Rhetorical criticism began as rhetorical studies of single speeches or speakers. As rhetorical theory began to broaden its purview, so too did rhetorical criticism widen its domain, adopting a more liberal view of the nature of rhetoric. Rhetoric came to be viewed generally as attempts to influence others through symbols, and studies were undertaken of a variety of artifacts which were not public speeches. Studies of groups of rhetorical artifacts, both within movements and within genres, also flourished. Although some may dislike individual experiments and innovations in rhetorical criticism, probably no one would deny that these developments have not only invigorated the practice of rhetorical criticism but have also provided insights which would have been difficult if not impossible to obtain with traditional approaches.

This essay is intended to encourage similar experimentation in competitive rhetorical criticism. This is not to deny that some experimentation has already occurred in this individual event. The Ohio Forensic Association's state tournament, for example, recently experimented with film criticism. Individual students have undertaken criticism of literary works and other artifacts not traditionally considered rhetorical. We have already witnessed a movement toward "communication criticism" and toward a broader conception of "rhetorical criticism" at tournaments. These changes are laudable, and in a similar vein, this essay is intended to a) justify and encourage such efforts, and b) provide a theoretical framework for them. This essay is limited to one particular type of innovation—the rhetorical criticism of literary works—but many of our arguments apply by analogy to other approaches, and we encourage sound experimentation along other lines as well. Such a justification and theoretical framework could be erected on various grounds.

The phrase "rhetorical criticism" contains within it an important ambiguity, for the adjective "rhetorical" can be interpreted as modifying to the method of criticism, to the object of criticism, or to both simultaneously. This suggests that four types of criticism can

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be distinguished:

1) rhetorical criticism of rhetorical artifacts,
2) rhetorical criticism of non-rhetorical artifacts,
3) non-rhetorical criticism of rhetorical artifacts, and,
4) non-rhetorical criticism of non-rhetorical artifacts.

As we shall see later, this typology is overly simplistic. For one thing, it assumes that an artifact is either rhetorical or non-rhetorical, but not both—an assumption we explicitly reject later. Despite this limitation, it will serve as a starting point for our discussion, and we will refine it subsequently. This essay will limit its discussion of non-rhetorical artifacts to literature, and of non-rhetorical criticism to literary criticism, although analogies could be made for other artifacts, e.g., art and art criticism, or film and film criticism.

The rhetorical critic is most interested in the first sort of enterprise, where both the method and the object of study are rhetorical. Rhetorical critics, as rhetorical critics, are utterly uninterested in the last alternative, since neither the method of inquiry nor the object of study falls within their purview. The second type of study can be exemplified by rhetorical criticism of literary works, and the third by literary criticism of rhetorical discourse. The second and third categories do hold interest for the rhetorical scholar. The former can extend the boundaries of rhetorical criticism, while the latter gives a fuller appreciation for the artifact under investigation.

Most essays exploring the nature of rhetorical criticism concern the first sort of undertaking. Except as necessary to accomplish the purpose of this paper, these works and this type of study need not concern us here. While the rhetorical theorist and critic may gain useful insights into the nature and function of rhetorical artifacts by considering the insights a literary critic can offer into rhetorical discourse, this sort of study will also be excluded from discussion here. We draw upon the literature in rhetorical theory, rhetorical criticism, and literature as guidance for contestants in competitive rhetorical criticism.

THE NATURE OF CRITICISM

Let us begin by outlining our conception of the nature of criticism, the focal point of this inquiry, and proceed then to a consideration of the distinction between rhetoric and literature.

The *Oxford English Dictionary* observes that criticism is "1. The action of criticism or passing judgment upon the qualities or merits of anything. 2. The act of estimating the qualities of literary or artistic work." The conclusion that the term "criticism" refers to a process which culminates in a judgment is inescapable.

Various scholars in speech communication have also declared that the particular form of criticism which interests us here—rhetorical criticism—includes evaluation or judgment. Loren D. Reid asserts that the critic's "primary and inescapable responsibility" is "to interpret, to appraise, to evaluate." For Lawrence W. Rosenfield, an "essential" feature of criticism is the "verdict." Finally, Ernest Bormann claims that "the critic, to do his job fully, must make judgments." Hence, many writers in speech communication consider evaluation or judgment to be an essential aspect of rhetorical criticism.

