THE PURPOSE OF MY RESPONSE to the essays and to the critiques will be as much invention as critical. To begin with a confession, if not exactly an apology, my invitation to Mike Leff and Mike McGee to write focal essays, while a good idea for any number of reasons, was also motivated by a personal agenda. I wanted to learn something. Particularly I wanted to learn how to negotiate a recurrent tension that kept cropping up in my own work—and in the work of various colleagues whose studies I particularly admire. I wanted to discover how to go from rhetoric writ large to rhetoric writ small—from rhetoric as process to rhetoric as product. For example, at one pole of my own work, the "M" pole, I am interested in understanding "rhetorical epochs"—symbolic events so massive as to constitute a "before and after" of meaning. Placed on a chronological line, these kairotic occurrences become self-constitutive chapters in the anthology of meaning we call history. At the other pole, the "L" pole, I am interested in texts. Particularly one.

While much productive and necessary critical reflection in recent years has focused on models for criticism, I emerge from the study and teaching of this literature with mixed responses. No sooner do I partially yield to the temptations of system—however generously construed—than at my back I always hear Isocrates’ rasping whisper "But I marvel when I observe these [persons] setting themselves up as instructors of youth who cannot see that they are applying the analogy of an art with hard and fast rules to a creative process."

Leff and McGee are important critics in our field because they are superb performers. To hear a paper by either, to read an essay by either, is to participate in the unfolding of a vision of what rhetorical studies can be and do. But when I try, in the classical sense, to "imitate" either of these artists, I get stuck (and I see others getting stuck)—always at the same place. Can a critic, in one and the same essay, or even in one

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and the same scholarly project, "perform" criticism in both the McGee and Leff modes? Must one choose? Responding to a panel on the Federalist papers at the 1989 Alta conference, Leff answered this question in the affirmative. He pointed to essays which either focused on the rhetorical action of the text or on the ideology of the text. Though the current evidence is on Leff's side, by producing an essay which melds his perspective and McGee's, I hope to show that choosing between them is not inevitable. But as a synthesis takes time to perfect, the following reflections will have to be a meta-performance—a solemn soliloquy on action. As Dilip Gaonkar's reflections provide an expansive historical framing and a penetrating analysis of the issues, I shall begin with his appraisal of McGee and incorporate the incisive observations of Cox and Condit as I move toward Leff. My aim will be to see how far these two genres of critical art can be interwoven, or to discover whether God in her wisdom and mercy set some impassible barrier to their assimilation.

In his stunning revisionist reading of "The Literary Criticism of Oratory," Gaonkar argues that McGee and Leff have inherited two different sides of Wicheln's legacy. McGee inherits a line of interpretation which places the object in a dominant position over the method, but an object diminished by Wrage's thesis that the speech is a transparent medium for the transmission of "ideas" and Becker's further reduction of the speech to a mere rhetorical residue, a "message." Leff inherits a line of interpretation which resists placing the object in a position dominant over the method, but, Gaonkar argues, in attempting to affirm the autonomy of method, Leff ends by reaffirming the priority of the object.

Gaonkar's placing of McGee in a line of tradition which persistently diminishes the object, even while paradoxically insisting on the priority of the object over the method, has an undeniable ring of truth to it, especially in light of McGee's featuring of the "fragment" as the central focus of rhetorical analysis. I would like, however, to resist Gaonkar's minimalist critique of McGee and argue to the contrary that McGee has his own balance between object and method, a balance rooted in his vision of rhetorical time. Leff's view of the object is similarly rooted in an understanding between object and method, a balance rooted in his vision of rhetorical time. Leff's view of the object is similarly rooted in an understanding of rhetorical time. I will argue that once we grasp how McGee's and Leff's visions of rhetorical time condition their views of the rhetorical object, we will neither have to choose between the two on the basis of personal predeliction, nor hold that the projects are mutually exclusive; instead, we will recognize compelling motive for seeking their integration. I believe that once the relation between McGee's and Leff's rhetorical objects is properly understood, it should be possible for rhetorical critics to analyze rhetorical objects at different levels of resolution (from micro to macro) and to move between episodes or epochs, as well as within them, in a natural yet methodologically rigorous way. A new kind of study—the longitudinal case study—would then emerge on the rhetorical horizon.
For McGee, rhetorical time is existential. What happens in time is the emergence of a particular rhetorical object out of the half-articulate wishes of an ethnic group or language community. History, for McGee, describes a symmetrical rhetorical arc in which a people emerge from fragments of folk belief and shared experiences and through the narrative skills of a charismatic leader discover their specific identity through a shared story which undergoes change and development as different generations adapt it to new circumstances, until the narrative decays and the People disappear as a self-conscious rhetorical entity. We may capture McGee's view of rhetorical time in a maxim: "From fragments the people emerge and to fragments they return."

In contrast, time for Leff may be considered indifferently as forensic or deliberative. The distinguishing feature of Leff's view of time is the imperative for judgment. Leff's forensic/judicial view of time determines his choice of the text as the proper habitation of rhetoric. Through its imbrication of form and content and its invitation to the audience to participate in unfolding a particular view of the world in narrative time, the audience is led by the rhetorical art of the speech (or text) to resolve a contingent issue demanding decision. Leff's project sees time as a series of densely structured but discrete episodes bracketed in history and enacted in texts; each text/context has its proximate beginning and proximate end. What is rhetorically interesting about history for Leff is the production of these discrete and locally stable artistic wholes.

In one important sense Gaonkar is correct in affirming that object controls method for McGee, whereas method controls object for Leff. Object does control method for McGee, once the object has been constituted. But there is a prior step which conditions this relationship for McGee and reveals a submerged affinity with the method/object, object/method tension in Leff. McGee's view of rhetoric as material is the corollary of his view of history as rhetorical. McGee's prior rhetorical view of history sets the scene for the specific material incarnations of McGee's rhetorical object—consciousness. The object/method tension which Leff proximately resolves through his twin views of theory as a theory of the case and the text as the proximate habitation of rhetoric, find answering echoes in McGee's notion of the object of analysis as consciousness—especially as the consciousness of the Anglo-American people—and the ideograph, the maxim, the analogy, the fragment, even the text, as the proximate habitations of this object. McGee's consciousness-as-object, like Leff's "text," is dynamic and gathers meaning over time. But whereas Leff's text unfolds in a specific situation and discloses its meaning within textual time, McGee's text unfolds and gathers meaning over centuries. While McGee's object is very large, to call it "globalized" or "fragmented" risks overlooking McGee's distinctive contribution to the technical analysis of rhetoric, which is his delineation of the modes in which rhetoric makes itself felt in and across historical time.
We shall gain a clearer view of McGee's understanding of the specificity of the rhetorical object by understanding the views of language, situation and judgment which give solidity to his perspective on time as existential. In his analysis of Kenneth Burke, Weldon Durham effectively captured Burke's notion of "substance" when he characterized it as consciousness enacted through symbols. McGee's view of language is similarly "substantial," for it is through language that the being of an historical people is made concrete at a variety of discursive sites.

In the most fundamental sense, language for McGee is at once a system of signification and an ontological event. What the political language of a people signifies, or more properly, what it is, is a felt quality of life. Though the region covered by his object is vastly larger, no less than for Wichelns and Leff, rhetoric for McGee occupies a regional ontology. McGee's view of language as the medium of consciousness is ontological, for the consciousness of a people as enacted in their ideographs, analogies, and maxims is the affective-cognitive site of their political being.

McGee's view of language as an event constitutive of the political consciousness of a people may be clarified by comparing it to Vico's. In Vico's account, the first humans crossed the border separating proto-human from fully human when first they experienced the word "Jove" as a thunderclap. "Jove" meant both "thunderclap"—an experience of terror in the presence of power—and the first word in the political lexicon of a human community beginning its odyssey as a people. The "ideograph" in a sense is McGee's "Jove." In the Anglo-American lexicon, "ideographs" such as "liberty," "freedom," and similar terms evoke strong though confused feelings associated with a variety of historical events aboriginally constitutive of Anglo-American consciousness. Though McGee does not focus specifically on the ultimate origins of this consciousness, in his essay "The People," he presents the speech, as delivered by an initial charismatic leader, as the proximate site at which a people emerge in historical form.

