

REVIEWS

RIDING THE THIRD WAVE OF RHETORICAL HISTORIOGRAPHY

Lives of Their Own: Rhetorical Dimensions in Autobiographies of Women Activists by Martha Watson. Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1999. 149 pp.

Activist Rhetorics and American Higher Education 1885-1937 by Susan Kates. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2001. 157 pp.

Genteel Rhetoric: Writing High Culture in Nineteenth-Century Boston by Dorothy C. Broadus. Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1999. 136 pp.

The Resistant Writer: Rhetoric as Immunity, 1850 to the Present by Charles Paine. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999. 261 pp.

Progressive Politics and the Training of America's Persuaders by Katherine H. Adams. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum, 1999. 169 pp.

The nineteenth century fascinates and bedevils rhetorical historians. From the 1940s, when speech communications scholars began writing histories of rhetorical instruction, to the 1980s, when rhetoricians working within English departments took their turn, scholars have focused on the century as the period when oratory moved from the center of college curricula to the margins and written composition courses ossified into current-traditional reductiveness. Albert Kitzhaber, James Berlin, Robert J. Connors, Nan Johnson, Sharon Crowley, S. Michael Halloran and Gregory Clark, among others, have painted parts of this dystopic picture. In the early nineteenth century, they have written, university instruction in rhetoric comprised four years of rhetoric and regular oral performance, designed to teach citizens—albeit white, well-educated, male ones—to shape public decision-making. But because of industrialization, increased vocational emphasis, and specialized training in colleges, among other factors, by century's end this comprehensive rhetorical education had disappeared, leaving first-year composition in its "current-traditional" stance emphasizing mechanical correctness and expository form, not invention.

These historiographers have done a great service for scholars interested in nineteenth-century writing and speaking. And now scholars can build upon

their work: examining assumptions, scrutinizing evidence, filling in gaps, and extending premises. Halloran and Clark acknowledge the need for such work in the introduction to *Oratorical Culture in Nineteenth-Century America* even as they sketch a broad picture. They note that some of their book's essays "confirm and elaborate this introductory narrative, while others point to limitations of it and to cultural issues . . . that it ignores. In doing so, [the essays] complicate and even conflict with it in ways that, fully examined and developed, could overturn it" (5). If histories written by speech communications scholars were the "first wave" of American rhetorical historiography, and the pioneering works by composition studies historians the "second wave," as both Nan Johnson and Robert J. Connors have suggested, then perhaps the five books I review here herald a third wave of revisionist historiography focused on nineteenth and early twentieth-century reading and writing.

Taken together, these five books provide a good overview of this third wave scholarship. Each author engages with words, reflecting training in close reading and rhetorical analysis. They're experienced at scrutinizing texts with an eye for detail and an ear for audience. In addition to close readings of text, several of these writers demonstrate careful historical work, including archival study of primary documents; they have unearthed new evidence to complicate our discipline's new official picture. Detailed historical study, too, fosters these scholars' more multifaceted readings of the people or movements they describe. It's hard to maintain a one-sided view of your research subjects when you've read their writings about their goals and shortcomings, perused plaintive letters they wrote their friends or mean-spirited missives they mailed their enemies, traced the difference in tone between stiff public writings and playful private ones. As well as taking deeper looks, these writers take broader ones. They've chosen topics beyond first-year composition and even outside the academy, and tied the stories of their pet rhetors and their movements to developments beyond college walls. Their methodologies yield a more complex and subtle view of nineteenth-century rhetoric and composition than we've often seen. Janet Carey Eldred and Peter Mortensen write in a July 2000 *College English* review essay, "Coming to Know a Century," that such revisionist endeavors "work from and promote a very nineteenth-century notion of coming to terms—that of sympathy" (748). As Charles Paine puts it, a revisionist scholar asks of historical figures, "What was it like to think with these ideas?" (36).

