

Future Directions for Rhetorical Traditions

Patricia Bizzell

Professor of English, College of the Holy Cross

*A lecture presented by the Center for Writing and the
Interdisciplinary Minor in Literacy and Rhetorical Studies*

**Speaker Series
No. 23 ♦ 2003**

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Preface

In September, 2003 the Center for Writing and the Interdisciplinary Graduate Minor in Literacy and Rhetorical Studies welcomed Professor Patricia Bizzell as its twenty-third speaker in the Series, to present on *Future Directions for Rhetorical Traditions*. Bizzell's talk covered topics ranging from her experience editing her well-known text book *The Rhetorical Tradition: Readings from Classical Times to the Present* to the content of a conference she had attended that weekend, entitled "Conference on the Status and Future of Rhetoric Studies." Held at Northwestern University on September 11-14, 2003, it was the first conference of the Alliance for Rhetoric Societies (ARS), a newly formed organization that brings together scholars from existing academic societies devoted entirely or in some part to rhetorical studies. With these activities fresh in her mind, Bizzell's talk triggered a lively audience discussion of issues of canon formation, the diversification of academic discourses, and perceptions of "tradition" in academia.

On the day following her talk, a luncheon, also colored by avid discussion, was attended by a group of faculty, staff, and students representing the Center for Writing; the Minnesota Writing Project; the Departments of Rhetoric, Communication Studies, English, and Linguistics; and the Minor in Literacy and Rhetorical Studies.

Patricia Bizzell is Chair and Professor of English at College of the Holy Cross in Massachusetts, where she has taught since 1978 and where she established a peer-tutoring facility and writing-across-the-curriculum program. She is President-elect of the Rhetorical Society of America and is a prolific writer and editor. Her book *The Rhetorical Tradition: Readings from Classical Times to the Present* is the definitive collection of texts for teachers of the history of rhetoric, while her recent *ALT/DIS:*

Alternative Discourses for the Academy, which she co-edited, addresses the question of how the increasing diversification of academic discourses affects the teaching of writing to college students.

Because of the quality of the recording from which this publication was transcribed, some of the questions during the question and answer session were inaudible. We have done our best to recreate these questions based on memory, notes, what little could be heard, and Patricia Bizzell's response. Questions marked by an asterix (*) denote these ambiguous areas. Our apologies for these omissions, but we hope you'll find – as we did – that Bizzell's responses are worth reading even without the complete questions.

We at the Center for Writing believe this Speaker Series will provide new insights for teachers and researchers in the field of literacy and rhetorical studies. We invite you to communicate with the Center about this publication or any others in the series.

Kirsten Jansen, Series Editor
Elizabeth Oliver, Editor

Kirsten Jamsen: On behalf of the Center for Writing, welcome to the first event in this year's Speaker Series for the Interdisciplinary Minor in Literacy and Rhetorical Studies. I'm Kirsten Jamsen, Director of the Center for Writing – home of the Literacy and Rhetorical Studies Minor, which is under the direction of my colleague Professor Donald Ross. The "Center for Writing" is a new name for the merged identity of the former Center for Interdisciplinary Studies of Writing and the Student Writing Center.

Before we begin, I would like to thank the College of Liberal Arts Scholarly Events Fund and the Office for University Women for co-sponsoring today's event. And, I would like to extend a special thank you to my colleague Professor Lillian Bridwell-Bowles for inviting today's speaker: Patricia Bizzell, Professor of English and Chair of the English Department at the College of the Holy Cross in Worcester, Massachusetts.

It is particularly fitting that Professor Bizzell comes today as part of the Literacy and Rhetorical Studies Minor Speaker Series, since her invitation was inspired by a lively discussion of her book *The Rhetorical Tradition: Readings from Classical Times to the Present* in Professor Bridwell-Bowles's graduate seminar last spring. As I learned from students in the course, reading Bizzell's book—co-authored with Bruce Herzberg and winner of the NCTE Outstanding Book Award in 1992—raised a lively discussion about who should be included in the "rhetorical tradition." Rather than cut off the questions, Professor Bridwell-Bowles said (and I'm paraphrasing here), "Let's invite Patricia Bizzell to campus and ask her these questions in person." One thing I know—and greatly admire—about Lilly is that if she envisions something, she knows how to make it happen. So, on behalf of everyone here, thank you, Lilly, for making this suggestion a reality.

Patricia Bizzell is truly one of the “great voices” in discussions of rhetoric, composition, and literature. In addition to *The Rhetorical Tradition*, her other books include *ALT DIS: Alternative Discourses and the Academy* (co-edited with Christopher Schroeder and Helen Fox), *The Bedford Bibliography for Teachers of Writing* (co-authored with Bruce Herzberg and Nedra Reynolds), *Negotiating Difference: Readings in Multicultural American Rhetoric* (co-authored with Bruce Herzberg), and—one of my favorites—a collection of her articles entitled *Academic Discourse and Critical Consciousness*. That collection came out in 1992, the year I first read Professor Bizzell’s work in a course on composition theory. I remember being inspired then both by her smart, contextual theories about how students learn and teachers teach writing, and her obvious passion for social justice. I’m not sure where she finds the time between her committed teaching and her prolific scholarship, but Patricia Bizzell is also known for her effective administrative skills, having directed her college’s and her department’s honors programs and having founded and directed a peer tutoring facility and a writing-across-the-curriculum program. And, she is currently the President-elect of the Rhetoric Society of America.

It is with deep admiration and respect that I welcome Patricia Bizzell to discuss with us today *Future Directions for Rhetorical Traditions*.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS FOR RHETORICAL TRADITIONS

Patricia Bizzell: Thanks, Kirsten, I appreciate it. I like for my talks to be interactive and this one in particular, you should think of as a talk with a hypertext with hypertext links attached. Occasionally, while I'm talking I'm going to mention topics that we can click on at the end of the talk and go back and explore them in a little more depth. Of course, you're free to ask any questions that you want at that point or, while I'm talking if you feel you have to put your oar in, please raise your hand.

Today we are going to talk about the history of rhetoric, and I'll divide my remarks into two parts: Part One, entitled "*The Rhetorical Tradition*," will summarize my essay that I understand has just appeared in *The Journal of Philosophy and Rhetoric*.¹ I haven't seen the current issue of the journal myself, but I understand it is now out. That essay is entitled "Editing the Rhetorical Tradition," and it's based on my experience as co-editor of this book called *The Rhetorical Tradition*, which Kirsten just mentioned. Part Two of my talk is entitled, "Rhetorical Traditions?" And in it, I will report on the conference from which I have just returned, convened by the Alliance for Rhetoric

¹ *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 36, no. 2 (2003): 109-118.

Societies, at which the study of the history of rhetoric was a major topic. I will tell you a little about the Alliance for Rhetoric Societies, the conference, and what I heard there, very up-to-date ideas about the history of rhetoric.

Part One. The first edition of *RT*, that's how I'll refer to it, for shorthand's sake, appeared in 1990. Now, Bruce and I begged the publisher to let us call it *Rhetorical Traditions* but he refused because Bedford had already published *The Critical Tradition* and they wanted our book to be a companion book to it. We said, "Look, if we do that, every single reviewer is going to castigate us for perpetuating this monolithic notion of one rhetorical tradition," and sure enough, that's what they all did, but you know, we didn't have any control over that. Even though we knew we had to call it *The Rhetorical Tradition*, Herzberg and I (and by the way, in case you don't know, Herzberg and I have been married for twenty-six years, which is why our names keep turning up together on these publications) we wanted the book to be inclusive in spite of the title. But when we began working on the first edition around 1985, we were surprised to discover just how hard that was going to be.

