Rhetorical Criticism

Perspectives in Action

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Brief Contents

3

What Is Rhetorical Criticism?

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The previous chapter provided a working definition of *rhetoric*. This chapter introduces you to another concept: *criticism*. The purpose of this chapter is to show you how you can be a critic of rhetoric, and why this is an important, enriching activity. **Criticism** is "the systematic process of illuminating and evaluating products of human activity. [C]riticism presents and supports one possible interpretation and judgment. This interpretation, in turn, may become the basis for other interpretations and judgments."[1] When we critique instances of rhetoric, we are allowing ourselves to take, through careful analysis and judgment, a closer, critical look at how rhetoric operates to persuade and influence us. Specific acts of rhetoric that critics single out to analyze are called **rhetorical artifacts**. Criticism has many broad applications, but in general it is a *humanizing* activity. That is to say, it explores and highlights qualities that make us human—the good and the bad, the sublime and the droll, the beautiful and the ugly. It is not about being negative or finding fault in everything. For Donald C. Bryant, "common notions of criticism seem to involve or to imply some analytical examination of an artifact or artifacts, of some human transaction or transactions, toward the end of comprehension and realization of the potential of the object or event. Most notions of criticism extend also to appreciation and on to appraisal or judgment."[2] For our purposes, we are interested specifically in **rhetorical criticism**: the analysis and evaluation of rhetorical acts. We are looking at the many ways that humans use rhetoric to bring about changes in the world around them.

T. S. Eliot is reputed to have said, "We do criticism to open the work to others." This is exactly what we are about when we perform rhetorical criticism. On this point Wayne Brockriede wrote, "By 'criticism' I mean the act of evaluating or analyzing experience. A person can function as critic either by passing judgment on the experience or by analyzing it for the sake of a better understanding of that experience or of some more general concept or theory about such experiences."[3] Even more to the point concerning rhetorical criticism, Bryant wrote that it is "systematically getting inside transactions of communication to discover and describe their elements, their form, and their dynamics and to explore the situations, past or present, which generate them and in which they are essential constituents to be comprehended and judged."[4] Rhetorical critics have varied reasons and purposes for producing criticism, but for those viewing it as a form of art, we engage in criticism for two broad reasons: *appreciation* and *understanding*. Simply put, we wish to enhance both our own and others' understanding of

the rhetorical act; we wish to share our insights with others and to enhance their appreciation of the rhetorical act. These are not vague goals but quality-of-life issues. By improving understanding and appreciation, critics offer new and potentially exciting ways for others to see the world. Through understanding we also produce knowledge about human communication; in theory this should help us to better govern our interactions with others.

CRITICISM AS A METHOD

In its most basic form, a method is a particular manner or process for accomplishing a task. The researcher's task—humanist, social scientist, or scientist—is to generate knowledge. The methods researchers use to accomplish this task vary greatly, however. The use of rhetoric is an art; as such, it does not lend itself well to scientific methods of analysis. Criticism is an art as well; as such, it is particularly well suited for examining rhetorical creations. Numerous critics have commented upon the humanistic, personal nature of the study of rhetoric. Marie Hochmuth Nichols, for instance, wrote that humane studies, of which the study of rhetoric is a prominent example, are "concerned with the formation of judgment and choice." Such studies teach us that "technical efficiency is not enough, that somewhere beyond that lies an area in which answers are not formulary and methods not routine." Beyond "the area of the formula lies an area where understanding, imagination, knowledge of alternatives, and a sense of purpose operate."[5] That area of which she writes is, of course, criticism.

The ways that the sciences and the humanities study the phenomena that surround us differ greatly in the amount of the researcher's personality allowed to influence the results of the study. For example, in the sciences, researchers purposefully adhere to a *strict* method (the scientific method). All scientific researchers are to use this same basic method, and successful experiments must be 100 percent replicable by others, else they fail. An experiment performed at Virginia Tech must be replicable under the same constraints at the University of Tokyo, or anywhere else in the world. The application of the scientific method may take numerous forms, but the overall method remains the same—and the personality of the researcher is excised from the actual study. Generally speaking, the researcher's likes and dislikes, and his or her religious and political preferences, are supposed to be as far removed as possible from the actual study and its reported findings. Even the language scientists use to describe the results of their studies distances them from those very results. For example, in scientific (as well as social scientific) essays, one normally finds a detached use of language, with researchers forcing themselves into the background by highlighting the study itself: "This study found that . . ." or "The conclusions of this study suggest that . . ."

In sharp contrast, criticism (one of many humanistic methods of generating knowledge) actively involves the personality of the researcher. The very choices of what to study, and how and why to study a rhetorical artifact, are heavily influenced by the personal qualities of the researcher. In criticism this is especially important since the personality of the critic is considered an integral component of the study. Further personalizing criticism, we find that rhetorical critics use a variety of means when examining a particular rhetorical artifact, with some critics even developing their own unique perspective to better examine a rhetorical artifact.[6] Even the manner in which many critics express themselves in their writing brings the personal to the fore. Many use the first-person singular in their writing: "I found . . ." instead of "This study found . . ." These distinctions were apparent to Edwin Black, who forcefully wrote,

> Methods, then, admit of varying degrees of personality. And criticism, on the whole, is near the indeterminate, contingent, personal end of the methodological scale. In consequence of this placement, it is neither possible nor desirable for criticism to be fixed into a system, for critical techniques to be objectified, for critics to be interchangeable for purposes of [scientific] replication, or for rhetorical criticism to serve as the handmaiden of quasi-scientific theory. [The] idea is that critical method is too personally expressive to be systematized.[7]

In short, criticism is an art, not a science. It is not a scientific method; it uses probability-based methods of argument; it exists on its own, not in conjunction with other methods of generating knowledge (i.e., social scientific or scientific). As Hochmuth Nichols articulated so well, "It is reason and judgment, not a [computer], that makes a man a critic."[8] Put another way, insight and imagination top statistical applications when studying rhetorical action.

THE CRITICAL ACT

At this point you should have a general idea of what rhetorical criticism is. Yet a question remains: How is it performed? In short, how does one actually "do" criticism? Where does one begin? And how does one ensure that criticism is more than mere opinion? Superior criticism is not performed mechanically, similar to following a recipe or a set of instructions to build something; neither is it scientific in the sense of following a strict experimental protocol. It is, however, quite rigorous and well thought out, with critics following certain norms when producing criticism. After all, good critics are trying to generate understanding and insight; they are not supposed to be simply flashing their opinions about. In general, there are three stages involved in the **critical act**, in producing criticism: conceptual, communication, and counter-communication.

The Conceptual Stage

The conceptual stage takes place in the mind of the critic; it is an act of cerebration. It is a private act, and its purpose is to generate some type of insight concerning the rhetorical artifact. Since this is a very personal act—that is, not mechanistic—there is no standardized way critics go about flexing their cerebral muscles. What works for one critic might not work for another. Often, though, insight is generated in one of two very broad ways. The first is a type of spontaneous inception. Think of the *Eureka!* of Archimedes, or of the proverbial lightbulb popping on inside your head. Critics often generate involuntary, almost instinctive reactions to rhetorical artifacts. This involves more than a simple reaction to the artifact, however, because critics are trained to observe, and their training has a bearing on what they see in an artifact. In a sense, the experienced critic has assimilated particular ways of viewing rhetoric; these modes of seeing are part and parcel of the critic's personality. Some critics may even come to see rhetorical artifacts in such a way that others recognize it as characteristic of that particular critic. The more a critic learns about rhetoric, the more that critic sees the world with a rhetorical understanding, and the more likely that critic will be to generate spontaneous insights.

