

The Feminist We Never Knew We Needed:



Digitally Archiving
and Recovering the Works of
FANNY FERN

By Haley Jones

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This thesis, divided into two chapters, examines how Fanny Fern's columns and words have either been lost or taken out of their original context (such as in the use of the phrase: "the way to a man's heart is through his stomach") and provides an overview of how this context has been slanted given dominating canons, and further examines the dominant canon in relation to active public memory, feminist rhetoric and scholarship.

The first chapter of this dissertation seeks to insinuate a connection between intentional acts of forgetting and remembering to maintain a certain social order. Throughout my dissertation, I assert the idea of active remembering and how the current canon uses this act to uphold male writers over female writers, indicating my engagement with public memory scholarship in rhetoric and writing studies. The thesis then explores the intentional squandering of female writers in comparison to their male counterparts through the act of remembering, which can alternatively be recoded to benefit feminist rhetoric, such as in the incorporation of Fanny Fern (and other female writers) into the modern, while also combatting the current male-dominated canon. My research then shifts into its final section, in which I make a rationale for creating a digital archive to promote active remembrance of Fanny Fern as an important 19th century rhetorician, activist, satirist, and public commentator.

In the second chapter, I recount the creation of Fanny Fern’s digital archive, starting with twenty columns selected from her works that insinuate, in my opinion, a connective theme to modern day society thus giving them relevancy in current public memory. I argue against the scholarship that an archive is passive since I see it as a useful building block for my overall goal of reinserting Fern into the public sphere of memory. It is not my intention to simply “place” this archive on the internet, where it simply serves as an additive; instead, I hope to make Fern’s writing engaging and interesting among a new generation; a generation that arguably needs her championing of females now more than ever. This chapter covers the process of the initial creation of a digital archive, and then analyzes rhetorical devices utilized throughout the site’s implementation. I also reflect on the creation of other modes of memory and assertion, such as a Twitter bot among other social media platforms to promote Fern and her publicly accessible archive. This also means the inclusion of both an academic and a public audience. It is my goal to give Fanny Fern’s writing a medium in which she can reach new audiences, ones that she would have never dreamed of reaching. Fanny Fern’s writing belongs in the present, and much like the digital medium on which she will be hosted, it is my intent to provide Fern’s writing with a new audience that will evolve and utilize her words to their maximum potential.

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RECOVERING THE WORKS OF FANNY FERN

by

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION: WHO IS FANNY FERN AND WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO DIGITALLY PRESERVE HER WORK?

As a society, we choose what knowledge is important or crucial enough to pass from generation to generation. This conveyance of knowledge is not a new concept; but instead, is one that has been carried on for centuries through repetition, enforcement, and preservation which is ultimately decided by rhetorical devices. The process of preserving the writing of influential authors, those who risk being lost with time and history, begins with questions such as: *Why should this writing be preserved? Who is benefiting from its preservation? Who will be able to access it and how?* To answer these questions, I will interject my intentions of accomplishing this preservation while aiding in an addition to the public memory; this chapter will explain my assertion of interjecting Fanny Fern, American's First Women Columnist, into the evolving mindfulness that is public memory through a combination of rhetorical devices and digital implementation.

As defined by Jan Assmann and John Czaplicka, cultural memory is “a collective concept for all knowledge that directs behavior and experience in the interactive framework of a society and one that obtains through generations in repeated societal practice and initiation” (126). So why is it important to preserve Fern’s writing and insert her into the public memory? Perhaps as scholars, we should first entertain the idea of where an individual may hear or learn about Fanny Fern. Personally, I did not hear about Fern until I was an undergrad in college. But like so many of my peers, I was familiar

with a phrase she had coined, although I had no idea that it belonged to her. Have you heard the phrase “the way to a man’s heart is through his stomach?” This quotation in its most original phrasing was coined by Fanny Fern in the column “Hungry Husbands”, written in the *True Flag* in 1853 (Fern 253); in that article, the phrase was written in the form of: “the straightest road to a man’s heart is through his palate.” Given the evolution of vernacular changes, the phrase has emerged into its current form. However, the meaning of this phrase in today’s public memory tends to reflect a superficial meaning; that is, how this phrase is understood in today’s world takes on a first-layer meaning without the context that supports the way in which Fern interpreted the phrase when she first wrote it. In fact, Fern’s coining of this phrase was not meant in this ‘woman-pleasing-man’ context at all however, the argument as to why Fern should be reinstated into the public sphere of memory may be best represented by this one simple phrase.

Establishing the Context of Fern within Today’s Public Memory

When one thinks of this phrase in its currently understood definition, it is commonly defined as a code of sorts for the normative ideal relationship in which a woman’s place is in the kitchen. As defined by the Cambridge Dictionary, the phrase is “said to mean that a woman can make a man love her by cooking him good meals.” When you read the definition of this phrase, it seems kind of obligatory that a woman should be a good cook in order to please or impress a man. This cliché ideology is best represented throughout various advertisements ranging from around the time Fern first coined the phrase, in the early 1900s, to modern day.



Figure 1.1 A 1947 Pyrex Ad

This advertisement (e.g. Fig 1.1) seems to imply that marriage is only a success if the wife, as stated in the advertisement can “go right ahead with some of those girlhood dreams... (such as) planning lovely meals for her man.” The advertisement depicts a bride and groom in full wedding attire; the wife bent over an oven, producing a meal for her eagerly awaiting husband. The idea seems to play on the phrase “the way to a man’s heart is through his stomach,” making this phrase synonymous with a successful marriage. Pyrex, a glass Tupperware brand, suggests the idea that a successful marriage “starts in the kitchen,” all while insinuating that it is the woman’s responsibility to uphold this success, evident by the wife’s role in the portrayed advertisement and the eagerly-awaiting husband, gleefully awaiting his bride’s prepared meal.

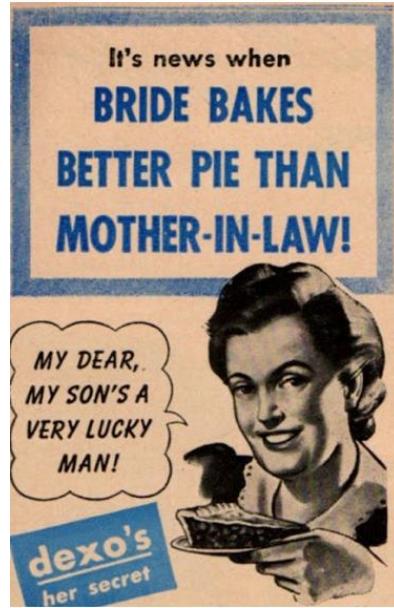


Figure 1.2 A 1950s Dexo Ad

This 1950s Dexo (e.g. Fig. 1.2) advertisement suggests that any husband is a “lucky man” if his bride can cook just as well if not better than his own mother. Much like the Pyrex ad before, this ad is implying that a husband is made happy by his wife’s cooking skills thus reinforcing the phrase “the way to a man’s heart is through his stomach.” An almost disturbing difference about this ad is the approval of the son’s mother, further adding a woman’s approval to the aforementioned quote.

This 1960s advertisement (e.g. Fig. 1.3) represents a change in the ideology for those who were marketing Fern’s coined phrase. The change represents advertisers no longer targeting wives who should make their husbands happy through their cooking skills.



Figure 1.3 A 1960s Wonder Bread Ad

This Wonder Bread ad aims to place an *illusion* of power in the woman's hands, implying that using Wonder Bread to make a sandwich gives a woman a chance to "succeed" with boys. A whole campaign of Wonder Bread advertisements display words such as "Tender Trap," "Boy Trap," and "Date Bait" complete with text that describes how women can use the product to "trap a boy" and thus implying that by feeding a man, he'll be yours forever. But rather than giving women "power" in a relationship, this ad only represents a sleuth of messages that serve to uphold the gender stereotypes that have evolved around the phrase: "the way to a man's heart is through his stomach," essentially preparing society for an internet meme that would go viral in the early 2000s.



Figure 1.4 An Internet Meme that Emerged in the early 2000s

This cliché instruction on how a woman can keep a man in a relationship through essentially preparing his meals experienced a paradigm shift in the early 1990s when the internet came into existence. It was around this same time that the term Third-wave Feminism was established, representing a group of feminists who stood against gender-role stereotypes and supported the idea of intersectionality.

How did the internet respond to this Third-wave Feminism? The above internet meme (e.g. Fig. 1.4) not only emerged on the internet in the early 2000s as a response but was pointed on a variety of clothing worn by many. The phrase “the way to a man’s heart is through his stomach” became less ‘pretty’ and more or less to the point: “Cool story babe. Now go make me a sandwich.” This new phrase which solidified and enforced the gendered stereotypes of the internet and society suggested that “the story” or the voice of a woman didn’t matter, it only mattered that “babes” or women remain subservient to the men in their lives, and keep them happy through feeding them.

What is ironic about the evolution of the phrase “the way to a man’s heart is through his stomach,” is that this entire reinforcement of supposedly normative gender stereotypes has been based on a phrase that has supported feminism the entire time. In 1853, when Fern first wrote that phrase in her “Hungry Husbands” column (Fern 253), she was not suggesting that women be subservient to men - quite the opposite. She opens up the column, prefacing the phrase “the straightest road to a man’s heart is through his palate” by admitting to her reader that the trait itself, the debased action of being led by your own stomach, is a “humiliating reflection” at best. Throughout the column, Fern speaks of taking advantage of your husband’s “amiable” and otherwise “complacent” mannerisms (because he is so distracted by the food) to persuade your man to subconsciously agree to purchasing something that will economically benefit your own means. So while the husband thinks he is being served by his loyal wife, she is actually gaining the most out of this interaction. Fern suggests vying for “half his kingdom” in the form of “a new bonnet, cap, shawl or dress... (or perhaps) ...a trip to Niagara, Saratoga, the Mammoth Cave, the White Mountains, or to London, Rome, or Paris” (253). She even offers advice for if your husband should not comply during the first request, simply “cook him another turkey,” to continue his distraction.

In no way does Fern offer womanly subservience as advice to her intended female audience; she instead offers a way to navigate around the unfortunate response but was printed on a variety of clothing worn by many. The phrase: “the way to a man’s heart is through his stomach” became simplified, less ‘pretty,’ and more or less to the point: “Cool story babe. Now go make me a sandwich.” This new phrase which solidified and

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What is ironic about the evolution of the phrase “the way to a man’s heart is through his stomach,” is that this entire reinforcement of supposedly normative gender stereotypes has been based on a phrase that gender expectations of the time in which she and her readers lived. In that same article, she advises her readers to:

...learn a lesson from it — keep him well fed and languid — live yourself on a low diet, and cultivate your thinking powers; and you’ll be as spry as a cricket, and hop over all the objections and remonstrances that his dead-and-alive energies can muster. Yes, feed him well, and he will stay contentedly in his cage, like a gorged anaconda (Fern 253).

In short, Fern is suggesting to her readers that a man is easily distracted by the domesticity of the beneficial home life such as food that is prepared for him. She advises her readers to take advantage of that distraction and benefit themselves in the process; an ironic twist in the evolution of interpretation of her coined phrase: “the straightest road to a man’s heart is through his palate.”

If any curious individual ever stopped to research the origin of the phrase, or simply googled it, you will find that credit is given to Fanny Fern on many platforms while some internet memes or websites simply leave the phrase as anonymous. However, the context in which this phrase was originally presented is not so easy to find. Realizing that Fern originally coined this phrase, along with the realization that her original context

is basically absent in most of its presented forms, raises two important questions that this project aims to address.

1. Why did Fern's phrase, without appropriate context being provided, take the form of supporting gender stereotypes?
2. Why was the context of her quotation, and thus Fanny Fern herself, forgotten?

The Act of Forgetting

To address the first question, the use of Fern's phrase displayed in various forms of advertisement aforementioned represent a dominant form of public memory at work in our society - the practice of forgetting. As described by Aleida Assman, the act of forgetting within public memory is “a necessary and constructive part of internal social transformations” (98). After all, to forget is a crucial part of memory — both individually and within society — so that we may make room for new information and ideas. However, the act of forgetting is complicated by two distinct forms of forgetting: *active* and *passive*.

Active forgetting involves intentional acts of violent destruction directed at “an alien culture of a persecuted minority” while *passive* forgetting is related to “non-intentional acts such as losing, hiding...abandoning, or leaving something behind” (98). These two forms of forgetting are distinguished mainly through the act of one in which a thought, idea or person falls out of the societal frame of attention while the other intentionally forces that thought, idea or person out of societal context.

At this point, we can revisit the advertisements that present a slanted viewpoint of what Fern's original intention of meaning was when she wrote her initial phrase. All of

the ads use Fern’s phrase in a way that supports gendered norms while ignoring or being ignorant to the original context. Taking it a step further, the internet meme created in the early 2000s — “Cool Story Babe...,” an evolved statement from Fern’s original quotation — was created around the same time as a Third Wave of Feminism was formulated to protest against gendered norms; Fern’s quotation, indirectly, had become an interrupting sentence in the next wave of feminism. Essentially, in a time where women were finding a voice, this societal-representation through an internet meme suggested that that voice wasn’t important. There has certainly been backlash to this phrase, as many feminists abhor the support and continued use of this phrase as it is displayed on t-shirts, hats, coffee mugs, stickers, etc. Many retailers carry merchandise that supports this phrase — such as Amazon or Walmart — who are either ignorant or unknowing to the context in which this phrase was created. Personally, I have witnessed this phase used as a conversation obstruction on online forums and comments. A group of individuals will be in debate regarding a certain topic, news article, or product. As the debate evolves into a more serious tone, and in most cases a woman contributor becomes more vocal, a male participant of that conversation will either write or post the “Cool Story Babe” meme in a effort to end the conversation and essentially, silence the voice of the “obviously obnoxious” woman who is trying to get her point across.

