The Rhetorical Goddess: A Feminist Perspective on Women in Magic

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ABSTRACT
Although female magicians have existed since the rise of entertainment magic, women have faced difficulty in entering the "fraternity" of the magic community. As an art form largely based around persuasion, it is useful to study the performance of magic as a text. It is additionally useful to study female magicians within this context of rhetoric. Not only will examining the rhetoric of female magicians provide insights on the rhetoric of women in this unique arena, but also of women in a historically gendered and underrepresented field. Research into this area may disclose other details regarding the communicative differences between women and men and how communication is adapted within a gendered communication paradigm.

KEYWORDS
women in magic, rhetoric, magic history, communication

"Woman is magic; man performs magic."
-- Setton, 2009

INTRODUCTION

She is blindfolded, sawed, set on fire, flipped, vanished, mutilated, shot, objectified, paraded and stuffed into boxes. She moves with the grace of a trained dancer, and her stunning costume exudes the elegance and mystery of an ancient, forgotten goddess. She *is* a goddess of sorts—making cards, plump rabbits and ivory doves, vivid silks and flowers, and even grand lions appear from somewhere and nowhere in the night air of the smoky-lit stage. She can read minds or hypnotize a mortal into thinking they are in love, or a fool, or both. She can slip out of a straightjacket backwards, sideways, and underwater every time. She is a goddess because she defies the laws of death—catching a bullet in her teeth or holding her breath for what seems like an eternity. She knows all of the tricks of the ancients, but is satisfied to slip in and out of the audiences' lives to thunderous rounds of applause. The audience came to see her tonight, and the applause is hers alone. She is not the assistant—she is the magician.

Though female magicians have existed since the rise of entertainment magic, women have faced difficulty in entering the "fraternity" of the magic community. No woman has achieved the widespread fame and admiration of their male counterparts, Robert-Houdin or Houdini. They have been swept under the magic carpet of patriarchal history. Today, though the number of female magicians has greatly increased, they are no less overshadowed by their male equivalents. Maria Ibanez, the 2007-2008 president of The Society of American Magicians (SAM), estimates that only 10-15 percent of their approximately 7,000 members are female (Summer, 2008). One explanation for this trend may be gender oppression combined with societal expectations for women, which have historically relegated women in magic to the role of the "lovely assistant" and likely dissuaded females from pursuing magic.

As an art form largely based around persuasion, it is useful to study the performance of magic as a text. It is additionally useful to study female magicians within this context of rhetoric. In this paper, we will utilize a feminist-rhetorical perspective, based on the work of Foss (1996) and Foss and Griffin (1992), to examine the gendered power relations in magic. Not only will examining the rhetoric of female magicians provide insights on the rhetoric of women in this unique arena, but also of women in a historically gendered and underrepresented field. As such, our criticism supplements, rather than supplants, non-rhetorical feminist perspectives on this issue. Research into this area may disclose other details regarding the communicative differences between women and men and how communication is adapted within a gendered communication paradigm.

THE RHETORICAL NATURE OF MAGIC

Humans generally have a natural tendency to hope for, and believe in, unlikely or intangible things, such as the mystical and the supernatural, undoubtedly because we strive to explain the unexplainable as well as long for a sense of wonder. Imagination is the vehicle that propels this human inclination toward "magic." Magic feeds the human need for wonderment, as well as our fascination with mysticism. Using various tricks and illusions, magicians not only entertain, but also reinforce the metaphor that the impossible is achievable if the spectator simply believes – or suspends their disbelief (Coleridge, 1817). A successful magic act appeals to everyone, from the wonder-seeking individual to the most cynical skeptic. The goal of the magician is to captivate, suspend disbelief among the diversity of audience members, and keep the audience asking "How did s/he do that?" Magicians must not only amaze, but also convince audience members from wide-ranging educational and personal backgrounds that they just witnessed something previously impossible. In this way, magicians are master rhetors. They must use an arsenal of persuasion techniques to purposefully direct the audience's attention away from the trick and toward the illusion. For a magician, the rhetorical goal is to *persuade* the audience to "suspend disbelief" and *convince* them that they witnessed something impossible become possible. What distinguishes magic from psychics, the occult and other forms of "magic" is the performance and audience. The audience attends a magic performance for solely entertainment purposes. They do not necessarily "believe" in the magic as a religious or spiritual outlet, rather, they wish to be amazed and entertained. Even when the lines between "real" magic and entertainment magic are blurred, what spectators experience is still a performance text – a text that can be examined. According to Covino (1992), magic is "the process of inducing belief and creating community with reference to the dynamics of a rhetorical situation" (p. 2). In the rhetorical situation of an entertainment performance—either on stage or up close—the main medium for this "social act" is persuasive discourse, or rhetoric (Covino, 1992, p. 3). The magician "induces" the audience to "suspend disbelief" and the result is entertainment by way of amazement. For magicians, persuasion works on two levels. First, magicians must tailor their communication and message to different audience members. Second, magicians must create a sense of mystery and wonder. To achieve these goals, magicians cannot rely solely on language, but rather, must incorporate a variety of existing symbols (such as music, mirrors, costume, etc.) and rhetorical tools including Aristotle's traditional rhetorical proofs (*pathos*, *ethos*, *logos*). The magician must be credible in order to be believed (*ethos*), evidence of the magic must be logical or motivated (*logos*), and the emotions evoked during the process must create a sense of awe and a desire for magic to occur (*pathos*). These appeals function differently but collaboratively, and different audiences are convinced by different appeals. In order to appeal to the widest audience possible, magicians must try to incorporate all three in a variety of ways.

A magic act can be rhetorically "read" or analyzed in the same fashion as any other rhetorical text. Magic, as a text, can be defined as, "any performance in which an individual employs persuasive means to convince an audience that something 'magical' has occurred and that seemingly impossible has become possible" (Covino, 1992). Using the word "performance" excludes all other special effects that are recorded without a present and engaged audience. Magic requires an audience in order to be considered a text for rhetorical analysis. Without a live audience, magic can be discredited to technology. Successful magic requires the audience's suspension of disbelief and belief in the reality of magic. Success of the magic is measured by the degree in which the audience accepts the magician's rhetoric.

Rhetorical scholars should look for the magician's rhetorical technique and technical elements, but deeper than that, delve for the metaphor and meanings behind the act. Traditional rhetorical theory can be applied to study magic in many ways. The symbols of magic such as the rabbit, top hat, magicians' use of directed attention, clothing, use of assistants, or music could be scrutinized for meaning. Overall, rhetorical scholars should examine not only the "magical" means of persuasion, but also how that persuasion gives the magician figurative and literal "power" over the audience. In particular, a rhetorical investigation can help us to see how meaning is derived from magical performances by women. As such, we aim to suggest that the rhetorical, albeit persuasive, performances of female magicians is a unique way to view women's contributions to the magical arts. In this paper, we draw upon interviews with female magicians, secondary sources, and performances to better understand the rhetorical contributions of women in magic. After a brief examination of some historical implications, we engage in a rhetorical analysis of the performance of female magicians in order to reveal important insight into their power and crucial participation in the art of magic.

HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL EXPECTATIONS OF WOMEN IN MAGIC

While it is important to study magic rhetorically, apart from the resources outlined above, specific research on the rhetoric of female magicians and analysis of live performances is almost non-existent. Although women have performed magic for hundreds of years, their history and presence in the entertainment industry still remains relatively unexplored. This is not a novel trend for women in the entertainment industry. Most academic studies on women as entertainers are quite recent and provide historical, performance studies-based, cultural, sociological, and/or psychological insights into women's performances (e.g., Hegarty, 1998; Latham, 1997; Nally, 2009; Ross, 2000; Sachdeva, 2000; Sullivan, 2008; Tilburg, 2007). To study the rhetoric of female magicians, we must consider the historical and cultural, although these areas alone explain or examine the persuasion methodology of female magicians. Rather, these areas lend a framework of clues as to *why* female magicians use certain rhetoric to persuade audiences to suspend disbelief.

