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. Frans H. van Eemeren, et al.

ine Style' and Political Judgment in
of Speech, 79 (1993): 286-302. On
Cannot Speak for Her: A Critical
New York: Greenwood Press, 1989).
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see David Ingram, *Group Rights*:
University Press of Kansas, 2000),

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ie J. Dow, "Feminism, Difference(s),
46 (1995): 106-117.

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Reflections on Criticism and Bodies: Parables from Public Places

Carole Blair

FROM OUR VANTAGE POINT in the early twenty-first century, rhetorical criticism of the 1970s and 1980s must appear now to have been rather staid, uniform, and predictable. Certainly, the targets of criticism—the discourses, practices, events, and objects critics studied—were highly varied. But critical works varied little in terms of their general format, tone, and articulated goals. It was to be a brief period of relative uniformity and consensus. No matter which or how many labels one may prefer to describe the source(s) of critical disturbance in the late 1980s and 1990s—poststructuralism, deconstruction, critical theory, postmodernism, anti-racist theory, neo-Freudianism, post-Marxism, sexuality studies, postcolonialism, critical rhetoric, third wave feminism, ideological criticism, cultural studies, etc.—there was disruption in the ranks. Although the adherents of these new, "disturbing" positions still complain (rightly, in my view) that they are underappreciated and often misrepresented (e.g., Thomas), criticism *has* changed noticeably in the last decade as a result of their presence and persistence.

Where once we might have turned confidently to the second or third page of a critical essay, knowing that there would be a section named "critical methodology" or some variant, we often now find no mention of "method," or we see instead something akin to an anti-methodological position (e.g., nomadology). Where once we might have read the conclusion first to discover what the critical essay claimed to contribute to theory, we see instead overtly political positions articulated. Whereas earlier critical essays intoned in a highly depersonalized, "objective" voice, critics now sometimes tell tales or even write letters about their critical encounters (e.g., van Maanen; and Ono). Resistance to these changes and the positions that motivate them certainly is present and vocal. But the shifts in purpose, viewpoint, approach, and tone are undeniable. Herman Gray notes approvingly critical cultural work that "encourages us to think outside of the categories that now domi-

nate palace discourse,"¹ and he suggests that this has occurred precisely by means of "a crossing of various genres as well as disciplinary and conceptual boundaries. With the impetus of cultural studies, queer theory, and post-structuralism as primary catalysts, the unsettling effects of so much blurring and crossing of boundaries has already been felt in a number of disciplinary based academic fields and subfields" (485–486).

Although rhetoric is one of those fields where the changes have been felt, no one seems very satisfied with them. Some believe the changes have been largely cosmetic and far too sluggish, while others insist the changes have gone too far. Perhaps most of us are simply mystified about where we stand in the world of rhetorical criticism, or perhaps uncertain as to whether such a world even exists or is identifiable or describable anymore. What we probably can agree on is that there has been some change (if too much or not enough), and that the changes have been wrought by a demand to question some of the most taken-for-granted of presuppositions: ideas about criticism, rhetoric, theory, and so forth that used to be so utterly presumptive that they were rarely, if ever, even articulated. Questioning the virtues of the public realm, speculating as to whether rhetoric is more an instrument of social stabilization and repression than of enlightened debate and change, placing at issue the grounds for reading histories of rhetoric, arguing for a radically revised canon and/or claiming that canonical texts should be read subversively, questioning the status of theory in criticism or even what counts as theory, arguing over "objectivity," doing battle over accusations of "relativism" in attempts to question the grounds of authoritative interpretations, struggling over the idea that scholarship could be (or always is) political, etc., have thrown multiple, heretofore basic, assumptions into high relief.

My goal is not to resolve any of these issues. Instead, I intend to take the position that all our assumptions as critics are open to question, and to pose issues that I believe we must address as responsible critics, if we are to act in the wake of the disturbances of the 1990s. I cast my lot here with the "disturbers" in at least two other obvious ways. First, the issues I raise are predicated on reflections about rhetoric in relation to bodies. Second, the issues are articulated by reference to specific, personal critical encounters—what I have had the nerve to label "parables"—and not by distanced or deep readings of "the literature."

The body has been of tertiary concern to rhetoric traditionally, e.g., in rare considerations of *actio*—which seems to be the mid-late twentieth century's version of the lost canon—or in an occasional examination of how bodies were used rhetorically in the social movements of the 1960s.² Bodies have become a more prominent concern in criticism in the past few years, for various reasons. Probably the first and most influential source of interest in bodies has been feminism, followed closely by the general tendency toward post-Cartesian positions in this

and other fields. Some versions of poststructuralism, especially those rendered by Foucault, Lyotard, deCerteau, and Deleuze, have called renewed attention to materialism in general and to the relationships of discourses, political agency, and bodies.³ And closer to home for everyone in rhetoric, the 1970s expansion of the domain of rhetoric to include cultural practices and artifacts beyond the spoken or written word has begun to exert an influence as well, as understandings of extra-linguistic rhetorics have gained in sophistication.

The more personal (not to be read as "subjective") character of criticism has emerged without nearly so much fanfare as other changes in rhetorical criticism, but the shift has been steady and even relatively stark in a number of venues. Again sparked most obviously by feminist theory, and further enjoined by more general critiques of objectivity, as well as by sharp questioning of modes of representation in the social sciences (e.g., Clifford and Marcus), the practice of writing what Barthes called "zero degree" in critical scholarship has become not quite a thing of the past, but certainly far less often a demand imposed on the voices of rhetorical scholars.

In aligning myself with the "disturbers" in these domains and in a general willingness to question assumptions, I cannot promise that the questions I pose here will be always pleasing or satisfying to them, any more than to those who have resisted the changes of the past fifteen years. In fact, I would be disappointed if they were. "Disturbers," like everyone else, are vulnerable to inertia, certainty, and partiality. It is my hope that the issues emerging from the "parables" will be equally challenging to all of us.

