Poroi
An Interdisciplinary Journal of Rhetorical Analysis and Invention
ISSN 2151-2957

Volume 2
Issue 2 (2003)
Assorted Topics with a Poroi Symposium on the Scope of Rhetoric

DOI: 10.13008/2151-2957.1049
pps. 42-64

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Recommended Citation
Simons, Herbert W.. "The Globalization of Rhetoric and the Argument from Disciplinary Consequences." *Poroi* 2, Iss. 2 (2003): p. 42-64.
Available at: http://dx.doi.org/10.13008/2151-2957.1049

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The Globalization of Rhetoric and the Argument from Disciplinary Consequence

Herbert W. Simons

Poroi, 2, 2, November, 2003

1 Apparently it's not easy to be a rhetorician these days, at least not one affiliated with the National Communication Association (NCA) or its member departments of communication. So it would seem from reactions to my review of Gross and Keith's *Rhetorical Hermeneutics*[1] by four of rhetoric's preeminent scholars: William Keith, Steve Fuller, Alan Gross, and Michael Leff.[2] NCA-affiliated rhetoric, as they see it, is under threat from within and without the field of communication studies.[3] That my review should have been singled out for their expression of disciplinary angst stems apparently from my enthusiasm for rhetoric's increasing globalization and for my failure to appreciate how that intellectual movement further undermines NCA-rhetoric's already weakened position relative to its real and imagined rivals. But much that I had to say in the review essay in support of a globalized conception of rhetoric and of an expanded role for civically oriented rhetoricians goes unaddressed by my colleagues. Of central concern to them are issues of turf. Here are two key quotations:

> Turf issues are where the conceptual commitment to the globalism of rhetoric bumps into the institutional reality that there is only so much money, resources and intellectual credit to go around, and we'll have trouble claiming our share if we can't do better than to say we're part of this wonderful, subtle, intellectual project. Prof. Simons likes to think that sociologists, e.g., are "doing rhetoric." Alright, then, why should anyone pay *us* to do it?[4]

And again:

> Currently "Communication Departments" are increasingly dominated by social scientists and their courses of study; there's nothing wrong with that, except that this is the very moment when the

> cheerleaders of rhetoric are declaring that "By God, rhetoric is in great shape" because people in other fields are using the term. In other words, just at the point when, institutionally, rhetoricians in Speech Communication departments need to be working to re-assert or re-integrate themselves with their own discipline, they focus the attention on imaginary allies in other fields. Yet is Bruno Latour likely to cite, let alone hire, Herb Simons or anyone else with a Ph.D. in Speech Communication? None of this ally-mongering is going to help show that the rhetorical tradition is a crucial part of Speech Communication programs focused on interpersonal and organizational communication, or programs which see the future of communication criticism in "cultural studies."[5]

2 The issues surrounding rhetoric's globalization and its implications for NCA-affiliated rhetoricians have deep personal meaning for me, as they must for those who signed on to "A Response to Simons." I was a convert to rhetorical studies, having begun my career in the now fashionable field of organizational communication. By 1970, I was strongly identified with the movement within Speech Communication toward a globalized rhetoric, having served as a principal contributor to the NEH-sponsored task force on "The Advancement and Refinement of Rhetorical Criticism," which recommended an expansion of rhetoric's scope well beyond the civic arena.[6] In the eighties I attended and coordinated conferences on Burkean rhetorical theory and on the rhetoric of inquiry, both of which figure prominently in what today is called rhetoric's globalization. Finally, I am by no means detached from the turf battles of which Keith *et al*. speak, although I come at them very differently

Why Globalize?

3 In the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, Scott McLemee recently announced the formation of an "Alliance of Rhetorical Societies" with the title "Making it Big." Its formation in my view is yet another indication of the value of a globalized, interdisciplinary approach to the study of rhetoric. Beginning around 1970, suggests McLemee, the globalized approach triggered renewed interest in rhetorical scholarship.

> Literary theorists began rediscovering the classical rhetorical tradition, which had analyzed varieties of figurative language well beyond the usual categories of metaphor and metonymy. Scholars working in the field known as "rhetoric of inquiry" began analyzing the ways in which persuasive arguments are constructed within specialized fields of study, including the natural and social sciences. And the power of mass media fueled efforts to understand the forms of persuasion peculiar to visual and electronic communication. In a now-classic essay called "The Rhetoric of the Image," for example, Roland Barthes submitted a magazine advertisement for a brand of spaghetti to "a spectral analysis of the images it may contain."[7]

No one who wishes to assess the costs and benefits of rhetoric's move toward globalization can do better than to read Dilip Gaonkar's "Rhetoric and Its Double."[8] There Gaonkar offers a balanced assessment, but one that shares my overall enthusiasm for the "turn" toward globalization. Gaonkar is far less sanguine about globalization in *Rhetorical Hermeneutics*, the object of my initial critique. What prompted his initial enthusiasm?

4 In "Rhetoric and its Double , Gaonkar features one theorist, Kenneth Burke, and one intellectual movement, rhetoric of inquiry, as twin pillars of rhetoric's globalization. To Burke alone, Gaonkar credits the "reclamation" of rhetoric's long repressed sophistic affinities, involving an extension of the range of rhetoric, which he finds "perfectly legitimate."[9] The second half of Burke's essay on "Traditional Principles of Rhetoric" breaks with the classical notion of clear persuasive intent to discover hidden historical treasures. "Once we come to Bentham's *Book of Fallacies*, a dazzling intellectual journey begins, a veritable *tour de force* through the history of ideas, involving text upon text, in the same breadth speaking of Pascal and Joyce."[10] Thus does Burke discover the rich rhetorical elements that, in Burke's words, "'had become obscured when rhetoric as a term fell into disuse.'"[11]

5 To be sure, Gaonkar, an astute rhetorical analyst of rhetorical theory, finds something "occluded" in Burke's discovery of a neo-sophistic tradition of rhetoric, hidden behind rhetoric's "manifest" tradition. This is the tradition of "civic humanism that stretches from Protagoras through Isocrates and Cicero to the Renaissance

humanists, and continues to manifest itself in the activities of great orators like Edmund Burke."[12]

