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Feminist historiographers in rhetoric and composition have long worked to expand our understanding of what constitutes both rhetoric and rhetor. While this work has greatly increased our historical knowledge of women's rhetorical practices, it has also made us acutely aware of the large scholarly gaps that remain, even in as well-traversed a field of inquiry as the U.S. We still know too little, for example, about the colonial era and early republic, and we know perhaps even less about the ostensible nadir of women's rhetoric, the period between the first two "waves" of American feminism, from roughly the passage of suffrage to the publication of *The Feminine Mystique*.

The collection *Women and Rhetoric between the Wars*, edited by Ann George, M. Elizabeth Weiser, and Janet Zepernick, admirably fills this latter gap. As the editors note, "the culturally shared 'memory' of U.S. women's history is that women didn't participate in public life after suffrage or work outside the home until the 1960s advent of 'women's lib'" (2). Despite a backlash against feminist-fought advances, women *did* increasingly participate in public life through the twentieth century in a variety of forums. This volume traces this participation through three broad "scenes"—the civic, the epideictic, and the professional—as well as considering the mechanisms by which this participation has often been rendered invisible.

Opening the book's section on the civic scene, Wendy B. Sharer's "Continuous Mediation: Julia Grace Wales's New Rhetoric" examines the rhetorical principles of the "largely unheralded" (21) peace activist and University of Wisconsin English professor, whose 1915 mediation plan to end World War I was adopted by the International Congress of Women for Permanent Peace and presented to international government leaders. Sharer argues for Wales not simply as an important rhetor, but an important rhetorical theorist, who through both her teaching and writing promoted "cooperative, dialogic rhetorical attitudes and practices" (25), undergirded by "constructive, supportive listening" (27) and a search for shared, universal values, thus anticipating the Burkean and Rogerian principles that would be later taken up by academic rhetoricians.

Though Jane Addams is perhaps best known for her settlement house work, she had a long career as a peace advocate, for which she was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1931. In "The Hope for Peace and Bread," Hephzibah Roskelly recovers these later efforts, demonstrating that the public space women had carved out in the early twentieth century was still tenuous; indeed, she suggests that the reaction against Addams's peace advocacy was in large measure a reaction against women entering a domain of politics still sharply defined as male. Roskelly argues that though we might regard Addams's efforts as a rhetorical failure, her faith in reason, her remarkable self-reflection and willingness to embrace uncertainty, and her perseverance in the face of obstacles offer a feminist model for communication still relevant today.

In "Gertrude Bonnin's Transrhetorical Fight for Land Rights," Elizabeth Wilkinson documents the rhetorical strategies Bonnin (perhaps best known to rhetorical scholars as Zitkala-Ša) employed as part of her contribution to a 1924 report for the Indian Rights Association documenting widescale land theft and other abuses during the Oklahoma oil boom. Employing her "Christian, married name" (54) rather than her Dakota one, Bonnin, argues Wilkinson, consciously eschewed the polemic persona she often employed under that name, adopting instead Anglo-American tropes of sentimentality to move her audience and advance the cause of Native land rights. Rather than see Bonnin as a hybrid or bicultural figure, Wilkinson argues for her as a transrhetorical one, gaining agency from her multiple positionalities.

In "A Rhetor's Apprenticeship: Reading Frances Perkins's Rhetorical Autobiography," Janet Zepernick examines the rhetorical education of Perkins, secretary of labor under Franklin Delano Roosevelt and one of the architects of Social Security, as depicted in her political memoirs of Roosevelt and New York Governor Alfred E. Smith. Zepernick attributes Perkins's achievements to both her training in social work—which included a stint at Hull House—and her skill in practical political rhetoric, which she learned first-hand by observing both Roosevelt and Smith in action. Her memoirs, argues Zepernick, serve as an "autobiographical textbook of rhetorical theory" (68), showcasing and commenting on examples of successful rhetorical practice she observed, learned, and enacted herself in her long career.

In "Working Together and Being Prepared: Early Girl Scouting as Citizenship Training," Sarah Hallenbeck depicts the movement's role in offering civically oriented rhetorical education to its members. As envisioned by its founder, Juliette Gordon Low—and as evidenced by early Scouting documents—the early Girl Scouts was to be no mere hobbyist organization but rather one that offered girls and young women the same opportunities to practice the leadership, teamwork, and problem-solving skills traditionally offered to men through sporting, military, and fraternal organizations. Rather than simply

reinscribing tropes of domesticity, the early Girl Scouts, Hallenbeck argues, helped prepare its members for a broad range of “diverse contexts—domestic, social, professional—in which they would likely find themselves” (81).

