Rhetorical Field Methods/Rhetorical Ethnography 🔓

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Summary

Rhetorical scholars have recently taken up rhetorical field methods, rhetorical ethnography, and other participatory methods to augment textual approaches. Following critical rhetoric, field researchers engage emplaced and embodied perspectives, thereby gaining an immediate understanding of rhetoric and its effects on audiences. Rhetorical field methods/ethnography challenge key assumptions and ethics about rhetorical research, including conceptions of text, context, the critic, the rhetor, and audiences. Although antecedent work at this intersection exists, only recently have rhetorical scholars given full attention to how fieldwork orientations and participatory approaches challenge the project of rhetoric. Rhetorical field methods/ethnography have been applied in a wide array of topic areas, including social movement research, public memory, environmental/ ecological rhetoric, digital rhetoric, international contexts, and audience studies. Tensions that have arisen as a consequence of taking up participatory perspectives include whether such research engages in critical/cultural appropriation or can effectively be conducted within groups that researchers ideologically oppose. Moreover, incorporating participant perspectives, non-textual elements, and affective considerations opens rhetoric to forms of expression that span well beyond traditional, logos-centered criticism. Such a move may dilute rhetorical research by flattening expression, making nearly all elements of human life open for critical consideration. Finally, rhetorical field methods/ethnography have emerged in a larger context of disciplinary reflexivity, with many questioning rhetoric's racist and colonial histories and legacies. To this end, we offer anti-colonial landmarks, orienting toward multidimensionality, liquidity, queering, and community, while disorienting from citizenship. These landmarks trouble rhetoric's legacies, and invite scholars to engage more deeply with de/colonial possibilities of rhetorical fieldwork.

Keywords: rhetoric, methodology, field methods, ethnography, participatory methods, anti-coloniality, decoloniality, critical theory

Subjects: Communication Theory, Critical/Cultural Studies, Communication and Culture, Rhetorical Theory

Introduction

Rhetorical field methods, or rhetorical ethnography, refer to perspectives and approaches adopted by theorists and scholars who engage rhetoric in locations where it is practiced, alongside community members acting as both rhetors and audiences, and with concern for how

embodied and emplaced criticism expands both the range of what counts as rhetoric and how rhetorical judgment can be located in or tethered to communities where rhetorical practices unfold. This tradition of scholarship relies on insights from researchers across subdisciplines, including performance studies, ethnography, and critical rhetoric. The broad range of theoretical and methodological influences on rhetorical field methods are evident in how it has been differently conceptualized as critical rhetorical ethnography, participatory critical rhetoric, field rhetoric, and ethnographical rhetoric (Hauser, 2011; Hess, 2011; McKinnon et al., 2016; Middleton et al., 2011, 2015; Rai & Druschke, 2018), as well as how it sometimes remains unnamed yet practiced in rhetorical scholarship (de Onís, 2018; Na'puti, 2019a). As a consequence, rhetorical field methods/ethnography does not prescribe a singular method or set of critical practices but instead offers orientations to, and perspectives on, rhetoric emerging from critics' moves toward active engagement within and alongside the rhetorical communities they are attempting to understand.

Rhetorical field methods/ethnography shares a sensibility with the critical turn in rhetoric (McGee, 1990; McKerrow, 1989) insofar as it seeks to position criticism as a performance and critics as rhetoricians who take positions on the rhetorical practices they examine, and in relation to the rhetorical communities in which, and with whom, they interact. However, while critical rhetoric theorizes rhetorical scholars as participants *in* rhetoric rather than simply as "disinterested" critics *of* rhetoric, critical rhetoric nonetheless initially remained focused on recorded, albeit reconfigured, texts. This textocentrism upheld the researcher's location as epistemologically and ontologically separate from the social, political, and material realities of the rhetorical communities examined. The participatory turn, on the other hand, considers how critics can ethically engage in advocacy as emplaced, embedded researchers and how rhetorical criticism can be constructed in dialogue with communities (see, e.g., Hess, 2011). Scholars theorizing and advocating for this participatory turn argue that its positive implications for rhetorical studies include expanding rhetoric's archives, informing critical judgment with the sensibilities of community producers of rhetoric, facilitating activist praxes, and centering types of knowledge from marginalized rhetorical communities. However, the move into the field remains fraught with practical, ethical, and theoretical tensions.

The definition and survey of rhetorical field methods/ethnography presented in this article is informed both by its long history of practice by rhetorical critics, as well as by more recent efforts to theorize decolonial perspectives. Conceptual dimensions of rhetorical field methods/ethnography, theoretical antecedents to the participatory turn in rhetoric, contemporary articulations of rhetorical fieldwork in various research contexts, and tensions and debates provoked by this research are addressed. Then, the meanings of, possibilities for, and enduring concerns related to participatory approaches are addressed in a cultural and political context increasingly attentive to the colonial legacies of rhetorical scholarship.

Conceptualizing Rhetorical Field Methods/Ethnography

Rhetorical field methods/ethnography challenge rhetoricians to reconceptualize the perspectives and concepts defining their scholarly engagement. Engaging with "live" rhetoric as it happens, archiving mundane, vernacular, and/or marginalized rhetorics, interacting with rhetors (both collective and individual) in the field, sharing critical judgment and interpretive practice with those encountered, and navigating the ethical considerations of these shifts are all part of the participatory turn. Each necessitates reflexive engagement regarding how scholars relate to the people and the places as well as the cultural and political contexts they examine. A first step is to consider conceptualizations of what rhetorical ethnography and rhetorical field methods are, and how they connect to larger challenges in rhetorical criticism. Then it is important to see how practitioners have and are navigating these considerations through analysis of how participatory orientations challenge the nature of texts/contexts, critics, rhetors, and audiences.

Although stemming from similar lineages, rhetorical ethnography and rhetorical field methods can be considered overlapping yet distinct participatory approaches. Both field methods and ethnographic approaches engage live rhetorics through embodied and emplaced practices, and both utilize tools for data collection and analysis found in the qualitative research tradition. These may include participant observation, fieldnote taking, interviewing, focus groups, oral histories, photography, film, performance, and other creative/art–based methods for collecting and analyzing data or sharing research with publics. Although both are informed by these practices, differences between rhetorical field methods and rhetorical ethnography include the depth and/or duration of the researcher's embeddedness within the scene. To be clear, both approaches require ethical considerations regarding relationships between critics and participants (McKinnon et al., 2016); however, they differ in how ethnography, as a methodological orientation and as a method of writing, requires sustained interactions with participants over longer periods of time with different ethical considerations from textual analysis. Although it is difficult to determine a specific amount of immersion time, ethnographers often conceptualize their methodological orientation as marked by extended engagement within a community, including the direct enactment of roles central to the activities, rituals, and culture of the group. Rhetorical field methods can carry similar commitments but may reflect much briefer engagements, such as the use of field methods to study a single speech or protest event, or to study organizations, places, or communities through participant observation without extended immersion. The positionality of the critic may also differ, with critics perhaps unable to fully immerse themselves within the actions of the group but able to observe their rhetorical efforts and engage rhetors' or audiences' perspectives through qualitative methods.

Historically, "rhetorical field methods" became a named approach in 2011 (Middleton et al., 2011), while "rhetorical ethnography" carries a longer history. Yet, although a variety of scholars have engaged in practices that have been termed rhetorical ethnography, not all carried the sustained fieldwork that is a hallmark of the approach as understood in contemporary contexts. Confusion further emerges from slippages in uses of the term "ethnography" to signify a method, a methodology, and/or a writing practice. One of the earliest adjoinings of "rhetoric"

with "ethnography" came in Van Maanen's (1988/2011), observation that ethnographies are themselves rhetorical insofar as they craft participant identities through language, and also serve to persuade readers. Conquergood (1992) further articulated rhetoric, performance studies, and ethnography, contending they have "much to gain" from one another (p. 81). Although not quite naming "rhetorical ethnography," Conquergood presciently foretold a future in which "ethnography can unmask the ethnocentric underpinnings of the privileging of 'reason' that has characterized rhetoric in the West" (p. 81). In the 1990s, Cintron (1998) clearly connected the rhetorical discourses of local communities with the research practices of ethnography, an approach that he continues in recent works (Cintron, 2020). Additionally, during this period, a variety of theorizing about the role of rhetoric in vernacular communities signaled the potential for ethnographic and other field-based approaches to inform rhetorical research practices (Hauser, 2011; Sloop & Ono, 1997).