However, there are some authors, as Barnet Baskerville reports, who suggest that criticism has another end: "The ultimate aim of criticism . . is illumination, the providing of insights into the work which will deepen the reader's understanding and appreciation." However, these other writers being referred to, as might be supposed from the reference to "readers," are literary critics. Moreover, as Northrup Frye, a noted authority in literary criticism, observes, "The axioms and postulates of criticism, however, have to grow out of the art it deals with." Although we can learn much from studying the methods of other sorts of criticism, we must not

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uncritically accept their ideas and approaches since they deal with
different objects of criticism than the rhetorical critic confronts.
Therefore, rhetorical criticism should render an evaluation or
judgment. This is consistent with the meaning of the term "criticism";
it is consistent with usage by various rhetorical scholars; and we ought
not be dismayed if it differs from usage in other disciplines. Many
useful investigations of rhetoric exist which do not include judgments.
However, strictly speaking, they should be referred to by a different
label, since a study must evaluate if it is to qualify as "criticism."
Competitive rhetorical criticism ought to conform to this usage as well,
unless compelling arguments are adduced. At this point it is
appropriate to consider the nature of rhetorical and literary discourse.

RHETORIC AND LITERATURE

Drawing a distinction between rhetoric and literature will aid us in
understanding the nature of rhetorical criticism, as well as in
distinguishing rhetorical and literary artifacts. We adhere to a
functional definition: rhetoric concerns persuasion, attempts to alter or
strengthen the beliefs, values, and attitudes of the audience. With few
exceptions, rhetorical theorists have considered rhetoric to be the art of
persuasion. In the fifth century B.C. Aristotle defined rhetoric as "the
faculty of observing in any given case the available means of
persuasion." Sextus Empiricus reports that one of Aristotle's chief
competitors in Athens, Isocrates, "asserts that orators pursue nothing
else than the science of persuasion." More recently, Richard Weaver
writes that rhetoric is "persuasive speech in the service of truth." Kenneth Burke, one of the theorists most frequently considered to be a
"new rhetorician," explains the relationship between ancient
conceptions of rhetoric and his conception:

Traditionally, the key term for rhetoric is not 'identification,' but
'persuasion.' . . . Our treatment, in terms of identification, is decidedly
not meant as a substitute for the sound traditional approach. Rather,
as we try to show, it is but an accessory to the standard lore.11

8Aristotle, The Rhetoric, tr. W. Rhys Roberts (New York: Random House,
9Sextus Empiricus, "Against the Rhetoricians," Against the Professors,
tr. R.G. Bury (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, Loeb Classical
Library, 1944), 62. See also Quintilian, Institutio Oratorio., II.xv.4.
10Richard Weaver, Life Without Prejudice (Chicago: Henry Regnery,
11Kenneth Burke. Rhetoric of Motives (Berkeley: University of
While there are exceptions in the long history of rhetoric,\textsuperscript{12} most rhetorical theorists agree that the essence of "rhetoric" is persuasion.

Not surprisingly, many rhetorical critics concur with this conception of rhetoric. Marie Hochmuth writes that "whatever the end the speaker has in mind, his specific purpose is to speak with persuasive effect toward that end."\textsuperscript{13} Karlyn Kohrs Campbell asserts that "Rhetoric, then, refers to written and oral discourses that are persuasive."\textsuperscript{14} Thus, even scholars writing from diverse perspectives, like Hochmuth (Nichols) and Campbell, agree with the contention that rhetoric means persuasion. This is generally the view within the forensic community as well.

What then is literature? Carroll C. Arnold explains that "We usually use the term literature to refer . . . to imaginative, enduring works."\textsuperscript{15} Wilbur Samuel Howell explains that:

the poetical utterance differs from the rhetorical utterance by virtue of the fact that the words used in the latter refer directly to states of reality, and the words used in the former refer directly to things that stand by deputy [symbols] for states of reality.\textsuperscript{16}

Thus, the poetic or literary work is imaginative, symbolic, and enduring.

