MUTED VOICES FROM ANTIQUITY THROUGH THE RENAISSANCE:
LOCATING WOMEN IN THE RHETORICAL TRADITION

DISSERTATION

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By

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* * * * *

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1989
For Isabel DuSang,
who taught me to read and write.

For Anna Seitz,
who taught me to watch and listen.
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INTRODUCTION

The world taught woman nothing skillful and then said her work was valueless. It permitted her no opinion and said she did not know how to think. It forebade her to speak, and said the sex had no orators.

Carrie Chapman Catt, 1902

Problem

According to received knowledge, no woman has influenced Western rhetorical tradition. While men have worked together in the public arena to build evolving yet enduring theories and praxes of rhetoric, women have dedicated themselves to creating the subculture of their private domain, the home. Women have been excluded from rhetorical practices and displays, and thus our version of history, our knowledge of both men's and women's thoughts and experiences, comes almost entirely from the writings of men. La Rochefoucauld was right—"History never embraces more than a small part of reality"—for none of the men who have written historical rhetoric texts and secondary rhetorics mention even one female rhetorician or female practitioner of rhetoric. Left unexamined, rhetorical history recounted by Aristotle,
Cicero, Isocrates, Augustine of Hippo, Peter Ramus, Hugh Blair, Richard Whately, James J. Murphy, Brian Vickers, George Kennedy, James Golden, and Edward P. J. Corbett is the accumulation of male experience, our female ancestors having disappeared. Other seemingly comprehensive resources exclude women from the canon of rhetoric as well. The Oxford Companion to Classical Literature, for example, lists "Aspasia," only to say "See Pericles," a rather abrupt notation for those who know Aspasia was the rhetorician and philosopher who counted Pericles, Socrates, and Plato among her pupils. Women have been systematically excluded from rhetorical history. Hence, the purpose of this study is two-fold: to locate those women who have participated in the making of our rhetorical tradition; to contextualize their contributions within the powerful male-imposed but female-accepted boundaries on women’s lives—social, political, educational, and intellectual boundaries.

Cause of the Problem

Women's omission from rhetorical history comes as no surprise, for women's contributions to all facets of culture-making have gone mostly unrecognized. In Man Made Language, Dale Spender builds on the findings of anthropological research to tell us that

[ historically, women have been excluded from the production of cultural forms, and language is, after all, a cultural form—and a most important one. In fairly crude terms this means that the language has been made by men and that men have used it for their own purposes. Because women have not been involved in the production of the legitimated language, they have been unable to give weight ]
to their own symbolic meanings (S. Ardener, 1975), they have been unable to pass on a tradition of women's meanings of the world (52).

Because women have been excluded from the making of language, they have not been able to contain and then pass on a tradition of women's language. It is no wonder, then, that so few women have ever controlled the linguistic, material, or social means to the making of an intellectual--let alone rhetorical--tradition among themselves. And because women have had no opportunity to build their own such base, they have been inhibited from the opportunity to participate on an equal basis in the ongoing dominant discourse, that of males.

In addition to the anthropological reasons for women's exclusion, there are intellectual ones. Histories of the world have traditionally been written with few or passing references to women, not, Gerda Lerner tells us, "because of the evil conspiracies of men in general or male historians in particular, but because we have considered history only in male-centered terms." In "The Challenge of Women's History," Lerner goes on to say that

[w]e have missed women and their activities, because we have asked questions of history which are inappropriate to women. To rectify this, and to light up areas of historical darkness, we must, for a time, focus on a woman-centered inquiry, considering the possibility of the existence of a female culture within the general culture shared by men and women. History must include an account of the female experience over time and should include the development of feminist consciousness as an essential aspect of women's past. This is the primary task of women's history. The central question it raises is: What would history be like if it were seen through the eyes of women and ordered by values they define (25)?
History has been seen in male terms. We can only begin to imagine what the longitudinal view might be were it seen through the eyes of woman—and ordered by the values she defines.

Women's sphere, then, like men's, has been defined and maintained by men, and many of those men recorded history. The ancients themselves set the pattern: wars and politics—not social or domestic affairs—claimed the chief attention of educated men. Unlike her male counterpart, Western woman has lived without access to any knowledge of her real and specific participation in the public domain, in building continuous traditions, in contributing to intellectual heritage. Her contributions and participation have gone unacknowledged. Hence, even when we witness the brief moments of literary women emerging into view—a view of history written largely by men and with men's concerns in mind—we realize that women had to assert themselves continually and actively, having no knowledge of their female predecessors or of their contemporary sisterhood.

The perceived silence of women has been man-made: women's contributions have been suppressed through a variety of social institutions—education, politics, the arts—which men have created and controlled. But primary works, such as those of the Pythagoreans, of Heloise, and of Anne Askew exist, as do secondary works that voice the influence of women. For instance, surviving fragments and references in the work of male authors provide tantalizing indications that the intellectual efforts of women
have been, at least occasionally, committed to writing. Plato, Appian, and Valerius Maximus, for example, all allude to the intellectual accomplishments of women; later, Jerome, Abelard, Juan Vives, Erasmus, and Thomas More, all committed to the education of specific women, mention the powerful and persuasive writings of their female pupils. Yet none of these men enumerate or elaborate upon women's specific contributions to oratory, politics, philosophy, or rhetoric, women's importance being inevitably obscured by the patriarchal values that have long dominated our culture.

Hence, no female rhetors or rhetoricians have been remembered. No female voices have been heard in important ways. The excision of women from rhetorical history has reinforced the architecture of women's continued mutedness, their confinement to silence. It is no wonder, then, that both historical and literary women have suffered from anxiety—not so much concerning male influence as of female absence. Our study of rhetoric has been the study of famous men; we have been denied the knowledge of any female rhetorical figures. Without access to a women's history, the public woman has been forced to devote much of her energy to self-justification, defending her right to be learned and articulate. To paraphrase Adrienne Rich, the entire history of women has been muffled in silence over and over. And that silence blankets women's accomplishments, be they muted or neglected or denied.
Solution through Revision

Only now are we beginning to understand the influence that some women—especially literate women—have wielded in the public domain of language, the domain of rhetoric. In "Emphasis Added," Nancy Miller tells us that feminist scholarship can perform two simultaneous and compensatory gestures: the archaeological and rehabilitative act of discovering and recovering "lost" women writers and the reconstructive and reevaluative act of establishing a parallel literary tradition. . . . The advantage of these moves is that they make visible an otherwise invisible intertext: a reconstituted record of precedence and prefiguration, debts acknowledged and unacknowledged, anxieties and enthusiasms (342).

During the last fifteen years, such revisionist scholarship in women's studies has flourished and brought to the fore the names and specific works of influential women writers and speakers throughout recorded history whose reputations and works have heretofore been distorted, omitted, trivialized, or obscured. The rediscovery of women writers and the re-evaluation of their place in history provide me with a starting point for my work and also help me situate my project in historical and ideological terms.

Critical Question

Overriding this project is the following twofold question: From antiquity through the Renaissance, what contributions did women make to the rhetorical tradition? How can those contributions be located within that tradition? Those large questions subsume smaller, critical issues of education, literacy, and social and religious constraints: How did a woman's education
occur when she was, by nature of her sex alone, a subset of society? How did access to education and literacy expand her world, allowing her to create a dialogue or a dialectic with the "primary" culture, the male culture? How well was she integrated into the intellectual circle of her time? What were the social, religious, philosophical, and economic boundaries placed on her? How much tension could she put on those boundaries and be credible, be persuasive, be powerful?

Rationale and Methodology

The acculturation of women has traditionally led to conformity and acceptance of social and political boundaries. However, the female rhetors and rhetoricians of this study deviated from the expected norms of their societies. Although successfully acculturated, these women were not paraffin under the impress of the patriarchal consciousness. Each of these women felt somehow empowered and liberated—the locus of her literary identity being an intersection of various social, cultural, political, economic, religious, educational, and domestic forces that may never be fully understood. For whatever reasons, she willfully chose not to conform to those norms. Perhaps in the process of her education or her personal development, perhaps encouraged by her family, incited by a particular situation, or sustained by her religion or her rank, she broke free from the constraints of society to create and realize dialogic and dialectic status within the power structure.
Women such as Sappho, Aspasia, Hortensia, Fulvia, Heloise, Hildegard of Bingen, Julian of Norwich, Margery Kempe, Margaret More Roper, Anne Askew, and Elizabeth I participated in the tradition of rhetoric; often the autonomy they demonstrated did not match the expectations of their social roles. Yet like all women breaking through the hegemony of male voices, even these formidable women sometimes sound marginal, especially when they tell their stories of how that kind of marginality feels. In their struggle to be heard, understood, and believed (in the context of their rhetorical exigencies), they managed to withstand the tension that accompanied their acute awareness of their intrinsic worth as self-determining human beings and of their diminished extrinsic value as women in the social order.

To trace the thread of women in rhetoric, to re-evaluate and hence re-envision them as a force in rhetoric, then, I implement traditional and contemporary historical methodology and current historical awareness, informed by feminism and Marxism, to contextualize my female subjects. Women's intellectual opportunities and limitations have been determined first by gender and then by social class, regardless of the historical period. Spender warns, however, that

[i]t is not enough to recover the "Great Women" of history, for even the notion of greatness has its origin in patriarchal hierarchies and implies [according to Mary Daly] "a desire to parallel the records of men's achievements." If women are to have their own voice, and not just to echo men, then new cerebration, a new way of knowing is required (Man Made Language 59).
The thread connecting these women in rhetoric may well be no more than John Donne's "gold to airy thinness beat," yet that is strong enough to weave them into the same rhetorical fabric, in the same networks of language.

No rhetorician can be fully understood a-contextually. Just as we better appreciate Plato by reading Aristotle and better appreciate Quintilian by reading Cicero, just as we compare the use of rhetoric in the Greek lyceum with that in the Scottish pulpit, we can better understand Aspasia by reading Plato and better understand Elizabeth I by reading Roger Ascham. Therefore, I situate these women rhetoricians in their historical, social, and intellectual milieux, and I take responsibility for my concept of a delineated context. As I move through history, I stop to consider the dominant (and, of course, male-dominated) rhetorical theories and practices of each historical period. As I consider the written and oratorical accomplishments of these women, I consider the exigencies of their work—the reasons they felt compelled to speak out in the first place—what Lloyd Bitzer calls the "rhetorical situation":

... a complex of persons, events, objects, and relations presenting an actual or potential exigence which can be completely or partially removed if discourse, introduced into the situation, can so constrain human decision or action as to bring about the significant modification of the exigence (6).

Such a reconstruction, then, allows me to better see what these women must have seen: the potential for mediating the thoughts and actions of their audience through language.
My methodology transcends that of the New Historicism in that I first map out the ordinary pattern of upper-class women's lives, but then I go one step further in tracing the extraordinary intellectual accomplishments of individual historical women. I am deliberately disrupting and re-interpreting that progressive continuity we tend to refer to unproblematically and homogeneously as the history of rhetoric. My selection of examples alone, the women I include in this study, ensures that such a re-interpretation will take place.

In "Writing on History," Nancy Partner tells us about the institutional myth "that there is such a thing as 'non-narrative' history which exhibits more sophisticated intellectual activity than [the popularized] narrative . . ." (93). Partner goes on to describe the limitations and subjectivity of any history:

All past events, persons, and phenomena, however abstractly defined, emerge into indentity only as part of a formal pattern which controls time. "Tick" = origins, causes, predisposing factors, fundamental premises. "Tock" = results, effects, achievements, recovered meanings. . . . [O]ur plot enables us to identify manifestations, symptoms, developments, characteristics. The most rigorously eventless, characterless, "non-narrative" history has to tell something, has to begin somewhere and proceed and conclude (93).

Partner assures us that all history is a story of some kind, that "[h]istorians characteristicly interpret evidence . . . into some special version" (94), and that the "central conventions which govern all narrative--the organization of time, the distinction between contingent and significant sequence, alias story--write history and fiction profoundly and permanently" (96).
And in *Language as Symbolic Action*, Kenneth Burke tells us that such a narrative as I tell is a reflection of reality; but by its very nature, it must be a selection of reality; and to this extent, it must function also as a deflection of reality (45).

All historical accounts, even the most seemingly objective historical records, then, are stories. And even these "stories" are pre-selected and arranged according to the selector's frame of reference.

The brief historical overview that follows (in Chapter I) merely implies the range of differences between male/female educations and the philosophies thereof. In terms of measures, theories, and practices of literacy, projected intellectual possibilities, and accompanying social constraints, the span of disparity is vast. Except in special cases, only men were educated to take a place in the public sphere, education and public action being bastions of male power and control. Therefore, any serious account of any woman's public intellectual accomplishments must naturally take into consideration her academic background and preparation. And because the written works of so very few women have been committed to history, I am especially careful to include a full-range examination of their rhetorical discourses or treatises, both in primary texts and in secondary rhetorics. Such an examination helps to make explicit the implicit philosophy and methodology of each female rhetor as well as the theory and pedagogy of each female rhetorician.
Overview of Chapters

In Chapter I, I situate Western woman within her culture and examine the ways her status and role have circumscribed her social and educational opportunities—always for the benefit of men. The chapter comprises an overview and a review of literature concerning the evolution of women's situation as well as the literature examining powerful women writers. In this opening chapter, I introduce the connective concerns of the subsequent historical chapters: socio-historical context, educational opportunity and limitations, established rhetorical tradition, the accepted view of women evident in literature and in historical accounts, established rhetorical tradition, and women who use language to trespass their accorded boundaries.

In Chapter II, I situate women in ancient Greece and Rome, where they were systematically excluded from education and public life. Then, I compare the representation of powerful women in classical literature with the lives of actual women, who were, by law, subjects to their men and forbidden preparation for or participation in public affairs—the world of rhetoric. During this time, men and society were laying the foundation of our Western rhetorical tradition, and nearly every woman was kept at home. I end the chapter by examining the lives and works of several women who nevertheless entered the public sphere of rhetoric, and left their mark.

In Chapter III, I elucidate the force of the Christian Church on women's continued subjection and subservience and on their
almost-total exclusion from rhetorical activity. Although men characterized female literary characters in the extreme forms (temptress v. saint), such representation seems to have rendered no direct effect on the lives of actual women. After examining Christian-informed medieval rhetorical theory, I end this chapter with an account of selected women's participation in the ever-expanding rhetorical tradition.

In Chapter IV, I briefly survey that construct we refer to as the Renaissance and woman's place and education in that society, and I give special interest to the dual influences of Christian Humanism and the Protestant Reformation. Then, I elucidate woman's vivid, but perhaps inaccurate, depiction in male-composed contemporary literature, a depiction that has colored our perception of the Renaissance yet had little influence on Renaissance women. After describing male-dominated, contemporary rhetorical theory, I end the chapter with an examination of women's specific contributions to rhetorical practice.

In the Conclusion, I review the findings of this study: the reasons for woman's modest role in the rhetorical tradition from antiquity through the Renaissance. With the women's movement, which began in the eighteenth century, came an easing of societal constraints that permitted more women to enter the public domain and the rhetorical tradition. I also discuss future scholarship on women in rhetoric that can grow from my study into a survey of those succeeding centuries of broadening literary and rhetorical opportunities for women.
Conclusion

Perhaps the most difficult part of my study is assessing the influence of these individual women or of their rhetorical discourses and treatises on rhetoric. With our twenty-twenty hindsight, we can easily measure the influence of Augustine of Hippo or Peter Ramus, for example, on rhetorical theory and practice. But what about these women, whose works have never been foregrounded? Not only must I contextualize their work in terms of current rhetorical theory and praxis, but I place their work in relation to the work by women that went before and came afterwards. In On lies, Secrets, and Silence, Adrienne Rich forewarns those of us who set for ourselves a revisionist and retrospective task:

The entire history of women's struggle for self-determination has been muffled in silence over and over. One serious cultural obstacle . . . is that each feminist work has tended to be received as if it emerged from nowhere; as if each of us had lived, thought, and worked without any historical past or contextual present. This is one of the ways in which women's work and thinking has been made to seem sporadic, errant, orphaned of any tradition of its own (11).

And in Reinventing Womanhood, Carolyn Heilbrun writes that

[w]omen's work . . . has been without beginnings or endings, and women have been notably lacking in disciples. There can be no question that women's almost total lack of followers . . . of those who carry on, in an unbroken line, the work of achievement . . . has been the greatest deprivation in women's history (137).

The time is propitious for a study of women's place in the rhetorical tradition, for only a careful and intensive examination of the issues delineated in this introduction will answer those
who define "female rhetorician" as an oxymoron and those who
define rhetoric as an agonistic and exclusively male-dominated
discipline. The women featured in this study build the platform
on which stand the female orators, rhetors, and rhetoricians who
have spoken to us since the Renaissance.
CHAPTER I
EXPLAINING THE SILENCE

The entire history of women's struggle for self-determination has been muffled in silence over and over.

Adrienne Rich

Introduction

The question of woman's voice within the rhetorical tradition presages the inevitable re-interpretation of rhetorical history, a task that Elaine Showalter reminds us cannot be carried out "over night," for women . . . have a special literary history, susceptible to analysis, which includes such complex considerations as the effects of social and political changes in women's status upon individuals, and the implications of stereotypes on the woman writer and restrictions on her artistic autonomy (Silences 204).

Men have never felt those same restrictions on their artistic autonomy; they have always had authority in the world of thought, the distinctive capacity to get things done in words. On the other hand, few women have had the chance to act as equals in the ongoing discourse of intellectuals, except by "special license granted to a woman as an individual and never as a representative of her sex" (Smith 281).
In this chapter, I will situate woman within her culture and examine the ways her status and role have been qualified. After reviewing the literature concerning the evolution of woman's place and role in society and the literature concerning women writers, I will introduce the connections of the subsequent historical chapters: socio-historical context (including the role of women); education opportunities and limitations; view of women evidenced in literature; established rhetorical tradition; and specific women who used language to trespass their accorded boundaries.

Locating Woman in His-story

The specific question of how we integrate woman's contributions to Western rhetoric with those of men cannot be answered until the broader issue of woman's traditional place in the Western culture is explored, for her status and role have circumscribed her social and educational opportunities. And until recently, few women have had access to those opportunities. In the educational and social processes, power and authority have always been the prerogatives of men.

These prerogatives were recorded in the standard descriptive interpretation of early Western culture: H. D. F. Kitto's The Greeks. Provincial and paternalistic, Kitto writes, "Most men are interested in women, and most women in themselves" (219). Kitto places Athenian women in Oriental seclusion, in part, because of their inferior legal status but also because they were, as he feels they should be, under the protection of their men. To
support his argument, Kitto turns to literature to find a wholly masculine society:

[Domestic life plays no part. Old comedy deals almost entirely with men (but for the extravaganzas of the Lysistrata and Women in Parliament); in Plato's dialogues the disputants are always men; the Symposium of both Plato and Xenophon make it quite plain that when a gentleman entertained guests the only women present were those who had no reputation to lose, except a professional one . . . . The Athenian house was divided into the "men's rooms" and the "women's rooms," and the women's part was provided with bolts and bars (Xen., Oeconom.). Women did not go out except under surveillance, unless they were attending one of the women's festivals (219-20).

Kitto goes on to write that "in this pre-eminently masculine society women moved in so restricted a sphere that we may reasonably regard them as a 'depressed area'" (222), yet he accepts such restrictions as sensible because they do not strain the limits of (his own) gentility. Throughout Western history, it seems, women have always been viewed through a necessarily distorted male lens. And Kitto's lens is no exception. However, common sense tells us that women played a more important part in the creation of Greek history than men acknowledged either in records or in literature, a point Kitto concedes. But his argument for women rests on his belief in the natural superiority of men. Such superiority manifested itself in the Greeks, whose "qualities were lively intelligence, sociability, humanity, and curiosity. To say that [they] habitually treated one-half of [their] own race with indifference, even contempt, does not . . . make sense" (222). Superior beings would not mistreat "their" women.
Despite his concession that Greek women did perhaps participate in public society, Kitto takes little time to incorporate women into Greek history, except to acknowledge their attendance at plays, their participation in women's festivals, their necessary protection in public, and their position of great responsibility in the ongoing financial success of the family unit. Thus, even the best of traditional scholarship, scholarship such as Kitto's, has systematically excluded women. Until women are situated within the narrative we call "Greek history," a story from which women are absent, that history is nothing more than an incomplete history, a "prehistory," perhaps.

Women in the Ancient World (1984), the Arethusa papers edited by John Peradotto and J. P. Sullivan, uses "prehistory" as the basis for revisionist scholarship. The selection of papers indicates the authors' willingness to challenge the accepted view of women in antiquity as a muted group and their intention of uncovering the origins of the Western attitude toward women. Many of the papers consider literary texts—Homer's, Sappho's, Euripides's, and Ovid's—comparing attitudes toward women across time. Various contributors note, for example, that the position of women in Homeric times may have been little different from that of later times in Greece; however attitudes toward women did differ. In the opening essay, "Early Greece: The Origins of the Western Attitude Toward Women," Marylin B. Arthur tells us that

... nowhere in the Iliad or Odyssey do we find any disparaging remarks about women's role, nowhere do we encounter the expressions of misogyny which appear so
frequently in later Greek literature. Although it may be true that the position of women in Homeric times was little different from that of later times in Greece, there is a difference in the Homeric attitude toward this social role. The Homeric poet focusses almost exclusively on the positive side of the position of women; it emphasizes women's inclusion in society as a whole, rather than her exclusion from certain roles; it celebrates the importance of the functions that women do perform, instead of drawing attention to their handicaps or inabilitys (13-14).

By the sixth century, however, misogyny not only was established as a topos of Greek poetry but had already become associated with a particular set of male-centered conventions: women's domestic functions were celebrated as an integral and valuable part of society, but "as part of a society increasingly inclined to incorporate the private side of man's existence into its cultural ideals" (23). In the Greek city-state, women were incorporated into a semi-idealized social "type," and their status and actions were considered only in relation to men, among whose families women were regularly exchanged. Outside of her private, albeit financially important, domestic role, the beautiful and sexually appealing woman represented the potentially destructive and violent power of eros that had to be "subordinated to the regulatory agency of the family structure" (50), which kept women dominated and secluded.

Other contributors to Women in the Ancient World contextualize women by using extant visual and domestic art, the archeological evidence of artwork, pottery, and houses. The inferences they draw from art about women's lives are tentative, ranging from women as sexually free to women as prudent
housewives. First of all, scholars are hard pressed to know if the figures on art objects represent history or reflect legend, because many womanly figures are, on closer examination, young men—in a society that seemed to promote the strong dichotomy between male and female behavior. And since upper-class life and its attendant luxuries were often imitated by the lower classes, researchers cannot be sure if physical evidence reflects homogeneity or imitation among the classes in terms of social conventions, sexual practices in particular. And finally, there is a tendency for scholars to draw reluctantly on the literary arts for confirmation, for post-Homeric Greek literature is fraught with the misogynistic tradition that related the mastery of the female to higher social goals.

Throughout, Peradotto and Sullivan argue for the study of the classics on the basis of their perpetual relevance, especially in the investigation of the feminine condition in Greece and Rome, where basic derogatory attitudes about the sex were molded by legal and social systems, by philosophers and poets, and kept in place by the thinking of other men ever since. Respect for woman's domain permeates this volume. All of these essays trace the political, socioeconomic, and cultural strands that supported the position of women and of the oikos, the family unit, and they work toward reconciling the ideal with the factual. These essays also bring to light the importance of the mother to the family unit, the social and cultural freedom available to foreign women,
and, of course, feminist readings of Plato, Ovid, Homer, and classical drama.

An impressive rereading of Plato's work is Natalie Harris Bluestone's *Women in the Ideal Society*, an overview of feminist scholarship on Plato from 1870 to the present. In Book V of *The Republic*, Plato proposes identical education for the most capable members of both sexes in preparation for identical leadership roles and for inclusion among the true philosophers (449c-473e). Bluestone argues that Plato was conscious of the disparity between the ideal of human freedom and the reality of women's inferior status in the city-state. Even so, he seemed unaware of the profound inequality between the sexes in the upper class and of the unfairness of women's position: he writes of communal living, state-regulated sexual activity and childbearing, abolition of private property, and female contributions to philosophy and politics at a time when all women were considered property, when an upper-class woman lived in absolute purdah (moving outdoors only to pass from her father's to her husband's household), and when men had full and complete power legally, politically, and financially. Plato's then-startling proposition, equality of the best and brightest, has been mostly ignored since, no doubt a reflection of age-old male domination in Western society.

Bluestone's careful readings of Plato as well as of the scholarship on Plato allows her to gain keen insights. For instance, she argues for a Plato of double mind: the society of his *Laws* was designed to be an actual realizable state, requiring
monogamy, private households, and private wives, while in the Republic's ideal city of speech, he eliminates the family and abolishes women's traditional sphere. She also calls attention to the sharp discrepancy between the misogyny scattered throughout the dialogues and Plato's claim that both sexes have the same nature.

What Bluestone does best, however, is encourage scholars to look repeatedly at the questions posed, but not answered, by Plato, especially the question that continues to plague us: is a society ruled by reason and committed to gender equality genuinely possible? In addition, Bluestone encourages us to re-evaluate the significance of women's contributions to Plato's thinking. Plato respectfully reports that Aspasia was the teacher of the historical Socrates and a powerful speech writer (Menexenus 236c) and that Socrates thoughtfully considered Diotima's views of love, beauty, and immortality (Symposium 201d-12a). These two women, whose ideas were explicitly discussed in Platonic dialogues, had the significance of their work undercut, however, both by their contemporaries and by later historians who cast aspersions on their personal lives. Bluestone would have us re-read and re-evaluate Plato, measuring for ourselves the contributions to his thought of these particular women as well as the potential significance of their work.

The History of Women Philosophers, Volume I (1987), edited and written almost entirely by Mary Ellen Waithe, opens with a photograph of a Greek fresco, featuring Socrates, Pericles, Plato,
Sophocles—and Aspasia. In an attempt to restore women's contributions to the history of philosophy and to throw into relief the question of women's contributions to our intellectual heritage, Waithe has collected both established and revisionist work, cataloguing chronologically (600 BC–500 AD) women who were engaged in precisely the same kind of philosophical enterprises that have historically characterized male philosophers. Implicit in this collection of essays is the assumption that we must recognize the existence of the intellectual work of these women before its significance can be fairly assessed. When Waithe discusses the Pythagoreans, for example, and their concept of harmonia, she makes clear that women philosophers taught other women how best to use harmonia, creating justice and harmony in their souls and in their homes. In the Pythagorean view, social justice depends on the rearing of just, harmonious individuals; therefore, women are not peripheral to social justice—they make it possible.

Waithe's volume features the only two women mentioned as philosophers in the Socratic dialogues of Plato: Aspasia and Diotima. Until this publication, the influence of Aspasia of Miletus had been nearly forgotten. A leading member of the Periclean circle and co-architect of the Sophistic movement, Aspasia contributed significantly to the development of oratory, the "handmaid of the New Thought," which Plato deemed to have negative consequences for Athens. Diotima is portrayed by philosophic tradition as Plato's only fictitious character.
According to Waite, however, such an argument rests on unsubstantiated assumptions and inconclusive interpretations of Plato's text; furthermore, it ignores her powerful presence in the Symposium. Waite includes Diotima partly, she says, to spur further investigation by scholars. The same could be said about all the women in this slim volume. Each essay raises research questions and offers a complete bibliography. Although only Aspasia is mentioned as a rhetorician, other intellectual contributions of classical women (from the Pythagorean women and Plato's mother to Julia Donna and Hypatia) are vital to contextualizing my own "gynocritical" study of women rhetoricians.

In 1979, American feminist critic Elaine Showalter coined the term gynocritics to describe the feminist research in history, anthropology, psychology, and sociology that has developed hypotheses of a female subculture. Employing the concept but not the term, Sarah B. Pomeroy wrote the first "social history of women" (x), Goddesses, Whores, Wives, and Slaves: Women in Classical Antiquity (1975). By presenting such an inclusive panorama of lifestyles, Pomeroy laid the groundwork for the feminist studies that would follow. Until she began what would be her life's work, the only Greek and Roman women who were known to us were the characters in men's writings or those in men's imaginations or those

who influenced matters of interest to men. Most is known—on the lowest level of society—about prostitutes, and—on the highest level—about women who played a role in politics: Hellenistic queens and those
Roman women who asserted themselves in traditionally masculine spheres of activity (228).

Not content with documenting from art and literature men's versions of women's existence, Pomeroy expands traditional commentary by using Greek and Roman law to ground her own interpretation. She strives to re-create the everyday lives of Athenian, Hellenistic, and Roman women, the realities of their existence, and thereby purvey an anthro-historical perspective (which she feels is more stable than the purely literary perspective) from which we ought to view our own work.

Judith P. Hallett's *Fathers and Daughters in Roman Society* (1984) advances the argument that, like only a few Greek women, some Roman women were forceful and effective politically as well as domestically, "despite their society's extolling of domesticity as women's only proper concern, and despite their own legal disabilities and formal exclusion from political participation" (6). Her father, brothers, husband(s), and sons--her family--played a central role in political life; thus, the elite Roman woman found ample opportunity to exercise more political influence than merely her "mother right."

In explaining the domestic power granted by men, Hallett tells us that

women were not only valued, and hence likely to become formidable and respected figures, in their families of birth (and for that reason those in which they gave birth) but also valued initially and primarily in Roman society as their fathers' daughters. The term "filiafocal" has been coined to describe the manifestations of this Roman phenomenon: affection and
other indications of value accorded by Roman fathers to individual female children; cultural importance assigned the role of daughter itself; emphasis on ties of blood and marriage through daughters and fathers' daughters—chiefly ties of and through such males as daughters' and sisters' sons, maternal grandfathers and maternal uncles, and fathers-in-law, sons-in-law, and brothers-in-law (263).

Although formally excluded from overt participation in civil life, women became involved, vocal, and influential in politics, active and valuable contributors in the public realm, exercising leadership during the long absences of men on military and governmental missions. These women created their own (minimal) political power base by deliberately blurring the differentiation between the domestic and public spheres: her strong influence over her male relatives, especially her sons, and over the members of her literary salon resonated in the public domain. And a few Roman women—Gaia Afrania, Hortensia, and Fulvia, for instance—found themselves pleading cases before the triumvirs, rhetorical endeavors and surviving texts that Hallett's research contextualizes.

As far back as 1940, scholars of standard sourcebooks were limning the feminism of imperial Rome in terms of their own early twentieth-century politics. In Daily Life in Ancient Rome, Jerome Carcopino writes that the many elite women had devoted themselves to intellectual pursuits, which until then men had jealously reserved for themselves:

In his sixth satire Juvenal [fl. AD 100] sketches . . . a series of portraits, . . . , which show women quitting their embroidery, their reading, their song, and their lyre, to put their enthusiasm into an attempt to rival
men, if not to outclass them in every sphere. There are some who plunge passionately into the study of legal suits or current politics ... while their husbands silently look on. There are others who seek literary fame ... ; inexhaustibly voluble, they affect a ridiculous pedantry in Greek and Latin, and even at table confound their interlocutors by the accuracy of their memory and the dogmatism of their opinions (91).

Carcopino's traditional attitude toward women's equality in Rome casts a dark shadow upon Roman feminism: in his telling, woman moved from being subjected to the authority of her "lord and master" to being his "equal, his rival, if not his imperatrix."
He goes on to say that the republican woman had shared her property with her husband, rejoiced in her fertility and faithfulness, but that the imperial woman kept her property separate, feared her fertility, used marriage for legalized adultery" (100).

Following in the classical tradition, the Middle Ages prolonged the unyielding oppression of women. Indeed, the Middle Ages fostered a masculine society governed by masculine theology and masculine morality, despite the rise and influence of Christianity. With the establishment of Christianity, private, spiritual life was to be the ultimate point of reference—not public politics as in Athens and Rome. Women were fully enfranchised in the early Christian community and worked to preserve and spread the Word. A dominant force in the church, Augustine of Hippo supported the spiritual equality of the sexes:

For you created man male and female, but in your spiritual grace they are as one. Your grace no more discriminates between them according to their sex then
it draws distinction between Jew and Greek or slave and freeman (Confessions XIII.23).

Such spiritual equality worked until the church-as-institution became the public domain, a "male only" public domain. Under the strictures of Pauline misogyny and Mariolatry, women once again resumed their "muted group" status within society: "Let the women learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence" (I Timothy 2: 11-12). By AD 200, the anti-female view derived from ancient Greece had superceded, or driven out, Saint Augustine's broader vision.

Recent scholarship, however, advances the argument that despite their subordination, women continued to make generous contributions to medieval culture. Like Hallett, Margaret Wade LaBarge posits social rank as the ultimate point of reference for women's participation in public affairs. In LaBarge's Women in Medieval Life (1986), social rank alone determines women's wide range of freedom, education, occupations, hardship, and contributions—artistic, cultural, social, and political. High-ranking women who were educated to an advanced degree often participated in intellectual life. Besides discussing Hrotsvitha of Gandersheim and Christine de Pisan, LaBarge goes on to describe the cultural contributions, especially those literary, of such forceful religious figures as Hildegard of Bingen, who advanced the theory of argumentation and Heloise, who contributed to ars dictaminis, the art of letter-writing.
More narrow in focus than Labarge's book is Katharina M. Wilson's *Medieval Women Writers* (1984). The backdrop for Wilson's careful account of medieval women writers is the following triangulation of (1) an opportunity for education; (2) freedom from repeated childbearing; and (3) literary productivity. Women writers of the period were rare: although some women could read, many had never mastered the second and separate skill of writing; nor could all women who copied manuscripts read. The women who could do both, the writers, wrote in response to the traditional canon of medieval literature--accommodating, opposing, and resisting it. Wilson includes essays by European women writing in different genres, different centuries, different milieus. Yet their writing shares a common feature: they wrote in response to the religious or societal constraints imposed on them.

To say that culture and religion overlapped would be pleonastic; the two could not be separated. Religious fervor, be it orthodox or heterodox, was enthusiastically espoused by women. Representatives of the whole range of religious ideas can be found among Wilson's choice of medieval women. She succeeds not only in painting a believably reasonable picture of female creativity and concomitant cultural contributions in general but also in accurately accounting for specific female literary artists, including Saxon canonness and playwright, Hrotsvitha of Gandersheim; French scholar-abbess, Heloise; German modern-age prophet, Hildegard of Bingen; English anchoress-mystic, Julian of Norwich; English religious enthusiast, Margery Kempe; and Franco-
Italian feminist Christine de Pisan. To further support her case, Wilson provides an account of each woman's contemporary patronage and popularity—and her subsequent cultural influence. For Wilson, these figures were not exceptions to cultural life but currents in the mainstream of Western literary traditions.

In his Women Writers of the Middle Ages, Peter Dronke presents and interprets a wide range of texts composed by women from the third to the thirteenth century, his purpose being to explore the ways "women helped to shape the earliest Christian writing in a western language, and observe their particular contributions to western literature over a millennium" (vii). The early writings of Perpetua (c. AD 200), for example, seem to prefigure the visionary writings of Julian of Norwich, Margery of Kempe, and Hildegard of Bingen. Another third-century writer was Hrotswitha, whose plays were much more than the stylistic imitations of Terence they were alleged to be.

Known more for her relationship—academic and romantic—with Abelard than for her own intellectual capabilities, Heloise was one of the most brilliant women in the Middle Ages. Her letters to Abelard represent the highest accomplishment in ars dictaminis, and Abelard's letters show the influence of Heloise, not vice versa. Hildegard of Bingen (AD 1100) saw herself as a visionary prophet; as such, she felt empowered to resist and challenge the politics of the Catholic Church. Her sophisticated, forceful writings (letters, autobiographical notes, books, liturgical poetry and music) are replete with stylized high-mindedness and
confidence. One reason these women's writings have not, heretofore, been valued or analyzed, Dronke implies, is that the outstanding ones have been traditionally (and wrongly) thought to be the work of accomplished men: Hildegard's writings were begotten by her male secretaries; Hrotswitha's plays, a male-perpetuated hoax; Heloise's letters, penned by spiteful churchmen.

Dronke suggests that medieval women tended to write in response to the exigency of a rhetorical situation: their motivation for writing rarely seemed to be predominantly literary. More often, their motivation seemed to be attempts to cope with human problems in their singularity—not imposing rules or categories from without, but seeking solutions that are apt and truthful existentially. Hence . . . [these texts] show a quality (literary, but also "metalliterary") of immediacy: they look at themselves more concretely and more searchingly than many of the highly accomplished men writers who were their contemporaries. This immediacy can lend women's writing qualities beside which all technical flawlessness is pallid (x).

For Dronke, there is no doubt that woman contributed to literary culture—and to rhetorical practice. His work helps to secure a place for women within the already-existing literary and rhetorical canons.

Women in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance: Literary and Historical Perspectives (1986), edited by Mary Beth Rose, is a rich and emblematic collection of essays concerned with the representations of women in the imaginative and prescriptive (proper-conduct) literature of both men and women. Rose's
rehabilitative work explains why the lives and works of so few medieval and Renaissance women are known to us: few women, only educated and upper-class women, had access to the kind of public life that enabled them to write, to record their lives in any way. Most other women internalized the sexual ideology implicit in patristic writings that idealized subdued, modest, and silent female behavior.

Like all effective retrospectives of women, Rose's considers the position of women in relation to the particular historical moment—the Middle Ages and the Renaissance—in which they found themselves. The analysis of Shakespeare's heroines, of Elizabeth I's use of rhetoric, and of the extant writings of medieval and Renaissance women (Margery Kempe, Mary Sydney, Margaret Cavendish) supports a contemporary reconstruction of their creative lives and their experience as women. The legacy of inequality and exclusion is treated as one among a host of interlacing considerations crucial to an informed reconstruction, including laws regulating women's financial and property arrangements, restrictions on their working outside the domestic sphere, and the obstacles to their participating in intellectual and literary life. In one essay from the collection, "Women's Defense of Their Public Role," Merry E. Wiesner demonstrates that some women were aware of and argued against their constricted lives:

Women's arguments often involved setting themselves apart from other women because of their particular economic situation, strength of intellect, or contact with God, and thus they sound antifeminist. As restrictions increased, however, these women also showed
the beginnings of a recognition that their situation and circumstances resulted more from their sex than from their social status, economic class, or innate abilities; they showed, in other words, the beginnings of what we might call a feminist analysis of their situation. . . . Thus one of the unforeseen results . . . was individual women's own realization that society viewed them, first of all, as women; and that any claim to a public role would have to be based on either a rejection of their female nature or on support for all women. Women since the Renaissance have faced the same choice (22).

Wiesner's essay embodies the awareness that any change in the status of women is always a feature of an entire social movement, while incorporating the recognition that woman's place transcends the historical moment. An awareness of the social, economic, and political milieu has come to represent one of the most important touchstones for literary interpretation and the power of the New Historicism.

One of the most influential works of New Historicism is Stephen Greenblatt's Renaissance Self-Fashioning (1980). Greenblatt argues for reading literature as a way to interpret culture; to view the literary arena of political, social, religious and economic conflict; and to see the author's attempt at self-fashioning and identity control. He writes that authors "self-consciously embed themselves in specific communities, life situations, and structures of power" (7) when they tell their stories. And other people can do so as well—while they live their life stories. Queen Elizabeth I, for instance, lived her life as a trope, presiding over the purposefully romantic atmosphere of her court as a marriageable virgin, presenting
herself to her people as their virgin mother, a paradox hitherto embodied only in one female: "In the official spectacles and pageants, everything was calculated to enhance her transformation into an almost magical being, a creature of infinite beauty, wisdom, and power" (167). Major English figures of the sixteenth century created their own performances, making choices in representing themselves and in fashioning their own characters; much as we do today, they understood the role of human autonomy in the construction of identity. And they used language to assert that autonomy. Because Greenblatt's methodology works well for tracing historical patterns, it is useful to a study like mine.

Greenblatt's secondary argument has to do with historical research itself: researchers must accept the multiple interpretations that inevitably color all their work, a position taken by Hayden White in *Tropics of Discourse*:

. . . [A]ll historical narratives contain an irreducible and inexpungable element of interpretation. The historian has to interpret his materials in order to construct the moving pattern of images in which the form of the historical process is to be mirrored. . . . [T]here are always more facts in the record than the historian can possibly include in his [sic] narrative representation of a given segment of the historical process. And so the historian must "interpret" his data by excluding certain facts from his account as irrelevant to his narrative purpose. . . . [I]n his efforts to reconstruct "what happened" in any given period of history, the historian inevitably must include in his narrative an account of some event or complex of events for which the facts that would permit a plausible explanation of its occurrence are lacking. And this means that the historian must "interpret" his materials by filling in the gaps in his information on inferential or speculative grounds. A historical narrative is thus necessarily a mixture of adequately and inadequately explained events, a congeries of established and
inferred facts, at once a representation that is an interpretation and an interpretation that passes for an explanation of the whole process mirrored in the narrative (51).

White tells us that the burden of history has been its claim of occupying "an epistemologically neutral middle ground that supposedly exists between art and science" (27). And history's claim to neutrality has recently been challenged: "there is resentment over what appears to be the historian's bad faith in claiming the privileges of both the artist and the scientist while refusing to submit to critical standards currently obtained in either art or science" (28). Instead of trying to reconstruct that seemingly objective, truth-capturing narrative that has traditionally been thought of as history, White encourages us to use the more conscious and realistic philosophy of constructing history, commonly called "historiography," used by Greenblatt as well as most of the other aforementioned scholars. White says, however, all historians, those who practice traditional or historicist methodology, shape their materials, if not in accordance with a framework of preconceived ideas, then in response to the imperatives of narrative discourse in general (102). White, then, would have us follow the example of contemporary historians such as Greenblatt and try to mark out what appears to be a new area of human experience for preliminary analysis, define its contours, identify the elements in its field, and discern the kinds of relationships that obtain among them (7).
Such a methodology is very Burkean, akin to his "selection, reflection, deflection" schema explained in my Introduction. The attitudes of both Greenblatt and White support the re-envisioning, re-interpretation, and re-writing of history. Both men recognize that multiple versions of history can provide an integrated, thus more accurate, version of history. The recently recovered writings of women provide the base for another version of literary and rhetorical history. And by locating women in the rhetorical tradition, we will have a more fully developed, more accurate history of rhetoric.

