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Publisher: Routledge

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## Southern Communication Journal

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/rsjc20>

### Corporeality and cultural rhetoric: A site for rhetoric's future

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Published online: 01 Apr 2009.

To cite this article: Raymie E. McKerrow (1998) Corporeality and cultural rhetoric:

A site for rhetoric's future, Southern Communication Journal, 63:4, 315-328, DOI:

[10.1080/10417949809373105](http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10417949809373105)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10417949809373105>

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# Corporeality and Cultural Rhetoric: A Site for Rhetoric's Future

Raymie E. McKerrow

In locating a site for rhetoric's future, the contributions to this special issue offer a variety of potential directions, none of them potentially exclusive of the other, depending on how each author's argument is read. As is also noted in my other response, I have elected to focus on two themes common across these essays: theoretical issues related to rhetoric's place in the future, and pedagogical issues related to how we might continue to instruct students as to that place and its importance. In this essay, the primary attention will be on themes regarding future research in rhetorical studies. Instead of taking each essay on its own terms in fashioning a response, I will, in what follows, advance an argument with respect to the central question I see emerging from these essays: If rhetoric is to re-fashion itself in responding to a culturally diverse world, what kind of theoretical orientation might it find as its "site" from which to appraise rhetoric? Whether one adopts Goldzwig's call for a "critical localism," or Campbell's very different call for a return to "neoclassical reason," or Turner's reminder that rhetorical history has value in and of itself, there is a critical need to revisit what exists presently as the dominant rhetorical orientation of our "modern/postmodern" world.<sup>1</sup>

In turning our attention to the present, the proposition that the history of western rhetoric is predominantly male-centered is incontestable. Rhetoric is an expression of power, and power has been in male hands for most of western history. As such, rhetoric constitutes an *administrative rhetoric*—it concerns itself with the distribution of resources necessary for the maintenance or alteration of power. Not only has Western Rhetoric denied women a place, it also has, in privileging specific "sides" of dichotomous binaries, severely limited its applicability in a multi-cultural world. The argument that will be made in this response is quite simple: Western Rhetoric, as currently fashioned via a male dominant language, is virtually incapable of being the "site" from which to appraise rhetorics within a diverse world.

The characteristics of Western Rhetoric that place inherent limitations on its applicability can best be seen from the vantage point of women's history within rhetoric. As Robert Connors (1992) has noted: "[T]he search for a women's tradition in the discipline of rhetoric has been a failure" (p. 65). While he does not specifically limit the claim to Western Rhetoric, it should be clear that, in the birthplace of what we have come to accept as our cultural heritage, rhetoric, like sport and combat, has been a "man's game" (Connors, 1992, p. 65). The environment then, as through much of western history, was truly inhospitable to women. The Italian humanist, Leonardi Bruni, writing in the 15th century, underscored women's non-existence within a rhetorical world; in a letter to Battista Malatesta, he asks "why exhaust a woman with . . . a thousand difficulties of rhetorical art, when she will never see the forum?" He goes on to note that women were to leave "all public severity to men" (cited in Grafton & Jardine, 1986, pp. 32-33). The exclusion of women from the rhetorical sphere is further evidenced in their manner of education. As one illustration, in the late eighteenth-early

nineteenth century, male and female versions of Abbe Condillac's ancient and modern history treatise were developed. As O'Meara (1982) notes, the exclusions in the female version "are structured . . . to fit their readers into the hierarchy of power represented by the society of their time" (p. 204). While the male text seeks to empower the Prince, the female text "acclimatizes" women "to a role that excludes political power" (p. 204). In other words, men are taught to create history; women are taught to consume it.

While there are exceptions to this formulaic separation of men's and women's roles, if one accepts the definitional strictures Connors (1992) places on rhetoric, and if one seeks a "women's tradition" within that framework, the case he makes appears inarguable. However, if one seeks not a tradition but a voice—one often expressed at the risk of severe censure, his indictment may be premature. One can, then, successfully write women back into traditional history. Whether one wishes to do so is, however, open to question. As we attempt to write women into history, Michelle Ballif (1992) asks the relevant question: "Are we not, then, merely making Woman into a *legitimate* coin, a *proper* currency, a *respectable* asset, but without questioning the very standard—the phallogocentric standard of Truth—that finds her lacking, that is responsible for her devaluation?" (p. 91). Ballif goes on to argue "that our attempts to (re)read women, to (re)cover women, to (re)present women, and to therefore (re)cast history, are insidious acts of (re)appropriation" (p. 91). If, in the process of constructing a rhetorical history of women in the guise of men's standard for the conduct of rhetoric, we simply reproduce the standard in women's voice, we have done little to redress the silencing of women across the centuries (Biesecker, 1992a). If we accept Luce Irigaray's (1993) analysis of the sexed nature of language, to write women in, in their own terms, also is problematic, as it simply perpetuates the difference that exists between men and women:

Most of the time, in *men's discourse*, the world is designated as inanimate abstractions integral to the subject's world. Reality appears as an always already cultural reality, linked to the individual and collective history of the masculine subject. . . . *Women's discourse* designates men as subjects . . . and the world as concrete inanimate objects belonging to the universe of the other. Women thus maintain a relationship to the real environment but they don't subjectivize it as their own. (p. 35)