The canon revision process that was already well advanced in literary studies by that time did not really seem to have come to scholarship in the history of rhetoric in any significant way. We found that, what I'm going to call in my talk today, "the traditional tradition," really seemed to dominate scholarship and by the "traditional tradition," I mean the great monuments . . . the names that are probably familiar to many of you: Plato, Aristotle, Cicero, Quintilian, Augustine, Erasmus, Bacon, Blair, and so on. Now, the editing of rhetoric anthologies has always been done with political agendas in mind; I make no apology about that, all the way back to Isadore of Seville, at *least*, who

attempted to make the fragments of classical rhetoric safe for Christians. But tendentious as we were prepared to be, we found it very difficult to incorporate into the first edition of *RT*, works on which little secondary scholarship existed to explain how these works might be construed as rhetorical, and of course it was impossible to include those works that hadn't been recovered yet, that hadn't really emerged onto the scholarly landscape. So we did the best we could. A decade later, when we prepared the second edition of *RT*, things had changed dramatically, at least in some ways, although they had stayed surprisingly the same in others.

What I'm going to do in this part of my talk is summarize the changes that we observed, moving from our work on the first edition of *RT* to the second edition of what we call *RT2* in our house [laughter] and I'll use the metaphor of a stock market report to convey this information. Now, as we worked on the second edition of our book, we discovered the scholarship in the history of rhetoric had burgeoned over the intervening decade, which was good news, we thought, but the texts of the traditional tradition remained the blue chip stocks of rhetorical scholarship. It was quite interesting. Aristotle in particular seems to be the site of a very stable industry, putting bacon on the table for a number of people, in spite of, or maybe even because of, the trenchant critiques of his work that have appeared in recent years. (I'm thinking, for example, of Jasper Neel's work, work that gives Aristotle responsibility for everything bad that's happened in education since, you know, 1700.) Nevertheless, Aristotle remains extremely popular and that was brought home to me at this conference at Northwestern this weekend. I made a flippant comment about Aristotle in a session that I was in, and almost the entire room rose to assassinate me. It was clearly not the right thing to do. Cicero also

continues to attract persistent interest and, by the way, was given pride of place in the plenary address on the history of rhetoric that was given at the ARS [Alliance of Rhetoric Societies] conference, which I'll have more to say about later.

So the blue chips continue to be quite popular. They were also quite popular in the readers' reports that we got on first edition of *Rhetorical Tradition* which we took into account in revising the volume. No reviewer wanted *less* of the traditional tradition. Generally speaking, the reviewers asked for more stuff. Very seldom did a reviewer ask for anything to be cut, but nobody asked for any of the blue chip material to be cut and, hence, if you compare the two editions, you'll see that we increase the coverage of Cicero, Erasmus, and Blair, and we also added men who could be considered perhaps more minor figures but still figures in this traditional tradition, including Longinus, Geoffrey of Vinsauf, Hume, Herbert Spencer, and Wayne Booth. Now here is one of these little click-on spots. Later on, at the end of the talk, if you want to go back and talk a little about why these blue chip texts and figures remain so popular, that might be interesting to do and we certainly can do that.

At the same time, in recent years, it's clear that what we might call "new traditions," somewhat of an oxymoronic term, have emerged in rhetorical study. These fall into at least two categories (and by now you will be snickering because you will realize how thoroughly Aristotelian I am, in spite of my snide remarks, since I tend to analyze everything into categories and I set them all up in these hierarchies.) These fall into at least two categories. The first I would describe as texts and authors already known to traditional historians of rhetoric, but considered to be very minor or deviant figures. Recent reevaluations have moved these figures to a more central position and the

best examples of this category are the Sophists. We increased our coverage of them in *RT2* in response to popular demand. Others who might be included in this category are Vico, Sheridan, Coleridge (whom after all we didn't include in *RT2*, but I think certainly falls into this category), Nietzsche, Bahktin, Derrida, Foucault, and Habermas, also one who didn't make it into *RT2*, but certainly could be included in this category. It will be seen that most of these figures are important to the post-modern, so-called rhetorical, turn in the humanities and social sciences, generally. This accounts in part for their revitalization. [Click here](#) if you'd like to talk more about why they've become more important when we get to the end of the talk.

Now, investment in the figures in this category remains risky. These are risky investment opportunities. Scholars have the advantage here of a fair amount of work already done on these figures since they were known to traditional scholarship. But their reputations also fluctuate unpredictably. In addition to the Sophists, Bahktin is a real growth stock. I'm giving you a tip here if you want to get in on the ground floor. Vico, on the other hand, continues to be unaccountably undervalued. I don't know why. And it also seems to me that Richard Weaver is due for a revival, so there might be some opportunities for future investment if you want to keep that in mind. On the other hand, I would say one of the dot-com stocks of this category is Derrida. There seems to be much less work by rhetoric scholars being done on his work in recent years.

The second category of new texts that I want to call to our attention has emerged I believe at least in part, as a result of increasing representation of people of color and white women among the ranks of rhetoric scholars in recent years (not that I mean to imply that the situation is yet egalitarian by any means.) These scholars have directed

our attention to texts and authors practically unknown to traditional historians of rhetoric, sometimes because we didn't have the methodological approaches necessary to construe them as rhetorical, and sometimes because the work itself was hidden from view, fragmented, or lost. These authors and texts alter the traditional tradition much more than the first category of new topics of study does because they require not just new priorities, but a complete reordering of priorities in scholarly study. And these are rhetoricians who often are people of color or white women.

I think of these figures often as exploring what I call rhetorics of "heterogeneity." Unlike the figures in the traditional tradition, these rhetoricians have not been able to assume that everyone who heard or read or studied or taught their rhetorical texts would be of the same race, gender, and social class as themselves. They have dealt in culturally mixed contexts and contrived complex, syncretic, ethical personae for themselves. To give one example from *RT2*, Frederick Douglass combined African and European-American visual cues in his platform presence, dressing his hair in such a way to emphasize its African texture while clothing himself in upper-class formal garments coded as white. He laced his speeches with European and American high-cultural literary references, but also occasionally sang African-American spirituals, and so on. His written work on rhetoric might also be viewed as syncretic since it combines commentary on how to speak effectively with autobiographical reminiscences.

Falling into the second, more radical, category of new traditions is the single largest group of additions to *RT2*, namely women. New to the second edition are Aspasia, Madeleine de Scudéry, Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, Mary Astell, Maria Stewart, Phoebe Palmer, Frances Willard, Virginia Woolf, and Gloria Anzaldúa, and we would

have also added Adrienne Rich had she given us permission to reprint her material. Which she didn't. These women join newly expanded and/or renovated selections from Christine de Pizan, Margaret Fell, Sarah Grimké, and Hélène Cixous. I would be happy to talk more later about what I think these figures contributed to the history of rhetoric, so that's another sort of click-here spot.

How is it that this work emerged? Well, sometimes a genre not previously considered rhetorical had to be read as such, such as conversation, which both de Scudéry and Astell read as rhetorical. Sometimes a marginalized speaker's defense of her right to speak at all could be theorized and indeed the right to speak – the arguments for the right to speak – becomes almost a trope in women's rhetoric throughout the period of western history that we're looking at. Sometimes long-neglected material that could actually be read with traditional scholarly tools had to be brought before the academy's eyes again, as Karlyn K. Campbell, a Professor here at Minnesota did in her ground-breaking two-volume study of 19th-century American women rhetoricians entitled *Man Cannot Speak for Her*. I can't over-emphasize the importance of that text, the emergence of these new sources.