The parables that follow arise from my experience in studying twentieth-century public commemorative art in the U.S. and more particularly from a growing concern I have had with how to deal with issues of how the body figures into that project. It seems no longer necessary to argue for the rhetorical character of material objects, and so I will leave such an argument aside.⁴ However, it does seem necessary to say something about how such a still relatively unusual target of rhetorical criticism may have anything to say to other critics, whether they study the far more traditional forms of public, persuasive speeches or more nontraditional ones like film, television, or the internet. I am sufficiently committed to the premise that these different forms have their own "languages" that the question is obligatory; the kinds of critical analysis demanded by different forms vary (or should vary) considerably. However, critical study is also informed by more general concerns and assumptions that, I believe, are relatively common across different approaches and targets of analysis. So, while the specifics of the parables may be far more interesting to me than to others, I hope they will raise questions of far broader interest.

Parable 1: Being There

As I write this paper, I am stationed in Washington, DC, to teach at the University of California's teaching and research center here. During one of my first days back in Washington, I went to the National Museum of American Art. On the second floor, I encountered again George Catlin's collection of nineteenth-century "ethnographic" paintings of Native Americans. It reminded me that I should assign my class to read Vivien Green Fryd's chapter on Native American representation in the *U.S. Capitol (157-176)*, a chapter that addresses the odd history of Catlin's paintings.

When I taught in Washington before, I had assigned my students the Fryd chapter along with a fieldtrip to the NMAA to see the collection. The assignment had culminated in one of my most satisfying teaching days ever. That was not attributable exclusively to the quality of Fryd's chapter; I've assigned it back home too, and the student reception was positive but not overpowering. The students in Washington identified the reason themselves: it was that the Fryd chapter took on a special meaning for them when we went to see the paintings. In their words, going to the NMAA to see the collection made her analysis more "real."

But on this most recent trip to the NMAA, I noticed signs that said the Museum was to close on January 7 for building renovation. I felt a genuine disappointment. My students this time would be deprived of that "real" experience. They would have to rely on Fryd's reproductions of the paintings and slides I would show in class of Catlin's work. But it would not be the same. The question is: Why not? Given that the students would be able to see the reproduced paintings in the book and in class, why should the experience be any different? And what difference would the difference make?

This parable raises some important issues for critics, and not just for critics of public art or cultural studies scholars. In many respects, those students were like most readers of scholarly critical work; it seems fair at least to suggest that the large majority of such readers are unfamiliar with the target discourses or objects we write about. Just as high as the probability that most of Fryd's readers have never seen the Catlin collection is the likelihood that our own readers have never heard or read the speech, have not seen the television show or film, or know little about the social movement our critical work addresses. In fact, there may even be some question about our own proximity as critics to the target discourses we study.

Consider the readers of critical scholarship first. The students who went to the NMAA had a variety of experiences that other readers of Fryd's chapter do not have, all of them having to do with bodies and place. They exerted physical and temporal effort to go to the Museum. It was a secular pilgrimage, complete with the expectations that typ-

ically go with such a journey; to make the effort to identify and reach a particular destination implies that there is something special about that place. The NMAA rewards that expectation. The Museum's grand design, immensity, and historical character (its history as the old Patent Office receives a fair amount of attention at the site) legitimize the place as special, and so does its naming as "national" and as a Smithsonian museum. Other visitors gaze at the paintings too, in a silent reminder of their significance. Bodies may even come into contact as they maneuver to get a better look. And the closer look sees vivid colors, the texture of the canvas, the layering of paint, the flow of brush strokes, and so forth. Those visual aspects of the paintings, not available for sight in standard reproductions, account for a portion of the differential experience, but only a portion. Because of the physical journey, the place, and the presence of other museum goers, the materiality of the experience also differentiates it from the act of seeing reproductions.

It is now common enough to acknowledge the positive, democratizing effects of the "mechanical reproduction" of artworks (Benjamin), but we must also remember the flattening effect of such reproduction—not just the literal two-dimensionalizing of a place and its inhabitant artworks, but also the metaphorical "flattening" of experience. And in doing so, we must pose the question of how we, as critics, make the object "real." How do we make it *matter* to our readers? The term "matter" has an important double edge here, as a noun that suggests substance and presence, but also as a verb that implies a rendering of significance. The question of how to make the critical object matter is particularly difficult in the cases of visual and material objects, for we must "translate" from the senses to print; that is, we must work the first sense of "matter." But the issue is difficult in any case, because of the second meaning of "to matter," of making a discourse or object significant to readers.

One answer has been to reduce the target discourses and objects to "data," and to make theory production or refinement the *raison d'être* of criticism. Presumably, theory would be sufficiently interesting to everyone reading criticism that it would make the target of criticism matter. Another possibility is to posit a canon and confine our critical targets to the discourses and objects that the canon stipulates will matter. But neither of those solutions works, because both ignore the fundamental motivating impulse of the critical project. It is the particular discourse or cultural object that motivates critical attention.⁵ Both solutions, in other words, are self-defeating. And so the question of "mattering" or making "real" or significant remains. And as rhetorical criticism's domain of legitimate objects has expanded, so too has the urgency of the question.

Questions of material presence are not limited to those having to do with readers of criticism. They extend also to those of us doing the

criticism, for most of us work with reproductions (Blair 38–39). In some cases, it may seem to make little (if any) difference, as in Bowman's observation about Mount Rushmore, which he suggests "is so familiar to us from professional and amateur photography that it seems to be nothing more than another, bigger, reproduction of itself" (145). And yet, how much credence would we be willing to grant a critic's treatment of Rushmore if we knew s/he had not been to the Black Hills and that s/he was working strictly with photographic or videotaped reproductions? Very little, I suspect.

Is it just the peculiarity of studying *place* that is at issue here? I would submit that it is not. Why should the standard be different in the case, for example, of a presidential speech? Does it make any difference that televised reproduction separates us from the bodily experience of going through security checkpoints to be present, from the din of the Secret Service sirens as the cavalcade of black SUVs arrives, or from the reactions of other audience members? Does it matter that there is an audience in attendance at all, given that people are standing and applauding in a driving rain?⁶ Those differences seem to me to make a difference, both to readers of criticism and to those who write it. The question for us as critics is a bit different, however. We must ask how it is that we validate the use of reproduction in our work. In what cases is it legitimate (or more so than in others), and what makes it so? What do we ourselves lose of an experience by not being present? And what difference does that loss make? In an age of pervasive mechanical, electronic, and now more pervasive virtual, reproduction, these questions seem worthy of our attention. In fact, they are overdue.

Parable 2: Women of Stone?