So what does the use of Fern’s evolved quote mean to public memory, and even more so, to today’s society? After all, to examine the way in which Fern’s quote has evolved over the past several decades allude to the way in which society has inadvertently and ignorantly participated in an active dis-remembrance of the quote.

I argue that society has actively forgotten Fanny Fern and her writing based on nineteenth-century America's divided reception of Fern's sarcastic, witty, and at times, her defiant observance of the America's gendered landscape. This in combination with the overall hesitance to accept women writers into the literary canon contribute to a widespread forgetting of Fanny Fern, her writing, and other women writers, a loss of public memory that upholds the gendered norms that Fern's writing threatened.

After experiencing fame in the early 19th century for her writing, most significantly through her contract with the most popular newspaper of the 1850s, the *New York Ledger*, Fern experienced criticism and praise alike. Her writing continued to captivate readers over the span of two decades (Warren "Introduction" xxxi) and then after her death, her writings seemed to disappear into a canonical oblivion, until recent years with her work being revived in academic settings. In large part, Fern's brief erasure from the literary canon could possibly be attributed to an alarming mindset at the time: that women who write are none but 'scribbling women' and thus their contribution to the literary world was thought to be brief and disposable.

In fact, Nathaniel Hawthorne, a notable writer of the time, is famously quoted in an 1855 letter to his publisher stating his dissatisfaction with women writers: "America is now wholly given over to a d[amne]d mob of scribbling women, and I should have no chance of success while the public is occupied with their trash" (Hawthorne). Hawthorne had an interesting relationship with this "mob of scribbling women," displaying a change of mind in an additional letter written to the same publisher, of his admiration and dislikes of one woman in particular, Fanny Fern:

In my last, I recollect, I bestowed some vituperation on female authors....The woman [Fanny Fern] writes as if the Devil was in her; and that is the only condition under which a woman ever writes anything worth reading. Generally women write like emasculated men, and are only to be distinguished from male authors by greater feebleness and folly; but when they throw off the restraints of decency, and come before the public stark naked, as it were — then their books are sure to possess character and value...If you meet her [Fanny Fern], I wish you would let her know how much I admire her (Warren xxxv).

Hawthorne's second letter seems to enact a sense of regret or contradiction, as he acknowledges that women are constrained by "conventions imposed by society" and those restrictions prevent their success (Warren xxxv). Granted, it was during this time of criticism that the literary world was undergoing a spate of female success with novels such as Susan Warner's *The Wide, Wide World* (1849), Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, and Sarah Payson Willis Parton (aka Fanny Fern)'s *Ruth Hall: A Domestic Tale of the Present Time* - not to mention Fern's ongoing career as a successful woman columnist during this time period. Fern had her own response to the claim that women's writing should rely on a gentle tradition, speaking her mind during a mock review of one of her own books:

When we take up a woman's book, we expect to find gentleness, timidity, and that lovely reliance on the patronage of...[the male] sex which constitutes a woman's greatest charm — we do not desire to see a woman wielding the scimitar blade of sarcasm (Wood 4-5).

However, despite Fern's extraordinary response to this patriarchal criticism, contemporary critics choose to focus on earlier, negative commentary such as Hawthorne's term: "scribbling women;" as noted by Joyce Warren, this phrasing was focused on so much so that "the phrase has become a part of our national literary

vocabulary” (xxxv). Why was this negative focus chosen as the dominating force to define women writers of the nineteenth-century? One could argue that the method of active forgetting has come into play; critics chose not to focus on the revised criticism of individuals like Hawthorne, or positive criticism of women writing such as from a British book review of Fern’s *Fern Leaves* in which she was praised for being “totally without that affectation of extreme propriety which is popularly attributed to the ladies of the New World” (xxxv). Unfortunately, this mindset of the male writer was echoed in an August 1853 review of one of Fern’s works in the *United States Review*:

Why do we regret Fanny’s popularity?

Because we naturally ask, when we see such a book *the* book of the day, where is American genius? Where are the original, the brilliant, the noble works, in whose publication we might take a lasting and national pride, from whose perusal we might derive delight, instruction and elevation?
Where are the men to write them?...

American authors, be men and heroes! Make sacrifices,...but *publish* books...for the hope of the future and the honor of America. Do not leave its literature in the hands of a few industrious females (Warren xxxvi).

The tone of this piece of literary criticism from the *United States Review* displays a request for active forgetting; the review itself does not focus on the literature that Fern has produced, but instead asks America’s men to react and publish books to counteract what Fern and other women writers have begun to contribute to the country’s literary canon. The review treats women’s writing as if it is a threat to the country’s upheld values — of patriarchy and gendered norms — and therefore enforces the dominant

ideology surrounding women's literary work: that they possessed a lack of value, an abstract existence, and a cause for erasure.

To address my second question, in which I ask why the context of Fern's quotation, and thus her own self was forgotten, I hypothesize that Fern's own writing could arguably be seen as a taboo to the gender construction of nineteenth-century American life. This resistance to the active canon would thus call for her work to be actively forgotten and in turn, actively restructured to meet those norms. This type of restructuring finds its place in another form of active and passive public memory: the act of remembering.

Who is Fanny Fern?

The name "Fanny Fern" first began to appear in newspaper columns in publications like Boston's *Olive Branch*, and in the *True Flag* in 1851, and soon, newspapers all over the country began to republish Fern's satirical works. The country was awed by Fern's "satirical, outspoken, polemical — even outrageous" columns, leading readers to ask: "Who was Fanny Fern?"

"Fanny Fern" is a pen name for Sara Payson Willis, born in Portland, Maine in 1811. The daughter of a preacher, and the fifth of nine children, Sara's willful spirit was seen as troublesome to her father. Deacon Willis (as he was known), was a strict Calvinist and deacon of the Park Street Church, known for its "fiery sermons" (Warren xi). He frowned upon 'ungodly' pursuits and would eventually send Sara to Hartford Female Seminary School in New Hampshire at the age of 16 because of her rebellious

spirit; one that her farther wished to curb through religious instruction — the school was unable to mold Sara into the piety and discipline that her father had hoped for.

Deacon Willis believed that his daughter was “not sufficiently serious or fearful of God’s wrath” however, Sara disagreed with her father’s beliefs; her ideal of God was that of a nurturing, maternal figure, not a wrathful patriarch. Later in life, she would write: “the God *my* eyes see, is not a tyrant, driving his creatures to heaven through fear of hell...Who but God can comfort like a mother?...there is no word but save God which is so...heart-satisfying (xi).

Sara would admit later in life that she had always been closer to her mother, even writing about her in amorous ways:

If there is any poetry in my nature, from my mother I inherited it...Had my mother’s time not been so constantly engrossed by a fast-increasing family, had she found time for literary pursuits, I am confident she would have distinguished herself. Her hurried letters, written with one foot upon the cradle, give ample evidence of this. She *talked poetry unconsciously* (xi).

Fanny Fern’s columns speak constantly of her mother, revealing a strong bond between the two. The columns also provide “perceptions of [how] her mother’s life helped her shape her later rebellion against masculine authority” (xi). Even as Sara adopted her pen name, “Fanny Fern,” she admitted that the name had more than likely been influenced by her mother; she recalled later in life that her name might have been derived from a memory of picking fern leaves for her mother (xxxvii).

Almost two decades after her enrollment at Hartford Seminary School, instructor Catherine Beecher remarked upon her former student, Sara: “[she was] the worst behaved

girl in my school...and I loved [her] the best" (xii). Harriet Beecher Stowe, who was then a pupil-teacher at Hartford recalled Sara as "a bright, laughing witch of a half saint half sinner...writing always good compositions and fighting off...Arithmetic lessons" (xii).

Despite her rebellious nature, Sara's compositions did not go unnoticed. While in school, the editor of a local newspaper often stopped by the seminary, asking for "Miss Willis's latest;" additionally, she read proof and wrote articles for *The Recorder*, the United States' first religious newspaper, founded by her father. But although her composition skills excelled, the young Sara never put any thought to her writing as a professional career, returning home in 1830, as she recalled later in life, to "learn the 'Lost Arts' of bread-making and button-hole stitching" (xi).

After several years at home, Sara married Charles Harrington Eldredge in 1837. From this marriage, Sara had three daughters: Mary Stace (1838), Grace Harrington (1841), and Ellen Willis (1844). She lived a brief life of happiness as a mother and wife. But during this time, her youngest sister, Ellen, died of childbirth complications; her mother died around the same time; and then Sara's first born, Mary, died of brain fever. Fern recounted her child's death in her first novel, *Ruth Hall*. The following year, in 1846, Charles died of typhoid fever. His death was followed by a lawsuit in which he lost, and once his creditors had been satisfied, and there were no more funds, Sara had to find a way to support herself and her two children. Her in-laws, who blamed Sara for her predicament, refused to support her. Her father reluctantly contributed some funds, and then urged her to remarry.

At the suggestion of her father, and after trying some feeble attempts at income, Sara entered into “a marriage of convenience” with her second husband, Samuel P. Farrington, in 1849 (32). This marriage proved to be controlling and abusive, and Sara took an unprecedented step in obtaining a divorce in 1851 — a move that shocked her friends and family. Years after, Fern never spoke of Farrington but she did use their marriage as a plot point in one of her novels, *Rose Clark*.

Scandalized by her contemporaries, and after trying her luck at being a seamstress, and then a teacher, Sara found that she could not support her two surviving daughters: Grace and Ellen. Therefore, she was forced to let her first husband’s family, the Eldredge’s, take her elder daughter while she and Ellen lived on a low-income in a boarding home.

In a desperate attempt for income, Sara decided to attempt writing for newspapers. Her first piece, published in the *Olive Branch* in 1851, earned her fifty cents. Encouraged, she sent articles to her older brother who was the editor of the New York *Home Journal*, asking for his help; however, he refused to help his sister. He wrote he was “ashamed to have any editor know that a sister of his had written anything so ‘vulgar’ and ‘indecent’ and advised her to write for the religious papers,” ultimately asking her to change her tone.

Undeterred, and assuming her pen name, Fern persevered and was soon writing several articles a week for the *Olive Branch*, and the *True Flag* for two dollars a column; at two columns for one newspaper and one for the other, she earned six dollars a week. This meant that Sara wrote around five to ten articles a week. In 1852, Fern was

contacted by the *Musical World and Times* with an offer to write exclusively for them, at a higher rate. Two weeks later, Fern's first article appeared under the header: "Fanny Fern's Column." Thus, Fern became the first female columnist in the United States; she would maintain her columnist career for over twenty years.

Devastated at their loss, the *Olive Branch* and the *True Flag* newspapers began to offer an increase in their compensation rate for her columns. In 1853, Fern was presented with an offer from James Derby of the Derby and Miller publishing firm, to publish a collection of her columns with the choice of making ten cents a copy in royalties or one thousand dollars to purchase the copyright. Fern chose to collect the royalties — a wise decision. The collection, titled *Fern Leaves from Fanny's Portfolio*, published in June 1853, sold seventy thousand copies in less than a year; another twenty-nine thousand copies were sold in England (xvi). Later that year, Derby and Miller released a collection for children, *Little Fern's for Fanny's Little Friends*, and in 1854, a second collection of her columns was released: *Fern Leaves*. In 1854, Fern's works had sold a total of 180,000 copies. With the money made from her book, Fern moved from Boston to New York with her youngest daughter Ellen and then reclaimed Grace. After her move, Fern continued to write for the *Musical World and Times* and wrote a brief time for Philadelphia's *Saturday Evening Post*.

In 1854, almost half a decade after she had begun her writing career, the editor of the *True Flag* newspaper, William U. Moulton wrote began a series of articles in his newspaper revealing details about the "secret identity" of the famous columnist, Fanny Fern. Fueled by his anger and loss of Fern's work for his own publication, Moulton's

articles helped put into context the true story behind her first book, *Ruth Hall*, which was based on her own life and whose characters were molded around real life models, and although fictionalized, the characters were easily recognizable once her identity was known. Although the results were devastating for Fern personally, the ridiculing articles helped her book sales increase; sales of *Ruth Hall* climbed to 70,000 copies sold. At the end of her career, Fern would go on to publish two novels, a novella, six collections of columns and three books for children — the sales of which were driven by her popularity and witty writing style.

After her establishment as a successful writer in New York, Fanny Fern, age 44 at the time, married her third and final husband, James Parton, age 33, whom had been her constant — and perhaps earliest — companion, dated back to her days in the editorial offices of her brother, N.P. Willis; he also was the inspiration for one of the characters in her novel, *Ruth Hall*. The two were married on January 5, 1856 after signing a prenuptial agreement “stating that Fanny Fern’s property was hers alone, ultimately to become her children’s” (xviii); a radical move for a woman at the time. Fanny expressed her satisfaction with her newfound independence in a column titled, “My Old Ink-Stand and I.”

Fern was a professional newspaper columnist for twenty-one years, her columns appearing in the *New York Ledger* regularly for sixteen years. Remarkably, her dedication to the paper, her success and to her readers never faltered, seeing that she never missed a contribution (xx). Not even telling her close friends of her impending death, Fern continued to write until the very end. When she lost use of her right arm, she wrote with

her left hand, and “when that became impossible, she dictated her columns to her daughter or her husband” (xx).

Fern died on October 10, 1872 of cancer. As a sign to her extreme dedication, her last column appeared in the *New York Ledger* two days after her death.

Fern’s Legacy

Fern and wrote on numerous topics, however, one of her most unusually insightful topics, for a woman of her time, was that of women and equal rights. For Fern, as noted in her multitude of columns, the world was not lost upon women; it was only a matter of learning how to circumvent the current situation of gender inequality. Fern was not a part of any feminist movement; she was not an active member of the women’s right movement and would not make a speech or attend a meeting until later in life (xxxvi).

Fern’s feminism was practical and was based on her life experience; a source that evoked much of her sarcasm and satire. Yet, she still had “a sympathy for the oppressed and a hatred of injustice that caused her to deal often with social issues” (xxxii).

