

Introduction

Traveling among the Realms

A Tale of Big Rhetoric and Growing Ambitions

Deepika Bahri and Joseph Petraglia

The title of this collection alludes to two well-known works in the field: Chaim Perelman's (1982) *The Realm of Rhetoric* and the Wingspread conference's landmark anthology, *The Prospect of Rhetoric* edited by Lloyd F. Bitzer and Edwin Black (1971). The phrase "realms of rhetoric" resonates with us for reasons Perelman might not have anticipated. Whereas his slim volume meant to demarcate rhetoric as a special domain within the liberal arts, it now seems appropriate to speak of realms in the sense that rhetoric has several institutional sites within the American university that have their own histories, identities, and future trajectories. The walls separating rhetoric-based pedagogical missions across the academy are not tumbling down, but concern about the cost of rhetoric's disciplinary diaspora seems to be felt with an urgency that we have not seen for decades, perhaps centuries. The idea of rhetoric as a theoretical pursuit and a research interest has never been more potent; witness the vast number of new titles in the humanities and social sciences coming onto the market each year that employ the term. The paucity of shared fora for these diverse interests and endeavors is therefore all the more surprising.

The idea of rhetoric's prospects also continues to resonate, though perhaps now it even dazzles—for though rhetoric has long been a study perennially marked for future greatness, that future seems more palpable than ever. Although rhetoric has been more successful as a disembodied, intellectual god-word—a "master trope" in the words of Gross and Keith (1997)—than as a living discipline within the academy; its prospects remain its greatest allure and its most mocking failure. It therefore comes as no surprise that rhetoric education is an idea whose time has come. As the existence of electronic listservs such as H-RHETOR, journals such as *Rhetoric Society Quarterly*, and organizations and conferences such as the Rhetoric Society of America clearly attests, scholars in these fields have become increasingly aware of their common interests in the areas of pedagogy and curriculum. The subject of

rhetoric education, long ignored, is certainly attracting more attention than any other language education topic we can think of at the post-secondary level. This book is an attempt to harness this momentum and to reflect and further educators' current enthusiasm for a more theoretically informed curricular space for rhetoric instruction.

Given the rhetorical tradition's rediscovered importance to the academy, it is unsurprising that many educators in rhetoric-based disciplines are looking for ways to recuperate rhetoric's pedagogic status and mission. One of the major obstacles blocking such recuperation lies in the fact that, in the United States, at least, rhetoric education's fragmentation into composition and public speaking has isolated rhetoric-trained scholars and educators from one another along disciplinary lines. To take a modest step toward redressing this fragmentation, *The Realms of Rhetoric* considers the prospects for "rhetoric education" outside of narrowly disciplinary constraints. In his chapter in this book, Walter Jost suggests that "professing rhetoric may be what each of us has already been doing for quite some time no matter what intellectual premises we happen to call home." As he goes on to point out, "Yet the work goes on without the needed coordination among our colleagues *across* the university." This book brings together a high-quality collection of original works written by established and emergent scholars to identify opportunities that propel—or can be made to propel—rhetoric education at the beginning of the millennium.

The author or editor of a scholarly book on rhetoric probably would be well advised to "go easy" on the subject of pedagogy. In too many humanities departments these days, any book about teaching is open to the criticism that it is not sufficiently critical, and that anecdotalism too easily masquerades as insight, that narrative too easily passes for theory. As Stephen Slemon (1992/1993) phrases it, pedagogy "is discursively in the feminine, in the 'service' ranks of professional engagement, beneath the purview of intellectual advancement, and far from the rugged masculinity of the theoretical frontier" (154). We raise the issue because it is precisely the dilemma rhetoric faces when attempting to create space in the modern academy. The aims of education have always informed rhetoric education, and rhetoric as a content area has traditionally been bound up in praxis. It is neither philosophy nor linguistics, nor literature, nor any other field that exists independent of instruction in its own production—thinking about rhetoric is thinking about how it is accomplished and how others may accomplish it. Accepting a rhetorical pedigree requires that we not shy away from the importance of teaching and instead insists that education merits our complete intellectual engagement.

