

Review: Walking and Talking Feminist Rhetorics: Landmark Essays and Controversies, edited by Lindal Buchanan and Kathleen J. Ryan. West Lafayette: Parlor, 2010. 483 pp.

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Rev. of *Walking and Talking Feminist Rhetorics: Landmark Essays and Controversies*, by Lindal Buchanan and Kathleen J. Ryan. *Composition Studies*. 39.1 (2011): 144-147.

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Article:

When I read a draft of the introduction to *Walking and Talking Feminist Rhetorics: Landmark Essays and Controversies* last summer, I was eager to see the collection in print. The draft introduction suggested an anthology of scholarly abundance and possibility. This collection has not disappointed, as Lindal Buchanan and Kathleen J. Ryan bring together in one text a nuanced understanding of feminist rhetorics as an established dynamic field. They have included 29 primarily women's but also men's voices in a multivalent scholarly exchange that has been occurring over the last twenty years. The editors define the field of feminist rhetorics as a community of scholars and body of scholarship with an intellectual, theoretical, practical, and political agenda that "encourages others to think, believe, and act in ways that promote equal treatment and opportunities for women" (xiv). "The significance of *Walking and Talking Feminist Rhetorics* is in its selection and arrangement of valuable contemporary articles that mark a middle ground between rhetorical traditions and interdisciplinary impulses for the discipline of Rhetoric and Composition Studies. Additionally, it provides a starting point for women and men who are interested in promoting social equity in their academic and professional endeavors.

The 26 previously published articles, book excerpts, reviews, and rejoinders are divided into four sections: 1) feminist rhetorics' beginnings, 2) its methods and methodologies, 3) its genres and styles, and 4) its controversies presented as case studies. In the collection's introduction, Buchanan and Ryan focus on their metaphors of walking and talking in this interdisciplinary field as emblematic of their textual choices. Walking allows for a combination of "intellectual flexibility and openness" and "reflexivity and curiosity," while talking represents the collaborative aspects of their work (xiv). Enacting what they are walking and talking about, two of the case study introductions are written by graduate students, Samuel R. Evans and Barbara Hebert. The editors' introduction, along with Kate Ronald's foreword and the introductory comments to the four divisions provide context and insight to their choices of texts. While the scholarly claim of landmark as "ground-breaking" or "innovative" always implies the risky terrain of judgment and criteria, the term also means "signpost" or "marker" referring to a topographical location. It is that second meaning that the editors suggest when they refer to their choices of selections and arrangement as their "journey to this point in time" within the field of feminist rhetorics (xv). In their mapping of the field, they distinguish five research strands that wind through the four sections. Each strand offers alternative theories, criteria, methods, and readings: a) recovery of women rhetors and rhetoricians, b) analyses of the contextual network of forces in women's rhetorics, c) examinations of "gender bias" in rhetorical traditions, d) critiques of "foundational disciplinary concepts," and e) interrogations of established epistemologies and "research practices" (xviii-xix). Another contextual field marker is the brief historical trajectory of patriarchal rhetoric that establishes the editors' beginning point of the field of feminist rhetorics as the 1989 publication of Karlyn Kohrs Campbell's *Man Cannot Speak for Her*.

The first three sections of the collection focus on the topics, purposes, and practices of the field of feminist rhetorics, while the fourth section highlights some key debates about them. Part 1, "Charting the Emergence of

