

Epidictic Rhetoric: Renewing vision, vibe and values

Abstract

This paper will explore the fruitfulness of viewing contemporary public discourse through the optic of an ancient, but neglected, concept: *epideixis*. Within classical rhetoric, epideictic discourse was one of three valorised forms/opportunities of public discourse, the other two being forensic discourse and deliberative discourse. Whereas these latter two have retained well defined and well articulated locations, institutionally and educationally, within modernity as serious and responsible modes of public discourse, epideictic is often viewed as a slightly fusty, even frivolous form of sentimental display associated with pompous ceremonies—a view first formulated by Aristotle. To the contrary, I will argue that epideictic discourse is in fact a fundamental political discourse, a discourse intent on re-founding and renewing a sense of community, what was called the *sensus communis* or *res-publica*, by invoking the values and virtues underwriting the community. Epideictic discourse thus summons a community to itself, to remember whom it is, to come together as a self/community - to 'be'. In face of the increasing erosion of legitimacy surrounding modernity and its institutions, epideictic discourse is, I suggest, coming to re-assume a much more prominent and vital role in public discourse. I will conclude that, if my diagnosis is correct, then as language educators we should be training future citizens to appreciate and perform this politically and ethically generative form of discourse.

Introduction

In recent times there has been a strong rise of cultural and religious aspirations in political discourse around 'values', 'recognition' and 'identity', a rise that has caught many modernist political thinkers and activists off-guard. Modernists of both Left and right persuasion have tended to frame human aspirations in primarily economic terms, the left espousing a state-based politics of redistribution and the right a market-based politics of individualist self-help. However, as Lakoff (2004, 19) comments in accounting for the failures of the US Democratic Party in recent elections:

People do not necessarily vote in their self-interest. They vote their identity. They vote their values. They vote for who they identify with. They may identify with their self-interest. That can happen. It is not that people never care about their self-interest. But they vote their identity. And if their identity fits their self-interest, they will vote for that. It is important to understand this point. It is a serious mistake to assume that people are simply always voting for their self-interest.

This rise of a cultural or values politics at odds with the established understandings and alignments of modernist politics has been more devastating for progressive than for conservative forces. In the US, Bush and in Australia, Howard have been able to exploit this new 'values' politics more readily than the US Democratic Party or the Australian Labor Party.

This paper will argue that a significant factor determining the crisis for progressive forces in both the US and in Australia is their dependence on critique and critical literacy as their primary genres for political engagement and for training students into political engagement. I will argue that if we look back to the ancient pedagogy of rhetoric, which was a pedagogy specifically designed to foster the skills of democratic political speech, we can find there more values-oriented forms of discourse to teach and nurture in our language and literacy classes. I will also suggest that the genres and ethos of critique secretly presupposes

epideictic discourse which is a values discourse that is on display at civic occasions, funerals, award nights, graduation ceremonies, memorials, centennials and such like. My argument will be that we need to revive this epideictic mode of discourse and a pedagogy for training students into it, if we are to reinvigorate political life and redress the rampant cynicism and withdrawal from political involvement among the general population; and more specifically, assist progressive forces reinvent themselves on a platform of positive values and hope rather than being cast as the party of carping negativity and joyless criticism.

Part one: The renewal of oratory

Until recently, modernity was predicated on the assumption that 'mankind' is gradually mastering the world in a way that will lead to peace, predictability and happiness, and that the flaws and unfairness of social life will soon be outmoded. But the re-emergence of human social life over recent decades as a narrative of unpredictable, uncontrollable 'eventfulness' is more readily graspable through the ancient concept of 'praxis', a concept that posited a human realm of "the unpredictable and of the 'could be otherwise'", a contingent realm at odds with the realm of theory which is governed by logic, principles and causality. No matter which historical or sociological theory we deploy to account for it, there is clearly a rising loss of faith in the inevitability of progress and a heightened awareness of the profound risks, incommensurabilities, conflicts, contradictions and aporias of life in global post-modernity. This rise of risk, values and identity has escalated the need and value of oratory, oratory as a form of speaking that can give voice to the shared emotions, responses, hopes and fears that are aroused by overwhelming events. Many have even (re)turned to religion in search of ceremony, fellowship and oratory.

