SECOND EDITION

READINGS IN RHETORICAL CRITICISM

CARL R BURGCHARDT
EDITOR

Readings in Rhetorical Criticism

SECOND EDITION

Edited by

CARL R. BURGCHARDT
Colorado State University

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Preface

The second edition of this anthology, like the first, presents major approaches to rhetorical criticism and illustrates them for undergraduate and graduate students. When I first began work on *Readings in Rhetorical Criticism,* conversations with colleagues around the country led me to realize that many of us assign the same basic readings and address similar topics. Teachers who used the first edition confirmed my judgment that the book includes many of the most important and commonly assigned essays in the discipline.

While readers and reviewers endorsed the main concepts of the first edition, they also suggested several ways the book could be enriched. Their perceptive comments guided my efforts to make the new edition more useful for those who teach—and learn about—rhetorical criticism. While retaining the basic structure and approach of the first edition, therefore, I have replaced some of the original selections with essays that reflect more recent scholarship, are more accessible to students, or represent an approach more clearly.

In this edition, as in the first, I endeavored to (1) conform to a focused concept of rhetorical criticism; (2) offer a survey of pathbreaking essays that are most frequently cited in the literature; (3) provide access to some classic essays that are out of print or difficult to obtain; (4) introduce students to contemporary critical practice; and (5) present the major critical methods, approaches, and philosophies in an evenhanded way. The major controversies concerning rhetorical criticism are reflected in these pages, both in the chapters and in the "Additional Readings" section in the back of the book.

To include everything that merited anthologizing would have been impossible. Instead, I selected essays that would provide a starting point for discussion and could be supplemented in a variety of ways. I chose some essays because they are famous, others because they illustrate a concept particularly well or propose new critical directions. I preferred to use primary sources rather than secondary interpretations of major critical concepts. Finally, I attempted to find essays that refer to and challenge each other.

Most of the essays analyze traditional objects of criticism: speeches, essays, pamphlets, editorials, and the like. In order to represent more contemporary approaches, however, I also included some essays that criticize nontraditional objects, such as radio monologues, media coverage, architecture, and a medical journal.

Each chapter begins with headnotes that describe the selections briefly and explain how they are related to each other. These headnotes provide background information and alert the student to important issues in the essays included; however, I do not systematically outline the readings or attempt to describe all the salient points. I have attempted to prepare the student to read productively, but not to interfere unduly with the student's process of discovery.

The first and largest chapter in the book presents nine views of the purposes of rhetorical criticism. These essays, taken together, form the conceptual foundation for all the rest of the chapters, which often refer back to one or more of these trailblazing articles. Chapters 2–13 define and illustrate many of the most popular and enduring approaches to rhetorical criticism. Generally, each of these chapters presents an essay that proposes a particular approach or method, followed by one or more essays that apply and illustrate the theory.

The anthology can be assigned from the first page to the last, but is also flexible to alternative arrangements. Each chapter is designed to be a self-standing unit, and there is no presumption that students have read the chapters in order. For example, although Chapter 1 exists as an internally cohesive unit, individual instructors may prefer to combine specific readings from this chapter with later chapters in the book. Herbert A. Wichelns's "The Literary Criticism of Oratory" could be assigned with Chapter 2, "Neo-classical Criticism." The excerpts from Edwin Black's *Rhetorical Criticism* could be combined with Chapter 3, "Ethical Criticism." Raymie McKerrow's "Critical Rhetoric: Theory and Praxis" could be linked to Chapter 13, "Postmodern Criticism."

Another possible arrangement would be to group essays that analyze the same critical object from different perspectives. For example, in essays included in Chapters 2 and 3, Forbes Hill and Karlyn Kohrs Campbell use contrasting approaches to examine Richard Nixon's speech of November 3, 1969. Lincoln's rhetoric is critiqued in Chapters 2, 9, and 12, from neo-classical, genre, and close textual analysis approaches. The Lucaites and Condit essay in Chapter 10, "Ideographic Criticism," as well as the Campbell and Griffin articles in Chapter 11, "Feminist Criticism," analyze social movement discourse and could profitably be read in conjunction with Chapter 8, "Social Movement Criticism." The "Additional Readings" section lists other essays that use different methods to analyze the same critical object.