From a historical perspective, women in western societies were universally associated with the dark arts or "witchcraft" (Nardi, 1988, p. 760). Throughout the 15th, 16th, and 17th centuries, women had little political or legal power and were often socially isolated. Women were also condemned by religious traditions as the culprits for carnality and being susceptible to demons and evil (Russell, 1980). Within this context, any women daring enough to perform magic tricks would be considered an incalculable threat and consequently drowned or burned at the stake. As magic began to move from street conjuring to the theatre in the 18th and 19th centuries, illusions became more elaborate, thus requiring assistants. These assistants were "almost always a (more powerless) woman or child" being subjected to the magic of "a (more powerful) male magician" (Nardi, 1988, p.762). According to Mangan (2007), this notion of power-over, "lies at the very heart of the magic act: the performance of the magician constitutes a theatrical display of power and control—over the natural world, over the very laws of Nature themselves, which the rational world since the Enlightenment had understood to underlie all being" (p. 157). As magic gained popularity as a form of entertainment in the early 19th century, women interestingly found success in roles as psychics or mediums. This new role in "spiritualism" offered women their first opportunity to compete with their male counterparts for the spotlight. As a result, spiritualism seemed to introduce a "gender-agenda" (Mangan, 2007, p. 162) that offered a somewhat equal playing field in terms of power relations between men and women spiritualists, fakirs, and mentalist performers

Compared to spiritualism, the escapology acts of Harry Houdini and similar magicians were considered more masculine due to the great physical prowess and what Sir Conan Doyle called, "the essential masculine quality of courage" (Mangan, 2007, p. 162). The Victorian and Edwardian stereotype of women being more spiritual than men played to the favor of mediums such as the Fox sisters, Florence Cooke, and Houdini's nemesis, Mina Crandon (Mangan, 2007, p. 162). Mangan (2007) suggests that the spiritualist phenomena of the early 19th century, which Harry Houdini so detested, are symbolic of a feminine magical power with which Houdini was so uncomfortable.

The character and persona of Houdini is important to the establishment of the "masculine" standard in magic. Houdini was seen as the embodiment of masculinity—the epitome of strength and cunning. Houdini would display his semi-naked, muscular body during his feats to illustrate no hidden keys. In essence, Houdini was performing masculinity, yet, unlike the female assistants subjected to the same magic torture, Houdini played *both* the victim and the victor in his feats of escape—mostly the latter, given the degree to which his acts were lauded (Mangan, 2007, p. 153). Kasson (2001) maintains that Houdini exemplified "risk and control, helplessness and mastery…he dramatized the ability of a lone figure to triumph over

the most formidable restraints and the most implacable foes…" and "…the masculine power he embodied was a claim of invincibility" (p. 76). Houdini is certainly an iconic figure—setting the standard for magic masculinity in popular culture and the magic entertainment industry (Mangan, 2007, p. 153).

Although Houdini set the masculine cultural standard, some women found success individually as spiritualists or through their husband's magic act. Adelaide Herrmann was perhaps the first female performer to achieve widespread fame in her own right as a female magician. Adelaide was married to Alexander Herrmann, a great magician of the early 1900s. Following her husband's sudden death, she carried on his Vaudeville magic show for the next 30 years (Larsen & Noyes, 2008; Nardi, 1988, p. 763). At first, she worked with her husband's nephew, Leon Herrmann, but due to their clashing personalities, she carried on by herself—earning individual fame (Dawes, 1979).

Besides being historically overlooked, women in magic throughout the 19th and 20th centuries have been overlooked by their fellow magicians. Many "classic" books and theories of conjuring and showmanship either bypass discussion of gender or merely address the issue of female assistants. For example, Née Clementine de Vere performed magnificent illusions in Belgium under the stage name, Ionia (Greene, 2011). Another way we can see how women have received scant historical attention is by reviewing important magic books. In the well-known book, *Magic and Showmanship: A Handbook for Conjurers*, Nelms (1969) devotes an entire chapter to "making the most of assistants," and continuously refers to these assistants solely as "she" and "her." Nelms suggests that the magician find the right "girl" to fit his ideal characterization.

Furthermore, regardless of culture, research shows that "women who fall short of the cultural ideals of femininity, thinness, proportion and youth are often judged more harshly and negatively than men who do not meet the cultural benchmark" (Wood, 1999). American culture's emphasis on being beautiful, young and thin is constantly reinforced and advanced through magazines, television, advertising, and the social media, among other media. Women in entertainment are pressured to reflect the cultural standards of beauty, and in doing so, they deflect the reality of individual beauty and create a false, unattainable standard of beauty for other women.

These beauty expectations also seem to exist in the magic industry. Some stereotypes of youth and beauty existed in magic even before the predominance of many culturally-shaping media, such as television. Fitzkee's *Showmanship for Magicians* (1943) is found in the library of almost every modern magician. In one chapter, Fitzkee emphasizes the importance of creating rhythm, youth, and sex appeal in magic acts. Just as television is beginning to gain popularity in the American home,

Fitzkee's recommendations for female assistants foreshadow gender expectations for female magicians and reflect the larger gender expectations of society.

Television brought the stage to the screen and with it, a new consciousness of appearance and a new, beautiful face to magic. Television not only changed the way magic is performed, but created the "beautiful assistant" stereotype. The documentary, *Women in Boxes* (Larsen & Noyes, 2008), investigates the historical relationship between magicians and their female assistants by interviewing the "assistants" of a number of well-known magicians of the modern television era. When asked how one becomes a magician's assistant, Irene Larsen, co-founder of the Magic Castle and a long-time fixture in the magic community, replied, "A boy meets a girl." Many of the assistants interviewed said that they "fell in love" with the magician, and thus, fell into the role of the assistant. Many of the women told of the excruciating physical demands and risks of the illusions, which carried serious risks of injury or death. In addition to performing "90% of the work" involved in the magic act, these women juggled their marriage, children, and travel, and were expected to show up for work beautiful every night. It is understood that the "best assistants" do not steal the spotlight, but rather, as Teller, of the magic duo Penn and Teller describes, "fade into the background to make the trick more miraculous" (Larsen, B. et al. & Noyes, P. et al., 2008). Some assistants, dissatisfied in the background, make attempts to foray into the foreground. After her marriage to magician James Dimmare ended, Luna Shimada forged a solo career. However, her performance as an androgynous character was commercially unsuccessful which attests to the sexist expectations of the profession (Larsen, B. et al. & Noyes, P. et al., 2008). As Gay Blackstone, assistant and wife to magician Harry Blackstone, Jr., said, "Magic in its purest form is sexist—that's part of its charm" (Larsen, B. et al. & Noyes, P. et al., 2008).

Sexism, combined with a strange societal fascination with the mutilation and endangerment of women, commodifies the victimization of women in society and perpetuates the notion of women as weak and vulnerable. Blaire Larsen, a producer of *Women in Boxes*, married into magic—her husband is related to Irene Larsen. Blaire describes her frustration and motivation for pursuing the creation of *Women in Boxes*:

> I would be dragged to these shows and I would become so enraged when I watched the assistants come out in these skimpy outfits and be cut in half and stabbed….And I thought this is the most sexist thing I'd ever seen….They're playing these victims on stage yet they ended up being the brains behind the magic—the actual magician. (qtd. in DiMeo, 2008)

Larsen found that the assistants were executing most of the illusions, while the magician accepted the credit and applause. *Women in Boxes* gives voice to these

women, who for years were denied credit by the audience; however, it is particularly troubling that the documentary showcases and celebrates the work of women as *assistants*, not as magicians.