Despite her sympathies, it was not her advocacy for women’s rights and other social concerns that made Fanny Fern so unique — it was her popularity during her time. Her popularity is attributed to what scholar Joyce Warren refers to as “original style and the vivid rendering of ideas....an ability to give life to the flaws she saw in society” (xxxii). Her writing had a way of stripping others — especially men — of their “grandiose airs and pompous self-complacency,” satirizing “folly and prevention in all facets of life” (xxxii). Fern embraced the idea of an independent woman, not bound by

conventionalities; she resented submissive wives and controlling husbands. She sympathized for women who lived out “treadmill lives” (xxxiii). Fern advocated for women’s careers and education, equal pay, family planning; encouraged women to support one another and pursue new opportunities; utilize divorce when necessary; and deplored the double sexual standard. She is noted as saying that “women must look out for themselves...and refuse to allow themselves to be victimized by the misuse of masculine authority” (xxxiii).

Fanny Fern *lived* her feminism — through her life, her career, her rebelliousness, refusal to conform, and her desire to succeed — as aforementioned, Fern’s feminism was practical. It was this practicality that fueled her creative wit and writing style, gaining her popularity among her readers for several decades. It was notoriety that earned her the title of “our grandmother’s mentor,” but the title truly encompasses what Fanny Fern did; Fern mentored female (and male) readers of the nineteenth-century through making an example of her own opinions, struggles, successes — her own life. It was this “realness” and desire to challenge aspects of society that drove her popularity; and it is for this same reason that I hope to bring Fanny Fern’s writing back into the public’s working memory.

The Act of Remembering

The active dimension of public memory supports a progression towards “a small number of normative and formative texts, places, persons, artifacts, and myths which are meant to be actively circulated and communicated in ever-new presentations and performances” (Assman 100). Essentially, when a society chooses to actively remember

something, they are solidifying the importance of reproducing this said, ‘object of importance,’ instilling it in generation after generation. This places the ‘object of importance’ into a society’s working memory, which “stores and reproduces the cultural capital of a society;” to reach this point of capital, the ‘object of importance’ has undergone an immense process of societal selection, earning it a “lasting place in the cultural working memory of society” (100). Of course, this act of labeling certain ‘objects’ as important enough for preservation within our society is influenced by collective values and dominant opinions. This process is called canonization, which means “‘sanctification’ ...[or]...to endow texts, persons, artifacts, and monuments with a sanctified status...[furthermore]...to set them off from the rest as charged with the highest meaning and value” (100).

Perhaps one of the most easily recognizable forms of active remembrance can be found in the Western Literature canon. Shaped by dominant opinions like that of Hawthorne and Melville, along with support drawn from patriarchal values, the Anglo-American literature tradition is dominated by white, privileged, heterosexual males. It is this domination that reflects what Assman describes as an independent selection of cultural value that has earned duration; one that is “independent of historical change and immune to the ups and downs of social taste...[thus] outly[ing] the generations who have to encounter and reinterpret it anew according to their time” (100). It is this continuation and solidification of the Western Literary Canon that upholds a collective thought that is restricted from the full spectrum of the human condition; this restraint is felt by the conforming values of gendered, racialized, and homophobic norms.

This restriction of the full spectrum of the human condition has not gone unnoticed in contemporary classrooms. In 2016, documented in a news article by Alison Flood, Yale English students petitioned the university's English Department, calling for a "decolonization" of the course. The course requires English students to take two semesters-worth of "major English poets" labeled as "canonical writers," which includes Geoffrey Chaucer, Edmund Spencer, William Shakespeare, and John Milton to name a few. The university defends their course, stating that these author's and their literature "take up questions and problems that resonate throughout the whole of English literature" (Flood). Yale English students disagree, calling for an abolishment of the requirements and asking for the university to "deliberately include literatures relating to gender, race, sexuality, ableism, and ethnicity" (Flood). A Yale student, Adriana Miele, wrote a column in the school newspaper addressing the English requirements, asking students to question why these author's and their literature is considered canonical. In that column, she criticized the foundations of the course:

Students 'are not taught to question why it is canonical, or the implications of canonical works that actively oppress and marginalise non-white, non-male, trans and queer people ... It is possible to graduate with a degree in English language and literature by exclusively reading the works of (mostly wealthy) white men. Many students do not read a single female author in the two foundational courses for the major. This department actively contributes to the erasure of history,'" Miele wrote (Flood).

To further strengthen the argument for a more diverse literary canon, VIDA, a New York-based organization for Women in Literary Arts, released a 2016 count of writers featured in dozens of literary journals and periodicals across the world, and found

that the authors represented, and the critics evaluating those authors, are two-thirds male. This is certainly not news as for the last several decades, white male authors have been the center focus of the literary canonical. Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar argue for the struggle of women to find an equivalent scaffold to stand on while presenting their writing in their own research:

Women who did not repeat into angelic silence seem at first to have had very limited options. On one hand, they could accept...writing in 'lesser' genres - children's books, letters, diaries - or limiting their readership to 'mere women like themselves'...on the other hand, they could become male...mimics who disguised their identities of bad faith and inauthenticity....[but] the most successful women writers often seem to have channeled their female concerns into secret or at least obscure corners. In effect, such women have created submerged meanings, meanings hidden within or behind the more accessible, 'public' content of their works (Gilbert and Gubar 71-72).

A selective canon that institutes active remembrance in the form of white, privileged, heterosexual men, cemented by values that stand stereotypical and prejudice towards writers who do not fit into this discriminatory category, does not leave room for other writers' voices to be heard. As Gilbert and Gubar highlight in their research, women's works were considered "less socially acceptable" (73). And as Emily Dickinson, one of the few women to have a completed archive placing her in the webs of public memory, remarks on her own (and in turn, women's) writing states that "[women's texts must] tell all the truth, but tell it slant" (73). Like the women that Gilbert and Gubar are defending, Fern found herself slanted, torn between her femininity and the classification of her writing. Although her writing was considered noteworthy for her time, gaining praise from critics, her peers, and readers, Fern was often told that her

writing rendered masculinity because she took “a strong independent stance and was not afraid to say what she thought” (Warren xxxvi). It was this classification that gained attention for her direct, straightforward writing style which offered criticisms of nineteenth-century America. But even though Fern was able to traverse into the realm of masculine writing, having earned herself notoriety from other successful male writers like Hawthorne, she still wrote from the *perspective of a woman*. And it was this perspective that allowed her writing to easily fall into the category of active forgetting. The perspective of a woman was considered menial and thus it was easy for society to forget that which has been labeled as having no value. To carry the label of acceptable erasure upon one’s name simply because she is a woman is perhaps why her writing disappeared from America’s literature.

In order to move forward with my insertion of Fern into the realm of public memory, first, a distinction must be made between my attempt to preserve Fanny Fern’s writing in the public working memory, and the institution of Fern’s work in the current literary canon. With the idea of ‘scribbling women’ dominating the nineteenth-century public realm, the academic realm wasn’t that different in its treatment of female writers. ‘Feminine’ works were not widely considered of importance in academia, evident in the lack of women writers present in early academic anthologies or their utilization in present-day college classrooms. Even scholar Joyce Warren acknowledges in her research that Fern’s work, in particular, has remained out of print for over a hundred years and has been absent from anthologies and college syllabi up to the present day. As mentioned before, the first and only time I have heard mention of Fanny Fern was in a

college classroom, during a course focused specifically on nineteenth-century American women writers.

After Fern died in 1872, her words seemed to die with her — entering into the realm of the public's passive, archival memory. It is not clear when exactly her work was forgotten but a focus on academic analysis and revival of her work doesn't appear until the end of the 19th century, largely focused around the 1990s. This revival effort was more than likely apart of the feminist scholar movement to preserve the works of numerous women writers which in turn, led to Fern's work reaching some classroom syllabi and curriculum. An anthology of one of Fern's books, *Ruth Hall*, and a collection of her columns wasn't completed until 1996, compiled by scholar, Joyce Warren — but Fern has yet to receive a complete anthology of her work in its entirety.

Even the recent academic recognition of Fern's work, as described by Warren, hasn't been widespread, and furthermore, this redemption has only taken place minimally in academia. But despite academia's effort to reinstate Fern and other women writers "cosigned to oblivion" from the Western literary canon (Warren xxxvii), efforts to reach beyond the classroom into the sphere of public memory are rarely successful.

Public knowledge of a various, few nineteenth-century women authors is a curious oddity. Given that so many women authors have met erasure - briefly or permanently - from the public sphere, it is interesting to observe which women authors have survived the act of active remembrance of the male literary canon. But when one takes into account the logic of 'scribbling women' and the theory of public memory which theorizes what knowledge the masses retain and repeat, the selection of women

writers who have been noted for their works and who live on in the public memory seem to be completely arbitrary. Some women writers are remembered while others are forgotten. Why? We can look to active remembrance for that answer.

One of the best examples of active remembrance and in turn, the male canon being challenged by a woman author is that of British writer Virginia Woolf, who was born ten years after the death of American author Fanny Fern in 1872. Woolf is an example of a woman author who, transversing countries, is widely-known on an academic and a public basis — even if just by name. Woolf's contribution on the literary timeline places her at the height of modernism in which more and more women were dismissed for their feminine writing; but Woolf was exempt from this dismissal because of her strong masculine style, similar to that of Fern. Instituting ideas of active remembrance, Woolf began to write and speak in a time in which feminism had gained — or forced — its place into the public's working memory. Although Fern's writing and ideas were well beyond her years, advocating for women's rights among other things, it was this advancement in her perspective as a pro-feminist that allowed her writing to be dismissed; there was not a place for her in the public's working memory at the time. Granted, Fern began her career as a columnist only a few years after Seneca Falls in which 300 women and men signed a plea to end discrimination against women in all spheres of society (National Women's History Project); but in 1866, only a few years before Fern's death, the U.S. Congress passed the 14th amendment defining "citizens" and "voters" as "male" in the U.S. Constitution thus losing ground on the fight for gender equality. During this same time in Britain, the London Society for Women's Suffrage is

formed (Manchester). This context shows the marginalization of feminist perspectives during the time when Fern was writing. Female rebellion against gendered norms and their fight for gender equality was in its early stages, perhaps best exemplified in the United States women's suffragist movement for the right to vote. It was only two years before Fern's death that U.S. Congress ratified the 15th Amendment which didn't specifically exclude women from the right to vote, but didn't specifically support the idea either, stating that the right to vote could not be denied "on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude." After Fern's death and before the birth of Woolf, the U.S. Supreme Court, in 1875, declared women as "persons" but held that they constitute a "special category of non-voting citizens." Women from both the U.S. and Britain, continued their fight for gender equality, pursuing the right to vote, the right to a voice. Women were not specifically granted the right to vote until 1920, when the 19th Amendment was ratified stating: "The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex;" women of England gained the right to vote in 1918.

With this surge of activism for women's rights, the first wave of feminism is considered to have begun in the nineteenth century, with the term first being coined by a French utopian socialist, Charles Fourier, and first used in English in 1890s, in "association with the movement for equal political and legal rights for women" (Feminism). The first wave of feminism is defined as occurring in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, with "[focus] primarily on gaining legal rights, political power and suffrage for women." With the establishment of this term, defined by the pursuit of

women's equality, the idea of feminism was forced into the public's working memory as it became a collective value among many women, finding its place in the active remembrance of many. Born into this active movement was Virginia Woolf, who is recognized in *The Rhetorical Tradition* as a foremother in the work of women's rhetoric, emulating a feminist stance "against the social, political, and economic forces that discouraged women's writing" (1200). I would argue that Fanny Fern, who composed her work decades before Woolf, has equally earned her own place as a foremother of women's rhetoric. After all, Woolf emphasized "the importance for women to connect with the work of earlier women writers" (1200). But despite Fern's early contributions to this growing movement of women's rights, it is curious to observe how much attention readers and feminists alike have granted to the works of Woolf and how little has been given to Fern. Like Woolf, Fern has a writing style owed to that of her own experiences and reflections, a style that is noted as different from a "logical or linear or hierachal" approach, often referred to as the "male mode"; instead, this style, or the female argument, "enacts a 'skeptical feminism' through carnivalesque attacks on pompous and oppressive male-maintained social structures" (1248). Woolf's writing style is described as "not aggressive or agonistic, but rather light and charming; at the same time, she carefully builds up a position to support her point of view [as] she often relies on personal experience for evidence" (1248). Fern's writing style is strikingly similar to Woolf's, as she approaches her reader with charm, all the while satirically criticizing the social injustice set upon women during her time.

Woolf's own ideas solidify why Fern should be recognized for her pioneering work in the field of women's rhetoric. In a speech titled "Professions for Women" delivered to a branch of the National Society for Women's Service, Woolf encourages women to ignore societal limits and be who they wish to be and do what they desire. Woolf acknowledges that "many famous women, and many more unknown and forgotten have been before [her], making the path smooth, and regulating [her] steps" so that when she began to write, "very few material obstacles [were] in [her] way" (1253). As a writer, Woolf speaks of "ridding herself of falsehood" and only being true to herself, in addition to "telling the truth about [her] own experiences" (1254-1255); these actions were not only emulated in Woolf's England-based writings of the twentieth century, but were also executed in Fern's nineteenth-century columns, based across the Atlantic, in the United States.

Another likeness attributed to the two women authors is that of their nonfiction work, which until very recently "scholarship has virtually ignored" (1248); although Woolf still attracts more attention to her work than does Fern. In an effort to strengthen my argument that some women writers such as Woolf, have gained more prominence in the public's working memory while others, like Fern, have long been forgotten. — and for my argument's sake, I will also deem Woolf and Fern as female rhetors.

I conducted a survey, questioning several individuals of varying age, educational background, and gender. I asked the question: "Do you know who Fanny Fern is?" The survey was presented as follows:

Even if just by name, do you know who Fanny Fern is? Y / N How?

Even if just by name, do you know who Virginia Woolf is? Y / N How?