Embracing rhetoric's pedagogic nature is one step toward the broader goal of this anthology: definition. Presently, the term *rhetoric education* signifies very little and much too much. All education can be called rhetoric education, of course, insofar as it provides students with the discursive-symbolic tools to interpret and propose arguments in their disciplines. Obviously, few of us are

prepared to be satisfied to leave it at that. Complacency about the diverse applications of rhetoric and its clearly growing relevance in an age supremely self-conscious about the challenges of communication can hardly generate the energy necessary for a sustained meditation on what it means to be rhetorical, or indeed, what it means to cultivate rhetorical sensitivity in our students. The cultivation of rhetorical intelligence may well be central to virtually all disciplines, but it begs the question of how such an intelligence is to be fostered as a practical art.

The quest for dedicated curricular space implied in the above observations might suggest an unworthy territorial jealousy, particularly since cultural studies, women's studies, postcolonial studies, and postmodernist enterprises throughout the humanities and social sciences have, arguably, all fared better from the "rhetorical turn" than has rhetoric, at least as far as curricular allocation is concerned (not, one might wager, that all or even most of these various practitioners see themselves as "rhetoric educators"). Although the incidental or implicit cultivation of a rhetorical intelligence is certainly better than nothing, it can scarcely constitute an adequate substitute for a conscious plan to pedagogically implement what the academy, the public, and the educational administration are otherwise validating in multiple ways. Nor is it clear how interdisciplinary thinking on this topic can be initiated, cross-hatched, and synthesized without an institutionally formal attempt to bring together those who are "searching," as Wayne C. Booth (1988) notes, "for their common ground." It is ironic, we suggest, that the major sites of rhetoric pedagogy throughout the twentieth century—the writing and speech classrooms—have been largely unable to capitalize on what should be the best of times for rhetoric education. Empirical, theoretical, and historiographic research continues to suggest that required courses in these areas are theoretically haphazard, poorly conceived, and often ineffectual. It is equally well documented that the faculty who teach public speaking, and especially freshman composition, continue to occupy the lowest rung on the academic hierarchy due to the fact that these are courses that "anyone" can (and does) teach. There is widespread concern that if these courses address training in rhetorical sensibility at all, it is in its shallow and formulaic form. For many discontents in rhetoric studies, no preestablished curricular space might have been better in this instance than one that effectively *displaces* the desiderata of rhetoric education by ostensibly consolidating it institutionally. Having said that, it is clear that any attempt to develop a course of study in rhetoric must engage composition and public speaking spaces that have, after all, proven their tenacity.

But we have yet to answer the question, "What is a *new* rhetoric education?" Is it merely a rearrangement of conventional spaces into something slightly different? Very different? Is it a more radical reconceptualization of both rhetoric and education? Might it be that a new and powerful program of rhetoric education, in the guise of the multi- and post-disciplinary projects

mentioned above, is already at work in several corners of the academy? And so we have to face up to the question of whether the impulse to impose some cogency onto rhetoric education is simply a question of reclaiming turf—a fit of pique on the part of those who call themselves “rhetoricians” in response to the success of others who do not acknowledge the label. Or do the conventional realms of rhetoric (e.g., writing, speech communications, rhetorical theory, etc.) offer something different, something that more *arriviste* users of rhetoric’s resources lack? If a rhetorical intelligence includes the cognitive abilities required for inquiry, and interpretation with a view to pursuing argument and change, then what specialized body of knowledge is associated with it? What, after all, is singular about what Fusfield (chapter 7) refers to as “rhetorical literacy”? Both Thomas Miller and David Fleming argue for an understanding of rhetoric education as marked by what Miller (chapter 5) calls its “activist orientation.” Such an orientation seems unavoidable at a time when the field must confront its civic interface with the boundaries of culture, knowledge, and power. David Fleming (chapter 6) proposes that it be conceived of as “the inculcation of certain action-oriented, ethically-framed, intellectual capacities and dispositions.” Ellen Cushman (chapter 10), likewise, suggests ways in which it is possible to “revamp scholarly work by centering it on tangible social issues in a situated learning environment.”