Rhetorical ethnography became a "named" approach in the mid-2000s by a handful of authors, including in Johnson's (2009) immersive exploration of spoken-word communities in Los Angeles, and in Townsend's (2006) field research informed by Hymes's "ethnography of SPEAKING" to observe local political action during town hall meetings. Around the same time, Hess (2011) explored rhetorical ethnography in his use of fieldwork to understand the practices of the drug advocacy group DanceSafe, later terming the practice as "critical-rhetorical ethnography" to signal its core assumptions as rooted in critical rhetoric. In each of these cases, rhetorical scholars engaged local communities through sustained participant observation, interviews, and focus groups, signaling how ethnographic methods specifically informed their research practice. Much of the same lineage, including the theoretical positioning within critical rhetoric, the attention to vernacular discourses, and the use of qualitative methods, also characterizes rhetorical field methods. Middleton et al. (2011) describe rhetorical field methods as informed by ethnography and other qualitative methods, as well as by critical rhetoric and performance studies. Yet, "rhetorical field methods" operates as a larger umbrella term for a constellation of practices. To encompass parallels within these methodological orientations, Middleton et al. (2015) brought both together under the term "participatory critical rhetoric." The variations in terminology encompass alignments in these sets of practices, and their challenges and contributions to rhetorical research and theory. Among these are rethinkings of text/context, critics, rhetors, and audiences.

Rethinking Texts/Contexts

Traditionally, text and context identified key elements of the rhetorical situation: Speakers give addresses to audiences in specific places and times (Bitzer, 1968), with these addresses serving as suitable texts for critics who analyze them in relation to historical contexts to determine their persuasiveness or other elements. Contexts thus envisioned included immediate places of speaking as well as the larger cultural milieu and respective attitudes and beliefs informing "the" text, traditionally understood as a single speech act. Contextual constraints upon rhetors could therefore range from the ability to vocally project beyond the immediate space of speaking, such as the back of a train, to the attitudes held by audiences, such as a nation divided over a debated

topic (Herrick, 2020). Traditional critics examining the text and context of speeches often did so from detached or historical perspectives, looking back on how rhetors engaged audiences using the *doxa* of the time.

In contrast, participatory approaches see text and context from much messier perspectives. Drawing from McGee's theorizing about textual fragmentation, participatory critics recognize texts as far from singular or finite, and they view audiences as active participants in rhetorical exchanges. As McGee (1990) described: "the fragmentation of our American culture has resulted in a role reversal, making *interpretation* the primary task of speakers and writers and *text construction* the primary task of audiences, readers, and critics" (p. 274, emphasis in original). Due to increased media exposure and circulation in contemporary contexts, audiences often cull together various texts into experiences of meaning-making rather than interacting with a singular persuasive text, such as a presidential address, as a coherent whole. However, although McGee was the first to codify this in a way intelligible to a Western-oriented field of study, rhetorical fragmentation is not new: The West has long imposed discursive fragmentation onto colonized peoples and spaces (Sandoval, 2000; Wanzer, 2012). In recognition of the complexities of texts/contexts, possibilities presented by participatory approaches include deepening attention to how audiences interpret and assemble discourses, pulling from diverse contexts and rhetors, in relation to place, space, culture, and history. In this manner, participatory approaches recognize how mapping relations (Na'puti, 2019a), locations (Endres & Senda-Cook, 2011), ecological contexts (Edbauer, 2005; Pezzullo, 2011), and digital discourses (Hess, 2018b; Riddick, 2019) themselves persuade and/or spill into texts.

Rethinking Critics

As an alternative to Western individualistic assumptions underlying conceptualizations of critics' authority over their objects of study, ethnographic and field approaches further embrace the critical turn's shift toward understanding critics as situated and partial. Extending this impulse, participatory rhetorical methods configure critics as embodied and emplaced within the spaces of rhetorical invention. This further decenters the critic and shifts from viewing rhetorical scholars as solitary experts who interpret discourse to instead envisioning them as participating in discovery, invention, and reflexive inquiry alongside and within communities where rhetorical action unfolds. So positioned, critics attend to different forms of rhetoric that are often ephemeral or corporeal in nature, including non-discursive and extra-linguistic forms that challenge the fictive standard of transparent recording of rhetorical practice (see, e.g., Rai & Druschke, 2018). Participatory approaches also challenge the role of expertise, as conversations with audience members and rhetors often provide unconsidered implications and otherwise unintelligible significances. As McKinnon et al. (2016) highlight, participatory methods redouble the stakes of critical judgment, demanding "balance between the critic's agency in making judgments about texts and the critic's responsibility to the human beings making those texts" (p. 15). One might push this a step further and consider the process of judgment as one that unfolds in relation *with* those human beings. Ethical and political considerations change when criticism is born of interaction, as texts are made in real time in connection to the critic, and when the backstage dimensions of rhetorical practice neatly hidden by the traditional text emerge into view

of the participatory critic (see, e.g., Middleton et al., 2015, pp. 127–133). At the same time, expressions and influences of power (both the critic's and the other actors' in the rhetorical scene) take on new forms and require different types of attention (McKinnon et al., 2016, pp. 17–20).

Rethinking Rhetors

Drawing grounds from the critical turn's expansion of inventional spaces to include vernacular, mundane, and/or marginalized rhetorics, participatory rhetorical methods further rethink who/what counts as rhetor. By proliferating the spaces where rhetorical action is analyzed, field methods and ethnographic approaches enable attention to rhetors previously overlooked within Western logics of democracy and citizenship, including what registered as "public" or even as "human" (Chávez, 2015; Towns, 2018). Participatory approaches compliment shifting views of rhetoric that incorporate not only collective mobilizations of human actors, but vast networks of "distributed agency" (Rai & Druschke, 2018, pp. 193–196), including nonhumans (Clery-Lemon, 2019), digital/networked rhetorics (Pfister, 2021), and ecologies (Barnett, 2021; Edbauer, 2005). Critics and rhetors interact, discuss inventional strategies, and reflect upon the rhetorical situation together. In this reconfigured relationship, the critic no longer observes rhetoric that has already occurred, but instead witnesses and participates alongside other rhetors in its emergent occurrence and/or its behind-the-scenes preparation (Chávez, 2013b; Chevrette & Hess, 2019; Hess, 2011).

Rethinking Audiences

The study of rhetoric has long focused attention on rhetorical production in relation to immediate and extended audiences. Yet, a great deal of research neglects to consider how audiences actually make sense of rhetoric (Houck & Kiewe, 2015; Kjeldsen, 2016). Textual criticism instead often presupposes how audiences are influenced. Responding to this absence, rhetorical scholars with participatory orientations have used field observation, interviews, focus groups, and other qualitative approaches to extend engagements with both rhetors and audiences (Johnson et al., 2021). The conceptualization of audiences has also broadened from specific people in specific places to include understandings of networked rhetorics and audiences, ecological conceptions of rhetorical situations, and recognition of ambient surroundings as contributing to rhetoric's audiential dimensions. Audiences may also participate in rhetorical researchers' interpretive processes, offering their attitudes, opinions, and assessments (Hess, 2015; Houck & Kiewe, 2015; Kjeldsen, 2018), which can lead to new moments of invention (Hess, 2018a) as well as to new ethical considerations (McKinnon et al., 2016).

Disciplinary Antecedents to Rhetorical Field Methods/Ethnography

Prior to the methodological theorizing of rhetorical field methods and rhetorical ethnography in the early 2000s, some precursors to the contemporary participatory turn are evidenced in both the early practice and study of rhetoric in ancient Greece, and its disciplinary formation in

Western academe. Haskins (2006), for example, illustrates that Isocrates' teachings offered theoretical and pedagogical implications for understanding rhetoric as interactive, performative, and immersive, all of which are elements attended to by participatory critics. Haskins notes that for Isocrates and students, "to train oneself in all the genres in which 'logos expresses itself,' to immerse oneself in a variety of culturally significant speech, [was] to become an active member of a political community" (p. 195), something largely lost in the Aristotelian model that subsequently prevailed. Centuries later, Wilchelns (1925/1995) called on rhetorical scholars to shift their nearly singular focus on applying neo-Aristotelian methods to speeches to instead engage more deeply with rhetoric's effects, including impacts of discourse on audiences (see also Houck & Kiewe, 2015), a call resounded by Thompson (1947), who suggested speeches be "directly observed by the research worker" (p. 274). These antecedents point to earlier moments in which rhetoric was recognized as immersive, effectual, embodied, and political; however, the theoretical and methodological hybridization that contributed to participatory approaches is most firmly situated within the intellectual foment of rhetoric's critical turn (McGee, 1990; McKerrow, 1989; see also Hess et al., 2020; McKerrow & Herbig, 2020). Critical rhetoric provides fertile ground for theorizing rhetoric in participatory ways, including its centering of critical political praxis, criticism-as-performance, and materiality.

