

Newsletter

of the Coalition of Women Scholars in the History of Rhetoric
and Composition

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This newsletter is published with editorial and financial assistance from the Departments of English of Miami University, Oxford, OH and The Ohio State University, Columbus, OH. The editors are assisted by Shannon L. Wilson at Miami University and Mary McDougall at Ohio State. The editors may be contacted at The Department of English, Miami University, Oxford, OH 45056 or The Department of English, 164 W. 17th Avenue, Columbus, OH 43210.

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Letter from the Editors

Welcome to the first issue of _____. There is a blank at the beginning of our project, just as the histories we're in the process of creating often begin with blanks where the women should be. We begin this newsletter with two kinds of names: one very long and cumbersome and the other, not yet created (see the contest information on page 2), an antithesis that captures the challenge of creating new histories. Whatever its name will become, this newsletter represents the first efforts to publish the workings of the Coalition of Women Scholars in the History of Rhetoric and Composition, a scholarly organization with two goals: the advancement of historical scholarship by women in rhetoric and composition and the promotion of contact among and the education of women scholars--faculty and students--who work in these two fields. The Coalition constitution was drafted in 1990 and the group met formally for the first time in San Diego at the 1993 Conference on College Composition and Communication. The third and most recent meeting--at Milwaukee in March 1996--spawned the idea for a publication to provide a means of linking coalition members between conventions and expanding the reach of the organization to scholars not yet a part of the Coalition.

The impetus for this group, as for many feminist organizations, was a felt sense of isolation. In the case of women working on historical scholarship in our fields, this isolation is doubled. First, we work within disciplines focused largely on contemporary research and practice. To compound the problem, the greatest part of what historical work has been done thus far revolves around a small canon of European men. But the moment has now arrived when a few scholars with the isolated projects have coalesced into a group with a growing bibliography and taken on the momentum of a field of study just beginning to discover its own potential. Our efforts range from recovering works by women overlooked in the past, to reidentifying various genres of women's writing and performance as "rhetorical," to redefining the very grounding theories on which the "tradition" has been built. Our vision carries us outside the bounds of the European "West" and elite educational institutions, urging us to recognize that we have only begun to

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find the Sarah Winnemucas and Sojourner Truths of the world.

In line with its second goal, the Coalition and its newsletter have a commitment to extend the energy, knowledge, and support of already-established scholars to those still in the midst of their graduate work or those with less institutional support for their scholarship. Both the meetings and the newsletter seek to forge connections across generations and institutions.

You'll find in this first issue reviews of new work by and about women, a preview of the Coalition meeting next March, information about conferences, announcements of new publications, and more. At this fledgling phase, we welcome your ideas for features, format, artwork, distribution--any aspect of the newsletter. We also welcome your ideas for contributions. If you'd like to write a review or article for the newsletter or have news about women in rhetoric and composition, please contact one of the editors at the addresses noted in the sidebar on page 1.

-Kay Halasek and Susan C. Jarratt, Co-editors

EPIDEICTIC CORNER

Oregon State University recently recognized **Lisa Ede** and **Cheryl Glenn** with its two highest teaching honors. Lisa received the \$3000 OSU Alumni Association Distinguished Professor Award, which recognizes "outstanding professional achievement through teaching and scholarship, and in service to both the University and community" was lauded as a "teacher of rare ability" and "wise and active citizen" of the Oregon State community. Cheryl, currently President of the Coalition, was awarded the \$2000 Elizabeth P. Ritchie Distinguished Professor award and was cited for her outstanding undergraduate teaching. Both awards were presented at OSU's University Day presentation on September 16, 1996.

Purdue University recently named **Janice Lauer** the Reece McGee Distinguished Professor of English. In awarding the title, Purdue executive vice president Robert Ringel cited Janice's "first-rate" scholarship and teaching. Janice has been at Purdue since 1980 and directs the graduate program in rhetoric and composition.

