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ABSTRACT

In the process of delegitimating the master narratives that have sustained Western civilization in the past, Postmodernism provoked a "crisis in narrative" which Francois Lyotard describes as narrativity that presents a sense of loss but not of what is lost. Recent histories of rhetoric have promulgated the view that rhetorical maps never reflect a neutral reality, but despite attempts at objectivity, unavoidably reflect the writer's perspective. Fortunately, rhetorical scholars of every stripe are involved in various re-tellings and remappings of rhetorical history, all acknowledging the political nature of their work and the biases mined in their own rhetorical territory. In particular, the recent body of historiography in which feminist researchers recover and recuperate women's contributions to the broad history of culture-making constitutes a new, more scenic excursion into the history of rhetoric. By following the arguments set forth by Joan Wallach Scott, Thomas Laqueur, Anne Fausto-Sterling, and others, (that culture and gender are overlapping, symbiotic, mutually imprinting, ever-evolving categories) it is possible to more accurately chart and account for those gendered limits and powers that lie on the borders of rhetorical history. As the histories of rhetoric are retold a new frontier is crossed. But it is well to be wary, for narratives of gender analysis can harbor the same overly grandiose and totalizing concepts as those now-disputed "grand narratives" of old to which Lyotard refers. (Twenty-eight references and two illustrations are attached.) (SAM)

1993 CCCC Convention, San Diego
B.1 The Role of Classical Rhetoric in Modern Composition Studies 2
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Cheryl Glenn

Classical Rhetoric Retold: Re-mapping the Territory

Juliet Mitchell tells us that "as his work progresses Freud became, more, not less, aware of the problems. Land he thought already mapped was not found to have been done so through a mist. [And] in one after another crucial area, Freud came to find [that] his discovery of the mist [was] the clearest sign of his progress" (43). Like Freud, we thought we had it mapped. We could pull the neatly folded history of rhetoric out of our glove compartment, unfold it, and navigate our course through the web of lines that connected the principal centers of rhetoric.[1] For years, we followed the aristocratic blue line that started with Corax and Tisias, ran past the Sophists and Isocrates, straight toward Plato, Aristotle, Cicero, and Quintilian--each rhetorician preparing us for the next, like Burma Shave signs. If we stayed on that freeway of influence long enough, we'd eventually swing by Saint Augustine and the medieval ars of grammar, letter-writing, and preaching, and on through Peachman' *Garden of Eloquence*, to Wilson, Puttenham, and Ramus. Before we knew it, we'd reach the Enlightenment, then Campell, Blair, and Whately. And after passing through a long tunnel, we'd come upon Weaver, Richards, Perelman, Burke, and Booth--the final stops on Heritage Turnpike.

But we *too* mapped our land through a mist. We ignored the borders of our map, the shadowy regions where roads run off the edge of the paper; we assumed those were drab territories devoid of scenic routes of historic events or influential people. Any stop or any person not marked on the Heritage Turnpike was off-limits, like those murky territories on Renaissance charts that bore warnings of monsters beyond the sea. And like Freud, our discovery of the mist signified our progress. In the light of postmodernism, we saw through that mist and became aware of the problems. With postmodernism came multiple and conflicting intellectual movements--historiography, feminism, and gender studies, for example--that provide insights into those shadowy regions and enable us to <u>remap</u> rhetorical histor*ies*.

In the process of delegitimating the master narratives that have sustained Western civilization in the past, postmodernism provoked "crisis in narrative," what Lyotard described as narrative literature that presents a sense of loss but not what <u>is</u> lost (Friedman 240). Studying the shape of literature, of evidence, historiographers desire to determine "how its form outlines the contour of a loss, an absence, a voice, a silence, which in turn is assumed to be the ground of history" (Conley 8). Historiographic practices, then, have become so firmly situated in the postmodern critique of rhetoric, that to say that the history of rhetoric is [now] pluralistic is to utter a commonplace" (199)--so Robert Scott tells us in the latest issue of *Pre/Text*, for pluralism, he writes, was "<u>born</u> of the bewilderment that postmodernist slants bring together" (199).