6 But the Kenneth Burke, who wrote "Poetic Categories" and "The Rhetoric of Hitler's 'Battle,'" was himself a civic humanist, himself a "republican" in the Isocratean sense of that term.[13] In such essays, he displayed another mark of rhetorical globalism: its impulse to transgress conventional boundaries: between poetics and politics, religion and politics, etc. In doing so, he encompassed and transcended them. This set up the conditions for comparative rhetorical scholarship, which Gaonkar praises in Burke's readings of Pascal and Joyce. In this sense, Burke's own civic humanism is not a thing apart from his globalization of rhetoric. His move toward "politicizing" poetic categories is itself a turn away from – or a step beyond – the "manifest" rhetorical tradition. In "Hitler's 'Battle,'" Burke identified not just a pattern distinctive to *Mein Kampf*, but something more global: on the order of a rhetorical genre or what John Lyne calls "a *rhetoric, a discourse strategy spanning and organizing numerous discourses, and acting as a trajectory for discourses yet unorganized*."[14] (Might Burke have analyzed the Bush administration's rhetoric of a "war on terrorism" in similar terms?)

7 My point is that the globalization of rhetoric need not be seen as incompatible with civic humanism, certainly not in Burke. And Gaonkar further strengthens the case for rhetoric's globalization by pointing to the many contemporary intellectual movements – in history and philosophy of science, in literary studies, in the interpretive social sciences – that display a "decisively rhetorical orientation."[15] This means, says Gaonkar, "that the special sciences are becoming increasingly rhetorically self-conscious. They are beginning to recognize that their discourses . . . contain an unavoidable rhetorical component."[16]

8 This alone would seem to me to justify rhetoric's current state of globalization. It also points the way to an even larger educational mission: moving the special sciences (as Gaonkar calls them) beyond their initial flirtations with rhetoric to more explicit, more systematic, more thoroughly developed rhetorical conceptions of what they are about. With that must come, of course, testing the limits of various globalized perspectives on rhetoric. The need is to determine when a perspective becomes, in Burke's famous phrase, "rotten with perfection." And as these limits are tested, new perspectives will be needed – and perspectives on those

perspectives – in the spirit of Burke's dialectics.

9 These, as I understand them, are already among the central tasks of the Project on Rhetoric of Inquiry and the intellectual movement that it has done so much to nurture. Ironically, as Gaonkar observed in "Rhetoric and Its Double," relatively implicit rhetorical theorizing has tended to be more provocative than the more explicit rhetorical turn of self-styled rhetorical critics, even though they self-consciously use rhetoric as a critical and interpretive method. Compare, for example, Thomas Kuhn's *Structure of Scientific Revolutions* to Wayne Booth's *Rhetoric of Fiction*.[17] The situation would seem to call for interaction between the two – precisely what began in earnest with the Iowa Symposium on the Rhetoric of the Human Sciences.

10 Gaonkar argues that there is something inherently limiting about the move toward an explicit rhetorical turn. But there is category slippage here, a conflation of implicit rhetorical theorizing with grandiosity or imagination and of explicit rhetorical theorizing with sheer obviousness. Gaonkar never showed that this was necessarily the case. Nor am I convinced that what has been most grandiose in the implicit rhetorical turn – its attempted deconstruction of traditional philosophy's foundationalist and objectivist presuppositions – ought to be the stopping point for the rhetorical turn. Needed beyond the deconstructive rhetorical turn is a reconstructive rhetoric, at once skeptical and pragmatic.

11 These, however, are quarrels with a colleague fundamentally sympathetic to the rhetorical turn. In "Rhetoric and Its Double," Gaonkar supports the rhetorical turn's rediscovery of a long repressed sophistic tradition and its efforts at moving that tradition forward. In "The Idea of Rhetoric in the Rhetoric of Science" (IRRS), however, Gaonkar moves from fundamental sympathy to disciplinary anxiety. His anxiety erupts into something on the order of a panic attack in "A Response to Simons."

A Response to "A Response to Simons"

12 In this essay, I discuss the future of rhetoric-as-discipline, with special attention to the concerns raised by Keith and others. I offer an inclusive vision of the discipline as a communal dwelling-place, open to all comers, and concerned less with property rights or with disciplinary consequences than with quality of product.[18] Rhetoric-as-discipline, I argue, is most productively understood as

a collective haunt or abode that responds to the call of disciplinary responsibility and not simply to issues of turf and power. It is a site of shared commitment to the quest for knowledge and wisdom, from which, as a byproduct of its collective effort, a discipline may come to develop a reputation for cognitive or moral authority, akin to the familiar Aristotelian sense of ethos as personal character.

13 To be sure, the preoccupation with turf by many NCA-affiliated rhetoricians, the sense of embattlement, and the fear of further marginalization are all understandable. Many a discipline, rhetoric more than most, has had to rally its troops in behalf of claims to its legitimacy.[19] But a discipline's primary obligation is to demonstrate that it has something distinctive and worthwhile to contribute to the larger society, not that its own fortunes will be advanced if others take it seriously.

14 This rule applies to efforts both at forging a disciplinary identity and at claims-making bearing on issues of disciplinary ownership and centrality. Paradoxically the weaker the reputation of a putative discipline, the greater its need to assert its cognitive or moral authority. But the more forcefully it asserts its authority, the more it betrays its disciplinary insecurity.[20] Likewise the more fragile one's hold on a discipline, the greater must one's efforts be to claim disciplinary centrality. Yet the more forcefully one asserts that centrality, the more vulnerable one becomes to charges of self-aggrandizement.

15 Precisely this problem afflicts "A Response to Simons." Written as though it had been submitted to a trade magazine rather than to a scholarly journal, it speaks only to NCA-affiliated rhetoricians and ultimately does them a disservice by arguing from a position of self-admitted weakness in a consistently strident, aggressive tone, all the while failing to identify NCA-rhetoric's very real disciplinary strengths. Worst sin of all, then, for a rhetorician, it is rhetorically inept.