More and more we experience current events, especially tragic events, as calling out for the answering voice of epideictic rhetoric, a voice able to give collective expression to the suffering, the outrage, the tears, the deep

desire for solidarity, a solidarity in suffering, in healing and in renewal. 9/11 was surely the event that most clearly issued this call, this demand, for an oratory that could measure up to the multiple meanings, possibilities and fatalities of such an event. The widespread feeling that George W Bush was unable to fully rise to the occasion of that event, to its horror, its grief, its conjuring of global empathy, and its possibilities for shaping the future for good for its global audiences strongly contrasted with the almost instinctive profundity of Ken Livingstone's response to the London bombings. Using the principles of ancient rhetoric, Livingstone would be judged the better rhetorician: he was more *kairotic*—he addressed the uniqueness of the moment more fully and adequately than Bush. However, we must remember that Bush was speaking primarily to and for his US audience and it is clear that he did voice to the outrage and desire for revenge felt by its citizens. Either way, the fact that these speeches were so important is a sign of our increasing need for oratory, for *kairotic* oratory, an oratory that speaks to the situation and its plethora of meanings in a manner that brings everyone together. Let's not forget that the formative context of epideictic has always been the funeral, the experience of loss and the need to re-establish a faith in the future. Whether this be Australia, 1788, New York 2001, Madrid 2002, Bagdad, Lebanon, Aceh, Bali, or London, 7/7. All call for epideictic rhetoric.

However, this epideictic discourse which clusters around ceremonial occasions of grief or loss is of course precisely the sort of discourse that is rejected by critical theory as outmoded, sentimental, ideological, patriarchal, imperialist, irrelevant and fatuous. So, whereas epideictic engages in singing the praises of 'the fallen', trying to draw us more deeply into the bonds of fellowship, and reaffirming the values of life and the future, critique prides itself on stepping back in order to enact a strategy of suspicion that can see through to the hidden weaknesses and failings and uncover the base desires, emotional blackmail and material interests hidden behind texts and situations. While epideictic discourse steps forward and positively affirms, critique steps back and negatively

criticises. Yet, insofar as progressive political forces seal themselves off from these deeper feelings of grief, fellowship, identity, affirmation and hope, they find themselves unable to participate in key experiences generating or reaffirming fellowship and a sense of community.

The rest of this paper is dedicated to expounding ancient rhetoric as a still valid framework for understanding public language and the teaching/learning of language. I first try, in Part Two, to set aside some inevitable misunderstandings surrounding the very notion of rhetoric that inhabit us from our 'history of prejudice' (Gadamer 1960). I do this under the following headings: ancient versus modern rhetoric; Ancient rhetoric versus Philosophy; Ancient rhetoric versus Postmodern rhetoric; and Rhetoric as social practice versus Rhetoric as pedagogic practice. Then in Part Three I proceed to outline some key structures and concepts of ancient rhetoric itself under the headings: *topoi*; *in autrum partem*; *praxis*; *phronesis*; *kairos*, and the three contexts or genres of public speech. This sets the scene for Part Four which expounds a theory of epideictic discourse in itself.

Part Two: Obstacles to Listening to Rhetoric

Ancient rhetoric versus philosophy: It is important to understand that from the very beginnings of self-conscious reflection on the practice of 'reasonable speech' - what the Greeks called '*logos*' - there was a fundamental conflict between two approaches to understanding and practicing *logos*, a conflict that has continued throughout the history of European history (Kimball 1986). Textually, this conflict focuses on Plato, Aristotle and Isocrates, usually aligned in such a way that Isocrates represents sophistry, Plato philosophy, and Aristotle defends rhetoric against Sophists like Isocrates and against the attacks of Plato by finding a legitimate place for both practices of *logos*—for philosophy with its love of theoretical wisdom (*sophia*), and for rhetoric with its search for practical wisdom (*phronesis*). Unhappily, Plato and Aristotle became a shorthand, a metonymy, for pointing to these two fundamental and

conflicting interpretations of *logos* in Western culture. But, reducing the conflict over *logos* to a debate between Plato and Aristotle unfairly sidelined Isocrates so that the conflict is reduced to an internal philosophical debate over the relationship between theory and practice, science and politics, determinism and freedom, realism and relativism.

