In Anglo-American Feminist Challenges to the Rhetorical Traditions, Krista Ratcliffe examines how feminists' gendered claims about writing and gendered textual practices inform rhetoric and composition studies. She explores this issue by presenting three intersecting projects. First, she maps the terrain of feminist rhetorical theory and suggests possibilities for the future. She then makes her own contribution to feminist rhetorical theory by extrapolating feminist rhetorics from the work of Virginia Woolf, Mary Daly, and Adrienne Rich. Finally, she develops a feminist composition pedagogy informed by these feminist rhetorical theories. Although there is a danger of losing one's bearings while negotiating the sheer number of definitions, categories, and frameworks that Ratcliffe sets into play to read and critique traditional and feminist rhetorical traditions, the ultimate effect is worth it. Ratcliffe's book inspires fresh appreciation of the possibilities for feminist rhetorical inquiry as the field enters the twenty-first century, and it does an excellent job of showing readers numerous paths into feminist rhetorical theory and feminist composition pedagogy.

In chapter one, "Bathsheba's Dilemma," Ratcliffe defines Anglo-American feminist rhetoric and demonstrates the kind of critical reading strategies this rhetorical theory makes possible. Such a rhetoric focuses on language as an important site of political struggle. Specifically, it theorizes the "intersections of the personal, the textual, and the cultural... for they construct spaces wherein the dominant ideology may be continually reinforced, rejected, or reimagined." Theorizing these intersections, Ratcliffe argues, forces us "to recognize that when we question textuality, we also question our culture and ourselves." Ratcliffe reads Roland Barthes's "The Old Rhetoric," identifying spaces where the dominant ideology can be reimagined. She turns to Barthes' essay not only because she finds value in his theories of language, but also because this essay is emblematic of the twentieth-century reception of rhetoric, a reception heavily influenced by Aristotle's work. The essay is also important to her project because it can be read for its own "sex and gender gaps" even though it succeeds in making a class-based critique of traditional rhetorical concepts. Ratcliffe reads these gaps as "invitations" for feminist inquiry. The numerous gaps Ratcliffe identifies range from the gender blindness she argues is inherent in Aristotelian-influenced notions of proofs and appeals to the limitations inher-
ent in how Barthes defines and deploys the rhetorical canons. For example, Ratcliffe notes that Barthes emphasizes just three canons: invention, arrangement, and style. While she acknowledges that feminist studies of these three canons can yield great rewards—such as the ability to “articulate different thought processes, logics, and shaping of ideas and feelings”—she presses for more feminist work on the canons of memory and delivery as well. “Studies of memory may encourage us to ask what is remembered, what is forgotten, who makes such decisions, where and why,” she argues, “and studies of delivery may disclose cultural gestures that expose textual heteroglossia at all sites of production.” For Ratcliffe, all five canons can be used to theorize the gendered nature of the connections between the textual, personal, and cultural. Throughout this first chapter, Ratcliffe suggests numerous such directions for feminist rhetorical inquiry.

In chapters two, three, and four, Ratcliffe argues that Woolf, Rich, and Daly deploy, in different ways, textual strategies that form an Anglo-American feminist rhetoric. These three feminists are clearly related intellectually by the idea that “language plays an integral role in constructing women’s subjectivity.” What I appreciate most about these chapters is the care that Ratcliffe takes to read Woolf, Daly, and Rich for the limitations as well as the possibilities their works hold for feminist rhetoric. She argues that questions about “who is (not) speaking, who is (not) listening, and what is (not) being heard?” must inform feminist rhetorical inquiry, for these questions will allow theories of race, sexual orientation, and other categories of difference to inform feminist work. Ratcliffe’s reading practices demonstrate what feminists can gain through self-critical reading practices. However, I would have liked to have seen additional connections drawn between the chapters and more explanation of why it is useful to unite three feminists from such disparate times and places under the term “Anglo-American feminist rhetoric.”

From Woolf, Ratcliffe draws a number of theories that challenge traditional rhetorical categories of analysis, such as language and the author. Ratcliffe extrapolates a concept of language from Woolf’s work that balances the belief in language’s power to create possibilities for change with the belief that authors are themselves written by cultural discourses. Informing all of Woolf’s work, Ratcliffe believes, is Woolf’s battle with the sexist mores of her culture, specifically her struggle to kill “the angel of the house” who encouraged her to practice “women’s” ways with language—flattery and deceit—at the expense of being able to express anger or independent thought. But despite Woolf’s sophisticated understanding of the ways in which sexism operated for women in her time, which included her understanding that sexism is experienced differently by women according to class position, Woolf’s thoughts
on race and its relevance to feminist work are “ambiguous at best.” Ratcliffe does argue that Woolf’s concept of the author—an “active agent who haunts her texts in history but who cannot control the reception of her texts”—challenges postmodern proclamations that the author is dead, noting that these proclamations have been treated with suspicion by women and people of color alike.

In reading Mary Daly, Ratcliffe acknowledges that Daly has also come under fire for her exclusions of women of color. Yet, Ratcliffe nonetheless finds in Daly’s work useful strategies for feminist rhetorical projects. For example, Ratcliffe offers a number of rhetorical strategies based on Daly’s understanding that words possess “foreground” and “background” meanings. Daly has developed strategies, such as “spinning,” that rehabilitate and reclaim patriarchal language by using clever word play to direct attention away from the dominant meanings of words and to resurrect alternative, less misogynist meanings. Ratcliffe argues that Daly is “unmasking how myth and language intersect in the foreground to perpetuate patriarchy. In other words, she un-covers the dominant rhetoric of patriarchy.” Again, I appreciate how Ratcliffe deals with the blindnesses to race in Woolf and Daly’s rhetoric. While their work needs to be complicated in this respect, Ratcliffe chooses not to dismiss their work, believing that any discourse has its insights as well as its blind spots. Such blind spots become, in Ratcliffe’s reading, opportunities for further feminist work.

