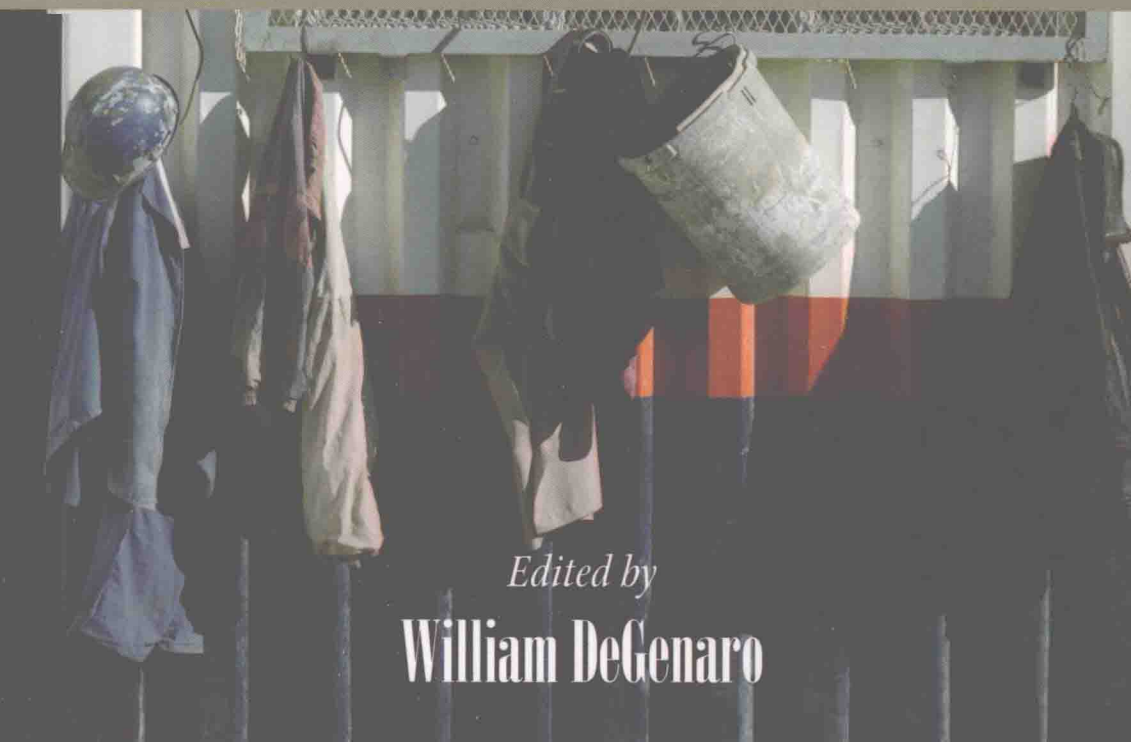


Who Says?

WORKING-CLASS RHETORIC,
CLASS CONSCIOUSNESS,
AND COMMUNITY



Edited by

William DeGenaro

Who Says?

Working-Class Rhetoric,
Class Consciousness,
and Community

EDITED BY

William DeGenaro

University of Pittsburgh Press

Published by the University of Pittsburgh Press, Pittsburgh PA 15260

Copyright © 2007, University of Pittsburgh Press

All rights reserved

Manufactured in the United States of America

Printed on acid-free paper

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS CATALOGING-IN-PUBLICATION DATA

Who says? : working-class rhetoric, class consciousness, and community /

edited by William DeGenaro.

p. cm. — (Pittsburgh series in composition, literacy, and culture)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0-8229-5938-0 (pbk. : acid-free paper)

1. English language—Discourse analysis. 2. English language—Rhetoric.
3. English language—Social aspects. 4. English language—Variation.

I. DeGenaro, William.

PE1422.W56 2007

420.1'41—dc22

2006026044

Who Says?

