



Digital Commons@

Loyola Marymount University
LMU Loyola Law School

English Faculty Works

English

2008

One Size Doesn't Fit All: The Contingent Universality of Rhetoric

Steven J. Mailloux

Loyola Marymount University, steven.mailloux@lmu.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.lmu.edu/engl_fac

Digital Commons @ LMU & LLS Citation

Mailloux, Steven J., "One Size Doesn't Fit All: The Contingent Universality of Rhetoric" (2008). *English Faculty Works*. 6.

https://digitalcommons.lmu.edu/engl_fac/6

This Book Chapter is brought to you for free and open access by the English at Digital Commons @ Loyola Marymount University and Loyola Law School. It has been accepted for inclusion in English Faculty Works by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons@Loyola Marymount University and Loyola Law School. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@lmu.edu.

Sizing Up Rhetoric

David Zarefsky

Northwestern University

Elizabeth Benacka

Lake Forest College



Long Grove, Illinois

1
301
.556
2008

For information about this book, contact:

Waveland Press, Inc.
4180 IL Route 83, Suite 101
Long Grove, IL 60047-9580
(847) 634-0081
info@waveland.com
www.waveland.com

Copyright © 2008 by Waveland Press, Inc.

10-digit ISBN 1-57766-532-5

13-digit ISBN 978-1-57766-532-8

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means without permission in writing from the publisher.

Printed in the United States of America

7 6 5 4 3 2 1



One Size Doesn't Fit All

The Contingent Universality of Rhetoric¹

Steven Mailloux

I will begin with two epigraphs. The first is from Hans-Georg Gadamer's "Rhetoric, Hermeneutics, and Ideology-Critique":

The ubiquity of rhetoric, indeed, is unlimited. . . . No less universal is the function of hermeneutics. (318)

My second epigraph is a video clip, taken from the third season of the television series *The West Wing*, an episode called "War Crimes." In the clip, we see President Josiah Bartlet (JB) and First Lady Abigail Bartlet (AB), entering the White House after attending Sunday mass. They begin arguing about the sermon:

AB: He feels the homily lacked panache. . . . It was a perfectly lovely homily on Ephesians 5:21: "Husbands love your wives as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her." . . .

JB: I have no problem with Ephesians. . . .

AB: Then what is your problem?

JB: Hackery. This guy was a hack. . . . He had a captive audience . . . and he didn't know what to do with it.

AB: You want him to sing "Volare"?

JB: It couldn't have hurt. Words, words when spoken out loud for the sake of performance, are music. They have rhythm and pitch and timbre and volume. These are the properties of music, and music has the ability to find us and move us and lift us up in ways that literal meaning can't. Do you see?

AB: You are an oratorical snob.

JB: Yes, I am and God loves me for it. . . . You can't just trot out Ephesians. Which he blew, by the way. It has nothing to do with husbands and wives. It's all of us. St. Paul begins the passage, "Be subject to one another out of reverence to Christ." Be subject to one another. In this day and age of 24-hour cable crap devoted to feeding the voyeuristic gluttony of an American public hooked on a bad soap opera that's passing itself off as important, don't you think you might be able to find some relevance in verse 21? How do we end the cycle? Be subject to one another.

AB: So this is about you?

JB: No, it's not about me. Well, yes, it is about me. But tomorrow it will be about somebody else. We'll watch Larry King and see who. All hacks off the stage, right now. That's a national security order.

I realize that it is somewhat dangerous to begin with the imperative "all hacks off the stage," but there you go.

My rhetorical goal in this talk is to size up rhetoric in the two senses illustrated in these verbal and visual epigraphs. In the *West Wing* clip, what President Bartlet does first is to size up, take stock of, then evaluate the rhetoric of the priest's sermon and the preacher is found wanting: he's judged a rhetorical hack. But the president's evaluation is opposed by a sizing up of the same sermon by Dr. Bartlet, the first lady, who goes on to size up the sizer-upper. She says to her husband: "You are an oratorical snob." But there is a second sense of sizing up that occurs in this scene: St. Paul's message in Ephesians 5:21 is sized up, enlarged, made more general: Bartlet interprets the passage not as just about husbands and wives, or Christ and his church, being subject one to the other. In his interpretation, it's about everyone being subject to everyone else. The specific examples Paul gives are sized up, by Bartlet, to cover all contexts of human interaction, rhetorical and otherwise, including the context of today's television consumer culture in the United States. "Be subject to one another." Can we not say that Paul's particular message has been sized up to be made universal? And universality is what the Gadamer quote is all about: rhetoric is ubiquitous, applies everywhere, and, thus, like interpretation, rhetoric is universal.

