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Octalog III: The Politics of Historiography in 2010

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OCTALOG

2010 CCCC Panel

Octalog III: The Politics of Historiography in 2010

Introduction

The field of rhetoric has historically been defined by competing visions of language and education—and by the conviction that these debates have significance for public life. James J. Murphy highlighted this point at the beginning of Octalog I (1988) when he noted the field’s consistent engagement with the idea that “what is at stake . . . ought to be discovered for the good of the community” (5). The Octalogs have provided a space for exploring varied notions concerning rhetoric’s role in serving a common good and assessing the contentious nature of that undertaking. These conversations have included a wide range of perspectives concerning rhetoric’s role in public and private life, methods of researching and writing rhetorical history, and the values that surround our work. They have suggested that our field’s notion of “truth” is multiplicitous and incomplete.

Octalog I sparked new scholarship by asking us to uncover and recover histories that have been neglected or hidden. The panelists highlighted assumptions about power, knowledge, and struggle that are embedded in every construction of history. They discussed the importance of creative research methodologies, what constitutes evidence, who and what should be included in our histories, and how researchers’ positions and goals affect their interpretations. Octalog II (1997) extended these discussions by pointing us toward the importance of local, contested, and marginalized histories and rhetorical practices and encouraging us to listen for the silences that have been left out of well-known historical accounts. The discussions urged a continued awareness about how moving the margins to center revises our sense of rhetorical history.

Octalog III builds on these earlier conversations. As Arthur E. Walzer notes in his reflection on the event, “all participants welcomed the expansion of rhetoric beyond what Graff and Leff have characterized as a white, male, European demographic.” Yet Octalog III shows that we are still negotiating multiple and contested understandings of what constitutes the history of rhetoric, how to study it, and rhetoric’s role in forming and promoting the common good. Octalog III urges us to move beyond our initial attempts to recover multiple and contested histories by exploring how the dynamics of power and issues of identity formation influence the historiography of rhetoric. The eight panelists and respondent specifically ask us to interrogate how our own dispositions and epistemologies shape our perceptions of the past and press us toward new methodologies and sites of inquiry. Especially as we continue to cross and move between borders in our research, participants press us to ask: why these histories? As we answer that question for ourselves and our students, participants urge us to consider the ethics that interrogate our choices, our assumptions, and our methods of researching and teaching history.

The Octalog participants also remind us that we research and teach in political and economic times that necessitate rethinking our ways of doing, writing, and teaching rhetorical history. They prompt us to ask how we can challenge dominant paradigms both within and beyond our discipline and maintain our commitment to inclusivity against a backdrop of inevitable acculturation. They challenge us to keep pressing on the traditional ways of doing rhetorical history, both as we look back to sites that have been traditionally taken up and toward new sites that ought to be studied. In addition, they urge us to consider the value of dialogue, difference, and interdependence that emerges from such work. Finally, this panel reflects the productive work of doing rhetorical history that has emerged since Octalog II, particularly in relation to bodies, space, and rhetorics of the other. Yet, as we continue our pursuit of an expansive and reflective approach to rhetorical scholarship and history, there is still much messy work to be done. As Victor Vitanza suggests, Octalog III ultimately pushes us to take risks in our scholarship that may lead us in directions that we cannot yet imagine.

We have printed below the revised statements presented by each of the Octalog panelists, along with Victor Vitanza’s response. Some of these revised statements include reflections on the event; other panelists’ reflections are included in a final section at the conclusion of this article.

Lois Agnew
Laurie Gries
Zosha Stuckey
Syracuse University

Ethos in the Archives

Vicki Tolar Burton
Oregon State University

Like *Smith Magazine's* six-word memoir, my historiography of rhetoric is brief: Cross borders. Lift rhetors. Study systems. These imperatives are not new—they were eloquently set forth by scholars in Octalogs I and II, and shape many histories of rhetoric. Octalog III embodies and enacts some directions border-crossings have taken. My work has crossed borders into the archives of eighteenth-century British Methodism in search of preaching women and working-class rhetors. In the Manchester archives, within the method of Methodism, I found a democratizing system of spiritual literacy that arguably laid the foundation for the British trade union movement. This system both sponsored and controlled rhetors, supporting and later silencing the preaching women, and containing other women rhetors by the accretion of male texts over female voices (Tolar Burton).

Since Octalog II, when Linda Ferreira-Buckley called for more attention to archival methods, historians have responded with significant work on methodology. I'm thinking, for instance, of Buchanan, Glenn and Enoch, Ranney, and collections by Kirsch and Rohan, and by Ramsey, Sharer, L'Eplattenier, and Mastrangelo.

Today, I want to interrogate archival work by bringing the pressure of *ethos* to bear on practices of border crossing. As we cross into the archives of others, what is the *ethos* of the historian of rhetoric? In the earliest days of Greek civilization, the days of Homer and Hesiod, *ethea*, the root of *ethos*, meant "a dwelling place." The notion of *dwelling* shapes Aristotle's story of the strangers who went into the wilderness in search of the wise philosopher Heraclitus, only to find him living in poverty. Sensing that his visitors were disappointed with what they saw and intended to leave, Heraclitus reached out, inviting the travelers to *dwell* with him, saying, "Here too the gods are present" (Hyde xix).

As historians of rhetoric, who are we in this story? We imagine ourselves as Heraclitus, reaching out to strangers and recognizing the sacred in the ordinary. But sometimes when we cross borders into the archives of others, we may be more like Aristotle's strangers. We embark on our research travels with high expectations. Then we arrive in the archives, and things are a bit of a mess—disorganized, uncataloged, overwhelming. Like the traveling strangers, we are in danger of not seeing what is before us, of missing our chance to dwell. Here, too, the gods are present.

In our field “crossing borders” has become an assumed good. But borders are also crossed by inept tourists, invaders, imperialists, and Starbuck’s franchisers. We had best think carefully about our *ethos* as border crossers, especially as rhetorical studies go global.

Michael Hyde suggests, “The ethical practice of rhetoric entails the construction of a speaker’s *ethos* as well as the construction of ‘dwelling place’ or a ground of being ‘for collaborative and moral deliberation’” (xviii). The ethical practice of archival research makes the same demands. Led by scholars like Brice Heath, Geertz, Street, Vitanza, Bizzell, and Royster, we practice research with principles such as respect for the local, non-exploitation of people and cultures, respect for the challenges of language difference, and the ambiguity of working in translation. We admit the partialness and situated nature of our knowledge.

