newsletter of the coalition of
women scholars in the history
of rhetoric and composition

www.unm.edu/~cwshrc

Call for Editors

The Coalition of Women Scholars in the History of Rhetoric and Composition is seeking one or two new editors for its publication, *Peitho*. For the last ten years, *Peitho* has been a twice-yearly, 8-page newsletter, featuring works-in-progress, book reviews, and mentoring-related articles. Over the ten years, it has been co-edited by Kay Halasek (Ohio State University), Susan Jarratt (University of California, Irvine), and Susan Romano (University of New Mexico). The Coalition has now decided to explore the possibility of converting the newsletter to a full-fledged journal and seeks applications for editorship. We welcome applications from individuals or pairs of potential co-editors. Please send a brief letter of application and cv to Susan Romano (sromano@unm.edu) by March 1, 2006, including a discussion of the following:

- your qualifications for editing a journal
- ideas for the shape and direction of a new, full-fledged journal for CWSHRC
- possible sources of institutional support (these may include office space and equipment, course release time, graduate student support, and financial support for printing and mailing)

A decision will be made by the Board at its annual meeting at 4Cs in March. Editorship will begin in Fall 2006.

Peitho fleeing the seduction of Leda appearing on an Apulian red figure vase, ca. 350-340 B.C.E.
J. Paul Getty Museum.
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Salon Rhetoric: Seventeenth-Century Origins and Eighteenth-Century Reactions

Elizabeth Tasker
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To create a more complete picture of the history of female rhetoric requires, as Andrea Lunsford suggests, looking beyond the parameters of the traditional cannon, for additional "forms, strategies and goals used by women as rhetorical" (6). Outside the courts, podiums, and pulpits, beyond the published treatises and arguments, are non-traditional rhetorical venues, as well as female-authored texts and artifacts, rich with rhetorical theory and practice by early modern women. One seventeenth-century venue that has been widely explored from the perspectives of French history and literary studies, but little explored from a rhetorical perspective until recently, is the early modern Parisian salon.

Historical studies have detailed the rise of the salon as a fashionable meeting place, newly imported from Italy to Paris in the seventeenth century, most notably, by Madame de Rambouillet, an Italian aristocrat who helped redefine the salon from a strictly aristocratic social space to a place available to a wider range of upper and even middle-class society. The early salons of Paris provided a semi-private, mixed-gender venue where educated people could meet for intellectual discussion and where female participation and leadership was the norm. In addition to discussions of literature and art, conversations in the early salons often consisted of subjects of a moral, political, or sometimes even scientific nature. Before the Fronde rebellion against the French monarchy in 1648, the salons were known as meeting places for political discussion and dissent; later, after the rebellion was quashed, salon conversations centered more on literature and art and less on politics (Newman 5-6; DeJean 43). The post-Fronde salons were derided by their contemporaries as superficial venues for the frivolous conversations of women who were called the *précieuse*, a term made famously derogatory by Molière in his comedy *Les Préscieuses ridicules*. But in the twentieth century historians began to reevaluate the salon's centrality to

seventeenth century society and to identify salon culture as a sort of protofeminist social movement that endured even after the Fronde rebellion and influenced women in France and England for the next century. This renewed interest in the historical significance of the early Parisian salons continues. In 2005, Benedetta Craveri's *The Age of Conversation* (originally published in Italian in 2001) details the salon as a colorful, potent, female-led, political force that thrived in Paris from 1620 until the French revolution.

Over the past few decades, scholars have also begun to study the salon as a rhetorical venue. Both Elizabeth Goldsmith and Joan DeJean, while not focused strictly on rhetoric, identify the distinct rhetorical style used in the salons of seventeenth century France. In her 1988 book, *Exclusive Conversations*, Goldsmith notes that the ability to excel in conversation was the most important skill in "an elaborate repertoire" of social skills among Parisians elites (1). In the salon, Goldsmith points out, "dialog must occur according to an ongoing exchange whose delicate balance must never be destroyed by the conclusive 'winning out' of one speaker over another" (44). Salon conversation presented a codified rhetorical model in which subordination of an audience to a speaker did not exist. The collaborative environment of the salon was also detailed by DeJean in her 1991 book *Tender Geographies*, an insightful study of the dominant role that female authors and salon culture played in the development of the early French novel. Both DeJean and Goldsmith identify the salon as an important rhetorical venue and credit best-selling, seventeenth-century romance writer Madeleine de Scudéry with documenting salon practices. But a study specifically dedicated to analyzing *salon rhetoric* as an early modern rhetoric of conversation and letter writing was not available until the last decade of the twentieth century.