Another welcome new development concerns not methodology but choice of topic. Recent publications have complicated the nineteenth-century narrative by highlighting overlooked or marginalized rhetors or alternative sites of rhetoric and rhetorical education. For example, in the past few years Lucille Schultz has detailed rhetorical education in primary schools; Shirley Wilson Logan and Jacqueline Jones Royster have illuminated African-American

women's rhetoric; Carol Mattingly has examined temperance talk. Three of the works I review focus on overlooked rhetors or sites of rhetoric. Finally, several of these books show another possibility for third wave historiography: a substantive grappling with the connections between "then" and "now," a working-through of how the study of nineteenth-century history and pedagogy can illuminate and change our contemporary teaching practices. Perhaps articulating these connections can make our work more relevant to others who teach rhetoric and composition, and more interesting to those outside it.

Eldred and Mortensen worry that smaller scale histories might hurt rhetoric and composition scholarship, leading to "a collection of fragmenting histories read by an equally fragmented, narrowing audience." They warn that limited histories could "play into a nineteenth-century legacy of separate political, racial, and gender spheres" (754). Yet just as rhetoric and composition benefits from both quantitative and qualitative research, from both theoretical work and detailed studies of individual students, our field should be able to encompass both grand narratives and smaller-scale histories. We *need* both big picture and detail work—especially since the detail work can lead to changes in the big picture. Furthermore, I wonder whether such fragmenting does happen in practice. At the conferences I've attended, small-scale histories generated large-scale interest. Vividly written microhistories might be more likely than grand narratives to attract audiences outside their authors' own academic fields. Biographies are microhistories, after all; and bestsellers like *The Perfect Storm*, *The Professor and the Madman*, and *A Civil Affair* spotlight single events or profile particular persons, letting the narrative ripple out to encompass wider topics. As for the concern that focusing on a particular group of rhetors replicates nineteenth-century evils: when we talk about nineteenth-century rhetoric, gender, race, and class *did* play powerful roles—as they still do. Whether rhetors were male or female, rich or poor, black or white or other, immigrant or "Anglo-Saxon," affected the kinds of arguments they made, the language they used, their access to public venues, and their audience's perceptions of them. Whatever the exact degree of separation between the spheres, real gulfs existed between genders, classes, and races; we need to acknowledge and understand these chasms, not least because they can shed light on similar gulfs today.

The five authors whose works I review here each enact some of the practices I've outlined above. Martha Watson does close textual analysis of works by marginalized rhetors. Susan Kates works with archival materials about overlooked sites of rhetorical education to draw parallels between late-nineteenth and early twentieth-century issues and pedagogies and current ones. Dorothy Broadus combines close readings of texts with historical work and attention to social developments outside academia. Charles Paine melds close readings with archival work, offers a revisionist view of cur-

rently unpopular rhetors, connects history with current pedagogy. And Katherine Adams tells a complex tale of good intentions gone awry, using archival work to illuminate an overlooked category of rhetorical education in overlooked places.

Martha Watson's *Lives of Their Own* examines the autobiographies of five activist women—Frances Willard, Anna Howard Shaw, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Emma Goldman, and Mary Church Terrell—as public rhetorical discourse. Watson tells a surprisingly upbeat tale. Except for Goldman, each of the women she studies crafted a rhetorically effective and commercially successful memoir. Watson asks how each writer remained true to her own experiences and yet created a life on paper with which diverse readers could identify, how each negotiated tensions between championing her cause and writing compelling narratives, how each portrayed her ideological commitments and activism, and how each crafted “feminine” personae to attract followers. She lucidly explains relevant narrative theories, from Burke's identification to DeMan's deconstruction, answers the questions she asks, and provides a refreshing perspective on overlooked works by remarkable women. The insights Watson offers into the rhetorical aspects of autobiography, into what writers think about when they craft “public” representations of their “private” selves, could be helpful to scholars working with autobiographical materials. Watson structures her book as a genre study and not a historical monograph, but she and James Kimble, who wrote one chapter, use archival materials to illuminate several of the authors' intentions. Their sympathy for their subjects and lucid explanation of each rhetor's complicated aims and rhetorical stances provide a good model for third wavers writing more traditional histories.

