



Twentieth-Century Roots of Rhetorical Studies

Jim A. Kuypers and Andy King
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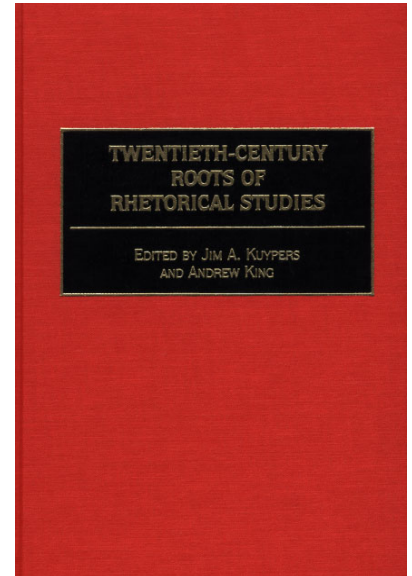
**Current
Issue**

Archives

**Editorial
Info**

Search

Interact



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This book examines the lives and influences of eleven noteworthy rhetoricians of the twentieth century: Everett Lee Hunt, Henry Lee Ewbank, Sr., Hoyt Hopewell, Wilbur Samuel Howell, Marie Hocmuth Nichols, Waldo Braden, Carroll C. Arnold, Robert Gray Gunderson, Ernest G. Bormann, Edwin Black, and Lloyd F. Bitzer. While not an exhaustive list of all influential figures of rhetorical studies in the modern age, surely this group represents eleven of the most significant teachers and scholars of rhetoric in the last hundred years. These individuals shaped our understanding of rhetoric through their own scholarship as well as through the development of generations of their students who carried these ideas forward through various stages of development and permutation. In addition to scholarship, these eleven also greatly influenced the role of contemporary departments and schools of communication, institutionalizing the study of our discipline in colleges and universities. Above all, they were master teachers, both at the graduate and the undergraduate levels.

Why study the historical roots of our rhetorical heritage? Kuypers and King offer three clear answers in their introductory essay. First, it is the editors' intention to show that rhetorical studies were not "spawned from a monolithic center" called neo-Aristotelianism. This work is, in many respects, a response to Edwin Black's, *Rhetorical Criticism: A Study in Method*, thirty-five years after Black, in the words of the editors, "cut us off from our past and made us ashamed of our progenitors." These eleven essays, according to Kuypers and King, strongly suggest that the heritage of rhetorical studies in modern America drew from many sources, besides Aristotle, and that it is both unfair and untrue to assume that neo-Aristotelian criticism was the dominant force in American rhetorical thinking until its demise at the hands of Black and others, beginning in the 1960s. The editors also cite as one of their objectives, a desire to "help reclaim a usable past" and note that these eleven were "unique," "many-sided," and possessed a "special angle of vision" in their thinking about rhetoric. The third objective of the work for the editors is "to set the record straight" about these founders. Kuypers and King note that these individuals were pluralistic, cosmopolitan, inventive, broadly educated, and "remarkably free of the brittle jargon that settled upon us in the late decades of the last century."

These essays strongly argue that there continues to be relevance in the study of one's past, especially the history of a discipline. While some post-modern scholars have viewed the study of history with skepticism, this work emphasizes the importance of the historical context both for the teachers and the students of communication. These eleven essays provides a sense of our professional origins. In this time period when many of our students are remarkably a-historical, it is important to locate our own development as a discipline within some time frame. The stories of these eleven remind us how the elements of classical education were central to the evolution of our field. They also remind us of the role that Cornell played, as a kind of grand alma mater, for all of us in communication. These stories also remind us that it was the Midwest, with its people who looked at life with careful skepticism, that provided much of our discipline's professional development through its teachers, scholars, students, and departments.

Beyond resurrecting a history of our heritage, this volume also serves to reinforce those ideas and practices that do not change over time. These eleven were respected for their careful scholarship and thoughtful research, for their critical and analytical thinking, and their clear and insightful writing. Such efforts are meaningful in any age and are perhaps most necessary in our current one, when the time constraints of our profession have often injured our best efforts as teachers and scholars to be careful, thoughtful, and clear.

In sum, this work is a valuable one, standing at the intersection of our heritage and our future, and offering insights into both.

[Back to Top](#)

[Home](#) | [Current Issue](#) | [Archives](#) | [Editorial Information](#) | [Search](#) | [Interact](#)