The other broad way a critic might generate insight is through a somewhat systematic examination of a rhetorical artifact. With this approach the critic uses some type of guide, formal or informal, that allows for an orderly progression through the rhetorical artifact. A more formal guide might take the form of a theoretical perspective on rhetoric, which we will

discuss below. A more personal and informal guide could be a question the critic has about the workings of the world (often called a research question). Simply put, the critic starts with a question or two in mind and then examines various rhetorical artifacts looking for answers to that question. For example, Stephen Howard Browne, the author of the chapter on "Close Textual Analysis," asks in his critical essay questions such as, "what is the primary theme in the rhetorical artifact?" and wishes to discover "how it superintends the symbolic action of the text as it unfolds." He continues, writing that he wants "to ask further about the internal structure of this movement and how this structure assists in the production of the speaker's message." He also asks, "Similarly, what kinds of images, metaphors, and other dimensions of style animate Obama's arguments and give them conspicuous form?" With those questions in mind, Browne decided that using a type of criticism called close textual analysis would be a fruitful perspective to use when looking at different rhetorical artifacts. In this way some authors are guided by their initial research questions in both the decision about what perspective to use and also in what to look for in the rhetorical artifacts they examined.

Whether a critic spontaneously generates an insight or searches a rhetorical artifact for information, it should be the critic, not the method or perspective, that is in control of the insights and knowledge generated. As Black wrote, "The critic's procedures are, when at their best, original; they grow ad hoc from the critic's engagement with the [rhetorical] artifact."[9] Of course, not all insights generated prove sound, and some ideas are never meant to move beyond mere personal musing. In my experience, it is only a small minority of ideas that create roots and actually grow. These ideas move to the next stage of the critical act: communication.

The Communication Stage

The second stage of the critical act is a quasi-public act of writing[10] out the criticism in preparation for sharing it with others. This stage of the critical act encompasses the private act of writing, sharing initial ideas with trusted friends and colleagues, and ultimately sharing with a wider audience. Your reasons for writing criticism will help to determine the particular audience for whom you write. For example, you could be writing a letter to the editor of your local paper concerning the rhetorical efforts of a politician running for office, you could be writing an entry for readers of your blog, you could be writing a term paper for your professor, or you could be writing with a specific scholarly journal in mind. When writing you must always keep in mind the audience with whom you intend to share your criticism. Recall that part of the purpose of criticism is to enhance the understanding and appreciation of others concerning the rhetorical artifact. On this point Black wrote, "The critic proceeds in part by translating the object of his criticism into the terms of his audience and in part by educating his audience to the terms of the object. This dual task is not an ancillary function of criticism; it is an essential part of criticism."[11]

When sharing your criticism with others, it is not simply a matter of providing a detailed picture of your opinions. You are instead sharing *propositions* with those who will be reading your work. Propositions are only naked assertions, however, until you provide a very basic step: giving supporting evidence with which to back up those assertions. Craig R. Smith wrote that critics must hold themselves to high "standards of argumentation" when writing criticism. Specifically, he suggested that, "when we write criticism . . . we ought to confine ourselves to solid argumentation inclusive of valid arguments built on sufficient and high quality evidence produced from close textual readings and masterings of context."[12] In short, critics must *invite*

their audiences to agree with them. This is accomplished through stating their case and then providing evidence for their audience to accept or reject.

For example, consider the short speech given by Baltimore Ravens running back Ray Rice on May 23, 2014, following the February 19, 2014, release of a video showing him dragging his unconscious wife (then fiancée Janay Palmer) from an Atlantic City casino elevator.[13] Police said the part of the tape not released showed that Rice struck his wife "with his hand, rendering her unconscious," before dragging her out of the elevator.[14] After over a month of negative publicity for Rice, the Ravens, and the NFL in general, including charges of chauvinism and turning a blind eye toward domestic violence, the situation was only getting worse.[15] On March 27, 2014, Rice was indicted on aggravated assault charges, eventuating in a plea deal that involved counseling. The next day he and Janay Palmer were married. As the NFL continued to stand up for Rice, the negative publicity continued to grow. Finally, on May 23, 2014, Rice held a press conference along with his wife, during which time he addressed the situation.

After watching the video and reading the transcript of his apology, I can honestly say that it was not only a rhetorical dud but a failed speech as well.[16] Yet so far we have only my opinion, undifferentiated among so many others. I might go further, however, and make specific assertions concerning the speech. I could say that Rice's speech did not work well in that it simply failed on several levels. For instance, it showed a lack of preparation; it lacked true elements of an apology; it demonstrated a lack of logical consistency; he potentially insulted his wife during the speech; and, ultimately, it failed as an apology.

At this point you would find yourself with additional information, but still I have only provided you with *unsupported assertions.* I have merely given you additional, although better focused, opinions about the speech. I move into the realm of criticism when I provide support for these assertions of mine, when I provide you with evidence that asks you to agree with me or that makes you aware of some aspect of the speech that you had previously overlooked (the sharing of insights). For example, I could provide specific sentences from Rice's speech that I feel support my assertions. On the matter of lack of preparation, I could quote Rice: "I usually prepare my speeches just coming off the top [of my head], but during the time I had, I had a chance to jot a lot of things down."[17] Yet the speech was full of awkward grammatical structures and lacked any real sense of organization. For instance, Rice said although we know no "relationship is perfect, but me and Janay together, what counseling has done for us . . ."[18] Concerning lacking true elements of an apology, I could mention that he failed to actually apologize to his wife Janay for knocking her unconscious, and she was sitting right next to him. Additionally, he never said exactly what he was apologizing for; instead, he used the vague "this situation that me and my wife were in" or "this thing [that] happened with me and my wife."[19] In a sense, he was shifting the blame onto a situation instead of onto his own shoulders.[20] In terms of logical consistency I could point out this passage: "Throughout this time, we really had the time to reflect on each other . . . but me and Janay together, what counseling has done for us—we want the world to see that it definitely did help us out."[21] He adds that he is working to change and become a better husband, father, and role model. Yet Rice then turns around and tells the listening press, "I want you to know that I'm still the Ray Rice that you know or used to know or grown to love. I'm still the same guy." And later, "We're still the same people, and I'm still the same person."[22] One does not logically say, "I have done all this self-help work that has been effective" and then go and say, but "I'm still the same old guy." In terms of insulting his wife, recall that the tape showed him dragging his unconscious

wife out of the elevator, and that police said the full tape showed him striking her with his hand prior to that. Speaking of avoiding failure, of bouncing back from this legal and moral quagmire in which he found himself, Rice said, "Failure is . . . It's not getting knocked down, it's not getting back up."[23] Who knocked down whom, and who did not get back up and was dragged unconscious from an elevator? Finally, evidence of the speech's failure comes when the criticism persists and even grows following his speech, and Rice is compelled to re-apologize months later on July 31, 2014. At this press conference, Rice actually stated, "Last time [in the May press conference], I didn't publicly apologize to my wife. I realize that hit home with a lot of people."[24] Even had the second apology been stellar (for instance, without more "hit" references) it was too late, and ultimately, Rice was cut by the Ravens in September, 2014. He has not played professional football since.