As our research goes global, through what lenses do we examine the texts and practices that we encounter? Do questions that apply to Aristotle or American composition studies work equally well for Asian and Arabic rhetorics? Our *ethos* is formed in part by the questions we ask.

We enact good will by observing the etiquette of the host archive. We enact a deeper *ethos* of knowledge and character by a willingness to dwell with the documents, to practice slow reading as we lift the rhetors from their musty folders, seeking clues to their rhetorical situations and literacy practices. But travel is expensive, so researchers are tempted to hurry, to get to everything fast, to possess the archive. This is the way of hubris and folly. Slow down. Breathe. Dwell. Before my first trip to the Manchester archives, I asked Anne Gere for advice. She said, “Always assume you will need to go back.”

Jim Berlin advised us to study systems, place discourse within its community, identify sources of power to speak and to silence. Deborah Brandt reminds us that sponsors of literacy may want a return on their investment. Dwelling with the material archive—city, buildings, artifacts—we scrutinize the systems and motives of the archive’s collectors and sponsors. Likewise, let us examine our own place in systems of grants, tenure and promotion, access and publication, acknowledging that we may sometimes conceal the partialness of our knowledge under the cloak of academic authority. Do we respeak archival subjects, ourselves practicing the rhetoric of accretion?

Now many researchers are crossing digital borders, lifting e-rhetors, and studying elusive systems of electronic sponsorship. Whether in bricks and mortar or digital archives, we enact our most generous *ethos* by mentoring others, inviting them to dwell and discuss. Here, too, the gods are present.

The Circulation of Discourse through the Body

Jay Dolmage
West Virginia University

I see rhetoric as the strategic study of the circulation of power through communication. In the very first Octalog, James Berlin offered a very similar definition of rhetoric, defining it as: “the uses of language in the play of power” (6). I am pretty sure that when I read the first Octalog in my very first year of graduate school, I stole Berlin’s definition, and I have been subtly rotating it and leveraging it for my own purposes ever since.

So I want to keep this theft in mind and at hand.

Berlin also suggested, in that first symposium, that rhetoric “reveals the conflicts of a historical moment”; later he praises another panelist for “acknowledging the narrativity of . . . historical writing” (12, 35). And Susan Jarratt agreed, suggesting that “there are stories that are guiding these things [these things being histories]” (26).

So I sit here today with my own ideas about historiography and my own definitions of rhetoric. Yet I do so as I weave together several earlier perspectives, writing myself into a guiding story. I am conscious of some theft and likely oblivious to other small crimes, yet willing to plead a preemptive guilt.

I want to suggest that this collage says something about the politics of historiography: My own perspectives are the creative and sometimes conscious layering of other people’s stories and ideas. When I can do this with some cunning and ingenuity, I am doing my job as a *rhetorical* historian.

I see rhetorical history as the study not of *just* a selected archive of static documents or artifacts, but a study *also, always* of the negotiations, valences, shifting claims and refutations, canons and revisions that orbit any history.

As a rhetorical historian, I seek to discover as many layers of meaning as possible in order to interrogate the interestedness of each version of a given story, not in order to choose one version. I think we learn a lot not from asking which history is most real, and not *just* from asking which histories to look for, but we learn from gathering and parsing the histories that are most fraught and varied, tense, duplicitous and difficult, and celebrating their contestation.

So my further suggestion is that when we look through rhetorical history for what is most tense and contested, we most often come to stories about the body. Wherever we find the body rhetorically contested, and wherever we find rhetorical contestation about the body’s role in meaning-making, we see intensely fraught negotiations. These constellations of value and their variable gravities are

exactly what we should be looking for—and we should be asking questions not to resolve this argument and set the universe in order but to better understand ourselves by locating those things we disagree, worry, and wrestle about most vehemently.

For instance, in my effort to locate the role of disability in rhetorical history, I've come to see that disability has a rhetorical push and pull, not just wherever we might recover disabled bodies but also when we find any supposedly "abnormal" body—foreign, raced, feminized, sexualized or desexed, contagious. Disability is often used rhetorically as a flexible form of stigma to be freely applied to any unknown, threatening, or devalued group. In these ways the "abnormal" or extraordinary body is highly rhetorical. So we need to look for it actively and engage the rhetorical body in our historiography—indeed in all of our research and in all of our classrooms. If we follow this impulse, we would create rhetorical history that reclaims stories from the margins and from apocrypha, as I have tried to do in reclaiming disability in rhetorical history. But a differently embodied historiography does not just find new stories; it is a new way to circulate these stories in order to generate a new ontology, a new epistemology, a new rhetoric.

Here I'll offer a litany and an invocation.

The litany: Tension around the body exists, first, because efforts to define rhetoric have so often denied and denigrated the body; second, because this denial has always been laughably impossible; third, because modern body values and anxieties have always been mapped back across rhetorical history; and finally because studying any culture's attitudes and arguments about the body always connects us intimately with attitudes and arguments about rhetorical possibility. That is, to care about the body is to care about how we make meaning.

The invocation: Rhetoric is always embodied. When I say this, I mean, first, that all meaning issues forth from the body and that second, communication reaches into the body to shape its possibilities. The body has traditionally been both a rhetorical instrument and a rhetorical experiment, even as bodies have always been insistently material. The corpus of history has most often been shaped to look like an ideal body: proportional, autonomous, never needing the assistance of others, strong—and of course white and masculine and upright and forward-facing. But if you find the *rhetorical* body, you find a field of tension, a site of trial and trouble; find the body in history and you need rhetoric not just to uncover layers of evidence but also the negotiation, argument, and translation between them. Then, writing from bodies we would do history differently, not just in recognizing other bodies throughout our stories in new complexity and eminence but also because our histories might more closely represent our bodies themselves—bodies that are flawed, incomplete, vulnerable, and unique, always in need of others, interdependent, rhetorically constructive and constructed.

I see rhetoric as the strategic study of the circulation of power through communication; this was the statement that I pilfered to begin my comments. Let me filter this theft a bit further as I end: I believe that we should see rhetoric as the circulation of discourse through the body. When we do so, we may find the conflict and variation that impels any rhetorical endeavor.

