

THE RHETORICS OF THE PAST: HISTORY, ARGUMENT, AND COLLECTIVE MEMORY

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Within the western tradition of rhetorical speculation, history writing as a discursive practice became problematized in the eighteenth century. Especially in the British rhetorical tradition, in the lectures on rhetoric offered by Adam Smith (1762-63/1963), Joseph Priestley (1777/1965), and Hugh Blair (1783/1965), analysis of the rhetorical dimensions of narrative discourse focused on history writing. While these theorists collectively thought that accurate description of the past was the central mission of historians, Adam Smith as the first British rhetorician to write extensively about history recognized that some historians practiced what he called an "oratorical method"; he found that both classical and contemporaneous historians used discussions of consequences and implications of actions in the past to deliver moral and political lessons to their audiences. So, Thucydides was said to have written the history of the Peloponnesian War so that "posterity may learn how to produce the like events or shun others" (Smith, 1762-63/1963, Lec. 19, p. 102). The social visions and moral uplift of Herodotus, Tacitus, and Livy also impressed him (Lec. 19). Likewise, Hugh Blair, while recognizing that "Truth, Impartiality, Fidelity, and Accuracy, are the fundamental qualities of an Historian" nonetheless considered that "wisdom is the great end of History. It is designed to supply the want of experience. . . . Its object is, to enlarge our views of the human character, and to give full exercise to our judgment on human affairs" (1783/1965, Lec. 35, 2:260).

I will not chart the twists and turns in the rhetorical history of history from this point. Others have done that far better than I can (see especially White, 1973). I mean to suggest only that the rhetorical study of history as something more than reports of the past has occupied the attention of significant theorists for a quarter of a millennium. The rhetoric of history writing has been developed into a thriving specialty, especially since the demise or at least serious illness of scientific history.

More particularly, my purpose here is to compare and contrast various relationships between rhetoric and the past. Yes, I do have some things to say in extension of the eighteenth-century rhetorical theorist's discussion of the rhetoric of history writing. But, I want us to open our vision somewhat wider to examine two other sorts of relationships between rhetoric and the past: the rhetorical use of the past in the construction especially of political arguments and the rhetorical evocation of the past, in particular, of what is now talked about as collective memory. Thus, I wish to discuss rhetoric and history, argument, and collective memory. Before I can proceed with that task, I first should review some background assumptions, even axioms, that frame my thinking about the past and its relationships to rhetoric, history, and memory. Then I can proceed with some notions suggested by my title, and conclude with some ideas for future studies that I think will enrich rhetorical thought.

THE PAST, MEMORY, HISTORY, AND RHETORIC

I will begin as close to ground zero as I can to help ensure that we share a common understanding. You are invited to question the assumptions I make about such concepts as the past, memory, history, and rhetoric, to be sure, though I am asserting that those assumptions lead to some fascinating understandings of

relationships between the past, the present, and the future. For at least a few minutes, therefore, grant me the following givens:

1. *The past is inaccessible and even unknowable.* If we take the past to be comprised of all that has happened to everyone at every time and every place before now, the past is inaccessible. We have no access to the past as such, but only to documentary, iconic, and recollected traces of those happenings. Human activity is ephemeral; it can be remembered but not relived. It also is unknowable. To be sure, you can "know" what you yourself can remember of events and even can read or see what others think they have experienced or remembered, but such knowledge is always partial, usually self-centered and even self-interested, and subject to the vagaries of surviving documentation. Thus, when the great library of Alexandria burned, we were deprived of information key to our reconstruction of the intellectual life of the Mediterranean from a formative period of western civilization. Great segments of the past became inaccessible and unknowable, as were all those aspects of the Euro-african past never recorded at all.

2. *History is a discursive practice, a discourse about the past.* History is not to be confused with the past, for history is a collection of stories and arguments about some set of events from a before (Berkhofer, 1989). The reason that Adam Smith and other eighteenth-century rhetoricians began to write about history was that they understood that history is talk-about rather than mere chronicling-of the past.

3. *History is a bivocal discursive practice, one that is both narrative and argumentative in voice and social understanding.* Most history is an argumentatively formed narrative--simultaneously a story and an interpretive or realistic argument about the past. To be both argument and narrative gives history what J. H. Hexter called the rank and file problem: how can a dual-genred discourse be composed and evaluated? I suggest an answer to this question is a rhetorical undertaking (Gronbeck, 1987a).

