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# Bathsheba's Dilemma: Defining, Discovering, and Defending Anglo-American Feminist Theories of Rhetoric(s)

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## Bathsheba's Dilemma: Defining, Discovering, and Defending Anglo-American Feminist Theories of Rhetoric(s)\*

*Krista Ratcliffe*

*"I have the feelings of a woman," says Bathsheba [Everdene] in Far from the Madding Crowd, "but I have only the language of men."*

—Virginia Woolf, "Men and Women"

For centuries, Bathsheba's dilemma has troubled women differently in their daily lives, affecting their listening and speaking as well as their reading and writing.<sup>1</sup> But this dilemma need not be read as suggesting that women and men literally speak different languages. Rather, it may be read as exposing, first, that Woman and Man occupy different relationships to language within the symbolic and, second, that each woman occupies a particular subject position within the symbolic, depending on her ever changing intersections of gender, race, class, sexual orientation, history, nationality, culture, and so on.<sup>2</sup> Bathsheba's dilemma is not acknowledged in traditional theories of rhetoric; instead, they perpetuate, among other things, a tradition of gender-blindness. Consider Kenneth Burke's *A Rhetoric of Motives*. To demonstrate that the range of rhetoric includes poetics, Burke invokes Milton's Samson who is "enraged with himself for having 'divulged / The secret gift of God to a deceitful / Woman'" (3). By analyzing Samson's rhetorical situation only in terms of Samson's suffering and violence, Burke leaves readers wondering whether the range of rhetoric includes the unnamed but ever present Delilah. Feminist challenges to the rhetorical traditions are presently emerging to address such genderblindness with the hope of recognizing, validating, and addressing Bathsheba's dilemma.

Although feminist challenges have carved out spaces for themselves within rhetoric and composition circles, they hardly presume theoretical consensus. Indeed, they define

\* Pages 1-31, as appearing in *Anglo-American Feminist Challenges to the Rhetorical Traditions: Virginia Woolf, Mary Daly, Adrienne Rich* by Krista Ratcliffe © 1996 by the Board of Trustees, Southern Illinois University, reproduced by permission of the publisher.

Bathsheba's dilemma differently.<sup>3</sup> Some feminist challenges study women's construction of knowledge claims (e.g., Mary Field Belenky, Elizabeth Flynn, Carol Gilligan, Jane Tedesco); others study women's textual strategies (e.g., Pamela Caughie, Mary P Hiatt, bell hooks); others study how rhetorical theories position women and Woman (e.g., Linda Brodkey, Margaret Fell, Susan Jarratt, Andrea Lunsford and Lisa Ede); others study rhetorical theories that women themselves have constructed (e.g., Cheryl Glenn, Barbara Johnson, C. Jan Swearingen); still others study intersections of rhetorical theory and pedagogy (e.g., Florence Howe, Susan Osborn, Marjorie Curry Woods); or as Virginia Woolf claims about women and literature in *A Room of One's Own*, they may study some combination thereof (3).

Many feminist challenges to the rhetorical traditions draw from studies in other disciplines, interrogating their claims, methodologies, and assumptions in order to determine their implications for the history, theory, and pedagogy of rhetoric and composition studies (Horner 206). An important implication that emerges concerns methodology. Like feminist challenges to literary, historical, and philosophical traditions, feminist challenges to the rhetorical traditions may employ a variety of interwoven moves: (1) recovering, (2) rereading, (3) extrapolating, and (4) conceptualizing.<sup>5</sup>

Recovering involves the archaeological project of discovering lost or marginalized theories of rhetoric. Because Cary Nelson's three axioms for recovering literary texts provide a means not only for expanding canons but also for critiquing the criteria by which canons are constructed, they could easily be adopted for rhetoric and composition projects: (1) retain texts that were popular or influential in particular periods, such as Ida B. Wells' speeches, a move that will reconstruct history; (2) retain texts that people repeatedly claim are worthless—for instance, Eudora Ramsey Richardson's text on women's public speaking—a move that will continually force us to critique our biases; and (3) recover writers and theorists, like Margaret Fell and Audre Lorde, who have dropped out or been left out of rhetorical histories, a move that may force us off the page and into cultural gaps (*Recovery* 51). Once recovered, women's rhetorical theories may be constructed into a separate rhetorical tradition or incorporated into the existing corpus of rhetorical theories. The first option assumes a gynocritical stance that emphasizes differences among women's texts, as exemplified in Andrea Lunsford's *Reclaiming Rhetorica* and Mary Ellen Waithe's two-volume *A History of Women Philosophers*. The second option assumes a desegregated stance that puts women's theories into play "equally" with men's, as attempted in Patricia Bizzell and Bruce Herzberg's *The Rhetorical Tradition*. Although both options serve important functions, they each pose potential pitfalls that must be guarded against: the first could allow women's rhetorical theories to degenerate into a separate but unequal position, and the second could allow women's rhetorical theories to become mere tokens. Moreover, because both methodologies are based on identity, both options focus on recovering specific women and their texts, a strategy that revolves around the question Who is speaking? and relegates unidentified texts into the anonymous category. Barbara Biesecker proposes an alternative means of concep-

tualizing history, arguing that feminist histories of rhetoric should construct a new narrative. This new narrative would not frame histories around specific subjects as agents—for example, Woolf, Daly, and Rich. Instead, it would foreground the forces that make speaking possible, such as a textual analysis of discursive positions (148). To Biesecker's claim, however, I would add the following question: What forces, including who is (not) speaking, made particular speaking subjects (im)possible?

Rereading entails revising our interpretations of canonical and recovered theories of rhetoric. Rereading canonical theories may not only reaffirm their valuable contributions to rhetorical studies but also explode their patriarchal assumptions and implications for composition studies. Phyllis Lassner provides an example of this latter move in her feminist rereading of Rogerian argument. Rereading canonical theories may give voice to women's/Woman's silenced contributions, shedding light on their visible absences that may be perceived as flitting presences only in prefaces, footnotes, dedications, or margins. Such projects either may focus on real historical women, as in Cheryl Glenn's study of Aspasia's influence on Socrates' concept of rhetoric and Drema Lipscomb's study of Sojourner Truth's influence on public discourse, or they may focus on the analytic category of Woman, as in Page duBois's philosophical project and Susan Jarratt's rhetorical one (*Sophists*). Rereading canonical theories may also result in the construction of feminist theories of rhetoric, as in Dale Bauer's rereading of Bakhtin's discourse theory (*Feminist Dialogics*). Furthermore, rereading women's recovered theories and judging them by contemporary criteria might uncover important contributions to rhetorical studies, as exemplified by Bizzell and Herzberg's inclusion of Sarah Grimke's defense of Anglo-American women's public speaking and by Karlyn Kohrs Campbell's inclusion of Mary Church Terrell's critique of African American women's public speaking (*Man Cannot Speak*). Though not all recovered theories emerge from a feminist ideology, such theories may be reread for feminist purposes, that is, to foreground how gendered claims and strategies affect rhetorical history, theory, and pedagogy.

Extrapolating entails rereading non-rhetoric texts (essays, etiquette manuals, cookbooks, fiction, diaries, etc.) as theories of rhetoric. That is, theories of rhetoric may be extrapolated from women's and/or feminists' critiques of language as well as from the textual strategies of such critiques.<sup>7</sup> For example, Bizzell and Herzberg encourage readers to view Christine de Pisan's *Treasure of the City of Ladies* as both a rhetoric manual and an etiquette book delineating Renaissance women's courtly gestures; Karlyn Kohrs Campbell posits a gender-related theory of feminine style based on the ideas and textual strategies of nineteenth-century feminist orators, such as Maria W. Miller Stewart and Elizabeth Cady Stanton (*Man Cannot Speak*); and Patricia Yaeger conceptualizes a theory of emancipatory style of women's writing based on the ideas and textual strategies in nineteenth- and twentieth-century women's literature. Given that few rhetoric texts by women have been, or are likely to be, recovered and given that much of the modern and contemporary research and personal musings about women and language has occurred outside the field of rhetoric and composition,

extrapolation may prove a rich interdisciplinary resource for rhetoric and composition scholars who are interested in constructing women's and feminist theories of rhetoric. One point about this extrapolating move should be noted, lest an extrapolated theory be mistaken for a positivistic rendering of the nonrhetoric texts: as in ethnographic studies, the person extrapolating the theory influences the resulting theory.