It is these two senses of sizing up, found in our conference call for papers, that I want to play off each other throughout my remarks. How does one size up the rhetorical turn: the return of rhetoric to the academic human sciences? Sizing up rhetoric (increasing its significance today) requires sizing up rhetoric (evaluating what it has been, what it is now, or what it could be). In what follows I will first size up rhetoric, then comment on its status and claims by doing a kind of practical and theoretical inventory. Then in a much longer second section I will size up rhetoric by suggesting one or two of its emergent projects for further development. Section one asks, where and how are we now? Section two, where and how will we go tomorrow?

Section One: Sizing Up as Taking Inventory

What do we now have in rhetorical studies? On the practical level, we have an interdiscipline that is often institutionally situated as a subfield (or sometimes simply a method) within various disciplinary departments in colleges and universities. I believe we should continue exploiting this double placement as subdiscipline and interdiscipline: We should work within our different departmental homes to develop rhetoric as historical tradition, theoretical perspective, and critical practice in the courses we teach and the scholarship we publish. In addition, we should be especially attentive to local

opportunities for developing rhetoric as an interdisciplinary field, a field that combines different disciplinary methods and objects of study, a field that provides a transdisciplinary perspective on how disciplines do their business, a field that both explains and challenges traditional disciplinary boundaries.

The practical project of sizing up rhetoric (in both my senses) requires attention to a certain theoretical problem. Though some of you are understandably quite tired of talking about rhetoric's disciplinary imperialism, the globalization of rhetoric, and Big versus Little Rhetoric, these disciplinary and interdisciplinary debates still matter for the future of rhetorical studies at the local, national, and international levels. Thus, I would like to continue my sizing up of rhetoric by considering the objections brought against rhetoric's claim to universality. Specifically, I want to comment on three objections to the assertion that rhetoric can study everything because everything is rhetorical.

First objection: Some people argue that if rhetoric is everything, it is nothing because it can't be differentiated enough from other things to be distinctively treated. This is a logical objection, which can be answered by noting that though everything can be treated rhetorically (as persuasion or as figuration, for example)—and in that sense everything is rhetoric—it is still the case that such rhetorical universalism can be internally differentiated. That is, there are different rhetorics. For example, there are oral, visual, written, digital, gestural, and other kinds; and under written rhetoric, there are various genres such as autobiographies, novels, letters, editorials, and so forth; and under oratory, there are deliberative, forensic, epideictic, sermonic, and other types. My point is the logical one that a whole can have different parts; or that the one can also be made up of the many.

A second, more metaphysical objection to rhetorical universality is sometimes called antirhetoricism. This objection says: To claim everything is rhetoric denies that there is a nonlinguistic world. This is a charge brought against some poststructuralists and some postmodern rhetoricians. The rhetoricism charge is based on a confusion. Just because everything can be rhetoricized, or made an object of rhetorical attention, does not mean that there is nothing that is not rhetoric. Indeed, rhetoric depends on and acknowledges the nonrhetorical—whether the nonrhetorical is viewed as physical force or material context, Burke's scene, or Heidegger's background of practices. Derrida made this point in defending himself against Habermas's charges, and Rorty made a related point in preserving a distinction between violence and rhetoric in responding to Lyotard (Derrida 156n9; Lyotard and Rorty 584).