As editor, I attempted to reproduce the original essays faithfully. Optical scanning technology, in conjunction with several excellent proofreaders, were enormously helpful in accomplishing this goal. I corrected only minor typographical errors. Occasionally, I inserted "[*sic*]" to indicate unorthodox or archaic practices in the previously published sources. (When "[sic]" appears in roman type, the original essay included it.) For the sake of consistency, I converted all footnotes to endnotes.

Features of the New Edition

In revising this volume, I tried to update the readings, refine my classification of criticism, and, in general, create a more interesting, accessible, and relevant book for scholars, students, and teachers, while maintaining the basic structure and approach of the first edition.

First, in response to insightful comments from colleagues, I replaced or added some essays to represent major approaches more fully or clearly for students. For example, I have completely rebuilt Chapter 11, Feminist Criticism, to reflect more accurately the history and the diversity of this approach.

Second, I have introduced a few more recent illustrations of contemporary critical practices. Chapter 4, "Dramatistic Criticism," Chapter 5, "Fantasy Theme Analysis," Chapter 8, "Social Movement Criticism," and Chapter 11, "Feminist Criticism" include new essays that represent more recent scholarship.

Third, I aimed to maintain the wide-ranging subject matter and critical variety of the first edition. New essays use cutting-edge, as well as more established, methods to explore both historical and contemporary subjects, such as Mary Wollstonecraft, the nineteenth-century woman's rights movement, Cold War rhetoric, Dwight Eisenhower's Farewell Address, the twentieth-century women's liberation movement, the clash over hunting culture in Maine in the late 1980s, and Garrison Keillor's radio monologues.

Fourth, in the chapter introductions, I have tried to emphasize, once again, that the critical approaches represented in the book do not constitute mutually exclusive categories. Several selections reflect more than one critical perspective and could legitimately appear in more than one chapter. I have tried to structure the material in a way that invites students and teachers to discover multiple connections between the readings.

Finally, the "Additional Readings" list at the end of the book has been expanded and updated.

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Most books require the help of many people to reach completion. This is particularly true in the case of a large anthology such as *Readings in Rhetorical Criticism*. Throughout the project, I relied on the good will, generosity, dedication, and hard work of numerous individuals.

I wish to recognize the encouragement and sound advice of everyone who helped me with the first edition. The valuable contributions of these individuals carried forward into the second edition: Jacinta M. Behne, Colorado State University; William L. Benoit, University of Missouri; Lloyd F. Bitzer, University of Wisconsin–Madison; Edwin Black, University of Wisconsin–Madison; A. Cheree Carlson, Arizona State University; J. Robert Cox, University of North Carolina; Richard B. Gregg, Pennsylvania State University; Cindy L. Griffin, Colorado State University; Richard L. Johannesen, Northern Illinois University; Peter Kane, State University of New York, College at Brockport; David J. Kavalec, Colorado State University; Brenda K. Kuseski, Colorado State University; Randall A. Lake, University of Southern California; Michael C. Leff, Northwestern University; Bruce Loebs, Idaho State University; John Louis Lucaites, Indiana University; Stephen E. Lucas, University of Wisconsin–Madison; Daniel R. Lutz, Colorado State University; Roseann M. Mandziuk, Southwest Texas State University; Martin J. Medhurst, Texas A&M University; Tracey M. Owens, University of Utah; Edward A. Schiappa, University of Minnesota; Kara Shultz, Bloomsburg University; Pamela J. Tosch, Colorado State University; and Karen Whedbee, Purdue University.

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For the second time, Kathleen M. Domenig, editor and publisher of Strata, exceeded all my expectations. I am grateful for her attention to detail, dedication to quality, patience, tact, knowledge, encouragement, and friendship. She is simply the best.

Once again, I could not have finished this book without my wife, Jill C. Burgchardt. She provided professional, as well as emotional, sustenance. No husband could ask for more. My fifteen-year-old daughter Jane did most of the computer scanning and initial proofreading for the new essays in the second edition. She did a superb job, and I am exceedingly proud of her. I am grateful to my eleven-year-old daughter Lucy for being her delightful self. I wish to thank family friend Jan Deering for coming to my aid when I really needed help. As always, I thank my mother, Elva L. Burgchardt, for providing love and support from the beginning. She is a model of courage, intelligence, and devotion. I dedicate this book to the memory of my father, Carl R. Burgchardt, Jr. Dad believed in "doing things right." I hope I followed his example in writing this book as in all else.

