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THE DISCURSIVE PERFORMANCE OF FEMININITY: HATING HILLARY

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When William Jefferson Clinton was elected president in 1992, polls revealed continuing unease at the prospect of Hillary Rodham Clinton as first lady. In a *USA Today*/CNN/Gallup Poll of November 10-11, citizens were divided equally between those who saw her as representing their values and lifestyles more than her predecessors and those who did not.[1] Perhaps the most bizarre expression of unease was the *Spy* magazine cover of December 1992 showing her head on the body of an S & M dominatrix. As a way to counter fears of the power of the first lady, what an insider called "a sense of corrosive mystery" about her activities,[2] she was given a defined and recognized role. She had an office in the West Wing of the White House; she became head of the task force of health care reform; she met with members of Congress, testified before congressional committees, and spoke before audiences all around the country seeking agreement about the goals that a health care plan should meet.

Clearly, these efforts were unsuccessful in allaying fears or garnering approval for her role. In 1996, Henry Louis Gates Jr. wrote that "Hillary-hating has become one of those national pastimes which unite the elite and the lumpen,"[3] and Garry Wills wrote:

> Hillary Hate is a large-scale psychic phenomenon. At the Republican convention there was a dismemberment doll on sale. For twenty dollars you could buy a rag-doll Hillary with arms and legs made to tear off and throw on the floor. . . . Talk shows are full of speculation about Hillary's purported lesbianism and drug use. Fine conspiratorial reasoning sifts whether she was Vince Foster's mistress or murderer or both. The Don Imus show plays a version of the song "The Lady is a Tramp" with new lyrics about the way the lady "fornicates" and "menstruates" and "urinates," concluding, "That's why the First Lady is a tramp."[4]

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These and other outrageous attacks amaze because they violate the norms of public decorum and courtesy, and as such, they challenge us to find some explanation. Obviously, many factors have affected attitudes toward the current first lady, but no prior presidential spouse has occasioned the kind of attacks that have been directed at Hillary Rodham Clinton.[5] In order to find parallels, one must return to nineteenth-century reactions to efforts for women's rights generally and for dress reform in particular. They reveal powerful social expectations about the public performance of gender roles.

The idea that gender is a performance, an "illusion . . . discursively maintained" by "words, acts, and gestures"[6] is argued in two major works by Judith Butler. She writes: "Gender norms operate by requiring the embodiment of certain ideals of femininity and masculinity, ones that are almost always related to the idealization of the heterosexual bond."[7] Butler relies primarily on scholarly work that builds on the insights of Michel Foucault and other continental writers, but the notion of gender as performance and of gender norms as requiring the embodiment of certain ideals of femininity has a history that supports and elaborates Butler's claims and, in an important although limited way, illuminates the dynamics surrounding reactions to the gender performance of U.S. First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton.

Butler's works develop two key ideas. First, that sex, the arrangement of one's genitals, and gender, "the cultural meanings that the sexed body assumes," are distinguishable; that is, "a gender cannot be said to follow from a sex in any one way."[8] Simply put, gendered behavior will be culturally coded and will vary from culture to culture and through time, and such codes are not mandated by biological sex. Second, that gender is behavior; it is "embodied"; the body, itself a cultural construction, is "a mere *instrument* or *medium*" through which cultural meanings are expressed.[9] Moreover, "[t]he practice by which gendering occurs, the embodying of norms, is a compulsory practice, a forcible production."[10] Such behavior is disciplined by cultural approval or censure. Accordingly, she writes, the term *girl* "or, rather, its symbolic power, governs the formation of a corporeally enacted femininity that never fully approximates the norm. This is a 'girl,' however, who is compelled to 'cite' the norm in order to qualify and remain a viable subject."[11] In other words, gender is not a physical or biological given; it is enacted and performed bodily, and in order for a "woman" or "girl" to be an agent, to assume what postmodernists call the "subject position," which is a role like that of rhetor, she must "cite" or "enact" cultural norms of femininity.

The reception of the nineteenth-century dress reform movement dramatically illustrates these ideas.[12] Starting in the 1830s, the fashion in dress worn by middle- and upper-class women and to which other women aspired required tight-laced corseting (13- to 18-inch waists were the norm) and skirts that dragged on floors

and sidewalks and, with crinolines, weighed some twenty to thirty pounds, clothing that severely restricted women's movement, breathing, and circulation and posed a hazard in any sort of emergency. From the middle of the century on, dress reformers worked to alter fashions in order to improve women's health generally, reduce the threat that child-bearing had become as a consequence of poor health, and enable women to perform their domestic roles more efficiently as well as to participate in educational and other opportunities. To contemporary eyes, their proposals seem entirely sensible and moderate: End the practice of tight-lacing corsets and the wearing of crinolines that weighed women down and prevented exercise, shorten the skirts that dragged on the floor to enable freer movement, and eliminate sleeve arrangements that prevented women from free use of their arms. Although the reformers made every effort to feminize the costume with lace and other embellishment, the reaction to wearers of what was called the "short dress" or the "reform" or "American costume" was hostility, ridicule, and ostracism, reactions far in excess of the modest changes that were proposed. The animosity was so intense, in fact, that even the most radical reformers, such as Lucy Stone and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, finally abandoned wearing it in public as a detriment to the causes they espoused.