This parable begins in that Washington, DC course several years ago, in the midst of a discussion of paper topics. A female student asked that evening what a good commemorative site for her project might be, given her interest in women's studies and feminism. I made the only obvious suggestions: the recently dedicated (1993) Vietnam Women's Veterans Memorial and the National Museum of Women in the Arts, which had opened its doors in 1987 ("Brief History").⁷ The inevitable question came up: Was that all? I used the question as an entry point to a discussion on representation and of what kinds of bodies have been deemed "appropriate" or acceptable markers of national history and identity. And of course, it is obvious in an attentive walk around Washington, DC that there is a nearly unitary answer—male bodies.⁸ It was a now familiar, and even rather predictable, discussion of the politics of representation, until one of the male students raised a troubling question. He challenged the idea that an average tourist would ever even notice the lack of female bodies represented in public space. Others asserted that it mattered, even if most people might not

notice, because it educated visitors—however implicitly—in the lesson that only men had ever influenced U.S. history. The discussion ended in a rather unproductive spat.

The next week, the conversation came up again but with a new twist. The young woman who had asked about paper topics the week before came back to class having seen and thought about the Vietnam Women's Veterans Memorial. She was dismayed, she reported, that the focal figure in a sculpture meant to honor women was a man. And she was challenged again by the same male student, who made two arguments. First, he argued, the average visitor would not interpret the statue so harshly; s/he would simply hear that this was the memorial for women who had served in Vietnam and take that interpretative frame at face value. Second, he suggested, all this "nonsense" about representation of women was just raising troublesome issues for normal people who are not sexists but who would simply see the unbalanced representation as an accurate report of history. After all, he suggested, "they" can't have it both ways. If women really were excluded (wrongly) from the public realm historically, then it was difficult to imagine how they could have made sufficient public impact to have national public monuments raised in their honor.

Although this class discussion did begin as a rather standard one about the politics of representation, and though I believe such issues must remain central to criticism, there seems much more of concern here. The discussion evolved to question whether visitors to Washington would ever notice the lack of female bodies represented in public space. The implication, if the question was to have relevance to the discussion, seems to have been that what audiences fail to notice cannot influence them. When put that starkly, such an assumption seems intuitively and utterly wrong. But how is that we can be so confident about that? To what extent *does* influence depend on conscious recognition on the part of an audience? Although I had no attachment politically to the direction this discussion went in terms of specifics, it still raised the question of whether good critical practice could sustain a very particular kind of argumentative slippage. To wit, how do we move analytically from identifying a characteristic of discourse (or the lack of a characteristic) to a claim that that characteristic (or lack) is influential? And how do we stake our confidence in such a move?

The discussion took an even more uncomfortable turn, though, in the students' arguments over the appropriate grounds for interpreting the Vietnam Women's Veterans Memorial. If I understand correctly the skeptical male student's argument, it was that we should worry about the erosion of criticism to censure. I believe he was asking something like: How sensitive is too sensitive in reading a cultural object? When does the task of "doing society's homework" (Benson 185) yield to unproductive complaining or even carping? And how do we tell

the difference? I strongly favored the earlier design proposal for the Vietnam Women's Veterans Memorial (a single figure of a female soldier) to the one chosen. And I am deeply committed to rhetorical criticism making and maintaining room for claims about the politics of representation. Yet, it is also true that the Vietnam Women's Veterans Memorial broke new ground in paying any head at all to women's accomplishments; it seems only fair to acknowledge that as well. And it seems reasonable to ask, given that, not only whether merely being represented is a sufficient rhetorical demand, but also how we might assess fairly such initial, highly imperfect efforts to represent the underrepresented.

Perhaps this was not the best possible exemplary case for the skeptical student's question, but his inquiry is still an important one. As new norms and forms of criticism have come on the scene, the clarity of standards has diffused. That is *not* to suggest that new critical works have lured us down the slippery slope toward relativism or that standards have somehow been degraded.⁹ The point is that genres—including those created from blurring and boundary crossing—entail different norms of assessment. In the welter of new critical genres, we need to be clear about what those norms will be in different cases. To demand less is to legitimize questions about how far criticism can (or should) go and about what separates criticism from mere reproach, or at the opposite—and equally problematic—end of the spectrum, from mere panegyric or tacit approval.

Parable 3: Names and Bodies

On a recent spring trip to Arlington National Cemetery, my frequent co-author, Neil Michel, and I were photographing and discussing the Tomb of the Unknowns. The discussion outlasted the photography session by several days.¹⁰ This parable is an attempt to recreate a portion of that conversation and some of the issues it raised in our research. It began when one of us observed how archaic the Tomb now seems, not only because biotechnology has made the idea of an "unknown soldier" obsolete, but also because of how the Tomb was implicated in what now seems the strange cultural preoccupation with the body of the soldier in World War I commemoration. The U.S. Tomb of the Unknown Soldier at Arlington, following precedents set in Europe, exemplified that near fixation, as did the disputes over repatriating bodies for burial in their home countries (see Laquer; and Winter, especially 102–108). Given the contemporary demand for naming in the contemporary design of cenotaphic memorials, the early-century focus on the body seems rather antiquated.

The conversation took a number of different tracks, but the most interesting was a meandering historical one through the phenomenon of commemorative naming in U.S. memorials and how naming seems to be differentially related to bodies, beginning in the era of the Tomb of

the Unknowns. "Walls of the missing" became a standard feature of U.S. military cemeteries in Europe beginning in World War I. We agreed that the endless list of names on a stone wall was a compensatory gesture, the only form of material commemoration that may have seemed possible in the absence of a body to inter and mark at a gravesite. This practice of marking absence continued in Europe and expanded into the United States and its territories during World War II. Walls of the missing perhaps most familiar to U.S. citizens are in the Punchbowl National Cemetery on Oahu and the memorial in New York's Battery Park to those who lost their lives in defense of the U.S. Atlantic coast in World War II.