Andrea Lunsford was one of nine central Ohio women honored by the Columbus, OH, YWCA as a "Woman of Achievement" in a ceremony in March 1996. The award, which was "established to increase community awareness, understanding and appreciation of women," recognized Andrea's commitment to nurturing the academic careers and personal empowerment of the women around her.

Kate Ronald, formerly of the University of Nebraska, has accepted the Roger and Joyce Howe Chair in Written Communication at Miami University. In this new position, she joins the graduate rhetoric faculty in English and works with teachers in the School of Business Administration on undergraduate writing pedagogy.

———— Name the Newsletter Contest ————

In the interest of involving the members of the Coalition in the on-going development and construction of the newsletter, we invite readers to submit suggestions for names. Our next issue will appear in the Spring 1997, and we hope to have a name by that time. If you have a suggestion, please e-mail or write one of the editors at the addresses in the sidebar on page 1. The editors, along with the Coalition board, will select a name. The winner of the contest, who will receive a \$20 gift certificate to the national bookstore chain of her choice, will be announced in the Spring/Summer issue of the newsletter. Please send entries on or before February 15, 1997.

Anyone wishing to contribute news items to the epideictic corner should forward information to Kay Halasek at the Department of English, 164 W. 17th Avenue, Columbus, OH 43210. She may also be reached via e-mail at halasek.1@osu.edu and by fax at (614) 292-7816. The editors welcome items regarding publications, dissertation defenses, awards, or other information of interest to the membership of the Coalition.

Book Review by Susan Kates

Fencing with Words: A History of Writing Instruction at Amherst College during the Era of Theodore Baird, 1938-1966.

Robin Varnum, Urbana, IL: NCTE, 1996. 327 pages. paper.

The extensive historical work of rhetoric and composition scholars such as James Berlin, Robert Connors, Nan Johnson, and others, has in recent years made it possible for other historians to embark on smaller, site-specific studies of rhetorical instruction in particular historical moments. Against the backdrop provided by these historians, scholars are now beginning to examine the rhetoric courses of individual institutions to discover in greater detail how rhetorical instruction has been shaped over time by a wide variety of cultural and historical forces.

Robin Varnum's *Fencing with Words: A History of Writing Instruction at Amherst College during the Era of Theodore Baird, 1938-1966* makes an important contribution to this exciting new direction in composition studies. Varnum surveys the pedagogy of Theodore Baird, architect of the legendary English 1-2 course at Amherst College. For nearly three decades, Baird designed and taught, along with a number of his male colleagues, one of the most controversial courses ever offered in the history of the institution. Unique in its incorporation of language philosophy in writing instruction, English 1 and 2 challenged the "skills and drills" approaches of introductory writing courses at other colleges at this time.

Varnum begins her account of English 1-2 in 1927, with Baird's arrival at Amherst College. Two years shy of the PhD he would receive from Harvard, Baird was assigned to teach a Shakespeare course and Freshman Composition. Baird based the latter on the study of language, emphasizing ontological and epistemological issues. Developing a writing curriculum that contrasted with the practices of his own teachers at Harvard, Baird designed a Freshman Composition course that avoided drilling students on grammatical principles.

The curriculum designed by Baird and his colleagues was built on Baird's belief that to make effective choices as writers, students needed to explore language in ways that would provide them with a more sophisticated understanding of the medium and the multiple ways it functions in various contexts. To enact this philosophy, Baird and his colleagues collaborated to create a series of assignments that asked students to consider how language works in various contexts. One of the earliest assignments in his sequence begins by asking students to write about an experience in which language failed them or they failed to use language to communicate as they wished. In such assignments, Baird encouraged students to draw upon their own experiences with language to come to a new understanding of a medium that they had not previously examined. Many of the assignments required students to write about their understanding of the definition of a word such as "teach" or "learn," or to consider the relationship between language and identity. Consider these assignments, written by Baird's colleague, Robert Townsend, which explore this issue:

Describe a situation in which you felt another person was not being himself, not expressing himself sincerely. What was the occasion? What was being said? What did the person say? Why did you think he was being insincere? What do you mean when you say, "He was being insincere?"

