

Coming to Terms with Recent Attempts to Write Women into the History of Rhetoric

Barbara Biesecker

An increasing number of rhetorical critics and theorists have begun to renegotiate their relationship to the history of the discipline.¹ Indeed, many of us have found it necessary to question some of our discipline's most basic theoretical assumptions as we have understood that the rhetorical histories that emerge out of and are shaped by those assumptions have consequences both for the practices of our professional everyday lives and for the lives of our students.² Here I think two examples will suffice. The first example is an extract taken from Gerard Hauser's *Introduction to Rhetorical Theory*, a book that deserves serious attention for many reasons, not the least of which is that it is currently being used by many teachers for the express purpose of initiating undergraduate and graduate students to the discipline. The second extract is pulled from the first volume of Karlyn Kohrs Campbell's *Man Cannot Speak for Her*. I have chosen to use this source as I am persuaded that the intent of Campbell's volumes is to supplement, if not to subvert, the received tradition that Hauser's work represents.

Selection One:

The Greeks developed public deliberation, or the practice of rhetoric as the means to achieving cooperation. . . . Every citizen might raise his voice confident that his views would be weighed in the whole process of assembly deliberation. The program of public deliberation did not establish a class of leaders blessed with special authority to make decisions, nor did it single out a special group whose opinions were esteemed as inherently superior in worth . . . In the democratic assembly, many voices were heard. Each spoke as a partisan.³

Selection Two:

Men have an ancient and honorable rhetorical history. Their speeches and writings, from antiquity to the present, are studied and analyzed by historians and rhetoricians. . . . Women have no

parallel rhetorical history. Indeed, for much of their history women have been prohibited from speaking, a prohibition reinforced by such powerful cultural authorities as Homer, Aristotle, and Scripture. . . . As a rhetorical critic I want to restore one segment of the history of women.⁴

As feminists, we cannot not want to be on the side of Campbell's revisionist history. It is a carefully documented narrative that makes all-too-visible the ideological agenda at work in Hauser's seemingly transparent and natural history of Rhetoric. By exposing the manner in which decidedly male experiences have been made to stand in for the history of Rhetoric as such, Campbell manages to bring the discipline and our own self-understandings to crisis. Indeed, having read Campbell's book, we cannot but be compelled to rethink our roles both in and outside the classroom, as Hauser's implicit claim—that the glory of our origins that is also our end justifies our contemporary practices—is radically undone.

Of course, Campbell is not alone in her attempt to refigure the history of the discipline. As Carole Spitzack and Kathryn Carter have recently pointed out,⁵ and as Karen Foss and Sonja Foss writing before them would agree,⁶ recent critical essays seeking to discredit the myth that "Man" is Rhetoric's hero by writing women into its history find precedence in a relatively prodigious past. Yet even as we congratulate these critics for having taken a decisive step toward eradicating decades of cultural misrepresentation, we must also, Spitzack and Carter point out, caution against the potentially debilitating consequence of their work: female tokenism. Adrienne Rich, speaking to the students of Smith College in 1979, framed the problem of female tokenism in the following way:

There's a false power which masculine society offers to a few women who "think like men" on condition that they use it to maintain things as they are. This is the meaning of female tokenism: the power withheld from the vast majority of women is offered to few, so that it may appear that any truly qualified woman can gain access to leadership, recognition, and reward; hence that justice based on merits actually prevails. The token woman is encouraged to see herself as different from most other women, as exceptionally talented and deserving; and to separate herself from the wider female condition; and she is perceived by "ordinary" women as separate also: perhaps even as stronger than themselves.⁷

Like Rich, Spitzack and Carter argue that the project of situating "great women speakers" alongside their better-known male coun-

terparts cuts two ways. On the one hand, the inclusion of a few great women “lends richness and balance to research practices” in the discipline; on the other hand, such projects “can easily support the presumption that the *majority* of women cannot rival male accomplishments.”⁸ That is to say, even as they recognize the importance of writing women’s contributions into the history of Rhetoric, thereby acknowledging the simple fact that women were not mere spectators of but vital participants in an oratorical tradition, Spitzack and Carter refuse to cover over what they understand to be the concomitant risk entailed in such an enterprise. While providing a heritage that potentially enables women to “seize and control their own creative resources,”⁹ the inclusion of particular texts spoken by women serve, albeit unwittingly, to perpetuate the damaging fiction that most women simply do not have what it takes to play the public, rhetorical game.

While I agree with Spitzack and Carter that one must move with caution against female tokenism, I am also compelled to wonder at what point circumspection leads to silence, stagnation, and inactivity. Is it not the case that at a certain cultural-historical juncture one must risk the potentially dangerous side-effects of female tokenism so as to instate to their rightful place women’s rhetorical achievements? Doesn’t the mere inclusion of women’s texts in the rhetorical canon make a difference—by destabilizing the subject of rhetorical history that up to this point has been exclusively male, by challenging the suggestion that masculinity and subjectivity are co-extensive notions? Should we not take our chances given that, as Teresa de Laurentis put it, a “‘room of one’s own’ may not avail women’s intellection if the texts one has in it are written in the languages of male tradition”?¹⁰

To all of these questions I must respond with a “yes and no.” But I respond with a “yes and no” neither because I wish to occupy the safe middle ground of a dialectical sublation, nor because I am seeking to take refuge in a less than rigorous deconstructionist dodge. I say “yes and no” because I want to underscore yet another effect of attempts to insert “great women speakers” into the official record we call the canon, an effect that utterly escapes our detection as we weigh only the risks of female tokenism.