One element of the costume was particularly controversial—the trousers that peeked from beneath the shortened skirt. Why was such a controversial item included? Because there was no way to avoid it. In order to facilitate movement and exercise, the skirt had to be shortened, but Victorian norms regarding female modesty required that a woman's legs be concealed completely. In order to do so, the reform dress had to include a trouser, usually Turkish-style pantaloons that extended below the wearer's ankles.[13] Despite their style and function, the idea of a woman wearing trousers was simply unthinkable; "opposition was more vitriolic than anything feminists had yet experienced."[14] In her autobiography, Jane Grey Cannon Swisshelm, a nineteenth-century abolitionist, woman's rights advocate, and journalist, reflected on the belief "that masculine supremacy lay in the form of their garments, and that a woman dressed like a man would be as potent as he."[15] Anne Hollander comments that "dividing the legs of respectable women with a layer of fabric seemed like a sexual sacrilege." [16] As one commentator writes, "trousers were the symbol of the male and of male domination, and the proposal that women should adopt them (almost entirely concealed by the skirt as they were) was seen as a threat to the whole structure of society."[17] The wearing of trousers was a defining enactment of masculinity, and when women wore them, the most strenuous efforts were made to enforce the cultural gender code. Indeed, the power of this gender norm is demonstrated by its persistence into the 1970s, when it finally began to be acceptable for women to wear "pants suits."

Animosity aroused by the reform dress is a vivid example of reactions to violations of cultural norms governing the public performance of gender roles. Conflicts over the *discursive* public performance of gender roles emerged clearly as U.S. women struggled to be accepted as advocates for temperance, the abolition of slavery, moral reform, and other social causes. The hostility early women advocates faced and the strategic responses by which they created spaces in which, and voices through which, they could speak in support of these causes have been studied extensively.[18] Those who first attempted public advocacy faced resistance from audiences who believed that speaking in public or writing for publication "unsexed" a woman because the role of public advocate was gendered "masculine." Many were silenced, but the most inventive found ways to make their advocacy more acceptable.

What can be summed up as "feminine rhetorical style" were strategic responses by nineteenth-century women to two competing sets of cultural norms: gender norms for the performance of femininity and rhetorical norms governing public advocacy.[19] Put simply, women speakers were expected to reaffirm their womanliness discursively at the same time that they demonstrated the ordinary rhetorical competencies—cogent argument, clarity of position, offering compelling evidence, and responding to competing views—that were gender-coded as masculine. Nineteenth-century women activists felt this conflict acutely because they were primarily middle-class women for whom these norms were particularly salient and because gender norms moved them to and prohibited them from public advocacy. To speak in public or write for publication was, in and of itself, a violation of gender norms that called forth severe sanctions. Ostracism by friends and family, expulsion from religious organizations, and public censure—in addition to physical assaults on women speakers—were used to enforce conformity to gender norms. That women were seen as naturally and distinctively pure and pious, however, implied that they were particularly well-equipped to advise on moral matters, and their earliest efforts at public advocacy arose in relation to issues closely related to what were seen as women's concerns—works of benevolence toward the poor and orphaned, and struggles against the moral evils of prostitution, slavery, and alcoholism. Women felt that gender norms authorized them to address these problems, but these same norms condemned them to silence except within the domestic circle of their homes. In effect, the beginnings of what became the movement for woman's rights were struggles for the right of women to speak and write publicly on what they saw as moral wrongs requiring remedies.

Although the conflict has been mitigated and modified through time, it persists, as studies of and works by twentieth-century women politicians attest.[20] As Kathleen Hall Jamieson points out, television has played a significant role in changing the public discursive performance of gender roles. The qualities that project

most effectively on television are qualities culturally associated with women's speech, which has made a personal, self-disclosing style based on narrative highly valued. This is illustrated by the positive response to the public discourse of President Ronald Reagan, whose rhetoric was characterized by a personal, self-disclosing, conversational tone and exploited the resources of longer narratives and brief anecdotes.[21] In fact, as long as males meet the rhetorical norms for effective advocacy—clarity and cogency of argument, selection of appropriate and compelling evidence, and preempting opposing positions—nothing prevents them from appropriating the elements of feminine style to enhance their public discourse, as the case of President Reagan illustrates. As I have indicated, the situation is different for women.

In rhetorical terms, performing or enacting femininity has meant adopting a personal or self-disclosing tone (signifying nurturance, intimacy, and domesticity) and assuming a feminine persona, e.g., mother,[22] or an ungendered persona, e.g., mediator or prophet,[23] while speaking. It has meant preferring anecdotal evidence (reflecting women's experiential learning in contrast to men's expertise), developing ideas inductively (so the audience thinks that it, not this presumptuous woman, drew the conclusions), and appropriating strategies associated with women—such as domestic metaphors, emotional appeals to motherhood, and the like—and avoiding such "macho" strategies as tough language, confrontation or direct refutation, and any appearance of debating one's opponents. Note, however, that feminine style does not preclude substantive depth and argumentative cogency.

In terms of the 1996 election, it means behaving rhetorically like Dole's wife rather than Clinton's. When Elizabeth Hanford Dole spoke to the Republican National Convention on the evening of August 13, she was widely perceived as imitating Oprah Winfrey,[24] whose talk show treats topics dear to women, attracts audiences of women, and has a deeply empathetic, emotional style. Her speech was intensely personal and self-disclosing; it developed through anecdotes about her husband's life; as his wife, not as a former cabinet member or as head of the Red Cross, she praised him, showed her love for him, and asked us to make an emotional decision to trust him. Organizationally, the speech was structured around anecdotes that inductively suggested that candidate Dole was a compassionate man who could feel the pain of others and understand their problems because of his experiences. Not only did she speak in the distinctively female role of wife, but she assumed a persona with a long history for women, unselfishly acting on behalf of someone else.