Punchbowl, though, reminded us of the wall of names in the U.S.S. Arizona Memorial; we agreed that, although it seems quite similar to these other memorials, its rhetorical edge is a bit different. It marks the death site of those killed on the Arizona, on December 7, 1941, so it is, in a sense, a collective grave marker. But not exactly, for the bodies that remain on the ship were unrecoverable—not missing precisely, but unavailable for cemetery or other material solemnizing. It seemed to us at least in that conversation to represent a decidedly different, perhaps transitional, moment of commemorative naming. It marks a tension between bodily presence and absence, functioning not quite as a gravestone, but not quite as a wall of the missing either. That tension shows up particularly well in the fact that those individuals whose bodies were recovered and returned to family members are named on the Memorial's wall along with their shipmates whose bodies were left aboard the ruined hulk below. We thought we might be on a path toward identifying some kind of historical continuity in the rhetorical function of naming, from absence (walls of the missing), to a tension between presence and absence (U.S.S. Arizona), to an ambivalence about presence displayed in the Vietnam Veterans Memorial and other contemporary "naming" memorials. We continued to build our case for this continuity until our neat, historical pattern collided with two other earlier commemorative monuments—the District of Columbia's World War I Memorial and the national First Division Memorial in Washington, DC.

Curiously, Washington, DC's World War I Memorial is situated on the national Mall in Washington, not far from the Korean War Veterans Memorial. Since the latter was dedicated, many more visitors now "find" the DC Memorial, and they often mistake it—not surprisingly—for a national monument. Instead, it is simply a local memorial that has gained more attention than most because of its location. Regardless, it and its local counterparts all over the nation seemed to belie the historical/generic series we were attempting to construct, for it marks neither a gravesite nor the absence of one. It simply names Washington, DC residents killed in World War I. Similarly, the First Division Memorial, located on the Ellipse in Washington, lists the names of all

the Division's soldiers killed in World War I. Names of First Division soldiers killed in World War II, Korea, and Vietnam were added later. Both of these memorials seemed to be more like the Vietnam and post-Vietnam memorials, in the rhetorical function naming performs, than to their contemporaries of the World Wars. Or were they? We finally abandoned our half-built historical account and began to wonder how all these different material listings "work" rhetorically; what do they do? How are they related to one another? And how do they differ rhetorically?

Given all the earlier cases of name listing on national memorials, we noted how odd it seems that the Vietnam Veterans Memorial would so often be credited in popular discourse with having initiated the practice. Even when it is not treated as the origin of commemorative naming, its list of names still remains as its most remarked feature. That seemed odd to us when we considered how relatively common the naming feature had been for more than half a century prior to its dedication.¹¹ Still, it is undeniable that naming became nearly a generic requirement of memorial design only in the 1980s. In fact, it became such a dictate of contemporary public commemoration that memorials that have not incorporated it as a feature (e.g., the Korean War Veterans Memorial and the U.S. Navy Memorial) have added it, in the form of a computerized registry on site. Abramson goes so far as to call naming a "cliché" of contemporary commemorative design (679–680).

The demand for naming would lead us back to the question of difference, however. Are the Vietnam Veterans Memorial and its successors (e.g., the AIDS Quilt, Civil Rights Memorial, Astronauts Memorial, National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial, Freedom Forum Journalists Memorial, Witch Trials Tercentenary Memorial, etc.) really so similar to one another in their rhetorical functions that we could legitimately link them generically? We knew, for example, that the overcoded, cloth AIDS Quilt does not really work the same way as the undercoded and stark Vietnam Veterans Memorial, despite the prominence of the naming feature to both. And we knew that these memorials did not all work equally well with their visitors either, even in their simple naming functions (see Blair and Michel, "Commemorating"). When visitors to the Astronauts Memorial (Cape Canaveral, FL) attend to its inscribed names, they often simply respond with a puzzled "Who are these people?" We have never overheard (except on the part of a child), nor even heard of, such a question being posed at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. At first, we discussed the possibility that the difference might lie in the number of names—the Astronauts Memorial with only seventeen, as opposed to more than 58,000 on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. Certainly far fewer visitors to the Astronauts Memorial would have any real connection to or information about the lives of any of the astronauts and test pilots listed on its walls.

But the numbers explanation failed to square with what we had seen and heard at the Witch Trials Tercentenary Memorial (Salem, MA), where visitors typically have acquired enough contextual information at other memory sites in the town not only to recognize particular names among the twenty, but even to know something about one or more of the accused "witches." Put simply, the naming seems not only to work differently in the various cases, but also to work more effectively in some cases than in others. The conversation stopped with these rather inconclusive conclusions, although it is by no means finished.

This long conversation raises some rather simple, but still important concerns for criticism, having to do with rhetorical history or rhetorical genre, as well as with what counts as historically or generically significant features of the discourses and objects we study. At a fundamental level of critical assumption, the discussion represented in the parable should disturb the idea of tracing appearances of characteristic features across time or across multiple discourses or rhetorical objects. Certainly, any historian of rhetoric or critic of genres would expect to encounter recalcitrant cases, as we did in attempting to establish a historical pattern that would hold across the U.S. memorials that have incorporated names of the dead as a central characteristic. But this seems more problematic than the simple and predictable case of history's (or a genre's) "messiness." At issue is what rhetorical characteristics we can or should focus on to establish identities or continuities among rhetorical discourses or objects.

Although walls of the missing feature names of the dead, they share more in common rhetorically with the Tomb of the Unknowns than they do with other memorials that chronicle names. These early walls of names and the Tomb sustain a reciprocal concern with the location of identity and memory in the body. The Tomb of the Unknown Soldier marked a body without a name ("known only to God"); the walls display names without bodies. Their positions are complementary, and both are predicated upon the material body as the preferred locus of ritual memory.

The early walls of the missing seem to have far less in common rhetorically with the late twentieth century memorials, despite the overtness of the common feature that seems to unite them generically. In fact, there may be a certain astuteness in the popular identification of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial as the prototype for the commemorative practice of naming. Although technically incorrect, the attribution does point to the fact that its listing of names and those of its successors seem to have performed very different rhetorical work than the naming on memorials of an earlier vintage. The Vietnam Veterans Memorial did lead in constructing public memory differently than its predecessors did, not in naming the dead, but in the rhetorical function of that naming.

If we pose one additional question beyond those in the parable about the naming—Who is named?—the distinction may emerge more clearly. The new memorials inscribe the deaths of individuals, like their earlier counterparts. However, most of them name individuals whose lives and/or deaths have been rendered outside the approved cultural mainstream. Note the examples: Civil Rights workers, the AIDS dead, accused and prosecuted “witches,” Vietnam veterans, etc. Of course, there are groups less culturally marginalized who are represented in some of the new memorials too: astronauts, law enforcement officers, and journalists. But even their marking on the landscape points to some dark, non-heroic (or at least not triumphant) stories of U.S. history, the kind of stories that had never before been acknowledged in national memory sites.¹² Like their early- and mid-century predecessors, these memorials chronicle multiple deaths. But it is rare among them to locate any positive or justificatory interpretation of the deaths, as is evident in the earlier memorials. Typically, there is not even an attempt.