4. *The professionalization of history has created gaps between academic historians' and public readers' versions of the past.* Michael Janas (1994) recently has recounted the growing professionalization of historians across the nineteenth- and twentieth centuries. (Cf. Narone, 1989.) As academic historians--like the rest of the professoriate--gradually defined their intellectual enterprises in increasingly arcane and specialized ways, usually in terms of schools of history (political, economic, social history) and in terms of method (documentary, testimonial, oral, and self-reflexive methods), they began to produce a discourse composed primarily for other academicians. Popular histories--the books your mother and mine ordered from the book club or checked out of the local library--have come to have almost no connection whatsoever with academic histories (Megill, 1987). Academic and popular histories represent clearly separable discursive practices.

5. *The past, moreover, is more than merely of historical interest; its importance to social, political, moral, and economic analyses of problems and their presumed alleviation is undeniable.* That is, the past is not the possession of historians, for they occupy but one demographic category of human being with claims to understand and possess portions of the past. Just as the past should not be confused with history, so should it be understood broadly as a resource for human beings of many different stripes and many different purposes. The past ought to be thought of as prologue for varied dramas: political deliberation over future action, economic controversy over what indicators of supply affect what indexes of demand, myths of origin that ground the religious dogmatics and the collective identity of a people, and psychoanalytic analyses of the neuroses and psychoses that affect us individually. Even Freudian psychotherapy is founded on reconstructions of the past. The past is in eminent domain, a set of life experiences open to everyone with an ax to grind or a Gordian knot to cut. The past may not be knowable or accessible, but it is pragmatically utile.

6. *And therefore, multiple rhetorics of the past have been practiced by various groups of advocates.* The past can be endlessly argued-over and argued-with. It can itself be a battleground or it can be raided, rebuilt, and perverted for any number of human purposes. In the form of traditions (Shils, 1981), the past appears to make direct demands upon our hearts and minds; yet those same traditions can be sites of struggle for contemporary social-political supremacy, as when the citizens of Georgia fight over the

symbolic meanings attached to the Confederate battleflag and its place in Georgia's state flag of today (Janas, 1994).

That last assumption brings us to the topic at hand. I wish to offer for our contemplation three rhetorics of the past. By rhetoric I mean with my doctoral mentor Donald Bryant (1973, p. 14) "the rationale of the informative and suasive in discourse," which is to say the underlying, self-interested purposes for which public discourses are constructed, purposes focused on controlling and structuring information and the valuative mindsets that form the bases of others' thoughts and actions. For this paper, rhetoric is to be understood, therefore, as a rationale of--that is, a justification for and an account of--the ways particular kinds of public discourse are built by one group of human beings to influence the beliefs, attitudes, values, and behaviors of other groups. More particularly, I am interested in discussing varying--here, three--rationales for ways the past is mined, shaped, and used to persuade audiences to alter their understandings of and activity in their life-worlds.

While others might wish to explore different rhetorics of the past, I want to focus our attention on three rationales for persuasive discourses working with and through the past: rhetorics of history, argument, and collective memory.

The Rhetoric of History

I begin at the beginning--rhetoricians, especially, attempting to understand what kind of discursive practice historians engage in. That practice, as I already have intimated, is simultaneously narrative and argumentative, concerned with what Spengler identified as *nacheinanderung* (one-after-anotherness) and *nebeneinanderung* (relationships between simultaneous events). (See Hexter, 1961.)

The rhetorical problem central to historical discourse, I would suggest, is the search for ways to bridge historical narratives and interpretive arguments. Can the story being told from traces of the past be made to seem like a transparent look at the past? Can historical discourse be so constructed that its arguments, its interpretations of that past, appear to flow naturally from its story? That sense of naturalization, for Hayden White, is created through the rhetorical construction of context. Says White:

The informing presupposition of contextualism is that events can be explained by being set within the "context" of their occurrence. Why they occurred as they did is explained by the revelation of the specific relationships they bore to other events occurring in the circumambient historical space. . . . [T]he Contextualist insists that "what happened" in the field can be accounted for by the specification of the functional interrelationships existing among the agents and agencies occupying the field at a given time (White, 1973, 17-8, qtd. in Berkhofer, 1989, pp. 186-7).