In addition to mutilation and victimization on stage, audiences share a chauvinist fascination with “vanishing women.” Beckman (2003) describes this “idea of women as vanishing beings,” which descends from the Victorian “tradition of the fatally elusive woman…female[s] who are fantasized as going away, usually in spectacular ways” (p. 5). Beckman cites Eve in *Paradise Lost*, Spenser’s *Faerie Queen*, and Keat’s “Belle Dame sans Merci” as examples of this literary tradition (p. 5). In magic, the use of a vanishing lady is socially symbolic. She initially possesses a body, which is made to vanish by the magician. Although the body returns in the end, the fate of the woman rests entirely at the hands of the male magician. Within culture, the vanishing woman “makes visible, then resists, a certain misogynist desire to make women go away” and “serves as a prop for the very patriarchal violence she appears to withstand” (Beckman, 2003, p. 7). This is not to say that the magician’s assistant *never* resists patriarchal violence, but that the audience should be aware of the assistant’s ability “to evoke the bodies of ‘others’ through certain forms of ‘suggestion’ such as the use of ‘oriental’ costumes or names” (p. 7). “Vanishing Lady” tricks became explosively popular among magicians in the 1880s (p. 47). Perhaps the most vivid and gruesome vanishing lady illusion appears in Melies’ 1896 silent film, *The Vanishing Lady*. In the film, Melies makes one alteration to the illusion. He makes his assistant Mademoiselle Patrice disappear under a cloth and when he lifts the cloth again, a charred skeleton sits in Patrice’s place (Beckman, 2003, p. 63). This horrific image, perpetuated today in some modern horror films, is arguably symbolic of a cultural desire to incinerate, remove or silence something feminine. . At a time when women were increasingly demanding to be heard, magic was increasingly trying to stifle their voice by making them vanish.

CONTEMPORARY GENDER EXPECTATIONS

On the modern magic stage, women—now as the stars of the show—continue to be mutilated and vanished. Some female magicians use assistants and some still take on the role of the assistant and allow the trick to be performed on them. Are these women making progress for all women in magic, or do they have no choice but to adhere to sexist, cultural traditions of the entertainment industry? This is a difficult, if not impossible, question to answer; however, magicians like Connie Boyd are award-winning performers who now star and produce shows featuring entirely all-women performers (Boyd, 2014). And, despite the few examples we now have of female magicians center-stage, Erika Larsen, a renowned female magician in her own right, claims that there are 30 to 40 female professional magicians in the world, as opposed to 3,000 to 4,000 males, because "Magic is a man's club; it's male-dominated, so women often don't get into it" (Griest, 1995).

Nardi (1988) also explored possible sociological and social-psychological gender implications of the magic entertainment industry, both historically and in contemporary society. Nardi argues that the social organization of magic—often referred to as the "fraternity of magi"—lends itself to patriarchal expectations (p. 764). Since men are the historical gatekeepers of the magic entertainment industry, women may face more difficulty accessing mentors, references, auditions, and contacts. Nardi suggests that with the generally masculine image promoted in the magic community and few female role models, women and girls would be less likely to take up magic as a hobby or career (p. 764). Nardi also points to gender socialization in childhood as a possible deterrent for girls to enter magic. Magic is seen as an "aggressive, competitive form" involving challenges and winning at the expense of others" and involves power and control over others (p. 766). American culture socializes boys to communicate dominance and competitive manipulation of others through their play activities which are found to involve more structure, complexity, and face-to-face confrontation (p. 765). Girls, on the other hand, are socialized to communicate for relational creation and maintenance (p. 765). Additionally, magic is "instrumental"—relying on the use of objects such as swords, boxes, wands and other props. In American culture, men are socialized to take on more "instrumental roles" in technical fields, such as math, science, and technology. Females, on the other hand, are socialized to take on more "relational roles" in people-oriented fields, such as nursing and teaching. To attest to the sexist perceptions in the magic community, famous magician Paul Daniels remarked that, "There is a reason there are fewer female magicians – girls give up toys sooner than boys. Around the age of eight they want fashion items. There are women who are starting to see it as a business, but they do tricks straight out of the box. Men are more creative" (Cox, 2013). These differences in socialization may provide some answers as to why women are less inclined to participate in magic; however, these arguments do not take into account the ways women may communicatively excel in magic. In addition to distinct sex socialization, women have a distinct style of communication which may distinguish their communicative performances. Given these differences, the rhetoric of female magicians would differ greatly from the rhetoric of male magicians.

Despite the historical and cultural significance of female magicians, the lack of research on female magicians seems to suggest a sexist bias in magic as well as rhetorical scholarship. The differences between male and female communication, combined with an overall lack of rhetorical analysis of both live magic performance and live performances of women in the entertainment industry, suggests that this is a novel area of interest for both rhetorical, as well as feminist scholars.

A FEMINIST RHETORICAL ANALYSIS

A mainstream feminist lens allows for a number of feminist theories to be considered and provides a foundation for exploring themes of patriarchy within the magic

community. Although there are many types of feminisms, Foss (1996) maintains that most feminists agree on three fundamental principles (p. 166):

1. Women are oppressed by patriarchy.
2. Women's experiences are inherently different from men's.
3. Women's perspectives are not incorporated into our culture.

Foss' (1996) three common principles form the framework for this rhetorical analysis, while standpoint and muted group theory serve as reinforcing principles. Ideally, live magic shows would be used for a rhetorical analysis of this type; however, because access to live shows is limited, the parameters of this rhetorical analysis are limited to videos and interviews. YouTube promotional videos and performances of female magicians were examined for common rhetorical trends of women in magic. Specifically, rhetorical (persuasive) elements, or means by which female magicians "suspend disbelief," were noted and analyzed. These rhetorical elements of magic are similar to the ethos, pathos and logos evoked by other orators and entertainers, but are stylistically distinct to magic entertainment (e.g., dance, music, patter, costume, misdirection, movement, and sex appeal). The routines of nine female magicians were examined for the ways in which these elements, both visual and non-visual (patter), are employed to persuade audience members that something magical has just occurred.

Because of the limited number of clips available, other materials such as websites and interviews of the nine selected magicians were used as secondary texts to the performance clips. All interviews were obtained through external publication or personal communication. Interviews conducted through personal communication were recruited through connections, referrals, and convenience. Personal interviews were obtained from two of the nine female magicians—Jeanette Andrews and Arian Black. This research was done in accordance with the Institutional Review Board (IRB) protocol. The protocol is available from the authors upon request. By focusing on the rhetorical implications of female magicians, we hope to answer these questions:

1. Does the rhetoric of female magicians reflect oppression against women in both the magic community and in relation to larger society?
2. Are the rhetorical techniques employed by female magicians distinct from male magicians?
3. Can the rhetoric of female magicians be a source of empowerment for women?

ANALYSIS

Despite their efforts, many women are still eclipsed in the shadow of their male counterparts. Overshadowed by "magic rockstars," such as Lance Burton, David

Copperfield, David Blaine and Criss Angel, female magicians face incredible difficulty in finding a foothold of popularity in contemporary culture. Within the magic entertainment industry, female magicians vary, however, a few overlapping trends emerged through the analysis of various performances of female magicians—sex appeal, dance-oriented performance, and unique use (or non-use) of character and patter.

Sex Appeal

Sex appeal is not a new concept in the rhetoric of magic; male magicians have long relied on the beauty and sex appeal of their assistants. The difference however, lies in the fact that male magicians themselves, are not held to the same beauty standards as their assistants or female magicians. Many male magicians have continued successful careers in magic performance into old age. Male magicians are expected to be well-groomed, but are not judged as staunchly on their looks. With the exception of magicians such as Criss Angel and Siegfried and Roy, whose exposed skin is part of their "character," or David Blaine, who wears little clothing in some of his stunt magic, few are expected to reveal skin, be in top physical shape, or exude masculine sex appeal. Many male magicians don tuxedos or suits, and let the assistant bring a "sex appeal" factor to the magic. As Penn, the famous "assistant" of the duo Penn and Teller jokingly said, "Magicians are ugly…it helps to have an attractive, healthy-looking woman next to you" (Larsen et. al, 2008). So, this begs the question: Are women in magic generally expected to be youthful, fit, and "healthy" to counterbalance their male counterparts?