Critical Political Praxis and Performance

Central to critical rhetoric is a robust concern for critical political praxis focusing attention onto systems of power and oppression. McKerrow (1989), drawing from Foucault, located dual critiques within critical rhetoric: the critique of domination, which aimed to uncover how power is wielded through oppressive discourses; and the critique of freedom, which called for critics' ongoing reflexivity relating to power's role in maintaining social relations. As a critical political praxis, McKerrow envisioned critics exposing power relations and resistance in everyday acts, as seen in the extension of critical rhetoric to attend to vernacular and outlaw discourses (Campbell, 2005; Ono & Sloop, 1995; Sloop & Ono, 1997), counterpublics and enclaves (Asen & Brouwer, 2001; Chávez, 2011; Squires, 2002), media systems (DeLuca, 2012; Nakayama, 1994), and numerous other sites. For participatory critics, the commitment to critiquing domination encourages critics to seek out discourses hegemonically excluded from public spheres, thereby opening spaces for marginalized voices and new considerations of power's operations in society.

Critical rhetoric's commitments to praxis and interests in subordinated, marginalized, and other vernacular discourses also informed a focus on criticism as a performance wherein critics become advocates or arguers for rhetorical practices otherwise excluded from the corpus of texts suitable for criticism (McKerrow, 1989, p. 108). For participatory critics, this shift toward performance positions critics as capable of joining, or even compelled to join, in "embodied advocacy" because the act of participation "enables critical rhetoricians to engage not only with vernacular communities but as vernacular within the site of dialogue" (Hess, 2011, p. 135). Given this, participatory approaches push the criticism-as-performance commitments of the critical turn toward opportunities to "advocate for change and engage in the incommensurable logics of outlaw discourses, reflecting upon the nature of dialogue and the adaptability within

disempowered or underrepresented communities, acting in accordance with the community, and learning the appropriate responses, tactics, and directions" developed in those rhetorical situations. (Hess, 2011, pp. 139–140).

Such efforts can be glimpsed in scholarship that laid the foundations for rhetorical field methods (see, e.g., Blair, 2001; Chávez, 2011; Dickinson, 1997; Dickinson et al., 2005, 2006; Pezzullo, 2003; Simonson, 2010), as well as scholarship that seeks to shape its future articulations (Clary-Lemon, 2019; Lechuga, 2020; Na'puti, 2019a, 2019b; Pezzullo & De Onis, 2018; Quiring et al., 2020). These applications of participatory methodologies demonstrate that "field rhetoric" offers "particularly powerful tools for studying the texture of places and politics that shape rhetoric and within which rhetoric emerges, circulates, enacts, and dissipates" (Rai & Druschke, 2018, p. 1).

Materiality and Critics' Locations Within Discourse

Participatory rhetorical methods also share critical rhetoric's concerns with reconceptualizing materiality as an integral dimension of rhetoric, foregrounding emplacement and embodiment as shaping the influence and consequence of rhetorical actions in everyday life. Whereas traditional approaches might include physical and material dimensions of contexts (or discard them altogether in favor of close textual reading), rhetorical field methods recognize the importance of "being there" (Blair, 2001) to experience rhetoric's extralinguistic and spatial dimensions, and consider how audiences' emplacement in natural or constructed scenes shapes rhetorical experiences (Dickinson, 1997; Dickinson et al., 2005, 2006). By centering corporeal dimensions of rhetorical contexts and including them within the boundaries of discourse, participatory critics are able to attend to "embodied rhetoricity" (McKerrow, 1998, p. 321) inclusive of relational and affective dimensions (McHendry et al., 2014). Troubling questions of materiality, corporeality, and presence,

> rhetorically inflected fieldwork . . . offers important insights for understanding . . .: the situated power and force of language; the symbolic means through which people produce meaning, generate social energy, and coordinate action in everyday life; and the connections between language and ontology, rhetoric, and materiality, and words and things as they manifest in various places and times.
>
> (Rai & Druschke, 2018, p. 1)

Corresponding with the focus on rhetoric's materiality, rhetorical field methods/ethnography emphasize researchers' epistemological and ontological locations in relation to discourses they analyze. As Jasinski (2001) explains, discourse shapes critics' judgments of texts, and contexts, "to the degree that it creates or generates a perspective for viewing objects, people, and events in the world" (p. 265). Like Sloop and Ono's (1997) call for a materialist conception of judgment that looks to the everyday and practical wisdom (*phronesis*) of vernacular discourses as they self-articulate within systems of power, participatory approaches to rhetoric reflect critical rhetoric's fracturing of judgment from its traditional roots in rationality and consistency, linking rhetorical judgment instead to experiential, ontological domains (Jazinski, 2001, p. 264). Critics' orientations to the world are seen as partial and as reflective of their social locations. By further

locating their interpretive practices in relation to audiences and rhetors, participatory critics attempt to augment their critical positionings with the varied attitudes, opinions, and beliefs that form the rhetorical moment (Hess, 2016). For example, through interviews with audience members, critics may learn of new interpretations of discourse that can otherwise escape critical readings (Hess, 2018a). As speakers make sense of their own performances and motivations, this challenges critics to apprehend various reasons rhetors speak, what their expectations might be, and how they assess their own rhetorical choices. Parallel to the discussion of the role of the critic, participatory approaches can thus contribute to decentralizing critics' perspectives by incorporating voices and perspectives of those holding various roles in the rhetorical situation.

Into the Field: Articulations of Rhetorical Field Methods/Ethnography

Rhetorical field methods/ethnography coalesced into a discernible approach in the 2010s. By this time, rhetorical research on topics including environmental advocacy (Endres & Senda-Cook, 2011; Pezzullo, 2003; see also Endres, 2020), enclaves fostering progressive politics around issues of immigration and sexual orientation/gender identity (Chávez, 2011; Cintron, 1998; see also Conquergood, 1991), democratic deliberation (Asen, 2010), and public memory (Dickinson et al., 2010; Philips, 2004) suggested a growing consensus that expanded the range of conceptualizing rhetorical practices, how practices exert consequences within localized rhetorical communities, and how engaging with communities could reshape rhetorical criticism. In 2011, two key works identified central issues and suggested future directions for this growing area of rhetorical studies (Hess, 2011; Middleton et al., 2011). These were soon followed by three book projects that further elaborated participatory rhetorical approaches within the discipline. Middleton et al. (2015) brought together insights from their previous essays to reconsider the concepts of text, critic, audience, and rhetor. McKinnon et al. (2016) published an edited volume theorizing shifts required by studying rhetoric in the field, and exploring a variety of case studies and their methodological implications. In another edited volume, Rai and Druschke (2018) drew together readings that spoke to "how the study of rhetoric within its everyday situations and ecologies might serve as a means to better understand and even sometimes intervene within the work of rhetoric in the world" (p. 11). Drawing on both the long-standing theoretical antecedents found in critical rhetoric and this contemporary attention to participatory methods, field-based rhetorical study has taken on various manifestations as rhetorical practitioners, and others, have sought to bring its insights to bear on wide-ranging subjects.

The proliferation of scholars theorizing and practicing rhetorical field methods/ethnography suggests both the theoretical, practical, and ethical challenges it raises, as well as the broad range of contexts in which participatory approaches offer additional, new, or more nuanced insights into rhetorical influence as it is constructed, resisted, and critiqued in localized rhetorical communities. Although a comprehensive review of field methods' practitioners and contexts exceeds the scope of the article, a survey of several prominent areas of rhetorical fieldwork follows. Social movement research, public memory, environmental/ecological rhetoric, digital rhetoric, international rhetoric, and rhetorical audience research are offered as representative examples of participatory approaches' broad utility.