Finding New Spaces for Feminist Research

Jessica Enoch
University of Pittsburgh

In her contribution to Octalog II, Cheryl Glenn called for the “regendering” of rhetorical history as a means to create an expanded, inclusive rhetorical tradition. The ensuing years have seen feminist scholars take up this work in earnest, with their explorations largely falling into two dynamic categories. First, scholars have recovered the rhetorical significance of female rhetors from an increasingly varied spectrum of raced, classed, and cultured backgrounds. As scholars engage in these acts of recovery, they do not simply add women to the history of rhetoric. Rather, they use their recoveries to revise our thinking about rhetorical theory and practice. The second way scholars have regendered rhetorical history is by rereading rhetoric’s traditions through the lens of gender. Here, scholars explore, for example, how masculine ways of performing rhetoric gained precedence and how rhetorical pedagogies have often been feminized and, consequently, dismissed.

These two modes of historiography have made tremendous challenges to traditional understandings of rhetorical theory, practice, and history. And there is still much work left to do. As we continue to pursue these research trajectories, however, it’s also vital to build from this work and imagine new ways of writing feminist history. For, as Glenn explains, every historiography and historiographic method is performative in that it “subtly shape[s] our perception of rhetoric globed” (*Rhetoric* 7).

Here I imagine a new feminist historiographic practice, one that examines the rhetorical process of gendering. This mode of historiography interrogates the rhetorical work that goes into creating and disturbing the gendered distinctions, social categories, and asymmetrical power relationships that women and men encounter in their daily lives. Attending to such concerns expands the purview of feminist research. Instead of working to recalibrate the rhetorical tradition, this project focuses on the everyday rhetorical processes that create difference and grant privilege. While there is certainly a range of historiographic possibilities to

explore, I consider what it would mean to historicize the rhetorical processes that engender space.

A feminist rhetorical history of space starts from the premise that spaces are not neutral backdrops for human dramas but are, borrowing from Michel de Certeau, “practiced places”—practiced in ways that play out assumptions regarding gendered behavior and social expectations (117). Working from such a premise, this project examines what I call spatial rhetorics: the discursive and material means used to engender spaces with value. Spatial rhetorics suggest the purpose of a space; the actions, behaviors, and practices that should happen inside that space; and the people who should occupy it. Methodologically, the work is to study the language that designates a space, the materials that construct and adorn it, and the activities enacted inside it. The ultimate goal is to investigate how the composition of space creates, maintains, or renovates gendered differences and understandings.

This historiographic project might seem familiar. Spatial concerns have been foremost in the work of scholars who analyze the constraints women have faced when attempting to claim masculine and male-dominated rhetorical spaces such as the pulpit, platform, and podium (Buchanan; Mountford; Shaver). For this new historiography, however, the gendering of rhetorical spaces is just the beginning. Its inquiry extends to other sites critical to the personal, professional, and political welfare of women and men, such as the schoolhouse, university, voting booth, childcare center, women’s shelter, and home. Additionally, examining these sites means that scholars consider not only what spatial rhetorics say about masculine and feminine behavior but also how these rhetorics comment on the full range of social categorizations, including those of race, class, culture, sexuality, and physical ability. To give two examples: We might study the physical construction of Harvard’s campus to understand how it reinforced the idea that the school was a preserve of white, aristocratic masculinity; or we might examine how black female rhetors such as bell hooks have revised white feminist visions of the home as a site of domestic entrapment to see it instead as a space of resistance that can “heal the wounds inflicted by racist domination” (384).

The stakes of this project are high indeed. As theorists such as Mary Ryan have argued, “[T]he appropriation of the social spaces of everyday life is an essential precondition for the political empowerment of subordinated groups” (92). Historicizing the rhetorical processes that engender spaces, then, offers critical insight to varied ways this appropriation and empowerment has occurred. Furthermore, in relation to the overarching aims of feminist historiography, this project gains a different kind of significance. It serves as an example of how we might continue to imagine new ways to write histories that explore the complex imbrication of gender and rhetoric.

When Will We All Matter: A Frank Discussion of Progressive Pedagogy

Ronald L. Jackson II
University of Illinois–Urbana Champaign

I write this statement with a spirit of caring and hope. I care that power as a form of dominance has raided our epistemologies and left us naked with only one garment of epistemological singularity that some of us recognize as “mainstream rhetoric.” Others know it by its abbreviated name “rhetoric.” I care that how we practice effective pedagogy pertaining to the study of rhetoric most of the time routinely ignores theoretic contributions from non-White scholars and therefore provides students with partial stories, partial truths, and nonprogressive training. I care that the legacy we are preparing to leave our children is rife with political, cultural, and social unfreedom. I care that as I speak to many rhetorical scholars about culturally progressive pedagogy, their eyes glaze over and they issue a battery of excuses and rationales why they cannot give serious consideration to a multicultural pedagogy when teaching classical and contemporary rhetoric.

Obviously, because there are multiple cultures in our world, there must be multiple classics because what is classical in one culture is not necessarily classical in another. Lest we think this is a tactical play on words, we need to recognize that rhetoric did not emanate in Greece or Rome. How could it unless of course the origins of humankind can be found in Greece or Rome, or unless we are willing to concede that no human being held the capacity to think, to organize ideas, or to compose arguments prior to Greeks and Romans? That has been the historical narrative. However, we all know that the writer who with every stroke of the pen moves our imagination controls the principal messages in a narrative.

Today, I come to you with hope, hope that we will once again rise to a challenge put to academics many centuries ago. The challenge was to consider assembling academic institutions that would train students to bind themselves to a creed of global civic participation, to prepare our students to engage with a world before them that is constantly changing, to equip students with the kind of moral integrity and independent thinking that will interrogate wrongdoing, reconcile poor judgment, and embrace all forms of social difference.

Rhetoric is a vast and varied field of inquiry. One of its many multitentacled dimensions is that of culture. Even narrower than that is the area of culture we have come to know as African-American rhetoric, which is where my work emanates. At this Octalog III, I am most concerned with discussing the nature, function, and usefulness of rhetorical studies. It seems to me we still teach rhetoric

the way we always have. We still train students to ignore nonmainstream (that is, non-White) rhetorical traditions. As professors and scholars, we also tend to sidestep our responsibility to be epistemologically responsible and just within this vast terrain of rhetorical studies. So the principal questions we must insist on asking every year is what counts as rhetorical scholarship? Whose rhetorical legacies and traditions get to be centered in the curriculum such that students cannot leave without learning them? Does it matter or is it culturally relevant how we teach what rhetoric is and how it functions in our society? These are questions with which we must grapple if we ever hope to be relevant and responsible. The challenge is to engage in a paradigm shift. Our challenge as intellectuals is to consider new perspectives. Oftentimes that means inviting and embracing new epistemologies.