Watson first explores the rhetorical minefields her subjects navigated. As leaders of social movements, these activists articulated a model of selfhood for others to follow, defying social conventions and creating a new kind of womanhood. In order to attract followers, they needed to create rhetorical personae that other women could relate to. They also needed to tell good stories: audiences want the “plots” of the narratives they read to make sense, the characters' actions to be believable and reliable, and the events and portrayals to ring true to their own experiences. Emma Goldman's autobiography, for example, failed rhetorically and sold badly because Goldman never offered rational reasons why she became an anarchist, instead focusing on her sexual attraction to anarchist leaders. Frances Willard of the Women's Christian Temperance Union, in contrast, wrote a successful text because she made an argument, which her audience found internally consistent and coherent. Willard redefined her clearly political activities into a God-inspired mission to protect the home; emphasized her happy, stable childhood rather than her peripatetic, unmarried adulthood; used an episodic, anecdotal, self-

effacing style; and provided her book with a flowery, frilly cover and illustrations. Similarly, suffragists Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Anna Howard Shaw produced rhetorically compelling autobiographies that portrayed their commitment as stemming from both background and experience. Each successfully modeled a "new woman" who sought an expanded sphere without sacrificing traditional values. Finally, African-American activist Mary Church Terrell used her own successes to back up her arguments about her race's great potential and to show how others could work against racism.

I have a few quibbles. Even though Watson's decision to focus on text seems perfectly legitimate, I still wanted more context with my text. These autobiographies span 51 years, from Willard's 1889 book to Terrell's 1940 memoir. Surely the rhetorical situation each writer faced differed greatly, depending on when each wrote and how others perceived their gender, their race, their class. Also, although Watson does provide some information about each writer's life and cause, I would have welcomed more about circumstances surrounding these works' production and reception: the kinds of readers each writer hoped to attract, the reactions of average readers, not just reviewers.

Susan Kates presents another angle on activism, rhetoric, and marginalization. In *Activist Rhetorics and American Higher Education 1885-1937* she examines the pedagogies of particular teachers between 1885 and 1937 at three institutions founded to serve marginalized populations: a women's college (Smith), a black college (Wilberforce), and a labor college (Brookwood). Kates coins the term "activist rhetoric instruction" for these pedagogies, which featured "(1) a profound respect for and awareness of the relationship between language and identity and a desire to integrate this awareness into the curriculum; (2) politicized writing and speaking assignments designed to help students interrogate their marginalized standing . . . and (3) an emphasis on service and social responsibility" (1-2). Kates structures her discussion of the three sites she examines around these three features. Finally, she contends that these instructors' activist rhetorical instruction foreshadowed late twentieth-century critical pedagogy and that the racism their pedagogies responded to prefigured current opposition to multiculturalism.

Kates has unearthed fascinating people. Mary Augusta Jordan, a Smith College rhetoric professor, taught effective argumentation with a sharp political edge, encouraging women's intellectual independence and critiquing current-traditional rhetoric's focus on error. She also wrote a writing and speaking textbook for a popular audience, in which she emphasized that "correct" language changes over time. Wilberforce elocution professor Hallie Quinn Brown, herself African-American, wanted to create what Kates terms an "embodied rhetoric located within and generated for the African-American community" (54). Her elocution reader included selections in African-

American vernacular, critiqued racism, and emphasized social responsibility by stressing changes in character that elocutionary study might produce. Kates' section on Brookwood Labor College features particularly rich descriptions of Brookwood teachers' activist pedagogies and compelling excerpts from student papers. Brookwood rhetorical instruction, Kates writes, showed an acknowledgement of the strategic use of working-class vernacular, a commitment to writing and speaking assignments promoting critical consciousness about laborers' working conditions, and an emphasis on speaking and writing to aid other workers whose exploitation might surpass the rhetor's own.

Kates' final chapter offers reasons why it's important to recover the legacies of earlier activist educators. Contemporary educators, she contends, are once again challenging conceptions of rhetorical instruction as "politically neutral" schooling, and developing curricula that feature the three aspects of activist rhetorical instruction Kates focuses on throughout her book. She touches on open admissions at City College of New York; the 1974 CCCC "Students' Right to Their Own Language" resolution; recent research on gender and communication; Ebonics; service-learning; "Borderlands" theory; and contemporary critiques of multiculturalism—among other topics. This chapter felt crowded with current events, without enough explanation of how each issue or theory related to past pedagogies.

