Barry Brummett

Rhetoric in POPULAR CULTURE

FIFTH EDITION

For Elizabeth Duncan Windler
and Katharine Duncan Brummett

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Welcome to the fifth edition of *Rhetoric in Popular Culture*. Here I want to address instructors who may be considering adopting this volume for their courses. This book brings together two vital scholarly traditions: rhetorical criticism and critical studies. There are several good textbooks, either well established or new, that cover rhetorical criticism from a fairly traditional perspective. They focus on the analysis of discursive, reason-giving texts, such as public speeches. On the other hand, there are several good books of critical studies available. Some of the newer textbooks of critical studies are much improved over their predecessors in covering techniques of Marxist, feminist, and other critical approaches in ways that are accessible to students. But there is a need to apply the growing and cutting-edge methods of critical studies to the study of rhetoric and to link these new approaches to the rhetorical tradition. That is what this book tries to do. It sees critical studies as rhetorical criticism, and it argues that the most exciting form of rhetorical criticism today is found in methods of critical studies.

There have been some changes between the fourth and fifth editions, primarily in Part II, the Application sections. Of course, the entire book has been updated in regard to examples, which must be done in every edition. Regrettably, even these updates may be a little out of date by the time you see the fifth edition! Beyond that, these major changes deserve note: Applications in Chapters 7, 9, and 10 are changed from the fourth edition. Chapter 7, *Notes from a Texas Gun Show*, uses a culture-centered approach to study an aspect of gun culture in America: the gun show. In doing so, it also studies a central aspect of Texas—especially rural and working-class—culture. Because the gun show is such a visual experience, the chapter also uses a visual rhetoric approach.

Chapter 9, *Jumping Scale in Steampunk: One Gear Makes You Larger, One Duct Makes You Small*, studies the recently popular cultural and aesthetic movement of steampunk. It primarily uses the media-centered and visual rhetoric approach, also giving some attention to dramatistic/narrative criticism. Both Chapters 7 and 9 are reprints of studies published by the author elsewhere and are used in this book for the first time. Chapter 10, *The Bad Resurrection in American Life and Culture*, is a newly written essay published here for the first time. It uses the dramatistic/narrative approach and media-centered approach to trace the recurrence of a narrative theme in a homology that crosses many experiences and texts.

I have consistently refused to "dumb down" this textbook despite the occasional appeal to do so, having faith in the ability of today's undergraduates to wrestle with challenging ideas that are (I hope) clearly explained. I also have faith in you, the instructor, to carry them through it. Theory and method need not be scary, and they must not be something distinct from the lives of ordinary people. If our students do not understand challenging ideas, then we have failed them—or possibly they have failed themselves by not trying. I have also not attempted to exhaust any topic I have brought up, but instead I have faith that my teaching colleagues will ably fill in whatever gaps I have left. Any textbook should be the beginning of a discussion, not the whole of the discussion, and surely not the end of it.

I am grateful to the editorial staff of SAGE, especially Karen Omer, who has been instrumental in bringing this fifth edition of *Rhetoric in Popular Culture* to fruition. I also want to thank Rachel Keith for a masterful, helpful, and thoroughly professional job of editing the manuscript.

Reviewers for all five editions of the book have been more than helpful, and I want to acknowledge their assistance here.

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I am grateful to all who have profited from reading previous editions of this book and used it in their own work. Finding references to this textbook elsewhere is always a nice reminder that one's efforts are making a difference. I am grateful to the many students who have used this book in my classes and in classes taught by others. Taking the principles explained here, they have taught me through their insights about popular culture. I hear often that readers of this book see the world differently; I could ask for no higher thanks or praise.

THEORY

In Part I, we learn about the history of the practice and theory of persuasion, which is called *rhetoric*. We will see why the rhetoric of popular culture is so important today.

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o you know what your blue jeans are doing to you? What kind of person do you turn into when you go to shopping malls? After a day of hard knocks at work or at school, do you use social media to “fight back” or to escape?

If you are like most people, you are probably not in the habit of asking yourself questions like these. We may think of our clothing, favorite kinds of music, favorite websites, or preferred forms of recreation as ways to express ourselves or to have fun. But we may think it a little far-fetched to believe that there is any serious meaning in TMZ, or Jimmy Fallon, or that our personalities and values are involved in checking out this spring’s new swimsuits.

Although most of us realize that clickbait ads or political commercials are designed to influence us, it may not be clear to us how the regular programming outside and between the advertisements has the same function. A lot of us may feel that we wear our hair in certain styles for aesthetic reasons—because we like it that way. We may not often think that those styles also express certain positions in important social and political battles. We may feel that we consistently shop at Abercrombie & Fitch rather than at Old Navy only for reasons of taste; we might be surprised to hear that our choice has the potential to turn us into different kinds of people.

This book asks you to think about how everyday actions, objects, and experiences affect you and others. You are probably already familiar with some of the more serious and newsworthy consequences of music, television, or films, such as the association of country-and-western music with conservative patriotism or the criticism of certain hip-hop musicians for their use of particular words and images. This book will expand on things you may already be aware of, leading you to see how *all* of popular culture works to influence the public. You will have noticed that the book has two key terms: *rhetoric* and *popular culture.* In this chapter, we will focus on *rhetoric* and its traditions.

There are some well-developed theories available for studying how messages influence people. These are theories of *rhetoric*, or persuasion. The word *rhetoric* has many meanings, and we will examine many of them in this chapter. Many people understand rhetoric to mean the ways in which words influence people. "That's just a lot of rhetoric," we say, and by that we mean that it's just so many empty but persuasive words. In this book, we will work from a different, expanded understanding of what rhetoric means: *the ways in which signs influence people.*

Let's pause for some quick definitions. The term *signs* refers to the countless meaningful items, images, and so on that surround us; it will be explained more fully in the next chapter, beginning on page 41). A sign is something that induces you to think about something other than itself—and everything has that potential. The clearest example of a sign is a word; you read the word *hat*, and you think of something other than—something beyond—the marks on the page that are that sign. There can be nonverbal signs also, such as the American flag, which encourages you to think of something—the United States—beyond the colored cloth that is the sign. There will be more on signs in the next chapter. In this chapter, we will also use the word *text*, which will also be discussed in more detail in the next chapter, but for now we can think of a text as a message, as a collection of verbal and/or nonverbal signs that create meaning. This book is a text composed of many signs in the form of words and pictures.

Has popular culture always been an important site of rhetoric? Not necessarily. To understand why the conjunction of rhetoric and popular culture is especially potent today, we first need to understand the history of rhetorical theory. We will begin with the ancient Greeks and how they thought about and practiced rhetoric. As we move toward our own time, we will come to realize why the focus of rhetorical practice has shifted from great oratory in public speaking in ancient times to music, film, television, and the Internet in our time. The historical review in this chapter will help you to understand why, if you want to influence people far and wide today, you start a viral video rather than preparing a public speech.

Rhetoric has been around for centuries, both as something that people do and as a subject that people study. One thing that is particularly striking about rhetoric is the many different ways in which it has been defined, today and throughout history. In this chapter, we will explore some of those definitions. Students of rhetoric are often frustrated with so many definitions for a term; "Why can't people just settle on a meaning?" they sometimes ask. To anticipate that frustration, let us first think about what a *definition* is and about defining as a strategy.

You may have taken courses that were a little frustrating because you learned that key terms have been defined by different authors and in different eras in different ways. You may also have noticed that the ways in which you define certain terms can make a lot of difference; in fact, definitions can be a way of securing power. If you define *culture*, for instance, as high culture—as ballet and oil paintings and symphony orchestras—that lets you reduce to second-class status everything else, including baseball games, cheeseburgers, reggae music, and hip-hop. This arrangement makes a pretty nice setup for the wealthy and talented people who already control "high culture," doesn't it? If "culture" is something that people think of as generally a good thing, then being able to define some things and not others as "culture" is a source of power.

If you study history, you find that certain terms have been defined in many different ways. Throughout history there have been varying definitions of what it means to be human. Some societies defined humanity by way of race; such a definition empowered people of one race to enslave whole groups of people who did not look like them on the theory that they were not really enslaving humans. In the twentieth century, Adolf Hitler and the Nazis in Germany attempted to define humanity along ethnic lines, portraying German Aryans as the only authentic humans. Through that definition, the Nazis denied that Jews, Gypsies, and others were fully human. Women have been defined in different ways throughout history, generally in ways that were disempowering (as incomplete or imperfect copies of men, as inferior versions of humanity, as essentially assistants or helpers for men, and so forth).

There are many terms that can have different definitions, such as terms used in describing families or sexual orientation. But there are also many terms that do not have varying definitions. There are not widely different definitions for *carrots*, *cats*, *dogs*, *umbrellas*, or *walking*, for instance. What is the difference? What makes one term have lots of different definitions while other terms seem relatively straightforward? Some words have little to do with power; you will find that these terms do not get defined in very many ways. When power and influence are at stake, the words in which power and influence (or disempowerment) are expressed or embodied will come to have lots of definitions. Settling the definition of *carrots* will not affect who has control over others, who has freedom to do as they will, who will have to accommodate others, and so forth.

The following exercise, which you can do on your own or in class with the instructions of your teacher, will help you understand what is at stake in the general strategies of definition.

One of the most important ways in which people are defined is in terms of race. Consider these questions:

1. What are the major terms for human races?
2. Are there any disagreements over what to call certain racial groups? Is there lack of agreement over what to call other groups?
3. What does it mean that certain racial groups seem to be called by only one term, with little struggle over what to call them?
4. Do different terms of races imply different definitions of people? If so, what does that have to do with power? Why are those terms struggled over? For example, in the last sixty years, one group of people has "officially" been called Negroes, Blacks, Afro-Americans, and African-Americans (and other, "unofficial" terms). Why so many terms? What does each term have to do with empowerment and disempowerment?

People struggle over power; therefore, they struggle over the words that express power. We may take it as a general rule that terms that have several different definitions—definitions that are controversial or argued over—are usually terms about important dimensions of human life. Such terms will have something to do with how power is created, shared, or denied. To control words is to control the world.

We have seen how there are disagreements and struggles for power over how the word *culture* is defined. Now we will see that an even greater disagreement exists over how to define *rhetoric*. Struggles over how to define rhetoric run through history. It seems, therefore, that there must be some connection between rhetoric and power. This connection was clear from the very beginning of thinking about rhetoric in Western civilization. We are about to take a detour of some length through ancient Greece. The reason for this is that the ways we—both the general public and rhetorical scholars—think about and define rhetoric are grounded in the ways the ancient Greeks thought about rhetoric. When we do rhetoric differently today, we do it differently from Greek practices. The Greek legacy to us includes ideas about the relationship between power and rhetoric as well as about the ways in which popular culture is related to both. Let us see what the Greeks thought rhetoric was all about.

Rhetoric has been studied for centuries throughout the world, although, in this country, we are most influenced by Western traditions of rhetoric that originated in the Mediterranean world. Western civilization has historically thought that the formal study of rhetoric began in about the sixth and fifth centuries B.C.E. in the ancient city-states of Greece and their colonies. To understand what rhetoric meant to these people, how they practiced it, and what they studied, we will make a quick (and therefore somewhat simplified) survey of their history.

