

throughout the collection—these are feminist research practices, but they are also good research practices in general because they address some of the troubling aspects of “traditional” research methods. Feminist research methods, like the feminist methodologies they grow out of, challenge the norms of research practice so that privilege and omissions performed within those norms of practice might be exposed and undermined.

The collection concludes with a “Pedagogical Postscript,” an engaging exploration of how feminist rhetorical methods and methodologies might influence the teaching of writing. Laura Micciche explains how the concept of play, as constructed in the work of Donna Haraway, might inform a feminist writing pedagogy. Play has immense potential for writing instruction because it is a means by which writers foster “intentional ambiguity,” or spaces where meanings are troubled, unsettled, created, and recreated (175). Interestingly, “play,” as Micciche describes it, is reminiscent of the feminist rhetorical methods and methodologies discussed earlier in the collection, methods and methodologies aimed at problematizing the “normal” and troubling binaries. When the “normal” is undermined and when the spaces between the dichotomous poles are inhabited through play, feminist researchers can discover new and important meanings. Micciche asks readers to consider the benefits of asking students to try similar strategies. She suggests that writing instructors integrate more opportunities for students to, as feminists do, use interruption as a political tool, employ fiction strategically in critical writing and engage the affective, embodied aspects of writing. The chapter closes with sample assignments designed to promote play in the writing classroom, and fulfills Micciche’s goal of “describ[ing] ways of *doing* feminist rhetorics in writing courses” (184).

Rhetorica in Motion covers an incredible span of methods and methodologies, but it does so in a way that allows the reader to make connections across them all and to envision an ethical but productively troubling journey for feminist rhetorical studies in the future.

Greenville, NC

Vision, Rhetoric, and Social Action in the Composition Classroom, by Kristie S. Fleckenstein. Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 2009.

Reviewed by Keith Rhodes, Grand Valley State University

Vision, Rhetoric, and Social Action in the Composition Classroom (*Vision*) is a compelling work, both in content and approach. The title plainly describes the content, even if the richness with which Kristie Fleckenstein connects

those terms may surprise many readers. Fleckenstein profoundly reorders our thinking about visual rhetoric, rhetoric more generally, social action in composition pedagogy, and the work of composition classrooms. Yet she does so in an engaging way, writing in restrained and personal tones and omitting some of the background discussion of theory and scholarship that a more normally pedantic work would include. This omission of extended literature review is not in the nature of failing to give credit. Instead, Fleckenstein takes responsibility for persuading us of matters with her own discussion and evidence, particularly in areas where her earlier work already provides the references we might want for further study. In substance, she writes as a more modest peer of Suzanne K. Langer, James Hillman, Jerome Bruner and others referenced more often in her earlier work on these topics; yet Fleckenstein has come into her own authoritative stance in ways that also escape those sources. Ultimately, the power of her intellectual shaping becomes an integral and essential part of her persuasive appeal—"essential" in both senses, both necessary to her case and of a piece with it.

Fleckenstein's claim is dauntingly complex. Put too simply, Fleckenstein argues that the successful composition classroom necessarily requires a melding, or "symbiotic knot," of vision, rhetoric, and social action. Her continuing metaphor of dynamic "symbiotic knots" unifying the strands of classroom situations purposefully transcends the merely aesthetic aspect of metaphor, eventually becoming almost as real as the physical circumstances represented by those knots, which are illustrated graphically in key places in the book, their mutually supportive components labeled on the threads of the knots. If the symbiotic knot is the *stasis* of Fleckenstein's project, the moving principle is a consistent assumption of hope—in the profound sense which hope is often used by pragmatically influenced philosophers like Langer and Cornell West and pragmatically informed activists like Paulo Freire and bell hooks. Fleckenstein's hope-fueled passage leads us through three stages of rhetorical symbiotic knots relevant to composition classrooms: the knots of silence, of bodies, and of contradiction. Each knot has as its archetype the fundamental knot of social action, composed of visual habit, rhetorical habit, and place. Fleckenstein claims and demonstrates that the knots of embodiment and contradiction offer ways to undo the knot of silence constructed by default pedagogies, destabilizing silencing constructs of place, vision, and rhetoric that offer students no true agency, and thereby opening up the transformative power of "agenic invention."

Vision precisely and clearly details everything outlined above as Fleckenstein unfolds her discussion. We have the expected benefit of Fleckenstein's well-crafted written style, complex constructions arranged for clarity and a broad vocabulary expertly used. By leaving aside extensive unpacking of the philosophy, politics and psychology that she has explained elsewhere, Fleckenstein opens up the potential to illustrate her thinking in sensory

terms, including in each section stories drawn from her experience as a parent and a teacher of young writers, analyzing the experience of these young learners who strive for greater rhetorical agency in the places around them. The result is a book that draws readers through its challenging agenda like a good river guide would lead us through a course of difficult rapids.