Pittsburgh Series in Composition, Literacy, and Culture

*David Bartholomae and Jean Ferguson Carr,
Editors*

Acknowledgments

I am grateful to the Miami University College of Arts and Sciences for providing a generous summer grant that made *Who Says?* possible. Specifically, Pete Martin, Lee Sanders, and John Skillings all supported this project and deemed it worthy of summer support. Thanks, also, to Lynn Bloom, Jim Catano, Cindy Lewiecki-Wilson, Tom Miller, Irv Peckham, Kate Ronald, John Tassoni, Tilly Warnock, Ed White, and Morris Young, giving colleagues who offered guidance and advice about the writing and editing processes.

Special thanks go to two friends and mentors from the Youngstown State University Center for Working-Class Studies, Sherry Linkon and Linda Strom, who introduced me to the rich interdisciplinary field of working-class studies. The smart and dedicated participants of the CCCC Working-Class Studies Special Interest Group and its listserv provided engaging discussion and debate. Ken McAllister opened my eyes to new theoretical possibilities. Mike Rose taught me that scholarship can matter. Finally, Lew Caccia, my good friend and collaborator, was a constant sounding board and voice of reason.

The University of Pittsburgh Press has been supportive of this project from the beginning and I owe David Bartholomae, Jean Ferguson Carr, Deborah Meade, Cynthia Miller, Nina Sadd, and Kendra Boileau a hearty thanks.

Last but certainly not least, this book would not exist without the wisdom, guidance, and red pen of Nicole Smithson.

Contents

Acknowledgments	vii
-----------------	-----

Introduction: What Are Working-Class Rhetorics? <i>William DeGenaro</i>	1
----------------------------------------------------------------------------	---

Part I. Toward a Working-Class Rhetorical Tradition

Articulating the Values of Labor and Laboring: Civic Rhetoric and Heritage Tourism <i>James V. Catano</i>	11
-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	----

“Miners Starve, Idle or Working”: Working-Class Rhetoric of the Early Twentieth Century <i>Judith D. Hoover</i>	32
-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	----

“Don’t Let Them Step on You”: Gender, Class, and Ethnicity in the Rhetoric of the Great Strikes, 1909–1913 <i>Anne F. Mattina</i>	47
--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	----

Unsettling Working-Class Commonplaces in Jane Addams’s Settlement House Rhetoric <i>Melissa J. Fiesta</i>	69
-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	----

The Culture of Steel and Memory: A Rhetorical Analysis of the Youngstown Historical Center of Industry and Labor <i>Anthony Esposito</i>	88
---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	----

Part II. Rhetorics of the Workplace

The Rhetoric of Migrant Farmworkers <i>Emily Plec</i>	107
----------------------------------------------------------	-----

Miles of Trials: The Life and Livelihood of the Long-Haul Trucker <i>Melanie Bailey Mills</i>	127
-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-----

Rhetoric on the Concrete Pour: The Dance of Decision Making <i>Dale Cyphert</i>	144
---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-----

Workplace Risk Communication: A Look at Literate Practice within Rhetorical Frameworks <i>Lew Caccia</i>	164
----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-----

Problematic Providing and Protecting: The Occupational Narrative of the Working Class <i>Kristen Lucas</i>	180
------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-----

Part III. Rhetorical Critiques of Working-Class Pop Culture

The Rhetorics of Reality TV and the Feminization of Working-Class Identity <i>Catherine Chaput</i>	203
----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-----

The Rhetoric of "I Have a Dream": The Remix <i>Kermit Campbell</i>	226
-----------------------------------------------------------------------	-----

Fatness as the Embodiment of Working-Class Rhetoric <i>Kathleen LeBesco</i>	238
--------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-----

Establishing Counterhegemony through Narrative: The Comic Books of the Congress of Industrial Organizations <i>Steve Martin</i>	256
------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-----

Conclusion: Working-Class Rhetoric as Ethnographic Subject <i>Julie Lindquist</i>	271
-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-----

List of Contributors	287
----------------------	-----

Index	291
-------	-----

William DeGenaro

Introduction

What Are Working-Class Rhetorics?