Social Movement Research

Social movements have long been of interest to rhetorical scholars (Haiman, 1967), and research in this area initially reflected traditional Western rhetorical approaches, focusing primarily on speechmaking efforts of movement leaders (Griffin, 1952; Simons, 1970; see also Jensen, 2006). Central developments in rhetorical understandings of social movements over the years included foci on their politics of recognition, counterpublicity, and resistance (Cox & Foust, 2009, pp. 609–617; see also Foust et al., 2017). Leaning into critical rhetoric's attention to praxis, performance, and materiality, further developments included how social movement members use embodied street performances (Pezzullo, 2003) and sensational body imagery on the public screen to advance their causes (DeLuca, 1999; DeLuca & Peeples, 2002). Additionally, Enck-Wanzer (2006) positioned social *movement* rhetoric as constituting and reflecting discourse: "to talk about social movement is to talk about the ways in which a discourse represents a shift away from or challenge to a dominant social imaginary as evident in narratives, ideographs, and other rhetorics" (p. 177). Since the articulation of new social movements, counterpublics, and social *movement*, participatory scholars have taken up new approaches to augment critical understandings.

Due to their attention on immediate interactions between rhetors and audiences, participatory approaches are poised to examine the active nature of social movement rhetoric, including activists' internal strategizing and external messaging. For some, participatory approaches invite critics to take up direct roles within social movements or other advocacy groups (Carillo Rowe, 2008; Chávez, 2013a; Chevrette & Hess, 2019; Hess, 2011; Murray, 2018; Paliewicz, 2019). In these cases, the direct performance of invention gives critics first-hand experience with advocacy, which supplies an affective and embodied perspective of movements (Hess, 2016). For others, participant observation guides the approach, providing rich accounts of rhetorical scenes and their action (Ewalt et al., 2018; Pietrucci, 2015) by attending to embodied, affective, and emplaced experiences of rhetoric. Fieldwork can also be coupled with interviews with members of advocacy groups or their audiences (Bishop, 2019; Nell Edgar & Johnson, 2018), or with performance-based activist approaches (Johnson, 2009). Insights enabled by such approaches are not merely about argumentation strategies in public advocacy; instead, guided by ethical reflexivity (Morris, 2010), rhetorical field methods/ethnographic work can highlight the complex nature of internal and external invention practices performed by social movements. As Hess et al. (2020) put it: "Because of this orientation, participation within community organizations and advocacy groups can underscore invention as a more dynamic process that includes changes in message strategy, internal disagreements, and behind-the-scenes narration of personal struggles" (p. 880). Frey and Hanan (2020) further see participatory approaches as collaborative interventions in social justice activism, and "encourage critical rhetoricians not only to participate in collaborative social justice activism interventions but also to study and report them in their published scholarship" (p. 861). Scholars examining social movements may also support scholar activism through documentary film (Herbig & Hess, 2012), experimental video (Licona & Chávez, 2015), and other scholarly outputs.

Public Memory

Public memory research also shares an important lineage with participatory approaches, with rhetorical scholars taking to "the field" before it was explicitly marked as such to analyze the rhetorical work of memorials, museums, and other memoryscapes. Public memory scholarship thus also set the stage for expanding understandings of the spaces of rhetoric and critics' roles within. For example, Blair (1999) generated attention to the material nature of rhetoric in public memory places, and later offered personal reflections on the role of critic as bearing direct witness to memory spaces, on "being there" in proximity with the discourses under investigation (Blair, 2001, p. 274). Dickinson et al. (2005, 2006) likewise pay close attention to the role of space and place in museums, offering reflections on how rhetoric works on bodies as they move through physical sites (see also Dickinson et al., 2010; Ott et al., 2011). Many authors since have directly taken up participatory approaches and their related terminologies to make sense of public memory discourses (Aden et al., 2009; Brouwer & Morris, 2021; Chevrette & Hess, 2015; Cram, 2022; Hess, 2018a; Hess & Herbig, 2013; Khrebtan–Hörhager & Kim, 2020; Light, 2016; Mitchell, 2018; Na'puti, 2019a; Paliewicz & Hasian, 2019; Senda–Cook, 2020).

Environmental/Ecological Rhetoric

Environmental/ecological critique further offered space for critics to develop field methods' contributions. The fusion of participatory methods and environmental/ecological criticism provides two key contributions to environmental criticism. First, rhetorical field methods draw greater critical attention to the rhetorical force generated for/by rhetorical practices around questions of emplacement in the unique environmental spaces where rhetoric is practiced (Endres, 2020; Pezzullo, 2003). Second, critics working at the intersection of environmental/ecological criticism and field methods push the boundaries of rhetoric's objects of study by challenging scholars to consider how "more–than–human" rhetoric influences relationships between humans and their (built and natural) environments. Scholars (de Onis, 2016; McGreavy et al., 2017) adopting this approach utilize field methods to gain access to rhetorical influences and consequences of "human and nonhuman animals, landscapes, and the cultural artifacts shaped by and found in manifold environments" (de Onis, 2016, p. 103). In this manner, field methods have "greatly expanded notions of rhetorical texts" (Endres, 2020, p. 318), leading to a "more diverse terrain for the production of rhetorical criticism" (Pezzullo, 2016, p. 37).

Digital Rhetoric

It is more than coincidental that participatory approaches to rhetoric largely emerged during a time when convergent and immersive media technologies were also growing. Indeed, as users populated Web 2.0 environments, new methodologies in rhetoric became necessary as vernacular communities engaged technologies such as social media to speak out. Echoing McGee's (1990) notion of fragmentation, media texts have become extensively networked across multiple platforms, and convergence culture has led to new forms of intertextual expression (Bruns, 2008; Jenkins, 2006) accented with a participatory sensibility. Even before the advent of user–generated

media systems, Warnick (2005) called for rhetorical scholars to look "under the hood" of such technologies, inviting both computational and participatory sensibilities into rhetorical scholarship.

Since the early 2000s, rhetorical scholars have increasingly turned to participatory approaches to examine digital media environments, and such efforts will likely grow (Silvestri, 2013). Case studies have explicitly connected participatory methods in rhetoric to digital texts and their production, including social media and locative technologies (Hess & Flores, 2018; Hess & Herbig, 2013; Martin, 2021), technological development and marketing (Johnson & Johnson, 2020; Pfister, 2017), virtual reality (Ceuterick & Ingraham, 2021), and the intersection of social movements and digital media (Chevrette & Hess, 2019; Ewalt et al., 2018). Moreover, recent work has extended methodological discussions to specifically account for how digital technologies themselves contribute to and offer new directions for rhetorical fieldwork (Cordes, 2021; Hess, 2018b; Quiring et al., 2020; Riddick, 2019).

International Contexts

When Conquergood (1992) contemplated how the critical energies of rhetoric, ethnography, and performance could be synthesized, his insights were informed by an expansive body of fieldwork and critical engagement, including crafting rhetorical messages around public health in Hmong refugee camps (Conquergood, 1988). However, rhetorical scholars have long been bounded by the U.S. nation–state in how they consider "citizenship" (Chávez, 2015), and much work dealing with international dynamics still assumes the United States as center and home. That is, rhetorical field methods offer but do not assure opportunities for critics to engage with international communities and contexts. Critics interested in rhetoric in international contexts utilize field methods to engage localized manifestations of and challenges to globalized rhetorics as well as to trouble and decenter Western perspectives (Asante, 2022; Hanchey, 2018, 2019, 2023; Huang & Brouwer, 2018; Na'puti, 2019a). International contexts also propel further methodological considerations for rhetorical ethnography. For example, in discussing her use of rhetorical fieldwork to study aid work in Tanzania, Hanchey (2019) troubles critical assumptions of participatory methods in international contexts, noting that "thinking that the rhetorical field researcher can unequivocally know what is required for emancipation and bring it to bear is a fantasy of mastery and certainty" (p. 46). Disrupting colonial fantasies requires recognizing that critics' participation in any rhetorical scene is "riddled with silences and gaps, suggestions unvoiced and unheeded, and interventions that miss their mark" (Hanchey, 2019, p. 46; see also Hanchey, 2018). Scholars utilizing rhetorical field methods/ethnography in transnational contexts have, in this manner, extended critiques of the critic's power and positionality and further exposed complicated implications participatory approaches pose for the communities who participate in research (see, e.g., Banerjee & Sowards, 2022; Na'puti, 2019a; Na'puti & Frain, 2017; Pezzullo & de Onis, 2018).