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[1]The map metaphors come from Jerry Adler's "Beware the Glove Compartment." *Newsweek*. November 9, 1992: 52.

Back in 1967 Douglas Ehninger argued for a pluralistic view of "rhetoric." He was among the first to break away from the Paternal Narrative and try to describe the ensuing "loss." But since the publication of his influential and much-contested articles, many rhetoricians have presented us with new rhetorical maps. Often conflicting, necessarily fragmented, never final, the historiographies of Jan Swearingen, Susan Jarratt, Michelle Bally, Jim Berlin, Vector Vitanza, John Schilb, Bob Connors, Bill Covino, Sharon Crowley, Kathleen Welch, Nan Johnson, Jorie Woods, Larry Murphy, and Rich Enos (to name just a few) have allowed us to see that historiographic rhetorical maps never reflect a neutral reality: in choosing what to show and how to represent it, each map subtly shapes our perceptions of a rhetoric englobed.

The recent prominence of the Sophists is a case in point. As soon as the sophists were determined a conspicuous absence on our rhetorical map, historiographers began practicing the crafts of resurrection, animation, and even ventriloquism to re-present them. Just take a look at the latest issues of *Pre/Text, Rhetoric Review, Rhetoric Society Quarterly, Rhetorica*, and you'll see how the rehabilitation and promotion of the Sophists--specifically of Gorgias, Protagoras, and Isocrates--has forced us to deconstruct the old map and to ask just whose agenda, we'd been following. Each road into the Sophists promotes more inroads (into style, logos, social history, and especially, it seems, into pedagogy) and gives us a more accurate picture of the Sophists, of what was once-considered a rhetorical wasteland.

In concert with historiography, feminist research (recovering and recuperating women's contributions in the broad history of culture-making) has also called into question the Western paternal narrative of rhetoric. Edward P.J. Corbett, the Father of us all, writes that, "Rhetoric is one of the most patriarchal of all the academic disciplines." In his third edition of *Classical Rhetoric for the Modern Student*, he anticipates and sanctions women's rhetorical contributions. He goes on to write: "But because of the active feminist movement, we may be on the verge of recovering the names of women who could lay claim to being rhetors" (377). In their *Rhetorical Tradition*, Pat Bizzell and Bruce Herzberg include for consideration the rhetorical discourse of a number of Renaissance and post-Renaissance women. Andrea Lunsford has edited a collection of women's rhetorical endeavors in *Rhetorica Reclaimed*, that includes essays ranging from Jan Swearingen on Diotima and Susan Jarratt and Rory Ong on Aspasia to Arabella Lyon on Suzanne Langer and Suzanne Clark on Kristeva. In "Opportunities for Feminist Research in the History of Rhetoric," Bizzell anticipates and accounts for various disruptions and realignments of the rhetorical map, by providing three specific feminist projects and methodologies: (1) resistant readings by both women as well as men of the Paternal Narrative; (2) the consideration of female-authored rhetorical works compatible to male-authored works; and (3) broadly defining *rhetoric* so as to move it from an exclusionary to an inclusionary enterprise. In "Coming to Terms with Recent Attempts to Write Women into the History of Rhetoric," Barbara Biesecker works to "forge a new storying of our tradition that circumvents the veiled cultural supremacy operative in mainstream histories of Rhetoric" (147). As Carole Blair and Mary Kahn demonstrate in their "Revising the History of Rhetorical Theory," such challenges to the map of rhetoric will not only restore women to rhetorical history and rhetorical history to women, but the restoration itself revitalizes theory by shaking the conceptual foundations of rhetorical study. Much feminist work remains to be done, for despite our on-going feminist research, each time we face the rhetorical *woman*, we still see that she is a *nova terra*, not yet existing on our maps.