Her speech received rave reviews from the public and the press. It was a paradigmatic performance of rhetorical femininity. Jean Baker Miller, a psychiatrist and authority on sex roles commented: "Somehow Elizabeth Dole is able to convey that more traditional role. . . . She's able to appear as if she's not rocking any boats."[25]

Similarly, in 1987, when she was campaigning for her husband, who was seeking the Republican presidential nomination, a *Washington Post* reporter commented in terms that perfectly describe feminine rhetorical style: "She mixes femininity—in her case, a Southern-belle graciousness and an almost girlish charm—with her Ivy League professional credentials more successfully than perhaps any woman in public life today."[26]

Once candidate Dole's wife spoke at the Republican National Convention, it became necessary for Clinton's wife to speak at the Democratic National Convention, and her speech on the evening of August 27, implicitly a response to Elizabeth Dole's speech, is a particularly useful counterpoint although it was a rather atypical speech for the first lady. Unlike her usual, unscripted presentations, such as the rally speech in Iowa for the reelection of Senator Tom Harkin broadcast live on C-span on the evening of November 4, 1996, or her testimony before congressional committees, her convention speech was delivered in measured tones from a script on a TelePrompTer. The only personal material, one of the very few self-disclosing references in any of her speeches, concerned the birth of her daughter Chelsea, and its inclusion was a surprise, given her persistent concern for a "zone of privacy." The centerpiece, however, was a reaffirmation of the theme of her book, that it takes a village to raise a child, and of related public policy concerns.[27]

Although her delivery was unusual in that case, Hillary Rodham Clinton's style of public advocacy typically omits virtually all of the discursive markers by which women publicly enact their femininity. Her tone is usually impersonal, disclosing minimal information about herself; her ideas unfold deductively in the fashion of a lawyer's brief; all kinds of evidence are used, but personal examples rarely, if ever, appear, although she incorporates stories she has been told by others. She is impassioned but very rarely emotional. As she did in the congressional hearings, she may say that she speaks "as a mother, a wife, a daughter, a sister, a woman,"[28] but she does not assume those roles in speaking. Instead, she plays the roles for which she has been professionally trained, the roles of lawyer, advocate, and expert. She confronts adversaries and debates positions as she has done in the courtroom; she even attacks her opponents. In other words, she speaks forcefully and effectively, manifesting her competency in meeting rhetorical norms, but with few of the discursive markers that signal femininity.

A typical example of her public policy rhetoric in support of health care reform was her address to the American Medical Association in Chicago on June 13, 1993.[29] Several elements in it are evidence of audience adaptation and of efforts to create common ground with her audience of physicians. Some of these may be read as efforts to feminize her presentation. One is the emphasis on concern for children as a prime motive for public policy efforts, linked to the presence of students from the

Nathan Davis Elementary School, a school named for the founder of the AMA. In her introductory statements, she says, "All of us respond to children. We want to nurture them so they can dream the dreams that free and healthy children should have. This is our primary responsibility as adults" (580). These comments transformed nurturance into a concern of both genders, however. In developing her arguments, she used six examples drawn, for the most part, from stories told to her as she has traveled around the country. Three include bits of personal information. One reminded listeners that she grew up "near here"; another concerned her father's illness, which prevented her from speaking to the AMA earlier. Another was a story told by a physician, described as "one of my friends," concerning the unfortunate choices poor people face when they cannot afford prescribed medication.

For the most part, however, this was a traditional public policy address. It argued that "the status quo is unacceptable" (582) and set forth the basic principles or goals that should guide any reform effort. It relied heavily on evidence drawn from the experiences of the physicians she was addressing, including an insider reference to "the burdensome regulations created under CLEA" (584), but it also incorporated statistical material about increasing paperwork and patterns in malpractice suits (583, 584). The speech set forth the basic elements of an affirmative debate case, i. e., the need for a change and the values by which that need is established, which in turn become the criteria to be used in judging any alternative. It appealed in part by reference to threats to the practice of medicine, e. g., "more employers are buying into managed care plans that force employees to choose from a specific pool of doctors," as well as referring to "the role that insurance companies have come to play . . . in second-guessing medical decisions" (583). It was a well-made case adapted skillfully to the audience of physicians that she was addressing.

Three moments in the speech seem to be evidences of feminine style. Early in the speech, in regard to parenting, she made a personal reference:

> When I was growing up, not far from where we are today, this seemed an easier task. . . . I remember so well my father saying to me that if you get in trouble at school, you get in trouble at home—no questions asked—because there was this sense among the adult community that all of them, from my child's perspective, were involved in helping their own and others' children. (581)

Later she used her father's illness to assure the audience of physicians of her appreciation of their work:

> My father was ill and I spent several weeks with him in the hospital before he died. During his hospitalization at St. Vincent's Hospital in Little Rock, Arkansas, I wit-

> nessed firsthand the courage and commitment of health care professionals, both directly and indirectly. I will always appreciate the sensitivity and the skill they showed. (581)

Although they are somewhat self-disclosing, these brief examples lack the details that evoke identification, and neither becomes a story with a plot, characters, or dialogue to engage us.

Later, she told a more extended story to reinforce her appeal for universal health care:

> I cannot tell you what it is like for me to travel around to hear stories from doctors and patients that are right on point.
>
> But the most poignant that I tell because it struck me so personally was of the woman with no insurance; working for a company in New Orleans; had worked there for a number of years; tried to take care of herself; went for the annual physical every year; and I sat with her on a folding chair in the loading dock of her company along with others—all of whom were uninsured; all of whom had worked a number of years—while she told me at her last physical her doctor had found a lump in her breast and referred her to a surgeon. And the surgeon told her that if she had insurance, he would have biopsied it but because she did not he would watch it.
>
> I don't think you have to be a woman to feel what I felt when that woman told me that story. And I don't think you have to be a physician to feel what you felt when you heard that story. We need to create a system in which no one ever has to say that for good cause or bad, and no one has to hear it ever again. (584)

The story is an effective piece of evidence, a clear instance in which money, not medical expertise, is determining health care. It was carefully developed to prevent its dismissal—the woman has been employed for years; she has followed appropriate preventive procedures; she is part of a larger group of uninsured workers. The doctor's statement establishes that a decision about treatment is made on the basis of insurance coverage. Ideally, the story will evoke identification and empathy, but much of its emotional power will have to be supplied by the audience who must imagine the sort of details that will make it a powerful goad to action; the speaker does not provide them. In other words, as an advocate, she understands clearly what makes this instance a strong piece of evidence, but she does not tell the story in a way that elicits a powerful affective response.

