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Like other ambitious collections before it, such as Glen and Ratcliffe’s Silence and Listening as Rhetorical Arts and Schell and Rawson’s Rhetorica in Motion, Feminist Rhetorical Resilience (FRR) expands on current developments in feminist rhetoric while broadening the field to new possibilities of research. Though FRR covers a variety of topics—transnational feminism, literacy, university hiring procedures, eugenics history, and queer theory—all essays are deliberately woven around the goal of composing a feminist notion of resilience. In the introduction, the editors share that their interest in the concept of resilience—one that grew out of their experience at the Fifth Biennial International Feminism(s) and Rhetoric(s) Conference—stemmed from the absence of resilience as a term discussed in feminist rhetoric despite its prevalence within subjects such as social work, education, and business. The qualities that make up feminist resilience, as defined by the editors, include agency, métis, and relationality; this social and transformative view of resilience opposes common perceptions that prioritize an individual’s attributes. Through envisioning a feminist resilience, FRR becomes a constructive addition to research in feminist rhetoric and also may serve—due to the diversity of the topics covered—as an introduction to contemporary concerns in the field.

In an effort to reinforce their common goal, the editors strategically structure the book to embody the theme of feminist resilience. The collection includes seven essays, each followed up with a “response” from an author (or, in some cases, authors) and a “reflection” from the chapter’s author (or authors) to the response. The call and response nature of this type of organization places the essays within a social, always altering, context where a reader can see the living, breathing creature of conversation underlying scholarly work. At times these responses and reflections serve to reinforce issues or themes within the chapter and at other times the responses and reflections lead to a new perspective or point out shortcomings of an issue. A memorable example of this resilience at work, and the reason I am examining the last chapter of the book first, comes from chapter 7, “No One Wants to Go There” by Jennifer DiGrazia and Lauren Rosenberg. In this chapter, the authors propose that queering the classroom—using queer text, recognizing queer moments, and destabilizing normalcy—offers students a deconstructive lens that may enable them to think more critically and resiliently in their own lives. In the response that follows, Jacqueline Rhodes and Jonathan Alexander offer a well-crafted but less optimistic vision of queering the classroom that disrupts DiGrazia and Rosenberg’s argument;
Rhodes and Alexander call out the shortcomings of our institutionalized pedagogy to be able to fully engage with the queer. The chapter ends with DiGrazia and Rosenburg’s reflection of this critique, which reiterates—perhaps more forcefully—the more idealistic key points in their essay while insisting that in our classroom practice we should work to actively seek, identify, and engage with queer moments in the classroom. It is in these moments of textual engagement—ones that place voices in direct tension with another—when a reader can identify the constantly evolving, métis nature of feminist resilience the collection works to define. Through the authors’ efforts to remain reflexive, transparent, and always listening, the reflective work done here to enact feminist resilience would also serve as a productive model for future scholarship.

The first three essays in this collection focus on transnational issues, making them of particular interest to scholars interested in the relationship of communication, power, and global borders. Working toward a transnational feminist perspective that recognizes and respects difference across borders is no easy task for our field and is charged with ethical inquiries. “Vandana Shiva and the Rhetorics of Biodiversity” by Eileen Schell studies the advocacy work of Vandana Shiva and begins to map the rhetorical traditions Shiva employs to effect social change. Through detailing Shiva’s work to fight biopiracy, Schell identifies collective versus individual action as an important theme throughout Shiva’s efforts and defines her rhetorical reliance and agency as located in a web of collectively organized groups. The theme of collective versus individual action continues in the “The Traveling Fado” by Kate Vieira. Like the first essay, “The Traveling Fado” offers a transnational perspective by asking “how rhetorics are passed down across national and linguistic borders” (60). This essay combines creative non-fiction, immigration experience, and rhetorical scholarship to examine the historical and rhetorical significance of the fado, a Portuguese folk song characterized by longing and the impossibility of returning home. With these essays, we see that feminist efforts to decenter a hegemonic Western discourse means to struggle with the complexity of how history is made and who is able to share their experiences.