The Vietnam Veterans Memorial is, without doubt, the first and still only, U.S. national war-related memorial that speaks not a word about the cause for which soldiers died. Memorials designed and constructed since the early 1980s follow suit, very rarely offering a heroic narrative, and some offering no explicit interpretive frame at all within which to understand the deaths they record. Even those memorials that do provide some larger historical framing do so only feebly. For example, the Astronauts Memorial’s mission wall suggests that the exploration of space was an objective the *astronauts* believed was worth the sacrifice of life, but it makes no bid to convince the visitor of that belief. The pre-Vietnam memorials, by contrast, seem to all reinforce official or at least mainstream narratives of U.S. history. They assume a posture honoring sacrifice for a common good, heroic selflessness, and nationalist progress. What we see in the later memorials, beginning with the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, is quite different. Their rhetoric offers no comfort of historical progress and speaks only about loss, not sacrifice. No messages of heroism emerge.¹³ What we see in these memorials is often a critique of mainstream values or policies, not alignment with them. So, in a sense, those who suggest or imply that the Vietnam Veterans Memorial used naming for the first time in a U.S. memorial are misled, but in a sense they are right. The naming function in the Vietnam Veterans Memorial and its successors names and honors the dead without ensnaring them in a heroic or nationalist narrative. Most of them might even qualify as what Mitchell describes as a “critical” public art, “one that dares to awaken a public sphere of resistance, struggle, and dialogue” (395).

The specific point for our project is that naming is not naming. It may appear to be a common rhetorical feature of the memorials, but “it” is not, for there is no unified “it,” in terms of

rhetorical function. The larger implication can be posed this way: Are generic or other identity markers of rhetoric simply overt surface features (e.g., naming), or are the rhetorical features we *should* be identifying those that link and differentiate discourses according to the rhetorical work they do? Why do we think we are identifying generic features or historical continuities in rhetoric when they work differently in various settings? How do we know that they are not merely chimerical traces of mistaken identities? Unfortunately, these questions cannot be confined to the boundaries of the criticism or to rhetorical history. The issue of genre—or at least of significant similarity and difference—pervades every critical discussion, whether explicitly or not.¹⁴

My point, of course, is precisely not about whether there are “objective” discursive features that qualify as generic. Instead, it has to do with genre considered *rhetorically*, that is, in relation to influence. The appearance of even identical features in different discourses would not signal identical rhetorical operations of these features; hence, to establish *rhetorically*-significant similarities or continuities should lead us to ask about what a discourse (or feature of it) does, rather than what it is.

Parable 4: Gateway to the West or to McDonalds?

Not all research on memorials is grim; on occasion, there is a break from the solemn and dignified. Neil Michel’s and my first joint research trip to the Jefferson National Expansion Memorial (the Gateway Arch), in St. Louis, proved to be one of those occasions. For ten days, Neil and I patrolled the seventeen acres of the Memorial site, taking photos, watching and eavesdropping on visitors, talking with National Park Service personnel, watching the film shown in the visitor center, exploring the underground Museum of Westward Expansion below the Arch, and walking the riverfront site.

In any such visit, we are presented with dozens of interesting experiences; this one was no exception. But three patterns of visitor reaction, each of them related to the bodies of visitors, stood out to us as we continued to watch and listen. First, we observed a highly repetitive “hardware check.” Nearly every male visitor would approach one of the two bases of the Arch and knock on it, try to shake it, and/or squint closely at the metal, as if to determine the structure’s stability. We overheard a few justificatory wisecracks, like “Well, we are going up to the top of this thing. Just checking.” Most did not offer such autoreflexive interpretations, but almost every man, and some women, conducted their own inspections. To be sure, the Arch looks rather insubstantial, and most visitors do ride to the top in internal shuttle cars. So perhaps, this analogue of kicking the tires seems prudent.

Second, and at least as common, were the patterns of visitor interaction inside the pinnacle of the Arch and again after they had completed their rides to the top and returned to the outdoor area below. In the cramped space in the Arch's observation area, almost every comment or question is audible. The most repetitive comment we overheard in our numerous hours there was: "Look, that's where we just came from," an apparent reference to the memorial grounds below. After a visit to the top, visitors back on the ground would point up at the Arch and exclaim: "Look, we were clear up there." Infinitely more common than any references to Thomas Jefferson, the Louisiana Purchase, westward expansion, or even the symbol of the Arch as the "gateway to the West," these comments seemed to collapse the rhetoric of the Jefferson National Expansion Memorial into a rhetoric of bodily mobility or locale.

Third, and most amusing, the most frequent remark we heard in our eavesdropping on hundreds of departing visitors was: "Let's go to McDonald's." We heard this injunction uttered as frequently at 10:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. as at noon, and it was always pointed toward McDonald's, not Taco Bell, Wendy's, Burger King, or KFC. If there is any doubt about the rhetorical work being done here, perhaps it can be dispelled by the fact that McDonald's has capitalized on the symbolism of the Memorial; it operates a dinner boat on the Mississippi River immediately below the memorial site.¹⁵ The venerable history of the arch as a symbol of triumph or of a successful expedition here seems to reduce to the impulse for a Big Mac.

By telling this "tale of the field" (van Maanen), I intend no disdain for visitors' reactions to the site. There is very little surprising in their reactions, given what they are given to work with rhetorically. In fact, their reactions seem rather appropriate. The Jefferson National Expansion Memorial suffers from its own self referentiality, in a way Young discusses:

In another vein, art historian Rosalind Krauss finds that the modernist period produces monuments unable to refer to anything beyond themselves as pure marker or base. After Krauss we might ask, in fact, whether an abstract, self-referential monument can ever commemorate events outside of itself. Or must it motion endlessly to its own gesture to the past, a commemoration of its essence as dislocated sign, forever trying to remember events it never actually knew? (54–55)

The Arch was many things, among them an engineering achievement and a local boondoggle, but its ability to refer to anything except its own soaring height is minimal.¹⁶

Although we might see the visitors' reactions as legitimate, they certainly do not align with the Park Service interpretations or with sympathetic critical readings (see Ebenhoeh and Givens; and Mehrhoff). It seems reasonable, therefore, to raise the question of "preferred" or "dominant" readings, a common enough notion in criticism, but one

that may deserve some interrogation. What is a preferred or dominant reading? What is preferred or dominant about it? And what is its source of legitimacy or legitimation as the preferred or dominant reading?

