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THE RHETORIC OF EULOGY:
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# THE RHETORIC OF EULOGIES:
# A GENERIC CRITIQUE OF CLASSIC
# AND CONTEMPORARY FUNERAL ORATORY

A Thesis

Submitted to the Faculty

of

Purdue University

by

Michael Lee Kent

In Partial Fulfillment of the

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of

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Dedicated to my parents, Raymond Lee and Laurel Alberta Kent,

for always believing me, for their love, for their support,

and for always allowing me to think.

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# PREFACE

This dissertation is really about the use of words, or language, to comfort, praise, console, encourage, and support. In keeping with the theme, I wish to include some words of my own choosing that have inspired, touched, moved, and at times disturbed me. I include some here as a preface to the scholarly discussion that follows.

> There are some who still fondly imagine that knowledge, casting the clear light of awareness, inspires and contains goodness within itself. (Dora Russell, The Religion of the Machine Age)

> I would not say that those who call out are answered—I would say, rather, that those destined to be answered must call out. (Burke, Toward a Better Life, p. 208)

> All of life can be broken down into moments of transition, or moments of revelation—this had the feeling of both. G'Qwon wrote: there is a greater darkness than the one we fight. It is the darkness of the soul that has lost its way. The war we fight is not against powers and principalities, it is against chaos, and despair. Greater than the death of flesh is the death of hope, the death of dreams. Against this peril we can never surrender. The future is all around us, waiting in moments of transition, to be born in moments of revelation. No one knows the shape of that future, or where it will take us; we know only that is always born in pain. (Ambassador G'Kar, "Z'Ha'Dum," Babylon 5)

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# ABSTRACT

Michael Lee Kent, Ph.D., Purdue University, December, 1997. The Rhetoric of Eulogies: A Generic Critique of Classic and Contemporary Funeral Oratory. Major Professor: Ralph Webb, Jr.

The purpose of this dissertation was to examine contemporary funeral eulogies. It was posited that eulogies to "everyday citizens," the majority of eulogies conducted on a daily basis, are not the same as eulogies to "the great," the type most commonly discussed in the scholarly literature.

This dissertation addressed four research questions: (1) historically and traditionally, how have eulogies been conceived, performed, and understood?, (2) how are eulogies understood and practiced by professional clergy who conduct them?, (3) what characteristics of eulogies make them particularly effective as vehicles of praise/consolation?, and (4) what characteristics of the eulogies that have been previously studied are found in everyday eulogies and what does this suggest for rhetorical theory/practice?

This project had two goals: (1) to draw from the literature on eulogies and the insights of professionals to explain how eulogies have been, and are "supposed to be," conducted in everyday practice; and (2) to examine a number of contemporary eulogies to identify their rhetorical characteristics and the extent to which theory on the subject matches everyday practice.

This dissertation found that the previous literature on eulogies had

failed to account for their highly religious character, and there exists at least two distinct genres of eulogies: eulogies to “the great” and eulogies to “every-day citizens.” This dissertation discusses the specific characteristics of these genres and makes several suggestions for individuals who participate in these genres.

# CHAPTER ONE: OVERVIEW OF THE DISSERTATION

## Thesis

In December of 1995, Cable News Network (CNN) announced that George Soros, a philanthropist and entrepreneur, had contributed more money than any other single United States Citizen to public research. Soros is the founder of the Center For Death and Dying in America, an organization devoted to thanotology, the study of death. In 1996 alone, Soros contributed over one-million dollars for independent research into the area of death and dying. Like Soros' "Project on Death in America,"[1] this study was an examination of the discourse on death and dying, eulogies in this case: an understudied area of rhetorical theory and practice, and an understudied area of social discourse.

The eulogy is part of ritualistic speaking events existing in nearly every culture in the world. Eulogies, and the cultural and religious traditions that characterize them, are a form of epideictic, or ceremonial rhetoric, and

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[1]According to the mission statement for the Project on Death in America: "The Project on Death in America is funded by the Open Society Institute, a non-profit foundation that supports the development of open societies worldwide. . . . The mission of the Project on Death in America is to understand and transform the culture and experience of dying in the United States through initiatives in research, scholarship, the humanities, and the arts; to foster innovations in the provision of care, public education, professional education, and public policy" (Project . . . , no date).

form part of the discourse of funerals. Eulogies are one of the special rhetorical events that nearly everyone will experience at some point in their lives.

As ubiquitous as eulogies seem to be in society, however, questions abound about how eulogies function, and the rhetorical ends they serve. One wonders, for example, whether Catholics conduct eulogies for different reasons than do Protestants; whether Buddhists, Mormons, or Jehovah's Witnesses conduct eulogies like the Catholics and Protestants; whether the poor are eulogized or remembered differently, or less favorably, than are the wealthy; and whether eulogies for everyday citizens are similar to or different from the eulogies for public figures. Currently no authoritative work, nay, no work at all, answers these questions. Such rudimentary questions need answering if scholars are to understand the rhetorical functioning of eulogies, the rhetorical ends to which they are put, and the ways they serve to reinforce particular social values and meet important community needs, such as consolation of the bereaved and remembrance and praise of the dead.

This study was a consideration of eulogies to the recently deceased, as opposed to “memorials,” or eulogies to those who have been dead for some time, such as take place on national holidays and important community events. This study was concerned with “everyday” eulogies, rather than eulogies to the great. Finally, this study was not a consideration of those “eulogies” which are given for the living or inanimate objects. Each of these distinctions will be clarified later in this chapter.

To enhance understanding of the rhetorical aspects of the eulogy, this study was an attempt to answer several questions:

(1) How have eulogies been conceived, performed, and understood, historically and traditionally?[2] That is, what are the boundaries of the eulogy, what is its scope or rhetorical focus, and what is currently known about eulogies?

(2) How are eulogies understood and practiced by the professional clergy who conduct them? That is, what do "professional" eulogists believe the goal of a eulogy is, or should be, and upon what do these individuals base their claims?

(3) What characteristics of eulogies make them particularly effective as vehicles of praise/consolation, and what other ends do they serve?

(4) What characteristics of the eulogies that have been previously studied are found in everyday eulogies and what does this suggest for rhetorical theory/practice? That is, what are the rhetorical "commonplaces" (or topoi) associated with eulogies and what does this suggest about the conduct of contemporary eulogies?

As these research questions indicate, the goals in this project were twofold: (1) to draw upon the literature of eulogies and the insights of professionals to provide insight into how eulogies have been, and are "supposed to be," conducted in everyday practice; and (2) to examine a number of contemporary eulogies to identify their rhetorical characteristics and the extent to

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[2]Note, it is beyond the scope of this project to exhaustively chronicle every instance and feature of eulogies. A "genre" of eulogy in which the dead is praised by the living in speech is present in nearly every known culture. Similarly, thousands of public, political eulogies may be found in the congressional record of the United States and, although not verified, globally as well. Given the enormity of the phenomenon in question, the overview provided here will not be exhaustive, merely exploratory.

which theory on the subject reflects practice. As explained below, this study utilized two kinds of data: those from interviews and rhetorical documents. Although the data cross religious boundaries, this project was not intended to be a cross-cultural or cross-religious examination. Rather, the intent was to draw upon representative members of religious traditions to adequately understand the rhetorical characteristics of the eulogy. The remainder of this chapter is devoted to more fully explicating the breadth and depth of this project including presentation of a more sophisticated rationale for studying this rhetorical phenomenon, detailed explanations of how materials were gathered, analyzed, and interpreted, and an explanation of what counted as data.

## Justification

Many scholars, especially feminist scholars, have called for a more complete examination of epideictic rhetoric in general and social ritual in particular (cf., Ochs, 1993, 1995; Arnold, 1992). Virginia Held, in her essay, "Non-contractual society: A feminist view" (1987), suggests that new models for interpreting and understanding the social world should be adopted. Similarly, Amotti Etzioni in his book, The Spirit of Community: The Reinvention of American Society (1993), has suggested that Americans have gradually been moving away from the idea of community and instead have been creating isolated worlds where social norms such as "good-conduct" and "responsibility" no longer have meaning (cf., also, Evans and Boyte, 1986;

Fox-Genovese, 1988). As well, many clergy and professionals in the health and funeral industry have observed disturbing trends in the way Americans view epideictic social rituals such as funerals (cf., Cassem, 1976; Chase, 1996; May, 1996; Weisman, 1976; Wolfelt, 1994). This interest in epideictic social rituals, in relations to eulogies, is significant. Eulogies, since Aristotle identified three types of speaking—forensic, deliberative, and epideictic—have been considered a paradigmatic example of epideictic rhetoric and are found in most cultures throughout the world.[3] Anthropological accounts of funerary rites suggest that nearly every culture performs a eulogy-like ritual as part of its funerary practices. Despite the ubiquity of funerals and the eulogy, very few accounts of the rhetoric of funeral practices exist, and virtually no accounts of the rhetorical practices of contemporary American funeral oratory exist.

The rituals of birth and death, because of their culture-specific natures vary by region, people, and circumstances. Although there exists numerous accounts of funerary practices across cultural, religious, epochal, and geographic fronts in the literature of Sociology and Anthropology, little Communication scholarship exists about funeral practices in general and eulogies in particular. As the research questions above suggest, little is known about the content of eulogistic messages, apart from broad and unsupported claims made regarding the role of funeral oratory, to "praise and console." If, as

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[3]Forensic rhetoric refers to "speeches of prosecution or defense in a court of law seeking to determine the just resolution of actions alleged to have taken place in the past"; deliberative rhetoric refers to "future action in the best interest of a state"; and epideictic rhetoric "does not call for immediate action by the audience but characteristically praises or blames some person or thing" (Kennedy, 1991, p. 7).

suggested, epideictic oratory and rituals are an understudied area of human communication, and if, as suggested, little scholarship has been done on funeral oratory, then a project such as this one should enhance understanding of the nature of social rhetoric in general and eulogies in particular. The following section contains a summary of the funerary and eulogistic scholarship that has been conducted in Communication and related fields, to provide a framework for understanding and interpreting the data and critique that appear later in this dissertation. Following this literature review is a discussion of the approach taken in gathering data for this project.

## Literature Review

This section is divided into four parts: (1) Historical, Anthropological, Sociological, Ecclesiastical, and Communication scholarship conducted on funerals and funerary rhetoric, is discussed to provide background on and insight into the funerary ritual and the role it plays in society; (2) non-Communication scholarship on eulogies is discussed to provide a framework within which to interpret the communication literature discussed in the next section; (3) Communication scholarship that has dealt with funerals and eulogies is discussed; and (4) scholarship in the area of Consolation and Comforting is briefly discussed to clarify future reference to these terms.

Each section is included because each arena of literature clarifies issues related to this project. For example, the funerary and eulogistic literature reviews are included because they illumine current understanding of

eulogies; the consolation and comforting literature is reviewed to help clarify analyses used in this study. More specifically, the literature reviewed highlights the depth and breadth of the understanding of eulogies—as social rituals, as genres of epideictic rhetoric, and as religious rhetorical rituals. The literature review also highlights the limitations of the scholarly understanding of eulogies—as monolithic events, as rituals of praise, and as secular phenomena.

## Scholarship Conducted on Funerals and Funerary Rhetoric

The scholarship on funerary rites and practices is enormous. Several bodies of literature have relevance to this project including historical and contemporary Communication, Anthropological, and Sociological scholarship, and ecclesiastical writings on eulogies, funerary rites, and epideictic rhetoric.

Several perspectives on funerary practices will be presented to illustrate their ubiquity and value as scholarly artifacts. The scholarship on funerary practices is also valuable because of the insight that it provides into the rhetorical situation in which eulogies take place. As will be clarified below, before one can make any claims regarding a rhetorical phenomenon, s/he must be able to account for the context in which it is performed.

As mentioned above, the funeral is one of the most omnipresent social events on the planet. Dobzhansky, in his Anthropological account of "religion, death, and evolutionary adaptation" (1965), provides valuable insight into the perceptions and beliefs that surround death in the West. Relating an

anecdote taken from Tolstoy, Dobzhansky describes the often irrational fears about death harbored by many people in the West. These "fears" help explain many of the other funerary practices described below. According to Dobzhansky:

> Tolstoy, in one of his stories, has a poignant description of a person's predicament in the face of death. A man begins to realize that his death is near. He tries to be sensible about it; he recalls an example of a syllogism in a textbook of logic: "All men are mortal; Gaius is a man; Gaius must die." Suddenly he recoils from this logic: "What does all this have to do with me, I am not Gaius." (p. 63)

The funeral ritual is an attempt by the living to come to terms with the inevitability of death. As Irion (1976) explains:

> [N]early every culture has developed some sort of ceremonial patterns for marking the death of a member of that society. Such ceremonies seem to have two major functions: to separate the body of the deceased from the community of the living and to assist the mourners in adjusting to their loss. (p. 32)

However, some funerary experts hold that in the United States there has been an increasing trend away from accepting death. More and more families have been opting for closed caskets, and the youth and health centered culture in the West often makes it difficult for survivors to accept the death of a loved one (cf., Cassem, 1976; Fulton, 1976).

Many individuals and groups have superstitious fears of death; and many have fears grounded in their religious beliefs of what they expect to find in the nether world[4] (cf., Douglass, 1969; Gardner, 1989; Huges, 1968;

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[4]Here I am referring particularly to references to "hell" and "eternal punishment," such as are found in the art and literature of the East and the West. Generally speaking, Christians believe that Hell <u>is</u> an actual place of fire, damnation, pain, suffering, etc.; non-Christians often consider the terms used to be figurative or metaphoric. Whether Christian or non-Christian, the belief in an afterlife replete with suffering for one's "sins" is characteristic of religious beliefs about death in both the East and the West.

Norton, 1920; Osborn, 1967; Owen, 1971; Skansie, 1985; Teiser 1988). Because of the "fear," "reverence," and "superstition" that has grown up around notions of death, cultures have developed funerary rituals and practices for handling (or burying) the dead. For example, consider the elaborate tombs of the Egyptians, the burial chambers and mausoleums of the western world, the practice of burying the dead in the ground common in all regions of the world, and the practice of cremation that has also been practiced in many regions of the world (cf., Pine, et al., 1976).