Yet Isocrates remains of major importance for two reasons. First, as a matter of historical fact, the whole history of language and literary education in European secondary schooling was shaped by an Isocratean ethos and pedagogy. According to Marrou (1981 197-9):

[P]hilosophy never recruited more than a tiny minority of the elite minds; statistically, so to speak, Isocrates decisively defeated Plato. Throughout the Hellenistic and Roman periods, the normal form taken by Greek culture at its highest level was that of eloquence, the art of speaking, which was also that of writing. ... [S]ucceeding generations overwhelmingly followed his precepts, and not in antiquity alone. Burnet called Isocrates the 'father of humanism', with good reason: his ideal, recovered by the West in the Renaissance, has dominated the tradition of classical humanism almost to our day.

Secondly, Isocrates remains important for language educators today because he was the theorist and educator who first wove together the study of language, the cultivation of ethics and the fostering of a democratic ethos of participation in the polis. He tried to:

bridge the gap between morality and technical skill that had been created by his sophistic predecessors and Plato alike... In short, Isocrates tried to combine rhetoric, ethics and political action in a literary form suitable for both private study and public discussion' (Conley 18).

Thus, the classical vision of the liberal arts as a study and practice of language for the moral and ethical education of free citizens is Isocratean in origin, a vision that was then disseminated by Cicero and Quintilian to far-flung regions and eras, in particular to the Renaissance (Conley, 112). This Isocratean vision of a democratic rhetorical culture of freedom radically contrasts with Plato's vision of an education, through

mathematics, dialectic and philosophical demonstration, an education designed to produce an intellectual elite of philosopher-kings.

Thus for 2300 years, Isocratean rhetoric was the dominant form of education for ruling class men across all European communities, an education designed to cultivate and form the attributes and *habitus* of community citizens and leaders by training boys and young men in the art of *eloquentia*, the art of persuasive public speech. Anyone who became literate during these two millennia passed through an intensive and extensive training in rhetoric, a formative experience shared by the leading figures of Western civilisation: Cicero, Augustine, Shakespeare, Montaigne, Erasmus, Bacon, Hegel, Milton. Thus rhetoric is almost certainly as fundamental to the wellsprings of Western culture as Greek philosophy and Hebraic Christianity.

In summary, we can say that, although it may have lost the ideological argument to Plato, Isocratean rhetoric won the educational battle. Although always under attack from both Platonic dialectic and Aristotelian logic, secondary education was for 2300 years largely based on Isocratean rhetoric.

Ancient rhetoric versus modern discourse: The historic dispute between Rhetoric and Philosophy took on a new virulence during the Enlightenment. Already during the Middle Ages, scholasticism had displaced a training in rhetoric with training in dialectic and *disputatio* in the emerging universities. Eventually, as Ong (1958) has demonstrated in his classic studies of Ramus, rhetoric was reduced to the study of language in a way that cut it off from any larger bearing on social life or worldly reality. In this way rhetoric was severed from any serious concern for truth, ethics, or justice which were now the preserve of philosophy and *scientia*. Thus rhetoric was transformed into what would today be called a pure textualism, the study of language and its effects for its own sake, separate from any concern for its actual insertion in or consequence for real contexts of history, life and action.

This shift can be explained in terms internal to rhetoric—not just as the conflict between rhetoric and something outside it, philosophy or science. Rhetorical education itself had two poles, two faces. On the one hand, it was an education in ‘content’; this part of rhetoric was called *Inventio*. On the other, it was an education in language and the impact of using figures and tropes to say things differently, this part being called *Elocutio*. In Latin ‘content’ was *res*; and ‘language’ *verba*. Ancient rhetoric embraced both *res* and *verba*. It studied both the substance and meanings of things—*res*, and the ways of varying language in order to heighten the meaning and emotional impact of *res* for an audience—*verba*. However, Ramus argued that *Inventio* should be taken away from rhetoric and assigned to Dialectic, leaving *Elocutio* to rhetoric. Thus rhetoric was reduced to a sentimental study of the poetics of emotional language cut off from all connection with truth, politics or argument.