Return to a situation in which you knew what it was to be yourself, more specifically to one in which you moved from not being yourself to being yourself. Where were you? Who else was there? What was said? Where precisely do you locate this movement from not being yourself to being yourself? (Qtd. in Varnum 188-189.)

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Book Review continued from page 3

The editors invite readers to submit book reviews for possible publication in the Coalition newsletter. The reviews should consider books published by, about, or for women in rhetoric or composition. Please limit reviews to approximately 750-1000 words. Reviews should also conform to the MLA Guidelines for non-sexist language.

Forward reviews to Susan Jarratt at the Department of English, Miami University, Oxford, OH 45056. You may also fax reviews to her at (513) 529-1392.

These and related assignments demonstrate the value the Amherst faculty placed on student experience and the ways that experience became a catalyst for the study of how language shapes an understanding of the world. This emphasis is particularly compelling when we recall that very few Freshman Composition courses in the country at this time encouraged students to explore language in this manner. Baird and his colleagues simply refused to separate the study of philosophical issues surrounding language from the practice of writing itself.

Using her interviews with Baird, his colleagues, and many of their former students, Varnum crafts a striking and multi-layered story: the Appendix includes a wide variety of pedagogical materials from the courses as well as her personal correspondence with Baird and others. These artifacts reveal a great deal about the philosophical nature of the course and its lasting effects on students.

Nevertheless, some readers of *Fencing with Words* may regret that Varnum does not do more to analyze the English 1-2 curriculum in terms of other courses offered throughout the country at this time. Because she does not make much use of other important histories of rhetoric and composition that examine this period, the richness and complexity of her study of the Amherst curriculum is diminished. What, for example, did the curriculum at this entirely male institution look like in comparison to those of other all-male or women's colleges and universities? How was pedagogy influenced by the Amherst students' socioeconomic class? In what ways did pedagogical methods change in relation to the larger political events of the 20th century?

Varnum's failure to provide the wider historical context that would have allowed her to address such questions may be due, in part, to her detailed description of the 28-year history of English 1-2. However, the notable absence of any discussion of rhetorical curricula at other institutions prevents Varnum from engaging issues that could transform *Fencing with Words* into a wider and more significant study of the place of rhetorical curricula in and their effect on larger cultural formations. Even so, Varnum's book should appeal to anyone interested in the history of writing instruction. Varnum's description of this curriculum again raises questions about the "core content" of Freshman Composition courses that has been so fiercely debated in recent years. *Fencing with Words* provides teachers and historians of rhetoric and composition alike another chapter to add to the growing narrative of writing instruction in American colleges and universities.

Susan Kates is Assistant Professor of English at The University of Oklahoma.

The Coalition On-Line in 1997

The Coalition is in the process of developing a listserv for its members and others interested in women the history of rhetoric and composition. Watch for announcements in the Spring/Summer issue of the newsletter for information about subscribing to the listserv. The listserv is intended as a means of fostering conversations among members between our regularly scheduled meetings. At the 1997 meeting at 4Cs, the Coalition will also discuss the development of a homepage, which will include an on-line issue of the most recent newsletter as well as frequent updates on grants, publications, and other news. All members interested in working on such a project are urged to contact Anne Meade Stockdell at

The School of Literature, Communication, and Culture
Georgia Institute of Technology
Atlanta, GA 30332-0165.

She may also be reached via phone at (404)894-6207, via fax at (404) 894-1287, or via e-mail at anne.stockdell@lcc.gatech.edu.

Upcoming Conferences

The Penn State Conference of Rhetoric and Composition. "Rhetorical Bodies: Toward a Material Rhetoric."