Rhetoric's Effects and Audience Research

A final thematic of rhetorical scholarship that has natural convergences with rhetorical field methods/ethnography is audience research. Questions of impact, consequences, and effects of rhetoric on audiences are wrapped into larger considerations of rhetorical force. Yet, as Houck and Kiewe (2015) overview, nearly a century of research provides little discussion of what effect rhetoric might have. Participatory approaches can aid in answering the question: What does rhetoric *do* to its audiences? Examples include the use of interviews to understand the effects of social movement rhetoric on external and internal audiences (Chávez, 2011; Chevrette & Hess, 2019; Nell Edgar & Johnson, 2018), and to learn more about visitors' perspectives of, and experiences in, public memory places (Chevrette, 2016; Zagacki & Gallagher, 2009). Theoretical and methodological works have also addressed audience reception in digital rhetorical contexts (see, e.g., Kor, 2018). Additionally, rhetorical theorists in Scandinavia have linked audience reception to rhetorical research (Bengtsson et al., 2020; Kjeldsen, 2016, 2018; Kjeldsen & Hess, 2021; Vatnøy et al., 2020), which follows the "Scandinavian inclination toward the practical and the empirical, and the orientation toward the public and the rhetorical life of the everyday" (Kjeldsen, 2021, p. 113), especially in regard to reception studies.

Critical Tensions and Theoretical Debates in Rhetorical Field Methods/Ethnography

Despite rhetorical fieldwork's demonstrated utility in a variety of contexts, and scholarship devoted to outlining its methodology, critical tensions and theoretical debates remain regarding how and when to use participatory approaches. Recurring methodological discussions continue to motivate ongoing theorizing, including three touchstone debates.

Critical Appropriation/Exploitation

The breadth of rhetorical theory and methodology one can attribute to rhetorical field methods/ethnography suggests the broad appeal of emplaced, embodied rhetorical criticism. However, as multiple critics and practitioners of rhetorical field methods/ethnography have suggested, the move into the field is fraught with challenges. One primary concern is magnified in participatory scholars' move from critical rhetoric's centering of fragmented, corporeal, vernacular, marginalized, and otherwise traditionally uncatalogued and critiqued rhetorical practices toward real-time engagement with these. In this manner, fieldwork often both archives the rhetorical practices of local communities and enclaves, and subjects their rhetorical invention to critical scrutiny.

For this reason, the move to the field resonates with the criticism of the potentially exploitative impulses of politicized rhetorical critics born of the critical turn. Phillips (1999) warned this could lead to a state where: "Rather than academic criticism acting in service of everyday acts of resistance, everyday acts of resistance are put into the service of academic criticism" (p. 97). Numerous rhetorical theorists (Hanchey, 2019; McKinnon et al., 2016; Middleton et al., 2015) have thus sought to theorize the challenges of navigating the ethical and political risks posed by

rhetorical field methods/ethnography when such critiques place critics in communities that are not their own. For instance, Chevrette (2016) observes how she was propelled by a Native American activist's lecture on Indigenous relationships to the land to consider how her fieldwork-based analysis of the settler colonial rhetorical entailments within a southwestern memory place risked "reproduc[ing] the very absences I sought to problematize" by centering her own settler perspective and its omissions (p. 158). As more critics turn to the insights rhetorical field methods/ethnography offer, Alcoff's (1991) admonition and warning about "the problem of speaking for others" thus confronts field-based rhetorical critics. Indeed, the choice to enter (at best, reflexively, but, in reality, not always) a field of rhetorical practice(s) enacted by vernacular and/or marginalized communities, poses both an ethicopolitical tension and a methodological dilemma. As Welsh (1925/2012) observes, the desire to center marginalized voices announced by critical rhetoric and extended by participatory approaches brings to the surface an irresolvable antagonism between researcher (and the entailments of that subject position) and advocate (and the entailments of that subject position). However, it is these same risks that position field methods as generating existential questions about the study of rhetoric more broadly: what is rhetoric, who is it for, and whose rhetorical practices are subject to criticism by whom and to what ends?

Dialogue, Advocacy, and the Challenge of Participation

Field-based rhetorical critique often sustains itself through two primary arguments. First, proponents argue that field methods allow access to otherwise ephemeral texts that offer insights into rhetorical logics of communities that may otherwise be excluded from the canon (McKinnon et al., 2016; Rai & Druschke, 2018; see also Pezullo, 2003). Second, critics argue that fieldwork offers a means and opportunity for rhetorical critics to recover *phronesis*, or practical wisdom, as a core constituent and end of rhetorical inquiry and practice (Hess, 2011; Middleton et al., 2015). As such, emplaced, embodied judgment enables the critic to act as an advocate for and/or ally of the communities with which they participate.

Against this backdrop, an emergent question is: What does this mean for the boundaries of a "text suitable for criticism" (McGee, 1990)? Is phronesis a value if the critic's insights sharpen the rhetorical missives issued by communities that work against the best interest of the environment, Black, Indigenous, and People of Color, the economically disenfranchised, and others? Is creating an archive of offensive rhetorical practices a worthwhile end, or should those texts be left to disappear in their ephemerality? Rhetorical theorists have considered these ethics from a multitude of perspectives, asking what it means to participate in rhetorical communities and political movements with which they disagree, whether the insight gained from such forays contributes to progressive goals, and whether participating in communities organized around regressive politics is an imperative, a tactic, or an inconvenience for the rhetorical critic (see, e.g., Middleton et al., 2015; see also Endres et al., 2016). Addressing similar concerns around the move toward performance ethnography, Conquergood (1985) argued the ethical pitfalls of difference/ detachment (exhibitionism/exotification of marginalized communities) versus commitment/ identity (facile identification with marginalized communities) could be resolved through dialogical performance, or, as he put it, "genuine conversation" (pp. 5–8). The aim of such

interactions, Conquergood (1985) argued, was to "bring self and other together so that they can question, debate, and challenge one another" while "resist[ing] conclusions" and "struggl[ing] to bring together different voices, world views, value systems, and beliefs so they can have a conversation with one another" (p. 8). However, as assumptions regarding belonging, membership, citizenship, and deliberative democracy that formed the background *telos* of traditional rhetorical inquiry erode, questions have emerged regarding whether dialogue is possible or even appropriate across political and epistemic divides between researcher and field-based rhetors. As more rhetoricians enter the field, considering how, and if, they can ethically move into and out of different rhetorical enclaves remains a concern of critical importance.

Between Elevation and Dilution: What Counts as Rhetoric?

An often-heard question in many first-year communication or rhetoric courses goes something like this: If everything can be considered rhetorical, then what *isn't*? Although posed to get students to consider the scope of communication, the question also highlights potential issues within participatory approaches in rhetoric. The turn toward the vernacular (Hauser, 1999; Ono & Sloop, 1995; Sloop & Ono, 1997), those smaller discourses that build public opinion or are often written out of history, invited new considerations about what constitutes or is worthy of being a rhetorical text. Rather than focus on the "canon" of great speeches, critics could look to the smallest of interactions found in local neighborhoods and communities that are typically lost to ephemerality. Affective embodiment (Landau, 2016; McHendry, 2016; McHendry et al., 2014), soundscapes and ecologies (Derk, 2021; Gries et al., 2022), or broadening inclusion of diverse digital texts (Cordes, 2021; Pfister, 2017; Quiring et al., 2020) all challenge what could conceivably be under consideration within field-based approaches to rhetoric.

Consequently, an emergent critical tension within field-based approaches pertains to the "qualities" of rhetorical action. What *should* or *shouldn't* be under consideration with participatory approaches? On one hand, the inclusion of embodied, multimodal, multi/dimensional, and affective elements has enriched critics' understanding of how rhetoric looks, is felt, and can be wielded. Often, vernacular communities engage in expressive acts that are non-symbolic or that have been historically unrecognized within rhetoric literatures. Their experience of discourse, no matter how mundane, is an important perspective to be appreciated in the context of fieldwork and the field more broadly. On the other hand, there may be discourses that should not be elevated through participatory or text-based approaches. The inclusion of myriad forms of discourse flattens discursive hierarchies, but it can also lead to a dilution of rhetoric, whereby all discourses have equal say and gather equal critical attention.

In some cases, the discourses of power may form themselves through violent or unethical means, such as digital trolling (Booth et al., 2018; Phillips & Milner, 2018), which is often sustained by mere attention. Participatory approaches that attend to nonsymbolic, affective, multimodal, or multi/dimensional rhetorics may need to account for the consequences of casting such a wide critical net across society.

