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*Making Noise, Making News: Suffrage Print Culture and U.S.  
Modernism* by Mary Chapman (review)

Gary Totten

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## BOOK REVIEWS

### *Making Noise, Making News: Suffrage Print Culture and U.S. Modernism.*

By Mary Chapman

Oxford University Press, 2014. xiv + 273 pp. \$77.00 cloth; \$31.95 paper

Reviewed by Gary Totten, University of Nevada, Las Vegas

Mary Chapman's *Making Noise, Making News: Suffrage Print Culture and U.S. Modernism* is situated at the intersections of gender, print culture, sound, and modernist studies. Chapman reads "voice as the primary trope for suffrage print culture" (11) and examines its various iterations. She notes that the voices of suffrage print culture were "multivocal, collective, anonymous, or pseudonymous" (19); they could be self-contradictory, ironic, parodic, and humorous; and they relied on quotation and ventriloquism via other genres. As such, these voices were "more disaggregated" from the bodies and identities of their speakers than we might imagine oratory or debate voices to be; thus, the "models of . . . voice" generated by suffragists serve as important "alternative figurations of political engagement" (20). Chapman's study uncovers the relationship between the voices of suffrage print culture and modernist aesthetics and literary experimentation, illuminating suffragists' contributions to modernist print culture in the early twentieth-century United States up to the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment in 1920.

In the first chapter, Chapman attends to "the centrality of the auditory in modern suffragist discourse" (28), and, in particular, suffragists' strategy of aligning themselves with "both noise and the 'new'" to establish themselves as "representative 'voices' of modern America" (29). Chapman's innovative and wide-ranging sonic analysis covers noise ordinances; gendered representations of oratory and public spaces such as "finance, government, and male

competitive sports” (36); the intersection of mass print culture with such things as the hurdy-gurdy and the barrel organ; and the appearance of suffragist newsies on New York streets in the early twentieth century. Further, Chapman calls our attention to the ways in which typefaces, placards, and newsie bags all became invitations for passersby to “read” the bodies of suffragist newsies (specifically members of the Progressive Women Suffrage Union) as “signs” of the “modern suffrage subject position” (45). Such discourse, Chapman argues, inaugurated not only a distinctly modern US suffrage campaign but also new modes by which women could participate in the public sphere, both literally in the streets and in print culture.

Chapman takes up the issue of “voicelessness” in her examination of silence as a powerful rhetorical strategy in chapter two. She examines tactics women used to avoid censure for inserting themselves into masculine and vocal public spaces; for example, tableaux, “voiceless speeches,” and textual banners carried by “silent sentinels” (56–57). Chapman views such rhetorical gestures as important forms of participation in the public sphere and, indeed, as forms of writing expressing women’s viewpoints and creating a “counterpublic in which to express their political concerns” (57). These rhetorical acts emphasize the body as text; indeed, the tableaux vivants illustrate this idea since tableaux depended on the sentimental notion that “the silent immobile body was a legible and moving text” (65). Suffrage tableaux of important women from history demonstrate how modern suffragists utilized “the radical rhetorical possibilities implicit in traditional femininity while evading proscriptions of women public speakers” (67). In another strategic incorporation of gendered space into their political agenda, suffragists also staged “voiceless speeches” (in which silent women displayed a suffragist speech written in bold letters on a sequence of cards) in places such as shop windows, generally associated with the acceptable feminine activity of shopping. Women picketing with suffragist banners as “silent sentinels” appeared in more masculine spaces, such as in front of the White House. Chapman notes how “the arrests and forcible feeding of pickets turned silent suffragist bodies into melodramatic victims of state brutality,” and the “wasting bodies” of hunger-striking pickets made for particularly dramatic and effective tableaux (84). Chapman convincingly demonstrates how suffragists used women’s bodies as texts to establish women’s “voice” in the public sphere, but then deferred attention to the “silent disembodied texts” of banners and tableaux (84). Through such subversive strategies, women were able to challenge the physical differences that allowed the public to rationalize women’s disenfranchisement.

In the third and fourth chapters, Chapman contrasts the voices and careers of two important women poets—Alice Duer Miller, author of a popular *New York Tribune* suffrage poetry column beginning in 1914, and Marianne Moore, the important modernist poet. Chapman considers these writers' citational strategies, specifically their practices of quotation and ventriloquism. Miller, for example, quoted verbatim from antisuffragist legislators, parodied canonical poetry, and ventriloquized antisuffragist sentiments in her poetry. Chapman finds that these strategies anticipate modernist poetry's citational nature. Most interesting and even surprising among Chapman's conclusions is that Moore's quotational tactics were influenced just as much by the citation of modernist suffragist poets as by avant-garde aesthetics. Chapman's analysis not only introduces us to the important modern suffragist voice of Miller but, in uncovering Moore's suffragist connections, also allows us to consider Moore's modernist aesthetics in new and productive contexts.