The beauty ideal of the magic industry, which stems from the overall entrainment industry's standard, perpetuates the western patriarchal ideology that women are more highly valued for their looks than their talents. As Wolf (1991) points out in the iconic feminist book, *The Beauty Myth*, before women entered fully into the workforce, there was a class of women paid for their beauty—dancers, entertainers, escorts, models, etc. (p. 27). Wolf also argues that as women's status and presence has grown, so too has the value assigned to these "display professions" (p. 27). Wolf goes on to mention that many professions into which women are making strides today—"in so far as the women in them are concerned"—are rapidly reclassified as "display professions." Despite anti-discrimination laws, this unspoken beauty standard is suppressing women in many professions. But does the appeal of sex necessarily stem into all entertainment arenas, including magic? Of the nine female magicians examined for this research, six used sex appeal of some kind in their rhetorical, albeit magical, repertoire.

"Scarlett the Deceiver" is only 23 years old. Scarlett had what many entertainers would call a "lucky break." When magician Jon Andrew needed a new assistant, he recruited Scarlett. Andrew took it upon himself to mentor Scarlett and the duo moved to Las Vegas, where Scarlett auditioned for producer David Saxe, the brother

of Melinda, First Lady of Magic. Saxe was looking for the "next Melinda" and thought Scarlett's stage presence and sex appeal was reminiscent of his sister's (Fink, 2008). A promotional YouTube clip for Scarlett's now-defunct family-friendly show, *Scarlett, Princess of Magic*, shows Scarlett, a gorgeous redhead, in a short sequined costume. Though she is not "thin" by Nelms' (1969) definition, she is healthy and curvy—a refreshing feminist departure from the standard definition of beauty in entertainment industries. Scarlett's red hair, however, makes her sex appeal "exotic," a patriarchal perception of the "magical" which is consistent in other female magicians. This trend requires that the female magician be either beautiful by entertainment standards (slim, blonde, elegant) or exotic (distinguished and/or a-typical features). In a YouTube clip of Scarlett's performance on the television show, *Masters of Illusion*, Scarlett dons this same red sequin ensemble, while her two assistants (both female) wear sexy, short Wizard of Oz costumes. Still, the levitation routine she performs is by all means family-friendly—she chooses a young girl from the audience and the assistants' skirts fall to the knee. Interestingly, Scarlett's family-friendly show was not renewed and Scarlett's new show, *Scarlett and Her Seductive Ladies of Magic*, is billed as featuring topless assistants. This deliberate shift into a more mature audience would appear to be an attempt for Scarlett to seek a frontier in a new audience base. While there were no video clips to compare the two shows, the promotional video shows Scarlett performing the same illusions as her family friendly show—perhaps now just with the topless assistants? It appears that Scarlett herself does not appear topless. Weatherford (2009) reviewed Scarlett's new show. While there were no video clips available for this news show, based on prior performances, Weatherford's review is consistent with the Scarlett's other performance videos. Weatherford describes this new adult version of the show:

> The show itself could slide as long as it met the minimum daily requirements: Here, a cute magician, a little dog dressed as Elvis and two sets of bare breasts (the Seductive Ladies, who go topless to give viewers choice between "natural" or "implants," but make for some lopsided staging). (p. 1)

Weatherford (2009) goes on to describe Scarlett's "stiff mannerisms," and the lack of rapport and storytelling (aside from loving "handsome men") (p. 1). From this description it seems that Scarlett does not wish to be seen as a performer with a character and talent, but rather, as a mechanistic "sex" object going through the motions. Scarlett is not viewed as the main attraction; rather, the "breasts" take center stage. Without character or story development, Scarlett cannot adequately connect with the audience. Going through the motions of an illusion does not mean that she adequately evokes *ethos*, *pathos*, and *logos*. Her credibility is neither initially present nor derived through her performance—it is tragically ignored amid the flashes of leg and one-liners seemingly delivered without affect. Hypothetically, pathos could be channeled if Scarlett used sex appeal in her routine as a means to

trigger sexual energy. But according to Weatherford's description, this is also missing. *Logos* is left to be assumed by the audience, though without ethos and pathos, the illusions are uninspiring. As a performer, Scarlett is rhetorically lackluster. Weatherford concludes that while her rhetorical techniques have *improved* since her family-friendly show, this topless-version is adequate: "A gender-blind female magician who doesn't flash a lot of leg is an interesting concept. But until that day, sex appeal at least livens up an almost-funny bit with Scarlett in a lab coat, and a silent segment with the familiar 'dancing hanky'" (p. 2). Weatherford acknowledges the lack of impressions that Scarlett's rhetoric makes. What is troubling about Weatherford's review of Scarlett's show is that while choicely deriding her rhetorical performance, he excuses her lack of skill for the sake of the "sex appeal," which saves the show. In Scarlett's case, it seems that rhetorically speaking, sex appeal has overtaken talent, a sentiment that is in agreement with this paper's viewpoint of Scarlett's rhetoric.

Scarlett is by no means the only female magician to employ sex appeal. "Magic Babe" Ning, an internationally recognized and award-winning magician from Singapore, is another example of a female magician using sex appeal to rise to fame. The very moniker, "Magic Babe," implies that Ning is not only a magician, but an attractive, sexy one. Her website describes her as "the sexiest woman in magic" ('Magic Babe' Ning, 2010). In a YouTube clip featuring one of Ning's escape performances, she initially appears in a black motorcycle jacket, zipped all the way up as she announces the feat she is about to accomplish—"the biggest challenge" of her career—an escape from an impalement cage (Conceptmagic, 2008). She takes off her jacket revealing a black sequined, backless halter top that reveal a bit of her midriff. A sexy, skintight, revealing wardrobe is Ning's signature style. As she enters the cage, she is locked into place by her magic partner, JC Sum, and another male. Her face reveals stress, as if the bondage she is enduring is against her will. The box is clear and the audience can see Ning wrestle to escape the fate of impalement in by picking the locks on her body with a paper clip. She finally emerges victorious from the death box, right as the spike drive down, almost "killing" her. The drama and suspense at Ning's impending doom is consistent with the societal/patriarchal fascination with female mutilation. What makes Ning's act intense is the possibility that this woman may be impaled by spikes. Her writhing around in bondage further adheres to the patriarchal notion of "power over"—Ning is the one fighting for her life, while her partner, JC Sum, watches from outside. The audience knows virtually nothing about Ning's character except that she is scantily dressed and is "sexy." Ning is seen as a sexual object in a glass box in danger for her life, not as the talented magician that she is. Despite her triumph and immense talent in this performance, she is still recognized as being the "sexiest woman in magic," not the "most talented magician." In 2009, Ning won the "Most Original Female Illusionist" Merlin Award—the highest esteemed award for a female magician; yet, one cannot help but

wonder whether it is her "sexiness" that makes her performance and rhetoric original or her death-defying feats?

Similar to Ning, Katalin, the 2009 winner of the "Best Cabaret Magician" at the World Magic Awards, performs in form-fitting attire—often costumes, such as a sailor uniform. In her performance at the World Magic Awards, Katalin performed in a "sexy magician's tuxedo"—hot pink sleeveless tuxedo shirt, a sleeveless rhinestone jacket and leotard. In a swift swoop of two giant fans, she changes in to a second outfit—a white cabaret corseted leotard. She performs all of her illusions in heels.