The book's solid structure makes it easy to understand, a clear, usually convincing reading experience. Kates' three-pronged definition of "activist rhetoric instruction" makes sense on the face of it, as does her choice to structure her description of each educator around these three features. The contemporary debates she outlines in her last chapter surely seem to parallel issues facing these earlier educators. However, the very neatness of the argument, combined with the book's brevity and relative lack of detail within each section, sometimes made me uneasy. Did these educators always fit as perfectly into her scheme as she claims? Kates does cite a letter from one sulky Smith student who found a Jordan assignment irrelevant to her life; this is the kind of messy detail I'd welcome more of.

Dorothy Broadus, like Watson and Kates, cares about outsiders—"the infiltrators," as she puts it in her book's dedication. But instead of focusing on outsider rhetoric or rhetorical pedagogy, she describes how a group of entrenched insiders, the "genteel rhetors" of mid-nineteenth-century Boston, used words to keep themselves in and others out. Broadus first shows how particular ideologies—Scottish Common Sense philosophy, Federalism, Unitarianism—influenced Edward T. Channing, Harvard's Boylston Professor of Rhetoric and Oratory from 1819 to 1851, and his minister brother, William Ellery Channing. In turn, the Channings shaped the thinking and rhetoric of their Harvard students, such as Ralph Waldo Emerson, James

Russell Lowell, Oliver Wendell Holmes, and Thomas Wentworth Higginson. These four famous writers sought to create a national literature, written by genteel and moral New Englanders with an appreciation for specific art and literature—in other words, by men like themselves. They emphasized “the power of character,” a term encompassing mastery as shown by education, cultivation of faculties, and discipline; reason; aesthetics and morality as linked qualities; a belief in individual and moral progress; valorization of literary and national patriarchs; and identification with Boston and New England (37). Broaddus argues that these authors’ genteel rhetorical practices became “powerful ideological systems, structuring class, race, and gender domination. Because the writers and their systems operated in the spirit of disinterested benevolence and manners, they succeeded in repressing and co-opting the dominated” (77). Through the upscale magazine they created, the *Atlantic Monthly*, these men reinforced their cultural hegemony and built the mainstream literary canon. But when they wrote about matters beyond their cushy frame of reference—immigrants, the poor, slavery, war—their poise vanished, and they sounded racist, compromised, and snobbish.

Broaddus blends historical narration with close attention to text, especially in her introduction and in the first chapter, “Teaching and Preaching Culture and Character.” There she shows how Edward T. Channing’s ideas of cultivation of faculties, especially the faculty of taste, enabled Channing and his proteges to set themselves up as arbiters of taste and judgment. For example, Broaddus describes an essay on Socrates that Emerson wrote for a college competition. He used an Edward T. Channing address, “The Orator and his Times,” as an exemplar for his own essay, and Broaddus traces how Channing’s “rationalist and Unitarian notions of progress” (40) reappear in Emerson’s effort, as he reproduces—and, at one point in the essay, resists—the ideas and codes of his culture and his professor.

Though Broaddus crafts a clear and convincing argument, producing obscure texts and re-reading less obscure ones to support her claim that these men exemplified hegemony and sheer snootiness, the claim itself seems like old news, one made before by historians she relies on. And her readings seem narrow and unreservedly hostile, especially when she’s decimating less famous writers like Lowell or Holmes. Broaddus tells us at the outset that she approaches these men “not from the privileged position of disinterested observer” but as a “guest with an agenda” (15), a feminist single mother from a working class background who “deliberately choose [s] to remain at the exterior” (17). This antipathy leads her to denigrate well-meaning, even brave actions of these rhetors—undertakings which, unfortunately, are encased in language reflecting the prejudices and stereotypes of their time. For example, Broaddus reads Higginson’s book about his experiences leading the first regiment of ex-slaves in the Union army as a story of his “ambiguous enthrall-

ment" with the South and with black soldiers (113). To bolster her negative view, she makes under-nuanced historical claims; for example, she writes that the Civil War rendered the New England intelligentsia irrelevant. But in fact the *Atlantic* began publishing only four years before the war began, achieving its greatest influence after the war.