Where We Must Go from Here

Many whiteness researchers have discovered that whites see no separation between what it means to be white and what it means to be American. Their reflex is to consider the two as synonyms (Jackson; McIntosh; Nakayama and Krizek). On the other hand, Blacks, Latinos, Asians, and even Native Americans do not think of their cultures as synonymous with what it means to be American. How could they?

What is perceived to be at stake is cultural solidity, often articulated as “our way of life.” At present, my fear is that the average students whom we consider the best of our most progressive students graduate with a set of social conditions they must learn to resist, a set of promises they must learn to tune out, and a set of ideals they must learn to cling to for dear life, hoping that some of it will save them.

We must become the Citadel of intellectual integrity, moral aptitude, and civic preparation. It is true that our legacy is inscribed on our children’s souls, and yet we must avoid this slippery slope of divested morality or else we will find ourselves repeating the same. Solutions must include remembering: We must remember the past perils of pedagogical violence so they can later be avoided; we must remember that when we unravel privilege, we have a colonialist subject standing there; we must remember epistemic violence is attached to a power/knowledge matrix, which includes its own body politic; we must remember that forgetting is ignoring symptoms of a disease that is deteriorating our social bodies. We must also remember that identity and difference are predicated on subjectivity, and it is our responsibility to critically interrogate how we consume messages that affect our consumption of difference.

The Rhetoric of Responsibility: Practicing the Art of Recontextualization

LuMing Mao
Miami University

Thanks in part to the contributions made from the first and second Octalog at the CCCC, our field has been turning to non-Western, indigenous rhetorical traditions to help reexamine the history of rhetoric and reconceptualize rhetoric's forms, purposes, and functions. In spite of the progress made so far, several key questions remain to be fully addressed. For example, what practices in these other traditions should we exactly focus on? Not every communicative practice that is non-Western or indigenous can either deserve our critical attention or promise to help advance our cause of writing the other ways of knowing and being into the history of rhetoric in the twenty-first century. How, then, does our object of study reveal our own experience, our own affiliation, and our own authority and legitimacy? How do they in turn privilege and prevail upon what we study?

Equally important, how should we go about engaging these practices? Is it methodologically possible for us to study such practices free of ethnocentrism and etic biases as long as we claim to be self-reflective or even openly critical of the rhetoricity of our own enterprise? Almost by the same token, how can we represent or celebrate these other practices, many of which have hitherto been ruled anything but rhetoric, without putting them on a pedestal or without denying them their own heterogeneous, if not conflicting or even problematic, traditions? Is there some standard or heuristic out there that can stand outside, or stand up to, this perennial self-other binary?

And related, in what ways do our ongoing dialogues and entanglements across national, political, and linguistic boundaries inflect and influence our engagement with these other practices? Do the conditions of the global necessarily impinge upon the effort to write a different kind of history that is closely tied to the local ways of doing and being? How can the production of such a history help usher in a new set of relationships and a new paradigm of cross-cultural dialogue?

I suggest that we practice the art of recontextualization to respond to these questions. By this I mean a critical reevaluation of both the self and the other, interrogating who we are and where we have been and unpacking how local political, economic, and sociocultural exigencies help determine particular contexts and individual performances. By this I further mean tenaciously engaging the contingencies of the present and recognizing how they can potentially shape our new historiography of rhetoric while still preserving or perpetuating the existing asymmetrical structures of power. I want to suggest that practicing the art of

recontextualization constitutes a processual model that productively troubles our own modes of thinking and that seeks to privilege experiences over facts and relations of interdependence over structures of sameness or difference. An inevitable corollary of this model, then, is a strong ethical imperative.

Finally, practicing the art of recontextualization in the global contact zones does not mean yoking the other with the global in the name of “seizing the kairoic moment,” at the risk of uprooting the other from its own native environment. Nor does it mean that we remain uncritically tethered to the local milieu for the sake of “going (and staying) native” to the point of failing to consider the influence of the global. Rather, practicing the art of recontextualization means negotiating, both dialectically and perpetually, between developing a localized narrative and searching for its new and broader significance within and outside its own tradition; between looking for rhetoric where it has been categorically ruled non-existent and rejecting a concomitant temptation to reduce experiences into facts and equate heterogeneous resonance with either sameness or difference; and between using the other for transformative agendas and resisting methods and logic that continue to silence or make invisible the same other. This is, I submit to you, the ultimate form of the rhetoric of responsibility.

This is a Story about a Belief . . .

Malea Powell
Michigan State University

This is a story.

Because I must be brief, I’m going to skip some of what I consider to be essential elements of story—easing in, slowly drawing an audience to me—and skip right to a fairly contentious and imprecise claim followed by a set of barely elaborated explanations that are themselves pretty contentious and imprecise.

The claim. In our discipline, scholars who study, theorize, and write histories about race are almost always assumed to be *not* talking about rhetoric—at least, we are told, not the kind of rhetoric that is generally useful to everyone or thought to generate theoretical frames and methodological practices that will be used by folks who “really” or “just” study rhetoric. As short-sighted and blatantly racist as such assumptions might be, most of us *other* scholars just go politely about our business, grumbling to one another but carefully avoiding any direct acknowledgement of such attitudes. I’m breaking that polite avoidance here because I’ve observed first-hand the slow creep of these assumptions as they move from scholarship about race to include scholarship about ethnicity, sexual

orientation, able-ness, language practices, digital technologies, material culture—anything that seems to threaten the primacy of the text over the materiality of the body or the kind of meaning produced by/through bodies. This worries me. The reason this worries me is because of what I’ve learned from my own work in American Indian rhetorics—cultures that don’t change, die. Our discipline’s inclination to fetishize the text above the body, combined with a narrowness of vision that insists on connecting every rhetorical practice on the planet to Big Daddy A and the one true Greco-Roman way does not exactly build a sustainable platform for the continued vibrance of our disciplinary community.¹

So right about now, some of you probably violently disagree with me. You might see yourselves as advocates of diversity with a pretty expansionist view of rhetoric studies. You might say: “But we don’t do this; we’ve diversified! We have women’s rhetorics and African-American rhetorics and we even have a couple books about ‘other’ rhetorics from antiquity! Just look at the folks gathered here at the Octalog to discuss ‘the future of rhetorical studies!’” You might even point to my presence here as proof of the existence of “otherness” in rhetoric studies, in fact. Some of you might have different objections. You see yourselves as maintaining a boundary between studying rhetoric and studying everything (anything) else, or you might be the rare bird who actually studies classical Greco-Roman traditions in their full cultural situatedness and original languages. Some of you might want to ask me what I *mean* when I use the word *rhetoric* if I don’t hearken back to Aristotle’s supposed consolidation of the term.² And because I hardly have the time to offer a nuanced and complicated response to any of those objections, I want to offer this instead.