Chapter five introduces conversation as a trope of "significant political value" (147)—one that reflected new social networks and forms of community used by suffragist women and texts to promote their political message. Chapman provides a fascinating discussion of tropes and cultural innovations, demonstrating the democratic impetus related to conversation. She considers how community and conversation were promoted by women's participation in new collectives: "as members of unions, assembly districts, political parties, or suffrage organizations; as college alumnae; or even as citizens" (148). She observes how a shift toward a dialogic focus in suffrage fiction was inspired by new technologies, such as the telephone, and she describes how coauthored and serialized novels from the period contributed to conversation and deliberation about the suffrage issue in the public sphere. The "composite authorship, generic heterogeneity, and serial publication" of these works in popular middlebrow periodicals fostered dialogue between the works' authors, genres, and readers (165), and thus promoted a "deliberative democracy" and "engaged citizenship" (173).

Chapter six considers the experience of women of color in relation to the book's themes, specifically the case of Edith Eaton/Sui Sin Far. By examining Chinese American responses to US suffragist discourse, Chapman demonstrates the racist and classist limitations of such discourse. She considers Eaton's writing that seems critical of the suffrage effort, noting that some critics find Eaton's work conservative (domestic) rather than political. Chapman points out that Eaton's work reveals the "quieter, more private and more domestic" (180) aspects of her Chinese reform ideals, which, although still feminist, were distinct from the US suffragists. Chapman helpfully demonstrates how Eaton's

Chinese reform discourse and her apparent reaction against what she perceived as the antidomesticity of suffragist discourse allowed her to connect the political with the personal and the domestic. Chapman's reading approaches what we might deem the problematic aspects of Eaton's work in new and productive ways. This discussion of a woman of color in a study largely focused on white women's texts and strategies is most welcome, and also raises the question of how other groups of women of color, such as the African American suffrage and Black Women's Club Movements, and individuals such as Anna Simms Banks, Mary Church Terrell, Ida B. Wells, or Colored Women's League president Helen Cook, among others, might have used their voices in innovative and strategic ways to make "noise" in this new landscape of modernist print culture and political action (although Chapman points out in the introduction that white women would not have been subject to the same "degree of insult" in public as black women [7], leaving journalism and essays as more viable forms of expression for black women [8]).

In the Coda, Chapman takes up Gertrude Stein's avant-garde opera about suffrage icon Susan B. Anthony, *The Mother of Us All*, as a text that attends to voice (formally and politically) in ways that are similar to the other texts Chapman has examined. Chapman views Stein as concerned about both literary and political forms of "citizenship," and she argues that the text underscores that "true citizenship" can be achieved only by both speaking and listening (209). As Chapman herself notes in this concluding section, an examination of Stein's text, which attends to both aesthetics and politics, is a fitting end to the study (211), and a cogent reminder of the "shared origins" and "experiments with voice" (224) of suffrage discourse and literary modernism that Chapman has so successfully established.

Readers of *The Edith Wharton Review* will be aware of both Edith Wharton's opposition to women's suffrage and her critique of the limitations that her society placed upon women. Given her fraught relationship with gender issues, connections between *Making Noise*, *Making News* and Wharton's work might seem unlikely. However, Wharton was interested in women's ability to control the representation and visibility of their bodies in public, masculine spaces, and thus the tactics and strategies that Chapman uncovers in relation to suffragist discourse can illuminate Wharton's oeuvre. Most obviously, Chapman's examination of suffrage tableaux invites comparison with the tableaux vivants scene in *The House of Mirth*, where, like suffrage tableaux, Lily Bart does not actually express herself verbally but, in Chapman's terms, she nonetheless "voice[s] an appeal" (59). Criticism on Lily's

tableau notes her inscription within oppressive gendered scripts but also her resistance to such scripts, and Chapman's explanation of how tableaux provide "forms of dissent" (82) in the suffrage movement perhaps allows us to imagine new contexts for Lily's resistance. Lily's acts of symbolic and literal "writing" in her tableau also recall the ways in which suffrage tableaux taught audiences how to read and write the body as a text (65). Suffrage tableaux relied on traditional femininity's rhetorical possibilities while keeping in mind restrictions on women as public speakers, and Lily Bart as objet d'art performs a similar rhetorical function. Further, the message of her tableau is both continuous with traditional femininity and, like the silent suffragist "sentinels" in shop windows and on street corners, also subverts such gender norms. These are just some applications to Wharton's work, and scholars will find fruitful connections between other early twentieth-century US women writers and the issues of voice, modern print culture, and women's counter-publics that Chapman raises.

GARY TOTTEN is Professor and Chair of the Department of English at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, and Editor-in-Chief of the journal MELUS: Multi-Ethnic Literature of the United States. He is the author of *African American Travel Narratives from Abroad: Mobility and Cultural Work in the Age of Jim Crow*, coeditor of *Politics, Identity, and Mobility in Travel Writing*, and editor of *Memorial Boxes and Guarded Interiors: Edith Wharton and Material Culture*. His articles on late nineteenth- and twentieth-century US literature, multi-ethnic literature, and travel writing have appeared in journals and essay collections.

*Anglo-American Travelers and the Hotel Experience in Nineteenth-Century Literature: Nation, Hospitality, Travel Writing*

Edited by Monika M. Elbert and Susanne Schmid

Routledge, 2017. 298 pp. \$27.48 paper

Reviewed by H. J. E. Champion, Université Bordeaux Montaigne and The University of Eastern Finland

In 1794 the City Hotel in New York opened its doors to guests for the very first time (130). Considered among the foremost of the grand hotels, its