Systematic Silencing

That women have been systematically and consciously excluded from the study and practice of rhetoric should come as no surprise: they have been excluded from a full share in the making of all Western cultural forms, including the production of language. Power and authority in cultural production are the prerogatives of men. The universe of ideas, images, and themes—the symbolic modes that are the general currency of thought—have been either produced by men or controlled by them. Women's work and experience have been entered into the general currency of thought on terms decided by men and approved by men. In "A Peculiar Eclipseing," Dorothy Smith writes that

[m]en have had authority in the world of thought as members of a social category and not as individuals. Authority is a form of power which is a distinctive capacity to get things done in words. . . . Men are invested with authority as individuals, not because they
have as individuals special competencies or expertise, but because as men they appear as representative of the power and authority of the institutionalized structures which govern the society (289).

As the dominant group, then, males have produced language, thought, and reality. Historically, their structures, their categories, and their meanings have been recognized and then validated by reference to other males; women have played little or no part. And male subjectivity has been the source of all those cultural inventions, even to the extent that their subjectivity has been received and believed as objectivity. In the meantime, women's tongues have been silent on public issues of the day, their speech severed from the name of action. Often, they have expected their thinking to be sanctioned by an external source of authority—men. And their opinions have tended to conform to approved standards—men's standards. The world has been intellectually dominated by men.

In *Public Man, Private Woman*, Jean Bethke Elshtain addresses the issue of women as dominated and silenced in the process of humanization and answers her own question of whether those denied a public role and voice can be considered human subjects at all. She challenges us to consider that

[t]hose silenced by power—whether overt or covert—are not people with nothing to say but are people without a public voice and space in which to say it.

Of course, years and years of imposed inaction and public silence strangle nascent thoughts and choke yet-to-be spoken words, turning the individuals thus constrained into reflections of the sorts of beings they were declared to be in the first place (15).
Women's estrangement from the production of cultural forms is probably best explained by anthropologist Edwin Ardener, who asked why women, who comprise one half the population, do not receive one half the attention. He argues that his framework can be applied to research about any groups in society in which members of one group are in an asymmetrical power relationship with members of another contrasting group. But because the gender division is so basic to the organization of society, and because men are dominant in public life, the mutedness of women is his particular concern:

If we look at those classes which are usually considered to be the exploiting or dominant classes, and then we consider those others which are supposedly the exploited or suppressed classes, there is this dimension that hasn't been mentioned yet: which is [that] of relative articulateness. One of the problems that women presented was that they were rendered "inarticulate" by the male structure; that the dominant structure was articulated in terms of a male world-position. Those who were not in the male world-position, were, as it were, "muted."

We may speak of "muted groups" and "articulate groups" along this dimension. There are many kinds of muted groups. We would then go on to ask: "What is it that makes a group muted?" We then become aware that it is muted simply because it does not form part of the dominant communicative system of the society—expressed as it must be through the dominant ideology, and that "mode of production" . . . which is articulated with it (Oral contribution to Session on Marxism, ASA Decennial Conference, July 1973, qtd. in "The Problem Revisited" 21).

A triangulation of perception, domination, and silence, Ardener's "muted group" theory is one explanation of women's eclipsing by man's culture. His model provides a way to conceptualize and visualize two types of structures: dominant and
muted. The top group in a social hierarchy determines to a great extent the dominant communication system of a society; thus, this dominant group renders "inarticulate" subordinate or muted groups such as children and women. Excluded from the formulation and validation of meaning—the prerogatives of men—women are the muted group. Their language, derived largely from the males' perception of reality, denies them the means to express themselves, and they find that they must adapt and mediate their own ideas and expression to the allowable, communicative modes of men. Women are, therefore, disadvantaged when articulating their experience.

Ardener's muted-group theory proposes that language and norms for its articulation are controlled by the dominant group even though both the muted and dominant groups generate beliefs (or ordering ideas) of social reality at the unconscious level. All language, then, is the language of the dominant order, and women, if they speak at all, must speak through it. To some extent, then, the perceptions of the muted group (women) are unstatable in the idiom of the dominant group (men), for there can be no writing or criticism totally outside of the dominant structure. In order to be heard, muted-group members must learn the dominant idiom and attempt to articulate within it, even though this attempt will inevitably lead to some loss of meaning. The experiences "lost in translation" to the dominant idiom remain unvoiced, and perhaps unthought, even within the muted group. Elaine Showalter calls this phenomenon "double-voiced discourse," for it always embodies
the social, literary, and cultural heritages of both the muted and the dominated ("Feminist Criticism in the Wilderness" 31).

In Man Made Language, Dale Spender writes that women's silence has been man-made. Although some women have written, broken the restrictions and been heard, their contributions have been suppressed through a variety of social and political institutions that men have created and controlled (25). Spender builds on Ardener's theory to argue that

[f]raming questions in terms of the silence of women leads to an examination of the language which excludes and denigrates them, and it also leads to an examination of their access to discourse. When the only language women have debases us and when we are also required to support male talk, it is not unlikely that we shall be relatively silent. When the only language men have affords them the opportunity to encode meanings and to control discourse, when they have made the language and decreed many of the conditions for its use, it is not unlikely that they will use it more and that they will use it more in their own interest; thus they assist in the maintenance of women's silence (51).

Thus, women are doubly dependent on men: first of all, they depend on the dominant group's definition of them as women and its definition of women's work; they further depend on the dominant group's evaluation of their language-use, their expertise in the received male system of expression. Therefore, in the patriarchal order, both their womanliness and their language-use require confirmation from men. As a "muted group" wanting to be heard, then, women must learn the dominant idiom and express themselves within its parameters--especially with regard to formal, public discourse. It follows that any women breaking through the hegemony of male voices will sound a bit marginal, but if they
speak and write as men do, they will enter the discourse subdued and alienated, revealing how that kind of marginality feels.

Women's Education

Consideration of the history of women's education is vital to any retrospective study of women, for women have been educated to take secondary roles in school, excluded as they have been from participating in the power structure we have blithely referred to as "education." Yet education has traditionally been accepted as benign and neutral, as a "good thing"—the more one gets, the better off one will be. Not until recently, have scholars come to see that all educational institutions embody a particular way of viewing the world, that all educational institutions implicitly urge their students to adopt this world view, and that the view is, not surprisingly, male. Because most of the institutions of higher education were designed by men, the history of education is the history of the education of males. And because most continue to be run by men, power and authority in the educational process have continued to be the prerogatives of men.

The percentage of educated women throughout history has always been low, for they have always been expected to take their "natural" place in the private, domestic sphere of the home. Men needed an academic education in order to participate in the public sphere, but women did not. With this understanding, many women have willingly allowed themselves to be cut off and alienated from
the dominant intellectual tradition—perhaps not an entirely detrimental phenomenon.

After analyzing the English educational system, in *Three Guineas* and *A Room of One's Own*, Virginia Woolf concludes that for women the best place in the educational structure was no place. The benefits of remaining outside such a nefarious arrangement outweighed the advantages of being enclosed in it. In *Three Guineas*, Woolf writes that she cannot support the existing education system because it does not develop an abhorrence of war, nor does it try to educate the young (men) towards understandings of cooperation. Rather, it interprets difference as a threat, and conquest as a solution—for through conquest difference can be suppressed. As outsiders, then, women remained to some extent free of the patriarchal value system, transmitted without question—or intermission—which proved to be so destructive to insiders, to competitive and war-mongering men. In *Room*, Woolf tells about walking in the Fellows' Garden and being asked to stay off their turf; she makes explicit the Fellows' hostility toward a female interloper: it is men's education, and Woolf counsels women simply to stay outside it:

> I thought of the . . . shut [to women] doors of the library; and I thought how unpleasant it is to be locked out; and I thought how it is worse perhaps to be locked in; and, thinking of the safety and prosperity of the one sex and the poverty and insecurity of the other and of the effect of tradition and of lack of tradition upon the mind of a writer (*Room* 24).

Today, researchers such as Carol Gilligan find that women continue to speak in *A Different Voice*, that the competition/
cooperation dichotomy can be broken down according to sex, that men do, indeed, react in more competitive ways, women with more cooperation. Gilligan links such reactions to our gender-specific socialization, manifesting itself foremost in our educations. And like Woolf, Gilligan believes that the outcome of women's moral education, though different from men's, is not deficient. Education, then, is merely one constellation in the galaxy of societal power structures—class, race, and sex—that present women with social and financial differences and disadvantages, prejudices against which women have struggled throughout history.

As a rule, educated women come from the dominant class; therefore, they have not been silenced in the way that slaves, blacks, or "untouchables" have been silenced. But they have been muted, despite playing an integral role in the dominant class. For most of these women, their education was a means of acculturation, the surest way for maintaining the hegemony of their class—of the men of their class. Women have been both institutionally and domestically educated to want to fill their expected social roles, to meet as individuals the expectations that have been held for women as a group. And women have been convinced, consciously or not, that demonstrating any unsettling individual thinking is somehow unfeminine. Whatever their education, be it domestic or schooled, women have, for the most part, accommodated the conventions of their education, not questioning how those conventions privilege some forms of knowledge at the expense of others. In fact, their course and
measure of institutional education were most often a derivative of the firmly entrenched male model, a model dispensed by their male teachers. And most women have received, not (to use Adrienne Rich's term) claimed an education, not opposing or resisting the dominant ideology propounded in their course of study.

The silence of women in their own education has been a cumulative process: conceptually and materially excluded from the production of cultural knowledge, their meanings and explanations have been systematically blocked, and their mutedness has been compounded. Only recently have scholars begun to unravel and remedy women's under-representation in language, knowledge, and culture. Only recently have they begun to look to the patterns of our past, the continued suppression of women's contributions, to learn how those patterns represent the climate of opinions influencing the present.

In the West, women's education has a fairly simple history: wealthy women have had the greatest opportunity for education, but their education was rarely so rich in return as that of their sexual opposite and social counterpart, wealthy men. In classical Greece (600 BC), for example, while all young free men spent their days in the lyceum, Athenian women were kept in rigid seclusion. Only those free women living in the transitional society of Asia Minor were freed from the rigidity of traditional marriage and from the identity that arose from that fixed role. The Greek women of Lesbos were exceptionally fortunate: they met in literary societies, writing and studying music, poetry, epics, and
drama—becoming well educated by the standards of their time and class.

Some two hundred years later (400 BC), a respectable Athenian woman could hardly show her face on the street. The only women afforded the opportunity for an education other than domestic were the hetairai, upper-class, foreign courtesans, immigrants neither entitled to the protection of nor subject to the restrictions of Athenian law. Free-born yet non-Athenian Greeks also could ignore Athenian strictures limiting women's participation in intellectual society. Free-born immigrants could attend school and participate in public life.

Like her Athenian forerunner, the Roman woman (42 BC) received only a limited intellectual education; legally and perpetually under male guardianship as she was, a domestic education was paramount. Besides, an assertively intelligent women was thought to be self-indulgent and licentious. Despite Quintillian's mention of educated mothers and of schoolgirls, Roman women who attained some measure of education go mostly unrecorded, mentioned only in passing as extraordinary household managers. The course of study and the scholastic achievements of their brothers, however, have served as models for Western education ever since.

The Christian Church solved the problems of educating and validating its many female followers by establishing convents, where young women could receive a far-from-impressive education—one that discouraged development of the intellect and, instead,
encouraged domesticity. Yet despite the plans of the early Church Fathers, the convent governed by a singular woman became a refuge for female intellectuals, offering teaching opportunities and a concomitant (though perhaps quasi-) classical education. The world of the university still beyond their reach, only the very rich, highly motivated, or exceptionally gifted women placed in convents had access to such a classical education. Only a few women, then, achieved a mastery of contemporary, male-conceived education, and fewer still opposed or resisted it.

During the Renaissance, women's primary routes to education were through tutoring at home, schooling in convents, and, occasionally, participating along with boys in a local petit school (the grammar school was boys-only). But since the Church frowned on such commingling, rudimentary education was always easier for girls to secure than higher education. When Humanism brought Latin literacy and classical learning to noble daughters as well as noble sons, however, a young woman found herself placed, along with her brothers, under male cultural authority. Not an opportunity for educational equality, such a program capitalized on her private virtue—to go public was deemed indecorous. The education of these women, then, directed them toward supporting roles: they were encouraged to become ornaments of the court and influential patrons of—not participants in—the arts. Even the most accomplished woman was expected to strive for no greater scholastic achievement than a sensitive translation of a man's work.
After doing her own historical overview of women, Carolyn Heilbrun writes that "women have behaved not as an oppressed class struggling to overcome their oppression, but as a caste, identifying with their oppressors, internalizing the oppressor's view of them" (Reinventing Womanhood 97). Education as an institution, then, is an embodiment of power. Only by charting women's education in terms of this power, in terms of educational opportunities, accomplishment, lack thereof—and difference—can we come to an understanding of our Western educational heritage. We need to know that past differently than we have ever known it—know it not to pass on a tradition but to break its hold over us.

ReClaiming Women's Voices

Lately, scholars in all disciplines, particularly history, have written that much of what passes as history is in fact evidence of the prevailing or established opinion of the age under consideration or of the age in which the author of the history lives. The same process and consequence are true for the canons of both poetics and rhetoric: there is no neutrality, only greater or less awareness of one's own bias when forming the canon, be it literary or historical (some would argue that they are the same). Literary history, too, is being reinterpreted as scholars self-consciously examine what they have omitted from the canon in order to understand fully what they have included. In Sensational Designs, literary theorist Jane Tompkins urges us to consider noncanonical texts by investigating the processes through
which canonical texts achieve their classic status. She explores the complex of circumstances that makes texts visible initially and then maintains them in their preeminent position. Any canon, she maintains, is the product of historical, cultural, and critical contingencies (xii).

Those doing new historical work have, perhaps, done the most to recover the omissions of the past, omitted writings that have only recently begun to receive the degree of critical attention they deserve. In Reinventing Womanhood, Carolyn Heilbrun writes:

In academic circles, nothing has so clearly marked the current women's movement as the search for female role models through the recovery of female history. Despite the dismissive snorts and defensive sneers of male scholars not eager to be told that their past labors had excluded consideration of half the human race, women historians—and some male scholars as well—began the enormous task of uncovering the hidden history of women (93).

As hundreds of lost women writers are rediscovered, as letters and journals are brought to light, as new literary biographies explore the relationship between the individual female talent and the literary tradition, the continuities in women's writing become clear for the first time. Perhaps it is time to believe Elaine Showalter, who writes, "We are both the daughters of a male tradition... and sisters in a new women's movement" ("Feminist Criticism in the Wilderness" 298).

The new feminist movement has precipitated a wave of new publications and new ideas that appear weekly: in-depth studies of individual women writers such as Barbara Newman's Sister of Wisdom: St. Hildegard's Theology of the Feminine and Enid
McLeod's *Heloise: A Biography*; specialized bibliographies such as Edith Yenal's *Christine de Pisan* and Shirley Nelson Kersey's *Classics in the Education of Girls and Women*; Carolyn Heilbrun's *Writing a Woman's Life*; gynocriticism in journals ranging from *Signs* and *Feminist Studies* to *Studies in Church History* and *Studies in Philology*. In addition to the kinds of works reviewed above, scholars are investigating notions of gender and its interplay with culture, education, reading, writing, thinking. The early psychoanalytic work of Helene Deutsch (*The Psychology of Women*) serves as a starting point for revisionist work: Nancy Chodorow's and Sara Ruddick's studies of gender formation and the psychology of motherhood; Juliet Mitchell's explanation of women's psychological oppression (*Psycho-analysis and Feminism*); Elizabeth Flynn and Patrocinio Schweikart's *Gender and Reading*; Elizabeth Abel's *Writing and Sexual Difference*, and Mary Field Belenky's *Women's Ways of Knowing*.

The historiography of Susan Jarrett, John Schilb, and James Berlin pushes to the breaking point that convenient fiction, that male-dominated canonical narrative we refer to as historical rhetoric. In journals such as *Pre/Text*, *Rhetorica*, and *Rhetoric Review*, scholars are urging us to investigate and interrogate the relationship of any author to the mechanism by which his or her work has been canonized. Jarrett argues that

[t]he point for a modern rhetorical historiography is the disruption of the conventional expectation that a history can be a complete, replete, full, and logically consistent narrative record. . . .
The point of . . . resisting the impulse to fit historical materials into a neat, continuous line from beginning to end especially for rhetorical historians is to achieve a kind of critical distance which allows for re-vision (16).

Such historical revision will comment on Aspasia and Diotima as well as Plato and Aristotle.

A serious failing of many post-1970 articles seems to be their discontinuity with the past: they do not encourage or foster the continuing dialogue established by previous commentators. Whether the authors purposely avoid or lack familiarity with the influence of the past, much of their work displays a basic a-historical approach. In addition, some authors fail to acknowledge the efforts of their contemporaries on the same topics, whether with admiration or respectful disagreement. Nonetheless, Berlin would have us continue in our attempt to strike a balance between the new ideas, new research, and traditional scholarship:

[N]o completely accurate and reliable historical account is attainable, yet this does not absolve us of the responsibility for attempting such accounts. . . . All accounts are partial, but all reveal something about history and about the movement of our thought in coming to terms with it. Just as we cannot know the future but must nonetheless make judgments about it and act on them, we cannot completely know the past, yet we must work to understand and judge it in order to understand and judge ourselves in our own moment. We are doomed to be partial, incomplete, mistaken, yet we cannot for all this abstain from acting ("Revisionary History" 59).

The social historians are working on recovering types of historical evidence overlooked by traditional intellectual historians. Because the figures of women have been marginalized,
if not rendered virtually invisible in many cultural productions, and because the tradition of (male-dominated) scholarship has tended, with some notable exceptions, to reinforce this marginalization, feminist scholars have necessarily begun to engage in a certain polemical effort to decenter the map of knowledge that they have inherited.

One of the first steps feminists took in constructing their meanings was to document the absence and silence of women. Such documentation is one means of making females visible. Dale Spender tells us that

the silence of women began to resound as documented record after documented record of female "non-existence" began to emerge. Women began to reject the definitions which had confined and distorted them and began to become aware of the voice which existed where their own meanings could have been (Man Made Language 65).

Yet the growing body of academic exploration of women's contributions to the making of history, promising and important as it is, has thus far failed to address women as rhetoricians, as ingenious strategists who succeeded in devising some modes of asserting their presence into male culture. No one has yet circumscribed the historical perimeter or posed the question governing my dissertation: How are women located within the rhetorical tradition from antiquity through the Renaissance? Thus, I am placing the specific rhetorical contributions and accomplishments of women in a larger and well-defined context, one that documents their achievements and explains their non-participation as rhetoricians and rhetors.
CHAPTER II
CLASSICAL RHETORIC CONCEPTUALIZED:
ARTICULATE MEN, MUTED WOMEN

I have no complaint
Prosperity that
the golden Muses
gave me was no
delusion: dead I
won't be forgotten.

Sappho

Introduction

Women can be located in the rhetorical tradition only when
the rhetorical tradition itself has been mapped out, beginning
with its classical, pre-codified roots, and expanded to include
the measure of women's contributions and participation. Walter
Ong tells us that the agonistic patterns we have come to accept as
rhetorical argument and dialectic were inscribed by gender—the
male gender. In Fighting for Life, Ong writes:

In . . . earlier cultures, contest and high-stress
operations suggestive of contest marked a variety of
phenomena at first seemingly unconnected: the dominance
of rhetoric and dialectic or logic in the curricula, the
use of a language other than the mother tongue acquired
(with negligible exceptions) only by males and under
stress situations, for all formally intellectual work,
the totally male population of academia, the vigorous
and often brutal disciplining of pupils, the dominantly agonistic teaching procedures, the constant recycling of all knowledge, even that acquired by reading, through agora of public oral disputation, the programmatically combative oral testing of knowledge, and much else (24-25).

His argument, however, obscures the fact that women, from the beginning of recorded time, have been excluded from participating in those practices that informed and codified the practice of rhetoric.

I open this chapter by examining the earliest literary examples of what would become rhetorical practices. Male writers and male characters most often articulated those practices, yet a few female characters used language persuasively, although in the private sphere. Although their contributions were modest, two groups of women, Sappho's coterie and the female Pythagoreans, wrote their way into the public domain, contributing to the development of male-dominated rhetorical art in the ascendent. And as the poet herself knew, Sappho's contributions would not be forgotten. By the time the Sophistic movement was in place, it was clear than another woman, Aspasia of Miletus, was influential in its development. I then go on to place the classical woman in her socio-historical moment, where she found herself secluded from education and public life. By law, women were subject to their men and forbidden preparation for or participation in public affairs—the world of rhetoric. I close this chapter with a look at several women who managed to enter the public sphere of rhetoric, and leave their mark.
The Ascendence of Rhetoric: Practice before Theory

If rhetoric is the art of using language in such a way as to produce a desired impression upon the hearer or reader, then the practice of rhetoric existed many hundreds of years before any rhetorical theory. And the literature of ancient Greece provides us an entrance into the earliest forms of rhetorical practice. Homer's Iliad and Odyssey are perhaps the earliest examples (900-700 BC) of purposeful and persuasive language-use, powerful orations calculated to achieve a desired effect. In Book 8 of The Odyssey, for example, Odysseus meets the challenge of the defiant Eurycleus, using well-chosen words about the power of words:

Stranger, thou hast not spoken well; thou art like a man presumptuous. So true it is that the gods do not give every gracious gift to all, neither shapeliness, nor wisdom, nor skilled speech. For one man is feeble than another in presence, yet the god crowns his words with beauty, and men behold him and rejoice, and his speech runs surely on his way with a sweet modesty, and he shines forth among the gathering of his people, and as he passes through the town men gaze on him as a god. Another again is like the deathless gods for beauty, but his words have no crown of grace about them; even as thou art in comeliness preeminent, nor could a god himself fashion thee for the better but in wit thou art a weakling. Yet, thou hast stirred my spirit in my breast by speaking thus amiss. . . . [T]hy word hath bitten to the quick, and thou hast roused me with thy saying (8.108-9).

And in the Iliad, Andromache, Hecabe, and Helen use purposeful language for a special occasion: the return of the dead Hector. Their epideictic funeral orations, encomia all, revive Hector's memory and deliver Hector unto his people. The exile's lament is the last to echo over Hector's remains; at the end of the Iliad, Helen says:
Hector, best beloved of all by goodbrothers, and dearest to my heart! Indeed my husband is prince Alexandros, who brought me to Troy—but would that I had died first! Twenty years have passed since I left my country and came here, but I never heard from you one unkind or one slighting word. If any one else reproached me, a sister or brother of yours, or a brother's wife, or your mother—for your father was always as kind as if he were mine—you would reprove them, you would check them, with your gentle spirit and gentle words. Therefore I weep for you, and with you for my unhappy self (24.297).

Thus, the power of eloquent speech, a rhetorical consciousness so to speak, is recognized in the earliest Greek writings and is made available to both men and women, before any theory of rhetoric had been codified—and before women found themselves excluded from the dominant social forms that included the practice of rhetoric. Homer's women, as well as the men, are knowledgeable and acknowledged rhetors who participate in the public domain: both Andromache and Helen pronounce their personal response to the Trojan War.

The power of language, of pre-theoretical rhetorical practice, was evidenced in other early Greek writings as well, namely in the works of Sappho (properly Psappho) of Lesbos (fl. c. 600 BC), the only woman in all antiquity whose literary productions placed her on the same level with the greatest male poets, in other words, with Homer. Plato calls her the tenth muse. And she is the only woman in antiquity whose intellectual training and achievements were not connected with, recorded by, or attributed to a man—a father, brother, or husband. In her recent book The Lyre, Jane McIntosh Snyder writes that Sappho is "the earliest woman writer in Western literature whose work has
--at least in part--survived the passage of time and the willful attempts to silence the voices of women[; she] is also the most famous . . . " (1).

Released from a male-dominated society, Sappho exercised her verbal prowess and celebrated women's education and persuasive public use of language. She demonstrated female language use in ways not evidenced by Homer, centuries before the institutionalization of misogyny or the codification of rhetoric in Western culture. Except for Sappho, our view of ancient women has come down to us through the eyes of men.

On the island of Lesbos, a young woman could receive a complete cultural education, one dedicated to achieving the highest possible nobility of spirit. The first Greek women to be systematically educated alongside men may have been the Spartans, but their education was purposefully subordinate to the good of the state—and of the men. Lesbian women, on the other hand, were educated by way of a religious, all-female fellowship, a thiasos. Riane Eisler would call their education a celebration of female, life-giving and life-sustaining sources. Theirs was an education "dedicated to the goddesses of culture—a form that was also to be adopted by the schools of philosophy from the time of Pythagoras onwards" (Marrou 34). Like their male-counterparts, the girls studied music and dancing as well as physical fitness and development—all arts that support the study of poetry, the only literature of the day. Werner Jaeger tells us that
The very existence of Sappho's circle assumes the educational conception of poetry which was accepted by the Greeks of her time; but the novelty and greatness of it is that through it women were admitted to a man's world, and conquered that part of it to which they had a rightful claim. For it was a real conquest: it meant that women now took their part in serving the Muses and that this service blended with the process of forming their character (I.133).

At the center of this all-female fellowship was the poet Sappho, who used language to explore and expand the limits of male-dominated forms of poetry—without diluting any of its potency. The ideas of the old Greek aristocracy had been expressed in the Homeric epics; Hesiod had wrought into poetry the practical wisdom and experience of the peasant's life and morality; and Tyrtaeus's elegies had eternalized the severe code of the Spartan state. But the new ideal of a polis seems, at first glance, to have no comparable expression in contemporary poetry, that is, not until individuality rather than community became an acceptable poetic theme.

When the Ionian poets (Archilochus, Semonides, Mimnermus of Colophon—misogynists all) narrowed their focus within the city walls, to the world of the individual, they discovered a new theme that makes clear the deepest reasons for the political revolution: the individual's will to live and right to enjoy life. Seventh-century Ionian poetry, then, concentrates on hedonism and is addressed to the whole community. However, the Aeolian lyric poets, Sappho and Alcaeus, address a more particular audience, for they express the individual's inner life itself. Alcaeus often addressed appropriate poetry to his closest companions, his circle
of drinking companions, while Sappho sang wedding or love songs to her hetaerae (a term translated as "girl-friends," young women who were friends). But Sappho takes the newly established joy-of-life lyric one step further, celebrating personal emotion and self-expression—and women. She moved the lyric from an expression of masculine heroism and male-individuality to the ardor and nobility of the feminine soul, thereby contributing to literary rhetoric (poetics) and disrupting the continuum of male-dominated poetics. In her articulation of womanly concerns, of sensual desire, and of her own experience, she closes her eyes as she writes and addresses only herself.

In the transitional society of Asia Minor, women of rank were freed from the rigidity of traditional marriage and from the identity that arose from that fixed role. Thus, Sappho was afforded some opportunity to write, and she demonstrated woman's ability to equal or surpass the male poets of her day. Of all the Greek lyricists, Sappho, both in reputation and actual achievement, holds by far the highest place. In the technique of her art, metrical skill, the music of verse, she is at least the equal of any poet who has lived since her day. Fragments of her poetry reveal her expertise in and resistance to all the traditional, male-approved forms and subjects: epithalamia (bed-chamber songs), epiphany (prayer or invocation), and priamel (catalogue).

In Fragment 16, Sappho molds the traditional catalogue, a technique now considered a rhetorical device, to suit her own
purposes (to explain her love for Anaktoria). Furthermore, in the same fragment she gives the traditional version of Helen in ironic (feminist) twist: Helen is the active, choice-making subject— not the passive object of choice. Helen's choice is based on the power of whatever is "most beautiful," and since whatever is most beautiful is what one loves, Fragment 16 is actually about the "power of love":

Some say that the most beautiful thing
upon the black earth is an army of horsemen;
others, of infantry, still others, of ships;
but I say it is what one loves.

It is completely easy to make this intelligible to everyone; for the woman who far surpassed all mortals in beauty, Helen, left her most noble husband

And sailed off to Troy, nor did she remember at all her child or her dear parents; but [the Cyprian] led her away . . . .

[All of which] has now reminded me of Anaktoria, who is not here.

Her lovely walk and bright sparkle of her face
I would rather look upon than all the Lydian chariots
and full-armed infantry [this may be the end of the poem] (qtd. in Snyder 22).

The shift in perspective from the traditional to the personal makes Sappho's poetry and her use of language both remarkable and memorable: she uses Homer to heroize her own world and to set up a female perspective on male activity that illustrates the exclusion of women from male arenas. Homer's Helen cursed herself for abandoning her husband and coming to Troy; Sappho's Helen is held up as proof that it is right to desire one thing, "the most
beautiful," above all others and to follow it. Sappho's desire for beautiful Anaktoria compares with Helen's desire for Paris. A student of her own school, Sappho worships the beauty of the present while embracing the beauty inherited from the past. Thus the most powerful seventh-century Ionian woman-of-words takes her rightful place in serving the Muses. (This is not to say, however, that Sappho served Dame Rhetoric directly.)

The literary contributions to what would become the art of rhetoric are many, but the nascent study of philosophy would also feed the development of rhetoric. Like the literary imput, most philosophical imput would come from males. But women participated in this male-dominated sphere as well—and thus in the formation of rhetorical tradition.

Upon admittance to the Pythagorean circle, women were provided the possibility for intellectual achievement. Unlike the ancient school of the hetaerae type, with master and students on the same level (vid., Sappho's school), the Pythagorean school took holistic charge of the entire student, requiring students to adopt a way of life dedicated to moderation, social order, and cosmic harmony. The followers of sixth-century Pythagoras of Croton, then, composed a religious fellowship, a thiasos, dedicated to Wisdom and to the goddesses of culture—to what would later become philosophy. Although no contemporary accounts of the Pythagoreans exists, subsequent reports indicate that their academic goals became the template of Greek education that was to inform Plato's Academy, Aristotle's Lyceum, and Epicurus' school.
Pythagoras' school became immediately famous for the genius of its headmaster and his vast learning, but it was his willingness to receive women as well as men into his school that made his school extraordinary, more so, perhaps, than his philosophy. Two centuries before Plato, he laid down the principle of equal opportunity for both sexes, a principle he practiced as well as preached. Recognizing the natural differences in function between the sexes, he gave his women pupils considerable training in philosophy and literature, but he also had them instructed in the maternal and domestic arts; thus, the Pythagorean women may have been the highest "feminine" type that Greece ever produced.

The mainstay of Pythagorean philosophy was harmonia, the body of inflexible cosmic rules that informs sculpture, architecture, poetry, music, rhetoric, religion, morality, and human life. Pythagorean men could practice their philosophy openly and publicly within Greek culture, but it was the Pythagorean women who helped to spread this philosophy of thought and who adapted it from the cosmos to the microcosm: from the state to the home.

Because the philosophy was transferred to the personal level and domestic sphere, some of the most influential Pythagoreans were women. Seventeenth-century scholar Gilles Menage mentions the contributions of twenty-eight Pythagorean women (47 ff.). Menage draws on Laertius' Life of Pythagoras (AD 400) to write that Pythagoras' Themistoclea, a Delphic priestess-philosopher, was the source of Pythagoras' aesthetic principles. No further
details can be found about her. Perhaps Pythagoras' wife, Theano, is most deserving of attention because she, more than any other of the women, explains—through speeches and writings—to her contemporaries the Pythagorean philosophy as well as the practical application of *harmonia* to the home and everyday life. According to her, women, being naturally temperate, bear the responsibility for using moderation (Theano's "Golden Rule") and for respecting the natural laws of hierarchy within family and marriage, which were thought to be the microcosm of the state. Consequently, Pythagorean women understood and accepted their domestic (muted) power and acted on their responsibility for creating the conditions under which harmony, order, law, and justice could exist in the state.

One of the few extant writings, albeit a fragment, is from the late Pythagorean Phintys of Sparta. *On the Moderation of Women* continues the argument that although the social responsibilities of men and women are different, men and women remain equal and that the normative principle of *harmonia* provides for satisfaction within the context of those specific social responsibilities, both public and private. Phintys argues persuasively, as a woman and for women, and she meets the opposition head-on:

*Now, perhaps many think it is not fitting for a woman to philosophize, just as it is not fitting for her to ride horses or speak in public. But I think that some things are peculiar to a man, some to a woman, some are common to both, some belong more to a man than a woman, some more to a woman than a man... But I say that courage and justice and wisdom are common to both. Excellences*
of the body are appropriate for both a man and a woman, likewise those of the soul. And just as it is beneficial for the body of each to be healthy, so too, is it beneficial for the soul to be healthy. The excellences of the body are health, strength, keenness of perception and beauty (qtd. in Waiithe 27).

Thus according to Phintys, any differences between men and women should not prevent women from taking their rightful place in the development, maintenance, and teaching of philosophy.

Another late Pythagorean work that focuses on the social and moral status of women in society is On the Harmony of Women, written, many scholars think, by Perictione, mother of Plato. Much more utilitarian than Phintys' work, and therefore perhaps more accessible to her lay readers, Perictione writes of ways for women best to achieve harmony within their circumscribed worlds, not within an idealized world. Pragmatic and insightful, Perictione's theories seem to prefigure rhetorical ones: she expounds rules that proceed from moral and legal judgments that society actually makes, yet she appeals to the feelings, for she addresses a popular audience. She opens her exhortation with these words:

One must deem the harmonious woman to be full of wisdom and self-control; a soul must be exceedingly conscious of goodness to be just and courageous and wise, embellished with self-sufficiency and hating empty opinion. Worthwhile things come to a woman from these—for herself, her husband, her children and household, perhaps even for a city—or, at any rate, such a woman should govern cities and tribes . . . (qtd. in Waiithe 32).

If Perictione the Pythagorean is indeed Plato's mother, she may well have influenced his Symposium, in which he extols the virtue
and wisdom and philosophy of another female Pythagorean, Diotima.
Using a combination of wisdom and good speech, a rhetorical
consciousness as it were, both Perictione and Phintys produce a
desired effect upon their readers—in a time when most women were
excluded from intellectual pursuits and well before a theory of
rhetoric had yet been developed.

The Greek Rhetorical Tradition

These indirect sources, epics, poetry, and philosophy,
indicate that the as-yet uncodified art of rhetoric was being
practiced long before it was formulated in 476 BC by the Sicilian
Corax; the methodizing of persuasive language accompanied the
establishment of a democracy in Syracuse. Rhetoric began as a
practical art, a vital part of civic life in this new democracy
fraught with a mass of litigation on property claims. Formerly
exiled claimants who had no documents of ownership had to rely on
inferential reasoning to plead their own cases. Without any idea
of how to state and arrange the complicated details, they needed
professional advice—hence Corax’s custom-designed art of
rhetoric, an art his pupil Tisias transmitted to Greece.

Corax’s art of rhetoric was immeasurably influential, for it
would serve as the foundation for the rhetorical theories of
Plato, Aristotle, Cicero, Quintilian, Gorgias, Isocrates, and
Pericles.
In the burgeoning democracy of Athens, men only argued for civic and political arete (excellence or virtue); such public oratory fed the spirit of panhellenism, a doctrine sorely needed to unify the Greek city-states. Women could testify, but only men argued. Receptive to the art, Athens became the center for the flourishing study and practice of rhetoric; therefore, men came to Athens to prepare for a career in politics.

Sicilian ambassador to Athens in 427 BC, Gorgias settled in Athens and opened a school of rhetoric, not a school in the institutional sense but rather a circle of collective tutoring. His philosophy of education was dedicated to producing capable statesmen and to forming their personality, their arete. For him, arete denoted intellectual power and oratorical ability. And his student Pericles was arete personified, an ideal citizen-orator. Not a philosopher, a thinker, or a seeker of truth, Gorgias was a teacher. But he became known for more than his teaching. Recognized as one of the first to appreciate and articulate the persuasive power of emotional appeal, of pathos, he laid the groundwork for centuries of debate concerning the efficacy of the individual artistic proofs (logos, pathos, ethos). Also because he believed that the probable deserves more respect than the true, he perfected the ability to promote probabilities, part of the power that is found in logos. Gorgias is best known, however, for his ability to merge rhetoric with poetics, for his distinctive, ornate prose style. Gorgias belonged to the Sophist school in that he was indeed a teacher of superior grade who distinguished
himself by providing a liberal education that would supplement the customary instruction in reading, writing, gymnastics, and music.

Despite his prodigious success, Gorgias was not to be the most influential of the teachers in the Sophistic schools; that distinction would go to Isocrates. Along with Aristotle, Isocrates is often hailed as the most influential of the Greek rhetoricians. Isocrates, whose school had offered a greater breadth of education than that of the Sophists, had himself received the best education Athens provided: he had studied with Tisias, Gorgias, and Socrates and ultimately identified himself as a sophist, a term which in his early years had no negative connotation.

Although Isocrates began his career as a logographos, a hired writer of courtroom speeches, his real vocation was teaching. About 392 BC, he founded his famous school near the Lyceum, its goal being the formation of an intellectual elite by way of a grave and upright education. He drew hundreds of paying pupils from the panhellenic world, and, in the process, amassed a considerable fortune. Although he often referred to himself as a philosopher, he was in fact a Sophist, albeit of a different stripe than Gorgias. If Gorgias' education was based ultimately on the idea of probability, that of Isocrates relied on the virtues of speech itself, of logos.

Isocrates' real eminence consists in the fact that by giving an artistic finish to the literary branch of rhetoric—accurate diction, logical transitions, smooth sounds and rhythm, periodic
sentences, holistic aim—he set a standard in form and rhythm for prose style. He was regarded by the Greeks as representing the school of smooth prose style, refining Gorgias' artificial style into an artistic prose, and as making oratory a literary form. George Kennedy tells us that Isocrates is the "first major 'orator' who did not deliver his speeches orally. They were carefully edited, polished, and published in written . . . form. By his action speech was converted into literature, another influence toward the letteraturizzazione [secondary form] of rhetoric" (35). In this way, he helped to raise oratory to the level of a literary art and preserve that influence of the spoken word on literature which, helped by the custom of reading aloud, was to remain one of the dominant features of Greek literature.

Isocrates' prose style was his legacy to the literature of modern Europe, and his confidence in the power of words was the wellspring of what would become Humanist scholarship. He undertook to saturate his art with a content of real values, for his eloquence had a distinct civic and patriotic purpose, and his students were to be citizen-orators. As such, his sophistry, his educational system with its sound moral influence and its rhetorical base, was a system of general culture.

The sophists, then, were supplying a social and political need—but they were also creating new ones. Their Humanist philosophy propounded individual responsibility as well as political and social action. The fruit of their philosophy was activated conscience and rhetorical maturity. The gods were no
longer responsible for earthly actions; individuals were responsible for their own actions and were collectively responsible for the actions of the state. In addition to the conducive climate of their historical moment, the Sophists owed much to individual patronage, and above all to the patronage of one man, Pericles—a fact that has not perhaps been recognized as fully as it should in accounts of the Sophistic movement.

Offering democracy to the masses, Pericles was the most powerful and influential of Athenians. Appreciating fine intellect and command of language, he surrounded himself with the greatest thinkers of his age, with Sophists, philosophers, scientists—and with one rhetorician in particular.

Socrates and Plato concurred, and later Cicero reported that Pericles was a persuasive speaker. For forty years the Athenians applauded his eloquence. But when Quintilian (AD 100) examined Pericles' written works, he concluded that some other pen had composed them:

Cicero in the Brutus states that nothing in the ornate rhetorical style was ever committed to writing before Pericles, and that certain of his speeches are still extant. For my part I have been unable to discover anything in the least worthy of his great reputation for eloquence, and am consequently the less surprised that there should be some who hold that he never committed anything to writing, and that the writings circulating under his name are the works of others (Institutio Oratoria 3.1.12).

Perhaps—just perhaps—his teacher of rhetoric supplied him with those speeches that established him as persuasive speaker.
The one rhetorician most closely associated with Pericles is a woman—Aspasia of Miletus. At a time when men were consciously forming human character in accordance with the new cultural ideal of military strength, at least one woman—Aspasia—was actively participating in that formation, including the formation of Pericles, the most respected citizen-orator of the age.

We know about Aspasia the way we know about Socrates: only from secondary sources. None of her work exists. But the fact that she is mentioned by her male contemporaries is remarkable, for rare is the mention of any intellectual woman. Surviving fragments and references in the work of male authors provide tantalizing indications that the intellectual efforts of Greek women were, at least occasionally, committed to writing. Sappho and Aspasia are two such women. We must consider any woman who merited such documentation, for the story of her intellectual contributions to poetics and rhetoric may suggest the existence of an unrecognized subculture within that community. Aspasia clearly represents the female intelligentsia of Periclean Athens.

In the "Life of Pericles," Plutarch (AD 100) credits Aspasia with contributing greatly to the intellectual life, commenting on her "great art or power" that she managed as she pleased the foremost men of the state, and afforded the philosopher's occasion to discuss her in exalted terms and at great length. . . . Aspasia . . . was held in high favour by Pericles because of her political wisdom. Socrates sometimes came to see her with his disciples, and his intimate friends brought their wives to her to hear her discourse . . . . And in the "Menexenus" of Plato, . . . [he writes] that the
woman had the reputation of associating with many Athenians as a teacher of rhetoric (XXIV.1-4).

Because Plutarch draws on a no-longer existent work of Aeschines (450 BC) to describe Aspasia, some scholars have considered Aspasia apocryphal. But both Cicero and Xenophon tap that same text, a fact that gives credence to the text—as well as to the existence of a historical Aspasia. In addition, she is memorialized in a fresco over the portal of the University of Athens, shown in the company of Socrates, Phidias, Pericles (on whom she leans), Sophocles, Antisthenes, Anaxagoras, and Alcibiades.

At a time, then, when women were systematically relegated to the domestic sphere, to the oikos, we have Aspasia, the only woman in classical Greece known to have distinguished herself in the public domain, in the polis. Aspasia’s reputation as both a rhetorician and philosopher was memorialized by Plato, Plutarch, Xenophon, Athenaeus, and Cicero, as was her enduring romantic attachment to Pericles. In her Chalice and the Blade, Riane Eisler would have us believe that Aspasia was memorialized because she represented the ancient goddess of wisdom, an Athena-like earth mother who supports and nourishes. Looking from Eisler’s viewpoint, we can see that Aspasia does provide a salon for learned men as well as nourishment for their minds, before the programmatic rejection of female wisdom and morality and the programmatic assembly of Athenian warrior society. The Peloponnesian Wars would leave a permanent impress on Greek
culture: given the choice of expediency or morality, Greeks would perpetually choose expediency.