Like all of her speeches on health care reform, this one focused on the basic principles or values that should inform reform. Each principle was developed and supported with evidence illustrating current problems that violate a principle—universal coverage, cost containment, reducing paperwork/bureaucracy, improving the quality of care. She worked to show that she understood the kinds of problems that physicians and nurses face, and she commended their efforts to improve health care. These are all praiseworthy moves rhetorically, but except for the personal references that I have cited, Ira Magaziner, her male counterpart on the health care reform task force, might have delivered this speech equally well.

Based on my examination of available texts of speeches she delivered on health care reform and her statements at the congressional hearings on health care reform, the style of this speech is characteristic of her public policy discourse on this issue. On September 13, 1993, for example, she spoke at a conference of Minnesota health care professionals sponsored by Congressman Martin Sabo. Her keynote address, broadcast throughout the state, was a textbook example of the well-made case for a public policy change.[30] After ingratiating remarks to the members of the Minnesota congressional delegation who shared the dais with her, she began describing the wide consultation that produced the plan, set up six principles that "we must insist on" although negotiations about details "may reveal better ways to reach them." The principles were: the security of universal coverage, simplification of the system, retaining choice to give power and responsibility to individuals, realizing savings, preserving and enhancing quality, and responsibility—meaning that "everyone must pay their fair share." Then she examined the three policy alternatives—single payer, individual mandates (on the analogy of car insurance), and the Clinton proposal—to argue that the last incorporated the best elements of the other two and, based on the record of Minnesota ("we know from Minnesota that. . ."), showing that the Clinton plan would work and would provide the benefits outlined in the core principles. The keynote ended with a powerful appeal to work for these goals based on a comparison of the faith and work that had led to the peace agreement Arafat and Rabin had signed with a memorable handshake a few days earlier.

The address is startling for the absence of virtually any markers of feminine style. The only personal material refers to her travels in support of health care reform, and the few illustrations are comparisons of the differing costs of the same surgical procedure in different areas of the country or of policies that have worked in specific areas of Minnesota—e. g., "what has been done in Willmar shows that we can set up systems of rural health care." Most of the evidence is statistical—e. g., 2.5 million Americans every month lose health insurance; hospitals now hire four administrators for every physician; health care costs 14 percent of national income in the United States compared to 9.4 percent in Canada and 8 to 9 percent in Japan and

Germany, which have universal coverage and a more generous package of benefits than is usually available here. The address is an excellent policy speech and a strong case for the Clinton health care reform plan. The speaker is clearly knowledgeable and committed. In the question period that follows, she laughingly calls herself "a policy wonk," and that is an apt characterization of the persona that emerges in the address and during the question period.

On February 15, 1994, the first lady spoke at the annual convention of the American Legion, and her speech resembles that given earlier in Minnesota in many ways.[31] It sets forth the need for a change from the current system and argues that change is urgent. It emphasizes the goal of access or universal coverage and focuses on problems in the insurance system. It is adapted to her audience of veterans in several ways, including a detailed account of how the VA system would fare under the Clinton proposal. The speech was personal and self-disclosing in referring to her father's death, which becomes an entry into her topic when she noted his failure to understand "why, as a veteran, he couldn't continue to use the VA system all through his life." She used an extended example in her introduction, a story "that seared in my brain what my father had told me," which she told as follows:

> I was in New Orleans and I was visiting with a group of workers at a small factory there. Most of the men I was talking with did hard, manual work every day. They were good, steady employees. Most of them had worked for the same employer for 15 years, some as many, as I recall, 28 years. Most of them were veterans. They did not have any health care benefits through their employer. They did not make enough money to be able to afford insurance on their own. And the stories they told me were ones that had become all too familiar but they were especially poignant, being told by veterans.
>
> I will never forget a young man—by my standards these days, anyone in his 40s is young—a young man, a Vietnam veteran, a hard worker, a taxpayer, a family man—but without much education so the job that he had, which was his source of livelihood for himself and his family probably paid him, after a hard week's work, less than $20,000 — telling me that he just prayed that his children wouldn't get sick, he just prayed that he wouldn't get sick, and they always postponed going to the doctor. And, when he did finally have to go to the doctor, it was usually at the last possible moment, and he would enter our health care system through the emergency room, which is all too common for those working Americans without insurance who number now upwards in the 30 millions.
>
> And he looked at me, and he wasn't asking for any special treatment. He wasn't asking even for sympathy. He said, "You know, the proudest years of my life were when I

> served in the military, and I'm proud to be a veteran, but I sure don't understand why I can't get health care in the civilian world the way I could when I wore a uniform." (3)

This is an effective choice for her audience of veterans, yet it is a lawyer's example, a story chosen and presented to argue a point, although her response ideally mirrors that evoked in her audience. The characters are good guys, "good, steady workers." The man quoted is exemplary—a Vietnam veteran with a traditional family, a typical lower-income manual worker. He isn't bitter, he doesn't want sympathy; but his words enable her to draw an analogy between the health care reform proposal and the health care coverage available to those in the military. I cite the story in detail to demonstrate the limited amount of narrative and to show that the specifics emphasize typicality rather than delineating a distinctive individual. The addition of dialogue heightens its force considerably, as do the suggestions that prompt audience members to imagine untold stories of trips to the emergency room with sick children. Here as elsewhere, I applaud Hillary Rodham Clinton's argumentative skill, but note that the very qualities that make instances powerful as proof may drain them of the qualities that would feminize her advocacy.[32]