The chapters in this book not only seek answers to the questions posed above, they provide the foundational first step to a conceptualization of the rhetoric education curriculum by alerting us to the questions that are central to the enterprise. The three parts are divided, roughly, in a manner to provide a spectrum moving from theory to practice. Each contributor to the first part (*Language Theory and Rhetoric Education*) of this book—Walter Jost, Thomas J. Darwin, David Bleich, John T. Scenters-Zapico, Grant C. Cos, and Thomas P. Miller—looks at a new conception of rhetoric education as dependent on new (or revived) philosophies of language. In each of these chapters, the authors uncover latent resources of the rhetorical tradition to modernize our conception of what it means to be rhetorical and to teach others to be. In his chapter, Jost argues that liberal education is, first and foremost, not an education in subject matters chiefly but in arts of inquiry, argument, interpretation, and judgment regarding changing subject matters. Jost’s is an attempt to shift the discussion toward dynamic disciplines that reflect this renewed understanding of the role of rhetoric in liberal education. Darwin complements this perspective on rhetoric with his contention that rhetoric becomes relevant, and perhaps central, to any discipline that contends with indeterminate situations. In this chapter, he illustrates this perspective on rhetoric education by analyzing a medical situation in which a physician and a family must contend with a serious illness. He shows how they resolve this situation not only through the rationality of medical diagnosis and prognosis but by using medical rationality in concert with the full range of emotional and ethical sensibilities encom-

passed by rhetoric. An example from medicine provides a useful case in point, because we all deal with medical problems to some degree, and medicine is a discipline that stakes its legitimacy on being scientific. Thus by arguing that medical rationality is fundamentally rhetorical, Darwin furthers support for his claim for rhetoric's legitimacy as a rigorous mode of reasoning, in addition to being a set of techniques.

Bleich's contribution to this book discusses rhetoric and the study of language as materialist. Humanities education, as far back as in the first Western universities in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, has stressed language study—through rhetoric, grammar, and logic—as the basis of serious thinking about society. Even at that time, however, these subjects were “add-ons” to the main curricula in medicine, law, and theology. Over 800 years, the history of humanities education has been characterized by the subordination of the subject of language use to “substantive” other subjects. And so although the presence of rhetoric has always been felt in the university curricula, its status has been secondary. As a result, many humanists, in spite of contrary instincts and understandings, have accepted the transparent-language assumptions imposed by science and the professions. On the other hand, in a contemporary reaction sometimes called the rhetorical or hermeneutic “turn,” other humanists have been backed into the position that rhetoric and discourse are everything, or *il y a rien hors de texte*. Bleich suggests that a materialist conception of language found in many nonliterate societies and in some literate ones views language use as a substantive, nontransparent factor in how people know nature and experience. In service of this goal, he reviews some of the modern bases of the materialist view of language in Wittgenstein, Austin, and Derrida, as well as in sociolinguistics and in ethnographic studies of nonindustrial societies. His review leads to the conclusion (echoed in recent feminist critiques) that the practices and results of science would have been different if the materialist view of language had been assumed. Focusing on the theme of this book, he concludes with the suggestion that the humanities might enhance their role in learning if they recognized, through a materialist approach to language and rhetoric, that the language is neither of secondary importance nor the postmodern “answer,” but material participants in research projects, participants whose influence varies with the projects' social purpose.