Questions of Turf

16 An underlying problem may be that NCA-affiliated rhetoric has long been committed to a myth of disciplinary centrality that is increasingly difficult to sustain. As recounted by Leff, it is the myth of Speech as the sole disciplinary residence of rhetoric for much of the twentieth century. Said Leff, the "poor waif named rhetoric . . . had been banished from Europe and had found an

academic home only in a new and unstable fiefdom known as the American Department of Speech."[21] It is only within the framework of this master narrative that one can understand the historical accounts provided by Gaonkar in his flagship essay for *Rhetorical Hermeneutics*, "The Idea of Rhetoric in the Rhetoric of Science" (IRRS). By Gaonkar's reckoning, rhetorical criticism begins with Wicheln's "inaugural essay" and continues from Black to Leff; similarly, contemporary rhetorical theory has moved from "Bryant through Bitzer to Farrell."[22]

17 I mean no disrespect to my colleagues in suggesting that the story told by Leff and filled in by Gaonkar leaves unexplained the rebirth of rhetoric in Europe and in Departments of English within the United States. Moreover, as both have acknowledged, the rhetorical turn applied to scholarly inquiry (rhetoric of science included) is spread across a dozen or more disciplines. As I argued in my critique of IRRS, too much that the wider scholarly world credits to contemporary rhetorical theory, criticism, and pedagogy falls outside NCA for the myth of NCA-rhetoric's centrality to be sustained. Indeed even the three NCA-affiliated authors of *Current Perspectives on Rhetoric* offer separate chapters on "outsiders" to NCA-rhetoric, none to "insiders." Included are Richards, Weaver, Toulmin, Perelman, Grassi, Burke, Foucault, and Habermas. And, as I argued in my review, these authors could have also devoted chapters to Barthes, Booth, de Man, Fish, Kennedy, McCloskey, McKeon, Barbara Herrnstein Smith, Vickers, and James Boyd White – again excluding anyone reared in or directly affiliated with NCA.[23]

18 Let us return, then, to the substantive issues that *should* have been addressed in "A Response to Simons." Gross and Keith had claimed in their introduction to *Rhetorical Hermeneutics* that Gaonkar's arguments would be so intellectually coercive as to prevent a broad constituency of scholars from continuing to work in their usual ways.[24] But in my review of *Rhetorical Hermeneutics*, I called attention to fallacies, inconsistencies, and lack of evidence by Gaonkar for sweeping generalizations.

19 These problems were not insubstantial, and hence I want to take the liberty of repeating them here. Gaonkar, I maintained, had built his critique of a globalized, hermeneutically oriented rhetoric on an infirm foundation. The entire argument was like a house of cards, poorly supported at each stage of its flimsy construction and hence highly vulnerable to collapse. Key terms such as "translatability" and "thin vocabulary" had been left vague or

ambiguous, while key assumptions went undefended. Among these was the assumption that Aristotle's rhetorical theory – indeed an essentialist version of that theory – was central to the tasks of rhetorical criticism.[25] Another assumption was that alleged inadequacies in rhetorical theory's critical-hermeneutic vocabulary were beyond repair. By these "straw person" assumptions, the project of globalization was set up to fail.

20 Gaonkar's use of rhetoric of science as the test case for "Big Rhetoric" was also fallacious in the formal sense, for it assumed that failure to meet what was alleged to be the toughest test would thereby invalidate the entire globalization project – this through a kind of reversal of the *a fortiori* argument.[26] Just why it is that Gaonkar was offering these arguments was left somewhat unclear. The most obvious explanation is that he had serious misgivings about the movement toward globalization, but Gaonkar demurred in places. I charged him with having been systematically inconsistent on this issue, and inconsistent too with an earlier, prize-winning essay in which he had heaped high praise on globalization. Finally, with naught but a sneer, Gaonkar had dismissed neo-Aristotelian and Burkeian rhetorical criticism as unproductive and rhetoric of science as "stalled." John Angus Campbell credited Gaonkar's "signature substitution of assertion and pure pose for argument as admirable."[27] I did not.[28]

Faulty Logics

21 Indeed I confess to having been disappointed with IRRS and another entry by Gaonkar, as with the sycophantic readings of them by several contributors to Gross and Keith's *Rhetorical Hermeneutics*. Hence I had hoped to find in "A Response to Simons" some acknowledgment of the merits of my arguments; either that or a spirited rebuttal. But, confronted with my critique, Keith and company shifted to what Cherwitz and Hikins have aptly called "the argument from disciplinary consequence." That is, they turned away from the veracity of my claims, focusing instead on their disciplinary consequences.[29] "We have no desire," said Keith *et al.*, "to perpetuate a dispute about who has sufficient proof to support this or that claim. Instead, believing that Simons's anger is misdirected, we want to stress the importance of the issues that Gaonkar raises for our disciplinary self-understanding."[30]

22 In shifting ground, as they did, Keith *et al*. mistakenly assumed that my critique of Gaonkar in *Rhetorical Hermeneutics* was irrelevant to our disciplinary self-understanding. They

compounded this error by failing to look beyond rhetoric's globalization for problems with rhetoric's critical-hermeneutic vocabulary and by begging the question as to whether a globalized rhetoric must of necessity be "incoherent," "watered down," a rhetorical scholarship incapable of growth.

