

# Peitho

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

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## Reflections: The Coalition in Phoenix 1997 Lifting as We Climb: Mentoring One Another

Rebecca Greenberg Taylor, Ohio State University

Our meeting in Phoenix in March 1997, "Lifting as We Climb: Mentoring One Another," demonstrated in multiple ways the crucial nature of the work we do as women scholars in the history of rhetoric and composition. The six provocative presentations pointed to the ways that the Coalition is working to expand the boundaries of what constitutes histories of our field: speakers addressed not only historical figures, but also figuration from historical perspectives. They spoke to both the need to recover the women rhetors so easily obscured by canonical histories and to the equally important task of committing ourselves to the women who currently engage in such work. Thus I left our meeting feeling that mentoring means not only assisting newcomers to the field, but also working hard to revise how we conceptualize possible identities for contemporary women scholars. That is a revision, I suspect, to which we must newly commit ourselves. I believe the discussion following the presentations, when Jackie Jones Royster problematized the lack of attention to the session's namesake, "Lifting as We Climb," the motto of the National Association of Colored Women, exemplifies our need to do so. The panel presentations and ensuing discussion that night remind me that there is much, much work to be done if the Coalition is truly to question the institutional structures that have obscured, silenced, or otherwise blocked the construction of new knowledges and recovery of older knowledges regarding the histories of women working within (and without) the boundaries of the field--subjects and scholars, historians and historical figures.

I attended the Coalition for the second time in my career as a Ph.D. student this year and listened carefully to six relatively new scholars in my field, women who, like me, struggle daily to locate themselves within historical studies of Rhetoric and Composition. Each of the six speakers--Kristen Kennedy (U. of Arizona), Claudia Myers (Texas Women's U.), Cindy Moore (U. of Louisville), Andrea Williams (Ohio State), Jean Williams (Ohio State), and Danielle Mitchell (Oregon State), as well as co-chairs Cheryl Glenn and Andrea Lunsford and the respondent, Nan Johnson--questioned the very selves that constitute our discipline: the gendered, racialized, professionalized selves that both critique and construct our ways of naming and valuing what counts as the history of composition and rhetoric.

For several speakers, the question of the location and/or embodiment of selves opened up discussion of rhetorical theory and practice in various historical moments. Kristen Kennedy's

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The editors are assisted by Jill Swencicki at Miami University and may be contacted at the Dept. of English, Ohio State University, 164 W. 17th Avenue, Columbus, OH 43210 or the Dept. of English, Miami University, Oxford, OH 45056.

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Anyone wishing to contribute news items to Peitho--and particularly its periodic 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 upcoming conferences, publications, dissertation defenses, awards, or other information of interest to the membership of the Coalition.

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paper, "Toward a Feminist Ethic(s): Cynic Rhetoric and the Tactics of Resistance" (reprinted in this issue of Peitho) considered fourth century philosopher Hipparchia of Maroneia, who chose exile as a rhetorical space from which to speak. Kennedy argued that Hipparchia's exile served as a fruitful discursive field for examining the relationship between rhetoric, ethics, and embodiment. Jean Williams's presentation, "Portraits of the Field: Locating Color and Its Absence in Composition," problematized notions of presence and absence as a rhetorical strategy within contemporary histories of our field, the majority of which figure students without gender, race, or ethnicity. Jean Williams furthered Marguerite Helmers' discussion of the "stock figure" of the student in composition studies, arguing that disciplinary histories render students of color either deficient in cognitive skills or invisible. In "The Idea of Rhetoric in Drama at the Turn of the 17th Century," Claudia Myers looked to the 17th-century theatre--considering the implications of rhetorical practice in public spaces-- as a site for studying Renaissance attitudes toward rhetoric. How, she asked, do dramatists explore epistemological implications of shifts in rhetorical practice within public forums? Attention to the relationship between language and activism fuels Andrea Williams's study of the ways that Flora McDonald Denison, a leader of the Canadian Women's Suffrage Association, invited other women to see themselves as part of a transnational movement. Thus Williams's paper, "Flora McDonald Denison and the Rhetoric of the Early Feminist Movement in Canada," pointed yet again to location--both in terms of nationality and transcendence of nationality--and its importance for discussions of feminist rhetorics and rhetors.