The main point to remember from this example is that critics are trying to argue for a certain understanding of the rhetorical artifact. In this sense they are actually using rhetoric to try to gain acceptance of their ideas. The best critics simply do not make a judgment without supplying good reasons for others to agree with them. On this point, Bernard L. Brock et al. wrote, "Statements of tastes and preference do not qualify as criticism. [Criticism is] an art of evaluating with knowledge and propriety. Criticism is a reason-giving activity; it not only posits a judgment, the judgment is explained, reasons are given for the judgment, and known information is marshaled to support the reasons for the judgment."[25]

The idea of rhetorical criticism being a form of argument is not new. For example, Wayne Brockriede wrote in 1974 that useful rhetorical criticism must function as an argument to be effective criticism.[26] In his landmark essay, Brockriede advanced five interanimated characteristics of how rhetorical critics could construct a strong argument:

> (1) an inferential leap from existing beliefs to the adoption of a new belief or the reinforcement of an old one; (2) a perceived rationale to justify that leap; (3) a choice among two or more competing claims; (4) a regulation of uncertainty in relation to the selected claim—since someone has made an inferential leap, certainty can be neither zero nor total; and (5) a willingness to risk a confrontation of that claim with one's peers.[27]

More significant arguments will have a greater number and strength of the five above characteristics than less significant arguments. This is to say, the five qualities of arguments given above are on a sliding scale of sorts. The fewer of the five, or the weaker in form, the less the criticism is an effective argument. The greater the number of the five, or the stronger in form, the greater the likelihood that the criticism is an effective argument. As Brockriede wrote, "When a critic only appreciates the rhetoric or objects to it, without reporting any reason for his like or dislike, he puts his criticism near the nonargument end of the continuum. On the other hand, when an evaluating critic states clearly the criteria he has used in arriving at his judgment, together with the philosophic or theoretic foundations on which they rest, and when he has offered some data to show that the rhetorical experience meets or fails to meet those criteria, then he has argued."[28]

Rhetorical Perspectives

The propositions and claims used by a critic are generally contextualized through the use of different perspectives used in criticism. A **rhetorical perspective** is a theory-centered point of view a critic uses to help guide the criticism of a rhetorical artifact. As pointed out by Raymie E. McKerrow, "There is no single approach or perspective that stands above all others as the

preferred means of enacting a critical perspective on any [rhetorical] artifact. That said, it is equally the case that some approaches are better suited to analyze specific artifacts or events."[29] Because a rhetorical artifact is a multidimensional, complex, and nuanced event, there is not one best way of viewing it (although some ways can be better for certain artifacts than others). Moreover, no one effort to describe or evaluate the artifact will yield all the knowledge that there is to know about that artifact. Rhetorical perspectives allow critics to view a rhetorical artifact from different angles, with the vast majority of academic criticism, since its inception, taking its structure from a particular perspective. Since the 1960s there has been an incredible expansion of perspectives critics have used to better understand the rhetoric that surrounds us. By one count, over sixty formally recognized perspectives have been cataloged,[30] with many more being used and with some critics even blending perspectives (thus, today we see more examples of multi-perspectival or eclectic criticism). Later in this book you will be exposed to many popular perspectives designed for generating insight and understanding about rhetorical artifacts, and even more are mentioned in the appendixes.

Using an established perspective to produce criticism has both strengths and weaknesses. One particular strength is that adopting a perspective allows you to see an artifact differently than if no perspective had been adopted. In a sense, using a perspective allows you to see the world in a particular way. Adopting a rhetorical perspective also allows you to stay focused because, when properly used, the perspective *guides* (rather than dictates) your analysis. It provides a road map of sorts, and if you stay on a particular perspective's road you will see parts of the countryside (of the rhetorical artifact) differently than if you had taken another road. This can be particularly useful for novice critics who are often bewildered by the enormous range of options any one rhetorical artifact offers for analysis. On the flip side of that coin, adopting a particular perspective will introduce certain biases into the criticism, because any given perspective can only provide an incomplete picture and also encourages you to view the world in a certain manner. The downside to using a road map is that even as you see certain parts of the countryside, you miss the other sights that taking a different road would have allowed you to see. The potential problem with this in terms of criticism, as Lawrence Rosenfield wrote, is that a "critic who comes upon a critical object [rhetorical artifact] in a state of mind such that he has a 'set of values' handy (or, indeed, any other system of categories) does not engage in a critical encounter so much as he processes perceptual data."[31] Put another way, what Rosenfield points out to us is that a critic who follows too closely the dictates of a particular perspective runs the risk of producing stale and lifeless criticism. Such a critic is simply looking for what the perspective suggests should be identified. In short, improperly used, a perspective would be allowed to *dictate* rather than guide what a critic does in the analysis.

The perspectives presented in this book represent a wide array of critical possibilities. Some are well known and widely practiced; others are less known but extremely powerful in their potential. As you become familiar with these perspectives, you will see how they differ in the type of material they allow a critic to focus on, as well as the type of material they exclude. A central question remains, however: *How does a critic choose which perspective to use?* The choice is guided by several factors. First, the critic's personal interest will play a crucial role in determining which perspective to adopt. As you study the perspectives shared in this book, you will find that some appeal to you, whereas others do not. This attraction or aversion is natural, so your first clue to which perspective to use should be your personal interest in that perspective. Second, and just as important, a critic must consider the unique characteristics of the rhetorical artifact being examined. As already mentioned, perspectives focus a critic's attention on certain aspects of a rhetorical artifact. A critic should take this into consideration

when choosing a particular perspective to use, since any given perspective will not fit every rhetorical artifact. Some, even when there is a sound fit, might need modification. More experienced critics may choose to combine perspectives, modify perspectives, or develop a completely novel perspective, and this is something we will look at in the chapter on "Eclectic Rhetorical Criticism: Combining Perspectives for Insights"—the choice is the critic's to make. Of course, the greater your understanding of rhetoric and of the nuances of different perspectives, the greater your ability to discern the intricacies of individual rhetorical texts, and thus the greater the likelihood of producing vibrant criticism.

A note on theory as a goal of criticism Although the promotion of understanding and appreciation are generally accepted goals in criticism, in academic criticism one finds a strong interest in the development of theory about rhetoric through the practice of criticism. Put another way, advancing your propositions (discussed above) through different rhetorical perspectives has potential to make an important contribution to the development of a critical vocabulary for both you and other critics to use. The greater our vocabulary, the greater the precision with which we can discuss rhetorical phenomena. The importance some scholars place on this was not lost on Mike Allen, who asked numerous rhetorical critics what made for publishable academic criticism; most "persons said that the scholarship had to contain an argument that related to theory and extended our understanding of theory."[32] James Darsey pointed out in 1994 that "the presumption in favor of [criticism] in the service of theory is so well established at this time that, in my experience, the failure to conform has been used as the primary reason to recommend against publication." And in response to this situation he asked, "Must we all be rhetorical theorists?" essentially arguing in his essay that, No, we should not.[33] The tension between these two positions exists still today. Arguments for greater or lesser inclusion in criticism of the development of theory[34] aside, almost all academic criticism—at least that which sees publication—contributes in some way to both the understanding of human communication and the development, or at least the understanding of, rhetorical theory. Regardless of which emphasis is greater, significance is important. Irrespective of how much or little theory is explored in one's criticism, I agree with Stephen E. Lucas, who wrote, "In the last analysis, our scholarship will be judged, not by the perspectives from which it proceeds, but by the quality of the insight it produces."[35]

The Counter-Communication Stage

Once the criticism is actually performed, the final stage of the critical act, counter-communication, is entered. This is a public act, and at this stage the critic shares openly with others. For instance, you might have a blog, vlog, or YouTube page and publish your criticism there. Your criticism could take the form of a submission to venues such as the *American Thinker, Huffington Post, or Quilette.* If published, it will allow others (possibly hundreds of thousands) the opportunity to share your thoughts and perhaps to respond. In more academic settings, students will submit their essays and receive feedback from their professors and possibly their classmates; or perhaps professors and some students will have written their essays for a conference presentation or for submission to a scholarly journal. The idea is to share your criticism with some segment of the public with the hope that it will provoke some type of feedback; the best criticism attempts just this.

Feedback can take many forms, as can public exchanges about the critic's ideas. Students will receive comments from their professors, and professors receive comments from their reviewers. If published, an essay then receives wider responses. The point is, once released to

this public realm, a critic's work takes on a life of its own, whatever the venue of publication. Feedback, positive or negative, should be viewed as what it is: evidence of the critic entering into a larger conversation. A response that critics often encounter, though, is a reply indicating *de gustibus non est disputandum*, "there is no disputing taste." In other words, you might hear from others that your point of view is simply a subjective opinion and that their point of view is equally valid. Yet we have already seen that criticism is far more than mere opinion. So, if you made certain to provide the good reasons mentioned earlier, then the exchange does not boil down to "I'm right, you're wrong," but to arguing who can see the fullness of the rhetorical artifact better, or who has an actual insight. As Brockriede wrote, "Critics who argue are more *useful* than critics who do not."[36] Along these same lines, Black wrote, "The critic can only induce us, and therefore it is we, the readers of criticism, who demand the critic's compliance with certain of our expectations. We expect the critic to see things for us that we are unlikely to see for ourselves until the critic has called them to our attention."[37]

What we are about during this stage of the critical act is none other than entering into dialogue about matters of importance. The exchange and discussion of ideas is crucial to criticism; only the best criticism provokes this. Actually, the cry of many critics might well be, "Love me, hate me, but don't ignore me." Remember that good criticism *is* an act of rhetoric.