Along with practices for handling the bodies of the dead, over the centuries "strategies" for dealing with the psychological trauma of death have emerged in the form of funerary ritual and oratory. Commemorative ceremonies to praise the dead for their "heroic" deeds were characteristic of the ancient Greek tradition of encomium; and, from at least the fifth century BCE onward, various ceremonial practices have been employed to both ease the trauma of death for the living, and to commit the dead to the hereafter. As Houlbrooke explains:

> Funerary rites have long interested both historians and anthropologists, largely because of the great range of purposes they have been designed to fill in different cultures. Perhaps the most important has been to secure the happiness, or at least the tranquility, of the departed, and if necessary prevent their return to earth to haunt the living. These rites have also served to repair the breeches in the fabric of society caused by the death of important people, to confirm the transfer of property and responsibilities to successors, reinforce the social hierarchy, and uphold traditions of hospitality. (1989, p. 1; cf., also, Irion, 1976)

In the ancient Greek tradition, "[t]he funeral speech developed out of the formal laudation or commemoration of those who had fallen in battle for their country" (McGuire, 1953, pp. viii; cf., Ziolkowski, 1981). Like the Athenian

funerary rituals based in Greek superstition, other cultures developed distinctive death rituals associated with their own religious and cultural eschatologies. For example, Douglass notes how the Spanish Murelaga saw death not as an honorable event but rather as an event to be feared. As Douglass explains:

> Death is not always fortuitous or unpredictable. Various signs may presage an immanent death. If in the stillness of the night the rooster awakens and begins to crow, someone is going to die. The howling of a dog in the darkness is another warning that death is near. During Sunday High Mass when, at the consecration of the Blessed Sacrament, the alter boy rings the bell to inform the faithful and, at the same time, the clock in the church tower begins to chime the hour, a feeling of uneasiness passes over the congregation. Surely death is immanent for one of them. (p. 19)

According to Houlbrooke, "Funerary rites have long interested both historians and anthropologists, because of the great range of purposes they have been designed to fill in different cultures" (1989, p. 1). One of the purposes of these rites has been to maintain power and economic relationships. In the Middle Ages especially, and throughout the history of the Christian church, the church sought to control all of the aspects of the parishioners' lives from their birth until their death (cf., Pagels, 1988; Houlbrooke, 1989). The art and literature of this time period stands as a reminder of the role served by the church to reinforce the inevitability and horrors of physical death (cf., Foucault, 1979, ch. 1; Gardner, 1989; Houlbrooke, 1989; Huges, 1968; Norton, 1920; Osborn, 1967; Owen, 1971; Teiser 1988). As Houlbrooke explains:

> [D]uring the centuries when the hold of Christianity was strongest, and its association with secular institutions at its closest, the churches also asserted uncompromisingly the reality of suffering in and after death. Their teaching emphasized the eternity of torment which awaited the damned, and, especially during the later Middle Ages and

> the first 150 years after the reformation, the horrors of physical death itself. (pp. 3-4)

Houlbrooke goes on to explain that the Christian church's "desire for greater security was an important early motive for the establishment of great new extramural cemeteries from about 1830 onwards, but by no means the only one. The overcrowding of the churchyards in rapidly expanding cities threatened the health of the living as well as the repose of the dead" (1989, p. 12). Funerary entrepreneurs served to put a new face on death and to usurp some of the omnipresent control of the church, "[b]y removing internments from the hearts of towns, burial reformers made the face of death less visible; in laying out more spacious and beautiful cemeteries, they also sought to make it more acceptable. Not surprisingly, some churchmen viewed the whole movement with profound suspicion" (Houlbrooke, p. 13; cf., also Pagels, 1988).

At least three distinct functions of funerary rites are identified in the funerary literature:

(1) A sociopolitical function, or a morbid need to "keep up with the Jones," alluded to by Houlbrooke in which individuals have sought to "put on the best show," create the most sumptuous ceremonies, and "have the most ham and cheese sandwiches" (Anderson, 1984).

(2) A consolatory function where the "task of incorporating the physical remains [of the newly dead] among those of the earlier dead and of aiding the soul in its journey to and inclusion in the community of the dead in the other

world" (Paxton, 1990, p. 7).[5] As Houlbrooke explains, "Christianity offered ritual and social support. The Christian emphasis on expiation and reconciliation provided a more effective means of coping with natural anger, guilt, and despair than any available to the agnostic. But above all Christianity held out some hope of ultimate reunion" (p. 15). Paxton claims that "death rituals, like other rites of passage, accompany and effect a change in the person or persons involved by which they pass 'from one cosmic or social world to another' (p. 6). . . . Once separated by preliminal [sic] rituals (and then finally by death) from the physical body and the 'body' of the living, the dead person was accompanied by words and actions" (p. 7) into the next world. Thus, funerary or death rituals function to comfort both the survivors of the dead and the dead themselves. Dobzhansky has observed that:

> Only man buries his dead, and a burial is a sign of some reverence for death, which can hardly be felt by anyone who does not know that he too will die. . . . Veneration or fear of the dead is, of course, common if not universal among primitive peoples and the remains of ancient civilizations are mute testimony of a great intensity of these emotions. (1965, p. 63-64)

Related to the veneration and fear of the dead that Dobzhansky mentions is also the denial that death even occurs at all. As Houlbrooke puts it:

> Most human societies have in varying measure denied mortality. Some have envisaged no more than a shadowy and somewhat tenuous existence for the departed, while others have accepted schemes laying out in some detail the geography and chronology of future states of existence. The Christian assertion of the immortality of the soul and the ultimate resurrection of the body constitutes the most fundamental denial of death (pp. 3-4). . . . Professor Garland characterizes Christianity as a "denial system." Some refer to the "denial" of death in the

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[5]Related to this second function is the actual comforting that is practiced by members of the clergy and the funerary profession. Often, as noted by Reeves (1976), pastors have difficulty executing this duty because of their own grief and loss felt when a friend, or parishioner, dies.

> twentieth century when what they really have in mind is its evasion or concealment. (1989, p. 15; cf., Irion, 1976)

And (3), a eulogizing function where the deeds and accomplishments of both "great" and "obscure" individuals worthy of praise, such as political leaders and scientists, is performed. Paul explains the practice of eulogizing as it has been applied to great scientists:

> [D]istinguished scientists, like other distinguished specialists, earn the additional honor of a posthumous eulogy. And if they are members of more than one academy, they are honored more than once (p. 1). . . . The ostensible intent of the eulogies [to scientists] still remained the bestowal of immortality upon men whose mortality was being commemorated. These men were still exhibited, especially in the perorations, as embodiments of virtue and wisdom worthy of imitation. (1980, p. 11)

The practice of eulogizing great political and social leaders is exemplified best by the ceremonies that are occasioned by the death of presidents and leaders of national/international acclaim (cf., Kent, 1991).

Here then in these three functions is the basis for the more lengthy discussion of eulogies that follows. As should be clear from the discussion to now, the funerary ritual is comprised of many elements, and informed by regional and social convention, and by thousands of years of tradition. Part of this tradition has been an attempt to use language to make the funeral ritual more memorable, and to make the survivors of the deceased feel more capable of continuing after his/her loss. These considerations are clear in the scholarship on eulogies discussed below.

## Non-Communication Scholarship on Eulogies

Outside of the field of Communication not a great deal of scholarship has focused directly on eulogies (cf., Cooper, 1960; McGuire, 1953; Paul, 1980; Tomarken, 1990; Ziolkowski, 1981). Paul's and Tomarken's texts are representative of scholarship in the area. Paul's text, "Science and Immortality: The Eloges of the Paris Academy of Sciences (1699-1791), is a discussion of the thousand year old practice of commemorating the life of a past leader or "fallen hero"; in Paul's case the eulogies given at the Paris academy of sciences are discussed. Tomarken's text, The Simile of Truth: The French Satirical Eulogy and its Antecedents, is characteristic of a fairly common usage of eulogy. That is, Tomarken discusses the eulogy as a type of speech for the dead, that is given "as if" someone, or something, has died. The Satirical French eulogies that Tomarken writes about are similar to eulogies given for plants, animals, and insects—all living things of course—a variety of humorous eulogies that are devoted to plants and animals (cf., Monty Python's skit about a dead Parrot).

Eulogies have also been given for scholarly practices that have been abandoned (cf., Mohrmann, 1980, "Elegy in a Critical Graveyard"; and Cherwitz and Hikins, 1990, "Burying the Undertaker: A Eulogy for the Eulogists of Rhetorical Epistemology"), for employees who are retiring (not dying), and for rhetorical and comic purposes which often do not involve a death at all (cf., General MacArthur's "Old Soldiers Never Die" speech; Day, 1996; Robertson, 1996). Finally, there are a number of texts devoted to publication of

eulogies in which there is no discussion of the nature of the phenomenon itself.[6]

Most accounts of eulogies seek to explicate the death ritual itself, rather than to consider the function of the actual words used or language spoken. This is not surprising in light of the diversity of fields of study that have an interest in funerary practices. Scholarship outside the field of Communication tends not to have a communicative focus and, consequently, tends not to deal with issues of language. In an effort to address the dearth of scholarship on eulogies per se, this study explicates and considers only funerary oratory and eulogies and not the entire funeral ritual in all of its myriad aspects.

McGuire in his introduction to The Fathers Of The Church (1953), a collection of eulogies written by several prominent "Fathers of the Church," offers a comprehensive and detailed historical account of the tradition of eulogies as he understood it. According to McGuire:

> The Christian funeral oration is one of the most elaborate of Christian literary forms. It represents an attempt to adapt to Christian use a pagan Greek form with many hundreds of years of tradition behind it, a form which in itself is only one branch, but an important branch, of the literary genre known as the encomium. (p. vii)

McGuire, in his essay, goes on to delimit the scope of funeral oratory and trace its development from Greek roots into a Christian funerary tradition. McGuire's essay, an introduction to a series of funerary "masterpieces" by

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[6]The Memorial Tributes Delivered in Congress collections for deceased presidents published by the library of congress is an excellent example of these texts. Each volume contains transcripts of hundreds of eulogies given by members of congress and by citizens in praise of the deceased leader.

Saints Gregory Nazianzen and Ambrose, was intended to contextualize his discussion of the speeches that followed.

As a theologian, McGuire makes no effort to rhetorically critique the eulogies themselves in an effort to better explain them, nor does he have an interest in clarifying the everyday practice of the genre, per se. McGuire's intent, primarily, is to bring to the masses the "eloquent" words of two Christian saints; in the process he does little to advance understanding of eulogies. Of course, efforts such as McGuire's are not new in religious circles. Practically every organized religion has published texts (manuals of "Common Worship") for their ministers, priests, and rabbis to draw upon when relating their various religious messages. McGuire's introduction is part of this tradition.

An authoritative account of classical Greek eulogies, one that appears in the text and references of a number of other authors on funerary practices and eulogies, is Ziolkowski's Thucydides and the Tradition of Funeral Speeches at Athens (1981). Ziolkowski claims that funeral speech can be traced to the Ancient Greek tradition of commendation/praise for the dead and that it was used primarily as a vehicle of praise for individuals and democratic customs and institutions. The area of scholarship on Greek eulogies and funeral practices is one of the more well developed areas of scholarship in Communication on eulogies.

Based on the discussion above, a communicative understanding of eulogies requires a rhetorical approach—an approach capable of accounting for diverse social, situational, and communicative, phenomenon. The follow-

ing discussion is a review of the relevant critical/theoretical treatments of eulogies in the literature.

## Communication Scholarship on Eulogies

The scholarly work on eulogies has been sporadic and incomplete. Several Communication scholars have written about particular eulogies or eulogists (cf., Berens, 1977; Brownlow and Davis, 1974; Carpenter and Seltzer, 1971; Dorgan, 1971; Foss, 1983; Jamieson, 1978; and Kent, 1991), while others have written about theoretical aspects of eulogies (cf., Campbell and Jamieson, 1978; Hart, 1990; Jamieson and Campbell, 1982; Kent 1991). Owen Peterson, in the 1982-1983 volume of Representative American Speeches, provides a general descriptions of the eulogy. According to Peterson:

> A eulogy has two distinctive characteristics which sets it apart from most other forms of public address: (1) it is meant to be delivered at a ceremonial occasion to honor the subject; and, (2) it is designed to be heard by an audience that already shares the speaker's respect, affection or admiration for the person being honored. The speaker's task then is to heighten the auditors' feeling of regard, love, or appreciation. (1983, p. 174)

Peterson's framework, like many of the authors critiqued below, is based on informed opinion and intuition.

Most scholarly accounts of eulogies have approached them with some combination of four assumptions: (1) that the Western eulogy is representative of all eulogies; (2) that eulogies to the exceptional (or "great person") are representative of those to everyday citizens; (3) that only extraordinary citizens are deserving of eulogies (cf., Gray and Braden, 1963; Rogge and

Ching, 1966); or (4), as Jamieson (1978) does, that eulogies are simply appropriate responses to circumstances guided by visceral reactions to situational constraints. As will become clear later in this dissertation, these "assumptions" are more or less false.

For present purposes, I will summarize the insights and assumptions of eleven Communication scholars who have written about eulogies, beginning chronologically with Gray and Braden's text, Public Speaking Principles and Practice (1963). Ten other works will be reviewed below including: Rogge and Ching (1966), Carpenter and Seltzer (1971), Dorgan (1971), Brownlow and Davis (1974), Berens (1977), Jamieson (1978), Campbell and Jamieson (1978), Jamieson and Campbell (1982), Foss (1983), and Kent (1991).

