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# REVIEWS

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Hildy Miller and Lillian Bridwell-Bowles, eds. *Rhetorical Women: Roles and Representations*. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2005. 261p.

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This book illustrates the range of women's rhetoric. The essays range from conventional academic discourse to personal narrative, from historical and critical studies to pedagogical reflections to theoretical arguments, and from analyses of a single figure to a survey of an entire century. The most personal essays, by Gallop and Allison, were both originally presented in 1999 in Minneapolis at the Second Biennial Conference on Feminism(s) and Rhetoric(s), which the editors co-chaired. The form of these two papers reflects their situation as oral discourse. The scope of the collection is also its weakness because, despite editorial introductions to the entire volume and to each of its three sections, the connections among the essays can be tenuous.

In their introduction the editors situate the book at the intersection of feminist literary theory and rhetoric. They justify their subtitle as the substitution of "role" and "representation" for the more contentious terms "persona" and "voice" (10). These two terms, they write, along with "ethos," "are refigured in the essays as the synergy of rhetor, language, and culture—as complex processes of subject formation by women for whom rhetorical expression is both externally and internally problematized" (13). Thus their project straddles postmodernism, which privileges language and culture, and modernism, which privileges the rhetor (11).

The first group of essays examines individual writers in a variety of historical situations. Julia Dietrich's essay on Julian of Norwich and St. Angela Merici addresses the question of how these two late medieval women succeeded in persuading their audiences of two unlikely arguments: the motherhood of God, in the case of Julian, and the establishment of a company of unmarried women to do charitable work within the secular community in the case of Merici. Yvonne Merrill argues in her essay on Lady Mary Wortley Montagu that Montagu's classical education and personal contacts with the literary leaders of her society, both highly unusual for a woman, enabled her to write as if she were a man. Precisely those contacts however made it impossible for her to maintain her anonymity, with the result that she suffered personal attacks, notably by Pope, based on her gender. Thus she was unable

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to achieve anything like the literary reputation she deserved until the recuperation of her work by feminist scholars in the late 20th century.

In the next two essays their subjects' status as members of minorities complicates the problem of authority. Sarah Winnemucca Hopkins was a Native American who presented herself as a translator, an intermediary between both the languages and cultures of the dominant majority and of her people, the Northern Paiutes. Malea Powell's "Princess Sarah, the Civilized Indian: The Rhetoric of Cultural Literacies in Sarah Winnemucca Hopkins's *Life Among the Piutes*" subtly explores the paradox by which Winnemucca's empowering intermediacy made her suspect on both sides and demonstrates her conscious presentation of herself by careful textual analysis of passages.

"Cooper and Crummell: Dialogics of Race and Womanhood" by Elizabeth West explores the divergences and convergences between the writings of two black American writers of the 19th century as they considered the future of black people in the United States after Emancipation. Both were educated members of the elite. Alexander Crummell's life had always been one of privilege in the north; Anna Julia Cooper was a former slave. Crummell was much older than Cooper and her pastor, and she treats his ideas with consistent respect. West however teases apart the discrepancies between their mainly congruent modes of thought and expression, especially as these concern the situation of black southern women, about whom Cooper could speak with the authority of experience.

The second group of essays considers women as producers of rhetorical theory. Jane Donawerth, in "Authorial Ethos, Collaborative Voice, and Rhetorical Theory by Women," shows how four writers—Margaret Fell, Madeleine de Scudéry, Frances Willard, and Mary Augusta Jordan—fortify their arts of discourse by the incorporation of other more authoritative voices. In "Theory Emergent from Practice: The Rhetorical Theory of Frances Wright" Karlyn Kohrs Campbell derives the theoretical basis of the radical orator Frances Wright from her published writings and reactions to her by contemporaries and critics and characterizes Wright as the first humanist rhetorical theorist in the United States and a precursor of consciousness-raising (137).

Jane Gallop's paper "Econstructing Sisterhood" concerns Gallop's literal sister Judi and their success in using e-mail, as opposed to the telephone and direct personal contact, in bridging their differences based, according to Gallop, on sibling rivalry, and at last developing a satisfactory relationship. The technology of e-mail, Gallop suggests, precisely because it involves reading and writing, time and thought, can be more appropriate than the spontaneity of speech to the negotiation of differ-

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ence, and the possibility of dissemination can be more of an asset than the threat it first appears to be.

“Exceptional Women, Expert Culture, and the Academy” by Lois Cucullu calls attention to Woolf’s modernism, to which Cucullu attributes the snobbishness and the substitution of professional expertise for domesticity in *A Room of One’s Own* and “Professions for Women,” and relates the conflicts within feminism, notably between critics and theoreticians, to the emphasis in modernism on change and the new. In the context of the ongoing erosion of the status and privileges of the professions, including the academic profession, including academic feminism, Cucullu reminds us of the contingency of the modernist model we dangerously take for granted.

The final section consists of three essays about contemporary women’s rhetorics. Cindy Moore’s “Why Feminists Can’t Stop Talking about Voice” defends the concept, provided that and because we can think of voice as multiple, metaphorical, ambiguous. In “Pedagogy and Public Engagement: The Uses of Women’s Rhetorics,” Kate Ronald and Joy Ritchie describe their work in two courses, one undergraduate and one graduate, in women’s rhetoric. Their courses required the students to derive rhetorical theories from historical texts and then apply them to the students’ own practice in and out of the classroom respectively for the graduate and undergraduate students.

Finally, in “Between Fiction and Real Life: The Reality of Our Work,” Dorothy Allison describes the ways in which she makes her own success an example to young people who come from backgrounds, like hers, that reduce their sense of their own possibilities. “I am alive,” she tells her audience, “because I began to think about my life as a novel. You can rewrite a novel. You can drop some characters completely. You can change genders; you can erase or highlight. You can say *what it meant*. That’s not rhetorical; that’s life-changing” (233-234). ✱