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I

Purposes of Rhetorical Criticism

What is rhetorical criticism, and what are its legitimate purposes? This chapter presents some of the most important answers to these questions, beginning with Herbert A. Wichelns's famous definition of the activity and tracing its development through contemporary practice.

Wichelns's 1925 essay, "The Literary Criticism of Oratory," explains how to evaluate public speeches methodically. Further, it provides a rationale for speech communication as a separate discipline, distinguishable from English. Wichelns argues that there are important differences between literary and rhetorical criticism: Literary criticism is concerned with evaluating the wisdom, beauty, and truth contained in the great works of fiction, while rhetorical criticism is devoted to assessing the persuasive effect of situated oratory. Rhetorical criticism, according to Wichelns, focuses on discovering and appreciating how speakers adapt their ideas to particular audiences.

Ernest J. Wrage's 1947 article, "Public Address: A Study in Social and Intellectual History," broadens Wichelns's conception by claiming rhetorical criticism can make important contributions to social and intellectual history. Wrage notes that ideas are produced by particular historical contexts, are linked to change, and have social consequences. Thus, ideas should not be viewed primarily as disengaged concepts for scholars to ponder and appreciate in a vacuum. Wrage also claims ideas are expressed in many different forms—not just in the major philosophical, literary, or historical works. Specifically, the ideas, values, and beliefs of a culture are expressed in speeches. As a consequence, Wrage maintains, rhetorical critics can make valuable contributions to intellectual and social history because they are trained to understand the nuances of meaning that come from analyzing discourse in its historical context. Finally, Wrage advocates shifting rhetorical criticism from the "speaker centered" model of neo-classical critics to an "idea centered" basis. While the neo-classical critic attempts to understand how an individual speaker persuades an audience, Wrage urges the study of persuasion on a cultural level.

"The Study of Speeches," published by Wayland Maxfield Parrish in 1954, disagrees with the traditional prescription that a speech should be judged according to its actual effect on an immediate audience. Instead, Parrish argues that critics should evaluate the quality of a speech. According to Parrish, the effect of a speech is difficult to assess, but the quality of a speech can be determined separately from its actual impact on an audience. Parrish advocates relying upon the judgment of qualified critics, rather than trying to compute audience reactions. To support this view, he outlines the necessary education and qualifications of a competent judge.

Edwin Black's 1965 book, *Rhetorical Criticism: A Study in Method,* critiques traditional criticism as it had been commonly practiced for the preceding forty years. Black maintains that the neo-classical method (which he calls "neo-Aristotelian") is formulaic, unimaginative, and unnecessarily restrictive. Further, Black contends, the neo-Aristotelian critic must defer to the goals of the rhetor without evaluating them. He demonstrates the inherent limitations of the neo-Aristotelian approach through a case study of John Jay Chapman's "Coatesville Address." Black argues that a strict neo-Aristotelian critic would have to conclude that Chapman's eloquent speech is defective because it did not make an immediate impact. In other words, the standard topics of neo-Aristotelian criticism are inadequate to analyze the text. As a consequence, Black claims, neo-Aristotelianism is an unsatisfactory critical method.

Lloyd F. Bitzer's 1968 essay, "The Rhetorical Situation," provides another perspective on the purpose of rhetorical criticism. While Bitzer's article is primarily concerned with rhetorical theory, it has important implications for criticism. Bitzer focuses on the situation that calls rhetorical discourse into being, maintaining that an act is rhetorical because it responds to a situation of a certain kind. This "rhetorical situation" provides the basis for persuasive interaction. Instead of concentrating on the personality, motives, and background of the speaker, as the neo-classical method does, Bitzer implies the critic should objectively judge whether a speaker's response to a rhetorical situation is "fitting." Bitzer's analysis suggests a critic should not evaluate the quality of a speech in itself, but judge whether it is appropriate for a particular "exigence."

Lawrence W. Rosenfield's "The Anatomy of Critical Discourse," published in 1968, expands critical methodology. Rosenfield defines rhetorical criticism as a particular type of analytical argument that judges discourse in terms of defensible criteria. Rosenfield theorizes that four variables in public communication comprise the critical act: "source," "message," "environment," and "critic." He discusses the possible combinations of these factors that can result in meaningful criticism. While Rosenfield does not advocate a particular method, this essay argues implicitly for pluralism because of the many legitimate perspectives available to the critic. Rosenfield also proposes two basic "modalities" of criticism: "model" and "analog." Model modality is used when the critic compares an ideal version of a speech (the model) to the actual performance. Analog modality is used when one speech is compared to another. The critic then creates theoretical explanations to account for the similarities and differences between the speeches.