Sex appeal, of which society has pressured females to conform, is innately attached to excess and glamour of Las Vegas. Arian Black, another Vegas-based magician, is a beautiful, distinguished blonde from Canada. She performs in form-fitting costumes which reveal her toned mid-drift. Arian's website features promotional photos of her semi-clothed with magical props and animals. In this way, Arian accentuates her conformity with entertainment beauty standards, while also adding the "exotic," by posing with animals like tigers, birds, and snakes. Black, who uses sex appeal as both a character and style, said:

> Sex sells. I've found it to be very commercial. There's elements of sex that women can portray and men can't….It's okay for two women to be on stage and flirting with each other, but it's not socially acceptable for men to be flirting with each other...It's socially acceptable and I use it to my advantage. If I didn't live in Las Vegas, I probably wouldn't use it. But I do live in Vegas, so I do. (Black, 2009)

While many "sex positive" feminists feel that this kind of double standard can be empowering for women, the greater social implications derived through this use of rhetoric can also be problematic. Levy (2005) describes women, such as Scarlett, Ning, Katalin and Black, who make sex objects of other women and themselves, as "female chauvinist pigs" (p. 4). She describes this term ironically:

> She is post-feminist. She is funny. She *gets it*. She doesn't mind cartoonish stereotypes of female sexuality, and she doesn't mind a cartoonishly macho response to them….Why worry about *disgusting* or *degrading* when you could be giving—or getting—a lap dance yourself? Why try to beat them when you can join them? (p. 93)

Levy's (2005) main argument is that American culture has created and constantly reiterates a stereotype of female sexuality and "sexiness" that proves that women are somehow "sexually empowered and liberated" (p. 197). Levy cautions that this illusion of empowerment is no more than a disguised script for sexual behavior

according to male standards. Women are "faking lust" for attention and mistaking human sexuality for a caricature of "sexiness" (p. 198). If you cannot break the stereotype, why not adhere to it? Levy (2005) maintains that the "real female power" lies in the freedom to figure out what women "internally want from sex instead of mimicking whatever popular culture holds up to us as sexy" (p. 200).

That is not to devalue or say that the above-described female magicians use sex appeal as a cheap rhetorical tool. In fact, using sex appeal in their rhetorical repertoire makes their performances much more difficult and strategic. Whereas traditional magicians wear coats which house hidden props for sleight of hand illusions, women wearing very revealing clothing have few options for hidden props and must be more strategic in costuming. The same holds true for tight-fitted clothing. Deliberate fabric choices must be made in order to ensure that women can move quickly in larger stage illusions. Moving quickly and gracefully in high heels is a skill that requires copious practice and an extremely careful shoe selection.

Although Arian Black fits the ideal beauty and sexiness standard, Black believes that sex appeal is not necessarily essential for female magician and even female magicians outside of the beauty standard can exudes similar, if not more, sex appeal:

> Even the girls that I know that are bigger girls, those girls even have a little more sex appeal than I do. They are just so confident in themselves… It's weird, but I'm always impressed. Like Luna [Shimada], she's had 3 kids, and she's not happy with her size right now, but on stage, oh, she has sex appeal. (Black, 2009)

Indeed, not all female magicians use an implicit form of sex appeal in their magic act. Luna Shimada, the daughter of the magician, Shimada, identifies herself as the "Feminine Force of Magic" (Shimada, 2010). In the performance clips on her website, she does not wear anything especially revealing and does not use any sexual references, topless dancers, or sexual imagery. Shimada's style is more exotic and sensuous—a theme that will be explored in later sections. Likewise, Juliana Chen, an accomplished Chinese card manipulating magician, exudes an air of Asian elegance. Though her costumes are not as revealing as Scarlett or Arian's, they are designed to emphasize her Chinese heritage and sensuous "exotic" qualities, using fabrics reminiscent of China.

Suzanne, a magician from Michigan, also does not use overt sex appeal in her routines. She dresses androgynously in suits and button down shirts, wears little makeup, and crops her gray hair short, which makes her appear older than her female contemporaries. In this way, Suzanne is a magician who embraces her age, while highlighting experience and downplaying femininity. Similar to Suzanne, Jeanette Andrews, a talented, young magician from Chicago, sports very

androgynous costumes—often dressing in all black or donning a tuxedo. Although Jeanette is only in her early twenties, she is strongly opposed to the use of sex appeal by female magicians in order to gain success. Jeanette chooses not to follow this route, saying,

> I have completely dedicated my life to this endeavor, and I want to be judged on the effort I put into my work to make it look effortless. I want to be judged for my skill and not as a woman….My quest is to show that women can be respected as human beings and as artists regardless of how you dress and how sexually attractive you are. Woman can be respected as artists in this field and in any other. (Andrews, 2009)

Although not all female magicians use overt sex appeal in their rhetoric, it is clear that the patriarchal definition of beauty as it applies to the entertainment industry carries over into magic in some other respects. Some larger illusions are physically demanding, which requires that magicians—both male and female—be in top physical shape. However, the expectation of fitness should be applied to magicians regardless of gender. Male magicians are able to carry on their magic careers into old age. One of the oldest performing magicians, John Calvert, is in his nineties. Female magicians, however, race a ticking clock. They must appear youthful to keep audiences coming. Countless female magicians "retire" to pursue marriage and/or motherhood—endeavors that prove otherwise difficult to juggle for people working nights and weekends. Arian Black acknowledges this age discrepancy, not only in magic, but also the entertainment industry. She cites it as a motivator for her current push for a television show deal and headlining Vegas show. "Women have a shorter shelf-life than men do…I know that within 10 years, I won't be able to do some of those things" (Black, 2009).

This double standard of attractiveness for female magicians, and female entertainers in general, reflects the larger double standard for women to be "sexy." As Levy (2005) maintains:

> For women and only women, hotness requires projecting a kind of eagerness, offering a promise that any attention you receive for your physicality is welcome. Not one male Olympian has found it necessary to show us his penis in the pages of a magazine. Proving that you are hot, worth of lust, and—necessarily—that you seek to provoke lust is still exclusively women's work. (p. 33)

It seems that while not all female magicians use sex appeal as part of their rhetoric, many who use it are recognized publicly with awards (such as the prestigious Merlin award mentioned above) and larger public audiences (television and Vegas shows). That is not to say that women who use sex appeal are better magicians by

any means, but rather, that they are "allowed" to appear in more public venues and receive more exposure than those female magicians who do not employ sex appeal. When used as a rhetorical means, sex appeal, as will be seen in the next two sections, overlaps *ethos*, *pathos* and *logos*, and can be used throughout a magician's performance.

Dance Performance

"Grace" is a characteristic associated with traditional femininity, and in modern culture, dance is still considered a female pastime (in so far as football is a stereotypical male pastime). Scarlett's show is dance-laden, and all four assistants are also dancers. Some, though not all, male magicians, such as Lance Burton, rarely dance leaving the dance performance to assistants only. Scarlett, on the other hand, dances alongside the assistants and throughout the entire show. Scarlett said that the purpose of plentiful dance numbers is to give audience members the full entertainment experience: "I don't want people walking out thinking they saw a magic show, but a show" (Fink, 2008). Numerous reviews have called Scarlett's show "family-friendly" entertainment though many reviews, most written by men, have been less kind about the use of dance to mask lackluster illusions (Fink, 2008, Rounds, 2009, Weatherford, 2008).