23 A recurring argument in IRRS and in the "Response to Simons" is that a globalized rhetoric trivializes rhetorical scholarship. Said Keith and company, "If everything is rhetoric/rhetorical, then it is neither informative nor interesting [to] be told that a practice/discourse/institution is rhetorical. *Si Omnia, nulla*. [If everything, nothing.]"[31] But this claim conflates "being told" that a given act or artifact or discourse formation is rhetorical (at best a useful first step) with being shown how it functions rhetorically and why that is important. Merely asserting, for example, that placebo treatments persuade (i.e., are rhetorical) is no longer newsworthy, if it ever was. But viewing the placebo treatment as a rhetorical genre, exploring its "staging" in medicine or psychotherapy as a kind of sham realism, considering thereby the relationship between the rhetorical and the real or ostensibly real, examining the delegitimating effects of placebo treatments in research that succeed too well, and the "public relations" efforts of health professions that seek to explain them away: all this can make of the proverbial sugar pill a rich resource for rhetorical inquiry.[32] Just so with other recent objects of rhetorical inquiry, such as claims-making by biologists about the discovery of new species. Alan Gross's own work on "Taxonomic Language" as applied to species identification provides a splendid example of the perspectives by incongruity that a globalized approach to rhetoric makes possible.[33]

24 Says Edward Schiappa in his own response to critiques of Big Rhetoric, "To define a term broadly does not necessarily make the term meaningless or useless. What is significant about the rhetorical turn is not that everything is 'rhetoric,' but that a rhetorical perspective and vocabulary potentially can be used to describe a wide variety of phenomena. Why is this such a bad thing?"[34] Why indeed? If it is bad, Gross must surely be among the worst offenders, for his essay on species identification aims at reconstructing the central concepts of evolutionary taxonomy "rhetorically, without remainder."[35] Schiappa likens the rhetorical perspective to efforts by presocratic philosophers to redescribe the world in physical rather than religious terms: "Now, 2600 years later, most of the sciences are still informed by the general notion that almost everything can be described as "physical." Where is

the problem? When was "physics" ever in danger of losing its disciplinary authority?"[36]

25 Far from trivializing rhetorical scholarship, the globalization of rhetoric has earned it a place at several academic tables, including science studies, culture studies, legal studies, media criticism, literary criticism, ideology critique, news journalism, photojournalism, organizational communication, religion, and psychotherapy.[37] The rhetorical turn is part and parcel of what Clifford Geertz has called the "reconfiguration of social thought," involving a "sea-change" in "the way we think about how we think," from the dominance of technology metaphors to those of game, text, drama, and others drawn from the humanities.[38]

26 Here the sophistic influence has been prominent, as Leff has noted.[39] Indeed the contemporary challenges to traditional philosophy by relativists, social constructionists, and postmodern skeptics can usefully be recast as a continuation of the debate over philosophy versus rhetoric between Plato and the sophists of ancient Greece.[40] The sophistic influence is at work, for example, in critiques of traditional philosophy as engaging in a recurrent pattern of question-begging about its own taken-for-granted assumptions. It is work as well in neo-sophistic challenges to the objectivist and foundationalist presuppositions of traditional philosophy, leaving open the possibility of viewing much of scholarly inquiry as involving rhetorical ways of coming to judgment and of bringing others to those judgments. Ironically this ostensible gain for rhetoric is at the heart of Keith *et al.*'s lament. All would be well if only the major contributions to the "rhetorical return" had come from NCA-affiliated rhetoricians. But the principal contributors – those like Stanley Fish, B.H. Smith, and J.B. White – have come from outside the fold, and they have not been particularly prone to cite NCA-affiliated scholarship or to draw upon the lexicon of classical terms which Keith and others maintained was central to rhetoric's claim to disciplinary distinctiveness.

27 How important is it that rhetoricians employ the classical lexicon in their scholarship? Should NCA-affiliated rhetoricians take pains to introduce the classical tradition's distinctive rhetorical vocabulary into their teaching?[41] I posed these and related questions at the 2002 NCA convention in New Orleans to Edward Schiappa, Robert Ivie, and David Zarefsky – not a representative sample, but an impressive one – all of whom agreed to go on the

record.[42]

28 As regards specific terms in the rhetorical lexicon, Schiappa is a pragmatist, or, as he put it, a "terminological Darwinist." "We use vocabularies that work for us, that accomplish our ends; and if there are other terms that work better for some reason, so be it. Disciplines progress (for the most part) through greater specialization, and that specialization usually entails a richer and more technical vocabulary. If the language of classical rhetoric no longer does what we need it to do, or if other language works better, again, so be it."

29 Like Schiappa, Ivie finds himself using explicitly rhetorical terms selectively, seeking to "avoid an overly jargonized fetish with our field's 'technical' terms but also trying to take advantage of their heuristic value for engaging in rhetorical critique of public culture. Often the terms I draw upon – tropes such as metaphor and metonymy – are in broader use already across disciplines and thus not subject to disciplinary parochialism." Ivie adds:

> Insofar as the question is what we teach, I think it is very important to expose students to the body of rhetorical theory from pre-modern, classical times through post-modern adaptations. I teach a graduate course on Vico-Nietzsche-Perelman-Burke, for example, to give students a strong intellectual background in rhetorical approaches to cultural production that are explicitly an alternative to the high modernist diminishment of rhetoric. My attitude is to engage other discourses that share a rhetorical sensitivity, in a broad sense, neither giving up my specifically rhetorical heuristics nor insisting exclusively on their articulation in the classical tradition. I think of Kenneth Burke as an example of someone who recovered the rhetorical tradition for contemporary use, not only bringing back the language of persuasion for studying the dynamic of social division and identification but also drawing into that tradition terminologies that had been invented in other disciplines.

30 David Zarefsky allows that he sometimes refrained from use of the rhetorical lexicon in his scholarship so as to reach a wider audience. He has much the same policy as regards teaching in a professional Master's degree program (as opposed to teaching his

own majors). He says:

> In my opinion it is the quality of our insight and not our technical vocabulary on which we ultimately will stand or fall. I would rather engage in dialogue with historians and political scientists than isolate myself by technical vocabulary. This does not mean that I am afraid of using rhetorical terms and concepts, and I do so when I think it helps understanding. But, in my opinion, what wins legitimacy for our discipline is the recognition by others that our scholars have something important and distinctive to say. I think it is our rich explication of the relationship between texts and contexts, not our distinctive vocabulary, that enables us to do that.

But, if what matters most is rhetorical sensitivity, or an ability to explicate relationships between texts and contexts, then "outsiders" who never imagined themselves to be rhetoricians might be able to do as well. Zarefsky was inclined to agree. This brings us back to the concerns expressed by Keith and company, calling into question their protectionist logic.