KEY ISSUES IN CRITICISM

When you begin to write your criticism, it will be helpful to know about five key issues with which all critics wrestle at some time or another. These issues are long-standing and have various "resolutions," with different critics taking different approaches to the same issue. For now it is enough to know the important questions these issues invite you to ask, not that you have the answers. By conscientiously thinking about these issues, you will be in a better position to produce deliberate, thoughtful, and well-informed criticism.

What to Include

One important issue involves the most basic element in criticism: *what to include in your writing*. Of course, there are many ways one could write criticism, but generally speaking your essay should contain three components: a description, an analysis, and an evaluation. Every critical essay should have these components in some form, but each essay will present them in a slightly different manner (and this will be seen in examples contained in the chapters that follow).

Description

Description refers to both a description of the rhetorical artifact and, particularly in more academic settings, a description of the theoretical background or perspective used in the essay.

Description of artifact A description of the artifact is crucial if your readers are to be able to follow you. The way you describe the artifact may well be the only exposure they have to it, so you must take great care in presenting as accurate a picture as possible. This accuracy is facilitated by approaching the artifact with a fair and open mind. By setting aside personal politics or ideological "truths," and approaching the artifact with a sense of curiosity, the critic allows the artifact, in a sense, to speak initially on its own terms. Judgments may

certainly be made, and appreciation or disdain expressed, but they must be made after two conditions are met: one, the fair-minded description of the inner workings of the artifact have been presented for the world to see; and two, the standards of judgments used by the critic are provided for all to see. These ideas are also discussed in appendix D, "On Objectivity and Politics in Criticism."

Description of theoretical perspective Although the promotion of understanding and appreciation are generally accepted goals for all criticism, more formal criticism (e.g., term papers, conference presentations, etc.) is grounded in a theoretical perspective where some level of discussion centered on the theory being used to perform the criticism is expected as part of the description section. So the issue becomes how much or how little theory development there should be in formal criticism, and this is a long-standing point of contention among scholars. Some, such as McKerrow, believe that although "there are numerous approaches to criticism . . . each is worthy of being considered in relation to the question or problem being addressed [by the critic]. That means, in practice, that whether or not the essay contributes to theory development will depend on the purpose underlying the critical act."[38] Thus, whether or not a critical essay contributes to theory development instead of to some other goal will depend upon the types of questions the critic is asking at the start of the criticism. Not all agree with McKerrow, however, and many researchers possess a strong interest in the development of theory about rhetoric through the practice of criticism,[39] as discussed earlier in this chapter ("The Communication Stage").

Since the 1980s some have pushed this theory-centered view further, though, advancing the opinion that this is the primary end of criticism. On this point, William L. Nosthstine et al. wrote, "'Theory' has become virtually the singular objective of criticism. . . . [C]ontributing to theory *is* regarded as the fundamental goal of [rhetorical] criticism."[40] Although perhaps true of many academic journals, there are numerous exceptions. As noted by James Jasinski, the "two most common patterns in the [communication] literature are (a) theory provides a [perspective] that is utilized in critical practice (theory serves criticism) or (b) criticism contributes to theorization through its heuristic capacity, through illustration and hypotheses testing, and through the reflexive implementation of theoretically-derived [perspectives] (criticism serves theory)."[41] Most readers want to know in which rhetorical theories your perspective is grounded and exactly how you are using the theory to guide your analysis (theory serves criticism); the more academic the essay, the more detailed this description will be, as will be the strength of the call to see your analysis adding to the pool of theoretical knowledge. This drive toward generation of theory is so strong for some academic critics that the very quality of criticism is judged by the contributions made to the growing body of rhetorical theory. Sonja Foss represented this point of view when she wrote that the "purpose of rhetorical criticism is to explain how some aspect of rhetoric operates and thus to make a contribution to rhetorical theory. The critic who is attempting to contribute to rhetorical theory does not view an artifact for its own qualities alone but instead moves beyond the particularities . . . to discover what that artifact suggests about symbolic processes in general."[42]

For others, though, theory is a means to an end: the generation of insights into a rhetorical artifact with the ultimate goals of producing understanding and appreciation of that artifact and of our common humanity. From this point of view, the artifact comes first, then theory development only if convenient or advantageous; critics are seen here as artists, not builders of theory. In a summary of the tension between criticism for insight and criticism for theory, Richard B. Gregg pointed out that "critics need not consciously set out to contribute to theory; it is often enough to gain a thorough understanding of a rhetorical event for its own

sake. On the other hand . . . critical interpretations always imply theoretical positions, whether consciously articulated or not."[43] I have written elsewhere that mandating that critics produce theory forces them into a mode of production that diminishes the personal and artistic qualities of criticism. As the role of theory lessens, with theory as an "increasingly gentle influence rather than prescription, the greater role the critic's personality assumes and the humanistic aspects of rhetorical criticism come to the fore. Of course, this later form of criticism is difficult to publish today given the theory-centric nature of our discipline."[44] For now, though, at least among academic-oriented journals, theory building is an important consideration; there are numerous exceptions, however, especially with eclectic criticism and conceptually oriented criticism on the rise.[45]

Description of "importance" When you describe the artifact and the theoretical perspective used to examine it, you will also want to relay the importance of the artifact, the study, or both. In short, at some point you will want to justify what you are doing. Given the countless appeals for our attention each day, readers may well ask, "Why is this important for me to know?" Although *you* might think what you are doing is important, not everyone else will think the same way. It is up to you to share with others the reasons why they should invest their time and energy to read what you have written. Another way of looking at this is highlighted by John W. Jordan, Kathryn M. Olson, and Steven R. Goldzwig:

> in building the case for rhetorical criticism one desires to publish in a scholarly journal, both the newness and significance of the critical claim (not the object of criticism) count, but significance counts more heavily. The critical essay that contains within itself a developed statement of its value to rhetorically trained readers beyond its author and a statement of the larger implications triggered when readers agree or disagree with the essay's point matters more . . . than one whose justification rests on the fact that no one else has used that combination of rhetorical concepts and texts—yet.[46]

Analysis/Interpretation

After you share with your readers what you will be examining (the rhetorical artifact), how you will be going about that examination (rhetorical theory), and the importance of what you are doing, you move on to the actual analysis of the rhetorical artifact. This section of your essay will generally consume the most space. When I say *analysis*, I mean both analysis *and* interpretation. They are not the same, but neither are they completely separate. In one sense, **analysis** is discovering *what is in* a rhetorical artifact, and **interpretation** is determining *what a rhetorical artifact means*. Analysis asks us to explain how the rhetorical artifact works; it provides a sketch of sorts, showing how the artifact is put together: what its parts are, how they go together, and what the whole looks like. The type of analysis depends on the temperament of the critic, but also on the theoretical perspective guiding the criticism.

Interpretation was once a strongly contested term in criticism. Some critics held that rhetorical criticism should involve a minimum of interpretation. For example, Barnett Baskerville, writing at a time (1953) when critics looked primarily at speeches, suggested that they were fairly straightforward in their meaning. They are "seldom abstruse or esoteric. . . . A speech, by its nature, is or should be immediately comprehensible, hence the interpretive function of the critics is seldom paramount."[47] Not all critics agreed with Baskerville on the nature of interpretation. Thomas R. Nilsen, for example, wrote a few years later that "if within the meaning of the speech are included the many attendant responses, the more subtle understanding and conceptions evoked by the speech and their possible consequences, then interpretation is a much needed function of the critic."[48] By the late 1970s some degree of interpretation had

become an accepted part of criticism. Critic Michael Leff pointed out that it is with "the act of interpretation by which the critic attempts to account for and assign meaning to the rhetorical dimensions of a given phenomenon."[49] Such interpretations can focus on the external or internal dynamics of a rhetorical artifact. External interpretations focus on how the rhetorical artifact interacts with the situation that surrounds it, and internal interpretations focus on how different parts of the rhetorical artifact act together in forming a whole.