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Greece used to be a considerably more fertile, prosperous, and even more populous land than it is now; some scholars think poor farming and land use techniques eroded the soil. At any rate, at one time the Greek land supported a large population that was organized largely around city-states—relatively small political entities, each anchored in a capital city such as Sparta, Athens, or Mycenae. In the sixth and fifth centuries B.C.E., several important developments took place. The Greek city-states had joined together to subdue their common enemy to the east, Persia, and thus they enjoyed a period of relative peace and safety from outside dangers. Many of these city-states were on or near the sea, and they developed navies and advanced techniques of navigation. Many of them became great trading powers and began to prosper economically as a result. As is so often the case, trade brought with it new ideas about science, government, philosophy, and technology, especially from Asia and Africa. Another important development was political; many, though not all, of the city-states developed strong democratic forms of government.

A democracy requires that people govern themselves, and to the extent that people are self-governing, they must talk about common problems and devise procedures for shared decision-making. When new ideas are coming quickly into a place, the people will want to talk about them, weigh them to determine their usefulness for themselves, and debate their applications. Peace gives people the freedom and leisure to participate fully in public discussions. And as economic prosperity grows, the consequences of public discussions also grow; what was decided in a prosperous city-state could have an effect on half the Mediterranean world. Do you notice the common theme in this paragraph? The ancient Greek world was an especially fertile context for the growth and development of rhetorical communication, particularly public speaking, as an important human activity.

Nowhere was that more true than in Athens, the largest and most prosperous of the city-states. This time period was known as the Golden Age of Athens; under leaders such as Pericles, it prospered and came to dominate many of the other city-states culturally, economically, and militarily. To understand some important assumptions that people make even today about rhetoric, we must understand how rhetoric was practiced in this important city-state.

The Athenians had no lawyers, no legislators, and no public relations or advertising professionals. All public decisions were made by an assembly of the citizens of Athens. We often hear of Athens as a perfect example of a democracy. In fact, it was not; only the free, native-born, property-holding, adult males of Athens were counted as citizens. In such a cosmopolitan and rapidly changing population, that number came to only about 15 percent of the total. Still, given a population of about 150,000 for the entire city-state during this period, it made for a sizable group of people who participated in public decisions.

From time to time, these citizens would gather at a place outside the city, and any and all issues of important public business would be raised then. When an issue was raised, it was dealt with through debate and discussion. Because such gatherings required that large groups of people be addressed at once, the discussion took the form of public speaking. That meant that every citizen needed to be able to speak in public at a moment's notice and on any topic that might come up. If you were an olive grower and someone proposed a new law that would regulate olive growing, you had to be able to speak on that issue immediately to protect your livelihood. If you were a young man of the proper age for the military and someone proposed sending an army or navy on some action, you might need to speak on that issue. If you wanted some public works constructed in town, there were no city council representatives to call; you had to stand up yourself and suggest that a bridge or dam be built. If you thought your neighbor was violating the law, there were no police or district attorneys to call; you had to stand up and accuse the rascal yourself. On the other hand, someone might accuse you of some form of wrongdoing, and you would be called upon to defend yourself in an impromptu speech.

In sum, an ability to speak, clearly and forcefully, on any subject that might come up was a vital skill for these Athenian citizens, crucial for their business and personal affairs. Today, nobody would think of starting a business without some training in accounting, business mathematics, administration, business law, and so forth. For many Athenians, the sine qua non—the most essential component—of successful business was public speaking.

Public speaking was also vital for the Athenians' political affairs. Athenians took participation in political discussion to be both a duty and an entertainment. Unlike the situation for most of us today, political decisions would be carried out by those who made them; if you voted to repair the city wall, you had to help with the planning, construction, and financing. Politics also required well-honed public speaking skills.

This need to be able to speak in public created a market for those who could teach such skills. (An analogous need today would be the great demand for training in computer competence, a demand created in just the last few decades around the world.) A class of traveling teachers of public speaking, known as the Sophists, arose to meet this need in ancient Greece. You may be familiar with the term *sophist* or *sophistry*; today, such terms are used to refer to those who argue for the sake of arguing, who devise empty arguments that sound good but are not solid. A sophist is, in this sense, one who is more concerned with winning an argument than with establishing the truth. But the Sophists of ancient Greece would not have defined themselves that way. These definitions of sophistry actually arose from the viewpoint of another philosopher of ancient Greece, Plato. Let us see why.

Two complaints were lodged against the Sophists. The first is that they claimed to have knowledge about public speaking but really did not. It would not be surprising if this complaint was true of some of them. After all, there have been quacks and charlatans in every profession throughout history. In ancient Greece, there were no accrediting agencies that could certify whether a given Sophist was a qualified teacher. So, certainly, some Sophists claimed to be able to teach something they really knew little about, though this was not true of all Sophists.

A second complaint is more substantial and was the primary reason for Plato's objection to the Sophists. This complaint centers on the idea that public speaking is not an art of anything in particular, because a person can speak about everything. If public speaking is not an art of anything in particular, Plato argued, then it ought not to be taught at all; instead, speakers should learn more about the things they spoke about. Certainly, given the way that public decisions were made in ancient Athens, people needed to be able to speak on any subject at a moment's notice. They might have to speak about shipbuilding if Athens was trying to decide whether to construct a navy; about wheat farming if Athens was trying to decide what sort of agricultural laws to have; about rules of evidence under the criminal statutes if an accusation of lawbreaking was made. The problem was, as a person took a course and learned about public speaking, that person did not, through those studies, learn about shipbuilding, agriculture, or law. Instead, a student of public speaking learned about introductions and conclusions, arguments, and verbal embellishments that could be applied to any topic.

Plato objected to this state of affairs because he thought it made more sense to learn the subjects about which you would speak than to learn techniques of speaking itself (Plato discusses this idea in the dialogue called *Gorgias*). Pursuing that logic to its conclusion, Plato argued that because true democracies refer all issues to all the people and because nobody can be an expert on every issue, democracy itself was flawed because it asked people to discuss problems and issues on which they were not experts. Plato instead preferred to refer problems to experts in the appropriate subject rather than to democratic decision-making (see his *Republic*). He feared that democratic gatherings would be too swayed by rhetoric itself, by technique rather than substance. He therefore defined rhetoric as "pandering," as an art of appearances rather than reality (see the *Gorgias*). Only later in his thinking did he allow some room for rhetoric as a tool or servant of those who were already knowledgeable in a subject matter for better instructing their audiences (see Plato's later dialogue, *Phaedrus*).

Thus, at the very birth of thinking about rhetoric, we find disagreements over definitions. And once again we see that the struggle over different definitions has a lot to do with power. For the Sophists, rhetoric was the art of persuasion carried out through public speaking, the art of determining how to speak to popular audiences on the wide range of subjects that might come before them for review and decision. For Plato, rhetoric was an art of fooling people, of flattering them, of getting the public to make decisions based on oratorical technique rather than on knowledge or a grasp of the truth. These definitional disagreements arose precisely because power was at stake: the power to make public decisions about important public business. If the Sophists were correct in their definition, then all citizens should share in the power to speak about important decisions, to influence others, to sway the judgments of others. If Plato's definition was correct, then decisions should be made by a small group of experts in whatever subject came up, and persuasive speaking should not at all be a factor in what was decided.

So, what is rhetoric, really? Bear in mind that any answer this book might give would have its author's own arguments for rhetoric—in other words, its author's own power issues—embedded within it. But the impulse behind asking such a question is understandable; it would indeed be useful to have some "core idea" of what rhetoric is, a basic notion underlying all the definitions rhetoric has accumulated over the centuries. Such a single summing up is probably not possible, but we might return to a general sense of rhetoric that we have already examined. Earlier, we used an extremely broad definition of rhetoric that could underlie at least most of these other definitions: the ways in which signs influence people. A public speech, like an essay or article, consists of lots of signs (words) working together in what we will call a text; rhetoric is, very generally, the ways in which these texts influence people. We will learn more about what a text is and the different forms it can take in the next chapter, but for now, think of it as a message, as an attempt to influence someone. Certainly, the Athenians had to use the public speaking form of communication in their assemblies to influence others. But what were they doing when they used those texts to influence others? What are we doing today when we use signs with rhetorical influence upon other people, or when signs influence us? How that influence is carried out, and ideas about whether that is a good thing or a bad thing to do, will be expressed more clearly in the narrower definitions that different thinkers offer.

The ancient Greeks were extremely influential in the development of rhetorical theory. The Sophists and Plato initiated arguments over rhetorical theory, and Plato's pupil Aristotle wrote the most famous work on this subject, the *Rhetoric*, which in one way or another influenced all subsequent rhetorical theory. Many of the assumptions, theories, and practices of ancient Athens have had an extraordinary effect on how people have thought about rhetoric ever since. We need to evaluate what the Greeks taught us, and whether the rhetorical tradition they began is relevant to rhetoric today. Let's examine two important legacies from that rhetorical tradition: (1) Rhetoric is conventionally equated with traditional texts, and (2) Traditional rhetoric is paradoxically linked to power management.

When the ancient Greeks spoke of rhetoric, they were referring to a particular kind of text. The Greek rhetorical legacy encourages people to assume that only the texts of public speaking had rhetorical functions. In exploring this idea further, it is useful to draw a distinction between rhetoric as a *function* and rhetoric as a certain kind of *manifestation*.

Rhetoric does certain things; it has certain functions. In its broadest sense, rhetoric refers to the ways in which signs influence people, and through that influence, rhetoric makes things happen. When people speak, when they make television advertisements, when they write essays, they are attempting to carry out some function. What that function specifically is, whether it is good or bad, will vary with one's definition. The Sophists would say that the function of rhetoric is to persuade others while participating in a democratic society, while Plato would say that the function of rhetoric is to flatter or mislead people. But the general function—that of influence—remains the same.

On the other hand, whatever rhetoric is doing, whatever functions it is performing, it must take on some physical form that can be seen or heard. The signs that influence people come together as texts in certain forms or manifestations. In ancient Greece, the manifestation that was almost universally called "rhetoric" was public speaking. There are, of course, many different kinds of public speeches. But, for the Greeks, public speeches shared four important characteristics as a form of text. These four characteristics describe what we might call traditional rhetorical texts. The Greek ideal of public speaking called for a traditional text that was (1) *verbal*, (2) *expositional*, (3) *discrete*, and (4) *hierarchical*.

Public speaking is a primarily verbal text: its main tool is language. Certainly, nonverbal dimensions of the experience, such as gestures or vocal expression, are important, but the words in public speaking are of primary concern. When we study the great speeches of the past, for instance, we look primarily at what was said; there is rarely any record of how the speakers moved or used their voice to emphasize certain points, how they dressed or combed their hair for maximum effect.

Public speaking is also a largely expositional text: its main purpose is to argue and explain. Here we will draw on critic Neil Postman's usage of the term *expositional* in 1985. Postman's broad definition refers to the sort of speeches that make several claims, then defend or develop those claims by providing evidence, clarification, examples, and elaboration in carefully organized structures. Such speeches rely on evidence—especially technical, scientific, historical, or other knowledge—to make and defend points. In other words, traditional texts are based on argument, not in the sense of being disputatious but in the sense of advancing and defending propositions. Expositional speaking entails lengthy development. By way of contrast, President Donald Trump took the themes of "change" and "draining the swamp" among several campaign slogans, often without specific explanation of what changes he meant or what he felt he could do. These expressions were not expositional in that the challenge was not developed, explained, or elaborated upon.

Public speaking is also a discrete text. By *discrete*, we mean clearly distinct and separate in time and space, surrounded by clear boundaries. A snail mail letter in an envelope is discrete: it is all contained in one place and usually read at once, at one time. Text messages, although they may respond to previous texts and may prompt new ones, are usually discrete messages: you hear the familiar jingling of your cell phone, you call up that particular text, you read it, you either reply or ignore it, and you are done.