## Giles Gray and Waldo Braden

Gray and Braden's text, Public Speaking Principles and Practice (1963), contains a short discussion of eulogistic rhetoric. According to the authors, in their one-and-a-half page discussion of eulogies based on Aristotle, the eulogist should "show that his subject, by his character and actions, demonstrated that he possessed the virtues esteemed by the society of which the audience is a part"[7] (p. 383). Gray and Braden explain that the eulogist should draw his/her evidence from the following sources: "(1) traits of character, (2) aspirations and goals, (3) outstanding accomplishments, and (4)

[7]Women's place in society in 1963, when Gray and Braden published their text was not in the realm of political and public policy, and their use of "he" was generic.

influences on men and the times" (pp. 383-384). Gray and Braden are describing the eulogy for the "great citizen" and not for the "everyday" citizen. They assume either that eulogies to exceptional citizens are, or should be, representative of everyday practice, or that only "great" citizens will be eulogized. Gray and Braden's suggested topoi for constructing eulogies reveals something of the occasion they imagine: he was brave; he was kind; he was sincere; he was generous; he was more intelligent than . . .; he was more generous than . . .; and he was more daring than . . . (p. 384). One would expect different topoi were Gray and Braden referring to eulogies for "everyday" citizens. In keeping with the neo-Aristotelianism of the day, Rogge and Ching provide another discussion of eulogies that assumes a "great man," or Wichelnsian (discussed below in the Dorgan section) notion of eulogies.

Edward Rogge and James Ching

Rogge and Ching's text, Advanced Public Speaking (1966), provides another perspective on eulogies, although their text reveals little more than does Gray and Braden's. Rogge and Ching make a distinction between "tributes" and "eulogies," tributes being given shortly after a person's death and eulogies given many years after a person's death; however no one else writing about eulogies at the time makes this distinction. According to Rogge and Ching, the eulogy has five "peculiar" characteristics: (1) historical objectivity is possible in a eulogy; (2) candor is possible in a eulogy; (3) calmness is expected in the treatment of the subject; (4) too much emphasis may be given

at the present occasion in lieu of the past and the deceased; and (5) eulogies and commemorations are similar.

Rogge and Ching add little to the theoretical or practical understanding of eulogies. They provide few suggestions as to what a speaker might say or do when giving a eulogy. Carpenter and Seltzer, discussed next, continue in the neo-Aristotelian vein set by Rogge and Ching and Gray and Braden when they conduct a critique of rotunda eulogies.

## Ronald Carpenter and Robert Seltzer

Carpenter and Seltzer in their "Situational Style and the Rotunda Eulogies" (1971), essay, take a commonly held stance to eulogies arguing that everyone agrees on what eulogies should do, and that eulogies are, essentially, an exercise in eloquence for the speaker. I quote at length from Carpenter and Seltzer who base their claims about eulogies on Aristotle:

> A eulogist's problem is essentially one of style. For as suggested in the Aristotelian concept of epideictic, much of a eulogy's subject matter is in effect predetermined by the noble deeds and ideals (actual or reputed) of the deceased man to be praised. Moreover, because these praiseworthy actions and attitudes tend to be widely known and taken for granted by the audience, the eulogist need not be concerned with demonstrating that they occurred or that they are indeed noble. Instead, he demonstrates his skill at developing the stylistic for this content. (p. 11)

Here, Carpenter and Seltzer are implying much the same thing Peterson implied in Representative American Speeches: that is, that the eulogist does not need to "persuade" his/her audience. However, Carpenter and Seltzer's claims exist apart from reality where average citizens do not have a history of

"noble deeds and ideals" and do not have an "expert" to "eloquently" speak over their graves. Beyond this, if I may be allowed to editorialize for a sentence, "We are not in Ancient Greece anymore." Why Carpenter and Seltzer would advance Aristotle as the only source of expertise about a rhetorical phenomenon that has been taking place for thousands of years seems unclear. As will be discussed below, contemporary eulogies for everyday citizens tend not to follow this Aristotelian model very closely.

The remainder of Carpenter and Seltzer's essay is the presentation of a grammatical/factorial analysis, of sorts, that ranks the stylistic categories of repetition and antithesis for five speakers who delivered rotunda eulogies. Carpenter and Seltzer conclude by claiming that: "individualistic differences in style do exist among the five eulogies. But their broader stylistic similarities suggest the influence of situational tendencies" (p. 15). Their essay adds little to the understanding of eulogies presented above; the authors' primary interest, as noted, is an analysis of situation and style.

Dorgan, discussed next, in his essay on the Huey P. Long funeral oration, provides historical scholarship on the politics of funeral oratory. His discussion, however, adds little to an understanding of the genre of eulogies or funeral oratory, except to suggest that it can be used for less than pious purposes.

Howard Dorgan

Dorgan, in his “Gerald L. K. Smith and Huey P. Long Funeral Oration” (1971), essay, explains how Gerald Smith, Huey Long’s eulogist, utilized the occasion of delivering Long’s eulogy to further his own political fortune. Dorgan points out how eulogies may be corrupted for base political gain and that Long’s funeral oration is a paradigmatic example of underhanded and inappropriate oratory. Dorgan’s essay is thoroughly neo-Aristotelian. Based on Dorgan’s section titles alone: “The Movement, The Man,” and “The Moment,” the hand of Herbert Wichelns reaching out from the grave is evident with his “great man” criteria of "the man, his work, and his times.” These factors, according to Wichelns, are the “necessary common topics of criticism.” "[N]o one of them” Wichelns asserts, “can be wholly disregarded by any critic" (1925, p. 42).

Dorgan’s essay provides an historical lens through which to view one of this nation’s most colorful politicians; his essay also contains an insightful rhetorical critique of Smith’s eulogy for Long. However, Dorgan’s essay adds little to an understanding of the eulogy itself as a rhetorical phenomenon. Dorgan’s only comments on eulogies, consist of the following:

> Smith performed the traditional labors of the eulogist. With undertoned but intense emotionalism he panegyrized the virtues of the son, the husband, the father, the politician, the statesman, and the citizen. He summarized the “nobler attributes”: he consoled the relatives; he gave assurances of the deceased’s spiritual salvation; and he closed with a recitation of the departed’s favorite poem. (p. 386)

While such tasks are consistent with those specified in the literature on eulogies and in the comments by several interviewees for this dissertation,

Smith's characterization of the role of eulogies seems to come either from a "received" view of the role of eulogies, or from a summary of what Smith actually did, rather than from any theoretical or practical discussion of eulogies. Like Dorgan, Brownlow and Davis' critique, below, displays a neo-Aristotelian approach in their analysis of Adlai Stevenson's eulogies.

Paul Brownlow and Beth Davis

Brownlow and Davis, in their essay, "'A certainty of honor': The eulogies of Adlai Stevenson" (1974), apply a neo-Aristotelian framework of analysis in which their final conclusion is—not surprisingly—that Stevenson's eulogies were good because Stevenson was such a good epideictic orator. Such a conclusion is consistent with many neo-Aristotelian critical efforts of the day in which the act of choosing an orator for study usually presupposed that s/he was worthy of study.

Brownlow and Davis' essay had three goals: "(1) to determine the rhetorical situation for each eulogy, (2) to analyze Stevenson's responses to the situations, and (3) to evaluate the appropriateness of Stevenson's eulogies as rhetorical responses" (p. 217). As is suggested by Brownlow and Davis' three goals, their essay is more concerned with situational analysis, like Bitzer's "Rhetorical Situation" (discussed in detail below) than with exploring the characteristics of eulogies per se. Brownlow and Davis take a functional approach to eulogies, assuming that all readers would agree on, and understand, what a eulogy is. While I believe that the speeches examined by

Brownlow and Davis were eulogies, I also believe that the eulogies examined were examples of one type of eulogy—the public eulogy given for "great citizens." As suggested above, the eulogy to extraordinary citizens is assumed to be representative of the genre of eulogies. This apriori acceptance of eulogies as a genre has characterized most of the research on eulogies.

In regard to Brownlow and Davis' conclusions, the authors suggest that Stevenson "had to accommodate: (1) the nature and purpose of eulogies, (2) the events in the lives of the deceased, (3) the time element and (4) personal and audience expectations" (p. 219). This "situational" approach is based on a Bitzerian notion of situation that was in vogue when Brownlow and Davis wrote their essay. Brownlow and Davis also suggest, ironically, that eulogies have three purposes:[8] "(1) to express appropriate personal and audience grief, (2) to deepen appreciation and respect for the deceased and (3) to give the audience strength for the present and inspiration for the future" (p. 219). Brownlow and Davis use these categories as a basis to critique the eulogies of Stevenson. Based on Brownlow and Davis' categories they suggest that, "speakers are usually granted 'eulogistic license' in evaluating the deeds and contributions of the deceased, but they are not given much time to prepare for or to deliver the eulogy" (p. 219). Both of these suggestions are questionable in terms of eulogies for everyday citizens. Brownlow and Davis' suggestion that the four days Stevenson had to prepare Kennedy and

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[8]The Irony of Brownlow and Davis' claim is that their definition of eulogies is based on two respected public speaking texts of their day: Gray and Braden (1963), and Rogge and Ching (1966), both reviewed above. Gray and Braden cite only Aristotle; Rogge and Ching, with the exception of a psychology textbook on motivation, cite no one.

Churchill's eulogies, and the ten days he had to prepare Mrs. Roosevelt's eulogies was short, suggests that the authors know very little about standard or average preparation time for eulogies; the authors are obviously unaware that most clergy have 1-2 days, and some even less, to prepare an entire funerary service, much less the eulogy. Similarly, the idea of "eulogistic licence," suggested by the authors as common place, was considered unacceptable by nearly all of the clergy interviewed for this dissertation—several who claim to have given hundreds of eulogies at funerals. Virtually all agreed that eulogists must be "honest"—some things can be left out, but a "scoundrel" cannot be "preached into heaven," and should not be made out to be a saint.

Brownlow and Davis' critique is a neo-Aristotelian analysis of Stevenson's epideictic oratorical excellence. Their essay begins and ends with the assumption that Stevenson was an orator worthy of emulation, and to that extent their essay is little more than a self-fulfilling prophesy. Their evaluation of Stevenson's excellence, like much of neo-Aristotelian criticism of their day, was predictable; their contribution to a general understanding of the "genre" of eulogy is small. Berens' essay, discussed next, is concerned primarily with Nationalism. His contribution to a "theory" of eulogistic rhetoric is limited.

John Berens

Berens' essay, "'Like a prophetic spirit': Samuel Davies, American eulogists, and the deification of George Washington" (1977), deals with how ministers and eulogists historically have drawn upon the George Washington myth in their nationalistic narratives portraying the United States as a nation with a divine destiny. Berens writes that Samuel Davies, a respected Presbyterian minister gave a sermon in which he suggested that the then Colonel Washington had a divine destiny. This "prophesy," Berens suggests, was later picked up on forty-five years later and used to "deify" Washington. Essentially, Berens' major concern is with the development of American nationalism and how it has been constructed, in part, with the myth of George Washington.

Berens takes an apriori approach to eulogies, suggesting that "hundreds of orations, eulogies, and sermons honoring the memory of George Washington were delivered throughout the United States" (p. 292), but never indicates what counts as a eulogy. To facilitate a theoretical understanding of eulogies, Berens' approach is problematic because nowhere does he differentiate sermons from eulogies; given that Berens suggests these speeches took place throughout the United States, reasonably, especially in light of the issues raised below, some of them were probably not eulogies in any exacting definitional sense.

In terms of the subject of this dissertation, eulogies, Berens' article is of no particular heuristic value. Berens is not really concerned with eulogies

or eulogists, per se, but rather with how the nationalist myth of Washington was created. Berens' essay is a work of historiography rather than of rhetorical theory/criticism. Jamieson's essay (1978), discussed next, offers another situationally based account of eulogistic rhetoric. The text by Campbell and Jamieson (1978), and the essay by Jamieson and Campbell (1982), following, offer more than previous authors to an understanding of eulogies as a type or genre of public speeches.

Kathleen Jamieson

Jamieson, in her "Critical Anthology of Public Speeches" (1978), provides a detailed discussion of funeral rhetoric, and presents the first published and perhaps most authoritative explanation of what eulogies "do." Jamieson's text essentially consists of rhetorical critiques of public speeches, to clarify how they function and the rhetorical roles they serve. Her discussion of eulogies highlights several of the issues raised above in regard to funeral oratory. Jamieson suggests that eulogies are shaped by cultural constraints of audiences, and that "proper responses" are largely the result of innate adaptations to rhetorical situations. As Jamieson explains, "Some forms of public address are so tied to basic human needs that a speaker requires no formal training in the art of speaking, no careful study of the audience, no analysis of past responses to comparable situations to know what response is required" (p. 40). Despite the visceral understanding that Jamieson implies speakers might have, she goes on to explain that:

> An examination of Western history reveals notable similarity in speeches created as a response to the death of loved persons. Eulogistic rhetoric has traditionally affirmed the reality of death, eased confrontations with one's own mortality, psychologically transformed the relationship between the bereaved and the deceased, and refashioned relationships of members of the community in the absence of the deceased. (p. 40)

In light of these needs associated with funeral oratory, Jamieson concludes: (1) that each eulogy is to some extent a unique act; (2) that death triggers a need to transform the relationship with the deceased and his/her community through public address; (3) that some situations, like death, demand a rhetorical response; and (4) that the response to death is informed by culture, and having a funeral where words of comfort are spoken for the survivors is considered a valuable psycho-social activity. Jamieson explains what rhetorical forces trigger funeral oratory and what situational forces influence eulogies.

In the same year that Jamieson published her "Critical Anthology of Public Speeches," Campbell and Jamieson published Form and Genre: Shaping Rhetorical Action (1978). Therein Campbell and Jamieson provide more detailed explanation of the function and scope of eulogistic rhetoric.

Karlyn Kohrs Campbell and Kathleen Hall Jamieson

Campbell and Jamieson's Form and Genre, represents one of the earliest sophisticated treatments of generic theory. In the introductory chapter, "Form and Genre in Rhetorical Criticism: An Introduction," Camp-

bell and Jamieson use the genre of the eulogy as a representative example of a rhetorical genre. The authors' position on the eulogy is clear:

> The eulogy responds to a situation in which the community is ruptured by death. In this situation, persons must alter their relationship with the deceased and also confront their own mortality. The very act of eulogizing acknowledges the death. In so doing, it necessitates a juxtaposition of past and present tense which recasts the relationship to the deceased to one of memory. (p. 20)

Campbell and Jamieson in their introductory chapter, provide more "back-ground" on what eulogies do; however, Campbell and Jamieson never really explain how eulogies function rhetorically, that is, they never critique any eulogies to support or illustrate their claims (of course, to do so was beyond the scope of their essay).