The European Enlightenment, in its commitment to the clear and transparent use of literal referential language and the ‘reason’ of science and truth, deepened the rejection of rhetoric by reviving the Platonic charges which had painted rhetoric as an exponent of deceit, manipulation, machiavellianism, and mendacity—what is now known as ‘spin’. By contrast the discourse valorised by the Enlightenment, the Plain style of the Royal Society, was a style careful not to use figures of speech or any text patterns that heighten emotional involvement. It is a discourse that is only answerable to telling the facts. Language as representation. Today we would call it *factual discourse*, or expository discourse. This Enlightenment commitment to transparent factual language in turn provoked an expressivist response, known as Romanticism. According to Romanticism, rhetoric should be rejected because instead of concentrating on expressing truthfully and sincerely the authentic emotional being of the author or speaker, rhetoric focused on using language as a weapon of audience-focused persuasion and manipulation.

And so today we find that rhetoric, a tradition which formed the very core of secondary schooling for 2300 years, now finds itself represented as

outmoded, irrelevant and as an enemy of truth, virtue, sincerity, democracy, and of civilization itself. This portrayal of the vices of rhetoric in the intellectual and public culture is mirrored in both everyday language and in our educational discourse. In everyday English, 'rhetoric' is used to refer to the pious clichés mobilised as a deceptive subterfuge by politicians or advertisers in order to seduce, bamboozle or deceive ordinary honest folk.

Rhetoric as social practice versus rhetoric as pedagogic practice:

However, the concept of rhetoric, as marked by Kennedy's (1994) distinction between primary and secondary rhetoric, is itself ambiguous. On the one hand, rhetoric can refer to the practice of rhetoric as a public culture in courts, in parliaments, in debates and at ceremonial occasions (Kennedy's primary rhetoric). Thus one can compare the rhetorical cultures of different cities, nations and eras. On the other, rhetoric refers to rhetoric as an educational discipline, as the teaching and learning of rhetoric in the classroom, (Kennedy's secondary rhetoric). This distinction matters because the two rhetorics do not always mirror each other. For example in a authoritarian political system rhetoric may thrive as a classroom practice (secondary rhetoric) but hardly exist as a public practice (primary rhetoric).

Drawing on this distinction between primary and secondary rhetoric, the argument of this paper could be encapsulated as: the postmodern times we live in are reviving the occasions for and significance of primary rhetoric and so language educators should look to adapting and renewing secondary rhetoric.

Ancient rhetoric versus postmodern rhetoric: One last distinction is needed before embarking on the primary task of this paper, which is to argue that understanding the present political situation from the point of view of the ancient art of epideictic rhetoric is fruitful both politically and pedagogically.

Over the course of the twentieth century, there has been a renewal of the notion of rhetoric as a philosophical point of view on language, on social life and meaning. We could adduce the names of Burke, Perelman, Barthes, and Derrida as key figures here. However even more significant in reviving a rhetorical approach was an as yet unpublished but widely reported lecture series by Heidegger in 1924 which was attended by both Gadamer and Arendt and which was decisive in shaping their philosophical trajectories, both of whom in turn impacted strongly on the shapers of contemporary 'political theory' (Gross & Kemmann). Even Habermas was deeply influenced by both, whilst of course reworking their insights into his own theoretical frame. In fact, one could plausibly argue that in essence post-metaphysical theory, especially poststructuralism, could be more precisely characterised as a 'rhetorical turn', not only 'a language turn', as Rorty termed it.

However, as significant as post-metaphysical and poststructural thinking may be, in this particular paper I am not concerned with rhetoric as a general philosophical stance. Instead I am focused on it as a concrete historical tradition of language education spanning 2300 years. And so my interest is the rhetoric of Cicero, of Quintilian, of Erasmus, of Milton, the rhetoric that they had each been subject to as students, taught and exercised as adults, and then documented for us in their writings.