I present this material, which, like the other examples cited, may appear to be contrary evidence, to argue a rather nuanced point. The sheer presence of examples, even of a detailed and moving example, is inadequate by itself to feminize the style of a speaker. All effective speakers use examples. Moreover, all adapt to their audiences; all attempt to evoke identification, to create common grounds with listeners. When no other discursive markers appear, when examples are used as one form of evidence in a deductively developed case for policy reform, when the speaker plays the role of expert and advocate, then there is insufficient evidence that the speaker has adopted a feminizing rhetorical style. In addition, it would be surprising if any speaker did not incorporate some of the elements that characterize feminine rhetorical style.

To test the accuracy of my perception of these patterns in her public policy discourse as the wife of the president, I turned to published sources for information about her earlier rhetorical style as a lawyer, a law professor, and as an advocate for educational reform in Arkansas as perceived by colleagues, students, legislators, and journalists who covered her public life as wife of the state attorney general and later the governor of Arkansas. The many biographies of the Clintons all describe Hillary Rodham's makeover following her husband's 1980 defeat for reelection after his first term as Arkansas governor. They report that she acquired contact lenses, lightened her hair, began to wear more fashionable clothes, and took her husband's name. If my reading of her public policy discourse as first lady is accurate, however, no such change seems to have occurred in her rhetorical style.

William R. Wilson Jr., a respected Little Rock attorney with whom she worked on criminal cases, is quoted as saying:

> I remember one of the first things I told people when I litigated with her and against her was: She tries a lawsuit like a lawyer rather than like a woman. . . . At that point in time, some female lawyers relied on their femininity, and sometimes didn't get down to the business at hand. It was a style for chauvinistic times, and Hillary didn't have it.[33]

Those views were echoed by Herb Rule, a partner in the Rose law firm where she worked, who said that "she's combative. She's a person who's not afraid to be herself. Lots of women are aggressive and competitive, but they hide it," and still another Arkansas attorney is quoted as saying, "She has a way of filling up a court room, but it is not feminine. It's just *lawyer*."[34]

The comments of other Arkansans describing her during her early years as the state's first lady are consistent with the comments of her legal colleagues. According to one biographer, they thought she was "intellectual, aggressive, blunt, very articulate, fairly tough. . . . A lot of people weren't sure how they felt about her because she came on kind of strong. They were a little bit intimidated by her intellect and her personality. . . . [and] her clipped professional manner. . . . [She was] pushy, arrogant, and domineering."[35] The same biographer concluded that, "In 1981, [Arkansas voters] gave full vent to their feelings of antipathy toward Hillary" (115) when they voted against her husband. Norman King claims that the public in Arkansas disliked her from the start of her husband's governorship, an attitude that "did not alter thereafter in any significant way, since Hillary made no attempt to change her style."[36]

David Brock quotes Robert Leflar, a professor at the law school, who remembered Hillary as "specific, definite, even hard-boiled," and Woody Bassett, who took classes from her at the law school, wrote that "Hillary was tough, intelligent, and highly articulate."[37] Her former secretary at the Rose law firm in the 1970s is quoted as saying, "there wasn't one stereotypically womanly or feminine thing about her."[38]

John Brummett, who covered the Clintons regularly from 1980 through 1993 for the *Arkansas Gazette* and is no fan of her, describes her at various points as "calculating and pragmatic," "combative," "disciplined," "tough," "cold and calculating," "cold and rigid," "self-absorbed and cold."[39] Those adjectives recurred in the polling and focus group research done by the Clinton campaign during the 1992 primaries. Among other things, she "was thought to be domineering, cold, harsh, and defiant. . . . There seemed to be very little softness or femininity about her."[40]

The cosmetic changes that Hillary Rodham Clinton made in 1980 may have reduced some Arkansans' hostility toward her, and they obviously gave her a more

traditionally feminine aspect. Whatever changes occurred in Arkansans' attitudes, however, seem to have been influenced powerfully by her work on education reform. One of her severest critics, journalist Paul Greenberg, wrote: "If anyone deserves more credit than Clinton for awakening Arkansas to the needs of young people, it may be Mrs. Clinton. As chairman [*sic*] of the statewide committee on standards in education, Hillary Rodham Clinton helped educate a whole state, not excluding her husband."[41] Traveling and speaking throughout the state, she transformed herself into a respected figure.[42] Many people were pleasantly surprised by the passion and humor and intelligence she revealed [in public appearances and television and radio interviews]. . . . Within a matter of weeks, her efforts were repaid as years of ill will were washed away," another biographer records.[43]

Because she was helping her husband reform the Arkansas schools, a realm in which women traditionally were prominent, rather than pursuing her own agenda, Hillary Rodham Clinton's involvement in public policy was not controversial. David Brock quotes Richard Herget, the 1980 Clinton campaign chairman, who explained: "When we think of school teachers we think of women, and so if you're going to take on a feminine institution, and that's school teachers, what better person to have do it than the governor's wife?"[44] In other words, not only was she helping her husband the governor, thereby playing a traditional role as helpmeet, but she also was working on a public policy issue traditionally coded as feminine.