Turning to the epideictic scene, the next section opens with Ann George’s “Reading Helen Keller,” which depicts Keller’s attempts to resist her public image in her 1929 *Midstream: My Later Life*. Despite Keller’s lifelong advocacy for progressive and radical causes, she remains fixed in public memory as the “miracle girl” (112) at the water pump, a triumph of the individual will over tragedy. George argues that while Keller deconstructed this pious image and invited readers to see her as multifaceted, readers were unable to do so because they read her words through the terministic screen—and powerful epideictic symbol—of her body. George thus invites readers to consider the extent to which language-centered rhetorical theories are complicated by material realities and the lived experiences of embodied rhetors.

In “Dorothy Day: Personalizing (to) the Masses,” M. Elizabeth Weiser complicates both our readings of Day, editor and cofounder of the *Catholic Worker* newspaper (and its namesake lay movement), and, by extension, religious activism, which, she argues, can still discomfort our field. Through intimate, personalized accounts of the lives of the poor—and those who served them—Day transmitted Catholic social teachings emphasizing the dignity of workers and the needs of the poor to an audience that might otherwise have been suspicious of the left-leaning economic critique they entailed. In doing so, Weiser argues, Day anticipates and enacts Burkean rhetorical theory, “falling on the bias between religiosity and progressivism” (128) as she “urged middle-class Americans toward a rhetorical identification with radical movements” (114–15).

Well known during her lifetime as a journalist, churchwoman, activist, and educator, Nannie Helen Burroughs has largely faded from public memory. Though increasingly revisited by scholars in history, African American studies, and education, she remains underexamined in rhetorical studies. In “The Shocking Morality of Nannie Helen Burroughs,” Sandra L. Robinson takes up Burroughs’s complex rhetoric of racial uplift, through which she challenged not just white racism but black classism and colorism, often “strategically violat[ing]” norms of decorum for rhetorical effect (139). Robinson argues that Burroughs’s promulgation of an afrocentrist rhetoric, and in particular her insistence on the moral superiority of black women, was an effective, even necessary response to the endemic racism and sexism of the era.

In another essay exploring the diverse rhetorical traditions within African American culture, “Bessie Smith’s Blues as Rhetorical Advocacy,” Coretta Pittman depicts the tensions between middle-class African American norms of feminine decorum in the early twentieth century and the lived experiences of working-class African American women that Smith’s music evoked. Pittman

argues that Smith's presentation of her "blues self," in her lyrics, vocals, and public persona, drew from and spoke to these experiences, asserting the right of working-class African American women to "independence, sassiness, and sexual freedom" and "implicitly arguing that [they] did not have to alter their behavior in order to be worthy of respect" (145).

In "Traditional Form, Subversive Function: Aunt Molly Jackson's Labor Struggles," Cassandra Parente examines the folk music of Appalachia, in particular the means by which it has offered rural white women rhetorical agency. Jackson, a midwife and folksinger from Harlan County, Kentucky, was deeply involved in that region's labor struggles during the 1930s. She drew upon and innovated within a rhetorical tradition in which songs were passed down to women by women and which at times served subversive functions. "Discovered" by urban intellectuals and labor leaders, Jackson gained renown, but found herself removed from the communal tradition that was the source of her ethos. Throughout, Parente challenges scholars to "understand that the construction of an individual rhetor involves the work of many hands" (174).

Women rhetors have often made use of prevailing gender norms to open a space for their rhetorical activities. In "Sweethearts of the Skies," Sara Hillin depicts the rhetorical performances of three pioneering women aviators, Amelia Earhart, Bessie Coleman, and Florence Klingensmith, arguing that their rhetorical success depended, rather, on their ability to at least partially decouple gender from their field of endeavor. Earhart's renown as a pilot allowed her to write on aviation for mixed audiences; Coleman's flying prowess afforded her a platform for promoting African American racial uplift; and Klingensmith's skills were so widely recognized that her fatal crash was read not as a fault of gender but a mark of her heroism. Presenting themselves as "aerocyborgs," inseparable from their aircraft, these women, argues Hillin, "disrupt[ed] culturally constructed norms of American womanhood" (175).

Opening the book's final section on women's participation in the academy, Risa Applegarth's "Field Guides: Women Writing Anthropology" depicts the collective efforts of women anthropologists to promote their discipline—and women's participation in it—by examining two loci of community formation strategies. In the papers of Elsie Clews Parsons and Ann Axtell Morris, Applegarth finds a "rich network of women engaging in social and intellectual exchange" (198) through "backstage" (195) activities. Extending this framework to two popular field autobiographies by Morris, Applegarth finds they "functioned as rhetorical recruitment tools" (202), both inviting women into the profession and offering them elements of its procedural knowledge. By engaging with strategies of community formation, argues Applegarth, feminist scholars can "better identify significant instances of collective, not just individual, rhetorical practice" (207–8).