Part Three: ancient rhetoric

Having cleared some of the obstacles blocking our ability to 'listen' to ancient rhetoric, I now turn in this section to a very quick sketch of ancient rhetoric.

Ancient rhetoric in its secondary form was a very stable constellation of educational ideas and practices. Developed by and for rhetoric teachers over 2300 years, rhetoric maintained a stable core of topics for study, passages for imitation and reworking, and exercises for learning a range of genres that developed in complexity and abstraction.

Topoi: It is important to note that rhetoric is a topical curriculum organised around 'topoi', not a conceptual or demonstrative curriculum organised around concepts, theorem, principles or theories. What this means is that rhetoric does not offer a body of knowledge, but a heuristic, a way of discovering knowledge. Like dialectical argument, rhetoric is a way of testing and discovering the truth through the very process of speech itself. Rhetoric discovers the truth by creating situations in which there is a dialogue between conflicting points of view.

In autrumque partem: In fact, possibly the most defining and fundamental axiom of rhetoric is *in autrumque partem*, meaning that, on any serious issue there will always be at least two points of view and that there is always something to be said for both sides of the argument (Sloan 1997). As Tully (1995, pp. 109-100) has insisted:

Like playing tennis, we grasp a concept by serving, returning and rallying it back and forth with other players in conversations. To understand a general term, and so know your way around its maze of uses, it is always necessary to enter into a dialogue with interlocuters from other regions of the city, to listen to their 'further descriptions' and come to recognize the aspects of the phenomenon in question that they bring to light, aspects which go unnoticed from one's own familiar set of examples. Since there is always more than one side to a case, one must always consult those on the other side.

The truth-discovery procedure for rhetoric is thus not a matter of arguing from axioms, first principles or concepts, but the actual process of engagement of competing points of view in real rational-emotional argument.

Praxis: Perhaps we could clarify the contrast between rhetoric as a 'topical' curriculum over against modern disciplinary knowledge by specifying more closely what kinds of truth rhetoric is intent on disclosing. Whereas traditionally 'theory' was posited as representing stable objects and systems, 'praxis' was concerned with unstable and

unpredictable matters, in particular matters of social relationships and politics. Rhetoric thus insisted that the absolute truth sought by philosophy and natural science, is unknowable in human and social matters and that the road to 'probable truth' which is the only sort of truth suited to human matters, is not the philosophical road of reason and logic, but the rhetorical road of publicly putting different points of view before an audience. Each point of view must have its say and try to have its sway. It is then up to the practical wisdom of the judging audience to decide.

Phronesis: For rhetoric as a training into praxis, the most important attributes of a rhetorician are *phronesis* (practical wisdom) and *kairos* (insight into the specific uniqueness of the situation at hand). *Phronesis* is a general background disposition of practical wisdom, a habitus that is not a matter of submitting to principles or propositions, but an ontological ethical orientation—to allude to Heidegger's reading of Aristotle's rhetoric (Gross & Kennmann).

Kairos: But although the cultivation of a general background ethic of *phronesis* was a goal of the rhetorical curriculum, because it did not view events or situations as simple examples or instances of concepts, rhetoric was also deeply aware of the particularity of situations. If one too quickly reduced a situation to a principle or rule, one could miss its uniqueness, and so *kairos* was also a key learning outcome for rhetorical education. *Kairos* is an ancient Greek word meaning 'the right moment' or 'the opportune moment' (White 13). *Kairos* is, if you like, saying the right thing at the right time. It is important because as a training program rhetoric is very explicit in its pedagogy and is thus prone to a rigid dogmatism. The emphasis on *kairos* is a reminder that the intuitive and spontaneous inventiveness of the rhetorician in the moment of speaking is the goal of a rhetorical education, not the slavish enactment of pre-determined rules. This why later levels of training in rhetoric focus on actual debating contests. *Kairos* means being tuned to the situation in its

unique contours, including the conflicted constellation of views, feelings and interests of participants, audiences and spectators.