Apparently, the Clintons believed that what had worked in Arkansas would work in Washington, that just as she had won over Arkansans as head of an education reform commission she would win over Americans as head of the health care reform task force.[45] As in the earlier case, it could be argued that she would be helping her husband rather than pursuing her own agenda because Clinton had made health care reform a primary issue in his 1992 campaign for the presidency. Similarly, care of the sick has a long history of being linked to women at least in the form of nurturing and nursing done in the home primarily by women; of course, as professionalized, medicine has been primarily a preserve of male physicians who supervise lower-ranked female nurses.

What went wrong with health care reform?[46] There is no one simple answer, but some reasons are clear to virtually all commentators. Health care reform was far more complex than educational reform in Arkansas, and the complicated changes that the task force proposed had in them something to irritate and threaten a great many political and economic interests, including small businesses, physicians, insurance companies, and even those on Medicare and Medicaid. Keeping proposals secret until decisions were made frustrated journalists who courted leaks that aroused backlash from specific groups. Physicians were not consulted adequately in the planning. If a complex compromise were to be forged, it could not be negoti-

ated by a task force; it would have to be crafted bit by bit in Congress. Health care reform was deferred; NAFTA took precedence, leaving more time for resistance to mobilize. Questions about the first lady's role in Whitewater and about her highly successful commodities trading eroded her ethos. Although all of these help to explain the failure of Clinton's health care reform proposal, they seem inadequate to explain the intense hostility she has evoked.

Like many other commentators, I reject the simplistic view that this can be attributed solely to resistance to changes in female roles, although that is surely part of the dynamic.[47] Because of her unprecedented public policy role, she became what *U. S. News & World Report* called "a national Rorschach test" of people's views of women's roles,[48] which reflects the sense in which the first ladyship is a culture type or ideal. Smithsonian curator Edith Mayo told the *Washington Post*, "It is much less about Hillary herself than it is about America's deep-seated ambivalence, even hostility, toward power in the hands of women,"[49] a comment that needs to be expanded to recognize the special fears evoked by women whose power is derived indirectly from a sexual relationship with a man. Given evidence of the impact of these attitudes on evaluations of the performances of past first ladies, in particular, reactions to Eleanor Roosevelt and Rosalynn Smith Carter, the least traditional modern presidential spouses, it is likely that Hillary Rodham Clinton's overt espousal of a non-traditional role would excite particularly powerful responses. Based on analysis of the women speakers of the past and present, I conclude that her rhetorical style exacerbates this problem significantly.

Why focus on her rhetorical style? Precisely because this first lady has elected systematically and consciously to play a public policy role, a choice that defines her first ladyship as a clearer, more explicit violation of gender roles than has been the case with any other presidential spouse. Because the role she chose is so unambiguously public and has involved extensive speech-making on a major public policy issue—public performances in a role that is gender-coded masculine—the gender norms calling for a feminine rhetorical style take on new intensity and urgency, and her inability to mitigate her violation of traditional gender roles by simultaneously performing femininity discursively becomes more salient. In turn, her limited ability to adapt to these expectations intensifies the efforts of opponents to punish her violations and, in effect, to compel her to retreat into more conventional displays of femininity. And they have been somewhat successful, as the emergence of softer hairdos, pastel suits, and smaller, "more feminine" jewelry, among other externals, attest. Based on her public policy discourse, however, there is little evidence of change in her rhetorical style.

In earlier work on the first ladyship, I concluded that the problems of Hillary Rodham Clinton were those of all first ladies writ large.[50] As is still evident, the

factors that make this role so difficult still offer a partial explanation of those difficulties: she is confounded by the ill-defined character of an ambiguous role; she is expected to personify an idealized vision of woman when one no longer exists; and as the wife of a powerful leader, she is an obvious lightning rod for hostile feelings about her husband.

In addition, however, she also symbolizes the problems of public women writ large, the continuing demand that women who play public roles or function in the public sphere discursively enact their femininity, and that women who do not or who do so to only a limited degree, women whose training and personal history fit them for the roles of rhetor, lawyer, expert, and advocate, roles that are gender-coded masculine, will arouse the intensely hostile responses that seem so baffling.

In what I have written, it may seem that I am identifying deficiencies in Hillary Rodham Clinton's performance as a rhetor. Judged purely in terms of achieving her goals, whether seen as approval ratings or the passage of the health care reform initiative, her limited ability to feminize her rhetorical style, to perform a culturally defined feminine role publicly, is clearly a disadvantage. At the same time, our failure to appreciate the highly developed argumentative skills of an expert advocate, when that advocate is a female, reveals our deficiencies, not hers. Legislation attendant on the second wave of feminism opened doors for able women who seek to exercise their skills in all areas of life, including the formation of public policy. If we reject all those who lack the feminizing skills of an Elizabeth Hanford Dole, we shall deprive ourselves of a vast array of talent.

NOTES

1. *USA Today*, November 13, 1992.
2. Connie Bruck, "Profile: Hillary the Pol," *New Yorker* 70, May 30, 1994, 8.
3. Henry Louis Gates Jr., "Hating Hillary," *New Yorker* 72, February 26 & March 4, 1996, 116.
4. Garry Wills, "A Tale of Two Cities," *New York Review of Books*, October 3, 1996, 12.
5. See Carl Sferraza Anthony's two-volume study, *First Ladies: The Saga of the Presidents' Wives and Their Power, 1789-1961* and *First Ladies, Volume II: The Saga of the Presidents' Wives and Their Power, 1961-1990* (New York: William Morrow, 1990, 1991); Betty Boyd Caroli, *First Ladies*, 2d ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995); and Lewis L. Gould, ed., *American First Ladies* (New York & London: Garland, 1996). In Doris Kearns Goodwin, *No Ordinary Time: Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt, The Home Front in World War II* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994), the author details the attacks made on Eleanor Roosevelt that culminated during the 1940 campaign (204-5). There were more bizarre attacks in the form of rumors about "'Eleanor Tuesdays,' days when Negro women supposedly went out into the streets en masse with the goal of knocking Southern white women to the ground" (522) and "'Eleanor Clubs' that black servants were supposedly forming in her honor, demanding higher wages, more privileges, and fewer hours" (370). The FBI was asked to investigate whether such clubs existed and, if so, what they did. "After comprehensive field investigation, the FBI

concluded that, despite the great sweep of rumors, not a single Eleanor Club actually existed. The answer to the mystery, the FBI observed, lay in the troubles white women were experiencing retaining their Negro servants in the face of the higher-paying factory jobs the war had made available. 'It was but logical that the blame was to be placed upon something or somebody,' the FBI wrote. And that somebody was Eleanor" (371).

6. Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 136.
7. Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 231-32.
8. Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 6.
9. Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 8.
10. Butler, *Bodies That Matter*, 231.
11. Butler, *Bodies That Matter*, 232.
12. See Kathleen M. Torrens, "Dress Reform Rhetoric in The Sybil, 1856-1864" (Ph.D. diss., University of Minnesota, 1997).
13. During this period there was great interest in harems, and the pantaloons may have echoed the prurient interest this involved.
14. Lois W. Banner, *American Beauty* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 56.
15. Jane Gray Cannon Swisshelm, *Half a Century* (Chicago: Jansen, McClurg, 1880), 140. Swisshelm opposed dress reform as the wrong priority for women, but in her somewhat sarcastic report of the outraged reactions to her editorship of a political newspaper, the Visiter [sic], she tells of one editor who "clutched his pantaloons" and joined the general chorus, "'My Breeches! oh, my breeches!' . . . Here was a woman resolved to steal their pantaloons, their trousers. 'That woman shall not have my pantaloons,' cried the editor of the big city daily; 'nor my pantaloons' said the editor of the dignified weekly; 'nor my pantaloons,' said he who issued manifestos but once a month; 'nor mine,' 'nor mine,' 'nor mine,' chimed in the small fry of the country towns" (113-14). Clearly, trousers were a significant symbol of masculinity and power.
16. Anne Hollander, *Sex and Suits* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1994), 53. It was also considered a religious sacrilege based on Deuteronomy 22:5, which reads: "The woman shall not wear that which pertaineth unto a man, neither shall a man put on a woman's garment: for all that do so are abomination unto the Lord thy God." The possibility that Israelite males did not wear trousers was not considered.
17. J. Laver, "Foreword," in C.N. Gattey, *The Bloomer Girls* (New York: Coward-McCann, 1967), 13.
18. Karlyn Kohrs Campbell, *Man Cannot Speak for Her: A Critical Study of Early Feminist Rhetoric* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, 1989); Karlyn Kohrs Campbell, "Gender and Genre: Loci of Invention and Contradiction in the Earliest Speeches by U.S. Women," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 81 (1995): 479-95; Kathleen Hall Jamieson, *Eloquence in an Electronic Age* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 67-89; Phyllis M. Japp, "Esther or Isaiah?: The Abolitionist-Feminist Rhetoric of Angelina Grimké," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 71 (August 1985): 335-48; Susan Zaeske "The 'Promiscuous Audience' Controversy and the Emergence of the Early Woman's Rights Movement," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 81 (1995):191-207.
19. Campbell, *Man*, 12-15.
20. Madeline Kunin, *Living a Political Life* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1994), esp. 205-6, 268; Marjorie Margolies-Mezvinsky with Barbara Feinman, *A Woman's Place: The Freshmen Women Who Changed*

the Face of Congress (New York: Crown, 1994); Virginia Sapiro, *The Political Integration of Women: Roles, Socialization and Politics* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1984), 138-39; Linda Witt, Karen M. Paget, and Glenna Matthews, *Running As A Woman: Gender and Power in American Politics* (New York: Free Press, 1994), esp. 194, 215-16, 223. In addition, see Patricia L. Schmidt's biography *Margaret Chase Smith: Beyond Convention* (Orono: University of Maine Press, 1996), which emphasizes Senator Margaret Chase Smith's "carefully cultivated feminine persona" (166) as essential to her political success. See also Karlyn Kohrs Campbell and E. Claire Jerry, "Woman and Speaker: A Conflict in Roles," 123-34, in *Seeing Female: Social Roles and Personal Lives*, ed. Sharon S. Brehm (New York: Greenwood Press, 1988), 123-34, which analyzes Geraldine Ferraro's 1988 vice-presidential campaign.