Looking to the Future

31 Like any academic tradition, rhetoric-as-discipline is in perpetual need of renewal and reinvention. This may in turn require rhetorical sensitivity to new kinds of texts and to changing contexts, as well as a readiness to abandon old terms and old understandings of terms for newer, more serviceable ones. Disciplinary lexicons are important, but there is little reason to believe that the Darwinian process of which Schiappa speaks is more likely to be advanced by pulling in the conceptual wagons. Consider the alternative possibility: that enrichment of the "critical-hermeneutic" vocabulary and eventual disambiguation might accrue from broader usage and from commerce with other fields – from free trade rather than protectionism. A fine example of terminological enrichment is Gaonkar's forum for the *Quarterly Journal of Speech* in November of 2002 on the idea of the "public," featuring, as it happens, an English professor rather than a rhetorician associated with NCA or a department of communication. The Michael Warner piece provides a model of the *management* of conceptual ambiguity, gained by a combination of broad application and precise delineation.[43]

32 In reviewing *Rhetorical Hermeneutics*, I offered a number of constructive suggestions on the implications of taking rhetorical globalization seriously. One of these was that we in speech communication become shameless borrowers of concepts and theories from others, while at the same time making it difficult if not impossible for them to ignore our contributions. We should, for example, represent the best work on a topic, from whatever origins, and not simply cite in our journal articles or include in our anthologies only NCA-affiliated rhetorical scholarship.[44] We should also introduce our graduate students to controversies about rhetoric in other disciplines, such as debates within philosophy and the social sciences about rhetoric's role in the social construction of reality.[45] Too often we NCA-affiliated rhetoricians ignore disputes, such as between strict constructionists and contextual constructionists," that ought to occupy a central place in our theorizing and research.[46] These and other such suggestions are dismissed by Keith *et al*. as "the warm haze of interdisciplinary ambiguity."[47]

33 These issues call for coolheaded consideration, rather than curt dismissal. Do we not have an obligation to our students, if not to ourselves, to represent the best in rhetorical scholarship, and to introduce them to controversies about rhetoric outside our immediate field? One would think that the answers to both these questions would be a quick and emphatic yes! Yet preoccupation with disciplinary consequences seems to have been the subtext even of Gaonkar's IRRS essay. As I remarked in my review of *Rhetorical Hermeneutics*, too much of IRRS is about disciplinary recognition, visibility, reputation, status, with "discipline" being narrowly defined. Barely acknowledged were the substantive contributions to the rhetoric of science by those "outside the pale" – such as Latour and Woolgar or Nelson, Megill, and McCloskey – on whom Gaonkar had heaped praise in "Rhetoric and its Double."[48]

34 In my review, I also put forward a vision for a reinvigorated NCA-style approach to rhetoric. Let us prepare our undergraduates, I suggested, not just for the career marketplace, but also for the life of the mind, and for civic engagement. Let us do so in ways quite familiar to us, yet not always rewarded, for example, by cultivating both rudimentary and advanced skills at public speaking, discussion, and debate.

35 A potentially useful model is the Temple Issues Forum, including its extracurricular student arm, the TIF Debate and Discussion

Club.[49] Its professionally produced "highlights" video of a day-long "Bombings and Beyond" forum has been shown at various conferences and colloquia. (It is available for viewing elsewhere.) The forum was held just two days after the 9/11 terrorist attacks. It featured faculty and students deliberating together on media coverage of the attacks, on America's choices, and on the role of the University in times of crisis. The Debate and Discussion Club not only prepares undergraduates to compete in tournament events, but also provides instruction via its Public Debate and Discussion component on how to organize, stage, and participate in public events such as the 9/13 forum. This is hands-on training that alerts the campus to values of rhetoric. It enlivens the campus and provides a counterstatement to university corporatization and careerism. At a recent day-long forum on "Invading Iraq," the Debate and Discussion Club supervised three panel discussions, each combining expertise with ideological balance. Members took turns serving as "talk show" moderators. Here is a model of rhetorical pedagogy that other campuses can surely emulate.

36 While providing positive models of rhetoric, however, our field needs also to attend to the darker, sophistic side of rhetoric – with a view, not to promote it, but to understand and evaluate it critically. Too often that sophistic side is denied or minimized, again for the sake of disciplinary legitimacy. Yet we ignore it to society's peril. I am thinking, for example, of the ways of mystification used to sanitize barbaric practices and to justify exploitation and oppression. Echoing Robert Hariman, I would urge a reframing of rhetoric's long history of marginalization. The idea is to show its downside and demonstrate opportunities to draw on its experiences. Kenneth Burke did that repeatedly – as in his analysis of "Hitler's 'Battle.'" Said Hariman, "As rhetoric is marginal, it also is a reservoir of power" – a zone of those potencies suppressed in our society."[50]

Conclusion

37 The arguments for disciplinary consequence put forward in "A Response to Simons" are counterproductive. Its authors betray disciplinary insecurity in the interests of claiming disciplinary centrality, distract attention from substantive issues much in need of attention, and invite the very sorts of unnecessary and potentially destructive conflict that they are at pains to denounce.

38 Regrettably the authors are by no means alone. The myth of speech as rhetoric's sole house of residence, its disciplinary center,

gets passed on from generation to generation of students, and even finds expression in Gaonkar's disciplinary histories of contemporary rhetorical theory and criticism. The sense of threat leads to an us-them orientation and a consequent pulling in of the wagons, prompting even Gaonkar to play down the contributions to rhetorical scholarship of those not in the NCA fraternity whom he had previously honored.

39 Symptomatic of the deepening malaise is the apparent enmity among many NCA-affiliated rhetoricians to cultural studies. By way of explaining the inclusion in the *Quarterly Journal of Speech* of "A Response to Simons," the editors reported that my essay had evoked a considerable response from the *QJS* readership, including a goodly number of "angry rhetors" who also worried "that their ancient discipline is being swallowed up by the leviathan of cultural studies." So caught up were the authors with battles real and imagined that they too miscast me as a cultural-studies groupie. Where in my fourteen pages of text, I wondered, was that written? Quite the contrary: I had challenged both the necessity and ultimate significance of a principle put forward by Gaonkar and generally associated with cultural studies. This is the notion that intentionality is an illusion, that agency is an ideology, that everything we might have assumed is individually authored (Darwin's *Origin*, for example) is really intertextual.