Danielle Mitchell and Cindy Moore brought us full circle as they urged us to reflect upon our own positions within and beyond the academic community. As respondent Nan Johnson phrased it, both women offered us "narratives of commitment/about commitment." In this case, the commitments considered by Moore and Mitchell involved professionalization, family, institution--and perhaps most importantly, both presentations reminded us yet again to consider our selves, bodies, and corporeal and material positions. For Mitchell, the experience of applying to Ph.D. programs in rhetoric and composition brought to the forefront countless reminders of what her commitment to academic life might entail. In "Meeting Graduate School Again for the First Time, or Scaling the Ph.D.," Mitchell spoke candidly and with humor about the job market, TA salaries, rising tuition costs, the value of the English Literature and Language GRE test scores as a determinant of one's potential for success in a rhetoric and composition program. In other words, Mitchell problematized the ways that women gain entry into the field and what they may sacrifice in the process. While Mitchell reminded many of us of that painful, uncertain time before making the commitment to our careers, it was Moore, I think, who questioned the costs of that commitment. Moore's delivery of "The Rising Costs of Professionalization for Women in Composition and Rhetoric" resonates for me still; I don't think I'll ever forget the image of Moore working exhaustedly on her dissertation as her newborn baby swings gently beside her. Moore asked the question that so many women scholars are afraid to voice: How can those of us who choose to do so integrate teaching, research, and family commitments? How are we to juggle identities as we work in an institution that privileges competition and individualism even as many of us long for collaborative opportunities? And perhaps most importantly, how will the field of rhetoric and composition begin to reconstitute itself in ways that facilitate multiple lifestyle choices for women?

This question leads me back to the theme for the evening, "Lifting as We Climb: Mentoring One Another." Clearly important acts of mentoring have begun to take place within the Coalition; for rising scholars like the panelists, the opportunity to share their work with an audience of both new and experienced women scholars is invaluable. But as Jackie Royster suggested after the panelists' presentations, in addition to referring to the second half of our meeting's title ("Mentoring One Another"), it is essential that we pay attention to the first half ("Lifting as We Climb") and the context of its importance. That motto is the product

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of an 1896 union between the National Federation of Afro-American Women and the National League of Colored Women, who allied to form the National Association of Colored Women (Giddings, When and Where I Enter 93). The members of the newly formed NACW chose not just to mentor one another--to help one another adapt to existing institutional structures--but to form alliances to reconstitute those structures altogether (I couldn't help but think of Cindy Moore when I read that the NACW convened committees to draft plans for day nurseries for its members.)

Just as the NACW's historic first meeting in Washington D.C. made a space for leaders of the abolition movement like Harriet Tubman and Frances Ellen Harper to work alongside upcoming cultural and political leaders like Anna Julia Cooper and Mary Church Terrell, this Coalition needs to continue to foster intergenerational exchanges akin to our 1997 meeting in Phoenix. Such exchanges are valuable not just because they offer multiple generations of scholars the chance to listen to one another, but because such conversations help us to imagine and facilitate changes within our institutions, thereby making possible fuller participation by women scholars who define themselves and their work in multiple ways. While the NACW clearly differed radically from this Coalition in terms of positioning and privilege, it is important nonetheless to find points of connection between the two groups in order to cultivate not only acts of mentoring but also structural institutional change.

"Our women's movement is a woman's movement in that it is led and directed by women....We are not alienating or withdrawing. We are only coming to the front." --Josephine St. Pierre Ruffin, quoted in Giddings (95)

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Luke, Carmen, ed. Feminisms and Pedagogies of Everyday Life. Albany: SUNY Press, 1996.

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Wertheimer, Molly, ed. Roses in Snow. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, forthcoming.

The editors invite readers to submit book reviews for possible publication in Peitho. 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 e-mail (jarratt\_susan@msmail.mu.ohio.edu) or fax reviews to her at (513) 529-1392.

## Revising Revisionist Histories of Rhetoric: American Women and Rhetoric in the Age of Common Sense

Janet Carey Eldred and Peter Mortensen, The University of Kentucky

This paper is part of continuing efforts by scholars in the history of rhetoric to recover women's place in rhetorical theory and practice. Work in this area has generally--and wisely--started with the premise that to find women's place in rhetorical history, we must look outside the all-male academy and into the places where women had opportunities to speak and write (Bizzell). Our work on women who were engaged in rhetoric instruction in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries has led us to qualify this premise in several important ways. We illustrate our argument with examples drawn from our study of the prolific nineteenth-century writer Louisa Caroline Tuthill (1798-1879).