But there is a third objection to claims of rhetorical universality. Let's call it disciplinary. To see everything as rhetorical makes a specific discipline of rhetorical studies impossible. This objection has, I believe, more bite than the other two. If every human-science discipline studies something that is or could be rhetoricized, then what distinguishes a discipline of rhetoric? Here universality and particularity must be emphasized and interrelated: Yes, everything could be studied rhetorically, but some rhetorics are contingently

better than others as objects of study. We can think of academic disciplines as institutionalized networks of practices, theories, and traditions for producing and disseminating knowledge (Mailloux, *Disciplinary Identities* 5). It is the task of every discipline to define and hierarchize its objects of study; that is, to form its traditions of interpreted objects according to its theories and practices. There are thus different kinds of rhetoric and some will receive more attention than others for different reasons at different times. Just as privileging is unavoidable in human behavior (where we have everyday phronesis, or practical wisdom, to help us), so too in academic fields (where we have disciplinary *techne*, or method, constituted by traditions of theory and practice). It's not a matter of choosing whether we should have a canon or not in rhetoric; we will always have one. Or, in words that I have used elsewhere, in rhetorical studies if there were no canon, we would have to invent one (71).

Section Two: Sizing Up by Sizing Down

Whether this practical and theoretical inventory has any persuasive force or not, I now want to turn to my second question: What next? The interesting thing about this question is that to answer it, we are led to something of a paradox. What next? We need to size up rhetoric, even super-size it, while trying to avoid the unhealthy side effects of academic Big-Macism. We need to move rhetorical studies more aggressively toward its transdisciplinary potential, to be part of every discipline as prolonged self-reflective moments (as their academic imaginary) even as rhetorical studies hovers precipitously above disciplines taking disciplinarity and particular disciplines as its subject matter. Rhetoric here can examine the academic/nonacademic divide as part of its object of study. That is, rhetoric should not only size up disciplines and interdisciplines, but also reevaluate the difficult relation between academic specialization and lay public spheres. Size it up.

At the same time, and perhaps paradoxically, rhetorical studies should super-size by down-sizing. "Down-sizing" here means becoming more ambitious, instantiating the universal, by getting more particular or more exactly foregrounding the particularity of the contingent. Let me give two extended examples of what I mean. I turn now to two interrelated topics that constitute emergent projects in rhetorical studies, projects that require a kind of sizing up by sizing down, a kind of universalizing that demonstrates, nevertheless, that in rhetorical studies one size does not fit all. I will look, first, at the rhetorical differences among types of intellectuals and, second, at the contemporary rhetoric of political theology.

In sizing up (enlarging rhetoric's purview), I have alluded to the academic/nonacademic divide, which includes the distinction between disciplinary expertise within the university and issues of more general public concern extending or originating beyond its boundaries. How might rhetorical studies elaborate this distinction between academic formations and lay publics?

At one time within Euro-American culture, the intellectual was seen as “the spokesman of the universal.” In Foucault’s words, “to be an intellectual meant something like being the consciousness/conscience of us all” (“Truth and Power” 126). In the 1970s, Foucault argued persuasively that universal intellectuals had been replaced by nonuniversal, specific intellectuals—magistrates, psychiatrists, doctors, social workers, lab technicians, sociologists—who used their specialized expert knowledge in specific political struggles related to their areas of expertise (e.g., penologists joining with prison reformers). As helpful as this distinction between specific and so-called universal intellectuals continues to be, it now seems time to ask: In the twenty-first century is there a need for a new kind of universal intellectual? I will return to this question, at least implicitly, but here I want to use Foucault to emphasize a different distinction: the academic versus the public intellectual.

Later in his career, Foucault described himself as “show[ing] people that they are much freer than they feel, that people accept as truth, as evidence, some themes which have been built up at a certain moment during history, and that this so-called evidence can be criticized and destroyed. To change something in the minds of people—that’s the role of an intellectual” (“Truth, Power, Self” 10). Being widely recognized as a public intellectual, Foucault fulfilled the rhetorical function of his role—changing people’s minds—partly by connecting his political activity in nonacademic settings with the research he did as an academic scholar and theorist. Besides speaking as a *public* intellectual, Foucault taught as a specific *academic* intellectual—the professor of the History of Systems of Thought at the Collège de France.

Academic intellectuals speak and write primarily for the professional disciplinary communities with which they identify. In contrast, *public intellectuals* not only rhetorically engage audiences beyond the academy but are recognized as doing so by both academics and nonacademics. As the example of Foucault demonstrates, academic intellectuals can become public intellectuals. Some of these hybrids rhetorically build on their disciplinary expertise in making their public interventions (e.g., the literary cultural critic Edward Said), while others tend to separate their principal disciplinary work from their sociopolitical criticism in the larger public sphere (e.g., the linguist Noam Chomsky).