The rhetorician's task is to address this conflicted conjuncture of views, meanings and interests in a way that uncovers a unified vision to which all can bind themselves—an audacious, if not impossible task, but an inevitable task if violence, alienation and conflict are to be avoided. For ancient rhetoric, peace, community and order rest on agreement and a sense of community, and these latter are shaped and renewed by rhetoric. Community rests on *sensus communis*, not on rule of law or a constitution. Perhaps it should be reiterated that rhetoric is deeply committed to difference and plurality. Coming to agreement is reaching a nuanced judgement in relation to a specific situation; it is not coming to agree on a dogma, ideology or general theory. Each agreement has to be won the hard way—by engaging with other possible interpretations of the situation, competing interpretations which inhabit ourselves as well as others. Perhaps the stance of rhetoric in relation to '*topoi*', '*phronesis*' and '*kairos*' could be summed up by saying that rhetoric, like Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics, is concerned not so much with truth as an adequate representation of a reality of objects and causal relationships between objects, but with truth as the articulation of the grounds for connection, relationship and fellow-feeling between human beings. For rhetoric, the goal of speech is solidarity and understanding.

The three contexts of public speech: Ancient rhetoric taught that there are three key contexts calling for three kinds of public speech. They are forensic situations, deliberative situations and ceremonial situations. Forensic speech is concerned with prosecuting or defending seeming wrong-doers; deliberative speech is concerned with discussing the pros and cons of policy proposals and action plans; and ceremonial speech is concerned with deepening the emotional identification of people at a ceremony. Forensic speech is the speech of barristers in court; deliberative speech is the speech of parliamentarians and the writings of political

commentators in newspapers; ceremonial speech is the speeches we hear at funerals, memorials, openings and closings of important events.

We can interpret these three forms of public speech as three approaches to community-building or nation-building: forensic speech builds community by imposing law and order; deliberative speech builds community by debating views, hopes and goals for the future; ceremonial speech builds community by deepening our feeling of community, our *sensus communis*.

Deliberative democracy: At least since the 1960s New Left there has been a strong revival of the notion of deliberative or participatory democracy in opposition to the 'party-based representative political system of liberal democracy'. Deliberative democracy is the idea that the people must participate in the political process of policy formation. Theoretically, the notion of deliberative democracy tends to be associated with Habermas's later theorising in which modernity is posited as a dialectic between two forms of rationality: instrumental rationality which is the rationality of the social system; and communicative rationality which is the rationality of the life-world. Deliberative democracy is an effort to construct a public sphere or civil society which is not hostage to the manipulations of the instrumental rationality of the economy or functionalised bureaucracies.

Now, in fact, unfortunately, Habermas is a neo-Kantian and he views the public sphere as a reinvention of Kant's tribunal of reason. For Habermas, the deliberative public sphere is a region of argument in which policies are tested against the standards of reason. Thus Habermas retains Kant's homo duplex theorem, so that a person is as it were split in two: on the one hand there is their lived identity as defined by language, culture, history, embodiment, experience and identification; on the other there is their higher self which identifies only with the discursive power of the stronger, more rational argument. The former, the realm of rhetoric, interprets social life through the optic of emotionally charged and habituated prejudice, while the latter views social life through the serene and impartial vantage point of reason which consists in the mobilisation of neutral, historically-evolved cognitive capacities and argumentative protocols.

I will not go into the concerns of deliberative discourse as such any further here, rather I want to raise two questions: one concerns the sufficiency of deliberative discourse as a grounding for a democratic politics; the other shifts to the educational arena and asks: is critical literacy a sufficient pedagogy for nurturing and cultivating deliberative discourse for a democratic politics?

Basically, what I want to suggest is that the answer to both questions is 'No!'. No! Deliberative discourse is not on its own a sufficient public discourse to ground a democratic politics. And No! Critical literacy is not a sufficient pedagogy to nurture or cultivate a deliberative discourse for a democratic politics. What I want to suggest is that in both cases what is missing is epideictic discourse.

In a nutshell my argument is that if people sense that they can only enter the public sphere at the expense of their identity and life-world, then that public sphere will be experienced as a place of coldness and alienation, a denial of self, not an expansion of self, and certainly not as an expression of the sovereignty of the people. The educational corollary is that critical literacy is also not a sufficient pedagogy for nurturing and cultivating a democratic politics, but must be in turn supplemented by a more ceremonial curriculum.