Some reviewers of *RT2* have complained that the texts we have included in the second category reduced people of color and white women to mere performers of rhetoric, not according them the dignity of rhetorical theorists, such as has been traditionally awarded to Aristotle, Cicero, and other traditional tradition figures. That again is a topic that we can talk more about later, but just for now, let me say first that our construal of these traditional figures as theorists is to some extent at least an artifact of scholarship. Cicero, for example, really didn't write very many abstract treatises on

rhetoric. *De Oratore*, for example, which is his best known rhetorical work, is a highly dramatized dialogue in which a numerous cast of characters sits around drinking under the shady trees of a country estate and discusses quite discursively the topics of rhetoric, philosophy, and public life, but we no longer notice the syncretic nature of this text because generations of scholarship have taught us to read it as theory. For Herzberg's and my anthology, we chose, or so we think, texts in which our newly emergent rhetorical figures show considerable metacritical awareness of their own rhetorical practices. These are not performances merely. Again, for a brief example, the speech of Maria Stewart's that's included is one in which she defends her own rhetorical practice, asserting her spiritual authority, comparing herself to a catalogue of biblical and historical eloquent women and generally showing considerable self-consciousness about connecting herself to, if not *the* tradition, *a* tradition, of public speaking by women. The figures and texts in the second new category constitute the most dynamic growth stock opportunities in the history of rhetoric today, but at the same time, I am certainly not recommending that we abandon the traditional tradition, blue chips, or their newly revalued compatriots. The rhetorical tradition has always been edited, it's always changing, and I find it hard to regard this process as anything but healthy and generative. And, of course, it's a process that continues even as we speak.

Now what I'd like to do is turn to Part Two of my talk and tell you a little about what happened at Northwestern over the weekend. So this is the part entitled, "Rhetorical Traditions?" The Alliance of Rhetoric Societies, or ARS, is a brand-new organization whose members are other professional societies with an interest in the study of rhetoric. Some of the member organizations include the National Communication

Association, the Conference on College Composition and Communication, the Rhetoric Society of America, the American Society for the History of Rhetoric, and others. If you'd like to learn more about ARS, the website should be up shortly and the URL is simply rhetoricalliance.org. ARS is the brainchild of some speech-communication scholars, notably Michael Leff, who has been at Northwestern for a number of years but is just now moving to the University of Memphis, and Gerard Hauser of the University of Colorado. They noticed that the scholars interested in rhetoric were dispersed among quite a number of different academic disciplines including History, Philosophy, and Political Science, as well as Speech Communication, English, and Composition Studies. I understand here at Minnesota there are three or four different departments at least – Rhetoric, Speech Communication, English, Writing Studies – where these people might be found. The ARS founders decided that it would be a good idea to try to bring scholars of rhetoric together for scholarly exchange to cross-pollinate our research and to provide us with more political clout, both within the university setting and on the national scholarly scene. So they said, let's see what happens if we bring these folks together. So, accordingly, two years ago Michael Leff hosted a conference of fifteen rhetoric scholars from different disciplines and different professional organizations at Northwestern University. Art [Walzer, in the audience], you were there, and I was also privileged to be a member of that group. That meeting turned out to be extremely exciting and productive. It resulted in a recommendation that ARS be formed and also, the decision to launch it with the conference that occurred at Northwestern this past weekend. Again, I'd be happy to talk later about what ARS is and what it hopes to

accomplish. I'm a member of the board, and we can talk about it more during the question period if you'd like to know.

Mike Leff and Andrea Lunsford, a compositionist at Stanford, organized this conference for ARS. It took place from last Thursday night until yesterday morning and brought together about 150 rhetoric scholars from many different departments. Also, it was kind-of an international conference; I personally met people from Japan, Holland, and Sweden, and I'm sure there were other countries represented. We heard plenary addresses, with lengthy respondents' essays on four important topics: the history of rhetoric, the nature of rhetorical agency, the teaching of rhetoric, and the place of rhetoric in the academy and the wider world. This was an incredibly intense and exciting conference and my head is really still buzzing from it. I was privileged to be able to sit down this morning and try to put some of my notes from the conference in order – what I'm delivering to you now – but I hope to develop them a little further when I have more time to think about it. On each of these four major topics, discussion groups of ten to fifteen participants were formed. We met periodically throughout the course of the conference to talk about what was happening and to give an ongoing account of the success of the conference. Was it working? Were we finding it interesting to talk to each other? And what would we recommend might be some desirable outcomes for the conference? I was a facilitator for one of the two groups that talked about the history of rhetoric, and we had to report back at the end to the final plenary. What I'm going to be telling you is drawn not only from my discussion group, but also from the other discussion group on the history of rhetoric, because we got together for a meeting before the final plenary to kind of compare notes. All the four topics were really interesting, and

I would have been happy to be a member of any one of those discussion groups, especially the one on agency after hearing Professor Campbell give a truly magisterial plenary address on that topic.

My plan for the remainder of my talk is to tell you a bit about what I learned at the conference, and I'm going to group my notes under the following topic headings: Do we have a rhetorical tradition? If we are to pluralize this tradition, how is that to be done? What is the study of rhetoric generally for, and what is the history of rhetoric for? Why should we do it at all? First, a rhetorical traditional question. Based on what I just told you about what Herzberg and I learned preparing *RT2*, you would have thought that there was now no question that the history of rhetoric should not be characterized by the term "rhetorical tradition," singular. Many people at the conference didn't even like the term "traditions," plural, because they felt that any version of the word "tradition" implies a continuity and teleology for the texts and figures under study that is tendentious and exclusionary. Our discussion groups on the history of rhetoric tried on several different terms to describe the material we study – that we call it an assemblage of texts, an inventory, a constellation, and the one that we finally settled on that we liked the best was Amazonian Rainforest. [laughter] Think about it: it's tangled, it's chaotic, it has various points of entry with varying degrees of difficulty, and also there are a lot of uncatalogued species still at large in there.

Nevertheless, interestingly enough, the plenary address on the history of rhetoric was entitled "Tradition." Not even plural. This address was prepared by Jerzy Axer of University of Warsaw, and because he was unable, ultimately, to come to the conference, it was read for him by John Kirby. Not only does Axer entitle his talk "Tradition," but he

begins with a really charming account of how he was suffering from writer's block. Axer decided he couldn't write the plenary address at all, so he planned to call Professor Leff and tell him that he wasn't coming after all. But, he bethought himself of the cross-Atlantic time difference, so he decided to take a bath before placing this phone call. He was sitting in the bathtub when miraculously, out of the tap, popped a fragment Cicero's *De Oratore*, Book Three! A previously unknown fragment. So Axer tells us in his plenary, he will translate this for us and, lo and behold, it reveals a exchange between Crassus, who, if you've read Cicero you know is his main mouthpiece in the dialogue, and one of frequent interlocutors Scaevola, on the value of broad learning to the development of rhetorical ability. Crassus, as you might expect, defends learning, and even avers that the same canon of texts will always be necessary to mastery. Scaevola suggests that future generations, on the contrary, will regard the legacy of the past as a threat, because it unjustly imposes one particular worldview and aesthetic. Alas, the fragment breaks off just as Crassus is about to reveal the simple and obvious answer to this objection. [laughter] Now you'll see how this exchange summarizes what's at issue when the pluralizing of the rhetorical tradition is debated, as well as showing that it is still debated. And, Axer's choice of the Ciceronian fragment to make this point not only instantiates Cicero's blue chip status once again, but also seems to kind of identify Axer with a more traditional perspective on the tradition.