Academic intellectuals in their teaching and research do have public effects, but such effects do not constitute them as public intellectuals according to the distinction I am making. That distinction can be further described in explicitly rhetorical terms: academic and public intellectuals differ in their primary intentions, chosen styles, and immediate audiences. Academic intellectuals wish to produce and disseminate new disciplinary knowledge using the tropes, arguments, and narratives of their respective disciplines and aim toward the specific disciplinary audiences with which they identify. Public intellectuals, in contrast, often translate their disciplinary knowledge in commenting on special topics and more general issues of concern to nonacademic publics using a rhetoric accessible to those publics.

Now we can develop this distinction between academic and public intellectuals to elaborate on an account more useful to rhetoricians examining various publics and counterpublics. What are some of the rhetorical functions of the hybrid intellectual, the academic who goes public with his or her thinking? Four overlapping roles include translator, commentator, inventor, and metacritic. *Translators* provide the lay public with interpretations of specialized disciplinary knowledge, making accessible not only the research that has direct, immediate applications to social issues and technological problems but also the speculative thought and practical philosophy generated from within the scholarly traditions that have less calculable but still discernible relevance to people's lived experiences. *Commentators* present the public with specific critiques and general explanatory models of society and its culture. Hybrid intellectuals are most often seen in the mass media fulfilling this rhetorical role. *Inventors* are creative thinkers who move beyond analysis of current public controversies and present alternative ways of thought. *Metacritics* comment on the rhetorical work of the translators, commentators, and inventors.

Rhetoricians have a special role to play as metacritics in their functioning as public intellectuals. They can analyze the audience specificity of the translation process; they can size up the persuasive success or failure of various rhetorical commentaries; and they can track the tropes, arguments, and narratives used in strategies of invention. Most generally, they can trace the rhetorical paths of thought in the public sphere. Rhetoricians can produce for various audiences analyses of how different agents think in public, their shared and different rhetorics of thought, as well as what they appear to think about rhetoric itself. This rhetorical self-consciousness, so crucial to a deliberative democracy, remains the major contribution rhetoricians can make as academic intellectuals who go public.²

There is one specific area where I believe rhetoricians can make a major contribution as both academic scholars and public intellectuals, one area that calls for sizing up rhetorical studies in both my senses. The return of rhetoric to the human sciences at the end of the twentieth century has been followed by another return in the twenty-first: the return of religion to the academy and its simultaneous reemergence (was it ever gone?) on the domestic and international scenes. There are many aspects to consider within the emergent topics of religion, but I will restrict myself to one: political theology.

What is political theology? It's the union of political practice with religious belief. More exactly, political theology is any theory articulating the historical relation between politics and theology, between worldly action within power relations and speculative thought about a world beyond.³ Of course, the American version of political theology didn't begin in the Bush administration. It was present at the very origin of what became the United States. But for both domestic and global reasons, there seems to have been a rhetorical intensification of political theology since even before 9/11. There are many ways of examining the particulars of this intensification, but I will take one that emphasizes the continuity between one originary rhetorical

moment in U.S. history and its reception in the current rhetorical scene at the national level.

On June 11, 2004, the funeral for President Ronald Reagan took place in the National Cathedral in Washington, DC. At the service, former President George H. W. Bush, father to the sitting American president, spoke movingly of the man whom he served as vice president for eight years. At one point, he said, "Ronald Reagan was beloved because of what he believed. He believed in America so he made it his shining city on a hill. He believed in freedom so he acted on behalf of its values and ideals. He believed in tomorrow so the Great Communicator became the Great Liberator" ("State Funeral"). The trope, the metaphor, of a shining city on a hill became a *leitmotif* at the funeral service. Its American genealogy begins, of course, in 1630 when John Winthrop delivered a sermon to a group of Puritans making their way to the New World. Near the end of "A Modell of Christian Charity," during his rhetorical performance of political theology, Winthrop reminded his listeners: "For wee must Consider that wee shall be as a City upon a Hill, the eies of all people are upon us" (42).

