Faith Jones

Professor Andrea Walsh

WGS.101 E1V1

March 3,2019

Analyzing the Rhetorical Strategies and Possible Impacts of First Wave Feminism Texts

‘

While studying first wave feminism, we have learned a great deal about the people who fought for women’s rights as well as the methods they have used to achieve their goals.The most **affective** and the focus of our study has been words in the form of **press** or **speaches**. (In written word) it is very important to write to your audience and appeal to them in the most effective way. (In) this essay (I) **will study** the rhetorical strategies used by Frederick Douglass in “Why I Became a ‘Woman’s Rights Man’” and Elizabeth Cady Stanton(’s) **in**“Our Costume”, particularly their use of colorful metaphor, strong diction, and varied syntax in order to persuade their audience to further the **women’s suffrage movement**.

Before we can identify the key rhetorical devices for each (of the) pieces, we must first identity who their likely audiences are and what they are attempted to persuade them of. In “Why I Became a ‘Woman’s Rights Man’”, Douglass is attempting to appeal to abolitionists and Black americans to encourage them to also support the Women’s Suffrage Movement. Douglass begins this piece saying, “When the true history of the antislavery cause shall be written, women will occupy a large space in its pages; for the cause of the slave has been peculiarly woman's cause” (Douglass). This piece, written **is** support of women’s right**s**, opens not with a focus on women’s rights but that of the abolition of slavery. With this opening, Douglass is giving reason for Black Americans and **abolitions** to continue reading--it is an issue that they already have personal stake in. This just represents one possible audience that women’s rights activist would be attempting to reach in order to further the movement.

Stanton’s “Our Costume” attempts to reach a different demographic. This piece was published in *The Lily*, the first United States newspaper made for and by women. By sending “Our Costume” to this particular magazine, Stanton ensured that her piece would be read by women who have enough interest in women’s rights to read a women owned paper. We can read further into **(who)** her intended audience **(might be)** by reading the piece **(itself).** She is attempting to garner support **(in the arena of)** dress reform, by encouraging women to wear the “costume”. The particular women Stanton is **(trying to)** appeal**ing** to are **(women who are)** **on the fence** about wearing their dedication to the women’s suffrage movement **(on the outside)** in the form of the costume.

The audience that you are **intending on reaching** heavily impacts the tone that you use. **For Douglass, his audience is members of his own community. These people presumably already respect and trust him**. His tone throughout this **speech** could be described as fairly logical. He makes a point and then rationalizes it. Through this tone he **(makes an)** appeal**s** to logos, the rational part of his audience.

Douglass’s tone is shown not only in what he says but **also** how he says it. Throughout “Why I Became a Women’s Rights Man”, Douglass’s diction establishes a strong credibility. Throughout the piece he uses language **(and phrases)** like “observing”, “rational basis”, and “reasoning” --all things referring back to fact. **Without actually giving his credentials and proving his authority to speak on the subject, through his language used he proves this**. Another way he proves his credibility is by taking the side of his readers. Douglass states that in a conversation with Stanton, he is initially not a supporter of women’s rights, but is unable to combat her points with strong, logical arguments (Douglass). Whether on not this is actually true, by portraying himself as someone who previously believed what his readers may have believed, he is hoping to appear more credible and relatable to his audience.

While Douglass relies on appeals to logos and ethos throughout this piece, he does make appeals to pathos as well. After establishing his credibility **(in the beginning),** while discussing **while** women should be given the opportunity to represent themselves within the government, Douglass says, “If from the cradle through life the outside world brands a class as unfit for this or that work, the character of the class will come to resemble and conform to the character described”. By using this rich metaphor comparing the treatment of women in society of the times to a cradled, sheltered child, Douglass attempts to paint a picture in his audience's mind. It is said in hopes that the reader will realize that by “protecting” women, they are actually forcing them into a role that is naturally too small for them.

Stanton’s “Our Costume” takes a different tonal approach, as her tone is more dark, and at some points a little patronizing. At many points in the document Stanton is appearing to criticize women that subscribe to the beliefs of the Cult of the True Womanhood. This patronizing tone is shown strongest through her use of metaphor **(throughout the piece).** While addressing the concerns about the costume being not feminine enough, Stanton states, “For parlor dolls, who loll on crimson velvet couches and study attitudes before tall mirrors -- for those who have no part to perform in the great drama of life, for whose heads, hearts and hands, there is no work to do, the drapery is all well” (Stanton). While she does not directly say it, she is comparing the women who disagree with the costume to useless decoration. These people are presumably not in her **audience** so taunting them in this way does not hurt her argument as much.

**Another compelling rhetorical device that her piece uses is her varied syntax. Within this essentially one paragraph piece, Stanton uses anaphora, parenthesis, antithesis, ect. By filling this piece with colorful language and varied syntax, it contributes to her calling the audience to action-- to wear the costume.**

Both Stanton and Douglass make strong appeals to their intended audience**s** **(in order)** to further the progress of women’s rights in the way they think is important. By studying the … used in “Our Costume” and “Why I Became a Women’s Rights Man”, we learn something bigger about the fight for **(suffrage and)** women’s rights **(in general).** **This issue is not a two dimensional one. It affects many different people of many different backgrounds**. Because of this, multiple approaches are needed. We can not determine which was more successful or necessary for overall success in the movement, but we know that they were both used and made an impact, otherwise, we wouldn’t still be studying **(and discussing)** them today. These pieces are still relevant, and their methods of rhetoric can still be applied today to further the fight for gender equality.

Works Cited

Douglass, Frederick, Rayford L Logan.“Why I Became a 'Woman's Rights Man'.” Life and

Times of Fredrick Douglass, Written by Himself.

Stanton, Elizabeth Candy. “Our Costume.” The Lily, 4 Apr. 1851, pp. 31.

Dear Professor Walsh and Professor Fox,

For this first essay I chose to analyze the rhetoric used in Elizabeth Cady Stanton’s “Our Costume” and Frederick Douglass’s “Why I Became a ‘Woman’s Rights Man’”.

I am happy with the claims that I made in this piece, however I’m not quite sure if the evidence selected was the best for my argument. Particularly the evidence used. Also, in some paragraphs, I don’t have verbatim citations but I describe parts of the paper that I am attempting to discuss. I am not sure if this is enough though.

I am a little concerned with the organization of my paper. I starts with an introduction stating my thesis, then goes into the background of each document, and then delves into Douglass’s rhetoric then Stanton’s. I chose to divide the essay this way to avoid it sounding like a compare and contrast essay, however I am afraid that because the piece is so segmented that it might lose the reader’s focus.

Sincerest Regards,

Faith Jones