Bill Bolin teaches graduate and undergraduate courses in rhetoric, pedagogy, and writing at Texas A&M University-Commerce. He completed his PhD in English at TCU and knew he had passed his dissertation defense when Jim Corder, his director, ambled down the long hallway toward him and said, with a hint of a smile but no particular sense of urgency, “Well...[long pause], congratulations.”
ability to use his own voice, his own ethos, for a discussion of ethos. She offers some of her favorite lines from Corder’s poetry and invites the reader to sample his essays in the book rather than to read it straight through, finding what catches a reader’s interest at any given time. While Bishop’s foreword is written in first person and includes personal narratives, Baumlin and Miller’s introduction to the collection reads more like traditional scholarship. One of their principal points is that Corder’s work would make a valuable contribution to the field of Composition Studies because it offers opportunities to reconcile social constructionism and expressivism. The editors show how Corder worked in a number of fields within Rhetorical Studies—expressivism, classicism, critical autobiography—without neatly fitting into any one category, and they conclude with the well-supported claim that Corderian rhetoric includes the notion that lives are narratives; thus, the stories we tell are our individual legacies.

While the preliminary pages do justice to the idea of a Corderian rhetoric, Bishop, Baumlin, and Miller allow Corder to speak for himself throughout the book proper. In fact, this approach calls to mind an editorial note in a sourcebook of twentieth-century rhetoric that included a reprint of “Argument as Emergence, Rhetoric as Love.” The note, which preceded Corder’s first-person biographical sketch, in contrast to all the other authors’ third-person biographical sketches, says, “The editors think it appropriate to have Jim Corder, given his particular ethos, speak in his own voice” (Enos and Brown 412). The first section of the book, “Essays Scholarly and Personal,” allows the reader to catch glimpses of Corder through some of his better-known essays such as “What I Learned at School” and “Hunting for Ethos Where They Say it Can’t Be Found.” The second, shorter section is a collection of some of his previously unpublished works. Bishop is exactly right; the book should be dipped into so that the reader can flip through the pages and find pleasure in the voices that come through the essays, published over a long and productive career. It is an enjoyable and edifying read. The book ends with Miller’s annotated bibliography of some of Corder’s “more scholarly publications along with his longer pieces of literary nonfiction” (301), excluding his many journalistic pieces which were often too locally centered to be of significant use to a wider audience. The annotated bibliography serves as a guide to those interested in pursuing for themselves a study of Corder’s contributions to the discipline.

The LEA book supplements the argument for a serious study of Corder’s oeuvre by providing essays from established scholars in the field. After the introduction by the editors, the book opens with Janice Lauer’s “The Spaciousness of Rhetoric,” a history of rhetorical instruction as a discipline in the United States throughout the 1960s and 1970s. This “synoptic reference,” as Lauer describes it, begins by exploring and explaining the formation of a number of important organizations involved with the study and instruction of
rhetoric and writing. Following is a brief acknowledgement of the multidisciplinary impact of previous decades, including works by names generally associated with courses in twentieth-century rhetoric: Burke, Toulmin, Ong, Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, although the latter was likely not studied to the extent of her co-author of New Rhetoric (Foss et al. 81-82). The rest of the chapter is devoted to the historical overview, which is all of part 1 of the book, and provides glimpses at both the written, official record and the more personal, anecdotal record of Lauer’s experiences. For example, Lauer describes the formation in the 1960s of groups devoted to the study of communication, and the initial meeting of the Rhetoric Society of America at the 1968 CCCC meeting allows Lauer to sketch out the purposes of that new group that included scholars in disciplines other than English. And it also provides her opportunities to describe the informality and the collegiality behind the first organizational meetings: several group members met over dinner to flesh out ways to extend the study of rhetoric more widely throughout higher education. The tone here gives the impression that the field as we might know it today grew from warm working relations among colleagues at institutions across the country. The essay ends with the assertion that the work of rhetoricians, including Corder with his study of ethos, opened up the previously narrow field of Rhetoric and Communication Studies, casting a wider spotlight over issues related to communication. As a synopsis, the essay works well to give an overview of two important decades of composition research.

