

# Peitho

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

Fall 1996

Volume 8, number 2



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seduction of Leda  
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peitho staff members

### Letter from the archives

Dear Colleagues:

This letter is in response to the editor's call for narratives describing archival research in rhetoric. It describes a recent sabbatical trip to the UK to visit archives of three of the women to enter the British Parliament in the 1920s: Nancy Astor (1919); Katharine Stewart-Murray, Duchess of Atholl (1923); and Jenny C. Lee (1929 and 1945).

*How I got Started:* While looking for a rhetorical artifact to test some theoretical assumptions, I realized that I needed to find a British artifact. A big part of my academic training has been in British Literature, and I wanted to build on this strength in my background. So, I thought, "Who might be a good source of speeches among prominent British women?" Then I remembered that American-born Nancy Astor was the first woman to sit in the British House of Commons. I went to the library expecting to find Nancy Astor's speeches on the shelf. No only were the speeches not there, but also I could find little about Astor or about British women's oratory. I started reading history and biography, which led to the primary source materials, such as collections of papers and letters. I was able to identify six of the first thirteen women to enter parliament in the 1920s as possible subjects, largely based on the existence of collections of papers and existing biographies. The biographies helped me determine if such papers existed, and the British National Register of Archives ([www.hmc.gov.uk/nra/nra2.htm](http://www.hmc.gov.uk/nra/nra2.htm)) and the Archives Hub ([www.archiveshub.ac.uk](http://www.archiveshub.ac.uk)) located the papers that were held in libraries and public collections.

*Querying Archives:* The next step was to query the individual archives. In all but one case, the archive provided me with a catalogue of the collection. Catalogues are listings of files with brief descriptions of what each file contains and the time period covered. These descriptions are often vague, sometimes incomplete and even wrong. From each catalogue, I could guess the likely areas where the speeches might be filed. Then I wrote, emailed, or called the archivists and asked them to look in those files to see what was there. This process yielded a fairly clear picture of what was in the files. One exception to this process was the archive of Jenny C. Lee, whose papers are in the process of being catalogued, so a visit to the Jenny C. Lee library at Open University in the UK was necessary. In some cases the archivist may be able to photocopy what you need and send it to you if its not extensive and the material is sturdy enough to stand up to photocopying.

*Archives and libraries visited:*

Papers of Katharine Stewart-Murray (Duchess of Atholl) at Blair Castle, Blair Atholl, Perthshire, Scotland.

Papers related to her public and personal life including her political campaigns, Parliamentary work, and local public service.

Papers of Nancy Astor, Reading University Library, Reading, Berkshire, UK  
Extensive archive covering Astor's entire career, including her personal

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Please contact us with  
questions, suggestions,  
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for papers, conference  
announcements, or any  
other  
news of possible interest  
to Coalition members.  
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[www.unm.edu/~cwshrc](http://www.unm.edu/~cwshrc)



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### Peitho Revisited

The logo inaugurated in  
this issue was inspired by  
an image of Peitho fleeing  
the seduction of Leda  
appearing on the Apulian

correspondence, speeches outside of parliament, and British and American  
newspaper clippings.

Papers of Jenny C. Lee, Jenny C. Lee Library, Open University, Milton Keynes, UK  
Extensive by spotty in areas of her early public speeches and political campaigns.  
Not well catalogued yet.

General Collection of the Women's Library at London Metropolitan University, London  
Complete microfilm collection of early 20th century women's political press.

General Collection of the British Library, London  
Background and reference works hard to access in U.S.

*Applying for Research Grants:* While this process was going on, I asked my graduate  
school's research support department to search for grants to support this research. The  
process of writing the grant proposals was extremely helpful in focusing the project  
early on. This focus also helped me more narrowly pinpoint what kind of documents I  
would look for in the archives, allowing me to make the most of my travel time. Of the  
four grant proposals that I wrote, one was funded – the one that I needed the most. I  
received a grant from the British Academy, supporting one month's living expensive to  
conduct research in the UK. This allowed me to visit three collections of papers,  
including one in Blair Castle in the central highlands of Scotland, and the Women's and  
British Libraries in London.

*Tips for Grant Budgeting:* While devising budgets for each of the grants, I worried  
about how much time to plan at each site because that would determine how much  
money to ask for. I asked everyone I knew how to judge this. All told me that you can't  
judge how much, just guess. I learned to ask the archivist, "How many days do you  
think I should plan for my visit?" Each archivist provided a fairly accurate estimate of  
the time needed. I also found that archivists know about good accommodations nearby  
and were able to supply leads to comfortable and affordable places to stay. Search the  
University's or Library's website to see if they have a listing of nearby hotels.