Conceptualizing implies writing new theories of rhetoric. The debates that rage about this process parallel debates between liberal and radical feminisms, that is, between working within institutional structures or overturning these structures. Should feminists situate their theories within rhetorical traditions, or should we question any connection with such traditions? Though these two questions appear separate, they are not. Because we are born into language, we cannot escape the dominant discourse of the symbolic. No space exists in which feminists may stand to begin totally anew, for Aristotle writes us as much as we may write (against) him. But because the dominant discourse is not static, it may be revised. Hence, two possibilities arise. The first is that new rhetorical theories and practices may emerge from the old. Roxanne Mountford, however, cautions us about relying too heavily on the old: "appropriating classical rhetorics without deeply transforming them from the point of view of the disadvantaged—those who would seek to enter some kind of public forum, some institutionalized discourse, without the benefit of the elite, white, maleness that classical rhetoric presumes its students to have—is foolhardy" ("Feminist Theory" 2). The second possibility is that the unconceptualized that-which-already-exists may be conceptualized. Karlyn Kohrs Campbell contends that such projects will radically challenge our fundamental assumptions about rhetoric ("Sound of Women's Voices" 214); bell hooks contends that such projects will also force us to ask the questions Who is listening and What is being heard? ("Young Soldier" 14). The potential of these two possible conceptualizing moves puts liberal feminisms and radical feminisms into play. Liberal feminists must recognize that particular changes within structures can change the structures, and radical feminists must recognize that new structures emerge from existing ones, whether that emergence is violent or peaceful, fast or slow, conscious or unconscious. The implications of these conceptualizing moves are enormous. They encourage not a passive acceptance of structural oppression but rather Julia Kristeva's "radical *refusal* of the subjective limitations" of the structure of dominant discourse ("Women's Time" 20). They also reject the desire for a totalizing theory and embrace the possibilities of multiple theories that articulate multiple standpoints and practices.

All four moves—recovering, rereading, extrapolating, conceptualizing, or some combination thereof—offer tremendous potential for challenging our rhetorical traditions. But if the recovery of women's and feminist theories of rhetoric proves as difficult as Bizzell and Herzberg imply (670), then rereading, extrapolating, and conceptualizing may become crucial research functions for rhetoric and composition research about Bathsheba's dilemma.

Focusing on the extrapolating option, I offer the following critical question for this study: How may Virginia Woolf's, Mary Daly's, and Adrienne Rich's Anglo-American feminist theories of rhetoric be extrapolated from their feminist texts about women, language, and culture in ways that productively complicate the genderblindness of traditional rhetoric and composition history, theory, and pedagogy? As one response to this question, I examine the interrelationship between *what* Woolf, Daly, and Rich write and *how* they write; in other words, I extrapolate their feminist theories of rhetoric from their interwoven claims and textual strategies. I offer these extrapolated theories not as positivistic truths lying just under the surface of these feminists' texts, not as the final words on feminism and rhetoric and composition studies, and certainly not as totalizing visions that speak to and for all women. Rather, I offer these extrapolated theories as my readings of three women's texts, readings that inform my rhetoric and composition studies every time I sit down to write or walk into a classroom. I hope this study contributes to the continuing conversations about feminisms and the rhetorical traditions by inviting readers not only to question how Woman, women, and feminists have been located as a part of, and apart from, these traditions but also to explore the implications of such locations for rhetorical history, theory, and pedagogy.

This chapter [. . . discusses] how Anglo-American feminist theories of rhetoric may be defined, discovered, and defended. The defining section establishes the theoretical perspective of this study and defines Anglo-American feminist theories of rhetoric. The discovering section rereads Roland Barthes's essay "The Old Rhetoric: An Aide-Mémoire" to locate gaps in the received tradition that Woolf's, Daly's, and Rich's theories might fill or expand. Finally, the defending section argues that these three theories do indeed provide important Anglo-American feminist challenges to the rhetorical traditions.

#### DEFINING ANGLO-AMERICAN FEMINIST THEORIES OF RHETORIC(S)

My project, with its focus on Anglo-American feminist theories of rhetoric, offers multiple readings and, as such, demands definitions.<sup>9</sup> My use of the term *feminist* refers to a materialist feminism that can be positioned, in part, in relation to the following terms: *female* is defined as characteristics grounded in biological sex differences, *feminine* as behaviors grounded in socially constructed gender differences, *women* as nonessentialist real-life historical subjects, *Woman* as an analytic category, and *feminist* as an ethical stance that foregrounds sexual and gender concerns as a particularly productive means of demystifying and critiquing the cultural matrix—including the complexities of gender, race, class, sexual orientation, religious preference, geographical location, and so on, within which power relations function.

A materialist-feminist stance cites language as an important arena of political struggle but is skeptical of isolating language and abstractions from other arenas of struggle (Newton and Rosenfelt xxi). Such a stance locates feminism as a site of inquiry from which arise possibilities for (re)visioning multiple concerns within a specific culture. Moreover, this feminist

revisioning is not passive. It entails (re)writing the past and the present, not to ignore the roles of men but to draw attention to gendered actions, biases, and assumptions as well as the accompanying inequities of power. Since men's roles have usually been the primary focus in history, since men themselves have usually been the primary interpreters of their roles in history, and since the construction of these "facts" occurs within discourse, an interrogation of language that exposes the constructed "nature" of ideology becomes crucial to the materialist feminist project of revision. Through this feminist revisioning, political stances are translated into action so that personal and collective change is not only imagined but effected. And this imagining and effecting are what introduce the space of rhetoric as well as the need for feminist theories of rhetoric.

The materialist feminism of this study is complicated, however, by the term *Anglo-American*. Even though Woolf is Protestant, Daly is "Nag-Gnostic," and Rich is Jewish, I situate these women within feminist tradition(s) that Toril Moi names Anglo-American. This classification implies a materialist feminism possessed of the ethical stance described above; it also implies a feminism admittedly situated in the white privilege of British and North American traditions. Situated in relation to African American feminist tradition(s), Caribbean American ones, Native American ones, French ones, and so on, the white privilege that is particularly located within the Anglo-American feminist tradition(s) raises certain questions, particularly questions of definition relating to the terms *women* and *Woman*. The problematics of these definitions are well articulated by bell hooks:

Historically, white patriarchs rarely referred to the racial identity of white women because they believed that the subject of race was political and therefore would contaminate the sanctified domain of "white" woman's reality. By verbally denying white women racial identity, that is by simply referring to them as women when what they meant was white women, their status was further reduced to that of a non-person. . . .

White feminists did not challenge the racist-sexist tendency to use the word "woman" to refer solely to white women; they supported it. For them it served two purposes. First, it allowed them to proclaim white men world oppressors while making it appear linguistically that no alliance existed between white women and white men based on shared racial imperialism. Second, it made possible for white women to act as if alliances did exist between themselves and non-white women in our society, and by doing so they could deflect attention away from their classism and racism. ("Race and Feminism" 140)

Jackie Jones Royster offers one solution to this problem: we must name everybody before we can stop naming anyone.

Considering hooks's critique and Royster's solution, I name my study *Anglo-American* so as to respect the differences among feminists in general and to stipulate my focus on Anglo-American feminist theories of rhetoric in particular. For as Judith Levine has claimed in "White Like Me," Anglo-American feminists have an ethical imperative to deal with race at this particular historical moment, to move beyond discussing race mostly, or only, in terms of "the Other" (23). Such a move exposes what many people with white privilege often forget: that race is marked on Anglo-American women as well as on African American women or Native American women or Chicana women, and that particular differences exist *within* each of these categories.[ . . .] Thus, as Toni Morrison has encouraged literary theorists to do (*Playing 6*), I attempt to articulate how the silences whispers, images, and arguments about race have contributed to the presence of the Anglo-American identities within Woolf's *Daily's*, and Rich's theories.<sup>12</sup> [ . . .]

