Gold, David and Catherine L. Hobbs, *Educating the New Southern Woman: Speech, Writing, and Race at the Public Women's Colleges, 1884-1945.* Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 2014. Print.

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In *Educating the New Southern Woman,* David Gold and Catherine L. Hobbs expand historical scholarship on the rhetorical education provided for women at single-sex colleges in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Thus far, Gold and Hobbs explain, scholarship has focused largely on the rhetorical education provided for upper-class women at liberal arts colleges in the Northeastern US. More attention, Gold and Hobbs argue, needs to be paid to colleges that served other groups of women in other regions of the country. In response to this need, *Educating the New Southern Woman* focuses on eight state-supported women's colleges in the South: Alabama College for Women (now University of Montevallo), Florida State College for Women (now Florida State University), Georgia State College for Women (now Georgia College and State University), Mississippi State College for Women (now Mississippi University for Women) North Carolina College for Women (now the University of North Carolina at Greensboro), Oklahoma College for Women (now the University of Science and Arts of Oklahoma), Texas State College for Women (now Texas Woman's University), and Winthrop College (now Winthrop University).

Building on Gold's research at Texas Woman's University, which was published as a chapter of his 2008 book, *Rhetoric at the Margins: Revising the History of Writing Instruction in American Colleges, 1873-1947*, Gold and Hobbs trace the development of the southern public women's colleges, from the practical, vocational missions with which most of them were established, through their transformation into "hybrid institutions offering liberal arts, vocational education, and teacher training" (2), and into the era of coeducation following the Second World War. Throughout this history, the colleges are positioned within national trends in education, industry, politics, and economics. At the same time, Gold and Hobbs are careful to consider how local conditions varied across the region and to articulate how those variations affected the structure of rhetorical education at different institutions.

In Chapter One, Gold and Hobbs explore the historical and social contexts surrounding the origins of the schools. The understanding of Southern womanhood at the time resulted in mission statements and curricula that

were quite different from those at private Northeastern institutions, such as the Seven Sisters schools, with many of the southern schools gaining support from the state only after publicly issuing assurances that the institutions were, in the words of Mississippi College for Women president Richard W. Jones, "not teaching women to demand the 'rights' of men nor to invade the sphere of men" (27). Gold and Hobbs contend that, because faculty and administrators of these institutions "often had to contend with legislators, parents, and populaces with varying conceptions of the purposes of education and the proper public and professional roles of women," they frequently relied on traditional constructions of gender identity to promote their interests.

At the same time that administrators had to assure more conservative supporters that the schools were not intended to uproot gender norms, they also had to establish missions and design curricula in response to the very real economic needs of the women who would be their students. In the aftermath of the Civil War, many widows and orphaned daughters needed to support themselves: the women's colleges provided essential vocational training for these women. As the schools grew and gained accreditation (a process that was completed for all of the schools by 1925), however, they tended to distance themselves from the vocational focus of their original missions, although they continued to be centers for teacher preparation. The heyday for the public women's colleges, Gold and Hobbs explain, lasted through the first half of the twentieth century. In 1945, 276 institutions identified as "women's colleges," but, as more and more public institutions went coeducational, the number women's colleges dropped precipitously. Only forty-eight institutions identifying as "women's colleges" remained in 2009 (31).

Chapter Two explores writing instruction at the women's colleges, with a focus on how writing curricula—in conjunction with extracurricular opportunities for writing through debate socities, literary societies, and campus newspapers and literary journals—prepared women to present themselves publicly through their writing. Many faculty followed a "current-traditional" paradigm, emphasizing correctness and common "modes." Yet, Gold and Hobbs argue, writing instruction at a number of the colleges engaged issues of local and national importance and encouraged students to contribute to conversations within the college community and beyond. For example, William Dodd, who served as both English chair and dean of the college at Florida State College for Women, enacted a composition curriculum that blended a traditional focus on correctness with a focus on writing about "modern life" (45). Faculty, and presumably their students, sometimes struggled to meet both the goal of correctness and the goal of social engagement. Archival materials from the North Carolina College for Women, for example, suggest that, when a focus on contemporary public issues was folded into the composition sequence in the

1930s, the result was "a conceptual struggle to balance correctness of expression with belletristic literary analysis and expository meditations on topics of social import" (55).