A discrete text is a unified series of signs that are perceived to be separate and distinct from other signs. Elevator music is not usually perceived to be a discrete text, because it blends into other texts. It is heard as its producers mean it to be heard: as a background noise that merges with whatever else you happen to be doing. Traditional speeches are usually perceived as discrete texts. They begin when the speaker begins to speak, and they end as the speaker is finished. The words of a speech form the text for the most part; coughs and clearings of the throat by the speaker are not considered part of the text. Similarly, reactions by the audience—what they said and did in response to the speaker (even during the speech)—are not part of the discrete text that is the speech.

Traditional speeches are especially discrete texts in that they occur in special times and places. You go to a certain place at a certain hour to hear a speech. Speeches are not likely to be found breaking out unexpectedly in your living room. In that sense, traditional speeches are the epitome of discrete texts, texts that are bounded in time and space.

Finally, traditional public speeches are hierarchical texts. By that we mean that a structure of relationships is imposed on the process of using signs, of sending and receiving a message. In traditional public speaking, the structure of relationship calls for one person to speak while many people listen. One person is, therefore, put in a position of advantage over others, at least for the moment. The audience may heckle or shout approval; they may violently disagree; others may stand up to speak in agreement or opposition afterward—but as long as a speech remains a speech (rather than turning into a riot, for instance), the roles of speaker and audience are relatively different. It is very clear in public speaking who is the source of the message. The speech is identified with an individual, and that individual is, during the moment of speaking, put in a relatively privileged position. After all, that individual gets to claim the attention of an audience for the duration of his or her speech. In contrast, think of how often during the day you get to command the attention of thirty, one hundred, or more people all at once.

An example of a nonhierarchical message would be graffiti. Any of us can place a message on a public wall, and any of us may choose to read or not to read it. There is no structure prescribed or imposed for how we are to relate to either writers or readers of graffiti. Another example would be a highly informal, animated discussion among friends: people talk over, around, and through one another, paying little attention to anybody having more status or more of a right to speak.

The Greek legacy tells us, then, that rhetoric occurs in traditional texts (verbal, expositional, discrete, and hierarchical). While the mainstay of Greek rhetoric was public speaking, other kinds of texts (such as newspaper editorials) can also be traditional in form. But rhetoric occurs in many different manifestations. If rhetoric is using signs to influence others, then editorials, letters to the editor, advertisements, and public speeches as well as your lunch, your blue jeans, Beyoncé's latest recording, and so forth, are ways in which that influence is materialized, or made manifest, in the texts found in real life. The Greeks, however, did not share that understanding, nor did later theorists who wrote under their influence. Theorists of rhetoric throughout history have mostly assumed that rhetoric is found in traditional forms and manifestations. In sum, the first Athenian legacy that we have inherited is an assumption that whatever is called *rhetoric* must have most or all of the four characteristics of traditional texts.

The second part of the legacy that the Greek rhetorical tradition has given us is a paradox. A paradox is an apparent contradiction. The paradox we inherit from the Greek legacy is that traditional texts both include and exclude people from the management of public business and thus from positions of power. To understand this paradox, we must first clarify the idea of power management, or of managing important public business.

When we manage power, we make use of our ability to control events and meanings. Our ability to manage the decisions we face or that influence us varies with the amount of power we have. Imagine an invalid, unable to rise from a hospital bed. Although largely helpless and subject to the routines of hospital staff, this person will still manage what happens to him or her as well as possible through the means at his or her disposal, such as using the call button or granting and withholding cooperation. At work, others of us might be invited to help manage decisions concerning who gets to take vacations during prime months. Other decisions, however, are managed without our involvement, such as whether to sell the company we work for to a foreign investor. An ability to participate in the management of decisions is empowering. Public business must similarly be managed. To the extent that we are excluded from or included in decisions to pave streets, finance welfare programs, or go to war, we are correspondingly empowered or disempowered.

We often manage power in one more important way. Note that power has been defined as the ability to control both events and meaning. Sometimes, as in the case of our imaginary invalid, the ability to control events may be sharply limited. But a kind of power can be gained by controlling the meanings of what happens; it makes a difference whether the invalid sees his situation as "recovery" or as "hopelessness," for instance. Similarly, the president has the power to send troops at a moment's notice into action in the Korean peninsula, a decision very few might participate in managing, but the press and public have a different kind of power insofar as they manage what the military action means: Is it a noble gesture, an act of self-defense, or the last gasp of imperialism? Given how responsive many public officials are to opinion polls, management of the meaning that results in public opinion can be a form of empowerment.

This second "paradoxical" legacy from the Greek rhetorical tradition can best be understood by considering two aspects of the way in which rhetoric is defined. First, the more favorably rhetoric is defined, the more people it involves in managing public business. This is because rhetoric and democracy fit together naturally. When the public are officially entrusted with managing public business, they make those decisions through arguing about them together. The more decisions are made by involving people in the rhetorical exchange of open discussion, the more democracy occurs. Therefore, if rhetoric is something people are able to do and feel that they should do, and if rhetoric is the way important public business is managed, then rhetoric is a form of communication that distributes power widely.

If, on the other hand, rhetoric is defined unfavorably as something that not everyone should do because not everyone should be persuasive, have a voice, or be influential, then public business will be managed by people who have some special status, some special claim to decision-making other than being persuasive. These people will be the experts—those who are already powerful, the highly born or the specially chosen few.

We have learned that within the Greek rhetorical legacy, a favorable definition of rhetoric enhances the democratic management of society's important business. But, paradoxically, the specific Greek understanding of rhetoric as pertaining to traditional texts—texts that are verbal, expositional, discrete, and hierarchical—is not as democratic as it might be.

There is a reason for this paradox. When people assume that democracy occurs with rhetorical discussions but then go on to define rhetoric as referring only to verbal, expositional, discrete, and hierarchical texts, they are unable to see the democratic participation in public decision-making that can occur through different, nontraditional kinds of texts. In ancient Greece, democracy was officially conducted within the assemblies. But after the assembly, citizens returned to the marketplace and conversed informally there. All the while, women instructed and nurtured children. Slaves and

This choice between defining rhetoric (a) in order to democratize power and defining it (b) in order to concentrate power among a few is one that we continue to face today. Let's leap over several centuries and think for a minute about how this choice confronts you. For each decision listed below, think about how you would prefer that the decision be made and by whom.

1. How should city officials organize their office filing system?			
2. Should your state permit construction of a new nuclear power plant?			
3. What should you do about a lump that you have discovered in your body?			
4. Is the president doing a good job?			

foreigners talked among themselves within their own groups. People were, of course, exposed to nonverbal signs of all sorts, and there was surely the ancient Greek version of today's blue jeans that all the younger people wore. But in the thinking and writing about rhetoric at that time, there is no mention at all of these everyday communications. There is no awareness of what is rhetorical about everyday texts, or of how they might also be involved in the management of important public business.

Some classical theorists such as Plato were concerned about the effects of certain kinds of texts—such as music, poetry, or drama—on the public. These kinds of texts may appear to be just the sort of popular culture texts we are studying in this book. But there are actually some important differences. First, the forms of ancient Greek music, poetry, and drama were closer to traditional texts than they would be to today's texts. A Greek drama, for instance, was highly verbal, with frequent expositional passages and not much in the way of the kinds of special effects you find in *Red Dead Redemption*. Second, part of what was traditional about those texts was that they were experienced less in the moment-to-moment flow of everyday life than today's popular culture is. They tended to be presented as special, and thus discrete, moments of high culture, very much under the auspices of established power structures. And, finally, nobody ever thought of calling those entertainments rhetoric.

To refer back to our very general definition of rhetoric, there was no attempt among the ancient Greeks to theorize how any and all signs might have been influencing people. Instead, we find in Greek rhetoric an assumption that the important business of the society would be conducted largely in traditional rhetorical texts. However, many everyday, moment-to-moment decisions are not made by reasoning them out through the knowledge associated with traditional rhetorical texts. We arrange dates, figure out how to get along with the new family next door, and decide which television program to watch, all using something other than traditional texts. But within the Greek legacy, experiences and decisions that people face in everyday, mundane contexts, and the ways in which those decisions are made, are all assumed to be of little consequence.

The chief result of this paradox within the Greek legacy for the study of popular culture is that traditional thinking does not recognize any important rhetoric of everyday life. If any important business of society is being conducted through the texts of everyday experience—through nonverbal signs or informal conversation, for example—then any thinking grounded in the Greek legacy will not recognize a rhetorical dimension in the management of that business. This is because Greek rhetorical theory views rhetoric as sharing the four characteristics described on page 10, and everyday conversation, nonverbal signs, and ordinary social practices will probably not be verbal, discrete, expositional, and hierarchical. In the traditional view, texts that do not share those four characteristics have been seen as not fully rhetorical and as not fully performing rhetoric's important functions. But students of popular culture take issue with the idea that texts that do not have those four characteristics are less important and not concerned with a society's serious business.

In talking about different kinds of texts, we should not make any absolute distinctions. Clearly, many kinds of communication will have some but not all of the four characteristics of the traditional texts of public speaking. There is no sudden cutoff at which everyday, mundane business becomes public (and therefore important) business. Also, societies have a full continuum of business, from the vitally important to the trivial; the majority of a society's business probably falls somewhere in the middle. But historically, traditional rhetorical theorists have assumed that the closer a communication is to having all four characteristics of the traditional texts of public speaking, the more clearly it deserves to be called rhetoric.

In sum, the ancient Greek rhetorical legacy assumes that rhetoric means verbal, expositional, discrete, and hierarchical—that is to say, traditional—texts. This legacy links rhetoric and democracy: the more public business is decided rhetorically, the more people will be involved in managing that business. But, paradoxically, the Greek conception of a traditional text places limits on the widespread management of public business. The Greek legacy does not allow for the rhetorical management of public business within popular culture. That inability to see the rhetoric of the everyday lasted for centuries beyond the time of the Greeks.

To understand the assumptions that are sometimes made about what is rhetoric and what is not, write down your reactions to the following exercise. In this exercise, you will indicate whether the texts listed below share the four characteristics of public speaking.

Is this text verbal? expositional? discrete? hierarchical?

a. A speech by the president of the United States
b. This book
c. A website
d. An Internet-based video game
e. A mother's routine for getting children ready for school
f. Your favorite song
g. A city bus going along its route

You probably answered yes to more of the four characteristics of traditional rhetorical texts for the first two or perhaps three items on the list than for the later ones. Not coincidentally, most people would have no trouble identifying a speech by the president or perhaps even this book as rhetoric—but the ways in which a city bus is a rhetorical text may not be at all clear to most people.

Now look over that list of texts again, this time asking yourself which ones are most often involved in the management of society's serious business. Which texts are composed of signs that influence people in important ways? We are likely to think that the more traditionally rhetorical texts fit that description. A list of other traditionally rhetorical texts—texts that would be likely to share all four characteristics of the texts of public speaking—would probably include most essays and articles in periodicals and to some extent the literature of novels, poems, plays, and so forth.

In the centuries between Plato and the present, many thinkers and writers have devised their own understandings of what rhetoric is, what functions it performs, what manifestations it takes on, and whether and how it manages important public business. This book is not meant to be a history of rhetorical theory, but it would be useful to review very briefly some of the ways in which some of these later thinkers and writers thought about rhetoric. We will see that the Greek legacy has remained strong; though there are differences, these people's ideas are fundamentally similar to those of the Greeks. However, we will also see that as cultures have changed through history, definitions of rhetoric have moved more toward an understanding of popular culture as also rhetorical.