Despite our culture's powerful socializing tendency to define *feminist* as man-hater, my title's emphasis on *challenges* is, first of all, not a separatist move. I do not deny the effectiveness of men's rhetorical theories, whether they be those of Aristotle, Augustine, Burke, Roland Barthes, or Henry Louis Gates. I believe, for instance, that Aristotelian rhetorical theory is so pervasive in our culture that it is inscribed on and in our bodies and that, consequently, we should understand it and use it for our own ends. Yet we must also be honest about its limitations: for example, its genderblindness. My emphasis on *challenges* is, second of all, not a nurturing move, which may seem strange, perhaps not supportive enough, for some feminists and nonfeminists alike. But my goal is to confront conflicts while respecting my readers and students, not to create a "safe space" in theory or in pedagogy. For even though safe spaces seemingly provide temporary harbors from a violent world, they usually exist only in the scholar/teacher's mind. Indeed, such spaces too often deny the very real conflicts inside and outside our minds and, more importantly for our students, inside and outside our classrooms. Susan Jarratt articulates this stance particularly well: "[M]y hopes are pinned on [a theoretical conversation and] a composition course . . . in which students argue about the ethical implications of discourse on a wide range of subjects and, in doing so, come to identify their personal interests with others, understand those interests as implicated in a larger communal setting, and advance them in a public voice" ("Feminism and Composition" 121).

The term *rhetoric* that I employ in this book problematizes Kenneth Burke's concept, which merges "its use of *identification* and its nature as *addressed*" (*Rhetoric of Motives* 45). As Burke himself claims, this rhetorical function pervades all aspects of culture: "We can place in terms of rhetoric all those statements by anthropologists, ethnologists, individual and social psychologists, and the like, that bear upon the *persuasive* aspects of language, the function of language as *addressed*, as direct or roundabout appeal to real or ideal audiences, without or within" (44). This definition posits rhetoric as a conscious and unconscious socializing function of language through which specific subjects, contexts, and texts interact



to construct meanings that influence public and private cultural spaces by moving specific subjects to personal and collective action and/or attitude (50). Such a concept of rhetoric and rhetorical analysis exposes the function of ideology in the interwoven textual, personal, and cultural and reminds us that rhetoric has a socializing, hence moralizing, function that influences all texts and all people (39; xiv-xv).

Yet some gaps in Burke's theory (as in many other theories of rhetoric) necessitate the search for feminist theories of rhetoric. First, Burke's theory focuses on points of identification more than points of difference. Burke predicates his concept of identification upon the existence of difference and acknowledges that specific terministic screens will trigger particular worldviews; however, his desire is for rhetoric to erase such differences through consubstantiality and to thereby effect the possibility of communication. He argues that a consubstantial move is possible because different kinds of symbols, including language, promote similarities through socialization (*Language as Symbolic Action* 52). But much is rendered invisible when identification becomes the main rhetorical pursuit. Second, Burke's theory perpetuates a centuries-long tradition of genderblindness. Like many other theories of rhetoric, no mention is made of the differences in men's and women's cultural positions; indeed, little mention is made of women except in the "Courtship" section of *A Rhetoric of Motives* (208). So deeply entrenched in the dominant ideology are such sex and gender biases and erasures that they appear as the natural order of things, not as subjects for investigation. Although women and feminists should not reject Burke's theory or any other phallogocentric theories solely because of such biases or erasures, we do need to expose tacit assumptions about sex and gender and analyze their implications.

To complicate these gaps in Burke's rhetorical function, I call on the theories of Roland Barthes and Julia Kristeva. Because Burke's tension between identification and difference assumes binary structural boundaries that limit the potential play of language and, hence, potential meanings, I invoke Barthes's theory of language function to complicate Burke's theory. Barthes posits language as a sign system that presumes the potentially endless play of the signifier, that is, a signifying process in which signifiers become multiple signifieds that in turn become other signifiers. This language function as transformation becomes a game for Barthes, "the very pleasure of power," the cultural site where various voices intersect to construct "the pensive text" (*S/Z* 59, 217). Despite concerns of certain feminist critics, Barthes's play need not erase the ideological nature of language but may instead foreground it by merging questions of the personal (idiolectal forms) and the political (collective formulas) with the potential for revision (memory) ("Style and Its Image" 98-99). As such, Barthes's doubling of multiplicity and ideology may be read as positing a language function that questions socialization as identification and celebrates socialization as perpetuation of difference. By putting the possibilities of Burke's rhetorical function in play with Roland Barthes's language function, I imagine a rhetorical function that offers possibilities of difference, not just identification, and that assumes multiple interpretive possibilities that, in

turn, construct spaces for feminist revisionings. This resulting rhetorical function resembles the particle/wave theory of light in quantum physics: that is, a person's stance, like an electron's *position*, can be noted, or the continual play of the signifier, like an electron's *motion*, can be noted; however, like position and motion, stance and play cannot be observed simultaneously.

To confront the implications of genderblindness in this rhetorical function, I work from Kristeva's third term of feminism, the "*insertion* into history and the radical *refusal* of the subjective limitations imposed by this history's time" ("Women's Time" 20). From this standpoint, many possibilities emerge. First, Kristeva's third term enables feminists to refuse the violent metaphors of killing and scapegoating upon which Burke's rhetorical theory is based (*Rhetoric of Motives* 13; *Language as Symbolic Action* 55). Second, it enables feminists to refuse the binary trap of being forced to identify either with Lakoff's color conscious women or with Cixous's hysterical Medusa (Ryder 531)<sup>16</sup>; indeed, women can use the language of men to express the feelings of women. Third, it enables feminists to (re)theorize rhetorical theories; that is, conventional theories of rhetoric may [be] viewed not as static but as mutable, while new theories may be seen as emerging from the old and making the old unrecognizable. Such possibilities challenge the rhetorical traditions.

Therefore, by complicating Burke's rhetorical function with Barthes's multiplicity and Kristeva's third term of feminism, I construct a rhetorical function that intersects with my materialist feminism. From this position, I construct the following definition: *Anglo-American feminist theories of rhetoric* are those theories that employ Anglo-American materialist feminism(s) as their primary lens of inquiry to expose how language functions through subjects, contexts, and texts to construct meanings that influence public and private cultural spaces by moving specific subjects to personal and collective action and/or attitude. Given that no theory can provide a totalizing vision, Anglo-American feminist theories of rhetoric are admittedly limited; they foreground certain concepts and constituencies while backgrounding others. What becomes visible is how, from an Anglo-American woman's perspective, language affects and is affected by sex and gender. But because sex and gender do not exist in a vacuum, they emerge as a productive means of demystifying and critiquing power relations within the complex cultural matrix. Thus, Anglo-American feminist theories of rhetoric recognize, validate, and address Bathsheba's dilemma by contextualizing gendered discursive practices and by questioning their interwoven claims and strategies as well as their assumptions and implications.

Anglo-American feminist theories of rhetoric assume interwoven relationships of the personal, the textual, and the cultural. Theorizing such interrelationships problematizes the poststructuralist concept of *text*, which is often read as enveloping everything and which is sometimes read as negating the possibility of political positioning. Andrea Nye articulates the necessity of reimagining text as follows: "structuralist and post-structuralist theories of symbolic meaning complete the philosophy of man [by positing] a textual arena where am-

bivalent relations can be acted out, while at the same time real life continues with its murder and cruelties" (217). To address Nye's complaint, I read the personal, the textual, and the cultural as rhetorical functions that have intersecting, though not identical, properties: the personal constructs and reflects the textual and the cultural, the textual constructs and reflects the personal and the cultural, and the cultural constructs and reflects the personal and the textual. Because all three categories are defined not as static artifacts but as rhetorical functions, specific subjects assume a limited agency, texts assume a potentiality of meanings, and cultures assume a nonstatic structuration. All are read in order to make ideology visible and to locate gaps that disempowered subjects may fill with their heteroglossic words, nonunified voices, and conflictive actions.<sup>19</sup>

Within this framework, rhetorical analyses of personal, textual, and cultural functions are imperative. For texts may emerge differently given different cultural agent(s), space(s), and moment(s). As such, texts are not fetishized but are instead rendered subject to contextualized (re)constructions of meanings at various cultural sites of production and consumption. Texts may disturb personally and culturally accepted ideas as well as effect personal and cultural transformations. At the same time, personal and cultural events may create the space for specific subjects or cultural forces to imagine, write, publish, or read such texts. These intersections of the personal, the textual, and the cultural are important, for they construct spaces wherein the dominant ideology may be continually reinforced, rejected, or reimagined; such intersections force us to recognize that when we question textuality, we also question our cultures and ourselves.