In the mid 1990s, Jane Donawerth began publishing articles acknowledging Madeleine de Scudéry as the foremost theorist of salon rhetoric. Donawerth asserts that "Scudéry formulated a new rhetoric of conversation for the French Salon, and included women as central participants" ("Conversation" 184) and that Scudéry's creation of a "female-to-female discourse in the vernacular" is an important development in historical rhetoric ("Selected Letters" 36). In the introduction to her 2004 translation of Scudéry's selected letters, fictional orations, and rhetorical dialogues, Donawerth presents her most compelling assessment of Scudéry as a rhetorical theorist and gives a close reading of Scudéry's models and style not only for conversation, but for letter-writing and oratory as well ("Selected Letters" 16-36). Following Donawerth's lead, in the past five years, more scholars of historic rhetoric have begun to examine Madeleine de Scudéry as an important *other* rhetorical voice of the early modern period (Bizzell and Herzberg; Newman).

Positing Scudéry as an early modern rhetorical theorist is an interesting assertion considering that she was neither the first nor the most famous salonnierre, and that, from the late eighteenth century until quite recently, Scudéry has been viewed chiefly as the author of voluminous, long-winded, and archaic French romances. Detailed historical accounts of Scudéry's life and work, however, reveal that she was a vital part of both the literary scene and salon life of her time. Her affiliation with the salon world began in 1637 in the salon of Rambouillet where, as a young woman, Scudéry received her education in the ways of proper social interaction and the art of discourse. In the 1640s, Scudéry started her own salon, which was known simply as "samedis" (or "Saturdays") for the day on which the meetings occurred (Aronson 37-43). During this time, Scudéry was also a prolific writer, publishing first under the name of her brother, George Scudéry, and later in thinly veiled anonymity. Throughout the seventeenth century and early eighteenth century, Scudéry was one of the most widely-read authors in Europe (Bizzell and Herzberg 761-762; Aronson preface). Scudery's romances, *Ibrahim* (1641), *Artamene, Le Grand Cyrus* (1647 -1653), and *Clélie* (1654-1661), were huge successes with numerous reprints and translations into several languages. In the 1680s, Scudéry began to strip the moralistic dialogues out of her fiction and republish them into a series of shorter creative works, including *The Heroic Harangues of the Illustrious Women* in 1681 and a ten-volume collection of essays called *Conversations on Several Subjects*, which she published from 1680 through 1692.[1]

It was in these later works that Scudéry explicitly theorized the rhetoric of the salon social structure to which she belonged. The purpose of Scudéry's *Conversations*, as described by Goldsmith, was to "realize the aesthetic ideal of salon culture" (2-3). To delineate this ideal, Scudéry had to distinguish the rhetoric of conversation from classical rhetoric. Thus, as Donawerth states, Scudéry

"revisioned the tradition of masculine 'public' discourse for mixed gender 'private' discourse in salon society, emphasizing conversation and letter writing" ("As Becomes" 305). Scudéry's revision of discourse suggests informal and open-ended exchange as the most appropriate, enlightening, and enjoyable way to interact with others. Scudéry's *Conversations* reproduce the salon setting by enacting philosophical discussion through the informal dialogue of a group of friends in which, as Scudéry's biographer Nicole Aronson describes, "[b]rief stories are told in order to make certain points, but a solution is rarely given. The reader ... is presented with various arguments and then must make up his own mind" (121). Likewise, Goldsmith states that in salon conversation "endings are problematic...and usually are imposed simply when the company retires, or night falls" (44). Thus in contrast to classical argument, with its orderly and formal presentation of exordium, claim, evidence, refutation, and conclusion and its structured appeals to ethos, pathos, and logos, salon rhetoric is seemingly spontaneous, informal, and unstructured, as Scudéry states:

Conversations must appear so free, as to make it seem we don't reject any of our thoughts ... and everyone will say what he ought to say for the rendering the Conversation agreeable. But what is most necessary to make it soft and diverting is, that it must be influenced, with a certain spirit of Politeness, which absolutely banishes all bitter Railieries. (772)

In the salon, argumentative behavior was not acceptable. But it would be a mistake to think that salon attendees could not express their points of view. The real restriction was that, regardless of content, salon conversation had to conform to a fluid, polite, non-confrontational, peer-to-peer rhetorical style.