Age _____ Gender _____

Highest Level of Education Completed _____

Figure 1.5 Survey Questions

This survey (e.g. Fig 1.5) was conducted on an online medium, SurveyMonkey, and was shared on my own, personal Facebook. As a disclaimer, I have not broadcasted my research interests nor have I shared any information about Fanny Fern or Virginia Woolf via my Facebook page so the validity of the knowledge that these respondents have (or do not have) about these female writers remains true. The survey was set up to receive answers from participants anonymously and the questions of age, gender, and highest education completed were optional. Most answers were multiple choice, while age and how participants might know of one author or another were formatted as question boxes. To my pleasant surprise, I received answers from 51 participants, and most of those participants answered every question. All 51 participants answered all questions with the exception of one ‘skip’ on the education question and 2 ‘skips’ on the age question. With these high participation numbers, my survey provides an interesting view on the original hypothesis that some women rhetors, such as Woolf, have gained more prominence in the public’s working memory while others, like Fern, have long been forgotten. The following graphs demonstrate the data I received:

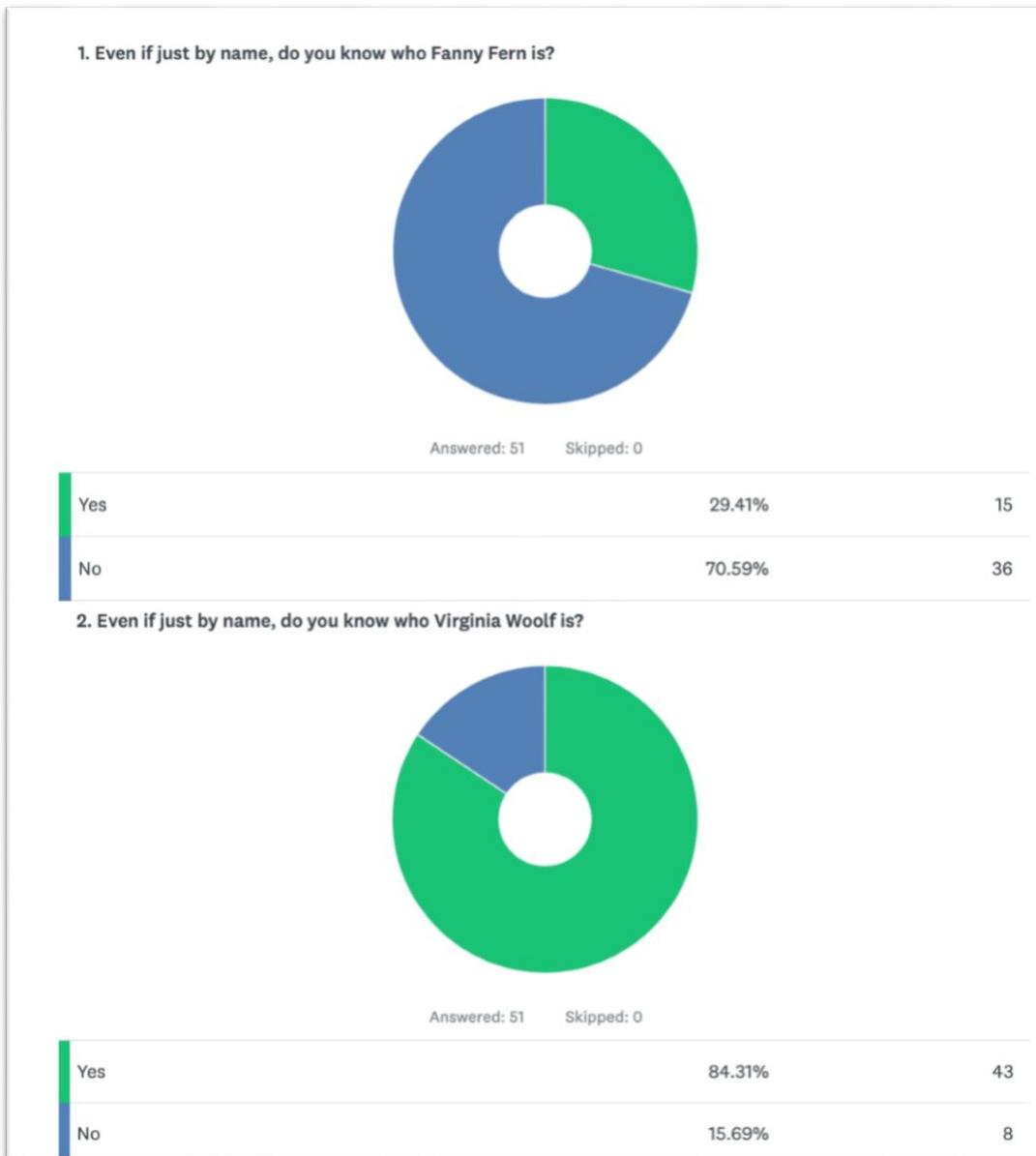


Figure 1.6 Results of Survey Questions 1 & 2

As predicted, the survey results immediately reflected that writers such as Virginia Woolf have found their place within the public's active, working memory while rhetors like Fern — even with her satirical wit and style — have subsided into the public's passive, archival memory. The survey revealed that a staggering 70 percent of

survey participants answered that they did not know who Fanny Fern is, but 84 percent of those participants knew who Virginia Woolf is. Why is this? Why have women of this caliber, calling attention to social injustices done to women in such a charming and cleverly critical way, been ignored for so long? The demographics of my survey recipients might be revealing to that question.

After recipients answered the yes/no questions regarding Virginia Woolf and Fanny Fern, they were then asked to answer, via a comment box, how they know of one or both authors. All 51 participants provided some form of an answer. The results are as follows:

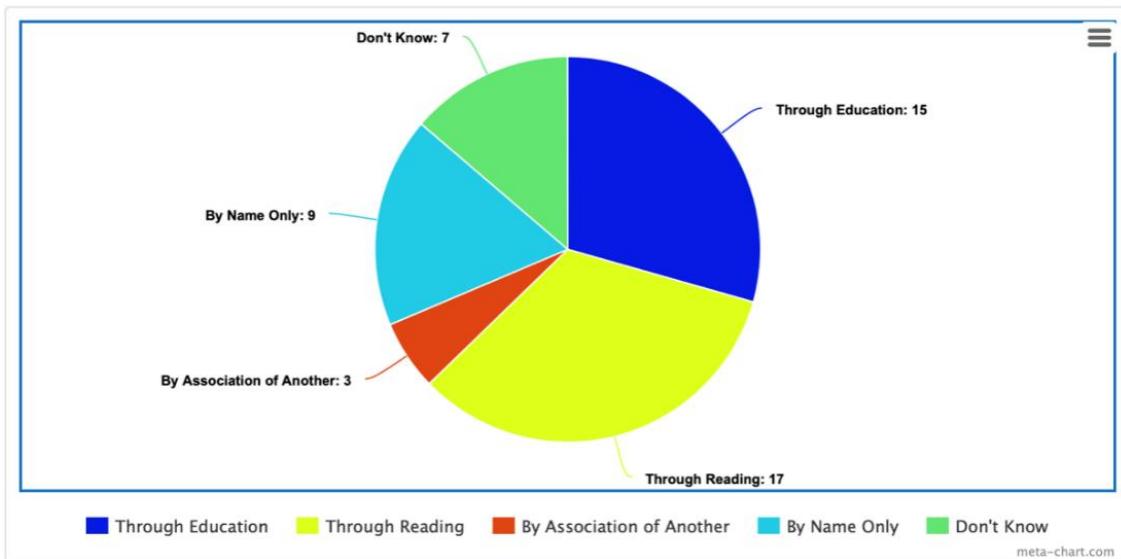


Figure 1.7 Survey Results

Again, the results of “how” a survey participant had knowledge of the one or both authors was presented in the form of a comment box so participants had a free avenue to express how they possessed (or did not possess) knowledge of either Virginia Woolf or

Fanny Fern. I categorized the responses based on a few rules: 1) if the participant had any of the following words in their answer, their answer was automatically placed in the education category: *school, college, high school, class, course*; 2) any mention of a book or reading (isolated from education terms), was placed in the reading category. Some of the answers which qualified for this category also mentioned in the answers referring to Virginia Woolf was a movie or play in addition to the book as a source of knowledge. A third point was also noted from the survey results in that interestingly enough, there were some answers which stated that they did not know either author, which then placed them in that corresponding category, while others specifically stated that they did not know of Fanny Fern. Some specific responses from survey participants are as follows:

Respondent 4 (age 21): I am honestly not familiar with either of the authors listed.

Respondent 19 (age 68): Fanny Fern, I'm not sure, but I know the name... Woolf, from college English, read her books, know the play, etc.

Respondent 9 (age 42): Only have heard of Fanny. Studied Virginia Woolf in college.

The responses listed are best representative of the variety of answers I received from this survey. It can be observed from these three responses alone that the majority of respondents who had any knowledge whatsoever of one or both authors received that knowledge *from education*. This observation can also be observed in the pie chart representing participant's answers (e.g. see fig. 3). Again, I categorized any answer that was void of educational terms into the "through reading" category however, it is safe to assume that those participants gained that knowledge through reading, *though*

educational means. If this assumption is made, then we can observe that over half of the participants gained their knowledge through education.

With the survey's participants in mind, their knowledge or lack thereof regarding Virginia Woolf and Fanny Fern, I return to my original hypothesis: the focus of academia is shaped by the values and focus of the public realm and in turn, it is this discussion of public concern that leads academic syllabi to be constructed by dominant civic issues.

Thus, solidifying the active, working memory of the public realm, academia supports what society has already solidified as its valued focus: male dominance. Now, these results do not reflect recent “public concern” such as female empowerment, the #MeToo movement, etc. which have generated a response through academic means, thus the public seems to be making a gradual turn towards finding a place for authors that are not typically found in the active canon. For example, I first read Virginia Woolf in an undergraduate, theory class and the topic of that specific week was feminist theory.

Additionally, I first read Fanny Fern during a course centered around female authors, with a Women and Gender Studies slant. However, my survey results simple reflect the absence of a variety of female author knowledge and solidify that the knowledge of certain female authors — like Woolf — have found their way into the active, male-dominated canon because of the timing of their social-positioning and “push-back.” I am simply arguing that a rhetor such as Fanny Fern should be actively remembered in the public’s working memory, as her words still have relevancy in today’s society and through the survey results, it is clear that the public does not know who Fanny Fern is.

Perhaps this lack of knowledge also has to do with certain demographic factors like gender, age, and education level — since an educational setting is where I first hypothesized an individual would hear and/or learn of one or both female rhetors. The gender of the survey participants is as follows:

5. Gender (optional):

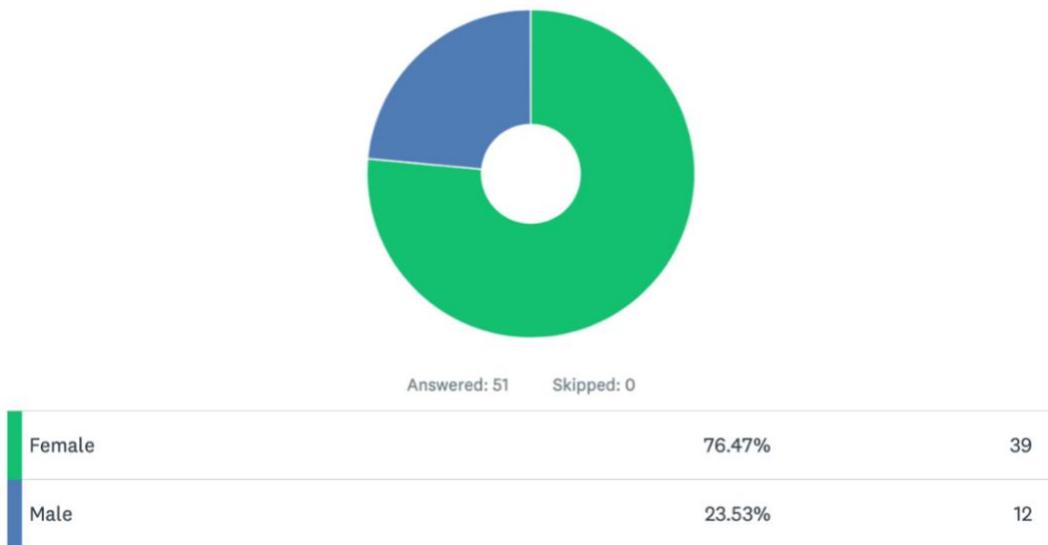


Figure 1.8 Survey Demographics “Gender”

It can be observed that almost 80 percent of survey respondents were female (e.g. fig. 4). Why is this important? We must take into account that gender both determines and influence the association within which we operate in the world. And in an effort to explore all areas of why my survey received a majority response from females, I will explore two possibly, significant factors in relation to gender, gender association, and social media use.

In a sense, these survey results, with the influence of gender in mind, remind me of a theory regarding children's literature in that the "bias towards tales that feature men and boys as lead characters" contribute to how "children understand what is expected of women and men, and shape the way children will think about their own place in the world" (ScienceDaily). In referencing a sociology experiment performed at the University of Florida that was published in a 2011 edition of *Gender & Society*, a study was conducted of nearly 6,000 books published from 1900 to 2000. The study found that "males are central characters in 57 percent of children's books published per year, while only 31 percent have female central characters" (ScienceDaily). Furthermore, children's books are "a 'dominant blueprint of shared cultural values, meanings, and expectations,'" therefore, the disparity between male and female character-presence in children's books generates the "message that 'women and girls occupy a less important role in society than men or boys'"(ScienceDaily).

Taking a cue from this study, one could hypothesize that because of gender female students resonate more with an author, theorist, rhetor of their own gender. Therefore, perhaps in this survey, the female participants remembered Woolf — if only by name — because she is a female; this assumption, however, seems to uphold a binary of gender that I do not wish my survey to reflect. But I feel that the association of gender itself is certainly worth considering.