#### DISCOVERING SEX AND GENDER GAPS IN THE RHETORICAL TRADITIONS

Until recently, the rhetorical tradition commonly evoked such names as Aristotle, Cicero, Quintilian, Augustine, Cassiodorus, Peter Ramus, Hugh Blair, George Campbell, Richard Whately, I. A. Richards, and Kenneth Burke, all of whom have theorized and/or practiced the art of rhetoric. The construction of such a tradition, impressive as it is, has reinforced two trends: a dominance of phallogocentric theories and the marginalization of certain people. Recently, many rhetoric and composition scholars have challenged one another to interrogate the closure implied by this construction and to entertain the possibilities of multiple, diverse rhetorical traditions that not only revise the canon but also question the concept of canon and the assumptions of canon formation (e.g., Patricia Bizzell and Bruce Herzberg, William Covino, Susan Jarratt, Andrea Lunsford, Jaspur Neel). In this study I respond to such challenges by focusing on feminist theories of rhetoric. To lay the groundwork for my response, in this section I identify sex and gender gaps in the received Aristotelian rhetorical tradition(s) that may serve as spaces, or starting points, for conceptualizing feminist theories of rhetoric.

Although a variety of histories would seemingly serve my purpose, I will (re)read Roland Barthes's essay "The Old Rhetoric," compiled in 1964–65 when he became interested in the nineteenth-century "death" of the old rhetoric. Barthes's twentieth-century reception

of rhetorical history and theory is heavily Aristotelian, which is appropriate for my purpose here, given that Aristotle's *Rhetoric* remains a dominant thread in twentieth-century "recoveries" of rhetoric. "The Old Rhetoric" not so much reconstructs a linear history as narrates moments of the old rhetoric, questioning traditional rhetorical concepts in terms of class and structuralist language assumptions. For scholars who want to complicate traditional rhetorical concepts in terms of gender, the importance of Barthes's critique is two-fold: it not only models a critical methodology, using class as a criterion, but it also functions as a history text that may be reread for its own gender gaps. In the following paragraphs I complicate Barthes's reading of the old rhetoric in terms of gender gaps; in particular, I examine definitions of *rhetoric* in terms of (1) proofs and appeals, (2) language function, (3) text and the five rhetorical canons, (4) author and audience, (5) rhetorical situation, (6) history, traditions, canons, (7) politics, and (8) pedagogy.

The reason for such a rereading is simple: I want to identify the possibilities and limitations of this Aristotelian rhetorical theory for women and feminists. Like other twentieth-century receptions, Barthes's rendering explores the possibilities of this rhetorical theory, that is, its potential for empowering anyone in any situation to achieve any end. What is not recognized, however, is its limitations for outsiders. Women occupy different cultural spaces than men, and feminists occupy different cultural spaces than nonfeminists. Although infinite possibilities abound for *particular* differences within these various cultural spaces, identifying the limitations of the old rhetoric for these cultural spaces demystifies gendered power plays as well as prevalent stereotypes (e.g., that women are not as logical or as reasonable in their arguments as men). By critiquing both the possibilities and the limitations of Barthes's reception of rhetorical history and theory for women and feminists, I simultaneously discover spaces for, and highlight the need for, feminist theories of rhetoric.

To begin such a project, Barthes's definitions of rhetoric must be examined. He claims that "the world is incredibly full of old Rhetoric" and cites rhetoric's importance as the only theoretical structure that has foregrounded the function of language ("The Old Rhetoric" 11, 15). Though rhetoric has (re)emerged in academic circles during the last half of the twentieth century as an important site of inquiry, the term still suffers from hazy, multi-layered definitions and, consequently, retains some of its power for feminism(s).<sup>21</sup> Barthes acknowledges such a position when he defines rhetoric as a metalanguage and delineates its six different, though sometimes simultaneous, functions: (1) a technique or art, (2) a teaching, (3) a science, (4) an ethic, (5) a social practice, and (6) a ludic practice (13–14). Barthes's multiple definitions can be read and questioned so as to invite women and feminists into the Burkean parlor.

Barthes's rhetoric as *technique* is defined as an "'art' in the classical sense of the word; the art of persuasion, a body of rules and recipes whose implementation makes it possible to convince the hearer of the discourse . . . , even if what he is to be convinced of is 'false' " ("The Old Rhetoric" 13). For Barthes, rhetoric as *techne* implies a form/content split, despite

other rhetoricians' claims to the contrary (Corbett 381). That is, Barthes's rhetoric as *techné* reveals how rhetoric as an "ideology of form" may be learned and employed by anyone in any discourse situation. While the possibilities for empowerment within such a structure are rightly emphasized, we too often forget to question the limitations of this theoretical stance. Particularly, we mystify the fact that different speakers and writers occupy different cultural positions and, hence, different positions of power. By asserting a false sense of equality (i.e., that everyone can learn and employ and be empowered by rhetorical conventions), we assume that the logic underlying this structure is a universal logic shared by all people in all cultures at all points in history, that specific agency alone can overcome structural oppressions, and that content is separated from form. Feminist theories of rhetoric should not only foreground such assumptions but also question them, problematizing rhetoric as an ideology of form in terms of Barthes's other defining categories of rhetoric.

Barthes's rhetoric as *ethic* is posited as "a system of 'rules,' . . . at once a manual of recipes, inspired by a practical goal, and a Code, a body of ethical prescriptions whose role is to supervise (*i.e.*, to permit and to limit) the 'deviations' of emotive language" ("The Old Rhetoric" 13). This ethic points to the cultural construction of rhetorical/ethical intersections, and the specific intersections constructed provide boundaries within which people assume they can function comfortably, that is, prescriptively and predictably. In this way, Barthes's rhetoric as ethic exposes the interwoven relation of theory and praxis. Yet this ethic also functions from assumptions that limit the rhetorical potential of women and feminists, as evidenced by the following questions that may inform feminist theories of rhetoric: Who establishes this ethic? What truth conditions must be accepted for one to believe this ethic? Who benefits from the power structure of this ethic, and how? Where are the boundaries of this ethic? At what points are these boundaries visible and vulnerable? What are the implications of believing in plain and emotive languages? And how can "'deviations' of emotive language" be recovered or reread for feminist purposes?

Barthes's rhetoric as *social practice* is defined as "that privileged technique (since one must pay in order to acquire it) which permits the ruling class to gain *ownership of speech*" ("The Old Rhetoric" 13-14). This social function exposes class assumptions that control subjects' relative access to rhetoric. It also exposes the constructed "nature" of power relations between subjects within specified cultural spaces; as such, it implies that constructed subjectivities, as opposed to essential natures, may be deconstructed. At the same time, this social function works from assumptions that limit the rhetorical potential of women and feminists, as evidenced by the following questions that should inform feminist theories of rhetoric: What happens to gender when class is the predominant cut made across the social? What happens when the matrix of the social is problematized by sex and gender as a means of interrogating class, race, sexual orientation, religious preference, geography, and so on? How does rhetoric function outside the "ruling class," outside racial barriers, outside geo-

graphical circles, and the like? Where do such questions overlap? And, finally, what are the assumptions and implications of believing in the “ownership of speech”?

Barthes’s rhetoric as *ludic* practice is posed as “games, parodies, erotic or obscene allusions, classroom jokes, a whole schoolboy practice” (“The Old Rhetoric” 14). Rhetoric as ludic provides an ironically effective space for diversion and subversion. Given feminist contexts, rhetoric as ludic provides feminists entrées into dialogues about rhetoric. As with Cixous’s laughing Medusa, the play of the ludic becomes the space and the means for feminists to identify, disrupt, and reject the logic of phallogocentric discourse. These disruptions and rejections subvert the dominant ideology by creating gaps that may be filled and expanded with feminists’ voices, actions, and theories of rhetoric. What should not be forgotten is that negative material consequences for laughter exist, namely, madness and sometimes death. Yet the ludic also provides a much-needed emphasis in feminist theory, an emphasis on the *pleasures* that women find with(in) language. Borrowing a metaphor from Mary Oliver, Patricia Yaeger provides one such example: “the archetype of the writer as a honey-mad woman, as someone hungry for the honey of speech” (4).

Barthes grounds his multileveled definitions of the old rhetoric primarily in Aristotelian theory: “[It] is above all a rhetoric of proof, of reasoning, of the approximative syllogism (enthymeme); it is a deliberately diminished logic, one adapted to the level of the ‘public,’ i.e., of common sense, of ordinary opinion. . . . [I]t would be well suited to the products of our so-called mass culture, in which an Aristotelian ‘probability’ prevails, i.e., ‘what the public believes possible.’ How many films, pulp novels, commercial articles might take as their motto the Aristotelian rule: ‘better an impossible probability than an improbable possibility’ ” (“The Old Rhetoric” 22). Like William Grimaldi’s interpretation of Aristotelian rhetoric, Barthes’s Aristotelian “rhetoric of proof” focuses on deductive and inductive arguments with interwoven logical, emotional, and ethical appeals. As scholars too numerous to name have claimed, Aristotle’s brilliantly conceived systematic art of rhetoric has greatly influenced Western culture. Yet, to reiterate the point, Aristotle’s rhetoric also poses potential pitfalls for women and feminists and, hence, suggests many possible starting points for revisionist theories.

