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This collection of essays represents an effort to draw upon the wisdom of some of the most distinguished scholars of rhetorical criticism. We have asked these experts to draw upon the knowledge that they have acquired from their career-long studies and to synthesize their observations for readers of *Rhetoric Review*. We have asked them to write about rhetorical criticism in a way that will reveal the wisdom that can only be acquired across time and to do so in a manner that will help reach readers eager to learn more about rhetorical criticism. Writing in such a manner itself requires a special talent, and I am indeed grateful for the time and effort that it took to produce such essays. What is apparent in this collection is not only the depth of experience of each of the respective contributors but also the range and diversity of their perspectives. Included in this symposium are observations about rhetorical criticism that bear on literary studies, social movements, political rhetoric, women's studies, history, and religion.

We intended to have Edwin Black write the introduction for this symposium. Professor Black accepted our invitation, but ill health prevented his participation in our project. This short introduction is a far cry from what he would have written. This project is dedicated to him, for Edwin Black has—as many of the writers in this collection will reveal—done more to broaden the view and scope of rhetorical criticism than any other scholar of our era.

(NB: I thank Sarah Yoder for her careful reading of, and thoughtful suggestions on, this work.)

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Cultural Challenges to Rhetorical Criticism

When I was a graduate student, rhetorical criticism was not taught in speech departments; we studied rhetorical history. I learned close textual analysis in American literature courses. I began teaching rhetorical criticism in the late 1960s and published *Critiques of Contemporary Rhetoric* in 1972, which was, I believe, the first criticism textbook. My notions of what was rhetoric and how it should be analyzed were expanded by studying the rhetorical theory of Jean-Paul Sartre and by teaching in schools whose student populations were predominantly nonwhite in the midst of the civil rights, countercultural, women's, and antiwar movements.

Because I found the discourse of these movements fascinating and challenging, I began to think about alternative ways of approaching them, reflected in the 1971 essay on Black rhetoric that appeared in the *Central States Journal*, in the essays in *Critiques*, and in essays on second-wave feminism and on Cady Stanton's "Solitude of Self," which appeared in *Quarterly Journal of Speech*. From the outset I was searching for critical approaches that were adapted to the character of the rhetoric and to the time, place, culture, and circumstances of the rhetors. That is still my goal.

As I write this, I am in Tokyo, where I have been a visiting professor at Dokkyo University teaching courses in Western rhetorical theory, rhetorical criticism, political communication, and gender and communication to Japanese students. There my rhetoric colleagues, Yoshihisa Itaba and Hideki Kakita, asked me to lecture to the English Department faculty on the topic, "What is Rhetoric, and Why Should We Study It?" At the end of December, I attended a conference at Xiamen University in China that explored the history of communication studies on the mainland, in Hong Kong, and Taiwan, and in research by Chinese scholars elsewhere. There, too, much confusion existed about rhetorical studies, about its character and value, despite the fine work of Xing (Lucy) Lu, Lin-Lee Lee, and others. Our challenge is to find ways to make rhetoric—its theory, practice, and criticism—a vital part of communication studies in non-Western cultures.

There are several barriers to that goal. First, the study of public discourse in the United States has been Western in two senses: theoretically grounded in the Greco-Roman theory of Aristotle and Cicero, and conceived as having as its purpose the celebration of public discourse by dominant figures, reflecting the ideals of US democracy. A narrow understanding of Greco-Roman theory led scholars to declare that there was no (Western) rhetoric in Japan until it was opened to the West. Scholars produced rhetorical histories that dismissed or deprecated voices of dissent, such as Barnet Baskerville's *The People's Voice*. As a graduate student in a top program, I read no work by a woman, an African American, an anarchist, a socialist, or a labor union organizer, and the only abolitionist whose works I read was Wendell Phillips. In other words, our past theoretical and historical training has been a poor basis for broadening our conceptions of rhetoric, rhetorical theory, or criticism.

Second, our training in foreign languages is pitiful, and most programs, including my own, have dropped foreign language requirements. Happily, my department has attracted rhetoric students from Taiwan (Chinese), Japan, and Korea as well as from the Czech Republic and Bulgaria, and I have worked with students from Nigeria and Venezuela as well as with an American fluent in Spanish. The real challenge is to nurture the development of critical approaches

suiting to the ways that other languages define and categorize, to the value systems and discursive expectations of other cultures, and to the distinctive circumstances in which discourse emerges.