Arian Black uses sex appeal through sensual dance as an integral part of her routines. In one routine, Arian dances with a sexy female assistant in a spandex leopard-print leotard. They caress each other in a sensual manner, and the assistant slides into a split. The assistant then locks Arian into a box-like prop where Arian's torso is covered by a black piece of fabric. The assistant then prances around the box a few times caressing Arian's face and arms which seem immobile in the contraption. The assistant seems to penetrate Arian's torso and slides out of the front of the box. At the climax of the music, Arian and the assistant toss their long hair in seeming ecstasy. Following the illusion finish, Arian takes the assistant into her arms, dips her down by holding her lower back and then runs her hand along the assistant's body. The description for Arian's YouTube video reads, "This was shot one night while I was opening for Amazing Jonathan. We went to perform it on a television show in La [sic] and they told us it was to [sic] provocative" (Black, 2008). When asked about this incident in an interview, Black said that some producers of the show saw their act that night and wanted them to come on a television show. Black and her assistant flew out to Los Angeles and rehearsed the show. The producers said it was "too sexy" for television and to modify the beginning and ending. Black made the necessary changes and according to Black, following the secondary rehearsal, "The producers said 'That's not sexy, that's lesbianism and that's disgusting and we're not going to use it.' They had my assistant in tears" (Black, 2009). While Black says this is a rare occurrence, this incident is ironic, compared to the previous sex appeal expectations for female magicians. Alternatively, "Magic Babe" Ning uses erotic dance reminiscent of exotic dancers in

some of her performances. In Ning's promotional video, she is shown on stage dancing erotically and stripping while trying to escape from a straightjacket during a routine titled, "Straight Jacket Striptease" (Conceptmagic, 2009). From these two examples, we may conclude that it is okay for female magicians to be beautiful and dress and dance provocatively according to male standards, but not okay for them to express their female sexuality through movement and dance. A female touching another female on stage is considered "provocative" and sexually taboo, but a male magician caressing his female assistant is viewed as "normal." The magic industry thus encourages the expression of female sensuality in movement when it is confined to a night-show setting, but suppresses its expression in the mainstream media, like television, leaving that duty to pornography and R-rated movies.

Not all female magicians opt to use erotic movements in their routines. Outside of the erotic, Juliana Chen uses dance in her performance to emphasize her "exotic" and Chinese features. She moves gracefully to music and dance reminiscent of her Chinese culture. This appeal of the "exotic" is both raced and gendered. It is always already imbued with sexual notions because she is exoticized. Chen's appearance, movement and grace as culturally distinct and exotic are "sexed." While these three elements (movement, appearance and grace) overlap, for purpose of this analysis, they are being separated to better understand the text. This strategy of using the "exotic" could also be analyzed as an unintentional sexual strategy from a Western male gaze, re-appropriated as a form of cultural expression. From the feminist perspective of her performance however, Chen's rhetorical movement is more about grace and elegance rather than *intentional* Westernized sex appeal. Chen confirms that "magic is her life," and she performs passionately because for her, "it's the movement, the facial expressions and the connection with the audience. People watching sometimes forget to watch my magic because they're watching my face and my movement" (Hoekstra, 2009). Her ease of movement as she gracefully sweeps around the floor hides the great difficulty she has as she conceals a whole pack of cards that she has palmed (holding hidden in her palm). Luna Shimada uses a similar kind of graceful movement as she flows through her illusions. In one routine Luna dances with a "zombie ball." She relates it to the "cosmic dance between a mother and the spirit of an unborn child…so it has a very maternal quality to it" (Lunamagick, 2007). Luna sees her movements as a way to express a symbolic emotive, characteristically female state. Neither Chen nor Shimada use much patter in their performances. In this way, their graceful movements are more symbolic and serve as a substitute for verbal meaning.

Smooth movements, as persuasive elements in a performance, are important to the rhetoric of all magicians. Jerky movements can reveal technique, so regardless of the use of dance grace in execution is essential. Some female magicians do not use dance at all, yet rely on the grace of their hand movements. Jeanette Andrews, for example, executes sleight of hand illusions with the grace of a dance, yet she uses no dance at

all. Her hand movements transition with each illusion effortlessly. By contrast, Suzanne, whose specialty is walk around magic, relies on patter, but uses graceful hand gestures to illustrate stories that narrate her sleight of hand illusions. For some female magicians, dance and grace are focal points of their character and a substitute for patter. For others, it is an enhancement to their magic. Dance is non-essential to the rhetoric of all female magicians, yet graceful movements seem to be an inherent characteristic of magic, regardless of character.

Character and Patter

In order to create and sustain *ethos*, or credibility, a magician must be consistent in character, movement, costumes, patter, and even choice of illusion. Any element out of character could ruin the magician's ethos, making them less credible, or in some cases less capable, of performing any extraordinary feat. Character expresses the persona of the magician. Working in conjunction with character in order to create style, "patter" is the spoken words or "script" that a magician uses in order to reinforce character or direct (or misdirect) an audience's attention. It is important that the style of performance is consistent with the magician's character. Ortiz (1994) says that it is character that makes a magician "memorable" and supports the cliché that a "magician's job is to sell himself" (p. 231). Not only does Ortiz use a male pronoun to describe a magician, but his chapter on character excludes discussion of female characters. Ortiz maintains the magic "effect" should match the personality of the magician and every aspect of the magician's act should be consistent with their character and style (p. 233). However, being wed to the stereotype of the "assistant," women in magic have had less liberty to experiment successfully with personality and patter. Many forego using patter at all, opting instead to let non-verbal communication, dance performance, and letting the illusion speak for itself. As such, the use of character and patter in the acts of the female magicians differs dramatically from their male counterparts.

Some magicians, such as Krystyn Lambert and Arian Black, opt for girlishness in their characters. Black describes her character as "more like the girl-next-door with a lot of sex involved" (Black, 2009). Black says that she does use some patter, along with many other elements, because "to have a well-rounded show you want a little bit of everything" (Black, 2009). Black incorporates animals, bubbles, dance, comedy, and mostly, sex appeal, into her performances.

Krystyn Lambert, before she took on the role of Criss Angel's "apprentice" (Katsilometes, 2013) where Criss Angel calls her the "#1 female magician in the world" (Mr. E, 2013), also exudes a more wholesome, girl-next-door persona in her routines. Her patter exudes a teenage bubbliness, which is complimented by her blonde hair and trendy clothing. In one clip, Krystyn wears a black prom dress as she enthusiastically narrates a close-up magic card trick. Although on the surface Krystyn's character seems somewhat stereotypically "girly" and immature, she gives

a very mature answer in describing the challenges she faced when determining character and what to wear:

> Women also have to deal with the fact that most magic is created for men in evening suits. While many of the distinctions made between female and male magicians are self-induced, I believe that there ought to be some differences between the sexes in magic. I don't exactly think women should go stomping around pulling mouth coils in an oversized suit, because that's obviously denying a fundamental part of who she is. But that applies to anyone in magic…you have to be yourself. Still… if I'm going to wear something form fitting and appropriate for my gender, um, where am I going to hide my loads? I've really had to rework many tricks to suit my lack of suit, if you will. (Kawamoto, 2010b)

While some female magicians take a more feminine, girly approach to their characters, others seek a gender-neutral personality. As discussed earlier, gender expectations for clothing have an impact on the character and type of techniques chosen by female magicians. Magical women who do more sleight of hand illusions, such as Julianna Chen, Suzanne, and Jeanette Andrews, tend to opt for clothing that is less sexy and more practical for the movements and storage required for that type of magic—including wearing jackets and loose-fitting clothing. This kind of dress may reflect a more "masculine" or "gender neutral" character.

Suzanne is unique in her abundant and effective use of patter. Although Suzanne's style is more gender neutral than other female magicians, she uses a great deal of narrative and humor in her patter—much of which has a feminine appeal. Suzanne describes how she adapted her patter to suit her gender:

> Most patter is written for men. Again, not because the writers are trying to exclude women, they are just writing what they know. This shouldn't matter in the long run because as an entertainer you should be able to make the trick your own, but in the beginning, it's good to be able to work with patter that has been tested. And if it has a "male" feel to it, the women won't be able to pull it off as well as their male counterparts. The female magician almost needs to work from scratch when it comes to patter. (Kawamoto, 2010a)

This not only illustrates the difficulty women face in producing patter, but also finding a voice, character and personality that is unique to them as women. For example, Suzanne's version of the classic "Cups and Balls" illusion is quite different from many male versions. Rather than showy, well-timed tricks or history lectures (as two well-known male magicians perform the illusion), Suzanne tells the story of a woman in her dreams that is telling her the story of three travelers. The "moral of

the story" is that "on our life's journey, though our paths may appear very different, our quests are very much the same. And if we choose to run with each other, then we may just find life's greatest treasure" (Suzmagic, 2010a). This narrative suggests a very feminist idea of equality and cooperation. This reminds us of the "female style" of communication, as Suzanne puts an emphasis on relationships—between the travelers of the story and the "travelers" of the audience. In this sense, she also creates "inclusivity" among the audience. As "travelers" through life the audience all can be a part of both the magic and the lesson of the story.