Scenters-Zapico and Cos begin by assuming that rhetoric has been atomized for numerous educational, social, and political reasons and subsequently has been meted out to several contemporary disciplines. The results have been that many “postmodern” fields (cultural studies being the best case in point) use rhetorical wisdom (*sophos*) and skills (*techne*) without acknowledging them, or in many cases without being aware that they are even using “rhetoric.” Echoing other contributors to this part of the book, they claim that rhetoric, appropriated as such, presently appears to be more of a gesture or a stance than a specialized body of knowledge. Making a particularly moment-sensitive

intervention, they contend that although the academy's presidents, deans, and department heads have been slow to appreciate it, technology in the last ten years has begun to dissipate differences not only between the separate entities of composition and speech communication but among several other disciplines as well. The use of multimedia has dramatically altered the division between oral and written discourse because inherent to it is an array of media. Writing, art, visual sensitivity, oral performance, and, public display—all of these elements must come together for a multimedia project to be effective. All of these components interact and drawn upon the resources of several traditionally separate disciplines and research cultures.

As we are challenged by technology, we are asked to shape our ideas in multiliterate fashions, sensitive to the demands that our various multimedia components are going to evoke in their viewers, and in readers. With current multimedia technologies and those slated for the new millennium, it is clear that we must have technical skills and the artistic know-how necessary to deploy the canons of rhetoric—to discover, create, and arrange our ideas, adapting them convincingly to our audiences—in entirely new ways. This chapter, then, examines the shape of this challenge and considers how the technologies of multiliteracy evoke a pedagogic response that requires a united conception of rhetoric education.

In the final chapter in this part, Miller asks what it might mean to teach not just rhetoric but *rhetorically* as rhetoric gains interdisciplinary popularity and moves out from under traditional conceptions of literature and the social sciences. Positioning rhetoric as a civic subject, Miller argues that, rhetorical criticism notwithstanding, a rhetorical stance differs from a critical stance by focusing on production rather than interpretation as an end in itself. In contrast to the social scientific study of rhetoric, on the other hand, the activist orientation of rhetoric is crucial to reconsider. In addition, the subject position of the rhetorician needs to be defined in ways that take into account the interactive technologies that are transforming the culture of the book. Research into community literacies, service learning, and mediated publics can further help us ground rhetoric in modes of social action that are both intellectually and materially distinctive. Miller concludes by suggesting that the “civic potentials” of rhetoric “can be developed by creating programs of study that assume an activist stance on the study of the ethics and politics of literacy.”

The second part, *Shaping Praxis: Curricular Forms and Formats*, gathers together contributions that bridge language theory and classroom practice. They do this in a variety of ways. David Fleming resuscitates the idea that the topics (topoi) belong at the center of a rhetorical education. William D. Fusfield, Joseph Petraglia, and Ellen Cushman look at the disciplinary politics of rhetoric and their relationship to literacy and the classroom to very different effect. Cushman in particular highlights the relevance of both rhetoric education when it moves out into the community and of rhetoricians when they

adopt the stance of public intellectuals. Finally, Rolf Norgaard performs a (curricular) physics experiment in which the interconnectedness of expertise, authority and community—and its relevance to the prospect of revitalizing rhetoric education—is made clearer.

The tendency in the late-twentieth-century North American university has been to see rhetoric as either a globalized interpretive language, powerful and elastic but possessing an uncertain and unstable curricular form, or as an art of verbal presentation, anchored and precise but intellectually uninspiring and, in the end, trivial. As an important and a substantial course of undergraduate study, rhetoric is largely unavailable on our campuses. To revive such an education, we would need (1) a metalanguage for confronting and managing discursive practices that is specific and effective but also important and attractive (2) integrated into a multi-year program of practice, inquiry, and criticism (3) the goal of which is neither the acquisition of skill nor the mastery of content nor even the writing of papers and speeches but rather the inculcation of certain action-oriented and ethically framed intellectual capacities and dispositions. The purpose of learning rhetoric, writes James Murphy (1990), is to “become rhetorical,” and this is something that requires more than just a theoretical vocabulary and more than fifteen weeks.