Surprisingly, in Gold and Hobbs's discussions of writing instruction at North Carolina College for Women, no mention is made of Kelly Ritter's recent book, *To Know Her Own History: Writing at the Woman's College, 1943-1963* (Pittsburgh 2012), a study of writing instruction at that institution. While the time period of Ritter's study is later than that addressed in *Educating the New Southern Woman,* the historical spans of the two books do overlap by a few years. It may have been the case that *Educating the New Southern Woman* was already far along in the publication process at the time that Ritter's book became available. In any case, the two publications make interesting companion texts: Gold and Hobbs provide a useful background for Ritter's book, while Ritter productively extends the work of *Educating the New Southern Woman.*

In Chapter Three, Gold and Hobbs offer an overview of instruction in public speaking—both within and beyond the classroom—at the women's colleges. Training in public speaking derived largely from different systems of elocution that were popular at the time, particularly among women. Gold and Hobbs explain that, as elocution and "the speech arts" lost favor to more scientific study of language at elite male institutions such as Harvard, these rhetorical endeavors "became coded as 'feminine,'" a situation that enabled women's colleges to continue to offer coursework in them. Most influential in the early twentieth century was the "Delsarte System of Expression," a method of instruction that embodied Francois Delsarte's belief that "physical gesture reveals or corresponds to the movements of the soul; as such, gesture was central to communication" (65). Also popular at the women's colleges were Charles Wesley Emerson's system of elocution, as articulated in his book *The Evolution of Expression,* and Samuel Silas Curry's approach as detailed in his books *The Province of Expression* and *Foundations of Expression*. As was the case for written rhetorical forms, students at the women's colleges enhanced their abilities in spoken rhetoric through extracurricular activities. College life provided additional opportunities for women to practice and hone their public speaking skills outside of the classroom through, among other things, literary and debate societies, dramatic productions, and a variety of special events, a number of which were organized in collaboration with local women's associations.

In keeping with the vocational goals that were part of their missions, the eight women's colleges also provided students with industrial training. The initial structure and evolving shape of this training is the topic of Chapter 4. While more traditionally "female" endeavors (sewing, cooking, millinery, etc.) were the focus of practical training in the early years of the colleges, some

schools, such as Mississippi State College for Women, expanded vocational training to areas such as "telegraphy, phonography (an early form of stenography) and typewriting, bookkeeping, drawing, design, modeling, wood carving, needlework, repousse [decorative metalworking], leather working, photography, pharmacy, dressmaking, millinery, cooking, and printing" (91-92).

During the first two decades of the twentieth century most of the schools shifted focus from a broader vocational curriculum to a narrower focus on professional preparation for careers in teaching and clerical work, with both fields providing growing employment opportunities for women. Additionally, the study of "home economics" grew in popularity, in large part because, as Gold and Hobbs explain, federal funding became available for institutions to provide training in this field. Furthermore, the study of home economics allowed women to study subjects that otherwise might have been seen as outside of their purview. The idea of women studying chemistry and biology for the purpose of ensuring proper nutrition for their children was much more palatable for the public than the idea of women studying these subjects for careers in medicine, for instance.

In Chapter 4, Gold and Hobbs focus on both the rhetoric that school leaders used to advance the vocational education of Southern women and the role of rhetorical education within vocational curricula for women. Instruction in writing and speaking was important for future teachers, but it was also given substantial attention in other curricula, including home economics and business. A number of home economics graduates would go on to work as extension agents, thanks to the creation of the Agricultural Extension Service via the Smith-Lever Act of 1914. As extension agents, women would need to be able to create publications about and deliver home demonstrations on a variety of products and processes for farmers and their families. Women entering the business field as clerical workers would also need to know how to write effectively and communicate professionally within the workplace.

Chapter Five opens with the critical point that "the southern public colleges for women were founded in an era when, in both popular and scholarly parlance, to be 'southern' meant to be white" (109). Gold and Hobbs use the majority of the chapter to consider both complicity with and challenges to racist attitudes as evidenced in students' written and spoken rhetoric at the eight colleges. Drawing on campus publications and details about campus performances provided through the local press, Gold and Hobbs demonstrate that, through the 1910s, representations of African Americans in campus rhetoric were, if not "overtly hostile," certainly steeped in racial stereotypes. Student writings that include African American characters often present them in the "stock loyal servant role" (118); as dialect-speaking, nostalgic, former slaves, pining for life before the war (124); or as objects of ridicule in minstrel shows (121).

It was not until after the conclusion of World War I that attitudes toward race started to change: "Following World War I and especially into the 1920s and 1930s, student writing at some campuses began to exhibit both greater sympathy for African Americans as well as a greater intellectual understanding of the cause of black civil rights" (127). As examples, Gold and Hobbs provide student essays from different schools that discuss, among other things, the economic plight of ex-slaves, the power of black poetry, and the recognition of one's own racial prejudice. Gold and Hobbs attribute this shift in racial attitudes to several factors, including the study of Harlem Renaissance authors (in coursework as well as through extracurricular activities), the interracial work of the YWCA on campuses, and the offering of sociology and anthropology courses that attempted to address race in a scholarly context.

While trends and similarities are evident across campuses, differing economic histories, particularly the extent of each state's past reliance on slave labor, meant that campuses were not equally prepared to address racial difference. For instance, the Texas State College for Women permitted discussions of race relations on campus, in part because the state was not as embedded in the plantation history of other southern states, and thus, emotions regarding the "loss" of the old ways of life were not as powerful.