Campbell and Jamieson's claim about what eulogies do contains some imprecise language. Eulogies for everyday citizens are not responses "to a situation in which the community is ruptured by death" (p. 20), funerals are. Eulogies to the great may accomplish this, but certainly all eulogies do not. Similarly, many writers on funeral practices—as noted above, an area stud-ied much more extensively than eulogies—agree that the "very act of eulogiz-ing acknowledges the death" (p. 20), but it is the funerary ritual, especially the confrontation with a body, that drives home the fact that a loved one has passed away (cf., Cassem, 1976; Fulton, 1976; Greenberg, 1976). For a contemporary example of this, consider the case of Elvis Presley who many apparently believe is still alive.

Campbell and Jamieson's respective and collaborative work does provide one of the first discussions within a work on Communication of what purpose eulogies serve; however, their information is not startling or new.

Based on Campbell and Jamieson's footnotes, the substance of Campbell and Jamieson's discussion seems to be based on a Masters thesis by one of Campbell's students, James Payne (1976).[9]

Campbell and Jamieson assume that all eulogies are more or less the same, and that eulogies to the great are representative of everyday eulogistic practice, a position that is probably not defensible. Campbell and Jamieson assume apriori that the eulogy is a genre of discourse that is generally understood and agreed upon. As will be discussed in the next chapter, this assumption is suspect. Many of the clergy interviewed for this dissertation claim that they do not even conduct eulogies as part of their funerary services, and many claimed that they were not sure what a eulogy was for. These are important matters in light of the fact that most authors, discussed above, assume that there is general agreement about what eulogies are and what they do. In Jamieson and Campbell's (1982) essay, below, the authors critique several eulogies to demonstrate that genres, as "fusion of forms," are rule governed phenomena.

Kathleen Hall Jamieson and Karlyn Kohrs Campbell

In Jamieson and Campbell's essay, "Rhetorical hybrids: Fusions of Generic Elements" (1982), the authors make claims about eulogies that are

[9]Payne's thesis ("The American Eulogy: A Study in Generic Criticism"), although not reviewed here, is highly theoretical and abstract. He deals little with genre critique per se—his title suggests otherwise—proposing his own "formal/archetypal" (cf., pp. 17-28) conception of genre. Payne also conducts an abstract critique of nineteenth century eulogies.

more or less similar to the claims made in their previous works. The essay seeks to clarify Jamieson and Campbell's position on genre theory, furthering their idea of "rhetorical hybrids" and "generic fusions." What is troubling about Jamieson and Campbell's essay, however, is not that they fail to make a convincing argument, but that their claims about what eulogies do are based on apriori assumptions.

Following the authors' explanation of eulogies is a footnote that cites Jamieson's (1978) essay, "Critical Anthology" and Payne's "The American Eulogy." From a theoretical standpoint, Jamieson's essay contains little not found in Payne's essay, and the funerary scholarship mentioned above; thus, what is occurring is a static conception of eulogies being passed down through the scholarly record. As noted in the introduction to this section, there are several fallacious assumptions associated with eulogies each revolving around the assumption that the neo-Aristotelian notion of a "great man" eulogy, such as those given when slain presidents, kings, and social leaders pass on, is representative of daily practice. Jamieson and Campbell's definition makes such an assumption:

> A eulogy responds to those human needs created when a community is sundered by the death of one of its members. In Western culture, at least, a eulogy will acknowledge the death, transform the relationship between the living and the dead from present to past tense, ease the mourners' terror at confronting their own mortality, console them by arguing that the deceased lives on, and reknit the community. (1982, p. 147; cf., also, Payne, 1975, pp. 53-54 and 114-115 ff.)

As should be clear from this literature review, there exists no authoritative or exhaustive account of the rhetorical or social role played by eulogies in the Communication literature. All previous studies have simply substituted the

word “eulogy” for “funeral,” or have assumed that the essence of eulogies is immutable and agreed upon. The research conducted for this dissertation casts doubt upon these assumptions.

Because Jamieson and Campbell operate from the apriori assumptions mentioned, the remainder of their essay, not surprisingly, is devoted to showing how the rhetors they critiqued either met or failed to meet, the standards of an effective eulogy. Similarly, Jamieson and Campbell's assumptions led them to draw some conclusions of questionable validity. For instance, Jamieson and Campbell claim, regarding a eulogy for Robert Kennedy by Charles Percey, that Percey's eulogy failed because it was not epideictic enough and focused too much on deliberative issues (p. 150). While this may indeed be the case, the authors note, only one page previously, that “Percey's eulogy lacks coherence” (p. 149). If Percey's eulogy failed “because it lacked coherence,” (and Jamieson and Campbell offer no external corroboration such as newspaper accounts or eye witnesses to show that it did fail), by Jamieson and Campbell's own explanation it failed because it was a “bad” speech, and not because it did not do what a eulogy “should” do—since there is no agreement about what that means. In the absence of valid critical criteria, there are too many examples of “excellent” speeches that violated scholarly expectations and were successful to assume that this one failed on technical grounds rather than aesthetic grounds.

Karen Foss's essay, discussed next, provides more of substance to a discussion of eulogies than the neo-Aristotelian essays heretofore discussed. Foss provides a mature treatment of eulogies. Her essay begins with a

review of the eulogistic literature and then seeks to broaden the current understanding of eulogies, based on a critique of the eulogies to John Lennon, by proposing that eulogies serve an "advisory" function. Her thesis is consistent with the accounts of the interviewees for this study regarding what eulogies "should" do.

Karen Foss

Foss' essay, "John Lennon and the advisory function of eulogies" (1983), begins with a review of the literature on eulogies, and suggests that eulogies function to: (1) make real the death to the shocked audience; (2) reduce personal fears of mortality by referring to an afterlife; (3) allow the audience to reorient themselves to the deceased; and (4) reassure the audience that the community will live on (p. 187); Foss cites Jamieson (1978) for this insight. Foss introduces a new idea into the discourse on eulogies when she argues that eulogies serve an "advisory" function, as well as their "praise" and "consolation" function.

Foss acknowledges that her essay is an exploration of the "advisory" function of eulogies, rather than of eulogies per se. To this extent, Foss relies upon the work of previous scholars as warrants for her adoption of their definitions. That is, Foss assumes that previous scholars have satisfactorily examined eulogies, which, as has been shown, has not necessarily been the case. While several critiques have been conducted, scholars have assumed apriori that the eulogy is monolithic and well understood.

Foss' approach, in contrast to most of the work on eulogies that preceded her, is Burkean. That is, she views her "eulogistic"[10] discourse from the perspective of "hierarchy" (cf., Foss, p. 189). Because Foss considers "eulogistic" rhetoric, rather than eulogies proper, a considerable portion of her essay is devoted to fleshing out the relationship that existed between Lennon and his fans in order to support her claims regarding the "advisory" function of eulogies. Foss concludes that Lennon's eulogies served to: (1) ask fans to examine their behavior; (2) show the fans that they had valued the symbol of Lennon more than the man; and (3) encourage fans to be more like Lennon had been—to advise them (pp. 193-194). Foss also insightfully suggests that a further exploration of the advisory function of eulogies might be in order.

Foss' call for increased exploration of this area is laudable. Nevertheless, Foss never really examines eulogies per se. What Foss calls "eulogistic" rhetoric might more accurately be called "thanotological discourse," given that her examination did not center on eulogies per se. Foss proceeds from faulty assumptions regarding what a eulogy is, and her claims may prove to apply most appropriately to the death of "pop culture icons," rather than to eulogies in general. Foss suggests as much in her conclusion (p. 194). The final work to be considered here, Kent's (1991) "Rhetoric of Eulogy . . .", essay, was a topological critique of presidential eulogies.

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[10]Foss considers what may be called meta-eulogistic discourse and not simply eulogies proper, hence her use of the term "eulogistic" rhetoric. This dissertation does not consider meta-eulogistic discourse.

Michael Kent

Kent's essay, "The Rhetoric of Eulogy: Topoi of Grief and Consolation" (1991), is unique in that Kent examines criteria regarding what eulogies have been purported to do, and then proceeds to conduct a critique of presidential eulogies. Of course, Kent's essay also suffers from the same errors of previous essays, that is, Kent assumes that eulogies are monolithic, and that a critique of exceptional speeches will inform everyday practice. While most rhetoricians would agree that the studying of great models has value, in the case of social rituals, like eulogies, rhetoricians must be sure that the models studied are representative of everyday, or actual, practice. To Kent's credit, in his conclusion he raises this issue and suggests that more comprehensive and comparative studies of eulogies be conducted.

Kent, in his "Rhetoric or Eulogy" essay, identifies a series of topoi that are present in presidential rhetoric that are related to "American Values" such as those identified by Steele and Redding (1962), and compares these topoi to a variety of classic topoi culled from research on eulogies and funeral oratory. Perhaps Kent's greatest insight is his illustration of how contemporary eulogistic topoi influence the development of eulogies, and his suggestion that topoi may vary by circumstance of death, religion, economics, and gender.

Summary of Eulogy Scholarship

As should be clear from the above discussion, very little theoretical work has been conducted on the genre of eulogies. Most scholars have assumed that eulogies are more or less understood, or have critiqued particular eulogies or varieties of eulogies (cf., Berens, 1977; Brownlow and Davis, 1974; Carpenter and Seltzer, 1971; Dorgan, 1971; Foss, 1983; Jamieson, 1978; Jamieson and Campbell, 1982; Kent, 1991), and others have mistakenly assumed that various treatments of funerary scholarship is equivalent to rhetorical scholarship. Obviously scholarship from a variety of areas can inform the scholarship in Communication studies, but to assume that Sociologists, who's major concern is "social interaction" are describing "rhetoric" is not precise. Similarly, Theologians do not describe funerary practice with an eye toward the purely linguistic aspects of the ritual. Communication scholars need to more fully understand the characteristics of this omnipresent rhetorical-social phenomena to foster a greater understanding of the role played by language in the ritual of eulogies. In the next section, "Definitional Issues of Consolation/Comforting," Consolation and Comforting are briefly discussed so that the use of these terms will be clear in the "Data" and "Critique" chapters. Because of the volume of scholarship in these areas, this discussion makes no attempt to review all of the scholarship. The goal here is only to provide a framework for understanding both terms.

## Definitional Issues of Consolation/Comforting

As suggested in research question Three (What characteristics of eulogies make them particularly effective as vehicles of praise/consolation?), and as revealed above in the review of funerary scholarship, much of the scholarship on funerals and eulogies suggests that eulogies serve a variety of functions including praise of the deceased and consolation for the living (cf., Kent, 1991; McGuire, 1953; Ziolkowski, 1981).

Interestingly, eulogies were first referred to as speeches of consolation. Consolations, or eulogies, as a literary genre were "introduced into Latin literature by Cicero. His first work, On Consolation [De consolatione], [was] written to console himself on the death of his daughter Tullia" (McGuire, 1953, p. xi). According to McGuire, "[t]he Greek treatise on consolation [eulogy] impressed the Romans profoundly and many of its essential features passed into the Latin" (p. vii).

It is from these Greek and Latin traditions that the Christian concept of eulogies come. As noted by McGuire, Christian eulogies come from "the varied pagan literary tradition [and] . . . exhibit modifications and new elements which give them their specific Christian character" (p. vii). The concept of the "Christian"[11] eulogy "is based on the central doctrine of the Christian religion; belief in a personal God, the creator of the world and man,

[11]"Christian" is quoted here because those Christian writers who have spoken of eulogies have discussed them as is there were only one type of "Christian" eulogy. A careful reading of the discussions of Christian eulogies however, reveals that they are far from monolithic structures and are generally described as rituals that draw on Christian "doctrine" rather than clearly delimited rhetorical structures.

all-powerful; but all-just and all-merciful, . . . the trinity, . . . [and Christ's] resurrection as the savior of mankind" (McGuire, p. xiii).

In both scholarly and religious parlance, however, "consolation" is an ephemeral term. Much of the contemporary scholarship that uses the term is associated with an area of clinical research called "bereavement" or is religious in nature (cf., Burnell, 1989; Henberg, 1990; More, 1977; Muller, 1993; Perkins, 1994; Rozwaski, 1994). The majority of the works that speak of consolation speak of it much like the scholars of eulogies have spoken of eulogies; that is, the term is used in an <u>apriori</u> fashion, as if everyone agreed on what the term meant, to denote efforts to comfort someone suffering great grief. Essentially, the term is used denotatively: "To allay the sorrow or grief" (American Heritage Electronic Dictionary, 1993).

Although the lack of precision associated with use of this term, and the lack of understanding of the area of eulogies, make it difficult to isolate what exactly this phenomenon might refer to, the fact remains that "consolation" <u>is</u> associated with eulogies. Because of the close relationship between this somewhat obscure social phenomenon and eulogies, consolation is discussed in this dissertation as an important theoretical term. The closely related and well developed area of scholarship on "comforting" will also be discussed to explain the process of consolation.

Consolation and Comforting

Humans of every culture, religion, and social group have experienced grief since the dawn of time (Ochs, 1993, p. 25). Before humans began recording history, before humans understood the cycle of life and death, before humans could speak to one another, humans have been born, lived out their lives, and died. In spite of this inevitability, however, most people understand very little about what to say to other human beings when they have lost a loved one. In fact, research suggests that many individual's "attempts" to comfort actually inflict pain rather than comfort (Lehman et al., 1986).

When asked what one should say to, or do for, someone who has lost a loved one, most people can only shrug. Most people understand that one is supposed to say something "kind," something "understanding," something "sympathetic" perhaps, to use the "right words" as it were, but exactly what one is supposed to say is something most people do not know (Burleson and Goldsmith, 1996, pp. 21-22). Does what one "should" say vary by religious tradition? Do those people of different religious traditions experience grief more acutely? Most people understand very little about the act of comforting (Cluck and Cline, 1986; Lehman, 1986). This is an interesting failing in light of the fact that each person will experience the death of others in the course of his/her lifetime. The issue of consolation (or comforting) is raised in this dissertation to help explain how eulogies function and to provide insight into the types of rhetorical strategies used to console the living in eulogies.