It would seem we are in a dilemma: we are prohibited from writing women into history because to do so perpetuates their bondage in a male dominant world, and we are likewise prohibited from seeking women's rhetoric where and as it exists, because to do so perpetuates their innate difference. How do we escape the dilemma? Rita Felski (1989) offers a solution in her claim that "a convincing case has yet to be made for a gendered aesthetics, for the assertion that men and women write in distinctly different ways or that certain styles or structures in literature and art can be classified as inherently masculine or feminine" (p. 156). From her perspective, language styles are differentiated due the effects of power "which serve to legitimate and to privilege certain forms of discourse traditionally reserved for men" (p. 62). If that is the case, a definition of rhetoric that flows from that form of discourse reserved for men will not, by itself, account for any other form of expression. Thus, the western rhetorical tradition appears incapable of responding to the diversity of expression within the world. There are three reasons for what has become, in Veblen's phrase, a "trained incapacity" to respond.

First, and foremost, in the process of privileging a rational, male dominant voice, western rhetoric has in turn focused on the mind to the exclusion of the body. It is perhaps no accident that the mind/body split also separates the sexes: "Women's identity has traditionally been associated with the body and nature, just as man's has been located in their transcendence as mind and culture. Women are therefore positioned

as man's attenuated inversion, as a mere specular reflection through which his identity is grounded" (Kirby, 1991, p. 5). The triad that Vicki Kirby (1991) gives expression to—women/body/nature; man/mind/culture—extends to the fourth component of lived experience already noted above with respect to education—women occupy the private sphere, while men occupy the public sphere. Even when women do occupy the public sphere, the mind/body split remains a potent source of differentiation. Catherine Fouquet (1992), offers one revealing illustration of the importance of the body: "for men at least, the higher the role in society, the less importance the body has" (p. 55). As men participate in the public sphere, those in positions of power need concern themselves less with bodily appearance than with the mind's ability to give expression to ideas. That, as Fouquet amply demonstrates, has not been the fate of women in the public sphere, further underscoring the mind/body split as women give expression to ideas in public settings.

Second, the mind/body split entails a second differentiating factor affecting rhetoric: that of man's privileging reason to the exclusion of emotion as the hallmark of any rhetorical act. As Jane Sutton (1992) illustrates, rhetoric developed in a culture that saw its practice in terms of taming excesses (a sense reflected in later historical references to rhetoric as the "harlot of the arts") through the male-dominant exercise of reason. Thus, rhetoric unbridled is womanly; rhetoric tamed is manly. In this formulation, reason is the activity of a mind in control of its body; emotion is the activity of a body only. Thus, we add the final element to the distinctive nature of western rhetoric, giving us the following pentadic set:<sup>2</sup>

Women/body/emotion/nature/private sphere

Men/mind/reason/culture/public sphere

In response to this problematic, I propose that we reverse the phrasing—instead of writing women into the history of rhetoric, let us proceed to write rhetoric into the history of women. In so doing, we come to terms with rhetoric in places not currently included within the province of an administrative rhetoric. We also need to go beyond the province of women's discourse to extend this reversion to include people of color. Thus, I am arguing that only by re-visioning rhetoric—by casting it in terms other than its western manifestation—can we properly credit the rhetorical voice as expressed in all of its cultural diversity. Only through such action can we theorize a space for those rhetorics not always already implicated in the dominant structure of western discourse—and thereby grant them independent value as competing styles of discourse, effective within their own province, and perhaps even superior in several senses to that which currently dominates our practice. Only through re-visioning, then, can we unmask the power structures and their effects on differing discourse styles, each equally named as rhetoric in its own right; only through re-visioning can we exercise a critical rhetoric (McKerrow, 1989). Goldzweig's call for a "critical localism," which I heartily endorse, is possible only within a context that allows one to sort through the rhetorics available in finding that which best answers to the needs of the present moment. A return to "practical reason," so long as it is represented solely within the confines of a Westernized mentality, is a retrograde solution to the "siting" of rhetorical theory for the future world.

### THE NATURE OF A CORPOREAL RHETORIC

What is the nature of the "re-visioning" that I propose? A "rhetoric of the body," or more precisely, a *corporeal rhetoric* contains the features that are essential if we are to broaden the definition of rhetoric to include its practice in the lived experience of those outside what has been termed an administrative rhetoric. This sense of rhetoric

encompasses rather than sits alongside an administrative rhetoric. As I have observed elsewhere in writing on the nature of "rhetorical agency": "Before the subject is the body" (McKerrow, 1993, p. 52). The relationship is further solidified in Elizabeth Grosz's (1993) commentary on the body:

Knowledges are the product of a desire to live and conquer, a will to power that is also, and primarily, exhibited corporeally. They [men] misrecognize themselves as cerebral, a product of ideas, thoughts and concepts, forgetting or repressing their own corporeal genealogies and processes of production. They are the products of bodily impulses and forces that have mistaken themselves for products of mind. (p. 204)