The overwhelming response from women survey participants could possibly have a correlation with social media users. My survey was available via a social media platform and this medium alone could have shaped my participant's demographics.

However, The *Business Insider* did conduct a study on social media demographics in 2017 and found that “in the US market, gender, income, and education level have little impact on whether an individual has adopted social networking as an activity...age *does* remain a factor” (Gallagher). However, a Pew Research Study in 2016 did determine that “women continue to use Facebook at somewhat higher rates than men” but only by a slight margin with 83 percent of female internet users and 75 percent of male internet users that are Facebook adopters (Greenwood). Given that this survey was shared on Facebook, perhaps the observable increase of women utilizing this particular social medium is why my survey experienced a dominant-female response.

The margins between women and men from the 2016 social media gender study are not that significant in my own opinion, which leads me to feel inclined that association played a strong role in not just the respondents’ recollection of the female writers, but possibly led to their participation as a whole in the survey — although my social media post which contained the link to the survey simply stated that I needed to gather some information for my thesis project without providing specific details as to what the survey would be about.

Regardless of the overwhelming female response and the factors that might have influenced such demographics, twelve of the survey respondents were men and their individual results were intriguing. Out of those 12 men, four stated that they *did* know who Fanny Fern was. When looking at these particular men’s demographics, all four men attributed their knowledge to education. Interestingly enough, the highest level of education completed by two of those men was high school, while the other two

completed a higher education degree. In contrast, there were two other male respondents who completed a higher education degree but stated that they only knew who Virginia Woolf was. Additionally, three of those 12 men did not possess any knowledge of either female author. Aside from these three, the rest of the male respondents had some knowledge of female authors (with Virginia Woolf as the most recognizable) and attributed this knowledge to education or reading with a wide variety of education levels.

The male respondents' answers coincide with the idea that the active canon of the public's working memory is certainly present within academia, especially given that more than half of the male respondents *did* have knowledge of Virginia Woolf. It also makes us, as scholars, ask questions related to academia and at what stage of education should a student learn about certain influential figures? Or maybe we should question at what point in academia do we, as scholars, strive to disassociate with the atypical projection of the active, male-dominated canon onto our malleable students' minds? Perhaps instead, we should seek-out new voices, and fresh words to incorporate into our syllabi, breaking free from the stale, dried pages of canonical works.

It can be observed (e.g. fig 1.9) that survey respondents' education levels provided a diverse sample from a multitude of educational backgrounds:

6. Highest Level of Education Completed (optional):

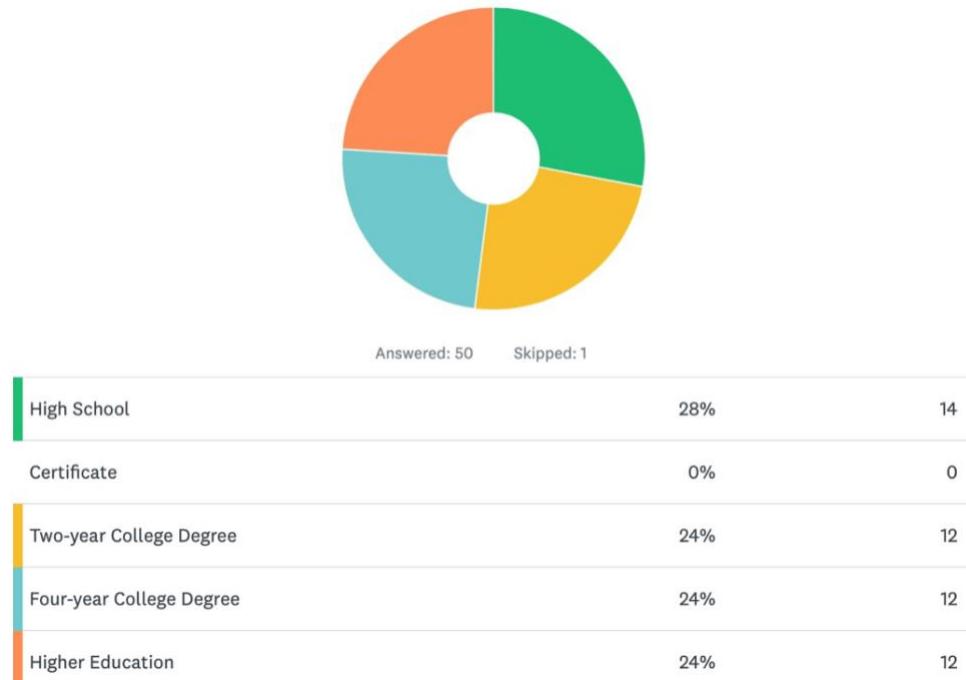


Figure 1.9 Survey Demographics “Level of Education”

With this type of variety, (even with one respondent skipping this question) I can safely assume that all educational levels were represented which then further validates the absence of Fanny Fern’s active remembrance in the canon. What this also tells me, given the correlation between survey respondents and their knowledge of at least one author, is that recognition and remembrance of female authors is strongly correlated with education. Additionally, survey respondents represented a wide variety of ages:

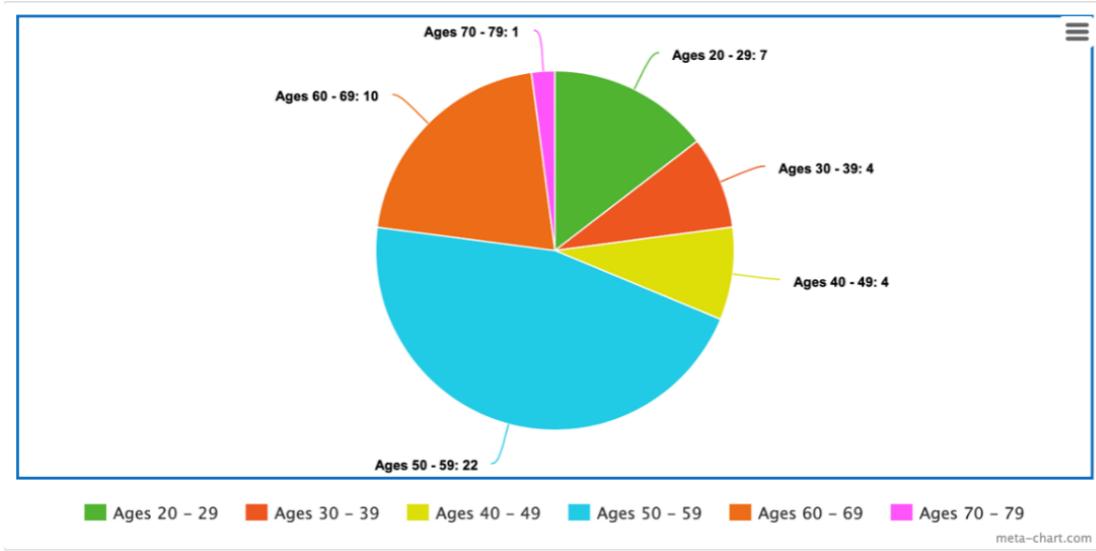


Figure 1.10 Survey Demographics “Age”

In comparing respondents’ knowledge of Fanny Fern to their age, I first analyzed the largest, represented group: ages 50-59 (e.g. fig 1.10). This age group was of high school and college education age around 40 years ago, which places them in the 1980s. That was 10 years before scholars’ feminist revival efforts of women writers’ work, such as that of Fanny Fern. Of this group, the ratio of respondents that had knowledge of Fanny Fern versus those that had no knowledge of her is 5:6. This ratio is almost even in knowledge versus lack of knowledge. However, as the respondents’ ages decreased, so did their knowledge of Fanny Fern:

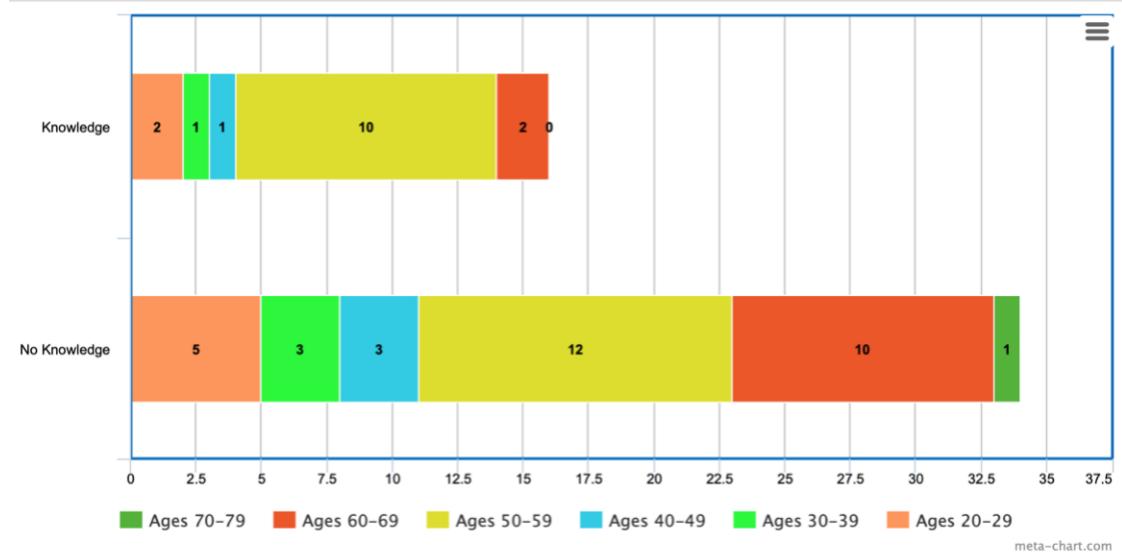


Figure 1.11 Survey Answers “Knowledge of Fanny Fern”

It can be observed (e.g. fig. 1.11) that the number of respondents who have no knowledge of Fanny Fern is always a larger number than those who do possess knowledge of her. The largest gap of knowledge vs. no knowledge appears in respondents ages 20-29 (ratio of 2:5) and ages 60-69 (ratio of 1:5). The latter group would be almost two decades before the feminist movement to revive female writers’ work, so this number is not surprising. However, ages 20-29 also expressed a lack of knowledge in regards to Fanny Fern with a ratio 2:5 but *did* express a knowledge of Virginia Woolf with a ratio of 6:1.

The gap between knowledge and no knowledge of Fanny Fern seems to increase with the younger the age of the respondent. What is alarming about this number, is that respondents ages 20-29 expressed no knowledge of Fanny Fern but their age group

places their childhood right in the middle of the feminist revival effort. In theory, this group should have a better knowledge of female authors but instead, the results speak otherwise.

The knowledge (of lack thereof) of Fanny Fern among respondents can be observed as decreasing over the years, starting somewhere around the 1980s (based on respondents ages 50-59; see fig. 7). This trend also coincides with my assertion of active and passive public memory, questioning what types of writers and what texts have been engrained into the public's working memory, and what writers have been lost to the passive, archival memory?

Even more so, the survey results solidify three things: (1) According to the survey results, education is the most likely place for an individual to receive any knowledge of female writers; (2) There is an alarming correlation between younger generations and a lack of knowledge of Fanny Fern, despite feminist scholars' revival efforts; (3) Given that the first bullet point is true, how does feminist recovery efforts such as the revival of Fanny Fern's work reach beyond academia, and engage with the public's working memory? With these three points in mind, I will first examine the active canon in academia.

Finding the Active Canon in Academia

For those who do have knowledge of a sufficient amount of women authors, it is most likely the cause of a university English class. I use the word 'sufficient' because we cannot say that as academics, we naturally learn about a vast amount of women

authorship in the classroom without doing our own ‘extra’ research. Outside of the classroom, we must ask ourselves why women authors like Virginia Woolf, for example, might hold prevalence over other women writers in the public realm. Again, I argue that public memory functions as a “perpetual interaction between remembering and forgetting” (Assman 97). As Assman explains in her work: “memory capacity is limited by neural and cultural constraints such as focus and bias” (97). The focus of society at the time of Fern’s work was not on feminism, or women’s rights. To return to the historical facts, around the time of Fern’s death, women had still not gained the legal status as “persons;” women’s contributions to the literary canon were considered of no value, and ultimately were lost to the depths of actively forgotten depots. When Woolf was born, at the break of the 1900s, the movement of feminism was on the rise and had gained significant public notice; a collective identity had been formed among women suffragettes, one that forced its place in the working memory of society.

Of course, on the topic of academia and the ways in which both Fern and Woolf are taught in a college classroom, I would argue that the focus of academia is shaped by the values and focus of the public realm. The academy itself is a public realm because of its inhabitants, which begin their life influenced and shaped by the discourse of the public’s working memory. In her work, Zelda F. Gamson offers a similar viewpoint: “it is unequivocally clear that colleges and universities provide ‘public space’ for citizens and organizations to meet on neutral ground to learn about and discuss issues *of public concern*” (4; added emphasis). It is this discussion of public concern that leads academic syllabi to be constructed by dominant civic issues. Thus, in the aforementioned example

of the male-dominated literary canon, academia is merely supporting what society has already solidified as its valued focus: male dominance. Is this correct? No. Is this fair?

No. But it is simply a repercussion of active remembrance which is influenced by public value; therefore, the upheld canonical of male-dominated texts is placed in a “constant interaction” with the realm of academia, “keep[ing] them in active circulation and maintain[ing] for this small segment of the past a continuous presence” (Assman 100). Although Woolf may have gained more prominence in the public memory due to her contribution to the literary canon at a time when feminism was on the rise, writers like herself and Fern are still women, and are still battling the mindset that a woman’s voice is of no value, and still challenging that that voice deserves to be heard. I am not alone in this idea. Academics, such as the Yale English students who petitioned their English department, are calling for a change in the unbalanced scale of the western literary canon.