From a purely lexicographical standpoint the terms "comfort" and "consolation" are synonymous, used to define each other in many dictionaries/thesauruses.[12] However, from a theoretical or applied standpoint, the two terms are not synonymous. In common scholarly parlance, "comforting" is referred to as both an interpersonal and a group process involving physical, or nonverbal components, and auditory, or spoken behaviors. As Samter explains:

> Formal definitions of comforting behavior typically fall into one of two categories. In one approach, exemplified by Yarrow and Waxler (1976), it is maintained that the alleviation of physical distress should be included under the auspices of comforting behavior. In a somewhat different vain, Burleson (1982a) suggests that acts of comforting address the psychological rather than the physical needs of another. (1983, p. 2)

Burleson offers a representative definition of "comforting" as "messages intended to reduce or manage the negative emotional states experienced by others" (1985, p. 103). Comforting is seen as intentional, purposive, behavior and is not considered to be subsidiary to any other activity such as entertaining or discussing the weather.

"Consolation," in contrast to comforting, has been described as an activity that includes a wider variety of behaviors/activities and is often aimed at an audience other than at an individual or small group. The obvi-

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[12]Consider the following sources: Roget's II Thesaurus: Comfort: noun: a consoling in time of grief or pain, solace, consolation; verb: to give hope to in time of grief or pain, soothe, console, solace; and Console: verb: to give hope to in time of grief or pain, comfort, soothe, solace (American Heritage Electronic Dictionary, 1993, emphasis added). And in, Webster's New Twentieth Century Dictionary: Unabridged: Comfort: syn.—consolation, solace, relief, support; and Console: to comfort; to cheer, especially by making up for loss or disappointment; syn. comfort, solace, soothe, cheer, sustain (1983, emphasis added).

ous example is funeral oratory which has been said to serve the dual purposes of praise and consolation (cf., Kent, 1991). As Ochs explains:

> The point remains, nevertheless, that audiences for whom consolatory symbolic behaviors are addressed include individuals experiencing different degrees of disorientation, uncertainty, and insecurity. In a real sense the audience at a consolatory ceremony experiences contradictory and incompatible urges on the one hand to "push the dead away," and, on the other, to "keep the dead alive." (1993, p. 27)

Clearly, then, comforting and consolation both refer to a communicative, social, process whereby the emotional distress of another is allayed through words, deed, or behaviors. Obviously, slight differences in emphasis exist; however, given that the nature of this project is to explore an area of rhetorical social practice that has before now received little attention, it seems necessary to consider the extent to which eulogies actually do serve to "console," and whether those individuals who conduct eulogies actually are aware of a consolatory aspect in eulogies. This dissertation explored this aspect of eulogies in two ways: one, several of the interview questions were direct inquiries into the consolatory potential of eulogies; and two, the rhetorical critique that follows looked for "traces" of consolation or comforting in the texts examined. Neither consolation nor comforting is central to this dissertation; however, an understanding of both terms should help to understand aspects of the rhetorical critique and data sections.

## Summary of Literature Review

The literature review was divided into four sections: (1) a review of Historical, Anthropological, Sociological, Ecclesiastical, and Communication

scholarship conducted on funerals and funerary rhetoric; (2) non-Communication scholarship on eulogies; (3) Communication scholarship that has dealt with and discussed funerals and eulogies; and (4) a discussion of the terms “consolation” and “comforting.”

Section one was intended to provide a framework for the discussion of eulogies and funeral oratory, and also to provide background for understanding the approach taken to data gathering for this dissertation. Funerary oratory and rituals may be viewed as having these dimensions: (1) a sociopolitical dimension, or a morbid need to “keep up with the Jones”; (2) a consolatory dimension where the “task of incorporating the physical remains [of the newly dead] among those of the earlier dead and of aiding the soul in its journey to and inclusion in the community of the dead in the other world”; and (3), the eulogizing function where the deeds and accomplishments of both “great” and “obscure” individuals worthy of praise, such as political leaders and scientists, is performed.

The second section, on non-Communication scholarship on eulogies, revealed that the eulogy has been a central part of funerary practice for thousands of years. However, also explained in this section was the diversity of explorations of eulogies that ranged from religious to satirical. Section two was intended to support the argument that eulogies have not received a great deal of examination in spite of their ubiquitous social role.

The third section was a discussion of the Communication scholarship that has been conducted on eulogies. Eleven works were discussed: Gray and Braden (1963), Rogge and Ching (1966), Carpenter and Seltzer (1971), Dor-

gan (1971), Brownlow and Davis (1974), Berens (1977), Jamieson (1978), Campbell and Jamieson (1978), Jamieson and Campbell (1982), Foss (1983), and Kent (1991). Section three contains a critique of the limited literature in the area of eulogies. In section three was also an explanation of how most of the past scholarship on eulogies operated under the false assumption that eulogies to "great men" can somehow clarify or explain everyday social practice. The scholarship was reviewed chronologically so that the development of thought in the area could be understood, and so that research shortcomings could be illustrated.

The forth and final section was concerned with providing an explanation for the terms "consolation" and "comforting." In this section, a distinction was drawn between the two terms, each term was briefly discussed, critical issues related to each term were raised, and the suggestion was offered that literature on comforting is useful to understand consolation. The next section of this chapter will be concerned with explaining the "Approach" that was taken in the gathering of data for this dissertation.

## Approach

The purpose of this dissertation was to clarify the rhetorical phenomenon of eulogies. To accomplish this, four tasks were undertaken: (1) an historical/critical overview of funerals, funeral oratory, and eulogies, was completed above; (2) to more fully understand the rhetorical ritual of eulogies, interviews with ministers, clergy, and funeral directors were conducted;

(3) original eulogies to "everyday" citizens were gathered to have a body of discourse to critique; and (4) a rhetorical critique of the eulogies gathered, using a "generic" methodology, was performed to identify the rhetorical characteristics of the genre of eulogies.

Primarily this project was concerned with conducting interviews with clergy and funeral home directors, and using that insight to inform the genre critique. As alluded to above, this critical approach represents a significant departure from previous research on eulogies in two ways: One, previous research on eulogies assumed that eulogies to the "great" are representative of, or can explain, everyday eulogistic practice, this study did not; and two, this dissertation was concerned with explicating the rhetorical boundaries and characteristics of the genre of eulogies and not simply conducting an apriori, neo-Aristotelian, critique of "great" eulogies, such as presidential eulogies given by highly skilled rhetors.

The analysis of the historical and technical aspects of funerals and eulogies was necessary to understand the tradition of eulogies itself. Based upon the analysis provided above, questionnaires (discussed below) were developed for clergy and funeral home personnel that were thought to yield information which would enhance understanding of the technical aspects of eulogies. The data gathered from interviewees was used to inform, support, and clarify, the generic critique that was conducted and reported in this dissertation.

The next section, Data, will clarify what discourse was determined to count as data and how data were gathered and organized.

## Data

Data for this project consisted of: (1) archival, theoretical, historical, and scholarly material used to inform clergy interviews and the generic critique; (2) Interview data gathered from local clergy and funeral home personnel; and (3) original eulogies gathered at funeral homes and churches in the Lafayette and West Lafayette, Indiana area.

### Archival Data

The archival materials already considered above, consisted of a broad range of subject matter and materials: (1) historical and contemporary academic scholarship in the areas of Communication, Anthropology, History, and Religious/Ecclesiastical writings on eulogies, funerary rites, and epideictic rhetoric; and (2) scholarship on consolation and comforting. Traditional historical methodology was employed which included following up on citations from other sources on subjects found, as well as a series of database searches.

Databases and libraries at several major research institutions were consulted, including: Purdue University, Northwestern University, University of Oregon, and The Library of Congress. A series of searches of the internet was also conducted and included requests for information from two news groups: the Communication Research and Theory Network (CRTNET), and the Communication Graduate Students Network (COMGRADS, maintained

by the Communication Institute for On-line Scholarship, CIOS). Also searched was the Communication Service (COMMSERVE) database for information related to the areas of inquiry. Finally, "Dissertation Abstracts," a database of Masters Theses and Doctoral Dissertations maintained by University Media Incorporated (UMI) was searched. The search of the Dissertation Abstracts citations was conducted for as far back as the database would go, about 1850, and utilized the key-words listed: Comforting, Consolation, Encomium, Eulogy/Eulogies/Eulogistic, Epideictic, Epideictic Rhetoric, Funeral, Funeral-Oratory/Orations/Rhetoric/Practice, Genre-Critique/Criticism/Theory, and Generic-Critique/Criticism/Theory.

## Interview Data

Interviews were conducted with a variety of local clergy members and funeral home personnel. Interviews were tape recorded, and notes were also taken during the interviews. A "Non Schedule Standardized Interview" format was utilized (cf., Denzin, 1978, pp. 105-110). In total, three funeral home directors were contacted and interviewed one or more times—one individual was interviewed three times—from three different funeral homes in the Lafayette and West Lafayette, Indiana area. The funeral homes were: Hahn, Hippensteel, and Soller-Baker. Soller-Baker, the largest of the three funeral homes in the area, has three locations. All of the interviewees were men, approximately 27-35 years of age; no women in the role of "funeral director" were available for interview; however, one of the assistants working

for Soller-Baker was a woman who participated in several informal conversations with the interviewer. The three funeral homes represented a cross-section of the funeral homes in the Lafayette and West Lafayette, Indiana area and likely, represented a cross-section of the geographic, socioeconomic, and religious traditions in the area.

Interviews were conducted with 25 local clergy in the Lafayette/West Lafayette area.[13] Originally, 28 interviewees were targeted. More than this number were contacted (approximately 44); however, because of the constraints of scheduling, interviewee disinterest, and lack of ability to contact some interviewees because they were on vacations, had no phone service, provided other names of potential interviewees in lieu of themselves, or were unwilling to return telephone calls, the total number of interviewees was less than targeted.

Interviewees were selected with clergy and lay-clergy so that a cross-section of the Lafayette/West Lafayette religious institutions would be represented. The goal was to interview a broad spectrum of individuals representative of different faiths and religious traditions in the Lafayette/West Lafayette area so that some of the theoretical assumptions regarding eulogies could be evaluated. The statistical breakdown of the religions in the Lafayette/-West Lafayette area was estimated based on a document prepared by Margaret Cole and James Davidson of the department of Sociology and Anthropology at Purdue University (1994, p. 5-6).

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[13]For a variety of reasons three interviews were not viable. Two tapes were incomprehensible, and one interview tape (and transcript) "disappeared." All but the one lost interview were reconstructible from notes taken during the interviews.

The sample selected was based on a representative distribution of the religious traditions in the area and included individuals from religious traditions including: Assembly of God, Baptist (Independent, Southern, and United), Baha'i, Buddhist, Catholic, Church of the Brethren, Church of Christ, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (Mormon), Ecumenical, Federated (American Baptist/Disciples of Christ), Jehovah's Witnesses, Jewish, Lutheran, Methodist, Pentecostal, Presbyterian, Reformed, and United Methodist.

## Eulogy Data

Eulogies were gathered in a variety of ways: (1) by attending funerals at local funeral homes selected at random from the newspaper; (2) by contacting funeral home directors and requesting permission to attend funerals; and (3) by requesting transcripts, tapes, and videos from interviewees for purposes of analysis. Eulogies were recorded and accompanied by notes taken concurrent with the funeral service, when possible—in some cases only recordings were made, and in some cases only notes were possible.

Eulogies were taken from funeral recordings by verbatim transcription. In some cases, paralinguistic information was also included as part of the transcription to help clarify the rhetorical style or intent of the eulogist. Although recordings of entire funeral services were gathered, only the eulogy portion of the service was transcribed, the remainder of the service was summarized using loose transcription.

A total of eighteen eulogies were used in the generic rhetorical critique. These eulogies were taken from the 30 funerals attended in the course of gathering the data. Some funerals, because of the logistics of the funeral home or church, were not able to be recorded. In these situations, note taking was also avoided out of consideration for the bereaved. Similarly, some funerals were attended merely as a means of familiarizing the researcher with prevailing practices: Church funerals as opposed to funeral home funerals, for example. Soller-Baker Funeral Home provided invaluable assistance by allowing the researcher to attend virtually any of the funerals it handled. They also explained that it would not be necessary to ask permission of the bereaved since, "they would probably not even know that I did not work there" (Benefiel, 1996).

## Methodology

The methodology for this project was a combination of three research approaches: (1) targeted interviews of funerary professionals and clergy; (2) observation of eulogies from a variety of religious traditions; and (3), a generic rhetorical critique of a sample of eulogies, and eulogistic practices. Methodological issues relevant to each approach are discussed below.

## Interviewing Methodology

No comprehensive framework for delimiting eulogies existed. Previous research suggested an apriori framework within which to view eulogies. That is to say, all eulogies were assumed to be more or less the same, and that eulogies to the great could inform the everyday practice of eulogies (cf., Gray and Braden 1963; Kent, 1991; Payton, 1976; Rogge and Ching, 1966). As suggested above, this assumption is probably unwarranted when speaking of eulogies to everyday citizens.

In an effort to secure information about what may be termed "every-day" eulogies—those conducted most often in society—interviews were conducted with individuals thought to possess unique insight into eulogies: clergy, funeral home personnel, and those associated with funerary activities. This project began with a review of the historical and scholarly literature mentioned above to determine relevant areas for further inquiry.

Before any interviews took place, however, permission was secured from Purdue University, Committee on the Use of Human Research Subjects. Because all subjects interviewed were adult, "public figures," who were informed in advance of the questions they were being asked, the Human Research Subject Committee granted an exemption (see Appendix A).

Once a body of what "seemed" relevant information had been identified, a sample interview guide (see Appendix B) was developed and pilot tested on six interviewees: three individuals associated with religious institutions, and three funeral home directors. Before interviews were conducted,

however, individuals were contacted by letter and by telephone, in the case of the funeral home directors (see Appendix C for a copy of the interview solicitation letter to funeral directors); and, in the case of the religious interviewees, contacts were made by interpersonal contact,[14] and copies of questions were provided to interviewees in advance.