The speech *per se* cannot be the privileged object of analysis for McGee, even though it has a theoretically privileged place in his rhetorical myth of origin. As McGee explains why, he clarifies his view of language as an ontological event and the specific ways he stabilizes that object as he describes its changes over time. The speech, or at least certain key speeches, demand our attention because they are the kairotic sites at which the public consciousness of a people emerged or was significantly redefined. Implicit in McGee's selection of events for analysis—Peter Wentworth vs. Elizabeth I, Pitt vs. Walpole, Wellington vs. nearly everyone, Lord Strafford (Thomas Wentworth) vs. Parliament, George William Curtis vs. political patronage, Falwell vs. the liberal media, Genesis I & II as a language of power—is a prefiguration of what specific rhetorical events were decisive for Anglo-American consciousness. McGee, implicitly at least, has his own nascent sense of
"touchstones" in that the core of his project is to locate and describe key discursive epicenters from which aspects of contemporary Anglo-American consciousness radiated into the present. Setting aside for the moment his present essay, McGee's traditional focus on parts of discourse whether "ideographs," analogies, maxims etc., does not signal a fragmentation of Anglo-American consciousness, but is a coherent disciplined exposition of the specific rhetorical forms in which the Anglo-American identity has been communicated from its points of origin to other rhetorical sites seemingly remote from it in space and time. As Condit observes, and as Leff himself has pointed out, Leff is not alone as a close reader of texts. (Though I would not agree with Condit that the difference between the two projects is quantitative. Condit herself acknowledges—in the same passage—that the concern of close reading with "disposition" makes it qualitatively distinct.) In his Wentworth and Elizabeth I essay, in his "Not Men But Measures," essay, and certainly in his analyses of Judges 19-21 in his Falwell essay, and of Genesis I & II with Scult and Kuntz, McGee has shown that he reads whole texts with care and insight. The key difference in the focus of Leff's project which sets it apart from McGee's even when they seem most closely to approach one another is Leff's interest in the speech as a manifestation of the art of the speaker and McGee's interest in it as an example of the structuring omnipresence of an ideology.

But whether McGee will focus on the whole of a text or on a fragment turns upon where he discerns the rhetorical pulse of history. Without exception, in each of his analytic essays, McGee's critical practice is to move forward and backward in time, to shift his attention from the whole text to its parts, and to trace the rhetorical centers which made a particular event effective in a particular occasion or in many occasions across generations. In his Wentworth and Elizabeth I essay, McGee moves from the maxim, "sweet is the sound of liberty," to full speeches and back to the single term "liberty." He reads the affective charge of the term "liberty" as it was felt in the late Tudor period, as it was felt under the Stuarts, and as it is experienced today by a retired steelworker from Chicago living in retirement in Czechoslovakia. His "Not Men But Measures" essay follows a closely analogous pattern. A partial exception is the "Fall of Wellington" essay where McGee does not analyze specific speeches, since he argues that what precipitated Wellington's fall, and where we are to find rhetoric as an historical force, is not in whole speeches, but in a specific analogy—in the shift from the traditional analogy equating aristocracy with balanced government to a new analogy equating aristocracy with tyranny.

The different views of rhetorical time which lead McGee and Leff to focus on different rhetorical objects are also reflected in their different views of context. Because Leff sees rhetorical time as deliberative or forensic, his account of rhetorical action focuses on the text and its immediate situation. The question of how one can move from one
rhetorical context to another does not arise within the horizon of Leff's project. But because for McGee situations are contained within a larger (and I believe coherent) rhetorical object—the on-going story of Anglo-American consciousness—McGee is able to offer something Leff does not: a rhetorical theory of change across situations.

McGee's view of language as an event in consciousness and constitutive of identity enables him to explain how rhetorical situations recur without running afoul of the objections which have attended Bitzer's realistic formulation of situation. From McGee's perspective, the ideographs constitutive of consciousness are carried forward in time on the popular speech of a people. A "situation" arises when a "felt quality" of their lives, materialized in everyday language, encounters a countervailing and hostile felt quality. Even if one wished to dispute McGee's historiography in specific cases, his method of tracing change across time is rhetorically rigorous and is of permanent interest and value to rhetorical critics. As he explains in his Wentworth and Elizabeth I essay, when the people who knew a particular feeling of freedom in the presence of Elizabeth's power encountered a different feeling under the Stuarts, the people's self-interpretation could not be reconciled with the new political grammar. I find this succinct formulation a cogent account of how a specific rhetorical object—the political consciousness of a people as materialized in their language—creates new rhetorical situations as it moves across time.

If McGee's view of situation encompasses a horizon larger than the specific and self-contained episodes examined by Leff, McGee's view of judgment is at least complementary to Leff's view of judgment as manifest through the development of a text. McGee's view of rhetorical "judgment" is an extension of his view of situation and is set forth in his account of "radical reflection" and the "moment of danger."

For McGee "radical reflection" is an everyday discourse practice inherent in political community. Effective history, in McGee's view, is always present interpretation. Effective history focuses on "rank" and not on some "file" of true facts and interpretations of past events. Developing a concept from Walter Benjamin, McGee explains how radical reflection occurs when in a present moment of danger an individual (or an individual speaking on behalf of a people) reaches into the magazine of cultural memory and brings forward a fragment of the past around which to crystallize resistance to a present danger. Unlike Leff's text, McGee's object is manifest at many discursive sites over time, but his exposition of "radical reflection" underscores, as does Leff's, how the parts of his object rhetorically cohere in a particular product—judgment. The people's judgment "this situation is like that one," while on one level an unsupported assertion, is on another level reflective, for, parallel with Leffian judgment in which deliberation occurs over the time of the densely structured text, radical reflection gains density from the concrete resources of a specific tradition. In affirming a previous
self-interpretation as their present self-definition, a people treat an entire tradition as though it were a text, "invent" a relevant parallel to the present case, and rally to repel a perceived threat.\textsuperscript{29} The parallel between rhetorical judgment in McGee and Leff underscores the complementarity of their perspectives, despite their different views of rhetorical time, and \textit{a fortiori} reinforces the essential unity and coherence of McGee's interpretation of the rhetorical object.

The patient reader may have come to suspect, well before this point, that my reading of McGee faces its own "moment of danger" from his latest essay. That essay does take a new turn, but his central concept, the "fragment," is continuous with his larger view of the rhetorical object. Indeed, as Gaonkar notes, McGee's longing for "new wholes" means that the moment of the post-modern fragment must be, for the moment, postponed. No one as firmly rooted as McGee in the grand tradition of the nineteenth-century and who includes in his rhetorical paternity "Hegel, Guizot, Burckhardt, Lamprecht, Marx, Dilthey, and Huizinga"\textsuperscript{30} is going to find it easy to be a whole-hearted prophet of the part. But before examining what is different in McGee's latest essay, let us note first what in it remains the same.

McGee's current emphasis on the "fragment" in most particulars is a condensed and productive explication of what has been a consistent focus of his own critical practice. McGee's call for critics to problematize their understandings of texts reflects accurately the instructive way McGee himself has negotiated the tension between the parts of his object, "complete" texts, ideographs, analogies, maxims, and the whole—Anglo-American political consciousness. On this view, his claim that the critic "does not begin with a finished text in need of interpretation..." but rather, "The apparently finished discourse is... a dense reconstruction of all the bits of other discourses from which it was made" (p. 279), underscores for the rhetorical analyst the participation of the "text" in a larger stream of history. McGee's formulation of how such full texts as King's "I Have A Dream" and Leni Riefenstral's film "Triumph of the Will" "are 'in between' elided parts which will make them whole" (p. 279), is perfectly consistent with the unity of his object as it has been manifest in all of his essays.\textsuperscript{31} McGee's formulation of how these and all other "finished texts" are at once fragments and wholes is vintage McGee: "They are simultaneously structures of fragments, finished texts, and fragments themselves to be accounted for in subsequent discourse" (p. 279). This is a succinct restatement of McGee's view of the role of the part in making the whole of a tradition effective at a variety of discursive sites over time. His disclaimer that calling attention to the relation among text, sources, context, and influence does "no more than change the way we have traditionally described the problematics of rhetorical criticism" (pp. 282-283) is modest. McGee's call for critics to problematize their understanding of texts and his restatement of his program, summarized in his current notion of the "fragment," is timely and appropriate for several reasons.
First, by emphasizing the priority of the tradition from which the text emerges over the completed text, McGee invites us to see even the most magnificent rhetorical artifact as but a partial expression of a larger cultural whole. This emphasis on tradition is a useful corrective to "close reading," for it reminds us that invention is grounded in history and history is a matrix of possibilities. Each text represents but one possible selection and disposition of resources for negotiating the tensions of its context. Second, in underscoring the dependence of the text upon culture for its coherence, McGee reminds us how the sense of the text as comprising a whole is a kind of illusion. A text coheres because common culture constrains listeners in numerous ways to interpret its parts similarly. Here McGee sponsors an interactive view of the relation between text and context which places an especially strong burden on the critic to locate the action of the text as action on an audience. Third, in underscoring the text as influential, McGee not only reminds us explicitly that the text is a performance which aims at action in the world, but he implicitly points to the effective vehicle of that action—the part. Though he does not state the point directly, McGee's emphasis on "influence" when coupled with his emphasis on the "fragment" invites the inference that it is often through influential parts, for example such slogans as: "we have nothing to fear but fear itself," "ask not what your country can do for you. . . ." or "all the world's a stage" that texts live in cultural memory.

