyses, I begin the chapter by analyzing how the sensory architecture of Regal Nail Salon illustrates how lineages of patriarchal, capitalist power structures are materialized and influences the kinaesthetic emergence of the hand as feminized object (demonstrating the first part of the second characteristic of rhetoric's materiality: that the movements of matter-energy are always influenced by directional lineages of power). My second analysis in chapter four facilitates the full development of my answer to RQb, illustrating the importance of both parts of the second characteristic of rhetoric's materiality (that the movements of matter-energy are always influenced by directional lineages of power, but never predetermined by them). In this analysis, I examine how materialized lineages of white supremacist, capitalist logics exert a directional force as they permeate the sensory architecture of the Regal Nail Salon, but do not predetermine the movements of matter-energy that co-construct this sensory architecture or the presence effects that arise from these rhetorical movements (in this case, the relational presence effect of the emergence in awareness of a subversive, agentic hand).

This analysis of the unique appropriation and subversion of sensory forces infused with white supremacist, capitalist logics illustrates both parts of the second characteristic of my expanded definition of materiality (that the movements of matter-energy are always influenced by directional lineages of power, but never predetermined by them) that, in combination with the first part of my analysis in chapter four, allows me to fully answer RQb.

The Culmination of Embodied Inquiries: Answering RQ

So far, I have provided an overview of the analytical journey I undertake in this dissertation and how it enabled me to answer my sub-questions. These answers, developed through my embodied inquiries in this dissertation, are intimately connected. They provide

different insights into the relationship between the rhetorical force of materiality and embodiment, forming the foundation of my answer to the central research question of this dissertation:

RQ: What is the relationship between the rhetorical force of materiality and embodiment?

The rhetorical force of materiality, always influenced by directional flows of power lineages, structures both relational and kinaesthetic presence effects that constitute our experience of embodiment.

This answer acknowledges the multifaceted entanglement of the rhetorical force of materiality, power, and embodiment, presenting an answer to my central research question. Answering RQ, as well as my sub-questions (RQa and RQb) that support RQ's answer, required me to develop conceptual tools that allowed me to more deeply analyze the rhetorical nature of materiality and embodiment than I could with existing rhetorical concepts.

Continuing Rhetorical Inquiry: Conceptual Contributions

The conceptual tools I develop in this dissertation—an expanded definition of rhetoric's materiality and an understanding of rhetoric as kinaesthetic—were necessary for answering my research question and sub-questions, but I argue that these conceptual contributions are also necessary for advancing scholarly study of rhetoric's materiality. While current conceptualizations of rhetoric's materiality have value and provide the foundation I build upon in this dissertation, this foundation is not sufficient for extending our understanding of the complex relationship among the rhetorical force of materiality, embodiment, and power to the fullest extent possible. My expanded definition of rhetoric's materiality and understanding of rhetoric as kinaesthetic are conceptual tools that can aid us in extending our understanding as much as we are able. My conceptual contributions are able to do this because they are more deeply attuned

than current conceptualizations to the inextricable nature of power as it infuses rhetoric's materiality, and the multifaceted forms of embodiment that rhetoric's materiality can evoke.

This attunement is reflected in both conceptual contributions, stated below:

Expanded definition of rhetoric's materiality: *materiality as suasory, mercurial movements of matter-energy.*

Two characteristics:

1. *Matter-energy moves in dynamic, lively ways, and our embodied experience and understanding of these suasory movements is made possible through affect.*
2. *The suasory movements of matter-energy are always influenced by directional lineages of power, but never predetermined by them.*

An understanding of rhetoric as kinaesthetic: an understanding of the rhetorical force of materiality as moving our sensing bodies in ways that not only result in relational presence effects¹⁵⁴ but also kinaesthetic effects, ever-changing experiences of inhabiting a body, or one's "self" as part of a formation of matter-energy that becomes labeled a "body."

As demonstrated through my research in this dissertation, these conceptual contributions are necessary for rhetorical scholars if we truly seek to further our understanding of the complicated but fascinating entanglements of the rhetorical force of materiality, power, and embodiment.