*Working Conditions:* In general, British libraries have much more security than we are  
used to in the U.S. At Open University, the archivist "invigilated" me, meaning that she  
was not allowed to leave me or the material unattended, because there was no secure  
area for working with the materials. At both the Women's Library and British Libraries  
in London, you must fill out detailed forms and leave all but what you need in the  
reading room in lockers provided in the basement. You will need some kind of official  
ID for this process. My university ID and my U.S. driver's license were sufficient at both  
the Women's and British Library. On your first day at the library, allow time for the  
process of securing a reader's card. Both the Women's and British libraries have  
restaurants, so you can plan to spend the day and refresh yourself with lunch and tea as  
necessary. At Blair Castle, I worked in the archive office, which may have been the old  
estate office. The first morning there I shared the office with the archivist, her border  
collie, and another researcher who was repairing documents. They sat at an old partner's  
desk and conducted their business and caught up on news. I was assigned to a small  
3'-wide table in the corner with a shadeless lamp, which turned out to be quite adequate  
for my needs. Two of the walls were lined with shelves containing numbered boxes of  
the archive and another with books on Scottish history and other reference books. Bring  
your own mechanical pencils because you will not be allowed to use a pen and the  
pencils furnished are never sharp.

*What to Look At and What to Take:* In order to help me make decisions about what to  
look for and then what to take along, I had limited the time frame from 1919 to 1928  
and to six of thirteen women who served in the House and for whom I could find  
sufficient biographical and historical material to contextualize a study of their political  
rhetoric. Four of the six have existing biographies and archives, one only has a

red figure vase, c. 350-340 BCE (J. Paul Getty Museum). Peitho, Greek goddess of persuasion, merges her verbal power with the threat of seduction. In classical literatures, Peitho is connected with Aphrodite Pandemos and with Athena, goddess of the polis. Thus Peitho crosses from a feminized world of seduction into the public life of communities. We prize her ability to move across categories not easily violated in Western thought: religious and secular, male and female, seduction and reason, order and disorder, public in its several senses. A digital version is available at [www.theoi.com](http://www.theoi.com). Used with permission.



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#### announcements

### The Fifth Biennial Feminism(s) & Rhetoric(s) Conference

October 6 - 8, 2005

Michigan Technological  
University,  
Houghton, Michigan

[Proposals due April 1,  
2005](#)



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#### Membership

Officially founded in  
1993, The Coalition of

biography, and one has no formal biography or papers, but enough material about her exists in other works to think she still could be included. The Astor Archive is so extensive that I had to further limit my search to her first 22 months in office as the only women MP and any files clearly labeled as speeches. Before leaving for the trip, I had read each of the biographies and several social and political histories, so aht I felt that I could recognize documents related to significant issues and events in their lives and the time period.

*Things to Ask About Before You Travel:* At Reading University Library, I had to go through one application process to get access to the Internet and another, requiring a passport size photo, to be able to check out books and to access the research databases, like JSTOR. I recommend that before you leave for the library, you ask what kind of documentation you will need to be able to assess the various research materials you will need. I would have saved myself a great deal of time if I had brought a passport photo with me.

Another thing to ask about before you go is what facilities they offer for photocopying. At Blair Castle, I had to transcribe most of what I wanted, and I think I came away with a total of ten pages of photocopied material, which the archivist copied for me at the main business office for the Castle free of charge. Reading University provided photocopy service at 10p (\$.17 US) and was only limited by what I was willing to pay. The Women's Library was fairly strict about what they will let you photocopy. They would not let me photocopy material similar to what I was allowed to copy at Reading. You should allow more time for archives and libraries with limited facilities or policies regarding photocopying.

As I write this letter, my work table is stacked with storage boxes containing the speeches and other materials that I have gathered from the UK archives. I now must get started on the much more difficult process of trying to interpret these artifacts. I have two more archives in the US to visit this spring and summer. I invite anyone with comments or interest to contact me at [iard@ksu.edu](mailto:iard@ksu.edu).

Sincerely,

Irene Ward  
Associate Professor, English  
Kansas State University

#### recent books of interest

Joyce Blackwell. *No Peace Without Freedom: Race and the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, 1915-1975*. Southern Illinois UP, 2004.