The idea of criticism: Critical literacy is based on the notion of criticism or critique coming from the 18th century Enlightenment. This notion of criticism suggests that people need to be enlightened, that currently they are guided by fraudulent ideas which need to be criticised so that their lives, beliefs and actions can be based on true ideas. This concept of 'enlightenment through critical reason' has, of course, its own history and genealogy. It echoes Plato's famous cave analogy in which citizens are likened to cave-dwellers, condemned to knowing only the reflected shadow of things, never the things themselves.

For both Plato and the Enlightenment, reason and criticism are based on a very strong notion of Truth and of the Truth as One. There is only one

true way of seeing things, one way to act justly. If there *are* differences in the way we see things, these differences show that some of us have fallen into superstition or ideology. These people need to be brought into the Truth by submitting their ideas to criticism. So, both reject the to and fro of a more embodied rhetorical discourse, and attempt to substitute a more transcendent epistemology for dealing with social life.

In my view it is the reliance on criticism to ground its deliberative rhetoric that is robbing progressive forces of their political support. The problem is that criticism typically does not give voice to positive values but just assumes them. Moreover these values are often not evoked as values *of the audience* but as values held *against the audience*. I think this is what the notion of 'political correctness' must mean. A value that is invoked as valid and binding for an audience whether or not it is espoused by that audience. In other words rather than being grounded in or expressing the *sensus communis* and way of life of the audience, it gains its validity from some transcendental source, and is simply imposed from the outside. We can, I believe, read much of recent Australian political history, especially from Pauline Hanson onwards, as resulting from a progressive intellectual elite wishing to impose its own values on a general population that does not feel answerable to these values.

Part Four: Epidictic

This brings me to the heart of this paper: the argument that criticism and deliberative discourse are not sufficient for building community, and must be supplemented by ceremonial speech. What is missing from a deliberative discourse that relies on criticism as its main genre is rhetoric's third form of public discourse: epidictic rhetoric.

Epidictic discourse is a discourse which calls on the audience to reconnect with the values, the history and the hopes that bind that community together into a fellowship of humanity. Without epidictic rhetoric a community inevitably becomes alienated from itself and falls into factionalism and routinisation that is unmindful of the spirit, of the horizon of meaning and ideals that give that community, its soul and

heart. Without epideictic discourse, a community tends to lose contact with its origins, its essence, its hopes, its aspirations, its loyalties and its ethics.

Epideictic discourse is a call to fellowship, a gesture towards the laying or re-laying of a common ground, what ancient rhetoricians call a *sensus communis*—a sense, or feeling, of community, a basis for community, a feeling of friendship and respect sufficient to underpin the productive dialogue of difference and dispute as different voices articulate different ways of seeing and interpreting where we are, where we have been and come from, what we could do and what we should do.

Epideictic discourse is a discourse aimed at strengthening bonds of loyalty, commitment and community. It is a discourse that tries to deepen its audience's identification and commitment to the values, principles, culture and history underpinning their way of life.

Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca (1969 49-55) puts it thus:

The purpose of an epideictic speech is to increase the intensity of adherence to values held in common by the audience and the speaker... . The speaker engaged in epideictic discourse is very close to being an educator. ... Any society prizing its own values is therefore bound to promote opportunities for epideictic speeches to be delivered at regular intervals: ceremonies commemorating past events of national concern, religious services, eulogies of the dead, and similar manifestations fostering a communion of minds.

Here is how a contemporary rhetoric scholar (Walker 9-10) describes epideictic discourse:

Epideictic is that which shapes and cultivates the basic codes of value and belief by which a society or culture lives; it shapes the ideologies and imageries with which, and by which, the individual members of a community identify themselves; and, perhaps most significantly, it shapes the fundamental grounds, the 'deep' commitments and presuppositions, that will underlie and ultimately determine decision and debate in particular pragmatic forums. [But] such epideictic discourse is not limited to the reinforcement of

existing beliefs and ideologies, or to merely ornamental displays of clever speech ... [W]hen conceived in positive terms, ... epideictic discourse reveals itself ... as the central and indeed fundamental mode of rhetoric in human culture.

