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COUNTERPOINT
The Rhetorical Principle of Unity in Diversity

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When Susan Jarratt asked me to write an essay that would invite *RSQ* readers to engage with all four articles in this issue, she described the task using the musical metaphor of "Counterpoint"—the title of the new feature she's adding. The purpose of these "Counterpoint" essays, Jarratt explained, would be to "help readers see how the essays move in relation to each other" and encourage broader reading. That is no small task, but it is made both more urgent and more enjoyable in the face of the four essays collected here—essays that span the globe (or, rather, the northern hemisphere) and that, in all their differences, together illuminate many of the pressing questions of rhetorical scholarship today.

So, to inaugurate the "Counterpoint" feature and interweave these four lovely essays—persuading you, I hope, to read all four—I briefly become a music theorist as well as a rhetorician: I track how the independent melodic-scholarly lines that make up this issue of *RSQ* form a "coherent combination" that "fulfills the aesthetic [and rhetorical] principle of unity in diversity" (*Oxford Companion to Music*, "Counterpoint" ¶1). This issue is indeed contrapuntal in form and content; it maintains "a balance between independence and interdependence" even though the authors did not consciously compose their work in search of coherence, unity, symmetry, or complementation as the *Oxford Companion* recommends.

There are many independent themes that emerge from an encounter with these four essays, but I sample just three here: "risky bodies"; "human worth/human agency"; and "shifting scenes and changing theories." Those themes move in and out of essays that are otherwise quite varied, taking us from Bombay to Cairo, Czechoslovakia to California and examining political speeches, labor pamphlets, prison letters, and remixed films. The articles offer a wide-ranging cross section of the work being done today in rhetorical studies, yet they consistently shed light as well on our common concerns as a field.

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Risky Bodies

One area of consensus among the panelists in the "Bodies and Rhetoric" super-session at the 2014 RSA Convention was that bodies are now "in the water" for rhetorical scholarship. We no longer have to make the argument that bodies matter or carry rhetorical weight. Indeed, some panelists suggested, even largely language-based scholarship today is thoroughly infused with awareness of rhetorical bodies. The essays in this issue bear out that admittedly un-researched claim. With the exception of Keohane's essay, these are not studies focused primarily on rhetoric and the body, yet they are each profoundly aware of and inflected by bodily concerns. They bring before our eyes the body at risk and the risk of bodies.

The risky body—contaminating, boundary crossing, other—is the driving factor behind the rhetorical artifacts that both Stroud and Keohane examine. For the leaders of the nineteenth-century Knights of Labor union in Keohane's study, Chinese immigrant laborers become the ultimate other, and Keohane vividly tracks how the Knights' fleshy arguments could simultaneously incorporate Southern black workers into the laboring national body politic and seek to expel Chinese immigrants as threatening foreign bodies. Likewise, as Stroud traces the influence of Dewey's theories in the speeches of Indian statesman Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar, Ambedkar's body—marked by the stigma of "untouchable" caste—emerges as a fundamental exigency. If Dewey's arguments about democracy and education lend Ambedkar new warrants for his appeals, the body itself makes such appeals necessary. Where Ambedkar sleeps, what spaces he can move through, who will touch him: in Stroud's essay, these fundamentally bodily matters become fundamental questions of democracy, and Dewey's pragmatism becomes ever more pragmatically a matter of risky bodies.

The body at risk—threatened by disaster and violence and radically constrained by cell walls—provides a focal point for the remaining two essays of the issue, those by Earle and Just and Berg, and it is palpable. Hunger, death, and fragmentation sit right at the surface in these essays, leading both authors to powerful reflection on the nature of agency (as the next theme discusses). These two essays pair well together in part because the bodily risk in question functions quite differently between them and usefully illuminates the complexity of tracking rhetorical bodies. For Earle's subjects, the body in crisis is a powerful driver of rhetorical action. Vulnerable, deteriorating, panicked bodies reach out to others not because such action is likely to be persuasive but because they cannot do otherwise and continue to exist as subjects recognizable to themselves. In Just and Berg's study, actual bodies in peril gain rhetorical valance only after the essay's central object—an art film titled *Disastrous Dialogue—The Roland Emmerich Speech Act* by Danish artist and film director Søren Thilo Funder—begins to circulate publicly. Although the piece restages scenes from Emmerich's disaster films, *Independence Day* and *The Day After Tomorrow*, Just and Berg track how the artistically threatened bodies in *Disastrous Dialogue* take on new

meaning and rhetorical force for audiences in Egypt and across Europe as they are caught up in the protests of the Arab Spring.

Taken together, then, these four essays remind us that our bodies are simultaneously powerful rhetorical exigencies and vulnerable subjects of rhetorical action. Tracking the moving, reaching, aching body across this issue is visceral and enlivening work.

Human Worth/Human Agency

With no disrespect to the recent object-oriented turn, this is a collection of essays distinctly human in its focus, with a great deal to say about the rhetorical valance of humanity. Earle gives us perhaps the most intense focus on this front, as his essay plumbs the possibilities for rhetorical agency in moments of absolute dispossession. Here, political prisoners Nawal El Saadawi and Vaclav Havel find themselves unable to maintain a sense of self except through the possibility of response from others. Analyzing their writing reveals, Earle argues, that it is in the "rupture rather than the recuperation of the subject" that we might find the deep potential for agency and just action.