The third chapter, “Virginity and the Hymen Reconstructions” by Iklim Goksel, continues the transnational conversation but focuses on complicating attitudes about how we define literacy. Goksel borrows from other scholars to define literacy as “critical thinking and authorship” and argues that women’s engagement in hymen configurations offers a space for them to take charge of their world’s conception of traditional gender expectations of virginity (92). This research, rooted in Goksel’s fieldwork in the squatter settlements of Turkey, highlights the sophisticated vernacular literacies and resilience of these women as they develop their own sense of agency despite an economically unstable and patriarchal landscape. The narratives documented by Goksel continues the work to re-envision our traditional
concepts of literacy while revealing how these studies are significant in order to better understand transnational issues.

Chapter 4 shifts away from a transnational perspective to focus on the relationships and resilience that takes place between the university and dual-career-couples. “Diversity and the Flexible Subject in the Language of Spousal/Partner Hiring Policies” by Amy Koerber uses the rhetorical concepts of flexibility and resilience as a lens to understand the connections that dual-career-couple policies make between spousal/partner hiring issues and faculty diversity. After providing a historical context of the dual-career problem, Koerber looks at the emergence of the idealized flexible subject and the problems that arise when an individual rather than an organization is asked to create changes. Scholars, administrations, and of course, dual-career couples will find Koerber’s essay informative for both the history of spousal/partner hiring policies it provides and for the weaknesses it reveals concerning contemporary procedures of spousal/partner hiring.

Chapter 5 and 6 both examine Western history in the time of eugenic rhetoric. Though admittedly an uncomfortable history on which to reflect, both “A Case Study in Resilience” by Frances Ranney and “From ‘Mothers of the Nation’ to ‘Mothers of the Race’” by Wendy Hayden look at women’s use of eugenic rhetoric as a means to foster agency and resilience. “A Case Study in Resilience” studies the letters and notes of Fontia R.’s fourteen-year dependence on the Luella M. Hannan Foundation—a resource that primarily assisted middle- to upper-class elderly women with food, clothing, and housing needs around the time of the Great Depression. Perhaps using “dependent” to describe Fontia R.’s experience is inaccurate here since the word suggests she is without control. In the essay, Ranney reveals Fontia R.’s clever manipulation that allowed her to—despite being penniless and jobless—maintain her appearance as a respectable, feminine woman of high social standing. Whereas Ranney’s research reclaims an individual woman’s resilience within the social context of the Great Depression, “From ‘Mothers of the Nation’ to ‘Mothers of the Race’” reflects on the different ways early feminists used eugenic rhetoric to argue for rights to education, rights to protect women from spousal abuse, and even rights to demand sexual pleasure. Although chapter 6’s racial implications make it a delicate issue, Hayden effectively argues that recovering uncomfortable or outdated rhetoric does not mean affirming it. In fact, as Hayden writes,

By analyzing the specific rhetorical moments and reading them in the context of the larger web of ideological and institutional relations, such as science and medicine, we gain insight into the rhetorical choices that failed feminist rhetors of the past. (202)

Whereas many, including myself, may have resisted or shied away from these topics of controversy, Hayden demonstrates it is necessary rhetorical work that will allow us to become better prepared to make feminist choices in the future.

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Though *FRR* does not specifically discuss feminist methodologies in great detail, the variety of current topics covered in the collection would be valuable reading for a graduate course on feminist rhetorical scholarship; the emphasis on response and reflection could open up further discussions about the ethics underlying feminist research and scholarship, especially concerning history and transnational issues. The first of its kind to focus on resilience as a feminist value, this collection not only addresses some of the more pressing issues facing feminist scholars today, but it also speaks to the breadth and depth of this scholarship within a contemporary landscape. Featuring a variety of perspectives and conclusions, the voices within this conversation provide hope that feminist rhetorical scholarship itself remains always resilient, always thoughtful, and always transformative.

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**Works Cited**