40 This is not to say that I am a rhetoric groupie. What I most regret is the pressure from both camps to choose sides. Much that they contribute is complementary or cross-cutting or mutually exclusive; very little requires choosing sides. Cultural studies lack traditional rhetoric's understanding of invention, argument, and style. Rhetoric lacks the understanding of power, including the language of power, evident in cultural studies. Neither is adequate for some tasks, such as managing long-term campaigns and movements; but the two together are better than either alone for other purposes, such as analyzing feminist rhetoric.

41 Why, then, can't those of us in Communication all get along? And if we must compete, why can't we display our wares rather than our wariness? This same question can be asked of rhetoricians from within and outside the National Communication Association. The possibilities for collaboration among NCA-affiliated rhetoricians and our rhetorician colleagues in English departments have surely been demonstrated at recent Rhetoric Society of America conferences, and with no friction whatsoever between proponents of "Big Rhetoric" and of a "restrained rhetoric" focused

on the civic arena.[51] So, too, has it been useful to bring together NCA-oriented rhetoricians with rhetorically oriented scholars from other fields at Iowa's symposia on rhetoric of inquiry, as at various international conferences on argumentation.

42 All this is to suggest that disciplinary rhetoric requires a hospitable disciplinary home (or perhaps more than one!) inviting to strangers and with permeable, flexible boundaries. So, too, must we do a better job of making our case to colleagues in other fields. Our disciplinary history – indeed most disciplinary histories – can offer few reassurances that we will succeed in turf battles through the argument from disciplinary consequence. We are more likely to succeed by responding as best we can to the call of scholarly and pedagogical responsibility.

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Notes

[1] Alan G. Gross and William M. Keith, eds., *Rhetorical Hermeneutics: Invention and Interpretation in the Age of Science*, Albany, State University of New York Press, 1997.

[2] William Keith, Steve Fuller, Alan Gross, and Michael Leff, "Taking Up the Challenge: A Response to Simons," *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 85, 4, November, 1999, pp. 330-338.

[3] NCA is the National Communication Association, formerly the Speech Communication Association, and before that the Speech Association of America. Its original base consisted of rhetoricians who taught public speaking and who identified rhetoric with the study of public address. Nearly all of its members are attached to departments of communication studies or speech communication (and related titles), and most of these departments include rhetorical studies as part of their curricula. But communication these days is typically understood to include much more than rhetorical studies, and rhetoric itself is undergoing disciplinary expansion and segmentation while also attracting increased interest from outside the field of communication. Relatively few of the "outsiders" are members of NCA, and some who are credited with having made significant contributions to the study of rhetoric do not even label themselves as rhetoricians: hence the current controversies over disciplinarity, disciplinary centrality, and disciplinary membership. Even the most sophisticated "boundary-workers" in the mapping of rhetoric's disciplinary domain trip over

their own "rhetoric of rhetoric." See my "Rhetorical Hermeneutics and the Project of Globalization," *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 85, 1, February, 1999, pp. 86-100, note 7 on p. 98. On the concept of boundary-work, see Thomas F Gieryn, "Boundary-Work and the Demarcation of Science from Non-Science: Strains and Interests in Professional Ideologies of Scientists," *American Sociological Review*, 48, 4, 1983, pp. 781-787.

[4] Keith and others, "Taking Up the Challenge," p. 332.

[5] *Ibid*., pp. 332-333.

[6] See Lloyd F. Bitzer and Edwin Black, eds., *The Prospect of Rhetoric: Report of the National Development Project*, Englewood Cliffs, NJ, Prentice-Hall, 1971.

[7] See Scott McLemee,"Making It 'Big,'" *Chronicle of Higher Education*, 50, 10, October 31, 2003, pp. A14-15.

[8] Dilip Gaonkar, "Rhetoric and Its Double: Reflections on the Rhetorical Turn in the Human Sciences," *The Rhetorical Turn*, Herbert W. Simons, ed., Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1990, pp. 341-366.

[9] Gaonkar, "Rhetoric and Its Double," p. 351.

[10] *Ibid*., p. 351.

[11] *Ibid*., p. 349.

[12] *Ibid*., p. 351.

[13] See Kenneth Burke: "Poetic Categories," *Attitudes Toward History*, Boston, Beacon Press, (1937), second edition, 1959, pp. 34-91; "The Rhetoric of Hitler's 'Battle,'" *The Philosophy of Literary Form*, Berkeley, University of California Press, (1941, 1967, third edition, 1973, pp. 191-220.

[14] John Lyne, "Bio-Rhetorics: Moralizing the Life Sciences," *The Rhetorical Turn*, pp. 35-57, on pp. 37-38.

[15] Gaonkar, "Rhetoric and Its Double," p. 353.

[16] *Ibid*., p. 352.

[17] See Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, (1962), second edition, 1970;

Wayne Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1961.

[18] Michael J. Hyde, "Introduction: Rhetorically We Dwell," *The Ethos of Rhetoric*, Michael J. Hyde, ed., Columbia, University of South Carolina Press, forthcoming, 2004.

[19] Indeed Robert Hariman remarks that rhetoric is the quintessentially suspect verbal discipline, forever in need of justifying itself and hence perpetually reinventing itself: "Status, Marginality, and Rhetorical Theory," *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 72, 1, February, 1986, pp. 38-54. In "The Rhetoric of Rhetoric: Six Tropes of Disciplinary Self-Constitution," *The Recovery of Rhetoric*, R. H. Roberts and J. M. M. Good, eds., London, Duckworth, 1993, pp. 61-84, Michael Cahn explains that what measure of legitimacy rhetoric achieved in ancient Greece accrued from a process of professionalization that included logography, paid lessons, and textbooks. But the case for rhetoric in those textbooks needed to be made subtly, adroitly, and non-confrontationally, lest a direct assault appear to be merely self-serving. The rhetoric of rhetoric's legitimation involved blurring the distinction between artist and art, elevating the artist while insisting on the need for artistic concealment, and balancing rhetoric's affirmation of technical rules with the caveat that rhetorical artistry depended ultimately on an unanalyzable capacity for success, the magic of timing. Thus did classical rhetoric assert its status as a *techne* while retaining what these days we might call the escape hatch of non-falsifiability.