Barthes’s Aristotelian rhetoric of proof presumes a deductive logic based on inductive precedent, namely, that which has comfortably come before. To combat this deeply ingrained impulse, feminists must frequently refute received traditions as well as recover lost ones and construct new ones, all in an attempt to construct a space from which to speak effectively. Only when such a space is constructed may they address their immediate arguments and conclusions. Based on Aristotle’s enthymeme as defined in his *Rhetoric* and *Prior Analytics*, Barthes’s rhetoric of proof also presumes the importance of a deductive logic that relies on publicly accepted (and imagined) probable premises that lead to probable conclusions.<sup>22</sup>

Feminists frequently face particular problems with the logical appeal of Barthes's Aristotelian enthymeme: specifically, the logic of their probable premises often does not reflect the common sense logic of the general public; therefore, the public cannot imagine or will not supply missing premises. As a result, feminists are often obliged to lay out their premises and argue their validity. This time-consuming process often delays political action. Yet even when their premises are outlined, their arguments and conclusions must still confront the judgment of mass logic. And this mass logic often denies the validity of personal experience, especially the personal experiences of women, feminists, and other outsiders, unless of course this personal experience can be validated, preferably by the testimony of two men.<sup>23</sup>

Feminists also confront particular problems with Barthes's Aristotelian emotional appeal. That is, these appeals are largely negated by the logic of Barthes's probable/possible distinctions. The maxim—"better, an impossible probability than an improbable possibility"—does not provide space for many feminists' arguments ("The Old Rhetoric" 22). Grounded in women's private/public experiences and skeptical of major/minor distinctions, feminists' arguments frequently emerge as emotional pleas that are too often received neither as probable impossibilities nor as improbable possibilities but as *improbable* impossibilities—that is, improbable within the consensus of public opinion and impossible within the logic of dominant discourse. That these improbable impossibilities (read "private emotional pleas") might possess logics of their own is an unpopular notion that public opinion is not often willing to acknowledge, let alone explore. Jane Tompkins claims that Western epistemology allows no space for the emotional (170), but the emotional does not simply vanish. What Western epistemology does is mystify the power of the emotional by hiding it in the negative and renaming it *illogical*, *irrational*, *nonsensical*, *untrue*, *invalid*—all of which occupy space. As a result, emotional appeals are rendered as improbable impossibilities. Because their logic does not neatly fit the dominant logic of the masses, feminists are often labelled "mad" or "angry," accused of giving way to emotional tirades, and dismissed as having no sense of humor. Such labels and accusations deny the validity and importance of feminists' different emotional appeals.

Barthes's Aristotelian ethical appeal also poses problems for feminists. Aristotle restricted his concept of *ethos* to that sense of the speaker which emerges from the text at the site of the audience's listening. This concept of *ethos*, however, has traditionally not included a space for women whose sex is visibly marked on their bodies. The sight of women or the sound of feminists behind the bar or in the pulpit has almost always evoked resistance before they could ever utter a word, or The Word. Such resistance calls not only upon public opinion but also upon the Law (of God, of the Phallus). Popularly invoked as transcendent Truth that emerges transparently through language, the Law is frequently perceived as impervious to the influences of history and culture. So women and feminists have traditionally had to argue for their right to speak or write in a public forum about private and public concerns (e.g., Margery Kempe, Laura Cereta, Margaret Fell, Angelina and Sarah Grimke, Sojourner Truth, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Mary Church Terrell). Although Cicero expanded Aristo-

le's concept of *ethos* to include the reputation of the speaker (*De Oratore* 2.43), his theory further marginalized women and feminists who were not allowed a respectable public reputation.

Clearly, if feminists' enthymemic premises are not imagined or supplied by the public, if their logical appeals prolong political action, if their emotional appeals are hidden within the negative, and if their ethical appeals are given relatively little cultural space, then revisionist feminist theories of rhetoric need to reconceptualize these classical boundaries of proof and appeal to emancipate women from their "old" and "new" rhetorical double binds.

In addition to critiquing definitions, proofs, and appeals of the old rhetoric, Barthes narrates another important rhetorical consideration, language function:

[T]he art of speech is originally linked to a claim of ownership, as if language, as object of a transformation, condition of a practice, had been determined not from a subtle ideological mediation (as may have been the case in so many forms of art), but from the baldest sociality, affirmed in its fundamental brutality, that of earthly possession: we began to reflect upon language in order to defend our own. It is on the level of social conflict that was born a first theoretical sketch of *feigned speech* (different from fictive speech, that of the poets: poetry was then the only literature, prose not acceding to this status until later). ("The Old Rhetoric" 17)

Part of the "subtle ideological mediation" that must be demystified in the above description is that "we" meant *men* and "our" meant *men's*, while women, slaves, and children were relegated to the category of "earthly possession" for which men bargained (Aristotle, *Politics* 1260a.7). To redefine women's position, feminist theories of rhetoric must critique this concept of language to determine if, and how, it can be made more inclusive. For how we assume language functions, more than anything else, determines how we read and write the cultural as well as the textual. When posited as a simple tool that communicates thought, language functions at the beck and call of unified subjects whose unlimited agency can determine when, how, and why to speak, listen, read, or write. When posited as an all-powerful structure that creates both subjects and thought, language constructs discursive positions *within* which specific subjects are totally determined. But when posited as a necessary component of rhetorical socialization and negotiation, language becomes a means through which specific subjects as rhetorical agents both construct and reflect their personal and collective texts and cultures. The latter position allows women and feminists the possibility of, and space for, social change. Just as importantly, it demystifies the dangers of celebrating an acultural, autonomous agency, otherwise known as the bootstrap theory, which frequently traps women and feminists into feeling inferior, inadequate, mad, or angry for not being able, singlehandedly, to overcome systemic sexism and its accompanying racism, classism, homophobia, religious prejudice, and so on. It also demystifies certain death-of-the-author



theories that have emerged just as women, feminists, and other marginalized voices were becoming powerful in academia, theories that have sometimes been used to silence them.

Barthes also narrates the concept of text. The significance of the old rhetoric for the new text of modern and contemporary rhetorical theories is elucidated in his opening paragraph:

At the source or on the horizon of this seminar, as always, there was the modern text, *i.e.*, *the text which does not yet exist*. One way to approach this new text is to find out from what point of departure, and in opposition to what, it seeks to come into being, and in this way to confront the new semiotics of writing with the classical practice of literary language, which for centuries was known as Rhetoric. Whence the notion of a seminar on the old Rhetoric: *old* does not mean that there is a new Rhetoric today; rather *old Rhetoric* is set in opposition to that new which may not yet have come into being: the world is incredibly full of old Rhetoric. ("The Old Rhetoric" 11)

Clearly the old rhetoric cannot be ignored, for the new rhetoric must emerge from, or in opposition to, the old. Thus, feminists may construct theories of the new rhetoric by following Virginia Woolf's injunction "to try the accepted forms, to discard the unfit, to create others which are more fitting" ("Men and Women" 195). Woolf's third position echoes Barthes's idea of a "text which does not yet exist," a concept of text that provides the perfect opening for feminist theories of rhetoric. For feminists are concerned with nothing if not arguing that *improbable impossibilities* are indeed *possible*.

Linking *the possible* to gendered textuality has implications for rethinking the canons of rhetoric, which Barthes describes as "*active, transitive, programmatic, operational*," as not a structure but a "gradual structuration" ("The Old Rhetoric" 50). Although Barthes reduces the five canons to three—*invention, arrangement, and style* (51–52)—when dealing with written texts, feminist scholars should reclaim all five. For feminist studies of *invention, arrangement, and style* may help us articulate different thought processes, logics, and shaping of ideas and feelings. Studies of *memory* may encourage us to ask what is remembered, what is forgotten, who makes such decisions, where, and why. And studies of *delivery* may disclose cultural gestures that expose textual heteroglossia at all sites of production (e.g., writing, publishing, retailing, advertising, reading). Hence, all five canons are important means of tying the textual to the personal and the cultural, of uncovering the functions of sex and gender in these processes.