The study of rhetoric most often takes the form of the study of elite figures, communities, traditions, and tropes. Rhetoricians analyze speech patterns, rhetorical strategies, oral and literate practices, argumentation styles, and rehearsals of dominant or dissenting ideologies among privileged practitioners of rhetoric. Inertia has kept scholars focused on those privileged enough to have access to the resources—generally speaking, time, treasure, and technology—that facilitate partaking in public speech acts. So even a casual glance at major journals and monographs in the field(s) of rhetoric reveals an abundance of work on politicians, highbrow intellectuals, educators, mainstream religious leaders, movers and shakers. Quintillian’s “good man speaking well” is still with us. Attempts to canonize a rhetorical tradition have resulted in a mythic history of rhetoric comprised of a history of intellectualism (Plato to Cicero to Augustine to Ramus to Vico to Derrida) and a history that privileges theorizing. This history contains an inherent and often explicit streak of elitism, often characterized by a disdain for physical labor and the people who partake in such work.

The Aristotle Example

Rhetoricians often point to Aristotle as the grand patriarch of rhetoric as a discipline. James Berlin has brilliantly contextualized Aristotle’s life and work within the Athenian political economy, pointing out

for example that Aristotle and his fellow thinkers saw leisure and comfort as keys to the good life. To be privileged not only meant comfort, it meant possessing the potential to be morally upright (59). Dominant ideology of the time dictated that physical labor detracted from the ability to be virtuous. The logic went like this: If members of the banausic class—manual laborers—used their hands, they probably did not use their minds. Balme suggests that Aristotle and his contemporaries viewed contemplation as *arete*, a greatness or perfection. They looked upon hard work, though necessary, as reprehensible “both on moral grounds (banausic crafts deform both body and soul) and on practical grounds (manual labor and trade do not allow the leisure necessary for taking part in politics)” (141).

As in the Judeo-Christian tradition, work represented punishment for Athenians. In the Genesis story, of course, God punishes Adam with labor. Similarly, in Hesiod, the gods punish Prometheus for stealing fire by making humankind work (Balme 142). Wood and Wood suggest that the banausic class lacked the divine birth (the elite claimed to be descended from the gods) necessary to lead Athens. In *Class Ideology and Ancient Political Theory*, Wood and Wood write, “An important component of the ideology shared by the Socratics with many aristocrats was a deep-rooted hatred of democracy” (3). The polis placed an increasing amount of emphasis on civic values instead of kinship values, and this frightened well-born Athenians (25). In short, the democracy encouraged involvement in civic affairs regardless of identity and birth; civic participation was a goal worth striving for. The oligarchy (which notable rhetoricians like Isocrates and Plato supported), on the other hand, had as its *telos*, or end goal, the good life (Leyden 19). In the polis, Athenians likely considered work, though less than virtuous, to be a *techne*, a practical and useful art. Aristotle, it seems, disagreed.

On Rhetoric, often the starting point for explorations of rhetorical theory, is comprised of lecture notes from Aristotle’s tenure at the Lyceum. Aristotle taught students to take advantage of the “worst impulses” of the masses (Berlin 63). He asserted that pathetic appeals, though base, are effective rhetorical tools for persuading the nonspecialized and uneducated. Further, his criteria for judging an orator’s character include good birth. He proliferated the conventional wisdom of his era that said that members of the banausic class were destroying their own souls by neglecting their minds with physical labor. The common individual, according to Aristotle, is wicked (Wood and Wood 215). Not all those of good birth are virtuous, but in order to be virtuous one need be well-born. Good birth, as Aristotle explains in *On Rhetoric*, means that both parents are citizens and distinguished by wealth (220).

As such, Aristotle empowers the elite in the pages of *On Rhetoric*. In terms of the ethical appeal to the credibility and trustworthiness of the rhetor, Aristotle on one hand claims an audience should judge ethos by the rhetor's words. Yet when he gives us the criteria, they are largely based on "qualities derived from birth, wealth, and extensive education—that is, from experiences prior to the rhetorical situation" (Berlin 62–63). Even Aristotle's description of individual virtues largely employs an elitist criteria, such as ability to manage riches. Berlin writes, "the ethical proof *requires* membership in a privileged social class" (63, emphasis mine). When he turns to the pathetic appeal, the same bias exists. Though Aristotle explains that the use of pathos is base, the rhetor must use pathos since the nonspecialized audience is "deficient" and can't follow a complex, logical argument (62).