The question then becomes whether the argument changes our views. As to the most obvious parts of the claim, it certainly should. Though I intentionally situated myself as a skeptical reader, I could manage no real resistance to being persuaded that composition teachers need to include more and better uses of visual pedagogy and visual components in composition projects. Similarly, Fleckenstein's analyses of location and embodiment in the composition classroom had me jumping over to my syllabi for next fall and shamefacedly revising my plans. *Vision* has already become the single book I would seek to put in the hands of anyone who needs further persuasion about why writing assignments need to have students work beyond the printed page and the seated desk, and why writing tasks need to move outside the confines of the classroom and professor's office. In a portion that I think of as the true heart of the book, subtitled "Thread 3: A Lively Classroom," Fleckenstein illustrates the story of an educational observer becoming drawn into the activity of "TeenStreet," a learning program based on street theater activities. The powerful subthemes of embodied agency and experiential learning leap from being the abstractions I must use in this short treatment to become virtual and holistic embodiments of Fleckenstein's argument. As the TeenStreet observer becomes increasingly engaged in the activities, moving from analyzing them to taking part in them, the reader of *Vision* also becomes drawn into the reality that Fleckenstein's points are to be used, not just understood.

The skeptical reader could not be overcome entirely, however. I am not yet convinced that social action is a necessary part of the puzzle created by Fleckenstein's symbiotic knots. Despite knowing where else in her work to go for answers, I find myself unable to locate Fleckenstein's philosophy within this text. As a result, I could not see on what basis readers would be expected to accept the necessity of social action as part of composition pedagogy. Among other strands, Fleckenstein presents us with threads of Martha Nussbaum's classicism, Katherine Hayles' post-structuralism, several social activist's dialectical materialism, and a few more materialist psychologists' findings on matters like empathy. She also frequently adds to a relatively thick, if often compressed, cord of American pragmatism—the latter particularly prominent in her views on language and the role of hope in forming theories for action. Indeed, if I were to attempt to read a philosophy onto *Vision* to reconcile these contending viewpoints, I would select a reading together of Susanne K. Langer's *Philosophy in a New Key* and Ann E. Berthoff's *Mysterious Barricades*, particularly since I know that

Fleckenstein has done thorough readings of Langer in the past and writes so consistently with Berthoff's pragmatist ideas about language, embodiment, and experience.

Yet though I can intuit something of the underlying argument for social action as a part of the grand symbiotic knot, I do not find that Fleckenstein presents this part of the puzzle convincingly in the book itself. Social action is a wonderful thing, and Fleckenstein is surely right in pointing out that a composition pedagogy of social action could instill a powerful and pedagogically effective level of agency and invention. I simply find no way to conclude that social action in the composition classroom has the same compelling necessity as the other parts of her vision. I think I can imagine other ways to instill a genuine sense of agency—and in fact Fleckenstein's invaluable thinking about vision, embodiment, and place helps me do that better. I find no real help in sorting out what to do about students who pursue abhorrent social action—something that will be chosen, if for fun at the professor's expense if for no better reason, by at least some students out of the thousands in my composition program each year. I find insufficient answers for those parents who will call, asking what possible pedagogical reason teacher Z might have for (from their viewpoint) requiring first-year students to support liberal social causes at the price of a grade.

Considered as a whole, *Vision, Rhetoric and Social Action in the Composition Classroom* adds considerable new weight to important discussions in composition and rhetoric. The framework of “symbiotic knots” will become a durable part of my own thinking, and would advance scholarship in our field should it become a widely-shared way of discussing these themes—as it should. Fleckenstein's scholarship and thinking about vision, embodiment, location, and agency will educate and delight anyone interested in rhetoric and composition classrooms. Indeed, I do not find that I can reject what Fleckenstein claims about the role of social action, either. Instead, I want to know more, and mainly want to have her connect much of her earlier work more fully with that theme. That is, *Vision* has done quite enough work for one book to do. I am simply greedily interested in having Fleckenstein do more of my thinking for me.

Allendale, MI

Works Cited

- Berthoff, Ann E. *The Mysterious Barricades: Language and Its Limits*. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1999. Print. Toronto Studies in Semiotics and Communication.
- Langer, Susanne K. *Philosophy in a New Key: A Study in the Symbolism of Reason, Rite, and Art*. 3rd ed. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1957. Print.