Feminist Rhetorics," establishes the field by exploring the crossing of feminism with rhetoric, so it focuses on the initial research questions and approaches in texts published between 1989 and 1995 and includes texts by Campbell, Cheryl Glenn, Susan C. Jarratt, Krista Ratcliffe, and a collaboratively written piece by Lisa Ede, Cheryl Glenn, and Andrea Lunsford. For instance, the 1995 "Border Crossings: Intersections of Rhetoric and Feminism" reconsiders the five traditional canons of rhetoric in light of women's ways of knowing and speaking and argues for the revising and nuancing of established principles in both feminist and rhetorical theories through the interweaving of the two fields. Part 2, "Articulating and Enacting Feminist Methods and Methodologies," examines feminist historiography and the ways that it both shapes and draws attention to "women's rhetorical interests, experiences, and accomplishments" (110). The six journal articles by Patricia Bizzell, Vicki Tolar Collins (Burton), Jessica Enoch, Mary Queen, Susan Romano, and Hui Wu demonstrate the historical scope, ethnic/racial diversity, and transnational approaches of the field's topics. For example, employing feminist rhetorical topoi as sites for recovery, Romano presents four alternative narratives of a sixteenth-century Spanish female missionary's disappearance in Mexico. In contrast, Queen develops a digital methodology to explore rhetorically the political motives involved in the online representations of Afghan women's bodies and voices post 9/11. Part 3, "Exploring Gendered Sites, Genres, and Styles of Rhetoric," concentrates on women's historical locations and situations and the ways in which their rhetorical agency is contained and enacted. Chronologically organized by topic, these six historical arguments provided by Jane Donawerth, Bonnie J. Dow and Mari Boor Tonn, Nan Johnson, Shirley Wilson Logan, Carol Mattingly, and Susan Zaeske examine women's rhetorical options, challenges, and innovations from the seventeenth through twentieth centuries. As illustration, "Black Women on the Speaker's Platform (1832-1899)" details the various issues and topics, in addition to slavery, that American black women organized around, fought to change, and spoke to during the nineteenth century. "These include "employment, civil rights, woman's rights, emigration, and self-improvement" as well as "mob violence, racial uplift, and support for the southern black woman" (254).

The abundance of women writing about women's rhetoric is simultaneously reinforced and altered in the fourth section. Part 4, "Examining Controversies," is a series of four case studies tied to specific controversies revolving around the debated issues of a) recovery or critique as the field's primary objective, b) rhetorical aims and their impact, c) women's roles in curricular reform, and d) rhetorical historiography. The first case study that questions whether women can be placed in the rhetorical canon pairs Barbara Biesecker's critique of Campbell's *Man Cannot Speak for Her* with Campbell's response and defense. The second case study questions whether or not there are "distinct masculine and feminine communication styles" and includes Sonja K. Foss and Cindy L. Griffin's article on invitational rhetoric and Celeste Michelle Condit's critique and argument for women's persuasive rhetoric (360). In the third case study, Roxanne Mountford's book review criticizes Robert J. Connors's historical account of rhetorical education's demise due to women entering college during the nineteenth century as oversimplistic, biased, and stereotypic, calling into question his method and methodology. The final case study begins with Xin Liu Gale's critical analysis of feminist research methods used by Glenn and Jarratt and Rory Ong pertaining to *Aspasia of Miletus*. The rejoinders of Glenn and Jarratt follow. The editors' choice to include these four debates reinforces and remaps the questions and perspectives of the first three sections of the collection and continues the conversation beyond the collections' texts. For example, the short introductions to the case studies suggest this continuation by listing other texts directly affecting or related to the controversy. In addition, the issue of rhetorical aims and the question "Is persuasion violence?" could be enhanced and extended by reading Sally Gearhart's 1979 "The Womanization of Rhetoric" and Jarratt's 1991 "Feminism and Composition: The Case for Conflict."

Multivocality is apparent not only in these scholarly debates but also in the number of bibliographic citations involved in this type of collection. Each of the reprinted texts includes its original citations. The Works Cited for the collection's and sections' introductions is yet another rich list. Additionally, the editors have compiled a selected bibliography of influential monographs, edited collections, anthologies, and special journal issues focused on feminist rhetorics.

The variety of competing and complementary voices and the editors' careful attention to and fine distinctions of

scholarly exchange and alternative views invite ample opportunities and possibilities for this collection's use. I can see *Walking and Talking Feminist Rhetorics* used in upper-level undergraduate courses and graduate courses in Rhetoric and Composition studies and in Women and Gender Studies. Moreover, it can easily be supplemented with articles referred to but not included. At the graduate level and depending on the focus of the Rhetoric and Composition studies seminar, I might pair this text with Eileen E. Schell and K. J. Rawson's *Rhetorica in Motion: Feminist Rhetorical Methods and Methodologies*, Kate Ronald and Joy Ritchie's *Teaching Rhetorica: Theory, Pedagogy, Practice*, or one of the feminism and composition collections. The value of the case studies is two-fold, both pedagogical. The first is the discussion about the debate and the added research and reading that can happen to extend the voices in it. The second is that these debates operate as models for a case study assignment with students choosing their own issues to explore. At \$40 for the paperback and \$30 for the Adobe eBook, this collection offers our discipline a strong, usable text at a price we can work with in our courses.

Works Cited

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