Working from theorists like Homi Bhabha³ and Roy Harvey Pearce filtered through the meaning-making practices of indigenous North Americans,⁴ helps me see these kinds of objections to my contentious and imprecise claim as grounded in a belief I do not share. A belief that there is *a* rhetorical tradition around which all other rhetorical traditions constellate. A belief that *all* rhetorical scholarship must somehow, some way, show a genealogical or thematic relationship to that mythical Greco-Roman origin story in order to be counted as “really” (or “just”) about rhetoric. This belief itself is an outgrowth of a much larger, more insidious belief—a belief about civilization, about the duties and character of civilized wo/men, a belief that made it possible for the colonization of the Americas to take place, a belief that writes particular destinies as “manifest,” and others as impediments. The imperial narrative that produces this belief is founded in the same intellectual fires that “revived” rhetoric during the Greco-Roman re-turns and re-writings that characterized the Scholasticism and then the European Renaissance. This belief is literally *written* in the same colonial spaces where the revised version of classical rhetoric found a way to travel to North America—in the writings

of Scottish colonials whose work, if we believe Win Horner and a slew of other scholars, became the basis for a kind of writing instruction that tried to organize the savage chaos of the “new” world through the “elements” of rhetoric (see Horner; Whately).

Here it’s important to remember that what our discipline has produced is what Pearce would call “a certitude” about our destiny—a study of our own civilizing discourse that gives those who come after us “an enlarged certitude of another, even happier destiny—that manifest in the progress of American civilization over all obstacles” (xvii). How easy, then, it is to make the claim that our discipline has allowed “other” rhetorics space on the stage in order to study them in quite the same way—in order to produce a certitude about the strength of *a* single rhetorical tradition, dressed up and feathered by its gradual incorporation of difference into that narrative of certitude—a narrative that continues to sustain us in the face of the chaos that confronts us every day here in the twenty-first century. This certitude is a problem. It’s a methodologically unacceptable way to theorize rhetorical scholarship because it keeps us trapped in genealogies of colonialism.

It’s important to understand that I’m not arguing for us to make space for other rhetorics. Even at its most radical, that multicultural story about “the history/histories of rhetoric/s” is merely a complicated rhizome spreading out under the fertile ground of *the* rhetorical tradition that ultimately treads that same path, what I think of as “the narrow arrow,” from Greece to the Americas. What I’m arguing here is that we have to learn to rely on rhetorical understandings different from that singular, inevitable origin story. We have to try harder to overcome the behaviors that sustain colonial discourse in our contemporary practices, which means we need to theorize, and that theory can’t always be directly tied to classroom practices that are, again, an outgrowth of a paracolonial ideological state apparatus.⁵ We need to theorize, and that theory can’t engage in textual fetishism—neither by relying on alphabetic print texts nor by textualizing non-alphabetic objects. We need, in fact, to move our conversations and our practices toward “things,” to a wider understandings of how all made things are rhetorical, and of how cultures make, and are made by, the rhetoricity of things.⁶

Newee; thank you.

Notes

¹ So, this phrase has gotten a lot of attention. First during and immediately after the Octalog panel in the Tweetstream, then in f2f and continuing social-media interactions after. Most younger scholars express excitement to hear someone say what they’ve been thinking all along; many “established” scholars express dismay at my lack of respect. Disciplinarity does do its job, does it not?

² I will, however, offer my definition of rhetoric. Just for the record, when I use the word *rhetoric*, I am evoking a *shorthand* that encompasses thousands of years of intellectual production all over the globe—a set of productions that we have only just begun to understand—and that generally refers to systems of discourse through which meaning was, is, and continues to be made in a given culture.

³ In *Signs Taken for Wonders*, Homi Bhabha reminds us that “[t]here is a scene in the cultural writings of English colonialism which repeats so insistently” that it “*inaugurates* a literature of empire.” That scene, he tells us, is always “played out in the wild and *wordless wastes*” of “the colonies” and consists entirely of the “fortuitous discovery of the English book” by colonized peoples; this scene marks the book as an “emblem,” one of the colonizers’ “signs taken for wonders” (29).

⁴ See especially Lisa Brooks; Joy Harjo; Thomas King; Nancy Shoemaker (ed.); Linda Tuhiwai Smith; Robert Warrior; and Shawn Wilson.

⁵ For an examination of “paracolonial,” see Vizenor.

⁶ A totally unsatisfying and provocative opening into my current work that argues for situating specific rhetorical events in the continuum of rhetorical practices (alphabetic and non-alphabetic) that hold particular cultures together over time.

Rhetoric as a History of Education and Acculturation

Arthur E. Walzer
University of Minnesota

The first Octalog featured “the politics of historiography.” The session was dominated by criticism of our pioneering histories by Kennedy, Corbett, and Vickers, which were faulted as methodologically uncritical and limited for their focus on theoretical texts by white European males. In the decade between the first Octalog and Octalog II, historians expressed a greater self-consciousness about methods. Many of the authors of these new histories (for example, Atwill, Schiappa, and Glenn) were participants in Octalog II. While these revisionist histories criticized the traditional rhetorical tradition and included contributions of women, they retained the chronology, geography, and genres of the traditional tradition. The new heroes—the Sophists, Isocrates, Aspasia—lived just down the street from the old. Based on the work of the panelists invited to participate in Octalog III, the limitations of the first wave of revisionist histories are now being addressed. This expansion is welcome. But is it possible at the same time that we are welcoming this expansion to revitalize the traditional tradition?

The traditional rhetorical tradition was modeled after philosophy and literature: from philosophy, a narrative of great men, great ideas; from literature, critical reading of “great speeches that transcend their age.” I am a child of this tradition and am not inclined to matricide. Nevertheless, perhaps this approach has run its course. It may never have been the best approach for a discipline interested in the history of literacy. But the history of literacy is also the history of rhetoric at least until the eighteenth century. The history of Western rhetoric should not be neglected.