In the words of scholar Cary Nelson, we must consider how "the literary and social history we promulgated as sufficient [has] in fact suppressed an immense amount of writing of great interest, vitality, subtlety, and complexity.... Literary history [has] thus told a selective story substantially constituted by its cultural presuppositions and restricted by its ideological filters" (5-6). With Nelson's quote in mind, we as scholars must ask ourselves what voices we might want to uncover, what voices would create a balance in the otherwise unbalanced literary canon. Furthermore, as an academic pursuing this challenge, what ideological assumptions will be revealed in these recovered

texts and voices, and how might we present these recovered texts in a way that remains true to their message?

Here, we can revisit Fern and her misconstrued phrase: “the straightest road to a man’s heart is through his palate.” Overtime, and without the proper context of her pro-feminist column, this phrase was transformed into a chauvinistic stab at women who attempted to gain a voice, beginning its usage in early advertisements and evolving into an internet meme. So perhaps Fern’s misconstrued quotation can be attributed to a lack of public access to Fanny Fern and her work. Without access, it is hard for one to understand the true context of a person or quotation. Beyond the canonical focus, access to texts ultimately determines what literature an individual may read or the context to which they understand a text or phrase. And in turn, the focus of the Anglo-American literature tradition can determine that access provided to the public.

Creating Access and Redirecting the Active Remembrance of Women’s Writing

The challenge of recovering a voice from the distant past and upholding the validity of the message all while battling the male-dominated canon held in place by systems of active remembrance can be challenging at best — but the attempt is necessary. The effort to actively preserve women’s writing has been a mute point until the last few decades. Although multiple efforts are underway, far too few of women have completed archives and even fewer are well-known in the public’s working memory. This epiphany struck a movement among feminist scholars and fueled their attempts to preserve the

works of numerous women writers; perhaps one of the most notable attempts is *The Women Writers Project*, whose effort of archival preservation began in 1988.

Archives have found a new role in academia; aside from research, archives have become pedagogical. *The Women Writers Project* (WWP), for example, brings together the work of scholars, archivists and technologists “to consider the role of traditional and digital archives in the study and teaching of early modern women’s writing” (Wernimont 425). And with this turn of the century revelation to preserve women’s writing came the adoption of new scholarly methods of providing scholarly and public access to women’s writing: the adoption of the digital humanities.

Digital humanities highlight the efforts of substantial change among feminist, literary and rhetorical scholarship (among others), to adapt and shift into the digital and technological world. Taking into account the limitations and exclusions of active remembrance, the “push-back” that is created by this shift in the humanities has the potential to transverse the repercussions caused by actively forgetting; that is, to embrace the ripples caused by active remembrance.

Additionally, this shift addresses challenges of access and the lack thereof; a challenge that has long impeded both scholarly and public knowledge of many erased women writers’ works. As the world we live in is ever-changing, so does our understanding and utilization of the tools that the digital realm may provide us. Access, and in turn, ease of access are essential components of preservation and active remembrance, and the challenges long prevented by lack of access can now be alleviated through the implementation of a digital archive.

An archive can function as a stem of active remembrance in which works are collected by various scholars and other contributors in an effort to insert these writers and their text into the public's working memory. In turn, a digital archive can provide a wide access in a continuously-evolving, digital world, thus having the potential to expand cultural memory by providing access to a collection of texts so that future generations can not only learn from past writers, but utilize and grow from their past knowledge, especially when it applies to current and future situations.

A digital archive is much like an artifact, defined by Merriam-Webster Dictionary as "a showing of human workmanship or modification" (Merriam-Webster); therefore, think of a digital archive as a showing of human workmanship that has become or is created to be digitalized. A digital archive can allow for literary works, thoughts, theories, and knowledge to be collectively placed on an all-access, free, online database, which provides current and future generations transferrable knowledge that past generations may have found relevant (or irrelevant). Or perhaps, a digital archive may be used for the preservation of ideologies; ideals that are important to highlight throughout the generations because they should not be forgotten.

This preservation of ideologies would function in a collection of works displayed as just that, without providing any slant or suggestion of thought. The purpose of this would be what Stephan Ramsay and Geoffrey Rockwell relay in their research:

A digital artifact that transparently shows you something else might convey knowledge, but it doesn't intervene as an explanation or argument; it recedes from view before that which is represented....A second way to think of digital artifacts as theories would be to think of them as hermeneutical instruments through which

we can interpret other phenomena. Digital artifacts like tools could then be considered as ‘telescopes for the mind’ that show us something in a new light (Ramsay and Rockwell).

The thought that a digital archive could provide a “telescope for the mind” — a telescope that would essentially glimpse into the past — is a method of active remembrance that we as scholars should not dismiss. Scholarly preservation cannot ignore the vast possibility of digitization both in attempts to breakdown the current literary cannon and to preserve and remember new authors who have too long been forgotten. However, as digital possibilities expand and grow, one cannot forget the efforts of archival memory before digitization.

Here I will acknowledge the work of one departed scholar, Joyce Warren, a recent professor of American literature and Director of Women’s Studies at Queens College, at the City University of New York. Warren, a Fanny Fern specialist in her own right, has done a vast amount of research on the early American writer. In fact, she compiled and edited the collection, *Ruth Hall and Other Writings* by Fanny Fern, compiled of multiple articles and one book by the author, which served as a heavy resource in my own research. Additionally, she authored *Fanny Fern: An Independent Woman*. Although I never received the opportunity to speak with Warren, as she passed away in late 2017, I do want to attribute the early archival work she completed. Warren contributed to a monumental step of archival preservation through her attempts to transparently present Fern’s writing in a 90s publication. Unlike that of the work of The Women’s Writer Project, which is in current pursuits to preserve the writing of pre-Victorian English women, Warren set out to preserve one women’s voice; a voice that was actively

forgotten but Warren saw that it was important enough to preserve. As one reviewer wrote in the L.A. Times: “[Warren] resurrects this fascinating figure and explains her obscurity as an outcome of society's resistance “to the aggressive assertions of the female voice” (Gingold).

Feminist scholars, like Warren and the WWP, spent the 1980s and 1990s attempting to recover forgotten women writers. And the stronghold that is the current literary canon seems to magnify the negativity of the public’s current working memory. When returning to Aleida Assman’s work on Cultural Memory, it is evident that the canon is kept alive by continuous repetition and practice as it is “not built up anew by every generation... [but instead] outlives the generations who have to encounter and reinterpret it anew according to their time” (Assman 100). And this active canon is manifested in the white, male-dominated canon that we teach in our colleges and institutions, reflective of a public working memory controlled by patriarchal dominance. Therefore, if we expect the public’s working memory to reflect anything other than this dominated canon, perhaps it is important to acknowledge that those feudal attempts by feminist scholars in the 80s and 90s are remembered, but not actively. Their scholarly efforts at preservation were stunted by the barriers that were built around them; and “virtually all of the dozens of writers they reclaimed...never made it out of academia’s cloistered walls and into the public consciousness” (Riox).

Although the idea of a redirected active cultural memory can be thought of as a beneficial concept in remembering forgotten women writers, the current scholarship reflects a rather dismal view. If active cultural memory represents the canon then passive

cultural memory represents the archive, a tool “halfway between the canon and forgetting” (Assman 102). Assman continues:

According to a famous statement by Foucault, the archive is ‘the law that determines what can be said.’ To bring this statement closer to the level of empirical institutions, it can be rephrased in the following way: The archive is the basis of what can be said in the future about the present when it will have become the past (102).

Assman uses her analysis of passive cultural memory and the archive to frame the power of the empirical, and the tension between the two opposite poles — the canon and the archive. Essentially, the canon represents an array of selected texts presented with “existential meaning and framing it with an aura” while the other pole, the archive, aims to destroy that aura (102). The opposite poles are forever in contention with one another, pushing and pulling for the label of societal importance. To frame this idea more closely with my research, the academic canon which in turn, shapes the public working memory, has set its aura around white, male authors. This canon then respectively consists of the literature we teach, praise, and read as members of society; the knowledge that we retain. This practice of upholding the canon is repeated from generation to generation as we solidify its importance in academia, the media, and other forms of canonical expression. On the contrary, the opposite pole of the archive, with its collection of texts that are displaced from this public aura of importance are there, in the not-too-far distance, being collected and stored for the day when the public’s working memory turns its blind-eye aside from the reverence of the male-dominated canonical, in curious search of a voice that has been repressed.

Of course, this is where the importance of digital archives, their attempt at transparent preservation, and revival of lost texts are crucial. An attempt similar to the work of *The Women Writers' Project* (WWP); but even this project is not without its own repercussions. What is most intriguing about the efforts of the WWP, is the carefully-constructed “points of pressure” that the organization considers within its work. These pressure points include the digital shifts in technology that have created anxiety among some scholars who fear that texts reproduced in this way might lose their validity; careful and restrictive use of the terms ‘new’ and ‘innovative’ when referring to digital archival work, which colludes the work and efforts of previous archivists; and complicating the ideas of access, which makes us as scholars ask, “is inclusion enough to bring these texts into cultural view” (Wernimont 426)?

While a collection of women’s works is clearly still necessary to help make women’s contributions visible, we need to consider if this archive of women’s writing constitutes a simple “additive approach,” as well as whether and to what degree it resolves the issues around systematic exclusion” (497).

For my own research purposes, I feel that a digital archive provides the creation of access, while also highlighting and creating a space for Fern’s work within the public’s working memory. And while I will never use the terms “new” or “innovative” to compare my own research with the work of other archivists before me (such as the work of Joyce W. Warren), I will advocate for humanities’ shift to the digital realm in an effort to reinstate Fern, along with many other writers whose texts are bound to material formatting, and their relevance to present day topics.

In review, I return to my own research questions in which I asked why the context of Fern's quote was shaped to support gendered stereotypes, and thus, why was Fern herself forgotten? I reason that Fern's writing was a threat to the active canon. Her own writing was actively forgotten because it could arguably be seen as a taboo to the gender construction of nineteenth-century American life. And it is this resistance to the active canon that would call for her work to not only be actively forgotten, but for it to be actively restructured to meet gendered norms.

It is for this reason that I have deemed the writings of America's first woman columnist, Fanny Fern, as influential, thus gaining her a crucial spot in the preservation of America's literary canon. Fern was a pioneer in America's early feminist movement although she is not widely credited for doing so. Her journalism career sparked the notion of opinionated women being observers of their surroundings, generating thoughts and opinions that can move and shape the world as equivalently as their male counterparts. And interestingly enough, her 19th-century work is still relevant in today's society given its current focus on women empowerment and equality in society.

Bringing Fern into the Modern; The Voice We Need to Hear

As outspoken as Fern was in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, and after unveiling her true identity in 1855 to her readers, Fern continued to write under the name "Fanny Fern." Her friends called her Fanny Fern; her husband (at the time) called her Fanny, and all of her works were published under that name (Warren xxxvii). Fern's own writing, and the career that she built around her skills, created her notorious pen

name, Fanny Fern (therefore, from this point onward Sara Willis will be referred to in this text as Fanny Fern). The pseudonym was one that she was known for and what she preferred; alternatively, from her birth name (given to and created by the men in her life), this name had *become her own*.

Fern was quite adamant that the name she created for herself should be her own. And as can be imagined with the rising fame of a woman during this time, others tried to take advantage of Fanny Fern's popularity. In 1856, a book titled "Fanny Fern's Family Cook Book," was published, issued by Philadelphia publisher William Fleming. In short, the advantageous Fleming had attempted to use "Fern's name as a trademark without her consent and thus had misled the public into believing she was the source of the cookbook" (Homestead 231). With support from *The New York Ledger*, Fern responded in a column.

In 1956, she took legal means against Fleming for using her name to his benefit, in which she stated that "the inferior quality of Fleming's 'ungrammatical, vulgar and commonplace' cookbook...will diminish her 'Literary reputation' and impair future sales" of her work (232). Although there is not any direct account of the legal court proceedings, there is a re-reading by Elizabeth Cady Stanton of Fern's character in the novel *Ruth Hall*, that constructs an alternative version of the text, which portrays "a woman writing her way out of bondage and into independence and self-possession," directly addressing lawyers who tell her she has no legal claim to her pen name (232):

FANNY FERN is not my name, is it?" Let me tell you, that if I originated it, as a *noln de plume*, I have as much right to the sole possession of it, as I have to the one I was baptised by; and no one has any more right to appropriate it, than to take the watch from my girdle. "Doubted?"-We shall see; I have listened to croakers before now. with my arms a-kimbo (232).

At first, the pen name “Fanny Fern” seemed to be created both as a means of identity protection as well as through satirical notions. But, perhaps Sara’s assumption of a pen name creates a rhetorical life for her own writing, a reflection of her rebelliousness nature, a character trait that her father identified early in her childhood. Although the pen name ‘Fanny Fern’ cannot be fully categorized as anonymous, since there is a name to attribute the writing to, her use of a pseudonym can be thought of as a subset to anonymity. The thoughts and opinions that were written under the name of Fanny Fern were critical of the world at that time (and even now), and included satirically humorous views on several topics, including divorce, prostitution, birth control, children’s rights, venereal disease, the need for prison reform and the necessity for women to have and control their own money. Yet, in a two-decade writing career, Fern never publishes these articles under any name other than her pseudonym. *Why?* Avoiding the stigma of authorship is what is attributed to the use of a pseudonym in Gillin Paku’s *Anonymity in the Eighteenth Century*. Writing did not “fall within the usual, sanctioned circle of female accomplishments,” Paku argues; in fact, women’s writing became a metaphor of prostitution as “women writers selling an intangible, intimate product of their selves to any or to many, themselves unknown” (Paku). It is my assumption that Fern, like so many of her readers, was caught in this web of anonymity and the gender mindset of a patriarchal society. Paku continues to cite an argument that this prostitution metaphor

created “a social concept of female sexual and ontological ‘nothingness’ in relation to men, as well as of ‘the conceptual disembodiment that all commodities achieve at the moment of exchange, when their essence appears to be an abstract value” (Paku). By way of explanation, the writing of women was taken into societal understanding as a disembodied, abstract (if not negative) act. In an attempt to combat this ethos upheld by society and give a name to the otherwise disembodiment of women on paper, the pen name, and furthermore the voice of Fanny Fern was created.