There are, of course, other one-chapter explanations of the field’s growing pains, chapters that include details that Lauer leaves out. For example, Sharon Crowley, in her chapter describing the shift from product- to process-oriented writing instruction, includes mention that the rhetoric building at the University of Iowa was destroyed by arson, presumably by students unhappy with the first-year writing requirement (Crowley 205). Whether the building was burned down because it housed the writing center or because it was named Old Armory Temporary, a name uncomfortably similar to the former ROTC building nearby, is not clear. In fact, the building was destroyed in May 1970, most likely in protest of the Kent State fatalities earlier in the month, but Crowley provides evidence of the turmoil that spilled out on campuses because of the Vietnam War and that certainly would have affected other aspects of campus life. These are quite different views of the time period than Lauer gives us, and, taken together, the various histories combine to project a clearer picture of the discipline. Lauer’s piece certainly contributes a worthy slice as it emphasizes the spaciousness of rhetoric due in large measure to the changing scholarship of the 1960s and 1970s.

Part 2 of the book features six essays under the general heading of theory-building and critique. The aim of the section is to identify characteristics
of a Corderian rhetoric. The opening essay, by James Baumlin, is an especially ambitious attempt, even more ambitious than the introduction of the NCTE book, to establish Corderian rhetoric as an approach worthy of study by placing it within the tradition of existentialism. The argument is convincing as Baumlin cites a number of Corder’s passages that dovetail with passages by Sartre, including Corder’s discussion of the Western novel Shane, as well as his “Argument as Emergence, Rhetoric as Love.” Early on, the reader is sure to notice the wealth of examples from a wide variety of Corder’s work (twenty-nine works cited) as Baumlin rigorously matches Corder’s publications with the criteria for establishing a system of language study—a Corderian rhetoric.

Following and complementing Baumlin’s essay is that by his co-editor of the NCTE book. Keith Miller’s contribution seeks to highlight Corder’s feminist rhetoric, and Miller sorts through much of Corder’s own writing (sixty-one single-author entries in the list of works cited as well as a few on which Corder collaborated). The exhaustive survey of primary works provides the basis for hallmark characteristics of Corder’s rhetoric—argument as indirection, argument as mystery, argument as charm, and so on—in order to “elucidate [Corder’s] contribution to the theory and practice of argumentation” and afterward to “elaborate my contention that his rhetoric is radical, pioneering, subversive, and feminist” (60). If this essay has a weakness, however, it is in the support material for the claims about the radical, subversive, feminist rhetoric. Although Miller provides some characteristics of feminist argumentation, including resistance to certainty and an embrace of multiple perspectives, the feeling in this piece is that those characteristics are widely accepted as feminist. However, there are no sources offered to support such a feeling. Many readers might want to see how Miller’s conclusions stack up against the theories of leading feminist thinkers.

Ross Winterowd’s short but pithy review of Corder’s 1971 book The Uses of Rhetoric states its purpose as offering reasons why the book should have been considered more important to the field than it was. Winterowd suggests that Uses arrived too early, that it appeared when rhetorical texts did not fit into the current-traditional approaches so widespread in this country at that time. Winterowd calls it “the right book at the wrong time” (80) as he points out the contrasts between the neo-Romanticism that he asserts was the prevailing theory of the time and Corder’s call for invention, disposition, and style. In fact, Winterowd contends that only a couple of arguments for rhetoric made any impact then: Corbett’s Classical Rhetoric for the Modern Student and Young, Becker, and Pike’s Rhetoric: Discovery and Change. Immediately after naming these two works, however, Winterowd says, “[B]ut they were textbooks that were adopted by either true believers or by the naïve who didn’t know what they were getting into” (80). The review ends with an extended quote from
Uses that both emphasizes the primacy of invention and demonstrates Corder’s voice, that folksy voice that starts a sentence, backs off, goes another way, talks about the rugged Southwest, and then wends its way toward a conclusion.