Broaddus puts her rhetors in bed with wealthy Boston capitalists, calling them "entrepreneurial writers who made their way in the marketplace by selling ideas and writing," and emphasizing their family connections with Boston businessmen (48). Yet as Ellery Sedgwick emphasizes in *The Atlantic Monthly 1857-1909*, nineteenth-century New England cultural elites always thought of themselves as distinct from, and increasingly opposed to, the dominant economic elites. A more complete way to look at these rhetors, I think, would be to separate these men's (often laudable) intentions from the effects of their actions—which were frequently harmful. Bourdieu himself—whom Broaddus frequently mentions—points out the complexities of the relationship between artists and the business people who indeed make their work possible. Instead, Broaddus simplistically reads the canon-makers' effects back into their intentions.

Broaddus doesn't cite archival documents, sticking to published works. It's hard to tell whether her dislike of her subjects led her to avoid archival research on them or whether her lack of archival study led to a one-sided negative view. I suspect that archival work would have led to more nuanced claims. If Broaddus were to retain her clarity and force and her blend of historical narrative and close reading and study rhetors she actually respected, I would love to read the result.

In *The Resistant Writer* Charles Paine takes on one of the same rhetors Broaddus does: Edward T. Channing. Like Broaddus, Paine mixes close reading and historical narrative. But whereas Broaddus makes one point, Paine tackles various tasks. He gives a revisionist reading of Channing and another patriarch of current-traditional rhetoric, A.S. Hill; traces one way of thinking about rhetoric from Aristotle to Ira Shor; delves into medical discourse and journalism history; and devotes two chapters to contemporary pedagogy, including an account of his own composition classes. In the process, he synthesizes a staggering range of sources, from Cicero to Donna Haraway, Walter Ong to Paolo Freire. This is an exciting book, one that made me take a fresh look not only at Channing and Hill but also at the possibilities of creative historiography. Elegantly written, it rarely feels disjointed or facile despite its scope. Paine enacts the kind of compassionate reading he advocates. He doesn't treat Channing and Hill's writing about writing as "bad rhetoric" and reject these men out of hand; instead, he tries to look carefully at their ideas and respond fairly to them.

Paine argues that although Channing and Hill's pedagogies undoubtedly

hurt writing instruction for a century and counting, we shouldn't dismiss these men as alien to us. In fact, he says, their motives parallel those of many contemporary compositionists. Instead of teaching their pupils to produce their own rhetoric, both professors tried to equip students to see through others' language, seeking to inoculate or safeguard students against what Channing and Hill saw as pernicious public discourse. Paine traces this way of thinking about rhetorical instruction, "rhetoric and inoculation" in his terms, back from Channing and Hill to Aristotle's thoughts on how to properly receive rhetoric, and forward to Neil Postman, Deborah Tannen, and composition and critical studies advocates. He concludes by suggesting that instead of exposing students to noxious rhetoric in order to boost their resistance, composition teachers should foster a postmodern-inflected "responsibility" in their classrooms: putting "difficulty" at the center of their pedagogy, respecting the positions of the students, and striving to integrate their ideas, responses, and objections into classroom dialogue.

First, Paine introduces "discourse immunity" as a theme throughout rhetorical pedagogy's history. In the following chapters, he closely reads Channing's essays and letters and diary entries by Hill and his colleagues to provide a more sympathetic portrait of the two men's ideas and their pedagogical goals. The two men, Paine argues, developed their "inoculation, resistance, and immunity" concepts of rhetorical education as responses to a rapidly changing America. Channing wanted to preserve a critical space for writers and readers where they could distance themselves from society, analyze its assumptions, and discern "the truth." For him, the written word offered this refuge; nostalgic for his imagined ideal of republicanism, he pushed for reasonable, polite, disinterested, and calm written discourse. Hill, who taught from 1876 to 1904, as colleges were moving from producing orators to producing professionals, wanted his students to take an active part in changing the world—not, as Broadus would surely believe, to help them fit in with modern capitalism. His essays on English, Paine argues, show that he tried to rid student writing of its "tedious mediocrity" (131), not just teach mechanical correctness. A disillusioned ex-journalist, he believed that good composition skills would render his students less susceptible to the rhetoric of newspapers and novels. Writing well also required good character. This good man, imbued with the faculty of taste, then had to make the world listen: to write for the public.

