students graduated from state institutions, where English departments were generally controlled by literature teachers who staffed composition classes with part-time teachers and graduate students required to follow textbook-driven syllabi. Our recognition that other models existed doesn't necessarily invalidate the general picture. Additional studies like Varnum's will be needed before we can accurately modify these larger judgments.

But, most importantly, and most to Theodore Baird's liking I would think, this book can help us evaluate our own teaching. For the puzzle of how best to teach composition has never been fully solved. Freshman composition, especially in multi-sectional courses often deemed as remediation, can become anti-intellectual, a matter of formats and correctness or of unexamined autobiographical writing—mistakes that, whatever excesses his course may have contained, Baird never made. While recognizing the anxiety involved in this methodology, Varnum praises its clear sequencing of assignments, its insistence on creative thinking, and its emphasis on using writing to examine reality. From Theodore Baird's career comes a belief in fostering students' intellectual development through their writing that should influence us all.


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*Reclaiming Rhetorica: A Class (Re)Action*

During the spring semester of 1996 at Texas Christian University, graduate students enrolled in a seminar entitled “Theory Building and the New Rhetorics” collectively critiqued Andrea Lunsford's *Reclaiming Rhetorica*. This group project came at the end of a semester devoted to examining efforts by a variety of twentieth-century rhetoricians to construct theories of rhetoric. The course emphasized not only what their theories present but how each theoretician goes about arguing for various representations of rhetoric; it also considered the more global issues of building a theory, research methods, the evaluation of claims, and future research.

Each of the fifteen students and the instructor served as principal respondent for one of the sixteen essays in *Reclaiming Rhetorica*, summarizing, criticizing, and leading discussion for the assigned article. All seminar participants shared in reading Lunsford's introduction, "On Reclaiming Rhetorica," and the "Afterword" in which the volume's contributors comment on the issues and difficulties of doing research on women in the history of rhetoric. This latter section was particularly valuable to our effort because it not only laid bare the difficulties in creating a generalizable and yet identifiable theory, but also because it exposed so candidly the problems of theory-construction and the attendant creation of sensitive methodologies for research.
Reclaiming Rhetorica is uniquely suited to collective analysis because, while the editor and authors make no claim of presenting a definitive theory—James J. Murphy calls the project an “enthymeme” in the “Foreword”—it provides a number of studies that dramatize the advantages and difficulties of building a gendered theory. In fact, this candor among authors and across the entire volume is one of its greatest and more refreshing strengths; if anything, Reclaiming Rhetorica understates its achievements by qualifying its mission.

A primary strength of the collection is its inclusiveness. Women are treated historically (Aspasia and Diotima); as practitioners of rhetoric in literature (Christine de Pisan, Mary Astell, Mary Wollstonecraft, Laura [Riding] Jackson); in oratory (Ida B. Wells, Sojourner Truth), and in both orality and literacy (Margery Kempe). Women are examined who were themselves historians (Margaret Fuller), theoreticians (Susanne K. Langer) and cultural critics (Julia Kristeva), and they are considered in terms of the educational and pedagogical issues of learning rhetoric (women’s suffrage and the Seven Sister Colleges) and in the construction of composition pedagogy (Louise Rosenblatt). Women are also treated collectively; that is, they are studied both in terms of their “place” in various historical periods and as representatives of groups within social movements. In addition, the collection extends borders rather than excludes. For example, although its research focus is women, men participated in the project, and virtually all the contributors seem consciously to avoid “male bashing,” focusing on specific, demonstrative instances of gender opposition rather than making sweepingly inaccurate blanket statements.

In sum, many adjectives describe the orientation of Reclaiming Rhetorica: theoretical, philosophical, historical, critical, social and cultural. Because the emphasis of this volume was on “tradition,” however, the more standard methodologies of research were employed. Notably absent, however, is a history of women whose gender-related work centers on social scientific or empirical research. Also absent are those women who are the great scholars of rhetoric: Marie Hochmuth Nichols, Sister Miriam Joseph, Sister Therese Sullivan, Lucie Olbrechts-Tyteca, Helen North, Virginia Holland, Laura Crowell. Certainly these distinguished female scholars of rhetoric—and many more—could be the focus for a subsequent, complementary edition.

Certainly, a number of constraints make building a theory of feminist rhetoric difficult, and coherence is often the price paid for being inclusive. That is, Reclaiming Rhetorica reflects a careful effort to embrace all demonstrations of women in discourse, but its broad spectrum makes identifying uniquely female traits—topoi and heuristics—difficult. Perhaps, however, it is neither important nor necessary to have a single, unified, coherent theory of feminist rhetoric—even if one were possible. As Robert Scott’s essay, “On Not Defining Rhetoric,” illustrates, is likely that such definitions set up limitations and barriers rather than enhancing explanation and understanding. In short, it is wise, especially at this developmental stage, not to define a rhetoric but to present manifestations of rhetorics for further study toward the development of more
Nor do the book's contributors make claims about presenting a unified theory of feminist rhetoric. The authors argue from specific individuals and social-intellectual movements, and their claims are domain-specific. Each essay deals with women responding to a rhetorical situation and each response from those contexts is particularized so that it should not be automatically seen as representative of even that individual or group. The collection's incremental approach seems much more responsible than trying to advance sweeping assertions that may exclude as many manifestations of rhetoric by women as it captures.

In a larger sense of context, perhaps cultural and historical concerns might well contribute to manifestations of rhetoric as much as anything that could be classified as "feminine." Males—particularly those who did not utilize the dominant mode of discourse—may also represent modes of expression in different periods that would otherwise be inferred to be female. For example, cooperative and competitive manifestations of rhetoric may be—at various times—as representative of male as they are of female rhetorics. Further, it is possible to characterize rhetoric as "feminine" and not have it determined by biology but by stylistic preference, just as a rhetor makes choices of appropriate genre and mode of presentation.

Another constraint is the difficulty of creating or adapting methodologies for researching feminist rhetoric. For example, examining the role of women in non-English speaking contexts (eventually) requires work in the primary language. This observation does not devalue the works of Reclaiming Rhetorica but rather illustrates that these essays show potential for and, in that respect, underscore the need for primary research. Those essays based primarily on new, basic research are praiseworthy. Much of this scholarship is historical and archival, its authors often going directly to the site and "discovering" lost information: that is, literally reclaiming Rhetorica. Such work should also be extended to other methodological areas; in fact, the continued creation of critical theory that specifically addresses female discourse is one such area, and another needed area of research is in the development of cognitive rhetoric, using empirical methods to examine features of the writing process that possibly could be labeled female.

We see Reclaiming Rhetorica as a responsible contribution in the quality of its individual essays and also in its goal to inscribe women who warrant attention and study into the history of rhetoric. With the contributors, we agree that any effort to advance claims about feminine rhetoric would now be premature. If after a century of ethnographic research, anthropology has yet to advance a unified theory of "culture" and may even have reached a stage of recognizing that such a theory is neither possible nor beneficial, how then can scholars of rhetoric be expected to advance such claims when the stage of research is nascent? At the same time, Reclaiming Rhetorica opens up possibilities, including the construction of methodologies, topics, issues, individuals and movements which will not only enrich our knowledge of women in the history of rhetoric but offer a much more complete and sensitive accounting of our discipline as a whole than currently exists.