A much more difficult issue to resolve is the one of the relationship of rhetoric and literature. A wide diversity of opinion exists here, which can be placed roughly on a continuum. The more traditional writers, like Hoyt H. Hudson, while admitting that "poetry in some of its more usual forms is more or less strongly tinged with a rhetorical element,"\textsuperscript{17} distinguish rather sharply between rhetorical and poetic discourse: "poetry is for the sake of expression. . . Rhetoric is for the sake of impression."\textsuperscript{18} Bernard Weinberg offers a similar analysis:

\textsuperscript{12}For example, Donald C. Bryant, "Rhetoric: Its Functions and Its Scope," \textit{Quarterly Journal of Speech} 39 (1953), p. 404 includes both "informative and suasory discourse" in the realm of rhetoric.
\textsuperscript{15}Carroll C. Arnold, \textit{Criticism of Oral Rhetoric} (Columbus: Charles E. Merrill, 1974), p. 4.
The poet does not begin by determining the character of his audience; he does not proceed by adapting the form of his poems to the particular expectations of particular readers. He writes his poem, and if he has written it well, the audience will respond to it as it should, will be subject to the appropriate effect.

This is not a rhetorical effect. It is not an effect of persuasion. It depends neither on the character of a speaker nor on the character of an audience; it contains no proofs—logical or ethical or pathetic. It is an aesthetic effect, one that consists for each person in the arousal of a specific range of feelings proper to the emotions within the poem.19

These theorists hold literature or poetry quite apart from rhetoric, although even Weinberg admits that he speaks of "pure" rhetoric and "pure" poetry.20

This conception of the nature of literary discourse is markedly different from that of, say, Burke or Booth. Kenneth Burke observes that "Wherever there is persuasion, there is rhetoric. And wherever there is 'meaning,' there is 'persuasion.' "21 Obviously, all symbolic works, including literary ones, are rhetorical by this approach. Wayne C. Booth declares that "dramatic necessity and rhetorical function seem, then, to be thoroughly united."22 More strongly, he argues in support of the claim "that the rhetorical dimension in literature is inescapable."23 One final representative of this approach is the essay by Walter R. Fisher and Richard A. Filloy, which explains that:

Our position is that a rhetorical interpretation of a work arises whenever it is considered in regard to an audience's response, the ways in which people are led to feel or to think or to act in regard to a symbolic experience. We have no quarrel with the notion that poetic discourse is rhetorical when it advances a lesson or a moral. Nor do we have difficulty with the fact that fictive and nonfictive genres share specific language forms, that one can find rhetorical features in poetic discourse and poetic features in rhetorical discourse. The difference between our approach and those of Booth and Burke is that we focus not on authorial techniques or specific individuated forms but on audience response, the mental moves made by an audience on interpreting a work. Where they stress the ways in which poetic forms are made rhetorical, we concentrate on the ways in which poetic forms are experienced rhetorically.24

20Weinberg, p. 40.
21Burke, p. 172.
23Booth, pp. 105-06.
24Walter R. Fisher and Richard A. Filloy, "Argument in Drama and
Thus, these two activities, rhetoric and literature, have much in common. They both employ verbal symbolic messages as the means to their peculiar ends. In both, the source (rhetor or author) and receiver (audience or reader) play important and similar roles. They often employ/recommend analogous notions (e.g., organization of ideas, selection and arrangement of words) in their artifacts. These similarities are not surprising, given the fact that the modern discipline of rhetorical criticism developed out of literary criticism under the guidance of Herbert A. Wichelns.25

Most importantly, for the purposes of this essay, given artifacts partake of both—that is, novels or poems are persuasive, and orations qualify as great literature. Persuasion is not the essence of literature. Rather, literature is evocative or representational. However, discourses which are literary can also possess persuasive characteristics, and these persuasive elements, when present, render literary works susceptible to rhetorical criticism.

What is important here is that no matter where one falls on this continuum, rhetorical criticism of literary works is justifiable. Whether one subscribes to the view that "some literature is 'tinged' with rhetoric," or that "literature is inherently rhetorical," it must be admitted that (at least some) literature is amenable to rhetorical criticism. The former provides minimal justification for our goal, while the latter provides emphatic support for it.