My collaborative efforts as an advisor have convinced me that some elements of Western rhetorical theory can be useful—all cultures have ways of assessing credibility, for example, but not as the *ethos* Aristotle described. The pure persuasion that Kenneth Burke believed existed nowhere seems to have been enacted by oppressed women in a remote area of China. The rhetoric of Hugo Chávez is another example of constitutive rhetoric but in ways quite different from that of the Quebeckers and in which television plays a significant role. Rhetoric addressed to the Shogunate regarding foreign policy appeared in pre-Meiji Japan, but in forms (as a dream) and using assumptions (wait until the audience wishes to listen) that make it difficult for Westerners to recognize or understand it.¹ The nuances of language, cultural references, and metaphors argue in subtle ways that cannot easily be recognized by outsiders, as illustrated by Korean President Roh-tae-woo's inaugural address.²

Accordingly, I propose these principles:

- (1) Rhetoric is ubiquitous. Never ask if there is rhetoric; where there is culture and language, there is rhetoric. The challenge is to discover its cultural forms and functions.
- (2) Rhetoric is indigenous, linked to cultural history, traditions, and values. We recognize that Aristotle describes a rhetoric of the ancient Greek polis; all rhetoric and the theory that underlies it are as closely linked to time and place and culture as was Aristotle's. In other words, we should be searching for the assumptions that inform the use of discourse in a particular cultural time and place, not attempting to fit what occurred into theory designed for other rhetors under other conditions.
- (3) The study of rhetoric is the study of language, how language shapes perception, recognition, interpretation, and response. At the moment, the languages and discourses of Asia and the Middle East are becoming increasingly important. We need to foster rhetorical training among those whose cultural experience enables them to be critics of bodies of discourse that are closed to most US critics.

Scholarship on feminist theory and criticism offers an analogy. An essay by Iris Young uses the concept of seriality, developed by Jean-Paul Sartre in the

Critique of Dialectical Reason,³ as a way to think about gender that avoids essentialism. Young posits that gender, instead of being an identity or an attribute or a trait, is constituted for women by seriality, that is, by their relationships to externals—to laws, institutions, norms, and the ways in which categories such as race and class are constructed and enforced in a culture at a particular time and place. Young concludes: “*Woman* is a serial collective defined neither by a common identity nor by a common set of attributes that all the individuals in a series share, but, rather, it names a set of structural constraints and relations to pratico-inert objects [the sediment, material and symbolic, of past human action] that condition action and its meaning.”⁴

The cultural distinctiveness of rhetorical action and related theory that I have been describing is another instance of seriality.

Notes

¹Yoshihisa “Sam” Itaba. “A Rhetorical Analysis of Pre-Meiji Arguments over Japan’s Foreign Policies.” Diss. U of Minnesota, 1995.

²Sangchul Lee, and Karlyn Kohrs Campbell. “Korean President Roh Tae-woo’s 1988 Inaugural Address: Campaigning for Investiture.” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 80 (Feb. 1994): 37–52.

³Jean-Paul Sartre. *Critique of Dialectical Reason: I. Theory of Practical Ensembles*. Trans. Alan Sheridan-Smith. Ed. Jonathan Rée (London: NLB, 1976). 256–69.

⁴Iris Marion Young. “Gender as Seriality: Thinking about Women as a Social Collective.” *Signs* 19 (Spring 1994): 713–38; cited material on 737. I thank Zornitsa Keremidchieva for calling this essay to my attention.

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Classical Rhetoric and Rhetorical Criticism

In 1876 Richard Claverhouse Jebb ushered in the first major English-language critique of classical rhetoric with his *Attic Orators from Antiphon to Isaeos*. Jebb’s intent was to provide a comprehensive account of the masterpieces of oratory in ancient Greece. In his monumental work, Jebb provided readers with historical background, a survey of the theoretical tenets of rhetoric, and a cogent accounting of great oratory based on the classical tenets of rhetoric. Jebb’s nascent efforts were based on his presumption that the criticism of classical oratory should be drawn from the tenets of classical rhetoric. That is, classi-