In "Have We Not a Mind Like They?: Jovita González on Nation and Gender," Kathy Jurado examines two little-studied works by the Tejana folklorist and novelist. In her master's thesis, "Social Life in Cameron, Starr and Zapata Counties," González documents the "longstanding roots of the ethnic Mexican community in Texas" (213), challenging popular inscriptions of that community as outsiders to the region. In the short story "Shades of the Tenth Muses," González imagines a conversation between Sor Juana Ines de la Cruz and Anne Bradstreet in which the colonial Mexican poet subtly instructs the Puritan New England one in feminist principles. Throughout, argues Jurado, González "demonstrates a rhetorical reconfiguration of ethnic Mexicans and women as knowledge producers that challenges the racist and sexist discourses at the time" (210).

In "Exceptional Women': Epideictic Rhetoric and Women Scientists," Jordynn Jack documents the complex epideictic function of two popular rhetorical genres. Examining feature news articles on women scientists such as Marie Curie and Florence Sabin, Jack finds them simultaneously praising their achievements and reinscribing "conventional values of femininity" (225) by detailing their ostensible adherence to traditional gender norms or ascribing spurious "maternal" (226) exigencies to their work. Turning to career guides, Jack finds that while they offered a vision of gender equity, under that same guise they sometimes blamed women for their exclusion from science or failed to acknowledge systemic discrimination. By promoting a narrative of individual triumph and exceptionality, both genres, Jack concludes, upheld a status quo that ultimately circumscribed possibilities for women in the sciences.

In "Long I Followed Happy Guides': Activism, Advocacy, and English Studies," Kay Halasek examines the professional lives and relationships of Adele Bildersee and her mentor, department chair Helen Gray Cone, two English faculty members at a New York normal school (now Hunter College). Halasek argues that Bildersee's 1927 textbook, *Imaginative Writing*, discounted by James A. Berlin for its expressivist pedagogy, is a much richer text when read through its fuller "biographical, institutional, historical, and cultural contexts" (241). Both women, concerned with educating women and promoting writing skills, "consciously constructed courses to situate the study of literature in a social context" (253). Situating Bildersee thus, argues Halasek, exposes a writing pedagogy that values "both personal rhetorical agency and communicative purposes" (255) appropriate to its local institutional context.

*Women and Rhetoric between the Wars* demonstrates a remarkable diversity in locating heretofore lost, underexamined, and misunderstood feminist forebears, as well as encouraging us to broaden the various rhetorical scenes we examine. Its contributors and editors have collectively done an admirable job in producing consistently cogent and readable text, making particularly

effective use of the limited space a 15-essay volume allows. This work will make an outstanding volume for advanced undergraduate and graduate courses in twentieth-century women's rhetoric, and many of its essays will serve as research exemplars for burgeoning scholars.

While it is thrilling to recover these voices, especially those that might at one time have been deemed rhetorical failures or even outside of the realm of rhetorical study, this volume does suggest the need, as Carol Mattingly has argued, for more attention to the full range of women's rhetorical activities across the political spectrum. We still have too little work in rhetorical studies to compare to the body of scholarship in historical studies on, say, women's participation in the anti-suffrage movement (or race and class tensions within the suffrage movement), the home economics movement, white evangelical churches, Confederate memorial societies, or nativist or racist organizations such as the Klan. Such activities, even those painful to contemplate from a contemporary feminist perspective, are part of women's history; understanding them may also help us to better understand the fractures and fissures within contemporary feminism, the roots of which trace back at least to Seneca Falls. But no edited collection can be completely comprehensive; indeed, good scholarship exposes as many gaps as it fills. *Women and Rhetoric between the Wars* not only advances the conversation on a number of underexamined rhetorical figures and rhetorical scenes but should inspire a substantial body of future research as well.

## Works Cited

Mattingly, Carol. "Telling Evidence: Rethinking What Counts in Rhetoric." *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 32.1 (2002): 99–108. Print.

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## About the Author

David Gold, Associate Professor of English at the University of Michigan, is the author of *Rhetoric at the Margins: Revising the History of Writing Instruction in American Colleges, 1873–1947* (Southern Illinois UP, 2008), winner of the 2010 CCCC Outstanding Book Award, and essays on rhetorical history and historiographic practice; with Catherine L. Hobbs, he coedited *Rhetoric, History, and Women's Oratorical Education: American Women Learn to Speak* (Routledge, 2013) and coauthored *Educating the New Southern Woman: Speech, Writing, and Race at the Public Women's Colleges, 1884–1945* (Southern Illinois UP, 2014). He is currently studying women's participation in the elocution movement.