I propose that we conceptualize the tradition in a different way. The history I propose would focus on how instruction in rhetoric has created historically appropriate subjectivities. In the short time left, I will give three examples.¹

Example 1. Under the great man/great ideas approach to Roman rhetoric, we study Cicero’s speeches to identify the sources of their transcendent style and how Cicero’s eloquence relates to his philosophy of education. But as W. Martin Bloomer has argued, the most enduring legacy the Romans have bequeathed to us is “not a lapidary prose style” but a competitive system of rhetorical performance—declamation—that did not create many transcendent orators but did socialize the Roman boy to his role within Roman Imperial culture. Crucial to this process of acculturation were rhetorical exercises of *ethopoieia*—exercises in which students performed and rehearsed the roles of slave owner, father, advocate—becoming comfortable in their role as *paterfamilias*. Education in rhetoric shaped a politically appropriate subjectivity.

Example 2. Declamation was part of the rhetoric exercises known as the *progymnasmata* that formed the basis of rhetorical education through the Renaissance. We have sometimes studied the *progymnasmata* to see if their integrated sequence might be a model for a writing curriculum today. But we could study these exercises in terms of their political use in the Renaissance. A most interesting example is Erasmus’s encomium on marriage, which he included in his textbook on letter-writing (*De conscribendis epistolis*) as an example of a letter of persuasion. In the context of Luther’s challenge to clerical celibacy, Erasmus’s letter was considered heretical, but Erasmus disingenuously claimed that the letter was merely an exercise in declamation intended to teach students how to structure an argument and argue *utramque partem* (van der Poel). Education in rhetoric played a covert political/social role.

Example 3. Historically, rhetoric is a complete art for shaping students— influencing how they think through the canon of invention, how they express themselves through the canon of style, and how they move and sound through the canon of delivery. In the eighteenth century, the fifth canon became especially prominent, enlisted in the effort to fashion the polite subject, as Dana Harrington has shown in a recent issue of *Rhetorica*. Politeness was a matter of

feeling and taste—shaping the subject toward appropriate emotional response and civil behavior to others. Thomas Sheridan preached that polite response and its appropriate expression could be taught, especially somatically. Sheridan and other elocutionists would train students' faculties by having students enact the tones and gestures that embodied politeness in giving a speech or in reading aloud. One is tempted to invoke Foucault: Rhetoric was complicit in rendering the body as a political field. But the elocutionists' instruction could also be seen as liberatory—as a force in the transformation of the public sphere in the eighteenth century.

Historicizing rhetoric in the way I propose is not new; one might say that this approach is inherent in the idea of *paideia*. But the project as I envision it would be undertaken without the evangelism and elitism that once characterized the study of *paideia* in the context of ancient Greece. We would proceed, not in the spirit of Jaeger but under the sign of Bourdieu.

Note

¹ I take inspiration from Richard Graff and Michael Leff; Thomas Habinek; Jean Ferguson Carr, Stephen L. Carr, and Lucille Schultz; and Susan Miller.

Neoliberalism, Higher Education, and the Rhetorical/Material Relation

Ralph Cintron
University of Illinois at Chicago

Professor Tom Miller raised an important question from the audience. He noted that the speakers, with the exception of me, seemed hopeful. He concluded that much of the convention did not seem to question how it rested on neoliberal paradigms. I answered by elaborating what I think to be the political and economic contexts that are eroding the innovations in public education from the last half century. The argument, which needs more careful analysis than what I can provide, is that publicly funded universities and colleges—along with vast sections of the public sector—have been dismantled by the combination of a populist antitax movement and a segment of the wealthier class that wants to maximize profits. The first group consists of working and middle-class folks who interpret government action as tyrannical, resenting even filling out census forms. The second group wants to maximize profit by rolling back the taxation of wealth (hedge fund managers pay only fifteen percent on their profits), privatizing public services (the rise of charter schools; garbage pickup used to be public sector employment), and advocating deregulation.¹ Neoliberalism, a capacious term, wants to starve

the beast of government and make the economy more efficient and flexible by privatizing social security, cutting pension funds, ensuring on-time deliveries of goods and services rather than warehousing, and chasing cheap labor through outsourcing.

Where I teach, state funding has plummeted over the decades until today it is about sixteen percent. The university is developing plans for consolidating departments and units. Similar talk is occurring in many other public universities. There are two major consequences that seem to be unfolding from these national discussions:

- (1) Legislators and the public in general are targeting graduate teaching in the humanities as less essential than undergraduate teaching. English departments are particularly vulnerable because they cannot automatically justify the study of literature, literary theory, or even cultural studies to cost-saving administrators. The positioning of composition and rhetoric may be different, for we study and teach specific skills. Indeed, many of our first composition and rhetoric PhD programs began in the late 1970s and 1980s as one response to an influx of “nontraditional” students, a movement that first appeared with the GI Bill. Nevertheless, our field may undergo structural changes due to public pressure to emphasize undergraduate teaching and not graduate teaching or research. Indeed, our campus recently fought off a proposal that threatened to eliminate tuition and fee waivers for graduate students, a proposal that, in effect, would have killed our graduate program.
- (2) Since the 1950s the production of BAs, MAs, and PhDs among the not privileged has arguably changed the “face” of the American professional class and radically altered what counts as knowledge, particularly in the social sciences. But students are taking on ever-larger proportions of their own education. In sum we may be seeing the privatization of public education and, consequently, a hardening of the divide between those who can afford and those who cannot. Remember, at one point the University of California at Berkeley was free. Needless to say, these changes in public university funding and their consequences will be site specific.

Professor Miller’s critique of the entire convention, including our panel, hit at one of the vulnerable cores of composition studies and rhetorical studies. Both mobilize a certain social uplift in the name of progressive politics. The politics of social uplift, otherwise known as “empowerment,” is at the core of neoliberalism, for neoliberalism can justify a disinvestment from the public sector once everyone becomes her own entrepreneur. Consider the overlap between George

W. Bush's "ownership society" and our field's "own your own text, culture, or identity." So identity movements, uplift, and empowerment—the focus of many of our panel presentations and the conference itself—have been positively used to fight historical injustices but are also seamless with neoliberal agendas.