On January 8, 2020, President Donald J. Trump delivered an important speech in response to a tense international situation with Iran. In addition to addressing the nascent crisis, the speech also allows us to explore the dual critical functions of analysis and interpretation. Prior to this speech, on December 27, 2019, Iranian proxies launched rockets at an Iraqi air base that killed an Iraqi American civilian contractor and injured several American soldiers,[50] and on December 31, 2019, Iran-backed supporters of an Iraqi Shia militia attacked the American embassy in Baghdad. In partial response to these and other Iranian-backed actions, on January 3, 2020, President Trump ordered the drone attack near Baghdad International Airport that killed Major General Qassem Soleimani, head of Iran's Qud Force, and a known terrorist leader responsible for over six hundred American deaths and thousands of Muslim deaths.[51] In response to this strike, on January 7, Iran launched more than a dozen ballistic missiles at two U.S. air bases in Iraq which, although destroying some infrastructure, claimed no lives. According to American news media, these "recent developments were expected to spark global fear of a US war in the Middle East."[52] On January 8, 2020, President Trump delivered his speech in response to this situation with Iran.

An *analysis* could discover many things about this speech, including basic facts or President Trump's characterization of Iran. It is important to focus on what is actually in a speech (or other rhetorical artifact) before moving on to interpretation. Some media outlets failed to do this, making embarrassing mistakes in the process of analysis. For instance *Rolling Stone* magazine said it was a fifteen-minute speech when it was only slightly longer than nine minutes,[53] and the *Palmer Report* stressed that a general standing behind the president gave a "horrified look" when Trump mentioned hypersonic missiles, implying that the president had leaked that "which appeared to have been classified information."[54] Yet video shows that there was no such horrified look from either general in attendance,[55] and even a cursory glance at the topic shows that it is no secret America possesses hypersonic missile technology.[56] In terms of President Trump's characterization of Iran in the speech, consider these passages:

> As long as I am President of the United States, Iran will never be allowed to have a nuclear weapon.
>
> For far too long—all the way back to 1979, to be exact—nations have tolerated Iran's destructive and destabilizing behavior in the Middle East and beyond. Those days are over. Iran has been the leading sponsor of terrorism, and their pursuit of nuclear weapons threatens the civilized world. We will never let that happen.
>
> Peace and stability cannot prevail in the Middle East as long as Iran continues to foment violence, unrest, hatred, and war. The civilized world must send a clear and unified message to the Iranian regime: Your campaign of terror, murder, mayhem will not be tolerated any longer. It will not be allowed to go forward.[57]

Analysis allows us to see these statements as characterizations of Iran; beyond this, analysis ends and interpretation begins. Just what do these characterizations mean? In criticism, one usually finds interpretation of content linked with the theoretical perspective used, or to an individual critic's personal point of view. For instance, the *Washington Post* published this interpretation of the speech:

> Trump's Iran policy has been a catastrophic failure. "The civilized world must send a clear and unified message to the Iranian regime: Your campaign of terror, murder, mayhem will not be tolerated any longer," Trump said. But that in itself is an acknowledgment of his own failure.
>
> When the president came into office, we had a painstakingly negotiated agreement that by the consensus of the entire international community was successfully restraining Iran's nuclear program. Trump not only abandoned that deal, he instituted a "maximum pressure" campaign against Iran, arguing that if we crippled their economy, they'd become less aggressive in the region and crawl back to the negotiating table, whereupon they'd give us whatever concessions we asked for.
>
> The very fact that we're in the position we are now demonstrates that this policy has failed.[58]

Of course, such assertions are a form of argument and thus would necessitate that the author provide evidence that other nations felt the nonproliferation deal was working, and also an explanation as to why, after the signing of the deal, Iran's military and terrorist-related provocations were increasing, not decreasing. In criticism, interpretations are more than opinion and need evidence as well.

Importantly, there are often alternate interpretations. Take, for instance, this interpretation of Trump's speech published by CNN:

> What was clear throughout Trump's speech . . . was that he did not want to be perceived as backing down from an enemy. The first words he uttered were: "As long as I am president, Iran will never have a nuclear weapon." And within minutes, he echoed his initial statement: "Iran has been the leading sponsor of terrorism and their pursuit of nuclear weapons threatens the civilized world. We will never let that happen."
>
> Trump also repeatedly noted that he was doing things that should have been done by past presidents. "Soleimani's hands were drenched in both American and Iranian blood," said Trump at one point. "He should have been terminated long ago."
>
> *This isn't your father's (or Obama's or Bush's) United States,* Trump seemed to be saying. *We are de-escalating for the moment. But don't assume that we won't re-escalate if you, Iran, keep poking at us.*[59] [italics in original]

In the end, these examples might make it seem as if analysis and interpretation are two separate steps. That is not the case at all. The very first step a critic takes, deciding what the rhetorical artifact actually is, is itself an interpretive act. For instance, is President Trump's speech an attempt to stand strong against Iran, an attempt to save face, or a statement of policy? We separate out these steps (analysis-interpretation) for the sake of discussion. As you write criticism, become aware of how analysis and interpretation comingle and energize each other. On this point, Michael Leff cogently wrote,

> The act of interpretation mediates between the experiences of the critic and the forms of experience expressed in the [rhetorical artifact]. To perform this act successfully, critics must vibrate what they see in the [rhetorical artifact] against their own expectations and predilections. What critics are trained to look for and what they see interact in creative tension; the two elements blend and separate, progressively changing as altered conceptions of the one reshape the configuration of the other.[60]

Through the analysis and interpretation section of your essay, you share your insight and understanding of the artifact, and you actively make a case for your conclusions, which leads to the final component of a criticism essay: evaluation.

Evaluation

Evaluation of the rhetorical artifact boils down to the judgments you make about it. However, judgment is more than an expression of like or dislike. It necessitates first that you know the thing that you are studying; it also necessitates that your judgments are shared with the goal of enriching both understanding and appreciation. Judgments may certainly be made, and appreciation or disdain expressed, but they must be made after two conditions are met: one, the fair-minded description of the inner workings of the rhetorical artifact have been presented for the world to see, and two, the standards of judgment used by the critic are provided for all to see. In short, the expression of judgment is conjoined with the reasons you think the way you do. The standards of judgments used will differ depending on the type of rhetorical perspective used and also on the critic's personality. As you acquire information on the different theoretical perspectives contained in this textbook, notice what type of information they allow you to gather about the rhetorical artifacts. This is a clue about the types of value judgments a particular perspective allows. Usually these will revolve around differing combinations of the ethics, effects, truth, and aesthetics involved in the rhetorical transaction.[61] The standards of judgment on which you rely should flow from the perspective you use to examine the rhetorical artifact; thus, how the concepts above will be understood is directly related to the perspective you use.

Choice of Theoretical Perspective

Another important issue facing critics is the seemingly easy decision concerning *which perspective to use in their critical endeavor.* Simply put, how will a critic go about producing criticism? As you read additional chapters in this book, you will most likely find that a certain perspective appeals to you. You may not know why, but you seem to gravitate toward it; you just like it for some reason. It seems natural for you to use, and as you use it, you become increasingly familiar with its nuances and potentials. Some critics are well known for producing insightful and nuanced work using a particular perspective. For example, Andrew King is well known for using Burkean theory in his work; Marilyn Young's work using the situational perspective is another such example; critical rhetoric and the name Raymie McKerrow are no strangers; and so on with many of the chapter authors in this textbook.