Upon emigrating from Miletus to Athens, the brilliant, highly educated, free-born Greek opened an academy of rhetoric and philosophy for women and girls of good families. Not a native Athenian, Aspasia was neither entitled to the protection of nor subject to the restrictions of Athenian citizenship, but as a stranger-woman, she could ignore Athenian strictures limiting women's participation in intellectual society and impeding their access to formal education. Her academy soon became a popular salon (often referred to as Pericles' salon), a resort for the most brilliant men of the day, those men portrayed in the fresco. And some say that Perictione, Plato's mother, played a part in Aspasia's/Pericles'/Socrates' circle as well. Charles Seltman writes that "it is a rare thing for the mother of a great man to be mentioned in ancient literature, and there is good reason for assuming that Periktione [sic] was a woman who played a part in that [above-mentioned] brilliant circle" (131). Mary Ellen Waithe also supports the notion of Plato's mother contributing to philosophical thinking and writing, both as a Pythagorean and as a member of Aspasia's salon (69).

All the information we have on Socrates is second-hand, yet the influence of what we accept as his own beliefs is incredible. Kitto explains:

What society but Athens could have produced a figure like Socrates—a man who changed the current of human thought without writing a word, without preaching a
doctrine, simply by talking in the streets of a city which he never left but twice—for the battlefield (21)?

Despite that handicap, authors continue to knit together secondary mentions in an attempt to shape a reliable Socrates. For example, several ancient authors would have us believe that Socrates deeply respected Aspasia's thinking and admired her rhetorical prowess, despite her being a hetaira (a term that had, at the time of Sappho, meant "girl-friend" but which was now used to refer to an upper-class courtesan). In Xenophon's Memorabilia, Socrates explains to Critobulus the "art of catching friends," and of using an intermediary:

I can quote Aspasia . . . . She once told me that good matchmakers are successful only when the good reports they carry to and fro are true; false reports she would not recommend, for the victims of deceptions hate one another and the matchmaker too. I am convinced that this is sound, so I think it is not open to me to say anything in your praise that I cannot say truthfully (II.36).

In Xenophon's Oeconomicus, Socrates ascribes to Aspasia the marital advice he gives to Critobulus: "There's nothing like investigation. I will introduce Aspasia to you, and she will explain the whole matter [of good wives] to you with more knowledge than I possess" (III.15). Plutarch writes that "Socrates sometimes came to see her [Aspasia] with his disciples, and his intimate friends brought their wives to her to hear her discourse . . . as a teacher of rhetoric" (Lives 69-70); Athenaeus calls Aspasia "clever . . . to be sure, . . . Socrates' teacher in rhetoric" (V.219) and goes on to account for the extent of Aspasia's influence over Socrates:
[I]n the verses which are extant under her name and which are quoted by Herodicus, . . . [she says]: "Socrates, I have not failed to notice that thy heart is smitten with desire for [Alcibiades] . . . . But hearken, if thou wouldst prosper in thy suit. Disregard not my message, and it will be much better for thee. For so soon as I heard, my body was suffused with the glow of joy, and tears not unwelcome fell from my eyelids. Restrain thyself, filling thy soul with the conquering Muse; and with her aid thou shalt win him; pour her into the ears of his desire. For she is the true beginning of love in both; through her thou shalt master him, by offering to his ear gifts for the unveiling of his soul."

So, then, the noble Socrates goes a-hunting, employing the woman of Miletus as his preceptor in love, instead of being hunted himself, as Plato has said, being caught in Alcibiades' net (V.219).

Furthermore, in the Menexenus, the Platonic Socrates agrees that were the Council Chamber to elect him to make the recitation over the dead (the Epitaphia), he "should be able to make the speech . . . for she [Aspasia] who is my instructor is by no means weak in the art of rhetoric; on the contrary, she has turned out many fine orators, and amongst them one who surpassed all other Greeks, Pericles" (235-36). But it was Pericles—not Aspasia—who delivered that speech.

Plato's Menexenus contains Plato's version of Socrates' version of Aspasia's version of Pericles' Funeral Oration and is further recognition of Aspasia's reputation as a rhetorician and philosopher and as co-architect of the Sophistic movement, a movement devoted to the analysis and creation of rhetoric. Her political capacity and powerful influence on Pericles' persuasive oratory was made manifest in that, as Socrates asserts, she composed Pericles' famous Funeral Oration:
I was listening only yesterday to Aspasia going through a funeral speech for [the Athenians]. . . . [S]he rehearsed to me the speech in the form it should take, extemporizing in part, while other parts of it she had previously prepared. . . . at the time when she was composing the funeral oration which Pericles delivered. . . (236b).

That Aspasia may well have composed Pericles' speech makes sense: after all, being honored by the opportunity to deliver the Epitaphia, he would have prepared well, seeking and following the advice of his colleagues, including Aspasia, on points of style and substance. Perhaps Quintilian was right in doubting the originality of Pericles' work.

Before demonstrating her expertise at composing moving, patriotic epideictic oratory, Aspasia reminds Socrates of the efficacy of rhetoric: "it is by means of speech finely spoken that deeds nobly done gain for their doers from the hearers the meed of memory and renown" (236e)—presentiment of social-constructionist theory. The author of the speech also makes clear the power of oratory to influence the public's belief that its history was other than it was: the most aggressive exploits of Attic imperialism are represented as "[bringing] freedom [to] all the dwellers in this continent" (240e), as "fighting in defence of the liberties of the Boeotians" (242b), as "fighting for the freedom of Leontini" (243a), as "setting free . . . friends" (243c), and as "saving their walls from ruin" (244c). This version of Pericles' Funeral Oration, an exaggerated eulogium abounding with historical misstatements and anachronisms, makes
explicit Plato's implicit feeling that orators such as Aspasia are indeed interested more in believability than in truth.

Thinly disguised in the *Menexenus* is Plato's cynicism. In his opinion, the development of oratory had negative consequences for Athens, the most glaring defect of current oratory being its indifference to truth. In the opening dialogue of the *Menexenus*, the Platonic Socrates disparages the orators in much the same way he does in the *Symposium*, saying that "in speeches prepared long beforehand . . . they [orators] praise in such splendid fashion, that . . . they bewitch our souls . . . [E]very time I listen fascinated [by their praise of me] I am exalted and imagine myself to have become all at once taller and nobler and more handsome . . . owing to the persuasive eloquence of the speaker" (235b). Plato seems to have been the first to recoil from the touch of rhetoric.

Aspasia was at the center of the most famous intellectual circle, her influence radiating out to such well-known thinkers as Socrates and to such exemplary orators as Pericles. Most importantly, her influence extended to Plato, for she was his teacher of rhetoric as well. By example, Aspasia taught Plato that belief and truth are not necessarily the same, a sentiment Plato makes evident in his *Gorgias* when Gorgias admits that rhetoric produces "[mere] belief without knowledge" (454). She also revealed to him that rhetoric, which is the daughter of truth-disclosing philosophy, does not always carry on the family tradition; rhetoric can be used to obscure the truth, to control
and deceive hearers into belief. In the Gorgias, his Socrates says, "[R]hetoric seems not to be an artistic pursuit at all, but that of a shrewd, courageous spirit which is naturally clever at dealing with men; and I call the chief part of it flattery" (463). And in the Phaedrus, Plato writes that "in the courts, they say, nobody cares for truth about these matters [things which are just or good], but for that which is convincing; and that is probability" (272e).

Like Aspasia, Plato approved of a rhetoric of persuasion; he too sees the political potential of public rhetoric. But his rhetoric is foremost a search for the truth; only truth should constitute persuasive rhetoric. His perfect orator of the Phaedrus "must know the truth about all the particular things of which he speaks or writes . . . [and] must understand the nature of the soul" (277c), for the ideal rhetorician speaks "in a manner pleasing to the gods" (273e). What Plato has learned, then, from Aspasia is the potentially harmful uses of rhetoric as a branch of philosophy.

In addition to influencing Socrates and Plato, Aspasia also had a direct effect on Xenophon and his wife, teaching them the art of inductive argument. In De Inventione, Cicero uses her lesson on induction as the centerpiece for his argumentation chapter. Like others before him (Plutarch), Cicero too acknowledges her influence on Socrates as well as the existence of the Aeschines text:
[In a dialogue by Aeschines Socraticus[,] Socrates reveals that Aspasia reasoned thus with Xenophon's wife and with Xenophon himself: "Please tell me, madam, if your neighbour had a better gold ornament than you have, would you prefer that one or your own?" "That one," she replied. "Now, if she had dresses and other feminine finery more expensive than you have, would you prefer yours or hers?" "Hers, of course," she replied. "Well now, if she had a better husband than you have, would you prefer your husband or hers?" At this the woman blushed. But Aspasia then began to speak to Xenophon. "I wish you would tell me, Xenophon," she said, "if your neighbour had a better horse than yours, would you prefer your horse or his?" "His," was his answer. "And if he had a better farm than you have, which farm would you have, would you prefer yours or his?" And at this Xenophon, too, was silent. Then Aspasia: "Since both of you have failed to tell me the only thing I wished to hear, I myself will tell you what you both are thinking. That is you, madam, wish to have the best husband, and you, Xenophon, desire above all things to have the finest wife. Therefore unless you can contrive that there be no better man or finer woman on earth you will certainly always be in dire want of what you consider best, namely, that you be the husband of the very best of wives, and that she be wedded to the very best of men." In this instance, because assent has been given to undisputed statements, the result is that the point which would appear doubtful if asked by itself is through analogy conceded as certain, and this is due to the method employed in putting the question. Socrates used this conversational method a good deal, because he wished to present no arguments himself, but preferred to get a result from the material which the interlocutor had given him—a result which the interlocutor was bound to approve as following necessarily from what he had already granted (I.xxxi.51-53).

Another woman who seems to have left her impress on the thinking of Greek philosophers and rhetoricians is Diotima. In the Symposium, Plato stretches the scientific study of human passions, "love" in particular, over the frame of inductive logical method. And in this dialogue, Plato features Diotima, a female philosopher and teacher.
Much controversy surrounds Diotima of Mantinea, centering on whether she is fictitious or historical. Her historicity seems beside the point, her dramatic significance lying in her being a female—in her being represented as worthy and competent to teach Plato's own master initial elements of social philosophy. A. E. Taylor writes that "[t]he introduction of purely fictitious named personages into a discourse seems to be a literary device unknown to Plato" (224). Recognizing the academic hesitation to accept Diotima's historicity, other scholars (e.g., Waith, Taylor, Grote, Rosen, Cacoulllos, Neumann) willingly accept the importance of her argument nonetheless.

Because Socrates tells her that he needs an instructor (207c), Diotima takes him through an inductive argument on "love." Her findings, according to Socrates, depart from those in the Phaedrus, from the usual sensual/spiritual dichotomy. Diotima offers "love" or eros as culminating indeed in reproduction—but not in procreation. One who loves the beautiful should scale a ladder of love, starting with love for beautiful individuals and culminating in love for the expression of beauty. Rather than seeking love for the fulfillment of biological reproduction, eros leads us toward the Idea of the Beautiful, the true immortality that comes only through an intellectual legacy, through reproduction of those expressions of beauty—values and ideas. Diotima deviates from Plato in another way as well: for her, the soul is regenerated; for Plato, reincarnated. Instead of believing in the transmigration of souls, she espouses the
reproduction of one's soul in others—an opportunity available
only to lovers of the Beautiful. Waithe writes that

[Although Diotima holds that the desire for immortality leads a person to strive to generate an offspring of the psyche, this offspring is always human, never animal [i.e., not woman or animal for the unvirtuous].... Moreover, Diotima is noncommittal on the origins of the human psyche, but her portrayal of it indicates that individuals develop certain qualities in their souls which become features of them as a person. A person can become immortal by reconstituting in someone else (the beloved) the complex qualities that have come to constitute that person's soul.... The Platonic soul is eternal and transmigratory. Diotima's soul is markedly non-Platonic: it is not eternal—if you fail to generate an offspring of your soul, it presumably ceases to exist when your body dies and you fail to achieve immortality.... (87).

Socrates himself relates Diotima's theory in this dialogue, a theory inconsistent with those of his own. It is unlikely that Plato, when writing the dialogues, would attribute to Socrates positions inconsistent with those Socrates was actually known to have held. For this reason, we can give more credence to the possibility of her actual influence. Diotima may well have been a historical figure. Whether she was a priestess or a Pythagorean philosopher, she seems to have influenced and impressed both Socrates and Plato, not only with her metaphysics but also with her method of argument. Hence, by reason of her contribution to argumentation alone, Diotima helped shape Platonic rhetorical theory.
Women's Place in Greece Society: Historical and Literary

Relatively few women participated in the intellectual life of ancient Greece. Aspasia and the possibly historical Diotima are striking exceptions to societal expectations. Although Aspasia was a powerful force in Periclean Athens and although Diotima seems to have affected the thinking of Plato and Socrates, not all Greek thinkers would accept women as mental equals.

Aristotle makes no provision for the intellectual woman, except for his nod to Sappho: "Everyone honours the wise... [T]he Mytilenaes Sappho, though she was a woman" (Rhetoric 1389b.12). Otherwise, Aristotle denied any philosophical or rhetorical contributions of women. He quotes Sophocles when he writes, "'Silence gives grace to woman'—though that is not the case likewise with a man" (Politics I.v.9). Reasoning from Aristotle's perspective, Aspasia could not have become a teacher, much less a rhetorician. And Diotima could not have been a philosopher. By the principle of entelechy (the vital force urging one toward fulfilling one's actual essence), she would have naturally followed her predetermined life course, her progress distinctly marked off and limited to a degree of perfection less than that for a man.

For the most part, Aristotle's accounts of woman, buttressed by the defective scientific understanding of reproduction and biological processes, belie woman's participation in the making of culture, leaving her daughters without access to any knowledge of a female tradition, continuity, or intellectual underpinning. For
Aristotle, men and women differed only in outward form—but the inequality is permanent. Unlike Plato, he could not see beyond the contemporary and seemingly permanent inferior status of Greek women. In the *Politics*, Aristotle writes "between the sexes, the male is by nature superior and the female inferior, the male ruler and the female subject" (I.11.12); in the *Rhetoric*, he writes that "one quality or action is nobler than another if it is that of a naturally finer being: thus a man's will be nobler than a woman's" (I.9.15).

And those naturally finer beings—men—were awarded a public voice, which enabled them to participate as speakers, thinkers, and writers in the polis, in the "good" of public life. A public voice was the right and privilege of those who were declared to possess reason and goodness to its fullest extent—men only. Naturally then, women and slaves—inferior beings in every way—were condemned to silence as their appointed sphere and condition. And most women could see no alternative. Aristophanes' *Lysistrata* opens with a description of the ordinary conditions of Athenian women:

What can we women do? What brilliant scheme can we, poor souls, accomplish? We who sit trimmed and bedizened in our saffron silks, our cambric robes, and little finical shoes (41-45).

Women were absorbed within the oikis (the household), idiots (private persons), living in the idios (the private domain). In the polis, the public sphere of action, the realm of highest justice, the world of men, women and slaves should be invisible
and aphonic. The history of classical rhetoric is thus the
history of great men speaking out—Aristotle, Plato, Gorgias,
Pericles, Socrates. But the voices of classical women have been
silenced—that is, except for Aspasia. But even her voice is
muted; she speaks only through men.

Plato records women's voices, Aspasia's in particular, in his
work. Unlike Aristotle, Plato believed that differences in bodies
do not indicate differences in nature; for Plato, the soul has a
separate and distinct identity from the body. Thus, Plato
believed in the essential similarity of the sexes—except in
matters of procreation—and in the claim of women to equal rights
and duties with man. In the locus classicus of Plato's feminism,
Book V of the Republic, Plato does not promise that women are
equal to men; he proposes complete equality of opportunity. It is
sometimes difficult to reconcile Plato's belief that women and men
are equal in nature, and yet women are always inferior in
capacity, but it is easy to believe Plato's professed desire for
reform. Plato attempts to equalize the roles of the best and
brightest of both sexes:

[I]f it appears that the male and female sex have
distinct qualifications for any arts or pursuits, we
shall affirm that they ought to be assigned respectively
to each. But if it appears that they differ only in
just this respect that the female bears and the male
begets, we shall say that no proof has yet been produced
that the woman differs from the man for our purposes,
but we shall continue to think that our guardians and
their wives ought to follow the same pursuits (5.454e).

He goes on to write that for "the production of a female guardian,
our education will not be one thing for men and another for women,
especially" (456.5c). Hence, it is easy to believe that women were allegedly admitted to Plato's Academy, Lastheneia of Mantinea and Axiothea of Philesia. What is ironic, however, is that according to a fragment by Dicaearchus, Axiothea had to dress like a man to gain admittance to Plato's lectures (Waitha 205). F. A. Wright also draws on that fragment to tell us that

[i]n the inner circle of the Academy, the first University College of which we know, men and women met on equal terms, and shared responsibilities and privileges. The names of two such women (neither of them . . . Athenians) are recorded for us by Dicaearchus . . . Lasthenia of Mantinea and Axiothea of Phlius (177-78).

Any man allowing women to penetrate his intellectual sphere, be it his mother or his students, would surely include mention of his teacher in his works. Plato's mention of Aspasia, then, should come as no surprise.

Some scholars suggest that the exceptional intellectual, social, and political opportunities that Aspasia enjoyed were due to the fact that she was a foreigner and a hetaera, her entrance and success in the public domain resting on her relative freedom. Hetaerae were for the sake of pleasure—physical and intellectual. Proper matrons, uneducated though they be, were to bear legitimate children and manage households. Those scholars would like us to believe that Aspasia's Athenian-born sisters lived in Oriental seclusion, total subjugation, domestic imprisonment, with absolutely no opportunity to develop themselves intellectually. But we must remember that such rigorous restriction applied only to the upper classes. F. A. Wright is perhaps the most damning
critic regarding the Athenians' treatment of their women. Making connection between class structure and ideological constructs, he writes: "The wealth of intellectual achievement barely concealed the poverty of her [Greece's] social morality, ... the degradation of their women and the misery of their slaves ..." (135).

The class structure was obvious in the striations of women's work. Some citizen women worked in the fields with their husbands and plied retail trades; lower-class women, who had no slaves, would have had to go into the marketplace and out on errands. In "Women in Classical Athens," D. Richter tells us that "[t]he exigencies of the Peloponnesian War led many Athenian wives to take employment as wet nurses, day laborers, grape pickers, market vendors, all totally inconsistent with any convention of harem seclusion" (8). As for the Athenian matron, James Donaldson writes that her duties "lay entirely within the house. They were summed up in the words, 'to remain inside and to be obedient to her husband'" (52). We must remember, however, that many wives were young girls who were taught by their husbands how to run their household. Robert Flaceliere too supports the seclusionist thesis: respectable women were not to be seen on the street, except to attend religious ceremonies (66 ff.). But again, we must remember the responsibilities of respectable women; the reason Lysistrata found it so hard to get out was not that she felt imprisoned, but that housework was so time-consuming: "It's not easy for a woman to get out, you know. One [woman] is working
on her husband, another is getting up the maid, another has to put
the baby to bed, or wash and feed it" (15-20).

Other scholars say that the upper-class Athenian woman was
protected—not secluded, seclusion being the handmaiden of
protection: the house was locked to prevent thievery and sexual
commingling from within and without. The wife was responsible for
conscientious housekeeping; thus, the pantry stores and wine
cellar were often locked. All females were locked in their own
quarters: the reproduction of female slaves was to be supervised,
and the reproduction of free matrons was an important matter of
inheritance. Women were forbidden to go out alone on the streets
because the streets were unsafe; the almost total lack of civil
police or street lighting in this period contributed substantially
to danger. Plutarch writes that at the end of a day a "certain
lewd fellow" followed Pericles home, "heaping all manner of
contumely upon him." But when Pericles "was about to go in doors,
it being now dark, he ordered a servant to take a torch and escort
the fellow in safety back to his own home" (5.1). Plutarch's
story illustrates the street dangers, harassment and darkness.
Women as well as men did indeed need protection. Therefore, part
of the protection argument stands. But women were also secluded
legally as well. Their legal seclusion signaled cultural efforts
to keep women objectified possessions of men:

Some of the passive, powerless aspects of a woman's lot
in Athens were elaborately codified in the laws. A
woman, like a piece of property, was always under legal
control of some man; and if he should die in her
lifetime, she and whatever was attached to her passed to
the next male relative in the same elaborate order of succession used for any other property. If the woman was heiress to an estate, the estate went to the appropriate male relative whose wife she necessarily became; she had no more choice in the matter than . . . a vase (Garner 84).

Despite so vulnerable a position, however, the elite Athenian woman was not entirely unprotected under the law; her single greatest security was her dowry, which stayed with her throughout her life.

Still other scholars say the seclusion argument is nullified by the strong, self-propelled women in contemporary imaginative literature. They cite the politically astute women in Lysistrata who band together, ally and enemy alike, to bring their husbands to terms; their husbands do not find consolation in the arms of hetaerae nor are they content with the society of their own sex once their wives withdraw their favors. Clymenestra avenges the murder of her daughter by killing her husband; Electra murders Clymenestra. In Attic tragedy, women come and go from their houses at will, publicly shamed only when they are wailing. Antigone is asked to go indoors—but only because she is creating an undignified disturbance. Imaginative literature creates autonomous Athenian women, more so than do historical accounts of actual women. And the seclusion argument would have us believe that Athenians leveled a sort of contempt on their own upper-class women, secluding and excluding them. Yet we are left to believe that those same Athenian males demonstrated respect and admiration for immigrants like Aspasia. We can only hope that the female
characters in the imaginative literature were based on exceptional actual women, who were neither secluded or excluded from public life.

We know very little about the intellectual opportunities available to Greek women. But because of the evidence on vase paintings, showing women in domestic scenes holding or reading book rolls (c. 450 BC) or young girls carrying writing tablets, we can assume that some women could read and write (Cole 223-26). But there is no evidence for regular instruction in reading and writing for girls in the Classical period. Just as most young boys were taught Homer at home, perhaps some young girls shared in their brothers' home lessons, and later in their school lessons. Yet, despite our lack of information about women's schooling, we do know that those academic opportunities produced the idea of a first-rate thinker like Diotima and that those opportunities, in conjunction with her own personality and her position outside the citizenship culture, produced an Aspasia—highly cultured, politically keen, rhetorically influential, personally fulfilled.

The Roman Rhetorical Tradition

In the centuries between Aristotle and Cicero, rhetoric was formally codified and schematized; unfortunately, none of those rhetorical works is extant except for Rhetorica ad Alexandrum, a not-very-impressive text written by the pseudo-Aristotle. If the work of Theophrastus still existed, some scholars believe we could trace back to him the conceptualization of the three levels of
style that Cicero would later expound as well as the division between schemes and tropes made popular by the pseudo-Cicero.

Higher education in Rome was in most respects a close copy of that of Greece, and the teachers of rhetoric in the Roman republic were Greek, as were the early texts. One of the most influential Greek teachers at the time was Hermagoras, who formulated the theory of "stasis," the basic issue of any case, which remains at the heart of rhetorical invention. And it is Hermagoras who successfully linked Greek and Roman rhetoric, for his rhetoric informed the Latin treatises that initiate a Roman rhetorical tradition: Cicero's De inventione (87 BC) and the pseudo-Cicero's Rhetorica ad Herennium.

Following in the Greek tradition, the Romans too used rhetoric as a means of persuasion in the law courts and political arenas. But the Romans were teaching and practicing a more practical rhetoric than the Greeks, not one steeped in philosophy. Hence, philosophers withdrew from teaching rhetoric, no longer making claims for it as a humane study. And because philosophy was a Greek subject, philosophy fell by the wayside as there was no Latin philosophy. Traditionally, young men learned the art of speaking as part of their training for public careers. And traditionally, they learned in Greek.

With Cicero, however, came yet another reconciliation, this time between the concept of the ideal orator and that of the eloquent philosopher. Dedicated to Isocrates' ideal of the citizen-orator, Cicero, thoroughly trained in Greek rhetoric,
revitalized both the practice and theory of rhetoric, and placed it in the service of the Republic. But it was his determination to teach in Latin that ensured a Roman rhetoric. From motives that were genuinely patriotic, and throughout his long career, this great orator devoted himself to a Latin rhetoric. His De inventione (84 BC), a technē, was meant to assist men with the discovery of ideas and subject matter suitable for their forensic contests. Much more sophisticated and written at a later age was his De oratore, a response to Aristotle, who had felt rhetoric had no subject matter. Cicero argues that the orator needs a vast knowledge, a liberal education, in order to best argue a case, in order to best know which side to take, and in order to have insight into human psychology.

Although technical skill was the mainstay of his eloquentia and the very stock and trade of an orator, Cicero expanded the concept to include an ability based upon all the accessible culture, both Greek and Latin, and embodying a philosophy of life as well. The citizen–orator ought to be ready to do anything for his country, but not everything was permissible—nothing that went against justice or morality or the law.

A later Roman rhetorician whose name is always coupled with Cicero's is Quintilian, whose Institutio Oratoria was considered the most encyclopedic treatment of rhetoric. In order to provide an education system with rhetoric at its heart, an educational system that would produce citizen–orators for the Roman world, Quintilian enriched his treatise on education. His Institutio
Oratoria comprises a manual of rhetoric, a reader's guide to the best authors, and a handbook on the moral duties of the orator. Like Cicero, of whom he speaks with unbounded eulogy, Quintilian regards the broadly educated man as the fittest candidate for a course in rhetoric and for a role in public life. But Quintilian expanded the province of the ideal orator to include being of strong moral character as well, an idea Cicero left implied. Quintilian writes,

My aim then is the education of the perfect orator. The first essential for such a one is that he should be a good man, and consequently we demand of him not merely the possession of exceptional gifts of speech, but of all the excellences of character as well (I.Pr.9).

It is this emphasis on moral purpose as well as rhetorical skill that distinguishes Institutio Oratoria from all preceding rhetorics. Furthermore, Quintilian defines the study of rhetoric differently from those who came before him: he treats oratory as the end to which the entire mental and moral development of the student is to be directed. And he argues that children of both sexes must be educated in order to become well-educated parents, who, in turn, can teach their own children:

As regards parents, I should like to see them as highly educated as possible, and I do not restrict this remark to fathers alone. We are told that the eloquence of the Gracchi owed much to their mother Cornelia, whose letters even to-day testify to the cultivation of her style. Laelia, the daughter of Gaius Laelius, is said to have reproduced the elegance of her father's language in her own speech, while the oration delivered before the triumvirs by Hortensia, the daughter of Quintus Hortensius, is still read and not merely as a compliment to her sex (I.1.i.6).
Plato had talked in the *Republic* about equal educational opportunities for women, but his talk had been theoretical. Quintilian argues for the equal education—and provides proof of impressive results.

Quintilian dedicates his last book to the discipline of the whole man in his life beyond rhetorical studies: "my temerity is such that I shall essay to form my orator's character and to teach him his duties" (XII.Intr.4), and in this book, he accepts Marcus Cato's definition of the perfect orator:

"a good man, skilled in speaking" (vir bonus dicendi peritus). It is essential that the orator be free from vice, for eloquence, the fairest of all possessions, cannot consort with evil: "if the powers of eloquence serve only to lend arms to crime, there can be nothing more pernicious than eloquence to the public and private welfare alike" (XII.i.1).

According to Quintilian, then, the orator must devote his attention to the complete formation of his moral character and acquire a complete knowledge of all that is just and honorable. To do so, the orator must study wise sayings and noble deeds, especially those of all the great Romans. To the Roman way of thinking, the Greeks had excelled in moral precepts; the Romans excel in moral performances. Convinced that the purpose of education was to train citizens fully equipped in character, intellect, and all the high qualities of leadership, Quintilian provided an educational system for doing just that.
Could women become citizen-orators in the style of Cicero or by way of Quintilian's educational system? A particular point of Roman male pride seems to have been the deliberate exclusion of women from civil and public duties. Cicero reportedly contemplated with utter dismay a society which "included women in assemblies" and which allowed women "soldiery and magistracies and commands": "How great will be the misfortune of that city, in which women will assume the public duties of men" (Lactantius, Epitomes 33 [38] 1-5, ascribed to De Re Publica 4-5, qtd. in Hallett 8).

The popular ideal was of female domesticity: Domum servavit. Lanam fecit—"she kept up her household; she made wool." And the ideal persisted—despite the pragmatism permitting women to exercise leadership during the absence of men on military and governmental missions, despite enormous wealth and aristocratic indulgence. By the mid-fifth century BC, women were legally empowered to inherit, own, and bequeath property, yet any such transaction was to be done under the male guardianship. She belonged first of all to her father, and only secondly to her husband, keeping her property within the agnate.

But her autonomy was illusory, for even the most emancipated and self-assertive Roman woman lived in subjugation in comparison to the most retiring Roman male. She was expected to invest her economic and educational advantages into her home life. The Roman matron was expected to be domestically well-educated and legally
autonomous, yet, to use anthropological terminology, "structurally central" to her family—and devoted. In The Second Sex, Simone de Beauvoir writes:

Legally more enslaved than the Greek, the woman of Rome was in practice much more deeply integrated in society. At home she sat in the atrium, the center of the dwelling, instead of being hidden away in the gynaeceum; she directed the work of the slaves; she guided the education of the children, and frequently she influenced them up to a considerable age. She shared the labors and cares of her husband[;] she was regarded as co-owner of his property. The matron was called domina; she was mistress of the home, associate in religion—not the slave, but the companion of man (104-5).

Most scholarship develops the notion of domina. The hardy virtues of the Roman matron—combined with superior knowledge, refinement, and civilization—prevailed among the higher classes during the empire. Well-born Roman women, then, were interested in public affairs; they also played a crucial part in their children's education (as Quintilian attests) and in their children's marriage arrangements as well. Like the Greek matron, the Roman was oppressively busy managing her household and family, but she enjoyed a larger sphere of activity: she was often formally educated, and not being sequestered, she went out in public, pursuing social, business, and political affairs.

Upper-class women were often sufficiently cultivated and educated to be able to participate in the intellectual life of their male associates. Although little is known about precisely how young girls received their educations, we do know that some were tutored at home by their parents, while others, of all social classes, studied at the Forum. The story of Virginia
(whose father had mercifully slain her rather than turn her over to Appius Claudius) indicates that it was not unusual for the daughter of a lowly plebeian centurion to attend elementary school in the Forum. And Pliny the Younger, a senator and author active in government (late first, early second century AD) included the following in his portrait of a thirteen-year-old who died just before she was to be married:

How she loved her nurses, her preceptors, and her teachers, each for the service given her. She studied her books with diligence and understanding (Pliny Ep. 5.16.3).

But most descriptions of educated women are limited to those of the upper class. For instance, Pliny writes of his own wife's high intelligence and devotion to him, which together have "given her an interest in literature: she keeps copies of my works to read again and again and even learn by heart" (Letters 4.19). Plutarch describes Cornelia, wife of Pompey the Great, as charming beyond her youth and "well instructed in letters, in playing on the lyre, and in geometry, and she had been accustomed to listening to philosophical discourses with profit. In addition to this, she had a disposition free from all affectation and pedantic display, which such acquirements generally breed in women" (qtd. in Pompey 55).

Epictetus, who conducted his own school, reported that Roman women carried around copies of Plato's Republic as their feminist manifesto. Not all their educational accomplishments were appreciated. In Satire 6, for example, Juvenal (fl. AD 100)
berates the woman who tries to educate herself into the male sphere:

She is . . . more intolerable when she affects to play the Critick at Table, applauds the Genius of Virgil, and excuses poor Dido dying for Love. She quotes the Poets and compares them; Virgil she weighs in one Scale, and Homer in the other. The Grammarians are Fools to her, the Rhetoricians are struck dumb, the whole Company is mute, not even a Lawyer, a common Crier, not one of her Female Gossips, can put in a Syllable where she is; she comes down with such a Torrent of Words, that you would swear so many Baso[o]ns or Bells were ringing. . . . Such a lady . . . pretends to more than ordinary Learning and Eloquence [and wants] to be distinguished as a Philosopher . . . .

Let not the Wife of thy Bosom, that lies by thee, know any thing of the Art of Logick, how to come over you smartly with a short Enthymeme, or pretend to be perfect in History. I'll allow her to have some Taste of Books, but she should not understand too much; I hate a Woman that is always conning, and turning over her Grammar Rules like a Pedant, and placing her words exactly in Mood and Tense, who is for ever plaguing me with her old-fashioned verses that I know nothing of, and correcting her gossiping Companions for speaking a Word improperly, which a man would take no notice of; a Husband surely may be allowed to break Prisian's Head, without danger to his own (170-71).

Juvenal's Satire is no doubt exaggerated. But we may be sure that some contemporary thinkers were, at best, amused and, at worst threatened by the educated woman. Education was the first step for women who moved into the public sphere from the private one, the first step toward rhetorical consciousness.

In the shadow of female domesticity, some Roman women of the upper classes proved politically influential figures in the late republic and early empire. Often, though, their motherhood is foregrounded, and their influence is kept within the private
domain. A mother is, in short, the proverbial "iron hand in the velvet glove."

Perhaps the most famous of the historical Roman mothers is Cornelia, the mother of Tiberius and Gaius Gracchus (c. 100 BC), a woman renowned for her eloquence—and influence. The accomplished, bilingual daughter of Scipio Africanus, she devoted herself entirely to the education of her children. Mainly owing to her judicious training, her two sons became distinguished statesmen and orators. At a time when nature was still considered to be the primary influence on development (and although her sons had an impeccable bloodline), Cornelia proved that a scrupulous education was at least equally effective in the development of the citizen–orator. Her then-extant letters, models of composition, greatly impressed Cicero. In the Brutus, he writes: "We have read the letters of Cornelia, mother of the Gracchi; it appears that her sons were brought up not so much at their mother's breast as by her speech" (58.211). Thus, Cicero's ideal progymnasmata could begin at home.

But Cornelia is not the only mother who receives credit for her sons' accomplishments—and for the greatness of Rome. The historian Tacitus (AD 100) writes a retrospective account of positive maternal influence, the kind of influence that Quintilian, in his Institutio Oratoria, was hoping for. Tacitus tells us:

Every citizen's son, the son of a chaste mother, was from the beginning reared, not in the chamber of a purchased nurse, but in that mother's bosom and embrace,
and it was her special glory to study her home and devote herself to her children. . . . Thus it was, as tradition says, that the mothers of the Gracchi, of Caesar, of Augustus, Cornelia, Aurelia, Atia, directed their children's education and reared the greatest of sons (Dialogue 28).

The assumption that women of high birth were instrumental in affecting the course of Roman republican and imperial politics manifests itself frequently in ancient Roman male sources. And because the family was the basic political unit, a mother's structural centrality would furnish her with a power base. Still, it is nearly impossible to distinguish her actual from her imagined influence in political matters—unless we look at her actual primary participation. Besides being influential mothers, a few Roman women themselves became involved in public affairs. They participated in politics as women, not as influential mothers, during time of rapid change.

One of the very few Roman women to make a name for herself in Roman oratory is Hortensia, daughter of Cicero's oratorical rival, Quintus Hortensius. Unlike Aspasia who established a reputation for herself in rhetoric, Hortensia's foray into public speaking seems to have been a one-time effort. That her speech merited recording by her male compatriots suggests that hers was an "occasional" rather than professional performance, a public display of her talent on the strict understanding that it would not become a regular event. More charitable in his evaluation of the event, Edward E. Best, Jr. tells us that Hortensia "had interested herself in her father's profession to such a degree
that, even though women were not allowed to plead at the bar in Rome, she was able to argue the cause of the wives . . . " (203).

In 42 BC, the triumvirs had published an edict requiring 1,400 of the richest women to submit a valuation of their property, with severe penalties for concealment or undervaluation. A portion of these means would then be employed for the war effort. Already distressed by the proscription of their male relatives, the women were exasperated by this excessively burdensome tax. No man, however, dared plead their cause. After several futile attempts to plead with the female relatives of the triumvirs (Fulvia, wife of Antony, was especially rude to them), the women, as legend has it, forced their way into the Forum. There Hortensia faced the triumvirs and spoke in the name of women.

Her address, highly praised by Quintilian and "recorded" by second-century historian Appian (who wrote in Greek), seems much like a second-century rhetorical exercise. Nonetheless, her speech is worth examining in full, for her anti-war arguments echo those of the Greek literary women (Andromache, Lysistrata, for example) as well as prefigure those of more modern feminist speeches:

As befitted women of our rank addressing a petition to you, we had recourse to the ladies of your households; but having been treated as did not befit us, at the hands of Fulvia, we have been driven by her to the Forum. You have already deprived us of our fathers, our sons, our husbands, and our brothers, whom you accused of having wronged you; if you take away our property also, you reduce us to a condition unbefitting our birth, our manners, our sex. If we have done you wrong, as you
say our husbands have, proscribe us as you do them. But if we women have not voted any of you public enemies, have not torn down your houses, destroyed your army, or led another one against you; if we have not hindered you in obtaining offices and honours, why do we share the penalty when we did not share the guilt?

Why should we pay taxes when we have no part in the honours, the commands, the statecraft, for which you contend against each other with such harmful results? "Because this is a time of war," do you say? When have there not been wars, and when have taxes ever been imposed on women, who are exempted by their sex among all mankind? Our mothers did once rise superior to their sex and made contributions when you were in danger of losing the whole empire and the city itself through the conflict with the Carthaginians. But then they contributed voluntarily, not from their landed property, their fields, their dowries, or their houses, without which life is not possible to free women, but only from their own jewellery [sic], and even these not according to fixed valuation, not under fear of informers or accusers, not by force and violence, but what they themselves were willing to give. What alarm is there now for the empire or the country? Let war with the Gauls or the Parthians come, and we shall not be inferior to our mothers in zeal for the common safety; but for civil wars may we never contribute to Caesar or to Pompey. Neither Marius nor Cinna imposed taxes upon us. Nor did Sulla, who held despotic power in the state, do so, whereas you say that you are re-establishing the commonwealth (qtd. in Lefkowitz and Fant 207-8).

Hortensia's argument was successful, for the triumvirs reduced the number of women who were to submit while extending the decree to include all men of a certain income bracket. It is interesting to note, however, that she does not argue for women's equality under the law; in fact, it is women's legal inequality on which her argument rests.

In Memorable Deeds and Sayings, Hortensia's near-contemporary Valerius Maximus praises her in male terms:
[B]y bringing back her father's eloquence, she brought about the remission of the greater part of the tax. Quintus Hortensius lived again in the female line and breathed in his daughter's words. If any of her male descendants had wished to follow her strength, the great heritage of Hortensian eloquence would not have come to an end in a woman's actions (VII.3).

Thus, Hortensia is temporarily received into the male tradition of public oratory, of persuasive rhetoric—on male terms. Although the filiafocal society of the Romans could understand and condone her dalliance with rhetoric (after all, she was the daughter of an orator), Hortensia stands alone in her oratorical achievement, singular though it was.

As a group, elite Roman women did not follow Hortensia's example of participating in the public domain to advance feminist causes. Those few who did, received no praise. Clearly the daughterly devotion of Hortensia was more valued and memorable than womanly assertiveness. Valerius Maximus mentions two other women in connection with oratory, neither with the admiration he reserved for Hortensia:

We must be silent no longer about those women whom neither the condition of their nature nor the cloak of modesty could keep silent in the Forum or the courts.

Amasia Sentia, a defendant, pled her case before a great crowd of people and Lucius Titus, the praetor who presided over the court [77 BC]. She pursued every aspect of her defence diligently and boldly and was acquitted, almost unanimously, in a single hearing. Because she bore a man's spirit under the appearance of a woman, they called her Androgyne.

Gaia Afrania, the wife of the senator Licinius Buccio, a woman disposed to bring suits, always represented herself before the praetor: not because she had no advocates, but because her impudence was abundant. And so, by constantly plaguing the tribunals
with such barking as the Forum had seldom heard, she became the best-known example of women's litigiousness. As a result, to charge a woman with low morals, it is enough to call her "Gaia Afrania." She prolonged her life until Caesar's second consulship with Publius Servilius as his colleague; for it is better to record when such a monster died, rather than when it was born (8.3).

Other Roman authors mention Sempronia, who was later charged with conspiracy; Octavia, the wife of Antony, whose intervention in affairs of State was deemed beneficial and judicious; Fulvia, the formidable wife of Pompey, who, like Amasia Sentia, was considered "mannelish"; Julia, daughter of Caesar and wife of Pompey, who kept the two leaders on good terms; and Cornelia, mother of the Gracchi. These are just a few of the women whose names are linked with politics. But if their domain of persuasion included public oratory, they go unmentioned in the records.

Because the Romans clung to the ideal of the domina, of the strong privatized woman, they often reacted with perplexity at the women who would pursue a public life, be it intellectual or political. Unlike the very few Greek women who found acceptance and admiration in the public domain, no Roman woman seems to have succeeded. In fact, Hortensia's speech works more to reproduce and affirm the oppression of her reality than it does to affect the public good. For most women of antiquity, women's sphere was defined by men, a definition accepted as well as maintained by men and women alike. Woman's sphere has traditionally been a private one, a world of social and domestic affairs not conducive to the study or practice of rhetoric.
CHAPTER III

PAGAN ROOTS, MEDIEVAL FLOWERING:

WOMEN'S CONTINUED, "NATURAL" SUBORDINATION

[I]t was for the citizens to decide after which of the two deities they wished to name their city. . . , for in those days the women also took part in public deliberations. The men voted for Neptune, the women for Minerva, and since there was one more woman, Minerva won out. Neptune was angry at this, and the sea flooded the entire Athenian territory. To appease the god's wrath, the citizens imposed a threefold punishment on their women: they should lose their right of suffrage, their children and they themselves should no longer bear the title of Athenians.