How are such contexts constructed? In many ways, but let me review two rhetorical techniques that are regularly employed by historians:

1. *Bracketing*. A key opening move for any historian involves framing the period that is about to be interpreted, for such framing sets out the domain of the writer--the bracketed segments of time and space that will be turned into historical discourse. Let me offer some examples from histories of eighteenth-century England. The great nineteenth-century historian, William E. H. Lecky (1839-1903), for example, set his overall brackets at 1688-89, the period of the Glorious Revolution that drove the Stuarts off the throne, and at 1832, the year of the First Reform Bill that redistributed some parliamentary seats so as to give especially cities more representation. He then divided that era into two parts, 1688-89 to 1760, which he assigned to the ascendancy of the Whigs, and 1760 to 1832, which he thought was contextualized by the Tory ascendancy. Never mind that the Tory party had disintegrated; Lecky knew who the Tories were. This splitting of the frame in his eight-volume history of England (1925) allowed Lecky to construct a narrative about progressive democratization in the first half of the century, about frustrated democracy under George III, and then the triumph of middleclass democracy in the 1832 Reform Bill. The temporal brackets he set

worked well to emphasize popular party politics and to project a moral sense of frustrated then triumphant democratic consciousness.

Lecky (1896, 1:21) was an historian who believed that the world had never "seen a better Constitution than England enjoyed between the Reform Bill of 1832 and the Reform Bill of 1867." During that third of a century, he saw Great Britain governed with power in the hands of the upper middle class, "not the class most susceptible to new ideas or most prone to great enterprises, but [one] distinguished beyond all others for its political independence, its caution, its solid practical intelligence, its steady industry, its high moral average" (1896, 1:20-21). His history of eighteenth-century England, therefore, was framed so as to provide maximum evidence for that judgment.

2. *Causal connections between context and events.* A second rhetorical art needed by historians is the ability to make a particular context seem necessary and sufficient to account for the events from the past under scrutiny. So, for example, one can do a political, an economic, a social, or even a rhetorical history of the American Revolution. The political history would focus on the rise of a Yankee political mentality, putting emphasis on both the disintegration of party politics in England after the Seven Year's War and the political force of the Stamp Act, the Townshend Duties, the Quartering Act, and the like. An economic history likely would begin with the Sugar and Molasses Acts, passed by Great Britain as revenue bills but interpreted in the colonies as interference with trade, review the growing independence of the colonies in terms of trade, manufacturing, and fiscal policies, and even depict the course of the war as being strongly affected by the British gentry's refusal to grant the increasing internal taxes needed to pursue a distant and expensive conflict. A social history would document the change in collective identity, as has Richard Bushman's history (1967) of the shift from Puritan to Yankee mentality in Connecticut. A rhetorical history of the War, of course, would focus on the narrative and argumentative discourses that reframed the American vision and motivated a people to risk all in the name of independence.

The point here is that a particular context is both a way of looking and a mechanism for coherence. As Kellner (1989, p. 55) notes, "[Historical n]arrative exists to make continuous what is discontinuous; it covers the gaps in time, in action, in documentation, even when it points to them." Key to narrativization is the casting of a context that frames the historical enterprise generally and seemingly identifies and organizes a series of past events so that they can be narrativized, that is, bound together into a story. In turn, the events so organized become, often transparently, evidence that can reinforce the utility of the context itself as a way to understand and account for human affairs; social histories, especially, in that they are contraposed to traditional perspectives, often use our interest in their subject-matter as evidence for the importance of such studies. Thus Marxist historian E. P. Thompson (1978) argues that eighteenth-century English society must be approached as a paternal rather than a political entity, as a site of a hegemonic relationship he calls a "paternalism-deference equilibrium" (p. 150), because it shows us the actual mechanisms rather than merely the structure of political power. By the end of that essay--and certainly in his earlier (1963) book--Thompson urges that social politics rather than institutional politics is at the center of English history. He argues that the power of his perspective is seen in the lives of

the poor stockinger, the Luddite cropper, the 'obsolete' hand-loom weaver, the 'utopian' artisan, and even the deluded follower of Joanna Southcott . . . Their crafts and traditions may have been dying. Their hostility to the new industrialism may have been backwardlooking. Their communitarian ideals may have been fantasies. Their insurrectionary conspiracies may have been foolhardy. But they lived through these times of acute social disturbance, and we did not . . . In some of the lost causes of the people of the Industrial Revolution we may discover insights into social evils which we have yet to cure (1963, pp. 12-13).