My claim is that critical literacy as a hermeneutic of suspicion is too afraid of epideictic discourse, of its ritualism, of its 'bullshit', of its clichés, and sentimentality. For most educators today, especially secular progressive educators in public education, epideictic is something that is faintly embarrassing, something at which you squirm. Epideictic is the sort of discourse that can usually only be carried off with conviction, sincerity and enthusiasm by: conservatives, religious leaders, military leaders, business leaders, politicians, and, private school principals. It is the sort of discourse that has been ostracised by modern, liberal, secular, neutral, public education. Unfortunately this means that the teaching and learning of epideictic has been largely left to Dale Carnegie and Toastmasters.

Yet it is precisely the emotions expressed in epideictic discourse that help bind psyches to the underpinning values of the *sensus communis* and underwrite the values of political deliberation and action. So, from the perspective of epideictic, the concerts or discourse by rock musicians about poverty in Africa *are* important acts of epideictic rhetoric. Of course, talk or music *on its own* never achieves anything, but my argument is that neither does much get achieved without talk, especially prior epideictic talk. But talk can create social pressure and people power, solidarity, and bring these to bear on the deliberative discourse of political players.

According to Sheard (1996), epideictic discourse is a discourse through which a community reflects on its publicly and privately held beliefs and prejudices and decides whether to reaffirm or reform them:

Epideictic discourse today operates in contexts civic, professional or occupational, pedagogical, and so on that invite individuals to evaluate the communities and institutions to which they belong, their own roles within them, and the roles and responsibilities of their fellow constituents,

including their leaders. We see examples of such discourse on the op-ed pages of our newspapers on our televisions, in our classrooms, at conferences, in professional journals as well as in places of worship and other sites at which communal and institutional goals, practices, and values are re-affirmed, reevaluated, or revised and where specific kinds of behaviours are urged. (Sheard p. 771)

Epidictic is a form of speech in which people are called together, to see themselves forming a larger whole, a discourse community, an imagined community (Anderson 1983), to form an 'in between' (Arendt 1958), a space between, a space across which speech, beliefs and emotions flows and interweave, a *sensus communis*, a sense of belonging, a sense which is not based on a passport or ID number or birth certificate. If Derrida is right in thinking that the nation, the community, the polis is always still founding itself, that the act of founding is still both always already behind us yet still always deferred and thus still to be achieved, then epidictic is one of the primary processes of founding, of constituting what Castoriadis (1987) calls 'the social imaginary'. If human institutions are such that they are comprised of two sides as it were—the constituted and the constituting—then true epidictic is on the side of the constituting, not the already constituted.

In fact Cicero (1949 p. 5) argued that cities were first formed through the power of rhetoric, not the power of legislators or military leaders. I would also argue that although the constitution of modern states may not seem to be built on epidictic speech, but rather on the literate acts of legislators and constitution-writers, this is in a sense an illusion. I would argue that it is precisely because the Australian constitution is not built on epidictic speech that it is unfinished and incomplete. Only when it is truly built on epidictic discourses that call Indigenous Australians into full citizenship *as* first Australians will the constitution move towards completion.

Conclusion

To conclude, this paper has argued that with the emergence of global post-modernity epidictic as an interpellation or call to identification,

belonging and community has taken on a new vitality, that the critical ethos of modernist discourses have lost much of their potency, and that ancient rhetoric possesses a valuable archive of ideas and practices that we can draw on adapt to orient us both politically and as language educators. What you praise, what people celebrate, what we feel strong emotions about, what brings us together, what evinces strong collective emotions from us is not innocent. It cannot be taken for granted, nor left to fate. Epidictic deserves to be studied and practised in its own right. Such is the charter of epidictic rhetoric. In my view, there is a huge deficit of progressive epidictic discourse in Australia, a deficit that needs to be made good if we are to become a fully constituted nation. Perhaps as language educators we can help with this task of reviving and reawakening epidictic discourse.

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