Now he admits in this plenary, which with all of these plenary addresses and respondents' essays should be up on the Rhetoric Alliance Web site shortly, along with the initial position papers, which are up there now. Axer admits that the rhetorical tradition will, of course, change over time, with some texts moving toward the center and

some moving toward the margins, and he cites *RT2* as a book that exemplifies this process. And he is undisturbed by it. He doesn't really think it's too important. He kind of dismisses it as homage to "political correctness," and he actually did use that phrase. I'm not sure he really understood all of the implications of that phrase for American academics. In fact, after the plenary several people came up to me and said, "Gee, how'd you feel when Axer attacked your book?" And I said, "Well, I didn't actually feel attacked by it. I mean, he was putting it in a certain location, which was okay with me." And you wouldn't really think that he attacked it if you paid attention to what he said in the whole speech, because he goes on in the body of the address, in very elegant fashion, to recommend that, while the traditional tradition must continue to form the *center* of the study of rhetoric (so he puts himself, I guess, on the right side of the spectrum there), what he calls "local and regional examples of rhetoric" should also be added. So his position, as I understood it, was that in the study of the history of rhetoric you must study the traditional canon first, but you must also make it possible for your students to study these newly emerging texts *after* ... he was very clear about that. And he said one thing that I thought was extremely interesting and that I wish had been addressed more by somebody, either the respondent or any one of the questioners, that he felt that professors should not suggest to their students much in the way of how to put the traditional tradition texts and the new texts into relation with each other. He thought that those relationships should be constructed by the students and in fact he seemed to regard it as domineering and oppressive on the part of graduate faculty if they indicated how these texts should be related to each other. I wasn't sure whether *RT2* was a negative example for him in that regard. *RT2* just tries to fold new and old together, putting them, to the

degree possible, on an equal footing. I'm not sure if he would have disapproved of that or not, but he was very clear that he thought this was something that each student had to do for himself or herself, which I thought was quite interesting. In any case, he concludes with an inspiring call for continued commitment to the study of the history of rhetoric, and he basically gave three reasons why he thought it was valuable. One, that it protects at least some people from marginalization in our complex contemporary political environment. Two, it protects people from what he called "the cooling of the heart," (I thought, an interesting phrase) a cooling of the heart that's promoted by the materialistic values of globalization. And three, what he called, and again these are from my notes "the loss of contact with reality," (that was his phrase) "encouraged by our increasing reliance on electronic media of communication rather than the face-to-face paradigm that dominates classical texts." And, his respondent Jeffrey Walker basically agreed with him right down the line. He said, "right on, Professor Axer, you're absolutely correct," agreeing with him completely.

My discussion group wished to go much further than Axer or Walker, however, in the pluralizing of the history of rhetoric. Although some wanted to emphasize that even the traditional tradition is certainly not monolithic – and I believe I have already suggested that in my remarks concerning previously known, but marginalized figures who've moved back closer to the center of study – others in our group, and I would say the majority, wanted to emphasize that we must talk of multiple histories and must encourage much more study of figures and texts in the second new category that I talked about in the first half of my talk today. So, the general tone of the meeting seemed to reinforce what I just said to you about the new stuff being the growth stock area for folks.

So, do we have a rhetorical tradition? Well, the answer seems to be yes, as long as we don't call it a tradition – ha – as long as we don't restrict it to only one traditional tradition history. But people seem to be comfortable going back to the past. Now, having accepted these premises concerning the study of history, it seemed that our group's hard work had really just begun. If we're going to pluralize (this brings me to the second heading under which I'm trying to organize my notes here), if we're going to pluralize the history of rhetoric, if we accept that it should be pluralized, then what? How do we organize our research in this area? How do we organize our courses in this area? What should we do? It was pretty clear that *RT2*'s approach was not in favor with most conference participants. In other words, most seemed to feel that one should not simply teach a course in the history of rhetoric that starts with the Sophists and ends as far up in to the present time as you can go, and just moves along chronologically, and slots old and new together. Most folks seemed to feel that was not the way to do it, that was methodologically retrograde. We can talk more later about why they didn't like it. They also didn't like courses based on a centralized category such as women's rhetoric. And again, we can talk more about my sense of why those ideas did not find favor.

To give you a flavor of what they did like, I'm going to tell you about some of the courses that folks described as organizing this new kind of study of history in better ways. One was a course on Chinese rhetoric in which Chinese rhetoric formed the rhetorical frame, but, here and there, texts from the Western tradition were inserted when they seemed to resonate with topics that came up in the course of this account of Chinese rhetoric and the history of Chinese rhetoric. Another course focused on a couple of essays by Foucault in which he draws on classical sources, and this again was what I

think of a hypertext-organized course, where every time there was a classical reference in Foucault, the class clicked on it, found the classical text, and read a big chunk of it, to try to figure out why and how Foucault was using it. I can easily imagine that that would take a good semester-long just to do. People seemed to like courses that were thematized in dialectical ways. One example that was given was a course entitled “Dominance and Resistance” in which traditional and new texts were paired and the struggle between them was examined. Another, fourth, example, examined the rhetorical activity of a particular historical period in great depth, so that the traditional tradition texts that appeared there and the new tradition texts that are there are all brought forward and put in dialogue with each other and all depicted as part of a very thick description of the historical moment, perhaps providing more historical information, cultural information, and archaeological information than we have typically done in rhetoric courses. So those are some examples. I could probably come up with a couple more if you’re interested.

It might not surprise you to learn, based on what I just said, that people felt that a great benefit could be derived from cross-disciplinary work on such projects. Indeed, one of the major insights enacted by ARS conference as a whole was the degree to which all scholars in rhetorics need to team-teach, send students to each other’s classes, even if that means sending them to the “other” department, [laughter] and co-sponsor speakers and local conferences, including conferences that bring graduate students from different departments together and different institutions. People seem to think that would be very valuable: collaborative research projects – and actually, every time this came up at the conference I just thought again how remarkable it is that we don’t do this more, what a tyranny of the existing academic structure, what a tyranny is exercised there that folks

who have these common interests don't come together more on projects. Another insight that came up that is particularly close to my heart is devising curriculum that recombines instruction in written and oral rhetoric, which seems to be extremely difficult to do, unaccountably difficult to do. The discussion groups that were working on the teaching of rhetoric apparently had some quite nasty arguments about how that could be done or couldn't be done, but it seems to me that it needs to be done. I have in my notes from the conference an additional list of these common projects in the history of rhetoric, at least, which I'd be happy to share, so we can click on that at the end if you'd like to.

Something that struck me forcefully, a question that was obsessing me throughout the conference – and I will end with this question, posing some further questions about it – is the question why study or teach the history of rhetoric at all? I found that my fellow conference participants were, on the one hand, very reluctant to address this question and, at the same time, prolific with answers to it. [laughter] So I guess the idea that everybody had lots of answers, but nobody really felt they had the answer, an answer they wanted to go to wall for. I'm going to lay out three kinds of arguments that tended to come out when this question came on the table, as the discussion swirled around over the weekend.

