

# Must We All Be Rhetorical Historians? On Relevance and Timeliness in Rhetorical Scholarship

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*Rhetorical scholarship, if it is to remain relevant, must be actively applied to current events. This essay proposes an alternate mode of scholarship, one that takes advantage of the online medium and integrates the speed of journalism with the rigors of scholarly analysis. Such a mode of scholarship dissemination is not meant to replace the current journal system; rather it serves a different end—that of providing scholarship to the public as a whole. I argue that scholarly analysis of current events will enrich the dialogue that is already taking place in the public sphere and help citizens to more fully take part in democratic practice.*

The practice of rhetorical scholarship has often been defined through a series of questions. In 1977, Barnett Baskerville asked, “must we all be rhetorical critics?”<sup>1</sup> Baskerville was concerned that the role of the rhetorical historian was being eclipsed by the rise of the rhetorical critic. In 1994, James Darsey asked, “must we all be rhetorical theorists?”<sup>2</sup> Darsey was concerned that the role of rhetorical critic was being eclipsed by the rise of the rhetorical theorist. In 2000, Jim Kuypers asked, “Must we all be rhetorical activists?”<sup>3</sup> Kuypers expressed concern over an ideological turn in rhetorical scholarship that threatened both critics and theorists. Such questions are important because they help keep the discipline on its toes by asking where we are heading.

In 2011, I suggest that Baskerville need not have worried. It seems that we are becoming a discipline heavily invested in rhetorical history. In fact, a cursory glance at the table of contents of any given rhetorical journal will reveal a decidedly historical slant. Even theory is informed through the lens of history as a kind of post hoc humanistic version of social scientific studies of persuasion. The historians never left, and now they are the journal editors and reviewers that determine the worthiness of one’s scholarship. Therefore, I pose the question: “Must we all be rhetorical historians?” My answer is an emphatic “no,” but to explore how this is to be done, we must first examine the culture that encourages the historical turn in rhetorical scholarship, the structures of

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<sup>1</sup> Barnett Baskerville, “Must We All Be Rhetorical Critics?” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 63, no. 2 (1977): 107-16.

<sup>2</sup> James Darsey, “Must We All Be Rhetorical Theorists? An Anti-Democratic Inquiry,” *Western Journal of Communication* 58, no. 3 (1994): 164-81.

<sup>3</sup> Jim A. Kuypers, “Must We All Be Political Activists?” *American Communication Journal* 4, no. 1 (2000): <http://www.acjournal.org/holdings/vol4/iss1/special/kuypers.htm>.

academic publishing, and the quest for relevance to and accessibility for the general public.

### **The Problem of Publishing**

Authors of journal articles strive for a long “shelf life” by choosing topics that seem significant, such as the oratory of Abraham Lincoln or the rhetoric of Martin Luther King, Jr. This requires the selection of rhetorical artifacts that have already stood the test of time; presidential rhetoric is a safe bet, as is the close examination of influential orators that are safely dead. Contemporary rhetoric is just too uncertain—how is the critic to know that a rhetorical act or text will be influential until we have all witnessed its power? Karlyn Campbell explains that there is a place for discussion of contemporary events, but that “professional journals should not be the primary vehicles nor professional colleagues that primary audience for such efforts. The social criticism of ephemeral, contemporary events belongs in the mass media where much of it now appears, and the audience it needs to reach is the general public.”<sup>4</sup> I agree that the analysis of contemporary events must reach the general public, and I agree that scholarly journals should not be the primary outlet for such analysis. There is certainly a need for theory building, but is theory the only thing of value?

Campbell seems to paint an either/or kind of dichotomy here, but this is a necessary consequence of the nature of journal publishing. Shortly after I had finished my doctorate, I had a chance to meet with one of the foremost scholars in the rhetoric of technology. I asked her how she managed to publish on a topic that moved so quickly that by the time an article hit the pages of the journal it was already obsolete and irrelevant. She replied that she always had to write from a historical perspective. Stories abound concerning the glacial pace of journal publishing. In my own experience, I have waited over nine months to hear a response from one of NCA’s journals. I am pleasantly surprised when I receive a response within four months. This is well and good when one receives an invitation to revise and resubmit the article—which also adds months to the original decision—but once rejected, the clock starts all over again. The cycle to publication can often stretch into years, especially if the paper is presented at a conference before being sent out for publication.