My expanded definition of rhetoric's materiality is needed because of its more explicit focus on the inextricable relationship between power and rhetoric's materiality, extending previous scholarship in the field. This previous scholarship on rhetoric's materiality forms the foundation of my definition, which draws on a long tradition of rhetorical thought, including George A. Kennedy's early insights into the animate, dynamic character of living things and their capacity for persuasion (conceptualized broadly), Celeste Condit's work on rhetoric's materiality as it arises from physical contact among forms of matter-energy, Nathan Stormer's

¹⁵⁴ Brian Ott and Greg Dickinson, "Redefining Rhetoric: Why Matter Matters," *Berlin Journal of Critical Theory* 3, no. 1 (2019): 54.

focus on rhetoric's material and relational nature as it circulates within ecologies of matter-energy, Jenny Edbauer Rice's emphasis on the role of affect when theorizing rhetoric's materiality, Brian L. Ott and Greg Dickinson's definition of rhetoric that explains the symbolic and non-symbolic/material character of rhetoric, affect, and relational presence effects, and the scholarship of many others.¹⁵⁵ Building on these understandings of rhetoric as inherently material, experienced through affect, and producing relational presence effects, I extend this conceptualization of rhetoric's materiality to include explicit recognition of power as an inescapable, but not determining, influence on the suatory, rhetorical movements of matter-energy.

In addition, I expand our understanding of rhetoric's presence effects, illustrating how rhetoric's material functioning invites both relational presence effects and kinaesthetic presence effects that influence the conscious and unconscious sensing of our bodies. This understanding of rhetoric's materiality as capable of evoking particular kinaesthetic presence effects, and (as indicated in my definition of rhetoric's materiality) always influenced by the directional force of power, has the potential to enrich ongoing scholarly research on rhetoric's materiality in a number of ways.

As theoretical tools, my expanded definition of rhetoric's materiality and understanding of rhetoric as kinaesthetic can uniquely contribute to rhetorical scholarship being done on the material-discursive formation of bodies and embodiment. As many scholars have noted, the

¹⁵⁵ George A. Kennedy, "A Hoot in the Dark: The Evolution of General Rhetoric," *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 25, no. 1 (1992): 1–21; Celeste Condit, "The Materiality of Coding: Rhetoric, Genetics, and the Matter of Life.," in *Rhetorical Bodies*, ed. Jack Selzer and Sharon Crowley (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1999), 326–56; Nathan Stormer, "Articulation: A Working Paper on Rhetoric and *Taxis*," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 90, no. 3 (2004): 257–84; Jenny Edbauer Rice, "Unframing Models of Public Distribution: From Rhetorical Situation to Rhetorical Ecologies," *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 35, no. 4 (2005): 5–24; Ott and Dickinson, "Redefining Rhetoric," 54.

meaningful formation/coding of bodies in society is always a material-discursive process (producing what Karen Barad refers to as our “naturalcultural bodies”), one influenced by power structures.¹⁵⁶ For example, rhetorical scholar Annie Hill examines how power structures influence material-discursive processes that shape how the phenomenon of cancer—breast cancer, in particular—and human bodies with cancer are coded with cultural meanings based on a normative “ideal” body mired in logics of racism, sexism, classism, and ableism.¹⁵⁷ Understanding rhetoric’s materiality as fundamentally inseparable from power and productive of both relational and kinaesthetic effects could extend this valuable line of inquiry even more, examining how power structures influence the production of conscious and unconscious kinaesthetic effects. Specifically, how might the material-discursive shaping of embodiment for individuals with cancer influence what parts of their bodies their kinaesthetic awareness is directed towards, versus other parts that become less prominent (consciously or non-consciously)? How can conceptualizing embodied experiences of breast cancer as routinized pattern of kinaesthetic presence effects help us to understand this material-discursive embodiment in new ways? More than this, when kinaesthetic awareness forms a foundation for

¹⁵⁶ Karen Barad, “Transmaterialities: Trans*/Matter/Realities and Queer Political Imaginings,” *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 21, no. 2 (2015): 410; Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, trans. Constance Borde and Sheila Malovany-Chevallier, 1st American ed. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2010); Sara Ahmed, *Strange Encounters: Embodied Others in Post-Coloniality* (Routledge, 2000); Karma R. Chávez, “Embodied Translation: Dominant Discourse and Communication with Migrant Bodies-as-Text,” *Howard Journal of Communications* 20, no. 1 (2009): 18–36; Karma R. Chávez, “The Body: An Abstract and Actual Rhetorical Concept,” *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 48, no. 3 (2018): 242–50; Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, trans. Robert Hurley, 1st American ed. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978); Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, *Extraordinary Bodies: Figuring Physical Disability in American Culture and Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997); Elizabeth Grosz, *The Incorporeal: Ontology, Ethics, and the Limits of Materialism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017); Kelly E. Happe, “The Body of Race: Toward a Rhetorical Understanding of Racial Ideology,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 99, no. 2 (2013): 131–55; Casey Ryan Kelly and Kristen E. Hoerl, “Shaved or Saved? Disciplining Women’s Bodies,” *Women’s Studies in Communication* 38, no. 2 (2015): 141–45; Han Koehle, “Gendering the Fat Body: Rhetoric and Personhood in Transition,” *Advances in Trans Studies: Moving Toward Gender Expansion and Trans Hope* 32 (2021): 77–90.