Democracy is, among other things, a vast argument machine and desire machine, and its most important products are the democratic rhetorics, such things as equality, rights, transparency, freedom, and so on. "Freedom is . . . constantly produced. [Liberalism] proposes to manufacture it constantly, to arouse it and produce it, [along with the] constraints and the problems of cost raised by this production" (Foucault 65). The progressive left, including the panelists and me as well, have simply followed the logic of incitement rooted in the democratic rhetorics, which have historically enabled the disadvantaged to advance their material conditions in the face of otherwise hierarchical and sedimented power relations. But I am impatient with this work when its focus is limited to rhetorical dimensions or identity formation and does not include material analyses of political economy. Our field provides little training in such matters. We are too much about words. We might also turn to urban theory, economics, social theory, political theory, and empirical methods. All of my teaching and research these days is a search for ways to meld rhetorical and material analyses whether in matters of taxation, banking regulations, citizenship status, housing initiatives, or in understanding the nation state as a set of territorial, political, and economic stabilities in contexts of transnationalism. So, a call here for rhetoric to move out of any disciplinary location—and I have seen some success in this: the deinstitutionalization of rhetoric from English and communications and its reconstitution elsewhere. But a wilder call: Kenneth Burke explored a poetics in which the whole of daily life—its thoughts, actions, and objects—became enactments of the rhetorical. I repeat: His was a poetics, not an ontological claim. Well, of late my students and I have been examining how price performs the rhetorical action of reification in order to settle the elusive concept of worth; or how rights are metaphors, storehouses of social energy, that deny their origins in desire; or how both libertarianism and Marxism are the *inventio* of liberalism; and how all three fetishize freedom. If one starts to unearth the conceptual grounds and material conditions upon which our beliefs and actions lie, one may, shockingly, discover that identities are only a tertiary production of these mechanisms.

Note

¹ See <http://wealthforcommongood.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/04/Shifting-Responsibility.pdf> for more information.

Response¹

Victor Vitanza
Clemson University

This occasion of a Third Octalog is a moment that calls for *epideictic* discourse. Primarily praise. Let's rebegin, however, with a **flashback** to Octalog, a flashback that comes to us from various future anteriors. Octalog was not considered the first of three+. It was Octalog! Bear with me: A flashback: I will have said something like this: *I've come not to bury **THE** politics of historiography, but to praise what other-wise wants to be said. Yet, I dig a grave issue, when it is perhaps an unbearable lightness of a certain uncertain attitude that I want to perform. The revenant will have returned* (cf Derrida, *Specters of Marx* 4). Etc. . . . And so we did our thing back then. But surely you must know, you must feel, there are specters whose improper-proper names haunt this third octalog. But there's not near world enough in what goes for time in the program.

We each have five minutes. Can you imagine in another world with another ethnologic sense: The life-span of a "little fly, called an ephemera" (Franklin). A few moments, not in terms of a full day! How grave can it be! I could **try to respond** to eight presenters in five minutes. Instead, I've responded at length privately in writing to each of them and placed my affirmative comments for each in an envelope, which I have just now distributed to them . . . Vicki, Ralph, Jay, Jessica, Ron, LuMing, Malea, Arthur.

I would dis-rupt *the time that remains*. To Messianic Time. I have little faith in Chronological time. Contrary to the flashback that I opened with, I do not deliver in chronological time, but invest in the *future anterior* of times to come.

Item one: Octa-loggers **reclaim** your *éthea*, that is, your wildness, that which you were before becoming domesticated into y.our professional, akademik *ethos*.² Octa-loggers, *address the other that is indefinite*. Not only *within you* and all around you, but especially *in Logoi*. Rethink the notion of *responsibility* by beginning perpetually to develop y.our abilities *to respond to the other that is indefinite in Logoi, not just in ethos and pathos, but in Logoi!*³

Item two: Octa-loggers, **follow** what wants, desires, to be said. No matter how wild *your truths without principles* might be expressed through your variously perverse historiographies! Be wild. Be wilder at first and thereafter. Bewilder not only those around you, but even, if not more so, your so-called "self." I have in mind what Althusser has called "a wild/savage practice." Think finitude! Writing is, after all is said and undone, the very site of finitude's excesses.

Item three: Ergo, post-Ego, **beware** of chrono-logic. Embrace anachronisms. Embrace messy-antics. Beware, specifically, of those in philology who pretend that chronology, chrono-logic, has exclusive validity and value when it comes to historiographical readings of times past, remembrances of times lost. Traditional philologists, old or new, cannot themselves remain faithful to their god Chronos. Who eats his futures! Traditional philologists are the great pretenders of time-travel to the past, when, more so, and every moment so, they, with others, live in a future anterior, a *what will have been*—namely, in a past that is forever re-situated in a future. With a past coming to us from a future.

So, **Let be thought** this morning a para-philology not unlike, yet quite different from, those of Paul de Man and Edward Said. Both of whom called for a return to philology. But their particular calls are not *logoi*'s call. Rather surreal.ally, *logoi*'s peculiar call is for a revisionist—yet, ever sub/versive—para-philology that is de-based, ungrounded, in finitudes, by ways of *being alongside*, *besides itself*, wherein so-called agents as well as agencies become “adjacencies,” ex-statically next to, impertinently so, what has been called philology. **Let there be less thought** about achieving a *point of stasis*—which historiographers have yet to achieve anyway—thanks to the gods who are perpetually at odds with each other. Such a point of *stasis* would only be a *static* trap for establishing an “us” as inside, perpetually as *enstasis*. Rather, **Let there be exultations**. For the *revenant* is coming. **Let there be ek-stasis** . . . more so, every moment so. *Ek-stases* and Ecstasies!

Notes

¹ For Jim and Bob . . . Susan, Sharon, Richard, Jan, Nan, and Jerry (chair), Octalog, 1988, St. Louis.

² *Éthea*, where animals belong, in their wildness. I'm using Charles Scott's *The Question of Ethics* for reading, as CS cites such in the *Iliad* (6.506–11). The horse wants to return to its *Nomós*, field, as opposed to *Nómos*, law (Scott 143). I've consulted Charles Chamberlain's “From Haunts to Character.”

³ I would claim, therefore, that it is our responsibility to search out our other-abilities, our impotentialities, to address the other that is indefinite. I'm not referring to potentialities, that is, *Techné* or *Dynamis*. Rather, I am referring to what Aristotle notes only in passing as *Adynamis*, or Impotentiality (see *Metaphysics* 1046e, 25–32). This, then, would be the para-methodology of misology! As well as the wildness that I refer to! In reference, as Giorgio Agamben says, *Adynamis*, or Impotentiality, would address all that has NOT YET been intuited, thought, acted on in ethico-political lived experiences (see *Potentialities*). Or forgotten! At least, in our wide, impotentially wild field.