In short, history and theory are all that journals have to offer. Perhaps this is why rhetorical scholars seem to have taken to heart Campbell’s prescription for criticism that is enduring; criticism itself is not enough. In some ways, both the theorists and the historians have won the battle for journal space, but at the expense of analysis of contemporary events that is useful at the time of publication. Steven Hunt states that “publishable rhetorical scholarship is high quality criticism which illuminates a rhetorical text and/or adds to theory.”<sup>5</sup> But it is not enough to simply illuminate a rhetorical text; it must be a “worthy” rhetorical text that “influences many people perhaps profoundly.”<sup>6</sup> It seems we have, in a roundabout way, returned to Herbert Wichelns’ assertion that

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<sup>4</sup> Karlyn Kohrs Campbell, “Criticism Ephemeral and Enduring,” *Speech Teacher* 23, no. 1 (1974): 10.

<sup>5</sup> Steven B. Hunt, “An Essay on Publishing Standards for Rhetorical Criticism,” *Communication Studies* 54, no. 3 (2003): 378.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 383.

rhetorical criticism is concerned, above all, with the question of effect.<sup>7</sup> But more importantly, how is the rhetorical scholar to know the effect of the discourse? This is a prescription for historical criticism because it is only with hindsight that the rhetorician can proclaim the importance of the discourse. Even then, the pace of journal publishing means that by the time the analysis is provided, the effects will already be felt by the public.

Barry Brummet argues that the goal of rhetorical theory is “to teach people how to experience their rhetorical environments more richly.”<sup>8</sup> But as it stands, journals cannot do this work. We experience our rhetorical environment in the present tense, not as a historical reflection. If rhetorical scholars are to take up the challenge of educating the general public concerning their rhetorical environment, we must do so where and when they are. And there must be a space for this kind of scholarship if rhetoric is to remain relevant beyond the journals and the ivory tower. This in no way negates the importance of historical or theoretical scholarship, but, to put it bluntly, historical analysis of Nazi propaganda techniques cannot retroactively stop the work of death that took place in the concentration camps.<sup>9</sup> We must also move beyond our current solipsistic mindset in which rhetorical scholarship is fit for consumption only by rhetoricians.

This leads us to the potential for mass media to fulfill this obligation. Unfortunately, we have witnessed how the mass media provides critical analysis of contemporary events: complex issues are reduced to slogans and discussions of people are reduced to *ad hominem* attacks and irrelevancies such as whether one wears a flag pin on his or her lapel. But part of the problem may simply be the nature of the media themselves. Marshall McLuhan reminds us that the medium influences how we perceive the message.<sup>10</sup> Scholars such as J. Michael Hogan and Kathleen Jamieson have noted that the mass media places its own rhetorical constraints on the message, leading us to the culture of the sound byte.<sup>11</sup> I recognize that rhetorical scholars are sometimes asked for input by the mass media concerning rhetorical issues. For example, Martin Medhurst,<sup>12</sup> David

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<sup>7</sup> Herbert A. Wichelns, “The Literary Criticism of Oratory,” in *Studies in Rhetoric and Public Speaking, in Honor of James Albert Winans*, ed. Alexander Magnus Drummond (New York: Russell & Russell, 1962), 209.

<sup>8</sup> Barry Brummett, “Rhetorical Theory as Heuristic and Moral: A Pedagogical Justification,” *Communication Education* 33, no. 2 (1984): 103.

<sup>9</sup> I do not mean to suggest that there was no analysis taking place at the time—quite the contrary, although mainly in the field of public opinion research. See Walter B. Emery, “Verbal Warfare,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 30, no. 2 (1944): 154-57; S. K. Padover, “How the Nazis Picture America,” *Public Opinion Quarterly* 3, no. 4 (1939): 663-75; Edward Yarnall Rartshorne, “Reactions to the Nazi Threat: A Study of Propaganda and Culture Conflict,” *Public Opinion Quarterly* 5, no. 4 (1941): 625-39; Thornton Sinclair, “The Nazi Party Rally at Nuremberg,” *Public Opinion Quarterly* 2, no. 4 (1938): 570-83; Gordon Skilling, “Will November 1918 Repeat Itself?” *Public Opinion Quarterly* 7, no. 2 (1943): 258-66; Gregor Ziemer, “Rehabilitating Fascist Youth,” *Public Opinion Quarterly* 7, no. 4 (1943): 583-91.

<sup>10</sup> See Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1994); Marshall McLuhan and Quentin Fiore, *The Medium Is the Massage* (New York, NY: Bantam Books, 1967).