Aristotle explains that the end goal of deliberative rhetoric is *skopos*, or "happiness and its parts" (57). He goes on to include in his definition of happiness "abundance of possession." This definition is part of Aristotle's discussion of deliberative rhetoric, oratory concerned with political decision making. If the goal is a materialistic happiness, the implication seems to be that it is virtuous to use the political process to increase monetary possessions. Again, Aristotle's audience in this text is the elite young citizens of Athens. He essentially tells them that wealth is the *telos* of political rhetoric, a necessary constituent of happiness, the "one goal" of their communication with the masses.

Of course Aristotle discusses the constituents of happiness in some detail. Another part of happiness is good birth, the "legitimacy" of bloodlines—so the masses don't have the potential for happiness anyway, a convenient justification for their manipulation (58). Aristotle's discussion of wealth as a constituent of happiness deserves to be quoted at length:

The parts of wealth are abundance of cash, land, possession of tracts distinguished by number and size and beauty and also possession of implements and slaves and cattle distinguished by number and beauty; and all these things should be privately owned and securely held and freely employed and useful. Things that are productive are more useful, but things used for enjoyment are being freely employed; and by productive I mean what produces incomes, by enjoyable that from which there is no gain worth mentioning beyond the use of it. The definition of securely held is that which is possessed in such a place in such a way that use of it lies with the owner; and whether things are privately owned or not depends on who has the right of alienation, and by alienation I mean gift and sale. All in all, wealth consists more in use than in possession; for the actualization of the potentialities of such things and their use is wealth. (59)

Aristotle praises the joys of private ownership, including the ownership of slaves, as well as anything that produces income.

Not only does Aristotle empower the elite to strive for wealth as *arete*, he also stresses the importance of elite identity as a means to ethos construction. He explains in a somewhat vague manner that an orator must “be a certain kind of person” and be perceived as such (120). He goes on to explicate the effects that good birth, power, and wealth have on one’s rhetorical character (169–72). Aristotle admits that good birth is largely accidental and sometimes “degenerates into rather demented forms of character” but stresses it is a necessary component for strong ethos. Aristotle has a less glowing description of how wealth influences ethos, noting that the wealthy can become “insolent and arrogant” (170).

The Effect of Aristotle’s Legacy on Rhetoric

The scope of rhetoric has too often consisted of elites concerned more with theorizing and less with doing, more concerned with Lyceum students than with the banausic classes. This limited and limiting scope is particularly ironic, given that rhetoric is a living and breathing practice that takes place in real social contexts. Those interested in understanding both the practices and contexts of rhetorical acts in ancient and contemporary milieus and all points in between need a livelier dialectic with the so-called rhetorical tradition. Historian of rhetoric Thomas P. Miller calls for “a more dynamic relationship” with a multiplicity of traditions: “Instead of just the rhetorical tradition, we need to study the rhetoric of traditions—the ways that political parties, ethnic groups, social movements, and other discourse communities constitute and maintain the shared values and assumptions that authorize discourse. If we adopt this more broadly engaged approach, we can begin to make the discursive practices of marginalized traditions a central part of the history of rhetoric, and the history of rhetoric will then become more central to our interest in rhetoric as a social praxis” (26).

Miller argues that looking beyond the “fictional” rhetorical tradition at a broader range of social movements will allow scholars of rhetoric to build localized knowledge about an array of cultural experiences. Instead of just studying good men speaking well, Miller urges his readers to locate archives that rhetoricians can utilize to craft social histories and critical narratives of “suppressed traditions” (29). Further, Miller writes, understanding the complicated roles that rhetoric plays within local cultures can facilitate an understanding of how language authorizes and is authorized by dominant cultural values.