With this digitizing project, I hope to reflect and uphold the rhetorical writings of Fanny Fern but even with this intent in mind, projects like this meet apprehension and hesitation. Lamentably, Merriam-Webster dictionary still defines text as “the original words and form of a written or printed work,” yet the term “text” has the capacity to be defined by a wide variety of mediums, whether written or digital (Merriam-Webster). In the English curriculum, text is recognized as a “product of a culture” (Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy). Maintaining that similar thought, a realm in which Digital Rhetoric and the Humanities intersect is that of digitizing and processing text - a process driven by a digital culture (Champion). In turn, this process could not only redefine what is categorized as “text” in our culture, but can also provide new avenues for authors, journalists, poets, etc. who have been lost among the pages of the current canonical of academia.

Like Lanham’s challenge of the definition of text aforementioned, Fanny Fern’s archive will implement the challenging conception that text may begin as a print medium but its life in the relevant, textual canon doesn’t end there. The key to this challenge is

Lanham's notion of the "malleable and self-conscious [texts]" (5), which find themselves limited to the pages of print mediums, given limiting perceptions; perceptions which argue that a text cannot be defined as such if it leaves behind the physical page. I would argue that print is a malleable subject which can be redefined and redesigned to meet the current situational needs of an evolving society. Fern's text, which began its life on the pages of the New York Herald in the early 19th-Century, will now find new life on the interface of a digital archive.

Fern's own writing, although she did not realize it at the time, was limited to the current medium on which she chose to publish her words. A newspaper, although an iconic and nostalgic medium to express one's thoughts and share daily news, has seen its decline beginning in the early 1990s as the emersion of the internet increased media choices available to the public. There have been efforts to preserve print-form newspapers, such as the Google News Archive (Keller), which began in 2008. Over the course of three years, Google "scanned nearly a million pages from 2,000 newspapers into an easily browsable database" but the project was ended in 2011. There was never a definite answer provide by Google as to why they ended their project, but Keller hypothesizes in his 2011 article that "the process may have turned out to be harder than Google anticipated...or it may have turned out that the resulting pages drew far fewer eyeballs than anyone expected" (Keller). Personally, I hypothesize that Google undertook this project only to realize that the world and the way that it processes its information is shifting; a project of archiving news articles seems redundant in the digitized world of instant news. Google's attempt at archiving newspapers and its withdrawal from its

project demonstrate a shift in the way the public consumes its information - a shift to the digital. But let me be clear. Unlike Google, who set out to preserve the pages of various newspapers, in my project, I do not wish to create an archive of newspaper columns. Instead, I aim to create a malleable, self-conscious digital medium to spotlight Fanny Fern and her ideologies, which will in turn, become once-again relevant to current audiences.

The societal shift in digital materiality relates to the term used by James Elkins: *Visual Literacy*. The idea of visual literacy rests upon the notion that “we ‘read’ images” (Elkins 1) and that our society “is a predominately visual culture” (vii). In turn, this concept can be applied to Champion’s notion that “(text) itself is linked to both the image and materiality” (Champion 127) — the book is a material; just as the web is a material. Why should a text’s original materiality negate its possibilities for future readers? Fern’s ideas and challenging rhetoric deserve to be shared with current and future generations which is why I have chosen to digitize her columns, and in the near future, other works such as her novels and children’s books. Lanham’s idea of the malleable and self-conscious text will be applied to Fern’s own situation as her 19th- century print columns will now be molded into the digital; and her text will become self- conscious as it adapts with an ever-changing society.

CHAPTER II

CREATING FANNY FERN'S DIGITAL ARCHIVE

Through digital tools and rhetorical practice, I have created a digital archive for Fanny Fern's writing (www.FannyFernArchive.org), with the intent of the message(s) of her writing reaching new audiences, ones that she would have never dreamed of reaching. Fanny Fern's writing belongs in the present, and much like the digital medium on which she is be hosted, it is my intent to provide Fern's writing with a new audience that will evolve and utilize her words to their maximum potential.

Fanny Fern, and her satirical whit, has earned every right to be preserved on a digital medium, with the goal of eventually providing her with a completed archive. According to Bizzell and Herzberg:

Rhetoric has a number of overlapping meanings: the practice of oratory; the study of the strategies of effective oratory; the use of language, written or spoken, to inform or persuade; the study of the persuasive effects of language; the study of the relation between language and knowledge; [and] the classification and use of tropes and figures (1).

In a general sense, a rhetor can be defined as a public speaker or writer, and Fanny Fern indeed falls into the category of a writer for the public who is persuading her audience to reexamine injustices done to women, while also providing a satirical bite to men's misogyny. Fern utilized discursive rhetoric through persuasion, satire, and

argument in her writing to combat women's inequality, a characteristic of her writing that made it, during her career, escalate in popularity.

Although popular, attempts to dismiss and defame her writing were often made through labeling it as women's sentimentalism; a label that scholars like Joyce Warren have sought out to discredit and remove from the margins of Fern's writing. However, I argue that instead of working to separate Fern's writing from labels of sentiment, what if we instead analyzed how Fern intentionally utilized this genre to both draw attention to her message as well as create greater opportunities for her writing? Fern was intentional in employing a type of sentimental rhetoric because she knew that by engaging with sentimentalism — a popular genre among women at the time because they could not achieve credibility for their writing elsewhere — that she could ironically reach a greater audience. It was through the cover of sentimentalism that Fern was able to gain her popularity using both her satirical wit and discursive rhetoric to evoke agreement, anger, and discomfort from both her loyal readers as well as critics who sought out to defame her. Borrowing from *The Female Woman: Fanny Fern and the Form of Sentiment*, scholar Lauren Berlant poses a similar view about Fern's use of sentiment:

In mid-nineteenth-century America, the popular discourse of feminized 'sentimentality' translated the materials of official history and domestic life into the abstract, relatively autonomous realm of "woman's interests," a realm governed by certain immutable "laws." These laws were articulated as part of a set of territorializing social forces...Fern understood that the increasingly urbanized, alienated life of industrializing America separated women and men into the separate times and spaces of the public and the domestic, which came to seem naturally gendered by virtue of which sex dominated where...; but Fern also sensed, in a more self-reflexive way than did her sentimental peers, that *the meaning, the pacing, and the spaces of everyday domestic life were themselves the*

effect of a new capitalist ethos of personal instrumentalization, where the woman bore the burden of seeing that there would be no affective, no intellectual, no moral, and of course no economic waste (Berlant 431 - 432; added emphasis).

It was this use of sentiment that propelled Fern's fame, as she realized that she could turn societally-created women's discourse into an instrument, or weapon if you will, against gender inequity. Fern created and utilized a woman's sentimental ethos not just through sharing her own personal experience, but also in the way she unscathedly addressed social issues. Her satire and critical wit were protected by the genre she was placed in: sentimentalism; a genre where she could ensure that all aspects of society were properly reprimanded and held accountable for their actions. Of course, her rise to fame was solidified when she used her sentimental, discursive rhetoric to create a career in journalism. It was through journalism that Fanny found a platform for her writing to reach a widespread audience:

Fern's work in periodical journalism, which asserted the sovereignty of subjective knowledge, *aimed to convert the meaning and value of female life in the quotidian: to witness it, to affirm the dignity of its unhistoric acts* (often in the face of patriarchal and economic brutality, and extreme isolation within the family and from other women), but also to transform its mind-threatening monotonous and hermetic sameness by *proposing her own brand of female soliloquy as a public, collective, and emancipatory form of expressivity and invention*, available for any socially silenced subject (Berlant 431 - 432; added emphasis).

It is this Fanny Fern brand of “public, collective, and emancipatory form of expressivity and invention” that I aim to convey in Fanny Fern’s Digital Archive.

Creating the Archive: Rhetorical Devices of a Website

During her nearly two-decade writing career, Fern produced numerous columns compiled into six collections, in addition to three novels, and three children books. While all of her work is appreciated, for my initial focus, and in an effort to bring Fern into the relativity of today's society, I will be selecting columns that relate Fern to current issues. Fern wrote columns on numerous subjects but I have chosen to specifically focus on, what I perceive to be, Fern's most empowering columns as it relates to the current societal focus of female empowerment. The columns I have chosen to begin my digital archive creation are as follows:

Hints to Young Wives (Olive Branch, 1852)

Insignificant Love (Olive Branch 1852)

Woman's Wickedness (Olive Branch, 1852)

All About Satan (Olive Branch, 1852)

"I Can't." (True Flag 1853)

Hungry Husbands (True Flag, 1853)

Who Would Be The Last Man? (Olive Branch, 1853)

Have We Any Men Among Us? (Musical World and Times, 1853)

Male Criticism on Ladies' Books (New York Ledger 1857)

What Came of Violet (New York Ledger 1858)

The "Coming" Woman (New York Ledger 1858)

A Bit of Injustice (New York Ledger, 1861)

Job's Patience (New York Ledger 1863)

Bogus Intellect (New York Ledger 1865)

The Women of 1867 (New York Ledger, 1867)

Ladies Excluded From Public Dinners (New York Ledger, 1868)

The Modern Old Maid (New York Ledger, 1869)

Women's Salaries (New York Ledger, 1869)

How I Look (New York Ledger, 1870)

One Sort of Woman (New York Ledger, 1872)

In choosing these twenty columns, I realize that I have made my first rhetorical choice in creating Fanny Fern's Digital Archive, the first of many rhetorical choices required to design and create this project.

Despite my awareness of this rhetorical choice, the reality is that all websites are a rhetorical device, a vessel of communication, in which ethos, pathos, and logos are utilized to persuade a visitor to perform a certain action. In my case, I am persuading my website visitors to read Fanny Fern's work, to become more familiar with her critique and opinions which echo modern calls for female equality. I chose these columns specifically because they speak for female empowerment while also criticizing male societal behavior and gender inequality. These columns represent, what I feel, is a timeless message: one of equality, accountability, and criticism. These messages can easily translate into the current, societal focus of female empowerment and it is my hope that by utilizing these specific columns in the initial creation of Fanny Fern's digital archive, that I can share the relevancy of their messages — even in today's society.

I realized that by accepting the task of creating an archive for Fanny Fern, a writer whose words have been living in the passive memory of the public for almost 150 years, that I was not only going to be arguing for why Fanny Fern is still relevant in today's society — I was also going to be making a lot of rhetorical choices on how she is going to be re-presented to this society. Along with this thought, I also considered Cary Nelson's words in considering how I might present and re-present Fern's recovered words in a way that remains true to their original message? A most helpful resource used when designing the Fanny Fern Digital Archive was a rhetorical analysis questionnaire created by Digi Rhetorics, which is constructed like a class assignment, asking questions on purpose, design, interactivity, and influence. The questionnaire is as follows:

YOU HAVE 4 TASKS FOR WEBSITE ANALYSIS

1. DEFINE THE PURPOSE	2. DISCUSS THE DESIGN	3. DISCUSS THE INTERACTIVITY	4. DISCUSS THE INFLUENCE ON YOU
What is the purpose of the website? Who does this website work to educate and empower? Why? How?	Is there a logo for this website? If so, describe it. How does the logo work with the purpose of site?	How do the authors sound on this website? Who are they talking to? How do you know?	Why do YOU like this website?
Is the site selling something? How does it sell these items?	Is there a repeating image on this website (like a background image)? Describe this image. How does it work with the purpose of site?	Describe the language of the site's author. How does the language work with the content and message of the site?	You chose websites that you like. You do not have to like all aspects of your websites but their design should be something that teaches you something, something that YOU want to emulate. Describe this in detail.
Does the website build some sort of community around a common cause or issue? Does the website further a political/social cause?		What are the various features of the site? Who do you think uses this site regularly?	Offer some comparisons between your two websites. What are the commonalities in the two websites that drew you to them both? What are the differences in these two websites that you like?
Does the website recruit volunteers for a project? Who? How?	What other kinds of images appear on the website? Describe them. How does they work with the purpose of site?	How do people interact with this site? What do they do once they get there? Do they comment?	
Does the website inform you about a person, place, or set of issues?		What kind of links to other sites and digital work does this site offer? Why? How does that fit the message?	
How does the website communicate its purposes with more than just the words on the site?	What is the color package of this website? What does that color package convey in terms of message, mood, etc?		

Figure 2.1 Digi Rhetorics Website Analysis

With this questionnaire in mind, I began with the first rhetorical aspect of a website: purpose. The purpose of the Fanny Fern Archive is to educate and inform both academic and public individuals about Fanny Fern, in addition to providing exposure to her textual works. It is my hope and goal to share Fern’s work with interested individuals — both through intentional and accidental discovery — so that her words, and the messages behind them, can find new audiences. I envision this digital archive as becoming yet another tool in the feminist movement of today, providing a connection between current issues and historical ones, strengthening the bonds between the current feminist landscape and “our grandmother’s mentor(s)” of the past, as Fern’s messages clearly echo gender equality concerns of today’s modernity. This will be accomplished and organized via the website through a biography page, about the project page, and a column page — for now.

My next rhetorical choices began with the archive’s website design. I sought out to create a design for the website, one that would convey the Fanny Fern brand (as coined by Berlant); I began my research for digital, archive design by analyzing other scholarly, online archives. What I found was that most scholarly, online, digital archives can be described — at best — as *stale*. The designs are made up of muted, monotonous colors that blend together like a 90s blast-from-the-past; designs that do not evoke any rhetorical pathos, as their colors work against the overwhelming textual presence of research content that fills the page. I certainly did not want to replicate the designs that I found from my research of other online, archives which then propelled me to rely on a more innovative, modern approach to the design of the Fanny Fern Archive.

Using Weebly, a digital website hosting platform, I set out to create a modern, clean design which dominantly uses a color palette of black, white, and pink (see fig. 2.2). This color scheme was intentionally utilized to create a sort of iconic theme of black and white, which can be associated with newspapers. Additionally, pink accents such as buttons, titles, and subtitles create a feminized twist.