Rhetorical Field Methods/Ethnography at/After the End of the World

Participatory approaches are situated at a key moment in the history of rhetoric as a field, when, troubled by realizations of legacies of colonialism and racism, scholars are questioning the composition and purpose of the discipline (Asante, 2019; Na'puti, 2019b; Pham, 2019; Sowards, 2019; Wanzer-Serrano, 2019). As argued by Hess et al. (2020), participatory approaches carry as much of this epistemological lineage as critical rhetoric or rhetoric writ large. Hess et al. therefore contend that rhetorical field methods/ethnography can, and must, look for ways to break from received traditions to invite new understandings of what rhetoric is or can be. Having overviewed historical developments in rhetorical field methods/ethnography, the breadth of contexts in which they have been utilized, and the theoretical and methodological challenges they have sparked, we remain aware that the order of things constructed through encyclopedic knowledges is constrained by what fails to be recorded. Put differently, the world of rhetorical field methods/ ethnography presented thus far does not fully reflect multiple and conflicting subjectivities of all who live and make knowledges within, and in spite of, symbolic and material erasure. Although some fit within the epistemological and methodological assumptions of the Western tradition, of linear conceptual histories and locatable future trajectories, that is not the world of all (Lugones, 2003). It is critical to consider what is elided by accounts of/from the field, whether that "field" is a discipline, an epistemological location, or a physical place in which a researcher interacts. This critical consideration necessitates asking what rhetoric and rhetorical field methods/ ethnography look like for those on the underside of Western modernity, the darker side (Mignolo, 2011), an upside-down of sorts in relation to the world instantiated by coloniality.

Rhetorical scholars who have moved toward participatory methods to engage marginalized, activist, material, and nonhuman rhetorics cannot assume to stand outside the violences of disciplinary myth-making. To this end, rhetorical fieldwork cannot start from a place where rhetoricians uncritically "enter" fields inhabited by Others in order to make observations, build theories from those observations, and report findings back to those in academe. That scenario already carries with it epistemological and ontological assumptions (including these categories themselves) that must be reconsidered. Here, it is important to rethink the very logics with which critics orient themselves to "the field." A step back is a problem only under a Western conception of forward progress, one that venerates linear time. We ask: What does it mean to be a rhetorician? Do rhetorical field methods/ethnography at a time when the "public sphere" has crumbled? The political and social events of the last half-decade—including but not limited to the global COVID-19 pandemic; the rise of authoritarian despots like Bolsonaro, Duterte, Putin, and Trump; the Russian invasion of sovereign Ukraine; global climate death events like heatwaves, wildfires, floods, and drought; surging anti-LGBTQ and anti-woman legislation; and the escalated mass incarceration of Black, immigrant, and Muslim communities in places like the Unites States, Eastern Europe, and China, respectively—have revealed the so-called "Western" principles of freedom, democracy, and justice undergirding much rhetorical theory as myths put in place by unspeakable violence.

But who has the world ended for? And what kind of world is it that has ended? Black scholars have long recognized that for them and their ancestors, the world has already ended (Gumbs, 2018), and they "inhabit a scifi nightmare" (Dery, 1993, p. 180). Similarly, Latinx work demonstrates that the splintering of worlds is not new; as participatory critics, we are dealing with the fragmented remains (Sandoval, 2000; Wanzer, 2012). Indigenous scholars likewise disrupt linear narratives of time and place, countering the false temporalities of colonialism's "post" (Byrd & Rothberg, 2011; Cook-Lynn, 1997; Weaver, 2000). Rhetoricians already live in the aftermath of worlds crumbling; some have just been able to ignore it. This is why Gumbs (2018) asks critics to consider not just what happens "after the end of the world as we know it," but "after the ways we have been knowing the world" end, too (p. xi).

Orienting to Anti-Colonial Landmarks for Relating in the Ruins

Anti-colonial approaches to rhetoric and rhetorical field methods/ethnography necessitate the further examination of how the axioms of Western methodological training constrain research and analysis to parameters that are not necessarily useful in other cultural contexts. Cruz and Sodeke (2021), for example, discuss how the white, Western assumptions of their qualitative training left them utterly unable to register organizing as it appeared in their African home countries. De la Garza (2008) similarly questions "received views" in ethnographic inquiry including the researcher's opportunism, presumed independence, and entitlement, along with the "primacy of rationality" (p. 147). She argues that these views, and their methodological enactments, are rooted in colonialist epistemological and ontological violences that grant Western researchers a certain authority over Others' knowledges (pp. 147, 148). For critics who practice rhetorical field methods/ethnography, this necessitates asking what knowledges are meant to be theirs, what their rhetorical training has left them attempting, and what it has left them unable to register. Particularly in a context where rhetoric's guiding assumptions of public good, citizenship narratives, and inclusive logics no longer hold—and have never held for all (Calvente et al., 2020; Chávez, 2015; Na'puti, 2019a)—what landmarks can assist scholars in emplacing themselves and finding their way within a field that cannot be assumed to operate by colonial and white supremacist logics?

We use the language of landmarks deliberately: Land is the most durational and substantive materiality many have, which is something critics often miss when the field is articulated as an abstract construct requiring leaving one's current emplacement to study. The concept of "landships," instead of citizenships, is already being used in fields like landscape architecture and urban planning to describe how some are re-centering their relationships to land, especially those lands on which environmental catastrophe is unfolding (De Almeida, 2021). This language can assist critics in decentering rhetoric from white colonial concepts such as "citizenship" that continue to dominate the field (Chávez, 2015). Whether recognized or not, landships rhetorically mediate the sets of relationships between peoples and ideas that comprise the social networks they participate in (Aswad & Lechuga, 2023). Orienting toward land in this manner is not a new

trend in social sciences, but rather, a mode of knowing the world that Indigenous and anti-colonial activists and scholars have described in terms like "body-land" (Altamirano-Jiménez, 2020) and *vincularidad* (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018; Pacari, 2013).

Thus, we offer five landmarks for re-/disorienting rhetorical field methods/ethnography's embodiments amidst the field's colonialist rubble. These landmarks are grounded in work from those who have wrestled with both the disorientations of coloniality and what engaging with rhetoric looks like when the white supremacist cisheteropatriarchal monolith of its perceived world has been splintered into pieces. To be clear, anti-racist, decolonial scholarship is not new; the "newness," or sudden importance ascribed to anti-colonial orientations in disciplinary periodizations only describes a collective lack of seeing what is and has always been there. Our critical orientations are therefore not just spatial logics; they are also temporal logics demonstrating durational ideas, concepts, and relationships.

Multidimensional Orientations

Multidimensionality may seem to be something arrived at by field methods themselves as scholars enter the field to try to identify and engage with various dimensions and encounters through which suasion occurs. In situ approaches contribute to understanding rhetoric's multidimensionality; for example, drawing from qualitative scholars Lincoln and Guba (1985), Chevrette (2016) argues that a holographic analytic attunes rhetorical scholars to a three-dimensional view of public memory places that moves beyond museum-as-text to instead interrogate intertwining symbolic, material, and social landscapes and temporal emergences within places of remembering. However, as a landmark for anti-colonial scholars orienting ourselves within, and in relation to, the critic's fields of analysis, multidimensionality is not equivalent to simply using field methods to recognize rhetoric's multiple dimensions. Instead, to contend with dimensions of knowing and being elided by (white, Western) critics' gazes and the "imaginative and material geographies of U.S. settler colonialism" they reflect (p. 149), requires engaging more deeply with the land and local histories of it. Multidimensionality as a decolonial landmark emplaces critics within broader sets of geographic and "political relations in which we are involved, and that we cannot (yet) understand" (Hanchey, 2018, p. 157). In doing so, it offers a means of relating to landscapes and the peoples, relationships, materials, and memories within them. Multidimensionality conceptualized as such is not simply an aspect of a rhetorical text's complexity or a recognition of how texts hold different meanings for different audiences, but instead offers an orientation insistent on decentering the Western and white gazes within knowledge production, and the epistemic and ontological foreclosures they produce.

Practically speaking, approaching field methods in this manner requires all researchers, but particularly those working from dominant subject positions, to "face [their] subjective contradictions" (Hanchey, 2018, p. 147), to challenge the "circularly reinforcing, exclusionary disciplinary logic of white-U.S. normativity" (De Tar, 2021, pp. 191–192), and to reflexively interrogate "absences in our analyses, or dimensions of our con/texts that would otherwise be overlooked" (Chevrette, 2016, p. 158). As participatory scholars consider their own positionalities as intertwined with their interpretive practices and perspectives they omit, this approach may lead to an extension of the field of one's fieldwork to engage "various rhetorical fragments from

different locations and dimensions" to consider Indigenous and other marginalized knowledges otherwise absented from the colonial storying of history (Chevrette, 2016, p. 152). To this end, multidimensional orientations can engage what Houdek (2021) calls "decolonial smuggling": a deliberate and necessary practice to bring "bits and pieces of alternative epistemologies through the fissures within rhetoric's underlying epistemic terrain to expose its fault lines, reveal its instability, and pry open enough space to build new worlds" (p. 274).