In another illusion, Suzanne uses a band aid to illustrate the power of "a mother's love" (Suzmagic, 2010b). Suzanne starts by saying that the band aid she applies to the volunteer's arm is "magic." However, at the end of the narrative and the illusion, Suzanne reveals that the real secret behind the band aid is that "magic has nothing to do with the band aid. You see, Mom loves you so much that she takes all the hurt and all the pain and she holds it and then she puts a lot of love where the band aid is" (Suzmagic, 2010b). This patter also evokes a mother-child oriented relationship. As Suzanne urges her volunteer to conjure images of their mother, the audience is also thinking of their respective mother figures. This "communication to show support" is concentric with a "female" style of communication. By encouraging the volunteer and the audience to visualize their mothers, Suzanne is inviting them to participate in the magic by sharing a warm vision of their mother figures.

In addition to the feminine and gender neutral styles, some magicians opt for a style that is hyper-sexual. "Magic Babe" Ning, for example, builds her whole persona on her sex appeal—so much so that it is incorporated into her stage name. Like Black, Ning's use of sex appeal through costume, character and dress is the foundation of her character. While a claimed sexuality can be healthy, this can also become problematic when it creates an identity that detracts from talent and focuses on appearance. In this case, Ning's whole identity is built upon her looks. She is not known as "The world's greatest escape artist" or "greatest female magician;" she is known for being sexy and edgy—a shallow and fleeting characteristic. However, the adoption of this moniker has brought Ning much fame and success, and she has appeared in a number of major Asian magazines and televisions shows. It seems that an erotic personality proves successful in more than one culture.

In contrast to Ning and Black's eroticism, however, Juliana Chen emphasizes the "exotic" in her character and style. Chen uses little patter, opting for silent routines and expressive dance as a substitute. Chen's preferred magic medium is cards and sleight of hand, but her other props, especially masks, robes, and ropes, reflect her Chinese heritage. From her costume to music, Chen's whole persona and style emphasizes her exotic qualities. With Chen, and often with other female magicians, the sensuous non-verbal serves as a substitute for patter and personality. To some degree, the "exotic" is an intrinsic part of the "mystery" of magic. That which is

mysterious is also sometimes indescribably beautiful. Mysterious beauty becomes problematic, however, when the credibility and persuasiveness of magic is dependent on the exotic beauty of the magician. There’s a risk, then, that the female magician becomes an “exotic” Other to the white male magician’s gaze. In this way she is a rarity to be viewed as an object, not as the incredibly talented magician that she is.

When executed correctly, mystery combined with the exotic can produce a character than is sensuous, rather than sexual, in nature. Joanie Spina, a woman and prominent magic consultant, advises female magicians that "...it is important to assure that the style is perceived as sensual as opposed to sexual. Sensual is still classy and will be received well by most. You should always err on the side of class, particularly as a woman" (Spina, 2010, p. 75). This illustrates the very delicate difference between using a rhetoric of sex or a rhetoric of sensuality. When sex appeal is not implicit, the female magician’s art may not be taken seriously. In this way, as a female magician, In order to preserve ethos, it is better to be perceived as “classy” rather than “sexy.”

Luna Shimada’s style exemplifies this type of “class.” It is both sensuous and mysterious. She evokes a spiritual and Wiccan impression through her corseted pheasant dresses, boots and mystic music. Her props include orbs, fruit, doves, and masks. Her illusions appear as new-age spirituality and magical miracles. The mystical music combined with the graceful movements is almost sensuous, but not overly sexy, in nature. Shimada insists that she not only performs, but lives her character:

> A wise man once told me that if you want to be a Magician on stage, first you have to become a Magician in everyday life….I try to live fully and follow my bliss, keeping in mind that we are surrounded by magic all the time and the point of power is always in the present....The power of choices is the only true freedom we have and it’s an awesome power! Magic comes down to belief in everyone, but most of all, belief in yourself, for we all flow from the same source, like branches on a mighty tree, we are all one. (Shimada, 2010)

Shimada’s philosophy on magic eschews greatly from entertainment standards. Luna calls this philosophy, “Herstory” and “The Feminine Force,” two titles which are implicitly feminist (Shimada, 2010). Shimada is a modern new-age, feminist goddess and a perfect example of a female magician claiming her femininity and maternity, while also developing a style that invokes Foss and Griffin’s (1992) invitational rhetoric. Shimada invites the magician and the audience to become active in this “belief” and “power” so that the audience and magician are equal in the performance.

Unlike the other female magicians in this analysis, Scarlett's personality and style is more aseptic, forced and unnatural. Her first show had been deemed "family friendly," and Scarlett seemed to emphasize feminine "innocence" in her show's promotional video. She relies on strictly scripted patter and plays a range of characters such as a mad scientist, Betty Boop, Michael Jackson, and Marilyn Monroe. Rounds (2009) finds Scarlett's use of numerous scripted roles for the community of female magicians problematic:

> There is a confusing line in the established roles...sometimes she is the magician, and sometimes she puts herself in the position of the assistant and allowing one of the dancers to take the dominant role...and while she may be the best choice for being the "assistant" in the illusion, she is not doing herself, and any other female magician, any favors. (p. 2)

Scarlett's adoption of "famous" characters prevents her from fully finding her own voice in magic. She plays up to patriarchal stereotypes of famous celebrities and does not bring her own unique magic experiences to the table. By not acknowledging and accentuating her unique role as a female magician in a male-dominated field, Scarlett denies her experiences as a woman in magic, opting instead to take the role of "imitator." Though Scarlett uses patter, she does not use her own character and voice. This indicates the magic entertainment industry's chauvinistic truth—that women should be seen and not heard, or seen and then vanished.

It seems that even though there is pressure to adhere to visual male standards in magic, the one thing female magicians achieve consensus on is that choosing to adhere to male standards of magic in the formation of character is a *choice.* While the three categories of analysis above seem somewhat indiscrete, sex appeal is a gendered rhetorical means that overlaps *ethos*, *pathos* and *logos*. *Ethos* through the magician's personality is an individual decision and from feminine to gender neutral to sexy to sensuous to vapid, no two female magicians are the same. For *pathos* and *logos*, some use patter, others substitute dance. Some dress scantily, others very elegantly. However, because their choices are constructed and limited by the patriarchal structure of magic, each must embrace the choices that are available to them.

CONCLUSIONS

Magic as an art form is unique in that it uses persuasion to convince an audience to *believe* something contrary to the laws of science. Magicians must deceive the audience's eyes and their minds. Examining the rhetoric of female magicians is useful for a number of reasons. First, the voices and rhetoric of women in a historically gendered field can be observed and documented. Second, by examining the differences in how women communicate in fields such as these, scholars might

be able to draw parallels for how women and men communicate differently and how women adapt their communication to fit the gendered paradigm of their underrepresented field.

Except for Nardi's (1984, 1988, 2010) work, we believe this study is not only the sole rhetorical analysis of female magicians, but it is also the most comprehensive discussion of women in magic. Although we have uncovered a number of notions regarding the rhetoric of women in the entertainment industry, a more comprehensive study of the rhetoric of women performing live entertainment might yield other insights into patriarchal rhetoric. There are a number of other areas that deserve further examination. First, cultural issues should be explored. For example, does the rhetoric of Arian Black, a Canadian magician, differ from Julianna Chen, a Chinese magician, and if so, in what ways? Does the rhetoric of female magicians vary according to culture? Do magicians adapt their rhetoric according to the culture of the audience? Additionally, we could examine possible generational differences, such as is the rhetoric of younger female magicians different from the rhetoric of older magicians? Perhaps the influence of culture may have impacted the degree to which female magicians adhere to male standards. Do the waves of feminism have anything to do with rhetorical differences between female magicians of different generations?