Over time, Scudéry's *Conversations* were distilled into guidelines for speaking and interacting with others; each edition of Scudéry's *Conversations* became smaller until, by the latter half of the eighteenth century they were like "pocket books" on etiquette with user-friendly tables of contents that listed each of the topics covered in the conversations (Goldsmith 43). Thus, the distilled version of Scudéry's rhetoric was disseminated to a wide audience of educated people in France and England. Tracing Scudéry's impact on subsequent generations is somewhat speculative, but we do find mention of either Scudéry, French romance, or *préciositie* by many major seventeenth- and eighteenth-century authors, including, Molière, Dryden, Astell, Fielding, and Burney. Many of Scudéry's principles of conversation are echoed by Mary Astell. In *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies Part II*, Astell recommends Scudéry as one of the five authors that women should read for their education (Kreis-Schink 200). In describing the similarities between conversation and writing, Astell states that women's "Musical Tone, Persuasive Air, and winning Address" make them naturally good at conversation but that rhetoric should be gentle in employing persuasion, not self righteous and triumphant (854-56). Thus, in the 1690s, Astell is in agreement with Scudéry that a soft demeanor is of primary importance in the rhetoric of conversation.

A different reaction to Scudéry's theories is found in the mid-eighteenth century in a highly nuanced critique of salon rhetoric by British novelist Charlotte Lennox in her work *The Female Quixote*. Nearly seventy years after the publication of Scudéry's *Conversations*, Lennox's satiric novel critiques Scudéry and the rhetoric of conversation. Early in the novel, the heroine Arabella tells the other characters that she strives to emulate the behavior of the great heroines of antiquity as documented by "the inimitable pen of the illustrious Scudéry" (62). Holding up Scudéry's romances, *Clélie* and *Artamene Le Grand Cyrus*, as accurate historical documents and exemplars of correct social conduct, Arabella seeks to live her life according to the courtly behavior and customs presented within them. Arabella's adherence to the extravagant romances of Scudéry is, of course, socially inappropriate and complicates her relationships with all of the other characters in the story. Arabella's peculiar behavior is an irony that Lennox uses to satirize and complicate eighteenth-century customs of feminine conversation—customs that are grounded on the principles and practices of salon rhetoric.

Through Arabella, Lennox is at once working in and against the rhetorical tradition of Scudéry. Like Scudéry, Lennox explores the rhetoric of conversation in salon-like settings where the women characters are able to speak as freely as the men. But in violation of salon etiquette, Arabella is constantly and vocally critical of the customs of the social circles in which she finds herself. She argues fervently with her relatives and friends about the right and proper subjects of speech. To her uncle, she says, "you have not well considered what you say...take the Pains, I beseech you, to reflect a little upon those numerous and long Conversations, which

these subjects have given rise to in *Clelia*, and *The Grand Cyrus*, where the must illustrious and greatest Personages in the World manage their Disputes" (149-50). Later, during a discussion with her cousin and fiancée, Arabella tells him flatly, "I am not of your opinion" (150). And she directly confronts and insults her conniving and predatory neighbor when she asks him "What Lady...will receive your Service, loaded as you are with the terrible Imputation of Inconstancy?" (151). Arabella's confrontational style of speech is the antithesis of salon rhetoric. She even transgresses from the mixed-gender realm of polite conversation into the all-male realm of oratory and debate where she is definitely not a member. Arabella argues her point of view, continuously breaking into paragraphs of oratory and philosophy, until her uncle exclaims, "Lady Bella...you speak like an Orator" (269) and later states "if she had been a Man, she would have made a great Figure in Parliament, and ... her Speeches might have come perhaps to be printed in time" (311).

In contrasting conversation with argumentation and oratory, Lennox is insinuating that, while speech has the potential to be empowering, words without action or purpose, only for the sake of polite socializing, are worth little. And, although Scudéry's *Conversations* depict the free flow of mixed-gender conversation as a positive development in rhetoric, Lennox sees the overemphasis on agreeableness of tone and the lack of debate as a serious limitation. Thus, a generation after Scudéry's time, Charlotte Lennox in *The Female Quixote* indirectly renounces salon rhetoric and suggests that the rhetoric of conversation should be developed into more rational and practical uses than merely the diversion of elite society.

The different reactions from Astell and Lennox to Scudéry's rhetoric of conversation foreshadow two distinct strains of female rhetoric that appear in the later eighteenth century and early nineteenth century: the first one, genteel and indirect, is exemplified by the Bluestockings, such as Elizabeth Carter and Elizabeth Montague, for whom the salon venue became an important literary forum. The second, a more direct rhetoric borrowing from classical rhetorical style, is the rhetoric of gender reform as voiced first by Mary Wollstonecraft and then by a host of women in the nineteenth century. Certainly many outspoken women speakers and writers who came after Scudéry continued to appropriate the traditional masculine rhetorical constructions to argue effectively and claim power and attention.