Orienting Liquidly

Liquid orientations likewise remind critics of knowledges seeping beyond the boundaries of rhetoric's current orientations/worlds; among these, the fluidity, permeability, and interconnectedness of elements perceived as separate within Western frameworks (Cruz & Sodeke, 2021). Liquidity, conceptualized by Bauman (2000) to describe global conditions of mobility and change, taken up by organization and management as well as digital communication scholars, and repositioned by Cruz and Sodeke (2021) as specifically relevant for understanding "political, economic, and cultural contexts at the margins" (p. 529), can contribute to participatory rhetorical approaches. In a landscape where stability is a fiction, where things cannot be assumed to remain solid, where intimate connections underlie critics' understanding of the world around them and, as they shift and change, transform their relations to that world, orienting liquidly challenges colonial categorizations that continue to impact approaches to rhetorical field methods/ethnography. Assumptions regarding where the field of rhetorical field methods is located—i.e., often in bounded, physical places that critics enter into to witness "live" rhetorical action in communities and places—frequently reproduce colonialist assumptions Na'puti (2019a) terms "landcentricity." Importantly, critiques of landcentricity are not only about a focus on land per se, which we have called for decolonial participatory critics to pay deeper attention to; but rather on how logics of solidity, immutability, locatability, and separability inform Western ways of knowing, including the conquest of, divisions placed on, and ownership over land. For example, as Hanchey (2023) demonstrates in her examination of colonial and Indigenous relations to land in Tanzania, Western epistemologies understanding land as something to be owned, partitioned, and controlled, cause problems for Tanzanians when they attempt to relate to land in ways that center on continued use rather than ownership. For instance, by farming on land that is considered the property of others but which is left unused, Tanzanian villagers remap land through relational rather than property logics. By orienting liquidly, participatory rhetorical scholars can perceive and build networks of relation that shift and change with contextual demands, allowing them to better connect to the lands and people with whom they engage (Cruz & Sodeke, 2021; Na'puti, 2019a, 2019b, 2020).

Western approaches not only can hamper Indigenous agency, action, and resistance, but can also obscure and marginalize them for most field researchers (Cruz & Sodeke, 2021). Orienting liquidly is an important practice for scholars who turn to rhetorical field methods/ethnography as a means of engaging marginalized communities and knowledges, because liquid orientations are often the means by which those pushed to the margins organize, survive, and resist. Likewise, liquid orientations can aid in considering "how publics resist from places that are seemingly neither here nor there (when considering their political status or if comparing to nation–

states)" (Na'puti, 2020, p. 98). Cruz and Sodeke (2021) explain how liquid organizing is both forced on marginalized actors by the inaccessibility of mainstream forms of stability and power, and yet at the same time can serve as means of reclaiming agency to act around and against these structures. For instance, Hanchey's (2023) fieldwork found that even though Tanzanian employees of an international nongovernmental organization were pushed out of financial decision-making by Western donors, they would activate already-existing relational networks to find ways to use funding to meet emergent needs without directly pushing back on donor desires. A focus on landships and relational networks can help participatory fieldworkers to attune to emergent opportunities and resistances as they take shape.

Though not using the language of liquidity, ethnographer Tsing's (2004, 2015) work illuminating messy global connections and cultural and economic entanglements within individual sites of ethnographic fieldwork, as well as using multi-sited fieldwork to map these connectivities, offers an example of such an orientation. Tracing the global routes matsutake mushrooms take as they are cultivated and foraged in various global locations to make their way to Japanese consumers, Tsing (2015) observes this commodity chain as indicative of alternative practices of survival engaged in by peasants, refugees, veterans, and many others at capitalism's margins. In keeping with the work of environmental/ecological scholars contributing to the participatory turn in rhetoric, her call for viewing landscapes as fluid, active, and interactive, rather than as "backdrops," illustrates how "humans joi[n] other living beings in shaping worlds" (p. 152).

In addition to reconceptualizing relations and resistances that would otherwise be erased, liquidity can contribute to interpretive practices used in rhetorical field methods/ethnography by challenging scholars to consider how their training and analytic methods limit their approaches to places and place-based knowledges. Cordes (2021), for example, critiques the colonialist fictions of the field's veracity and transparency, exploring how Indigenous and ally researchers can utilize a "digital constellatory autoethnographic mode" to produce "more honest engagements" in the field (pp. 56, 57). Cordes argues that digital media can and should be considered as data that extend field sites to produce multi-sensory, relational, experiential, and actively unfolding knowledges. Liquid orientations can thus align with rhetorical field methods/ethnography's existing attention to digitality and digital methods to further propel anti-colonial practices and approaches.

Queering Orientations

Queering contributes to decolonial remappings given that as "settler colonialism leverages rhetoric to facilitate the material arrangement of ideological power on lands and bodies" (Lechuga, 2020, p. 378), it does so in relation to cisheteropatriarchal narratives that have further shaped the field of rhetoric and its objects of study. For instance, those drawn to rhetorical field methods/ethnography as a means of furthering critical rhetoric's liberatory aims may "assume that rapport or intimacy with those with whom we are aligned necessarily results in more horizontal relations" (Berry et al., 2017, p. 539); however, this is not always the case. Even activist approaches to "the field" and fieldwork frequently "replicate that which they critique, by silencing the racialized, gendered researcher's embodied experience or by inscribing it in new

colonial narratives" (Berry et al., 2017, p. 539). Berry et al. (2017) describe how "constitutive and interlocking racial and gender hierarchies and inequities . . . structure the epistemic and ontological violence that undergird fieldwork" (p. 537). In fact, the orientation to fieldwork that seeks to penetrate the knowledges, cultures, and practices of the Other—to pierce the epistemological depths of the "unknown" to extract their value—does so in a manner that Trinh (1989) argues is similar to denigrating women's bodily autonomy. Indigenous scholars have recounted how violent acts of settler colonialism positioned lands, women's bodies, and Indigenous knowledges as things to be extracted, "used, sullied, taken from, over and over again" (Simpson, 2016, para. 19; see also Rand, 2008; Smith, 2005). Queering rhetorical field methods/ethnography requires considering how participatory critics orient to their physical and epistemological places of fieldwork and how they can disrupt assumptions of extractability and penetrability that reflect and perpetuate whiteness and its cisheteropatriarchal violences.

Considering queering as a landmark around which to reorient participatory rhetorical approaches especially seeks to recognize how scholarship, activism, and embodiments emerging from queer of color communities have engaged in forms of worldmaking that create spaces for "liveable lives" (Butler, 2004, p. 8) amidst ruins. Queer and trans thought, embodiment, and action are integral to decolonial struggles. Given that queer bodies and practices have long been marked as deviant, queering and transing orientations enable the rejection of false binaries and imposed normativities to make space for survival amidst ruins, or in worlds already inhospitable to queer and BIPOC existence. For instance, Hanchey and Asante (2021) demonstrate how postcolonial conditions require ambivalent forms of resistance (Asante, 2020), ones that may not tear down "the Master's house" (Lorde, 1984) but instead use it queerly by repurposing its infrastructure for decolonial ends.

Queerly approaching the field, and fieldwork, also orients the researcher toward bodily sensations, pleasures, and desires. In their work on archives as rhetorical places, and fields of embodied experience, Cram (2016) foregrounds the relational materiality between bodies—including the body of the researcher in relation to the archive, its materials, and the traces of embodiments recorded within—as generating intimacies central to archival work. Cram notes the "perception of sensation makes gender and sexuality legible within archival scenes, thus enabling queer invention" (p. 111). Queer relationalities based on the researcher's embodied sexual, intimate, and gendered knowledges enable "the tactical circumvention" of normative logics to queerly reconfigure the field and fields of knowing, providing a method for counter-reading omissions and traces of alternative existence (Cram, 2016; see also Morris, 2006). Through intimacies developed between researchers and the subjects they engage, "a queer sense of absent persons, relationships, and historical contexts" can thus be generated (pp. 111–112).