Reflections Following Octalog III at CCCC

Vicki Tolar Burton: One astute questioner in our abundant audience asked several panelists what was meant by the “we” in our papers. If there is a gift from this Octalog, it is an understanding that the “we” of rhetoric has become more capacious—yet clearly not capacious enough. I want to connect this present lack to future pedagogy. Introducing Octalog III, Chair Lois Agnew said that students begin her graduate course in rhetorical history by reading Octalogs I and II. Now is added Octalog III, with new questions for historical rhetoric, new pedagogies, research methods, and territories for rhetorical exploration. I imagine spirited discussions as students place our papers in dialogue with each other, with earlier Octalog speakers, and with their own visions of what rhetoric can be and do. Respondent Victor Vitanza encouraged us to “go wild” with our research, meaning, I think, to take risks, to re-imagine our work—to rap it, to rhyme it, to turn it on its head. My hope is that Octalog III’s audiences will go into the wilderness of new archival and rhetorical frontiers with Vitanza’s spirit of wildness, with a traveler’s curiosity and appetite for knowledge, with Heraclitus’ commitment to dwell ethically with texts, speakers, and audiences, and with courage to address the messiness of our times.

Jay Dolmage: During this third Octalog, I was struck by several important ways in which ideas enfolded, echoed, anticipated, and responded to one another. So, just as I grounded my own comments upon a theft from a previous Octalog, I hope to center future work around theft from *this* Octalog—with some selection and deflection, of course. In particular, I am energized by the challenges posed by my peers: from Ronald Jackson, the call to recognize the harm racism does to both bodies and the “body politic”; from Jessica Enoch and Vicki Tolar Burton, the need to see the ways that bodies shape and are shaped by social spaces; from Art Walzer, the suggestion that we might find liberatory potential even in classical pedagogies and practices that have been seen as repressive of bodily expression; from LuMing Mao, the argument that the us/them duality that impels so much bodily denigration must be transformed into a “proactive heuristic”—a way of seeing all bodies as “coterminous and interdependent”; from Malea Powell, the provocative challenge to move beyond flat and linear historiography, and instead shape a method as malleable and unpredictable as the body itself; from Ralph Cintron, the call to “name a citizenship of movement and presence”; and finally, from Victor Vitanza, the affirmation of wildness, partiality, and messiness. Perhaps opportunistically, I see these all as invitations to engage the

body rhetorically, and in particular to challenge the normative body of rhetorical scholarship.

Jessica Enoch: The conversations of Octalog III elucidated for me two major historiographic concerns. First, not only is historiographic writing rhetorical, but it should also be overtly persuasive. While scholars have made this point in previous contexts, it takes on a different nuance in this contemporary moment (Berlin; Bizzell; Jarratt). The Octalog III panelists made clear that our field is (or should be) rich with *histories*: histories of rhetorical education, of “Other-ed” or non-Western communities, of women, and even of gendered spaces. As the discipline’s past grows in these divergent ways, now more than ever it is important for the historian to persuade her readers why her particular history is worthy of the field’s attention: Why *this* history? What does it say to readers today? How does it contribute to or (re)direct scholarly conversations? Second, as the historian crafts arguments regarding the relevance of her historiography, she must also consider the methodological questions that arise when pursuing new research areas. Such questions include not only what counts as evidence, and what is (or could be) the primary text, but also what ethical concerns emerge in investigating this group, working in this archive, or pursuing this kind of interdisciplinary scholarship. Addressing these questions seems paramount to the scholar’s work, especially at this moment when the potential for historiographic expansion is both so necessary and so possible.

Ronald L. Jackson: Rich with profoundly important intellectual statements about the future of rhetoric, the Octalogs have attempted to paradigmatically shift how we do rhetoric. This Octalog was greeted with a spectacular standing-room only audience. Although not that diverse culturally, the audience remained interested and responsive. We had at least three panelists discuss the significance of a radically progressive multicultural pedagogy. I urge everyone who reads these words and attends these events to do some critical self-interrogation and rigorously revise your pedagogy to be more aggressively culturally inclusive. It is only then that we truly educate our students to be effective citizens.

LuMing Mao (*From “Going Native” to Cultivating a Transrhetorical Dialogue*): In espousing the art of recontextualization for writing a new historiography of rhetoric, I have drawn inspiration from the work of the comparative philosopher David Hall and the sinologist Roger Ames. They have proposed for the study of Chinese culture an *ars contextualis* (“art of contextualization”) that rejects

any overarching context determining the shape of other contexts and that “permits the mutual interdependence of all things [in Chinese culture] to be assessed in terms of particular contexts defined by social roles and functions” (248). No less important to me is the work by scholars who have challenged us to critically examine how and why non-Western, indigenous rhetorical practices are being constructed and how and why such constructions become, importantly rather than merely additively, constructive for this new historiography. The art of recontextualization calls for perpetually moving between rhetorical borders with no overarching context or standard from one tradition influencing or determining the shape of many from other traditions. However, such a practice is not foolproof. We can become so entrenched in our own tradition that we either unknowingly fail to make the crossing or end up, after crossing, seeing the other with one’s very own “I” (eye). We can also feel so enlightened by the other that we begin to hyper-correct the other in hopes of correcting the ills that have troubled our own tradition. Overzealousness could be another form of perpetuating the structures of dominance that such a rhetorical border-crossing aimed to transform in the first place. Admittedly, “going native” has become the gold standard for the study of the other in ethnography. The art of recontextualization for writing the new historiography of rhetoric is not so much about “going native” as about going places to cultivate a transrhetorical dialogue. There we stop coveting a rhetorical communion—an epistemological impossibility—and we begin to practice and advance interdependence-in-difference where both the self and the other turns, overlaps or interruptions notwithstanding, to develop a new language and to learn to recognize and draw from each other’s social, political, and linguistic affiliations and affordances.

Art Walzer: It seems to me that Octalog III was marked by a confirmation of the expansion of the scope and function of rhetoric as a discipline that is currently well underway. All participants welcomed the expansion of rhetoric beyond what Graff and Leff have characterized as a white, male, European demographic. But the challenge of attempting to understand cultures different from one’s own is clearly the source of some anxiety as scholars fear, in Emmanuel Levinas’s phrase, turning the Other into the Same. A second theme in our session, building on the work of revisionist historians of Octalog II, was the movement away from a focus on the reading of great works to a focus on the relationship of rhetoric to power, not only in the overtly political arena but in education, where rhetoric has historically played a dominant role. Here the challenge (it seems to me) is to acknowledge that acculturation is inevitable and to understand how it liberates as well as limits.

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