Laura Sells (1996) has argued that my "take" on this relationship is mired within the very male-oriented language I had hoped to escape. In effect, her claim is that simply referring rhetoric to "the body" is to place it in a feminized place that yet retains the need to control, from the privileged perspective of the male ego, a body that otherwise would not "mind." In other words, it merely re-instantiates the binary I wish to avoid. Kellie Hay (1996) and Lenore Langsdorf (1997), on the other hand, support the priority of the body over the subject. While sensitive to Sells' critique, I remain unconvinced that this is a necessary fate. If one remains ensconced within a western tradition, that certainly is the consequence, but if one can remove oneself from the position of privilege it argues for, one can, and I believe must, reconceptualize the body as an object without sex or gender. Furthermore, the positionality I am seeking in "siting rhetoric" is one from which the practice of a "critical localism" or a critical rhetoric can move forward. By itself, locating rhetoric in the body is not designed to suddenly rearrange centuries of oppressive practice. Rather, it is designed to operate as a site from which oppression might be challenged. As another gloss on the critique posed by Sells, subjectivity follows from the body; it does not precede it. As Grosz (1994) suggests, the body has been investigated from three broad perspectives: as an object of scientific analysis, as a "machine" at the disposal of a conscious subject, and as a "vehicle of expression." Grosz argues that simply working from one or more of these, in an uncritical manner, serves to reproduce the very obstacles that currently dominate the contemporary (male) preserve. Each of these perspectives tends to be reductionist in respect to treating the body as of a particular, and therefore, not "other" type. As Moira Gatens notes, in respect to Spinoza's improvement on a Cartesian dualism of body/mind, "the body does not have a 'truth' or a 'true nature' since it is a process and its meaning and capacities will vary according to its context." What is suggested here is that the body is, as Merleau-Ponty noted, a historical rather than merely biological or purely physical "thing" (p. 12 in Grosz, 1994). The body as physical presence is connected to its own history, but this does not necessitate seeing it only in the terms in which history has named it as feminine.<sup>3</sup>

Two different characterizations are crucial at this juncture: if the body is an historical entity, what is its relation to history? Grosz (1994) distinguishes two orientations—the "constructionists," represented by Kristeva, Marxist feminists, and others, and the "sexual difference" group, represented by Irigaray, Cixous, Butler, and others. For our purposes, the latter group can be seen as an extension of the former; they part company not on the social construction issue, but on the issue of what is included in that construction: for this group "the body is a cultural interweaving and production of nature," and cannot be conceived of as a "biological *tabula rasa* onto which masculine or feminine could be indifferently projected" (p. 18).

While both positions are closer to the mark with respect to what needs to be constructed, neither wholly suffices. The constructionists, as Grosz (1994) identifies them, are limited by the sense of biology as pre-given; the sexual difference group, on the

other hand, are limited by the inability to hypothesize difference in any way other than in terms of an ineradicable difference between bodies. What is necessary, from my perspective, is a sense of the body that is neither already sexed, without the effect of nature, or bound up in an ineradicable difference that promotes an equally ineradicable difference at the level of lived experience. While I would agree, as is accepted by both perspectives, that the body is “a site of contestation,” I would rather see it, as Grosz suggests, as a site of “mediation between what is perceived as purely internal and accessible only to the subject and what is external and publicly observable, a point from which to rethink the opposition between the inside and the outside, the private and the public, the self and other, and all other binary pairs associated with the mind/body opposition” (pp. 18, 20).

But what is the actual status of that site of mediation? In departing from these analyses, I want to return to a conception of the body that is as much metaphorical as real, as much a product of the imagination as it is a product of lived experience. For once the body is seen in social terms, it already has limited the potentialities for becoming what it might otherwise be. I do not wish to deny the value of a feminist account of contestation, but I do wish to back up one step from that contest, and ask how we might, in freeing ourselves from the constraints of lived experience, hypothesize a body that houses the fullest range of potentialities available. This is not a “universal body,” as that would imply a far too idealized set of specific potentials that any one body might employ in living within the social world. From this perspective, the body is neither a *tabula rasa* nor a fully constructed site of contestation. As Grosz’s (1994) analysis goes on to suggest, the conception of “body image” derived from psychoanalysis and other domains has the kind of “ultimate potentiality” we are looking for, as it functions as a “postural schema” in locating the body in time and space (p. 85). But even this conception has its limitation. The problem, in effect, is that to further define the body is to limit its expressiveness. Once defined, it becomes differentiated in time and space from other conceptions as an undefined concept, one that functions as the site of intersectionality—as the site wherein ambiguity resides (and the parallel to Burkean ratios is intentional).

Thus configured, a corporeal rhetoric forsakes oppositionality in favor of an all-encompassing perspective on the rhetorical act. The sense of rhetoric envisioned draws on but goes beyond the feminist account of the body. As such, the body is neither uniquely gendered nor sexed, and is no longer seen as a part of a mind/body binary. In Judith Butler’s (1990) terms, the body takes on a “corporeal style” that compels it “to conform to an historical idea of ‘woman’ [and I would add, parenthetically, ‘man’], to induce the body to become a cultural sign, to materialize oneself in obedience to an historically delimited possibility, and to do this as a sustained and repeated corporeal project” (p. 273). The “cultural fiction” thus created enacts its corporeal “strategies” as a means of survival within the culture (p. 273). To phrase it differently, bodies are trapped inside cultures, and exhibit those acts promoted within the culture—they are, in this context, neither inherently male nor female, neither inherently reason-based nor emotion-based.