I think it is important to notice that recent attempts to render the discipline more equitable by supplementing the canon with texts spoken by women have something like a relationship with what only a few decades ago was coined as affirmative action.¹¹ In the socioeco-

conomic sphere, of course, affirmative action is the institutionally sanctioned and insured measure through which a history of injustice is to be rectified. Specific structural mechanisms are set in place to provide equal opportunity to members of disadvantaged or marginal groups. Transposed to the cultural sphere and, more particularly, to the classroom, affirmative action translates into a three-pronged imperative: new knowledges must be read, taught, and learned. In quite practical terms, this means that course syllabi, comprehensives lists and curriculum requirements must all be revised. Yet when this strategy (useful as it may be in the social sphere) is made to operate in the cultural sphere, the project misfires. Why do I say that the project misfires since, as I noted earlier, thanks to pioneer feminist projects, a gender difference does seem to be challenging the identity of the field and history of Rhetoric?

What I find objectionable in the affirmative action approach to the production and distribution of knowledges—an approach not unrelated to, but, in fact, one of the conditions of female tokenism—is its underhanded perpetuation of “cultural supremacy.” When deployed in the cultural sphere, affirmative action signifies nothing less than the power of the center to affirm certain voices and to discount others.¹² Despite its ostensible purpose—to move toward multiculturalism by adding new items to an ever-expanding list of “great works,” the affirmative action agenda conserves the putative authority of the center by granting it license to continue to produce official explanations by the designation of what is and what is not worthy of inclusion. Thus, even as the list of “great works” expands over time, the criteria for determining that list need not change. Indeed, for the most part the criteria have remained firmly in place.

This line of thinking compels us to raise a question that the strategy of inclusion does not: What are the criteria against which any particular rhetorical discourse is measured in order to grant or deny its place in the canon? One way into this question is to recognize that the rhetorical canon is a system of cultural representation whose present form is predicated on and celebrates the individual. It is a list of proper names signifying the exceptional accomplishments of particular individuals over time: from Gorgias, Isocrates, Cicero, and Augustine to John Winthrop, Jonathan Edwards, Susan B. Anthony, and Martin Luther King. To each of these proper names corresponds a text or set of texts, and between them is marked a certain kind of originating function that wins the individ-

ual membership in a distinguished ensemble of individuals. But what is the problem with a criterion that applies equally to all, a criterion that purportedly crosses lines of gender, race, and class and asks only that an individual, any individual, “generate rhetorical works of extraordinary power and appeal”?¹³ Nothing less than the fact that a system of cultural representation that coheres around the individual subject, that is both master of her- or himself and of her or his discourse, is not politically disinterested. Already entailed in the valorization of the individual is a mechanics of exclusion that fences out a vast array of collective rhetorical practices to which there belongs no proper name. The exaltation of individual rhetorical actions is secured by way of the devaluing of collective rhetorical practices which, one cannot fail to note, have been the most common form of women’s intervention in the public sphere. In short, the danger in taking an affirmative action approach to the history of Rhetoric is that while we may have managed to insert some women into the canon (and, again, this is no small thing), we will have not yet begun to challenge the underlying logic of canon formation and the uses to which it has been put that have written the rhetorical contributions of collective women into oblivion.

Karlyn Campbell’s most recent, and I think landmark, attempt is not immune to such a critique. To be sure, like her predecessors, she plots her revisionist history around the model of the individual speaking subject. Effective rhetorical discourse, that is to say rhetoric worthy of inclusion in the canon, is the outcome of strategic choices made among available techniques of persuasion on the part of an autonomous individual. Indeed, in organizing her book as a series of cameo appearances by extraordinary women who, “on occasion, found symbolic means of responding” so as to “show that the artistry of this rhetoric generated enduring monuments to human thought and creativity,”¹⁴ Campbell’s revisionist history of Rhetoric resolidifies rather than undoes the ideology of individualism that is the condition of possibility for the emergence of the received history of Rhetoric.

So far I have suggested that we must be vigilant against the desire to interpret all gestures toward inclusion as inherently revolutionary or *necessarily* disruptive of the status quo. More specifically, I have tried to argue that a feminist rewriting of the history of Rhetoric that founds itself on the mandate to secure a place in the canon for “great women speakers” is simply not enough. The

mere accumulation of texts does not guarantee that our ways of knowing will change when the grounds for their inclusion and, likewise, our way of deciphering them, remain the same. But if a decidedly feminist revisionary history of Rhetoric hinges at least in part on our articulating an alternative to the ideology of individualism that has up until now enabled the discipline to identify "the great works," what criterion should take its place?

It is interesting that, if Karlyn Campbell's most recent work from which I draw my representative generalization marks a certain orthodoxy and ultimately disabling cultural politics operative in the field, it is her earliest work in this area that gestures toward an alternative. In 1973, Campbell published her now famous article entitled "The Rhetoric of Women's Liberation: An Oxymoron."¹⁵ One of the most striking features of this early essay is the way in which it begins to challenge the presumed wisdom and general applicability of traditional theoretical models and customary modes of rhetorical understanding. By taking concrete instances of women's liberation discourse (however narrowly conceived) as her point of departure, Campbell attempts to cut loose from the prevailing tendency on the part of critics to posit rhetorical categories on an a priori basis. Campbell's boldest stroke takes the form of an explicit and seemingly uncompromising challenge to Lloyd Bitzer's theorization of the audience. Given the history of the disenfranchisement of women, Campbell argues persuasively, "it is difficult to view them as an audience, i.e., as persons who see themselves as potential agents of change;"¹⁶ unlike other rhetorics, rhetorics directed toward the liberation of women must take as their point of departure "the radical affirmation of new identities."¹⁷