Perspectives are not to be used as templates or rubrics, however. Although they do suggest a particular way of viewing the world, as the critic you must direct the criticism. When novice critics first begin to use a perspective, they often do apply it *rigidly* to the rhetorical artifact. Yet criticism, like any activity worthy of learning well, benefits from practice. As critics become more knowledgeable about the perspective they use, they often become more *flexible* in its application, allowing for personal insight and interests to guide the criticism. The personality of the critic begins to blend with the perspective used. The best criticism involves this. As Michael Leff has written, "Interpretation is not a scientific endeavor. Systematic principles are useful in attempting to validate interpretations, but the actual process of interpretation depends on conjectures and insights particular to the object [rhetorical artifact] at hand."[62]

Regardless of the perspective chosen, a critic must be cautious in its application. Perspectives are to help a critic, not control the criticism; a successful critic's ideas blend in with those of the perspective. Perspectives are not molds into which rhetorical artifacts are to be poured—eventuating in mechanistic and rigid criticism—what some call *cookie-cutter criticism.* Black puts this idea, and the consequences, in proper perspective:

> Because only the critic is the instrument of criticism, the critic's relationship to other instruments will profoundly affect the value of critical inquiry. And in criticism, every instrument has to be assimilated to the critic, to have become an integral part of the critic's mode of perception. A critic who is influenced by, for example, [Burkean dramatism] and who, in consequence of that influence, comes to see some things in a characteristically dramatistic way—that critic is still able to function in his own person as the critical instrument, and so the possibility of significant disclosure remains open to him. But the would-be critic who has not internalized [Burkean dramatism], who undertakes to "use" it as a mathematician would use a formula—such a critic is certain (yes, *certain*!) to produce work that is sterile. An act of criticism conducted on mechanistic assumptions will, not surprisingly, yield mechanistic criticism.[63]

Some critics, myself included, take the process of assimilation one step further by blending and developing their own framework from which to proceed with criticism. This type of criticism is often called *eclectic* criticism, and is discussed in chapter 13; it involves "the selection of the best standards and principles from various systems of ideas."[64]

Initial Approach

Yet another issue involves *how one should approach a rhetorical artifact* (what Ed Black below calls rhetorical "transactions"). Should one begin with a theoretical orientation or should one begin with the artifact itself?[65] Black described this distinction as *etic* and *emic* orientations. One using an etic orientation "approaches a rhetorical transaction from outside of that transaction and interprets the transaction in terms of pre-existing theory"; in contrast, one using an emic orientation "approaches a rhetorical transaction in what is hoped to be its own terms, without conscious expectations drawn from any sources other than the rhetorical transaction itself."[66] These orientations are quite distinct, and although there are instances in which they might blend, such are infrequently encountered.

Both orientations have strengths and weaknesses. An etic orientation allows for a fuller development of rhetorical theory. The major end of criticism would be to develop and advance rhetorical theory, thus adding to our overall knowledge concerning human communication. A potential weakness with the etic orientation is that critics may very well find exactly what they expect to find, even if it is not really there in the rhetorical artifact; in short, the rhetorical artifact is sometimes forced into a mold. An emic orientation allows for a more nuanced description of the rhetorical artifact and also provides more room for the critic's personality and intuition to play a part in the criticism. A weakness with the emic orientation can arise because critics may "aspire to so sympathetic an account [during the descriptive and analysis/interpretive phases of criticism] that the critic's audience will understand that object as, in some sense, *inevitable.*"[67] This is to say that the rhetorical artifact might be viewed as never having experienced the possibility of being in any other form, that those who created it had no choice but to create it in the form they did. On this point Leff wrote, "The critic at some point . . . in the interpretive process comes to form a conception of the object as a whole. . . . This conception . . . is something other than the actual expression in the text; otherwise, there would be no interpretation. Consequently, while still engaged in the interpretive act, the critic constructs a meaning for the object, an hypothesis or model that explains what it is."[68] The difficulty in this process lies with the "good faith" of the critic. After such a sympathetic account of the rhetorical artifact, the critic might find it challenging to return to a more objective role during the evaluative phase of criticism.[69]

Objectivity or Subjectivity?

Yet another concern involves *the notion of criticism as an objective or a subjective (even political) endeavor*. It is clear that criticism is not a scientific act; the very best criticism involves the personality, insights, and imagination of a critic. Yet for all that, there are critics—I among them—who maintain that a certain degree of objectivity is necessary for honest, productive criticism. I do not mean that critics ought to possess or are capable of possessing a computer-like detachment from the object of criticism. This would surely produce a sterile criticism devoid of its lifeblood: the critic's intermingled intuition, insight, and personality. What I am suggesting with the term *objective criticism* is that the critic approach the artifact under consideration with a fair and open mind, with a *detached curiosity*. In this sense the critic sets aside personal politics or ideological "truths" and approaches the artifact with a sense of curiosity. The artifact under consideration should not be altered to fit the prejudgments of the critic but allowed to voice its inner workings to the world. The work of the critic is to make certain that this voice is intelligible to and approachable by the public.

This in no way detracts from the critic's bringing to bear an individual stamp upon the criticism produced; nor is it the antiseptic application of theory upon an unsuspecting rhetorical artifact. It suggests instead that the critic must learn how to appreciate the inner workings of a text, even if, personally, the critic abhors the artifact or wishes it to be other than it is. In this sense, the critic is being "objective," or disinterested, when approaching and describing a text.[70] My notion of objectivity is somewhat similar to the notion of "appreciation" put forth by Lawrence W. Rosenfield. I position my notion of objective criticism between a politically partisan criticism and detached scientific objectivity; Rosenfield positions "appreciation" between ideologically driven criticism and scientific objectivity. For Rosenfield, appreciation is "founded on an inherent love of the world, while [scientific] objectivity, the effort to establish distance on the world (for whatever laudable ends) sometimes betrays an essential distrust of the world, a fear that one will be contaminated in some manner if one is open to its unconcealment."[71]

Although I agree heartily with Rosenfield that "partisan involvement may be a civic virtue, but insight derived therefrom must be continually suspect,"[72] other critics disagree with us, as you will discover while reading some of the chapters that follow. For these critics, the act of criticism involves a more active attempt at persuasion of their audience in all three phases of criticism—description, analysis/interpretation, and evaluation. Very often the direction of this persuasion takes its cue from the political ideology of the critic. For example, Robert L. Ivie defined productive criticism as "a detailed and *partisan* critique."[73] According to Ivie, a critic "intentionally produces a strategic interpretation, or structure of meaning, that privileges selective interests . . . in specific circumstances."[74] The purpose of criticism is made clear: those who engage in rhetorical criticism are, or should be, advocates. Viewed in this manner, "criticism, as a specific performance of general rhetorical knowledge, yields a form of scholarship that obtains social relevance by strategically reconstructing the interpretive design of civic discourse in order to diminish, bolster, or redirect its significance. [Criticism] is a form of advocacy."[75]

Often some attempt at political fairness is made, although the result is still the politicization of the critical act. For example, Michael Calvin McGee wrote, when relating oneself to criticism, "the first thing a rhetorician should do is to identify her political orientation. Her syllabus should contain a paragraph describing the trajectory of her course. Her book should have a Chapter that aligns her politics with that politics practiced in the workaday world by political parties competing for control of the State. She must be fair, describing the politics of those who disagree with her in a light that leans more toward portraiture than caricature."[76]

However, regardless of such an attempt, I agree with Rosenfield when he asserts that a difficulty with ideological criticism is that the "very notion of commitment to an ideology, no matter what its value system, implies a kind of immunity to those experiences of the world which in any way contradict the ideology."[77] Further clarifying this politicization of criticism, McGee expressed, "That which [ideologically driven] critics do today is proactive, openly political in its acknowledgment of its bias and its agenda to produce practical theories of culture and of social relations (including political relations)," and thus appears to embrace the very situation Rosenfield described above.[78]

Although summarizing a much larger conversation on this topic, the positions advanced are clear. On the one hand we have critics striving to keep personal politics from the initial stages of the criticism—most notably, during the description and analysis phases of the critical act. This position presupposes that part of the purpose of criticism is to produce knowledge that disputants can draw upon when making decisions about how to live—academic critics should not be partisan agents of social change. On the other hand we have academic critics allowing their personal politics to guide them during all three stages of criticism. This position presupposes that critics begin by seeing the world differently than the public they seek to persuade and that the job of the critic is to produce partisan social change in the direction of that critic's choosing.[79] A good example of this contrast is found when looking at the chapters on traditional criticism and feminist criticism.[80] For an outstanding examination of this tension, see the cogent essay by Edwin Black, "On Objectivity and Politics in Criticism" in appendix D.