Barthes also narrates the rhetorical concepts of author and audience by blurring their boundaries and interweaving them, thus calling into question the concepts of agency, identity, and unified self. When interrogating the concept of author, he distinguishes the *auctor* of the old rhetoric from our contemporary author: "As for the written text, it was not subject, as it is today, to a judgment of originality; what we call the *author* did not exist; around the

ancient text, the only text used and in a sense managed, like reinvested capital, there were various functions: 1. the *scriptor* who purely and simply copies; 2. the *compiler* who adds to what he copies, but nothing that comes from himself; 3. the *commentator* who introduces himself into the copied text, but only to make it intelligible; 4. the *auctor*, finally, who presents his own ideas but always by depending on other authorities" ("The Old Rhetoric" 30). The ancient, agonistic auctor poses problems for feminists. He is assumed to be a male "athlete of speech" whose speech emerges as a competition to see who can flex the most rhetorical muscles. His speech "is the object of a certain glamour and of a regulated power," and through this power-play merger of grammar and glamour, his aggression becomes "coded" and invisible (30). These concepts of auctor and auctor's speech celebrate a victor/victim, winner/loser power dynamic based on violence that many feminists are unwilling to accept. Such concepts reinforce a superior/inferior ethics rather than an ethics of difference, and they denigrate personal experiences, emotions, and reasoning by their insistence on "other authorities."

Influenced by Enlightenment concepts of self that have been strengthened by Romantic notions of private visions, the contemporary author also poses problems for feminists. He is an original presence, a unified self in possession of a transcendent signified.<sup>24</sup> This liberal humanist notion of unified self presumes an autonomous agency that uses language as transparent medium to negotiate societal structures and that succeeds or fails on the basis of individual will. When truth and talent are perceived as foundational and transcendent rather than conventional, scapegoating emerges as a popular rhetorical strategy for transferring sin, blame, and responsibility. With its focus on specific subjects, this concept of author leaves no space for theorizing institutional oppressions and thus little room for critiquing itself. That is, this closed concept of author does not provide feminists with spaces for questioning the cultural labels of women's discourse (e.g., too personal, too emotional) and the cultural value (e.g., mundane), which emerge in commonsense logics as powerful first premises that are increasingly hard to challenge.

Barthes addresses the limits of auctor/author concepts by repudiating an authorial agency in which the author's presence functions as the sole determinate of meaning ("Death of the Author"; *S/Z*). Instead, he valorizes the continual play of the signifier, a stance about language that simultaneously undermines the concept of authorial presence as agency and posits a readerly agency in which the reader is invited to read and read again, with each reading rendering different possibilities, different texts, that other readers are then invited to (re) read. By blurring the categories of author and reader, Barthes argues that an act of writing is actually an act of reading the world, or as he claims, the death of the author gives rise to the birth of the reader ("Death of the Author" 55). This readerly agency retains a space in which a specific feminist may validate her own experiences by reading/writing the world, but this agency does not enable her to totally control how others receive her readings/writings.<sup>25</sup> This stance allows feminists the possibilities of critique while acknowledging its limitations. My

extrapolation of feminist theories of rhetoric joins this discussion. The ideas and textual strategies that inform Woolf's, Daly's, and Rich's feminist theories of rhetoric are theirs; the rhetorical values assigned to them in my extrapolation is mine; further interpretations will belong to the reader. All of these processes will, of course, be influenced by our language and our culture.

Barthes's concern with spatial and temporal influences on reading narrates another rhetorical concept, rhetorical situation. Barthes questions the function of space and time by addressing geographical dimensions of inventive *topoi*: "What is a place? It is, says Aristotle, that in which a plurality of oratorical reasonings coincide. . . . Yet the metaphoric approach to place is more significant than its abstract definition" ("The Old Rhetoric" 64-65). Barthes complicates the function of space with the movement of time when he posits *topoi* as place, as a method of finding arguments. Although Barthes never uses the term *rhetorical situation*, he does refer to cultural "moments" of production and consumption that are continually being (re)constructed. Within this context, Barthes's rhetorical situation refers to geographic spaces and moments that are both psychological and cultural. This definition opens possibilities for constructing and validating feminist revisionings; indeed, it offers more possibilities for feminists than does Lloyd Bitzer's definition of rhetorical situation as the sum total of exigences, audience, and constraints. Bitzer's positivistic rendering mystifies the influence of time and memory, the constructive nature of history, and, to a degree, the multiple interpretive possibilities of a text. Demystifying these factors, Barthes's concept of reading implies a rhetorical situation, or cultural moment, that is fluid and continually reconstructed.

Barthes's concept of continually reconstructed cultural moments narrates a closely related rhetorical concern, the compilation of these moments into histories. For Barthes, rhetoric cannot be separated from a consideration of history and historiography: "[R]hetoric . . . call[s] into question history itself . . . ; the classification it has imposed is the only feature really shared by successive and various historical groups, as if there existed, superior to ideologies of content and to direct determinations of history, an ideology of form; as if . . . there existed for each society a *taxonomic identity*, a sociologic in whose name it is possible to define another history, another sociality, without destroying those recognized at other levels" ("The Old Rhetoric" 14-15). For feminists, there are both limits and possibilities for change in studying rhetorical history. Limitations emerge in conceiving rhetoric only as "an ideology of form" or static structure that has been relatively untouched by its cultural moments; such a stance may trap women into static cultural, psychological, and linguistic essentialisms. Conceiving rhetoric only as "an ideology of form" also begs a separation of intellectual bodies from stylistic dress; this separation too often implies that language functions only to communicate thought. Yet possibilities for change do exist. Studying the history of rhetoric allows feminists to question the construction and importance of language theory and language function in textual interpretive processes and in cultural power dynamics. It also enables them to question the functions of histories and historiographies, which in turn pro-

motes the possibilities for imagining multiple histories and multiple historiographies. Such actions are imperative if feminists are to read and write their concerns of race, gender, class, sexual orientation, religious preference, and so on, into history.

For Barthes, rhetorical history moves in both diachronic and systematic directions ("The Old Rhetoric" 15). This doubled movement denies the closure of evolutionary historiography to which Knoblauch and Brannon consign classical rhetoric and its potential applications for contemporary composition pedagogy. This doubled movement also calls into question the concepts of tradition and canon. That is, by what criteria are existing rhetorical traditions and canons defined? Do the criteria assume gynocritical, androcentric, or desegregated canons? Whose interests do these criteria serve? Where should feminist theories of rhetoric be located in relation to these traditions and to these canons? Should feminists establish a separate tradition or expand the canon? What truth conditions inform different traditions, different canons? And what are the limits and possibilities of feminists' embracing the concepts of tradition and canon for their own projects of rewriting rhetorical histories? The paradox of histories that we should always keep in mind, however, is that they have meaning only in the present as they inform our conscious and unconscious thinking, acting, feeling, and being.

When critiquing the knowledge constructed and dispersed within these traditions and canons, Barthes narrates another facet of the old rhetoric, its relation to politics: "It is obviously tempting to conflate this mass rhetoric with Aristotle's politics; which was, as we know, a politics of the happy medium, favoring a balanced democracy, centered on the middle classes, and responsible for reducing antagonisms between rich and poor, majority and minority; whence a rhetoric of good sense, deliberately subordinate to the 'psychology' of the public" ("The Old Rhetoric" 22–23). Barthes's temptation "to conflate this mass rhetoric with Aristotle's politics" echoes Aristotle's impulse to locate rhetoric between logic and ethics/politics (*Rhetoric* 1.4.10). Yet connecting rhetoric to Aristotle's ethics/politics may pose problems for feminists. For example, Aristotle's Ideal States imply a balance, a center agreed upon by *most* people (read "men in power" and "those men who may attain such power"). Even if such a relatively conflict-free state were possible, this definition erases the divisions between rich and poor, free and slave, men and women; as such, it privileges the first term—propertied, free, male—while presenting it as the universal subject of rhetorical theory. From a feminist perspective, this ideal state is exposed as ideal only for those with power: the truths of the margins are exposed as less important than the truths of the center, and the stress on conflict-free existence emerges not simply as a desire for harmony but as a desire for maintaining the status quo. Moreover, positing a "rhetoric of good sense" as the dominant discourse of Aristotelian Ideal States poses important questions of power ("The Old Rhetoric" 23). Who gets to define good sense? Will this good sense be constructed as a monolithic category or as a field of difference? Most importantly, why the emphasis on sense, on logic, on the head?