Disorienting Citizenship

The bounds of personhood imposed by Western citizenship logics have long served to erase Black and African humanity (Asante & Hanchey, 2021; Towns, 2018), leading to inhumane treatment, structures, and logics of engagement under the guise of development and aid. And yet, the participatory turn has done little to destabilize what Chávez (2015) describes as rhetoric's

"almost exclusiv[e]" concern "with citizen discourses, mostly from white men in *public*" (p. 163, emphasis in original). Even when the people being discussed, analyzed, and otherwise turned into objects for rhetorical analysis (Lechuga, 2020) are not themselves citizens, nor perhaps desiring such a designation, they are still read by critics through logics prioritizing citizenship and democracy as the aims of rhetorical actions. To those who engage rhetoric after the end of the world, this makes little sense. Why strive for colonial citizenship in the ruins of white democracy? Instead, fieldwork that disorients citizenship, reorienting around multidimensional and fluid relations, provides landmarks for navigating the public's ruins.

Rhetorical field methods/ethnography can contribute to disorienting citizenship when scholars turn to those who have been excluded from citizenship expectations—whether legally, discursively, or physically. However, for engagements with vernacular rhetorics of marginalized and excluded individuals, communities, and knowledges to encompass decolonial orientations, the aim should not be bringing them into the violent arms of the nation-state, but rather learning other ways of relating to one another in/and the world. Chávez (2015) writes that moving away from citizenship is imperative to make rhetoric "not . . . a more inclusive discipline but . . . something entirely different: a discipline constitutive through non-normative, non-citizen, non-Western perspectives and ways of knowing and being" (p. 163). Doing so is necessary not only to broaden the ways scholars of rhetorical field methods/ethnography can engage with the world, but to put a stop to the violences inflicted on colonized and BIPOC people by the imperatives of citizenship and inclusion (Calvente et al., 2020; Na'puti, 2019a, 2019b, 2020). Disorienting citizenship requires disentangling subjects from states. Contexts, people, and relations elided by rhetoric's long-standing focus on white citizenship provide ways of knowing that illuminate survivance in ruins and alternative pasts, presents, and futures. For practitioners of rhetorical field methods/ethnography, to learn from the embodied theory enacted in the field requires challenging presumptions about nation-states, citizens, and citizenships as the central producers of/organizing sites for rhetoric. Chirindo (2018) argues that to move beyond nation-states and their accompanying geographies, rhetorical scholars will need to attend to how bodies are specifically articulated in and constituted by various localities. Orienting toward landships, the uneven intimacies and relations formed between people, communities, bodies, and lands, here replaces conventional conceptions of citizenship that center on individual participation in abstracted local, national, or global political orders removed from the materiality of physical environments. Such an orientation would likely shift the questions with which researchers enter into their fieldwork, they ways their fieldwork sites and/or participants are selected, and/or the aims of their research.

Orienting Toward Community

Our final decolonial landmark for rhetorical field methods/ethnography is orienting toward community. This is not the same as observing, or embedding oneself in, a community for the purposes of research. The desire to amplify marginalized voices has been among the driving aims and justifications for rhetorical scholars incorporating rhetorical field methods/ethnography, and yet, in practice, this desire bears the risk of utilizing qualitative methods as tools to gain access and enter into spaces of "vernacular" or "minor" knowledge production to extract

information for the researcher's gain. As Lechuga (2020) argues, the gaze of the scholar conducting rhetorical fieldwork tends to subjectify the ethnographic Other and embeds them within a capitalist economy of knowledge production (p. 382). For this reason, "activist research that does not pursue epistemological decolonization will . . . inevitably reproduce the very hierarchies of power that it seeks to help dismantle" (Berry et al., 2017, p. 538).

Recognizing community provides a means of centering embodiment without succumbing to colonial logics that register some bodies as less human than others. Mack and Na'puti (2019) explain that "resistant subjectivities at the colonial difference are always in a process of fighting colonial subjectification; their embodiment serves to challenge normative colonial logics and presumptions" (p. 352). In part, this is why rhetoric has long served to undermine attention to embodiment, even while gladly talking about "the body" in abstraction (Chávez, 2018). Rhetoric scholars, even those in the field, rarely attend in loving, excruciating, sweaty, gory detail to the embodiment of those being written about—or their own—as it is difficult to destabilize colonial logics of estrangement and mastery that guide "rigorous" inquiry. Decolonial scholars provide tools to better engage embodiment in rhetorical fieldwork. For instance, Gutierrez-Perez and Andrade (2018) pair rhetorical analysis with embodied performance, while Mack and Na'puti (2019) center intersubjective witnessing to better understand bodies in relation.

A (re)new(ed) ethical orientation rooted in community and landedness can aid in further developing decolonial rhetorical field methods/ethnography. The interest from rhetorical scholars to pursue "fieldwork" demonstrates something that is, after all, rather obvious, but scholars only seem to be discovering: knowledge is largely produced outside of the academy. Orienting toward community requires considering how we might move further toward communal knowledge building rather than emphasizing the individualized contributions of those with reputation as the privileged sources of knowing. For example, David Cisneros (2021) invites rhetorical scholars to embrace an abolitionist telos rooted in "artivism" (art-activism) from communities around the Mexico-U.S. border. He contends that those doing work in the field on institutions of violence and control—like criminal justice reform, the prison-industrial complex, the expanding forced-birth apparatus, and migration control—should begin to build theoretical frames "from the point of view of the freedom of movement . . . [,] beyond just a concern with 'doxastic' discourses of social regulation of citizenship, nationality, and civic belonging" (p. 96). Thus, orienting toward community is not only a form of recognizing emplaced rhetorical invention within communities, but a means of reconceptualizing rhetorical theory, where it comes from, what it aims to do. What this evolution might look like is unclear, but embracing the challenge to move as communities do, not to simply report on their movements from afar, is critical to the emancipatory interventions rhetorical field methods/ethnography could enable.

Looking Forward/Looking Back

The field is "a physical place as well as an epistemological space of investigation shaped by histories of European and U.S. imperialism and colonialism" (Berry et al., 2017, p. 537). And let's face it—it wasn't meant to last forever. Colonial occupation, settler occupation, isn't built to last. The United States has labored to maintain the myth that somehow, despite its sordid history of

genocide, enslavement, and ecocide, "Western" democracy ushered in a new global vision for representative citizenship. And rhetoric as a field took up this mission, believing that in order to communicate a global, universalizing vision of equality, democracy relied on particular forms of public address. Rhetoric thus became obsessed with how to measure the most persuasive speech styles relative to the ways those speeches communicated the values of a political institution (Bower, 1943). In other words, the "field" began as a colonial occupation of myth-making and testing the effectiveness of that myth-making capacity. Namely, rhetoric has been a study of how persuasive a communicator can be in moving persons into a citizenry compliant to colonial institutionalization.

One wonders, then, if being a rhetorician in the 21st (Western) century is akin to being an alchemist in the 19th, when science discredited the ability to create gold out of nothing. Is it even useful to continue the traditions of rhetoricians, given that critics and the communities they study no longer live in a society governed by the rules of the so-called public sphere? This is where scholars of rhetorical field methods/ethnography necessarily find themselves, left with a choice to move forward in a fragmented world where meaning-making relies on the ability to acknowledge, read, and understand multiple ways of observing, describing, and articulating the events shaping landscapes—or to stay stuck in crumbling cathedrals reciting canons in search of salvation. Or perhaps, recognizing a moment of transition—out of the universalist myth and into the pluriversal reality—participatory critics can collect what resources might be necessary to survive and rebuild in hostile landscapes and leave behind those that might only weigh them down.

Perhaps, practitioners of rhetorical field methods/ethnography, looking to a field that is less recognizable than once assumed, might take up Gumbs's (2018) tool of "speculative documentary," an alternative temporality that maps the future of fieldwork onto the present, asking what might be left for future rhetoricians to find in the field's rubble. After all, there is still a spirit in many to imagine and articulate a political future for themselves in a plural world, and whether or not that spirit is called "rhetoric" or something else, it holds the capacity to articulate justice and create communities that are better for all. Put differently, rhetoric stands at a (hopeful) moment of disciplinary reflection, in which participatory rhetorical approaches contain critical potential for remaking critics' worlds of study. As critics examine the ruins around them, scholars in the participatory turn will need to continue interrogating what "the field" means at and after the end of rhetoric's world. Where is the field of rhetorical field methods/ethnography located, and how does "the field" shape—and is shaped by—multiplicities of "us" forming in relation to it? And how then should critics engage with/in the field of their fieldwork?

Critics must turn to the landships around them, setting their roots deeper to engage with the texture and depth of relations (Na'puti & Cruz, 2022), rather than imperial modes of investigation as expansion. And wait to see how the field envelops them.

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