Thus Thompson uses the mini-biographies that comprise much of his book, *The Making of the English Working Class*, as testament to the utility of social history generally.

As well, of course, the events of the past, once positioned in a narrative, can be used to argue outside the narrative itself as evidence for some social or moral lesson. Thompson said as much in the last sentence I

just quoted from him. As well, in Volume 5 of his history of eighteenth-century England, Lecky stops for four pages to examine "The qualities of mind and character which in modern societies have proved most successful in political life" (1925, 5:261). Indeed, Lecky constantly generalizes and intellectualizes the events of eighteenth-century British politics, rehearsing abstract philosophical positions, moral codes, oratorical flourishes, expressions of legal doctrines, and even literary culture that influenced the course of the past and, as well, serve as social-political-legal lessons for other times. The temptation to be an historicist--a person who believes in the cycles or regular rhythms in human experience through time--is strong; the fantasy of being to recycle others' lives as guides to our own plays has many adherents in most societies.

I will go no farther with this idea for now, because it becomes the point at which the discourses of professional historians impinge upon the discourses of social decision makers and reformers, whose use of the past will occupy us shortly. Rather, let me conclude this brief look at the rhetoric of history. I have identified but two rhetorical techniques essential to the historians' discursive activity. Framing and establishing causal connections between contexts and events are but two pieces of rhetorical artillery in the armory of the historian. Other weapons are there: a variety of argumentative forms (see, e.g., Gronbeck, 1987b; Janas, 1994), multiple ways to test evidence, stylistic devices that caulk over the fissures in narrative and argumentative structures, and even battles over the credibility of historians themselves (see, e.g., Schwartz, 1982).

If you will accept my description of framing and causally contextualizing the past in discourse designed to influence the beliefs and values of others as representative of what could become a full rhetorical account of history writing, then we can move on to other rhetorics of the past. I would make one last comment about the rhetoric of history: *the rhetoric of history is a constructionist activity* in the strong sense of that word. In history, the past is constructed into narratives and arguments about the significance of those narratives. Especially in the book-length history, there is often a feeling even that a "Great Story," a unified and totalizing story about the "Great Past" understood as all worth knowing from that past, has been related. Among popular histories, certainly William Shirer's *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich* (1960) is such a work; a presidential biography such as McCullough's treatment of Truman (1992) promises to be such a work as well.

These works are thoroughly constructionist in their force in that a vision or understanding of the past is built in such a way as to suggest the completeness and adequacy of the project. Creating a sense of thoroughness and satiation, plentitude and satisfaction, is the product of a constructionist rhetoric.

Arguments From the Past

A second kind of rhetoric of the past does more than construct a history. It depends explicitly upon the appropriation of the past for presentist purposes. Such a rhetoric of the past is seen in the legal use of precedents to guide judicial decision making, a mother's admonition to her child not to climb too high in a tree because of what happened the last time it did, Freudian psychoanalytic histories that are used to guide therapy (DeConcini, 1990), and legislative debates that turn on discussions of the founding fathers or a rehearsal of earlier legislation. In each of these cases, the past is not being reconstructed around the truth-conditions (McCullagh, 1984) that propel the professional historian's culling of the past for significant information; rather, it is explicitly for guidance of present-day concerns or problems.

I have already published a paper on this subject in the 1991 Alta proceedings (Gronbeck, 1991), so I will do less with concrete examples. Four years ago, I argued that public deliberations often appropriate the past in two ways. One form is the genetic argument, the argument that runs some concept, idea, pattern of activity, or valuative commitment to an originary moment in time and place. That originary moment then can be posited as a beginning, with the present time and the decision some individual or group faces as a significant point in a story that reaches from that origin until now.