We noted earlier that Plato's student, the philosopher Aristotle, diverged from his teacher's views to write a comprehensive treatise, the *Rhetoric*. This book is a system for studying as well as doing rhetoric, and since Aristotle's time, *rhetoric* has been a term that can be applied both to what people do and to systems of knowledge or explanation about what people do. Thus, we might say that someone delivering a speech is "doing" rhetoric. At the same time, however, there is likely to be a systematic explanation of how the introduction and conclusion to the speech are constructed, how the arguments are devised, how emotional appeals are used, and so forth; we would refer to this system of rules and practical advice as a rhetoric. You could also call a systematic set of rules a rhetorical theory.

Aristotle broke with Plato over the subject of rhetoric because Aristotle viewed it more consistently as an activity worth doing, a subject worth studying. In Chapter 2 of Book 1 of the *Rhetoric*, Aristotle defined rhetoric as "the faculty of observing in any given case the available means of persuasion." In further defining his subject, he made it clear that he viewed rhetoric as public speaking in legal, political, and ceremonial contexts; it was in those contexts that he saw much of the important business of his society being managed. Aristotle did not include within his definition everyday conversation, bargaining in the marketplace, entertainment, religion, or other experiences of communication. His treatise is concerned with the construction of public speeches, which are clearly discrete and verbal texts. His focus is on expositional texts as well; how to discover and express argument is a major focus of his theory. And, for Aristotle, rhetoric is also hierarchical: He envisions the classic relationship of a speaker holding the floor before an audience that has gathered to listen.

In the first century B.C.E., the Roman statesman and philosopher Marcus Tullius Cicero wrote extensively on the subject of rhetoric, most notably in *Of Oratory*. Cicero exemplified the Roman ideal at that time, which maintained that life is lived most fully when one is actively involved in public life—that is, in public debate and discussion and in public decision-making. Romans considered it both a duty and the very rationale behind life to be involved in public life, discussing the important business of their society. One of the most important ways in which that involvement occurred was through oratory, or eloquent public speaking, which is how Cicero defined rhetoric.

Cicero was a Roman senator, and at that time the senate made many of the most important decisions for the Roman Republic. It made those decisions through inspired public speaking, many examples of which are still studied as model speeches today. Cicero also valued lively and learned discussions among his fellow patricians as a profitable way to pass the time and to acquire knowledge. But he would assign the management of most of his society's public problems to rhetoric in the form of public speaking; the involvement of every citizen in public affairs, rather than the assignment of problems to experts, was his ideal. And, clearly, when rhetoric was used to manage public problems, it did so through forms of public speaking that were verbal, expositional, discrete, and hierarchical.

Cicero died, the Roman Republic came to an end, and the age of the Caesars was ushered in. Within the Roman Empire, public business was managed largely by the emperor and by officials appointed by him. Although Plato would probably have disapproved of many of the people who were in charge of imperial Rome, the Roman Empire did follow Plato's model, which called for the removal of the management of public business from the hands of the people and, consequently, from rhetoric in the form of public speaking. Consistent with Greek assumptions, as democracy faded, theorists began writing as if rhetoric were also reduced in scope and importance. In the first century C.E., the Roman teacher and rhetorician Marcus Fabius Quintilianus, or Quintilian, wrote a long rhetoric called the *Institutes of Oratory* that both prescribed a course of study for training in rhetoric and gave practical advice for its use. But Quintilian was forced to define rhetoric primarily in terms of public speaking in the courts because that was the only important arena left in Rome in which public speaking could be exercised meaningfully. It is interesting that Quintilian did not look for rhetoric—for the ways in which signs influence people—in manifestations other than speaking; clearly, the Greek tradition was influencing him as well. This shrunken definition of rhetoric as legal public speaking reflects the relationship between rhetoric and power: As power was denied to the public and as rhetoric (public speaking) was restricted in terms of what it could control, so was the sense of what counted as "rhetoric" more narrowly defined. For Quintilian, rhetoric continued to be defined as the manifestation that is traditional public speaking, with its four key characteristics.

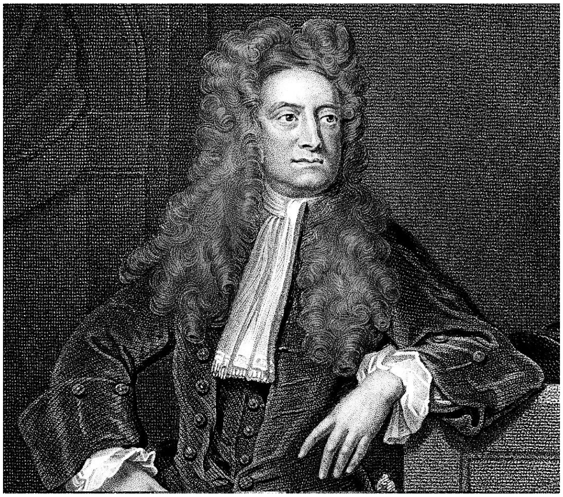
An important rhetorician after Quintilian was Saint Augustine, Bishop of Hippo, in Africa, who lived around 400 C.E. St. Augustine took on one of the most pressing problems for the early Christian Church: what to retain and what to discard among the artifacts of the polytheistic culture that the Christians were replacing. Rhetoric especially came under suspicion, as many in the Church thought that the faithful had no business seeking to gain advantage over others through any means, including public speaking. In *On Christian Doctrine*, especially in Book IV, St. Augustine argued that rhetoric should be used by Christians—that, in fact, it had the high calling of inducing belief and stimulating faith in people. St. Augustine shows the influence of the Greek legacy as well, for his view of rhetoric is embodied in the written texts of the Bible and the form of public speaking that is the sermon or homily, traditional texts that embody the four characteristics very clearly (particularly the verbal and hierarchical traits). It is significant that St. Augustine does not have much to say about person-to-person witnessing or testimony, rituals and ceremonies, or nonverbal signs such as pictures, icons, and costumes, as elements of rhetoric. His writings instead reflect a sense of traditional rhetorical texts as managing the important business of the Church.

Widespread participation in public decision-making was scarce in Europe for centuries after the collapse of the Roman Republic. Various forms of powerful, centralized political control succeeded one another: the Roman Empire, the Catholic Church, the feudal system with its absolute monarchies and principalities, and so forth. The important business of societies was officially being managed by priests and princes in their abbeys and castles, not by peasants and merchants. Certainly, people talked and went about their business as they had for centuries, but we can find little evidence that any thinkers thought that those everyday experiences were important in shaping society or managing its business. Significantly, because what was considered the important business of society was being managed by an elite few and not through public speaking, rhetoric came to be defined in increasingly narrow and restrictive ways.

Between St. Augustine's time and the eighteenth century, the Greek legacy continued to hold sway. The most interesting developments in rhetorical theory were the ways in which the definition of rhetoric became limited, paralleling the highly centralized and nondemocratic forms of government and social control of the times. One way in which rhetoric was limited was its restriction to certain kinds of texts and not others. For instance, the province of letter writing was assigned to rhetoric. In the centuries after Cicero, letter writing was not unimportant; it was a major means of communication over long distances. But letter writing certainly represented a restricted scope of subject matter and contexts compared to the days when rhetoric involved thousands of people in political, legal, and ceremonial speaking.

Another means of restricting rhetoric had to do with the kinds of strategies or techniques it used. Peter Ramus, a sixteenth-century thinker, defined rhetoric so as not to include logic or reason; those strategies he set apart as a separate field of study. Instead, he defined rhetoric more narrowly as the study and art of verbal style. Because logic was undergoing systematic development and was seen as an important tool of thought and decision-making (especially in the Church and in academia), restricting the definition of rhetoric to style alone, apart from logic, was a disempowering move on the part of Ramus and his colleagues.

We often think of the eighteenth century as the Age of Reason, as a time when nondemocratic forms of social control were rejected. It was during that century that the American and French Revolutions both took place, for instance. Significantly, the eighteenth century also saw renewed interest in rhetorical theory, especially in Great Britain. Many thinkers returned to the ancient Greek and Roman rhetoricians and reestablished that legacy. Richard Whately, for instance, extended Greek and Roman ideas of argument to include the concepts of presumption and burden of proof. In argument, presumption means you do not have the primary responsibility to develop a detailed argument, since it is presumed that your position is correct. Tradition, custom, and power usually create a sense of presumption. If a parent tells a child to go to bed, the parent enjoys presumption. The parent does not have to give reasons why the child should go. On the contrary, it is the child who has what is called the burden of proof. If the child has an argument for going to bed at a different time than usual, an argument for overturning parental authority, it is the child who must devise the argument, not the parent.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But alternatives to the Greek legacy were also developed at this time. It would be inaccurate to say that any eighteenth-century rhetorician proposed a theory of rhetoric in popular culture, but a number of thinkers did propose ideas that suggest ways of going beyond the Greek legacy, thereby planting the seeds of alternative ways of thinking. Let us briefly review just a few of the people who proposed such alternatives.

Giambattista Vico was a professor in Italy during the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. Vico directly confronted the restrictive definitions of rhetoric that had limited it to style and verbal embellishment while the more substantive areas of reason and logic were assumed to be something other than rhetoric. Rhetoric, he proposed, should be seen as the ways in which we think about probabilities and make decisions about issues that we cannot be totally certain of. Contrary to the pretensions of philosophers such as René Descartes of France, who thought that many if not most decisions could be made through formal reason rather than rhetoric, Vico argued that most, if not all, decisions were based on thinking about probabilities and thus had a rhetorical dimension. He claimed that for humans, reality is a matter of what we perceive—that we create our own realities out of signs. Since reality is human-made, it must be understood by using human faculties, and rhetoric is a primary human faculty. By carefully defining both human reality and rhetoric, Vico created a possibility for thinking about our experiences of reality (including public events as well as everyday experiences) as places where rhetoric is at work, influencing us to create our realities by seeing the world in one way or another. Vico's perspective is very close to the ideas that we will explore in Chapter 2 when we think about the world of culture as both one that is made by humans and one that has a great deal of influence bound up in the artifacts (signs) of which it is composed.

Another important departure from the Greek legacy during the eighteenth century had to do with the development of the idea of taste as a basis for making decisions and for constructing and judging communication. Rhetorical theorists such as Joseph Addison and Hugh Blair began suggesting that taste, an aesthetic way of thinking and perceiving, is and should be a factor in how people communicate and in how people make decisions on the basis of that communication. Blair and other rhetoricians were primarily concerned with taste as found in traditional texts, including oratory, letters, essays, and so forth. But whereas a concern for argument, for instance, entails a restricted focus on traditional texts, a concern for taste and aesthetics enables extension of those concepts beyond rhetorical texts. If taste is acknowledged to be a reason why people might do certain things, why decisions might be made, that acknowledgment sets up ways of thinking about how taste in clothing, in grooming products, in interior decoration—in popular culture overall—might be rhetorical. If you look for rhetoric only in terms of how evidence can be mustered in support of a point, then you cannot see both a speech and a country-and-western star's cowboy hat as rhetorical. But if rhetoric can be defined to include aesthetic judgment, or taste, then that hat, too, becomes rhetorical.