To think of each part of a discourse as a series of fragments, each breaking along lines partially peculiar to itself, partially peculiar to the audience, is to challenge our notions of form and radically to underscore both the creative power of the listener and the fugitive yet oddly enduring character of rhetorical art. On the one hand we are left asking: Where now the sense of an ending? Or of a beginning? Each part is its own whole, and the speech a tale told by the listener in the chambered auditory of the mind. On the other (at least up until the postmodern epoch) we are made to realize that within the interpretive tradition of a people there is a remarkable continuity. As Edmund Burke observed of the common names, kindred blood, similar privileges, and similar religion of the English peoples on the two sides of the Atlantic: "These are ties which, though light as air, are as strong as links of iron."

While McGee's call to problematize the text and his attendant suggestions on the relatedness of the text to its sources, culture, and influence, are, from my standpoint, the most suggestive and welcome features of his project, several aspects of his essay invite further development if their promise for rhetorical studies is to be fulfilled.

McGee seems to have wedded a dynamic and pluralistic view of the text to a static and monolithic view of context. From one point of view his underscored stricture "Discourse ceases to be what it is whenever parts of it are taken 'out of context'" (p. 283), is entirely proper. His supplementary comment: "Failing to account for 'context,' or reducing 'context' to
one or two of its parts, means quite simply that one is no longer dealing with discourse as it appears in the world" (p. 283), is similarly unexceptionable. But his own example—the reduction of a speech by Kissinger to a citation—reveals a documentary view of history as the ground of his model of context. A documentary model of context begs the very question McGee's dynamic and interactive model of the text seeks to address.  

First, especially with complex texts, one never can be sure that one has the full context. Can anyone, for example, have the full context of a book of the Bible, a sermon, a Shakespeare play, a novel, or even a scientific report? Can anyone confidently affirm that he or she has the full agenda for his or her last office interview with a student? For specific purposes one can bracket certain features of context and thereby justify certain claims. But a documentary model of context as in McGee's example of the Kissinger citation is at least one fragment which should be left in its original setting—positivist historiography.

Second, complex texts have interlocking contexts. As Cox well notes, McGee himself has provided a nuanced reading of interlocking contexts in his study of Falwell. As the interview with Falwell appearing in Penthouse radically underscores, context is polymorphous. We can ground the interpretation of a text, not by appealing to proof texts to stabilize the context, but by discovering the full range of contexts in which the text can be or has been implicated.

Third, context may be undecidable, and possibly because it was deliberately made so by the rhetor. From the Delphic priests to Darwin, exploiting the undecidability of a phrase or figure is a rhetorical technique ancient in lineage and catholic in scope. From a literary standpoint undecidability may explain the richness of a text; from a rhetorical standpoint, it may explain its simultaneous appeal to different audiences.

Finally, context and meanings in texts are emergent. As McGee himself has indicated in earlier work, what Magna Carta means for us is not anything remotely like what the document says, or what it meant to its initial audience. The document we hold up as the Great Charter of English Liberty is precisely a tradition of misinterpretation spanning centuries. By extending to context McGee's problematized view of text, we reverse and expand McGee's stricture on context and gain a perspective which anticipates and welcomes emergent meaning. Our corrected dictum would read "Discourse begins to be what it is when its parts are placed in the full variety of their relevant contexts." In this sense, for the practitioner of discourse as well as for the analyst, not even the dead stay quiet—and sometimes they change their minds.

McGee's notions of totalization and homogeneity similarly need to be clarified and radicalized. When McGee speaks of an unfragmented past, his examples are of a pre-democratic, homogeneous, aristocratic high culture. "In the not too distant past..." McGee writes, "Education was restricted to a scant minority and... was so homogeneous that
an orator could utter two or three lines in Latin, identified only with the words 'as Tully said,' in complete confidence that any reader/au-
dience/critic would be able to identify the source... and even repeat the
next several words..." (p. 284). The past McGee seems to have in mind
is the House of Commons before the second reform bill of 1867, or pre-
Jacksonian America, or perhaps the select audience of the Constitutional
Convention. When McGee speaks of the fragmented present, his ex-
amples are of a democratic, heterogeneous, popular culture. McGee
writes "One clear truth will not change: The public's business is now
being done more often via direct mail, television spots, documentaries,
mass entertainment, and 'quotable quotes' on the evening news than
through the more traditional media (broadsides, pamphlets, books, and
public speeches") (p. 286). There are two issues here.

First, to measure change—even in a generous qualitative way—like
needs to be compared to like. Second, a heterogeneous or pluralistic
popular culture is not so fragmented as to preclude intelligible political
action by jealously watchful publics.

In his previous essays McGee has worked from a model of popular
discourse rooted in his concept of "The People" and has been at pains
to stress the primacy of popular culture over high culture, even when
the figures he has examined were technically representatives of wealth
and property. In his "Feminization of Power" essay, McGee argued that
when Peter Wentworth challenged Elizabeth with the maxim "sweet
is the name of liberty" he spoke in the name of popular culture not in
the name of the high culture which McGee associated with the "elitism"
of Francis Bacon. In his essay "Not Men But Measures" McGee even
traced the origin and development of what we think of as a contemporary
phenomenon—"image politics"—back to the age of Walpole and Pitt the
elder.

While McGee argues in his present essay that in the "postmodern"
epoch history itself has radically changed, a more parsimonious explana-
tion is that there has been a right wing coup in his model of history. Instead of seeing the present as a common rhetorical legacy of the Anglo-
American people materially manifest in shared "ideographs," McGee
now sees the present as the remnant of a high culture whose elite
representatives once gave whole speeches (with fragments in Latin). McGee's "fragmented" present is a function of his revisionist model of
a holistic past. By replacing the rich legacy of doxically endowed parts
("ideographs") engendered by popular culture and materially carried for-
ward by the common speech of the Anglo-American people with an elitist
model of discourse (the whole speech), which represented only the high
culture of the past, McGee has rhetorically disinherited the popular
culture of the present. It is not for nothing that Condit has referred to
the author of the present essay as "neo-McGee"!

McGee's assessment of the radical discontinuity in our present epoch
is overstated and obscures important continuities which his earlier
studies fruitfully disclosed. How could our friend who has made such a splendid point of supporting "The People" against the elite, overlook Major Cartwright, Tom Paine and the tradition of English radicalism, to say nothing of the older dissenting traditions of the Puritans, the Levellers and the Diggers? Homogeneous culture of the past indeed! Few of these people spoke Latin, but many gave, and all listened to full speeches; many wrote, and many more read pamphlets. The prince of them all had a Latin vocabulary consisting of just one word (but what a word!) "Res-publica" and invented one-liners which a Peggy Noonan might envy—Paine on Burke: "He pities the plumage, but forgets the dying bird"—or a Roger Ailes could learn from—Paine explaining to the working class the meaning of "Nobility": "no-ability." Since the 1830s, at the very least, high and popular culture in Anglo-America have intermingled in the political arena. In England members of the first mass popular movement, The Anti-Corn Law League, included people who could read Latin and people who could not read. Its techniques included McGee's traditional media: "broadsides, books and public speeches" and also monster rallies, direct mail via the new "penny post," popular entertainment (songs and ballads) and slogans like "Cheap Bread!" A similar claim could be made for the Chartist movement. In America Jackson's candidacy ushered in the era of mass politics and caused the party of the old aristocrats to discover the virtues of plain English. After three straight failures to swim against the tide, they discovered the advantages of floating with it, coined the slogan: "Tippecanoe and Tyler Too!" and were swept into office. These are not examples of a homogeneous high culture giving whole speeches to an elite Latin-speaking audience. They are examples of a robust popular culture electing its own kind or demanding that its "betters" speak a plain language it can understand. Nor are these examples recent; they are roughly one hundred and forty years old. Moreover, if we stay at the level of popular culture where ideographs and image politics have roamed freely over the plains of the Anglo-American political imagination from the days of "Not Men But Measures" to "Millions for defense but not one cent for tribute," to "It's Morning In America," the present has a remarkable continuity with the past—for good and for ill.

Cox's critique underscores that the fragment, as McGee has explicated it, is insufficiently able to implicate doxa. Theoretically I believe Cox is correct. But not only does McGee compare unlike things—a self-contained high culture of the remote past with an open popular culture of the present, but his simple equation of pluralism with fragmentation makes his reading of the politics of our century unduly one-sided and undialectical. Our century (like every other in our entire tradition) has seen both new divisions and new unities. In the past thirty years mass popular culture has given us Rachel Carson and Betty Friedan, the anti-Vietnam war movement and the environmental movement, Civil Rights, Gay Rights, NOW; it has given us "Pro-choice," "Pro-life," the NRA,
Falwell, and popular mass education about AIDS. It has given us international charity fundraisers via satellite such as Live Aid; it has promoted smoking, promoted warnings against smoking, and prohibited smoking in offices and on airlines. The significant headway made by all of these movements argues that in "postmodern" pluralistic culture doxa is variously, agonistically, and energetically engaged by very broad publics.

