

## Chapter 3

# The Other Stares Back: Why “Visual Rupture” Is Essential to Gendered and Raced Bodies in Networked Knowledge Communities

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### **ABSTRACT**

*This chapter addresses the Other’s Stare of gendered and raced bodies who visually rupture and resist their discursive formation in Networked Knowledge Communities (NKC)s. New multimodal texts described as “texts that exceed the alphabetic and may include still and moving images, animations, color, words, music and sound” (Takayoshi & Selfe, 2007, p. 1), contribute greatly to the situated nature of knowledge production by NKC)s in the postmodern “network society” (Castells, 1996). NKC)s are learning communities that “proactively participate in building and advancing knowledges” (Gurung, 2014, p. 2). While NKC)s are idealized as sites for progressive socio-political transformation, this chapter argues NKC)s are also antagonistic visual spheres where images of gendered and raced bodies are used as metadata to ideologically contain, construct, and constitute them. Using a rhetorical perspective, the chapter reveals the discursive formation of the gendered and raced Other and how they preserve their visual image-making with the oppositional stare.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

*Maybe the target nowadays is not to discover  
what we are, but to refuse what we are.*

*-Foucault, The Subject and Power (Foucault, 2000)*

Despite its consideration as an idealized and emancipatory “network society” (Castells, 1996), Networked Knowledge Communities (NKC)s are dynamic sites where vision, the noblest of senses mediates meaning-making of difficult and different identities. As a social and participatory community where diverse

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belief-systems characterize the social justice mission of NKC's, issues of symbolic representation are also a distinguishing feature of this network society. Because the epistemological boundaries between who can and cannot make and contribute to meaning-making are blurred in NKC's, they have the possibility to radically reconstitute the discursive formation of the gendered and raced Other in the visual sphere of NKC's. The visual sphere is described as "a multitude of relations between images, their agency, and politics, whereby meanings are created and negotiated" (Nathansohn and Zuev, 2013, p. 2). With such a perspective, this chapter argues NKC's are indeed a visual sphere given they are a visionary epistemic site where collaborative, creative, and critical thinking are placed in rhetorical tension often for social and political justice. Therefore, as the emblem of social and political efficacy where meaning-making is classified, negotiated, consumed, and produced, the gendered and raced Other still must challenge a consensus representation of their identity from within the visual sphere of NKC's. The visual sphere of NKC's is like a mall—albeit a networked visualization mall where socio-political magazines, paintings, music, videos, scholarly articles, etc. all intersect in a Kafkaesque hybrid space each with a story often narrated exclusively through an image. Once stripped of its utopianism, NKC's can have an inestimable influence on cultural democracy given its audiences are willing to have uncomfortable and complicated conversations on socio-political topics. Like all discourses from the Other that seek substantive and sustained social and political transformation, power and agency, therefore, lies at the center of the Other's counter-arguments. To destabilize marginalizing visual discourses with the Other's Stare may appear as a trivial form of resistance. However, articulated in the rhetorical space of NKC's, the Other's Stare can be instrumentalized as metadata to remediate homogenizing visualizing practices in NKC's.

This chapter is organized in four sections with the central thesis that the Other's Stare of gendered and raced bodies is both visually rupturing and resistant to Western visual discourses. In the first section, I begin by articulating key theories and concepts central to the visual analysis of the Other's Stare which I argue undergird and structure the visual sphere of NKC's. In the second section, I reference the image of a popular American artist to examine how the stare and stance of the gendered and raced body is both revolutionary and emancipatory. With the third section, I illuminate the Western visual discourse dialogically orbiting perhaps the most famous image in American magazine history. Finally, I conclude by considering the socio-political implications of a governing Western visual discourse which, I believe, can be abolished with the Other's Stare.

## **NO SAFE SPACE: VISUAL IMAGE-MAKING AND THE SOCIAL MOSAIC OF NKCS**

In *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice* Foucault argues that discourse and practices are not isolated forms of discursive formations but overlap and reinforce one another with power being the synergy between the two. For Foucault, a discursive formation is not just the instrumental use of language. Discourse is the medium through which, for example, relations between institutions, social codes, and the spatial become meaning-making systems for contextualizing knowledge. Whatever is hidden, Foucault posits, the discursive practices that underlie its rhetorical patterns are at some point revealed in both tacit and explicit ways. He argues that:

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