During the Reagan funeral, Winthrop's sermon was quoted by Justice Sandra Day O'Connor of the U.S. Supreme Court, a Reagan appointee, and cited by Reverend John Danforth, a former senator and the Episcopal minister officiating at the funeral. Reverend Danforth reminded his listeners that Winthrop's source was the Sermon on the Mount: "You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hid"; the same Matthew 5:14 passage was read by Cardinal Theodore McCarrick, Roman Catholic Archbishop of Washington, immediately before Danforth's homily. Like his fellow speakers, Reverend Danforth emphasized the positive political spin traditionally given the passage in applying it to the eulogized president. That America was a shining city on a hill for the rest of the world was, Danforth said, President Reagan's "favorite theme, from his first inaugural to his final address from the Oval office. . . . Winthrop believed that the eyes of the world would be on America because God had given us a special commission, so it was our duty to shine forth. The Winthrop message became the Reagan message. It rang of optimism, and we longed to hear it, especially after the dark days of Vietnam and Watergate." Later in his homily Danforth made the references contemporary as he affirmed to his audience, "You and I know the meaning of darkness. We see it on the evening news: terror, chaos, war. An enduring image of 9/11 is that on a brilliantly clear day a cloud of darkness covered Lower Manhattan." Danforth then asked, "What do we do when darkness surrounds us?" and declared, "St. Paul answered that question. He said we must walk as children of light [Ephesians 5:8]. President Reagan taught us that this is our mission, both as individuals and as a nation" ("State Funeral").

A rhetorician might comment on various aspects of this conjuring of an earlier American exceptionalism based on political theology. To track the interpretive and rhetorical elements of this repetition, I could adopt a rhetorical hermeneutic perspective, a kind of cultural rhetoric study that traces the

rhetorical paths of thought across texts, events, and eras and their receptions. How is political theology thought of in the public sphere now and in the past? What is its rhetoric of thinking (what tropes, arguments, and narratives are used) and what is its thinking about rhetoric (what claims does its rhetoric make about rhetoric)?

There have been many answers to these questions given in the last few years, both by academic rhetorical critics and popular media commentators. Two especially rich examples of the former are Sharon Crowley's *Toward a Civil Discourse: Rhetoric and Fundamentalism* and Robert Ivie's *Democracy and America's War on Terror*. It seems to me that these two books speak to both academic and nonacademic audiences and thus illustrate the way rhetoricians can function as effective commentators at this critical moment of the explicit and implicit employment of political theology in the public sphere. But as rhetorical inventors I think that rhetoricians can do even more: they could, to return to my opening, develop a rhetorical ethics and politics of the neighbor: "Be subject to one another." I'm taking my cue here from several contemporary thinkers, some rhetorically self-identified, some not.

On the rhetorical side, Diane Davis and others are trying to develop a Levinasian nonappropriative ethics that emphasizes the nonhermeneutic aspects of rhetoric. A rhetorical ethics of the neighbor might adopt such a Levinasian rhetorical ethics and supplement a rhetorical hermeneutics of communication with a nonhermeneutic rhetoric that maintains a nonappropriative relation among conversants and thus continually acknowledges radical otherness, attempting perpetually to respect difference, not only in our neighbors but also in ourselves.

On the other hand, some political theorists are moving in the opposite direction toward a greater recognition of sameness, and it is with these thinkers I am in more sympathy. One nonrhetorical theorist of the postcolony, Achille Mbembe, has argued for a new (perhaps old) approach to conflict in the contemporary world. Commenting on his current situation in South Africa, Mbembe acknowledges the importance of postcolonial theory for understanding that situation: "In carrying out a radical critique of the totalizing thought of the Same, postcolonial theory enabled the positing of the foundations to think alterity, plural singularity even, this scattered multiplicity." However, Mbembe has now begun working against the grain of this theory, noting that "by insisting too much on difference and alterity" postcolonial currents of thought have "lost sight of the weight of the fellow human [*le semblable*] without whom it is impossible to imagine an *ethics of the neighbor*, still less to envisage the possibility of a common world, of a common humanity." Moreover, Mbembe continues,

Insofar as postcolonial theory has considered the struggle between Father and Son—that is to say, colonizer and colonized—to be the most significant political and cultural paradigm in formerly colonized societies, it has tended to overshadow the intensity of the violence of brother towards brother and the status of the sister and mother in the midst of fratricide.