Beth Daniell. *A Communion of Friendship: Literacy, Spirituality, and Women in Recovery*. Southern Illinois UP, 2003.

Kathryn T. Flannery. *Feminist Literacies, 1968-75*. University of Illinois P, forthcoming.

Cheryl Glenn. *Unspoken: A Rhetoric of Silence*. Southern Illinois UP, 2004.

Karyn L. Hollis. *Liberating Voices: Writing at Bryn Mawr Summer School for Women Workers*. Southern Illinois UP, 2004.

Roxanne Mountford. *The Gendered Pulpit: Preaching in American Protestant Spaces*. Southern Illinois UP, 2003.

Gwendolyn D. Pough. *Check it While I Wreck It: Black Womanhood, Hip-Hop Culture, and the Public Sphere*. Northeastern UP, 2004.

Women Scholars in the History of Rhetoric and Composition is a learned society devoted to supporting women scholars committed to research in the history of rhetoric and composition.

Additionally, we work to build and sustain a network

of scholars interested in the role of women in rhetoric and composition. The network serves both as a forum for discussion of related issues and as a vehicle for mentoring newcomers to the field.

If you would like join us, please fill out the [on-line application](#). All Coalition members receive Peitho regularly and stay abreast our work via email.



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Nedra Reynolds. *Geographies of Writing: Inhabiting Places and Encountering Difference*. Southern Illinois UP, 2004

Wendy B. Sharer. *Vote and Voice: Women's Organizations and Political Literacy, 1915-1930*. Southern Illinois UP, 2004.

Candace Spiegelman. *Personally Speaking: Experience as Evidence in Academic Discourse*. Southern Illinois UP, 2004.

Susan Zaeske. *Signatures of Citizenship: Petitioning, Antislavery, and Women's Political Identity*. University of North Carolina P, 2003.

### **5th Biennial International Feminism(s) & Rhetoric(s) Conference**

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

Thurs., October 6 – Sat., October 8, 2005

Hosted by Michigan Technological University, Houghton, Michigan

#### Keynote Speakers

Donna Harawa

Min-Zhan Lu

Andrea Abernethy Lunsford

Jacqueline Jones Royster

Helena Viramontes

#### Featured Speakers

Jonathan Alexander

Mary Lay

Lisa Ede

Shirley Wilson Logan

Karen A. Foss

Scott Lyons

Sonja K. Foss

Joyce Irene Middleton

Cheryl Glenn

Jacqueline Rhodes

Cindy L. Griffin

Kim Sawchuk

Laura Gurak

Patsy Schwickart

Gesa Kirsch

Lynn Worsham

#### Possible topics:

- Identification of the language patterns or rhetorical strategies of women from a particular culture, race, historical era, or academic field
- Recuperations of the contributions of women rhetoricians, writers, readers, or linguists from a particular race, culture, historical era, or academic field.
- Literacy practices of women in underrepresented groups including lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transsexual.
- Cross-cultural investigations of gendered reading, writing, or speaking.
- New directions for alternative rhetorics.
- Feminist critiques of traditional rhetoric.
- Postcolonial feminisms.
- Comparisons of language patterns or rhetorical strategies of women and men from a particular race, culture, historical era, or academic field.



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- Representations of gender in film and new media.
- The rhetoric of whiteness.
- Examinations of the intersections of gender and technology.
- Feminist studies of communication within families.
- Rhetoric and homelessness.
- Workplace literacies.
- Rhetorics of disability.
- International perspectives on feminist rhetorics.

**Review: Mattingly, Carol. *Appropriate(ing) Dress: Women's Rhetorical Style in Nineteenth-Century America*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 2002.**

Jennifer Love  
Lane Community College  
Eugene, OR

In *Appropriate(ing) Dress*, Carol Mattingly examines the ways nineteenth-century U.S. women adapted conventions of dress in order to secure for themselves a place in the rhetorical landscape. As Mattingly points out in her introduction, "Fabricated Gender," rhetoric prior to the early 1800s was fully masculinized: dominated by conventions of argument and delivery (4) and fostering the assumption that women did not and could not speak in public. Alluding to well-known late-twentieth- and early twenty-first-century writers of feminist rhetorical theory such as Miriam Brody and Karlyn Kors Campbell, Mattingly suggests that U.S. women rhetors in the nineteenth century were compelled to refigure the ancient Greek legacy of the feminized speaker as superficial and rhetorically ineffectual (13). Campbell has discussed the ways that U.S. women speakers refigured this premise by altering and/or appropriating discourse in their actual speeches. Complicating and building on this earlier feminist scholarship, Mattingly argues that nineteenth-century women speakers made profound statements – both of strategic reassurance and disruption – with the clothing they wore.