"Postmodern" popular culture has its own peculiar problems and has produced its own forums and genres to address them. To coin an expression, "Eloquence Happens." McGee's vision of a "postmodern" culture too fragmented to be rhetorically coherent describes not North America or Western Europe and certainly not Eastern Europe—where peoples are struggling to discover a new sense of coherence in a revitalized public sphere—but Northern Ireland or Lebanon and possibly parts of Central and South America. McGee's vision is a distinct historical possibility, but it is not uniquely postmodern. Thucydides has given us a moving portrait of a pre-modern culture where McGee's "postmodern condition" was true with a vengeance. It is not only in the "postmodern world" that words may "lose their meaning." Nor is it only in the postmodern period where peoples struggle to regain their voices. McGee would advance his concept of "the fragment" and our comprehension of it were he to situate it—like the ideograph—in a specific strata of our common popular political tradition and explain how the popular discourse practices of the present are more fragmented than were their lineal antecedents.

It could be argued that McGee's account of the "fragment" demonstrates that my attempt to defend the integrity of McGee's rhetorical object—Anglo-American consciousness—against Gaonkar's charge of fragmentation has failed on its own ground. This reading is not inevitable. Peoples, McGee has told us, undergo a cycle of rise, development, and decline. From the standpoint of McGee's organismic view of a people, the fragmentation of Anglo-American consciousness is not a mere theoretic possibility. It must happen eventually. But this is just my point. If one scene of our McGee/Viconian drama of history ends in fragmentation, in the next the curtain rises on a new corso ricorso. Our age, the age of irony, may begin with separate individuals polishing dense fragments of a once coherent past. But we have inklings of what must happen in the next act. History chronicles the rhetorical emergence of peoples. Gaonkar's reading of McGee and mine are separated chiefly by different emphases. In his shrewd observation that McGee longs for new wholes, Gaonkar confirms my reading that McGee maintains his holistic view of the rhetorical object (the Anglo-American people—or whatever people succeed them) to the very last.

A further problematic feature of McGee's present essay is his downgrading of the importance of interpretation. Here Cox must be our guide. He is correct about Ricoeur, about Eagleton and, lamentably, he is correct about McGee's own earlier work where McGee has articulately
defended "radical reflection" as an everyday interpretive practice.54 (Gaonkar has missed something here. What would Bloom say about a "strong critic" who feels obliged to "misread" his former selves?)

Not only is McGee's present essay not reflective of positions on interpretation which he has taken and defended earlier, the final problematic aspect of McGee's analysis is his reading of the recent history of the field. Cox has traced the twists and turns of this reading and shown that McGee introduces a series of distinctions between speech and writing, rhetorical criticism and literary criticism, action and interpretation, only to set them aside as he moves to the central part of his analysis—the fragment. Two points seem relevant here.

McGee's account of the field, like his account of "postmodern" culture, rests not on analysis of data—in this case what rhetorical critics have written—but on definition. Since Black spoke of "rhetorical criticism," by definition he placed the emphasis on criticism and turned how we study into what we study. Since the object of our study is rhetoric, then only those who get their words in the right order, "critical rhetoric," are really studying and doing rhetoric. The issue here is not the merits of the project of McKerrow and Hariman,45 but the purely definitional grounding of McGee's "reading" of the norm of practice in our field. The method that informs his reading is the very method McGee has warned us about in many of his splendid essays and especially in his "Feminization of Power." There McGee railed vigorously against those who substitute abstractions—fashioned by an elite—for analysis of the material discourse of a people.46 However, not only is the "we" he speaks of in the present essay not "us" (the real material people who are his speech communication colleagues and associated hangers-on) but he takes the worst distinctions which "they" (deconstructionist literary critics) have devised (the dichotomy between speech and writing) to warn us of the errors of "our" ways. In effect literary critics and rhetoricians who follow them are surrogate successors to Delphic priests!

"Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Askelon...."57 I rise to defend the McGee I love and know from neo-McGee! If one wished to find a psychologically nuanced and rhetorically perceptive reading of relevant sacred literature, literature which continues to inform real material political practice and not some theological red herring about dead mediators of dead Greek gods, I would highly recommend the short essay by Scult, McGee and Kuntz on Genesis I and II.58 The focus of that study is certainly a sacred literary text, its method is certainly rhetorical, it is sensitive to literary genre, it shows how the text and an interpretive reading of the text are equally performances, and it has the power to convince even a believer that Genesis is also a material discourse on power. Distinctive and groundbreaking as that essay is, it draws on the actual state of the art of rhetorical analysis in our field and, as one would expect, none of the dichotomies between speech and writing, literature and performance, rhetoric and literature,
or rhetoric and theology that burden this essay are deemed sufficiently important even to merit mention, let alone refutation. A similar point can be made for McGee’s Falwell essay where he minutely examines the story of the fall of the tribe of Benjamin (Judges 19-21) and reads it six ways to Sunday. McGee never so closely approaches a Leffian “close reading” as when he reads the Bible.

In keeping with the aim of my essay to advance my education, I think McGee has something important to teach us even when he is dead wrong.

McGee’s essay ought to remind us not only of the importance of problematizing the texts we read, but to practice reflexive rhetoric in our own writing. Simply to say we are “for” a particular position, and our opponents are “against” it, irrespective of the surface evidence for the claim, does not settle the issue. Being for or against something is not just a matter of propositions, but—to invoke a venerable McGee category—of practice. Whether we style ourselves rhetorical critics or critical rhetoricians, what we say must be read against how we say it. When McGee contrasts the Isocratean technique of regarding as an opposition what to the philosophers was a contradiction, he was never more rock solid on a central tenet of our common tradition. But when he organizes his essay around a series of binary oppositions, text construction vs. text interpretation, speech vs. writing, rhetorical criticism vs. critical rhetoric, literary criticism vs. performance, modernity vs. postmodernity, the whole vs. the fragment, the elite vs. the people, and when he valorizes one side of the column and dismisses the other as unalloyed “error,” we are faced with the same problem in knowing how to interpret McGee as Blake struggled with in his reading of Milton. It seemed odd to Blake that a man who set out to “reconcile the ways of God to man” would write a more persuasive speech for Satan than he wrote for God. Blake concluded that whether he knew it or not Milton was “of the Devil’s party.” If even so formidable a defender of rhetoric as McGee could fall to the seductions of the philosopher’s “form” in the very act of condemning it, who among us is strong enough to stand?

These reflections on the need for critics to follow McGee in problematizing their texts and to become more reflexive in writing them, provide a natural bridge to Leff’s analysis of the historical split between form and content in our field and what he sees as the related but less severe tension between text and context. Leff’s account of how the theoretical blinders implicit in the early history of our field have survived our attempts to transcend them shed considerable light on recent practice. Leff’s essay invites reading on two distinct but related levels: (i) as a “situated” (one might say “local”) contribution to the theory of rhetorical criticism and (ii) as a rhetorical analysis of an oratorical text.

For a field which prides itself in anatomizing the rhetorical conventions of popular discourse, and on critiquing the discourse conventions of other fields, Leff’s diagnosis of the unexamined assumptions constricting our own critical practice is a fitting tu quoque. The symmetry Leff
finds between our preoccupation with abstract formalism on the one hand, and attention to linguistic structures larger than the text on the other, illuminates why our neo-Aristotelian nuclear winter was broken by a textually silent spring. In the spirit of the “diagnosis” and “prescription” of his landmark WJSC essay of ten years ago, Leff’s etiology of our critical distemper is exact, persuasive, and helps advance his program of developing “mid-range” rhetorical theories and of locating our methods in the objects which we study.

The icon seems especially well adapted to enable the critic to develop a theory of the case for, while it is but a textual part, it is also a representative anecdote for the rhetorical action of the whole. As a local, microinstance of form, in Kenneth Burke’s sense, the iconic sentence, paragraph, or discourse invites the reader to perform the speaker’s meaning in a manner analogous to the way an audience participates in the gesture and movement of a live speaker. Through its mimetic invitation to the reader, the iconic dimension of the text is not cognitive first and empathic or social second, but is thoroughly both at once. For at the time of the reading, the iconic sentence, paragraph, or discourse becomes the surrogate speech and thought of the reader, melding his or her mood with the message of the text. By using form to reach beneath ideology and inviting the reader to participate in an unfolding pattern of action, the icon is an opening step (as Burke has held to be true of form generically) to agreement with the propositions affirmed in the form. Leff’s marriage between his method and his object is thus happy; the icon is not a fragment of some full blown theoretic system foreign to the text, but is a dimension of the text itself and of the very fabric of its meaning.