<sup>11</sup> J. Michael Hogan, *The Nuclear Freeze Campaign: Rhetoric and Foreign Policy in the Telepolitical Age* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1994); Kathleen Hall Jamieson, *Eloquence in an Electronic Age: The Transformation of Political Speechmaking* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988).

<sup>12</sup> Alec MacGillis, “Obama Seeks to Transfer Campaign’s Spirit to Challenges Ahead; Evoking Historical Calls for Perseverance, Inaugural Address Urges Determination,” *The Washington Post* January 21, 2009;

Zarefsky,<sup>13</sup> and Steven Lucas<sup>14</sup> have all weighed in on Barack Obama's rhetorical skill. But even these observations are reduced to one or two sentences, rather than the complex analysis we get in a journal article.

Rhetorical scholarship is currently faced with two seemingly insurmountable obstacles to become relevant to the general public: it must be current and accessible. By accessible, I mean both available and readable. In my rhetorical theory class, I have my students read original scholarship rather than the regurgitated versions found in textbooks. They struggle through these articles largely because of the dense verbiage. It seems, at times, that rhetoricians have adopted the postmodernist strategy of unreadability. The ideas that we grapple with are often not as complex as the words we use to describe them. Rhetoricians that wish to make rhetorical scholarship accessible must learn new ways of writing, acting as interpreters of theory and events.

The question of timeliness is vexing, considering the current mode of review. But there are other disciplines whose scholarship depends on timeliness that can teach us how to overcome this obstacle. The field of law provides one such example. Although law reviews are certainly not written for the lay population, time is of the essence because legal scholarship is often used to defend court opinions. For example, it is not uncommon to see legal research cited in Supreme Court opinions. This leads to a different style of review process. When submitting an essay to a law review, the author can choose the traditional route of sending it to one journal and hoping for the best, but this is not the one generally used. Rather, the author will submit the essay to many journals at once through a centralized system called Expresso, making choices based on ranking and fit. For this convenience, the author pays a small fee of two dollars per journal. The journals often will have a decision within two weeks. If the author receives an offer to publish the essay, he or she can inform the other journals that are also considering the essay. The other journals may choose to simply reject it, especially if the offer comes from a journal that is ranked considerably higher, or offer a counteroffer to publish in their journal.

Of course this speed in decision making comes at a price. The journal reviewers offer little, if any feedback. If rejected, the author receives a standard form letter informing him or her that the journal has chosen not to publish the essay. However, because the review process is so rapid and the author is able to submit to multiple journals at once, he or she increases the chances of a favorable response while the essay is still relevant. Moreover, because the essay is going to multiple journals at once, it encourages increased attention to quality. Because the author is likely to send the essay simultaneously to as many of the appropriate outlets as possible, if the essay is not completely ready, the author risks the possibility that no one will accept the article. Communication journals, on the other hand, provide extensive feedback (for the most part) seemingly with the assumption that the author will send the essay to another journal. But after two rejections, the topic may no longer be timely. An author that submits to 50 law reviews may receive offers to publish from three of them and rejections from 47 of them; imagine going through the 47 rejections to get to one of the acceptances under our current system in

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Bruce Newman, "King's Words Reverberate in Obama's Dream," *Oakland Tribune* August 27, 2008; Matt Spetalnick, "Can Bush's 'War on Terror' Vocabulary Survive Obama?; Language Suggests Policy Change, Rhetoricians Report," *The Vancouver Sun* February 7, 2009.

<sup>13</sup> Peter Applebome, "Is Eloquence Overrated?" *New York Times* January 13, 2008.

<sup>14</sup> Newman, "King's Words Reverberate in Obama's Dream."

rhetorical studies—one would send it out as assistant professor and have it published as emeritus!

There are significantly fewer options for publication in the field of rhetoric than there are in the field of law so it may provide little benefit to submit to all of them simultaneously. More importantly, in rhetoric journals there may be little benefit in doing so because it is quite possible to get the same reviewers at multiple journals. Perhaps this is one of the reasons for the lag in the time between submission and decision. Given the double whammy of overworked reviewers who are also producing their own research, combined with the expectation of thoughtful comments on the essay it seems understandable that rhetorical scholarship would move more slowly. But it doesn't have to be that way.