WRAPPING UP

We have covered a great deal of ground in this chapter. Most notably we have explored the definition and nature of criticism, particularly rhetorical criticism. We specifically looked at how criticism is a method of generating new knowledge just as the scientific method is a method of generating new knowledge. The three stages of the critical act (conceptual, communication, and counter-communication) alerted us to basic elements involved in producing good criticism, and also to rhetorical perspectives. Finally, we looked at four key concerns in criticism today: what to include in our criticism (description, analysis/interpretation, and evaluation), the choice of a theoretical perspective, how to initially approach a rhetorical artifact, and objectivity and subjectivity in criticism.

The chapters that follow will give you a sense of the variety and artistry of rhetorical criticism. As you move through each chapter, you will find that the way the author(s) practice criticism both modifies and moves beyond the definition I shared with you in this chapter. Take note of *how* the nature and scope of criticism changes in each chapter. Criticism is not a sterile endeavor, and you will find that some of the chapters resonate more strongly with you than do others. Just like rhetoric, criticism is nuanced and may be understood on many different levels. Each chapter that follows underscores this idea and presents a point of view that will add rich variety to your overall understanding of the critical act.

SUGGESTED READINGS

Black, Edwin. *Rhetorical Criticism: A Study in Method*, ix–xv, 1–9. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1978.

Brockriede, Wayne. "Rhetorical Criticism as Argument." *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 60 (April 1974): 165–174.

Jasinski, James. "Criticism in Contemporary Rhetorical Studies." In *Sourcebook on Rhetoric*, 125–144. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2001.

Kuypers, Jim A., ed. *Purpose, Practice, and Pedagogy in Rhetorical Criticism.* Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2014.

Rosenfield, Lawrence W. "The Experience of Criticism." *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 60, no. 4 (1974): 489–496.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How is criticism a "humanizing" activity?
2. Where would you draw the line between analysis and interpretation? Where does one end and the other begin?
3. Review the definition of objective criticism. Can criticism be objective? Should it be objective?
4. Should theory building be a part of the critical process? If so, explain how.

ACTIVITIES

1. Think of a time when a friend or family member talked to you at length. Describe what was said. Taking the definition of rhetoric provided in the previous chapter, analyze and then interpret what was said.
2. In a small group, discuss your preference for either the emic or etic approach toward criticism.
3. In a small group, discuss which interpretation of President Trump's speech about Iran makes more sense to you. Go to the original sources and then make your case.

NOTES

1. James Andrews, Michael C. Leff, and Robert Terrill, "The Nature of Criticism: An Overview," in *Reading Rhetorical Texts: An Introduction to Criticism* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1998), 6.

2. Donald C. Bryant, *Rhetorical Dimensions in Criticism* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1973), 25.

3. Wayne Brockriede, "Rhetorical Criticism as Argument," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 60 (April 1974): 165.

4. Bryant, *Rhetorical Dimensions*, 35. These characteristics might well appear in other forms of criticism, and Bryant points out that in "rhetorical criticism . . . the essential *external* reference of discourse, the context both immediate and antecedent, the suasory potential in the situation, plays an organic part different from the part it plays in other criticism" (35).

5. Marie Hochmuth Nichols, *Rhetoric and Criticism* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1963), 7.

6. See "The Experiential Perspective," in *Methods of Rhetorical Criticism: A Twentieth-Century Perspective*, 3rd ed., ed. Bernard L. Brock, Robert L. Scott, and James W. Chesebro, 85–95 (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 1989).

7. Edwin Black, *Rhetorical Criticism: A Study in Method* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1978), x–xi.

8. Marie Kathryn Hochmuth, "The Criticism of Rhetoric," in *A History and Criticism of American Public Address*, vol. 3, ed. Marie Kathryn Hochmuth (New York: Russell and Russell, 1954), 13. Hochmuth later changed her name to Marie Hochmuth Nichols.

9. Edwin Black, "On Objectivity and Politics in Criticism," *American Communication Journal* 4, no. 1 (2000), http://ac-journal.org/journal/vol4/iss1/special/black.htm.

10. This is not to say that one could not orally deliver criticism. Certainly a critic could prepare a response as a speech or public presentation. One could even prepare criticism for a podcast or YouTube video. Since the majority of academic criticism is written, my primary focus is on that form in this chapter.

11. Black, *Rhetorical Criticism*, 6.

12. Craig R. Smith, "Criticism of Political Rhetoric and Disciplinary Integrity," *American Communication Journal* 4, no. 1 (2000), http://ac-journal.org/journal/vol4/iss1/special/smith.htm.

13. For a complete time line of the situation, see Louis Bien, "A Complete Timeline of the Ray Rice Assault Case," *SB Nation*, November 28, 2014, http://www.sbnation.com/nfl/2014/5/23/5744964/rayrice-arrest-assault-statement-apology-ravens.

14. The State of New Jersey vs. Raymell White, Complaint Number 0102-S-2014-000728, February 15, 2014, http://gamedayrcom.c.presscdn.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/ray-rice-police-report-arrest-hit-girlfriend.jpg.

15. For a different perspective on this incident, see: William L. Benoit, "Roger Goodell's Image Repair on the Ray Rice Suspension," *Relevant Rhetoric* 9 (2018), http://www.relevantrhetoric.com/Roger%20Goodell's%20Image%20Repair.pdf.

16. Video of the speech can be viewed here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WJBkG_kyqxI.

17. "Full Transcript from Ray Rice News Conference," *Baltimore Sun*, May 23, 2014, http://www.baltimoresun.com/sports/ravens/ravens-insider/bal-full-transcript-from-ray-rice-news-conference-20140523-story.html.

18. Ibid.

19. Ibid.

20. This is where using rhetorical theory and previous examples of criticism could come in. For instance, I could use Bruce E. Gronbeck, "Underestimating Generic Expectations: Clinton's Apologies of August 17, 1998," *American Communication Journal* 2, no. 2 (February 1999), http://ac-journal.org/journal/vol2/Iss2/editorials/gronbeck/index.html. Or perhaps look at the classic study by B. L. Ware and Wil A. Linkugel, "They Spoke in Defense of Themselves: On the Generic Criticism of Apologia," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 59 (1973): 273–283. The insights these critics share concerning how apologia works could then influence how I see Rice's speech and what insights I might have.

21. "Full Transcript from Ray Rice News Conference."

22. Ibid.

23. Ibid.

24. Cindy Boren, "Ray Rice Apologizes for Domestic Violence Incident, Calls It 'Biggest Mistake of My Life,'" *Washington Post* (*The Early Lead* blog), July 31, 2014, http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/early-lead/wp/2014/07/31/ray-rice-apologizes-for-domestic-violence-incident-calls-it-biggest-mistake-of-my-life.

25. Brock, Scott, and Chesebro, *Methods of Rhetorical Criticism*, 13.

26. Brockriede, "Rhetorical Criticism as Argument," 165–174.

27. Ibid., 166.

28. Ibid., 167.

29. Raymie E. McKerrow, "Criticism Is as Criticism Does," *Western Journal of Communication* 77, no. 5 (2013): 547.

30. For instance, see Ronald Matlon and Sylvia Ortiz, *Index to Journals in Communication Studies through 1995* (Annandale, VA: National Communication Association, 1997).