A sensitivity to the constraints that the grafting of theoretical models onto specific discourses imposes on rhetorical analysis is what gives Campbell's essay its critical edge. Yet it is an edge that has been blunted by the force of the tradition within which it was produced: though she identifies the limits of Bitzer's conceptualization of audience by reopening the question of (female) identity and subjectivity, her uncritical mobilization of the concept-metaphor "consciousness raising" as the paradigmatic expression of the rhetoric of women's liberation marks the essay's complicity with precisely those normative theorizations that it seeks to oppose. Taken quite literally, "consciousness raising" signifies the project of bringing to the surface something that is hidden, the task of making manifest something that is concealed or covered over. Under-

pinned or at least burdened by the whole history of psychoanalytic theory, Campbell's use of the term participates in a depth hermeneutics that posits an irreducible essence inhabiting the subject and a tropology of the psyche that writes presence as consciousness, self-presence conceived within the opposition of consciousness to unconsciousness.¹⁸ Out of this tropology comes Campbell's notion of audience and her understanding of the overriding exigence that the rhetoric of women's liberation must address. The discourse must, as she puts it, "violate the reality structure," "transcend alienation to create 'sisterhood,' " indeed must produce "a radical form of consubstantiality" that transcends "differences in age, education, income, etc."¹⁹ Here "consciousness raising" marks the deliberate attempt to recover the potential originary space *before* the sign "woman"; in staging the specifically feminist project in recuperative terms, rhetoric is understood, once again, as a purposive act that shuttles between consummate, sovereign, though perhaps estranged, identities.

Of course, Campbell is right to insist that women's access to subjectivity is indispensable to a political program that seeks, above all else, the empowerment of women. However, following the cues of both Jacques Lacan (who has taught us to be more than a bit skeptical of "the talking cure") and feminists working between the post-Freudian and materialist perspectives (who have warned us of the perils of sifting women's problems through pathologizing filters²⁰), I must admit that I find less than satisfactory the conceptualization of history and social change implied in Campbell's reformulation of female subjectivity, a conceptualization wherein the ideology of individualism and the old patriarchal alignments are reinscribed. In Campbell's work, the possibility for social change is thought to be more or less a function of each individual woman's capacity to throw off the mantle of her own self-perpetuated oppression, to recognize her *real* self-interests (interests that are her own *as* a woman and, thus, are shared by all women) and to intervene on behalf of those interests. No doubt, Campbell's promotion of a kind of self-help program plays straight into the hands of the old order that has consistently sought to deflect critical attention away from those structures of oppression larger than individual consciousness and will. In Campbell's formulation, positivity lines up with activity, while passivity and with it femininity are identified as negative.

If feminists working in the history of Rhetoric could deconstruct

the all-too-easy bipolarization of the active and the passive, we would go a long way toward dismantling the ideology of individualism that monumentalizes some acts and trivializes others. Not only would we realize that any active intervention is constituted by the so-called passive but, also, that the passive is inhabited by an active potential, since it *is*, to borrow and turn a phrase from Kenneth Burke, the substance of the active. Thus if, as feminists, we want to produce something more than the story of a battle over the right to individualism between men and women, we might begin by taking seriously post-structuralist objections to the model of human subjectivity that has served as the cognitive starting point of our practices and our histories. Indeed, following Campbell's initial impulse to reexamine and expand "the presumptions underlying symbolic approaches to human behavior,"²¹ I want to argue that the post-structuralist interrogation of the subject and its concomitant call for the *radical* contextualization of all rhetorical acts can enable us to forge a new storying of our tradition that circumvents the veiled cultural supremacy operative in mainstream histories of Rhetoric. More specifically, I want to suggest that the strategic appropriation of post-structuralism on the part of feminists sets up the conditions for a 'new' definition of *techné* that considerably alters our way of reading and writing history by displacing the active/passive opposition altogether.

A reencounter with post-structuralism

As R. Radhakrishnan has recently argued, what is singular about post-structuralism is its interrogation of identity.²² Unlike structuralism, Marxism, or Freudian psychoanalysis, post-structuralism attacks identity as such and not just particular and isolated forms or versions of identity. For example, in several of his works, Derrida challenges explicitly the presumed integrity of the phenomenological subject, the subject of the humanistic tradition that, as I hinted above and have argued elsewhere, underwrites most contemporary rhetorical analysis, feminist or otherwise.²³ Derrida launches a deconstruction of the subject by taking seriously the possibility that the human being, like writing and speech, is constituted by *différance*, as "starting from/in relation to time as difference, differing and deferral."²⁴ By way of an elaborate argument that I will not attempt to represent here, Derrida shows us how the identity of any subject, like the value of any element in a given system, is

structured by and is the effect of its place in an economy of differences. In short, against an irreducible humanist essence of subjectivity, Derrida advances a subjectivity which, structured by *différance* and thus always differing from itself, is forever in process, indefinite, controvertible.

To claim that a movement outside the prisonhouse of the essentialist subject is necessary for writing a new history of Rhetoric is not to say that there are no subjects. As Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak has pointed out on more than one occasion, it is possible to read in Derridean deconstruction quite another story about the subject. Put succinctly, it runs as follows: "The subject is always centered. The critic is obliged to notice persistently that this centering is an 'effect,' shored up within indeterminate boundaries that can only be understood as determining."²⁵ By this reckoning, the presence of an "I" (that is not, however, identical to an "I"'s self-presence—and this is why we must not forget the previous story) records something like the provisional stabilization of a temporality and a spacing that always and already exceeds it. Thus, subjectivity in the general sense is to be deciphered as an historical articulation, and particular real-lived identities are to be deciphered as constituted and reconstituted in and by an infinitely pluralized weave of interanimating discourses and events.