With the growing acceptance of online journals, there is little reason one would even have to wait for the issue to be filled before reading the material. For example, in the hard sciences, it is not uncommon to access in press corrected proofs through the Science Direct database. With an online journal, material could be quickly peer reviewed, then revised, and posted to the journal's website. Moreover, without page restrictions, the journal could focus on publishing material that fulfills the scope and aim of the journal. I agree that journal standards should be rigorous, but a recent issue of *Quarterly Journal of Speech* devoted 46 pages to book reviews because they did not have enough material that passed editorial muster.<sup>15</sup> Granted, *QJS* is the flagship journal in rhetorical studies and is right in maintaining strict standards. But are we really so bad as a discipline that we cannot collectively fill an issue of *QJS* with something besides book reviews? Some journals, such as *PMLA* seem to take pride in single digit acceptance rates. It seems to me that what we need is more scholarship, not less.

We also need more outlets for rhetorical scholarship. If *QJS* is turning away over ninety percent of the material that is submitted to them, where does it go? It cannot all be complete dreck, but the regional journals can only absorb so much of this material, along with *Rhetoric Society Quarterly*, *Rhetoric & Public Affairs*, *Rhetoric Review*, *Rhetorica*, and a handful of other rhetoric journals. In looking at the table of contents of these journals, we can see more clearly the need for an outlet specific to contemporary issues in rhetoric. It seems that many of these journals have a decidedly conservative slant—not in the political sense, but in the sense that they are quite unlikely to push the envelope, either through content or methodology. Consider Thomas Benson's essay, "Another Shooting in Cowtown," which provides one of the most lucid examinations of American politics I have read in any of our journals, yet many dismissed it as not worthy of publication in *QJS* because it did not seem like serious scholarship.<sup>16</sup> In fact, it was originally rejected by the reviewers and the editor; the editor eventually changed his mind and decided to publish the essay. It seems to me that Benson's real crime was that it was written to explain to his daughters what it means to be a rhetorical scholar—in a way that they could understand.

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<sup>15</sup> John Louis Lucaites, "QJS Editorial Policy," email to *CRTNET: Announcements, Queries, and Discussions*, no. #10427, June 4, 2008, <http://lists1.cac.psu.edu/cgi-bin/wa?A2=ind0806&L=CRTNET&T=0&F=&S=&P=1353>.

<sup>16</sup> Thomas W. Benson, "Another Shooting in Cowtown," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 67, no. 4 (1981): 347-406.

If we as a discipline are to move forward, we must not be afraid to question our orthodoxies. We need more scholarship that pushes the boundaries of what constitutes good scholarship. I am not advocating wholesale rejection of our history, nor do I advocate latching on to every fad in scholarship that passes through the humanities. Rather, I suggest that we should explore new ways of making scholarship relevant to the rest of the population. Essays like “Another Shooting in Cowtown” and Michael Pacanowsky’s “Slouching Toward Chicago” do not look like scholarship, but they certainly have something to teach us.<sup>17</sup> More importantly, they are written in such a way that they can also teach others outside of our discipline.

But pushing the envelope is easier said than done. For the most part, those who submit to journals are those who are working toward tenure or promotion. The adage “publish or perish” is a stark reality for those who are working toward tenure. The work of the public intellectual that makes scholarship accessible to the general public is not well rewarded by tenure committees. An essay in an obscure journal is worth considerably more toward tenure than an article in a trade press or popular magazine, despite the fact that the popular press will almost certainly reach more people. In short, there is not much incentive from an institutional standpoint to create accessible scholarship.

Thus we see that there is an entire system at work that discourages accessible, timely scholarship. The conventional wisdom in rhetorical scholarship is that appropriate scholarship should contribute to theory and should be done on “worthy” subjects. This worthiness, of course, is in the eyes of the reviewers and the editor. Because of the time required to move an essay through the publication process, the analysis of contemporary rhetoric for the education of the general public is difficult because by the time the essay is reviewed, accepted, and published, it will no longer be timely. Essays that are published by a timely outlet, such as a popular magazine or a newspaper do little for tenure. Essays that are written in such a way that they are readable by the general public are likely to be dismissed as not serious scholarship. Perhaps this is partially from our perception that research that contributes to theory must be densely written. The odds are stacked against the possibility of rhetorical scholarship being translated to the public in a timely manner.