Clothing in the nineteenth century U.S. was associated with women and the domestic sphere. From girlhood, women – especially those of the middle and upper social classes – were carefully schooled in its proper uses (8). As Mattingly explains, women speakers of the nineteenth century often used this affiliation to their advantage, successfully manipulating one of the "means of persuasion" most immediately available to them. Yet Mattingly points out that the socially-sanctioned alignment of clothing and domesticity did not extend to women rhetors an open and invitational hand. Stricture about clothing – for women of all ethnic backgrounds and social classes – were fierce, and convention during the nineteenth century "assumed a uniform [domestic] location that all women should inhabit" (8). Until repeated instances of (often white) women speaking in public in the United States made the occurrence somewhat commonplace by the mid-nineteenth century, a woman speaking to mixed audiences outside the home was considered immodest, indecent, and even heretical. Mattingly's discussion, in Chapter 1, of the negative popular reception given to early-nineteenth-century feminist and social reformer Frances Wright illustrates this point.

Further complicating the task of women speakers entering the masculinized sphere of public speaking during the nineteenth century was the increasingly rigid, gendered differentiation between women's and men's clothing. Around mid-century, for instance, while men donned plain colors and sober suits, middle- and upper-class women's dress "increased focus on the waistline, often with narrow skirts... accompanying low-cut bodices and exposed shoulders, or fuller skirts with elaborate petticoats, hoops, bustles, and crinolines" (9). As Mattingly discusses in the powerful conclusion of her book, "Dress and Body as Spectacle," a scopophilic culture emerged during the nineteenth century – a time when daguerreotypes and photography were discovered, and sweeping hoop skirts and miniscule bodices re-formed the bodies of socially prominent U.S. women. In this spectator-oriented culture, middle and upper-class white women and





women of color were outfitted for the purposes of being subjected to a (white) masculinist gaze. Mattingly's argument is that women speakers, unaccompanied and unfamiliarly prominent at a podium, often outfitted themselves for the purpose of "claiming" and manipulating this normally dominant male gaze: "when assuming the platform, the most astute [women rhetors] carefully staged the way they would be viewed in that situation" (40).

Mattingly pursues this argument in detail, dividing her book into chapters that incorporate period images and journalistic reports to explore the rhetorical successes, challenges, and failures that women speakers negotiated from the late 1820s through the 1890s. In Chapter 1, "Friendly Dress: A Disciplined Use," Mattingly examines the self-presentation of white women speakers from the early and middle part of the century – including Frances Wright, a radical thinker of Scottish heritage, whose trousered dress and short hair (along with her fiery rhetoric) contributed, as Mattingly attests, to her limited influence with many mixed audiences in the United States. Mattingly's point is that the women who achieved success as public speakers during this time, notably the abolitionist and feminist writer-speakers Angelina and Sarah Grimke, eased their way into the public gaze by consciously choosing garments that announced their modesty, sobriety, and religious sincerity. Because opponents to women's public speaking associated "women's public activity with the demise of morality and organized religion" (23), the Grimke sisters chose Quaker dress – with its round-collared, simple patterns and modest bonnets – as their rhetors' garb, confounding dominant expectations (entrenched by uncompromising dressers like Fanny Wright) that female speakers supporting abolitionist and woman-centered causes must be immoral and unwomanly (24).

In Chapter 5, "[Re]Fashioning a Proper Image by Dressing the Part," Mattingly returns to the idea of women speakers successfully claiming a visual image of modesty that "counteracts" possible negative reception to their public rhetoric. Here, the author explores the dress-oriented tenets of organizations such as the Woman's Christian Temperance Union (the subject of Mattingly's earlier book *Well Tempered Woman*), emphasizing the popularity of its president, Frances E. Willard. Because Frances Willard and the WCTU stipulated the importance of modest, healthful, but also typically feminine clothing for women (divided skirts hidden beneath gracefully draped fabric, for example, as shown in an image on p. 113), the group's image and press coverage was positive: "Reporters often associated the organization with morality and organized religion" (113). Carefully preserving this propriety in her own speeches, Willard "constantly reminded the public that she and other members of the WCTU were 'womanly' women" (115). By maintaining a traditionally feminine demeanor – and by promoting values associated with a woman's prescribed sphere such as modest speech and sobriety – this organization of primarily white women was assured of a welcoming reception in public and the press.