Leff’s move to rehabilitate the text, and his focus on “iconicity” demonstrate the double character of the public address renaissance of our time. We are returning to our “primitive object” and are returning armed with an articulate awareness of the range of specific analytic resources available in the arsenal of the classical rhetorical tradition. Kenneth Burke and Perelman, for example, have been instructive for close reading thanks to their synoptic views of rhetoric and argumentation writ large. Nonetheless, as a field, aside from the long domestication of a short list of old standbys, we have been slow to reclaim the analytic tools of our classical heritage. Brian Vickers’ instructive study of Bacon, for instance, illustrates powerfully the kind of critical penetration one can gain even from one tool—partitio—once its potential has been thoroughly grasped. Leff’s reclamation of “genre” (with Mohrman), of timing, of topics, of judgment (with Browne), of “dispositio” as Condit has noted, of “decorum,” and now with Sachs of “iconicity” enables us to move more closely into our object by showing us how to assimilate and deploy the resources of our tradition.

Not only does the icon link contemporary textual criticism with its classical rhetorical roots, by stressing the action of the text as action
on the reader, the icon also manifests a link between Leff's project of close reading and McGree's critique of ideology. Like the ideograph, or like the fragment, the icon is a densely structured part. In that what one carries away from the icon is as much a mood as a meaning, the icon is literally an experience—something that materially befalls the reader in the time of the text and in the time of the world. By its peculiar blend of form and substance (analogous to the way an Aristotelian soul is the soul of its body and body the body of its soul) the icon assimilates to itself other fragments of experience of a similar kind and extends to the reader a very specific invitation.

Especially in the examples that Leff has cited, and in perfect keeping with Edmund Burke's distinctive contribution to aesthetics—the intense pleasure produced by fear—the icon elicits in the reader a moment of danger. Because the icon occasions a real experience, we may speculate that the reader's own bank of images is thus brought into play through what McGree has called "radical reflection." Through the text, reader and author negotiate together a definition of the content of the experience evoked. When surrounded by the dense fragments of Burke's fecund imagery, the reader may accept the author's account, in which case the reader will have been persuaded. But rhetorical art operates under severe historical constraints. In circumstances so manifestly unfavorable to Burke as were those surrounding the Bristol speech, Burke's art could not turn the balance permanently. The many similar sections one could find in Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France,* arguably show the power of the icon in more favorable circumstances to cooperate with the aristocratic reader in creating a lived fiction and a living nightmare which lasted forty years. Though the icon can provide a theory of the case and reconcile the split between theory and method, the historical effectiveness of this textual line of analysis cannot be determined by textual means alone.

How a reader responds remains as much an historical and cultural question as a textual one. In the hands of a perceptive critic, the icon promises to be an instrument at once supple and precise, enabling the critic to steer clear of the twin rocks of logical and linguistic reductionism which routinely grind up fragile texts between rigorous theories of pure basalt. But what price this welcome safety? Will the inner dynamic of this new critical gyroscope generate an unreal calm and desensitize the critic to the mutual pitch and roll of text and audience?

Here is where Condit implicitly challenges Leff's judgment that the text/context tension is not of the same magnitude as the form/content split. Condit argues that Leff has in fact done what he warned against—that in his own reading he has closed the text against the context. There are two issues here. Do Leff and Sachs in fact ignore the specific context of Burke's speech? Quite apart from how one judges whether or not they do, does Condit's critique carry a suggestion for a course correction within the close reading project?
To my mind, the Leff and Sachs essay is not primarily a free-standing analysis of Burke. Were I to judge it as a free-standing essay I would share more of Condit’s concern about immediate context than I do. But Leff and Sachs’ essay presumes familiarity with Leff’s earlier work with Stephen Browne “Political Judgment and Rhetorical Argument: Edmund Burke’s Paradigm.” In that essay, Leff and Browne focus on the problem of judgment in rhetoric and on how Burke’s Bristol speech enacts judgment in a manner responsive to the particular political circumstances which occasioned Burke’s address. When I place the current essay in the context of Leff’s earlier work, I do not discern the same trend as Condit sees for Leff to focus increasingly on the internal dynamics of texts at the expense of their immediate contexts. Nor would I agree that Leff’s close reading of rhetorical masterworks amounts to his seconding an ideology he finds congenial. Leff distances himself from the ideology of the text—at least in the case of Burke.

In their concluding paragraph Browne and Leff observe: “Burke’s conception of political judgment implies a rhetoric of consent hardly consistent with the contemporary stress on the rhetoric of participation. For many, Burke’s key premises seem narrowly aristocratic or hopelessly unrealistic.” The critical distance of the close reading projects from its objects allows Leff and others to bring to our attention something which we (SCA and ICA members, McGee Whig-Liberals, feminists, Environmentalists, Public Television Supporters and Compassionate Right Thinking Left-Leaning People in General) might otherwise have missed. “These reservations, however, do not detract from the status of the ‘Speech to the Electors of Bristol’ as an important paradigm for the study of political argumentation. To understand the way that the speech grounds and embodies its principles places us on the road to understanding how the theory of argument unfolds within the texture of argumentative practice.” While generically there cannot help but be merit in Condit’s claim that the men in this field, including Leff, tend to study other men, Leff’s recent analysis with Thomas Rosteck of an 1895 speech by prominent American Anarchist Voltairine de Cleyre, published after Condit had written her response, suggests either that Leff is more politic than most other men in the field, or that a more finely woven net may be needed to catch the ideological fry of close reading.

Within her comments on the question of “misuniversalization,” Condit also raises other issues which I believe specify inherent limitations in the close reading project. Condit urges that close readers do not sufficiently recognize that texts are read variously and that sometimes they fail rhetorically. How, her essay suggests, are close readers to protect themselves against a problem inherent in their enterprise—a critical rapture of the deep? Delighted by discovering hidden symmetries in some great classic hulk of sunken oratory, close critics minimize or ignore the gaping hole in her side and the ever more distant boom and hiss.
of the mocking on-flooding world beyond. Leff’s aim to account for context within the text is thus complicated—as Leff himself is the first to acknowledge—by the patently free character of even a limited context, the polysemic potential of language, the alternating moods of seriousness and play, insight and inattention, prejudice and dispassion, which mark the polymorphism of the human mind. When the mind in question belongs to a member of an audience expected to sit for the several hours required for an Edmund Burke to address it, one can well imagine it could wind through quite a number of moods—some of them in active rebellion against the “invitation” of the text. Are there not more possible readings of the text than the art of the speaker can contain or the art of the critic can pin down?

Condit’s reflections on the difference between her own reaction to Burke’s speech and Leff’s, and between Solomon’s reading of Lincoln’s “Second Inaugural” and Leff’s, nicely specify this issue. In his introduction to the special number of Communication Reports in which the Solomon and Leff essays appeared, Zarefsky identified the possibility of radically different critical readings of texts as “the central issue in the politics of criticism.” Having commended Solomon and Carpenter for having performed “a valuable service” in “render[ing] received wisdom contingent,” he went on to caution: “But what then? Are all alternative readings equally sound? Do they all make similar claims upon readers? Affirmative answers to these questions would render criticism nihilistic, unconstrained by the text or even language itself.” In further reflections Zarefsky urged attention to critical standards, what Leff in another context has called “decorum,” as a means of keeping criticism accountable. Following the lead of Condit and the reflections of Zarefsky, how then might we accommodate the aim of close reading to understand the architecture of the text, with the discomfiting polysemic fact that “Words, strain,/ Crack and sometimes break, under the burden,/ Under the tension, slip, slide, perish,/ Decay with imprecision, will not stay in place,/ Will not stay still”?

A route to moving criticism above ideological polemics (or, failing that to move the polemics to a higher level) is to acknowledge a critical via media which, while aiming at unity (in the sense of coherence) is not, to wrench a phrase, “patently single” in its critical bookkeeping. As Leff has written instructively of the habitation of rhetoric and as it would aid critical rhetoric to imagine concretely a habitation sufficiently capacious to house comfortably and securely both his project and McGee’s, I propose we shift our imagery from the sea to the land. Using Bacon’s Solomon House as the remotest of ancestral icons, I would call this new abode of rhetoric, the House of the Middle Way. My aim in offering it is not to overturn other houses great or small, but to imagine another possibility—something between the Leff cottage and the McGee mansion.
The first pillar of this middle way would be Gadamer's insight that the meaning of a text must encompass the history of its interpretations, and the second would be the fact of difference among critics. Each of these pillars would be reinforced by a view of meaning as historically emergent, and together the two would support and be connected by the beam of pluralism—a pluralism disciplined by the Aristotelian convention that argumentation must be appropriate to the field and to the nature of the question asked. A third pillar would be Leff's insight into the local stability of the text, and a fourth would be McGee's insight into the remarkable regional stability of the Anglo-American tradition. Clearly the local stability of the text amid a context of broader change and the longer-range stability of an ideology which changes gradually over generations are not opposite, but complementary rhetorical phenomena. Each of these two great pillars would be reinforced by a view of meaning as emergent in the text and in the ideograph, and together the two would support and be connected by the beam of longitudinal case studies, which I will expand upon presently.