Stephen E. Lucas's 1981 essay, "The Schism in Rhetorical Scholarship," analyzes the relationship between history and criticism. Lucas disputes claims that "rhetorical criticism" and "rhetorical history" are fundamentally different methods of scholarship. According to Lucas, rhetorical criticism and history are complimentary rather than antagonistic. Indeed, he maintains, all objects for rhetorical study are inherently historical. He also argues that even an "intrinsic," close reading of a text cannot avoid external, contextual factors, including the assessment of effect. Lucas concludes that scholarly methods do not vary significantly between rhetorical history and rhetorical criticism.

Philip Wander's "The Ideological Turn in Modern Criticism," published in 1983, asserts that rhetorical analysis should introduce political ideology as a standard for judgment. Wander reviews the role of ideology in the critical literature, beginning with Wichelns, moving through Kenneth Burke, culminating in the sharp debate over Richard Nixon's rhetoric, and concluding with a discussion of

Martin Heidegger. Wander argues that critics should go beyond assessing the efficacy of political discourse; that instead, they should openly challenge rhetorical purposes if they are corrupt. In light of real crises in the world, such as famine, war, racism, oppression, and environmental destruction, he maintains, critics should take an activist role through the analysis of public discourse.

Raymie E. McKerrow's 1989 essay, "Critical Rhetoric: Theory and Praxis," advocates postmodern philosophy. According to McKerrow, a "critical rhetoric" focuses especially on how public communication fosters "domination" and "freedom" in an uncertain world. In McKerrow's view, rhetorical discourse is primarily concerned with maintaining or challenging power, and the critic's role is to reveal how discourse oppresses and silences. Further, the critic should seek discursive avenues for bringing about changes in power relationships. McKerrow outlines the principles that would support such a critical practice. He concludes that criticism should be directed away from universal concepts of reason and instead focus on rhetoric as relativistic. Finally, he regards the act of criticism as "performance."

The Literary Criticism of Oratory

HERBERT A. WICHELNS

I

Samuel Johnson once projected a history of criticism "as it relates to judging of authors." Had the great eighteenth-century critic ever carried out his intention, he would have included some interesting comments on the orators and their judges. Histories of criticism, in whole or in part, we now have, and histories of orators. But that section of the history of criticism which deals with judging of orators is still unwritten. Yet the problem is an interesting one, and one which involves some important conceptions. Oratory—the waning influence of which is often discussed in current periodicals—has definitely lost the established place in literature that it once had. Demosthenes and Cicero, Bossuet and Burke, all hold their places in literary histories. But Webster inspires more than one modern critic to ponder the question whether oratory is literature; and if we may judge by the emphasis of literary historians generally, both in England and in America, oratory is either an outcast or a poor relation. What are the reasons for this change? It is a question not easily answered. Involved in it is some shift in the conception of oratory or of literature, or of both; nor can these conceptions have changed except in response to the life of which oratory, as well as literature, is part.

This essay, it should be said, is merely an attempt to spy out the land, to see what some critics have said of some orators, to discover what their mode of criticism has been. The discussion is limited in the main to Burke and a few nineteenth-century figures—Webster, Lincoln, Gladstone, Bright, Cobden—and

to the verdicts on these found in the surveys of literary history, in critical essays, in histories of oratory, and in biographies.

Of course, we are not here concerned with the disparagement of oratory. With that, John Morley once dealt in a phrase: "Yet, after all, to disparage eloquence is to depreciate mankind."[1] Nor is the praise of eloquence of moment here. What interests us is the method of the critic: his standards, his categories of judgment, what he regards as important. These will show, not so much what he thinks of a great and ancient literary type, as how he thinks in dealing with that type. The chief aim is to know how critics have spoken of orators.