The development of interest in psychology, and the application of that new human science to rhetoric, also created possibilities for envisioning the rhetoric of popular culture. British theorists such as John Locke, David Hartley, Joseph Priestley, and George Campbell began to probe into how people think, how the mind operates, during the full range of experience. Campbell developed a rhetorical theory that explained how human understanding and imagination were addressed by others. Although Campbell also restricted his focus in practice to traditional texts, he and his colleagues opened up the possibility of thinking about ways in which people might be influenced through things other than verbal, expositional, and discrete texts. Because they were concerned with the whole operation of the human mind, these rhetorical psychologists introduced the possibility of thinking about how the mind might be influenced by signs and artifacts found throughout everyday experience, not just during moments of reading essays or listening to speeches.

One consequence of a concern for psychology was the development of methods of criticism. By criticism, we mean critiquing or analyzing, not just being contentious. Rhetorical thinkers had always been concerned with how audiences received messages and thought about them. Plato urged rhetoricians to study the different "souls" that could be found in an audience, for example, and Aristotle discussed the ways in which messages would be received and understood. But their concern was largely with offering advice for speakers, for those who would produce signs and texts, rather than for those who would see or hear them. In the eighteenth century, rhetorical thinkers such as Lord Kames and Blair began to expand their understanding of the different kinds of reactions that people might have to signs and texts and to identify specific techniques for analyzing, or critiquing, messages, audiences, and the connections between the two.

This concern for criticism also created a possibility for thinking about the rhetoric of popular culture, because it is as critics, or as consumers, that most people confront the artifacts of popular culture. We will see later how the rhetoric of popular culture is concerned mainly with how people encounter and then use, rather than originally produce, the texts of popular culture. To begin thinking about criticism is a step in that direction.

The eighteenth century was an age of powdered wigs, of candlelit salons, Mozart and Haydn, and Voltaire. It was the dawn of modern science and industry. The eighteenth century would not seem to have much to do with Toby Keith or Lady Gaga, but developments in rhetorical theory during that period laid the groundwork for understanding the rhetoric of popular culture. So far we have considered four specific developments:

1. With Vico came an understanding that rhetoric runs throughout the experiences of human reality.
2. With Blair came a concern for taste and aesthetics as a basis for decision-making.
3. With Campbell came a widening understanding of the human mind and how it works in response to signs and symbols.
4. With several thinkers, including Blair, came a concern for refined methods of criticism, particularly in relation to the reception of communication.

During all these centuries in which rhetoric was defined primarily in terms of traditional texts, people were still experiencing signs and texts that were not in that traditional form. Informal conversation, architecture, clothing styles, common entertainments, food—in short, the whole range of cultural artifacts other than traditional rhetorical texts—were being experienced by people as influential and moving, while rhetorical theorists continued to call only the traditional texts rhetoric. One purpose of this book is to demonstrate that many of today's rhetorical theorists now understand the rhetorical dimension of that wider range of cultural artifacts. In other words, many theorists today would choose not to limit rhetoric to those traditional texts (although some still would, however; see Leff and Kauffeld for an excellent review of scholarship grounded in traditional texts). That shift in understanding raises the question of what changed, rhetorically, between the eighteenth century and the present. Are people being influenced by signs in different ways now, such that we must now call the texts of everyday experience rhetorical but did not need to call them that two hundred years ago? Have rhetorical theorists awakened to truths that were always there but went unrecognized until recently? In other words, does a change in thinking about what rhetoric is follow from a change in the world or a change in theory?

The answer to that final question is both. The world and our experience of the world have changed. The main locus of that change was the twentieth century, although it continues today at an even faster pace. People do things differently, new technologies alter the realities of life, environmental and political changes occur, wars come and go, and so forth. Theories, or our ways of understanding the world, also change. Often, theories change because it is felt that the old theories no longer describe experience, which has changed, accurately. But theories sometimes change for the reasons we discovered at the beginning of this chapter. A theory is a complicated way of defining something as well as explaining it, and so one important reason why rhetorical theories change is because people may have reason to define and explain the world differently. In short, changes in theory may be part of changes in power.

A sampling of just a few definitions of rhetoric from rhetorical theorists within the last hundred years will show that the seeds of the eighteenth century have grown into conceptions of rhetoric that are markedly different from that of the Greeks. In 1936, I. A. Richards defined rhetoric as "a study of misunderstanding and its remedies" (3). Richards's concern is almost exclusively with verbal texts, but his definition is important in that it places rhetoric within the contexts of everyday communication and interaction. Misunderstanding is at least as likely to occur in the give-and-take of conversation as in the more carefully prepared traditional texts of essays or speeches. A concern for misunderstanding also emphasizes the role of audiences or receivers of communication and the question of how they understand and interpret texts in their everyday experience.

Perhaps the most famous definition of rhetoric in the twentieth century was that of Kenneth Burke, who defined it as "the use of language as a symbolic means of inducing cooperation in beings that by nature respond to symbols" (*Rhetoric of Motives*, 43). Like Richards, Burke tends to restrict his focus to language, although he also finds rhetoric in art forms such as music. But his definition is widely applicable. Many kinds of signs, in many forms and contexts, can induce cooperation. Although it does not focus mainly on popular culture, Burke's definition tells us to look for how people are induced to cooperate with others, potentially in any texts, whether that be to their benefit (their empowerment) or not. Similarly, Donald C. Bryant sees rhetoric's function as "adjusting ideas to people and people to ideas" (413). Although Bryant restricts his focus to "the rationale of informative and suasory discourse" (404), the wider idea of adjusting ideas and people to one another is descriptive of a process that can and does occur outside traditional texts.

Although James L. Kinneavy objects to those who would define rhetoric too broadly, he himself prefers anchoring its definition in "persuasion," which encourages us to consider the ways in which many kinds of texts persuade. Kinneavy's definition is geared to the function of rhetoric rather than to a particular kind of manifestation (216–18). Similarly, in his definition of rhetoric, Stephen Toulmin proposes a model of argument, which would seem to be largely an expositional type of text (*Uses of Argument*). But he develops his definition from actual arguments used in court decisions and other "real-life" situations. Toulmin's model has been widely used to explore the ways in which the arguments of everyday life are persuasive.

What prompted these changes in theory and definitions of rhetoric in the twentieth century? What has led to today's explosion of rhetoric in popular culture? To begin to answer these questions, let us examine some important ways in which the world changed in the twentieth century. That century was, of course, significantly different from the past in a number of ways that continue to be true in the twenty-first century. Our concern here is with differences in how signs influence people. Some of these differences are radical, or extreme. Most, however, are relative, or matters of degree (though still significant). In each instance, the difference has to do with a change that the Greek rhetorical legacy and its assumptions cannot fully account for; thus, these are "real-life" changes that have prompted changes in theory. Furthermore, these are changes that situate rhetoric squarely within popular culture. We will review changes in these interrelated areas: population, technology, pluralism, and knowledge.

Little argument should be needed to establish that in the twentieth century and beyond, the world's population exploded. Populations grew at the greatest rate in the poorer countries of the Third World, but nearly every industrialized nation experienced the same phenomenon. Of particular interest in industrialized countries was the pattern of population growth: populations first became more urbanized, then suburbanized and exurbanized as the century progressed. That is to say, the experience of living with only limited contact with others, or even of living on farms or in rural areas, became increasingly rare. Farm populations shifted to the cities during the first half of the century. During the second half, city populations began spreading out into suburbs and smaller towns on the outskirts of larger cities. The main result of these developments has been that today, in the twenty-first century, more people are being exposed to more people, and more different kinds of people, than ever before.

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This difference in population patterns is to some extent a matter of degree. It was rare for people to be completely isolated or in touch with only a few others centuries ago. Nor is it the case that no one is ever alone today. But, relatively speaking, more people are living and working near more other people today than ever before. That is an important difference, because it means that more people are exposed to a wider variety of cultural artifacts than before. We must note that the issue is one of greater exposure to cultural artifacts, a concept we will study in the next chapter; briefly, a cultural artifact is some kind of action, object, or event that particularly represents a group of people. Artifacts are highly charged with meanings *of* people. Certainly, people are no more conscious today than they ever were, nor do people have more things to perceive today than they did in the past. A person's experience is no fuller today than it was three thousand years ago. But today, a person's day is relatively more full of signs that are artifacts, signs that are charged with meaning and that bespeak the presence of others. This is especially true of those who live in the population- and message-dense urban areas. Ian Chambers pictures the city dweller as "caught up in the communication membrane of the metropolis, with your head in front of a cinema, TV, video or computer screen, between the headphones by the radio, among the record releases and magazines" (11).

Two hypothetical cases might help to make this relative difference clear. Imagine a farm family living on the Great Plains 125 years ago. What would they see and hear during the course of the day? Many of their experiences would be of nature, of signs that were not necessarily produced by humans and that did not bespeak human groups. That is not to say that their culture was impoverished but rather that, relatively speaking, their exposure to cultural artifacts that represented others was limited. Compare that family with a family living in a city today. Certainly, the urban family encounters natural signs, but many of those might take on the status of artifacts to the extent that they were put in place by other people, such as urban landscape architects. Of more importance is that as this family goes about its business during the day, it is bombarded by artifacts of every sort, by a pressure cooker of signs that bespeak other people, certainly to a greater extent than was the farm family. Most of us live somewhere in between these two extremes, but the point to remember is that, in general, people today are exposed to more artifacts.

As an expanding population puts more of us in touch with more people and with the artifacts they have produced, more of us are influenced by more signs coming to us, not only in our surroundings but also by way of new technologies. Some have described this process as the development of a new kind of culture—mass culture—that is significantly different from the more localized and physically centered cultures of earlier times. People have, obviously, had their everyday experiences in all times and places, but today's everyday experiences are, relatively speaking, more filled with human voices than in the past. Those voices call to us from the objects and events of everyday experience. What are they saying to us? How are they influencing us? Such rhetorical questions about popular culture are more pressing today.

Exposure to artifacts produced during daily living with many more people also means that we are exposed to more artifacts and texts that are not verbal, expositional, discrete, or hierarchical. When we are surrounded by more people and thus by more signs that they have produced, artifacts come to us in a hodgepodge. We are exposed to signs that come and go quickly, without time for expositional development; to signs that are nonverbal rather than

A quick exercise will illustrate the extent to which you are surrounded by other people and by their artifacts. Consider, either on your own or in class discussion, the following questions:

1. From where you are right now, physically, how far would you have to go to be able to see or hear any three things that were not designed, produced, or placed where they are by other people?
2. When was the last time that you were more than one minute away from the sight or sound of another person?
3. Of all the sights and sounds you have experienced in the last twenty-four hours, what percentage would you say took the form of verbal, expositional, discrete, and hierarchical texts?

verbal; and to signs that are mixed in with other signs rather than discrete. And the clear imposition of a hierarchical relationship that is present in the experience of public speaking is much less apparent in today's signs. Instead, we, as consumers of signs and artifacts, become more instrumental in structuring how those signs and artifacts are experienced and understood. How we do so, and how that influences the effects those signs and artifacts have upon us, are also rhetorical questions that are relatively more important today.

A second development within real life in the last hundred years has been expanding technology. This development has been both quantitative (we are exposed to more technologies, more often, in more different experiences than people used to be) and qualitative (we are exposed to technologies that are wholly different and unprecedented in human history). Of particular interest for the rhetoric of popular culture are the technologies of communication.

In the centuries following the ancient Greeks, technologies for distributing the written word were gradually developed, most notably the printing press. Although print technologies can certainly distribute other kinds of texts, think about how well suited these technologies are for the distribution of traditional rhetorical texts (see Boggs). Clearly, print is verbal; it presents words "as good as they can get," so to speak, whereas nonverbal or pictorial images in print are "still" and thus able to represent far less, proportionally, of the visual dimension of experience than words in print can of the verbal dimension. The long and careful development of arguments is very well suited to print, for print allows readers to go over difficult proofs and arguments repeatedly if they need to. Most printed texts (such as this book, for instance) are perceived as discrete texts. And printed texts establish a clear, one-way hierarchy of communication; readers cannot talk back while using that medium.