The book concludes with a reflection on the legacy left by the women's colleges, all of which have now become co-educational. Although the schools no longer exist in their original form, the questions that administrators and faculty struggled with remain highly relevant today. Those questions, as articulated by Gold and Hobbes, include, "How do we balance liberal arts with professional training? How do we devise appropriate curricula for our local campus constituencies? How do we negotiate with publics with views on education at variance with our own? And how do we find room for instruction in the forms of reading, writing *and* speaking that our students will need?" (140) The strategies these eight colleges used might help us to consider and address these questions more robustly today.

Educating the New Southern Woman enriches the history of rhetorical education in America by providing details from a region that has traditionally not been the focus of scholarship in the field. The book, too, offers up several important lessons and reminders for the field. One such reminder is that individuals who take up administrative roles can have a significant impact on the trajectory of rhetorical education at their institutions (and beyond). The nature of rhetorical education at these institutions was frequently determined by the administrative presence of key figures. As Gold and Hobbs explain, "Indeed, at those campuses in which administrators had formal connections to English, rhetorical instruction tended to be the most comprehensive and forward looking" (41). This observation is followed by examples of English faculty who served as administrators

(deans and/or presidents) and who promoted a rhetorical curriculum that "recognized the importance of balancing liberal arts and vocational education" (41). The power of individuals to advance a more comprehensive rhetorical education comes up at several other points in the book as well. For example, in discussing the strength of the public speaking curriculum at the Florida State College for Women at a time when the study of elocution at other Southern women's colleges was being subordinated to the study of literature within English Departments, Gold and Hobbs explain that "influential English chair and dean of the college, William Dodd…saw 'oral composition' as an important part of study in the discipline, believing that learning to tell a story, debate, and think on one's feet promoted students' resourcefulness and confidence…. He therefore encouraged the development of a speech program and departmental major" (80). The importance of powerful leaders and exemplars is also seen in the details that Gold and Hobbs provide about racial climates at different institutions. North Carolina College for Women, while certainly not fully embracing diversity, provided an environment where the subject was at least broached in a sometimes non-hostile manner, thanks in part to the work of prominent individuals at the school. Lula McIver, wife of NCCW founding president Charles Duncan McIver, invited a black male student from North Carolina A&T to board with her, suggesting that such co-existence between races (and genders) was appropriate. In addition, sociology professor Walter Clinton Jackson, who "had a scholarly interest in black culture and was publicly active in the Commission on Interracial Cooperation…taught the school's first sociology course in interracial relations…[and] sponsored interracial events, inviting singer Marian Anderson in 1935" (117).

The book also contributes valuable insight into rhetorical strategies that challenge the social order and that, although not bringing immediate and extensive change, help to pave the way for substantial future change. Justification of the study of chemistry and biology in the name of "home economics," for example, enabled many women to enter fields previously closed to them, even as it did little to challenge the division of men's and women's "spheres." Other examples of this kind of preparatory rhetorical work for social change are provided in Gold and Hobbs's discussion of race relations on the campuses. As discussed previously, NCCW professor Walter Clinton Jackson was instrumental in opening the classroom and the campus to considerations of race, yet he felt pressure to limit the inroads he had made, ultimately forbidding interracial meetings on campus after being chastised by school trustees for allowing such a meeting in 1937 (117). The stories of influential individuals, exemplified by faculty like Jackson, are ones of only partial success, but, as Gold and Hobbs point out, "the groundwork had been laid" (117), and that groundwork in part made it possible for the student newspaper at NCCW to support desegregation starting in 1952 (117).

The history told by Gold and Hobbs also highlights the influence of external groups—particularly women's organizations—in establishing and extending the education that students received. The first of the eight schools to be founded, Mississippi State College for Women, Gold and Hobbs explain, "largely set the pattern for the establishment of other southern public women's colleges, with various combinations of progressive educators and newspaper editors, populist farm-advocacy groups, and women's clubs and professional organizations joining together to lobby state legislatures to create hybrid industrial-liberal arts institutions designed to serve a broad range of female students" (26). Extracurricular collaborations with outside organizations, including the YWCA, the United Daughters of the Confederacy, and various local clubs, provided special occasions—pageants, debates, and programs that included public readings of literature and storytelling—that became important venues for students to practice writing and speaking. These collaborations, and the book as a whole, remind readers of the importance of an expansive rhetorical education that blends instruction in reading, writing, and speaking and that takes place through formal, course-based instruction, through extracurricular groups and activities, and through cooperation with local citizens.

Works Cited

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Wendy Sharer, Professor at East Carolina University, is co-editor of *Working in the Archives: Practical Research Methods for Rhetoric and Composition* (SIUP 2009), author of *Vote & Voice: Women's Organizations and Political Literacy, 1915-1930* (SIUP 2004), co-author of *1977: A Cultural Moment in Composition* (Parlor 2008), and co-editor of *Rhetorical Education in America* (Alabama 2004).