[20] Tim Behme, a graduate student at the University of Minnesota, has done a nice job of illustrating this point in an unpublished classroom seminar paper on "Presidential Addresses at NCA." He compared seventeen of the past twenty presidential addresses to the National Communication Association with thirteen presidential addresses presented between 1983 and 2000 to the American Psychological Association. Both sets spoke to disciplinary concerns, but the NCA addresses tended to be preoccupied with disciplinary survival, whereas the APA addresses stressed what the discipline could do to serve society better. Five of the thirteen were scholarly treatises, a further indication of disciplinary security. This is not to suggest that the NCA in general or NCA-affiliated rhetoric in particular are in a position to emulate the better positioned APA. Rather it is to illustrate by contrast the rhetorical dilemma that leaders of lower status disciplines confront. Still, preoccupation with disciplinary identity and turf

may not be the most effective response to the dilemma. Says Behme, "I really like Zarefsky's address because he uses analogies to diagnose society's problems in relation to itself."

[21] Michael Leff, "The Habitation of Rhetoric," *Contemporary Rhetorical Theory*, John Louis Lucaites, Celeste Michelle Condit, and Sally Caudill, eds., New York, Guilford, 1999, p. 55.

[22] Dilip Gaonkar, "The Idea of Rhetoric in the Rhetoric of Science," *Rhetorical Hermeneutics*, pp. 31-32.

[23] Sonia K. Foss, Karen A. Foss, and Robert Trapp, eds., *Contemporary Perspectives on Rhetoric*, Prospect Heights, IL, Waveland, 1985.

[24] In *Rhetorical Hermeneutics* (pp. 6-7), Gross and Keith summarize in four claims the heart of IRRS's skeptical response to the tide of globalization: (1) "Rhetoric's essential character, as defined by both Aristotelian and Ciceronian tradition, consists in generating and giving speeches, not interpreting them – and certainly not interpreting texts in general." (2) "The productive orientation of rhetorical theory, as traditionally conceived, requires a strategic model of persuasive speech, one in which the agency of the author controls the communication transaction. Such a view is plausible only in ancient fora or their contemporary analogues." (3) "As a consequence of its traditional focus on production, rather than interpretation, rhetorical theory is 'thin.' The amount of specification necessary for a handbook like the *Rhetoric* is less than that needed for a critical theory. Because rhetoric's central terms – e.g., *topos, pisteis, enthymeme* – elude precise definition, there are few constraints on them. Consequently, they are open to unbounded use. With so few constraints on interpretation, there can never be enough evidence for legitimate interpretive consensus. The thinness of rhetorical theory, then, enables its *globalization*, its extension to every instance of text, artifact, or communication." And (4) "Globalization, in turn, is tied to a disciplinary anxiety. If rhetoric is in need of revival, that's because its identity has been erased (by philosophy, science, the Enlightenment, or whomever) and there is therefore the danger that marginality could be permanent, that is, the 'tradition' might be lost. But there is no need to worry: globalization is predicated on a circular strategy of recovering rhetoric as a universal phenomenon by prefiguring it as something *suppressed* or hidden. On this account, there are many 'rhetorical' theorists (e.g., Thomas Kuhn, Stephen Toulmin) who only use the

word occasionally and have no grounding in 'the tradition' – but we can see their work is *actually* rhetorical anyway, provided we can (re-)describe it properly."

[25] IRRS is oddly structured, I maintained. There is not much development of key terms and propositions. Instead the essay moves quickly through a series of questionable representations to engage a handful of essays in some detail: (1) Translatability (i.e., intelligibility) comes to stand for all hermeneutic criteria. (2) Aristotle and, to a lesser extent, Cicero represent the entire classical rhetorical tradition. (2) Rhetoric of science stands for the globalization approach. (4) Rhetoric of science in the NCA mode stands for all scholarship in rhetoric of science. (5) Selected essays by Gross, Campbell, and Prelli represent all (NCA) rhetoric of science. And (6) a few features of these essays (e.g., ideology of agency) represents them as wholes. Thus IRSS is a complex argument exceptionally vulnerable to challenges of its representations and links at every stage.

[26] Why Gaonkar's choice of rhetoric of science? In *Rhetorical Hermeneutics*, Gross and Keith answer that "Gaonkar intends to test the assumptions underlying rhetorical theory and criticism for coherence, and so his best choice will be a[n] interpretive practice confined to a single disciplinary community" (p. 1). Gaonkar has chosen the rhetoric of science literature to test the scope and depth of these assumptions because this vanguard discipline is most likely to put the greatest strain on a globalized, hermeneutically oriented rhetoric's underlying theses, "forcing the underlying assumptive cracks to appear" (p. 1). Responding approvingly to Gaonkar's challenge, the editors say that, "If rhetoric can prove itself of explanatory value in the inner sanctums of physics and chemistry, its claims to wide scope become genuinely cogent" (p. 6). They take rhetoric of science to be the "hard" case (p. 6).

[27] John A. Campbell, "Response to Simons," *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 85, 1, February, 1999, pp. 101-103, on p. 101.

[28] I was delighted to discover yet another and more positive turn in Gaonkar's ruminations about rhetoric in his introduction to "The Forum: Publics and Counterpublics," *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 88, 4, November, 2002, pp. 410-412. Says Gaonkar on p. 410: "The practice of rhetorical criticism in the last three decades also is marked by a persistent attempt at theoretically informed methodological explorations. These explorations, initially goaded by the exemplary critical theory and practice of Kenneth Burke,

have cleared a space for a dialogue between the critical vocabulary of classical rhetoric and the newly emergent languages of criticism in the humanities, such as 'new criticism,' hermeneutics, ideologie-critique, critical theory, structuralism, reader-response theory, deconstruction, new historicism, and the like."