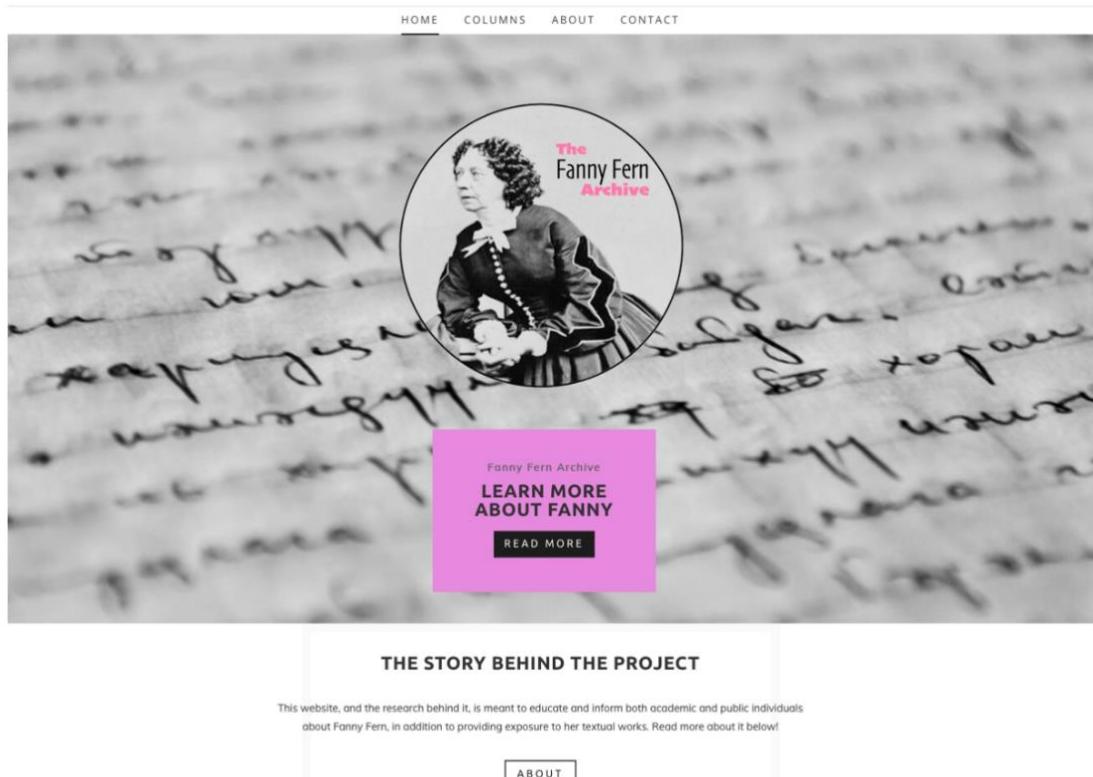


Figure 2.2 Fanny Fern Archive “Home Page”

The website also utilizes white space to present an organized interface to the website user, stepping away from an overuse of text, as seen in previous academic online archives. The design’s use of “boxes” as opposed to a circular design is intentional in that

it breaks away from the atypical assumption that feminized things are soft, and curvy; the website uses a “box-like” design to give it a sharp, clean edge — much like Fern’s own satirical wit.



Figure 2.3 Fanny Fern Archive “Logo”

I did however, create a logo (e.g. fig 2.3) for the website, one that uses a round schematic and is composed from a portrait of Fanny Fern in the background, while subliminating pink text along with bolded print for the title of the website.

ABOUT THIS PROJECT

The purpose of the Fanny Fern Archive is to educate and inform both academic and public individuals about Fanny Fern, in addition to providing exposure to her textual works. It is my hope and goal to share Fern's work with interested individuals — both through intentional and accidental discovery — so that her words, and the messages behind them, can find new audiences. I envision this digital archive as becoming yet another tool in the feminist movement of today, providing a connection between current issues and historical ones, strengthening the bonds between the current feminist landscape and "our grandmother's mentor(s)" of the past, as Fern's messages clearly echo gender equality concerns of today's modernity. This will be accomplished and organized via the website through a biography page, about the project page, and a column page — for now.



THE FANNY FERN ARCHIVE IS EDITED BY HALEY JONES

Jones holds a master's degree in English from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro and will continue her research through the Rhetoric and Composition Concentration PhD program at the University of South Florida. Her current research projects work to combine humanities and computational data and archival methods to study impacts on public memory, and the circulation of digital artifacts, which will contribute to the ongoing expansion of data-driven methods in rhetoric and writing studies. Her research interests include digital rhetoric, public memory studies, the rhetoric of marketing and communication, technical communication, and maker culture.

She earned an associate in arts degree from Mitchell Community College in 2014, and a bachelor's degree from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro in 2016.

Figure 2.4 Fanny Fern Archive “About This Project”

The interactivity of the site is still in its infancy stages. As I stated before when discussing the website's purpose, I hope for this website to be utilized by both academic and non-academic spheres, through both intentional and unintentional discovery. In relation to a website author's message, I have implemented an 'About the Project' tab (see fig. 2.4) which explains the purpose of the project and introduces myself briefly, and my scholarly interests; I've also added a picture of myself.

One thing that I did observe in my research of other academic online archives was the lack of personable presence. What I mean by that statement is that, as a website user,

I did not experience any evoked pathos when visiting other sites. These sites seemed to portray institutional and academic without giving me, as the user, any reason to invest personally in the site. It is my hope that by leaving a personable note on the site, under the ‘About the Project’ tab, it will evoke a pathos that encourages relation and interest. Additionally, I’ve also created a biographical tab of Fanny Fern (see fig. 2.5) using the information I compiled for this thesis, most specially the information that is listed in the ‘Who is Fanny Fern’ section.

BIOGRAPHY



WHO IS FANNY FERN?

The name "Fanny Fern" first began to appear in newspaper columns in publications like Boston's Olive Branch, and in the True Flag in 1851, and soon, newspapers all over the country began to republish Fern's satirical works. The country was awed by Fern's "satirical, outspoken, polemical — even outrageous" columns, leading readers to ask: "Who was Fanny Fern?"

"Fanny Fern" is a pen name for Sara Payson Willis, born in Portland, Maine in 1811. The daughter of a preacher, and the fifth of nine children, Sara's willful spirit was seen as troublesome to her father. Deacon Willis (as he was known), was a strict Calvinist and deacon of the Park Street Church, known for its "fiery sermons" (Warren xi). He frowned upon 'ungodly' pursuits and would eventually send Sara to Hartford Female Seminary School in New Hampshire at the age of 16 because of her rebellious spirit; one that her father wished to curb through religious instruction — the school was unable to mold Sara into the piety and discipline that her father had hoped for.

Deacon Willis believed that his daughter was "not sufficiently serious or fearful of God's wrath" however, Sara disagreed with her father's beliefs; her ideal of God was that of a nurturing, maternal figure, not a wrathful patriarch. Later in life, she would write: "the God my eyes see, is not a tyrant, driving his creatures to heaven through fear of hell...Who but God can comfort like a mother?...there is no word but save God which is so...heart-satisfying (xi)." Sara would admit later in life that she had always been closer to her mother, even writing about her in amorous ways:
If there is any poetry in my nature, from my mother I inherited it...Had my mother's time not been so constantly engrossed by a fast-increasing family, had she found time for literary pursuits, I am confident she would have distinguished herself. Her hurried letters,



Figure 2.5 Fanny Fern Archive "Biography"

The biography section of the website can be accessed here

(<https://www.fannyfernarchive.org/biography.html>).

The columns themselves are listed on a tab (<https://www.fannyfernarchive.org/columns.html>) that carries on with the same design (see figure 2.6).

HOME COLUMNS ABOUT CONTACT

COLUMNS

Fanny Fern produced numerous columns during her nearly two-decade writing career. To learn more about Fanny Fern, read her [biography](#).

While all of her work is appreciated, for my initial focus in getting this archive started, and in an effort to bring Fern into the relativity of today's society, I will be selecting columns that relate Fern to current issues. Fern wrote columns on numerous subjects but I have chosen to specifically focus on, what I perceive to be, Fern's most empowering columns as it relates to the current societal focus of female empowerment.

To view a column, click on the title below:

Hints to Young Wives (Olive Branch, 1852)
Insignificant Love (Olive Branch, 1852)
Woman's Wickedness (Olive Branch, 1852)
All About Satan (Olive Branch, 1852)
"I Can't." (True Flag 1853)
Hungry Husbands (True Flag, 1853)
Who Would Be The Last Man? (Olive Branch, 1853)
Have We Any Men Among Us? (Musical World and Times, 1853)
Male Criticism on Ladies' Books (New York Ledger 1857)
What Came of Violet (New York Ledger 1858)
The "Coming" Woman (New York Ledger 1858)
A Bit of Injustice (New York Ledger, 1861)
Job's Patience (New York Ledger, 1863)
Bogus Intellect (New York Ledger 1865)
The Women of 1867 (New York Ledger, 1867)
Ladies Excluded From Public Dinners (New York Ledger, 1868)
The Modern Old Maid (New York Ledger, 1869)
Women's Salaries (New York Ledger, 1869)
How I Look (New York Ledger, 1870)
One Sort of Woman (New York Ledger, 1872)

A black and white portrait of Fanny Fern, an elderly woman with curly hair, wearing a dark dress and a necklace, holding a small object in her hands.

Figure 2.6 Fanny Fern Archive “Columns”

The columns titles also function as links which then redirect the website user to the selected column. From there, visitors to this website will see a page similar to figure 2.7.

The screenshot shows a website layout. At the top, there is a navigation bar with links for HOME, COLUMNS, ABOUT, and CONTACT. Below the navigation bar is a large, dark rectangular image. In the center of this image, the word "COLUMNS" is written in white capital letters. Below the image, the title "WHO WOULD BE THE LAST MAN?" is displayed in a purple font. Underneath the title, the author's name "Olive Branch" and the date "June 11, 1853" are listed. The main content of the article is presented in black text. A quote from "NY Musical World and Times" is included: "'Fanny Fern says, 'If there were but one woman in the world, the men would have a terrible time.' Fanny is right; but we would ask her what kind of a time the women would have if there were but one man in existence?'" --- NY Musical World and Times. The text continues with a descriptive paragraph about a hypothetical world with only one woman. Below the text, the author's name "FANNY FERN" is printed in a small, centered font. At the bottom of the page, there is a pink box containing citation information: "To cite this project: Fanny Fern, "Who Would Be The Last Man?," Fanny Fern Archive, Ed. Haley Jones (2019) <http://fannyfernarchive.org>.

Figure 2.7 Fanny Fern Archive “Who Would Be the Last Man?”

Note (in Fig. 2.7) that the column is accessible in text form, with a citation below. It is my hope to add a copy and paste function within the citation in a future version of this archive.

Overall, the website's biographical information, and archival purpose create a logos; the use of colors, photos, and portraits evoke a pathos of nostalgia, in addition to the personable description of the project overall; and the feminized accents of the overall archive lead the website user to recall a societal ethos of feminism.

In addition to the purpose, design, and interactivity of the website, I have registered the website under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial ShareAlike license. In the early stages of this project, I spoke to archivist Anne Gilliland, MLS, JD, based out of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill regarding usage rights of Fanny Fern's work. From that conversation, I learned that all of Fanny Fern's works have exceeded their copyright date and are now public domain. Therefore, utilizing her texts and scans in the creation of this digital archive should be legally feasible. However, in an effort to fully excuse myself from any copyright complications, I have added the Creative Commons licensing. I wish to make the collections of Fanny Fern's Archive available to a wider audience with no intention of profiting from her direct work.

Future Vision: Continuing Work on the Fanny Fern Archive

The work I have already done on this project is not finished. In the near future, I envision my project growing to include more of Fanny's works including: a complete collection of her columns, novels, and children's books. With the hopeful vision that I complete this online collective, I would also imagine including various interactions Fern had with authors and critics of her time, such as letter correspondence, literary and

critical reviews, etc. Additionally, I would like for my project to include scans and Extensible Markup Language (XML) formatting so that Fern’s texts can become even more accessible, by giving users the ability define their own customized markup languages.

But the vision does not stop with an archival collection since I absolutely cannot stop asking myself, is a digital archive enough? Is a digital archive enough in terms of revitalizing Fanny Fern’s presence in the public’s active, working memory? For some scholarship, which categorizes archives as only having the potential to reside in the public’s passive memory, the answer is no. An archive is thought to be an aloof creature, one that is displaced from the public’s working memory, existing only in the “storage” of the public’s mind. However, I seek to disassociate this stigma of archives — particularly that of an online archive.

An online archive has so much potential to be, as quoted previously from Lanham, “malleable and self-conscious” in accordance with its current social, political, and ethical environment. Just like the definition of the term “text,” which can be molded into so much more than the print pages of books, an archive can transform and change to become relevant to an audience of today’s society. Of course, that change begins with the digital realm, in that cybernated convenience can increase access to Fanny Fern’s work.

But this malleable archive goes beyond the efficiency and convenience of cybernation, as it seeks to engage both familiar and new audiences with its modernity and relevancy in design, content, and message.

In addition to the creation of this archive, I envision Fern receiving more of a social presence, something that can drive, reach and engage potential readers in a way that Fern's writing was never able to do during her career through the use of a social media platform. I imagine something similar to a Twitter bot, which can retweet and respond using lines from her own columns. This future project would provide further exposure for Fern and her work.

So, you ask, is a digital archive enough to begin the revitalization process of Fanny Fern and her satirical, witty writing? Will it engage audiences both new and old? Will it spark interest in readers who have never heard of Fanny Fern before while sparking a renewed enthusiasm for those familiar with her work? Will the creation of this archive lead to other mediums in which the exploration and discovery of Fanny Fern can be furthered? My answer is *yes*.

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