I have drawn attention to Derrida's doubled morphology of the subject because I believe it can enable us to begin to write a quite different history of Rhetoric. Were we to follow the trajectory of Derrida's interrogation of the subject, keeping one foot firmly anchored in the former account (the subject is never coincident with or identical to itself and, thus, is open to change) and the other foot in the latter account (the subject is always centered, but that centering can only be understood as an effect of its place in a larger economy of discourses), it becomes possible to forge a storying that shifts the focus of historical inquiry from the question "who is speaking," a question that confuses the subjects of history with the agents for history, to the question "what play of forces made it possible for a particular speaking subject to emerge?" Nonetheless, by claiming Derridean deconstruction for a new history of Rhetoric that begins by thinking the subject as "historical through and through," I am not suggesting that we can find in Derrida's work anything like a general theory of history or a coherent set of directives for writing one. In fact, if such a project is not to be given up, if we are to broach the question that Derrida

enables us to ask—"what play of forces made it possible for a particular speaking subject to emerge?"—we might find it useful to slip from Derridean deconstruction to Foucaultian archaeology. Perhaps it is worth remarking that this turn to Foucault seeks, as did the prior discussion of Derrida, to identify only a few aspects of his work that may help us to write a feminist history of Rhetoric that averts the shortcomings of the affirmative action approach.

In a certain sense, the definitive characteristic of Foucault's middle project, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, is its insistence upon relating the radical reconceptualization of the subject, characteristic of post-Sartrean French thought, to forms of social organization that he calls "discursive formations." But what are these "discursive formations"? And what is the subject's relation to them? To be sure, Foucault mobilizes the concept-metaphor "discursive formation" in order to work against the widespread tendency amongst social theorists to presume that the *socius* is operated by a coherent logic that can account for all relations and practices.²⁶ Indeed, in the chapter on discursive formations, Foucault emphasizes time and again that the *socius* is a discontinuous space constituted by heterogeneous fields of objects operated by a "body of anonymous historical rules,"²⁷ a nonstatic arena woven of dispersed "I-slots."

Now it is important to note that while these "I-slots," most often referred to as subject-positions, are neither essential nor constant, they do, at the same time, assure a certain kind of being-in-the-world by "determining what position[s] can and must be occupied by any individual if he is to be a subject" at all. Here Foucault emphasizes the discursivity of the "I" since the condition for its making sense is a function of its positioning in the "stated." Thus for Foucault, identity is defined by way of one's relation to or place in a network of social, political, cultural, and economic practices that are provisional (*in the sense of historical and not essential*), discontinuous (*in the sense of nontotalizable*), and normative (*in the sense of rule governed and governing*).

Like Derrida, Foucault conceives subjectivity and identity as made available by, rather than existing outside of or prior to, language and representation. Of the subject and its relation to structure, Foucault writes:

So the subject of the statement should not be regarded as identical with the author of the formulation. . . . He is not in fact the cause, origin or starting-point of the phenomenon of the written or spoken

articulation of a sentence; nor is it that meaningful intention which, silently anticipating words, orders them like the visible body of its intuition; it is not the constant, motionless, unchanging focus of a series of operations that are manifested, in turn, on the surface of discourse through the statements. It is a particular, vacant place that may in fact be filled by different individuals. . . . If a proposition, a sentence, a group of signs can be called a "statement," it is not therefore because, one day, someone happened to speak them or put them into some concrete form of writing; it is because the position of the subject can be assigned.²⁸

If both Foucault and Derrida redefine the speaking subject as a locus of effects,²⁹ what distinguishes Foucault's thinking on the subject from Derrida's is the former's refusal to decipher subjectivity and identity as infinitely or indefinitely pluralized: "The individual is not to be conceived as a sort of elementary nucleus, a primitive atom, a multiple and inert material on which power comes to fasten or against which it happens to strike. . . . In fact, it is already one of the prime effects of power that certain bodies, certain gestures, certain discourses, certain desires, come to be identified and constituted as individuals."³⁰ Where Derrida would speak of the ever-shifting limits that persistently thwart our desire to make the subject cohere in any final sense, Foucault would chart the localized rules and mechanisms of disciplinary power that insure the production and reproduction of differentially situated subjects in a nonstatic but hierarchically organized space. Indeed, Foucault himself seems interested in marking this constitutive difference between his own work and Derrida's. At the end of the second edition of *Madness and Civilization*, he writes:

Today Derrida is the most decisive representative of a system in its final glory; the reduction of discursive practice to textual traces; the elision of the events that are produced there in order to retain nothing but marks for a reading; the invention of voices behind texts in order not to have to analyse the modes of implication of the subject in discourse; assigning the spoken and the unspoken in the text to an originary place in order not to have to reinstate the discursive practices in the field of transformations where they are effectuated. . . . it is not at all necessary to search elsewhere, for exactly here, to be sure not in the words, but in the words as erasures, in their *grill*, "the meaning of being" speaks itself.³¹

Though Foucault himself may be written both too much and too little by Derrida,³² suffice it to say here that Foucault's commit-

ment to demonstrating how specific practices not only constitute distinct forms of selfhood but normalize them into being is what lends his work its distinctive ethos.

Feminist and non-feminist historians alike have claimed that Foucault's decisive contribution to our understanding of social economies and their conditions of existence and emergence, is encapsulated in his theory of subject positions, a theory that resolutely challenges the assumption that ideology can be demystified since "individuals are not only the inert or consenting target of ideology and power but are always also the elements of their articulation."³³ But if individuals emerge always and already *as* particular lived-expressions of the limits and possibilities of a discursive formation, if, that is to say, subject positions are not a matter of choice but of assignation, is there then no possibility for human agency, rhetorical intervention, social change? To be sure, it is on the issue of human agency that Foucault's work has seemed to prove less than palatable to many critics. Nancy Hartstock's commentary may be taken as somewhat paradigmatic of a generalizable disappointment: "Foucault's is a world in which things move, rather than people, a world in which subjects become obliterated or, rather, recreated as passive objects, a world in which passivity or refusal represent the only possible choices."³⁴ If, as Foucault suggests, "power is everywhere," then it seems only reasonable to conclude that there is nowhere out of which anything like an insurrection may gain its foothold.³⁵ Set over and against the ubiquitous and hegemonizing effects of power, the very notion of resistance seems nothing more than a fragile proposition.