[29] See Cherwitz and Hikins, "Climbing the Academic Ladder: A Critique of Provincialism in Contemporary Rhetoric," *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 86, 4, November, 2000, pp. 375-385. I applaud the Cherwitz and Hikins introduction of the concept but not their chief application of it. The "argument from disciplinary consequence," they suggest, "appears less concerned about the veracity of its claims than about the perceived status of the discipline *vis-à-vis* others" (p. 376). They add, "Surely the principal test of a theory should be its soundness or veracity, not its consequences, unless those consequences bear on the tenets of the theory itself" (pp. 378-379). Ironically Cherwitz and Hikins themselves engage in this sort of rhetorical maneuvering when they identify their kind of philosophy, "traditional analytic philosophy," with the whole of philosophy. They would get an argument from within philosophy itself from hermeneuts, deconstructionists, Foucaultians, and Frankfurt School critical theorists – just to name a few. But my quarrel in this essay is not with Cherwitz and Hikins. Rather it is with those who treat NCA-affiliated rhetoric (and rhetoricians) as the seat or core or sole repositor of rhetoric-as-discipline, this in the interests of achieving victory over real or imagined rivals from within or outside rhetoric or the broader field of communication studies.

[30] Keith *et al.*, "Taking Up the Challenge," p. 330.

[31] *Ibid.*, p. 331.

[32] See Herbert W. Simons, "Distinguishing the Rhetorical from the Real: The Case of Psychotherapeutic Placebos," *Rhetoric in the Human Sciences*, Herbert W. Simons, ed., London, Sage, 1989, pp. 109-118.

[33] See Alan Gross, *The Rhetoric of Science*, Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 1990, pp. 33-53.

[34] Edward Schiappa, "Second Thoughts on the Critiques of Big Rhetoric," *Philosophy and Rhetoric*, 34, 2001, pp. 260-274.

[35] Gross, *The Rhetoric of Science*, p. 33.

[36] Schiappa, "Second Thoughts," p. 264.

[37] See Simons, ed., *The Rhetorical Turn*.

[38] See Clifford Geertz, "Blurred Genres: The Reconfiguration of Social Thought," *American Scholar*, 49, 2, Spring, 1980, pp. 165-189.

[39] See Michael C. Leff, "Modern Sophistic and the Unity of Rhetoric," *The Rhetoric of the Human Sciences*, John S. Nelson, Allan Megill, and D. N. McCloskey, eds., Madison, University of Wisconsin Press, 1987, pp. 19-37.

[40] See Herbert W. Simons, "The Rhetoric of Philosophical Incommensurability," *The Rhetoric of Scientific Incommensurability*, Randy Harris, ed., Albany, State University of New York Press, forthcoming.

[41] I agree with Keith *et al*. that use or avoidance of the vocabulary has "turf" implications. Indeed I have had to confront the trade-offs myself in choosing whether to fight for retention of an undergraduate "Rhetorical Theory" course in my department's increasingly career-oriented curriculum or to introduce rhetorical theories under the more marketable banner of "Theories of Public Communication." In an earlier incarnation, my department proudly called itself "Rhetoric and Communication," but it is soon to become "Strategic and Organizational Communication." We will get more majors by "SOC"-ing it to them, although only a small percentage are likely to concentrate in rhetorical studies (i.e., "Public Communication."). Meanwhile I am likely to introduce my field to strangers as "communication" rather than "rhetoric" or to work for a laugh by describing myself as an "expert at persuasion."

[42] Emails, December 2, 2002.

[43] See Michael Warner, "Publics and Counterpublics," *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 88, 4, November, 2002, pp. 413-425.

[44] Highly questionable in my view, for example, is the nearly exclusive reliance on work by NCA-affiliated rhetoricians in Charles Morris and Stephen Browne's *Readings on the Rhetoric of Social Protest*, University Park, PA, Strada, 2001. Missing from that anthology are theory and research by historians and social scientists, which could be of inestimable value in rhetorical case studies. I am thinking here, for example, of Jaspers' "normative" view of protest, Klandermans on predictors of successful

mobilization, Gamson on correlates of successful protest, Charles Tilly on repertoires of contention, Snow and his colleague on frame utilization, and McAdam on innovative tactics. See James M. Jasper, *The Art of Moral Protest*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1997; Doug McAdam and David A. Snow, *Social Movements*, Los Angeles, Roxbury, 1997.

[45] To be sure, this is already the practice in many if not most communication departments.

[46] See Gale Miller and James A. Holstein, eds., *Constructionist Controversies*, New York, Aldine de Gruyter, 1993.

[47] Keith *et al*., "Taking Up the Challenge," p. 330.

[48] Gaonkar, "Rhetoric and Its Double," pp. 341-366.

[49] For a detailed report on the Temple Issues Forum and its student arm, see G. Hauser and A. Grim, eds., *Rhetorical Democracy: Discursive Practices of Civic Engagement*, Mahwah, NJ, Lawrence Erlbaum, 2003. Also see http://www.temple.edu/tif.

[50] Hariman, "Status, Marginality, and Rhetorical Theory."

[51] Ironically, in making a case for a globalized approach to rhetoric, an approach that made room for its sophistic, shadow self, I never intended to demean speech communication's traditional interest in the rhetoric of the civic arena. Indeed the case for a "restrained rhetoric" in the public address tradition of speech communication is not without merit. I read the most trenchant critiques of rhetoric's globalization as laments about the loss of meaning, as found not just in shared definitions but in shared understandings and shared memories tied to rhetoric as public address and as a body of theory about public address. I read these critics as concerned not just about vagueness but about ambiguity, such that disputants can quarrel endlessly and irrationally, each from a different conception of rhetoric. But these very legitimate concerns get short shrift in the "Response to Simons." Neither do Keith *et al*. consider the possibility, briefly discussed in my review of *Rhetorical Hermeneutics*, that we may be able to evolve parallel cultures of meaning as regards other arenas than public address, such as rhetoric of science.