The corporeal style I am advancing expresses itself, within discourse, as an “embodied rhetoricity.”<sup>4</sup> To further clarify its nature as an organic entity, consider corporeality in relation to androgyny or the hybridity of extant genres.<sup>5</sup> Androgyny postulates a broader repertoire of skills as grafted onto the originary body as male or female. What I am advancing is a notion of corporeality that merges binary oppositions into an organic whole prior to a lived manifestation as gender or sex. As Grosz (1993) suggests: “Bodies *speak*, without necessarily talking, because they come coded with and as signs. They speak social codes” (p. 199). As such, bodies may vary in the manner in which they occupy space and relate to particular cultures. Nor is the nature-culture dichotomy maintained in this revisioning of rhetoric as corporeal. As the ecological feminists have

suggested, a conception of the body that merges these distinctions is not only possible, but preferable. Charlene Spretnak (1993), for example, views "culture not as a struggle in opposition to nature but as a potentially harmonious extension of nature, a human construction inclusive of creative tensions and reflective of our embeddedness in the Earthbody and the teachings of nature. . . . [wherein] the bodily affinity of females and males in nature is respected and culturally honored, rather than denied and scorned" (p.273).<sup>6</sup> Her perspective is precisely the kind that dominates a corporeal rhetoric. As conceived, a corporeal rhetoric sees expression in its organicity—not exclusively as reason, or emotion, or private or public, or nature-bound or culturally determined. Rather, it allows for the examination of the rhetorical voice in any one of these manifestations, without privileging any one as the primary or "responsible" means of giving voice to one's thoughts. In this sense, a corporeal rhetoric aligns with the aims of a critical rhetoric (McKerrow, 1989, 1991, 1993) in recognizing the conditions for our freedom to be other than we are. As Grosz (1994) points out, men have not "conspired" to create knowledge in their own image, but rather have produced and acted out of bodies "as an inscribed product of the intervention of meanings into the way men live their bodies. . . . [Thus] certain perspectives are particular to their social and corporeal interests" (p. 204). An embodied sense of rhetoricity captures this perspectival approach to understanding and critiquing men's discourse, as it does womens' discourse. As will be seen, a *corporeal rhetoric* allows us to account for the variations in discourse beyond a western, male, and also predominantly white world. In essence, an understanding of rhetoric as corporeal is not a method of doing or seeing rhetoric, but rather an attitude that one takes toward the rhetorical act. As such, it changes the nature of the judgments made simply because one is operating with a different set of lenses. Discourse that does not meet the ratiocinative standards of an administrative rhetoric need not be, by that reason alone, a deficient rhetoric. Rather than privileging a certain type of rhetoric—administrative—a corporeal perspective sees rhetoric in inclusive terms, operating as an organic whole within which one finds not one rhetoric but many. As will be noted in what follows, reliance on an administrative rhetoric denies us the opportunity to valorize the rhetorics that such a perspective fails to accord respect or even recognize as worthy of the name *rhetoric*. Only by broadening the perspective will we come to an appreciation of the diversity of voices that represent the Earthbody.

### CORPOREAL RHETORIC

What is the diversity of voices that marks a corporeal perspective on rhetoric? In beginning this discussion, I need to make explicit an underlying assumption about the inherency of rhetoric. In the western tradition, it is commonplace to observe that rhetoric requires a democracy—only within a societal order that allows persons the freedom to speak their minds will one find the need to counsel, train or otherwise concern oneself with the nature of discourse intended to govern others. Thus, as Roman Emperors assumed personal control over deliberative matters, the wealth of oratorical expertise that was the general assembly moved to the public arena and gave voice to feckless declamations. As a direct contrast to this view of rhetoric's province, and hence its history, I issue a reminder: the rhetorical voice will not be denied; the rhetorical impulse will never be silenced. It may *not*, to be sure, exist in the public forum in the guise of a deliberative address heard and heeded by those in power. As an illustration of the force behind the impulse to give voice to one's condition, consider the experience of slaves in the South prior to the Civil War. As Gravlee (1987) observes:

Deluded in believing that blacks were happy and working hard while singing . . . whites encouraged "cheerful" and "nonsensical" songs, unaware that such singing was neither. As long as the "sound of the singing created a mood acceptable to whites or the language was perceived by owners as being meaningless, blacks

could communicate their thoughts and concerns unmentionable publicly in other forms." Some contemporary spirituals, such as "Down by the Riverside" and "Steal Away from Jesus," supposedly were sung originally as signal songs. (p. 59)

Such "signalling" or doubling of the message intended and heard also can be seen, as Gravlee (1987, pp. 59-62) notes, during the Civil Rights movement in this century. One could argue, as Janet Zepernick (April 5, 1994) implies in an electronic mail discussion of this issue, that the songs themselves—the actual words—are not really rhetorical:

To the extent that the purpose of the songs was simply to transmit encoded information, rather than to argue, persuade, reassure, etc., their rhetorical content would have belonged mostly to the situation rather than to the songs themselves. That is, the very fact of passing information in this way could be considered a rhetorical claim all by itself, but in order to be considered rhetorical discourse in any more technical sense, each individual performance would have to carry some persuasive force distinct from the argument contained in the simple fact of being informed.