As an example of how such an education might be structured, Fleming examines one component of the traditional rhetorical metalanguage, the topics. Topics (Gk. *topoi*, L. *loci*) are classes or categories of arguments, recurrent ways of engaging in discursive reasoning. Topics continue to prompt scholarly and pedagogical interest, but this attention has been marked by the same educational defect that has plagued most of contemporary rhetoric: topics become either a universal language for looking at all manner of discourse (and thus are portable but also shallow), or they become a kind of beginner’s checklist for “writing with no content in particular” (Kaufer and Young 1993). In other words, topics have not been seen as part of a multiform, multi-year, ethical-intellectual-practical discipline.

Fleming proposes that topics be seen as an acquired self-consciousness about discourse, a learned capacity for “confronting and managing” discourse effectively and responsibly. An education in the topics would be lengthy and multifaceted, and its purpose would be the development of the competencies and sensibilities appropriate to an effective and a responsible citizen in a community of free and equal citizens. Much of the chapter discusses Quintilian, who offers useful educational advice on good topical argumentation as well as an enactment of good topical argumentation in his presentation (i.e., the *Institutio Oratoria* is both about good argumentation and an example of such). Fleming then offers a sketch of a curriculum in the topics, applicable to the modern university, that avoids the two pitfalls described in the chapter, where topics are either a universal but shallow language for analysis or a simple checklist for novice composition.

Fusfield begins by exploring the problems that beset the project of “revitalizing” rhetoric education. He insightfully draws our attention to the potential *conservatism* of rhetoric education that must confront the fact that “inventional, dispositional, and stylistic innovations are . . . constrained by the necessity to satisfy existing expectations of form and content” even as our student body grows increasingly more depoliticized. His somewhat cynical assessment of a world “of the state-corporatist, ‘zero-sum,’ polity,” where “the excellence of political acumen and argumentative deliberation” barely matter, is nevertheless balanced by a thoughtful consideration of the spectrum of responses to a world that challenges the project of revitalizing rhetoric education. His own pragmatic and clear-sighted response is to face up to “the severe political and social limitations we are presently under as teachers of rhetorical performance and then . . . [redesign] our basic speaking and composition courses to operate as best they can within those constraining limits.” What might otherwise seem a palliatory and glib attempt to salvage a doomed project is rendered thoughtful and realistic through his delineation of a precise, twelve-point strategy that can animate and shape this effort. Notes of gloom and doom are seldom welcome, especially when they are sounded at the inception of a movement for change and reconstitution, but Fusfield’s admonitions are both cautionary and salutary for any serious attempt to bolster the project of rhetoric education under present circumstances.

Norgaard’s is no less a clear-sighted attempt to contend with the different forces that bedevil the evolving field of rhetoric education. He submits that “our best prospects for revitalizing rhetoric education lie in consciously using prevailing institutional forces to rhetorical ends.” He tackles the challenging question of how this might be done by outlining “two proposals that seek to redraw connections among expertise, community, and authority.” Eschewing both “strident abolitionism” and “tame curricular acquiescence”—two extreme responses to the challenges facing the field—Norgaard chooses a method of “situating courses in ways that identify thresholds and span boundaries.” The two proposals thus redraw connections among expertise, authority, and community by foregrounding rhetorical apprenticeships and locating rhetoric education in disciplinary “contact-zones.”

Petraglia’s contribution seeks to leverage the new opportunity for disciplinary coherence and reconciliation offered by the present moment in the reconsideration of the role of rhetoric in liberal education. The very problems that beset the rhetoric educators, he contends, are a unique product of the unprecedented reevaluation of the serious potential of rhetoric. His somber observation that “unless rhetoric’s stakes in pedagogic and epistemic forms of disciplinarity are clarified and reconciled, it will be impossible to build a solid foundation for rhetoric education” is followed by a declared attempt “to praise rhetoric education, not to bury it” by arguing for a new epistemic identity that takes knowledge generation as its foundation.

Cushman's concluding chapter in this part illustrates "how public intellectuals can revamp scholarly work by centering it on tangible social issues in a situated learning environment." In order to harness the potential of rhetoric education and contend with its contradictions and problems, she argues, rhetoric scholars must actively engage in altering "the social organization of academe, the civic role of the scholar, and what counts as specialized knowledge."