And it is that Corderian voice that Bishop celebrates in the next essay in this section. As others do in this collection, she writes about looking for Corder’s voice in his writing, and then she connects what she finds with her own experiences, although many of her experiences differ from his. Also as others do in this collection, Bishop points out examples of Corder asking huge, philosophical questions about language and communication while employing his trademark gentle, down-to-earth voice. She demonstrates, through some quotations from “Asking for a Student Text and Trying to Learn from It” and others, that Corder concerned himself with questions such as the place of the writer in the text and the manner in which postmodernism must contend with one’s ethos. Furthermore, Bishop’s celebration of Corder’s method of grappling with such heavy issues while using what has been considered less-than-academic prose echoes some of Bishop’s own work extolling the virtues of nonacademic prose and creative nonfiction (Bishop 257), an extension of her premise, challenged by Gary Olson at the 2000 CCCC Research Network Forum (Olson 33), that academic writing in Composition Studies had gotten too complicated and—while not over-theorized—perhaps over-languaged. Bishop claims that Corder’s prose is “provocative and of a professional piece (in a way that I’d like to redefine professional)” in its manner of developing a cogent point as well as a personal style and a clean narrative line (96).

Pat C. Hoy II offers opinions on Corder’s voice while seeming to capture the flavor of Corder’s writing in the opening chapter. Hoy describes what he’s doing as he prewrites, attempting to feel Corder’s word usage as he looks over *Yonder: Life on the Far Side of Change*. In a discussion of the value of Corderian scholarship exemplified in that book and in *Chronicle of a Small Town* and *Hunting Lieutenant Chadbourne*, Hoy explains Corder’s rigorous examinations of the past and various interpretations of the past while studying identity. He demonstrates that Corder used archival research for the books and says that Corder “challenges us to think deeper and more expansively about what research means and about how we inevitably become a part of the research that we conduct” (105). The bulk of the essay provides examples from the three books, thus supporting Hoy’s claim about Corder’s scholarly rigor and his language, but what stands out in this essay is that Hoy seems to capture a Corderian style himself. The opening scene of settling down to read from *Yonder* in order to feel Corder’s voice (Hoy calls him Jim), of feeling a chill, of remembering past conversations with Corder on the phone and at drinks after a CCCC panel, all hearken back to Corder’s descriptions about self and space while he is moving toward his larger point. The essay concludes with Hoy’s
addressing Corder directly about sharing perceptions of self, again quoting from Yonder. The sense is that the reader is listening in on a conversation between the two about identity but the reader has been invited to listen in.

The final essay in this section stands out primarily because it appears to be an unflattering assessment of Corder’s work in the very center of a book that, otherwise, is quite admiring. In the essay’s title, “Finding Jim’s Voice: A Problem in Ethos and Personal Identity,” George Yoos flashes the first signal that he wants to challenge some of Corder’s ideas in the wider context of other ideas. This essay, which uses only Corder’s 1973 textbook and the 1992 Yonder, is instructive rather than vituperative as Yoos questions the authenticity of Corder’s Yonder as memoir. And Yoos softens his criticism of the book by reminding the audience that he has reread Yonder a number of times to establish his own ethos. In placing the characteristics of a memoir onto Yonder, Yoos would like to see more of Corder’s musing going somewhere; he would like to see more purpose in Corder’s narrative style. Yoos further establishes his ethos by pointing out similarities between his own background and Corder’s—traveling the same highway in Texas; growing the same backyard crops; facing the Depression, dust storms, and graduate-school child-rearing—and many readers of this book will already know of Yoos’s work with the Rhetoric Society of America and its journal. Such an ethos, together with the commentary on what Yonder lacks as personal writing, makes this essay a notable contribution to the collection, one worthy of a careful read.

Although part 2 allows the contributors to look toward Corder’s writing, the last two parts of the book allow the contributors to use Corder’s work as a basis to then branch out into other important considerations. The result here is that Corderian rhetoric has value precisely because it is applicable to important, external issues. In part 3 co-editor Theresa Enos argues for a return to comity in the professional and public conversation regarding Communications Studies. Hers is a well documented examination of the idea of virtue since Aristotle; it moves through the Romans, the Victorians, and into twentieth-century American writers such as Kenneth Burke and Richard Weaver. The survey brings her to Corder and a number of his works calling for a deeper understanding in communication. Enos points out specifically that Corder’s ethos, crafted through his use of voice and personal anecdotes, invites comity. She points out further that Corder’s style allows the reader time to reflect; it is spacious rather than rushed.