Saint Augustine
The City of God

Introduction

From antiquity through the Middle Ages, feminine forces remained intact but subordinate. Religion gradually evolved from the matriarchal, Earth-goddess cults of prehistoric Greece to the fervent Mariolatry of Medieval Europe; even so, religion and culture remained masculine dominions. Not until the Middle Ages, not until Julian of Norwich and Hildegard of Bingen, would women attempt to reconstitute any kind of feminine power. Woman's place remained secondary to man's; woman's subordination in the
in the "order of nature" was the accepted theological and cultural view.

In this chapter, I will elucidate the force of the Christian church on women's continual subjection and subservience as well as on women's isolation from rhetorical activity. A look at male-produced female literary characters reveals woman in extreme forms (temptress v. saint); such representation bore no direct influence on the lives of actual women. After examining medieval rhetorical theory, which was also informed by Christianity, I will end this chapter with an account of the few women who, bolstered by their Christian faith, managed to break their silence and participate in the ever-expanding rhetorical tradition.

Medieval Cultural Dynamics

Inextricably interlaced with society, the Church stimulated the Christian flowering of a medieval culture with pagan roots. The writings of the Beowulf and Pearl poets, of Malory, of Chaucer, of the hagiographers, and of literary and religious scholars indicate an effort to bring the past into equilibrium with the present, a practice Saint Augustine called "taking the gold out of Egypt." Whether those writers found themselves balancing pre-Christian tracts from the Old Testament, from philosophy, or from politics, they attempted to harmonize such writings with their own Christian values.

Religious writings, too, had to be re-presented for contemporary tastes. In many instances, the Old Testament
appeared immoral or contrary to new Christian doctrines and ethics, so Christian writers, Saint Ambrose and Saint Augustine for example, created interpretations of fixed Biblical texts that complemented their contemporary values. As Augustine phrased it, hermeneutics or exegesis allowed Christians to take the gold out of pagan cultures and convert it to their own use. In Christian Doctrine, he writes:

[All the teachings of the pagans [the classics] contain not only simulated and superstitious imaginings . . ., which each one of us leaving the society of pagans under the leadership of Christ ought to abominate and avoid, but also liberal disciplines more suited to the uses of truth, and some most useful precepts concerning morals. Even some truths concerning the worship of one God are discovered among them. These are, as it were, their gold and silver . . . . [And] [W]hen the Christian separates himself in spirit from their miserable society, he should take this treasure with him for the just use of teaching the gospel (75).

Augustine is just one of many medieval writers who converted the pagan past, including pre-Christian notions of womanhood, into fuel for the Church. In fact, early Christian writings were shaped by a struggle between opposing groups over the equality of women.

In theory, the original Christian vision allowed full citizenship to all orthodox and obedient believers—of both sexes: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:28); "And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy . . ." (Acts 2:17 f.).
Christ himself had preached that the souls of men and women were equal.

But because the Church fathers had inherited the literary traditions of classical paganism, of ancient Israel, and of primitive Christianity, they did not always accord such espoused equality and opportunity to women. Their sources—the Old Testament, Greek and Roman philosophy and law—took for granted women's inherent inferiority. In medieval intellectual circles, for example, Aristotle’s notions about woman were firmly rooted: woman’s rational capacities were inferior to man’s and her inferior reason was the result of her more feeble body; her weaker intelligence affected her moral behavior and justified her subjection to men. Aristotle went so far as to offer biological explanations and justifications for the social and cultural inequalities between men and women: woman was a defective man. Hence, intellectual activity, that highest human function, was not appropriate for women.

But other Church fathers argued that women could attain equality with men. To those who held fast to the intrinsic inequality of men and women, they countered that a woman who surrendered to the Church ungendered herself and became a man, hence an equal. Saint Jerome writes that "as long as woman is for birth and children, she is different from man as body is from soul. But if she wishes to serve Christ more than the world, then she will cease to be a woman and will be called man" (qtd. in Bullough 498). Saint Ambrose expresses a similar idea: "she who
does not believe is a woman and should be designated by the name of her bodily sex, whereas she who believes progresses to complete manhood, to the measure of the adulthood of Christ. She then does without worldly name, gender of body, youthful seductiveness, and garrulousness of old age" (qtd. in Bullough 498).

Saint Paul was ambivalent about the issue of male-female equality. Although he occasionally repeated Christ's emphasis on the equal value of women's souls, he more often stressed women's inferiority, in keeping with the social conditions of his own day. Like many Christians, he used the Old Testament story of Eve to rationalize women's secondary status, an integral part of Pauline doctrine. Paul preached that in the private and public sphere "the head of every man is Christ, the head of a woman is her husband" (I Cor. 11:3). And as for woman's participation in the Christian church, he writes:

Let a woman learn in silence with all submissiveness. I permit no woman to teach or to have authority over men; she is to keep silent. For Adam was formed first, then Eve; and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor. Yet woman will be saved through bearing children, if she continues in faith and love and holiness, with modesty (I Tim. 2:11-15).

Thus, in the place of genuine equal rights and equal roles for women, mainstream Christianity preached an ethic of equality for all people insofar as they could be viewed as men and pseudo-men, but that equality was to be evidenced only "in Christ," not in the real world.
This immeasurable power of the medieval Church influenced every cultural feature and social practice and is the fundamental feature that distinguishes the Middle Ages from earlier and later periods of history. The prevailing cultural attitudes considered women, as the descendents of Eve, intellectually and emotionally inferior to men and thus incapable of full participation in Church and society. So although the Church initially espoused equality between men and women, few women actually stood equal in the eyes of the Church fathers (AD 300-400) or in the eyes of patriarchal society.

Woman's Place in Medieval Society: Literary and Historical

Since all medieval literature, liturgical and secular alike, was colored by the Church, the medieval woman pales in comparison to medieval man, spiritually, morally, and intellectually. And because we have rarely questioned its historical validity, our image of the Middle Ages has been chiefly informed by such surviving literature. We read about fierce and brave female women—saints, Grendel's mother, and warriors—and about chaste and submissive Griseldas and Pearls, and about wily Morgans and Judiths. Yet all these medieval women are secondary characters. While men play leading roles in the stage-play of medieval literature, woman serves, at best as a supporting actress and, at worst, as an extra, a prop, even scenery. In no case was the female character envisioned as an autonomous woman—or even human.
Judith, a seemingly realistic character in an Old English poem by the same name, is drawn from the deuterocanonical narrative of the Old Testament. Although she might seem to be the subject of her own action, Judith is, actually, the object of the male gaze. This Jewish woman is endowed with all the features most admired by the Anglo-Saxon man: she is white and shining, with curly hair; she is noble and holy, but courageous; and above all, she is wise. In fact, she is one of the few women in medieval literature granted God's gift of wisdom, so her story is often interpreted along the lines of a saint's life.

Although the drinking scene, the prayer scene, and the beheading scene are described with gusto and exuberance, the continual references to Judith as a "fairy beauty," a "holy virgin," a "radiant woman" about to be stained with "pollution and foulness," work only to disturb the verisimilitude of the story; thus it is that Judith, like most of the women in medieval literature, is one-dimensional. Furthermore, despite the fact that she serves as God's instrument, she serves as no kind of venerable model for contemporary women, for regardless of her loyalties or the color of her cause, her methods are of no more merit than those of the conniving temptress, Morgan le Fay: she slips into the enemy camp, seduces her foe, and then slits his throat.

In the romance or lai, heroines are often supercilious, haughty, even cruel when they grant valiant warriors the privilege of serving them. For example, in Cretiene de Troyes's "Knight of
the Cart," Guenevere insists that Lancelot, in affirmation of his love, must without a moment's pause choose to debase and disgrace himself by riding in a cart. In Chaucer's "Franklin's Tale," the good wife Dorigen challenges her would-be lover to "remove all the rocks, stone by stone" from the coast of Brittany. And the privilege of serving these courtly ladies of romances leads to the right to have sex with them. Despite their virtue and charm and despite their their worship, they are commodities for males.

The medieval genre of the fabliau (a bawdy, usually misogynous tale) provides perhaps the least sophisticated, the basest, and the most conspicuous secular view of woman. In striking contrast to legends and romances, the fabliau is not chivalric and courtly, but rather bourgeois and rough, its women deceitful and faithless. In the fabliau, women are universally pictured as deceivers, sure to be unfaithful to their husbands if given at least a chance. When the women are discovered in flagrante delicto, they are saved not only by their own cleverness but by their husband's gullibility as well.

The anonymous "Dame Sirith" (c. 1200) is a fabliau of a cunning procuress—a story that most women would willingly let die, for few have found it a congenial story. Though very short (450 ll.), "Dame Sirith" has all the stock characters and structural elements of the genre. Knowing that Dame Margerit's old jealous husband was out of town, the clever student Wilekin persuades that soon-to-be-obliging Dame that he loves her. He then visits the resourceful Dame Sirith to work out the details
necessary to bring his scheme to fruition. Dame Sirith then goes to Margeri and tells her that she will be turned into a weeping dog if she refuses a student's advances:

    God almighty be thy help
    that thou will be neither bitch nor welp!
    Dear dame, if any clerk
    Asks that you make love
    I advise you to grant his wish
    And become his lover soon (371–76 [all modernizations in this chapter are my own]).

In short, Margeri must not refuse the next clerk who propositions her; otherwise, she will be transformed into a weeping bitch. So, she gratifies the canny Wilekin when next they meet. True to the fabliau tradition, Margeri will be saved by her amoral ingenuity. And Dame Sirith, like Chaucer's Pandarus, will derive great vicarious pleasure from the lovemaking, besides earning a living. Fabliaux portray women as ever-obliging and obligated to men.

Chaucer, too, demonstrates his skill with the fabliau form, in tales that invariably put women in a bad light, despite the various motivations of his story tellers. In "The Miller's Tale," Alison is described as having a "lecherous eye" and being "winsome for the fabliau. The women in "The Reeve's Tale" are deemed possessions of the Reeve, for when they are dabauched (raped) by the smarty students, they are serving merely as instruments of revenue. That the plot line of "The Merchant's Tale" is also that of a fabliau—with an ever-deceiving and quick-witted wife—comes as no surprise after the pronouncement of the merchant in the prologue of his tale. A popular genre during the Middle Ages, the
fabliau offered only a distorted picture of woman, one that did nothing to enhance her role in society and culture.

Like the fabliau, the literature of Mariolatry so pervasive during this time did nothing to advance or enhance the realistic role of women. The Cult of the Blessed Virgin captivated the Church of the Middle Ages (though it was by no means the invention of medieval popes; on the contrary, its heritage was the Four Gospels). Implicit in the Cult of the Blessed Virgin is the doctrine of women's inferiority, for no mere woman can ever match Mary's goodness. Virginity was enshrined. A central theme in the N-Town Cycle of Corpus Christi Plays is the perfection of Mary's life, a perfection unattainable by even the least inferior of earthly virgins or devout wives. Hers was the Immaculate Conception, for she had been conceived free of original sin, and her son's birth was the Virgin Birth. The perpetual comparison between fallen Eve (first sinner and mother of murder) and elevated Mary serves only to aggravate the lasting, unrealistic, and unfair virgin-whore dichotomy of womanhood.

Medieval literature abounds with would-be Virgin Marys. Just as Mary served as handmaiden to the early Church and is eternally perceived as secondary to her Lord, these would-be Virgin Marys subordinated themselves either to the patriarchy of the church or of their men. The Pearl poet writes of his beautiful, flawless Pearl, who comes to him in a dream and implores him to think not of her but of his own soul and the Everlasting. The three aristocratic women for whom the Ancrene Wisse was written have
withdrawn from secular life in order to serve better the Lord and
nourish their souls. Chaucer's Man of Law tells of the perfectly
steadfast Lady Constance, who in the face of uncertainty, danger,
and horror, behaves as beseeming a daughter of the Holy Church.
And Chaucer's Clerk tells of the long-suffering, virtuous
Griselda, who withstands the loss of her children, her marriage,
and her kingdom as a test of her loyalty to and love for her
husband, the king.

The literature of the Middle Ages offers many stories of
women; unfortunately, all of them were composed by men, and none
seem to capture the essence of woman as half of humankind. A
woman is either an attractive snare and source of temptation,
inherently weaker than and inferior to man, or she is untouchable
perfection. Never is she a human being. The exaggerated, double-
vision of literary women could not be an accurate reflection of
the historical moment. However, the reduced circumstances of
those literary characters and the lack of respect accorded most of
them exemplify long-established cultural practices that secluded,
eluded, and muted women—as a group, but not as individuals.

The subordinate roles of female literary characters
paralleled the secondary place of historical women, whose place in
the intellectual sphere is best understood in the context of their
place in overall society. Medieval society, with its wars,
territorial struggles, and violence, seems particularly hostile to
the exercise of female initiative and power—especially when power
is equated with public authority, with the getting and spending of
legitimated and sanctioned power. This traditional and limited view of woman's power leaves her largely powerless and thus marginal. Indeed, the prevailing cultural attitudes of the Middle Ages considered women descendants of Eve, incapable of wielding authority effectively. Except for the fewest queens, women could not vote or run for public office, nor could they participate fully in other power structures such as the Church, the military, or the guilds.

Yet medieval women's ascendancy in cultural affairs was far from inconsequential: many historical medieval women did indeed wield great personal power. Feudalism, as a system of private jurisdictions, bound power to landed property; it permitted both inheritance and administration of feudal property by women. Inheritance by women often suited the needs of the great landholding families, as their unremitting efforts to secure such rights for their female members attest. Among the nobility and landowners, the men were often away at wars, and their women were left in charge. Thus, women ran estates as large as towns that encompassed as many and as varied tasks. In addition, women presided over the court, and took charge of the vassal services due the lord. She was the lord—albeit in his name rather than her own—unless widowed and without male children.

But as head of a household, a widow enjoyed extensive rights and participated more actively in the public community than she could as a dame. Married women labored under the most severe legal handicaps because peasant economy and society gave their
husbands, as heads of households, the fullest rights—a system that worked to the advantage of widows. Given the general precariousness of human life, female heads of families were certainly numerous in the Middle Ages, but since women, regardless of their situation, were exempt from personal taxes, it is impossible to estimate their numbers.

English peasant women were not isolated from the public world either; they owned land, appeared in court, and worked in the marketplace. And the daily life, the life of the society at home, was always under the direction of women, noble and peasant alike. Still, women's access to public power was limited by both their gender and their position in the household. Common law and customary law alike barred married women from exercising the legal and landholding rights accorded men. Yet, resourceful women found ways into public life. In "Citizenship and Gender: Women's Political Status in Northern Medieval Cities," Martha C. Howell writes that

[w]omen of all classes in late medieval cities . . . were active and visible participants in the public realm . . . . In this public realm women made and sold textiles, clothing, beer, bread, pottery, and other goods used both locally and abroad. They ran taverns and inns; they belonged to guilds and confraternities; they borrowed and lent money; they took oaths; they led religious movements; they ran charities; they joined popular political demonstrations; they sued and were sued; they learned and taught reading, writing, and arithmetic; they delivered babies for pay; and they dispensed medicine and medical advice (37).

But women's presence in the public sphere did not preclude their subordination to men. Men controlled the crafts and guilds to
which women could belong. Men codified the law that permitted women entry into public affairs and protected their property. Men ran the Church, the institution of learning and religion. Men were the legal heads of households. Men also monopolized politics. Men alone made, judged, and executed law; men alone voted; men alone held public office, elective or appointive, as mayor, alderman, judge, or bailiff.

In such conditions, it was obviously rare for a woman to be able to make her public presence felt. But some strong women prevailed, primarily women associated with the Church. Most prominent among puissant medieval women are the abbesses, who exercised analogous temporal as well as spiritual jurisdiction over great territories, and always in their own right, in virtue of their office. Not only did some religious women have power, they had authority. And authority is the key to power, for it is a socially sanctioned "right" to make decisions binding on others. Besides administrators, other religious women actuated influence as well, by directing, from their cells, the spiritual lives of others or by evangelizing among the masses. During the medieval period, only women affiliated with the Church could take themselves seriously enough and be taken seriously enough to command intellectual and social leadership, for the Church defined the intellectual base for medieval culture.
The Medieval Rhetorical Tradition

Women's contributions and participation in the intellectual life of the Church call to mind the full spectrum of intellectual activity that included rhetoric. Guiding all such intellectual activity, including medieval rhetorical theory and practices, was of course the Church. So following the pattern of medieval cultural principles, rhetoric found itself to be a transmutation of Roman principles in Christian garb.

Saint Augustine of Hippo (c. AD 396) cut short a brilliant secular career as a rhetorician to take up the Christian ministry, and he soon formulated what became the definitive Christian apologia for the study of pagan rhetoric, De doctrina christiana. His broad principles transcended pagan oratorical goals and offered valuable suggestions to the Christian writer and preacher, further evidence of his ability to appropriate "Egyptian gold." Saint Augustine borrowed from Cicero three aims for the (Christian) teacher: to teach, to delight, and to move his audience. These aims were incorporated into the medieval theory of preaching, forma praedicandi, which provided rules and precepts of logic for the comparatively unshaped, less formal, almost conversational and homely style of speaking theretofore used by the Church.

Medieval rhetoric to a great extent became a series of adaptations of ancient works to particular needs of the times, with applications to problems of preaching, letter-writing, and verse-writing. Medieval rhetoricians relied on the Aristotelian
tradition, especially the relation of dialectic to scholastic disputatio. They also tapped the grammatical tradition, based on the work of Donatus and Horace, which not only emphasized syntax and expanded the grammar into the stylistic matter of the tropes and figures but also laid down specific advice to writers about how to go about the composition of poetry. Following the tradition of Quintilian's Institutio oratoria, Geoffrey of Vinsauf's preceptive Poetria nova bridged the gap between rhetoric and ancient grammar.

_hArs dictaminis_, the art of letter-writing is a truly medieval invention, for before the Middle Ages only speaking was emphasized. By the fourth century, letters had become related to informal discourse; therefore, the letter became a type of "conversation," one based on Ciceronian rhetorical ideas. The primary concern in successful letter-writing was the salutation to the intended recipient, for astute audience awareness would guide the tone of the entire letter, with consequences for the letter writer and the writer's language.

Insofar as rhetoric deals with a basic and essential social ability—the power to speak or to write—it has been closely related to education since antiquity. The classical educational program outlasted the culture that gave it birth, transmitting the practices directly into the Middle Ages, practices that continued to exclude women. Advanced learning was necessary for neither marriage nor the convent, the traditional expectations for women. And since the world of the university was beyond the reach of all
women, those who insisted on seeking an education could best be
served by joining an intellectual convent. In the better convent
schools, women learned the trivium (rhetoric, logic, and grammar),
Holy Scripture, the Fathers, and music. Because of Church-
supported educational opportunities, nearly all the medieval women
in rhetoric were convent-educated; all of them were religious
women.

Veiled Voices: Women in the Medieval Rhetorical Tradition

The Church Fathers pronounced pagan rhetoric as ineffectual
so far as Christian persuasion went, for successful evangelism
depended on the grace of God. In Acts 20:32, Paul tells his
hearers that God's grace is the gift that enables them to
comprehend the world of God transmitted through a human speaker:
"And now I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which
is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all
those who are sanctified." In other words, the message itself has
divine power.

Saint Augustine, too, espoused the importance of the message
itself rather than a purposeful arrangement or delivery. The
individuality of each hearer informs the received message, for
each hearer must balance the things she hears against what
Augustine calls "interior truth," which is already resident in the
person who hears the words of another. In other words, the
message is more important that the medium.
In Rhetoric in the Middle Ages, James J. Murphy reflects upon the communication theory of the Church Fathers:

[Their] whole congeries of ideas has enormous psychological and philosophical implications. It places a great stress upon individual judgment. It encourages private interpretation of messages received. It states flatly that rhetors do not persuade, but that hearers move themselves; that teachers do not teach, but instead that learners learn (289).

For the medieval women who participated in rhetoric, Murphy's news is good news. Excluded from classical university education and hence from rhetorical training, inexperienced in public life and the expectations of an audience, most educated women took nontraditional (i.e., feminine) rhetorical routes.

Known only through the two texts of her singular, visionary experience, Julian of Norwich (1343-1415) has emerged as an outstanding theological writer of the Church. Despite the originality of her mystical expression, Revelation of Divine Love, she rightfully joins in the established tradition of religious mysticism in England and in vernacular English writings. Yet her religious disclosures take her further than membership in that tradition: the understanding, interpretation, and precise recording of her mystical revelations entitles her to join the ranks of Christian rhetors (Augustine's teachers, preachers, and movers).

Paul and Augustine had laid the groundwork for Julian, implicitly validating the visionary medium and explicitly supporting individualistic interpretations such as Julian's. Her mystical experiences, five hours of dramatic visions, left her
permanently affected. According to her compelling accounts, she was stricken with a severe illness that peaked (on May 13, 1373) in an intensified visual experience, a cascade of sixteen showings centering on the active figure of Christ, with the silent and chaste figure of Mary playing a smaller but crucial role.

Her initial recording is little more than a simple transcription of her showings, but her second, the "long" version of her work, is a much fuller account of that same experience. The culmination of nearly two decades of meditation and reflection, the longer version reveals her deeper understanding and further insights into the meaning and significance of those showings. Following Augustine's injunction, Julian had used those intervening years to concentrate on improving her knowledge and interpretation of the Scripture and hence to better understand God's message to her.

By all accounts but her own, Julian was well educated. Her most recent editors, Edmund Colledge and James Walsh, were led to the "inescapable conclusion" that Julian had been formally educated even before she began to compose the short text (I.43). The editors go on to write that "beyond any doubt,"

young Julian had received an exceptionally good grounding in Latin, in Scripture and in the liberal arts, and that thereafter she was able and permitted to read widely in Latin and vernacular spiritual classics. . . . She shows knowledge of such great masters as Augustine and Gregory; and she seems to have become deeply influenced, as she composed the "second edition" of the long text, by William of St. Thierry, not only through his *Golden Epistle*, but also by other of his works, in her day known only in learned circles. Furthermore, her writing, in the long text especially,
constantly displays remarkable congruity of both thought and language with contemporary English writings: notably *The Treatise of Perfection of the Sons of God*, *The Cloud of Unknowing* and *The Scale of Perfection* and and their ancillary treatises, and Chaucer's *Boethius* (44-45).

Despite her display of scholarly, spiritual, and intellectual gifts, Julian displays the humility *topos*, introducing herself (in the short text) with typical female self-deprecation: "But God forbid that you should say or take it that I am a teacher, for I mean nought so, no I meant never so; for I am a woman, ignorant, feeble, and frail" (Colledge and Walsh vi.40-42 [all quotations are taken from this edition of Julian's work; the modernizations are my own]). Her awareness of Pauline doctrine, that women should not teach, is followed by an *apologia* for her instructional writings: "Except that I am a woman, should I not tell you the goodness of God, since I saw during that time what his will is, and that it should be known?" (vi.46-48). She makes clear that she is not the teacher, but that "Jesus . . . is teacher of all" (vi.51-51). Like many women in rhetoric, Julian is humble—yet resolute.

A rhetorical precept of great importance in the development of *ars praedicandi* was rhetorical judgment: a distinction between levels of audience capability. Christ himself had used the parable, a narrative followed by a moral lesson, for it was not given to all men to know his message directly: "with many such parables he spoke the word to them as they were able to hear it; he did not speak to them without a parable, but privately to his own disciples he explained everything" (Mark 4:33-34). Thus, even
Christ resorted to audience analysis and gauged his speech accordingly. Even the first Christians realized that astute audience analysis would lead to the successful dissemination of their beliefs. And Julian followed in that tradition.

Julian breaks through the long history of feminine silence. In fact, that breakthrough may be her greatest contribution to rhetorical theory and practice: she wrote as a woman to other women. Probably convent-educated herself, Julian would have been well aware of the far-from-impressive intellectual standard of nuns. Classical Latin was beyond the reach of most; reading and writing, of many. Medieval audiences could be divided crudely into the learned and the unlearned. So Julian analyzed her audience and presented herself and her information accordingly, but most important of all, she wrote in the vernacular, and thereby reached an audience that had theretofore been neglected.

But Julian's decision to write both her versions, her immediate vision and her re-vision, in her native tongue was influential in yet another way: she provided an early and masterful example of vernacular prose. Like the "Ancrene Wisse" and the Katherine Group of writings, Julian's homiletic and devotional writings helped keep English prose alive during the years following the Norman Conquest, when French became the official language and, with Latin, threatened to squeeze out English entirely. The languages of government, religion, education, and power, Latin and French thwarted the religious educations of women.
Ultimately at complete ease, both about being a woman and about exercising authority in her role as interpreter of the divine, Julian of Norwich was respected for her individualistic piety and influence. Her treatise breathes warmth and humanity as well as the love of God she was so eager to share with others. In fact, in her delicate balance of simple—not highly "rhetorical"—form (forma) and profound substance (materia), she carried lightly a remarkably wide theological learning. She often translates the scriptures directly from Latin, demonstrating to a learned (secondary) audience her erudition, yet she is ever mindful of her primary, unlettered audience. In the short text, she translates Latin syntax to write: "Such pains I saw that all I can tell or say is too little, for it may not [all] be told, but after the saving of St. Paul, each soul should feel Christ Jesus in him" (x. 23–26).

And her arguments are so carefully wrought, seemingly simple, and easily followed, that they belie her rhetorical sophistication—except to the knowing. In her long text, she finely tunes her original argument regarding sin in order to give it both rhetorical and theological precision:

[proposition] And God showed that sin shall be no shame, but rather worship to man,
[reason] for to right every sin is to answer a pain with truth, every sin made right by the same soul is blessed by love,
[proof of the reason] It is a grievous time when diverse sins are punished with diverse pains. But those sins made right will be rewarded for their victories with diverse joys in heaven, after those sins have been painful and sorrowful to the soul on earth.
[embellishment] For the soul that shall come to heaven
is so precious to God and the place so worshipful that the goodness of God suffers never that soul to sin, for finally that soul shall come there. [conclusion] But what sinners they are that shall be rewarded is made known by the Holy Church on earth and also in heaven by upward bound prayers (xxxviii.1-12).

Julian then goes on to amplify her conclusion with the exemplum of Mary Magdelene, whose shame, like that of all sinners, lasted only from the time of its commission until her forgiveness. She was forgiven because she asked to be forgiven: she was sorry, and she knew that Christ believed her sorrow. Sin is not shameful; it is the wellspring of the divine compassion, the only route to forgiveness and to eventual heavenly reward.

Although she would not expect her audience to appreciate the full scope of her rhetorical ability, Julian could rely on them to recognize her Biblical sources: "In thee, O Lord, do I seek refuge; let me never be put to shame; in thy righteousness deliver me! / Incline thy ear to me, rescue me speedily! Be thou a rock of refuge for me, a strong fortress to save me!" (Psalms 31:1-2).

The ancient authority of the Psalms are reiterated in the New Testament to support justification by faith: "Blessed are those whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered; / blessed is the man against whom the Lord will not reckon his sin" (Romans 4:7-8). Reverberating in her argument is Luke 15:7,10: "Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance. . . . I tell you, there is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents." Such embedded
quotations are common to this prose style and are not an invention of Julian's. Yet she uses them especially effectively.

Saint Augustine posited that conversion is an act of the Holy Spirit in which eloquence has no role, for he knew that the rhetor's ethos carried greater weight than his eloquence (De doctrina christiana 4.27,59). As every rhetorician knows, ethos plays an integral part of audience awareness and ultimate rhetorical success. Hence, Julian's attention to her projected ethos is especially impressive. She had to consider those in her audience who were uneducated yet learned in the Scriptures (through the liturgy and daily readings during meals). Devotional concerns then, as now, knew no class, and many women from the lower echelons were learned in their Bible, knowing much of it by heart. And because devotional concerns were not a totally feminine domain, Julian had to consider the men in her audience as well.

In her initial version, she presented herself as a devout Christian woman with slow-burning religious fervor—validated by the Holy Spirit. Yet she evinces twinges of disquietude. She assures her audience that although she wants to share the significance of her showings, she is not presumptuously purveying herself as a female teacher. Thereby, she takes care not to alienate any of her audience, particularly the males. Though unsure of the potential of her showings, Julian is more assertive initially. She needs to convince her audience of her worth as a medium. Her desire to share Christ's passion is "with devotion"
and "great feeling" (1.8). She seems anxious for her auditors to believe that "[i]n this blessed revelation [Julian] was truly taught" (xx.34). As Alain de Lille had prescribed, she uses the humility topos solely to gain the goodwill and then move her auditors more effectively. Yet Julian uses her humility to her advantage, better to secure goodwill and then moralize to her auditors.

After spending years reflecting on her visions, Julian became completely comfortable as a spokeswoman for Christianity. Her later text—the re-vision—reveals a woman so confident in the significance and application of her showings that she no longer has to defend herself as a worthy medium. In fact, she includes no apology for her sex or for her purpose. The original would-be moralizer fades away in the later, more polished text: as Augustine would have it, the message overshadows the medium. Julian's perception of a oneness (rather than her original rivalry) with all humanity manifests itself in her use of first-person plural pronouns: she has completely identified with her audience. In the second version, she writes:

For I saw full truly that all our endless friendship, our stead, our life and our being is in God. For that same endless goodness that keeps us when we / sin keeps us from perishing, that same endless goodness continually entreats peace against our wrath and our contrary falling, and makes us see our need with true awe, [and] mightily seek God’s forgiveness, [and to have a] gracious desire of our salvation. For we may not be blessedly saved until we are verily in peace and in love, for that is our salvation (49.23-30).
Julian's *Revelations of Divine Love* traces the process whereby she experienced a detachment from her self and a union with God. Just as Jesus Christ had established kinship with humankind by dying on the cross as a man, Julian wanted to unite with Christ by experiencing the passion. In her first telling of her showings, her mysticism is personal; her union with Christ, personal too. But her retelling strikes a universal appeal, a oneness with humanity, that is actually much more in keeping with the Christian vision.

In England, Julian's *Revelations* has had long-term influence as a classic of English piety, establishing as it did a female tradition of religious visionary literature. Participating in the Christian movement seeking simplicity in preaching, Julian demonstrates superior literary skills marked by restraint that serves to underline the sublimity of her feelings; she also displays superior rhetorical skills colored with balance, serenity, and compassion. In perhaps her most eloquent theological passage, she writes:

> Love and reverence [paradoxical oppositio] are brothers [personification---expolitio], and they are rooted in us by the goodness of our maker, and they shall never be taken from us without end. We have the nature to love, and we have the grace to love; and we have the nature to revere, and we have the grace to revere [initial and medial repetitio]. It belongs to the Lord and to the Father to be revered, as it belongs to the Holy Spirit to be loved; and it belongs to us that are his servants and his children to revere him as Lord and Father, as it belongs to us to love him for the Holy Spirit [contentio used for affirmation]. And this reverence and love are not / both in one, but they are two in property and in working, and neither of them may be had without other [distributio throughout] (74.20-29).
Julian is truly eloquent. To her singular purpose, she effectively adapts literary devices to accomplish what few of her age—and no other English woman—had been able to do: in English, she employed rhetoric to render seemingly intractable matter, the process of her visions and locutions, into beautifully balanced and rhythmic prose harmonious with her thought and with her carefully structured rhetorical argument. The features of her prose are not only distinctly individualistic in their approach but universal in their vision. And the sophistication of her rhetorical technique, her artful use of Biblical sources and exempla, the thoughtfully constructed ethos, and her estimation of her audience, all work together to enhance and inform her cogent theological method.

Julian of Norwich was not the only woman to make a name for herself in English letters, however. During the twelfth through fourteenth centuries, when Latin and Norman-French displaced English prose, when English was used only for preaching and devotion, Margery Kempe (1373–c.1439) gave voice to a largely silent and unsung force, the voice of the uneducated woman. Born at about the time of Julian’s showings, the two women eventually were to meet; the younger Margery goes to the authority to discuss her visions. In the third-person, Margery describes her visit to Julian:

Then she was bid by our Lord to go to an anchoress in the same city, named Dame Julian. And so she did and showed her the grace that God put into her soul, of compunction, contrition, sweetness and devotion,
compassion with holy meditation and high contemplation, and full many holy speeches and revelations, which she showed the anchoress to find out if there were any deceit in them, for the anchoress was expert in such things, and could give good counsel.

The anchoress, hearing the marvelous goodness of our Lord, thanked God with all her heart for his visits, counseling this creature [Margery] to be obedient to the will of our Lord God and to fulfill with all her might whatever he put in her soul, if it were not against the worship of God, and profit of her fellow Christians, for if it were, then it were not the moving of a good spirit, but rather of an evil spirit. . . .

Much was the holy dalliance that the anchoress and this creature had by communing in the love of Our Lord Jesus Christ the many days that they were together (ch. 18, 20b [all the passages are taken from the Butler-Bowdon edition of her work; the modernizations are my own]).

Margery's testimony about seeking Julian's spiritual guidance is particularly convincing since it echoes Julian's own language as well as thought. Like Julian, Margery was a mystic who had communicated with God and who demonstrated typical late medieval longing for the Passion. And like Julian, she was a woman writing prose in the vernacular—a practice unheard of during a time when vernacular prose was written down only to save souls or improve morals (for instance, Chaucer's "Tale of Melibee"); Margery is both saving souls and improving morals with her prose. Verse, of course, was another matter.

But unlike anchorite Julian (a religious recluse), the lively and gregarious Margery traveled widely—sometimes to the embarrassment of her traveling companions. And unlike the serious, erudite Julian, well-born Margery seems not to have instruction in any but the most rudimentary of Latin and more
surprisingly, none in French. According to the personal accounts
of both women, Julian and Margery were illiterate, "knew no
letters," and therefore made use of amanuenses. Neither woman
acknowledged receiving conventional training in Latin rhetoric or
composition. In both cases, these women documented their mystical
experiences approximately twenty years after the fact. And both
writers had the same avowed goal: to help others to achieve
greater knowledge and appreciation of God's ways through
understanding. Together these women are the most prominent female
authors of Middle English devotional prose.

The Book of Margery Kempe, written early in the fifteenth
century and neglected for five hundred years, strikes interest
above and beyond its place in early vernacular prose and in the
evangelical (soul-saving) tradition. Of course, any document from
the Middle Ages is of historical interest, and her Book may well
be the earliest extant large-scale prose narrative known to have
been written in English. Scholars consider Margery's narrative
prose a link between eras, a link forged by the woman-centered
devotional writings for female recluses and by anchoresses. These
women, including Julian and Margery, were from the Norfolk area,
an area that seems to have led the way in the civic revival of
English. In the channel of language history, then, her Book
contributes to documenting the widespread resumption of English as
a written medium in the fifteenth century.

But Margery's eccentric and extreme life translates into
sparkling prose narrative, albeit one of somewhat incoherent
overall arrangement. Akin to the loosely organized homily, her narrative is loosely arranged, yet pointed and moving. Except for the university-trained preachers, medieval theorists did not worry about "composition," that is, a concern for the unified nature of the message. Instead, medieval grammarians and rhetoricians—and Margery—were concerned more with bits and pieces of language than with what Cicero would have called invention or arrangement.

Margery effectively marshals the information within each true-to-life vignette like the best of fiction writers, commingling homely, even commonplace events with rather self-satisfied descriptions of her great devotion, her intimacy with Christ, and the gradual routing of those who opposed or mocked her (a practice consistent with saints' lives). Thus, female spirituality, selfhood, and authorship converge in her work, in a narrative sequence form that validates Margery's words and actions. In fact, this convergence, this projected ethos that subsumes her vernacular evangelical prose, is Margery's contribution to rhetorical theory. In Wayne Booth's term, Margery's "implied author" shapes the narration and selects the events to project a carefully wrought ethos. From the outset, this projected ethos is Margery's only means of self-preservation, both within the written text and within the text of her life.

Her self-disclosing, candid, direct view of contemporary life gives her text a verisimilaritude rarely found in devotional literature. No English writer theretofore had committed to writing such an intimate, revealing, and human account of life and
thoughts. Perhaps, only a woman (untrained in and unconscious of standard rhetorical practices) would assert her self this way.

This earliest extant autobiography written in English is a rare commodity, an original in ways other than that it is not a translation and not merely a succession of chronicle entries. Thus, The Book of Margery Kempe is original—and important.

She opens her Book with the scene of her visions, the life-threatening experience of her first childbirth and the (after-life) threatening dealings with her confessor:

When this creature was twenty years of age . . . , she was married to a worshipful burgess and was with child within a short time, as nature would. And after she had conceived, she was belabored with great fevers until the child was born, and then, what for the labor she had in childing and for the sickness that had gone before, she despaired of her life, supposing she might not live. And then she sent for her spiritual father, for she had a thing in her conscience that she had never showed before that time in all her life. . . . And when she came to the point of saying that thing which she had concealed for so long, her confessor was a little too hasty and began to reprove her sharply, before she had fully said what she wanted to say, and so she would say no more for what he might do. And before long, because of the dread she had of damnation on one side and his sharp reproving on the other side, this creature went out of her mind and was horribly vexed and labored with spirits for a half year, eight weeks, and odd days (ch. 1, 4a).

"This creature," as Margery consistently styles herself, projects a sense of radical dependency on God for her ongoing creation, a projection grounded in the humility topos. Yet this devout, humble, feverish Christian, this God-created creature actually creates herself. Margery-the-actual-author creates Margery-the-implied-author who creates Margery-the-character. And just as the
historical Margery Kempe creates herself as an implied author, the
Margery within the text creates a public ethos for herself.

Although presented as non-fiction, Margery Kempe's account
implements highly sophisticated fictional techniques: an implied
author, a narrator, and herself-as-a-character. What is most
impressive—amazing, in fact—about her text is that the implied
author evokes a sympathetic response in the implied audience, a
response that is surprising in that the Margery-as-character, who
seems to have no sense of (narrative) audience, is neither a
sympathetic nor likeable character. By distancing herself-as-
author from herself-as-character, Margery Kempe employs a powerful
persuasive technique: she engenders sympathy for herself by
differentiating herself from her third-person narrator. This
rhetorical feat seems to be the first of its kind in English.

The implied author's use of gossipy anecdotes and fresh
dialogue in the development of her narrative also is strikingly
effective, and her figurative language is strong—natural and
homely. Margery spends many years of her marriage trying to
dissuade her husband from their sexual relationship, and her
account of her ultimate success is engaging and homespun:

It befell on a Friday on Midsummer Eve in right hot
weather, as this creature was coming from York-ward
carrying a bottle with beer in her hand, and her husband
a cake in his bosom, that he asked his wife this
question: "Margery, if a man came here with a sword and
would smight off my head unless I should commune
naturally with you as I have done before, tell me on
your conscience—for you say you will not lie—whether
you would suffer my head to be smitten off or else allow
me to meddle with you again as I've done before?"
"Alas, sir," she said, "why do you bring up this matter
when we have been chaste these eight weeks?" "For I will know the truth of your heart." And then she said with great sorrow, "Truly, I had rather see you be slain than we should turn again to our uncleanness." And he said again, "You are not a good wife" (ch. 11, 12a).

Margery commands her native tongue for use in self-definition and self-defense. Her tone, her voice, her rhetorical style is perfectly matched to her aim: to impress upon her readers her chastity, a form of spiritual expression that offers psychic freedom.

The created Margery (the Margery-character) seems to have no good sense of immediate (narrative) audience, for her accounts are replete with her offensive behavior at home and abroad. Not dedicated to the vow of silence, Kempe reproved even the highest Church officials for what she considered their moral lapses and preached to people wherever she found them. Her fellow Christians taunt, harrass, molest, and abandon her. Her incessant religious harangues, her moralizing, and her sobbing fits soon infuriate nearly everyone she meets. As R. W. Chambers writes,

Things might have been easier for Margery, if she had been a recluse [like Julian]. At large in the world, people found her a nuisance. In a cell, where people could come and speak to her when they wished, and depart when they liked, Margery would have fitted better into medieval life. But that she should wander about, rehearsing tales of scripture, was felt to be irregular (xix).

For instance, when her visions transport her to the scene of the resurrection, she treats the mournful Blessed Mother as though she were just another Christian, giving even her unasked-for care and advice:
Then the creature [Margery] thought, when Our Lady was come home and was laid down on a bed, that she would make for Our Lady a good cauldre and bring it to her to comfort her, and then Our Lady said to her, "Take it away daughter. Give me no food, but my own child." The creature answered, "Ah, Blessed Lady, you must comfort yourself and cease your sorrow" (ch. 81, 94b).

But such behavior—appreciated or no—establishes the Margery-character's _ethos_; she wants to present herself and be recognized as a religious woman, one summoned by Christ.

The Margery-character's intense concern with her weeping fits and her clothes emerges as a feature of female authorial consciousness: the implied author determines what best reflects the Margery-character's _ethos_, an important feature of successful evangelizing. Margery copiously manifests her gift of tears every day for ten years, and at less frequent intervals over an additional fifteen. The author skillfully limns a devout weeping spell in such a way that the authorial audience sympathizes with Margery, delights in her, all the while understanding why the Margery-character vexes her narrative audience:

On the Purification Day, or otherwise Candlemas Day, when the said creature beheld the people with their candles in church, her mind was ravished into beholding Our Lady offering her blessed Son, our Savior, to the priest . . . . She was then so comforted by the contemplation in her soul that . . . she might full evil bear up her own candle to the priest, . . . but for the fervor of love and devotion that God put in her soul through contemplation, she went went wavering on each side as though she were a drunken woman, weeping and sobbing so hard that she stood uneasily on her feet. And sometimes, she could not stand but fell down among the people and cried loudly, [so loudly] that many men wondered and marveled what ailed her, for the fervor of the spirit was so much that the body failed and might not endure it (ch. 82, 96b).
Although Margery (author and character both) wanted to live chastely with her husband, she was indeed a married woman. Her decision to dress as the bride of Christ, completely in white wool and to wear a gold ring engraved *Iesus est amor meus* (Jesus is my love) was an effrontery to her townspeople. Since she had a newborn son and a living husband, her behavior was considered anomalous, if not scandalous.