It certainly is possible to render a reading of heroic proportion of the Jefferson National Expansion Memorial, as in Mehrhoff's encomium. Such readings are attempted not only in such critical work, but also in the "official" interpretations of the site by the National Park Service. Thus, the Jefferson National Expansion Memorial as the symbolic "gateway to the West," complete with its colonial narrative of conquest, might be taken as a preferred or dominant reading. But there is more than a little doubt about whether the designer, Eero Saarinen, even considered that symbolic possibility or would have approved of it (Temko 18–19, 42; Bodnar 186–189). But if Eero Saarinen really had in mind only an engineering triumph, it would hardly square with the genre for which he was designing—commemorative architecture. Should we acknowledge genre, then, as the authorizing source of a dominant reading? Should the source of validation for a "preferred" reading be the designer or author or speaker? Or should that validation source be an institutional authority like the National Park Service?

Another possibility, and an apparently compelling one in the case of public commemorative art, might be to consider audiences as the validating source of dominant readings. But that seems problematic too, if we extend that possibility to other, less amusing cases.¹⁷ The problem is not a minor one, if we take seriously criticism's political dimensions and its capacity and respect for generating "alternative" or even "subversive" readings. Turning again to Gray, we see his approval of "discursive strategies that reveal, critique, and help to establish the conditions of possibility for alternative and emergent imaginations." But he elaborates by issuing a warning that we must be able to distinguish between reinscriptions of dominant discourses and those strategies that "offer critical alternatives" (485). Depending on what counts as dominant or alternative makes a difference in determining whether the Jefferson National Expansion Memorial is a gateway to the West or just another of McDonald's ubiquitous arches. It also matters in answering Judith Butler's question about how we know the "difference between the power we promote and the power we oppose" (qtd. by Bordo 191).

Parable 5: Never Go Alone

At about 6:30 a.m., I joined the line that had already formed. In spite of the cold rain and early hour, there were already about fifty people there waiting to get admission tickets to the Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, DC. It had opened only the week before, and the numbers seeking admission had been overwhelming. But the people

in line that morning seemed remarkably cheerful and friendly. Since we would wait nearly three hours for tickets, conversation was welcome, particularly since I had come to Washington and the Museum alone this time. I chatted with a family from Massachusetts and later at more length with the couple in line ahead of me from Nebraska. They waited while I got my ticket to ask when my assigned ticket time was. When they learned it was the same as theirs, they asked if I would join them for lunch before returning to the Museum for our early afternoon admission. I agreed and went off to a couple of hours of archival work a few blocks away. I met my new acquaintances for a pleasant lunch, and then we made our way back to the Holocaust Memorial Museum. There, we saw the family from Massachusetts again and joined them in the admission line and in conversation.

When we finally were admitted to the Museum's interior, we waited in line again, this time for the factory-like elevator that would transport us to the permanent exhibit. I remembered the reviews of the Museum building I had read before my trip, and tried to mentally prepare as we stepped onto the elevator. James Ingo Freed's design is technically brilliant. The building not only shows the collection well, but it also "teaches" experientially. The path through the exhibit is dark, crowded, and confusing. People get separated from the groups with whom they came. They stop talking to one another, concentrating not only on the exhibits and interpretive labels, but also on just maneuvering themselves through the congested maze that seems to offer few moments or spaces for relief. As Linenthal puts it, the building is "insisten[t] on certain ways visitors inhabit and move through space." It is "a place of disorientation" (89). Raul Hilberg's comment is even more pointed. He suggests that the Museum building is "a concentration camp on the Mall" (qtd. by Linenthal 107-108).

It was insistent and disorienting, and it carried more than quiet suggestions that its visitors should experience something akin to the miseries of the death camps. Although I was never far from the people I had met that morning, they had stopped talking to one another or to me. When I came face-to-face with the woman from Nebraska about an hour into the Museum, she did not seem to recognize me at all. She just kept moving. Less than halfway through the permanent exhibit, I knew that the building's rhetoric had exerted its force effectively with me. I felt exhausted, overwhelmed, resentful, and nearly frantic for some respite. The only place I found it was in the nearest restroom. Afterward, I stopped to recuperate in each restroom I saw along the way. At about three and a half hours, I knew I had to exit, and I rationalized that I had come only for a quick reconnaissance, to see if we would want to include the museum (since it is also a memorial) in our research. So I tried to leave, but even that was difficult, since I had to move through packed crowds of people and follow what I could only guess was the way

to the exit. But I finally found the door. Outside the Museum, there were others like me who just sat silently on the curb to recover.

The Museum is an ordeal, not just because of its collection or the story it tells (although, of course, those are devastating), but because of the dehumanizing force of its interior space on the body. If I thought it were actually a choice, I would never enter that building again. I have gone back, but only for professional reasons, always with dread, and never alone.

This final parable obviously raises an ethical question, a persistent and difficult issue for rhetorical critics. Rhetoric fulfills its end in influence, and there can be little doubt that Freed's building influences. It creates discomfort, and it teaches somatically. It attempts to offer its visitor some small measure of the physical experience of a Holocaust death camp, and it succeeds. From the standpoint of architectural theory and practice, the Museum represents a dramatic success. It is one thing to theorize the specific effects of building design and quite another to see such a clear case of it in practice. But to acknowledge that such effects *can* be produced certainly should not be conflated with the conviction that they *should* be. Is it ethically acceptable to reproduce experiences of the Holocaust, even pale reflections of them, in order to exert an influence? Is victimization of museum goers legitimate, given what they typically expect from a museum experience? Is the creation of physical discomfort an ethical, or even effective, way to teach? Would rhetorical success be sacrificed if the somatic experience of the Museum's interior design were different, more like a "typical" museum? Am I wrong to even suggest that some small discomfort is an unacceptable price to learn of such a horrendous event? Or should we worry about the political implications of reenacting, and thus perpetuating in a more "legitimate" form and for "justifiable" cause, the brutalities and unimaginable horrors of the Holocaust?