Paine's final section, "Contemporary Pedagogy," winds down in an interesting and apt way. Paine first argues convincingly that some recent communications and composition theorists want to inoculate students against unhealthy discourse, as did Channing and Hill. Paine, in contrast, thinks that since impoverished argumentation is deeply embedded in our students, a quick fix won't work. Instead, we need to teach our students to take in op-

posing arguments, to be like the latest medical model of how bodies work: “contrite conflictualism” Paine calls it, with his ear for the catchy phrase. These chapters felt more tentative, full of questions and perhapses, sometimes in danger of devolving into touchy-feely generalities. These chapters seem like a performative act—a demonstration of the kind of argument Paine advocates. He suggests that we need to let students wonder in their writing, trade certainty for ambiguity, and interrogate the stable writerly selves they’re used to producing—and his last section enacts this idea.

In Paine’s book, Channing and Hill come off as inadvertently tragic figures, because the current-traditional pedagogies they created to strengthen students’ writings and help them become public leaders, ultimately weakened students’ writing and helped them become docile corporate drones. Katherine H. Adams’ *Progressive Politics and the Training of America’s Persuaders* describes a similar phenomenon that began to unfold just as Hill was retiring from Harvard. Adams shows how Progressive reformers created advanced writing programs in journalism, public relations, and creative writing to train expert rhetors to convince Americans to support Progressive reforms. But the well-meaning reformers who created these programs could not control how their effective rhetorical training was used. Some of their students did further Progressive policies; others became corporate shills and war propagandists. “Big Persuasion,” as Adams dryly dubs the propaganda industries, still rules.

Adams’ book demonstrates many third wave strengths. She’s undertaken detailed historical work, and gives us a detailed historical narrative. (In fact, at times I wanted her descriptions of various programs to be leavened with textual analysis. Adams does cite John Dos Passos and Upton Sinclair, and she closes the book with a wonderful close reading of Auden’s “Unknown Citizen,” whetting my appetite for more literature and more close readings.) Second, Adams looks at alternative sites of rhetorical instruction; she writes about state colleges in the Midwest and West, not East Coast elite schools, and about advanced composition classes, not first-year ones. Third, she tells a complicated, paradoxical tale, sympathetic towards the motives of the participants—even characters like public relations expert “Poison” Ivy Lee, P.R. man for the Rockefellers. Fourth, she uses archival materials from the University of Wisconsin, whose advanced writing curricula she details most thoroughly. Finally, Adams connects historical work with current pedagogy, though briefly; she ends with a emphatic call for better rhetorical education: “Citizens should not be at the mercy of those who control words . . . they must receive an education on how these slants, twists, and distortions work” (150). In Adams’ understatement: “The Progressive belief that the average American did not need rhetorical skills and could trust in trained persuaders was ultimately not good for democracy” (xviii).

Teaching students to see through slants and distortions sounds like Paine's disdained "rhetoric as inoculation." But basic composition isn't this book's focus, because, Adams writes, it wasn't Progressive educators' focus. At a time when few people went to college, these educators felt that primary education held the key to a new citizenry, and they tried to change elementary school emphases from drill and memorizing to active learning. When it came to higher education they cared about specialization, not basic instruction, and so they ignored first year composition, abandoning those students to current-traditional practices.

The book is a little dry at times, especially in the section where Adams details advanced writing classes at colleges other than Wisconsin. Perhaps it's harder to write fascinating histories about programs than about people. Accounts from professors or by participants in the classes, if these were available, might have given the book a more human feel. Adams might also have elaborated on her work's connection with contemporary pedagogy. How do you teach students to see through the slants? What about teaching rhetoric as production? Finally, did *all* Progressive educators ignore basic college rhetorical education? Surely exceptions existed—perhaps Jordan and Brown, for example.

How do these new books change our field's nineteenth-century narrative? Perhaps they don't substantively alter it. Yet they show that—as every student of rhetoric knows—it's always more complicated than that. They show well-meaning teachers and well-intentioned pedagogies producing alarming results, and they teach that money talks, even when rhetors try to talk louder. Each book suggests further research possibilities: work on non-East Coast and non-elite colleges; work on women; work on time periods other than the mid-nineteenth century; work on other sites of rhetorical instruction besides first-year composition. Together, these works paint a somewhat disturbing picture of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century rhetoric, but an optimistic one of our field's historiographical practices one hundred years later.

Julie Garbus

*Department of English
University of Texas*

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