University Park, PA

July 6-9, 1997

This, the fifteenth Penn State Conference, seeks to bring together scholars who wish to consider explicitly and self-consciously "how the material conditions of rhetoric, the material embodiment of rhetorics, and the material configuration of rhetoric's technologies and artifacts shape how rhetoric is practiced and how it is theorized." **FEATURED SPEAKERS** include Celeste Condit, Lester Faigley, Cheryl Glenn, Christina Haas, Katherine Hayles, Peter Mortensen, Victor Villanueva, Susan Wells, and Iris Marion Young. You may also find information on the conference at this WWW address: <http://www.cde.psu.edu/rhet&comp/>

From Boundaries to Borderlands: Intersections of Feminism(s) and Rhetoric(s).

Oregon State University, Corvallis, Oregon

August 28-30, 1997

"From Boundaries to Borderlands" will explore intersections of feminism(s) and rhetoric(s). **FEATURED SPEAKERS** include Jamie Barlowe, Susan Carlton, Suzanne Clark, Elizabeth Flynn, Maria Gonzalez, Angeletta Gourdine, Susan Jarratt, Shirley Logan, **ANDREA LUNSFORD** (keynoter), Joyce Middleton, Susan Miller, Krista Ratcliffe, Joy Ritchie, **JACQUELINE JONES ROYSTER** (keynoter), Patricia Sullivan, C. Jan Swearingen, **NANCY TUANA** (keynoter), **BARBARA WARNICK** (keynoter), Kathleen Welch, Molly Meijer Wertheimer.

**** Recently Published and Forthcoming Titles of Interest ****

Finders, Margaret. *Just Girls: The Literate Life and Underlife of Early Adolescent Girls*. Urbana, IL: NCTE and Teachers College Press, 1996.

Flannery, Kathryn T. *The Emperor's New Clothes: Literature, Literacy, and the Ideology of Style*. Pittsburgh: U of Pittsburgh Press, 1996.

Heilker, Paul, and Peter Vandenberg, eds. *Keywords in Composition Studies*. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook, 1996.

Hobbs, Catherine, ed. *Nineteenth Century Women Learn to Write*. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1995.

Kutz, Eleanor. *Language and Literacy: Studying Discourse in Communities and Classrooms*. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook, 1996.

Logan, Shirley Wilson. *With Pen and Voice: A Critical Anthology of Nineteenth-Century African American Women*. Carbondale: SIU Press, 1995.

Lunsford, Andrea L., ed. *Reclaiming Rhetorica: Women in the Rhetorical Tradition*. Pittsburgh: U of Pittsburgh Press, 1996.

Ratcliffe, Krista. *Anglo-American Feminist Challenges to the Rhetorical Traditions: Virginia Woolf, Mary Daly, Adrienne Rich*. Carbondale: SIU Press, 1996.

Tayko, Gail, and John Tassoni, eds. *Sharing Pedagogies: Students and Teachers Write about Dialogic Practices*. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook, 1996.

The editors welcome items regarding upcoming conferences. If you would like to have an announcement included in the newsletter, please forward relevant information to Kay Halasek, Department of English, 164 W. 17th Avenue, Columbus, OH 43210. Please note that information for the autumn/winter issue must be received by August 1 and for the spring/summer issue by February 1.

Constitution of the Coalition of Women Scholars in the History of Rhetoric and Composition

Article I. Statement of Purpose.

The Coalition of Women Scholars in the History of Rhetoric and Composition is a learned society composed of women scholars who are committed to research in the history of rhetoric and composition. The Coalition has been formed to promote and foster collaboration and communication among women whose area of specialization is in these two areas. It has two major aims: 1) the advancements of research in the history of rhetoric and composition and 2) the education of women faculty and graduate students in the politics of the profession.

Article II. Membership.

The General Membership consists of women who are interested in research in the history of rhetoric and composition.

Article III. Governance.