Still, most familiar to us, regardless of its slant, is a rhetorical map exclusive of women, a map featuring only agnostic, upper-class, public, privileged males. And because those rhetorical maps are always inscribed by the relation of language and power at a particular movement (including who may speak, who may listen, and what can be said), such maps have replicated the power politics of gender, with men at the highest social elevation and rank. Thus, the newest, most interesting, and perhaps most scenic route into rhetorical history may well be via contemporary gender theory. At last year's CCCC, Lisa Ede assured us that the postmodern critiques of the self were so prevalent in *New Yorker* cartoons that "even the lawyer or editor taking the subway to work in the morning may well be aware that the self or subject is[--]if not dead[--]then thoroughly deconstructed and problematized." Well, thanks in part to the latest revelations about J. Edgar Hoover and to Jaye (J-A-Y-E) Davidson's stunning performance in *The Crying Game*, the *New Yorker* is once again broadcasting academic concerns--this time gender studies. In the first cartoon, two FBI agents are wondering if anyone "considered that maybe his dress was a disguise," and in the second, a startled pedestrian discovers that the marquee on the J. Edgar Hoover Building spells J. J-A-Y-E.

Domna Stanton tells us that

> Figuring Gender reflects the conspicuous trend in many disciplines to denaturalize the concept of sexual differences and to investigate the cultural construction of men and women. Beginning in the mid-seventies and complementing the earlier, more exclusive emphasis on women in feminist studies, the focus on gender as a category of analysis has underscored that definitions of femininity and masculinity are relational, part of a system of binary oppositions. (216)

Putting gender studies on the rhetorical map, then, problematizes (what Blair recently described as) that "preservative, continuous history of rhetoric from ancient Greece to contemporary America" ("Refiguring" 181), (what Ehninger described as) "the notion of classical rhetoric as a preferred archetype from which all departures are greater or lesser" ("On Systems" 140), and most of all the power politics--the gender politics--of rhetoric.

Thus gender studies are revitalizing our thinking about the appropriate or inappropriate roles and opportunities for sexed bodies. For too long, we've accepted that women were closed out of the rhetorical tradition essentially because of their sexed bodies, their essential nature. But we've moved beyond that thinking to the consideration of gender as a way of denoting "cultural constructions." In *Gender and the Politics of History,* Joan Wallach Scott describes gender as "the entire social creation of ideas about appropriate roles for women and men....Gender is, in this definition, a social category imposed on a sexed body,...[offering] a way of differentiating sexual practice from the social roles assigned to women and men" (32).

One particularly interesting juncture of gender studies and rhetorical history is the Enlightenment. Besides bringing about the end of classical rhetoric as the dominant and most influential system of education and communication, the Enlightenment also brought about the end of the one-sex model of gender provided a cultural rather than any sort of "scientific" proof of a two-sex model of gender, of genders in polarity. Any model of gender, though, accounts for the movement of females and males along and across the range of gendered performances. In his terrifically interesting *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to*

Freud, Thomas Laqueur demonstrates that what we think we know about the sexed body itself is culturally produced away: anatomical sketches and biological explanations of the body throughout the ages have continually reflected and "proved" each society's beliefs about the body, whether it be that all humans are some variation of the male sex, or that males and females are antithetical. But just a few weeks ago, *The New York Times* ran a piece by Anne Fausto-Sterling, "How Many Sexes Are There?" Clearly, Fausto-Sterling has carried forward her *Myths of Gender* work to prove scientifically that there are not one, not two, but five sexes on that contimuum of sexed bodies, summoning us back to the biological thought of classical antiquity. Taken together, the Scott, Laqueur, and Fausto-Sterling work demonstrates the reciprocal ways in which gender and society interinanimate one another: the particular and contextually specific ways in which social politics constructs gender and gender construct social politics. By following the arguments--set forth by Scott, Laqueur, Faust-Sterling and others (David Halperin, David Cohen, Joan Kelly, for instance)--that culture and gender are overlapping, symbiotic, mutually imprinting, ever-evolving categories, we can more accurately chart and account for those gendered limits and powers as we take a specific route along the borders of rhetorical history. And by building on the contributions of Diane Fuss's *Essentially Speaking*, Eve Sedgwick's *Epistemology of the Closet*, Nancy Armstrong and Leonard Tennenhouse's *Idealogy of Conduct*, and Linda Kaufmann's *Gender and Theory*, for instance, we can demonstrate gender as a performance within a range of possible performances, especially when we consider within rhetorical performances. But as we investigate gender performance within the rhetorical tradition we should be careful not to fold up our map the wrong way. Otherwise--it'll spring from our glove compartment like a caged bat. So, we must keep in mind Susan Bordo's "skepticism about the use of gender as an analytical category" (135). And we must heed her warning that narratives of gender analysis can harbor the same overly grandiose and totalizing concepts as those now-disputed "grand narratives" of old (139).