We have not much serious criticism of oratory. The reasons are patent. Oratory is intimately associated with statecraft; it is bound up with the things of the moment; its occasion, its terms, its background, can often be understood only by the careful student of history. Again, the publication of orations as pamphlets leaves us free to regard any speech merely as an essay, as a literary effort deposited at the shrine of the muses in hope of being blessed with immortality. This view is encouraged by the difficulty of reconstructing the conditions under which the speech was delivered; by the doubt, often, whether the printed text of the speech represents what was actually said, or what the orator elaborated afterwards. Burke's corrections are said to have been the despair of his printers.[2] Some of Chatham's speeches, by a paradox of fate, have been reported to us by Samuel Johnson, whose style is as remote as possible from that of the Great Commoner, and who wrote without even having heard the speeches pronounced.[3] Only in comparatively recent times has parliamentary reporting pretended to give full records of what was actually said; and even now speeches are published for literary or political purposes which justify the corrector's pencil in changes both great and small. Under such conditions the historical study of speech making is far from easy.

Yet the conditions of democracy necessitate both the making of speeches and the study of the art. It is true that other ways of influencing opinion have long been practiced, that oratory is no longer the chief means of communicating ideas to the masses. And the change is emphasized by the fact that the newer methods are now beginning to be investigated, sometimes from the point of view of the political student, sometimes from that of the "publicity expert." But, human nature being what it is, there is no likelihood that face to face persuasion will cease to be a principal mode of exerting influence, whether in courts, in senate-houses, or on the platform. It follows that the critical study of oratorical method is the study, not of a mode outworn, but of a permanent and important human activity.

Upon the great figures of the past who have used the art of public address, countless judgments have been given. These judgments have varied with the bias and preoccupation of the critics, who have been historians, biographers, or literary men, and have written accordingly. The context in which we find criticism of speeches, we must, for the purposes of this essay at least, both note and set aside. For though the aim of the critic conditions his approach to our more limited problem—the method of dealing with oratory—still we find that an historian may view an orator in the same light as does a biographer or an essayist. The literary form in which criticism of oratory is set does not afford classification of the critics.

"There are," says a critic of literary critics, "three definite points, on one of which, or all of which, criticism must base itself. There is the date, and the author, and the work."[4] The points on which writers base their judgments of

orators do afford a classification. The man, his work, his times, are the necessary common topics of criticism; no one of them can be wholly disregarded by any critic. But mere difference in emphasis on one or another of them is important enough to suggest a rough grouping. The writers with whom this essay deals give but a subordinate position to the date; they are interested chiefly in the man or in his works. Accordingly, we have as the first type of criticism that which is predominantly personal or biographical, is occupied with the character and the mind of the orator, goes behind the work to the man. The second type attempts to hold the scales even between the biographical and the literary interest. The third is occupied with the work and tends to ignore the man. These three classes, then, seem to represent the practice of modern writers in dealing with orators. Each merits a more detailed examination.

II

We may begin with that type of critic whose interest is in personality, who seeks the man behind the work. Critics of this type furnish forth the appreciative essays and the occasional addresses on the orators. They are as the sands of the sea. Lord Rosebery's two speeches on Burke, Whitelaw Reid's on Lincoln and on Burke, may stand as examples of the character sketch.[5] The second part of Birrell's essay on Burke will serve for the mental character sketch (the first half of the essay is biographical); other examples are Sir Walter Raleigh's essay on Burke and that by Robert Lynd.[6] All these emphasize the concrete nature of Burke's thought, the realism of his imagination, his peculiar combination of breadth of vision with intensity; they pass to the guiding principles of his thought: his hatred of abstraction, his love of order and of settled ways. But they do not occupy themselves with Burke as a speaker, nor even with him as a writer; their first and their last concern is with the man rather than with his works; and their method is to fuse into a single impression whatever of knowledge or opinion they may have of the orator's life and works. These critics, in dealing with the public speaker, think of him as something other than a speaker. Since this type of writing makes but an indirect contribution to our judgment of the orator, there is no need of a more extended account of the method, except as we find it combined with a discussion of the orator's works.

III

Embedded in biographies and histories of literature, we find another type of criticism, that which combines the sketch of the mind and character with some discussion of style. Of the general interest of such essays there can be no doubt. Nine-tenths of so-called literary criticism deals with the lives and personalities of authors, and for the obvious reason, that everyone is interested in them, whereas few will follow a technical study, however broadly based. At its best, the type of study that starts with the orator's mind and character is justified by the fact that nothing can better illuminate his work as a persuader of men. But when not at its best, the description of a man's general cast of mind stands utterly unrelated to his art: the critic fails to fuse his comment on the individual with his comment on the artist; and as a result we get some statements about the man, and some statements about the orator, but neither casts light on the other. Almost any of

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