### **Theory, History, and Rhetorical Scholarship: Reflections on a Conversation**

Sometimes insight comes from someone with an outside perspective. My brother Shane asked me a simple question: “What does rhetoric do?” As a lawyer, he understands my definition of rhetoric as how we make sense of the world symbolically. In actuality, he was asking an instrumental question of relevance. In other words, why should anyone care about rhetoric? What does rhetorical theory do for the masses? These questions are quite easily answered for such fields as medicine, law, and engineering, but not so easily answered for rhetoric. At times, we seem to be the acolytes of an esoteric order that exists mainly to perpetuate itself. We study rhetoric because it is important and it’s important so we study it. We know that rhetoric is of immense importance, yet we often have difficulty explaining how this is so to a lay audience.

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid.; Michael Pacanowsky, “Slouching Towards Chicago,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 74, no. 4 (1988): 453-67.

Shane asked me for an example of rhetorical theory that would be of use to someone besides rhetorical scholars. I responded by explaining to him Edwin Black's concept of the second persona, emphasizing that "the critic can see in the auditor implied by a discourse a model of what the rhetor would have his real auditor become. What the critic can find projected by the discourse is the image of a man, and though that man may never find actual embodiment, it is still a man that the image is of."<sup>18</sup> In other words, rhetorical discourses are not only about persuading one to do something, but to *become* something. We then went on to discuss a particular commercial, explaining how this notion helped us to understand more completely what the advertiser would have the viewer become. Shane agreed that this notion was, indeed, useful, yet he wondered why the only people who would ever hear these things would be in my rhetorical theory course. I have also wondered why this is so and the only answer that I have is that there is nowhere for the general public to find research in a way that they can read it.

Shane also wanted to know why we seem so fixated on the past. A cursory glance a *QJS* will demonstrate that we have a love affair with history. Once again, there really isn't a place to publish scholarly research that is theoretically informed that examines current rhetorical affairs. When *Today's Speech* was created by the Eastern Communication Association, the idea was to create something like *Psychology Today* for the field of speech communication. Examining the older issues of that journal demonstrates that such an endeavor is possible, although it has since changed its name to *Communication Quarterly* and now seems no different from any of the other regional journals. The articles in *Today's Speech* were interesting, readable, and shorter than the average article found in communication and rhetoric journals today. However, they were no less scholarly or theoretically informed. They were also timely, considering salient issues and events. We read about strategies of obscenity and First Amendment issues in protest actions,<sup>19</sup> confrontations with anti-war protestors at the height of the Vietnam War,<sup>20</sup> and critical analysis of civil rights era strategies.<sup>21</sup> These articles helped explain how these actions functioned rhetorically, but did so in a way that was accessible to the general public. *Today's Speech* demonstrated that scholarship does not have to be historical to be useful. We need a space that recaptures this commitment to contemporary rhetoric. However, it is not enough to simply play by the old rules and expect new results. If this is to be done well, we must reconsider the way we write scholarship, what we write about, and the mode of publication.

First, for scholarship to be truly accessible, we must become adept at translating theory. This should be well within our abilities as scholars; after all, many of us teach courses in rhetorical theory and criticism. This is not a prescription for dumbing down theory. I firmly believe that the average person can be taught rhetorical theory if he or she is taught with sufficient care. Perhaps this will require that some of the minor nuances are omitted in the interest of clarity and application. In other words, it is our role to separate the wheat from the chaff. Most importantly, the critic must recognize that if he or she is

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<sup>18</sup> Edwin Black, "The Second Persona," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 56 (1970): 113.

<sup>19</sup> Haig A. Bosmajian, "'Speech' and the First Amendment," *Today's Speech* 18 (1970): 3-11; Haig A. Bosmajian, "Obscenity and Protest," *Today's Speech* 18 (1970): 9-14.

<sup>20</sup> Thomas W. Benson and Bonnie Johnson, "The Rhetoric of Resistance: Confrontation with the Warmakers, Washington, D.C., October, 1967," *Today's Speech* 16 (1968): 35-42.

<sup>21</sup> Gladys Ritchie, "The Sit-In: A Rhetoric of Human Action," *Today's Speech* 18 (1970): 22-25; Herbert W. Simons, "Patterns of Persuasion in the Civil Rights Struggle," *Today's Speech* 15 (1967): 25-27.

writing for a non-specialist audience, the essay must be self contained; one cannot expect that the reader already has a firm understanding of Marx's conception of alienation or Lacanian psychoanalysis. If such concepts are essential to understanding the rhetorical phenomenon under investigation, the critic must explain them, or at least the relevant ideas that will help illuminate the rhetorical text or act.