Zepernick applies what Bryant (1973) referred to as the "rhetorical dimension" of any artifact, whether a painting, a song, a poem, or other form of symbolic message that communicates a particular meaning, or whose meaning is artificially and deliberately altered. But, in the case of slave songs, they were rhetorical in a doubled sense—they both communicated a code known only to the slaves (e.g., "the Master is coming"; "there's a meeting tonight"), and persuaded the masters listening that such music was indeed "nonsensical" and hence harmless. Thus, the words alone were, in this instance, also rhetorical in the sense Zepernick (April 5, 1994; April 8, 1994) alludes to: they carried a "persuasive force distinct from the argument" (though one might admit that in one sense Zepernick is correct—as words they carry no weight until or unless they are assigned meaning, even if that meaning is other than intended by the speaker).<sup>7</sup> The point I wish to underscore, as an initial assumption, is that the impulse takes many forms—it may be expressed in song, in poetry, in painting, or in the form of jokes as doubled messages (as in the case of those living under the yoke of Communism who told jokes critical of the communist bureaucracy while seeming to be meaningless fun). While the message may have its "non-rhetorical dimensions," it nonetheless functions as rhetorical to the extent that it has meaning for those who attend to the artifact.

A second assumption also needs to be briefly addressed. Thus far, I have discussed a corporeal rhetoric largely in terms of the absence of women. As intimated in the prior example of slave songs, such rhetoric, as embodied practice, is not confined to women alone, nor to white men and women. Corporeal rhetoric, as I hope to illustrate, answers to the need to provide a means of incorporating cultural rhetorics that do not meet the requirements of an administrative rhetoric, yet have legitimacy in their own right.

#### MERGING BODY AND MIND IN AN EMBODIED RHETORICITY

In considering the Chinese philosopher Hsun-tzu's listing of cognitive and affective attributes, Garrett (1993) notes that the grouping did not "set off" reasons and explanations from happiness and anger, etc.; as a consequence, "the body/mind opposition could hardly arise" (pp. 24-25). As in the merger of reason and emotion, it is possible to construe a rhetoric that works out of the body/mind as a single entity.

The merger of body and mind is seen in a commentary from Christine de Pizan's *Book of the Three Virtues*. Written in 1405, the comments represent a clear sense of how women should maintain their role in medieval society:

Prudence and sobriety will teach the lady to have well-ordered speech and wise eloquence; she will not try to be coy, but rather poised, calm, her words beauti-

fully phrased and spoken in a measured voice, without movements of the hand or body, facial grimaces, or excessive laughter. (Dulac, 1992, pp. 16-17).

There is a clear sense here of “playing the part” that is required, but more importantly, of integrating body and mind into a whole as one creates meaning through discourse. What is significant in de Pizan’s case is that she was an influential women of the court—a “mediatrix” of the first order in gaining a hearing among men. As she understood, and hence practiced, “speech becomes a principal factor in political conduct” (Dulac, 1992, p. 17). She wrote extensively as well, instructing men on proper conduct in keeping with the values of her own time. As Leppig (1992) notes, de Pizan advanced a conception of government in which obligations on the part of all are made clear: “the laborers *must* go about their daily work . . . without aspiring to power . . . the prince *must* love God, justice and the people, *must* act in the interest of the commonwealth” (p. 142). In the process, while assuming an anonymous voice, she chose a name already associated with her prior work. Thus, it is fair to assume that readers took her work as an act of political rhetoric, in terms not threatening to those in power.

The same sense of influence, though much more limited by culturally inscribed constraints on one’s “place” is echoed centuries earlier in Pan Chao’s *Lessons for Women*. Among the lessons addressed to young women is the advice to “choose her words with care; to avoid vulgar language; to speak at appropriate times and not to weary others (with much conversation)” (Swann, 1932, p. 86). Pan Chao was, as Swann suggests, “the first thinker to formulate a single complete statement of feminine ethics” (p. 133). As in the case of classical Chinese rhetoric, the language style utilized in the *Lessons* reflects a merger of reason and emotion, and a sense of rhetoric as embodied—women should appear in ways that would accommodate their role and preserve their feminine presence within the court.<sup>8</sup>

Another example of what I am terming “embodied rhetoricity” is evidenced in Maurice Bloch’s (1975) examination of the oratory of the Merina of Madagascar. As he notes, in this culture the *manner* (p. 5) of address is more critical than the content. His account of the formal manner of a Merina leader is instructive: “The speaker began very slowly, hesitantly, and very quietly, head down, and only gradually would he appear to gain more confidence, although at no time did any excess of expression creep into his manner of delivery” (1975, p. 7). This particular ritualistic approach, affirmed within a culture, clearly incorporates the activity of the body with that of the mind—they must be in sync in giving the right sense of humility and care for the demands of the situation.<sup>9</sup>

The same sense of embodied rhetoricity is evidenced in the case of classical African orature. As Adetokunbo Knowles-Borishade (1994) argues: “African orature is culturally idiosyncratic and does not conform to the Western style of speech-making” (94). In analyzing such discourse according to Afrocentric standards, Knowles-Borishade illustrates its integration of body, mind and spirit. As a clear departure from western traditions, it should be examined on its own terms rather than from the vantage point of an administrative perspective.