It would be difficult to object to this gloss on Foucault's project; it is quite true, as Frances Bartkowski has convincingly argued, that "even though he acknowledges quite clearly that 'you can't have one without the other,' Foucault never gives us as committed a look at resistance as we most certainly get at power."³⁶ Having said this much, however, it seems unwise to suggest, as Hardstock does, that the pressing demand for real social change obliges us to rule Foucault, indeed all post-structuralist theory, out of court or to presume, as Blair and Cooper do, that we can simply cover over the problem of human agency by refashioning Foucault into a humanist.³⁷ To preserve one's own emancipatory projects or salvage one's own disciplinary identity by ignoring Foucault's work altogether or repressing those aspects of it that make us uneasy with ourselves is myopic and politically naive.

Even though Foucault does not write at great length about resistance, there is one thing he makes abundantly clear: we must hold against the temptation to construe resistance as a structure that stands over and against power, as an event subsequent to the establishment of power. Resistance is always and already a structure of possibility within power and, it should be added, power is always and already a structure of possibility within resistance. Power and resistance are two sides of the same coin and, thus, emerge in tandem. But from where? Out of what? In a phrase, Foucault responds, "of something other than itself."³⁸

The implicit challenge to fill out or specify the "other" that is the reserve of power and resistance has already been taken up by a handful of theorists and critics who, in contrast to Hardstock and Blair and Cooper, have attempted to articulate a theory of resistance based on Foucault's "anti-humanism." These critics productively regraft Foucault's notion of subject-positions along the lines of a conflict of interpretations schemata. Given that subjects emerge at the heterogeneous intersection of *multiple* and, presumably incompatible, interpellations—race, gender, and class—they cannot be made to cohere as Subjects. Hence, by reading the subject itself as a site of multiple and contestatory inscriptions, one can, they argue, locate a reservoir of revolutionary potential in the gaps, fissures and slippages of the nonidentical "I".³⁹

Though I am more than sympathetic to the claim that lived-experience is a trying, oftentimes exasperating, oftentimes failed, exercise in self-negotiation, I do not think such experience can be exploited as the basis for a theory of change. Hence, my objection to the attempt is not that such experience fails to ring true but, rather, that "the theory of pluralized 'subject effects' gives an illusion of undermining subjective sovereignty while . . . providing a cover for this subject of knowledge."⁴⁰ Indeed, it seems to me that such a formula can make sense only if the human being is presumed, however unwittingly, to be motivated by an a priori drive for symmetry, a presumption fearfully analogous to Freud's pleasure principle: at the moment wherein the subject's knowledges become out of sync, at the point upon which the wear and tear of unsynchronized knowing congeals into intolerable epistemic violence, the subject's will-to-coherence manifests itself as a precarious sublation whose name is resistance. As Paul Smith put it in a recent book that cogently argues for this view, "the colligation of subject-positions, far from entailing a fixed or cerned

'subject,' is effected precisely by the principle which stands against unification—negativity, the forgotten fourth term of Hegel's dialectics."⁴¹ In short, resistance is taken to be the real-lived outcome of a subject who, knowing that she does not know, is moved by an always and already unfulfilled drive to "get it together." But must the possibilities for resistance and social change be secured by scrupulously resurrecting an ontological guarantee under the guise of an epistemological imperative? I think not. In fact, were we to allow certain aspects of Derrida's doubled morphology of the subject to interrupt Foucault's thinking on individuals-in-power, a more promising direction for theorizing resistance could be developed.⁴² That is to say, because I believe Foucault's take on the subject-in-power is both instructive (in arguing that identity is manufactured and sustained through specifiable discursive means) and limited (in failing to adequately theorize the resources of and possibilities for social change), I want to press the issue of resistance to a further limit within the Foucaultian frame, once again using Derridean deconstruction as my lever.

Retooling *techne*

Earlier in the essay I argued that what lends Foucault's work its particular ethos is his commitment to demonstrating how specific practices not only constitute distinct forms of selfhood but normalize them into being. What I should like to emphasize here is that the Foucaultian analyses of the operations of power circulate almost exclusively within, indeed are orchestrated by, a metaphoricity of space. In Foucault's work, space is everything. With the precision of the cartographer, Foucault takes his reader from the leprosariums of the High Middle Ages to the Saint-Luke Hospital founded in 1751, from the radical reorganization of the *Maison de Force* to Bentham's Panopticon, from the Victorian bedroom to the analyst's couch. With him, we trace the proliferation of disciplines and the internal necessities that open up the frontiers of knowledge and chart the progressive interiorization of madness and sexuality. Indeed, in Foucault's hands, the history of the West is brilliantly divided, anatomized, and mapped as a landscape whose configuration is deciphered almost exclusively in terms of the constellation of objects: walls, irons, windows, mirrors, icons, bodies.

But what would happen if the Foucaultian project was deliber-

ately made to incorporate rather than neglect one of Derrida's pivotal insights—namely, that the subject that is always centered is nonetheless outstripped by a *temporality and a spacing* that always already exceeds it? I have implied it repeatedly: were this excess that never appears as such figured into the Foucaultian calculation, it would become possible for us to recognize the formidable role structure plays in the (re)constitution of subjectivities and the capacity—albeit non-intentional in the strictest sense of the term—of those subjectivities to disrupt the structure within which and through which they are differently inscribed. Indeed, the exorbitant *play of spacing* is, I would argue, the “other” that is the reserve of power and resistance; *spacing* as such “speaks the articulation of space and time, the becoming-space of time and the becoming-time of space.”⁴³ That such a notion cannot be recognized within Foucaultian archaeology should come as no surprise since it is that very thing that cannot be reduced to the form of *presence*.

