"Identity Formation in Marginalized Groups in the Nineteenth Century"

This panel examines important issues related to the issues of identity and identity formation. In particular, the three panelists consider the various means by which insiders and outsiders through discourse constructed marginal group identities in 19th century America.

It is no longer controversial to assert that all identities are, by nature, oppositional. At least since Kenneth Burke theorized identity formation in part as a matter of "division," most scholarship on identity construction has reinforced Kwame Appiah's assertion in *The Ethics of Identity* that "identities are formed in antagonism" (106) and Moya Lloyd's contention in *Beyond Identity Politics* that "any notion of self can only be articulated through the positing of an other/Other" (17). This observation becomes particularly crucial when the identity constructions of minority or marginal groups are considered, because those constructions inevitably form in opposition to more dominant groups. This set of papers inquires into the rhetorical nature of this process, particularly into the role of media, literacy, religion, and history in the construction of marginal group identities by both insiders and outsiders in 19th century America.

Addressing the marginal identities of the Amana (a pious German communal society located in Iowa), of free people of color in New Orleans near the end of the Civil War, and of female religious speakers operating within patriarchal structures, these papers trace rhetorical moves along a continuum from rhetorical containment to rhetorical agency. The first paper shows how outsiders constructed the "curious" Amanites in their newspapers and magazines: such accounts deployed a rhetoric of containment in that the Amana identity constructed in tourist literature served both to quarantine the alternate way of life represented by the community and to unify readers from various demographic, national, and ethnic backgrounds as "real" Americans. The second paper inquires into the ways in which free people of color used newspapers to assert their own identity--a gendered identity which challenged stereotypes then circulating. The third paper examines specific females' individual opposition to traditionally male religious discourses. Taken together, the papers deepen scholarly understanding of identity formation by carefully analyzing specific cases. The presenters together show the material consequences of identify constructions (especially for marginalized groups), detail the means through which marginal groups have worked to assert identities counter to those constructed for them, and explore the efficacy of various rhetorical strategies for identity construction by marginal groups.

Speaker 1: "Painting the Living Scenery of Amana: A Case of Containment"

The Amana Society was founded when a group of German religious non-conformists fled Germany in 1843 and settled in Iowa. Taking its lead from Takis Poulakos's approach to Gorgias's "Encomium for Helen," which holds that silenced individuals and groups can be recovered if we study the rhetorical efforts used by dominant groups to contain them, this paper examines how the Amanites were constructed in and by newspaper and magazine articles as a strategy of containment. Fulfilling the three purposes of travel

literature—to instruct, to entertain, and to comfort—journalistic accounts of the Society written by a heterogeneous and yet overtly "American" set of writers positioned Amanites as "living scenery," as a part of the American landscape and yet apart from mainstream American identity. Besides informing their readers about the German pious community and entertaining with descriptions of Amana's "demure, but not coquettish" maidens, these accounts comforted readers by explaining that the unfamiliar lifestyle of the Amanites was, paradoxically, un-American yet unthreatening. In the end, the story of how the Amana were constructed reminds us that whenever there is a non-normative ideology, there will most likely be a rhetorical coping mechanism—a rhetoric of containment—enacted by the larger society.

Speaker 2: "Gender Constructed in Print: *The New Orleans Tribune*"

The New Orleans Tribune, or *La Tribune de la Nouvelle Orleans*—the first black-owned daily newspaper in the United States, established during the final battles of the Civil War in 1864—provides fascinating access to the remarkably varied and extensive uses of literacy by free people of color in New Orleans during the second half of the nineteenth century. Building on Collins and Blot's definition of literacy as "any body of systematic useful knowledge," this paper expands the traditional definition of literacy (as the ability to read and write, especially in public settings) to include the everyday and domestic literacies of free people of color. The adept political commentary, marine intelligence, financial/economic skill, and domestic management expertise evident in the paper's columns together demonstrate the multifaceted nature of literacy. More important, an analysis of these historically undervalued literacies offers a counterpoint to traditional identity categories as they were constructed and deployed in the more conventional public spheres of the Civil War-era South, especially as those categories exclude the interplay of race and gender. By utilizing these multiple non-traditional forms of literacy, the writers of color constituted a characteristic discourse community through the *Tribune,* one that challenged the dominant white and masculine identities circulating in other popular media.

Speaker 3: "The Historiographic Practices of Nineteenth-Century Female Religious Speakers"

This paper details the unique forms of identity construction and history-making that were fashioned, consciously and unconsciously, by nineteenth-century female religious speakers. By selecting their own religious identity as a "master" identity, women such as Frances Willard, Louisa Woolsey, and Fannie Hunter critiqued, reconfigured, and rearticulated the contemporary identities available to women in the churches; their practices also suggest a kind of historiography counter to establishment forms. In other words, these women enact what Patricia Bizzell has outlined as the three stages of feminist historical research. First, the women become "resisting readers" of their canonical text, the Bible, and identify themselves as resisting readers of Church doctrine more generally. One of their primary resistant premises is that the "Truth" in these texts is mediated by dominant identity constructions—that truth blurs as it passes through the lens of those with political and religious power. Second, the efforts of these three women

reveal that other women were in fact also constructing a tradition of women's preaching to equal male preachers' achievements. Finally, Willard, Woolsey, and Hunter themselves include in their histories other women who do not neatly fit the mold of religious rhetoric: activists, educators, and other "model" women. In this way Willard, Woolsey, and Hunter—by offering encomia of female contemporaries—suggest new possibilities both for constructing women's history and identity, and for inspiring a future generation of women to embrace more fully their roles as rhetors.