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But radical differences in communication began in the twentieth century. These differences are the products of developments of technology for the distribution and transfer of other kinds of signs and texts. As we progress through the twenty-first century, the pace of these changes increases continually.

Today, the individual with an iPod and headphones can go through the entire day literally attached to a technology of communication. There is not a single moment of that person's day, no place of retreat at all, where technology cannot carry a message. If the person is listening to SiriusXM satellite radio, that person can be reached by messages and other texts generated only an instant before anywhere in the world. Smartphones in the home, office, car, or in the mall allow a person to be in visual or voice communication with others at all times.

Elaborate messages for distribution to others can be prepared on tiny computers that can be carried anywhere. The Internet is accessible now through devices combining many functions into instruments that used to be only telephones, and through the Internet one can be in touch with anybody anywhere instantly. Television has given people easy access to a wide range of sights and sounds that they used to have to travel to theaters to experience, and tiny portable televisions now also allow battery-powered mobility. Cable and video recording technologies have expanded this particular form of access to messages even more; a person in possession of cable television and a digital recorder has access every hour to more information and entertainment, to a greater volume of artifacts tumbling across the screen, than someone living a hundred years ago could have experienced in a year. Could a person one hundred years ago have sat surrounded by more books than he or she could read in a lifetime? Of course, but today a person has instant access, by way of computer networks, to an exponentially larger number of artifacts even than that.

Not only does technology expose the individual to more messages; it also exposes more of us to the same global or mass culture of messages. Hip-hop, for instance, is now heard all over the world. People in distant parts of the world see recycled American television shows. People are connected technologically at a cultural level in ways we were not before.

One important result of a vastly increased number of advanced technologies in everyday life has been a vastly increased exposure to artifacts. Technologies like satellite radio or smartphones with ever-expanding networks allow us to fill our every moment with artifacts should we choose to do so. More exposure to information technologies means exposure to more artifacts and thus to more rhetorical influences in our everyday lives.

To understand the extent to which new information technologies are a fact of everyday life, consider the following questions on your own or in class discussion:

1. Name at least four information or communication technologies that you could have access to within a two-minute walk from where you are now (extra points for naming three such technologies that you can see or hear without moving from your chair).
2. Name the last complete public speech, or similar traditional text, that you gained access to by using one of the electronic information technologies of information (the Internet, television, radio, and so on). If you are not able to think of many, draw some conclusions about the sorts of texts that today's technologies seem best suited for.
3. Draw up a list of important activities in your personal or work life that you simply could not do without some of the technologies of communication that we have discussed here. Now draw up a list of such activities that do not need such technologies at all. What picture surfaces of how your life is shaped by technologies of communication?

A less obvious result of the increase in information technologies has been an increase in people's reception of texts that are not verbal, expositional, discrete, and hierarchical. Much of our communication today is visual. Other messages are verbal but in different forms. The lyrics of the latest country-and-western hit coming to us through our headphones may be verbal, but they are not likely to be expositional. The quick scrolling of numbers across a personal computer screen is not verbal, nor is much of the content of the videos on YouTube. A person who switches constantly from one station to another while watching television is paying little attention to discrete texts. Instead of merely facilitating the more hierarchical relationship of public speaking, today's information technologies can place receivers of communications in a much more coequal relationship with the producers of communications. For example, when using instant messaging on a computer, a person can respond instantly online to the author of a message that appears on his or her screen. Bloggers can post their thoughts about what is happening where they are and receive very fast responses from readers all around the world.

When people have more exposure to and control over a wide range of technologies in their everyday experiences, they acquire more control over how and when they experience signs and artifacts. Ultimately, the Greek rhetorical tradition is inadequate when it comes to understanding how people use and understand the wide range of signs and artifacts available to them through contemporary technologies.

A third significant development in the twentieth century and beyond is the growth of pluralism. This term can mean many things. Here, by *pluralism*, we mean the awareness of

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many perspectives, philosophies, points of view, codes of ethics, aesthetic sensibilities, and so forth, and the awareness of a legitimate grounding for all of these.

The growth of pluralism is directly related to the growth of population and to the spread of information technologies. If you are not directly exposed to very many people during the day, chances are the people to whom you are exposed are people who are just like you. The Great Plains farm family used as an example before would probably have experienced other people who were largely like them—of similar values, religion, ethnic background, and so on. They would surely have been aware of Indian people living near them, but they would probably not have had much accurate information about them. Limited contact with people who are different limits people's awareness of the beliefs, values, practices, and experiences of those different others.

However, increased contact with different groups of people will not necessarily increase understanding, particularly if people remain ethnocentric, judging different others only by the standards and perspectives of their own group. Thus, the Great Plains family might have known people who traded frequently with the Indians, traders who were aware of what these people thought and felt and did yet nevertheless dismissed their whole way of life as second-rate and degraded. This Great Plains family was not likely to be pluralistic, in the first case because they were not aware of a wide range of different points of view; they were not exposed to the variety of human thought and experience that there is in the world. In the second case, neither the Great Plains family nor their trader friends were pluralistic because, whatever the differences of which they were aware, they probably would have seen no legitimacy for those different ideas and experiences.

But expanding population and information technologies have made for a change. As more and more people come to live in proximity to one another, they become more aware of their differences. The experience of immigrants clustering in American cities in the first part of the twentieth century is a good example. In this case, people from Ireland, Italy, Germany, and other countries were suddenly forced to live in relatively close proximity to each other, and thus to learn about each other. Information technologies serve the same function, allowing us to find out more about people who live even on the other side of the world, as if we were neighbors, through things like the National Geographic Channel on television. Today, it is hard not to be aware of many other groups of people—of their habits, customs, and beliefs. (See Klotz for a discussion of the extent to which technologies of communication, especially on the Internet, are responsible for revealing and connecting groups of people to each other today.)

An even more important dimension of pluralism, however, is a growing recognition that the beliefs and customs of other, different people have some sort of legitimacy or grounding. This is not to say that we must agree with those who are different (nor that people often do so), but rather that we are aware that others feel that they have good reasons for thinking and doing the things they do. People are becoming increasingly aware that other people have philosophical, social, religious, or other reasons for their thoughts and behavior, just as "we" do.

In the nineteenth century, for instance, people might have marveled at stories, brought back by explorers of faraway societies, of people who put their elderly onto ice floes and cast them off into the sea; "civilized" people might have shuddered and condemned the members of such societies as hopeless "savages." Today, however, although we might consider such a practice wrong, we would be relatively more willing to seek to understand the reason for it; we would expect such a practice to have legitimacy for that particular society, even if we would be appalled at the thought of doing anything of the sort ourselves. This sort of understanding of difference is relatively new; such understanding has always been held by some but is held more widely today. There is no doubt that prejudice and ethnocentrism still exist, but they exist in a curious mixture with increased knowledge of other people and of why others are different.

One important result of pluralism—that is, of an awareness and acknowledgment of the legitimacy of others who are different—has been a democratization of status. Prejudice, bigotry, racism, classism, and sexism do still exist, of course. Nevertheless, there has been a relative increase in such pluralistic awareness in many countries over the last few decades, with the result being that many different groups have been granted legal and political power, or status, that they did not have before.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, for instance, only white males could vote throughout much the United States. Women and members of other races did not have as much of a voice as they do today; laws and the Fifteenth Amendment to the Constitution that guaranteed rights were often not enforced. Certainly, biases against these groups still exist, but today's intentional pursuit of rights and prerogatives for all sorts of groups is practically unprecedented in history. Whereas second-class status was common for many groups in nearly all earlier times and nations, many democratic nations today try not to place any of their citizens in second-class positions. Of a different kind of importance than traditional power (such as the right to vote) is the power that comes from increased presence in the shared texts of a culture. Pick up most newspapers and turn on most television shows, and you will see, hear, and learn from and about whole groups of people who might have been, in African-American novelist Ralph Ellison's terms, "invisible" people only a few decades before.

Pluralism challenges the Greek legacy in a number of ways, two of which we will explore here. First, it legitimizes signs and texts that are not verbal, expositional, discrete, and hierarchical in the ways that traditional public speaking is. The Greek legacy is predominantly a European legacy, since European culture was strongly influenced by Greece. That European culture has been dominant in the West for centuries, of course. But people from non-European (for example, African, Asian, or Latin American) backgrounds who came to industrialized democracies such as the United States have developed other ways of communicating, through texts that do not share the same discrete, verbal, expositional, and hierarchical characteristics.

In his book *The Afrocentric Idea*, for example, Molefi Kete Asante shows how the "Afrocentric" pattern of communicating features unity, wholeness, dialogue, and aesthetics in ways that are distinct from the structure and argumentative patterns of traditional European-based public speaking. Women from all backgrounds, who historically had relatively less access to the forums of public speaking than did men, developed more interactional and dialogic forms of communication geared to the patterns of everyday conversation (Kramer; Rakow and Wackwitz; Treichler and Kramarae). Other ethnic and cultural groups have patterns of communicating rhetorically that are specific to their own heritages and that do not follow the Greek model. Pluralism demands, in other words, that we consider alternative rhetorics, other ways in which people use signs to influence others and are influenced by signs in their turn.

A second way in which pluralism challenges the Greek legacy is by creating the possibility of shifting the locus of where and when the important business of a society is conducted. In the Greek legacy, important business is conducted only by those who are officially empowered to conduct it, either members of the public, using traditional texts, or the expert few. These, of course, will be the people who are empowered generally, who are in charge within a society. If important business is conducted only by those officially empowered to do so, then only in specifically designated places and times will you find business that is considered important or valuable going on. So, for the Greeks, important business happened in their assemblies more than in their homes. In the Roman Empire, important business was done in the legal and imperial courts more than in the baths.

When certain groups and classes in complex societies are not empowered or are suppressed, they become marginalized. Their actions, thoughts, voices, feelings, practices, and so forth are assumed not to have any part in the management of important business. Instead, these groups are moved to the "margins" of power; whatever they do, it is assumed that their actions are not part of the exercise of power taking place at the official "center" of society. In other words, society allows such groups to live and communicate only within the times and places in which that important, official business is not being conducted.

Of course, all of us step into the margins from time to time; for instance, if you go fishing, play cards, or watch television with your family, the Greek legacy would hold that you are not doing anything of much importance. But people who are often and repeatedly disempowered are made to occupy the margin for the long term. One outcome of such marginalizing is the assumption that whatever the group in question does must perforce be marginal or of less value; such an assumption is the very essence of racism and sexism, for instance. This point is illustrated by the Greeks themselves: Official business was conducted by the citizens in their assembly, while women, slaves, foreigners, and so forth continued to talk and do their business within the "margins" of society: homes, taverns, farms, and so forth. What women, slaves, foreigners, and so on did was not considered the important business of society.

But in a more pluralistic society (which nearly all industrialized democracies are now or are increasingly becoming), awareness of different groups and of the legitimacy of those groups' practices and beliefs brings an increase in the status of those practices and beliefs. And this means that what marginalized people say and do assumes more importance in terms of what happens generally in a society. Thus, the margin shrinks. People who were ignored a century ago are now publicly noticed and heard. The margin is still there and probably always will be, but pluralism shrinks it.