1. Textbooks remain an important object of study in histories of rhetoric, particularly if we expand our definition of "textbook." It is too often assumed that we've learned everything possible from studying early American textbooks. Indeed, it has been argued that such study distorts our sense of actual school practices. But we have yet to see an exhaustive study of textbooks published explicitly for women, so we must continue to examine such texts as they establish--at the very least--the aims of schooling practices for women. Moreover, when looking at textbooks for women, we are drawn to books that challenge conventional expectations of form: we find books whose authors "imagined" rhetoric or composition practice in and beyond the context of female academies. Such books are commonly seen as too didactic and prosaic to be novels. Yet, ironically, these books are too novel-like to have been recognized as textbooks. In breaking with the conventional textbook genre, these books let us see how schooling for women was imagined, and particularly how that schooling might have reached women. They lead us to an extensive "extracurriculum" (Gere) that supported a market for what we call "novel textbooks (and what others have called "usable fictions"). For example, Tuthill's The Belle, the Blue, and the Bigot (1844), noted in literary histories as a poor novel, consists of three character sketches that, we recognize, render contrasting examples of female rhetoricians, some apt and others inept at establishing a convincing ethos. Likewise, Tuthill's Boarding School (1848) outlines the qualities of good and bad writing, judged not by belletristic standards of aesthetic beauty, but according to purpose and effect on audiences.

2. Women's work in the female academies might demand that we understand "mainstream" rhetorical histories. To understand women's rhetorical schooling, we must know about not only national politics, the politics of domesticity, the history of the novel, but also the changing nature of rhetorical instruction at the elite American colleges, universities, and seminaries where men were schooled. Tuthill's Young Lady's Home (1839) and Young Lady's Reader (1839)--a rhetoric and an anthology respectively--explicitly acknowledge her debt to the Scottish Common Sense ecclesiastics, particularly to Dugald Stewart and Hugh Blair, and model, to some degree, their work.

3. We need to look not only at the early feminists who practiced oratory in their quest for suffrage, but also at those women who concerned themselves with "domestic economy," frequently vilifying those women who were prominent orators. Looking only for women who were orators in the public sphere risks ignoring the many women who were practicing and promulgating instruction in rhetoric and writing both in the female academy and in the home. Difficult though it might be (and it has been for us), it is important for researchers to set aside this bias long enough to see that these influential women were self-consciously enacting and teaching a domestic rhetoric that included sometimes rigorous training in logic, argument, and style. And having seen this, we can also recognize a similar response today in the rise of "argument" textbooks on the market: namely, a hope that the "neutral" tools of logic will neutralize--will domesticate--the contentious political discussions that permeate everyday American life. Then, as now, rhetoric could be imagined as a way of containing rather than engaging public voices that challenge deeply held notions of truth.

## Hipparchia the Cynic: Feminist Rhetoric and the Ethics of Embodiment

Kristen Kennedy, The University of Rhode Island

I admire you for your eagerness in that, although you are a woman, you yearned for philosophy and have become one of our school, which has struck even men with awe for its austerity.

A letter to Hipparchia from Diogenes of Sinope,  
The Cynic Epistles

Stand fast, therefore, and live the Cynic life with us  
(for you are not by nature inferior to us, for female dogs are not by nature inferior to male dogs). . .

A letter addressed to Hipparchia from her husband Crates,  
The Cynic Epistles

Little remains of the early Cynics; even less is known about Hipparchia of Maroneia (ca. 300 BC) whom Ethel Kersey identifies as the "first feminist" (132). What does remain is hidden within the history of Cynicism. From these traces emerge the legend of Hipparchia, the story of an outspoken woman who flouted convention, took up staff and cloak, and joined her husband Crates in the streets of various Greek cities to show the masses how they had fallen under the spell of false gods, shirking the virtues of a democratic polis for the comfort of easy wealth. In this way, Hipparchia participated in and continued the Cynic ethics and tactics of resistance.

The most detailed account of her outrageous behavior is provided by Diogenes Laertius who tells the story of her engagement to Crates of Thebes, a follower of Diogenes of Sinope. A woman of high-birth, aware of the attendant expectations that she would marry a wealthy man of the same class, Hipparchia rejected these expectations, as well as her parents' arguments, by her intention to marry Crates who had neither station nor wealth to offer her, save the few belongings he carried with him. Following the wishes of her parents, Crates tried to dissuade Hipparchia from her intention to marry him. But after all arguments went to waste on her, Crates finally took off his clothes, and standing naked before her said "This is the bridegroom, here are his possessions; make your choice accordingly; for you will be no helpmeet of mine, unless you share my pursuits" (Laertius 101). By accepting Crates's offer of marriage, Hipparchia also embraced the Cynic way of life, a life that demanded she give up not only her domestic tasks, but also the comfort and stability of high social class. Living in the agora and openly questioning convention, Hipparchia and Crates exemplified the Cynic doctrine "to live a true life."