The struggle for a positive public reception waged by women of color in the U.S. during the nineteenth century, however, was much more difficult. As Mattingly notes, African American women of all classes were "cast as immoral and inferior" (123) within a dominant culture shaped, in part, by a slaveholding mentality, and African American women rhetors strove to dispel these castigating stereotypes (123). In doing so, many African American women consciously situated themselves, through dress and other elements of their rhetorical self-presentation, "within nineteenth-century Christian notions of the lady" (131). Appropriating conventions of dress associated in the popular mind with white women speakers, black women rhetors such as Victoria Earl Matthews also sometimes voiced explicit connections with white women in their audiences (131). Others, such as Sojourner Truth and Frances Ellen Watkins Harper, drew attention to the ways that their dress symbolized freedom from bondage (110, 130). In Truth's case, her self-presentation also served to remind her viewers – and startle them into awareness – of her survival of the physical terrors of slavery (127).



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As Mattingly's book as a whole indicates (with its emphasis on journalistic reports on white and upper-middle-class women rhetors), African American women's public speaking events were "underrepresented and misrepresented by newspapers" (131), with often error-ridden reporting (132) – and until near the end of the century very seldom visible in print media. Only as late as the 1890s were African American women's reformist organizations, such as the National Association of Colored Women, given visual coverage in the press. Journals and newspapers some forty years earlier did, on the other hand, depict (usually white) women wearing a reformist dress known as the Bloomer. This outfit, made popular among reform-minded women by social activist Amelia Bloomer, consisted of wide trousers/pantaloons and knee-length skirts. In her chapter "Blooming Celebrity: The Flowering of a National Ethos," Mattingly shows how the Bloomer outfit – with its emphasis on comfort and freedom of movement – carved out a space for women that was associated primarily with the public arena (38). From a feminist perspective a positive innovation, the Bloomer was destined for a short career. Mattingly notes that it was primarily women speakers with petite figures and stereotypically "feminine" demeanors who were seen as successful promoters of – and speakers in – the dress (49). Here again, as well as in her subsequent chapter on the social backlash against the outfit, Mattingly suggests that in order to reach a wide audience and favorable attention in the nineteenth-century press (which frequently satirized Bloomer-wearing women), women's rhetoric of dress was expected to invoke images of traditionally modest, delicate, and domestic femininity.

In her book as a whole, Mattingly effectively explores the rhetoric of nineteenth-century women's clothing, focusing mainly on the dress of well-known women speakers and its journalistic reception. Supplemented by period images and magazine and newspaper quotations, Mattingly's text distinguishes between women speakers' clothing choices as more and less successful based on the women's rhetorical motives – while often allowing readers to draw their own conclusions about the extent to which individual women furthered positive social change for women. A chapter that leaves interestingly open the question of rhetorical "success" in dress is "The Language of Passing and Desire: The Rhetoric of Cross-Dressing" (Chapter 4). Here Mattingly explores the way that cross-dressing women in the nineteenth century (primarily elite white women) often ignored the conventions of modesty and femininity, facing arrest and social condemnation – not to mention physical harassment – as they adapted men's clothing for their public and private use.

In general, however, Mattingly in *Appropriate(ing) Dress* celebrates the speakers, both African American and white, who engaged in the subtle and purposeful drama of compromise through the clothing they wore. As Mattingly notes in her conclusion, "In adapting dress to fit the times and mood of the country, women showed a remarkable rhetorical sophistication in recognizing what worked for them" (143).

### **membership application**

Officially founded in 1993, The Coalition of Women Scholars in the History of Rhetoric and Composition is a learned society devoted to supporting women scholars committed to research in the history of rhetoric and composition



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Additionally, we work to build and sustain a network of scholars interested in the role of women in rhetoric and composition. The network serves both as a forum for discussion of related issues and as a vehicle for mentoring newcomers to the field.

If you would like to join us, please fill out the following application. All Coalition members receive Peitho regularly and stay abreast of our work via email.

Name:

address:

institutional affiliation:

email address:

After completing the application above, please forward it, along with a check in the amount of your membership fee (\$10 for faculty; \$5 for students), to the following address:

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Please contact us with questions, suggestions, calls for papers, conference announcements, or any other news of possible interest to Coalition members.

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