The challenge a shrinking margin poses to the Greek legacy has to do with the fact that traditional texts have not usually been found in that margin. Many of the signs and texts found in society's margins are not verbal, expositional, discrete, or hierarchical. As noted before, people who have previously been disempowered have developed texts that differ from traditional forms. The growth of pluralism has given rise to texts that cannot be accounted for in the Greek legacy.

A fourth development in the twentieth century and beyond that has worked against the Greek legacy is the incredible expansion of knowledge, specifically technical and scientific knowledge. It can hardly be denied that what there is to know increased exponentially in the twentieth century. Science especially, aided by the information technologies (such as the computer) that we discussed earlier in this chapter, has amassed enormous amounts of information. So much information has been gathered and is being gathered even as you read this book that the ability to organize, understand, and gain access to that information has become a major problem, one as complicated as that of discovering new information.

Knowledge is becoming increasingly specialized. Whereas one hundred years ago one might simply be a physician, today even a specialization like internal medicine is rather broad; subspecialties such as gastroenterology exist, and even the knowledge covered within that subspecialty is vast. New scholarly journals and books are being churned out by the hundreds at this very moment. The explosion of knowledge is obvious and simply stated; the impact of that explosion upon the Greek legacy is significant and complex.

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One effect of the knowledge explosion has to do with the relationship between knowledge and how decisions are made—that is, with the specialization of decision-making. Of course, you need knowledge to make decisions. Historically, technical or scientific knowledge has been used in the decision-making associated with traditional texts. By "technical or scientific knowledge," we mean knowledge based on research, public knowledge acquired through scientific methods rather than simply through personal experience. For example, when we argue expositionally, we consult facts and figures, examples, history, expert testimony, and so forth. Such knowledge has traditionally been considered more valuable than knowledge acquired simply through everyday experience or through other means. But the available technical and scientific knowledge is becoming more and more specialized as it increases in sheer volume. As such specialization happens, the location of decision-making also tends to become more specialized.

The problem is that there is a limit to what decision-makers can understand. As total knowledge grows, the amount that decision-makers can understand stays about the same; thus, decision-makers' knowledge must become more specialized, since the amount that a person can understand and control shrinks as a percentage of what is known overall. The result is that decisions based on technical or scientific knowledge are increasingly being referred to specialists and experts. The general public cannot possess enough technical and scientific knowledge to argue expositionally and to make judgments about many issues that depend upon that knowledge.

Today, for instance, public decisions must be made about the issue of pharmaceuticals: how to regulate them, when to approve or disapprove them, how to finance the cost of prescription drugs, and so forth. To make these decisions, knowledge is needed. But who can know enough about the pharmaceutical industry to make a decision that is informed by technical knowledge? It is unlikely that ordinary people know very much about that subject, nor do our representatives in government. Increasingly, it is scientists in governmental or industrialized bureaucracies who are specialized enough in their knowledge to be able to make decisions about what sort of tolerance there should be for side effects, how much profit margin is reasonable for the drug companies, how to evaluate experiments to test new drugs, and so on.

But suppose you take it to be your duty to read up on pharmaceuticals. The next issue to come along, however, is whether the state should control stem cell research. Do you know all the medical and legal facts you need to know to participate in making that decision? After stem cell research, we need to decide what to do about international trade—are you knowledgeable about that? And so it goes.

The problem that this situation poses for the Greek legacy is rooted in the fact that the ideal of that legacy is popular participation in public decision-making through public speaking. The Greek legacy is built upon the model of citizens who know enough about the issues that confront them to be able to form and develop expositional arguments about such issues, to understand the issues well enough to debate them. Traditional rhetorical texts, with their four characteristics, are designed for a rational, well-informed, step-by-step consideration of issues. The problem is that the public can no longer confront most of the issues faced today in that way. Today's issues and problems are too vast for people to debate them rationally and expositionally in the way envisioned by the ancient Greeks.

A number of thinkers have complained that the public is no longer able to argue expositionally and rationally (for examples, see Boggs; Postman). The problem is actually a result of the knowledge explosion: people cannot possibly know all they need to know, and gather that knowledge into rational arguments, in order to debate public issues expositionally. It would take hours simply to recite all the studies, facts and figures, statistics, and so forth that one would need to know to be able to make a decision about most public issues. A further problem is that there are so many public issues for which there is an overabundance of specialized knowledge that the chances of an audience understanding and being able to follow a knowledgeable speaker on a technical topic are not great. This problem is true for all traditional rhetorical texts, essays, and articles as well as speeches. Information has outgrown the ability of this type of text to handle it.

The explosion of knowledge confronts us with this choice: Either the public will become increasingly excluded from important decision-making as those decisions are referred to experts with specialized technical and scientific knowledge, or people will find ways to understand public problems through other means besides traditional texts that rely upon scientific and technical knowledge. It may be that important public business is already being managed in ways that are not limited to texts that depend upon scientific and technical knowledge. And, if that is true, then important public business is being conducted through texts other than traditional texts that are verbal, expositional, discrete, and hierarchical.

We have learned so far that the shapes taken by rhetoric are changing as more and more of our social business is managed in the rhetoric of popular culture. The verbal, expositional, discrete, and hierarchical forms of traditional texts are giving way to the new texts of television, films, and popular music. But it would be a mistake to assume that traditional texts have vanished, or that no important business is ever done using those tools. Think for a moment of times when the rhetorical conditions of ancient Greece still occur today, when empowered speakers still present reasoned, verbal arguments in carefully crafted addresses to attentive audiences. Those moments would certainly include nearly the whole of our legal system, much of the communication in places of worship, educational and technical instruction—in fact, you can likely find traditional texts offered up by your instructors in your college classrooms on a daily basis! This very book you are holding is a traditional text.

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Since traditional texts have not gone away, it would be useful to understand a method that has been devised over the course of centuries for analyzing those texts. It is known as neo-Aristotelian criticism. It is based on the rhetorical principles explained by Aristotle but is "neo" because that great theorist himself did not set out a specific method for the critique of traditional texts. More recent scholars have developed this scheme. Let us take a look at the main principles of neo-Aristotelian criticism and how to use them in analyzing traditional texts. These principles may be summarized in this scheme:

The Situation

- Context
- Exigency
- Audience

The Speaker

- Background
- Intentions

The Speech

- Invention: logos, ethos, pathos
- Arrangement
- Style
- Delivery
- Memory (technology)

Evaluation

- Effects and effectiveness
- Ethical assessment

Neo-Aristotelian critics think of texts as tools that persuaders use to address specific problems. They want to know what prompted the speaker to craft a message, what the speaker hoped to accomplish in speaking, and whether the message met the speaker's expectations and addressed the problem that generated the whole process. So, neo-Aristotelian criticism begins with considering the situation, by which we mean the event, problem, issue, or difficulty that called forth the message—we call this the exigency—and the context in which the exigency occurred.

Sometimes the exigency, the event that sets the rhetorical process in motion, is a happy one (a high school class is graduating), sometimes it is sad (a funeral), sometimes it is dangerous (there has been a terrorist attack), but in all cases the exigency is the kind of problem that can be addressed through rhetorical communication. Nobody thinks of addressing the exigency that is a sprained ankle by giving a speech; that's not the sort of problem that gives itself up to rhetorical manipulation. But there are problems that need to be addressed by someone talking, and those problems are the exigencies that the neo-Aristotelian critic identifies as having occupied a speaker.

Of course, problems do not occur in a vacuum. There is a context for them. If there has been a terrorist attack, is this something new or part of a long, dismal pattern? Is it in a friendly or unfriendly part of the world? On our soil or in another country? From enemies we know or enemies we don't? The context into which the exigency enters will affect how the event is understood and will establish limits and possibilities for response. The neo-Aristotelian critic always places the exigency into the context as understood by the speaker and audience.

This brings us to the third part of the situation, and that is the audience. To whom did the speaker present this message in hopes of addressing the exigency? What did the audience know about and think about the speaker before the speech? The speaker assumes that the audience addressed was in a position to resolve the exigency, so the neo-Aristotelian critic studies the audience to identify who they were, what they knew and felt about the exigency and the speaker, what their strengths and weaknesses were, and what role they could play in addressing the exigency.

There is some reason why this particular speaker stepped up to offer a rhetorical response to the exigency for that particular audience, so the speaker is the next major category of analysis. The neo-Aristotelian critic should identify the speaker's background— who that person is, what her reputation was before the speech; if possible identify what the audience thought of her; and explain the speaker's qualifications, training, and experience that would be relevant in addressing the exigency. The critic wants to say why this particular speaker was put in the position of solving the exigency rhetorically.

The speaker's intentions are a key part of analysis. If we are to assess the success of a speech as a tool, we need to know the purpose for which it was intended. The neo-Aristotelian determines as much as possible what the speaker planned to do. Since few critics are mind readers, identifying intentions can be difficult. Fortunately, many speakers leave a record of what they intended to do in speeches, and the more important the occasion, the more likely there is to be a record. A president discussing with top aides how to respond to a crisis will leave a record of notes, sometimes tape-recorded conversations, and press releases. Often those aides themselves will write books recalling what the president meant to do. From these historical records, the critic can reconstruct the goals the speaker was trying to achieve. An understanding of the speaker's intentions then becomes a benchmark for evaluating the success of the speech.

The speech is the most complicated category of neo-Aristotelian analysis and the one on which the critic spends the most time. We should be clear that we are referring to "the speech" as the exemplar of traditional texts, just as we refer to "the speaker," but the techniques of this neo-Aristotelian method apply equally well to other forms of traditional texts. The first and most complicated unit within this category is invention.

Invention means the inventing of what to say. Here the critic identifies the substance of the speech and does so on three dimensions. First, the critic explains the logos, or logical (expositional) appeals of the speech. Second, the critic explains the ways in which the speaker built up an appeal based on his own character, trustworthiness, goodwill toward the audience, expertise, and qualifications. These appeals based on the speaker himself are called ethos. Finally, the critic explains the emotional appeals, or pathos, used by the speaker. For each of these subcategories of invention, the critic always relates the analysis back to what the speaker intended to do and what the audience needed or expected to hear in confronting the exigency, for those are the standards against which the rhetorical effort is judged.

Another category for analyzing the speech itself is arrangement: How did the ordering of different appeals in the speech affect the audience? How did the speech begin; how did it end? Were there issues the speaker delayed in raising; were there some issues that were addressed first, before other issues could be tackled? The next category is style, or language choice. The neo-Aristotelian critic studies key terms in the speech and the ideas that those terms bring to the foreground. The critic studies stylistic devices or figures of speech such as metaphor, irony, metonymy, and so forth to identify ways in which the speech was made both pleasing and effective.

Delivery is a category of analysis of the speech concerned with nonverbal rhetoric. This category will be immediately recognizable as a major concern of many political commentators today who remark on the physical expressions, tone of voice, regional accents, animated or wooden gestures, and odd pronunciations of so many political leaders and candidates. This category reminds us that a concern for the physical presentation and appeal of messages is ancient, predating today's popular culture of images and impressions.

Neo-Aristotelian critics do not pay much attention to the category that is sometimes called the "lost canon" of rhetoric: memory. In the early days of Greek oratory, an ability to memorize lengthy speeches was crucial, and several schemes were available for speakers to do so. In an age of teleprompters and PowerPoint, such a concern seems irrelevant. I propose that the category be updated rather than discarded, however. People had to memorize speeches because of the condition of technology in ancient Greece: there were no teleprompters! But the condition of technology in our times can dramatically affect the impact of even traditional texts. In place of memory, neo-Aristotelian critics should study the speaker's use of technology: Were visual aids to the speech used, and how were they presented? Was video or music incorporated into the speech at all? If the speech was broadcast on television, how were camera angles used? When did the camera move in for a tight focus on the speaker's face, when did it pull back, and to what effect?