The first one I've grouped under a sentence that I wrote down in my notes that was spoken by one of my discussion group members. He said, "We live in an age of moralistic criticism." I think he intended that to be pejorative. At various points over the weekend, the question of why the history of rhetoric must be pluralized would come forward. Everybody basically agreed that it was and that it should be, but it still occasionally would come back to the question of why. It was clear there was some

reluctance about pluralizing. I think I've already implied, in what I said about Professor Axer's speech, that I thought he implied some reluctance about the pluralizing of the tradition. There were certain moments of eye-contact between members of the discussion group that suggested that there was still some underground resistance to this idea of pluralizing, but it had gone underground, to some extent at least. The accepted official story is, we need to pluralize the tradition because it's a matter of social justice, it's a matter of fairness. It's only fair to include rhetorical works by as many people as possible, particularly by people who belong to social groups that have been marginalized, oppressed, excluded, victimized, by way of redress. Now, it seems to me that if you include material in your history of rhetoric on these grounds, you're judging this material by criteria that are external to the study of the history of rhetoric. You're using moral criteria or political criteria or ideological criteria, whatever you would like to call them, in order to decide your scholarly agenda. Most people did not want to open up that can of worms. They didn't want to talk about that. I think the fellow who used the phrase "moralistic criticism" was pointing to that. He saw it the same way I did, that people were using moral values to determine scholarly agendas, and he didn't like that, but he really didn't want to get into a big discussion of that. It seemed like nobody really did. I think it would be better, on the one hand, to have that out on the table, to openly aver our moral and political commitments, because I don't think it's any disgrace to admit that your professional work is motivated by values that you deeply hold, that may come from deeper aspects of your being. In fact, how could they not be? If your professional work is disconnected from your deepest values, you're in the wrong line of work, you know? How could it not be? And, if it is, why pretend it isn't? And, why excuse yourself from

the responsibility of making rhetorically persuasive arguments about why your values should be heard in determining scholarly agendas? Why not get that on the table? So that's one response to the moralistic criticism comment.

On the other hand, I would also say that I'd like to see more work judging the value of the new texts in what I will call (making a somewhat artificial distinction) "purely rhetorical terms." In other words, let us say more about why Frederick Douglass, to take my earlier example, contributes to our understanding of rhetoric and the history of rhetoric in ways that we can gain nowhere else. Let's talk about why as scholars seeking to understand rhetoric and the history of rhetoric, we need him, and let's rely less on the unexamined assumption that he needs us to rescue him from historical oblivion. So that's that topic. Now I'm going to turn to another one.

This, again, was a kind-of buzz-phrase that kept coming up whenever we posed the question of why do we teach rhetoric, why do we teach the history of rhetoric: "the democratic value of deliberative discussion." Many conference participants wished to aver that the value of the study of rhetoric generally lies in its preparation of good citizens who can participate responsibly in the debates over public issues upon which democracy depends. Rhetoric teaches deliberative discussion, it teaches people how to argue multiple sides of a question without allowing partisan emotions to close off debate. James Arndt Aune, who was the respondent to the plenary on the place of rhetoric in the academy, made this criterion a central credo of his belief in the value of teaching rhetoric. He said, "If we do nothing else, we must teach people how to engage in deliberative discussion." It seems to me there are a lot of problems with this as a justification for teaching rhetoric. It leaves unexamined (I'll just list a few of them, you may be able to

think of more) it leaves unexamined the place of rhetoric in social constructions that are not democracies, as the United States, arguably, increasingly, is not. [laughter] In other words, where are the public fora in which our admirably trained students are going to go and deliberate discursively? It leaves unexamined the issue of whether rhetorical tools will necessarily be used for good. If we teach students to do this, how do we know they're going to go out and be good citizens of a democracy? What's to prevent them from becoming manipulators? In other words, it's begging the question of whether the study of rhetoric actually makes you or helps you become a good person, whatever "good" means. There's a whole nested set of unexamined questions there, it seems to me. And, of course, they go back all the way, at least all the way back to the different conceptions of rhetoric we find in Isocrates, Plato, and Aristotle. So there's nothing new about this. It's still unexamined, and people are still relying on it as justification of what they do without unpacking it.

Moreover, we can say that this particular defense of rhetoric leaves the role of the history of rhetoric quite sketchy indeed. One could presumably defend the teaching of those past works that bear particularly on civic rhetoric. That is, those works that might aid in the teaching of deliberative discussion and, indeed, these are the texts that have favored in traditional tradition scholarship, and this also helps to explain the male dominance of this tradition. I noticed on the poster for my talk that it was announced I would be discussing the male-dominated history of the tradition of rhetoric, so if you want to talk more about that, what's the connection between civic rhetoric and the purported male-dominance of the history of rhetoric, I'd be happy to do that. [Click here](#) when we get to the end of the talk.

Even so, the history remains in an ancillary position to texts and figures that bear more immediately on present political circumstances, such as examples of presidential rhetoric and so forth. The problem here may be illustrated by the reported decline of interest in courses in the history of rhetoric that many participants reported at their schools. For instance, Lucy Xing Lu, who teaches at de Paul University, was offering a course in the History of Asian Rhetoric, which was drastically under-enrolled, until she changed the title to Asian Culture and Communication. [laughter] Same course, different title, and then it was fully enrolled. So, what's that about?

I'm almost done.

My third heading has to do with historical situation and historical situatedness. Michael Leff, at one point in the conversation, delivered himself very eloquently, in a way which I can't reproduce, about how the study of history should be especially important in the study of rhetoric because rhetorical analysis always aims to unpack the historical situation of instances of discourse that use historical situatedness. It's something that we take as an integral part of rhetorical analysis, so if we're going to do that with the object of our study, how can we not do it with our own discipline? How can we claim to be rhetoricians and not understand the history of rhetoric? And I think, actually, that this is probably the best justification for studying the history of rhetoric. Not only in order to understand rhetoric itself as a discipline but – as I learned through studying the history of rhetoric over the years and working on two editions of *Rhetorical Tradition* – I was struck over and over again by the centrality of rhetoric to Western intellectual history generally and therefore, by its repeated illuminations of our present intellectual, ideological, and political condition.

And, finally, there is ultimately, I think, a spiritual dimension to the study of the history of rhetoric, if I may use a term that's rather taboo in the academy. We can talk about sex and money, but we are not to talk about things that are spiritual. I'm not talking about religion, however, but really the notion that people need a sense of where they are on this plane of time in order to understand their situation and take ethical action. A sense of history (I'm going to just propose this and throw it out at the end of my talk) I think a sense of history is spiritually orienting. I think its absence is a major cause and condition of alienation. That's one reason why oppressed and marginalized groups deeply feel that recovering their history is crucial to their empowerment. Such epistemological considerations are much harder to talk about than liberal political agendas, but I think we will never be able to understand the persistent interest in the history of rhetoric and the passionate concern with what constitutes the history of rhetoric, without considering them. I will end there and now open the floor. [applause] So please, people should get up, move around. And click wherever you'd like to click.

Question: One of the questions posed maybe by our poster was future directions. Is there an *RT3*?

Patricia Bizzell: [laughter] Well, actually, I'm going to just shoot from the hip on that. Based on what I learned at Northwestern over the weekend, I don't think that the format of *The Rhetorical Tradition* is going to be adequate to represent the work that's going to be done in the history of rhetoric over the next ten years. I don't think a chronologically organized, serially organized volume is going to be adequate. I think what we're probably going to need instead is probably a cluster of volumes that cut and slice this material different ways. In general, what we are going to see, I think, is much more work

on my second category of new: the rhetorics of heterogeneity, much more work on that, much more diversification of the kinds of texts that we read rhetorically and that will have to be represented. And, while we're on the subject, probably much more diversification in the media of study. You know, a book is something that you hold in your hand, it's probably the last time a book that you hold in your hand could ever purport to represent the tradition of rhetoric. We're going to need multimedia type books, so I think that's what is coming.