Of course, before and while this book began taking shape, rhetoric educators have been attempting to work across traditional disciplinary boundaries. The third part of this anthology, *Experiments and Experience*, describes two instructive efforts: one a success story and the other a cautionary tale. To begin with the cautionary tale, M. Lane Bruner and Hildegard Hoeller recount their attempt at creating a yearlong "rhetoric foundations" course. Coming to the course from different academic backgrounds (one communication, the other composition), Bruner and Hoeller explain how they tried to navigate the potholes and detours created by an unstable mandate and interdepartmental politics but ultimately ran up against disciplinary realities, their own as well as others'. A more encouraging experiment (or set of experiments) is one being carried out at North Carolina State University with the participation of Carolyn R. Miller, Victoria Gallagher, and Michael Carter. The impetus for this innovation centers on a recognition that technologies of communication make the hoary writing and speaking skills schism untenable (an issue also dealt with by Scenters-Zapico and Cos). This chapter argues both the intellectual and pedagogical cases for the academic integration of the traditionally separate "modes" of communication (oral and written). The authors examine their common intellectual roots, their contrasting conceptual organization and pedagogical practices in the twentieth century, the fate of recent attempts to combine them, their relationship to visual modes, and the practical and intellectual reasons for continuing to attempt integration. Their account centers on three curricular experiments underway at North Carolina State University: a first-year course in writing and speaking, a campus-wide program in writing and speaking across the curriculum, and a Ph.D. proposal in integrated communication studies. The authors argue that "situation-based genres provide a mid-level concept that can structure the intersection of broadly applicable rhetorical knowledge and discipline-specific needs and conventions." With what seems to us cynical editors to be surprisingly genuine university support, Miller, Gallagher, and Carter suggest that integrated approaches to teaching rhetoric can take hold in many forms, even if "unifying the divided house of rhetoric" is an ongoing process.

To conclude the book, Anne Beaufort was asked to perform a small discourse analysis to ascertain whether the realms of rhetoric provide a sufficiently cogent foundation for productive exchange and a unified pedagogic mission. She concludes with a number of lessons learned that reinforce and clarify the theoretical observations made by others and suggest ways in which a very disparate group of rhetoric educators can move forward together.

But for all of the voices included in this book, many others are excluded; though still at the early stage of building an audience around the topic of rhetoric education, it is clear to us that English and communications departments are going to be the front line in these conversations. Yet we take some comfort from the fact that though English and communications are the *departmental* homes for contributors, their disciplinary backgrounds are quite diverse, representing philosophy, linguistics, and literature as well as rhetoric, composition, and speech. But once some of the common ground has been defined, we realize that the conversational pool must certainly grow to include interlocutors from still other disciplines. The absence of work representing rhetoric education at the secondary school level, the rhetoric of science, and the rhetoric of race, difference, diversity, and so on reflects the need for developing this conversation more broadly, rather than a lack of interest in these constituencies. We wish to emphasize the tentative steps that these chapters make toward delineating a rhetoric curriculum. Future work might open up the idea of “rhetoric disciplines” a bit more encompassingly as well as propose curriculum a bit more narrowly.

A popular bumper sticker circulating in the 1970s implored the reader to “Reunite Gondwanaland!” The faux-militancy of this nonsensical proposition was an amusing commentary on the facileness of rallying cries. Speaking as editors desiring to avoid facileness, the goal of this book is not to “Reunite Rhetorica” by striving to resurrect some mythical Golden Age of Rhetoric Education (tempting as that might be), by lamenting rhetoric’s dissolution into a number of disciplines (which we easily could), or by arguing for the desirability of rhetoric’s reconstitution into a single disciplinary form (though we might have). Instead—and we speak now as fellow contributors—our hope is that in traveling among the realms of rhetoric, we may find common ground and a common language for articulating something that is critical to all of us: the practical relevance of rhetoric education as we start a new millennium.