Lisa Ede, Cheryl Glenn, and Andrea Lunsford begin “Border Crossings: Intersections of Rhetoric and Feminism” with the observation that “Western rhetoric began ... as a response to disputes regarding property, regarding borders.”¹ They are, of course, speaking of crossing disciplinary borders and their essay, as its title indicates, explores both the common ground and the chasm between rhetoric, classically considered a male world, and feminism. Throughout, they use the metaphor of the border to unify their argument for the need to find bridges between the two territories so that one might strengthen the other and vice versa.

Long before Ede, Glenn, and Lunsford’s call for border crossings between rhetoric and feminism, however, Susan Glaspell was crossing rhetorical and feminist borders of her own. According to these authors, feminist rhetoric “argu[es] that knowledge based in the personal, in lived experience, be valued and accepted as important and significant” (412). It is not surprising, then, to find Susan Glaspell drawing material from her Iowa upbringing, her early desire to write, her attachment to Jig Cook, her desire for a family, her understanding of the plight of creative women in the early twentieth century, as well as her delight in sewing and making jelly. She uses her experiences as a creative woman in an often unreceptive world to inform the rhetorical choices she makes as a writer: she peoples her short stories, novels, and plays with female artists; she usually includes some sort of female support system for her creative female characters; she elevates domestic chores such as quilting, gardening, and jelly-making to the status of art; and she

constantly pushes society to make room for female creativity. This essay focuses on a key rhetorical strategy in Glaspell’s work, her use of the metaphors of enclosure and entrapment, walls and chains, and her characters’ reactions to them—from acquiescence to resistance to defiance—in their attempts to reach “Out There,” a space of their own beyond the borders of art. Looking at these metaphors in some of Glaspell’s lesser-known short stories and her unpublished play *Chains of Dew*, illustrates particularly that her concern for female self-expression is consistent throughout her career, and not just in her more popular plays.

Glaspell’s use of metaphors that challenge social borders is an especially effective rhetorical strategy for an author whose agenda is to bridge one reality to the possibility of another for her readers. Early feminist rhetorician Gertrude Buck, writing and teaching at Vassar from 1897-1922, would certainly have agreed. Buck, whose formal study of the metaphor is now considered “far ahead of her time,” explains that this trope literally involves “transference of meaning from one word to another over the bridge of analogy.” Buck’s study goes beyond literal bridging, however. Buck, a contemporary of Glaspell’s, also demonstrates the psychology of the metaphor, calling it “a straightforward attempt to communicate to another person the maker’s vision.” The metaphor is, in effect, a consciousness-raising device, intended to deepen and change “not only [a] situation but its observer,” whose “eyes are opened to see new objects, or old ones in a new light.”

The rhetorical aim of the metaphor, Buck claims, is to transform the reader, who is, of course, male: eyes now open, “He is a different man, and his world is new” (45). For Buck, the metaphor is a rhetorical vehicle or bridge for moving the reader smoothly from one psychological place to another. In her theory, metaphor is the necessary step that precedes the ability to speak directly about a new reality; it moves a reader gently away from an old view to a new one, bridging a reader’s understanding until he reaches the point where “plain statement” is possible in the new place. Glaspell uses metaphor in just this way, as a bridge from one consciousness to

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