As a further example, consider the dual lives African-American men and women play in a white culture. As expressed by one young man (Orbe, 1994):

My aunts in my family, they all have law degrees . . . and whenever they had [white] people over, I could tell a certain change—snap!—that they would go through . . . the biggest difference was—snap!—she would come up to par, you know, play the part. (p. 292)<sup>10</sup>

To consider the role of the body in “playing the part” as well as the mind, and to consider the fact that body and mind must be “together” in the role, does not take much imagination. Fitting into another culture, or even within our own culture, requires a

corporeal presence—an embodied sense of rhetoric as a performance that one does, rather than as an analytic, objectified extension of who one is. The prospect of fitting in raises another issue—what is our nature as human, and how is that related to the culture in which we find ourselves?

### MERGING EMOTION AND REASON IN A CORPOREAL RHETORIC

John Campbell seeks to save us from the insanity of an alleged irrational preoccupation with unreason in a call that makes neoclassical reason the center of our future salvation. The problem with privileging one form of reason above all others is to consign those who do not reason thusly to the dung heap of irredeemable souls. If one doesn't "get it" within the prevailing mode of reason, one is told to "think better." The question that should arise is: In whose terms? We do not all reason alike, even within the same culture, much less the same household, nor is there a compelling demand that we should all conform to one standard. What is at risk in the recovery of a neo-classical reason is precisely the kind of strait-jacket thinking that has prompted the postmodern response. Campbell may well respond to this concern by noting that "this isn't the kind of reason I have in mind and ask us, and me in particular, to recall that 'reason can be conventional without being arbitrary and principled without being rule governed.'" I would only note that one is still faced with the question: whose conventions, and whose principles? For it does matter if one is to consider the possibilities of a global rhetoric that encompasses all forms of reason and does not, at the outset, privilege one over others as the most efficacious in resolving a specific problem. I am not intent on destroying neo-classical reason; rather, I am intent on suggesting that a singular recourse to such reason, already hegemonic, denies the possibility of reason that is not embraced by those conventions or principles. This is at the heart of the reason/emotion dichotomy. While Campbell may wish to hedge his bets in a way that recovers "responsible reason" of a neoclassical variety, one is left still wondering how such reason implicates questions of power. The short answer: it doesn't, and that is the rationale for a postmodern response that is neither on a "moral holiday" nor debilitated by fragmentation (for views contrary to Campbell's assertions, see McGee, 1997; McKerrow, 1995, in press).

But what of emotions? As Mary Garrett (1993) points out, considering the role of the emotions is risky: to the extent that an administrative rhetoric, or any other, "encourages pathetic appeals," they run "the risk of being considered manipulative" (p. 20). However, not all rhetorics have so solidly divorced reason from emotion as has an administrative rhetoric. Garrett's (1993) examination of Classical Chinese rhetoric amply demonstrates the possibility of a rhetoric that merges reason and emotion. In fact, "insofar as the Chinese distinguished between thought and emotion they seem to have assumed this was a matter of degree, not essence" (p. 24). A focus on an embodied rhetoricity, as envisioned in this essay, encompasses affective as well as purely cognitive dimensions of the human person—an emphasis on how affective expression is given voice need not be separate from the body from which it emanates. From a purely administrative perspective, Classical Chinese rhetoric would be deemed deficient for its recognition of the affective elements of rhetoric. Only in the context of a corporeal rhetoric could such discourse be given its rightful place.

One could extend this sense of reason/emotion into the African-American style of "playing the dozens" as discussed by Shirley Weber (1994). Insults between people are not part of what is "normal" within administrative rhetoric, but certainly form a part of exchanges within particular social groups. In the case of "playing the dozens," "it is the highest form of verbal warfare and impromptu speaking. Thus, "Say Man, you so ugly, you mamma had to put a sheet over your head so sleep could sneak up on you" could be met by "Say Man, your girlfriend so ugly she had to sneak up on a glass to get a drink of water" (p. 90). *The exchange clearly merges a play on reason with a strong emo-*

tional content; to play is, as Henry Louis Gates (1988) observes in connection with the practice of “signifyin,” to engage in socially accepted behavior, to match wits with others in displaying one’s own verbal prowess. To critique such discourse from the perspective of an administrative rhetoric is to miss its purpose. These practices also fit within the next component of a corporeal rhetoric—the relationship between mind and body. As reason and emotion are merged into one, so to a mind/body oppositionality becomes hard to maintain.

### MERGING NATURE AND CULTURE IN A CORPOREAL RHETORIC

Feminists have been divided over the relative merits of nature and culture. As Irigaray (1993) observes, culture is masculine; nature is feminine. The problem comes in accepting that split, and furthering it to the point of claiming that women’s destiny is to be as nature determines. While the critique of essentialism is beyond the scope of this essay, it should be clear that it is inimical to the sense of an embodied rhetoricity I am advancing.<sup>11</sup> What I hope to articulate is that, in moving beyond the feminist concern with the body, we need to recognize that other cultures depend on nature as their culture—to see the two in opposition would be a mindless exercise. While mindful of the multiplicity of cultures encompassed by the label “Native American,” as clearly documented by Morris and Wander (1992), I believe we can still postulate a concern for nature as endemic to the early culture of American Indians. As Randall Lake (1983) argues with respect to “Red Power” rhetoric, its aim is “persuasive insofar as it serves consummatory purposes prescribed by traditional Indian religious/cultural precepts” (p. 128). As he goes on to note, part of the rationale for land recovery is economic, but part of it is also spiritual: the land is an essential element of Indian identity, and without it, their culture is incomplete (pp. 129-132). This sense of merger with nature is explicit in Henry Mann Morton’s address to the U.S. Forest Service:

I am an American Indian woman. My grandmothers have been here for all time. The land you strive to protect is my grandmother—my mother. She is oldest woman—first woman. She is sacred; she is our beloved earth woman. (cited in Gronbeck, McKerrow, Ehninger & Monroe, 1994, p. 320)

While spoken in the context of an administrative rhetoric, the content implies a sense of nature/culture that is foreign to that domain. Hence, a corporeal sense of rhetoric, as the more encompassing term, allows for the approach to be valued in a way that is not admitted within prevailing power structures.