The Cynics were one of the few sects that allowed and even encouraged the participation of women, observing no intellectual differences between men and women. Others were not so progressive. As Laertius relays, at a banquet given by Lysimachus, Hipparchia argued with the atheist, Theodorus. Laertius relays the encounter:

'Any action which would be called wrong if done by Theodorus, would not be called wrong if done by Hipparchia. Now Theodorus does no wrong when he strikes himself: therefore neither does Hipparchia do wrong

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### Membership in the Coalition

Scholars interested in women in rhetoric and composition are invited to join the Coalition.

Annual faculty (\$10) and student dues (\$5) may be sent to  
C. Jan Swearingen  
Department of English  
Box 19035  
The University of Texas at Arlington,  
Arlington, TX 76109.

Please include your name, e-mail and preferred mailing addresses.

If you have not yet renewed your membership for 1997-1998, please do so at your earliest convenience.

when she strikes Theodorus.' He had no reply wherewith to meet the argument, but tried to strip her of her cloak. But Hipparchia showed no sign of alarm or of the perturbation natural in a woman. And when he said to her. 'Is this she/Who quitting woof and warp and comb and loom?' she replied, 'It is I, Theodorus, —but do you suppose that I have been ill advised about myself, if instead of wasting further time upon the loom I spent it in education?' (101)

In her essay on women and philosophy, Michele Le Doeuff observes that Hipparchia's reproach of Theodorus's insults concerns how she uses her time, in particular, her life-time, for the improvement of her mind rather than "wasting" her time confined to the home (205). For Hipparchia, time spent away from the loom and on "the getting of knowledge" provides her with "a better life, but [in the process] she wins exile" (206). Nevertheless, Hipparchia preferred her exile to traditional feminine pursuits.

I, Hipparchia, have not followed the habits of the female sex, but with manly courage, the strong dogs [Cynics]. I have not wanted the jewel or the cloak nor bindings for my feet, no headties scented with ointment; rather a stick, barefeet and whatever coverings cling to my limbs, and hard ground instead of a bed. A life such as mine is preferable to that of the Menalian maid, since hunting is not as worthwhile as seeking wisdom. (208)

The Cynic operated from a position of exile—sometimes chosen, sometimes forced—and while the causes of exile require specific and responsible address in terms of what critical stances they offer, exile did provide a rhetorical space for the Cynic rhetor. In addition, the idea of exile assumes a spatial understanding of the political subject in her relation to the *polis*. That is, the literal and figurative space of exile assumes "an outside," a sense of (dis)placement that affectively situates the exile in relation to a perceived "inside." In some cases, exile is the spatial movement of the body over time and space to a place outside a city, a nation, a place. Thus, exile—in both literal and figurative terms—involves the body and its relationship to both space, as a figurative concept, and place, as a lived or "real" environment.

Central to Cynic ethics was the performed function of ethical critique, and exile provided an important discursive space for this rhetorical practice. A philosopher of action rather than discussion, the Cynic is one who "receive[s] virtues for toils" (Malherbe 65). "For the way that leads to happiness through words is long, but that which leads through daily deeds is a shortened regimen" (7). In addition, the Cynic imperative to create spaces to speak through *parrhesia* and to critique through "serious laughter" maintains the Cynic ethics of resistance. Thus, Cynic rhetoric—in its emphasis on critique as well as the inclusion of women—took an ethical stance toward giving discursive spaces to "those who are not already located in speaking positions within dominant discourses" (Allen and Faigley 142).

... I want to develop the critical space of exile for the Cynic tactical repertoire. This addition is complicated, for in the case of Hipparchia, we meet an almost "double exile"—a woman excluded from political citizenship and as a Cynic. In this sense, her exile is simultaneously forced and chosen, a move that further complicates the position of exile. Moreover, Hipparchia—as the woman rhetor—tells a different story at the gendered site of ethical and rhetorical enactment of Cynic tactics. ... Hipparchia highlights the problem for ethics, rhetoric, and embodiment because both ethics and rhetoric have historically assumed a male body and its corporeal experience. Women's bodies are positioned as "other" to men's centrality and the standard of their corporeality. Because of this, as well as her commitment to Cynic ethics, Hipparchia forces us to consider important issues of gender, sexual difference,

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and embodiment in ethical rhetorical practice. . . . [H]er absence in the history of both rhetoric and philosophy and her present recovery as "the exception" in these traditions, speak to the gendered assumptions that underwrite the writing of history.