To take a simple example, it makes a great deal of difference whether Americans posit the seventeenth-century British religious dissenters or the eighteenth-century revolutionary colonists as originary models. Is the essence of Americanism to be found in the political theocracy of the Puritans, where individual initiative, unquestioned commitment to values entailing particular personal and social responsibilities, and localist cultural standards dominate the social system? Or, is Americanism rather grounded on the revolutionary principles, the Yankee mentality, where liberty is understood in both individual and collective contexts, equality is coequal with liberty as a central value, commerce is understood in terms of exchanges or transactions where both parties gain value, and collective civic rather than religious principles reign supreme. America's present-day liberal and conservative visions are, in many of their manifestations, based on these competing originary moments.

More specifically, I see genetic arguments from the past working in two ways: either (1) an advocate can rely on our general belief in progressivism to argue that action today will advance some aspect of life along a course we can see stretching from the past to the present to the future, or (2) a rhetor can return to the originary moment of some part of civic life to essentialize it, asking for a recommitment to a presumably primal but presently ignored value or mindset. Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech of 1963 (1993) captures the progressivist argument nicely. King structured the speech around a movement from 1863's Emancipation Proclamation to the 1963 March on Washington into a dream of a future of racial harmony, civic equality, and universal brotherhood. James Hanson's (1991) analysis of the *Communist Manifesto* suggests that Marx and Engels offered a genetic argument of a second sort when they posited an edenic state, one existing prior to feudal class divisions and industrialized capitalism, when collective ownership centered social relations. The moral imperative of the communist movement, in this view, then is a return to earlier values and structures--much more a rebirth than a radical revolution.

The other form of argument from the past that appears regularly in social-political controversy is the analogical argument. As Maurice Mandelbaum (1971, p. 66) notes, "Explanations that rest on subsuming a particular case under previously familiar types of cases are to be found in all aspects of life," including public deliberation. Meteorologists use historical data to build laws associating climatological causes with climatological effects; children are reminded how angry father gets when they scream too loudly before supper; and the grayest beard on the Senate Agriculture Committee inevitably will tell a story about a past change in agricultural policy that produced an ugly outcome, thus seeking to suppress a change in policy today (Boynton, 1987).

I use the idea of analogical argument to reference a whole family of arguments that assert important similar or dissimilar relationships between two or more persons, places, things, or events in order to support a disputable proposition. What have been called arguments from parallel case (Ehninger & Brockriede, 1963) and arguments from reciprocity (Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1969) also fall into this family of rhetorical weapons. David Zarefsky's (1991) analysis of similarities between the nineteenth-century slavery debate and the twentieth-century abortion debate illustrates the analogical argument from the past. The similarities in situation, motivation, ideological orientations, and projected outcomes between discussion of the Dred Scott decision and the controversy focusing on the nullification of *Roe v. Wade* show the persuasiveness of arguments from the past to guide present-day controversy.

In this second kind of rhetoric of the past, therefore, the past is not so much constructed--though of course it really is--as it is appropriated, made into something useful for today, into a tool to solve some problem or block some proposal. The past can be hammered into stories that promise glory or shame, ease or difficulties, glorification or eternal damnation as we relive it again today. Historian A. L. Rowse (1963, p. 20) has suggested that "there is no one rhythm or plot in history; but there are rhythms, plot, patterns, even repetitions. So that it is possible to make generalizations and to draw lessons." It is that historicist understanding of the unfolding of collective life that makes genetic and analogical arguments from the past so compelling in human affairs.

The Rhetoric of Collective Memory

I come finally to a third kind of rhetoric from the past--the rhetoric of collective memory. This sort of rhetoric is quite similar to the arguments from the past I have just discussed; the rhetoric of collective memory works by symbolically building bridges between today and yesterday. The difference is that the primary movement is not from the past to the present, but the other way around. A society's collective memory is regularly reshaped by today's interpreters so as to make it more useful in the present.

"Collective memory" conceptually resists easy delineation. A collective memory belongs not to an individual or the presumably continuous record constructed in histories, but rather to a family, group, or larger social unit that attaches special meanings to particular events from the past. It often comprises moral stories--social and political myths, fables, fairy tales, and what Aristotle called reminiscences (*De memoria et reminiscencia*, in McKeon, 1941), that is, special events that are imbued with socially charged significance. Social memory is a collectivized discourse; it is the construction of no rhetor, but, as Lévi-Strauss (1963) remarked about myth, it is built by everyone who recounts a socially advisory or constraining story about the past. It is less argumentatively than exhortatively formed; the moral of the story is its *raison d'être*. The collective memory is recalled, seemingly, so as to let the past guide the present, but it can do so only when the past itself is remade. In the words of the author of the first book on collective memory, Maurice Halbwachs (1941, p. 7, qtd. in Schwartz, Zerubavel, & Barnett, 1986, p. 149):

If, as we believe, collective memory is essentially a reconstruction of the past, if it adapts the image of ancient facts to the beliefs and spiritual needs of the present, then a knowledge of the origin of these facts must be secondary, if not altogether useless, for the reality of the past is no longer *in* the past.