Ironically, Scudéry's attempts to claim the power of speech for women, while not as overt as more outspoken feminist voices, in some ways are more subversive. In effect, Scudéry removes herself from traditionally masculine public forums and classical argumentation and situates herself in the semi-private salon forum and a rhetoric stylized for mutual sympathy and agreement. Today, we need not see Scudéry as less or more effective than other female rhetoricians. But we can recognize her as significant and perhaps even revolutionary in her approach to rhetoric.

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Notes

[1] Until recently, the only available English translations of Scudéry's later works were Ferrand Spence's 1683 translation of *Conversations* and James Inne's 1681 translations of *Les Femmes illustres.* These texts are not widely available, but an excerpt of Spence's translation is included in the second edition of Bizzell and Herzberg's *The Rhetorical Tradition.* Just in the last decade, two new translated editions of Scudéry's later work have been become widely available in English: Karen Newman's 2003 translation of *The Story of Sapho* and Jane Donawerth's and Julie Strongson's 2004 translation of *Selected Letters, Orations and Rhetorical Dialogues.* In French, the most recent edition of Scudéry's later works is the 1998 publication of *De l'air gallant et autres conversations*, edited by Delphine Denis.

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Review: *Unspoken: A Rhetoric of Silence*, by Cheryl Glenn. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2004. 221 pp.

Whitney Myers Madden, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque

In her earlier book, *Rhetoric Retold: Regendering the Tradition from Antiquity Through the Renaissance*, Cheryl Glenn insists upon the recovery of female rhetors such as Sappho, Aspasia, and Elizabeth I. This recovery project disrupts traditional historiography in rhetoric by investigating perceived areas of silence to uncover rhetorical contributions. In *Unspoken: A Rhetoric of Silence*, Glenn continues her investigation of silence, defining it as a specific rhetorical art that deserves serious scholarly research in composition and rhetoric. She argues that for too long silence has been read as a passive act when in reality it is significantly expressive. Glenn builds on the current feminist conversation "about the power of conscientious speaking out and of silence, about power and control, and especially about who remains silent and who silences" (xii). She advances this conversation by asserting that silence is an undervalued and under-critiqued feminist rhetorical art because of its association with weakness or lack. Glenn suggests this construct is inextricably linked to the idea that language and speech make us human and signal power, culture, and civilization. Thus, speech becomes synonymous with authority while silence is characterized as passive agreement. Glenn rejects this representation of silence as the "lamentable essence of femininity, a trope for oppression, passivity, emptiness, stupidity, or obedience" (2) through a thesis that positions silence not as oppositional but as complementary and equal to speech.

In chapter 1, Glenn begins her redefinition of silence by examining its historical construction as oppositional to speech through a review of linguistic, phenomenological, rhetorical, and anthropological literature already published on the subject. This chapter attends to the "paradoxical irregularities of intention and perception" (xii) and begins exploring the gendered nature of silence. Chapter 1 insists that silence is meaningful as both choice and imposition. Chapter 2 continues this redefinition by explicitly gendering the uses of silence. Here Glenn links gender theory, muting, and silencing to show how silence is used to either "maintain power or admit subordination" (22). Examples taken from higher education and other systems of power demonstrate

how silence and silencing become explicit rhetorical decisions and how rhetorical agency is employed in power relationships.

Chapters 3 and 4 examine the highly public and politicized silences of Anita Hill, Lani Guinier, Bill Clinton and women he became sexually involved with, and Clinton family members Hillary and Chelsea. By way of these examples, Glenn explores how silence can both deploy power and defer to power, continuously referring to what can be termed the "double-bind" of silence; that is, "silence can be a rhetorical imposition of subordination, or it can be inhabited as a rhetorical position of often undisputed power" (52). In other words, when Anita Hill refused to speak of her encounters with Clarence Thomas, her use of public silence conferred power because "[n]either the white men on the committee nor the president of the United States knew what she knew . . . [or] might say under oath" (55). Conversely, once she decided to speak out of silence, those same men were able to use Hill as a scapegoat and construct her as a sexualized female presence. Their uses of rhetorical power effectively silenced the woman they had forced to speak in the first place.

Chapter 5 examines the uses of silence by various Southwest Indian tribes, a cultural group often depicted as silent that has been silenced by mainstream society through the enforcement of English-only policies and other anti-Indian governmental decisions. Glenn's study suggests that lack of allegiance to a western rhetorical tradition committed to individual public display or agonistic rhetoric may account for this supposed reticence. She uses a wide variety of interviews to call into question the accuracy of "foundational" research projects positioning Indians as silent. These interviews create an opportunity for Southwest Indians to participate in the description of their cultural uses of silence.