In passing, it has clouded our understanding of the relationship between sovereignty, homicide, fratricide, and suicide. (14-15)

Within his African context, Mbembe has not yet elaborated his alternative politics based on this ethics of the neighbor, but that ethics has begun to get more and more attention in the Euro-American context as an alternative to a political theology based on Carl Schmitt's enemy/friend opposition. In his recently published "Toward a Political Theology of the Neighbor," Ken Reinhard begins by juxtaposing two of Schmitt's assertions that have recently garnered perhaps the most commentary: First, from *Political Theology*, "The sovereign is he who decides on the exception" (4), and second, from *The Concept of the Political*, "The specific political distinction to which political actions and motives can be reduced is that between friend and enemy" (26). Reinhard explains how these theological concepts sustaining the political order function together: the sovereign within and outside the law determines an unstable friend/enemy opposition that is the essence of the political. Reinhard sees the instability of the friend/enemy distinction as leading to a symptomatic contradiction in Schmitt's political theology, but rather than abandoning that theory he uses Freud and Lacan to "push it further" into an alternative political theology of the neighbor (11).

Rhetoricians can immediately identify with much of this recent talk about friends, neighbors, and enemies. After all, we've been doing friend/enemy rhetorical analysis, Burkean or otherwise, for quite a long time now. Moreover, Reinhard in his important essay and others working on political theology often refer to Alain Badiou's philosophy of the event, and I suggest that Badiou's philosophy too could do with a recognition of current and past rhetorical theory, especially that which develops rhetoric's contingent universality. Here we have another opportunity for a double resizing of rhetoric, sizing it up as global universality while sizing it down by focusing on rhetoric's local particularity.

Simply put, Badiou's philosophy provides an account of universal truth as fidelity to an event that constitutes subjects. For Badiou, truth emerges in the subject's faithfulness to an event in the domain of politics, science, art, or love. In his remarkable book on St. Paul and universalism, Badiou argues that Paul's militant preaching, his proclamation of the Word, initiates the Christian subject who believes in the event of the Resurrection. In the hearing of this Good News, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female" (Galatians 3:28). The atheist Badiou writes admiringly: "[For Paul,] what matters, man or woman, Jew or Greek, slave or free man, is that differences *carry the universal that happens to them like a grace*. Inversely, only by recognizing in differences their capacity for carrying the universal that comes upon them can the universal itself verify its own reality" (*St. Paul* 106). The truth that emerges out of fidelity to the Christ-event is both universal and contingent: universal in that it is preached to everyone and for everyone, contingent in that the truth ends when the fidelity to the event ends. In his book on evil, Badiou raises the problem of a

pseudoevent like the rise of Nazism (*Ethics* 72–77). Though Badiou does provide criteria for distinguishing between an authentic event and a pseudoevent, such as universal inclusiveness, I do think Badiou could use a rhetoric to supplement his ontology.

Such a rhetoric would need to begin by separating “essences” and “absolutes” from “universals.” Universals are not metaphysical notions at all. They are empirical commonalities, rhetorically deployed in support of specific beliefs and practices at specific times and places. They are shared interests that get rhetorically and hermeneutically determined as common within and across different communities (Mailloux, *Disciplinary Identities* 119). In any particular case of appealing to contingent universals, such as promoting peace or ending torture, there are always interpretive and rhetorical questions: Can a universal be empirically established as such here and now? And even if it can, how might it be successfully invoked with this audience in this context? What, for example, are the contingent universals that might, at present in the United States, be successfully invoked, reconstituted, or invented to enable communication, and perhaps cooperation, across different groups of religious and nonreligious believers?

In elite and popular culture, in government documents and on television programs, human rights talk continues to pervade discussions animated by political theology. Rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Rights to be pro-life or pro-choice. Freedom of religious expression in relation to separation of church and state. Civil rights versus the right to security. I will conclude with one final sizing up by sizing down in relation to the last of these.