About the same time, George Herbert Mead observed (1938, p. 81, qtd. *ibid.*) that "a person has to bring up a certain portion of the past to determine what his present is, and in the same way the community wants to bring up the past so it can state the present situation and bring out what the actual issues themselves are." In a somewhat more cynical mood, Mead (1929, p. 353, qtd. *ibid.*, p. 140) also noted that "The past which we construct from the standpoint of the new problem of today is based upon continuities which we discover in that which has arisen, and it serves us until the rising novelty of tomorrow necessitates a new history."

Rhetorically, what we are discussing is a species of epideictic, of commemorative discourse. In commemorative discourse, the past is not simply constructed or appropriated, as in the other rhetorics of the past, though of course construction and appropriation in fact are occurring. Additionally, in such discourse the past is evoked. Some present need or concern is examined by calling up a past, shaping it into a useful memory that an audience can find relevant to the present. The past thus can guide the present, but the present also is reconfiguring the past; therefore, through evocation of collective memories, past and present live in constant dialogue, even in a hermeneutic circle where neither can be comprehended without the other.

Robert Penn Warren (qtd. in Kammen, 1991, p. 11) noted that "to be an American is not . . . a matter of blood; it is a matter of an idea--and history is the image of that idea." That notion is nowhere better illustrated than in Michael Kammen's (1991) visionary *Mystic Chords of Memory: The Transformation of Tradition in American Culture*. Kammen divides an American history wherein collective memory becomes important and disputable into four periods--pre-1870, 1870 to 1915, 1915 to 1945, and 1945 to 1990. He then examines the struggles over memory between those who saw the past as important vs. those who repudiated its burdens; the rise of a modernist vision wherein immigrants and others had to accommodate themselves to a civic religion and national culture vs. the counter of localist or regional traditions that resist the homogenizing effects of nationalized collective memory; and between active contestants attempting to remake the collective memory, as in the 1960s, vs. reconciliators who often induce amnesia and thus silence voices from the past. The rhetoricity of these processes Kammen (p. 13) suggests with these words: "Public memory, which contains a slowly shifting configuration of traditions, is ideologically important because it shapes a nation's ethos and sense of identity. That explains, at least in part, why memory is always selective and is so often contested."

Kammen's project is monumental. A more focused study of the operation of collective memory is Schwartz, Zerubavel, and Barnett's examination (1986) of the curious recovery of the story of Masada with the rise of Zionism in the early twentieth century. As the Palestinian Jews were taking root following the post-World War I Balfour Declaration, the Zionist community faced a series of frustrations: immigration quotas, anti-Semitism, Arab resistance, broken families, and a hostile land. The dialectic of hope and despair, excitement and nostalgia, optimism and disillusion is captured in Yitzhak Lamdan's 1927 poem, "Masada." Rather than retelling the story of the 73 A.D. battle of Masada, where a remnant of Jewish resistance turned to suicide rather than surrender to Titus's Roman army, Lamdan's poem is a rumination that considers the present in terms of the past. An early canto affirms the confidence Masada gives the settlers:

Then the dance of Masada is heard in the ears of the world!
A chant for the dance of the solution: "let the 'no' to Fate dare!"
Bolster the leg, strengthen the knee, round and round increasingly!
Ascend, chain of the dance! Never again shall Masada fall!

A later canto documents the suicides that were common among despondent settlers in Palestine:

Dumbly do my steps lead me to the wall, dumbly as all steps in which fear of the future is moulded . . .

High, high is the wall of Masada, therefore does the ravine that crouches at its feet go deep . . .

And should this voice have cheated me--then would I cast myself from the heights of the wall into the ravine that there be no record of the remnant, and nothing remain! (qtd. in Schwartz, Zerubavel, & Barnett, 1986, pp. 155, 157).