31. Lawrence W. Rosenfield, "The Experience of Criticism," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 60, no. 4 (1974): 491.

32. Mike Allen, "Special Section: What Constitutes Publishable Rhetorical Scholarship: Heavy Lies the Editor's Fingers on the Keyboard," *Communication Studies* 54, no. 3 (2003): 355.

33. James Darsey, "Must We All Be Rhetorical Theorists? An Anti-Democratic Inquiry," *Western Journal of Communication* 58 (1994): 173.

34. See also the discussions about the purpose of criticism in Jim A. Kuypers, ed., *Purpose, Practice, and Pedagogy in Rhetorical Criticism* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Press, 2014).

35. Stephen E. Lucas, "Renaissance of American Public Address: Text and Context in Rhetorical Criticism," in *Landmark Essays on American Public Address*, ed. Martin J. Medhurst (Davis, CA: Hermagoras Press, 1993), 199.

36. Brockriede, "Rhetorical Criticism as Argument," 173.

37. Black, "On Objectivity."

38. McKerrow, "Criticism Is as Criticism Does," 546.

39. For an example of this discussion, see the special issue on the subject of theory in academic criticism titled, "The Role of Theory in Critical Rhetoric," in *Western Journal of Communication* 77, no. 5 (2013). See also Allen, "Special Section: What Constitutes Publishable Rhetorical Scholarship: Heavy Lies the Editor's Fingers."

40. William L. Nosthstine, Carole Blair, and Gary A. Copeland, *Critical Questions: Invention, Creativity, and the Criticism of Discourse and Media* (New York: St. Martin's, 1994), 34. See also Darsey, "Must We All Be Rhetorical Theorists?"

41. James Jasinski, "The Status of Theory and Method in Rhetorical Criticism," *Western Journal of Communication* 65, no. 3 (2001): 252.

42. Sonja K. Foss, "Constituted by Agency: The Discourse and Practice of Rhetorical Criticism," in *Speech Communication: Essays to Commemorate the 75th Anniversary of the Speech Communication Association*, ed. Gerald M. Phillips and Julia T. Wood (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1990), 34–35. This view is in keeping with that expressed by Roderick Hart, "Contemporary Scholarship in Public Address: A Research Editorial," *Western Journal of Speech Communication* 50 (1986): 283–295. See, too, the collection of essays in the *Western Journal of Communication* 77, no. 5 (2013), which, in summary, essentially state that, *at the very least*, "editors, reviewers, and authors should give priority to explicit contributions to theory" (558).

43. Richard B. Gregg, "The Criticism of Symbolic Inducement: A Critical-Theoretical Connection," in *Speech Communication in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Thomas W. Benson (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1985), 60.

44. Jim A. Kuypers, "Artistry, Purpose, and Academic Constraints in Rhetorical Criticism," in *Purpose, Practice, and Pedagogy in Rhetorical Criticism*, ed. Jim A. Kuypers (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2014), 87.

45. Additional signs of the potential turn toward appreciation of unique insight over theory generation or extension can be found in several of the chapters in Jim A. Kuypers, ed., *Purpose, Practice, and Pedagogy in Rhetorical Criticism* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2014).

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48. Thomas R. Nilsen, "Interpretive Function of the Critic," *Western Speech* 21, no. 2 (1957): 70. Essay reprinted in Thomas R. Nilsen, ed., *Essays on Rhetorical Criticism* (New York: Random House, 1968), 86–97.

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60. Leff, "Interpretation," 345.

61. For detailed examples of these, see Karlyn Kohrs Campbell and Thomas R. Burkholder, *Critiques of Contemporary Rhetoric*, 2nd ed. (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 1997), 109–127.

62. Leff, "Interpretation," 343–344.

63. Black, *Rhetorical Criticism*, xii. The pentad is explained in chapter 10.

64. Pauline Kael, *I Lost It at the Movies* (Boston, MA: Little, Brown, 1964), 309.

65. This is not a new problem in rhetorical theory. See Leff, "Interpretation."

66. Edwin Black, "A Note on Theory and Practice in Rhetorical Criticism," *Western Journal of Speech Communication* 44 (1980): 331–332.

67. Black, "A Note on Theory and Practice," 334.

68. Leff, "Interpretation," 345.

69. For a different take on the etic/emic orientation that includes a methodological suggestion for emic criticism, see W. Charles Redding, "Extrinsic and Intrinsic Criticism," in *Essays on Rhetorical Criticism*, ed. Thomas R. Nilsen (New York: Random House, 1968), 98–125.

70. This section based on Jim A. Kuypers, "Must We All Be Political Activists?," *American Communication Journal* 4, no. 1 (2000), http://ac-journal.org/journal/vol4/iss1/special/kuypers.htm.

71. Rosenfield, "The Experience of Criticism," 495.

72. Ibid., 492.

73. Robert L. Ivie, "A Question of Significance," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 80, no. 4 (1994), emphasis mine.

74. Robert L. Ivie, "Productive Criticism," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 81, no. 1 (1995).

75. Robert L. Ivie, "The Social Relevance of Rhetorical Scholarship," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 81, no. 2 (1994).

76. Michael Calvin McGee, "On Objectivity and Politics in Rhetoric," *American Communication Journal* 4, no. 3 (2001), http://ac-journal.org/journal/vol4/iss3/special/mcgee.htm.

77. Rosenfield, "The Experience of Criticism," 494.

78. McGee, "On Objectivity."

79. How and why we practice rhetorical criticism is an ongoing conversation. Those seeking to better understand the changing nature of our critical practices have a wonderful resource in the following special collections of essays published in 1957, 1980, 1990, 2000, and 2001. Taken together they present a wonderful opportunity for students of rhetoric to better understand criticism's changing nature. See "Symposium: Criticism and Public Address," ed. Ernest Wrage, in *Western Speech* 21 (1957). These essays were later reprinted along with five others in Thomas R. Nilsen, ed., *Essays on Rhetorical Criticism* (New York: Random House, 1968). See also, "Special Report: Rhetorical Criticism; The State of the Art," ed. Michael C. Leff, *Western Journal of Speech Communication* 44, no. 4 (1980); "Special Issue on Rhetorical Criticism," ed. John Angus Campbell, *Western Journal of Speech Communication* 54, no. 3 (1990); and "Special Issue: Rhetorical Criticism; The State of the Art Revisited," *Western Journal of Speech Communication* 65, no. 3 (2001). One might also consider Kuypers, ed., *Purpose, Practice, and Pedagogy in Rhetorical Criticism.*

A critical exchange focusing on the purposes of rhetorical criticism is found in "Criticism, Politics, and Objectivity," ed. Jim A. Kuypers, *American Communication Journal* 4, no. 1 (2000), http://ac-journal.org/journal/vol4/iss1/index.htm; "Rhetoric, Politics, and Critique," ed. Mark Huglen, *American Communication Journal* 4, no. 3 (2001), http://ac-journal.org/journal/vol4/iss3/index.htm; and the final essay in the exchange, Jim A. Kuypers, "Criticism, Politics, and Objectivity: *Redivivus*," *American Communication Journal* 5, no. 1 (2001), http://ac-journal.org/journal/vol5/iss1/special/kuypersresponse.htm.

Another resource on the historical changes in rhetorical criticism is the special issue of *Rhetoric Review* dedicated to Ed Black. See "Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Rhetorical Criticism," *Rhetoric Review* 25, no. 4 (2006).

80. For an overview of this tension between criticism geared toward an end goal of understanding and appreciation and criticism as ideologically motivated, see Jim A. Kuypers, "The Rhetorical River," *Southern Communication Journal* 73, no. 4 (2008): 350–358. For an excellent essay that explores a method of criticism that mixes elements of both types of criticism, see Jason Edward Black, "Paddling the Rhetorical River, Revisiting the Social Actor: Rhetorical Criticism as Both Appreciation and Intervention," in *Purpose, Practice, and Pedagogy in Rhetorical Criticism*, ed. Jim A. Kuypers, 7–22 (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2014).