Question: That may all be coming and I welcome it. However, because of what you said at the very end of your speech, I think looking historically is critical to understanding the various texts, how they fit in, how we got here, and so I'd like to see us bring more of the volumes of historical dimension, rather than a band of the chronological scheme tied together. You can do all these other thematic dialectical arrangements and so on, but I think it would be a great loss if you abandoned the historical approach that so many of us have used as kind of the core from which to rebel or to descend or whatever else we've done. That's one woman's personal plea.

Patricia Bizzell: Right. Right. Well, I actually completely agree with you and I actually, if I needed to, I could find a place in Frederick Jameson where he justifies the maintenance of traditional chronologies for philosophical reasons that are cognate with the spiritual reasons that I was talking about at the end of my speech, where he talks in terms of orienting and orienteering as a necessary intellectual equipment. So, I can tell you that as long as I'm teaching the history of rhetoric, I will always provide my students with the traditional chronological timeline, and I probably will be unembarrassed about assigning the historical period introductory essays in *RT2*, which are really the most

traditional kind of, you know, Cliff Notes to the history of rhetoric. I have to tell you, in the correspondence that we get about *RT*, we get so many grateful emails, particularly from graduate students, exactly about that most pedestrian aspect of the book that people find so immensely helpful, and I think I understand why.

Question: Having used your book, for a year or two, I think the thing that comes up, and came up last spring with people in class is that what we have here is the Greco-Roman, Judeo-Christian rhetorical tradition. So, if I were imagining historical connections, I would like to see Bedford or St. Martin's publish *The Chinese Rhetorical Tradition*, or any of the others. And so, I'd like for you address how close we are to any of those other rhetorical traditions being published by them.

Patricia Bizzell: Well, I would really welcome help from the audience in answering that question, because there may be people in this room who know more about that than I do. I'll just say a couple things in response to what you said. First, I've already said, I think that's a growth area. I think we're going to see a lot more scholarship in these areas over the next decade, and the more scholarship there is, the more possible it will be for this material to come forward for study. I don't know if you've seen the *Norton Anthology of World Literature*. That's a collection of imaginative texts of what we call fiction, poetry, so forth. It has strengths and weaknesses, and I think a *Bedford Anthology of World Rhetoric* would have similar strengths and weaknesses. It would put things in interesting juxtaposition, but it might also actually misrepresent everything in the volume, because everything would be detached from its historical, cultural circumstances. So I'm really not quite sure how this is going to work, and probably what is going to have to happen for at least a while, I think, is we're going to have to have parallel tracks. We don't have

to worry about the traditional tradition. It has its defenders, it will continue, and it will be taken care of very nicely, thank you very much. So that will continue. Meanwhile, we're going to get more and more work. We're going to get book-length studies. LuMing Mao is working on a book-length study of Chinese rhetoric, for example. When that comes out, that's going to be a tremendous resource for us. We're going to get more and more of that, and as that work emerges, then we'll begin to see the possibilities for bringing these traditions into dialogue with each other; or, people will decide that maybe they don't have to be in dialogue with each other. Maybe Chinese rhetoric is a topic that can be researched in and of itself. It's certainly rich enough. Just as people devote their careers to researching Greco-Roman rhetoric and don't feel the need to venture beyond that pasture, so I think that we are at a moment when those possibilities are all opening up, and it's really too soon to tell what will happen with them.

Question*: [*two inaudible questions*]

Patricia Bizzell: I also think this is a question on which we should bring to bear the recommendations for cross-disciplinary collaboration that came up over and over and over again at ARS. You know, you might have people who want to do joint work in, let's say, rhetoric and an education department or rhetoric and a public health department and would have the linguistic and cultural background to do some of this work in a serious way, but would need the flexibility in the program to put something together that would ultimately produce something for us. I mean, Chinese rhetoric seems to be near that point. While a lot of work is being done, I think that has something to do with the way that people from China have been able to come here and go to graduate school in

English programs and become, you know, people who are native speakers of Chinese and who know the culture and thus have been able to come here and make those connections.

Question: LuMing Mao got his Ph.D. here. I have to say that out loud.

Patricia Bizzell: Thank you. Thank you. You should be very proud.

Question: I was very much taken with your basic question, why should we teach rhetoric. And you recognize fully that that is a difficult question to answer.

Patricia Bizzell: I think it is.

Question: On other hand, the question of why we *do* teach rhetoric is much more easy. I think it could be summed up in one important word to your talk today and that's tradition. We teach it because it's a traditional topic and it has been as long as Western culture has existed. Maybe it's clearer in the case of something like English literature. Why do we teach English literature? Well, it wasn't always taught. I mean, we do today. It's just like American literature. It came into existence at one point and we continue to teach it ever since. So the question is why *isn't* tradition (I take this to be a relevant question) considered an adequate reason? You gave a good many of the reasons why it's not considered an adequate reason. I won't repeat those, but it strikes me that it's very easy when we're thinking about tradition to think of it in a reified way as something of negative thing, whereas if you think of it as handing-down, it's more difficult to think of in that reified way. And, it may be relevant to mention that, in respect to tradition being an act or a process, that nothing is more traditional than a university. We exist to hand things down. We hand them down in the process of questioning, as in the process of affirming. Of the two primary acts of handing down that we are involved in, one is teaching. You teach something, you hand it down, you engage in the process of tradition.

And two, publishing a textbook has to be included right up there. Whether you call it *The Rhetorical Tradition* or not, you can call it *The Rhetorical Anti-Tradition*, nevertheless, it will become the tradition of anti-tradition. There is very little we do in this profession that doesn't get included under that kind of act and, yet, we as academics are extremely skeptical of anything that be labeled traditional. Why that is would perhaps take some exploring.

Patricia Bizzell: Right. You make an excellent series of points and I think I have a couple of things to say about that. First, just a personal note, in another way, in another hat, in another aspect of my life, I'm an observing Jew and, in the Jewish community, tradition plays a completely different role. A precious and deeply valued role. And, there's something very deeply spiritually satisfying about doing things that you know have been done the same way for centuries. It might be interesting for people to speculate whatever connections they may have in their own lives with other things that are done traditionally, what satisfactions you get from doing that. Axer also had interesting things to say about that. He, at several points in his talk, reminded us and reflected on the fact that, until very recently, he was living under a totalitarian regime that allowed for no intellectual freedom whatsoever. This was partly why he viewed the "political correctness" debate a little flippantly. He was like, you know, you guys have the luxury to worry about that. For years, everybody was silenced in Poland. We didn't have the luxury of debating who was marginalized and who gets to speak. Everybody was silenced. Tradition was a shelter for a wider range of ideas than were permitted to be expressed in official discourse under that oppressive regime. So, it may be, he didn't use this metaphor, but it may be a way of trying to explain, the way I understood it was, it's

almost as if tradition were the gene-pool, the intellectual gene-pool, that preserves ideas through hard times, ideas that we may need later. And then they'll be there for us to draw on, share, and pass down to our students. So, for him, clearly, tradition did have a positive quality. Maybe not quite the same thing as what you're saying, but it did have a positive good that was very meaningful to him, and that he's now really fully able to appreciate, now that conditions have eased in his home country, and they can do things in the university that they couldn't do before. So, I think it's well worth reminding us of that. Absolutely.