Chapter 6 concludes the book with an invitation to further research on silence through the venues of listening, music, religion, ethnic-specific communication, and, Glenn emphasizes, the university composition classroom. This invitation suggests the inclusion of silence as a rhetorical art equal to speech, thus proposing a reevaluation of theories that inform the rhetorical tradition and answering the feminist call for a reevaluation of rhetorical historiography.

I'm particularly interested in Glenn's research on the use of silence among American Indian tribes located in the Southwest because of my experience as an instructor and graduate student at the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque. According to the July 2004 national census data, 11 percent of New Mexico's population comprises people self-identifying as American Indian or Alaskan Native, making New Mexico the state with the third-highest population percentage of this group. Self-identified American Indian students account for 5.8 percent of the total student population at UNM ("Headcount by Ethnicity and Level"). It is a commonplace among instructors that Native students are more reticent and quiet in the classroom than are other ethnic groups, and some scholarship does much to perpetuate this myth. Glenn's study foregrounds the diversity of the Native population, insisting upon the recognition of multiplicity within tribes and marching past scholarship that perpetuates a view of "Indians" as a whole rather than an ever-expanding, increasingly diverse group of people. It is important to note that this chapter is not limited in terms of interest to instructors working with Native students. Glenn's study has important implications for anyone working with diversity in higher education and tempted to homogenize certain populations of students.

Glenn is careful to position herself as an outsider to Southwestern Indian culture. One of the ways she does this is by including a prefatory chapter entitled "A Word (or Two) on Terms and Categories." This preface explores the reasoning behind decisions made regarding terms and categories used to describe particular groups of people (for example, "white" and "black"). Glenn notes that whereas she is comfortable thinking of power differentials in terms of gender, decisions about "naming" bring her great discomfort because of the inability language has to "capture the wildly rich diversity of any social, cultural, ethnic, or bodily group" (xx). The decision to claim her own subject position through a refusal to act as interpreter in chapter 5 is a bold feminist move and does much to construct a particular form of authorial ethos easily recognizable to feminist scholars and many within the academy. However, for some readers, this choice might be read as problematic and could possibly call into question the authority of the author.

Scott Lyons defines "rhetorical sovereignty" as "the right to speak or not on our own terms with the other people with whom we live" (qtd. in *Unspoken* 108), and Glenn applies this concept throughout her interpretation in this chapter. She

deliberately silences her white, scholarly, female voice and privileges Native voices interpreting Native experience. While the chapter is meticulously organized through subject headings and prefatory material, the interviews either stand alone or are interpreted by preexisting Native scholarship, a marked difference from previous chapters where Glenn's voice is actively, vocally interpreting for her audience. What arises from this deliberate rhetorical move is a reemphasis that silence (here on the part of the author) does convey meaning. In fact, Glenn's decisions not to speak (for example, the last subject heading is entitled "Not the Last Word") allow two arguments to be heard. The first facilitates the exploration of silence by American Indians and the second conveys how alert Glenn is to the difficulty facing academic writers exploring topics in diversity.

Glenn's study raises interesting questions about methodology, offers possibilities for further study, and suggests opportunities for silence to be looked at both in and outside classroom walls. *Unspoken* invites other feminist scholars to find voice and produce scholarship in areas currently ignored and overlooked.

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Announcing

2006 CCCC Annual Convention
Meeting of the Coalition of Women Scholars in the History of Rhetoric and Composition
Chicago, Illinois
Wednesday, March 22, 2006
6:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.
Location TBA.

Featured speakers:

Jenn Fishman, University of Tennessee
Carol Mattingly, University of Louisville
Sondra Perl, The Graduate Center, CUNY
Geneva Smitherman, Michigan State University

CWSHR Seeks New Advisory Board Members

The Coalition of Women Scholars in the History of Rhetoric and Composition invites self-nominations for positions on its Advisory Board. At conferences, advisors attend board meetings and serve as mentors; they also interact by email throughout the year to plan for conferences and to promote scholarship. The board memberships are for a three-year term.

Please send a brief statement of interest including information about scholarship, teaching, service, or activism related to the goals of the organization to Katherine H. Adams (kadams@loyno.edu) by March 1st.

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Officially founded in 1993, The Coalition of Women Scholars in the History of Rhetoric and Composition is a learned society devoted to supporting women scholars committed to research in the history of rhetoric and composition.

If you would like to join us, please fill out the online application at the Coalition website: www.unm.edu/~cwshrc. All Coalition members receive two issues of Peitho a year and are invited to the annual meeting at the Conference on College Composition and Communication.

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