Until recently, we didn't seem to realize that the rhetorical map had flattened out the truth, leaving scarcely a ridge on the surface that could suggest all the disenfranchised people laying by the side of the road, all the supposed ghost-towns just off the main road. Fortunately rhetorical scholars of every stripe are involved in various re-tellings and remappings of rhetorical history, all acknowledging the political nature of their work and the biases within rhetorical territory. Their cartographic measurements and findings challenge the history of rhetoric to recognize the full range of its migrations, its influences, its texts, its practices, its practitioners, and its theories. And as we re-tell the histories of rhetoric, we pass from the familiar and patriarchal territory of an exclusionary rhetoric into a frontier: the rhetorics of the future that await our exploration, our settlements, and our matting.

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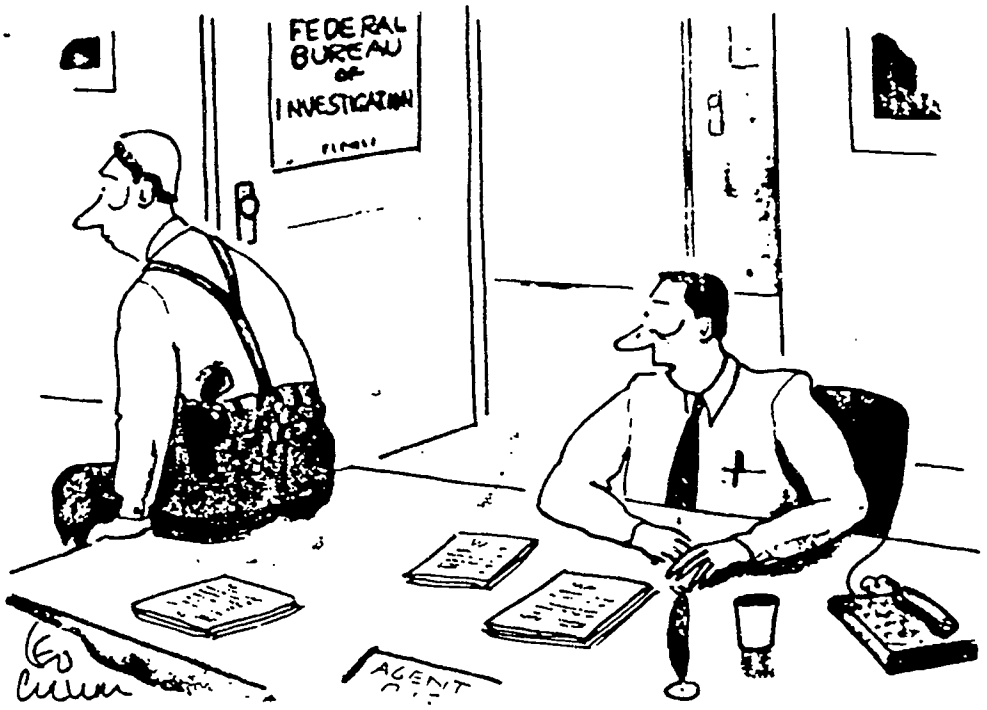

"Has anyone considered that maybe his dress was a disguise?"

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