A. There is an Executive Board of five women: a President, Vice President, a Secretary-Treasurer, an Immediate Past President, and one other member. Executive Board Members are established scholars who have published research in the field of historical rhetoric and composition studies and are tenured in their home institutions.

B. Terms of office. All Executive Board Members will have a two-year term of office that begins April 15 and concludes April 14 two years later.

Article IV. Procedures for Elections.

A. A Nominating Committee will consist of the Immediate Past President, who will chair the committee and will appoint one woman from the Executive Board and two women from the General Membership.

B. The election of the Vice President and the Secretary-Treasurer will take place every two years by mail.

Article V. Revision of Constitution.

The Constitution may be revised by a majority vote of the Executive Board.

Article VI. Meeting Place.

The Coalition's main meetings will take place at the annual meeting of the Conference of College Composition and Communication.

A. The Wednesday evening of the 4Cs will be a regular meeting time.

B. Additional meetings may be held at the Rhetoric Society of America, the International Society for the History of Rhetoric, the Speech Communication Association, the Modern Language Association, and other suitable organizations.

Article VII. Publications.

The Coalition will publish the results of its work in various venues.

(Signed March 24, 1990, Chicago Illinois. Kathleen Welch (President), Marjorie Curry Woods (Vice-President), Winifred Bryan Horner (Secretary), Nan Johnson, C. Jan Swearingen.)

The Coalition in Phoenix 1997

Lifting as We Climb: Mentoring One Another

The Coalition, which carries caucus status in the Conference on College Composition and Communication, will once again hold its annual meeting at 4Cs from 8:00-10:00 p.m. on Wednesday, March 12, 1997 in Phoenix. The session will be devoted this year to brief roundtable presentations on dissertation research on women in rhetoric and composition followed by small-group mentoring sessions.

In the first hour, participants will hear from **Kristen Kennedy** of the University of Arizona, who will speak to Cynic rhetoric and Hipparchia as a "model" for establishing a feminist ethic(s) of rhetoric. **Claudia Myers** of Texas Women's University takes as her topic "Feminist Actio: Role Playing and the Interdisciplinary History of Rhetoric." **Cindy Moore** of the University of Louisville will address the state of the discipline and the emotional and intellectual costs paid by women graduate students under the pressures of an increasingly professionalized field. **Andrea Williams**, Ohio State University, will examine the oratory of Mary Shadd Cary, considered the first African-American woman newspaper editor in North America. **Jean C. Williams**, Ohio State University, will speak on her dissertation project, which examines how some of the dominant historical works in composition studies negate the presence of or construct as deficient students of color. **Danielle Mitchell**, Oregon State University, will address the central concerns faced by students applying to MA and PhD programs, including cuts in graduate program admissions and rising costs of a graduate education. **Nan Johnson** will serve as respondent to the session, speaking briefly to the concerns raised by each of the panelists.

During the second hour, participants will break into small groups, each led by one or two members of the Coalition Board of Directors. These small groups will focus on important issues facing women in the profession--from grant-writing and publishing to job-hunting and tenuring--and aim at offering mentoring and support for new members.

Have ideas for the newsletter? The editors seek Coalition members interested in contributing articles, features, or columns. Because we want to publish a newsletter that speaks not only *to* but also *from* the membership-at-large, we seek your contributions. Please send to the editors brief essays (750-1000 words) informed by your recent research or scholarly projects, book reviews, ideas for on-going featured columns (e.g., a graduate student and/or part-timers forum), or other ideas of interest to the Coalition membership.

Information for the autumn/winter issue must be received by August 1 and for the spring/summer issue by February 1. Please forward inquiries to either of the co-editors.



MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

INSTITUTIONAL AFFILIATION _____

E-MAIL ADDRESS _____

Please forward this application form and a check in the amount of your membership (\$10 for faculty; \$5 for students) to

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Arlington, TX 76109

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