As we enter the capacious yet structured space of this project and pass between the first pair of its columns, we find that both Condit and Leff's reading of Burke and Leff and Solomon's interpretations of Lincoln can be accommodated without confusion. To credit alternative readings of Burke and of Lincoln is no more a gesture toward critical nihilism than was Darwin's insistence on the omnipresence of variation a gesture toward taxonomic anarchy. Darwin (perhaps anticipating Leff), held that species have a relative temporal and regional stability. For a subject dealing with something as varied and messy as life (and in this biology and rhetoric are equally life sciences) local or regional stability is all one has a right to expect. To ask for greater "rigor" is to risk missing the point. In an extremely difficult situation, Burke has shown us how close oratory can come to accomplishing the impossible. In a circumstance fraught with far greater danger, Lincoln constructed, if not the most pacific and magnanimous theodicy of the American Civil War that rhetorical art could invent, then at least the most pacific and magnanimous one political reality would allow. Listeners with the sensibilities that Condit describes could not long credit Burke. Nor could any close reading alter the decisive inflection a sensitive white southern mind would attach to the moment in Lincoln's speech where he implicitly imputes the greater sin to the South before moving forward to insist that God does not calculate sin regionally but imputes it nationally and historically "as the woe due to those by whom the offense came." Condit and Leff each have illuminated different potential responses to the invitations of Burke's text, and Solomon and Leff have each underscored inevitable differences in how a culturally decisive text will be read by bearers of alternative traditions of political memory. It subtracts nothing from the oratorical stature of Burke, or from the world-historical greatness of Lincoln, to say that each in his respective moment of
danger made the best of a bad job. As Aristotle (perhaps anticipating the deconstructionists) put it “The effect which lectures produce upon a hearer depends upon his habits.” To expect that a single authoritative reading of a text by a scholar could take precedence over the actual reactions of different audience members at a particular time and place, or over the readings of a text by bearers of different traditions of interpretation across time, would be to expect of rhetorical scholarship the rigor of an exact science rather than the different rigor of an art.

Burke looms large in the history of Anglo-American oratory not because he knew how to carry his hearers, but because he spoke decisively on momentous issues and discovered means of persuasion available only to an orator of genius. The wonder of Lincoln’s Second Inaugural is not that it is impartial (as though Lincoln were not also a politician and the Commander-in-Chief of a victorious army) but that it so nearly achieves magnanimity that one hundred and twenty-five years after the event his words are not only venerated in the North but are accepted with so little bitterness by the vast majority of southern whites. No document in the entire history of English Canada, for example, enjoys comparable moral authority in contemporary Quebec.

The point is not merely that if we broaden our scope we may accommodate more meanings, but rather, that if we allow for receptional pluralism, while at the same time deepening and diversifying our historical grasp, we may find that meanings (within the tolerances proper to our subject) tend to stabilize along specific rhetorical-cultural axes. By attending to the embedded “fragments” in texts—the separable parts which carry different affective/cognitive valences in specific time-bound circumstances, and from which different cultural traditions radiate outward—we come to understand the rhetorical meaning in larger historical-interpretive patterns. For example, one may be a Catholic, a Protestant, a Jew, or a secularist anywhere in Europe. Yet, were one to look at the religious map of Europe, say in 1648, one would discover that Catholicism held the area roughly occupied by Charlemagne’s original empire, while Protestantism was largely confined to the regions of Europe which were pagan longest and Christianized last. No close reading of Biblical or ecclesiastical texts, however ecumenical its intent, can undo this enormous gulf of difference, nor can any skepticism of the entire Western religious enterprise remove the deep impress and color of Biblicism from European consciousness. Even when a text is constitutive of the consciousness of a people—as is the Bible for the various sects of Jews, Christians and secular westerners, as is the Bhagavad-Gita for the peoples of India, and as is the Koran for the various sects of Islam—it is of the essence even of constitutive texts to be construed differently.

The meanings of texts vary and emerge. Far from being anarchic, different readings even of constitutive texts are both normal and normative. They are normal in that they happen regularly; they are
normative in that the occurrence of difference defines cultural reality as inherently agonistic. Constitutive texts mark the proximate sites at which a People's identity both coheres and separates. Scholarship does not and cannot overcome these guls, for culture reaches into scholarship and marks it for good or for ill, for richer or for poorer. One aim of rhetorical scholarship is to illuminate the line of sensibility, culture and history which engenders the difference between readings. Within the decorum of scholarship alternative readings are potentially revelatory. They reveal the precise border at which programmatic reading of whatever school has reached a point of diminishing returns and where new questions need to be raised which call for other methods. Even as great texts emerge from the complex of experience and symbolization (something profound happens to someone named “Moses,” the story is cast in the image of the “burning bush” and an encounter with “I AM”), so great readings emerge from the complex of prior experience and disciplined analysis (Eliot reads the “metaphysical” poets, Kenneth Burke reads *Julius Caesar* and *Mein Kampf*, Derrida learns to unread and causes everyone to reread the Western canon). In a dynamic culture the inflection of difference will always triumph over a kind of “close reading” which through a fallacy of misplaced concreteness overshoots the mark and lapses into fundamentalism. But this is far from a necessary tendency in close reading as Leff practices it, and no critic is immune from arriving at a similar cul-de-sac by a different route. Where the reading engages its object at too global a level—as is the danger in ideological analysis—it risks missing the crucial inflections on which may pivot the subsequent flow of tradition.

As we pass through the second set of pillars of the middle way we find that the local stability of the text in its immediate context and the local stability of an ideology changing gradually over time are held in dynamic equilibrium through their complementary views of language as the engine of emergent meaning. When placed so as to reinforce one another, Leff and McGee’s views of text, fragment, and history produce a breadth of view and a specificity of rhetorical detail not fully thematized in the projects of either.

Again to borrow categories from Condit, but to broaden their scope, both scholars are critics of plenitude and of spareness, of the text and of the fragment. Leff’s plenitude of the text, for example, is matched by a sparer style of historicism, and McGee’s sparer style of textual criticism is matched by an historicism of plenitude. Leff’s concern to preserve and celebrate the uniqueness of the text and to protect it from the distortions of reductionism limits his attention to history to the immediate context of a single rhetorical event. Leff’s project, by definition, cannot attend to the deeper cultural and historical currents which are the hallmark of the work of McGee. (And McGee’s project is less well equipped—certainly less well disposed—to focus on a sustained narrative or on the situated art embodied in a particular text.) Leff must contain
the text within a limited context, because only within a limited context can the singular variegated fabric of the text be protected against reductionism. Lengthen the historical sweep and such a multiplicity of particulars crowd in upon the would-be close reader's view that to accommodate them he or she can retain but one or two and must reduce the rest to a few manageable abstractions. McGee, for his part, keeps the focus wide, for he wishes not to miss the on-going sweep of events. From the standpoint of my own project (and I suspect from the standpoint of any similar one which requires both historical scope and close analysis of situated rhetorical art) here is where a problem arises. Is there a way of making use of the ideograph and of close reading which would allow the rhetorical analyst to encompass deep history while sacrificing little, if anything, to formalism or reductionism?

By definition, formalism smooths out difference. But what applies to the variegated texture of the single text applies equally to the uniqueness of historical patterns. Only one part of McGee's program is inherently reductionistic, and that is his generic concern with ideology. This concern emerges primarily in the synchronic moment of his analysis. If one is talking about "ideology" then one will, to that extent, attend less carefully to the text. In my view, consistently rich as is the diachronic moment in McGee's work, McGee's synchronic accounts of this moment are only partially adequate to the richness of his own historical/critical practice. But the problem is not, or at least it need not be, systemic, for the content of McGee's Anglo-American ideology is never clearly defined. It is known chiefly through its parts, and its parts emerge through agonistic events which leave textual as well as socio-rhetorical traces. The diachronic moment in McGee's project and the contextual moment in Leff's are the proximate points where each project most nearly approaches the orbit of the other.

The "ideograph" in principle should enable McGee, or anyone who needs to resolve the rhetorical object at a level larger than the text, to avoid formalism and reductionism, for the ideograph does not so much mean as do. While the ideograph is a part, like the icon, it is also a center around which variegated parts collect. We can say that the ideograph is the counterpart of the icon (or the other way around), for both constructions enact what they mean. Each construction absorbs the meanings of its context and bodies those meanings forth in a local explosion of rhetorical energy.