A consideration of good sense located in the head points to the final concern that Barthes narrates: pedagogy. As mentioned above, a *teaching* is one of Barthes's defining categories of rhetoric: "[T]he art of rhetoric, initially transmitted by personal means (a rhetor and his disciples, his clients), was soon introduced into institutions of learning; in schools, it formed the essential matter of what would today be called higher education; it was transformed into material for examination (exercises, lessons, texts)" ("The Old Rhetoric" 13). The *teaching* names a cultural space in which Barthes's other defining categories can be taught and challenged, yet the institutionalization of rhetoric, particularly its relegation to fake exercises and dry handbooks, mystifies the potential of its personal, textual, and cultural powers. Thus, the teaching raises certain questions. What connections exist between institutional and noninstitutional learning, between theory and praxis? Who is allowed access to institutional learning? Where does a student or teacher stand to challenge the dominant rhetoric? And what are the relations among gendered subjects, schools, and culture? Feminists should analyze the history of rhetorical pedagogy, not just to determine how and why women have been included or excluded but also to learn how and why pedagogical power struggles have, and do, undergird the mystifications of rhetoric's potential for changing the personal, the textual, and the cultural.

Barthes concludes his essay by discussing the interwoven possibilities of rhetorical history, theory, and pedagogy: "Yes, a history of Rhetoric (as research, as book, as teaching) is today necessary, broadened by a new way of thinking (linguistics, semiology, historical science, psychoanalysis, Marxism)" ("The Old Rhetoric" 92). To the parenthetical list, I would add feminisms. For an understanding of feminist theory and praxis would enable rhetoric scholars not only to locate gender gaps but also to imagine new texts of rhetorical history, theory, and pedagogy that recognize, validate, and address Bathsheba's dilemma.

#### DEFENDING ANGLO-AMERICAN FEMINIST THEORIES OF RHETORIC(S): WOOLF, DALY, AND RICH

At the 1992 Virginia Woolf Conference, Jane Marcus claimed in her closing address, "I need to make my Virginia Woolf stand for the issues that interest me." In many ways this claim articulates my own feelings about this project. I propose to make my Virginia Woolf, my Mary Daly, and my Adrienne Rich—or rather, the way that I read these women's lives and texts—speak to the issue that interests me in rhetoric and composition studies. That issue is feminism, specifically the ways in which sex and gender come into play in rhetorical history, theory, and pedagogy. As one attempt to articulate this play, I extrapolate Woolf's, Daly's, and Rich's Anglo-American feminist theories of rhetoric from their writings about women, language, and culture.

My extrapolations of these theories emerge from putting these three feminists' texts into play with the sex and gender gaps discovered in the previous discussion of Barthes's essay "The Old Rhetoric." Such an extrapolation process assumes that these feminists' texts are

genuinely concerned with rhetorical concepts but that, because these feminist texts have not been constructed from the site of rhetoric and composition studies, their theories of rhetoric must be extrapolated from their nonrhetoric texts, such as their essays, diaries, letters, and poems about women, language, and culture. The limitation of such an extrapolation process is that the eight concepts in the preceding section may be read as a theoretical grid, which forces Woolf's, Daly's, and Rich's Anglo-American feminist theories of rhetoric to conform to previous rhetorical categories and, thus, erases any original contributions these feminists might make. But the possibility of this extrapolation process allows another interpretation: if these eight concepts are interpreted as interwoven functions that merge personal, textual, and cultural concerns, then they may be interpreted as starting points for extrapolating feminist theories of rhetoric. Obviously, these eight concepts are not the only starting points. Thus, my study invites interested scholars to expand my extrapolations and also construct other feminist theories of rhetoric.

This extrapolation process has important implications. First, it challenges the received rhetorical traditions not in order to erase traditional theories nor simply to add women's voices to them but rather to rethink our discipline; that is, this process forces us to ask what happens if we imagine rhetorical history as a map with Aristotle's theory clearly marked and Woolf's, Rich's, and Daly's theories newly charted. Second, it asks how rhetoric and composition studies may be informed not just by the presence of Woman and women but by feminist ideology. Third, it explores how rhetoric and composition studies, specifically the question of Bathsheba's dilemma, may be informed by literary studies, religious studies, and women's studies. And, fourth, it also raises certain questions. Such questions will most likely emerge from the following three grounds, and although I will attempt to anticipate such queries, my responses will, I hope, evoke even more questions.

The first query is often constructed as follows: would studying Woolf, Daly, and Rich in rhetoric and composition studies be appropriate, given that these feminists do not locate themselves within rhetorical traditions and given that traditional histories of rhetoric do not commonly claim the texts of these feminists? My response is simple. Both claims are true. But if someone employs these two claims to prevent interdisciplinary moves, he/she is assuming that authorial intent determines meaning and that canon formation is static. Moreover, these claims ignore Woolf's, Daly's, and Rich's concerns with rhetorical concepts. Their schooling, talents, interests, opportunities, politics, and particular historical moments have led these feminist activists to become a novelist, a philosopher (one who studies "philosophia"), and a poet, respectively. Their concerns about women, language, and writing, however, can be (re)read as Anglo-American feminist theories of rhetoric that challenge the genderblindness of more traditional histories, theories, and pedagogies. To emphasize how these feminists may be read as rhetorical theorists, I have included a section in each subsequent chapter that locates their feminist texts in relation to rhetorical theories, lore, and practice.

The second query usually emerges as follows: would not focusing on French feminist theories be more appropriate, given that they are more sophisticated than Anglo-American theories? Within the logic of this question, Anglo-American feminist theories are denigrated as naive posturings of language use, autonomous wills, and identity politics; they are then compared to French feminist theories, which are hailed as sophisticated critiques of language, subjectivity, closure, writing, and so on. Ironically, this binary reinforces the structure of phallogocentric logic, with French theories occupying the dominant position and Anglo-American theories occupying the subordinate one; this binary also erases the presence of feminist theories that fit into neither category. Within this denigration logic, Anglo-American feminisms are divided into liberal and radical feminisms; in turn, radical feminisms, with which Daly's and Rich's texts are associated and for which Woolf's texts construct a space, are frequently accused of essentialism<sup>33</sup> and separatism.<sup>34</sup> [ . . . ] I revise these prevailing readings of Anglo-American feminisms; that is, I reread Woolf, Daly, and Rich to refute claims that an essential female self exists, that gender identity and sexual orientation occur only as conscious choice, and that identification among women is only achieved by a Sartrean bonding as objects (Nye 104).

The third query is perhaps the most serious: would a focus on Anglo-American feminist theory preclude discussions of difference? If we assume that difference occurs only between categories of feminisms, then such a focus would preclude such discussions. But if we assume that difference occurs not only between categories but also *within* them, then my focus on Woolf, Daly, and Rich may be read as exposing differences *within* Anglo-American feminisms. [ . . . ] Foregrounding differences within Anglo-American feminisms is a necessary move if these theories are to be particularized and recovered from charges of naïveté. The purpose of such a move is to celebrate Anglo-American radical feminist theories as *one* of many kinds of feminisms. Yet the ethics of such a move entails our continually asking ourselves, and addressing, the following questions: what can be accepted in these theories, what must be discarded, and what needs to be reconstructed? It also entails asking and addressing: who is (not) speaking, who is (not) listening, and what is (not) being heard? Responses to such queries should serve as the impetus for future research.

By studying Woolf's, Daly's, and Rich's Anglo-American feminist theories of rhetoric, I hope to invite new voices and new hearings into the history of rhetoric. For by changing contexts and lines of argument, these three Anglo-American feminists have reinforced, rejected, or reimagined traditional theories of rhetoric, whether consciously or unconsciously, to challenge the dominant ideology and push their own political goals.<sup>36</sup> As challengers of phallogocentric culture and its dominant discourse(s), these three writers and their texts have provided a means of recognizing, validating, and addressing women's commonsense experiences, otherwise known as Bathsheba's dilemma. In the process, these writers and their texts have constructed feminist literacies from which to enact changes in the interwoven realms

of the personal, the textual, and the cultural. That, I will argue, is the importance of their Anglo-American feminist theories of rhetoric for rhetoric and composition studies.