Implications do exist for the contestant at this point, though. Those on the liberal end of the continuum might not insist on any justification of the persuasiveness of a literary document being subjected to rhetorical criticism. However, a more conservative judge might require that the contestant present a rationale for considering that particular literary work rhetorical. One possible solution is for the contestant to suggest that it will become readily apparent that the artifact under investigation is rhetorical as the rhetorical method is successfully applied to it. Whatever the choice, our experience indicates that the student in rhetorical criticism needs to address this issue in some fashion.

We now consider the question of what basis might a judge with a more traditional viewpoint accept a literary work as rhetorical. Works which are both intended to be persuasive and which function rhetorically (have persuasive effects) are unquestionably rhetorical. Works which are either intended to be rhetorical or

which have rhetorical effects are arguably susceptible to rhetorical criticism. Application of rhetorical principles to artifacts which are neither intended to be nor which function rhetorically seems futile at best, and misleading at worst.

This leads us to refine the four types of criticism posited initially, in keeping with the ideas just explicated. The critic can profitably engage in four types of criticism:

1) rhetorical criticism of artifacts which are primarily rhetorical,
2) rhetorical criticism of artifacts which, while not primarily rhetorical, possess rhetorical qualities,
3) non-rhetorical criticism of the non-rhetorical aspects of artifacts which are primarily rhetorical, and,
4) non-rhetorical criticism of artifacts which are primarily non-rhetorical.

Other writers have recommended or engaged in these sorts of studies in the second category, the very sort we encourage students to pursue.

Several important benefits can be obtained from this sort of scholarly endeavor. First, students can expand the boundaries of rhetoric by studying the rhetorical elements of artifacts which are not archetypal instances of rhetorical discourse. It is possible to obtain insights which would be impossible or unlikely in traditional sorts of studies. Second, this type of study can help competitors to better understand the nature of rhetoric, through the effort of distinguishing rhetorical from non-rhetorical phenomena. Third, it is important to become critical consumers of persuasion, so that students are not persuaded unawares. By studying the persuasiveness of artifacts which are not primarily rhetorical—but which do have rhetorical aspects—we can help avoid this undesirable out-

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\textsuperscript{26}"Intent" can be a troublesome concept. We do not argue that the rhetorical critic is forced to grapple with it; however, if the critic can determine the rhetor's intent it can be most illuminating. If an artifact is persuasive, the critic can attempt to trace the rhetorical elements believed to be responsible for those effects regardless of whether the rhetor intended them or not (one must of course avoid commenting on the rhetor, and limit comments to the rhetoric itself in this situation). For contest criticism, however, if intent can be identified, then a) we can render judgments of the rhetor, and b) this knowledge may help the critic identify the rhetorical elements most relevant to the effects of the discourse. So, while intent is often difficult (if not impossible) to assess, it is not necessary for rhetorical criticism, although it can be useful.

come. Contestants who realize that literature can be persuasive, and who study the techniques of these attempts, become increasingly aware of these influence attempts. This is important, because they may not ordinarily expect literature to be persuasive, which may enhance its effectiveness because their defenses are lowered. Finally, it encourages the valuable kinds of interdisciplinary studies which are necessary if we are to keep specialization from fragmenting scholarly communities. All of these reasons point to the same conclusion: that students should be encouraged to do rhetorical criticism of the persuasive aspects of literary works in competitive rhetorical criticism. This is not to say that such studies should be the sole, or even the major approach employed in that event, but that it should be recognized as a legitimate and important one.

Another way to look at our central contention is this: We should stop attempting to neatly categorize the artifacts we study. The law of the excluded middle (something is either x or non-x; it is either rhetorical or non-rhetorical) simply does not apply here. Instead, we should recognize that almost any artifact can have rhetorical aspects or can be rhetorical in certain circumstances, and concentrate on a more important task than classification: identification of those elements of an artifact which are potentially rhetorical, investigation of their effects (if any), and explanation of those effects.