Of the three feminist writers focused on in this study, Adrienne Rich has most consciously taken up matters of race. Ratcliffe critiques Rich’s “dream of a common language” as “a dangerous fantasy” that encourages the marginalized to “downplay their differences.” But Ratcliffe also finds value in Rich’s dream because it provides a theory of how women in different locations might use silence, a theory that can complicate the canon of memory. Ratcliffe also finds value in Rich’s theory of the “politics of location,” which understands location as physical and theoretical space. Rich, Ratcliffe reminds us, emphasizes that location is not an enactment of a simple, fixed kind of identity politics. In fact, she argues, Rich is writing against such reductive versions of identity politics, and she calls for “feminisms to pursue a concept of difference that resists fragmentation and reveals how women are shaped by their local and global politics of location.” Practicing a politics of location that acknowledges its “situatedness, its multivocal contradictions, and its interests” means that one’s location can be “a site of agency from which a woman may read and write, speak and listen; and it is from this site that complex truths emerge, not authoritative ones.” Ratcliffe sees Rich furthering feminist work on difference that asks feminists to work in self-reflective ways. She believes that Rich’s work provides a means of questioning one’s own assumptions and investments by listening to and being changed by other voices.
In chapter five, "Educating Bathsheba and Everyone Else," Ratcliffe discusses pedagogical strategies that she derives from Woolf's, Daly's, and Rich's work—strategies that enable teachers and students to investigate the ways in which language positions them in culture. Ratcliffe's discussion of these strategies is inspiring; she demonstrates the ways in which teaching can be the practice of intellectual inquiry, and she also demonstrates how feminists might read rhetorical theory as pedagogical theory. For example, influenced by Woolf's work, Ratcliffe envisions classes where teachers and students have an opportunity to "analyze [their] own sentences and sequences to become more aware of [their] own stylistic practices [and to] . . . analyze these stylistic practices in terms of [their] positions of gender, class, age, and so on." Daly's "feminist reversals of Non-Canons—Spinning, Dis-ordering, Be-Spelling, Re-membering, Be-Speaking"—Ratcliffe feels, can be compared with Cicero's discussion of the five traditional rhetorical canons of invention, arrangement, delivery, memory, and style. Classes can "employ both schemes in different reading and writing situations in order to determine what kinds of issues and questions each raises and ignores." Ratcliffe argues that Rich's theory of the politics of location provides a broad critical framework "to identify, analyze, and compare the politics of location from which we have spoken, are speaking, and are spoken; and to critique these positions in terms of gender, class, race, sexual orientation, and so on, and in terms of their various intersections." Ideally, Ratcliffe believes, pedagogy should explore how intersections of difference, including gender, "construct our subjectivities as well as our cultural values, our epistemologies and our communicative possibilities." Her intent with these strategies is twofold: to enable teachers and students to pose questions about the role language plays in their lives, and then to question those questions for their own hidden assumptions. This an endeavor that leads "not [to] a paralysis of pluralism, but [to] the politics of always evolving locations."

Ratcliffe's book is part of a wave of 1990s feminist writing about women in the history of rhetoric and feminist rhetorical theory, including Susan Jarratt's *Rereading the Sophists*, Kathleen Welch's *The Contemporary Reception of Classical Rhetoric*, Jacqueline Jones Royster's *Lynching and Other Southern Horrors*; Andrea Abernethy Lunsford's *Reclaiming Rhetorica*; Cheryl Glenn's *Rhetoric Retold*; Shirley Logan's forthcoming "We Are Coming": Nineteenth Century Black Women's Persuasive Discourse; and Joyce Middleton's forthcoming book on Toni Morrison as rhetorician. Ratcliffe joins the above writers in expanding the field of feminist rhetoric. Additionally, she demonstrates the rewards of using feminist rhetorical theory to shape classroom practice and pedagogy. Ratcliffe wants to understand what it means to be written as a writer, as a student, and as a teacher by phallogocentric discourses. She
also wants to find ways for writers, students, and teachers to write themselves differently. Given her desire to connect how we write with how we teach, then, it is important not to overlook the contributions this book makes to composition pedagogy. *Anglo-American Feminist Challenges* demonstrates that both rhetoric and composition studies are concerned with the composition of subjects and cultures in language. Ratcliffe's book thus truly joins rhetoric with composition studies, raising and answering questions that drive each field: how does language compose subjects and cultures? How can we use language to compose subjects and cultures differently? How can rhetoric and composition studies be a way to theorize our own positioning in relationship to an Other? What possibilities are available and unavailable to us and our students in canonical and non-canonical discourses? Ratcliffe's provocative study demonstrates that feminist work on writing and language must inform and transform rhetoric and composition studies.


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Since the early 1980s, feminist scholars have become increasingly interested in considering multiple aspects of women’s lives: the public and the private, the autobiographical and the theoretical, the meditative and the pedagogical. In order to illustrate how speaking, reading, writing, and teaching represent intertwined and crucial ways to construct meaning in life, *Women/Writing/Teaching* presents twenty women’s autobiographical visions of their own experiences. The contributors represent a variety of women, including instructors of composition, creative writing, and women’s studies. Each author explores particular configurations of her gender, class, ethnicity, personality, culture, and history to reveal how her teaching and writing identity has been shaped. The text is divided into three parts: Silence and Words, Authority and Authorship, and Visions of Embodied Teaching. Although the authors of these collected essays come from diverse backgrounds, many of them discuss similar struggles with gaining a voice in a patriarchal society. Eleven of these essays were written specifically for this collection, while nine are reprinted from previous publications.