In Lamdan's poem "Masada," Schwartz, Zerubavel, and Barnett suggest, we find an allegorical relationship between the inhabitants of the ancient mountain fortress and twentieth-century Palestine. I would go farther: in the poem, Masada and the Jewish settlements are merged, each read and understood through the other. The mixture of defiant hope and bleak despair that characterized both the historical reconstruction of Masada and the exercise in carving out a new nation allowed Masada to be understood through the settlements and the settlements to be epitomized by the recounting of triumphant suicide.

The rhetoric of collective memory, therefore, as I noted earlier, is a special kind of commemoration--an evoking of a past both to frame a present but also to conform that past to the present. It is a discourse of absolute identification--an interpenetration of then and now wherein the hermeneutic circle spins in exceedingly small rotations.

Some Final Thoughts

In writing her innovative *The Art of Memory* in 1966, Frances Yates found the subject "curiously neglected" (p. 1). She would never open a similar book in the same way today. Stirring the idea of memory into the mix of a classic trio of terms--rhetoric, argument, and history--has enriched the study of discursive constructions of past and present in exciting ways. Fred Reynolds's new anthology on rhetorical memory (1993) testifies to the subject's currency, and this conference is a sign that rhetoricians are opening themselves to new investigations of the trio-plus-one.

The three rhetorics of the past that I have examined each work in different ways. The historian constructs the past; the disputant appropriates it; and the commemorator evokes it. All three rhetorics discursively bridge past and present, though via different rhetorical techniques. Historians set brackets and articulate causal connections between contexts and events in order to naturalize or make coherent the stories and interpretations they are offering. Disputants seek out genetic and analogical arguments that give the past a measure of control over the present and future. And commemorators evoke a past so as to let the present

shape it into a memory capable of being annealed with now, thereby accounting for the life-world and collapsing old and new identities.

I have asserted these notions confidently. Take that confidence as that of a person wishing to start a dialogue rather than to chisel out some eternal truths. I have been working on the rhetoric of history since graduate school, but on collective memory only for two years. I wish to publicly thank Michael Janas, who finally completed his dissertation, "Rhetoric, History, and the Collective Memory: The Civil War in Contemporary America" (1994), last summer. Most of the literature on collective memory I know has come through him. But yet, I am still new to the topic, so my musings, no matter how confidently offered, are just that--threads of thought still awaiting a master weaver.

Of one thing I am certain, however. While contemporary rhetoricians have made great strides in their work on history and arguments from the past, the evocation and use of collective memory are awaiting rhetorical treatment. The few studies out there--and I am thinking not only of Janas's dissertation (1994) but also John Nerone's article on professional history and social memory (1989), Robbie Cox's work on memory in Marcuse's writings (1990), and Michael Billig's essay on collective memory, ideology, and British royalty (1990)--show great promise. Rhetoricians have an excellent opportunity to contribute to a burgeoning literature coming from historians, sociologists, and literary critics. I hope we pick up the challenge.

The Popular Memory Group of Birmingham's Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (1982, p. 207) employs the term "popular memory" to reference "the power and pervasiveness of historical representations, their connections with dominant institutions and the part they play in winning consent and building alliances in the processes of formal politics." The past thus is, quite naturally, a site of rhetorical struggle for often-political control over those representations. Controlling discourses about the past may not guarantee political control of the present, but they nonetheless are powerful weapons of sociopolitical organization. One need not bring up only Adolf Hitler, though he was a master manipulator of the past. We can look to our own time, to Richard Nixon's construction of a history of Vietnam in his November 1969 speech on the war, Ronald Reagan's grounding of American civic values in John Winthrop's 1630 speech on "the city on the hill," George Bush's 1992 convention film that positioned him in the pantheon of great American presidents, and Bill Clinton's 1992 acceptance speech, built around a new covenant that worked desperately hard to evoke the sanctity of Israel's old covenant with Jahweh. Owning some important pieces of the past is always good for present purposes.

The rhetorics of history, argument, and collective memory in one way or another all run on the dialogue between tradition and progress that will ever be a central engine of America. As Kammen (1991, p. 704) notes, "The party of hope and the party of memory will continue to jostle each other for position." It is for the rhetorician to discover and make public the rules of that game.

Note

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