21. Jamieson, *Eloquence*, 83-89.
22. Mari Boor Tonn, "Militant Motherhood: Labor's Mary Harris 'Mother' Jones," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 82 (1996):1-21.
23. This is a role that is widely understood as appropriate for both men and women.
24. Viewers familiar with early television might have identified her role as resembling that of Ralph Edwards, the emcee for the television show, *This Is Your Life*. Dole has been making this speech for some time. She delivered a remarkably similar speech in Brooklyn Park, Minn., during her husband's 1987 campaign for the Republican presidential nomination. See Elizabeth V. E. Sturcken, "Elizabeth Hanford Dole: Rhetorical Change and Continuity in the 1988 Presidential Campaign" (Summa Honors thesis, University of Minnesota, 1988). A text is included in the appendix.
25. *New York Times Magazine*, October 13, 1996, 40.
26. Laura Parker, "The Dilemma of Liddy Dole," *Washington Post*, October 1, 1987, B3.
27. *The New York Times* (August 28, 1996) described her as "playing the teacher and not the TV personality" and although she said she wished "we could be sitting around a kitchen table, just us, talking about our hopes and fears," wrote that "she sounded more as if she were teaching a class or perhaps making a speech, a rather pointedly political speech, to the national PTA" (A14). Note that the 1992 convention film, "A Man from Hope," served the same purpose for Clinton as Elizabeth Hanford Dole's speech did for her husband in 1996.
28. House Committee on Ways and Means, *Statement of the First Lady: Hearings on the President's Health Care Reform Proposals*, 103d Cong., 1st sess. September 29, 1993, 11. In her statements to the congressional committees, she alludes to what she will tell her mother, to the fact that her father, a small businessman, had no medical insurance, to her mother-in-law's struggle with breast cancer, and to health care choices that she might have faced during her father's final illness. In all cases, these are brief and undetailed. See House Committee on Energy and Commerce, *Statement of First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton: Hearings on Health Care Reform, Part I, President Clinton's Proposal to Reform the Nation's Health Care*, 103d Cong., 1st sess. September 28, 1993, 5-6; Senate Committee on Labor and Human Resources, *Statement: Hearings on the Health Security Act of 1993*, 103d Cong., 1st sess., September 29, 1993, 4-7; House Committee on Education and Labor, *Statement of Hillary Rodham Clinton, the White House, Washington, D.C.: Hearings on the Presidents Health Care Reform Proposal, Vol. 1*, 103d Cong., 1st sess. September 29, 1993, 4-7; Senate Committee on Finance, *Statement of Hillary Rodham Clinton, Chair, President's Task Force on Health Reform: Hearing on the President's Health Care Plan*, 103d Cong., 1st sess., September 30, 1993, 3-8.

29. "Health Care: We Can Make A Difference" (delivered to the American Medical Association, Chicago, Illinois, June 13, 1993). *Vital Speeches* 59 (July 15, 1993): 580-85. Subsequent page references are in parentheses in the text.
30. Keynote address/Carlson Lecture. Health Care Summit '93: National Proposals, Minnesota Perspectives. University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, September 17, 1993. Author's videotape.
31. "The First Lady's Speech before the American Legion's Annual Conference, February 15, 1994, 12 pages. The White House. Office of the Press Secretary. White House Web Page.
32. See Karyln Kohrs Campbell, "Redefining the Role of the First Lady: The Rhetorical Style of Hillary Rodham Clinton," in *The Clinton Presidency: Images, Issues, and Communication Strategies*, ed. Robert E. Denton and Rachel L. Holloway (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 1996), 139-58. Janette Kenner Muir and Lisa M. Benitez describe her as a storyteller, noting her retelling of stories that were told to her by people on her travels, and concluding that these narratives balance her more logical, lawyer-like manner of speaking. I agree that these examples humanize her arguments, but in my view, her style of storytelling limits these effects. The authors also point to indications of audience adaptation and efforts to create identification. These are the hallmarks of effective speakers, but without other indicators they are problematic as discursive markers of femininity.
33. William R. Wilson Jr. quoted in Judith Warner, *Hillary Clinton: The Inside Story* (New York: Signet, 1993), 96.
34. Cited in Bruck, "Hillary the Pol," 62.
35. Warner, *The Inside Story*, 85-86, 155.
36. Norman King, *Hillary: Her True Story* (New York: Birch Lane Press, Carol Publishing Group, 1993), 74.
37. Robert Leflar and Woody Bassett quoted in David Brock, *The Seduction of Hillary Rodham* (New York: The Free Press, 1996), 66.
38. Brock, *The Seduction*, 81.
39. John Brummett, *Highwire: From the Backroads to the Beltway—The Education of Bill Clinton* (New York: Hyperion, 1994), 49, 53, 54, 161, 245.
40. King, *Hillary*, 164.
41. Paul Greenberg, "His Finest Hour," in *The Clintons of Arkansas*, ed. Ernest Dumas (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1993), 121. Originally in *Arkansas Times*, February 1984.
42. Brock, *The Seduction*, 161.
43. Meredith L. Oakley, *On the Make: The Rise of Bill Clinton* (Washington, D.C.: Regnery, 1994), 285.
44. Richard Herget quoted in Brock, *The Seduction*, 159.
45. Brock argues that HRC replicated the process that she had used on education reform as head of the health care reform task force, which meant that no real consultation was done and that no compromise was envisioned, ensuring defeat (329, 331-335). Brummett writes of the decision to have her head the task force: "The Clintons thought it ill-advised that Hillary exert influence generally by virtue of being the wife of the president. That would lend itself to criticism and do little for the cause of woman's independent accomplishment. Hillary wanted a project where she could make her independent mark, and she told her husband she would take the biggest and toughest of them all, health care. He agreed without compunction" (67).
46. The most detailed analysis of what occurred is found in Haynes B. Johnson and David S. Broder, *The System: The American Way of Politics at the Breaking Point* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1996), which

analyzes the contributions to its failure by all those involved.

47. As Hoffman R. Hays points out in *The Dangerous Sex: The Myth of Feminine Evil* (New York: Putnam, 1964), through time women have been perceived as the dangerous sex; Hesiod's works describe woman as created by Zeus as a punishment for man and Pandora as loosing all the ills on the world, and Genesis often is read as saying that Eve was the occasion of sin. Given such long-standing beliefs about women, it is plausible that an intelligent, direct, forceful first lady might become a lightning rod for the anger and frustration that people feel about her husband, about the role of government, about economic uncertainty, and about changing gender roles.
48. Cited in Brock, *The Seduction*, 262.
49. Edith Mayo, cited in Brock, *The Seduction*, 293.
50. Karlyn Kohrs Campbell, "The Rhetorical Presidency: A Two-Person Career," in *Beyond the Rhetorical Presidency*, ed. Martin J. Medhurst (College Station, Tex.: Texas A & M University Press, 1996), 194.