Spacing as the name of that which inaugurates the constitution of time and space, subject and object, self and other, can be related to the central problematics of this essay—power and resistance. Most important, what must be noticed is that Derrida's particular notion of spacing as an excess that is never thoroughly absorbed by and into the present cannot be thought to be an inherent property of the subject, a pure reserve or ideologically uncontaminated pocket, which assures the subversion of power. In fact, a careful reading of Derrida's work will show that the very possibility of resistance is to be found in the articulation of an act and not in the negativity of the actor. That is to say, Derrida's thinking on spacing shifts the site of resistance from the subject proper to the exorbitant possibilities of the act since spacing in this special sense is precisely that which “suspends the accomplishment or fulfillment of ‘desire’ or ‘will’.”⁴⁴ In the end, then, such a shift enables us to work within the Foucaultian framework: subjects are effects of their sociopolitical, historical, economic, and cultural contexts. It also, however, makes it possible for us to push the limits of that framework: in claiming with Foucault that individuals are manufactured and sustained through specifiable discursive means, we need not presuppose that their practices are nothing but reflections of such contexts or that their practices are thoroughly disciplined by them.

But already a finer distinction needs to be made. For if what we are trying to indicate is a certain structure of *reserve that breaks*

open a pathway within the hegemonizing effects of power by means of an act whose effluence eludes the mastery of the acting subject, then the word *practice* simply will not do. Indeed, at least since Aristotle, who seems to have been the first to use it as a technical term, "practice" designates a purposeful doing: "I accomplish (e.g., a journey)," "I manage (e.g., state affairs)," "I do or fare (e.g., well or ill)," and, in general, "I act, I perform some activity."⁴⁵ Still, today practice is the name for an intended doing, a deliberate—often theoretically informed—activity targeted to some end: practical criticism, practical argument and reasoning, the practice of rhetoric. Thus what I am seeking to point to is not practice per se but, instead, a force or structure of breaching in practice that establishes a cleft or fissure out of which an unforeseen and undesigned transgression may ensue.

Might we not then settle upon the word *techne* as the sign for an exorbitant doing that depends upon practice but which does not obey the imperatives of practice? Here I shall state my claim directly and unequivocally: by scrupulously working within and against the grain of the the word's historically constituted semantic field, *techne* can be used to refer to a kind of "getting through" or ad hoc "making do" by a subject whose resources are necessarily located in and circumscribed by the field within which she operates, but whose enunciation, in always and already exceeding and falling short of its intending subject, harbors within it the possibility of disrupting, fragmenting, and altering the horizon of human action out of which it emerges. Now without belaboring the obvious, it should be noted that to use *techne* as a word signifying a way or means by which something gets done is not new in the proper sense of the word. As I noted above, Aristotle, and even Plato before him, had said this much. What is 'new,' however, is the attempt to use *techne* differently by bracketing out the ethical/moral sedimentations that have, through the history of its uses, been attributed to the word and thereby making it possible for us to refuse to grasp the agent of history as identical with her intentions.

I should perhaps emphasize that it is precisely in refusing to conflate the always already intending subject with the potentially heterogeneous and counter-hegemonic effects of action that my use of the concept-metaphor *techne* differs from the way in which Michel de Certeau mobilizes the word. In *The Practice of Everyday Life*, de Certeau makes the important distinction between *techne* as "tactic" and *techne* as "strategy." While de Certeau distin-

guishes these two modalities of human action "according to whether they bet on place or on time," both are taken to be interventions whose implications can be calculated in advance.⁴⁶ Like Levi-Strauss's *bricoleur*, de Certeau's practician tinkers with the rules and tools of the established order and in so doing "establishes a degree of plurality and creativity" within "the place where he has no choice but to live."⁴⁷ These deliberate modes of use or re-use are simultaneously, for de Certeau, the modes of historical change. He writes, for example,

. . . even when they were subjected, indeed even when they accepted their subjection, the Indians often used the laws, practices, and representations that were imposed on them by force or by fascination to ends other than those of their conquerors; they made something else out of them; they subverted them from within—not by rejecting them or by transforming them (though that occurred as well), but by many different ways of using them in the service of rules, customs or convictions foreign to the colonization which they could not escape. They metaphorized the dominant order: they made it function in another register. They remained other within the system which they assimilated and which assimilated them externally. They diverted it without leaving it.⁴⁸

Contrary to de Certeau, then, my own use of *techne* seeks to mark out a structure of possibility in action that never entered the space and temporality of the intending consciousness upon which its own legibility depends. Contrary to de Certeau, I am suggesting that if we use *techne* as a word signifying a way, manner or means whereby something is gained, without any sense of art or cunning,⁴⁹ then *techne* signifies a bringing-about in the doing-of on the part of an agent that does not necessarily take herself to be anything like a subject of historical or, as in the above instance, cultural change. Used in this way, *techne* displaces the active/passive binary that dominates even de Certeau's thinking on power and resistance. *Techne* points to a heterogeneous history of practices performed in the interstices between intention and subjection, choice and necessity, activity and passivity. It is, as Derrida would put, the trace of "the not-seen that opens and limits visibility."⁵⁰

Back to history

As I see it, this essay could be summarized as a call for a gender-sensitive history of Rhetoric that, in working against the ideology of

individualism by displacing the active/passive opposition, radically contextualizes speech acts. And although the historiographical approach advocated here does not deny that over time distinguishable and distinguished speaking subjects emerge, it does suggest that the conditions of possibility for their emergence must be located elsewhere. Thus, for the feminist historiographer interested in rewriting the history of Rhetoric, the plurality of practices that together constitute the everyday must be conceptualized as a key site of social transformation and, hence, of rhetorical analysis. To be sure, this is no easy task. Were the critic to take up such a project, not only would she be obliged to confront the limits of her own disciplinary expertise (deciphering "great speeches" would not be enough); she would also be forced to come to the sobering realization that little assistance is to be gained from even the most benevolent enclaves of the academy. It is not only the discipline of Rhetoric that is written by the *ideology of individualism*. History, History and Philosophy of Science, Philosophy, Literary Studies, Foreign Language and Literature programs, and even the more recent Women's Studies and Cultural Studies programs share that history and, thus, its burden with us. History and Philosophy of Science may be the most telling example. While scientific practice is routinely collective, historians of those practices tend to write figural histories that celebrate, indeed monumentalize, individuals.⁵¹