What Hipparchia addresses in both her bodily specificity as the woman rhetor and in her role as a Cynic are the important and overlooked connections among rhetoric, feminism, embodiment, and ethics. Moreover, as histories of women and rhetoric have evolved and continue to evolve in the field, we need to consider how these recoveries work toward the development of feminist rhetorics. Related disciplines have been considering the role of ethics for feminism, just as rhetoric continues to examine the possibilities of a feminist rhetoric. To this end, feminist philosophers have recently renewed their interest in ethics. Claudia Card, Iris Young, Seyla Benhabib, and Rosalyn Diprose are but a few feminist philosophers who are working to redefine ethics outside of or in resistance to masculinist or patriarchal accounts of ethical theory. Within rhetoric and composition studies, feminist rhetoric has been an important locus for generating inquiry, critique, and new histories of women in rhetoric; Patricia Bizzell, Susan Biesecker, Susan Jarratt, and Andrea Lunsford are a few names associated with the project. However, a specifically feminist ethics of rhetoric has yet to be addressed. While I am concerned with the reasons for this "omission," if it can even be called that, I am more interested in reviving the ethical within rhetoric, especially as rhetoric needs to confront feminist rephrasings of gender and new, spatial definitions of ethics that will, in turn, help to create new discursive combinations and contributions. In short, this inquiry seeks to reveal the occluded lines between rhetoric, ethics, and feminism, a move that will initially force us to consider the unexamined ethic(s) that support(s) much of feminist rhetoric.

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#### From the Editors

With this second issue, we inaugurate a new name for the Coalition newsletter: Peitho. This Greek goddess of persuasion inspires our enterprise through the multiple associations attached to her name in antiquity. As a female deity, Peitho's power of verbal persuasion can merge with the seductive threat of the feminine. She is connected with Aphrodite, eros, and sexual seduction, appearing in the company of figures for desire and yearning. Hesiod represents her adorning the first woman, Pandora, with deceptively beautiful clothing and jewels.

But Peitho crosses from a feminized world of seduction into the public life of communities. Her power is necessary for establishing civilization and democracy. One of the tales of the founding of her cult illustrates this dual association. Pausanias, the travel guide of the ancient Mediterranean, tells of a temple in Athens to Aphrodite Pandemos and Peitho. Later, archaeologists find coins with Athena on one side and Aphrodite Pandemos and Peitho on the

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other. In these materials, Peitho is linked closely with Athena, goddess of the polis. Even the association with Aphrodite is dual. "Pandemos" (literally "all people") can be translated either as "vulgar" (in the pejorative sense of a "public woman") or in a more positive sense as "of the people," meaning located in a common gathering place like the agora. The ambiguity of these materials and their interpretation captures a figure who moves through many worlds—a female and feminine figure who, nonetheless, is not contained by conventional Western interpretations of those categories.

Peitho crosses other boundaries as well. Her erotic power is called upon by every combination of lovers: she persuades men to pursue men (see Plato's *Phaedrus*); women to pursue women, as in Sappho's first fragment. She helped Paris seduce Helen and is blamed for the power prostitutes wield over their customers. Peitho likewise moves from religious to secular. Appearing on temples, Peitho is a cult figure, but in the increasingly secular fifth and fourth centuries, she figures prominently in discussions of rhetoric, persuasion, argument, and the order of the polis.

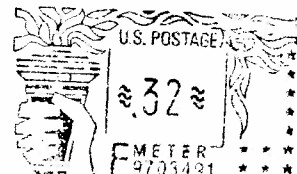
In this multiplicity, Peitho is a fitting figure for a project seeking to explore women throughout history: those who broke out of conventional feminine frames and those who wrote and spoke from within them. Her importance in Greek culture signals the power of the word—spoken, written, inscribed, intoned. In naming our newsletter after her, we invoke that power and importance.

In the choice of a name from "classical" Greece, we risk suggesting a traditional, Western orientation for the Coalition and its newsletter. But just as Peitho cannot be pinned down to a single set of associations, we hope that this newsletter will range widely over the world and its women, in the way that the "classical" is currently being revised to expose its African, Semitic, and Eastern sources and connections.

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**The Coalition of Women Scholars in the  
History of Rhetoric and Composition  
Department of English  
Miami University  
Oxford, OH 45056**



Susan C. Jarratt  
Miami University  
Department of English  
Oxford, OH 45056

To suggest visually the multiplicity of subjects suggested by Peitho, we offer in each issue a different visual image of a woman from the past who contributed to the power of writing and speaking. In creating a disjunction between name and image, we hope to suggest continually the differences among women whose work informs our project.

The frieze reprinted below of an unidentified Pompeian poet of late antiquity resides in the Museo Nazionale, Napoli. The reproduction appears on the cover of Le Doeuff's *Hipparchia's Choice*. (See Kennedy's article in this issue.)