Question*: Given this discussion of the appreciation for the linear tradition, I was wondering if you might talk for a moment about the treatment of the Sophists in *The Rhetorical Tradition*, given not only the call for pluralization in art, but also the competing definitions of what gets to count as Sophistic rhetoric – some critiques by Blochus and Schiappa – a vacillating tendency toward moving toward this linear tradition versus this pluralization.

Patricia Bizzell: Well, I think what you'll find in *RT*, even in *RT2*, is still a pretty traditional representation of the Sophists and if that's the point you wish to bring forward, I have to agree with you. So, if you want to fault it for that, be my guest. I'm not sure exactly what you're asking me.

Question*: There seems to be some contention regarding whether or not the Sophists perhaps are shaky ground as a foundational place to start.

Patricia Bizzell: Well, I'm not sure I'm going to answer your question, but I'll say a few things anyway, since I'm being paid to do that, and you can take it for what it's worth. I think there are at least two major uses of the Sophists right now in the history of rhetoric,

and one of them is the use that you're talking about, which is the use of the Sophists in understanding Greco-Roman rhetoric, its origins, and who got there first and what it meant and you know, are these guys really rhetorical or not. I think of Schiappa's work on where the word "rhetoric" or "rhetorica" first appeared in a classical text, and so forth. That's an area in which indeed the stock-market value of different Sophists and different Sophistical texts does seem to be fluctuating quite a bit right now. The other way in which the Sophists are being used are by contemporary revisionists like Susan Jarratt who is just appropriating that work wholesale and basically reading it in a social constructionist kind of way: reading the Sophists as social constructionists and using them in providing intellectual lineage for contemporary pragmatism in social construction, which I personally also think is okay. I don't like arguments that say, "Well, because nobody *then* thought of it, you can't use it that way now." But those folks often don't have a lot to say to each other. On the one hand, maybe they should, on the other hand, you know. A book like an anthology like *RT2* really can't adjudicate that kind of disagreement or try to judge between those different kinds of uses. What we try to do in our bibliographies is just try to get a little bit of everything in there, so folks could see the various ways in which this material was being used, to the extent that we were able to do that, and then you pull the threads you want to pull.

Question: I was wondering if you were to take *RT2* or *RT3* and organize it not necessarily chronologically, but according to a specific set of questions and problems and questions and look at how people respond to those problems, thereby giving it some more of a measure of intellectual and pedagogical coherence than you might have doing it chronologically. You bridge that chronological coherence, but if you did it that way, then

do you think you'd still have the plurality or would that be lost? If so, how much would be lost?

Patricia Bizzell: I was afraid what you were going to ask me is what would the categories be. [laughter] Not historical periods. Thank God you didn't ask me that. Of course, that would be the crucial question, and when you decided on those categories, you would be deciding exactly how you would fold in and what mix of traditional tradition and new tradition texts would be put together. So, I think, that will be for the future editors to determine, based on what happens in scholarship over the next ten years. I will say that, as you were talking, I was thinking, she's going to ask me what categories, so I was trying to think of some and I will say (you didn't ask this question) but, one category I think would have to do with sex and gender, interestingly enough. I think rhetoric and sex and gender are deeply implicated in ways that really haven't been explored. Those questions have tended to come up in really almost a simplistic way, it seems, up to now. Well, women weren't allowed to speak in public and then they were and they wrote about it and so, now we have more women, which is a pretty simplistic view. I would love to see an anthology that really tried to go into that topic. That would be a huge category, and we would have to be interdisciplinary. It would have to bring in anthropological and archaeological and cultural studies type materials to surround the rhetorical text.

Question: I thought about that and agree exactly, depending on what we deem the questions or problems are. I like to think we still could have the plurality that way.

Patricia Bizzell: Well, you'd have too much plurality. The problem would be too much plurality. I think that's a real question. That's a complaint. So far nobody has said to me

personally, and I haven't read in any material about *RT*, nobody has raised this question. But I don't know why they haven't. They certainly could have, so here's a stick to beat me with. I give it to you free. When you have a great pluralization of the tradition, when you say, let's diversify, let's have a thousand flowers bloom, well, you know, you reduce the authority of the traditional text, perhaps, which reformers think is good. Let's not have Plato and Aristotle be quite so up there on a pedestal, let's make a little room for these other texts. But you also make it difficult for new texts to gain authority. Then everything is just equal, of equal importance. So somebody who wants to make a case for, just to pick a name, Frederick Douglass, as a major 19th-century, western rhetorician, sorry, no more major figures. Can't do that. Study your guy if you want to, but I don't have to. I still like Plato, so I'm going to study him, because after all, they're all equal now, right? So, you know, I think that's a danger of the pluralization process. In literature, I don't know that this is happening in rhetoric, but in literature, in the canon wars in literature, people who are interested in literatures of color have made this critique. They say, gee, how convenient. Just when our stuff started getting read, the canon got busted up! [laughter] So you have to take it seriously. That issue should certainly be on the table.

Question: This question adds to this issue, so I don't even know if this is a possibility, but I'm wondering, with the rhetorics of heterogeneity and more interdisciplinary approaches to rhetoric, what kind of other texts might be able to be included? Not specifically suppository essays on rhetoric, self-consciously made to be about that topic, but is there any room to include the Bible and think of Jesus as a rhetor? Is there any way to include literature in these kinds of anthologies and is anyone thinking about that? I

think also in the Chinese tradition, if you think of Confucius and the Tao te Ching, different texts that way that serve different purposes, if religious or governmental or political, all these boundaries are crossed. Is there any move to bring in literature or religious texts?

Patricia Bizzell: Well, yeah. The short answer is yeah. To try to give a little more detailed answer... First of all, I'm a "big-R" Rhetoric person. I'm inclined to see Rhetoric as covering a very broad range of texts and I feel like almost any text can be construed as rhetorical, but when you talk about construing something as rhetorical, again, here we go again, it can be two things. She's doing it again! Unbelievable! [laughter] There's a lot of work that's been done that actually traces the influence of the Western rhetorical tradition in literature. This is easy to find: Milton- the influence of classical rhetoric on Milton, the influence of Greco-Roman rhetoric on the Bible, there's a whole raft of scholarship. Jim Kinneavy, for somebody who immediately comes to the fore in composition and rhetoric studies, some of his last work was on using classical rhetorical concepts to read the New Testament. So that work is being done, but I would call that a more traditional kind of scholarship because it's really sort of tracing identifiable literary influence. In other words, you need to be able to show that Milton read Cicero or whatever, right? That's one kind of thing that's happening, but if you take "reading rhetorically" to mean just finding the way in which the text is trying to be persuasive, in which the text is exercising rhetorical agency (and this, by the way, is why agency becomes this extremely important term to examine), then really the sky is the limit. Your ingenuity is the limit, but then you take on the responsibility for whatever text you bring forward, and you have to address some of the questions we've already put

on the table, like, is there something patronizing or appropriative? And, you're providing the rhetorical reading for a text that might not have been intended as rhetorical by the author, and so forth and so on. So you don't get off the hook by taking on the large "R" reading of what it means to read rhetorically. Methodologically, it seems to me that it opens the door pretty wide. And that's what we see happening. That's what happened that made it possible to bring stuff into our *RT2* that wasn't in *RT1*, in very many cases. Somebody had to look at *La Respuesta*, the Sor Juana letter, which had basically been sort-of lodged in the history of theology, and then said, "Wait a minute, let's look at how rhetorical this is. Let's consider the rhetorical situation." And several scholars did that, and then all of a sudden it became possible to read it that way. So, yeah, go for it. I guess.