More important, perhaps, the critic taking up the project of rewriting the history of Rhetoric would be required to come to terms with rather than efface the formidable differences between and amongst women and, thus, address the real fact that different women, due to their various positions in the social structure, have available to them different rhetorical possibilities and, similarly, are constrained by different rhetorical limits. Indeed, the argument I have put forward presses for a feminist intervention into the history of Rhetoric that persistently critiques its own practices of inclusion and exclusion by relativizing rather than universalizing what Aristotle identified as "the available means of persuasion." It obliges the feminist historiographer interested in rewriting the history of Rhetoric to take on the full burden of the notion of unequal or non-synchronous development—obliges her to write the story not only of the differences between women's and men's subject (re)formation but, also, to write into that account the story of the differences between women as well. Put simply, not only would one have to declare "man cannot speak for her." One would also

have to admit that no individual woman or set of women, however extraordinary, can speak for all women.

Does all of this mean, then, that we must abandon our canon, forfeit our masterpieces, renounce our tradition? Absolutely not. Even though the canon and the histories that have propped it up do not represent the way "things really were," we can learn to read them differently and, thus, teach ourselves something about who we are now or, more precisely, how we have become that which we now understand ourselves to be. Likewise, must the feminist project of retrieving texts spoken and written by women be stopped dead in its tracks? Again, I think not. For what is beginning to emerge there under the guise of information retrieval is the cathected story of what it is that we wish to become. For the academic feminist, however, that story may prove to be the most difficult of all to decipher. For in that story, we must begin to read ourselves as part and parcel of the history we so desperately seek to disown.

Rhetoric Department
The University of Iowa

Notes

1. What follows is a revised and extended version of a paper I first delivered at the 1989 Speech Communication Association meeting held in San Francisco. I wish to thank the International Society for the History of Rhetoric and its then vice-president, Takis Poulakos, for having provided a forum for a discussion that signified, to borrow and turn Protagoras's phrase just a bit, a deliberate and collective attempt to reorder our own house. I should also like to thank Michael Calvin McGee, Bruce Gronbeck, and the director and staff at University House at the University of Iowa for providing me with an occasion to rethink the notion of *techné* advanced here. Special thanks go to Alan Scult for having responded so carefully to my work during the summer workshop.

Finally, I wish to acknowledge formally my indebtedness to and profound respect for my teacher and friend Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. This essay is dedicated to her.

2. There is a steadily growing body of work dealing with the historiography of Rhetoric. Although a complete bibliography cannot be presented here, it may be useful to identify a few particularly recent and noteworthy contributions. See, for example, a special volume of *Pre/Text: A Journal of Rhetorical Theory* [8 (1987)] titled "Historiography and the Histories of Rhetorics I: Revisionary Histories." See also a special section in the *Western Journal of Speech Communication* [54 (1990)] on Rhetoric and Historiography.

3. Gerard Hauser, *Introduction to Rhetorical Theory* (New York: Harper and Row, 1986), 20.

4. Karlyn Kohrs Campbell, *Man Cannot Speak for Her: A Critical Study of Early Feminist Rhetoric*, Vol. I (New York: Greenwood Press, 1989), 1-13.

5. Carole Spitzack and Kathryn Carter, "Women in Communication Studies: A Typology for Revision," *The Quarterly Journal of Speech* 73 (1987): 401-23.

6. Karen A. Foss and Sonja K. Foss, "The Status of Research on Women and Communication," *Communication Quarterly* 31 (1983): 195-204.
7. Adrienne Rich, *Ms.* 8 (September 1979): 43.
8. Spitzack and Carter, 405.
9. Dale Spender, "Women and Literary History," *The Feminist Reader: Essays in Gender and the Politics of Literary Criticism*, ed. Catherine Belsey and Jane Moore (New York: Basil Blackwell, 1989), 32.
10. Teresa de Laurentis, "The Essence of the Triangle or, Taking the Risk of Essentialism Seriously: Feminist Theory in Italy, the U.S., and Britain," *differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 1 (1989): 15.
11. For this very interesting connection, I am indebted to the work of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. See her "On Behalf of Cultural Studies," *Social Text* (forthcoming).
12. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "On Behalf of Cultural Studies." For an earlier elaboration of this issue see: E. D. Hirsch Jr., Gayatri Spivak, Roger Shattuck, Jon Pareles and John Kaliski, "Who Needs the Great Works: A Debate on the Canon, Core Curricula, and Culture," *Harper's* (September 1989): 43-53.
13. Campbell, *Man Cannot Speak for Her*, 189.
14. Campbell, *Man Cannot Speak for Her*, 15.
15. Karlyn Kohrs Campbell, "The Rhetoric of Women's Liberation: An Oxymoron," *The Quarterly Journal of Speech* 59 (1973): 74-86.
16. Campbell, "The Rhetoric of Women's Liberation: An Oxymoron," 78.
17. Campbell, "The Rhetoric of Women's Liberation: An Oxymoron," 82.
18. I borrow the deconstruction of the Freudian tropology of the subject from Jacques Derrida, "Freud and the Scene of Writing," *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: The U of Chicago P, 1978), 196-231.
19. Campbell, "The Rhetoric of Women's Liberation: An Oxymoron," 79. What cannot go unnoticed here is that Campbell writes out the real-lived differences between women in order to establish a hegemonic feminism upon which she can then build her case. Rendering material differences as immaterial does enable her to construct what at least appears to be an elegant argument that explains a whole history of heterogeneous rhetorical practices in one fell swoop and to continue working within a traditional aesthetic axiology against which the value of particular discourses can be judged as worthy or not of canonization. This point will be taken up later in the essay.
20. Harriet Goldhor Lerner, "Problems for Profit?" *The Women's Review of Books* 8 (April 1990): 16.
21. Karlyn Kohrs Campbell, "Ontological Foundations of Rhetorical Theory," *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 3 (1970): 106.
22. R. Radhakrishnan, "Feminist historiography and post-structuralist thought: Intersections and departures," *The Difference Within: Feminism and Critical Theory*, ed. Elizabeth Meese and Alice Parker (Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 1989), 189-206.
23. Barbara Biesecker, "Rethinking the Rhetorical Situation from Within the Thematic of *Différance*," *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 22 (1989): 110-30.
24. Cited in Jonathan Culler, *On Deconstruction: Theory and Criticism after Structuralism* (Ithaca NY: Cornell U P, 1982), 95.
25. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Political Commitment and the Postmodern Critic," *The New Historicism*, ed. H. Aram Veesser (New York: Routledge, 1989), 279.
26. For a thorough and astute discussion of Foucault's work and its relation to social theory see Mark Cousins and Athar Hussain, *Michel Foucault* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1984).
27. Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language*, trans. A.M. Sheridan Smith (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972), 117.
28. Foucault, *Archaeology*, 95.
29. See also Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, vol 1: An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Pantheon, 1978), 142-43.
30. Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings*,