At about the same time that the Holocaust Memorial Museum was built and dedicated, there was a strong movement of Holocaust denial in Europe and the United States. That the Museum was responding to that seems clear. At every turn, the visitor is situated as a "witness." And there are clear bids to establish the historical reality of the atrocities and horror with photographs, survivor narratives, graphic films, collections of personal possessions of victims, and reproductions of death camp accoutrements, like an oven and "medical experimentation" labs. But the Museum engages in more than a rhetoric of display and shifts the visitor's role from witness to prisoner.¹⁸ Is that rhetorical excess, and if so, how do we determine what is excessive?

Conclusion

To write rhetorical criticism from within a perspective of materialism is certainly no longer unique. In fact, the critical disturbances of

the late 1980s and 1990s have offered a number of materialist stances: a traditional one that insists upon considering the material conditions of discourse, another that focuses upon the lived-in body as a condition and consequence of rhetoric, and still another that understands rhetoric as itself material. The standpoint of these parables spans all three. Nor is it any longer unprecedented to write critical work in fragmentary and/or narrative form. And the "revival" of the two neglected classical canons—*actio* and *memoria*—that this essay depends on is not particularly novel either. The foregoing simply participates in philosophical and formal critical strategies that have been in the process of formation for over a decade, in order to work through some of their broader implications. In that sense, it is diagnostic, not groundbreaking.

However, with critics still not agreed on whether these (no longer) new critical positions should be embraced, it seems important to point toward what they might offer to us all. Unfortunately, the critical disturbances of the past few years have done more to splinter the rhetorical criticism community into "camps" than it has to transform the ways we all approach our work. It is more than time for that to change. Grappling with the new is never easy, but it is necessary and often enriching.

The questions raised for rhetorical criticism in relation to these five parables can be summarized broadly as follows:

1. What relationship does or should the critic have to her/his object of study? How proximate is it? How proximate should it be? What difference, if any, does it make when the critic's object of study is a reproduction? How does that affect her/his ability to comment on that object credibly?
2. How can we be confident that what critics identify as significant features of the rhetoric they study have significant influence? How do critics distinguish between aspects of rhetorical texts or objects that are merely surface features and those that do rhetorical work?
3. How do critics draw distinctions between dominant or preferred readings and alternative critical discourses? On what grounds should such a distinction be drawn? And in a critical reading, where should a critic establish the boundary between the insightful, sensitive reading and one that is excessively sensitive or gratuitously polemical?
4. Where do critics establish a balance between rhetorical efficacy and ethical consequence? On what grounds can such a balance be legitimately struck?
5. How do critics make their objects of study and their critical readings matter to those who read them?

Some, perhaps most, of these questions might have been raised from within the milieu of rhetorical criticism that dominated in the 1970s

and 1980s.¹⁹ But the critical disturbances of the 1990s make these issues not just interesting but urgent. And the questions should be useful for everyone at least to contemplate, no matter which side of the aisle we may occupy. How can a postmarxist critic not deal with the ethical (*in addition to* the political) problematic, particularly in cases of highly inventive or creative, new discourses or objects? Or, how can a critic of historical public address *not* deal with the issue of her/his relationship to the discourse s/he studies, when time and distance make it necessary to rely on a textual reproduction?

Although I do not mean that these issues could not have been raised in the 1970s and 1980s critical worldview, most of them were not, and some probably would not have seemed very pertinent to the rhetorical criticism of that period. My interest in the general character of material rhetoric and the more specific concern about the relationships of rhetoric and the body have served as the animating source of the questions raised here. If rhetorical critics will grapple with nothing else in the next decade or so, they almost certainly will have to come to terms with the pressing issues that materialism—in whatever form—has thrust on us.

I also do not mean to suggest that these issues should exhaust our concerns as we reconfigure rhetorical criticism in the wake of the 1990s. Nor would I presume to argue that all of us should always concern ourselves centrally with these issues. If we learned nothing else from the 1990s, it should be that raising common issues is not the same thing as promoting the unproductive claim that we should all do the same kind of work. However, augmenting our repertoire with critical questions like those raised here seems at least a legitimate and productive move.

NOTES

¹Gray is working from Taylor's focus on "palace discourses," and he describes them as "those systems of thought and habits of mind emanating from the Crystal Palaces of western power/knowledge . . ." (484–485).

²Even then, the interest in bodies was not very focused, as DeLuca points out: "Even when the tumultuous street politics of the 1960s and the early 1970s forced rhetorical critics to look beyond the boundaries of conventional politics and formal argumentation and consider the implications of extra-linguistic confrontational activities, the scope was limited and bodies escaped sustained attention" (11).

³The relationship between a philosophy of materialism and the study of bodies has been articulated in a number of ways. Grossberg's position is among those that I believe makes the most sense: "Materialism describes human reality in terms of material practices: what people do, how they transform the world. But it is less a matter of intentions than of effects, and it is less a matter of origins than of distribution (i.e., what practices are available to whom, and which are taken up). Materialism does not reduce the world to a collection of bodies, although it does recognize the reality of socially constructed biological bodies. It addresses the world of people in social, cultural, political, technological, and economic relations; it talks about people with ideas, desires, pleasures, and emotions, all of which are defined by the forms and organizations of practices that are available to transform these dimensions of reality" (182). Also see Bordo 181–182.

A number of works in rhetoric have addressed questions of materialism directly. Among them are: Cloud, "Materiality"; Cloud, "Null Persona"; Condit; Cox; Crowley and Selzer; Greene; McGee, "Materialist's Conception"; McGee, "Text"; McGuire; McKerrow; and Wood and Cox.

⁴Even those seemingly innocent of rhetorical studies, though, describe public art objects as rhetorical, or in terms we would recognize as such. For example, Phillips suggests that, "If not essentially different from art, public art does suggest its own particular model for thinking about the way all art functions—as a dynamic exchange of invention, production, delivery, reception, and action rather than a stable collection of formal characteristics. In its many manifestations, it questions what occurs—and changes—when people encounter and experience art. In both subtle and radical ways, public art shifts critical analysis to the responses of viewers who shape, modify, perpetuate, and complete (at least provisionally) its meaning. Public art implies and acknowledges the transactions that drive the transformative nature of all art" (7–8).