Drawing upon the understanding of eulogies, funeral practices, and funerary and death rituals revealed in the preliminary interviews, a more sophisticated interview guide, subject to slight formatting changes, was developed and subsequently used for the remainder of the interviews (see Appendix D). The interview schedules were in a "Non Schedule Standardized Interview" format—a format that allows enough flexibility to pursue particular questions and, at the same time, allows enough structure to maintain consistency during the interview process (Denzin, 1978, pp. 115-116).

Interview solicitation letters contained copies of the respective interview guides. In some cases, interviewees, once contacted by telephone, claimed that they had not received their original interview letter. In these cases, follow-up letters were sent (see Appendix F for letters and follow-up letters), and interviewees were recontacted after approximately one week. Interviews were scheduled to be conducted during a six month period from March to August, 1996. "Thank you" cards with a brief note expressing gratitude were sent to all interviewees following their interviews.

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[14]To insure some level of bias-free and random selection, I asked colleagues for the names of people to whom I might speak for this project. Not being well-connected in the religious community in Lafayette, this approach seemed to work reasonably well.

Interviews were conducted following an exchange of names, small talk, etc., to "break the ice," and relax the interviewees. Next, verbal inquiries were made to ascertain whether interviewees objected to being recorded—all interviewees agreed to recording. Once this issue had been resolved, the project was explained in greater detail and, then, the first question on the interview guide was posed—provided the interviewee had no questions. Interviews lasted an average of forty-five minutes; the range of time for interviews was between thirty minutes and one hour. Interview responses were recorded thematically in the data analysis process (see Appendix E for sample transcripts of interviews).

The interview guide was divided into two major sections: the first section sought general information regarding the particular religion of the interviewee and that person's faith's teachings about death and the afterlife. This information proved invaluable to understanding and interpreting the responses of the interviewees. The remainder of the interview guide sought answers to more particular questions about the role of eulogies in the interviewee's faith (i.e., whether eulogies were conducted at all, and for what purpose) See Appendix D for a copy of the interview guide.

## Observation of Eulogies Methodology

Eighteen eulogies were gathered for this project—from among 30 funerals attended. Funerals were attended in the Lafayette and West Lafayette area. Only "public" funerals, the most common type of funeral, were

observed. Permission to observe funerals, and, consequently, eulogies, was obtained during the interviews. With only a few exceptions, all of the interviewees (clergy and funeral directors alike) saw nothing wrong with my attending funerals at their institutions.

Eulogies were gathered during a six month period from March to August, 1996. Eulogies were recorded, in most instances, and were accompanied by notes and comments taken during the service. Because of the "layout" of the Soller-Baker funeral home, with each room wired to the public address system in the chapel, the researcher could attend services, record eulogies, and take notes, without disturbing the individuals attending the funeral. Although this location was not the only location for gathering data, it was the most convenient and was the location most often visited.

In the course of my data gathering the researcher became well acquainted with the several funeral directors and staff who work at the various funeral homes where funeral directors were interviewed. At one point, one of the funeral directors at Soller-Baker was kind enough to call with information about funeral services that were coming up and had not yet been announced in the paper. In most cases, the daily newspaper was checked and the respective funeral home was called for permission to attend the funeral.

Eulogies to "everyday" citizens rather than eulogies to the "great" were gathered. These eulogies were subsequently recorded for analysis as part of the generic critique. In the course of data gathering, funerals for the following types of death were attended: one confirmed suicide (possibly two), two childhood deaths (both cancer), three "untimely" deaths of adults for various

reasons, and the remainder for advanced age and poor health. Four of the funerals analyzed for the generic critique were for women, and the remaining fourteen were for men.

## Rhetorical Critique Methodology

A rhetorical critique was conducted on the eulogies gathered from the funeral services attended. A generic critical approach was employed, and is described in detail below, because of that methodology's capacity to clarify rhetorical theory or practice as it relates to language or rituals of discourse thought to belong to coherent or related categories or "genres." As revealed throughout this chapter, little is known about how eulogies actually function or operate in everyday practice. The generic approach then was determined to be uniquely suited for exploration and clarification of social discourse such as eulogies.

The generic critique to be conducted utilized the transcripts of eulogies extracted from the funerals that were attended and recorded (see Appendix G for two sample transcripts). The criteria used to determine what funerary oratory should be considered to be an eulogy and what should not, were culled from the answers to interview questions that directly inquired into the nature of eulogies (cf., appendix D, esp. questions 1-4 and 16), and from the information gained through the literature review conducted as a precursor to this project.

Although part of the generic rhetorical critique for this dissertation focused on texts, explanations for claims and rhetorical processes were verified, as is the custom in generic criticism, by reference to other theoretical and scholarly areas. Similarly, having attended each funeral, and having listened to each one several times, this researcher also drew upon the insight gained from actually "hearing," or experiencing, the eulogies firsthand, and by considering the explanations provided by interviewees about why particular rhetorical strategies were being employed and why others were not. As a result, Chapter Four, the generic critique, is more than a critique of eulogies, it is a critique of a genre.

Six generic characteristics of eulogies are examined in the critique: (1) identification of the rhetorical situation/strategy and an explanation of what its boundaries are; (2) identification of the intended audience effects; (3) structural classification of language; (4) motivational classification; (5) archetypal or symbolic examination of the language; and (6) strategies/considerations a rhetor should be aware of when engaging in the genre in the future.

## Methodology Section Summary

The end goal of the rhetorical critique and the other critical areas of this dissertation was to answer the research questions posed at the outset of this dissertation, especially questions 2-4: (2) How are eulogies understood and practiced by the professional clergy who conduct them?; (3) What characteristics of eulogies make them particularly effective as vehicles of praise/con-

solation, and what other ends do they serve?; and (4) What characteristics of the eulogies that have been previously studied are found in everyday eulogies and what does this suggest for rhetorical theory/practice? As noted above, the genre of the "great person" eulogy has been examined in considerable detail, as have characteristics of funeral oratory in general; however, the genre of eulogy as it actually is applied in everyday practice in the United States has not been examined in considerable detail.

As suggested by Research question Four, a primary objective of this study was to determine how contemporary eulogies function and whether there are particular eulogistic strategies/uses that have been overlooked because of the largely elitist/specialized nature of previous scholarly efforts. Hopefully the remainder of this dissertation will provide valuable insight to future scholars about the dual areas of eulogies and generic criticism; perhaps, also, this study will provide some insight to those who practice this most ancient rhetorical ritual successfully, and to those who wish to be more successful in doing so.[15]

## Summary of Dissertation Chapters

This dissertation was divided into five chapters. Chapter One contains six major sections: (1) thesis, (2) justification, (3) literature review, (4) approach, (5) data, and (6) methodology. The thesis and justification sections introduce the research questions and provide the rationale for the generic

[15]After each interview, interviewees were told that they would be provided a copy of a summary of findings in appreciation of their efforts.

critique/study of eulogies. The literature review covers the scholarship relevant to this dissertation and includes a discussions of funeral rhetoric, Communication and non-Communication scholarship on eulogies, and a brief discussion of "consolation" and "comforting." The approach, data, and methodology sections in Chapter One describe the data gathered, and methodological considerations relevant to that data. Three types of data are described in Chapter One: archival, interview, and rhetorical; three methodological approaches are also discussed: interviewing, the gathering of rhetorical artifacts, and rhetorical critical methodology.

Chapter Two consists of an analysis of the answers to twenty-five questions asked of interviewees for this dissertation. Chapter Two also contains the rationale that guided the interview data gathering.

Chapter Three contains a discussion of the rhetorical methodology of generic criticism. As part of Chapter Three the theoretical assumptions of genre/generic criticism are discussed, and a chronological literature review of the scholarship on generic criticism is presented. Also discussed in Chapter Three are the differences between genre and generic criticism, a discussion of how generic criticism can be applied as a critical methodology, and a discussion of how generic criticism is utilized in this dissertation. Finally, Chapter Three offers a detailed rationale for the study of eulogies using a generic rhetorical methodology.

Chapter Four contains the rhetorical critique conducted on the eulogies gathered for this dissertation. Chapter Four is broken down into six sections, each containing a critique of a specific aspect of eulogies: (1) situational

characteristics, (2) audience effects, (3) structural factors, (4) motivational characteristics, (5) symbolic critique, and (6) participatory considerations.

Chapter Five contains the conclusion and four sections: (1) a review of the research questions asked that discusses whether the research questions were appropriate, and whether they were answered; (2) a discussion of the heuristic value of this project including, religion, comforting, and non-mainstream funerary practices; (3) a discussion of the methodological considerations relevant to this study; and, (4) closing comments. Following Chapter Five are references, seven appendices, and the researcher's vita.

# CHAPTER TWO: INTERVIEW DATA

## Overview

Chapter Two is organized as follows: first a brief discussion of the rationale behind the data gathered and the methodology employed is presented; second, the answers to each question from the interview guide are discussed in some detail and, where appropriate, explanatory links are made to contemporary theory that informs the content of the question; and third, a summary highlights issues important to the rhetorical critique that follows in Chapter Three.

## Data Gathering Rationale

Chapter Two is concerned with presenting the interview data gathered from 25 clergy and three funeral directors. Because the phenomenon studied is not widely understood in the same way by all scholars, open-ended responses to many questions were solicited. Such an approach was necessary for a variety of reasons: first, to determine if the interviewee had an awareness of or recognized eulogies as a social ritual; second, because some questions were designed to elicit "strategies" that individuals used in their everyday eulogis-

tic practice, interviewees were permitted to respond at length rather than being limited in their responses to a predetermined "list" or categorization derived apriori from the literature, which, as presented in Chapter One, is not well informed; and third, to have a body of informed responses to compare to the literature on the subject of eulogies.

Some questions were more straightforward and did not call for interpretation. For example, "Where do eulogies take place in the Lafayette/West Lafayette area?" (Question Eighteen). Other questions, because of their open-ended nature, involved answers requiring interpretation and explanation by the researcher. Answers to interpretative questions, such as "What is a eulogy?" (Question One), were subjected to close textual analysis. Categories of responses were sought, and an effort was made to represent the actual words used by the interviewees in the construction of those categories. A framework was created to isolate eulogies from other aspects of funerals. This "categorization" was an important activity for interpretation of some answers, such as questions One and Four—"What is a eulogy?" and "How do you know you have heard a eulogy?"

Because interview data analysis was such an important part of this dissertation, because one of the goals of this project was to inform contemporary rhetorical practice, and because this analysis represented a unique step in critical analysis of the rhetorical phenomenon of eulogies, efforts were made to insure that this researcher was actually identifying categories apparent in the responses of the interviewees, rather than categories that emerged as part of the researcher's biases and, as Burke might say, the

researcher's "occupational psychosis." To help insure that the researcher's analytical efforts were sound, two other data coders were trained by the researcher and asked to analyze a random selection of responses to two important questions: questions One and Four. Coders were asked first to establish that the categories of analysis were: (1) mutually exclusive, (2) exhaustive, and (3) easily discernible from each other. Coders were then asked to code several sets of interview data using sentence level coding and the coding schemas in tables Two and Six. Coders' responses were then checked for intercoder reliability using the Scott's pi index (cf., Reinhard, 1994) which corrects for number of categories used and also for probable frequency of use. The results of this test of reliability was 100% agreement, or 1.0 for Question One, "What is a eulogy?," and 75% agreement or .75 for Question Four, "How do you know you have heard a eulogy?" Not surprisingly, to achieve such high reliability estimates requires of the researcher to refine the categories several times. This process proved useful in identifying the primary characteristics of eulogies, and also provided a useful framework within which to conduct the subsequent rhetorical critique.

In the section that follows, frequencies, interpretations, and discussion for each interview question are presented. Only questions raised in "Part II" of the interview schedule are discussed since the questions from "Part I" were intended to yield background on the interviewees' religious belief. Interviewees' cosmological beliefs and religious backgrounds were also considered useful for interpretation of other questions.

## Interview Results

### Question One

What is a eulogy?

Two sets of responses are discussed for Question One: the first concerns the content and "frequency of responses" analysis prepared prior to the reliability check mentioned above (see Table 1); the second concerns the categories used for the intercoder reliability check (see Table 2). Both categories of responses are included for heuristic reasons. That is, the identification of topoi and related information was part of the rationale for this dissertation, and emerged as part of the interviewee responses analyzed.

Question One was intended to get at some of the issues raised in the literature regarding what a eulogy is and should do. The expectation was that respondents would indicate a eulogy was a "speech for the dead," a speech to "reknit the community," a "speech of praise," etc.; instead, the respondents cited the goals of biographically talking about the dead (what some have called the obituary) and remembering the dead most frequently. However, more than half cited some sort of religious component associated with the eulogy: accepting faith, honoring God, or some other religious purpose. This finding is significant because none of the scholarly/academic literature on eulogies discussed above suggested that religious purpose might be central to eulogies.

Table 1

Question One: What is a eulogy?

| Category of response | Frequency [a] |
|---|---|
| Secular | |
| 1. Words spoken about the deceased biographically. | 28 |
| 2. Words spoken in remembrance of the deceased. | 21 |
| 3. Words spoken as a celebration of the deceased's life. | 10 |
| 4. Words spoken for the living. | 7 |
| 5. Words spoken to comfort the living. | 5 |
| Religious | |
| 1. Words spoken for religious purposes. | 12 |
| 2. Words spoken in recognition of the situational constraints, such as humor. | 7 |
| 3. Words spoken to access the faith of the living. | 6 |
| 4. Words spoken to honor God. | 5 |
| 5. Words spoken to help the living confront their grief and begin accepting death. | 4 |
| 6. Words spoken that invoke religious ideals like "eternal life," etc.. | 1 |

[a] Frequencies are reported here because respondents noted multiple characteristics of eulogies.

Table 2

Coding Categories for Question One: What is a eulogy?

| Category | Explanation [a] |
|---|---|
| 0. Not applicable. | Unit of analysis was explanatory or supportive only. |
| 1. Focus on Deceased. | Words spoken about the dead (at a funeral) including, efforts to remember the dead, biographical discussion of deceased, celebrations of the deceased's life, etc.. |
| 2. Focus on Survivors. | Words spoken about the dead (at a funeral) to comfort the living, or console the living. |
| 3. Focus on Death. | Words spoken about the dead to help the living confront grief & begin accepting death. |
| 4. Focus on Religion. | For religious Purposes, to honor/praise God, access an individuals "faith," in God, etc. |

[a] The unit of analysis was sentence/phrase level. Coders were expected to make sense of sentences/phrases in context, considering what was said before and after particular utterances.