The critic that endeavors to examine current rhetoric is part rhetorical critic and part journalist. To select a topic to examine, the critic is led by his or her own interests and an awareness of world affairs. The journalist is quite able to report the events of the world, but remains ill-suited to interpret these events from a rhetorical standpoint. Such analysis requires a keen understanding of how rhetoric operates and of the theories that help explain the rhetorical force of particular strategies. Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw argue that although the mass media may not tell citizens how to think on a particular issue, it does dictate what issues citizens should think about.<sup>22</sup> The rhetorical scholar considers what readers are likely to think about, as well as explain why they are likely to perceive the message in a particular way.

But if such a model is to work, it must be as timely as the events that are taking place in the reader's rhetorical environment. Modern society seems to exist in a constant state of information overload; we are bombarded by a continual stream of news. As such, if rhetorical scholarship is to serve as a corrective to current events, it must exist concurrently *with* those events. A discussion of an important event that becomes public once the world has largely forgotten about it, or at least what they thought about the event, is of little worth to the general population, except, perhaps, as a cautionary tale. As such, the medium of the Internet seems well suited to such an endeavor. A printed quarterly journal may take too long. Consider such outlets as the *New York Times* and *Newsweek*, publishing daily and weekly. Contrast these with CNN's around the clock news coverage. By such standards, a weekly or even a daily news outlet seems almost archaic. An ideal situation for contemporary rhetorical scholarship would be constant updates. However, there just aren't that many rhetoricians to go around and not all have a desire to examine current rhetoric. But the Internet allows for the ability to continually update as new content becomes available. Thus, careful analysis of contemporary events would be available when the editor accepts it, rather than when the pages are open for that essay. This would allow the public to gain a greater understanding of current events that transcends the quick overviews currently offered by the mass media.

## Conclusion

In 1922, Walter Lippmann argued that modern society had become too complicated for the average citizen to make informed decisions and called for the establishment of bureaus of experts who could help leaders to sort through the confusion.<sup>23</sup> Shortly thereafter, Edward Bernays suggested that "ours must be a leadership democracy administered by the intelligent minority who know how to regiment and guide the masses. Is this government by propaganda? Call it, if you prefer, government by

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<sup>22</sup> See Maxwell E. McCombs and Donald L. Shaw, "The Agenda-Setting Function of Mass Media," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 36, no. 2 (1972): 176-87.

<sup>23</sup> See Walter Lippmann, *Public Opinion* (New York: Free Press Paperbacks, 1997), 143, 233-238, 250-251.



education.”<sup>24</sup> Yet Jacques Ellul asks, “How can people who are incompetent make important decisions with regard to technique? Here, of course, ordinary citizens are in exactly the same place as the politicians, who are also perfectly incompetent.”<sup>25</sup> The complexity of modern society seems to be increasing on an exponential scale. When even the experts cannot agree on the greater good, how, then, can citizens and elected officials who are not experts?

John Dewey noted that the public was “bewildered” and that “there are too many publics and too much of public concern for our existing resources to cope with.”<sup>26</sup> For Dewey, salvation comes through communication and community: “Till the Great Society is converted into a Great Community, the Public will remain in eclipse. Communication can alone create a great community.”<sup>27</sup> Yet what will we communicate about? If the desired end is to raise the quality of rhetorical discourse in the public sphere, rhetoricians must take an active part in teaching the public how to understand this discourse. Moreover, if citizens are to function in a rhetorical society, they must learn the art of rhetoric. What is at stake here is citizenship and democratic practice.

Changing the way we write, what we write about, and how we publish will be difficult. However, the ability to thoughtfully contribute to the rhetorical events of our day is a valuable reward. I have often wondered why research in *Nature* or *Science* is commonly reported in the popular media, yet I may never live to see *QJS* or another rhetoric journal cited in the popular media. The answer seems to lie in the fact that journals such as *Nature* are reporting current findings. There is not much demand for still more analysis of 18<sup>th</sup> century Revolutionary War rhetoric. We must begin to examine the events that are taking place around us and make those analyses public. Otherwise we, with our scholarship, risk being relegated to the dustbin of history.

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<sup>24</sup> Edward L. Bernays, *Propaganda* (Brooklyn, NY: Ig Publishing, 2005), 127-128.

<sup>25</sup> Jacques Ellul, “Technology and Democracy,” in *Democracy in a Technological Society*, ed. Langdon Winner, 35-50 (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1992), 43.

<sup>26</sup> John Dewey, *The Public and Its Problems* (Athens, OH: Swallow Press, 1991), 126.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 142.