There are a fair number of works by rhetorical scholars devoted specifically to studies of memory sites, including the following: Armada, "Fierce Urgency"; Armada, "Memorial Agon"; Blair; Blair, Jeppeson, and Pucci; Blair and Michel, "Commemorating"; Blair and Michel, "Reproducing"; Carlson and Hocking; Dickinson; Ehrenhaus, "Silence"; Ehrenhaus, "Vietnam"; Foss; Gallagher, "Memory"; Gallagher, "Remembering"; Haines; Jorgensen-Earp and Lanzilotti; Marback; Sturken; and Trujillo.

⁵If we are to believe the critics who report on their own work in Nothstine, Blair, and Copeland, eds., the motivation for them to write criticism has something to do with the target discourse, not theory production and not canonical commentary.

⁶I have a particular event in mind in this description—the 1995 dedication of the World War II Memorial site in Washington, DC. However, it was not unique in its character; typically those elements are present when the President speaks at an event.

⁷The Women in Military Services for America Memorial was not yet open. It was dedicated in the fall of 1997.

⁸Kahl points to the dearth of representations of women in significant national public spaces. In addition to those I could identify in 1995, there is now also the site she focused on in her paper—the National Women's Historical Park, in Seneca Falls and the U.S. Women in the Military Services Memorial at Arlington National Cemetery.

⁹Bordo describes the questioning that accompanied feminism, but the case surely is applicable more broadly to recent critical trends: "This questioning has hardly been the canon-bashing 'assault on reason' that contemporary polemics makes it out to be. With few exceptions, the point has been to reveal what dominant models have excluded rather than to attack the value of what they have offered. Yet a sort of cultural castration anxiety continually converts any criticism of canonical thought into the specter of Lorena Bobbitt-like feminists, wildly lopping reason, logic, and Shakespeare right off at the quick. For those who suffer from this anxiety—and this includes women as well as men—there appear to be only two choices: phallogocentrism or emasculation. But for many feminist critics of modernity . . . dethroning the king is not equivalent to cutting his head off. Rather, sharing power is what it's all about" (199).

¹⁰Indeed, the conversation has continued now for a number of years. And we still remain uncertain about how best to approach the issues it raises. I cannot represent the conversation exactly the way it happened. Nor is it possible to record all the influences on it, although at least two are clear. Piehler's and Heathcote's discussions of the Tomb surely played a part. More important, though, were various discussions I have had with Kathy Maboll, a graduate student at the University of North Carolina, whose research is on the Tomb and its departures from its contemporaries in commemorating war dead.

¹¹Even architects and designers of new memorials speak of the inspiration they have found in the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. Although some have modeled other

features of it as well (its horizontality, use of black granite, etc.), by far the most copied feature and most cited "influence" is the naming of the dead. For example, Marc Hinshaw, one of the architects of the Astronauts Memorial, acknowledged very early in our interview, and without prompting, that the Vietnam Veterans Memorial was an influence on his and his partners' work. Cleve Jones, founder of the NAMES Project, also has spoken several times of the same influence on his establishment of the AIDS Quilt. See Ruskin.

¹²See Young, who asks: "How does a state incorporate its crimes against others into its national memorial landscape? How does a state recite, much less commemorate, the litany of its misdeeds, making them part of its reason for being?" (52). Although the questions remain tantalizing ones, there are now a number of answers on that landscape in the U.S.

¹³One might make a case for "heroic" messages at the Korean War Veterans Memorial and the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial, both located in Washington, DC. Inscriptions at both sites suggest such a theme. But they are extremely muted in any case, and they are also complicated, arguably even subverted, by other elements of the designs. Even if we insist on these memorials' departure from the contemporary norm, they are, indeed, exceptions.

¹⁴See Rosmarin, especially 3-51. Although Rosmarin is concerned with genre criticism per se, the clear theoretical implication of her position is that all critical interpretation involves an early decision about how to "read" a work, that is, a decision of genre.

¹⁵I am assuming that the McDonald's boat is still present; it was as recently as our last visit in 1996.

¹⁶See Gass; and Blair, Jeppeson, and Pucci 279–280.

¹⁷For example, in the first summer the Franklin Delano Roosevelt Memorial (Washington, DC) was open, National Park Service officials had to rule against audience readings and uses that seemed completely inappropriate, e.g., daycare workers bringing their charges to the Memorial to play in its water features.

¹⁸I am grateful to Tia Lendo, a student at the University of North Carolina for this insight about the role transformation demanded by the museum's architecture.

¹⁹Indeed, some were, if not quite in the same ways or with the same implications.

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Silences and Articulations in Modern Rhetorical Criticism

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IN 1970, the Speech Communication Association sponsored the National Developmental Project on Rhetoric, which brought together some forty scholars who were interested in considering rhetoric's past, present, and future trajectories. Some of these conversations facilitated the publication of *The Prospect of Rhetoric*, edited by Bitzer and Black (1971). In one of the key chapters of this book, Sloan (1971) and the other members of the Committee on the Advancement of Refinement of Rhetorical Criticism advanced the following suggestion:

Rhetorical criticism is to be defined by the kinds of questions posed by the critic. . . . rhetorical criticism may be applied to any human act, process, product, or artifact which, in the critic's view, may formulate, sustain, or modify attention, perceptions, attitudes or behavior. The effort should be made to expand the scope of rhetorical criticism to include subjects which have not traditionally fallen within the critic's purview. . . . The rhetorical critic has the freedom to pursue his [sic] study of subjects with suasive potential or persuasive effects in whatever setting he [sic] may find them, ranging from rock music and put ons, to architecture and public forums, to ballet and international politics. (p. 221)

These are noble sentiments, and in the intervening decades, rhetoricians have made incremental changes that have helped move rhetorical criticism away from a pre-occupation with valorized texts, written by elites who purportedly possess some transcendent, rational knowledge. As Delgado (1998) recently observed, there has been "a recent turn in communication and cultural research" that has focused on the need to provide space for the voices of marginalized others" (p. 420). This move, however brings with it intellectual and political costs. As many of you know, words like "culture" and "critical" are volatile terms, often considered to be markers that are anti-rhetorical in nature. Critics who have the temerity to question the orthodox canons are often gambling. Blair, Baxter, and Brown (1994) noted in their "Disciplining the Feminine" that academic writing is "regulated by clear norms, usually among them the demand for a refined, ahistorical,