### MERGING PRIVATE AND PUBLIC SPHERES IN A CORPOREAL RHETORIC

A consideration of the exclusion of women from the public sphere, to say nothing of the exclusion of people of color, brings us full circle to the beginning of this essay. While it is not the case that all women were excluded, it is the case that the public sphere has not been a hospitable environment throughout the ages. The instances of women rhetors functioning as mediatrixes, as in the case of Pan Chao and Christine de Pizan in their respective times and cultures, represents only a small portion of the influence women have had, irrespective of their exclusion from what men would refer to as places of power. As Swearingen (1992) has noted, “as late as the Peloponnesian War, foreign priestesses and oracles were consulted in Athens . . .; however corrupt religious practices may have become, these female voices were a public presence alongside the speeches of statesmen and Sophists” (p. 129). The influence of Aspasia and Julia Domna during the Greek and Roman periods was substantial (Waithe, 1987, pp. 75-82, 117-138). A purely administrative rhetoric does not encompass the world in which these women lived and acted, as it is focused so narrowly on a prescribed form of, and place

for, the exercise of reasoned rhetoric. While living predominantly within a private world, Aspasia, Domna, Chao and de Pizan managed to move in and out of the margins of the public sphere, and enact their influence. The spheres were not so mutually exclusive as to disallow some interaction, though it would be fair to say that the influence, while felt at the center, was exercised on the margins.

As a further example of the private/public merger, we can point to the work of Aphra Behn, a seventeenth century novelist and playwright. As Paula Backscheider (1993) points out, Behn's novel, *Love Letters Between and Nobleman and His Sister* (1683) was a "deceptively packaged, sophisticated political satire" that "created a new form of political propaganda" through an adroit merger of the private and public lives of the characters portrayed (pp. 108, 239). Behn used the theatre to further her support for the established order, hence it was possible for her to place within her plays commentary that would be seen as an interpretation of current events. In thus challenging "representations of men, women and social relationships," Behn was able to promote a rhetorical message through her plays (Backscheider, 1993, p. 117). In particular, "plays of this period used cross-dressing of women as a political statement," calling attention to their respective "place" within both private and public spheres (O'Donnell, 1989, p. 346). This is just one sense in which public and private have been intermingled; as in the case of the other elements discussed, I would argue that an administrative rhetoric fails to capture the rhetorical significance of this kind of political act.

## CONCLUSION

There is a particular caution with respect to the sense of rhetoric I am advancing. It is all too easy to argue that what a corporeal sense of rhetoric allows is imprisonment within rather than freedom from the constraints of a hegemonic discourse style. To valorize a sense of rhetoric that calls attention to the role played by persons such as Chao or de Pizan is to advance a description that, at least potentially, eliminates censure. It does nothing, in and of itself, to promote a better place within which rhetoric can exist. I wish to advance three responses to this charge. First, if we are left only with an administrative rhetoric, we fail to even approximate the description of alternative discourse styles. When acknowledged within this hegemonic frame, the rhetorical efforts of women and of persons of color is misconstrued. Thus, to deny the possibility of a corporeal rhetoric is to diminish any opportunity to raise alternate styles to the same level, or even to acknowledge their power as respected within their own sphere of influence. It is, in Goldzwig's terms, to deny the option of a critical localism. Second, we need to avoid the temptation to impose our present day cultural values on the lives of those in the past, or at times even in the present. Our sense of rhetorical practice is not ennobled simply by suggesting that the Merino men practice a discourse ritual that we would not endorse or practice within the confines of an administrative, rationally driven rhetoric. It is not enough to note it is insufficient as a practice of neo-classical reason. This is not to say that we may not wish to critique other practices different from our own, but is to say that prior to critique must come a clearer sense of how the practice emerges from within its own culture. Only then can we begin to determine how intervention within that culture might effect change.

Third, and this is the more positive of the responses, I would contend that only through a corporeal perspective—a sense of rhetoric as embodied—will we ever break the constraints imposed by the narrower vision of an administrative rhetoric. We need a society in which reason and emotion are valued, each in their own right, and for what they bring to the occasion. To do otherwise is to imprison ourselves in the narrow confines of an impersonal, mind-centered discourse that trammels the soul's recognition of its own humanity. Without recourse to an embodied rhetoric, we are left forever forsaking Edmund Muskie for his tears that snowy day in New Hampshire. His was not the

practice of a rational rhetoric. A corporeal rhetoric would embrace that discourse thereby reclaiming for the soul a recognition of its own humanity.