The following passage is one of several describing her various choices of costume. In this passage, she has just been abandoned by her irritated fellow Pilgrims; providentially, Jesus Christ appears to the frightened Margery with advice:

"Fear not, daughter, for I shall watch over you well and bring you safely to Rome and home again to England without any harm to your body, if you clad yourself in white clothes and wear them as I told you to while you were in England." Then this creature, being with great heaviness and desire, answered again softly, "If you be the spirit of God that speaks in my soul, and I may prove you to be a true spirit with the counsel of the church, I shall obey your will. And if you bring me to Rome in safety, I shall wear white clothes, for your love, though all the world will wonder about me" (ch. 30, 37b).

Indeed, Margery—character's costume changes reflect her psychological state. Always attention-getting, the young, proud Margery initially dresses in the gayest new fashion to outshine the other merchants' wives, knowing

full well that men said of her much villainy, for she wore gold pipes on her head, and her hoods, with the tippets, were slashed. Her cloaks also were slashed and laid with diverse colors between the slashes, so that they should be the more staring to men's sight, and herself the more worshiped (ch. 2, 5a).
Throughout her life, the Margery-character offends many people with her choice of dress, these physical expressions of her ethos, whether her dress be stylish, white, or the later black ("I charge you to leave off your white clothes and wear again your black clothes." And she did his [the German priest's] commandment" [34, 41b]).

The reaction of the narrative audience is perplexity, exasperation, or unmitigated enthusiasm, but the authorial audience delights in her antics and applauds her decisions. Readers fully understand the negative reactions of the people in the text yet are sympathetic to Margery-as-implied-author. This rhetorical technique of using a double ethos, one for the teller and another for the character, is a major contribution to rhetorical theory—and Margery Kempe's own.

Julian of Norwich and Margery Kempe remain the most important English women who participated in the medieval rhetorical tradition. Never before recognized for those contributions to rhetoric, their fifteenth-century writings have rightfully enjoyed special attention from scholars of other stripes attracted to their ability to elaborate with considerable sophistication their theological convictions and practices. These English women represent examples of the most important literary activity by women in the Middle Ages: the flowering of religious writing into the writing and dictation of mystical treatises.

The works of the female mystics, widely known by both religious and devout lay communities, struck deeply, answering
chords in the developing popular piety which sought emotional as well as rational stimulation. And the thirteenth- and fourteenth-century works of the female mystics had affected both these women. Such works, perhaps mostly the works of renowned German mystic Hildegard of Bingen, greatly influenced the writing that followed. The continental mystic tradition provided Julian and Margery a socially acceptable and respected medium of religious expression and personal assertion.

What unites Julian's and Margery's voices with those of their literary foremothers most consistently is a shared conviction of their place in the hierarchy of creation, below men and angels and yet above the lower animals. In accordance with Pauline doctrine and proper womanly subjection, Julian insisted that she not be mistaken for teacher; Margery, for a preacher. This secondary condition of subjection they accepted as uniquely and appropriately their own, and the more learned they were, the more eloquently they defined their role. In fact, the first major figure in the visionary movement, German nun Hildegard of Bingen, wrote:

For woman is weak, and looks to man that she may gain strength from him, as the moon receives its strength from the sun; wherefore is she subject to the man, and ought always to be prepared to serve him. . . .

For when God looked upon man he was well pleased, for man was made in his image and likeness. . . . But at her creation woman partook of a mixture of the two [man and God]; she is a different creature, created through another than God, . . . The woman is therefore the creation of man . . . and the man signifies the divinity, the woman the humanity, of the Son of God. The man therefore presides over the tribunal of the
world, ruling all creatures, while the woman is under his mastery, and subject to him (qtd. in Erickson 211).

Thus, self-effacement overlays the feminine mystic tradition and the work of our powerful literary foremothers.

Hildegard of Bingen (1098–1179) was the literary foremother with perhaps the most electrifying and powerful force in the visionary movement. Internationally renowned and respected, Hildegard's recorded visions acknowledge her vast encompassing understanding of religion, literature, music, science, medicine, and art. Although visions were the fashion as well as a commonplace artistic and literary device during the twelfth century, Hildegard's visions are the finest embodiment of the genre. Like the best of the visionaries, her visions are neither the genius nor poetic inspiration of the recorded work, but merely the form in which the work is realized. A woman of extraordinarily active and independent mind, she was not only gifted with a thoroughly efficient intellect but possessed great energy and considerable literary power. Her writings cover a wide range, betraying the most varied activities and remarkable imaginative faculty. The best known, and in a literary sense the most valuable of her works, are the books of visions: Scivias (Know the Ways 1141-50) and Liber divinorum operum simplicis hominis (The Book of Divine Works 1163-70).

Like Margery, Hildegard claims to be a woman with prophetic illumination, and like Margery, she is disbelieved and mocked on both counts. And both women often appealed with success to higher
authority to gain support. While Hildegard is clearly of mystical disposition—her sense of the divine presence guides her life—she is never thought deranged. Her scientific, medical, and theological writings are peculiarly brilliant; her letters often show shrewdness, compassion, and helpfulness in practical matter. Like Julian, Hildegard was widely respected. And like Julian and Margery both, the source of Hildegard's visions was great illness. The only woman to have a volume in *Patrologia Latina*, this official Church "Mother" relates a vision:

> God punished me for a time by laying me on a bed of sickness so that the blood was dried in my veins, the moisture in my flesh and the marrow in my bones, as though the spirit were about to depart from my body. In this affliction I lay thirty days while my body burned as with fever, and it was thought that this sickness was laid upon me for a punishment. And my spirit also was siling, and yet was pinned to my flesh, so that while I did not die, yet did I not altogether live (qtd. in Singer 52).

Hildegard's character- and light-filled visions won the respect of Church officials and confirmed her genius and understanding of religious matters.

Far more influential than any of the female visionaries who followed, Hildegard set the tone for her successors. A deeply religious woman, who spent even the earliest years of her life within the walls of Benedictine houses, Hildegard spoke her mind and argued her causes, in short, exercised power and authority—under the guise of the traditionally feminine humility *topos*. Explaining her course of action, eminent medievalist Peter Dronke writes:
From 1147 onwards Hildegard, her prophetic role endorsed, is often appealed to for counsel, and often volunteers it, among the secular and religious leaders of her day. Her correspondents include three popes... monarchs... as well as a host of lesser dignitaries. She undertakes preaching journeys, addressing sermons to monks in their abbeys, to bishops and clergy at their synods, as well as to the laity in towns. She attempts to exorcise. In a word, as prophet Hildegard assumed without serious opposition many high sacerdotal functions which in general the Church had seen, and continued to see, as male prerogatives. Always she distinguishes between herself in her own right, the "poor little womanly figure (paupercula femina forma)," and what the divine voice, or the living light, expresses through her. When she admonishes, warns, or castigates, it is always in the name of that light and that voice, not in her own (149).

When, as an abbess, Hildegard found it necessary to fight for financial and administrative independence from the monks, she again tempers her forceful attack by referring to herself as a "poor little creature" (paupercula forma). She also relies on her prophetic vision to lend heft to her argument: "what I perceived in my true vision"; "The serene light says." Of course, her "true vision" and "the serene light" told her that the monks had no right to the endowments of her nuns, despite the fact that according to Church law, they indeed did.

As Hildegard pursued her highly "unfeminine" career as writer, reformer, and preacher, she naturally encountered opposition, both from her enemies and from within her own psyche. Not to be deterred, she creates an imposing professional ethos carefully balanced by her naturally inferior and subservient status. And although her writings reveal her vast erudition and political prowess, she never suggests that as a woman she has any
"right" to teach or prophesy in the Church. Nor does she claim or demand equality with men. Rather, she insists that God has chosen a poor, frail, untutored woman like herself to reveal his mysteries only because those to whom he had first entrusted them—the wise, learned, and masculine clergy—had failed to obey.

The problem of feminine authority emerges as a constant theme in her writings, and she resorts to that time-honored and time-tested rhetorical ploy—"otherness"—that of a mere woman, an underdog. In "Public Postures, Private Maneuvers," Joan Ferrante quotes from the _Patriologia Latina_ (Vol. 197) to illustrate Hildegard's posture: "I, a poor little thing" (Ep. 127); "a weak and untutored female form" (Ep. 58); "I, miserable and more than miserable in the name woman . . . your unworthy servant" (Ep. 19 to Bernard of Clairvaux); and "I, a poor little powerless thing" (_Liber divinorum operum_).

Instead of rejecting the role of woman imposed on her by her culture, Hildegard embraces it, making it work to her advantage. She refers to herself as narrator as "the small sound of the trumpet," and thereby validates anything she does or says as God's intention:

I am a poor little earthen vessel, and I say, not from me but from the serene light, Man is a vessel which God made for himself and imbued with his inspiration . . . like a trumpet which only gives sounds, when another blows in it . . . I who lie in the pusillanimity of fear, sound a little, like the small sound of the trumpet from the living light (qtd. in Ferrante 224).

But since God blows Hildegard's trumpet, she speaks with impunity. Hence, she sets a rhetorical precedent for relying on both the
humility *topos* and God's voice to sustain her persuasive appeals. Although her life might reveal her as a strong-willed, opinionated woman, her narrative self does not: she is the mouthpiece of the Lord. Her blend of linguistic passivity with persuasive power is undoubtedly Hildegard's major contribution to rhetorical theory. Hers is a paradoxical rhetorical achievement of power through its renunciation, and her visionary literature provided the model for the evangelical, "meek-shall-inherit-the-earth" genre of persuasion.

The world of the university was beyond the reach of women. Like many of her bookish sisters, the brilliant Hildegard turned to the only intellectual world within woman's reach: the world of eternal truth. All Christian piety in women was commendable, and piety was the only highroad to wisdom, religious wisdom. In fact, the authors of the wisdom books in the Bible considered wisdom (or *sapientia*) to be female: "Say to Wisdom, 'You are my sister,'" and call insight your intimate friend" (Proverbs 7:4). Hildegard tapped the *sapiential* tradition to write about the maiden beauty of Wisdom she saw revealed in the elite world of the nunnery. During her time and in her milieu, Wisdom and piety came to fruition in meditations, spiritual poetry, dramatic verse, mysticism; they produced scientifically complex visions and pungent letters of practical advice to a wide religious audience.

Hildegard was, in fact, distinguished for her accomplishments in all *sapiential* manifestations, including efficacious letters, models of *ars dictaminis*. She was renowned for her highly charged
and righteous correspondence with popes, kings, noblemen, and bishops. Indeed, through the extant correspondence of famous men, we can trace a series of women confident and learned enough to write in Latin, to cite pagan and Christian authorities, and even to comment on the style of their correspondents.

Of those twelfth-century women whose intellectual reputations were confirmed by their letter-writing, Heloise remains without a doubt the most famous, overshadowing even her eminent elder sister Hildegard, who left behind a corpus of writings far weightier than Heloise's own. Together, however, these two women circumscribe the main spheres of intellectual achievement during this period.

Although better known for her incandescent love affair with Abelard than for her own brilliant scholarly pursuits and accomplishments, Heloise (1101-1164) remains an imposing intellectual force. She left behind only her three letters to Abelard and her Problemata, forty-two theological questions concerning divine law, justice, mercy, and contradictions among the Gospels. However, those extant writings establish her reputation as one of the great minds of the twelfth century and reveal her careful study of texts and her willingness to confront difficult issues. Until now, vast literature has limited itself to exploring the legend of "Abelard and Heloise" with scant close attention to her writings or any notice of her rhetorical prowess and influence.

The measure of Heloise's rhetorical influence is best calculated by Abelard's already-established reputation. When
Heloise met Abelard, he was at the apex of his career, seemingly invincible, having outshone in philosophy and theology his own masters—Guillaume de Champeaux and Anselm de Laon. His reputation attracted students from all over the continent. Yet a teenager, a girl no less, was his rival, both in reputation and in accomplishment. Heloise's style, arrangement, subject matter, and rhetorical appeals would soon inform his own. History would repeat itself: once again, the master would be challenged in and by his own mastery, the brilliant student.

In his Historia calamitatum, a letter of consolation, Abelard recounts his own adversities, beginning with his first knowledge of the exceptional Heloise:

Now there was in this city of Paris a certain young maiden by the name of Heloise, the niece of a certain Canon who was called Fulbert, who, so great was his love for her, was all the more diligent in his zeal to instruct her, so far as was in his power, in the knowledge of letters. Who, while in face she was not inferior to other women, in abundance of her learning was supreme. For inasmuch as this advantage, namely literary knowledge, is rare in women, so much the more did it commend the girl and had won her the greatest renown throughout the realm (qtd. in Moncrieff 111 [all quotations of their correspondence will be taken from this edition]).

Thus Heloise was one of few medieval women still of the world who had the opportunity to give herself over entirely to the study of literature and philosophy. Encouraged and supported by her uncle, she pursued the laudable ambition of learning the liberal arts. Heloise was the only secular woman we know of with that extraordinary opportunity: a secular woman at the center of the elite academic world, the cloister of Notre Dame. Within that
male circle of scholars, she moved in an inner world all her own. And her youthful fame is no fabrication of male-written history.

Although her life became legendary, her accomplishments were no fiction. She was fluent in the three Bible languages, Greek, Hebrew, and Latin, and she knew philosophy, literature, and "secular" learning, rhetoric and dialectic, no doubt (as evidenced in her writings). In her later years, Peter the Venerable would write to her that she had outdone all women and almost all men and tell her that she was a truly philosophical woman; she had turned from secular studies and had chosen "the gospel over logic, the apostle over physics, Christ over Plato, the cloister over the academy" (trans. by and qtd. in Labalme 20). Thus, Heloise was able to surpass all other women and most other men in her breadth of learning. And by the time her life had become legend, God had taken her for His own: she had become a true philosopher, a theologian of such erudition and insight that she would influence the greatest mind of her day, Abelard.

Perhaps because he corresponded widely and effectively, Abelard was drawn to this young woman who possessed and delighted in the "knowledge of letters." In his Historia calamitatum, he writes that with such knowledge "even in absence it would be possible . . . to reach one another's presence by written intermediaries, and to express many things more boldly in writing than in speech, and so ever to indulge in pleasing discussions" (Moncrieff 12). It is, indeed, their letter-writing that captures the tenor of their mature relationship. It is her letter-writing,
however, that clinches her reputation as more than the finest intellect of her day; she was a fine and thoughtful rhetor as well.

The medieval art of letter-writing, *ars dictaminis* grew out of the epistolary form, a long-accepted literary device used to frame a narrative. Thus, the correspondence between Abelard and Heloise provides a framework for their dialogue. Although John Benton argues that all the letters were authored by Abelard, Peter Dronke counters that argument, successfully persuading readers that Heloise wrote her own part of their correspondence (140-43). The extant letters were written ten years after they both had entered religious orders, long after they had fallen in love, succumbed to passion, had a child, married, long after Abelard had been punished where he had sinned (i.e., had been castrated). Their *academic-*Latin correspondence exemplifies the best of *ars dictaminis*, capturing as it does their keen intellects and the evolution of their emotions.

A hallmark of medieval rhetorical development was the commitment to diversity, the adaptation of basic theories to specific needs. The correspondence of Heloise and Abelard illustrates that commitment. Their reintroduction to each other was by letter, by way of Abelard's letter written ostensibly to an unnamed, much-afflicted friend. Abelard's *Historia* was a letter of consolation, an accepted medieval convention, yet he seemed to adopt the epistolary form and the consolation genre as a literary device, as an opportunity to write his autobiography. D. W.
Robertson argues that the Historia actually revealed his spiritual conversion, although it was addressed to the "nuns of Paraclete, most of whom undoubtedly experienced 'temptations' of various kinds when they considered the alternatives they had renounced" (104). Although autobiography was extremely unusual (too personal for public, male discourse), Abelard's accomplishment carried ramifications greater than literary: he had built a platform for his woes on which he could defend his reputation—and engage in dialogue with Heloise.

According to Heloise, the Historia fell into her hands "by chance." However she came by it, she read it with care and immediately responded with a letter emblematic of her brilliant intellect and fiery passion. Abelard had recounted her forceful argument against their marriage (a marriage he hoped would assuage her furious uncle), remembering her impressive use of supporting pagan and Christian authorities to advance her argument and counter his own:

Straightway I, returning to my country, brought back my mistress that I might make her my wife. She, however, did not at all approve this action .... She asked me .... [W]hat a penalty this world would be entitled to exact from her if she took from it so bright a lantern, what maledictions, what prejudice to the Church, what tears of philosophers would follow such a marriage .... She set before me at the same time my own disgrace and the difficulties of matrimony which the Apostle exhorts us to avoid when he says: "Art thou loosed from a wife? Seek not a wife ...."

But if I accepted neither the counsel of the Apostle not the exhortations of the Saints as to the heavy yoke of marriage, at least, she said, I should hearken to the philosophers .... "Cicero," saith Jerome, "being asked by Hircius that after the
repudiation of Terentia he would marry his sister, absolutely refused to do so, saying that he could not give his attention at the same time to a wife and to philosophy. He does not wish to do anything which can be reckoned equal with the study of philosophy." . . . Wherefore also the eminent philosophers of yore, utterly despising the world, not so much leaving the age as flying from it, forbade themselves all kinds of pleasure, that they might rest in the embrace of their philosophy alone. . . . Finally she observed how both dangerous it would be for me to bring her back, and how much dearer it would be to her, and more honourable to me, to be called mistress than wife, that affection alone might hold me, not any force of the nuptial bond fasten me to her; and that we ourselves, being parted for a time, would find the joy of meeting all the keener, the rarer our meetings were.

With these and similar arguments seeking to persuade or dissuade me, since she could not bend my obstinacy, nor bear to offend me, sighing vehemently and weeping, she brought her exortation to an end in this manner. One thing, she said, remains to the last, that after the ruin of us both our suffering may be no less than the love before it (Moncrieff 77-19).

Abelard admits that although her argument had rung on his deaf ears, she had been right all along, her argument a prefiguration. And in his memoirs, he also took the opportunity to showcase her learning, her familiarity with the Old and New Testaments, the Fathers of the Church, and the classical authors. In her response, a letter written directly to Abelard, she evidenced her reputation for herself. Heloise controlled the traditional, then-current mode of argument, the language of power.

If "rhetoric" is the perfect union of thought and word," then Heloise is a consummate rhetor, for her rhetoric blends perfectly her genuine human emotion and her literary craft. Because her first letter was written in passionate response to the evocative Historia, her rhetorical situation had already been prepared for
her. And her response was carefully orchestrated to make the most of her heartfelt moment. Peter Dronke writes that her first two letters are "both the most intimate and the most rhetorically brilliant. They move us because of their inner sorrow, but also because Heloise has effectively marshalled every device towards the intent of moving" (110).

Dronke pays a good deal of attention to Heloise's style (elocutio), the details of her rhyme and rhythm. During the Middle Ages, the art of composing rhythmical verse and prose, ars rithmica, was a major component of ars grammatica and one not based on classical precepts. Although certain Ciceronian colores were recommended by some authors, the stylistic doctrine most characteristic of the ars dictaminis was the so-called cursus or rhythmical prose style which depended upon clausular arrangement.

In Rhetoric in the Middle Ages, James J. Murphy tells us that "rithmus attempts to introduce into certain kinds of prose some of the compositional principles usually employed in writing verse" (161). That ars rithmica [sic] was applied to hymn-writing or even preaching is no surprise; that it lent itself so readily to letter-writing perhaps is. He goes on to say that

[although modern investigators have traced the tradition of rhythmical prose far back into ancient times, the medieval emphasis upon its rules and precepts may be regarded as a significant departure from ancient practice. Its study by grammarians like [John of] Garland serves to emphasize again the basic medieval assumption that language is for the ear (161).

Heloise's artful rithmica reveals her literary formation.

Her intentional balance of velox and tardus cadences and sentence-
endings, her penchant for tardus—all these features were
particularly to the Italianate style of twelfth-century teacher
Adalbertus, author of Praecepta dictaminum (c. 1111 and 1118).
Influenced (either directly or indirectly) by the innovations of
that Bolognese dictatore, Heloise employs elaborate rhythmic
parallelism in phrases and clauses, a parallelism that heightens
intense emotion by frequent, often almost regular, rhymes. As
well as any master dictatore, Heloise employs the quantitative
rhythm of Latin to realize special effect, a stylistic achievement
that must have preceded her meeting Abelard.

Abelard, on the other hand, had been trained in the northern
French style, which favored swift cadences far more than slow
ones. Yet French-trained Abelard wrote in a weaker version of the
Italianate style instead of in the French style, a fact leading
Dronke to believe that Heloise may well have been the greater
literary influence of the two:

Even though his letters do not show her distinctive
features in the same fullness, it is demonstrable that
his tardus and velox cadences are, like hers,
deliberate, and that their proportion in his letters
sets him too apart from the mainstream of the northern
French writers who use cursus. It seems more plausible
to assume that Abelard was influenced to some extent by
Heloise's "un-French" mannerisms, than that she should
have derived these from him and then outdone him in
their use (111-12).

Thus, Dronke undoes the notion that Heloise was Abelard's academic
handmaiden; theirs was a symmetrical literary and intellectual
partnership.
Heloise's rhetorical influence surfaces at other sites as well. Following the precepts of ars dictaminis, Heloise breaks her first letter into the five-part structure (dispositio), a derivative of the Ciceronian six-part oration: salutation (salutatio); securing of good will (captatio benevolentiae); narration (narratio); petition (petitio); and conclusion (conclusio). And in accordance to medieval practice, she transfers the three traditional functions of the exordium to the salutatio and captatio benevolentia: in her salutatio, she makes her audience attentive; in her captatio benevolentia, docile and well-disposed. Heloise does so in accordance with contemporary dictaminal practices, for the first two parts of a letter drew more attention than the rest of the letter. In fact, an impressive output of separate treatises emphasized these two introductory sections, often merely presenting multiple examples of salutations.

It is her regard to the salutations of letters, however, that may be her greatest contribution to medieval rhetorical practice. According to the anonymous Rationes dictandi, the "Salutation is an expression of greeting conveying a friendly sentiment not inconsistent with the social rank of the persons involved" (qtd. in Rhetoric in the Middle Ages 222). For Heloise, then, the salutation was the locus of emotion. Abelard's self-centered, self-aggrandizing, and self-pitying Historia may well have provoked Heloise's erotic memories and febrile energy, especially his retrospective account of their intense relationship. In fact,
it may well have been his mention of her as "Heloise, my sister in Christ now rather than my wife" (Moncrieff 40) that elicited her first salutation:

To her master, nay father, to her husband, nay brother; his handmaid, nay daughter, his spouse, nay sister: to Abelard, Heloise (Moncrieff 53).

The form of her salutation was not an empty convention, for in it, she attempts to convey an appropriate level of address, one that comprises the range of their relationship: she repeatedly substitutes monastic titles for the secular ones, and she shifts from rank-specific terms to merely gender-specific ones. In her salutation, then, she recalls his physical and verbal violence connected with her studies; his sacerdotal bequest of his abbey, the Paraclete, to her as a nun; their marriage, their equal kinship in Christ; and last, their individual identities.

In addition to cataloging their affiliations, her first salutation is significant in other ways: not only is it an eloquent introduction to the ambiguities of the letter which follows, but the subtle dichotomy also reveals her tangle of emotions. Thus her salutation is much more than superficial verbal conjuring. When Abelard privileges their religious relationship over their marital one, hers is a visceral reaction. The subtext of her first letter seems to be the determination to resolve the parameters of their relationship.

That first letter follows four movements. After the salutation, she secures his good will by bathing his self-pity
with her own sympathy and that of her nuns. She refers to his history as

things I deem that no one can read or hear with dry eyes, for they renewed in fuller measure my griefs . . . and increased them the more, in that thou relatedst that thy perils are still growing, so that we are all alike driven to despair of thy life, and every day our trembling hearts and throbbing bosoms await the latest rumour of thy death (Moncrieff 53-54).

But no sooner does she gain his good-will than she moves to the narration: his obligation to her and her abbey. The anonymous Rationes dictandi defines the narration as "the orderly account of the matter under discussion . . . . We should by all means run through such a Narration quickly and clearly for the advantage of the sender's cause" (qtd. in Rhetoric in the Middle Ages 223).

And Heloise does just that. By writing his Historia, he has paid the debt of consolation to his friend, but she reminds him of his "greater debt" to her and her nuns: "thou hast bound thyself to us, whom it behooves thee to call not friends but dearest friends, not comrades but daughters, or by a sweeter and a holier name, if any can be conceived" (Moncrieff 55). He has planted her abbey at his former monastery, and the women need his "frequent irrigation" (56). His obligation to her and her nuns must be paid:

Thou art tending the vineyard of another's vine which thou didst not plant . . . . Think of what thou owest to thine own, who thus spendest thy care on another's . . . . Who givest so much thought to the obstinate, consider what thou owest to the obedient. Who bestowest so much on thine enemies, meditate what thou owest to thy daughters. And to say nothing of the rest, think by what a debt thou art bound to me, that what thou owest
to the community of devoted women thou mayest pay more devotedly to her who is thine alone (Moncrieff 56).

Her argument begins with a rational appeal: he had transplanted her women to the wilderness of Paraclete; the women need to be nourished—by him. But soon, her plea for all the women of the Paraclete is distilled into a plea for her: "that what thou owest to the community of devoted women thou mayest pay more devotedly to her who is thine alone" (Moncrieff 56).

Heloise's letter lends itself to multiple readings, for near the start, she speaks in a first-person plural that denotes both her and the community of nuns. Not until the close of the narration does she set this decorum aside, move into first-person singular, and claim Abelard's debt to her alone:

[T]hou knowest thyself to be bound to me by a debt so much greater in that thou art tied to me more closely by the pact of the nuptial sacrament; and that thou art the more beholden to me in that I ever, as is known to all, embraced thee with an unbounded love. . . .

. . . [T]hou who art alone in the cause of my grief may be alone in the grace of my comfort. . . .
And it is thou alone that owest me this great debt . . . . Nothing have I ever (God wot) required of thee save thyself, desiring thee purely, not what was thine. Nor for the pledge of matrimony, nor for any dowry did I look, nor my own passions or wishes but thine (as thou thyself knowest) was I zealous to gratify (Moncrieff 57).

Ultimately, the emotional appeal of her highly structured prose rests on her position as his wife.

Abelard had used his Historia to proclaim his own sorrows, and Heloise uses her first letter for the same purpose. She wants his good will and his attention; she wants to outline their discussion, but most of all, she wants to tell her own story
instead of letting him tell it for her. She no sooner establishes common ground with him by presenting herself as his religious sister than she moves into her role as his wife. As his wife, she asserts her right to his succor and guidance. Thereby, she moves into the fourth section of her letter: the petition, in which she describes her state of mind.

The petition of a letter endeavors to "call for something." According to Rationes dictandi, the nine species of Petition are "supplicatory or didactic or menacing or exhortative or hortatory or admonitory or advisory or reproving or merely direct" (qtd. in Rhetoric in the Middle Ages 223). She petitions him to remember their passion and her devotion and elaborates upon his version of her reasons for not wanting to marry. But she is leading up to the crux of her petition: she virtually demands a letter of explanation from him.

Although Fate had proved her right in that they were punished when they married, she does not seem comfortable with Abelard's retelling of her antimarriage argument. In an epigraph introducing this fourth section, Heloise writes: "And if the name of wife appears more sacred and more valid, sweeter to me is ever the word friend, or, if thou not be ashamed, concubine to whore" (Moncrieff 57). Hers is a correction of Abelard's account, for she goes on to say, that "wherein thou has not disdained to set forth sundry reasons by which I tried to dissuade thee from our marriage, from an ill-starred bed; but wert silent as to many, in which I preferred love to wedlock, freedom to a bond" (57). She
then moves forward with her elaborate reversal and displacement of
the opposition marriage and concubinage, which justifies her
strong opinion:

To wit that the more I humbled myself before thee the
fuller grace I might obtain from thee, and so also
damage less the fame of thine excellence. . . . I call
God to witness, if Augustus, ruling over the whole
world, were to deem me worthy of the honour of marriage,
and to confirm the whole world to me, to be ruled by me
for ever, dearer to me and of greater dignity would it
seem to be called thy strumpet than his empress
(Moncrieff 57).

Though the world be laid at her feet, she would choose humiliation
if it be for Abelard's good. For Heloise, the traditional
humility topos has bled into proud self-abasement. O that she had
remained his whore! Had they eschewed marriage, he might have
been saved disbarment, mutilation, and disgrace. But she has done
whatever Abelard has asked of her, whether it be surrendering her
body and mind to him, marrying him against her own good thinking,
or preceding him in taking religious vows at his behest. She
deliberately uses the word meretrix, which can be translated as
"strumpet" or "whore" or "prostitute," for the Middle Ages
indulged the concubine (concubina) in a long-term relationship.
In choosing meretrix, Heloise takes her daring argument of willing
sacrifice to the furthest extreme, to what some would think the
ultimate female act of love.

But Heloise does not get tangled up in her argument, nor does
she compromise her morals. Marriage for the right reason—love—is an honorable state, but the woman who marries for anything less
than pure love is nothing less than a prostitute, no better than a
meretrix. Although Heloise's argument is convincing, sound, and impressive, more impressive is her reliance on ancient authorities; in this case, her crown auctoritas is Aspasia, concubine of Pericles and rhetorical foremother of us all. Our only extant source of Aspasia's argument is in Xenophon's Oeconomicus, but Heloise draws on the now-missing text by Aeschines when she writes:

Nor should she deem herself other than venal who weds a rich man rather than a poor, and desires more things in her husband than himself. Assuredly, whomsoever . . . concupiscence leads into marriage deserves payment rather than affection; for it is evident that she goes after his wealth and not the man, and is willing to prostitute herself, if she can, to a richer. As the argument advanced (in Aeschines) by the wise Aspasia to Xenophon and his wife plainly convinces us. When the wise woman aforesaid had propounded this argument for their reconciliation, she concluded as follows: "For when ye have understood this, that there is not a better man nor a happier woman on the face of the earth; then ye will ever and above all things seek that which ye think the best; thou to be the husband of so excellent a wife, and she to be married to so excellent a husband" (Moncrieff 58).

Heloise's reliance on a pagan authority with saintly wisdom bolsters her argument that she loved Abelard selflessly and for himself alone. In fact, her example carries the implication she loved Abelard purely and fully—more than he her. Although she appears to be devoting her life to God, in actuality, she continues to devote it to Abelard. However, he seems to have cast her off: "Tell me one thing only, if thou canst, why . . . I am fallen into such neglect and oblivion with thee that I am neither refreshed by thy speech and presence nor comforted by a letter in thine absence" (59). Her emotional appeal for his personal
attention finally rests in her accusation of his concupiscence rather than affection, his desire rather than love for her. She provokes his response by challenging his motives.

Moving into her conclusion, the final part of her letter, she again reminds Abelard of her petition: "And so in His Name to whom thou hast offered thyself, before God I beseech thee that in whatsoever way thou canst thou restore to me thy presence, to wit by writing me some word of comfort" (61). Perhaps there is a fine line between emotional blackmail and powerful emotional appeal, for her ultimate rhetorical weapon is her (un)willing service to God, service dependent upon Abelard's cooperative response:

To this end alone that, thus refreshed, I may give myself with more alacrity to the service of God. . . . How more rightly shouldst thou excite me now towards God, whom thou excitedst then to desire. Consider, I beseech thee, what thou owest me, pay heed to what I demand . . ." (Moncrieff 61).

Powerful rhetoric, Heloise succeeds. Abelard responds.

The substance of his reply is not so important as the essence: he ignores the erotic connotations of her letter and concentrates only on their religious relationship. He will comfort and guide her, priest to nun. In fact, his salutation makes explicit the tenor of his reply: "To Heloise his dearly beloved sister in Christ, Abelard her brother in the same."

Guarded words, perhaps, but kindly and wise. He implies an ardent love, but not an erotic one. His letter is an encomium to good wives, ending in his wish to be buried at the Paraclete, where he knows his then-wife and now-sister will supervise the prayers on
his behalf. But Heloise is not satisfied: she had asked for comfort; he had given her more cause for distress by mentioning the possibility of his death.

Again, Abelard has created a rhetorical exigency: Heloise must clarify their relationship. Once again, she charts her rhetorical strategy according to the salutation. His salutation had touched a raw nerve: he had transgressed the hierarchical precepts of epistolary custom by placing her name before his own, which should have been first. His letter left her with a slow burn: he had not recognized her passion. The salutation of her second letter, then, is pointed. As much as she may want to proclaim her devotion here, she studiously follows convention: "To her all, after Christ, his all in Christ." And after her own obviously correct salutation, she addresses the issue of his:

I marvel, my all, that against the custom in writing letters, nay against the natural order of things, at the head of the greeting in thy letter thou hast made bold to set my name . . . before thine, to wit the woman before the man, the wife before the husband, the handmaid before the master, the nun before the monk and priest, the deaconess before the Abbot. Right indeed is the order and honourable that they who write to their superiors or to their equals place the names of those to whom they are writing before their own. But if they write to their inferiors, those take precedence in the order of writing who take precedence in rank (Moncrieff 75).

In this quibbling over such seemingly insignificant matter (salutation), Heloise and Abelard draw out the terms of their confrontation: he must accept her continuous and absolute devotion to only him and, therefore, acknowledge her as his inferior. Her constant reference to Abelard as her "all," in the
conclusion of her previous letter, in the salutation and opening of this letter, purposefully excludes Christ, the supposed focus of what would be nearly thirty-five years in her religious order.

The next movement of her letter is downward, for once again the humility *topos* manifests itself in proud self-abasement. Her desire for Abelard has not diminished, despite her outward show in her role of abbess of the Paraclete:

They preach that I am chaste who have not discovered the hypocrite in me. They make the purity of flesh into a virtue, when it is a virtue not of the body but of the mind. Having some praise among men, I deserve none before God, Who tries out the heart and the reins and sees in the secret places...

But in the whole period of my life (God wot) I have ever feared to offend thee rather than God, I seek to please thee more than Him. Thy command brought me, not the love of God, to the habit of religion (Moncrieff 82).

Heloise's disclosure implicitly challenges Abelard, as her series of balanced, parallel exhortations (featuring anaphora and isocolon) disputes his theretofore evasion of intimate exchange:

Do not, I beseech thee, presume so highly of me, nor cease by praying to assist me. Do not deem me healed, nor withdraw the grace of thy medicine. Do not believe me to be not in want, nor delay to succour my necessity. Do not think this strength, lest I fall before thou hold up the falling (Moncrieff 82).

Heloise raises the stakes with her eroticized and sentimental exchange, proving Abelard's evasive tactic impractical. She uses her reputation as her ethical appeal, their marriage as her rational appeal, and her true colors as her emotional appeal. Together, her appeals neutralize Abelard's argument for a purely spiritual relationship. She cannot be satisfied by the purely
spiritual, either with him or with God, and she gives her future no more thought than does the proverbial grasshopper:

It is enough for me to avoid danger. It is safer to avoid danger than to engage in battle. In whatsoever corner of heaven God may place me, He will do enough for me. For none there will envy any, since what he shall have will be sufficient for each (Moncrieff 84).

Heloise's influence is obvious. She argues the world's greatest dialectician into a corner; he has no other choice than to address their erotic relationship. Ever-mindful of his new-found role, however, he responds so as to appropriate the erotic while at the same time disarm its subversive potential.

As usual, his salutation dovetails into Heloise's response. The confrontation played out in the course of their four letters converges on their argument over salutations. Abelard's superscription itself answers Heloise's question as to why he had placed her name before his own. Sounding the true note which he never loses, Abelard continues to address her as his superior: "To the Bride of Christ, the servant of the Same." He overmasters Heloise with his properly executed rhetorical flourish. Heloise remains his wife, but as the Abbess of the Paraclete, she is the spouse of Christ as well and is therefore Abelard's lady, for Abelard is Christ's mere servant. Heloise must be announced first. In his letter, he responds to three other of Heloise's complaints: the evocation of his death; the manner of their entry into religious life; and Abelard's unwarranted praise of Heloise. Permeating his entire letter, however, is his admonition of her complaints ("Cease, I beseech thee, from saying such things, and
forbear from complaints of this sort" [93]) and his encouragement to join him in common thanksgiving ("Approach then also, my inseparable comrade, in a common thanksgiving" [99]), counsel that modifies her temper. In terms of the correspondence, Abelard's letter proves efficacious as well as routing, for in her reply Heloise says nothing further about her personal difficulties.

In fact, her final salutation seems almost playful: "To her Lord, who is specially his, singularly," a clever, logical retort addressed to God in species, but to Abelard as an individual. And she secures his good will with wit and grace:

For nothing is less in our power than the heart, which we are forced rather to obey than able to command. . . . According as it is written: "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." I will hold back my hand therefore from writing what I cannot restrain my tongue from speaking (Moncrieff 109).

Heloise is as good as her word, her letter is a testament. There is no evidence that she ever referred to their erotic relationship again. She devotes the rest of her life to the continual improvement of her abbey. Heloise moves directly into her final petition: she seeks Abelard's direction for the nuns of Paraclete, exactly the sort of task he is willing to fulfill for her, exactly the sort of role he is comfortable taking.

And so all we handmaids of Christ, and in Christ thy daughters demand with supplication two things of thy fatherhood which we foresee to be right necessary for ourselves. Whereof the former is that thou wilt instruct us by what origin the order of nuns began and what is the authority for our profession. And the other is that thou wilt institute some rule for us and set it forth in writing, which shall be proper for women and shall definitely describe the state and habit of our
conversation; which we do not find to have been at any
time done by the holy Fathers (Moncrieff 110-11).

Whatever her motivation and despite her coercion to take the
veil, Heloise had devoted herself to being an exemplary abbess,
even before asking Abelard's guidance. Her third letter as well
as her Problematas reveal Heloise's willing, serious concern with
every aspect of womanly monastic life. The points she brings to
Abelard's attention are not only practical but thoughtful:
Benedictine rule had been designed for men, not women, and thus
parts of it were unsuitable. Some of her concerns bordered on the
humorous; for instance, what is to become of the woolen garments
worn next to the skin at menstruation ("tunics or woollen
garments" at "monthly purgations of the superfluous humours"
[110]). Benedictines were famous for their hospitality, but could
women enjoy the same with male guests? Absolutely not. Her
experience with Abelard attests to the temptation inherent in such
commingling. With careful logic and sensitive probing, then, she
argues rationally for changes in the rule of nuns, appropriate and
rightful changes.

Although this third letter displays Heloise's vast erudition,
with its continual references to Church practices and beliefs, it
does much more: Heloise's genius at marshalling information and
appeals reveals the balance and completeness of her personal
nature. Her powers of independent judgment are finely poised with
her human emotions (and human emotions rarely appear in medieval
writings). She is discriminating in every point she makes, be it
regarding women's subordination to men regardless of rank, the dangers of Benedictine hospitality, the manual labor that women could not perform, the naivete of novitiates, or the admittance of priests into the convent for the intonation of night watches.

She argues cogently for moderation in all instances, relying upon the Church Fathers for support. As usual, her movement from general opinion to specific example is magisterial. For example, she quotes from Pope Saint Gregory's *Pastoral* for support: "In one way therefore are men to be admonished and in another way women, for heavy burdens are to be laid upon the former, but on the latter things lighter: and let great things exercise the one, but light things correct the other gently" (Moncrieff 112).

Saint Benedict himself, she points out, was ready to temper his rule to the capacity of those who were to observe it, as when, for example, he conceded the use of wine to his monks. Why then, she asks, should not wine, and meat too, be allowed to women as well?

In fact, it is her call for moderation that informs her letter—as well as Abelard's response. Although she is suggesting a somewhat bold departure from established custom, she subtly relegates this contemplated innovation to its proper place—moderation. She urges moderation in clothing, fasting, in food, and in drink, and cites the life of Christ and his Apostles for support. She quotes Saint Augustine's book *Of Conjugal Welfare*: "Continence is a virtue not of the body but of the soul" (Moncrieff 122). According to Heloise, then, "virtues alone acquire merit before God; and whoso are equal in virtue, howsoever
they may differ in works, deserve equally of Him" (123). The rule of Saint Benedict, which both men and women at that time observed, was, she shows by many well-chosen instances, clearly neither intended nor suitable for women in many ways. Thus, the call for moderation and adaptation governs her request to Abelard. She and her nuns need his direction—and approval.

The power of her letter, the first of the "Letters of Direction," is twofold. First of all, Heloise argues successfully for the rights and privileges of her own sex: women must be released from some of their manual and liturgical obligations so they can pursue their chief duty, the celebration of the Divine Office, as well as their educations. (And Heloise's convent became celebrated for its well-educated women.) Yet, they must also be granted autonomy in terms of diet, dress, and liturgical practices so that they are no longer dependent on or subject to their male counterparts. For instance, in the matter of the Divine Office, Heloise invites Abelard to judge whether it is not enough for them to repeat the whole Psalter once a week, without repetitions, and asks him to define what is to be done concerning the reading of the Gospel in the night watches, as this hardly seems a wise time, from the point of view of the community, to admit the priests and deacons who must intone it.

Secondly, Heloise's letter is powerful in that it directly informs the response of the greatest mind of her day. Although she does, in fact, express her own views on certain matters so skillfully as to make any disagreement on Abelard's part appear
unreasonable, his response is much more than an endorsement of her wishes. Abelard's response is exactly as she would have it, but what she would have is a comprehensive treatise upon the ideal monastic life adapted to the use of a community of women. Her letter serves as his *inventione*, for he departs not at all from her questions or her tacit opinion. He not only ordains matters in accordance with her wishes wherever he can, but sometimes, rather surprisingly, he himself uses exactly her arguments and quotations to support of his rulings. His rule may be more exacting than what Heloise would have liked, but in the main, he follows her thinking. His confirmation of her own brilliance and imagination balances with her willingness to sacrifice her all for him, everything, that is, save to pretend to love God a little more than him.

Deeply interested in the practical details of the contemplative life and of her profession as abbess, Heloise seeks rights and privileges for her sex—not more leniency, but different rights. Heloise devoted herself so fully to every possible aspect of her work as Superior of the Paraclete that it was not long before she made her monastery one of the greatest religious houses for women in the whole of France, and became herself, with good reason, the most renowned and distinguished abbess of her time. She seemed to live an irreproachable religious life for forty years, perhaps without having received the grace for it; she also served forty years of penance, perhaps
without any faith in its religious efficacy. Such questions
cannot be answered by Heloise's extant texts.