Earle's insights on agency, subjectivity, and human worth ripple outward into the other essays of this issue. They shed light, for example, on the unjust arguments at the center of Keohane's study. As the Knights of Labor struggle to carve a place for the working class in the Gilded Age United States, they build arguments designed to protect themselves against the very vulnerability that Earle illuminates. They invoke masculine labor to establish themselves as worthy citizens, but such emphasis on sovereign subjectivity and invulnerability, Keohane demonstrates, ultimately undoes the Knights's ability to respond to changing economic and political contexts.

Likewise, Keohane and Stroud's essays inter-animate each other not only in their common concern with how a society's fear of a contaminating other catalyzes public argument but also in their awareness of how rhetors gain rhetorical agency by negotiating subordinate and dominant positions. Keohane addresses how increasing pressures on the ability of laborers to provide for their families caused a crisis of identity, worth, and capacity for the Knights of Labor. Placed in a position of subordination, they imagined an ideal white male laborer who could align with political elites through a fundamental contrast with Chinese laborers they imagined as barely human. A fraught and troubling rhetorical agency then emerges for the Knights thanks to a hierarchy of human worth that minimizes their own marginalized status in favor of racial solidarity. Primed by Keohane's insights, we can see anew a related, mostly implicit theme at work in Stroud's essay. There, though, the negotiation of subordinate and dominant status preserves the sense of vulnerability that Earle emphasizes and so bends more toward justice. Stroud's central figure, Ambedkar, is simultaneously an untouchable and an elite. Well-educated and well-connected, he advances to positions of leadership but his work is constantly

confounded by others' reactions to his caste status. While Stroud's primary purpose in tracking Ambedkar's political evolution is to trace his adaptation and application of Dewey's thought, reading Keohane and Earle alongside Stroud encourages us to also see Ambedkar being called into responsibility through his vulnerability to others and so making consequential choices about his political alignments.

Such considerations of how rhetors both align themselves and are moved into alignment by others circle us back around not only to Earle's reflections on the foundational capacity for response but also to Just and Berg's recognition of agency's plasticity. For Just and Berg, seeing agency in terms of plasticity "denotes the human subject's most basic ability to give form to its encounters with the world, but also the ways in which these encounters are formative of the human subject and, finally, how the encounters may become explosive, destructive of both the subject and the world." From the eruption of the Arab Spring into an otherwise apparently apolitical art film to the radical demand El Saadawi faces in the eyes of another prisoner, the Knights of Labor's desperate effort to stave off their own enervation, and Ambedkar's struggle to upend the caste system, the urge toward a sense of self-worth and rhetorical agency forms the political worlds traced in this issue, shapes their actors, and reveals just how risky the whole rhetorical enterprise is.

Shifting Scenes and Changing Theories

In grouping these four essays together, Jarratt notes that they each touch—one way or another—on matters of transnationalism. While none of these essays explicitly engages rhetoric's recent transnational turn, they do, indeed, reflect and speak to one of its central recognitions: that attending to how people, ideas, institutions, and politics move across and exceed national boundaries sheds new light on the exigencies and effects of rhetorical practice. In varied and variously inflected ways, each of these essays illuminates its central rhetorical question by marking how both movement and immobility shape people, places, and arguments. In Stroud, Ambedkar's physical movement from India to the United States—and from British colonial schools to Columbia University—motivates new arguments and makes possible his translation of Dewey's pragmatist thought to warrant radical arguments against the caste system. For Just and Berg, transnational movement is both fundamental and implicit: a Danish filmmaker working in Cairo creates an art piece with Egyptian actors that remixes U.S.-made disaster films and whose meaning gets caught up in the events of the Arab Spring. Earle's central figures are literally locked in place, and it is the author himself who provides the intersection between Communist Czechoslovakia and al-Sadat's Egypt, showing how the suffocating space of the prison illuminates the possibilities for rhetorical action in ways both profoundly located and utterly displaced. Keohane similarly works from a fixed national location (California and the United States), but the trans-Pacific movement of Chinese immigration provides both the exigency for her subjects' public address and the frame for her insights on labor and the public body.

Movement, ultimately, motivates these essays and their contributions to rhetorical studies. In them we see how shifting our scenes also relocates our understandings of rhetorical theory and practice. Stroud gives us an evocative rethinking of rhetorical translation; in markedly different ways, Earle and Just and Berg each expand on the notion that agency itself is a mobile, intersectional phenomenon; and Keohane tracks how appeals to citizenship are often underwritten by efforts to contain and control movement across the thresholds of the national body. Readers interested in transnational rhetorics or in broadening the geographic horizons of rhetorical studies, then, will find among these essays a compelling leitmotif—sometimes submerged and sometimes dominant—drawing attention to how movement and immobility shape the work of rhetoric.

Reading Wholes

I must confess that, prior to Jarratt's invitation, I was exactly the sort of reader she hopes this new feature will entice: picking up isolated articles, here and there, based on their utility to my current research interests. While I cannot promise that this experience will entirely reform my reading practices, working through this entire issue of *RSQ* with an eye toward how its essays play against and alongside one another has been a uniquely generative experience. I intend to repeat it. In addition to playing out the themes traced here, these four articles also prompted me to think about my own basic assumptions regarding the scope and focus of rhetorical studies. Reading Stroud and Just and Berg alongside Earle and Keohane I found myself pondering the proper domains of rhetoric: are we a field primarily concerned with meaning, with effect, with persuasion, with subject-formation? Must we choose? On the other hand, for those of us still asking "Must We all be 'Rhetorical Critics'?" (or Historians, or Theorists), these essays provide reassuring, enlivening evidence that we ought not choose any single scholarly orientation for our field. Rather, it is in the combination and interaction of histories, theories, and criticisms that the strength of rhetorical studies comes into focus. Which is to say, go read these articles. They, together, show a field to be proud of.