Rhetorics of security focus on product and process: the content of beliefs about security and the dynamic of securing those and other beliefs. Today, we see security as a local, national, and international obsession. Security as an anxiety has been super-sized to the global level yet it is lived and experienced at the local. We hear much about the insecurity of peace and the security of war. The United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights asserts that “Everyone has the right to life, liberty, and security of person” (Article 3). Article 24 of the Charter of the United Nations gives its Security Council “primary responsibility” for “the maintenance of international peace and security”; while newspaper articles declare: “The war we have just begun is absolutely necessary for the security of the United States, the stability of the world, and the good of the Iraqi people” (Pollack B17).

Rhetoricians, I believe, can contribute to analyzing the presuppositions and effects of these discourses. Indeed, they’ve already made useful interpretations of the belief content about security and the rhetorical dynamics of securing belief domestically and internationally. Earlier, I cited Crowley’s and Ivie’s books. Interestingly, both take up the rhetorical implications of Chantal Mouffe’s “agonistic pluralism” for a renewed radical democracy, and, as Crowley points out, Mouffe herself invokes “the great tradition of rhetoric” as a resource for accomplishing her political goals (qtd. in Crowley 22). In the cases of political theology, rhetoricians can join intellectual histo-

rians, Foucauldian genealogists, and political commentators in tracking the rhetoric of thinking about security, and rhetoricians have even more to say about the rhetorical process of securing belief in security.

My final downsizing ends this talk with some pieces of rhetorical trivia: You'll remember that in my opening clip, President Bartlet ended his rant about the rhetorical and interpretive incompetence of the preacher by declaring: "All hacks off the stage. . . . That's a national security order." Not surprisingly, security rhetoric appeared again and again on a show that was about the rhetorical presidency of the twenty-first century. We might speculate about a more specific source for the *West Wing* security rhetoric. Before winning the Nobel Prize in Economics, could Bartlet have attended Foucault's lectures at the Collège de France from 1976 through 1978? One set of those lectures was called "Security, Territory, and Population," and another has recently been translated into English as "*Society Must Be Defended*."

Now, the final episode of *The West Wing* series aired a couple of weeks ago: On the way to the inauguration, outgoing President Bartlet (JB) asks President-Elect Santos (MS):

(JB): How's the speech?

(MS): It's OK. A couple of good lines. There's no, "Ask not what your country can do for you," but. . . .

(JB): JFK really screwed us with that one, didn't he? . . . Have you chosen a biblical quotation for the oath?

(MS): Kings 3:9–11.

(JB): "Grant thy servant an understanding heart to judge thy people"? . . . Good choice.

At the inauguration ceremony, the invocation by Cardinal Edward Doherty ends, "We pray that this good and generous country may be a blessing to the nations of the world and fulfill the hopes of our founding fathers." Then there's a blues rendition of "America the Beautiful" sung by Keb' Mo', and right after the lines: "America, America, God shed his grace on thee, and crown thy good with brotherhood from sea to shining sea," we watch the movers back at the White House packing up President Bartlet's personal items: a picture of his daughter, a bust of Kennedy, and . . . Foucault's lecture volume "*Society Must Be Defended*." In its pages Foucault argues for inverting Clausewitz's famous aphorism, saying instead "that politics is the continuation of war by other means" (15). Searching for a more hopeful response to Foucault's suggestion leads me to give Kenneth Burke the last word, slightly revised, sized-down just a bit for my sizing up purposes: Not just his *Rhetoric* but rhetoric in general must lead us through the Scramble, the Wrangle of the Marketplace, the flurries and flare-ups of the Human Barnyard, the Give and Take, the wavering line of pressure and counterpressure, the Logomachy, the onus of ownership, the Wars of Nerves, the War. It too has its peaceful moments: at times its endless competition can add up to the transcending of itself. In ways of its own, it can move from the factional to the universal (23).

Notes

- ¹ I'd again like to thank David Zarefsky, Mike Leff, and the other RSA organizers for the opportunity to address the conference.
- ² For further discussion, see Mailloux, "Thinking in Public," where a version of the previous five paragraphs was first published after delivery of the present paper.
- ³ See Scott and Cavanaugh; Davis et al.; Mailloux, "Political Theology."