¹⁵⁷ Annie Hill, “Breast Cancer’s Rhetoricity: Bodily Border Crisis and Bridge to Corporeal Solidarity,” *Review of Communication* 16, no. 4 (2016): 281–98.

embodiment, how does the rhetorical force of power-infused materiality work to regulate our embodied experience with or without our conscious consent, and what might be the implications?

Understanding rhetoric as kinaesthetic and defining rhetoric's materiality in a way that recognizes its fundamentally intertwined relationship with power can also extend current scholarly work examining the transtemporal dimensions of rhetoric's materiality and its relation to power. For example, rhetorical scholars Celnisha L. Dangerfield and Christina L. Moss's insightful Afrocentric analysis of how the performance of *Glory* at the 2015 Oscars drew on the power of the past and a continuing Black experience to rhetorically (re)mark a Eurocentric space/place provides a valuable site for expanded analysis that could examine how this transtemporal process of (re)marking place creates a sensory architecture that gives rise to powerful kinaesthetic effects. Using a power-attuned definition of rhetoric's materiality and understanding of rhetoric as kinaesthetic, further research could examine how visual/sonic performances and other rhetorical acts that (re)mark places, centering a transtemporal Black experience, produce not only relational presence effects inviting embodied feelings of communal connection and awareness, but also kinaesthetic presence effects that shift an experience of one's body as the sensory architecture of the place transforms in the process of (re)marking. When place is (re)marked (demonstrating how the suasory flows of materiality are not predetermined by the power structures that influence them, as indicated in my definition of rhetoric's materiality), how do the power-infused kinaesthetic effects change, and what might this mean for kinaesthetic agency in relation to how we experience our bodies? And what might the implications be for how kinaesthetic experiences become naturalized over time according to different logics of power?

Furthering Our Human/Scholarly Reach:

Embracing Our Intimate Entanglement in an Expansive, Shared Materiality

These questions are just a few of many possible questions my conceptual contributions can lead us to, guiding us toward areas of valuable inquiry. These conceptual contributions—an expanded definition of rhetoric and a conceptualization of rhetoric as kinaesthetic—because of their attunement to the complex entanglements of rhetoric’s materiality, its inextricable relationship with power, and relational and kinaesthetic embodiment, serve as a theoretical grounding that offers not only a direction for novel future research, but also a way to further our analytical reach as rhetorical scholars. This continuous, inquisitive reaching to touch the “untouchable” realm of our shared materiality, to more intimately understand it, has always been a collective movement. I do not claim to have gotten the collective “us” of humans, academics, or rhetorical scholars to this unreachable point, but I humbly offer a way to extend our reach toward understanding the rhetorical nature of that which is most “mysteriously intimate” and infinitely expansive.

More than this, it is my hope that the scholarly work I offer in this dissertation also provides understandings that enable us to more passionately embrace every moment of our lived experience of rhetoric’s materiality, embodiment, and power. For, ultimately, rhetorical criticism is also a form of pedagogy, serving as a tool “*to teach people how to experience their rhetorical environments more richly* [emphasis in original].”¹⁵⁸ I do not claim that the way I conceptualize rhetoric’s materiality, embodiment, and power is the only or best way of more richly experiencing the rhetorical environments of which we are a part. However, the conceptual contributions in this dissertation are animated by the hope I have for their use in our everyday

¹⁵⁸ Barry Brummett, “Rhetorical Theory as Heuristic and Moral: A Pedagogical Justification,” *Communication Education* 33, no. 2 (1984): 103.

lives. I hope that my work provides a way of more deeply experiencing our embodied immersion in, and co-creation of, the sensory architectures that give rise to our “selves.” I hope that the concepts I offer provide a way of more intensely feeling the rhetorical, suasory movements of matter-energy that course through our veins and reach beyond the boundary of our skin, connecting us to a world in which our experience and material-social formation of our bodies is shaped by materialized power, but does not leave us powerless. I hope that my particular understanding of the relationship among the rhetorical force of materiality, embodiment, and power can form the foundation for an embrace of collective, material agency to reshape the directional force of power structures. And, perhaps most of all, I hope that the conceptual understandings I offer provide a way of both better understanding and cherishing our interdependence, of experiencing the value of our own embodied existence as inseparable from the value of the existence of all formations of matter-energy.

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