New and Alternative Rhetorics

One instance of the broadening of the rhetorical canon has been the movement toward “new rhetorics,” especially in the two collections *Defining the New Rhetorics* and *Professing the New Rhetorics: A Sourcebook*. In both collections, editors Theresa Enos and Stuart Brown elucidate the transformation of rhetoric from existing, at best, as a humanistic study of figures of speech and, at worst, a pejorative term for manipulation to rhetoric’s “honorific” status as a social-contextual field of study “that concerns inquiry and the making of knowledge, and the communication of that inquiry” (*Professing* ix). The new rhetorics movement implies a social turn, signaling widespread acceptance that language does not exist in a vacuum but rather in real, material contexts. Instead of using formalistic and logocentric methods such as neo-Aristotelian rhetorical analysis that approach texts and artifacts as static objects with fixed meanings, new rhetorics consider the dynamic interplay between text and context. Instead of glossing over context as a means to better understand the exalted text, rhetoricians seek to enhance understanding of *both* text and context. Yet the new rhetorics still conservatively adhere to a kind of “good man speaking well” ideology. Not only are the respective tables of contents in Enos and Brown composed largely of the familiar Western-patriarchal voices, the writers largely reflect elite backgrounds and scopes of study, primarily dominant thinkers discussing theoretical concepts (a notable exception is the inclusion of Paulo Freire’s and Donald Macedo’s critique of illiteracy in the United States).

If the “new rhetorics” movement might be credited with defining and facilitating rhetoric’s social turn, the “alternative rhetorics” movement has more explicitly—and with a more acute foregrounding of politics and ideology—sought to broaden the scope of the rhetorical tradition. Laura Gray-Rosendale and Sibylle Gruber, editors of the important anthology *Alternative Rhetorics: Challenges to the Rhetorical Tradition*, write, “*Alternative Rhetorics* is intended to make sure that we continue exploring new territories, territories that were considered negligible, unimportant, or nonexistent not too long ago” (3). Their collection deliberately positions the scholarship contained therein as “alternative” in the sense that there is an attempt to “disrupt and challenge the hierarchical nature of some traditional rhetorical studies while recognizing that such challenges are temporary and open to co-optation” (4). Contributors consider how race and ethnicity, gender and sexuality, and new technologies are creating alternative sites for researching and teaching rhetorical praxis. The rich contributions contained in *Al-*

ternative Rhetorics challenge elitism by looking at alternative sources but eschew social class by neglecting working-class voices.

Toward Working-Class Rhetorics

My intention is to continue the essential intellectual work begun by the new and alternative rhetorics movements by foregrounding working-class consciousness in the context of rhetorical scholarship. Working-class rhetorics appropriate the histories of rhetorics for a social and political program; that is, confronting the elitism that has characterized educational, political, and civic institutions throughout the Western tradition. Working-class rhetorics explicate the class struggle as it exists in rhetorical texts, paying attention to what rhetors say regarding social class and attempting to situate the discourse of those rhetors in their contemporary contexts. In order to serve a transformative function, working-class rhetorics move beyond simply the close reading and contextualizing of canonical texts. Rather, inspired by the discursive activity of labor unions, for example, working-class rhetorics agitate and antagonize the static words on the pages of rhetorical texts and suggest contemporary scholars invent their own class-conscious readings of such texts. Working-class rhetorics try to understand open-admissions students at our colleges and universities. Working-class rhetorics analyze the media and popular culture and consider how notions of class are circulated in the culture. Working-class rhetorics deconstruct literacy centers and workplaces, considering the intersections of language, ideology, and social action. Most of all, perhaps, working-class rhetorics possess a certain consciousness—an awareness that class (and, by extension, class division and class conflict) exists.

New Directions of Inquiry

I hope this text will move rhetorical inquiry in new directions and empower more class-conscious scholars to theorize the intersections of rhetoric and social class, to pursue historical-archival research in working-class settings, to conduct ethnographic studies of working-class communities, to focus critical eyes on popular culture phenomena germane to working-class life, to conduct workplace studies, and to critique both academic and everyday institutions with class-conscious vigor.