Works Cited

- Badiou, Alain. *Ethics: An Essay on the Understanding of Evil*. Trans. Peter Hallward. London: Verso, 2001.
- . *St. Paul: The Foundation of Universalism*. Trans. Ray Brassier. Stanford: Stanford UP, 2003.
- Burke, Kenneth. *The Rhetoric of Motives*. Berkeley: U of California P, 1969.
- Crowley, Sharon. *Toward a Civil Discourse: Rhetoric and Fundamentalism*. Pittsburgh: U of Pittsburgh P, 2006.
- Davis, Creston, John Milbank, and Slavoj Žižek, eds. *Theology and the Political: The New Debate*. Durham: Duke UP, 2005.
- Davis, Diane. "Addressing Alterity: Rhetoric, Hermeneutics, and the Nonappropriative Relation." *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 38 (2005): 191–212.
- Derrida, Jacques. "Afterword: Toward an Ethics of Discussion." *Limited Inc*. Evanston: Northwestern UP, 1988. 111–60.
- Foucault, Michel. "*Society Must Be Defended*": *Lectures at the Collège de France 1975–1976*. Trans. David Macey. New York: Picador, 2003.
- , with Alessandro Fontana and Pasquale Pasquino. "Truth and Power." Trans. C. Lazzari. *Power*. Ed. James D. Faubion. New York: New P, 2000. 111–33.
- , with Rux Martin. "Truth, Power, Self: An Interview with Michel Foucault." *Technologies of the Self*. Ed. Luther H. Martin, Huck Gutman, and Patrick H. Hutten. Amherst: U of Massachusetts P, 1988. 9–15.
- Gadamer, Hans-Georg. "Rhetoric, Hermeneutics, and Ideology-Critique." Trans. G. B. Hess and R. E. Palmer. *Rhetoric and Hermeneutics in Our Time: A Reader*. Ed. Walter Jost and Michael J. Hyde. New Haven: Yale UP, 1997. 313–34.
- Ivie, Robert L. *Democracy and America's War on Terror*. Tuscaloosa: U of Alabama P, 2005.
- Liotard, Jean-François, and Richard Rorty. "Discussion Entre Jean-François Lyotard et Richard Rorty." *Critique* 41 (1985): 581–84.
- Mailloux, Steven. *Disciplinary Identities: Rhetorical Paths of English, Speech, and Composition*. New York: Modern Language Association, 2006.
- . "Political Theology in Douglass and Melville." *Frederick Douglass and Herman Melville: Essays in Relation*. Ed. Robert Levine and Samuel Otter. Durham: U of North Carolina P, 2007.
- . "Thinking in Public with Rhetoric." *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 39 (2006): 140–46.
- Mbembe, Achille. "On The Postcolony: A Brief Response to Critics." Trans. Nima Bassiri and Peter Skafish. *Qui Parle* 15.2 (2005): 1–49.
- Mouffe, Chantal. *The Democratic Paradox*. London: Verso, 2000.
- Pollack, Kenneth M. "A Dangerous Tyrant, A Hellish Fear: The U.S. Didn't Have an Alternative." *Los Angeles Times* 20 Mar. 2003: B17.
- Reinhard, Kenneth. "Toward a Political Theology of the Neighbor." *The Neighbor: Three Inquiries in Political Theology*. Ed. Slavoj Žižek, Eric L. Santner, and Kenneth Reinhard. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2006. 11–75.

- Schmitt, Carl. *The Concept of the Political*. Trans. George Schwab. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1996.
- . *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty*. Trans. George Schwab. Cambridge: MIT P, 1985.
- Scott, Peter, and William T. Cavanaugh, eds. *The Blackwell Companion to Political Theology*. Oxford: Blackwell, 2004.
- “The State Funeral of Ronald Reagan.” <<http://transcripts.cnn.com/TRANSCRIPTS/0406/11/sc.01.html>>.
- United Nations. “Charter of the United Nations.” <<http://www.un.org/aboutun/charter>>.
- . “Universal Declaration of Human Rights.” <<http://www.un.org/Overview/rights.html>>.
- Winthrop, John. “A Modell of Christian Charity.” *American Sermons: The Pilgrims to Martin Luther King Jr.* Ed. Michael Warner. New York: Library of America, 1999.