Second, we should also explore the "behind the scenes" women in magic. Joanie Spina, a top magic consultant, was a woman. Gay Blackstone, an assistant-turned magician, is a well-known producer of magic shows and even produced the recent television show, *Masters of Illusion*, which gave many female magicians exposure on network television. What do these women think about the rhetoric of female magicians? Do they endorse a male paradigm of magic or to counteract it? And, of course, we cannot possibly analyze every female magician, even with their relative paucity in the community, due to time and space constraints. Future research could try to be more comprehensive.

Finally, a theoretically viable area of study to apply the performances of female magicians is Langer's (1942) theory of "presentational symbolism," which proposes that humans use symbols such as music, art, and myth-making in order to deal with communicative phenomena that defy ordinary language (p. 97). Langer distinguished between "discursive" symbols found in scientific and ordinary language, and "non-discursive," or presentational symbols, found in art and other types of human expression such as theatre and magic performance (p. 97). Langer (1942) attempted to demonstrate that the symbols of human emotion used in artistic expression, can be understood in terms of conventions and semantic rules, just as linguistic expressions are (p. 102). These symbols represent more than the expression of an individual artist's emotion, and can enable the artist and his audience to experience moods and passions they have never felt before. Further rhetorical

studies on the performances of female magicians might explore the various ways in which the performances of women in magic fulfill this non-discursive role.

Female magicians face many obstacles on their way to achieving visibility and social acceptance, both in the magic community and in culture. Female magicians *can* have a unique style of invitational rhetoric. This style is not one that all women magicians can or will implement, but is a style that takes into consideration and communicates the experiences that are unique to female magicians and invite the audience to become a part of the magic occurring in front of their eyes. The philosophy of Luna Shimada serves as an excellent platform for the future of "the feminine" in magic: "To explore the different aspects of the Feminine in performance magic is the communication I seek, I feel and I see it as a lot about creation itself. Magic is a very feminine power if you think about it" (Shimada, 2010). Female magicians use traditional rhetorical tools differently than men in their magic. Their gender definitely has an impact on the kind of rhetoric they can and do, implement. From costumes to dance to narrative, female magicians employ different tools according to their character, style, and the gender expectations of society and the magic industry. Suzanne, for example, feels that women have an advantage over men with general audiences because they are more disarming:

> Just saying that society allows women to be less confrontational and if that's what they want their style to be, then I think women can pull it off better just because we are women. I think women can flirt in ways that don't come off creepy but if a male was to act that way... well ... it comes off sort of creepy. I can touch people physically in ways that would be, maybe, crossing some boundaries if I was a man. It's easier for me to be "sweet". Men socially don't get to be sweet. They have to be tough or edgy or fake con men or something like that like. I don't know that they get play in the same way women can. (quoted in Kawamoto, 2010a)

In addition to recognizing these differences, female magicians must also claim their sexuality (if it is important to their rhetoric) and a uniquely "female" style—a sexuality and style that is empowered, not patriarchal. Female magicians must develop their own unique voice, character, and a style that is representative of their experiences as women in magic, not as a "sexual object," a "rarity" or "novelty."

Despite tough economic woes in Vegas, Arian Black (2009) says that female magicians still find work because they are seen as a "novelty" in the magic entertainment industry. However, "novelty" is the key word. Female magicians are still not seen for their talent, but rather their rarity and beauty. Some female magicians use sex appeal to their advantage, but only to play up to patriarchal expectations of sex appeal and "feminine" beauty. By reducing the rhetoric of women to a "novelty," it does not legitimize women as magicians and silences their

unique voice and rhetoric. Female magicians have had to create their own rhetoric, techniques and means of communication within a male-dominated field. This rhetoric is distinct to female magicians and must be acknowledged among the magic community and in magic books and instructions, or women in magic will continue to be a "muted group." If women magicians are seen as a "rarity," then the label "woman" or "female" will continue to be added to the moniker "magician." In order to achieve a paradigm shift from a male-oriented rhetoric of magic to a rhetoric of difference, women must no longer be viewed as a novelty. Arian Black maintains that this dynamic of "novelty" is slowly changing with the times. But, she also worries that as she ages, her appeal as a female magician becomes less. Wouldn't it be easier for female magicians to be "successful" if female magicians did not have to fret about losing their youth, beauty, and, consequently, entertainment appeal? If female magicians have got it, shouldn't they flaunt it for a living? Society says that it's okay for women to be sexually promiscuous with other women, but is it okay to play up to these sexual standards? What kind of headway are they making for women as a whole if they are adhering to patriarchal social standards and exotic stereotypes?

As we have explored, not all female magicians submit to male-driven rhetoric, sex appeals, or even "exotic" personae. However, the ones that use a more patriarchal rhetoric seem to achieve more recognition within the magic community (national or world awards) as well as within the general non-magic public (television and Vegas shows). The point cannot be dismissed that while on stage, Suzanne is as an accomplished magician as Katalin. Yet, she is not winning national awards or appearing on television. Subsequently, Katalin wins World Magic Awards and performs on television, and Suzanne performs in restaurants in her hometown. And perhaps Suzanne is quite content with her career and this arrangement. But, one cannot help but wonder if her talent should be more recognized and celebrated than it is? Some women, such as Arian Black, "Magic Babe" Ning, and Katalin, among others, have created a space where they can perform even by capitulating to patriarchal standards. However, if the only way women can achieve monetary or commercial "success" within the magic community and the general public is to adhere to these standards, then the larger sexist problem will still dominate the magic industry. In order to achieve greater status, female magicians must create their own definition of "feminine" magic in order to break free of the historically patriarchal restraints in magic, as well as culture.

Some of the rhetoric employed by female magicians is reflective of the system of patriarchy that dominates the magic community, other entertainment industries, male-dominated professions and society. Women in magic are still "muted" in the mainstream magic entertainment circuit and seen as a novelty. Performing "male" routines and playing up to sex roles and gender stereotypes earns female magicians awards, on television, or a Vegas show. This trend does not necessarily need to

persist. Many female magicians have created their own distinctively “female” character and patter according to their unique experiences as women in magic, not as a sex object in society. Female magicians have developed a perspective of rhetoric that is different from their male counterparts and somewhat invokes Foss and Griffin’s (1992) concept of invitational rhetoric. Using sex appeal to evoke feminine sensuality, dance as an expressive liberation, and character and patter that are deeply personal can all be elements of a truly “female rhetoric” of magic. If this unique “female rhetoric” of magic is performed, it can possibly be a source of empowerment for both the magician and the audience—liberating both from patriarchy, celebrating the feminine, and inviting both the magician and the audience to share in the power of the illusion. Within the art of magic, there is the power of naming, a classification right, for each illusion and trick. It is left up to the ethics and purpose of the magician whether or not to use that right to defy or adhere to gender norms.

Female magicians have come a long way from relative obscurity. However, at the most popular and large national and international magic conventions, women are still relatively rare. As we have argued, there can be a feminine rhetoric in magic performance that distinguishes the magic performances of women from men. There is not one universal form of rhetoric for all women, but rather, a style of rhetoric that incorporates women’s unique experiences. However, until the social structure of magic changes to allow the inclusion and acceptance of more women on the basis of talent, not male-oriented rhetoric, this style may continue to go unappreciated and undervalued in the magic community and larger public. Additionally, the same communicative and rhetorical pressures faced by female magicians may echo those of women in other entertainment industries and male-dominated fields. It is important to acknowledge and examine gendered communication systems that create gendered communication paradigms. Perhaps the best answer to the question is: There *have* been, and *still are*, many great female magicians and entertainers, but the structure of the magic society and the larger social structure of the world prevent women from achieving recognition and acceptance. For now, the rhetorical goddess must keep working tirelessly at her art and toward equality as a talented artist, not an assistant, or an object.

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