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup>To forestall confusion over “modern/postmodern,” the following comments may be instructive: “For those firmly ensconced in a modern world, the postmodern impulse seems the epitome of an excessive tolerance of the irrelevant. Seen as a pastiche of the irresponsible, the indeterminable, the undecidable, those viewing the postmodern as the worst that is in us forgo the chance at rehabilitation: there can be no reconciliation with such an incommensurable world. For such critics, the task is not to reconstitute rhetoric in terms that acknowledge its indeterminacy, for that is to reject their own world view. As they perceive the postmodern critic, they are prone to ask: ‘What can you tell us we don’t already know?’ Their question reveals what is otherwise concealed: a hegemonic posture expressing condescension toward lesser humans. To attempt to respond, from a postmodern orientation, to such a question is to fall prey to the trap that has been set; there is no answer which will satisfy the critic’s presumptive question. All that an ‘answer’ achieves, from the perspective of the questioner, is the confirmation that no answer could satisfy, hence there is no value in the *enterprise being interrogated*. Were the world as black and white, as simply constructed, as those asking of the postmodern, ‘What is your value?’ we might well despair of ever crossing the incommensurable worlds and conversing about matters—in this case the reconstitution of rhetoric. Lyotard (1984) would say that we have an invitation to silence. There is a position that denies the incommensurability thesis, provided both sides are willing to inhabit its space. First, one must recognize that postmodernism is neither wholly continuous with modernity, as if the shift were gradual, nor wholly discontinuous, as in the sense of rupture. Rather, the relation is more properly constituted as a ‘both/and’: in some senses the shift is transformational, and in others it is clearly disjunctive. Hence, one creates a space for the relation, in Bernstein’s (1992) terms, as a ‘constellation’ or juxtaposition. In this context, the expression ‘modernity/postmodernity’ may be positive ground from which to explore the nuances that are presently inscribed as differences. In reconstituting rhetoric as postmodern, the point is that there is value in both enterprises, just as there is danger in the excessive reliance on either to the exclusion of the other. Modernity needs the postmodern to keep it off balance; postmodernism needs modernity to re-center itself from time to time” (McKerrow, R. E. [in press]).

<sup>2</sup>Luce Irigaray (1993/1990) observes that “there is another mechanism at work” in separating the sexes, especially in reference to the language used to denominate the things that are man’s and those that become woman’s:

- a) living beings, animate, human, cultured, become masculine:
- b) lifeless objects, inanimate, non-human, uncultured, become feminine. (p. 128)

<sup>3</sup>The sense of identity I am talking about is not, however, implicated in the sense affiliated with “somatics” or “somatology.” In Deb Greene’s (1995) analysis, somatics “advocates a perceptual shift that privileges the internally focused, subjective stance of experiencing oneself from the ‘inside out,’ focusing awareness on inner sensations, feelings, internal functioning, and increasing proprioceptive awareness.” The move toward “soma” as the locus of individual freedom may work well in terms of holistic medicine and other applications, but does not serve the needs of a corporeal rhetoric. As will be suggested later, the individual, as subject, does play a role in the revised conception of rhetoric as corporeal, but is not the starting point for such a revision.

<sup>4</sup>The sense of embodiment has its parallel in the concept of “embodied literacy” Carolyn Marvin (1994) as well as the sense of ethnography as “embodied practice” Dwight Conquergood (1991).

<sup>5</sup>While there is some similarity between the notion of corporeal rhetoric and “hybridity” with respect to merger of genres or styles of speaking as can be argued in critiquing ecofeminist rhetoric (Laffoon, 1994), I do not see this in hybrid terms. Hybrid, like androgyny, presumes difference at the core, with additions grafted on; a corporeal rhetoric is an organic whole, with some parts emerging as critical in some cultures or places, but not in all.

<sup>6</sup>To move within that frame of reference to a gendered or sexed body is to engage in what Linda Buckmaster (1994) aptly terms “bodyness”: “Bodyness differs from embodiment in that rather than being the body/self situated in a historical and cultural context, it is specific and collective history, culture and physicality situated in the body. Bodyness contains differences since it is the notion of working from the inside out” (p. 4).

<sup>7</sup>There is no more technical sense needed in appraising songs such as “We Shall Overcome” in terms of their rhetorical force; what is implied in Zepernick’s commentary is that the message must live beyond the situation in order to contain a rhetorical nature. While some discourse does live beyond its moment of expression, as in the case of archetypal metaphors (Osborn, 1967), it does not require that condition in order to be accepted as rhetorical.

<sup>8</sup>Her role went beyond instruction to include influencing the actions of government during her life. Yet, as the culture was male dominant, you find her teaching women the proper way to play the part as willing participants rather than as antagonists. The one point of departure—young girls, as well as boys, should be educated.

<sup>9</sup>It might be noted, parenthetically, that Bloch appears oblivious to the sense of oratory as, in Conquergood’s (1991) terms, “embodied practice.” The same is true of Elinor Keenan’s essay (1975) in the same volume.

<sup>10</sup>In explaining the "snap," Mark Orbe (1994) points out that in "recalling this instance, my co-researcher would loudly snap his fingers to signify the quickness of the change" (p. 292).

<sup>11</sup>For a brief critique, see Rose's analysis (1993, pp. 78-85).

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