The chapters in this volume represent diverse methods and methodologies, just as the authors represent diverse disciplinary identities. The common bond,

I believe, is a working-class consciousness: an acknowledgment that class matters and that working-class cultures and traditions can teach rhetoricians about language, discourse, and society. The first section, *Toward a Working-Class Rhetorical Tradition*, contains contributions to ongoing disruptions of the homogeneous, fictional (to borrow Tom Miller's term) history of rhetoric. James Catano considers how various voices contribute to the "civic rhetoric" of heritage tourism sites. Judith Hoover and Anne Mattina examine the discursive strategies of garment workers and miners, respectively, during periods of upheaval. Melissa Fiеста turns to Jane Addams in order to theorize the complex role of commonplaces within working-class rhetorics. Finally, Anthony Esposito deconstructs memory and working-class identity by analyzing a steel museum in a de-industrialized Midwestern city.

In *Rhetorics of the Workplace*, contributors continue looking toward non-traditional sites of academic inquiry: workplaces. Emily Plec enacts an activist methodology as she considers how migrant farmworkers articulate material concerns such as economic justice and self-determination. Melanie Bailey Mills sketches the identity of the long-haul trucker by combining personal narrative, field research, and critiques of representations in popular culture. Dale Cyphert illuminates various "speech events" culled from her study of a concrete crew. Lew Caccia and Kristen Lucas provide new theoretical possibilities—risk communication and problematized providing and protecting, respectively—for understanding the rhetorics of the workplaces.

Finally, in *Rhetorical Critiques of Working-Class Pop Culture*, contributors come to grips with a diverse set of popular representations of working-class life and culture. Catherine Chaput turns to reality television as an example of how the culture industries feminize popular understandings of working-class identity. Kermit Campbell uses a scholarly exploration of Hip-hop to complicate the intersection of African American identity and working-class identity. Kathleen LeBesco claims that fatness is one of the key markers of working-class identity, arguing that Roseanne and Anna Nicole Smith embody challenges to our notions of citizenship and success. Lastly, Steve Martin analyzes a series of comic books published by the Congress of Industrial Organizations, looking at how the themes in the comics countered dominant cultural mythology.

All of these contributors have a sharp eye on the practical uses of rhetorical analysis. While they direct our gaze toward fresh, even surprising sites of inquiry, they also teach us why this inquiry is important. They demonstrate the value of locating archives and worksites and communities and textual represen-

tations pertinent to an understanding of the marker "working class." Rhetoricians can expose scholarly audiences to working-class voices—voices that have much to say about literacy, culture, identity, equality, and democracy. In short, class-conscious rhetorical scholarship can allow working-class voices to participate in important conversations. Furthermore, this "new" and "alternative" form of inquiry can shape the field in broad, bold ways. This potentiality for change is the subject of the concluding essay of this collection, in which Julie Lindquist, a leading scholar in ethnographic research methods, considers how working-class consciousness can lead the field(s) of rhetoric to new and exciting uses of methodologies derived from the social sciences.

WORKS CITED

- Aristotle. *On Rhetoric: A Theory of Civic Discourse*. Trans. George Kennedy. New York and Oxford: Oxford UP, 1991.
- Balme, Maurice. "Attitudes to Work and Leisure in Ancient Greece." *Greece & Rome* 31 (1984): 140–52.
- Berlin, James. "Aristotle's *Rhetoric* in Context: Interpreting Historically." *A Rhetoric of Doing: Essays on Written Discourse in Honor of James Kinneavy*. Ed. Stephen Witte, Neil Nakadate, and Roger Cherry. Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 1992. 55–64.
- Enos, Theresa, and Stuart Brown, eds. *Defining the New Rhetorics*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 1992.
- . *Professing the New Rhetorics: A Sourcebook*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1994.
- Gray-Rosendale, Laura, and Sibylle Gruber, eds. *Alternative Rhetorics: Challenges to the Rhetorical Tradition*. Albany: State U of New York P, 2001.
- Leyden, W. von. *Aristotle on Equality and Justice*. London: Macmillan, 1985.
- Miller, Thomas P. "Reinventing Rhetorical Traditions." *Learning from the Histories of Rhetoric: Essays in Honor of Winifred Bryan Horner*. Ed. Theresa Enos. Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 1993. 26–41.
- Wood, Ellen, and Neal Wood. *Class Ideology and Ancient Political Theory: Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle in Social Context*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1978.

Part I

Toward a Working-Class Rhetorical Tradition