We might relate the ideograph more closely to Leff's variegated text (admittedly "Joyceing" the ideograph a bit in the process) through a companion oriental "icon"—the ying and the yang. The ideograph is not one meaning only. It is not merely Protagoras' "two logoi in opposition," but the opposition as held together in dynamic cultural-rhetorical tension. Thus, "liberty" is not Elizabeth only, or Elizabeth and Wentworth together, but the Elizabeth/Wentworth pair as carried forward in the later pairs, Elizabeth and James I and II, Elizabeth and Charles I
and II and, literally "etc."—pick your instantiating event. To move the illustration across the Atlantic, "liberty" is not Jefferson only, but Jefferson and Hamilton together, not James Madison only, but Madison and Patrick Henry. Read in this way the ideograph carries within its complex affective charge the tensions of enacted yet ever-emergent meaning. There is, then, no abstractness or formalism in the ideograph, for it is the very concreteness of specific historical experience; yet for all its radical particularity it is also a non-reductive register of rhetorical change across time and situations. Whenever the ideograph is embedded in fresh discourse—a whole text or a socio-rhetorical part—only the greatest orator or conversationalist can channel the opposite valence of historical usage exclusively in one particular direction. Opposed readings then manifest no embarrassment to or defect in rhetorical scholarship, but confirm the open texture of history and the situation-specific and inevitably limited character of even the greatest rhetorical art. As an early critical rhetoric study—replicated again and again—reported, "We hold these treasures in earthen vessels."

The House of the Middle Way is not only a program for peace but also for progress. This feature is manifest in the new horizon it would open for rhetorical studies—the possibility of combining specificity of focus with longitudinal or cross-situational range. With certain modifications at the programmatic level, the methodological oppositions between the McGee and Leff projects can be suspended (refused and defused) to facilitate a different style of rhetorical analysis. This different style would be more historical than ideological—though sharing with ideological analysis a diachronic concern for the movement of constitutive transformative experiences across time. It would be more social than textual—though sharing with close reading a jealous concern for the integrity of the text and the situated art of the speaker.

A "longitudinal case study" would begin by identifying an unresolved but perennial tension within the Anglo-American political tradition, or, more broadly, would locate a tension within the Western intellectual tradition or the human intellectual/spiritual enterprise at large. At the most general level a longitudinal case study could begin with the advent of a rhetorical epoch and proceed to analyze how a symbolism so radically different from anything that preceded it marked a differentiation of human consciousness and a before and after of meaning. An orienting perspective for this style of work is my essay "A Rhetorical Interpretation of History." Two excellent case studies are Goodnight's work on Reagan, the bomb and the end of history, and John Durham Peters' "John Locke, The Individual and the Origin of Communication." As an alternative point of beginning, or as the continuation of an analysis of a rhetorical epoch, a longitudinal case study could focus on the constitutive symbols of a people and examine, as McGee and Maurice Charland have done, the central representative events which have freighted a people's key historical ideographs with their opposite
culture-specific, cumulative, and untranslatable associations. The study could then lead to the close analysis of a particular text.

As yet another alternative, a close textual analysis could proceed very much in the manner of current close textual studies, but be enriched by the longitudinal perspective in at least two significant ways. First, a close reading informed by a longitudinal perspective would attend not only to the text's immediate situated context, but to how the text's seemingly given context was not the creation of yesterday or of local forces only, but of a tradition of interpretation. Second, a close reading informed by the longitudinal perspective would seek to honor equally the art of the speaker and the interpretive traditions of the audience or audiences. Such a reading would place a lessened emphasis on the need for the critic to provide a single magisterial reading of the invitation of the text and—while honoring the art of the rhetor—would also honor the audience by attending to the insurgent polysemy of the text and to how the speaker, despite himself or herself, invites alternative readings by different interpretive communities. Recognizing the inevitable failure of even the greatest art to control history would help us appreciate the specific rhetorical genius of great rhetors by underscoring how well they deployed the artistic resources at their disposal, and how closely that situated art came to achieving consensus. It would add also to our appreciation of the co-creative role of the audience by underscoring their role in facilitating, rebelling against, and enduring the meanings of their tradition.

Already this account is too didactic. The key epochal and ideographic events from which one begins are not given but made. The text one works one's way toward is also the beginning from which one worked backward from to uncover its complex rhetorical ancestry. But a rhetorical ancestry is a subtle thing. In history, almost by definition, things do not happen the way they are supposed to. A rhetorical history is not a matter of specific doctrinal or propositional agreements only, but of strategies of argument deployed initially in one setting for one purpose and then deployed later in another setting for a different or even hostile one. Even great cataclysmic epochal shifts are, after all, rhetorically reasonable, for they rest upon the very cultural grammar they doctrinally transcend. Nor are we speaking of fantasy chains (though in specific cases they are of undoubted value), for in longitudinal case studies as in biological evolution there are both missing links and also highly improbable real connections. One's fiercest enemy ideologically may turn out to be one's nearest kin rhetorically. Thus, from an initially plausible surface reading one can say Darwin's Origin was a death blow to conventional English natural theology. From a longitudinal rhetorical framework, one discovers that its central strategy of argument is inscribed within Archdeacon Paley's response to Hume's critique of miracles in Paley's Evidences of Christianity. Rather than rebutting Hume that miracles were impossible, Paley sought only to lessen the
absurdity in believing they had happened. Thus in the *Origin*, Darwin does not pretend to have proven evolution, but takes as his aim to lessen the absurdity in believing it. The similarity is not coincidental, nor is the coincidence what we might expect. Darwin described Paley as the sole author in the academic course who was "of the least use to me in the education of my mind" when he was reading divinity as an undergraduate. But there is in the Cambridge University Library an unpublished manuscript in Darwin's own hand in which he copied out nearly verbatim an analogous argument from Archbishop Sumner. Of such is the redundant cunning of historical reason, or as the ideological critics remind us, of the overdetermination of historical causes.

A final comment and an addition.

The principle on which our House of the Middle Way is to be constructed seems to me sound. The House will rest (the way a suspension bridge rests, or an airplane in flight rests) not on one principle only, nor yet on a compromise between two, but on the agonistic interplay of complementary opposites, each of which, like Aristotle's thirty-nine topics of enthymemes, is so secure in its situated, partial truth, that each can fold within its ambience some tincture of its opposite without loss of integrity. The Middle Way promises to be a place of hospitality, and, if we conduct ourselves with decorum, our House will welcome the performing arts, especially oratory, critical rhetoric, theatre, and oral interpretation; will provide sanctuary for private thought, or for a serious conversation of a late afternoon. Above the icon of a sailing ship moving confidently beyond the Pillars of Hercules, Francis Bacon placed in the frontispiece of his *Novum Organum*, what might be a suitable ideograph for our more modest "postmodern" project of the Middle Way: "plus ultra."

ENDNOTES

5. Michael LefF, "Rhetorical Timing in Lincoln's 'House Divided' Speech," published under separate cover as the first in the series of Van Zelst Lecture in Communication (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University School of Speech, 1984) "the meaning of the speech progresses through time to reconfigure the audience's perception of both space and time relative to public events" (p. 7). Also Stephen H. Browne and Michael C. LefF, "Political Judgment and Rhetorical Argument: Edmund Burke's Paradigm," Argument and Social Practice: Proceedings of the Fourth SCA/AFA Conference on Argumentation, ed. J. R. Cox, M. Sillars, and G. Walker (Annandale, VA: Speech Communication Association, 1985) 193-210, "The movement of the text is... determined by the braided threads of principle and action, by the interlocking structures of political time and space" (201); "The Habitation of Rhetoric," Argument and Critical Practices: Proceedings of the Fifth SCA/AFA Conference on Argumentation, ed. Joseph W. Wenzel (Annandale, VA: Speech Communication Association, 1987), "Decorum has no substantive stability across situations, since it represents a constantly moving process of negotiation... At the global level, decorum is pure process, but its local manifestations are products that display a powerful solidity. So also is rhetoric a universal activity that finds its habitation only in the particular" (p. 7). "Dimensions of Temporality in Lincoln's Second Inaugural," Communication Reports 1 (1989): 26-31. "Temporal movement... frames the action of... various argumentative and stylistic elements, blends them into a unified field of textual action, and projects this field onto the public events that form the subject of the discourse..." (p. 26).


8. For McGee on "ideograph" see "The Ideograph"; for "maxim" see "Not Men But Measures"; for "analogy," see "The Fall of Wellington"; for "text" see "A Materialist's Conception of Rhetoric."

9. For example, "The Origins of Liberty"; "The Ideograph"; "In Search of 'The People.'"


11. "Rhetoric, in other words, exists on a continuum from the absolutely specific experience of being persuaded to the absolutely general experience of having been conditioned to a pattern of social and political opinions." "A Materialist's Conception of Rhetoric," (p. 31).