The rhetorical legacy from our medieval foremothers is
powered by religion, and most of them were nuns. They translated
their Christian piety into meditations, spiritual poetry,
mysticism, visions, translations, drama, and letters. The early
writings of Perpetua (c. AD 200), for example, seem to prefigure
the visionary writings of Julian of Norwich, Margery Kempe, and
Hildegard of Bingen. Douda's writings (c. AD 1000) belong to a
genre that would become known as the "mirrors for princes," conduct
literature for young men of royal birth. Her own life mirroring
that of Chaucer's Griselda, reached out to her far-off son with
letters of moral, religious, and practical advice. The literary
output of Hrotsvitha, Abbess of Gandersheim, was extraordinary by
any standards: eight metrical legends and six dramas modelled on
the comedies of Terence. A widow, Christine de Pisan joined a
convent to write *The City of Ladies* and *The Book of Three Virtues*,
which provided rules of conduct for women at all social levels and
at all of life's stages. Her feminism was persuasive due, in no
small measure, to her description of the accommodations to the
masculine world women had to make and the places feminine
influence might best be applied.

If the writing of these women seems conservative, an
acknowledgment of traditional roles, we have only to look at the
letters of Heloise, the narrations of Margery, the scientific
writings of Hildegard to see the liberal sweep of their thinking.
These texts go beyond reclaiming women's nature to suggest a redefinition of the importance and domain of the feminine virtues. Thus, chastity and humility are not merely the attributes of a (weak) woman but those of a good Christian. In addition, these texts support a redefinition of the rhetorical tradition, one inclusive of female voices.

As Virginia Woolf has noted, the primary obstacle any woman must overcome is the long-standing societal norm that she has internalized, a norm that charges her with silence and obedience. Indeed, the medieval women in rhetoric internalized societal norms: Julian, Margery, Hildegard, and Heloise all concede and claim to respect their "proper" womanly roles. But then, by relying on the authority of God, of her Church rank, or of her powerful secular love, each woman finds a way to transform those norms and gain acceptability for her individual genre, be it visionary or epistolary persuasion.
CHAPTER IV

INSCRIBED IN THE MARGINS:

RENAISSANCE WOMEN IN THE RHETORICAL TRADITION

If [a woman] be good, it were better to be at home within and unknown to other folks, and in company to hold her tongue demurely and let few see her, and none at all hear her.

Juan Luis Vives

Introduction

The English Renaissance reached full bloom during the reign of Elizabeth, perhaps the most powerful woman who ever lived. Well-educated by Christian Humanist principles and standards, accomplished and prolific in rhetoric and poetics, politically keen and shrewd, Elizabeth ruled her vast kingdom successfully and wisely, ranking second only to King Philip of Spain in terms of lands, treasury, and power. An aureole of inspiration for poets and authors, Elizabeth illuminated Renaissance literature, a Golden Age of female-patronized, male-produced literature. English vernacular, long associated with the uneducated and with the hearth and home—with women—triumphed during this era. The domestic language became the public language. This movement could
have afforded women the opportunity to participate in the dominant discourse. But it did not. Women remained excluded.

*Patronize* is the key term here, for the literary participation of most Renaissance women was limited—to patronage, religious writing, and translation; moreover, their restricted literary and rhetorical contributions were received with condescension. Women were urged to read Church fathers and to translate sermons, but the measure of their worth remained tied to their chastity, their modesty, their demureness, and the extent to which they submitted themselves to the control of men. Despite Elizabeth's magnificent example, women lived and wrote in the margins.

In her famous essay "Shakespeare's Sister," Virginia Woolf asks "why no woman wrote a word of that extraordinary literature when every other man, it seemed, was capable of song or sonnet" (qtd. in *The Norton Anthology of Literature by Woman* 1376). Although women are a powerful presence in Renaissance literature, in drama and verse, they seem to have had "no existence save in the fiction written by men" (1377). Women's rhetorical accomplishments in translation, argument, oratory, literary rhetoric have heretofore gone unnoticed or undiscovered, but as Richard Hooker wrote, "Posterity may know that we have not through silence permitted things to pass away as in a dream."

In this chapter, I will examine briefly that construct we refer to as the Renaissance and survey woman's place and education
in that society, giving special interest to the dual influences of Christian Humanism and the Protestant Reformation. Then, I will elucidate woman's vivid but exaggerated depiction in male-composed contemporary literature, a depiction of strong (mostly domestic) women that has refracted our view of actual Renaissance women. Our familiarity with female literary characters will serve as a base on which to build our conception of the historical woman. After describing male-dominated contemporary rhetorical theory, I will situate women's specific contributions to and expertise in the rhetorical tradition.

**Renaissance Intellectual Dynamics**

During the Renaissance, the European literati acquainted themselves with Greek and Latin classical texts, the English acquainting themselves with contemporary popular Continental literature as well. Often, those wanting to absorb some of the new learning made a pilgrimage to Italy, the birthplace of classical learning and the cradle of the Renaissance. Antiquity supplied for the Italians an appreciation for their own past that slowly traveled northward across the continent to England. The changes brought forth by the Italian Renaissance of the fourteenth century did not reach England, an island at the end of the civilized world, until the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. And by the time the Renaissance had reached England, it seemed more serious, more practical in terms of scholarship and
literature, and more moral than the rich-in-art Italian Renaissance.

Renaissance literary scholars (i.e., "Humanists," a word they did not use for themselves) were like their medieval predecessors in their reverence for the ancient and the traditional. The invention of the printing press had made possible the duplication and dissemination of ancient texts and thus some startling and disquieting revelations about medieval literary study: in their passage across the centuries, many classical and religious texts had been corrupted through mistranslation, additions, deletions, or forgery. The literary scholars soon discovered that the medieval perception of the ancients had been badly flawed. The medieval fashion had been to extract and modify in order to substantiate Christian tenets. Thus, the medieval grasp on antiquity was shown to be much less certain than Aquinas and the Scholastics had supposed.

Renaissance literary scholars, therefore, felt that a turn from medieval to original sources—Greek, Latin, and Hebrew (which would include God's word)—was imperative. They wanted the true original (and thereby instituted what would become the methods of modern precise scholarship). Venerated as superior beings with supreme utterances, the ancients and their literary legacy served as the template for inscribing what C. S. Lewis calls the early or "Drab" Renaissance with a more discriminating and sophisticated "Golden Age" literature. Classical art and literature provided expert, yet attainable, even surpassable, models for Renaissance
artists, who shared the ancients' passion for harmonious arrangement and instructive realism.

And literary study was steeped in political and social awareness as well. That moral and religious instruction could be fused with schooling was not a new concept. The ancients as well as Renaissance cognoscenti regarded education as inextricably bound up with politics. Saint Augustine had long before charted a course for merging rhetoric with religious instruction; he was the first major Western theologian to teach that secular government should join the Church in ensuring that people were good Christians.

But the original source for what would become known as Christian Humanism was Marcus Tullius Cicero, the exemplar of Roman civic consciousness and the active life, the father of Humanist education. An inseparable part of his overall influence was Cicero's prose style—elaborate, balanced, ornate, with many dependent clauses and rounded periods—the prototype for the prose of most modern languages. But his fundamental influence on the prose of the Renaissance was as the source of moral goodness, for it is through eloquence alone, the eloquence of a writer like Cicero, that man could use that faculty of reason which God has given him as distinct from beasts. Thus, Ciceronian-based educational principles were the mainstay of Humanist education; "a good man speaking well" became "a good man writing well."

Shakespeare, the greatest wordsmith in the English language, would
have been the product of such pedagogy. In Shakespeare's Use of the Language Arts, Sister Miriam Joseph writes:

The aim of the grammar-school curriculum was to enable the student to read, write, and speak Latin, to acquaint him with the leading Latin classics and a few of the Greek, and to infuse into him sound moral and religious principles. The method prescribed unremitting exercise in grammar, rhetoric, and logic. Grammar dominated the lower forms, logic and rhetoric the upper. In all forms the order was first to learn precepts, then to employ them as a tool of analysis in reading, and finally to use them as a guide in composition. Much of the reading, especially in the lower forms, was selected with a view to furnishing moral and religious instruction (8–9).

As early as 1531, though, Thomas Elyot had written that the acquisition of "sound learning" for service to the state was the fundamental aim of the English system, "sound learning" being the understanding and application of the wisdom of Athens and Rome to contemporary needs.

Rather than philosophers, the Humanists were teachers of rhetoric interested in discovering the world in man; they were secular-minded but not anti-religious. (The word humanista was used to indicate these teachers of rhetoric interested more in cultural than scientific subjects.) During the Middle Ages, dialectics/logic had been the cynosure of education (as Heloise's example illustrates). By the Renaissance, however, the mainstay of education had become rhetoric, which allowed men to "speak" the universe, to address profitably such man-centered subjects as the "immortality of the soul," "praise of wisdom," "dignity of man." Much of England's greatest literature was conceived in this milieu of literary purposefulness, rejuvenation, exuberance, and
awareness: The King James Version of the Bible, The Faerie Queen, Paradise Lost, the Holy Sonnets, Dr. Faustus, and anything by Shakespeare.

Writers of educational theory and practice, such as Thomas Elyot (The Governor) and Roger Ascham (The Scholemaster), were among those concerned with the education of the elite, the leaders of the state. English Humanist educators prescribed formal intellectual training as necessary to the art of government (and the arts of literature as they might be practiced in courtly poetry). Theorists and students alike embraced the idea of the self-fashioning of gentlemen. And the real work of creating gentlemen, Renaissance men, was done in the schools or by private tutors. Of course, few shared the concept of "self-fashioned ladies" in terms other than of adornment and devotion. Nevertheless, the seeds of such an idea did sift through the masculine cultural screen: some of the Humanists' educational ideas filtered into the chambers of privately educated gentlewomen as well as into the cloisters of educated churchwomen.

In an era of spectacular literary achievements in the vernacular, it seems astonishing that English was not taught in the secondary schools: Latin was the thing, and "lesse Greeke." However, classic Latin, unadulterated, could not cope with the problems of the "new learning"; the modern world, science, and technology were compelled to seek utterance in the vernacular, so Latin was soon to die. The victory of English was clinched by the Reformation, for the great stronghold of Latin was in theology;
and in the Reformation, theology abandoned Latin for English. But both Margery Kempe and Julian of Norwich had contributed to this linguistic trend, as I noted in the previous chapter.

Student and expert writers alike enriched the English vocabulary, especially in learned terms. The enrichment expanded the capability of English to include handling the most complex and technical ideas of the then-current learning, and conversion, the use of one part of speech for another, was rampant. In addition, a wonderful and huge borrowing took place: many Latin words were taken in without alteration; others were altered slightly, including a host of Greek terms—literary, rhetorical, sporting, and scientific terminology. Renaissance English was a language struggling for full utterance in a broad, exciting age. Originality and inventiveness were appreciated most in terms of felicity with language, in a turn of phrase or in a witty conceit—obvious to any reader of Renaissance literature.

Woman's Place in Renaissance England: Historical and Literary

Had it not been for the Christian Humanists, however, women would have had little intellectual oppportunity in the Renaissance, for the Renaissance is best known for the notion of the ideal man. The typical Renaissance portrait displays a proud and handsome young man, obviously delighting in his worldly achievements. The ideal of the age is not the citizen–orator of antiquity, nor is it the ascetic cleric or consecrated knight of medievalism; instead, it is the widely informed man–of–the–world,
a man such as Philip Sidney, the perfect courtier and gentleman by birth and by nature—warrior, statesman, scholar, patron of poets, and poet himself. As though schooled by Castiglione's adaptation of Christian Humanism, The Book of the Courtier, Sidney could turn easily from court matters to classic meters; he read Aristotle in the original Greek and sought out philosophers such as Ramus and Bruni in person.

But how do women fit into the construct known as the Renaissance? into that seemingly exclusive picture of Renaissance accomplishment? We have no such picture of a "Renaissance Woman"—except in terms of her beauty. To counterbalance man's endowments of wit, judgment, and a mind almost divine, woman was blessed with a poetic (and hyperbolic) physical and spiritual beauty: with the proverbial complexion like cream, cheeks like damask roses, coral lips, teeth like ivory, golden, curly hair (which, Milton says, implies subjection [Paradise Lost 4.307-8]), eyes like suns, breasts like globes, voice and breath like perfumed music. Renaissance writers went even further with this idea of beauty: nothing could beautify a woman more than cheerfulness, contentment; modesty was another potent charm, one that gave beauty a soul. A noble mind would make a woman beautiful as well. Women were to beautify and preside over life, to add refinement.

But in addition to maintaining their beauty, women were also expected to learn all manner of fine needlework, spinning, weaving. Even a queen's (Catherine of Aragon, Elizabeth, Lady
Jane Grey) skill with a needle was renowned. The Renaissance woman was also to know how to keep and run a house, so that she could intelligently supervise her servants in sweeping, cleaning, cooking, preserving foods, making butter, rendering carcasses, baking, and washing clothes. In *Orality and Literacy*, Walter J. Ong tells us that

> [i]n medieval times and after, the education of girls was often intensive and produced effective managers of households, of sometimes fifty to eighty persons, which were often sizable businesses . . . but this education was not acquired in academic institutions, which taught rhetoric and all other subjects in Latin (111).

The Renaissance noblewoman, then, can be described to a limited extent, but only in terms of Petrarchan lady, domestic manager, or procreative functionary. Many contemporary treatises on women respect traditional notions concerning the subservient place of women in society and represent their capacity for intelligent action accordingly; that is, they restrict it to familial activities and specifically to the responsible performances of wifely duties. Until the Christian Humanists afforded women educational opportunities, it seems that their only creative, industrial, and intellectual outlets had been domestic ones.

As the Renaissance moved from medievalism into the new age, women gradually moved out of the religious-education milieu in which they had been kept by the Church for many centuries. In terms of education, this meant that the lettered women remained of better social position, or, as town life developed, of the rich burgher class. But in terms of intellectual achievements, they
were finally expected and encouraged to have knowledge of more than the Bible, the Psalter, and music. And provisions were made for them to have that knowledge—by the strongest educational current in the Renaissance, Christian Humanism. One aspect of Renaissance thought and learning, Christian Humanism inspired principles of education and cultural interests that became fashionable for women, so that educated women became yet another kind of ideal, and more important, an acceptable kind of ideal.

As Retha M. Warnicke reminds us, however, in *Women of the English Renaissance and Reformation*,

the majority of Tudor women lacked any academic training beyond elementary instruction in conversational English and in religious exercises. The accomplishments of the women humanists and reformers took place against a backdrop of stark illiteracy for most of their female contemporaries (3).

It is unreasonable to suggest that because it had several learned women, Tudor society as a whole encouraged its gentlewomen to become well educated. Furthermore, education did not make queens, princesses, or gentlewomen. Study and formal training enabled them to develop their intellectual potential, but the future of that potential was predicted at and by birth. Women of the middle or lower estates lacked such opportunities, and neither group was free to pursue unidirectionally learning and scholarship.

Like fellow Humanist More, Erasmus argued for educational equality; if the new learning (the new Humanist studies) was to be used as a basis for lay piety, it would have to be brought to women as well as men. Both More and Erasmus insisted that
"learning and morals go together," a persuasive claim for women's education being that it made them better women. However, the phrase carried both praise and limitation. By claiming that learning would increase women's virtue (i.e., their chastity, obedience, humility), the Christian Humanists and their successors reassured society that women's knowledge was (still) under control and directed to enhancing only their womanliness—and their piety. For example, Vives's argument for Humanist feminism—and female education—is erased by his antifeminist dicta: educated women were not to use their rhetorical skills to speak with men publicly or to argue with anyone anywhere. Therefore, knowledge of or an education in rhetoric was considered worthless for them. In The Instruction of a Christian Woman (1524), he explains why "a woman needeth [eloquence] not, but she needeth goodness and wisdom":

the study of wisdom, . . . doth instruct their manners, and inform their living, and teacheth them the way of good and holy life. . . . For these things ought to be seen unto, . . . chastity in bringing up a woman, requireth the most diligence . . . [B]ut it neither becometh a woman to rule a school, nor to live amongst men, or speak abroad, and shake off her demureness and honesty [all that is worthy of her honor], . . . which if she be good, it were better to be at home within and unknown to other folks, and in company to hold her tongue demurely and let few see her, and none at all hear her. . . . I give no license to a woman to be a teacher, nor to have authority of the man, but to be in silence (qtd. in Watson 53-56).

Goodness and wisdom could not be derived from reading the tales of Homer, Hesiod, Sappho, and Ovid. "Therefore," writes Vives,
a woman should beware of all these books, like as of serpents or snakes. And if there be any woman that hath such delight in these books, that she will not leave them out of her hands, she should not onely be kept from
them, but also, if she read good books with an ill will
and loath thereto, her father and friends should provide
that she may be kept from all reading, and so by disuse,
forget learning, if that can be done (61-62).

Advice such as Vives's stirred the controversy over women's place
in intellectual society. Erasmus, friend to both More and Vives,
thought that Vives was too hard on women. According to Erasmus,
Latin literacy and classical learning were the two sources of
practically all human knowledge, and Christian Humanists were wise
and right in making them available to noble daughters as well as
noble sons. And More's home life was living proof that Vives's
conservatism was unwarranted: the More women were indeed
profiting from a liberal and classical education. Margaret Roper,
his eldest daughter (1505–1544), would be renowned as first of the
learned English ladies of the sixteenth century. J. E. Neale
tells us that More's three daughters, and their kinswoman,
Margaret Giggis, brought up in a household

where women were treated as men's peers in conversation
and where knowledge and wit passed to and fro, were
famous for their learning. A perfect master of Greek
and Latin, some knowledge of philosophy, astronomy,
physic, arithmetic, logic, rhetoric, and music—these
were the accomplishments of Margaret More (10).

Neale goes on to say that "such women were the pattern of the age,
and [H]umanists boasted of them in their letters to foreign
scholars." But Neale is over-generalizing: although such women
may have been a "pattern," they were not common to the age.

An Italian whose work was translated into English intensified
Vives's argument. In The Necessarie, fit, and convenient
Education of a yong Gentlewoman, Giovanni Bruto writes that
learning and the "humane arts" induce those evils that are fundamental in human beings even from their birth, for reading gives too many examples of corrupt manners and of pleasures and delights. He goes on to say that although those who favor education for women insist that the learning be all directed toward chastity and purity, once a woman knows how to read (in the vernacular or foreign tongues), nothing can prevent her from reading books of love (Ovid, Catullus, Homer, Virgil) and learning all about the loves and adulteries of human beings and of the gods. Bruto was not original in his attempt to influence gender-based reading experiences by determining the (un)availability and (in)appropriateness of books. Besides, argues Bruto, with circular reasoning, women have no need of such education: the time women spend as companions to their husbands or running the house leaves no time for recreational study; and since women do not govern estates or commonwealths or teach the laws of philosophy, they cannot profit from education.

The Humanists and, later, the Reformers were not in complete agreement with Bruto. Instead they argued that women should be educated in the same manner as men, and they agreed with Saint Paul that there was no male or female in Christ Jesus. However, in emphasizing Biblical models, the Reformers developed a less-intensive educational program. Both groups joined religious enthusiasm and educational impulses into ideologies aimed at producing pious, learned women who could harness their intellectual and religious potential to the domestic sphere. In
addition, both groups were in concord with Saint Paul in assuming that women were the inferior sex and needed firm male governance.

The professed goals of a Humanist education were distorted when they were applied to women: equal education was not necessarily based on equal intelligence. Men were educated better to serve the state, but women were educated better to please men. Instead of a means to exert control, education was, for women, a further means of being controlled. In a letter to his children's tutor, More stated that both sexes had the same nature that separates humanity from the beasts, but he went on to admit that the brains of women might be weaker than those of men:

... [T]hough I admit that not all scholars possess [the genuine fruits of learning], I would maintain that those who give themselves to study with such [Christian] views, will easily attain their end and become perfect. Nor do I think that the harvest will be affected whether it is a man or woman who sows the field. They both have the same human nature, and the power of reason differentiates them from the beasts; both, therefore, are equally suited for those studies by which reason is cultivated, and is productive like a ploughed field on which the seed of good lessons has been sown. If it be true that the soil of woman's brain be bad, and more likely to bear bracken than corn (and on this account many keep women from study), I think ... on the same grounds a woman's wit is to be cultivated all the more diligently, so that nature's defect may be redressed by industry (qtd. in Reynolds 17).

One of those defects, according to More, was that women talked excessively. Although garrulousness has been a traditional criticism of women, it seems especially disturbing to our twentieth-century sensibilities that More, the leading exponent of women's educational rights, trafficked in such stereotypes.
In a letter to Margaret warning her against idleness, he asked her to write to him in Latin every day even when she had nothing to report, a task that he thought should not be too difficult since girls were "chatterboxes" who could always think of something to say about nothing. And when Margaret was expecting her first child, her father wrote that he hoped God would give her a child like herself in everything but sex, though he went on to add that it would be all right if the baby were a girl as long as she made up for the "inferiority of her sex" by zeal in learning that matched her mother's (Rogers 21, 36).

In England, the influence of such men as Erasmus, More, and Vives was far-reaching. But the well-educated women of the Tudor era were exceptional. The linguistic and literary talents of such women as Lady Jane Grey, Queen Elizabeth, the five daughters of Sir Anthony Cooke, and the More women could scarcely be matched by their contemporaries. And what impact the lives of these highly accomplished women had on their female contemporaries and successive generations remains to be judged.

The accession of Henry VIII in 1509 brought to the throne a king responsive to the new learning and a queen imbued with the Renaissance spirit. Queen Catherine of Aragon (1485-1536) was the daughter of Queen Isabella of Castile, who had learned Latin and ensured that all her daughters were educated to read and speak it. Isabella imported the best Humanists available, establishing chairs of Hebrew and Greek before Paris did. Her commitment to woman's education was confirmed by her inclusion of two female
teachers in the intellectual pursuits of the court. Indebted to her mother for her fine Renaissance education and orthodox Christianity, Catherine was also accomplished in the humble household tasks and in various recreational pursuits of court life.

A classical scholar like her mother, Queen Catherine invited one of the best scholars to tutor her own daughter, Mary. As a custom, Renaissance scholars moved freely around Europe, often replenishing themselves at an Italian university and always staying in close (Latin) correspondence among themselves. But these scholars were ready to go where their scholarship could support them. The aforementioned Spanish scholar, who was deemed a second Quintilian and who had served as Erasmus's assistant, Juan Luis Vives went to England to supervise the education of Mary, for whom he wrote the Plan of Study for Girls, an exacting plan of female education. And English scholar Thomas Linacre, who had also studied in Italy, wrote a Latin grammar for the same young princess. Later, perhaps in honor of the Queen, Vives would write The Instruction of a Christian Woman, translated by English Humanist Richard Hyrde. Catherine, admired for her wisdom, virtue, and intellectual pursuits, is often thought to be the model for Zenobia, the exemplification of the virtuous governor, in Thomas Elyot's Defence of Good Women (c. 1531-1538). Even before Princess Mary had been born, quintessential Christian Humanist More was bringing up his daughters in the new learning and providing them with the best teachers. To her contemporaries,
then, England provided manifold freedoms for women; a popular proverb ran, "England is a paradise for women, a prison for servants, and a hell or purgatory for horses."

The example of the Tudor court, though, was soon followed by many aristocratic parents all over the country, giving many upper-class women educational opportunities. Anne Boleyn (1507-1536) in Norfolk and Catherine Parr (1512-1548) in Westmorland were brought up to the new learning. Parr was extremely well-educated in Latin, Greek, and other languages, and was highly intelligent. Her books on religious subjects were published posthumously. The primary routes to education were tutoring at home, schooling in convents (before the dissolution), and, occasionally, participation along with boys in a local petit school. Co-education offered equality in education, but the Church and most Humanists frowned on such commingling—the tale of Abelard and Heloise was cautionary. Grammar schools, offering classical education, remained a male province. Young women of high birth who learned Greek, Latin, and sometimes Hebrew, were usually taught at home by their brothers' tutors.

The skill and enthusiasm of their teachers often contrasted favorably with their parents' severity. In *The Scholemaster*, Roger Ascham relates Lady Jane Grey's (1509-1537) loving story of her own learning. While her parents were hunting in the park, she was in her room reading Greek

with as much delight, as some gentlemen would read a merry tale in Boccaccio. After our greeting, . . . I asked her why she would leave such pastime in the park?
Smiling, she answered me: "I believe all their sport in the park is but a shadow to that pleasure I find in Plato. Alas, good folk, they never felt what true pleasure meant." "And how came you, Madam," I asked, "to this deep knowledge of pleasure, and what chiefly allured you unto it? Not many women and very few men have attained such a level." "I will tell you," she said, "and tell you a truth, which perchance you will marvel at. One of the greatest benefits that ever God gave me is that he sent me such sharp and severe parents and such a gentle schoolmaster. For when I am in the presence of either father or mother, [whatever I do]. . . . I must do it . . . ever so perfectly, as God made the world, or else I am so sharply taunted, so cruelly threatened . . . with pinches, nips, and bobs that I think myself in hell, till the time comes that I must go to M. Elmer, who teaches me . . . gently, . . . pleasantly, and with . . . fair allurements to learning . . . . And when I am called from him, I fall on weeping because whatever I do except learning is full of grief, trouble, and fear . . . . And thus my book has been so much my pleasure and more, that in respect of it, all other pleasures, in very deed, are but trifles and troubles to me." I remember this talk gladly, both because it is so worthy of memory and because it was the last talk I ever had and the last time I ever saw that noble and worthy lady (100-2 [modernizations of all quotations in this chapter are my own]).

Nevertheless, a measure of parental interest and control must have been necessary to encourage or enforce the long hours of study that alone could have produced young women as precocious as Lady Jane Grey, Catherine of Aragon, the Mores, the Duchess of Suffolk, Lady Brandon, and even the Princess Elizabeth herself. Ascham goes on to praise his Queen for her extraordinary literary and linguistic accomplishments as well:

[T]he best gentlemen of this court . . . show not so much good will, spend not so much time, bestow not so many hours, daily, orderly, and constantly for the increase of learning and knowledge, as does the Queen's Majesty herself. . . . [B]esides her fluency in Latin, Italian, French, and Spanish, she reads . . . more Greek every day, than some Pretendaries of this Church read Latin in a whole week. And . . . most praiseworthy of all, within the walls
of her privy chamber, she has obtained that excellency of learning, to understand, speak, and write, both wittily with her head, and faire with her hand . . . . I count this the greatest, that it pleased God to call me to be one poor minister in setting forward these excellent gifts of learning in this most excellent Prince. If the rest of our nobility would follow her example, then England might be a spectacle to all the world, for learning and wisdom in nobility (140-141).

Ascham's praise of these two women captured a radical shift in the conduct of a small number of aristocratic women that took place during the middle of the sixteenth century. Until their time, More's pioneering educational efforts had borne little fruit, except for excellent, in-house translations. Educators like More, Vives, and Ascham actively supported the education of women, but one strictly defined in private and domestic terms. There is no doubt that educated women were silenced and marginalized in the Renaissance, deprived of all but a few limited outlets for their intellectual abilities. And their primary outlet, translation, deprived them of any original voice. Their originality overlay a man's literary creation.

In theory, aristocratic women and men were to be educated alike. In practice, however, women did not attain the same measure of knowledge as men: they were denied knowledge of rhetorical theory, which remained the province of men. And educated women remained subject to male influence—an object of the male gaze. Then as now, education was an effective and efficient means of indoctrination, and in the case of Renaissance women, of disempowerment. That male gaze, unflinching in educational and societal practices and intensely apparent in
Renaissance literature, saw a Renaissance ideal: a woman chaste, silent, and obedient. Were she well-educated as well, her potential value to the men in her life was almost limitless. In "Patriarchal Territories: The Body Enclosed," Peter Stallybrass writes that Renaissance men saw the ideal Renaissance woman as controlled or disciplined by codes that required a closed mouth (silence), a closed body (chastity), and an enclosed life (in the home).

During the Tudor period, court women were well-educated; from Catherine of Aragon to Catherine Parr, the queens articulated their place in history. At the same time, though, they all seemed to realize their definition, their categorization as the king's property: economic cyphers and social possessions. Powerful as they may have been in the social hierarchy, they were nonetheless and categorically women, supposedly powerless in the gender hierarchy.

But when Elizabeth became queen, she was automatically ungendered, a prince. Thus, social and gender hierarchy collapsed in making this (wo)man the most powerful person in England. During her reign, then, we might expect literary images of women to reflect the historical reality of England's all-powerful, female monarch. We might expect a literature celebrating female strength and efficacy, a literature envisioning men in subjection to women. After all, Renaissance imaginative literature, especially that in the tradition of courtly love poetry, was created largely under female sponsorship.
In Redeeming Eve, Elaine V. Beilin writes:

Queen Elizabeth's lofty stature as revered monarch, embodiment of the national destiny, and epitome of chaste virtue might suggest that English authors would fill their poems and plays with similarly heroic female characters [e.g., Spenser's Faerie Queene, Peele's Arraignment of Paris, Davies's Hymns of Astraea]. But beyond the representations of Elizabeth herself and the usual catalogues of exceptional types—the Biblical Deborah and Judith or the classical Cornelia—most writers only exalted women as paragons of private virtues. Indeed, those female characters who defy their conventional bounds are more likely to be literary villains. In effect, the emphasis on Elizabeth's unique, divinely ordained position isolated her as a special case, and her public authority seems to have exerted little influence either on the private lives of her female subjects or on male writers' characterization of women in English literature, unless to make them affirm more than ever the traditional virtues (151).

In "Spare Ribs: The Conception of Woman," Michael W. Kaufman writes that

[t]he condescension of Renaissance writers toward women is so palpable that it seems surprising when we remember that their monarch was a queen. Elizabeth's daily presence must have created some tensions and not a little embarrassment to the masculine apologists. Because of her accomplished leadership and her fabled erudition, the successful military expeditions she authorized, her bold backing of Drake and Raleigh and the voyages of exploration, and her crafty handling of a recalcitrant court, Elizabeth embodied, however uneasily, the epitome of Renaissance virtu; she was a living example of a "great man." But as career woman and virgin Elizabeth was an affront to masculine sensibilities, and her vanity and growing paranoia seemed royal examples of feminine irrationality. It is not surprising, therefore, that the first two decades of her reign produced the most prolific rash of satires on woman's frailties in the history of that sub-genre (153).

Elizabeth is often glorified as a feminist heroine, and in many ways she is. But her reign actually did little to affect the possibilities for other women of her time. The queen was clearly
a woman on the stage of public life—and she liked to call it
that—but with a male identity. Her princehood underlay her
obvious femininity and lent her alone of all Englishwomen
authority and privilege.

Traditionally, all our definitions of women have come from
men, the masculine ideas of the feminine. And traditionally,
literary works have come from men. Whether they be imaginative or
advisory or hortatory, however, all male-conceived literary works
dealing with women can be called "imaginative," for they can never
narrow the distance between the literary and the actual. So it
was in the Renaissance.

The actual Renaissance woman, then, is a palimpsest, written
on and erased, again and again. Whatever woman actually existed
has been distorted by male-imposed descriptions; whatever ideas
she actually voiced have been muted by male-imposed dialogue. She
has presented herself through and spoken through males, for
centuries. She is a male fiction, perhaps without any
verisimilitude. It is important for us, then, to examine her
presentation in some of the world's greatest literature, the
presentation we have been willing to accept as historically
accurate, before we see her own self-presentation and hear her
authentic voice in woman-written literary and oratorical works.

In Women and the English Renaissance, Linda Woodbridge
writes:

Renaissance orthodoxy viewed women as by nature timid,
passive, and tender of heart: the courageous,
aggressive, and tough minded it typically regarded as
unnatural. No amount of contrary evidence could shake the faith of the average Renaissance man in the existence of behavior dictated by nature: if a vast majority of women had failed to conform to expectations about timidity, passivity, and tenderness of heart, that would have proved only that a good many women were unnatural nowadays (214).

Woodbridge goes on to describe this Renaissance mental habit as "the trick of maintaining a generalization about women by dismissing contrary evidence as aberrant behavior." It seems paradoxical that the Renaissance typically characterized womankind in general as weak and timid while portraying an infinite number of individual women, beginning with their queen, as sturdy and aggressive. The most famous of Renaissance plays bristle with strong-minded female characters—Joan of Arc, Queen Margaret, Constance, the Duchess of Gloucester, Portia, Rosalind, Beatrice, Kate, Viola, Mistresses Page and Ford, Helena, Isabella, Marina, Imogen, Volumnia, Cordelia, Goneril, Regan, Lady Macbeth, Cleopatra, Paulina, Emilia, Katherine of Aragon. The roll call is impressive: for good or for ill, these women's muscular personalities demand audience response. The same can be said for dozens of other women in Renaissance literature, from the heroine of Appius and Virginia to the heroine of The Duchess of Malfi.

Yet despite the truly spectacular number of assertive women in Renaissance literature, female assertiveness—both actual and fictitious—continued to be widely regarded as abnormal—and exceptional. It is telling that assertiveness was deemed "abnormal" as well as an exclusively male trait.
The Renaissance theory insisting on the fundamental difference between the two human sexes, a difference that somehow incorporated the variations among members of each gender, manifested itself in social, economic, and educational practices. Those same distinctions between the genders were demonstrated in literature as well, guaranteeing, as they did, audience appeal and influencing audience perceptions about actual life.

Edmund Spenser's Britomart is a heroine in the "new mold," one of the few truly powerful female characters. In The Faerie Queen, this female knight of chastity is a woman of active power, a sister in the Amazonian legend. Representing the stalwart woman who is not a slave of the body, she is the strongest force in Book III, overpowering Sir Guyon and the house of Busyrane. All the while, she is looking forward to honorable marriage, which is a spiritual rather than a mere fleshly union, for she is "pure from blame of sinful blot" (III.ii.23) and is "the flowre of chastity" (III.x.6). Through this inviolable virtue, Britomart overcomes all who oppose her—without losing her ardor.

Besides being stalwart, chaste, and passionate, Britomart is also beautiful, and her beauty, or to the Renaissance mind, the beauty of her chastity, overpowers people. However, Spenser had a specific reason for creating such an awesome woman: The Faerie Queen is an allegory, and Spenser is glorifying Britomart to glorify Queen Elizabeth. Britomart is drawn with such nobleness of character that she stands out as Spenser's example of perfect
womanhood: "That peerelesse paterne of Dame Natures pride,/And heavenly image of perfection" (IV.vi.24). But Britomart is Spenser's stylization of Elizabeth—not the voice of a real woman.

Lady Macbeth is another powerful—and exaggerated—female character, so powerful in fact that she can orchestrate the death of a king. She is ruled by ambition, an intense, overmastering passion that is gratified at the expense of just principles and of the sacred claims of kindred and hospitality. But Lady Macbeth's behavior does not really raise questions about women's tender-heartedness, for she has had to be unsexed before she can divest herself of tenderness:

Come, you spirits
That tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here,
And fill me from the crown to the toe topful
Of direst cruelty! Make thick my blood,
Stop up th'access and passage to remorse,
That no compunctious visitings of nature
Shake my fell purpose, nor keep peace between
Th' effect and [it]! (I.v.40-47).

Like Britomart, Lady MacBeth lacks verisimilitude and serves as no example of attainable female power or of already-attained female power. Each character speaks her male-author's words and does his deeds; she is, thereby, presented by him as an androgynous, yet another indication that these characters in no way narrowed the distance between the literary and the actual.

Epicoene, a play about sexual identity, presents us with a different kind of powerful woman from that of Britomart or Lady Macbeth: the Collegiate Ladies—Madam Haughty, Madam Centaure, and Mrs. Mavis. This play reflects the entrenched and overdrawn idea
that once a woman violates one convention of her traditional
domestic role, she falls into orgies of lust and vanity. In
addition, the Collegiate Ladies combine the negative stereotypes
of Renaissance women: they too are epicoene in that they are
lusty, loud, amoral, bossy, intellectually pretentious,
overpowering—they act like men:

[They] call themselves the Collegiates, an order between
courtiers and country madams, that live from their
husbands; and give entertainment to all the wits, . . .
with most masculine, or rather hermaphroditical
authority . . . (I.i).

Ben Jonson, too, resorts to androgyny as the only acceptable
explanation for his autonomous women.

None of the aforementioned characters resemble the
unrealistic and unattainable Renaissance ideal of the Petrarchan
class: a passive, spiritually and physically perfect, object of
unmitigated, masochistic love. None, in short, would inspire the
sonnet sequences of Spenser, Sidney, or Shakespeare, for none is
"more lovely and more temperate" than a summer's day (Shakespeare,
Sonnet XVIII). But then few living, breathing woman ever were.
That Epicoene, for instance, is burlesque, an exaggeration of
lusty attitudes, suggests at least some actual Renaissance women
fell markedly short of the ideal.

Only John Donne's sonnets allow women a reasonable equality,
for his sonnets integrate sexual needs with the traditional,
Petrarchan emotional intensity. Unlike the other love poets,
Donne's work increased the emphasis on sexuality while advancing
an increased valuation of women. Women are more than the
incantation of beauty, the object of contemplation, the
springboard for man's spiritual ascension—the static, conceptual
foci of the sonnet genre. Just like their lovers, his women are
strongly sexual and bring to the lovemaking a reciprocated
spirituality—"one another's best."

Donne's woman is a partner to her man; she is not reduced to
an object, either of spiritual contemplation or of sexual
subservience, like the women of his contemporary poets. His
poetry celebrates the sexual union and recognizes woman's equal
participation and credit. Woman's power equals man's in the
fleshly union, a religious mystical experience that, according to
Donne, solves all earthly problems and confers limitless bliss.
Donne's woman is a man's equal, but a man's ideal equal, his ideal
sexual partner. Her "equality" is determined in the most private
of domestic spheres—the bed. And again, the female character is
drawn by a man.

In addition to the strong women in Renaissance literature,
there are many female characters whose power is dissipated in
willfulness. These characters are manipulated by what their male
authors conceive of as Fortune and pay for their willfulness and
nonconformity with their lives—as it should be by Renaissance
(male) rationality. Juliet, Desdemona, and the Duchess of Malfi
all follow this pattern. Each of these women defies her family to
marry the husband of her choice. The dissembling Juliet goes so
far as to promise her parents that she will prepare herself for
her wedding to Paris: "Nurse, will you go with me into my
closet/To help me sort such needful ornaments/As you think fit to furnish me to-morrow?" (IV.iii.33-35). Instead, she prepares herself for feigned death—her way out of an impossible situation, for Juliet's circumstances demand a Hero-like obedience; her exercise of choice leads to her death.

O that Capulet could have learned from Brabantio, who cries when he learns that his precious Desdemona has eloped with the Moor: "O heaven! how got she out? O treason of the blood!/Fathers, from hence trust not your daughter's minds/ By what you see them act" (Othello, I.i.170-73). Neither could the duchess be trusted by her kinsmen. But then by twentieth-century standards, she should have been more independent of them. Although she is older than either Juliet or Desdemona, this high-spirited, high-minded widow still needs the blessing of her family. "Will you hear me," she announces to her controlling brothers, "I'll never marry." But she does, for she is the duchess. But to marry the man she loves, her steward, she, like the other two women, marries in secret.

All three women are doomed; they suffer death because of circumstances that grew out of their initial disobedience, their insubordination to the men in their lives. Juliet's death is a matter of Fortune: Romeo does not receive the friar's explanatory letter; Friar Lawrence is too late at the vault. Desdemona's death too is determined by Fortune: she is a double victim, a victim of Iago's lies and of her husband's capacity to believe them. And as for the poor duchess: she is a victim of her high
estate, an estate her brothers will not have contaminated. Unlike Queen Elizabeth in her estate, the Duchess has not been ungendered and thus is subjected to male rule. Juliet, Desdemona, and the Duchess of Malfi exemplify the disobedient woman, the woman who was socialized to be subordinate to the wishes of her kinsmen. Women not kept under control, willful women, eventually face avoidable dilemmas that transcend boundaries of rank, place, and time.

The male gaze is apparent in the celebrated literature of the Renaissance; men brought to center stage their versions of women, providing those fictions a place to think, speak, and activate their male-conceived experience. And that male-written literature did little to transform women's apparently private and passive virtues into the public, active attributes that were so valuable to the conduct of the commonwealth, to participation in civic life. Women's literary voices, then, were dubbed. Men were doing the actual speaking.

Any real Renaissance woman, then, who wanted to surpass the domestic sphere would struggle in a double bind: she would have not only to fight real-life strictures but throw off the accepted fiction of these literary stereotypes.

The English Renaissance Rhetorical Tradition

It is increasingly difficult to imagine an account of the arts of Renaissance poetry or drama that does not exhibit a corresponding appreciation of the art of rhetoric. Indeed, a
treatment of Renaissance culture that remains oblivious to the rhetorical tradition is almost inconceivable. Rhetorical study flourished during the Renaissance, contributing in large measure to the incredible output of literary works and the flourishing of Christian Humanism.

Clearly, the rhetoric of the English Renaissance encouraged the pursuit of eloquence at its most extensive, for eloquence served to shape the individual gentleman and to produce the articulate male citizen. After influential Peter Ramus pronounced rhetoric as only style and delivery, most of Renaissance writing on rhetoric was limited to the study and improvement of style; thus rhetorical study and education merged in such a way as to influence English Renaissance literature. And poetics was subsumed by rhetoric, just as Aristotle would have had it originally. Gerald P. Mohrmann writes that

> [a]n offshoot of our understanding of the educational system, indeed a rather direct projection of it, is the awareness that rhetorical studies figure importantly in the creation of English literature. Insofar as the Renaissance in England is concerned, it is safe to say that this is the field most tilled in the province of rhetoric . . . (59).

Ciceronian principles were the backbone of Renaissance educational practices: rhetoric was linked with all good things; eloquence and ethics were indissoluble. In "Cicero and the Roman Civic Spirit in the Middle Ages and Early Renaissance," Hans Baron remarks that Cicero taught the Renaissance these two things: the primary task of man is action and service for the community; and the contact of the spirit with the active life does not
distract his powers but stimulates his highest energy (91).