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Women's speech has traditionally been stereotyped as "polite, emotional, enthusiastic, gossipy, talkative, uncertain, dull, and chatty" while men's speech has been described as "capable, direct, rational, illustrating a sense of humor, unfeeling, strong (in tone and word choice), and blunt" (Kramarae 58). Scholars in communication studies (e.g., Karlyn Kohrs Campbell, Theodora Martin) and sociolinguistic studies (e.g., Robin Lakoff, Cate Poynton, Julia Penelope, Dale Spender) have sought to disprove these stereotypes. [ . . . ]

<sup>2</sup> My use of the term *symbolic* derives from Kristeva's division of human experience into the semi-otic and symbolic realms (*Revolution*). Her terms, in turn, echo Lacan's division of human existence into three orders: the *real* (the anatomical order that cannot be known, which exists before the ego and the formation of the drives); the *imaginary* (the order where a child totally identifies with the world and cannot distinguish a space between self and others, particularly the Mother; Kristeva renames this order the semiotic); and the *symbolic* (the order of language and loss of identity in which the lack of the latter triggers continual repressions of this lack and, hence, gives rise to the unconscious and the power of the phallus). My subsequent discussions of the symbolic also assume a familiarity with other terms in French discourse theories: for example, Derrida's *logocentrism*, which privileges the Logos as a metaphysical presence; Lacan's *phallogocentrism*, which privileges the phallus as the source/position of power; and Cixous's combination of the two terms into *phallogocentrism* (Moi 105).

<sup>3</sup> Cameron argues that debates about Bathsheba's dilemma have actually positioned themselves into two widely defined moves: criticism and critique (*Feminist Critique* 2–3). The first move assumes that to change the world, we must change the world's words: language use must be revised if women are to construct a space in which to express themselves. [ . . . ] Cameron's second move, critique, assumes that to change the world and Woman's/women's positions within it, feminists must rethink Woman's/women's relation to language and to the dominant discursive practices. Feminists must "examine the conditions upon which [Bathsheba's dilemma] exists, calling into question the assumptions it is based on" (*Feminist Critique* 2). Such a philosophical critique would call into question the truth conditions of cultural assumptions about gender, class, sex roles, and so on, thus enabling feminists to describe, demystify, and revise their multiple cultural locations. [ . . . ]

<sup>5</sup> [ . . . ] For feminist challenges to historical traditions, see Lerner; Anderson and Zinsser; and Briedenthal, Koonz, and Stuart. For feminist challenges to philosophical traditions, see Nye; and Waithe. Bizzell posits a slightly different research agenda for feminist challenges to the rhetorical traditions: (1) read traditional rhetorical theories as a resisting reader; (2) recover women who have written about rhetoric; and (3) include women who have not necessarily focused on rhetoric but whose work might reconceptualize rhetorical studies (51). [ . . . ]

<sup>7</sup> To avoid repeating the awkward phrase, "women and/or feminists," I will simply use "feminist" because it implies an ideological stance that both includes women and challenges the dominant logic and rhetoric. [ . . . ]

<sup>9</sup> Although this study foregrounds feminist theories of rhetoric, other studies might just as importantly focus on women's rhetoric(s), theories of women's rhetoric(s), or women's theories of rhetoric.



They might examine feminine rhetoric(s), theories of feminine rhetoric(s), or feminine theories of rhetoric. They might study feminist rhetoric(s) or even theories of feminist rhetoric(s). As becomes readily apparent, a wealth of research possibilities emerges (Jarratt, "Special Issue"). [ . . . ]

<sup>12</sup> When discussing cross-cultural research possibilities, questions of appropriation, colonization, and tokenism often emerge. For example, see Lee; and hooks, *Talking Back*. [ . . . ] For an excellent exploration of appropriation and race, see Anzaldúa. [ . . . ]

<sup>16</sup> Lakoff stipulates certain language functions that belong to women and men and that result in "linguistic imbalances" (*Language and Woman's Place* 43; qtd. in Ryder 531): women, for example, have more names for colors than men; men, on the other hand, use more expletives publicly. Cixous's medusa recovers the monster/hysteric position for women, positing it as a position of strength. For Ryder, this binary traps women into adopting social roles that are totally determined by language (e.g., Lakoff) or having to resort to madness (e.g., Cixous). For an in-depth discussion of this binary, see Ryder 530–31. For a history of this debate, see A. O. Hill. [ . . . ]

<sup>19</sup> This move presumes a definition of ideology similar to the one posited by Cixous and Clement: "For me ideology is a kind of vast membrane enveloping everything. We have to know that this skin exists even if it encloses us like a net or like closed eyelids. We have to know that, to change the world, we must constantly try to scratch and tear it. We can never rip the whole thing off, but we must never let it stick or stop being suspicious of it" (145). [ . . . ]

<sup>21</sup> Natanson posits a multilayered, progressively abstract definition when he argues that rhetoric may refer to all of the following: (1) rhetorical intention in speech or writing, (2) the technique of persuasion, or methodology, (3) the general rationale of persuasion, or theory, and (4) the philosophy of rhetoric, or the critique of theory (379). Bizzell and Herzberg follow suit, situating rhetoric as "the practice of orator; the study of the strategies of effective oratory; the study of the persuasive effects of language; the study of the relation between language and knowledge; the classification and use of tropes; and, of course, the use of empty promises and half-truths as a form of propaganda" (1).

<sup>22</sup> Aristotle's *Prior Analytics* posits three types of syllogisms: scientific, dialectic, and rhetorical (the enthymeme). The first assumes true premises and conclusions; the second assumes probable premises and true conclusions; the third assumes probable premises and conclusions. His *Rhetoric* discusses the enthymeme and cites two types—the demonstrative enthymeme, which proves a proposition, and the refutative enthymeme, which disproves one (bk. 2, ch. 22); he also cites the four types of facts upon which an enthymeme may be based—probabilities, examples, infallible signs, fallible signs (bk. 2, ch. 25).

<sup>23</sup> See, for example, Deuteronomy 17:6 and Numbers 30:35. Both citations refer specifically to the death penalty. But the importance of witnesses (read "men") is stressed throughout Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. [ . . . ]

<sup>24</sup> Interrogations of presence have attempted to erase traces of authorial agency in the making of meaning and, instead, have foregrounded the functions of readers, institutional structures, and language. See Barthes, "Death of the Author"; Foucault; and Derrida, "Structure, Sign, and Play."

<sup>25</sup> Partly because of the title of his article "The Death of the Author," Barthes is often misread as eliminating any type of agency. Because he asserts that the death of the author allows the birth of the reader, a type of readerly agency emerges. While the writer is a reader of the world, she or he cannot control the meanings in the texts that are constructed for other readers. [ . . . ]

<sup>33</sup> Nye details the attack against perceived essentialism in Anglo-American radical feminisms:

Radical feminists, having theorized a world of warring wills, cannot so easily escape their own theory. . . .

. . . Early radical feminists catalogued in detail the socialization of women, but socialization did not excuse women's capitulation. Socialization implies an intact female self which may be influenced but which can also refuse to accept the rewards of collaboration and courageously accept the pain of non-conformity. Gender identity and the choice of sexual object, however, may not be accessible to conscious change. . . .

Nor is there any positive prognosis in radical feminist theory for a woman's refusal to be a fellow traveller. . . . In each case, feminist theory and practice continues to operate within the space of Satrean metaphysics . . . [that] is inadequate to feminist practice. (102) [ . . . ]

<sup>34</sup> The perceived male/female separatism is most frequently associated with Rich's and Daly's texts. While their separatist moments cannot be denied, such a male-centered gaze too easily dismisses the importance of these feminist theories and erases the fact that a woman's wanting to focus on women and fight patriarchy is not synonymous with androicide. [ . . . ]

<sup>36</sup> In this sense, ideology becomes more than a set of doctrines. It becomes "the ways in which what we say and believe connects with the power-structure and power-relations of the society we live in . . . the modes of feeling, valuing, perceiving, and believing which have some kind of relation to the maintenance and reproduction of social power" (T. Eagleton 14–15). This definition may be expanded for feminism by asserting that "[o]nly a concept of ideology as a contradictory construct, marked by gaps, slides, and inconsistencies, would enable feminism to explain how even the severest ideological pressures will generate their own lacunae" (Moi 26). Within this theory of ideology, the cultural and the textual are interwoven. For ideological beliefs are not only manifested in (un)stated cultural behaviors but are also "translated into literary forms and conventions that at once encode and perpetuate those values" (Bootie). [ . . . ]

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