Apart from the dual secular/religious purposes, when the eleven content categories were reduced to topical, or goal related, categories for the intercoder reliability check, clear themes emerged in the analysis: "celebrating the deceased's life," "comforting the living," "confronting grief," and religious purposes such as "honoring God," and "accessing mourners' faith." These broad themes are the most common in the literature on eulogies. What have been less widely discussed are the categories or topoi that emerged in the analysis of the interviewees' responses. The thematic areas are present in the literature on eulogies, and are the most obvious and easily observed. The less obvious aspects of eulogies, the ones that cannot be identified by observation alone, are the rhetor's personal goals—and these goals are accessed by other questions.

## Question Two

### Where are eulogies given?

Question number Two was asked to explore a specific issue: That is, whether eulogies were perceived as "public" events in and of themselves, such as are given when a president or important social figure dies, or whether eulogies were considered part of funerary services and, consequently, only "quasi-public" events? Question Two was necessary since so much of the literature on eulogies characterizes them as public speaking events and yet, very few individuals (barring professional speakers and religious figures) actually give eulogies—although many people speak at funerals. Question

Two also encompasses the issue of whether "spontaneous eulogies" (discussed below) are considered, or shall be considered, "eulogies." Responses to Question Two are summarized in Table 3.

Table 3

Question Two: Where are eulogies given?

| Category of response | Frequency [a] |
|---|---|
| 1. Given at Funerals. | 13 |
| 2. Given in Churches. | 7 |
| 3. Given in Funeral Homes. | 6 |
| 4. Given in many situations such as retirement dinners, and other public speaking situations. | 5 |
| 5. Given in the deceased's homes, or the home of a close friend or family member. | 2 |
| 6. Given in other public places such as gyms, and community centers. | 2 |
| 7. Given at the grave side. | 2 |

[a] Frequencies are reported here because respondents noted multiple locations. Also note: not all respondents answered this question.

With the exception of two interviewees who noted that we call speeches of a certain "type" (those given with biographical/personal components, etc.) "eulogies," all saw eulogies as part of formal funerary services. There was some variability in responses as to where eulogies are given, related in part to the age of the interviewees. Several interviewees were old enough to remember eulogies being given in homes or churches exclusively. Virtually all interviewees saw the eulogy as an orderly response to an individual's death. None of the interviewees, even when prompted, mentioned spontaneous expressions of grief—such as those for Kurt Cobain or John Lennon (musicians) given in parking lots and rock concerts after their deaths, or

those given for Yitzak Rabin (Israeli Prime Minister)—as eulogies. Some mentioned that the "community of believers" (or religion) is a part of the eulogy, and thus, "spontaneous" expressions of grief do not fit the definition.

## Question Three

Are they always, often, rarely, given?

Question Three was intended to assess the frequency of eulogies. Presumably, if eulogies are not given as part of all or most funerary services, then perhaps the literature on eulogies (which views them as a fairly rare ritual) was accurate. As the data indicate, most interviewees saw eulogies as a part of most funerary services. Answers to Question Three are summarized in Table 4.

Note that, not every interviewee responded to this question. This is a result of the somewhat flexible interview format utilized which did not "force" interviewees to answer questions directly. Answers which could only be "inferred" from interviewees responses were not included.

Table 4

Question Three: Are they [eulogies] always, often, rarely, given?

| Response | Frequency |
|---|---|
| Eulogies are Always given. | 12 |
| Eulogies are Often given. | 8 |
| Eulogies are Rarely given. | 0 |
| NA (we do not give eulogies). | 2 |

The interviewees, with two exceptions, indicated that eulogies were part of most or all funeral services. Although some interviewees followed up their answers by indicating that eulogies were often "given as part of the larger ceremony itself," and "often not done well," nearly all saw eulogies as part of funerary services.

## Question Four

How do you know you have heard a eulogy?

Responses to Question Four, like Question One, were analyzed in more detail as part of a test of intercoder reliability. As noted above, tabulation of Question Four responses received an intercoder reliability estimate of .75.

Question Four was asked to confirm responses to questions One, Two, and Three, and also as a means of gaining additional insight into how the interviewees understood eulogies; as a result, responses were analyzed thematically only, and frequencies are not indicated. Thematic responses to Question Four are summarized in Table 5.

As indicated above, some disagreement exists among interviewees over whether eulogies should even be (or are) part of funerary services. Several individuals felt that the major thrust of a funeral should be on, or include, references to God. However, what is clear from the categories of responses reported below is that the primary focus of a eulogy is on the deceased rather than on the audience or some external audience such as God. All inter-

viewees agreed that the eulogy is only a part of the overall service and should not be the primary part of it. Coding categories are summarized in Table 6.

Table 5

Thematic Responses to Question Four: How do you know you have heard a eulogy?

| Thematic responses |
|---|
| 1. Eulogies are given at funerals. |
| 2. Eulogies are about the deceased's life and not about God. |
| 3. Eulogies are given to honor a person and the life they have lived. |
| 4. Eulogies consist of a history of person's life given in retrospect. |
| 5. Eulogies invoke memories of the deceased to comfort the living. |
| 6. Eulogies do/should use biblical sources to talk about deceased. |

Table 6

Coding Categories for Question Four: How do you know you have heard a eulogy?

| Category | Explanation [a] |
|---|---|
| 0. Not applicable. | Unit of analysis was explanatory or supportive only. |
| 1. Focus on occasion. | Eulogies are given at funerals. |
| 2. Focus on deceased. | Eulogies are spoken to honor/celebrate a person and the life they have lived, including historical discussions of the deceased's life given in retrospect; the focus is on the deceased's life and not on God/religion. |
| 3. Focus on the living. | Eulogies invoke memories of the deceased to comfort the living. |
| 4 . Focus on religion. | Eulogies conduct a discussion of the deceased's life using biblical sources. |

[a] The unit of analysis was sentence/phrase level. Coders were expected to make sense of sentences/phrases in context, considering what was said before and after particular utterances.

The categories that emerged from analysis of responses to Question Four closely resemble the categories that emerged in analysis of responses to Question One; Question Four responses, however, in contradistinction to

Question Two, indicate a heavy emphasis on occasion (the funeral), as opposed to the several individuals who focused on (location) in Question Two. This distinction is significant in light of the fact that in the majority of communication scholarship on eulogies reviewed in Chapter One, only one scholar (Rogge and Ching, 1966) indicated that a eulogy might be part of a funerary service. The other theorists/critics of eulogies refer to a form of social eulogy that has previously been described as the "great person" eulogy, not necessarily conducted at funerals.

## Question Five

How are they [eulogies] structured?

Question Five ascertained if eulogists had some shared understanding of how a eulogy might be structured. That is, did the interviewee draw on a formula or structure that was consistent and sought to emphasize particular aspects of the individual being eulogized? What was clear from Question Five responses was that no consensus exists regarding how to structure a eulogy. As will be discussed below (question 15), consensus exists regarding how a funeral service should be structured, but not a eulogy. The most relevant structural aspects of funerals seem to relate to the religious beliefs of the interviewees. For example, Catholics structure funeral services and eulogies quite rigidly; The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints do not even call what they do eulogizing. Because there is no consensus regarding the structure of eulogies, responses are not "summarized" here.

## Question Six

Do you have an outline or form a eulogy should take?

Question Six concerned the extent to which eulogists followed a prescribed pattern when eulogizing or adapting to the constraints of the situation. Responses to the question were grouped both by frequency of response and by thematic "constraints" interviewees associated with eulogizing. Responses to Question Six suggest, as also suggested in response to questions One and Four, that a religious or spiritual component is an integral part of the process of eulogizing. Audience adaptation involving honoring the deceased, facilitating the recovery of the bereaved, and uplifting God were seen as integral to eulogizing. Responses to Question Six are summarized in Table 7.

Table 7

Question Six: Do you have an outline or form a eulogy should take?

| Response | Frequency |
|---|---|
| I have no pattern, audience/occasion adaptation is used. | 14 |
| I have a guide I use. | 4 |
| NA (we not do give eulogies) | 4 |

## Question Seven

Do you have a pamphlet or guide provided by your faith?

Question Seven was asked to obtain additional information about eulogies that may not have been obtained during the scholarly review process. Although six (two of the four who claimed not to give eulogies also noted having manuals) interviewees mentioned possessing religious texts/manuals that described how a eulogy might be conducted, only one interviewee acknowledged actually using or consulting one of these manuals. Several interviewees indicated that they consulted religious manuals/texts earlier in their careers for inspiration/guidance. Several texts were examined and all texts were similar and consisted essentially of possible scriptural readings that might be included as part of a eulogy, and also possible poems to be read. Some contained "sample" eulogies. None of the texts examined offered any specific guidelines or contained any scholarly discussions of eulogies. Responses to Question Seven are summarized in Table 8.

Table 8

Question Seven: Do you have a pamphlet or guide provided by your faith?

| Response | Frequency |
|---|---|
| 1. My faith does not have a guide. | 13 |
| 2. My faith has "Recommended" texts, but nothing "required."[a] | 7 |
| 3. My faith has a guide. | 6 |
| 4. NA (we do not give eulogies). | 3 |

[a] Consider the following texts mentioned by interviewees: General Handbook of Instruction, Book of Common Worship, A Manual of Worship, Ministers Manual, and The Order of Worship.

## Question Eight

Did you learn this [how to give eulogies] in seminary school, from colleagues, from experience, or does your faith have a prescribed format that you are expected to apply?

Question Eight accessed the locus of the interviewees' knowledge about eulogies. Question Eight was asked to determine whether interviewees had learned to give eulogies from some source apart from religious texts/tracts. As Table 9 indicates, more than half of the interviewees learned to conduct eulogies through "trial and error." Nine indicated they learned from personal experience, four from colleagues, three from observation, and three indicated they had learned from religious handbooks. Interestingly, only eight, or about one third, indicated they had learned how to do eulogies in seminary school. Of these eight, four indicated they had learned by doing little more than "critiquing a few eulogies" as part of a class on special occasion speaking, including weddings and funerals. Such a report is interesting in light of the fact that the scholarly writing on eulogies discusses eulogies as if they were a well known phenomenon, but the clergy interviewed for this study seemed to have received no formal training in how to give eulogies.

Table 9

Question Eight: Did you learn this [how to give eulogies] in seminary school, from colleagues, from experience, or does your faith have a prescribed format that you are expected to apply?

| Response | Frequency [a] |
|---|---|
| 1. I learned from experience or I just figured it out. | 9 |
| 2. I learned in Seminary/College, etc. | 8 |
| 3. I learned from my colleagues. | 4 |
| 4. I learned by observing others do them. | 4 |
| 5. NA (we do not give eulogies). | 4 |
| 6. I learned from a religious handbook. | 3 |

[a] Interviewees could give more than one response.

## Question Nine

Why do we give eulogies, what is their purpose?

Question Nine sought to ascertain the primary purpose(s) of the eulogy. As in questions One and Four, interviewees indicated that there were both social and religious reasons for giving eulogies. Thirteen of the interviewees claimed that the primary purpose of the eulogy was to comfort or aid the survivors. Only seven interviewees saw the eulogy as an opportunity to praise the deceased, which, as noted above, is considered one of the primary purposes of the eulogy (cf., McGuire. 1953; Kent, 1991). Responses to Question Nine are summarized in Table 10.

Table 10

Question Nine: Why do we give eulogies, what is their purpose?

| Response | Frequency [a] |
|---|---|
| 1. To comfort/console the survivors. | 13 |
| 2. To deal with grief and mourning, and to "say good-bye." | 8 |
| 3. To honor the deceased. | 7 |
| 4. To build faith. | 4 |
| 5. To honor God. | 3 |
| 6. NA (we do not give eulogies). | 3 |

[a] Interviewees could give more than one response.

The faith building theme supports the belief that faith is, or should be, sufficient to help people deal with the loss of a loved one. Similarly, the idea of honoring God is related to the idea that the funeral service brings people together who might not normally come together (in a house of God), and the service is, or should be, a chance to inform these individuals of "God's love" and their chance to attain "eternal life." Thus, although most interviewees did not cite "faith building" and "honoring God" as highly as "comforting survivors," those who did mention these purposes also stressed that they thought it was one of the most "important" aspects of a funeral service.

The tendency of an interviewee to indicate that honoring God was central to eulogies in general and funeral ceremonies in particular was closely related to religious belief. Those whose religion was inflexible in their positions toward the afterlife, such as those from conservative religious traditions like Southern Baptists and some Lutherans, were more apt to believe that eulogies should invoke the presence of God;[16] those individuals

[16] By "inflexible" here is meant those individuals or religious groups who believe that they "know the truth," or believe that they know what is most

whose positions toward the afterlife were more flexible, such as those from the Church of the Brethren and Church of God, were more apt to speak of the deceased rather than of God, and more apt to try to speak to survivors' emotional needs. This insight was apparent because of the preliminary questions asked of interviewees regarding their religious traditions and positions toward the afterlife. None of the scholars reviewed above indicated how, or if at all, the background of a eulogist might impact the content of his/her message—which it most certainly does in terms of eulogies given by clergy interviewed in this study.

## Question Ten

<u>What would you tell somebody who had to give an eulogy?</u>

Question Ten was asked to allow the interviewee to consider, or restate, what s/he saw to be the dominant aspects of the eulogistic ritual. Foremost, and not surprising in light of previous responses by interviewees, was that "speaking of the deceased," especially as s/he had interacted with survivors, and "honesty," were seen as dominant activities for eulogists. This finding contradicts Brownlow and Davis' (1974) claim that eulogists have creative license to hyperbolize the life of the deceased and to be overly laudatory. Responses to Question Ten are summarized in Table 11.

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important, about the afterlife. By "flexible" here is meant those individuals or religious groups who do not worry about the afterlife, believe that the afterlife is not really their concern, or who's personal belief on the afterlife differs from the mainstream of their faith.