This aspect of the rhetorical inheritance enabled Humanists to resolve the apparent conflict between the life of contemplation and that of active citizenship. And in the process, this inheritance enabled them to continue another Cicernian practice as well: the exclusion of women from the active and public intellectual life.

The sustaining didactic curriculum behind the pursuit of eloquence was classical rhetorical theory, primarily as outlined in the anonymous classical treatise the Rhetorica ad Herennium. The centrality in Renaissance culture therefore of the commentaries and glosses on Cicero's Rhetorica (and until the sixteenth century it was still perfectly permissible to regard the Ad Herennium as a work of Cicero) hangs on the centrality of rhetoric in that culture. And translating those second-century theories and practices into sixteenth-century ones was Erasmus, "the ornament of learning" (Ascham 240), whose enthusiastically received Latin rhetoric De Copia hinges on an enthusiasm for classical literature and a concomitant pedagogy of imitation. Erasmus' immediate goal was to provide the student with very practical, nearly programmatic techniques for saying many things and saying them in many ways. The most influential rhetorician in Renaissance England, Erasmus set the pattern for the English grammar-school curriculum and for rhetorical training in the schools. Although Erasmus does not include much in the way of explicit theory, he does consider both writing and speaking. His
copia techniques are applicable throughout the modes of discourse, and they embrace every degree of purpose: to produce belief, to move, or to entertain.

It was enthusiasm for a systematic form of imitation that popularized, for a while, a Ciceronian phrase of prose with writers like Roger Ascham, author of The Scholemaster. Concerned with "the good encouragement and right consideration of learning," Ascham writes that the core of a curriculum should be imitatio, "a faculty to express with liveliness and perfection that example that you go about to follow" (234). The examples should, of course, be in Greek or Latin, languages not contaminated by common speech, for in these languages we find wisdom, eloquence, good matter, and good utterance. By carefully analyzing the writings of great writers, a student can engender a true imitation in any language. Like Virgil, Cicero, and Longolius, the scholar who imitates the beautifully and wisely written proves to be learned, wise, and honest; imitation brings forth learning and breeds true judgment. Students who want to write well need to imitate passages of the best writers ("Gods holie Bible," Plato, Aristotle, Xenophon, Isocrates, and Demosthenes), analyzing the use of words, forms of sentences, and handling of material in each selection. For lovers of learning, the rewards of imitation practices are threefold: a sensitivity to diction, an awareness of form, and an exposure to the finest of ideas.

Not only does Ascham afford us a look at the rhetorical activity in the grammar schools, but he also affords us a look at
the imitative Ciceronian prose style of the time. Like most literary men of the era, he had the classical authors whispering to him as he wrote, for his prose is carefully framed and neat, free of "inkhorn" terms, and sounds with the long-flowing and sonorous rhythms of Cicero:

Some ignorant, unlearned, and idle student: or some busy looker upon this little poor book, that has neither will to do good himself, nor skill to judge right of others, but can lustily condemn, by pride and ignorance, all painfull diligence and right order in study, will perchance say, that I am too precise, too curious, in marking and piddling thus about the imitation of others: and that the old worthy Authors never busied their heads and wits, in following so precisely, either the matter that other men wrote, or else the manner how other men wrote. They will say, it were a plaine slavery, and injury too, to shackle and tie a good wit, and hinder the course of a man's good nature with such bonds of servitude, in following another.

Unless such men think themselves wiser than Cicero for teaching of eloquence, they must be content to turn a new leaf (245-44).

Ascham's apologia for Latin and Greek is ironic, for his chief service to English prose is the example he sets as a scholar and a courtier, writing excellently--in the vernacular.

At St. Paul's school, alma mater of Samuel Pepys and John Milton, the schoolmasters were interested in the imitation necessary for their charges to speak and write "clene and chase latein." Their students were to imitate the rhetoric and grammar of classical Latin writers, composing epistles, declamations, verses, and orations. With little distinction made between imitation and plagiarism, the boys were constantly urged to take words, phrases, figures of speech and figures of thought, and
turns of idea as well as turns of expression, from the models they were imitating. Although there was some controversy over the authors to be imitated, Cicero—"not the name of a man but the name of eloquence itself"—was on every list for students at every level.

Imitation was a two-step process: after the students analyzed the matter and manner (precepts) of the literary model, they began the imitative exercises: memorizing, to impress the model in their minds; translating, to improve their command of the mother tongue; and paraphrasing, to improve copiousness.

Those imitative exercises of analysis were considered the basis for the imitative exercises of genesis. These more advanced exercises introduced the student to the problems of discovering something to say, inventio, and the problems of giving form to what was being said, dispositio. Students could learn either by imitating the best models (Erasmus, Vives, Cicero, Demosthenes) or by following textbook rules. They began by writing Latin epistles, adjusting their style to the writer, the receiver, and the circumstances. Next, they worked on writing verses, from elegy to eclogue, applying their study of prosody and their imitative skills. The precedents and patterns for their themes came from the "sweetest Latin" and the "choicest matter," and their themes were amplified and adorned with gleanings from the commonplace books they were taught to keep. Students learned how to classify and find arguments and how to write themes according to the patterns of Aphthonius. His Progymnasmata provided a
formulaic sequence of exercises and brief model themes that
introduced the three classes of rhetoric: deliberative, forensic,
and epideictic. In "Grammar and Rhetoric in the Renaissance," W.
Keith Percival substantiates the importance of such language
study:

Grammar and rhetoric were the most important
linguistic disciplines practiced by Renaissance
humanists. Grammar was the more elementary of the two,
in the curricular sense, and perhaps for that reason it
was the area in which the humanists were in a position
to contribute a great deal of their own. In rhetoric,
by contrast, the legacy of antiquity was much more
substantial and hence not so easy to emulate— one thinks
of such literary masterpieces as Cicero's De oratore and
Quintilian's Institutiones [sic]. The relation between
the two disciplines was close, but in this regard the
humanists were in debt to their immediate medieval
predecessors, who had also oriented much of their
grammatical instruction towards the distant goal of
stylistic fluency (330).

An essential feature of these grammar studies was their value
beyond linguistic: they were also a literary discipline, grammar
rules learned as a preparation for literature study. This dual
feature of the grammarian, as teacher of grammar in the narrow
sense and as teacher of composition and literature, was a legacy
from antiquity. It is clear, for instance, from Quintilian's
Institutio oratoria (first century AD) that it was customary at
that time for grammarians to train their students in a proper
understanding and appreciation of literature. Grammar was not
merely the gateway to the other liberal arts; it was the
foundation of the whole educational edifice. It is important to
emphasize that the dominant position of Latin instruction in the
curriculum persisted throughout the Renaissance and was further reinforced by the prestige of the *studia humanitatis*.

One of the first great masters of a distinctly native English prose style, Ascham surely understood this process, for he writes:

> [E]ven likewise, do we seek such one in our school to follow, who is able always, in all matters, to teach plainly, to delight pleasantly, and to carry away by force of wise talk, all that shall hear or read him: and is so excellent in deed, as wit is able, or wish can hope, to attain unto: And this not only to serve in the Latin and Greek tongue, but also in our own English language. But yet, because the providence of God hath left us the true precepts in no other tongue except Greek and Latin, we must seek in the authors, only of those two tongues, the true pattern of eloquence, if in any other mother tongue we look to attain, either to perfect utterance of it ourselves, or skillful judgment of it in others (275).

By the time John Lyly, author of *Euphues*, entered the Renaissance stage, there was competing force for the use of English for all writing: in part, it was the aggressive nationalism merging in the age, but most especially, it was the incessant demand of Englishmen in all walks of life to share in the Renaissance accomplishment. Ideas and facts in Latin were a prize of the few; in English, they became a ready storehouse for all.

Renaissance rhetorician Thomas Wilson had had a tremendous influence, for it was he who had written *Arte of Rhetorique* (1533), the first complete rhetoric of any kind in English. Until Wilson's contribution, rhetorical theory and practice were available only in Latin. (Rare was the woman with access to Latin learning.) Also the first to cover the five divisions of
classical rhetoric, Wilson's book overlay rhetorical study with a
general pride in English culture and with the learning being
published in English. More pronounced is his purpose of improving
English itself, as a written and oral language. His famous attack
on "inkhorn terms" shows his concern for the purity of the
language and for style. His emphasis on careful choice of words,
amplification, and effective use of vivid language show that he
aimed to make English as expressive and eloquent as the ancient
tongues; in fact, learners would be best served by imitating
wisely the practice—speech or writing—of the eloquent ancients.

Renaissance men, steeped in the classical tradition, began to
feel that English was theirs to form into any style they wished.
And they began to celebrate English as language. Consequently,
they ranged in style from the purest simplicity of Ascham's hero
John Cheke (who along with Wilson promoted anti-"inkhorn" terms)
to the extravagant rhetoric and vocabulary of Lyly's Euphues.

Philip Sidney's Defense of Poesie, the first English work of
literary criticism, was another phase in the evolution of English
prose. In the true spirit of sprezzatura, he focused his
therefore recreational writing on the defense of what was
becoming the national poesie. Writing in a style reactionary and
antithetical to that of Lyly's, Sidney was able to establish a new
literary vernacular: one of purely English idiom, yet versatile
in syntax; one free from gaudy and fantastic embellishments, yet
reminiscent of its predecessors in its fanciful personifications
and antitheses; and one of clear and ingenious arguments, yet playful and exuberant:

Marry, they that delight in poesie itself, should seek to know what they do, and how they do; and especially look themselves in an unflattering glass of reason, if they be inclinable unto it. For poesy must not be drawn by the ears, it must be gently led, or rather it must lead; which was partly the cause that made the ancient learned affirm it was a divine gift, and no human skill, since all other knowledges lie readie for any that hath strength of wit, a poet no industry can make if his own genius be not carried into it (45).

Sidney's digression is devoted to stylistic criticism, and his theory of style forms the link between rhetoric and poetics. His apology rests, as does his understanding of a successful and worthwhile poetics, on its rhetorical ability to move men to particular virtuous actions. In "The Power of Persuasion," Brian Vickers might well be referring to Sidney's theorizing:

The English rhetorics belong firmly to the classical and continental traditions, not least in their fusion of rhetoric and poetics, granting the poet and the orator equal status, similar methods, identical goals— to move, to teach, to please— and distinguishing between them sometimes through the traditional dichotomy of media, prose against verse, sometimes through the presence or absence of fiction (412).

Sidney's work is not a simple formulary, for he does not claim that truth rests in the poem. He calls for responsibility in language-use, both by those who produce texts and by those who process them. He wants his readers to be rhetors, to judge— just as they would any other rhetorical work.

Towards the end of his defense, Sidney bursts out in the seemingly ironical complaint that poetry is so like oratory, that all wordsmiths— poets and orators alike— have responsibilities:
But what! me thinks I deserve to be pounded for straying from poetry to oratory. But both have such a affinity in the wordish consideration, that I think this digression will make my meaning receive the fuller understanding:—which is not to take upon me to teach poets how they should do, but only, finding myself sick among the rest, to show some one or two spots of the common infection grown among the most part of writers; that, acknowledging ourselves somewhat awry, we may bend to the right use both of matter and manner: whereto our language giveth us great occasion, being, indeed, capable of any excellent exercising of it (52).

The union of rhetoric with poetics—eloquence—brought to the fore an exuberant, forceful, and confident English language. In fact, "[y]ou cannot read Renaissance literature for long without noticing everywhere a delight in words, an infatuation with rhetoric, a stylistic explosion" (33), writes Richard Lanham in *Motives of Eloquence*. And in "Rhetoric and Fiction in Elizabethan England," Arthur F. Kinney writes:

>[As the Tudors continued to develop their own high age of rhetoric, they drew more and more on what we should call imaginative or creative techniques to attract their listeners and persuade their audiences. As ambassadors, they needed oratory: as orators, they became, in Lucian's words, actors. And as writers they became poets (387).

This Renaissance of style enjoyed a great prestige—in spite of the controversies it was subjected to (e.g., inkmorn terms vs. pure English, Ciceronianism vs. Senecanism)—because language, the English language, was thought to be a social indicator both of man's individual character and his way of communicating with his fellow beings. The rank of women was never mentioned in the rhetorical treatises. Even Rudolph Agricola and Peter Ramus, the two very influential rhetoricians who considered rhetoric
secondary to dialectic, continued to see the importance of rhetoric to teaching—the capping of good argument with eloquence.

In fact, poetry's identification with rhetoric continues in many ways throughout this period. Poetic composition, itself, is often described in terms of the rhetorical triad: invention, disposition, elocution. The continued use of these terms by theoreticians who are themselves practicing poets indicates a belief that writing poetry involves the same disciplines as the composition of speech. In particular, the rhetorical analysis of style, the schoolboy exercises, as embodied in the teaching of figures and tropes, was a rich field of inspiration for the poet as it had always been for the rhetor. Thus, the concept of rhetoric was thoroughly subsumed in poetics.

In a power-conscious age and in the age of Absolutism and Contractualists, Francis Bacon wrote his Essays—in the vernacular. And although his essays lay some claim to beauty, their main domain is that of utility, for Bacon is intent upon passionless instruction on how to get ahead in life, on practical success. Hence, Bacon concentrates on narrowly defined issues of power and tactics, of domination and mastery. Bacon was a distinguished orator in the House of Commons and the lawcourts, one of few men with a true understanding of classical rhetoric, one of the few producing the first major orations in English, in modern history—a practicing, persuasive rhetor. In fact, in The Advancement of Learning, Bacon writes that "the duty and office of rhetoric is to apply reason to imagination for the better moving
of the will" (2.18.2). In a later work, Bacon writes that "rhetoric is subservient to the imagination, as Logic is to the understanding; and the duty and office of Rhetoric, if it be deeply looked into, is no other than to apply and recommend the dictates of reason to imagination, in order to excite the appetite and will" (qtd. in Corbett 613). In Classical Rhetoric for the Modern Student, Edward P. J. Corbett tells us that

[b]y viewing the imagination and reason as definitely distinct faculties, Bacon lays the groundwork for the great amount of subsequent discussion about the separate provinces and the separate cultivation of those faculties; and of course he is thereby fostering the Ramistic dichotomy between logic and rhetoric (613).

Unlike his rhetorical predecessors, noticeable (flamboyant) style is not central to Bacon's rhetorical scheme. More important than the words is the matter—Res over verba. Yet Bacon found himself arguing for rhetoric as the perfect union of thought and word, for the use of simple words whenever possible, and for careful attention to audience in order to gauge words, ideas, and argument.

As a schoolboy, Bacon's rhetorical training would have comprised writing personal essays, short prose compositions on a particular subject—the "rich," perhaps or on "nobility" or on "studies." And with the essay as a literary genre, came a change in style: Bacon's style is more personal and less elaborate than that of Euphues; his sentences are shorter and more pointed; and being comparatively free from pedantic inversions, his sentences have a more modern flow.
Bacon continually revised and polished his prose until each essay was a gem of worldly wisdom. He pennmican style is a tour de force—short, incisive, epigrammatically brief, Senecan. Every opening sentence is memorable: "What is Truth; said jesting Pilate; And would not stay for an Answer." "Men fear Death, as Children feare to goe in the darke." "Revenge is a kinde of Wilde Justice." "The Joyes of Parents are Secret; And so are their Griefes, and Feares." Every sentence is loaded with material, and virtually every sentence could be expanded into a sizable essay of its own:

*Ambition is like Choler; Which is an Humour, that maketh Men Active, Earnest, Full of Alacrity, and Stirring, if it be not stopped. But if it be stopped, and cannot have his Way, it becommeth Adust, and thereby Maligne and Venomous. So Ambitious Men, if they finde the way Open for their Rising, and still get forward, they are rather Busie then Dangerous; But if they be chek't in their desires, they become secretly discontent, and looke upon Men and matters, with an Evill Eye; And are best pleased, when Things goe backward; Which is the worst Propertie, in a Servant of a Prince or State ("Of Ambition" 98).

All of these Renaissance men were products of much the same male-conceived, male-dispensed, male-received, male-only educational system and rhetorical study. All these men learned in Latin and wrote in English. And yet their writing styles are markedly different, ranging from Ciceronian to Senecan. Common to all of them is their sustained interest in style, the manifestation of Renaissance rhetoric. However much their writing may differ, all of it is the vehicle by which the writer dramatizes his social awareness, experiments boldly with the
flowering of the English language, and represents himself to his readers. We must not forget, finally, that fame and position were great motivating forces of the Renaissance gentleman and that the skillful use of the English language was recognized as indispensable to the achievement of fame, either for the moment or for posterity.

The Renaissance man seemed to have all the advantages of schooling as well as the opportunity to learn and use rhetoric. And for men, rhetoric and erudition were the means to an end, be it social position or power. For women, however, rhetoric and erudition were considered ends in themselves. Even so, women were finding alternative routes to the rhetorical tradition, its wisdom and art.

Marginal Voices: Women in the Rhetorical Tradition

In The Elizabethan Woman, Carroll Camden assures us that women were indeed participating in the rhetorical tradition. Although many of his 1950s assertions regarding the ever-rising status of women seem now debatable, his catalogue of well-educated Renaissance women remains irrefutable: Elizabeth, the Cooke sisters, Jane Howard, Jane of Somerset, Jane and Mary of Arundel, Lady Jane Grey, Marie Stuart, Elizabeth Fane, the More sisters, Mary Sidney, Margaret How Ascham, Jane Fox, Dorothy Leigh, Mary and Jane Maltravers, Elizabeth Hane Weston, Arabella Stuart Seymour, Esther Inglis, Catherine Tishem, and Elizabeth Legge (57–58).
Camden goes on to gauge Renaissance women's contributions to the intellectual atmosphere, statistically:

Over fifty women wrote some eighty-five compositions during the years from 1524 to 1640. Fifty-eight of these books were printed separately, while the others appeared in anthologies, liturgies, and other collections. The nature of these printed pieces is rather interesting: they include three translations of non-religious works, sixteen translations of religious works, thirty original non-religious compositions, and thirty-six original religious compositions. . . . [M]ore than sixty percent of their printed efforts are given over to religious subjects (58).

Camden makes no reference to the source for these figures, yet they are interesting, for we do know that few men or women were publishing at this time. Publishing was considered a plebian activity; therefore, publication figures could not reflect the amount of writing and intellectual exchange actually taking place. But Camden uses the word wrote, not publish. Even Queen Catherine Parr invoked the humility topos when she published _Lamentacion or complaynt of a sinner_, motivated entirely, she writes

> by the hate I owe to sin, who has reigned in me, partly by the love I owe to all Christians, whom I am content to edify, even the thexample [sic] of mine own shame, forced and constrained with my heart and words, to confess and declare to the world, how ingrate, negligent, unkind, and stubborn, I have been to God my Creator: and how beneficial, merciful, and gentle, He has been always to me His creature, being such a miserable, wretched sinner (qtd. in Trivitsky 39).

The first woman to publish her work in English with the sole intention of influencing the public, the queen devised and commanded a specific rhetorical situation—buts with hesitation. Even a queen tread softly on rhetorical territory.
Camden's numbers are low, especially since he considers the number of writings rather than publications: fifty women wrote only eight-five compositions over 116 years. Or at least only fifty women admitted having written some eighty-eight compositions. Hundreds, perhaps, of other Renaissance women writers will remain unknown. Nonetheless, Camden's numbers support the sad probability that only a small percentage of the female population was active in intellectual circles. And for these few women, who emigrated slowly from the domestic sphere, public articulation came gradually—over generations.

Thus, the intellectual women fall into three generations: those supported by the initial wave of Christian Humanism, those encouraged by the Reformists, and finally those supporting the literary rhetoric of the late sixteenth century. Those relatively few English women can be represented by three: Margaret More Roper, who, in successfully uniting her erudition and her domestic vocation, exemplified the ideals of the new Humanist learning; Anne Askew, who implemented the rhetoric-dialectic methodological foundation of the Reformers to understand and propagate her beliefs—and to defend herself; and Queen Elizabeth I, whose patronage of individual literary-rhetoric endeavors was overshadowed only by her own private literary and public rhetorical accomplishments. These representative women are like those in Christine de Pisan's City of Ladies: female intellectuals of a privileged elite, not representative of women in all walks of life, yet representative of a type. And in each
case their "feminine voice" reflects a measure of individuality as well as a measure of internalized male aesthetic norms. And in each case, their best work was in the vernacular.

Profound though its influence on educational and rhetorical practices, Christian Humanism did not open up the full range of intellectual opportunities for women, not even to the women in one limited sector. Whatever the strides made in women's intellectual achievements, they were not all attributable to the Humanists. The Protestant Reformists were also significantly interested in education and in women, offering far more public opportunity and equality to women than did the Humanists. The intellectual influences on and of each group were obviously dissimilar, Humanists being neo-classicists, Reformists being religious fundamentalists.

Those female rulers and aristocrats renowned for their erudition did not entertain Humanism as a profession (a political, teaching, or courtier's career--male-only careers); instead, their accomplishment was deemed an end in itself, like fine needlework or musical performance. Their educations prepared them to patronize further Humanist studies and endeavors and to be virtuous, all the time keeping their idle hands and minds busy. Sir Thomas More makes this last point when he writes to daughter Margaret that her studies prevent her from being "idle and slothful" (qtd. in Reynolds 21).

In a later letter, More explicitly assures her that her learning is a private matter, intended for no other audience than
her father and her husband. Instead of public acclaim, she must work for the approval of the men who love her and whom she loves. Except for Queen Elizabeth I, who incarnated the most public display of intellectual proficiency, a woman's intellectual articulation would be indecorous:

But, my sweetest Margaret, you are all the more deserving of praise on this account. Although you cannot hope for an adequate reward for your labour, yet nevertheless you continue to unite to your singular love of virtue the pursuit of literature and art. Content with the profit and pleasure of your conscience, in your modesty you do not seek for the praise of the public, nor value it overmuch even if you receive it, but because of the great love you bear us, you regard us—your husband and myself—as a sufficiently large circle of readers for all that you write (Rogers 155). For the Humanists, then, a woman's intellectual accomplishments connote cultivation, a leisured life, a background which regards the decorative as adding lustre to rank and social standing, and the ability to purchase the services of the best available teachers for such comparatively useless skills. But the Reformers would include women from the middle class as well.

Like the Humanists, the Reformers advocated woman's education as the foundation for her piety; however, in emphasizing Biblical models, they developed a less intensive educational program. But the Reformers extended spiritual equality along with the assumption that concerned and knowledgeable women had the right to criticize the Church just as men did. Although upper-class and aristocratic women were the first to exercise this right, middle-class women soon joined in as outspoken critics of current religious practices. At the core of both disciplines (Humanism
and Reformism) was rhetoric: it permeated literature, and its aim was the instruction of men and women alike, women being just as important and worthy in the lay piety. In *The Rhetoric of Motives*, Kenneth Burke tells us that "Once you treat instruction as an aim of rhetoric, you introduce a principle that can widen the scope of rhetoric beyond persuasion" (77).

Even though the Renaissance brought Latin and Greek literacy, classical learning, and rhetorical educational practices (stylistic not oratorical) to noble daughters as well as noble sons, those young women were to use and enjoy their learning privately—and silently. Margaret More Roper, for example, was expected to speak Latin on demand, for her fluency reflected glory on her father. But any public demonstration of learning initiated by women themselves was problematic, and strong psychological constraints were exerted against producing any original written work displaying this learning. To speak in public was deemed unseemly. Besides, an assertively intelligent woman was thought to be self-indulgent and licentious. Only a saint could neutralize that suspicion.

The paragon of a Renaissance educated woman was saintly Margaret More Roper (1504–1544), daughter of Thomas More. Fully accommodating to the male- inscribed currency of thought, she became recognized as a fine scholar, perhaps the finest Renaissance scholar relegated to the margins of discourse. Roper's intellectual boundaries were circumscribed by timeless, male-imposed tradition. Like other accomplished women of her
rank, she patronized her in-home school and limited her writing to dedications of translations, letters, private devotional meditations, diaries, and translations.

That so many intellectual women limited their work to translations is not coincidental: composition was the masculine art, the articulated original; translation was feminine—derivative, defective, muted, and "other." Although men might offer translations to patrons as evidence of their capacity for public service, women could not. In "Attitudes toward Learned Women," Mary Ellen Lamb tells us that

this low opinion of translating perhaps accounts for why women were allowed to translate at all. . . . The dynamics underlying this way of thinking are transparent. Translation, especially translation of works by males, was allowed to women because it did not threaten the male establishment as the expression of personal viewpoints might. Perhaps more importantly, however, translation did not threaten the male ego. By engaging in this supposedly defective form of literary activity, women did not threaten perceptions of male superiority; any competence they displayed could be dismissed by denigrating the task of translation itself (116).

At the heart of the differences between male and female writers, then, is the decorum of language. Women's language must reflect the traditional feminine virtues and is thus constricted in a way that men's language is not. Translating by learned women from aristocrats to queens was socially encouraged. Translation provided the educated woman an outlet for her rhetorical skills as well as a voice and an identity as a writer, decorously concealed in the work of a known and accepted male author.
Anne Cooke Bacon, Mary Roper Basset, Elizabeth Falkland Cary, Mary Herbert (Countess of Pembroke), Elizabeth Cooke Russel, Margaret Beaufort Stanley (Countess of Richmond), Margaret Tyler—seven Elizabeth and Mary Tudor—are some of the most celebrated of Renaissance Englishwomen noted for translations rather than for their original compositions. Their translations included tracts and sermons, as well as poetry (particularly Psalms) and narratives. The translators were often remarkably erudite, having had classical educations, and their translations were often remarkably skillful, revealing their rhetorical training. Often, their translations are clearly and avowedly underlined by deep religious commitment, especially those women facing the supposedly Pauline doctrine not to interpret Scripture for themselves.

Roper's one published work, her translation of Erasmus's devout treatise upon the Pater noster (1524) was exceptionally good. Not only was she entrusted with translating for one of the finest minds of her time, but her translation is itself a major work: one of the earliest examples of the Englishing of Erasmian piety, it broke new ground as part of a broad campaign directed at the English-reading public in that it domesticated and disseminated Erasmus's view of the devotional life. But perhaps more important to her contemporaries, Roper's translation does nothing to detract from her womanly modesty, piety, and humility. Richard Hyrde wrote the Introduction to her translation and describes Roper thus:
this gentlewoman, which translated this little book, hereafter following: whose virtuous conversation, living, and sad [serious] demeanor may be proof evident enough what good learning does, where it is sure rooted: of whom other women may take example of prudent, humble and wifely behavior, charitable and very Christian virtue, with which she has, with God's help, endeavored herself, no less to garnish her soul than it has liked his goodness, with lovely beauty and comeliness, to garnish and set out her body: and undoubted is it that to the increase of her virtue, she has taken and takes no little occasion of her learning, besides her other manifold and great commodities, taken of the same; among which commodities, this is not the least, that with her virtuous worshipful, wise and well learned husband, she has by the occasion of her learning and his delight therein, such especial comfort, pleasure and pastime, as were not well possible for one unlearned couple, either to take together or to conceive in their minds, what pleasure is therein (qtd. in Watson 167-68).

Hyrde's encomium vindicates women in general as students of the humanities and justifies Roper in particular for "she has shown herself not only erudite and elegant . . . but has also used such wisdom, such discreet and substantial judgment, in expressing lively the Latin" (171). Her first-rate translation, a manifestation of her rhetorical training and skills, appeared as an act of piety, as an extension of her studies, as a tribute to her father, and as an integral part of her family's interests. And her prose seems markedly more steady than Hyrde's own.

Roper's translation, one of the earliest publications by a woman, is remarkably smooth, idiomatic, metaphorical, personal, and poetic, especially considering that English syntax was still in an unsettled state. Her naturally gentle rhythm, straightforward diction, and logical placing of phrases and clauses (depending on their relationships to the other parts of the
sentence) suggests an expertise in English composition not frequently found in the English prose of the early sixteenth century. The following is a typical passage from the meditation on the third petition, followed by the original Latin:

And that we may be able every day more and more/to perform all this/help us O Father in heaven/that the flesh may ever more and more be subject to the spirit/and our spirit of one assent/and one mind with thy spirit. And likewise as now in diverse places thy children/which are obedient to the gospel/obey and do after thy will: so grant they may do in all the world beside/that every man may know and understand/thou alone art the only head and ruler of all things/and that in likewise as there are none in heaven/which mutter and rebel against thy will/so let every man here in earth/with good mind and glad cheer obey thy will and godly precepts (Roper 116).

Hocut indies magis ac magis praestare valeamus, adjuva, Pater ooelestis, ut indies caro minus reluctetur spiritui nostro, ut spiritus noster magis ac magis unanimis fiat Spiritui tuo. Et quammodum nunc multis in locis parent voluntati tuae, qui obediant Evangelio Filii tui: idem fiat per universum terrarum orbem, ut omnes intelligent, te solu esse rerum omnium Monarcham, tuisque divinis legibus volentes ac lubentes obedient in terris quammodum in coelis nullis est qui tuae voluntari repugnet.

Her unpretentious yet sensitive and poetic translation was only to be expected, her father having provided her with rigorous and vigorous translation exercises. In his extended appraisal of her translation, John Archer Gee writes that hers was far more than a schoolgirl exercise and suggests that Roper had undergone "a considerable apprenticeship in the art of vernacular translation" (264). Gee goes on to note the immediately apparent, that "the translation proceeds straightforwardly from one clause to another
of the often long and somewhat involved sentences of the original” and yet

it rarely follows the Latin ordering and structure to the extent of being slavishly literal. . . . In general the Latin construction is treated with felicitous freedom which combines scholarship and art. The diction is also praiseworthy, a Latin word being seldom expressed by its English derivative. Likewise observable now and again is a pleasing rhythm, attained in part by skillfully transposing the Latin order . . . the translation is to be regarded as a mature achievement of its kind (265).

Erasmus's own influence is apparent in Roper's translation, for her tendency toward amplification may well have come from De Copia. Roper's careful balance of linguistic daring and confidence is expressed in her addition, expansion, or reversal of phrases, clauses, and ideas, and in her doublings and couplings of Erasmus's singular words. For instance, she uses "know and understand" for "intelligant"; "head and ruler" for "Monarcham"; and mutter and rebel" for "repugnet" (Verbrugge 40). While she is clearly aware of Erasmus's elegant parallelism, she often softens it, achieving an easier and more expansive English rhythm. And her amplification reveals her perception of Tudor life: Erasmus's ambitio becomes "ambitious desire of worldly promotion." At least twice, she slightly expands a potentially dramatic scene involving a relationship between God and man, which allowed her to reflect upon a relationship between child and (heavenly) father.

Elizabeth McCutcheon tells us that "the most striking aspect of her Englishing, in fact, is how she heightened this relationship: by position of vocatives, by an increased number of 'father's'
[sic] or 'good father's' [sic]" (462), making Erasmus's already meditative and conversational work more so. And Gee is right to remind us that this Roper piece is a remarkable instance of an interim stage in the development of modern English, a stage which did much to establish modern English literary prose (259).

An impressive translation was only to be expected of one trained in both rhetoric and poetics. Considered sister arts by the Humanists, rhetoric and poetics were thought to provide the rules for writing well in prose and verse, respectively. Thus, there was in the Renaissance, as for some time before, a close parallel and a good deal of mutual influence between rhetorical and poetical theory (as was discussed above). And her translation is representative of women's derivative works, as women were discouraged from creating their own original works. True, religious devotion could both liberate women as writers and hobble their intellectual confidence. In Roper's case, her devotion may well have inspired an unequalled translation that was supported by her magnificent intellectual background.

Roper's Greek and Latin letters, her ars dictaminis, were more proof of her splendid gift of powerful language, no doubt due to her rhetorical training and academic exercises. But the few of her letters that have received special study do little to bring out any sense of individuality for Margaret. The exchange of letters between her and her father during his imprisonment are so alike in style and substance (and in "rather little" punctuation)
that the problem of specific authorship surrounds at least one
important letter.

Unfortunately for those of us interested in the measure of
her rhetorical power, most of her work remains lost; we know about
them through incidental references in her father's letters or
through Thomas Stapleton, the More biographer most interested in
Margaret. Many, perhaps most, of these lost works (other than the
many letters no longer extant) were apprentice pieces. Stapleton
speaks of prose and verse written in Greek and Latin and praises
two Latin speeches, "written as an exercise" (103), along with
another speech, first written in English and subsequently
translated into Latin by both father and daughter. He himself had
one of these speeches—written in response to a declamation,
attributed to Quintilian, about the poor man's bees, killed by
poison sprinkled on flowers in the rich man's garden. Quintilian
defended the cause of the poor man; Margaret the rich, which,
Stapleton points out, was the more difficult position to take and
gave "greater scope for Margaret's eloquence and wit" (107).
Stapleton goes on to tell us that Margaret also emended a corrupt
passage in Saint Cyprian, and thus acquired a small but secure
place in sixteenth-century scholarship. And she and her father
wrote, in friendly competition, on the subject of the four last
things (death, judgment, hell, and heaven), probably in 1522,
though only her father's treatment, unfinished, has survived.

Such a background sharpened her linguistic skills, including
her translation skills, for Margaret More Roper remains best known
as a sensitive translator and exceptional grammarian. She was a practitioner of rhetoric, a rhetor of learned rather than creative tracts. But lest anyone think that her first-rate mind and education were put to second-rate tasks, or that those tasks made little contribution to rhetorical practice, we must remember that by the standards of any century, sixteenth-century Roper was an impressive scholar and skilled practitioner of her rhetorical training. Her translation of Erasmus alone earned her position as the exemplar of the new learning, the "new" educated woman personified. And like most early Renaissance Englishwomen, Roper showed no signs of dissatisfaction with the thinking of Renaissance theorists. For instance, without any complaint, she forbore publishing her own translation from Greek to Latin of Eusebius when she learned that Bishop Christopherson was engaged in the identical task. If she ever publicly or privately resisted or questioned male authority in general or her father in particular such evidence has not been preserved.

As much as Margaret More Roper defines the ideal of the learned and virtuous woman as a private, modest, silent being, Anne Askew (1521-1546) seems to diverge from it: she was courageous, disputatious, and strong, and one of the very few married women at that time to retain use of her maiden name. One of seventy (only four were women) who succumbed to the fires of Protestant martyrdom during the reign of Henry VIII, the quick-witted, spiritually tenacious, and publicly outspoken Askew set an example just as important as Roper's: she served as a role model
for those Protestant women who might not otherwise have viewed
themselves as sufficiently important to witness for their faith.
Furthermore, she is the only woman to have left records of her
religious sufferings.

Like Roper, the aristocratic Askew was the daughter of a
strong father who educated her according to Humanist principles.
Women like Roper took care that their lives and works observed
societal strictures on female virtue and domesticity. Their
ventures into the public sphere were masked by their apparent
reputations, their self-effacement, and their limited literary
endeavors. But Askew's story would be much different from Roper's
story. Whether fueled by her Reformist beliefs or by the power of
her individual personality, Askew was one of the first Renaissance
women to stride into the public arena, wielding her rhetorical
power for persuasion, exhortation, and self-defense, delivering
her rhetorical contributions to the Reformist movement.

Against her Humanist and aristocratic background, then,
Askew's experiences present a complex outline of complications,
placing her more in the tradition of Margery Kempe than Margaret
More Roper. Like Kempe, Askew exchanged the feminine virtues of
domesticity and silence for the human virtues of spirituality and
conviction. Like Kempe, she wanted nothing more than to transfer
her devotion from her husband to her church. Both women
recognized the restrictions on their sex but chose to circumvent
those restrictions because of their beliefs. And she was like
Kempe in yet another way: Askew's Examinations, creates the
identity of its author and her life crisis in much the same way
the earlier Boke of Margery Kempe had done.

A convert to the Reformed church, Askew continually raised
her voice in public to bear witness to her faith; in so doing, she
defied not only her husband, Thomas Kyme, but the whole hierarchy
of Church and State as well. She spoke out against forced
marriages and religious prosecution, for in her case, the two were
related. Not long after unwillingly marrying Kyme and bearing two
children, she became a Protestant. Her Catholic husband evicted
her; a divorce was denied her. Unable to conform to the
Renaissance pattern of thought that women should submit to men
(husbands, priests, or bishops), she eventually suffered cruelly.

Upon her move to London, Askew became a waiting woman for the
devout queen Catherine Parr, who retained learned Reformers as
religious instructors and preachers, their teachings often
touching upon the prevalent Church abuses. Catherine and her
female associates developed a reputation for patronizing more
extensive religious reform than that officially permitted by the
Crown. Religious conservatives on the King's Privy Council
attempted to block the ascendancy of the Protestant faction by
implicating the Queen and her women— and by accusing the
Protestant gentlewoman Anne Askew of heresy. Although focusing on
Anne, the anti-Reformists were actually persecuting her in an
effort to attack and bring down the more influential and powerful
Reformist figures with whom she was associated: the queen and her
circle of ardent religious supporters (John Parkhurst; Lady Anne
Parr Herbert [the queen's sister]; Lady Elizabeth Tyrwhitt; Lady
Lane; Katherine Willoughby [Duchess of Suffolk]; Lady Joan Denny;
Lady Fitzwilliam; Philip Hoby; Robert Testwood; Henry Filmer;
Anthony Parsons; Countess of Sussex; Jon Lascelles).

Askew would be intrepid and articulate when it came to
defending, declaring, or clarifying her strong religious
convictions. However, she was taciturn when it came to discussing
anyone else's beliefs, and she refused to comment on her personal
life or on her torture--subjects extraneous to her religious
conviction. In several examinations, she remained close-mouthed;
in one, she defended herself by saying, "God has given me the gift
of knowlege, but not of utterance. And Solomon says, that a woman
of few words, is a gift of God, Proverbs 19" (qtd. in Travitsky
177 [modernizations in this chapter are my own]). Her words were
few only when she sees the advantage of not speaking. And she
used the Scriptures to her advantage--every time.

Of special interest to her inquisitors, of course, was the
question of who in the Court aided her during imprisonment. In
her Examinations, the making of a Protestant martyr, her witty,
dramatic, and gripping spiritual autobiography, Askew records her
own spiritual heresy, her inquisitors' unflagging questioning, and
her controlled response. Her sense of audience is perfect, for
Askew realizes that she is obviously bound for the rack and can
gain nothing from her inquisitors by implicating other people,
Reformists or not:
Then came Riche and one of the counsel, charging me upon my obedience, to tell them if I knew man or woman of my sect. My answer was that I knew none. Then they asked me about my lady of Suffolk, my lady of Sussex, my lady Dennye, and my ladye Fitzwilliam. I said if I should say anything against them, that I would not be able to prove it.

Then they said that there were diverse gentlewomen that gave me money. But I knew not their names. Then they said that there were diverse ladies which had sent me money. I answered that there was a man in a blue coat who delivered me 10 shillings and said that my lady of Hertford sent it me. And another in a violet coat gave me 8 shillings and said that my lady Dennye sent it to me. Whether it were true or no, I can not tell. For I am not sure who sent it to me, but as the men said.

Then they asked if some of the counsel maintained me. And I said, no. Then they put me on the rack because I confessed no ladies nor gentlewomen to be of my opinion, and thereon they kept me a long time. And because I lay still and did not cry, my lord Chancellor and master Riche took paines to rack me with their own hands, until I was nearly dead. (qtd. in Travitsky 182-83).

By understatement, Askew conveys the silent virtue of both her remarkable strength and her constancy—"I lay still and did not cry"—and the vindictiveness of the two men, desperate to break her spirit. This exchange builds tension that is released in her torture. But the exchange is of rhetorical import, for it illustrates her keen sense of her rhetorical situation. Aristotle's celebrated definition that rhetoric "is the faculty of discovering in any situation the available means of persuasion" held no sway in this immediate situation: Askew realized that she could not use language to change the attitude, modify the behavior, or stimulate a particular course of behavior on the part
of her examiners. Therefore, what she unfolds in this specific section of her Examinations is not so much an argument as her essential, Christian self. Yet that presentation of argument and ethos influenced the thoughts and actions of other Reformists.

This self soon became a popular Protestant martyr, the focus not only of her fellow Reformists but of other gentlewomen as well. When in March 1545, she was brought before the quest for heresy, she became the first gentlewoman to be judged by a London jury. Accordingly, she was brought out of the domestic sphere and thrust directly into public view. Whatever she spoke there and recorded afterwards established her as a public figure; the public nature of her questionings immediately assured the wide currency of her words. And her Examinations became public record.

The proceedings of her inquisition were cruel and vicious as well as entirely illegal, since the law prohibited the racking of women in general, and Askew was a gentlewoman besides. All Protestant propaganda aside, her torture was an unusual technique in religious interrogations and unprecedented when employed against a gentlewoman already condemned to die. To the surprise of her enemies, though, those heated proceedings would purify her as an honest and God-fearing woman and only enflame the Reformist movement.

This Protestant martyr makes clear her genius for seizing the language. Her Examinations are the rarest form of sixteenth-century writing, the self-portrait, one that differs widely from our modern autobiography in that her language does not create an
individual (who laments her situation or speaks of her associates) but instead creates a participant in the larger community of the Reformed church. Like the women rhetors who preceded her, she taps her personal life for subject matter, but hers is a new purpose: the Reformist movement. She presents herself as fully participant in the "gifts of the Lord," as a teacher of doctrine, and as a champion of her faith. She could use rhetoric to teach, move, and please, for she pleased her Reformist supporters with her skillful arguments. Her writings movingly document the imprisonment, inquisition, and torture of a Protestant; they provide insight into her individuality only as far as her ability to suffer cruelly and her unwillingness to compromise her beliefs—or her everlasting soul.

And her autobiography is important for other rhetorical reasons as well: the records of her two arrests document her skill at disputatio and logical argument, as well as her vast knowledge of the Scriptures. Her Humanist education had prepared her well, for soon the time came for her to follow the Reformist directive that only those with a proper understanding of the Bible might interpret the Holy Scripture to the faithful (i.e., the Reformists). By her own learning, she knew the Bible, and as a Reformer, she trusted that learning. But her erudition did not please the traditional Christians, the anti-Reformists, who believed in the intellectual inferiority of women. In fact, the most damning charge against her was the accusation that like other Protestant women, she was violating the Biblical admonition that
men alone were ordained by God to serve as priests (I Cor. 14:33-35). Women might be accepted as spiritual equals, but they could hardly be accepted as legitimate expounders of the faith. Thus Askew's disputes with clergymen over Biblical interpretation would be particularly controversial.