The final major category of analysis in neo-Aristotelian criticism is evaluation. The critic must assess whether the speech worked as a tool to do the job for which it was intended. The first subcategory of analysis here is effects and effectiveness. Studying the effects of any persuasive effort can be notoriously difficult. The critic can examine public opinion polls taken after the speech to see whether audience attitudes changed. The critic can examine historical records of what actually happened after a speech to see whether actions called for by the speaker took place. The critic can examine other, later rhetorical documents to see whether key phrases or ideas introduced by the speech were taken up by others as a sign that the speech was influential.

However, there are some difficulties in determining effects. There is the question of time frames: A speech may have very little effect when it is given but come to gain greater attention and respect as time goes on. On the other hand, an initially successful speech may come to seem unwise or dated as time marches on. There is also the question of intervening causes: Other rhetorical efforts as well as events may occur that contribute to whatever effects may be observed, so that knowing how much to attribute to a particular speech is difficult. Finally, there is the question of very difficult rhetorical challenges: A speech may be effective even though it created few practical effects because it did the best it could under difficult circumstances. The case of Abraham Lincoln's first inaugural address is often given as an example of these difficulties. It was intended to keep the Union together, but the Civil War took place nevertheless. There were simply too many pressures for war for it to overcome, and too many intervening causes that negated any positive effect it might have. But over time it came to be understood as a powerful argument for unity that guided the nation's path even after Lincoln's death, and for these reasons it is judged more in terms of effectiveness than effect, as a speech that did the best that it could against overwhelming odds.

Finally, the neo-Aristotelian critic is allowed to make ethical evaluations of the speech. Whether a speech succeeded in practical terms may not be the only criterion for judgment. Many dictators and despots have been rhetorically successful in persuading people to follow them in their questionable policies, and so they would have to be judged practically successful. But those same speakers may also be judged on ethical grounds as having defended policies or points of view that were reprehensible.

In sum, the methods of neo-Aristotelian criticism can help us to understand how traditional texts work today. That is true whether the traditional text is in the form of a public speech, an editorial in a newspaper, or a sermon. Neo-Aristotelian criticism is a tool that is appropriate for studying traditional texts in just the same way as tools that we will learn about in later chapters are appropriate for studying the texts of popular culture.

We began this chapter by posing the question of how everyday objects, actions, and events influence people. The idea that these everyday experiences of popular culture have an important effect on people should already seem more plausible to you. Rhetoric was defined initially as the ways in which signs influence people, and in this chapter we began to understand some basic concepts that will help us to see how popular culture is rhetorical in just that way. We also briefly noted that influencing other people is a way of securing power. And we noted that power often creates privilege, which may exist outside the conscious awareness of those who enjoy it.

This chapter has covered many ideas and more than two thousand years. First, we discussed the idea that definitions in general are a means of empowerment and disempowerment; how you define a term is an act of power. Some terms that have a lot to do with power have therefore been defined in many different ways throughout history; rhetoric is such a term.

We learned a quick definition of signs and of texts, although these will be developed further in the next chapter. We learned a little about the history of ancient Greece, and about how public speaking was the public's way of rhetorically managing important business. In subsequent years, this experience of the Greeks would create a legacy that strongly affected the development of rhetorical theory. This legacy comprises what we might call traditional rhetoric. Traditional rhetoric assumes, first, that rhetoric means a particular kind of text, the kind that is most clearly exemplified in public speaking—that is, a text that is verbal, expositional, discrete, and hierarchical. The second part of the Greek legacy for traditional rhetoric is a paradox. We learned here that the more favorably rhetoric is defined, the more it democratizes power, because widespread participation in public decisions is conducted through rhetorical discussion. But, paradoxically, we also learned that because rhetoric meant traditional texts for the Greeks, the rhetorical tradition fails to see how important business might be conducted by texts that are not verbal, expositional, discrete, and hierarchical. A useful idea in connection to these issues is the distinction between the functions of rhetoric—what it does—and its manifestations, the form it takes. The Greeks had a narrower understanding of how rhetoric might be manifested, which was restricted to traditional texts.

We saw how this Greek legacy, embodied in traditional rhetorical theory, influenced writers and thinkers for centuries. It is still important today, and we learned techniques of neo-Aristotelian criticism designed to help us understand how traditional texts work. We learned how a neo-Aristotelian critique based on the categories of the situation, the speaker, the speech, and evaluation can guide the critic in understanding the rhetorical effectiveness of traditional texts even today.

From the eighteenth through the twentieth centuries, the germs of new ideas were planted, new ideas that would eventually allow for the development of a rhetoric of popular culture that is becoming fully developed in the twenty-first century. We also learned that "real-life" developments in the twentieth and now the twenty-first century have increasingly challenged the rhetorical tradition. We explored the specific developments of (1) an expanding population, (2) new technologies (especially of information), (3) pluralism, and (4) an explosion of knowledge. Because of these developments, we concluded that much of the important business of a society might not be conducted in traditional texts as exclusively as the Greek legacy would have us believe. Instead of seeking only verbal texts, we will look for texts that also include nonverbal elements. Instead of seeking only expositional texts, we will look for metonymy and narrative as well. Instead of seeking only discrete texts, we will also look for diffuse texts. And instead of using only hierarchical texts, we will also look for democratic texts. In the next two chapters, then, we will deal more specifically with how the rhetoric of popular culture works and how to study it.

At this point, you may very well have several questions left unanswered. Let us consider some questions that *should* arise from this chapter. You might think about these questions, discuss them in class, or use them to prepare for later chapters.

1. We have talked about rhetoric but not so much about culture; what do we mean by *culture*, especially popular culture?
2. We have not said much about the different forms that texts can take and how they participate in creating meaning.
3. We have not yet explored the idea of *struggle* over power very thoroughly. Are there ways in which you would say that popular culture is a site of struggle? For instance:
    - What happens when actions, object, and events mean several things, or mean contradictory things? Who decides what meanings they will have?
    - How do actions, objects, and events come to have several meanings?
    - Can the assignment of meaning lead to power and disempowerment? How does that happen?
    - How can people resist the meanings that others try to impose on them?
    - How is struggle over meaning conducted? What are the tools or strategies that people use?
4. We have learned about the characteristics of traditional rhetoric and its texts. What do the texts of popular culture look like, the texts that carry so much weight in everyday experience?

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ow we turn to the second important set of concepts in this book. Following our introduction to rhetoric, let’s learn about what we mean when we say popular culture and thus the rhetoric of popular culture. In comparison to traditional rhetoric, when we think about how rhetoric works in popular culture, we are concerned with the rhetoric of everyday life. How can we understand the persuasive influences that are all around us? In this chapter, we will examine the rhetorical dimension of those everyday objects, actions, and events to which we are constantly exposed. We will also see in Chapter 2 what it means to refer to these everyday objects, actions, and events as popular culture.

We will learn that many, even most, of the ways in which we are influenced through signs can be observed on this everyday, minute-by-minute level of popular culture. As we go through life experiencing and enjoying music, clothing, architecture, food, and so forth, we are also participating in rhetorical struggles over what kind of society we will live in and what sort of people we will be. This book will empower you to see those struggles as well, so that you will be able to find the rhetoric in Rihanna, the motivations on Facebook, and the arguments in RVs.

To begin seeing everyday experience as alive with persuasive influences, let us begin by considering power. Power is the ability to control events and meanings. We are used to thinking that certain people, groups, or classes of people have power and that others do not. We say that the Bush and Clinton families, Bill Gates, Barack Obama, Donald Trump, and so forth all have power. Perhaps you have worked in offices or on committees with individuals whom you could clearly identify as powerful. Perhaps there have been other individuals whom you thought were relatively lacking in power. Certainly, we might all agree that, compared with adults, children are relatively powerless for several reasons. But did you ever stop to wonder specifically when and where all this empowerment and disempowerment comes about?

Many people believe that, compared to men, women in some fields are relatively disempowered in some societies: women sometimes earn lower salaries for the same jobs; fewer women have high-ranking jobs and positions of prestige (e.g., U.S. presidents or senators); there are not as many female judges, physicians, police officers, college professors, and so forth. How does this relative empowerment of men and disempowerment of women occur? It is almost as if young males were all taken aside at a certain age and initiated into certain mysteries of dominance; it would seem as if all the men working at certain companies met in secret once a month to plan dastardly deeds of disempowerment against women. But this management of power does not really happen during isolated moments of conspiracy. Instead, the relative disempowerment of women and empowerment of men at the workplace occurs from moment to moment during everyday experiences—in short, in popular culture. For example:

- In fashion, where women often have available to them largely uncomfortable shoes and clothing designed to accentuate their bodies rather than to create ease of movement and repose.
- Around the office coffee pot, where the preferred topics of conversation among men are often things like sports or sexual innuendo (and when the boss is a male sports nut, guess which sort of knowledge revealed in conversation is more empowering when it comes to impressing superiors?).
- In social expectations, as when a male who leaves work early to pick up a sick child at school is considered responsible and sensitive, whereas a woman who does the same thing is often perceived as compromising her professional “commitment” to her career.

Of course, many women do not take these moments of disempowerment quietly. Women devise strategies of resistance, refusing the disempowerment that everyday experience often offers to them and seeking alternative means of empowerment. These actions have paid off on a societal level, and there is greater equality among men and women now than ever before. How this progress has occurred may also be studied in terms of popular, everyday sites. Everyday actions, objects, and experiences are really

This exercise is designed to help you see how some commonly held, even fundamental, notions are born and maintained in your everyday experiences. Pick, from among the following statements, the one that you agree with most strongly:

- American workers are suffering from unfair foreign outsourcing.
- In this country, urban problems are mainly economic problems.
- It is important to look nice and to smell nice.
- Pornography is a serious problem on the Internet.
- The United States is threatened by terrorists.
- Most politicians are dishonest, self-serving, or incompetent.

Now, do some thinking and reflecting on this question: Specifically when and where did you come to have that belief? Another way to ask this question would be, can you remember specific experiences that influenced you to hold that belief? To help you in your thinking, you might want to write down some specific experiences that fall under these categories:

a. Television commercials
b. Social media (Twitter, Facebook, etc.)
c. Movies
d. Faith communities
e. Popular music
f. Television news
g. Television drama or comedy
h. Teachers
i. Talking with friends
j. Family discussions
k. Internet blogs
l. Other

The earlier statements are widely held ideas; they are a sort of "party line" for many people living in the United States today. They seem for many of us to be "common sense"—statements that "grease the wheels" of everyday social interaction, allowing it to function smoothly. Perhaps not coincidentally, these statements are also what most people who are in positions of authority or established power would want the public to believe. That is because in general, these statements maintain present arrangements of power and privilege. If it is important to smell nice, then consumers will run out and buy lots of deodorant, perfumed soap, and so on that will keep the manufacturers of such products wealthy and powerful. If we are afraid of terrorists, we will tend to stick with political leaders who we believe have protected us so far. It is equally important to understand that we do not always accept what established and powerful interests want us to believe. We don't always "go with the flow" with those beliefs that seem to be most common or easiest to hold. Which of the above statements do you disagree with? If you do disagree with any of them, do you do so with the distinct feeling that you are in a minority, or bucking the tide of public opinion, in doing so? If so, use the preceding list of commercials, articles, movies, and so forth to identify how you developed your ability to resist a popular idea or ideas. In other words, how did you learn to struggle against some widely held ideas?