Question*: What happens in some sense, when we put all these texts in the same anthology we ask them to get in conversation with each other and they may not be necessarily speaking to the same thing, right, because oral performance operates on different perceptual regime than let's say written communication. It's produced differently. It's consumed differently. It's performed differently and so forth. A problem arises. If I tried to do something with Soviet Union's use of public speaking in organizing, what becomes increasingly clear then, is that I'm not necessarily dealing with texts that are deliberate in nature. So what I was trying, in some ways, was to create an object that is not necessarily there. What is your sense of the dangers of this expanding object? Could anything be expanded in this way? In your book you have lots of natural language next to studies, and theorizations of oratorical performances, next to studies of theorizations, and different types of communication.

Patricia Bizzell: I have a couple of responses to what you are saying. First of all, I think a very good elaboration of the difficulties to which you are pointing can be found in the exchange that was in *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* a few years ago... Was it in *RSQ* or *College English*? Somebody will correct me. Xin Liu Gale, Susan Jarratt, and Cheryl Glenn were involved in this exchange and then I weighed in at the end of it, talking about the exchange. My essay, I know was in *Rhetoric Society Quarterly*, but I think the other three were also. Does that sound right, Lilly?

Lillian Bridwell-Bowles: I'm thinking *College English*.

Patricia Bizzell: Maybe it was *College English* originally.² In any case, it should be eminently searchable and I know my essay was in *Rhetoric Society Quarterly*,³ so if you find mine it will lead you back to the others. Basically, Gale attacked Jarratt and Glenn, who are two of the best-known revisionist historians of women's rhetoric, for basically doing exactly what you just said – creating objects of study that weren't there and throwing proper scholarly behavior to the winds and doing it. It's a really, *really* interesting attack, because she says, again, I grew up in a totalitarian regime in China where we needed to be able to defend standards of scholarly rigor and objectivity in order to make space for intellectual openings that were being closed off by an ideological regime. So she essentially saying to Jarratt and Glenn, "You're playing with fire! You don't realize how dangerous it is to just think you can make up a subject of study for whatever ideological reason you please. I know how dangerous it is. Listen to me, you know, before it's too late." It's a very, very emotional exchange and, of course, Jarratt and Glenn were enraged and horrified by this. We don't often see this sort of gloves-off

² *College English* 62, no. 3 (2000): 361-394.

³ *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 30, part 4 (2000): 5-18.

scholarly debate, at least in our field anymore, but they were very angry with each other and it comes out in the articles and I command that to your attention, because I think you'll recognize what they're talking about. What I think would be better – this doesn't solve the problem – but I like the idea of the thick description of a historical moment as a way of bringing rhetorical analysis to bear on texts that don't seem rhetorical, so that you're not left out there naked with a text. In other words, it's like the new critical fallacy, that somehow you have to get everything rhetorical just out of this text, and its words and you're not allowed to talk about the surrounding social structures or other kinds of texts that are going on in the culture. I think you give yourself a better chance of doing rhetorical readings that are respectable to a scholarly point of view, if you embed the analysis of these texts in a more dense description of the historical moment. So I don't know what your project was, but it sounds like it might be doable. I know Hui Wu has a book that she's been working on over and over and over again, basically, on contemporary Chinese women essayists. She's published a couple of articles in *RSQ* on this work. She's trying to read not only rhetorically, but she's trying to read from a feminist angle, and these do not look like feminist works *at all* from the perspective of a Western feminist, because they are reacting against the way that feminism was used as a tool to oppress women during the Cultural Revolution in China, to set up a spurious equality between men and women which didn't recognize certain kinds of special needs that women have, and so forth and so on. So there's an example of a project. She has been able to get some of it published. As far as I know, she doesn't yet have a publisher for her book, and one of the reasons is because she is having a hard time making this case to reviewers. But nevertheless, she is getting some of the work out. And what she is

increasingly doing as she works over the project, is providing more and more context for the Western audience about how to read these women, how to understand what these women are doing. So that's not *the* answer, but that's *an* answer to the concerns you are raising.

Question: Given your response to that question and given your response to Ani's definition of rhetoric's place in the academy, I'm curious. I'd like you to explain more on what you think is rhetoric's place in the academy, because it sounds like you think that we should feel free to use rhetoric as a tool in any kind of subject area, that rhetoric doesn't have a small subject area.

Patricia Bizzell: Heresy!

Question*: Right, right. So I'm interested in hearing more.

Patricia Bizzell: Well, I don't think there is a guiding thread in *The Rhetorical Tradition* other than the tradition. In our introduction, we try to unpack our agenda a little bit. We preferred certain kinds of texts. We tended to ignore or devalue or downplay other kinds of texts. And I think, in general – again, I'm trying to give a little more full answer than just “there isn't any thread” – I think, in general, in *RT1* and *RT2*, we were the most interested in texts that seem to talk about epistemic rhetoric or civic rhetoric. Those seem to be the things that we were the most interested in, and I think the book is still weighted in favor of texts that can be read that way. You'll find much less stylistic rhetoric, for example, much less analysis of figures and tropes in terms of how many, you know, if we talk about the total number of pages of rhetoric theory ever written since, you know, the beginning of man, the beginning of humanity, there is a lot more on stylistic rhetoric than – it's not proportionally represented, I'm saying.

Question*: [laughter] [inaudible question]

Patricia Bizzell: Yeah, I think that's a very good question and again, I don't have *the* answer. I will give you *some* answers. I think in spite of what I have said, criticizing the notion of teaching deliberative discourse, teaching deliberative discourse is very close to my heart. I think it's very important to do. I try to do it in all my courses and I think that it can be done both by reading texts that are fairly easy to demonstrate as talking about deliberation and civic rhetoric and by reading deliberative texts rhetorically and showing students how to do that. For example, I'm teaching a seminar right now on Lydia Maria Childs, Harriet Beecher Stowe, and Louisa May Alcott, and the sort-of rubric for the course is to view them as social activists who are trying to use language to affect certain ideological and political goals that they have. What we're doing in the course is looking at how they do that in all of their writings, fiction and non-fiction, speeches, journalistic pieces, and so forth. So that's something that I do, but while I'm doing it I still have all these questions in my mind about, really, sort-of, agency questions. You know, to what extent will people be able to use this, where will they do it? I...I'm very skeptical... about the idea that teaching rhetoric encourages people to be good. I think I might be willing to say that you can encourage certain ideological tendencies in people by the texts you select for them to read and by your own example as a teacher. The human relationship that you have with your students and the way you behave towards them day in and day out, and you can hope that those influences will move your students in a certain direction. You can't be sure that it will, but you can hope that it will. So I think I'd be willing to say that I have that hope, while at the same time retaining all these doubts about whether it will actually work or not. The fundamental question here is the

question of agency and I guess I am kind of ultimately...I actually adhere very much to the concept of agency that Campbell outlined in her plenary at this conference, which sees there as being scope for individual agency, but not autonomous individual agency. In other words, people can do things, but they do things under constraints, in contexts. They can do things with words and you can teach them how to do them more intentionally without necessarily conferring freedom or democracy on them or fully empowering them, because we can't do that. So that's probably the best I can do for an answer. Any other questions?

Kirsten Jansen: Thank you all for coming and for such a lively discussion. Again, the suggestion did become a reality. That was wonderful. Thank you very much.

Patricia Bizzell: Thank you very much. Great questions.

[applause]