Richard E. Young uses Corderian rhetoric as a springboard into a discussion of invention. Young’s essay describes an interactive videodisc featured in a study of argumentation, and it concentrates on a student who manages to navigate the tremendous amount of conflicting data on the disc without once wavering from her original opinion. Young explains that she merely dismissed
evidence that ran contrary to her established opinion. It is a fascinating description of the study, one that readers of this volume would appreciate for its study of argument assessment, but it doesn’t address Corder’s connection until near the end. In offering suggestions for creating good courses in argumentation, Young includes some of Corder’s titles on ethos which “continually addressed the intellectual and moral perils of certitude” (167).

The final two essays in this section attend to conflict and war. Richard Lloyd-Jones, in an explanation of how one might define “rhetoric,” explains the crucial differences between a rhetoric of force, in which one uses rhetorical strength to advance personal gain ahead of the welfare of others, and one of reconciliation, in which one employs rhetoric to determine the best solutions for the most people. The bulk of Lloyd-Jones’s essay is devoted to examples from his wife’s sixteen years in the Iowa state legislature and her subsequent pursuit of a graduate degree in conflict resolution. The essay makes fine use of the examples to support the main point. However, if the essay is also a tribute to the ways that Corder’s work can lead to fruitful discussions on rhetoric, that springboard is used quite sparingly. Corder’s 1975 essay about writing his assignments along with his students and then offering arbitrarily numbered laws is the only source cited besides a book on conflict resolution. Lloyd-Jones claims that Corder brings to the fore the problem of conflict in rhetoric with the twenty-seventh law, which stated that invention invites openness, but structure demands closure.

Elizabeth Ervin makes similar parallels regarding conflict in the next chapter, “Rhetoricians at War and Peace.” Looking at personal experiences with close calls in times of war, particularly those experiences described by Wayne Booth, Lad Tobin, and Thomas Recchio, as well as accounts by survivors of the Holocaust, Ervin argues that these writers developed affirming theories of rhetoric that she likens to witness testimony and distinguishes from onlooker testimony. She spends more time than Lloyd-Jones does with Corder’s work, even contextualizing her reading of Corder with correspondence with Corder’s widow regarding his military service.

The final section of the book offers meaningful methods of utilizing Corder’s writing in the work of the institution, particularly in areas that have not always been considered “academic writing.” Tilly Warnock opens the section with a defense of espressivist rhetorics, following Corder’s suggestions to write autobiographically as she relates important narratives of her past to highlight the richness offered by expressivist writing. Peter Elbow follows with a piece on opening up the notion of dominant genres of writing to what he terms “everyday writing,” the non-school writing that people do but may not consider real writing because it doesn’t resemble their memories of school assignments. Elbow offers examples of such mundane writing—unpublished musings, shop-
ping lists, letters—and posits that such examples are real writing because (or although) they might have been executed by choice and without much formal preparation. John Warnock’s essay on opening up academic discourse to new rhetorics follows the same general theme by explaining the importance of recognizing a place as a rhetorical situation rather than as an external, objective area to be studied without becoming a part of it. His ideas mirror Corder’s in using personal experience and observations in making discoveries, although Warnock downplays the importance of making larger, universal, theoretical arguments with these personal reflections; they should be able to stand in the academy on their own merit as personal writing. Doug Hesse brings this section, and the book, to a close with his piece on the institutional boundaries attempting to delineate property lines in creative nonfiction.

Each book stands on its own as a contribution to the discipline of Composition Studies. Taken together, however, they provide a wonderful complement to each other: the one offering a repository of Corder’s primary sources and the other offering a context of Corder’s work through secondary sources. Both books invite the reader to step through the doorway and look more deeply for the evidence—the voice—of Jim Corder.

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