ed. Colin Gordon, trans. Colin Gordon, Leo Marshall, John Mephram, Kate Soper (New York: Pantheon, 1980), 98.

31. Quoted in Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Translator's Introduction," of *Grammatology* (Baltimore MD: The Johns Hopkins U P, 1976), lxi-lxii.

32. The point here is not to resurrect influence studies in the old way, but rather to note the uncanny play of *différance* within Foucault's own work.

33. Foucault, *Power/Knowledge*, 98.

34. Nancy Hartstock, "Foucault on Power: A Theory for Women?" *Feminism/Postmodernism*, ed. Linda J. Nicholson (New York and London: Routledge, 1990), 167.

35. As A. Belden Fields has pointed out in his article titled "In Defense of Political Economy and Systemic Analysis: A Critique of Prevailing Theoretical Approaches to the New Social Movements," even Foucault leaves us with very little to hold onto. He tells us that "power is amorphous, a machine in which everyone is caught up. And he finds that 'against these usurpations by the disciplinary mechanisms . . . we find that there is no solid recourse available to us today.'" In *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, ed. Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (Champaign IL: U of Illinois P, 1988), 144-45.

36. Frances Bartkowski, "Epistemic Drift in Foucault," *Feminism and Foucault: Reflections on Resistance*, ed. Irene Diamond and Lee Quinby (Boston: Northeastern U P, 1988), 44.

37. Carole Blair and Martha Cooper, "The Humanist Turn in Foucault's Rhetoric of Inquiry," *The Quarterly Journal of Speech* 73 (1987): 151-71. Indeed, in counter-distinction to Blair and Cooper, I do not think it necessary to dress Foucault up in the old humanist drag in order to make him useful for Rhetoric. For if rhetorical interventions are articulations of their socio-historical contexts, it does not follow that they are nothing but reflections of such contexts. This point will be taken up more fully in the following portion of the essay.

38. Michel Foucault, "The Question of Power," *Foucault Live*, trans. John Johnston, ed. Sylvère Lotinger (New York: Semiotext(e), 1989), 186.

39. See, for example, the essays collected in *Feminism and Foucault: Reflections on Resistance*, ed. Irene Diamond and Lee Quinby (Boston: Northeastern U P, 1988); Isaac D. Balbus, "Disciplining Women: Michel Foucault and the Power of Feminist Discourse," *Feminism as Critique: On the Politics of Gender*, ed. Seyla Benhabib and Drucilla Cornell (Minneapolis MN: U of Minnesota P, 1987), 110-27; Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990).

40. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, ed. Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (Champaign IL: U of Illinois P, 1988), 271. In this essay, Spivak brings the critique of Foucault's and Deleuze's theories of pluralized "subject-effects" to bear upon the Western Intellectuals' role within contemporary relations of power.

41. Paul Smith, *Discerning the Subject* (Minneapolis MN: U of Minnesota P, 1988), 156. Smith's book may be summarized as a prolegomenon to theorizing resistance. In the book, he examines a multitude of contemporary perspectives (Derridean, Althusserian, Marxian, psychoanalytic, feminist, semiotic, anthropological) on the issue and identifies their latent deficiencies. It is interesting that Smith never offers a sustained analysis of Foucault's thinking on power and resistance. It would not be far from the truth, however, to identify Foucault as the shadow figure that constitutes the margin of this text.

42. For a discussion of the productive notion of interruption as a cut of sorts that allows something to function, see Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Practical Politics of The Open End," *The Post-Colonial Critic: Interviews, Strategies, Dialogues*, ed. Sarah Harasym (New York: Routledge, 1990), 110-11.

43. Jacques Derrida, of *Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore MD: The Johns Hopkins U P, 1976), 68.

44. Jacques Derrida, "Différance," *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1982), 8.

45. Nicholas Lobkowitz, *Theory and Practice: History of a Concept from Aristotle to Marx* (Notre Dame and London: U of Notre Dame P: 1967), 9.
46. Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Rendall (Berkeley CA: U of California P, 1984), 39.
47. Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 30.
48. Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 31–32.
49. *Oxford English Dictionary*, 1785.
50. Jacques Derrida, *of Grammatology*, 163.
51. For a critique of these histories, see, for example, Sandra Harding and Jean F. O'Barr, eds., *Sex and Scientific Inquiry* (Chicago: U of Chicago P), 1987.

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