12. Speaking of political myths, McGee writes "it is easy to recognize them rhetorically as ontological arguments relying... on artistic proofs intended to answer the question, What is 'real'?" "In Search of 'The People,'" (p. 244).


18. The essay begins with a contemporary issue, 141, leads to a constitutive historical event, 142-153, and then returns to a meditation on the relation between the constitutive event and current political practice: 153-154.


20. See note #6 above.

21. I base this interpretation partially on Leff's practice—he does not generalize between cases, and in his programmatic essay of ten years ago, he focuses the task of the critic on generalizing within cases. Michael C. Leff, "Interpretation and the Art of the Rhetorical Critic," The Western Journal of Speech Communication 44 (1980): 349.


23. "The Origins of Liberty." "A tyranny' results whenever a prince does not behave as Elizabeth did," (p. 42); "The Fall of Wellington," 39-42. See also "Secular Humanism," and account of "radical reflection," esp. 5-6 & note #2, 30-31. See also "On Feminized Power," 4-10.

24. McGee anticipates objections to his account of how to chart the persistence of consciousness over time. See "The Origins of Liberty" 40-45. If one wanted to offer an alternative account of the genealogy of the constitutive events of Anglo-American consciousness, McGee's method of tracing continuity and change over time is so powerful that it would continue to define the rhetorical approach to the problem. A key limitation in McGee's view, from my perspective, is that his ideographs are but grammatical units or undeveloped inventional resources. To my own way of thinking, a more robust and developed view of the speaker as a person and of the rhetor's art is needed to account for how these parts come to be formed into wholes and strategically deployed in specific situations. Similarly, McGee's descriptions of ideographs as instances of "false consciousness," attempts at "seduction," or as "excuses for action" do not do justice to human consciousness as historical nor to the artistic and ethical complexities of the re-presentation and re-appropriation of the symbols of a tradition over time.
27. "Secular Humanism" 5-6; and "Hide-Bound Argumentation" 566-68.
28. "Secular Humanism" 5-6; and "Hide-Bound Argumentation" 566-68.
30. "In Search of The People" 235-236.
31. Each of McGee's major essays with the partial exception of "Secular Humanism" and "Genesis and Power" focus on parts. See note #8 above.
32. McGee stresses the importance of the audience's prior belief as an enduring restraint on the art of the speaker. See "In Search of The People," esp. 239-247. His challenge to the notion of a passive audience in "A Materialist's Conception of Rhetoric," 41; and his stress on "interactive motive" between speaker and audience, 43, places the accent on the unforeseen. Though McGee stresses how society "coerces" us and indicates that he uses the word "freedom" in a way closer to how most people use "coercion" ("A Materialist's Conception of Rhetoric," 47-48, note #17), the "moment of danger," underscores the kind of freedom the audience has to restructure this past in novel ways. Since, for McGee, there is no "objective" past "there" to constrain present action—except through "usage" and present interpretation—then history (both past and present) are radically open—free—for reshaping by the artistic interaction between rhetor and audience. On the active role of the audience see "Some Issues In The Rhetorical Study of Political Communication" . . . audiences actively participate in political communication, not only as recipients of messages, but also as producers of messages . . . " (p. 170).
33. There is then, a tension between the openness of choice—how an audience will construe this situation and draw upon its remembered past—and the simultaneous cultural constraint which pressures the selection of certain resources over others. Compare the present essay with "A Materialist's Conception of Rhetoric," 43-44.
34. McGee's essays, in keeping with the nature of the political tradition he has primarily studied (the tradition of the British House of Commons) stress gradual, developmental change and not sudden breaks. To argue that the reign of Elisabeth Tudor continues to inform our political vocabulary and practice (to say nothing of the debate between Pitt and Walpole, or the events surrounding the fall of Wellington) is to present a strong agenda for historical continuity. See also "Some Issues In The Rhetorical Study of Political Communication," 174-175.
36. For a critique of "documentary history" see Dominick LaCapra, Rethinking Intellectual History: Texts, Contexts, Language (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1983) esp. Ch. 1; see also Dominick LaCapra, History And Criticism (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1985) esp. Ch. 1. For a rhetorically rich alternative which has grounds in McGee's own earlier work see esp. LaCapra 1985, 39-44.
37. LaCapra, Rethinking Intellectual History Ch. 1 esp. 33-37.
38. LaCapra, Rethinking Intellectual History and History and Criticism.
39. LaCapra, Rethinking Intellectual History 43-45.
41. McGee, "In Search of 'The People'," 249; "The 'Ideograph'," 10-14.
43. "Not Men But Measures" 142-144. For an equally spirited defense of popular culture see "Some Issues in the Rhetorical Study of Political Communication" 174-182.
46. Paine 51.
47. Paine 106.
49. Thompson 325-326 and 482-483.
50. Michael Kraus, The United States To 1865 (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1959) 368-370; also Samuel Eliot Morison, The Oxford History of The American People (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965) 466-461; "The reason why the 1840 campaign became the jolliest and most idiotic presidential contest in our history is that the Whigs beat the Democrats by their own methods. They adopted no platform, nominated a military hero, ignored real issues, and appealed to the emotions rather than the brains of voters," (p. 456).
51. White, Ch. 3, "The Dissolution of Meaning: Thucydides' History of His World."
52. Vico, Book 4 "The Course The Nations Run" 335-351.
53. "In Search of The People," 244-249; "The 'Idiograph'" 14-16.
54. The de-emphasis on interpretation in the present essay is in stark contrast to the emphatic emphasis McGee placed on it especially in his Falwell essay, "Secular Humanism." "If radical reflection is itself 'built into' collective consciousness of everyday life, it is more than a technique of criticism or a style of philosophy. At least conceivably, it is a thorough-going way of arriving at what everyone—from a red-dirt tobacco farmer to Oxford Don—will count as moral knowledge. It could be the engine that makes 'dramatism' work. . . ." (p. 5); see also the "Radical Understanding" section in "On Feminized Power," 10-15.
57. 2 Samuel 1:20.
58. "Genesis and Power."
59. "Secular Humanism" 7-29. To be precise McGee reads it four ways, poetically, dialectically and two separate rhetorical readings.
61. William Blake, "The Marriage of Heaven and Hell," note to "The Voice of The Devil," The Portable Blake, ed. Alfred Kazin (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1974) 251. Contrast the way McGee here dismisses as "error" positions opposed to his own with the call he issued with John Lyne in "What Are Nice Folks Like You Doing In A Place Like This? Some Entailments of Treating Knowledge Claims Rhetorically" in John Nelson et al., see note #2: "When opposed alternatives appear to be mutually exclusive so that one must be rejected as the other is chosen, the relationship is not truly dialectical, for the opposites do not create a unity of understanding in their opposition," (p. 394). There he extended even to Plato a hand of fellowship he seems to withhold here even from his professional colleagues: "The trick is thus to think of rhetorical and Platonic models of authority as a unity of opposites," (p. 395).
62. "Interpretation and The Art of The Critic."


68. Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, ed. Conor Cruise O'Brien (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1988). In one sense Burke's entire book bears an iconic relation to what it affirms. In defending the established state Burke depicts the state under the image of a family and defends the "family" through a personal communication—the letter. (And on top of that the letter of an older experienced, fatherly man to a young, eager, inexperienced one—reminiscent (in different ways) of the *Nichomachean Ethics* or of Chesterton's letters to his son). The very genre Burke selects for his response is thus iconic with the substance affirmed in that genre. There are numerous specific passages which also are iconic in the more strict sense. Most are too long to cite; here is the merest sample: "but we ought to suspend our judgment until the first effervescence is a little subsided, till the liquor is cleared, and until we see something deeper than the agitation of a troubled and frothy surface," (p. 90). "In viewing this monstrous tragi-comic scene, the most opposite passions necessarily succeed, and sometimes mix with each other in the mind; alternate contempt and indignation; alternate laughter and tears; alternate scorn and horror" (p. 92-93). Note the contrast between the balance of Burke's writing in his descriptions of positive rights as an inheritance from the past and the vivid imbalance he conveys in describing the revolutionist's alternative: "they preferred this positive, recorded, hereditary title... to that vague speculative right, which exposed their sure inheritance to be scrambled for and torn to pieces by every wild litigious spirit" (p. 118).

69. "Political Judgment and Rhetorical Argument."

70. Leff's earlier case studies attend to context as does his most recent essay prior to the present one. Thomas Rosteck and Michael Leff, "Piety, Propriety, and Perspective."


73. "Piety, Propriety and Perspective."


76. Zarefsky 11.


81. *Nicomachean Ethics*, Bk. I., Ch. 7., 1098a 25; McKeon, 943.


83. *Metaphysics*, Bk. 2, Ch. 2, 995a; McKeon, 715.


86. 'till mutual sickness do scholars part.


88. Campbell, "A Rhetorical Interpretation of History."