Her Examinations are accompanied by other writings that illustrate her full range of learning and of rhetorical ability (persuasive language, use of support, audience awareness): her letters, her confession of faith, her prayer before death, her expert translation of the fifty-fourth Psalm, and an original ballad that places her among the minor poets of the sixteenth century and marks her as an early, if not the first, woman to have composed original verses in English. Furthermore, all her writings—striking and moving—are informed by her strong faith. Not only was she responsive to her rhetorical exigency, but she had a keen sense of her immediate audience (her inquisitors) as well as her ultimate audience (her contemporary and future supporters) and was thus readily able to take her rhetorical stance. In fact, her sense of a contemporary audience eager to read her work engenders Askew's careful attention to the nuances of language and to a style not of private revelation of self but of a public celebration of the virtues she values: piety, constancy, learning, and fortitude. Thus, she patterns her own life like that of a (now-Catholic) saint's life, the ultimate model of female virtue.
Perhaps the best way to illustrate her rhetorical capabilities is to consider her *Examinations* at the point where she used her rhetorical skills to defend and explain her religious beliefs. Her inquisitor's first point of entry into her religious antagonism was the fact that she had left her Catholic husband after her own conversion. A Biblical scholar, Askew knew the text intimately enough to dispute it with the best of clergymen and use it for her own defense, just like a saint. Upon questioning, she replied that according to Saint Paul's first epistle, a woman could seek a divorce: "If the unbelieving depart, let him depart. A brother or sister is not under bondage in such cases" (1 Cor. 7:15). Although by her example, divorce on such grounds would later become a tenet of the Protestant reformers, it was not acceptable under the rule of Henry VIII, who had set his own precedent for divorce.

When the Bishop told her she would be burnt, she answered that she had searched all through the Scriptures, "yet could... never find there that either Christ or his Apostles put any creature to death." She writes, "Well, well, said I, God will laugh your threatenings to scorn, Psalms. 2. Then I was commanded to stand aside" (qtd. in Travitsky 180).

A master of male forms of argument in terms of style and content, she deliberately began to resist those forms. During her first examination, she was questioned about her religious activities. And in her response, she explicitly denied her inquisitor's major proposition—by asking for his evidence:
Then the Bishop's chancellor rebuked me and said that I was much to blame for uttering the Scriptures. For Saint Paul (he said) forbade women to speak or to talk of the word of God. I answered him that I knew Paul's meaning as well as he, which is, I Corinthians 14, that a woman ought not to speak in the congregation by the way of teaching. And then I asked him how many women he had seen go into the pulpit and preach. He said that he never saw any. Then I said that he ought to find no fault in poor women unless they had offended the law (qtd. in Travitsky 174).

Her cleverly embedded syllogism stops the Bishop short: Obedient women do not speak in church. We are obedient women. Therefore, we do not speak in church. Not only does Askew declare that she understands Scripture as well as the chancellor, but she responds by questioning him, exacting an answer, and drawing an appropriate conclusion to discomfit the questioner. Her style suits perfectly her aims, for it is unadorned, understated, and concise. And she allows the climactic last sentence to exert its full force. The choice of "poor" to describe women is an example of Askew's controlled irony, for she has already shown herself to be anything but a poor unfortunate.

The accepted methods of rhetorical argument called for citing of past authorities and exempla. And while Askew cites Scripture at every opportunity, we can see that she uses it in a directly pragmatic, situational way: Paul said I could and should leave my husband; God will laugh at your conspiracy against me; following Paul's stricture, no women are preaching to a congregation. To Askew the reformer, as Scripture taught her to seek her own salvation, it also authorized her to speak, to bear witness as a true Christian woman.
Her inquisitors relied on Scholasticism, the medieval philosophy that stressed adherence to Church doctrine. But when they tried to trap her in the tangle of their doctrinal webs, she resisted, using her dramatic abilities and playing upon her lack of formal training—her rhetorical "otherness." Using a time-honored and tested rhetorical ploy, she responds once again to their scholastic arguments with "I'm just a woman":

... [He] asked me if the host should fall, and a beast ate it, whether the beast received God or not: I answered, "Seeing that you have taken the pains to ask this question, I desire you also to take so much pain more, as to explain it yourself. For I will not do it because I perceive you come to tempt me." And he said that it was against the order of schools that he who asked the question should answer it. I told him that I was but a woman, and knew not the course of schools (qtd. in Travitsky 175).

Not the least source of her power was that she was a woman, "other," alienated from accepted sources of power. Yet despite her alienation from sources of power—-or maybe because of that—she stopped trying to fit between the lines of male tradition and focused instead on a world of female culture ("Toward a Feminist Poetics" 131), empowered by her religious convictions that transcended gender inequality. Thus, she penetrated and undermined the masculine view that contained, detained, and eventually executed her.

Askew may seem a volcanic eruption into the public realm of Renaissance literary and political culture, especially when placed in Burke's "perspective by incongruity." Beside Roper, who graciously and gratefully inhabited the private domestic sphere,
Askew may seem a firebrand. But her defying the authorities of the established church made her an important example (of a Protestant saint) for the early Reformers, an example every bit as important as Roper's was to the Christian Humanists. And as Elaine V. Beilin tells us in Redeeming Eve, "As Askew moved from reading and knowing the Bible to quoting it in public [and] to writing it down in the context of her own story, she was breaking down prohibitions against women that had stood for centuries" (47). But saints could break through such prohibitions.

Both these women used language to create symbolic narratives that expressed their feelings of constriction as well as their feelings of community. The participation of these two women pierces the silence and exemplifies the range of rhetorically based endeavors possible for women: from Roper's willing intellectualism (translations, letters) to Askew's resistance (argument, exhortation, analysis), both women contributed in the great parade of culture. Between these two poles of powerful language use and movement into the public domain is a spectrum of women practicing rhetoric in rich and complex ways, the most notable being Elizabeth I, English nationalism incarnate, who seems almost an exaggeration of the public woman.

Despite a home-based education that included dialogue, disputations, and declamations, Roper's intellectual activity was kept within the home, channeled into religious or domestic outlets; her father provided her with a rhetorical education, yet seemed unconcerned about providing any public outlet for the
abilities he helped her to develop. Askew's synthesis of feminism and faith would be her legacy—but then she died for her beliefs. While the conciliatory and demure modes of expression (translations, dedications, and meditations) were widely celebrated for their literary accomplishments, the seeming subversive and polemical texts of those like Askew earned them persecution, ridicule, and martyrdom.

Time and time again, women were exhorted to remain silent. In *The Monument of Matrones* (1582), Thomas Bentley threatens utter ruin to a vocal woman: "There is nothing that becomes a maid better than soberness, silence, shamefastness, and chastity, both of body and mind. For these things being once lost, she is no more a maid, but a strumpet in the sight of God" (qtd. in Hull 142). Women's movement into and acceptance in the public sphere was slow—and treacherous. Even Richard Mulcaster, proponent of women's education, compares the public woman with a comet, flashing once across the sky, not a steady beacon of light, guiding other women. Only a woman like Elizabeth Tudor could fully project a compelling voice, a woman who owed no allegiance to a father or a husband, and a woman with unprecedented power, perhaps God's representative on earth. Constantly in public view Elizabeth I spoke not from the margins of discourse but from its focal point.

To say Elizabeth I (1533–1603) was a product of her time would be reductive—but true. She was educated by the best Humanists, including Roger Ascham, who described his student thus:
The constitution of her mind is exempt from female weakness, and she is endued with a masculine power of application. No apprehension can be quicker than hers, no memory more retentive. French and Italian she speaks like English; Latin, with fluency, propriety and judgment; she also spoke Greek with me . . . . The beginning of the day was always devoted by her to the New Testament in Greek, after which she read selections of Isocrates and the tragedies of Sophocles, which I judged best adapted to supply her tongue with the purest diction, her mind with the most excellent precepts, and her exalted station with a defence against the utmost power of fortune (English Works 219).

Elizabeth was also educated by the Protestants, whose cause was no longer identified with only social outcasts and powerless individuals. A Protestant God had saved Elizabeth to rule the nation and to usher in the new age of faith. The Protestants would owe their very existence to her rule, and she, having renounced the pope, would be dependent upon them. Paradoxically, Elizabeth achieved complete sovereignty only after a papal condemnation of 1570 excommunicated her and released her subjects from their allegiance to her rule. She quickly became the symbol of English nationalism—and ascended the throne just in time to be the unintended target of John Knox's grossly mistimed, gynecocratic First Blast of the Trumpet against the monstrous regiment of Women (which had been aimed at Mary Tudor):

To promote a woman to bear rule, superiority, dominion, or empire above any realm, nation, or city, is repugnant to nature, contumely to God, a thing most contrarious to his revealed will and approved ordinance; and finally it is the subversion of good order, or all equity and justice. . . . (qtd. in Pringle 18).

But even to exiled Puritan Knox, Elizabeth would be a godsend.
And it was in this atmosphere that Elizabeth became the most articulate woman of her age. Some might argue that neither Elizabeth nor her hearers underestimated the royal prerogative to command rather than persuade and that her linguistic power lay in her office—not in her rhetorical skill. Hence, there was no need for her to produce a steady succession of speeches in the first rank of eloquence. But necessity dictated and custom required that the queen use language to meet the challenges of her rule. Her office did not guarantee her continued security; the death of Queen Mary was proof. Fortunately, for her and for her people, Elizabeth's education and temperament enabled her to meet those challenges with conspicuous success, unlike the queens who preceded her.

Ascham says that when he was permitted to visit the Princess Elizabeth during Mary Tudor's reign, they read Latin and Greek together, their favorite being that disputatious chestnut, the opposing orations of Demosthenes and Aeschines concerning the latter's embassy to Philip of Macedon (Ryan xxi). Even as a girl, then, Elizabeth's mind turned to oral defense, to what was known as the "Tudor play of mind." Unlike most other Renaissance women, Elizabeth was not excluded from that play, the rhetorical tradition that posed abstract questions and argued answers on both sides of a topic.

Yet she lived her childhood by the motto she would adopt as queen: Video, et taceo—I see and hold my tongue. As a young girl uncertain of her place in succession, of her legitimacy,
Elizabeth strikes a modest, submissive tone, yet one that is rhetorically astute, both in theory and practice. For instance, when her brother was ill, the nineteen-year-old princess wrote him a beautifully executed, almost poetic letter. Her salutation and closing recognize his role as fifteen-year-old king and hers as his relatively powerless sister:

To the most Noble King Edward the Sixth

What cause I had of sory when I harde first of your maiesties siknes al men migth gesse, but none but my selfe could fele, wiche to declare wer or migth seme a point of flatery and therefore to write it I omit. But as the sorow could not be litel, because the occasions wer many, so is the joy gret to hire of the good escape out of the perillous diseases. And that I am fully satisfied and wel assured of the same by your graces owne hande I must nides give you my most humble thankes assuring your Maiestie that a precious ieweal at a nother time could not so wel have contented as your lettar in this case hath comfortsed me. . . . Moreover I do considar that as a good father that loves his childe derely dothe punis him scharpely, So God favoring your Maiestie gretly hathed chastened you straitly, and as a father dothe it for the further good of his childe, so hath God prepared this [illness] for the tettar helthe of your grace. And in this hope I commit your Maiestie to his handes, most humbly craving pardon of your grace that I did write no soner desiring you to attribute the faute to my iwel hed, and not to my slothful hande. . . .

Your Maiesties most humble distress to commande. Elizabeth.

And at fifteen, she toyed with the literary rhetoric (the patterned cadences of Oxford school prose) so prevalent in the Renaissance, limiting herself (just like a non-royal) to the feminine intellectual activity of translation. Although her translation of Queen Margaret of Navarre's godly Medytacyon of the
christen Sowle is competent, the tone of her prefatory letter is
one of abject submission:

If thou do throughly reade thy wyse worke . . . marke rather
the matter than the homely speache therof, consdeerynge
it is the studye of a woman, whych hath in her neyther
conynge nor science, but a fervent desyre that ycohe one
maye se, what the gifte of God the creatour doth whan it
pleaseth hym to justyfye a h[e]art. . . .

Therfore gentyll reader, with a godly mynde, I
besyche the pacientely this worke to perus whych is but
small in quantyte, and taste nothynge but the frute
therof. Prayeng to God full of all goodnesse, that in
thy harte he wyll plante the lyvely faythe. Amen (qtd.
in Travitsky 142).

Not until the death of her sister would Elizabeth speak and
write herself as a queen, using deliberative, forensic, and
panegyric speaking; ars dictaminis; and literary rhetoric as her
means of self-fashioning. Stephen Greenblatt would describe her
as a one who could wrest "the power to impose a shape upon
[her]self" and "the more general power to control [her own]
identity--[and] that of others . . . " (1).

In general, the will of the ruler was public opinion, yet
public opinion and the opinion of the queen did not always
coincide. Fortunately, Elizabeth had the traditional Tudor
ability to discern a popular trend, interpret it, and mold it to
what she held to be the needs of the kingdom. And when her people
and her advisors expected and wanted her to marry, she turned them
in her favor. Elizabeth was an avowedly devout Christian and
claimed to argue from Christian principles; nonetheless, she was a
Tudor and realized that by remaining single she could maintain her
authority and autonomy, that by being unattached, she could only
strengthen her political position. Therefore, Elizabeth merges the two arguments and explains that that highest of womanly virtues, chastity, allows her to devote herself to her kingdom. She cites Pauline doctrine for authority: "The unmarried woman careth for the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and spirit; but she that is married careth for the things of the world, how she may please her husband" (I Cor. 7:34). When she spoke to Parliament about marriage in 1559, the first point she made was that her spinsterhood was the way of life "most acceptable unto God" (qtd. in Teague 525).

Cognizant of rhetorical power and ever-mindful of her audience, Elizabeth took care with her ceremonial and occasional speeches. If her oratory was a by-product of her classical education--and she had read orations with Ascham, appreciating both style and ideas--she had the good sense and good taste to avoid quotations from Scripture or from the Greeks and Romans and to use a simple style. Her brief coronation address might best illustrate the essence of her style--aptly addressed, simple, direct, self-assured, and reassuring:

I thank my lord mayor, his brethren, and you all. And whereas your request is that I should continue your good lady and queen, by ye ensured that I will be good unto you as ever queen was to her people. No will in me can lack, neither do I trust shall there lack any power. And persuade yourselves, that for the safety and quietness of you all, I will not spare, if need be, to spend my blood. God thank you all (qtd. in Rice 63).

Like a good orator, Elizabeth pleased her audiences, in her case by generally saying what they wanted to hear, in a way they
understood. She had good audience awareness as well as a sense of
the rhetorical situation and the rhetorical exigency. When she
visited Cambridge, she found herself addressing the best-educated
men in her kingdom—in Latin. And because they were expecting the
usual Tudor endowment, she had to find a way to balance her keen
interest in their scholarship with her unwillingness to follow the
Tudor tradition of supporting that scholarship financially. In
the tradition of her rhetorical foremothers, the Queen taps the
feminine humility *topos*, using her self-effacement ("[my] rude,
off-hand remarks"; "[my] barbarous . . . oration") to offset her
forthright pronouncement of their present "sumptuous"
circumstances. Her "Latin Oration at Cambridge University, 1564"
exemplifies her special blend of self-deprecation, acute
perception, and candor:

Although my feminine modesty might deter me from making
a speech and uttering these rude, off-hand remarks in so
great an assembly of most learned men, nevertheless the
intercession of my nobles and my own goodwill toward the
University have prevailed upon me to say something. . . .

As to what concerns the advancement of good
letters, I recall this statement of Demosthenes: "that
words of superiors take the place of books among
inferiors, while the sayings of leaders are regarded as
legal authority among the subjects." I would have all
of you bear this one thing in mind, that no road is more
adapted to win the good things of fortune or the
goodwill of your prince, than the pursuit of good
letters . . .

Now I come to the University. This morning I saw
your sumptuous buildings, which were erected by my
ancestors, most distinguished princes, for the sake of
letters. And while looking at them, grief took
possession of me and those sighings of the soul which
are said to have gripped Alexander the Great, who, when
he had surveyed the mighty deeds of his fathers, turned
to a friend or counsellor and grieved deeply because he had not done anything of this sort.

... And while the thought of Alexander disturbs me a great deal, I hope, before rendering up my account to nature (if Atropos [the Fates] do no cut off the thread of my life too quickly) to accomplish some work of importance. ... And if it should happen ... that I must die before I am able to complete this thing which I promise, nevertheless, I will leave behind after my death some monument of distinction, by which my memory may be renowned and by which others may be incited by my example. And I will make all of you more diligent in the pursuit of your studies.

... Now it is time that your ears, detained so long by this barbarous kind of oration, be released from boredom. I have spoken (qtd. in Rice 71-73).

Like all her speeches, this one reveals Elizabeth's fine sense of timing and her careful appraisal of her audience. For her, speechmaking is a social tool more than a stylistic exercise. She uses speech, then, in the classical sense: to persuade by teaching, moving, and pleasing. In this particular case, she wins the goodwill of her learned audience by speaking in Latin, by invoking her femininity and her Tudor heritage, and by addressing their concerns about her financial support. She charms them with allusions to Demosthenes, Alexander, and Atropos and with hints of financial support to come. Yet woven into the fabric of her text is the strong thread of queenly prerogative: although not just now, she plans to give financial support eventually; she has definite plans that a memorial to her be erected upon her death, one that will induce continued financial support. It is interesting to note that she exercises the ultimate queenly
prerogative: Cambridge received nothing from the queen either
during her lifetime or upon her death.

Elizabeth fashioned herself the wife of the State, the mother
of the English people. In her speech to the House of Commons,
concerning her marriage (1558), she writes:

I have long since made a choice of a husband, the
kingdom of England. And here is the pledge and emblem
of my marriage contract, which I wonder you should so
soon have forgot. [She showed them the ring worn at the
accession.] I beseech you, gentlemen, charge me not
with the want of children, forasmuch as every one of
you, and every Englishman besides, are my children and
relations. . . (qtd. in Rice 117).

Elizabeth saw herself as the teacher and leader of her people, and
as such, she was not often called upon to win support by stirring
their emotions; she was, after all, the mother of her people and
married to England. Although she had every right to that
authority, to expect her every command to be obeyed, she,
nonetheless, inspired the unflinching loyalty of her people with
orations like the following. By appearing to the men encamped at
Tilbury, who were anticipating a Spanish invasion, she provided
visible proof of her appreciation, admiration, and trust; by
assuring them of receiving back pay (no small promise for the
parsimonious queen), she proved her responsibility for and loyalty
to them. Thus, "To the Troops at Tilbury, 1588" is one of
Elizabeth's most successful and felicitous exhortations:

My loving people: We have been persuaded by some that
are careful of our safety to take heed how we commit
ourselves to armed multitudes for fear of treachery.
But I assure you I do not desire to live to distrust my
faithful and loving people. . . . And therefore I am
come amongst you, as you see, at this time, not for my
recreation and disport; but being resolved in the midst
of the heat of battle to live or die amongst you all; to
lay down for my God and for my Kingdom and for my people
my honor and my blood even in the dust.

I know I have the body of a weak and feeble woman;
but I have the heart and stomach of a king, and of a
king of England too, and think foul scorn that Parma or
Spain or any prince of Europe should dare to invade the
borders of my realm; to which, rather than any dishonor
should grow by me, I myself will take up arms; I myself
will be your general, judge, and rewarder of every one
of your virtues in the field.

I know already, for your forwardness you have
deserved rewards and crowns; and we do assure you on the
word of a prince they shall be duly paid you.

In the meantime, ... by your concord in the
camp, and your valor in the field, we shall shortly have
a famous victory over those enemies of my God, of my
kingdoms, and of my people (qtd. in Rice 96–97).

In this powerful statement of courage and national pride (one
successfully lacking rhetorical self-consciousness), Elizabeth
once again employs the humility _topos_ thought appropriate to a
woman. But she has also put in place her long-standing appeal to
her composite nature as Queen: the "body natural" that of a frail
woman; the "body politic" that of a king, carrying the strength
and masculine spirit of the best of her male forebears. By
transforming herself into an androgyne (rather than the never-
popular Amazon), she deflects any criticism that could be aimed at
her womanly outspokenness and appeals to her people as a _monarch_,
rather than a queen.

Certain features of her speeches remain constant: the Anglo-
Saxon diction, the balanced sentences, and the insistent reverence
for God and love of her people. A product of her time, she
created the highly valued Renaissance style comprising carefully balanced clauses and strings of coordinate elements. But on occasion, she uses short, blunt sentences for emphasis, as in the following famous passage from her 1566 speech to parliament, regarding marriage and succession. In this deliberative speech, she not only recounts her argument for remaining single, but she also foregrounds the necessity of her integrated sexuality:

As for mine own part, I care not for death, for all men are mortal and though I be a woman I have as good a courage answerable to my place as ever my father had. I am your anointed [sic] Queen. I will never be by violence constrained to do anything. I thank God I am endued with such qualities that if I were turned out of the realm in my petticoat I were able to live in any place in Christendom (qtd. in Rice 81).

And Elizabeth once again purposefully employs androgyny, in her valedictory to the glories and responsibilities to Parliament, her "'Golden' Speech of 1601." In this deliberative and ceremonial speech, she refers to herself first as king and then as queen, thereby de-emphasizing gender and emphasizing instead her God-given rights as monarch and her deep love for God and the English people. The following excerpt exemplifies her technique:

To be a king and wear a crown is more glorious to them that see it than it is pleasure to them that bear it. For myself, I was never so much enticed with the glorious name of a king or royal authority of a queen as delighted that God hath made me this instrument to maintain His truth and glory, and to defend this kingdom, as I said, from peril, dishonor, tyranny, and oppression. There will never queen sit in my seat with more zeal to my country or care to my subjects, and that will sooner with willingness yield and venture her life for your good and safety than myself. And though you have had and may have many princes more mighty and wise sitting in this seat, yet you never had or shall have any that will be more careful and loving. Should I
ascribe anything to myself and my sexly weakness, I were not worthy to live then, and of all most unworthy of the mercies I have had from God, Who hath ever yet given me a heart which never yet feared foreign or home enemies. I speak it to give God the praise as a testimony before you, and not to attribute anything unto myself (qtd. in Rice 109).

Over and above her love and service for her people was her love and service for God, as it should be. Elizabeth was wise to attach her self and her reign to the authority of God, thereby transcending internecine religious struggles. A constant theme in her speeches was her devotion to God, not to a particular religious cause. Elizabeth tried to comprehend all England in a latitudinarian frame, excluding only recusant Catholics and radical Puritans. And she succeeded.

In addition to her public oratory and letter writing, Elizabeth also participated in the literary rhetoric of her time, translating and composing. She was vain about her linguistic skill, as translation had been an important part of her education. Like her female contemporaries, she found herself translating her favorite authors, but in her case they were not all religious: at eleven, she had translated The Mirror of the Sinful Soul for Catherine Parr; as an adult, she translated Boethius's De Consolatione Philosophiae, Plutarch's De Curiositate, a fragment of Horace's De Arte Poetica, a dialogue of Xenophon, and epistles of Seneca and Cicero (Wilson, Renaissance 532).

Elizabeth also wrote prayers, meditations, and poems, having learned as a schoolgirl to appreciate the synergy released by fusing rhetoric with poetics. And some of her poems are good, to
wit, "Doubt of Future Foes." Upon contemplating the threat of Mary Stuart and her heirs, the new queen wrote the following poem, which discloses her political strength (but not any special poetic skill). She taps the tradition of "Drab Age" literary rhetoric and writes from within her own power base, asserting her aims straightforwardly, as she always would:

The doubt of future foes exiles my present joy,
And wit me warnes to shun such snares as threaten mine annoy;
For falsehood now doth flow, and subjects faith doth ebb,
Which should not be if reason ruled or wisdom weaved the web.
But clouds of joys untried do cloak aspiring minds
Which turn to rain of late repent by changed course of winds.
The top of hope supposed the root upreared shall be,
And fruitless all their grafted guile, as shortly ye shall see.
Then dazzled eyes with pride, which great ambition blinds,
Shall be unsealed by worthy wights whose foresight falsehood finds.
The daughter of debate that discord aye doth sowe
Shall reap no gain where former rule still peace hath taught to know.
No foreign banished wight shall anchor in this port;
Our realm brooks not seditious sects let them elsewhere resort.
My rusty sword through rest shall first his edge employ
To poll their tops that seek such change or gape for future joy (Bradner 4).

The queen's participation in literary rhetoric opened the way, no doubt, for a few other upper-class women to venture into the same arena. No one would forget that a woman had ruled England when the Spanish Armada was defeated. Nor was it forgotten that Elizabeth was a scholar as well as a great queen. It is in part a reflection of the esteem in which Elizabeth came to be held that public opinion concerning the abilities of women was raised at all
during her reign. An example of this tendency to generalize from the queen to women in general is found in the slowly growing interest in women's literary rhetoric.

In her most famous essay, Joan Kelly poses this question: "Did Women Have a Renaissance?" The answer is "Yes . . . but."

Women did participate in that brilliant explosion of language we call the Renaissance, but their participation was of a different kind. No woman—not even a queen—could use language without recognizing the prevailing social and literary attitudes toward women as she tried to create her own literary personality, the very voice in which to express her ideas and create her self.

From Roper to Askew to the queen, each Renaissance woman writer confronted major obstacles, from the moment she entered the male-dominated world of writing and literature until she apologized for having written and for being a woman. Even the woman who did not write for immediate circulation, a young princess perhaps, was acutely aware that her writings would be overshadowed by the works of such contemporary male artists as Spenser, Sidney, Jonson, and Shakespeare. For the Renaissance woman, then, most emphasis has traditionally been on the writing she inspired or sponsored rather than the writing she produced.

Through language, Roper presented herself as the the domestic professor, and Askew presented herself as the religious defender. Queen Elizabeth, however, presented herself as a trope for the state: romantic and available—yet constant and powerful. And the language of other Renaissance women wrote them as well. Lady
Jane Grey composed an impassioned, highly crafted letter to convince an apostate to return to the Reformed faith. Catherine Parr was the first woman to publish a persuasive, religious tract in English. Anne Dowrich wrote history, *The French Historie. That is; a lamentable Discourse of three of the chiefe, and most famous bloodie broiles that have happened in France for the Gospell of Jesus Christ*. Translating from French sources, Dowriche composed—in verse—an account of French Huguenot struggles. Although her verse is functional and plodding religious verse, at least Isabella Whitney was writing, and perhaps she was expressing her self in those very terms. The Cooke sisters (Elizabeth Cooke Russell, Anne Cooke Bacon) wrote themselves as virtuous, pious, and learned through their religious poetry, their translations, their fine letters, and their prefaces.

The language of Mary Sidney Herbert, Mary Sidney Wroth, Elizabeth Cary, and Catherine of Aragon demonstrate their unique contributions to the literary arts. Herbert's translation of the Psalms and her revision of her brother's *Arcadia* demonstrate her rare gift for literary criticism. She was one of few people to consciously grasp and document the literary evolution as it occurred, who sensed the major changes in genres, subjects, and stances as they occurred. Her Psalter has been described as "a school of English versification," and it influenced other poets. No collection of lyrics in English had ever been so metrically varied as her 150 poems, and hers are more complex stylistically.
and more sophisticated in technique than their counterparts by her eminent brother. And her literary reviews evince her understanding that dramatic speeches could evolve with the change in a character. The work of Herbert's niece, Wroth, echoed her own; Wroth's Psalter became the model for John Donne and George Herbert. Her Urania, a pastoral tragicomedy of disillusioned love, is the first known full-length work of fiction by an Englishwoman. And she was castigated for this composition, encouraged to follow the example of her pious aunt and re-create (i.e., translate) rather than create. The language of Herbert and Wroth, then, demonstrate their unique contributions to the literary arts.

One can only imagine what the actual, as-yet-undetermined contributions to rhetorical technique, literary rhetoric, and discourse theory these women may have made. And one also wonders what women remain undiscovered. What we do know for certain, however, is that the social, educational, and religious contraints on Renaissance women contained them in the same way they had contained their foresisters. All these women were proscribed from writing rhetorical treatises. Roper provides a rhetoric of translation; Askew provides a rhetoric of religious apology; and Elizabeth provides a rhetoric of prerogative—but all their discourses reveal an implicit awareness of rhetorical theory. They merely demonstrated these rhetorics, inscribing themselves in the tradition in a muted way. Any contributions women have made to rhetorical theory and practice—be it traditional rhetoric or
literary rhetoric—were made despite their lack of formal training.
CONCLUSION

Guiding this study has been the following twofold question: From antiquity through the Renaissance, what contributions did women make to the rhetorical tradition? And how can those contributions be located within that tradition? My library and archival research, my examination of both primary and secondary rhetorics, revealed a surprising amount of female participation within the rhetorical tradition, despite my difficulty in locating texts. I have found one rhetorician, several orators, and a number of practitioners of rhetoric (rhetors). The research did not, however, uncover any hidden record of a female-only rhetorical tradition, either a synchronic or a diachronic one.

My research led me to two basic, intertwined conclusions. First of all, from antiquity through the Renaissance very few women were involved in the mainstream of rhetorical tradition. In fact, only Aspasia of Miletus is a found rhetorician, a theoretician of rhetoric, in the received sense of the word. As co-architect of the Sophistic movement, she was devoted to the analysis and creation of rhetoric; as Socrates' teacher of rhetoric, she explained that rhetoric is sometimes used to obscure the truth, to control hearers and deceive them into belief; and as
Pericles' teacher of rhetoric, she demonstrated the political potential of public rhetoric. Aspasia was probably memorialized because she represented the supportive, nourishing, wise and moral goddess of ancient Greece, a cultural form that prefigured the disputatious, expedient contemporary gods.

Other women who have made contributions to or participated in the rhetorical tradition have been rhetors, practicioners—not theoreticians—of rhetoric. The only Greek women whose persuasive public speeches exist are female characters in male-authored plays. And male writers have explained away the persuasive public oratory delivered by the Roman matron Hortensia as "occasional" speechmaking, a one-time participation in the public domain. Even a woman who knew the power language was forbidden to exercise it.

During the Middle Ages, the women who wrote and spoke persuasively were all under the aegis of the patriarchal Church (their only medium of intellectual opportunity), whether they composed theological tracts, visionary memoirs, evangelic exhortations, or letters of direction. Margery Kempe, Julian of Norwich, Hildegard of Bingen, and Heloise participated in the tradition of persuasive, Church-related discourse, the first two women making great contributions to the development of the English vernacular as well as to the concept of audience awareness. Kempe's work, for example, articulates as well as prefigures Wayne Booth's triangulation of "narrator, author, and implied author," converging it with the implied audience and the narrative
audience. This rhetorical feat seems to be the first of its kind in English. In addition, both Hildegard and Heloise demonstrated remarkable skill in balancing audience awareness with their own convictions. All four women concentrate on projecting their selves, through personal narrations.

The Renaissance brought forth a number of upper-class learned women who demonstrated their awareness of rhetorical conventions and practices in translation, arguments, and religious and non-religious compositions. One woman, Queen Elizabeth, evinced her rhetorical expertise as an orator. The three generations of rhetoric-practicing women were each supported by a different intellectual climate: initially, by the wave of Christian Humanism, then by the Reformists, and finally by the opportunities for patronizing literary rhetoric. And they each benefited from exclusive educations. Each generation can best be represented by one woman: Margaret More Roper, who exemplified the ideals of the new Humanist learning, successfully uniting her erudition and her domestic vocation; Anne Askew, who implemented the rhetoric-dialectic methodological foundation of the Reformers to understand and propagate her beliefs, to defend herself (and to create a Protestant saint); and Queen Elizabeth I, whose patronage of literary rhetoric endeavors was overshadowed only by her private literary and public rhetorical accomplishments. Although the female Reformers seemed to be moving toward political action, Elizabeth's presence stopped that movement. And although
Elizabeth lived her life as a rhetorical act, her example was not one that allowed "daughters" to follow.

Nearly all the women included in my study were upper-class and well-educated: Aspasia, Heloise, Hildegard, Roper, Askew, and, of course, Elizabeth. These representative women are like those in Christine de Pisan's *City of Ladies*--female intellectuals of a privileged elite, not representative of women of all walks of life yet representative of a type. In each case, their "feminine voice" reflects a measure of individuality as well as a measure of internalized male aesthetic norms. These women never spoke out or wrote without acknowledging their dependence on male approval and control. When Hortensia pleads before the triumvers, for example, she accedes to their power: "If we [women] have done you wrong, as you say our husbands have, proscribe us as you do them."

All the women in my study were dependent on male approval, be it kinsman, statesman, churchman, or God, and the full measure of that male influence is difficult to calibrate. In order to be heard, these ingenious strategists found ways for their womanliness and then their discourse to be accepted. For example, Hildegard writes, "I am a poor little earthen vessel... which God made for himself and imbued with his inspiration." Their success lay in "double-voiced" discourse, overlaying their own muted voices with the dominant (male) discourse. Heloise writes to Abelard, opening her letter by acknowledging her subservience to God and to Abelard, just as males would expect a female in her position to do. But then she moves immediately to her demands
("with supplication"): "And so all we handmaids of Christ, and in Christ thy daughters demand with supplication two things of thy fatherhood which we foresee to be right necessary for ourselves" (Moncrieff 110). Thus, Heloise mixes the expectations of male discourse with the urgencies of her female discourse in order to achieve her persuasive goal.

Another way these women gained male approval and the goodwill of their audience was to implement the humility topos: "I, poor little thing"; "I, a weak and untutored female form"; "I told him that I was but a woman, and knew not the course of schools." As the aforementioned example of Heloise illustrates, their own voices emerged when the dominant discourse could not cover all their meanings, urgencies, and needs. But even then, they often articulated their beliefs and intentions through the mouthpiece of God, as when Julian writes, "Except that I am a woman, should I not tell you the goodness of God?" On those occasions that Elizabeth I did not rely on the authority of God, she relied on her projected androgyny, yet another ploy to circumvent cultural strictures on public, outspoken women: "I know I have the body of a weak and feeble woman, but I have the heart and stomach of a king."

The fact that I covered nearly two thousand years of Western rhetorical history and found only one female rhetorician, Aspasia, seems astonishing. At the start of my research, I felt sure that at least one woman every generation would have broken through the hegemony of male-dominated discourse, despite her social and
educational handicaps. I expected to find theoreticians of rhetoric, female rhetoricians. I had hoped to locate rhetorical treatises written by women. But my research was often stymied by the difficulty of located even secondary sources about women writers. And although I was not successful in those ways, I did find reoccurring pockets of female intellectual activity, coteries of women who moved out of the margins into the body of the rhetorical tradition.

Aspasia is a case in point. Because none of her work is extant, all our knowledge of her comes from secondary sources. And although those secondary sources intersect to ratify her existence, her intellectual and rhetorical contributions, her influence on the greatest speakers and thinkers of her day, she is most often considered "apocryphal." All the information we have about Socrates comes from secondary sources as well, but the historicity of his life and work is never doubted. George Kennedy is one of many rhetoricians who omits Aspasia completely from his historical overview yet devotes many pages to Socrates, writing about him with assurance:

Socrates (469-399 B.C.) resembled the sophists superficially. He had little interest in physics or astronomy as studied by earlier philosophers and was deeply concerned with human life and human judgment . . . [H]e contributed to conceptualization; . . . he taught orally, was interested in words, and showed a fondness for paradox (41).

Socrates is remembered and revered, while Aspasia goes unmentioned and is nearly forgotten.
Aspasia's example brings to the fore the whole notion of lost, ignored, or nearly forgotten women, women whose intellectual repression has been deliberate, willed, constant, institutionalized. I wonder just how many women will continue to go unmentioned in rhetorical history, for years or for ever. And how many women remain hidden in the folds of what we perceive as the seeming linearity of history. Some women may be hidden behind male names. The editor of Christine de Pisan's Book of Feats of Arms and Chivalry, for example, changed her text so it appeared to have been written by a man. We can only guess how many other works by women are under the guise of male pseudonyms.

Until most recently, in fact, we had not even thought of looking for a woman in rhetoric. It had already been assumed, a priori, that no women participated in the rhetorical tradition. But if more women are searched out and located within the rhetorical tradition, if their work is recognized and validated, the unfolding of their stories will necessitate a realignment of rhetorical history. Thus far, we have been willing to believe the tautology that no women have been involved in rhetorical history because not a single rhetorical treatise by a woman appears in lists of primary works and because not a single woman appears in the indexes of the most comprehensive histories of Western rhetoric. I remain hopeful that a female-composed rhetorical treatise will surface, perhaps a theoretical piece on *ars dictamina* by a medieval abbess. But so far, his-story has been a smooth one, all the folds pressed firmly down.
My second conclusion is that women have been systematically and purposefully excluded from the history of rhetoric. My study elucidates the social, religious, political, cultural, and literary ways that women's voices have been muted—by men. Whenever women have broken the barriers of male domination, whether it be to speak publicly, write persuasively, or argue logically, men have found ways to exclude their contributions from accepted rhetorical practice. Thus, the arbiters of canonical acceptance have operated on the basis of X + 1. Whenever a woman has accomplished the same goals as her male counterpart (public speaking, successful argument, persuasive letter-writing), the standards immediately change. She may have achieved X, but now she needs X plus 1. For example, Roman men who spoke before the Forum were thought to be orators; Hortensia spoke before the Forum as well. But because she did not speak (may not have been permitted to speak) more than just that once, she is not an orator. Men who have conceptualized theories of rhetoric are rhetoricians. Aspasia conceptualized rhetorical theories, but since none of her texts are extant, she is not a rhetorician.

I suggest, then, that we re-see and re-conceive the procedures for evaluating what constitutes the practice or theory of rhetoric. Heretofore, men and women have been judged by the same standards—male standards. I am not implying a switch from male standards to female standards; neither am I advocating male standards for male discourse and female standards for female discourse. In order to incorporate more work by women into the
canon of rhetoric, I envision instead a broadening of standards, one that respects and inspects the tradition of "male" rhetoric (political, religious, and public discourse of power) as well as the tradition of "female" rhetoric (family records, diaries, letters, religious experiences, and autobiography—in other words, private discourse of the "self"). We may finally be ready to situate within the rhetorical tradition those written works by women that have never been included or even considered for inclusion.

As I was reminded when I wrote parts of this study, Aristotle saw woman as a defective man. Yet it is by returning to Aristotle that we can find the way to include women in the rhetorical canon. Instead of working from the irrelevant and false dichotomy of public/private discourse as the first principle of rhetoric, we can look at each individual piece of discourse and judge it on its own merits, its unique ability or inability to please, teach, or move its audience. Instead of following the customary prescriptive rubric for evaluating rhetorical discourse, we can set up a descriptive one, one that respects the dignity of each piece of discourse, be it man's or woman's, public or private. And Aristotle's Poetics and Rhetoric provide us a methodology for doing just that. We can examine a piece a posteriori, gauging the total effect and then working backwards to see just how that effect, the working power of the piece, was achieved. His Poetics repeatedly illustrates the principle of a piece-as-a-whole and the total effect of that whole, whereas, his Rhetoric provides us the
means to analyze and understand the effects and the means by which they are achieved. For Aristotle, poetics is a particular case of persuasion, and as such poetics is his source of illustrative material in the Rhetoric. Such an Aristotelian technique is based on the principle that successful communication between the sender and her audience is possible, analyzable, and describable. By following the teachings of Aristotle, we can expand our present narrow notion of what kinds of discourse constitutes "rhetoric." After all, in Rhetoric of Motives, Kenneth Burke tells us that "Wherever there is persuasion, there is rhetoric. And wherever there is 'meaning,' there is 'persuasion'" (172).

By disrupting that seamless narrative we have all been willing to accept as rhetorical history, this initial study has ramifications on past study as well as implications for future study. The most powerful ramification is an awareness of women's place in his-story. The knowledge that women have, indeed, participated in and contributed to the rhetorical tradition will reverberate down the corridors of past scholarship, as far back as the Sophist tradition. Our first obligation, then, as scholars is to look backwards at all the unquestioned scholarship that has come before. We must be willing to interrogate, test, and unfold past scholarship in order to re-think, re-see, and re-write rhetorical history. Edward P. J. Corbett, for example, has recently revised his Classical Rhetoric for the Modern Student, recognizing, for the first time, that a few women do rate inclusion in his historical survey of rhetoric, even by the most
conservative standards of rhetoric. If as a profession, we are willing to expand our notion of rhetorical theoría and praxis, then even more women will become part of our story. Like the woof and warp, her-story and his-story can be woven together to create a tapestry, a rich, complex, and colorful story, our-story of rhetoric.

Although the implications for further study are many, they all grow out of my methodology: I contextualized women within their socio-historical-political milieus. I did not skim their stories off the top. Instead of collapsing male history or substituting female history for that history, I told a story inclusive of both male and female locations throughout history. Scholars who conduct historical and contemporary studies of rhetoric, then, might be better served by locating their subjects socially, historically, and politically.

And although I strove for objectivity in telling the story, I announced explicitly my subjectivity regarding my female subjects, nearly all of whom were upper-class and well-educated. It is by recognizing ourselves and announcing to others just what we are doing (who and what we are looking for, where we have situated them) that we can best tell a story of rhetoric. As our scholarly community moves forward and backwards in history, up and down class lines, through language and literacy barriers, and across genres, we each need to tell a deep story, one replete with what the ethnographers call "thick description." Each of our stories will enrich the story of rhetoric.
The story of rhetoric is dark with silences, the silences of women, of the poor, of the illiterate, of the disenfranchised, of the ignored, and of the unrespected. The significance of my study lies in casting light on those dark silences. Rhetoric has long been centered on upper-class men and their public discourse. I hope that my study helps to de-center those traditions, without re-centering them elsewhere, and that my study illustrates the value of private, female-produced discourse, just one of many genres we may be ready to consider as rhetorical discourse. Thus, I am not calling for an overthrow of his-story. Nor do I want to replace his-story with her-story or even their-story. Instead, I would like to expand our notion of rhetorical discourse in such a way that we can finally begin to write our-story of rhetoric.
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