Table 11

Question Ten: What would you tell somebody who had to give an eulogy?

| Response | Frequency [a] |
|---|---|
| 1. To bring in personal experiences and quotations from survivors/audience. | 12 |
| 2. To be honest, but not judgmental; to be kind. | 5 |
| 3. To present a biographical overview of, or testament to, the deceased. | 4 |
| 4. To give witness to the Bible; to present the gospel. | 4 |
| 5. NA (we do not give eulogies). | 3 |
| 6. To allow the family to make decisions about what they would like to do in the service. | 2 |
| 7. To do some sort of life review of survivors. | 1 |
| 8. Not to "use" their audience; and not to use the event to Evangelize. | 1 |

[a] Interviewees could give more than one response.

Interestingly, only one interviewee said that the eulogy should not be used to evangelize, while four claimed that the eulogist should present biblical information. Also interesting is that only two interviewees indicated that they would tell the family that it could do or say whatever it wanted to in the funeral service. In fact, one interviewee was adamant that eulogists should not be "allowed to say whatever they want" because they "may say something that goes against God's teachings."

## Question Eleven

In the event that you have to give an eulogy, (or a sermon), how much time do you have to prepare?

Question Eleven turned out to be a more procedural question than anything else. Since individuals are usually buried within a few days of their

deaths, most interviewees gave the same answer. Essentially, the interviewees explained that eulogists generally have only a few days to prepare; sometimes less than a day. However, several interviewees explained that if the deceased had been suffering from a long illness, they might, if they had been ministering to the person, have had time to consider what they were going to say about the person after his/her death. Several interviewees explained that many individuals who are terminally ill actually arrange ahead of time for particular scriptural passages, poems, or songs, to be read/sung by their ministers. Indeed, even some individuals who are not ill arrange for particular verses, poems, songs, etc. to be read/sung at their funerals.

Generally speaking, however, all interviewees agreed that they usually have "very little time" to prepare for a funeral service and eulogy. Brownlow and Davis' (1974) claim that eulogists have very little time to prepare, "sometimes only a week," indicates that they (1) either do not understand the nature of everyday eulogies, or (2) are not talking about everyday eulogies—which is probably the case.

## Question Twelve

How do you decide what to say?

Question Twelve sought stylistic information regarding the "invention" process used by the interviewees. Currently no information, apart from that reported in Chapter One, exists on this subject. Several scholars have noted

that eulogists, and those participating in funeral services, should consider rhetorical strategies such as those noted above (cf., Fulton, 1976, pp. 28 ff.; Irion, 1976, pp. 34 ff.; Wolfelt, 1994). Question Twelve was asked to identify information regarding "invention."

Responses to Question Twelve revealed, once again, the religious/biographical split in the responses of the interviewees. Eight interviewees suggested that they often open the Bible and search for texts and inspiration, while two said that they expect the "Holy Spirit" to guide them when they speak. Twelve interviewees suggested that it is most comforting for the family and friends to hear their own words and experiences repeated back to them as part of the message of the eulogy. Responses to Question Twelve are summarized in Table 12.

Table 12

Question Twelve: How do you decide what to say?

| Response | Frequency [a] |
|---|---|
| 1. I talk to the family and friends and I use their own words to talk about the deceased. | 12 |
| 2. I use the Bible for texts of inspiration. | 8 |
| 3. I talk about the person's life, etc. | 7 |
| 4. I am often familiar with the deceased's life experiences. | 4 |
| 5. I am guided by the Holy Spirit. | 2 |

[a] Interviewees could give more than one response.

## Question Thirteen

Does your faith have a tradition of speaking (or eulogizing) at funeral services by members of the immediate family, friends, loved ones, etc?

Responses to Question Thirteen are interesting for what they tell us about eulogistic practice. Twelve of the interviewees who responded to Question Thirteen indicated either that they did not do eulogies at all (3/12), or that they did regularly give eulogies (9/12). The assumption of virtually all scholars who have discussed eulogies has been that eulogies are an omnipresent social ritual that accompanies the death of everyone. Although nineteen of twenty-two respondents indicated that they did perform eulogies, not all said that they performed them regularly. Responses to Question Thirteen are summarized in Table 13.

Table 13

Question Thirteen: Does your faith have a tradition of speaking (or eulogizing) at funeral services by members of the immediate family, friends, loved ones, etc?

| Response | Range | Number |
|---|---|---|
| Yes. | 75-90% of the time. | 10 |
| No. | Never to 25-30% of the time. | 9 |
| NA (we do not do eulogies). | -- | 3 |

Note. What constitutes a "tradition" was not quantified beyond the percentages provided here.

Those who responded "Yes" indicated that they have eulogies at 75-90% of their funerals. Those who responded "No" indicated that the range of eulogies given was from never to 25-30% of the time. The deciding factor

regarding whether a eulogy was performed seemed to be "tradition," that is, whether eulogies were encouraged, or a regular occurrence in particular churches.

## Question Fourteen

Are eulogies given for the living, the dead, [your] God, or all three?

Question Fourteen was intended to provide background information regarding the primary audience served by eulogies. Nearly all interviewees indicated that the primary audience for eulogies was the living, "after all," most responded, "the dead do not care anymore." The one individual who indicated that the ritual served all three audiences—the living, the deceased, and God—was a Thai Buddhist; and the four who indicated that God was the primary audience were associated with "conservative" religious traditions that stressed ritual and service to God.[17] The one individual who cited the deceased as the audience for the eulogy also cited the living, suggesting that the dead are "honored" by eloquent and inspiring eulogies, and that "inspira-

[17]I have remained intentionally vague in some of my references to specific religions here because so many of the answers obtained from interviewees are context specific. That is, the majority of my interviewees indicated that they were not obliged to follow any doctrinal rules when conducting their ceremonies. Rather, most claimed that they conducted their affairs as they did because they were guided by shared beliefs associated with their faith, and not out of obligation. Of course, most interviewees also claimed that they did not just follow their faith's "dogma" but believed in what the church stood for. This double bind (on the one had they can do what they want, but on the other hand they do what the church does) makes it difficult to make any predictions about specific churches' responses to death. Thus, a lot more church specific research would need to be conducted to make claims regarding specific faiths.

tion" is used to uplift the audience members in attendance at the funeral. Responses to Question Fourteen are summarized in Table 14.

Table 14

Question Fourteen: Are eulogies given for the living, the dead, [your] God, or all three?

| Response | Number |
|---|---|
| Eulogies are given for the living. | 20 |
| Eulogies are given for God. | 4 |
| Eulogies are given for the dead. | 1 |
| Eulogies are given for all audiences. | 1 |

## Question Fifteen

Are you ever asked to give a eulogy, or participate in a funerary service for an individual whom you did not know, or know well?

Of the twenty-four interviewees, the majority (18/24, or 75%) indicated that they had been asked to perform services for individuals they did not know well. In fact, two interviewees might be appropriately termed "professional eulogists," claiming to have conducted "thousands" of funeral services and eulogies over their years of religious service. Responses to Question Fifteen speak to the ubiquity of the eulogy to the "everyday citizen," which is by far the most common eulogy conducted in society. Responses to Question Fifteen are summarized in Table 15.

Table 15

Question Fifteen: Are you ever asked to give a eulogy, or participate in a funerary service for an individual whom you did not know, or know well?

| Response | Number |
|---|---|
| Yes. | 18 |
| No. | 2 |
| NA (we do not give eulogies). | 2 |

## Question Sixteen

Could you describe to me what might take place in a funeral service in your faith?

Very little consensus exists in the responses to Question Sixteen. "Most" protestant faiths follow a pattern something like that explained by Wolfelt (1994, pp. 58-59) and include an "opening" (which may include a prayer), a "scripture reading" (usually brief), followed by "choral music" (depending on the faith), a "eulogy," and a "closing," followed by organ (or more choral) "music" indicating that the audience should depart. This structure varies somewhat by religious denomination and church. Some churches perform the ceremony with an open casket, some with the casket closed, and some, because of structural limitations of the worship hall, do not even have the casket in the church. Similarly, some religious traditions emphasize more ritual than others and may include the ceremonial placing of a pall (a religious symbol) on the casket, the sprinkling of holy water, and Eucharist. Still other religious traditions have a more "informal" structures that may be

organized in consultation with the family of the deceased and includes several "eulogy-like" speeches.

## Question Seventeen

Are you informed of the death of a church member by any formal channels such as funeral homes, etc? And how do you find out about the death of church members?

Question Seventeen was omitted from all but six interviews.[18] All of the funeral home directors indicated that they learned about deaths from hospital or hospice care facilities. Indeed, when patients are checked into hospitals they are often asked to state a preference of funeral home. Although funeral directors sometimes hear of a death from a family member, they most often hear through formal channels. Similarly, most ministers know of a death because they have been ministering to an individual already (in the case of someone close to the church), or they are contacted by family members or funeral home directors. More rarely, ministers find out from the newspaper.

[18]Because the interview guide was pretested on funeral home directors and "non-mainstream" religions (Buddhist, Baha'i, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latterday Saints), I was unable to predict the outcome of this question before representatives of churches/synagogues were interviewed. Perhaps this should have been anticipated but it was overlooked in the interview preparation process.

## Question Eighteen

In your experience, where do funerals usually take place in Lafayette/W-L?

The majority of funerals in the Lafayette/West Lafayette area take place in churches and funeral homes. However, there are variations. Differences are often more attributable to the unique circumstances of the church, than to any prescribed moral/doctrinal prescriptions. One individual noted, for example,

> We would probably have all of them here if we could but, since our church seats 1,400 people we do not want to have it here where even 200 people would make it look small; sometimes people would feel that it would add to their grief, having it in the church, because they may only have 50 people come. (Hackett, 1996)

Similarly, another individual noted that his church only seats a hundred people and if a big funeral took place that church would not be large enough. Other factors included the fact that it is less expensive to have a funeral in a funeral home, since the cost of transporting the body to and from a church is an extra fee.

Question Eighteen remains somewhat imprecise because interviewees introduced the idea of "preference," and because some interviewees who had more experience with community practice were generalizing to the Lafayette/West-Lafayette area—as the question asks interviewees to do—while other interviewees, who had limited knowledge of community practices could only generalize to their own church's practices. Several interviewees noted that Catholics and Lutherans usually prefer to have services in their churches, while other interviewees noted that Protestants most often use the funer-

al home. However, other interviewees noted that the age and social status of the deceased can influence where a service is likely to be held. For example, when a young person dies the attendance at funeral services is usually quite high; as a result, a small church may not be able to accommodate the attendees. Similarly, if an important community member dies, it may be necessary to hold the funeral services in a very large church or some other public place to accommodate the numerous attendees.

The most accurate estimates for Question Eighteen likely come from the funeral home directors who have more experience with various religious traditions and funeral services. However, the members of the community that various funeral homes serve also makes it difficult to make a simple estimate of where funerals take place. John Benefiel of Soller-Baker Funeral Home—and the only funeral director to make a percentage estimate—for example, estimated that 70% of all funerals take place in the funeral home, and that 30% take place in churches or other locations; however, Rich Groeber, of Hippensteel Funeral Home, noted that the age of the deceased, his/her religion, and their level of church involvement also influence an individual's choice of funerary location. Finally, Robert Atkinson of Hahn Funeral Home, suggests, like Groeber, that the traditions of the religion of the deceased play an important role in their decision about where to have a funeral.

## Question Nineteen

If there is an average or "standard" procedure for funerals in the Lafayette area, and could you describe it?

Question Nineteen was answered, in terms of the procedure for funerals, in Question Sixteen above. The responses as tabulated add little to an understanding of eulogies. Many interviewees, for example, had never attended services in another state or even another church. Responses to Question Nineteen are summarized in Table 16.

Table 16

Question Nineteen: If there is an average or "standard" procedure for funerals in the Lafayette area, could you describe it?

| Response | Frequency |
|---|---|
| No, there is no average procedure. | 11 |
| Yes, there is an average procedure. | 7 |
| Lafayette is like most places. | 3 |
| There are regional differences. | 2 |
| NA (we do not do eulogies). | 2 |

## Question Twenty

Do you know if there are differences by religion, and if so, do you know what the differences are?

Question Twenty was asked to assess broad understanding of religious traditions. The question was not specific to eulogistic practice. Question Twenty, like Question Nineteen, was often answered by vague references to "more ceremony" or "less ceremony." Eleven of the interviewees indicated

that they did not "really" know about differences; four of the eleven indicated that the question did not apply because they did not do eulogies; the remainder indicated that they were aware of differences but not to a great extent. With the exception of five interviewees who had ministered in a variety of churches, switched religions, or actively studied other religious faiths, most only spoke in generalities. Still, the data gathered here indicate that there are few eulogistic differences across religious traditions. Responses to Question Twenty are summarized in Table 17.

Table 17

Question Twenty: Do you know if there are differences by religion, and if so, do you know what the differences are?

| Response | Number |
|---|---|
| Yes, there are differences by religion. | 10 |
| No, I do not know if there are differences. | 4 |
| I do not know much about the differences. | 7 |
| NA (we do not give eulogies). | 4 |

## Question Twenty-One

How often are funerals Public and Private?

According to interviewees, most funerals ("98%") are public, with the exception of certain instances such as suicide or still-born children. As Levi put it, "for us there is no such thing as a private funeral; if it is in the church it is public" (1996); similarly, Pfaltzgraff-Eller indicated that "I think death is a public event" (1996).

## Question Twenty-Two

Are there differences between religious and secular funerals, and if so, can you explain them?

Question Twenty-Two inquired into the existence of what is termed "secular funerals." Because of the flow of particular interviews and time constraints, this question was only asked of eleven interviewees. Of those interviewees asked the question, only three interviewees admitted having had direct experience with secular funerals.

As the numbers in Table 18 suggest, however, five interviewees indicated having had some contact with secular funeral services. Wingard, for example, one of the interviewees most experienced at conducting funerals, noted: "Yes, there are some who would not want any scripture. They want poetry. A very civil type of thing and not religious. I've had a few of those" (1996). In a different vain, Goode expressed concern about the secularization of the funeral ceremony when he explained that:

> Yes, I think more and more we are seeing families demanding eulogies, perhaps because we have less people in the church studying the scriptures, and more and more people who are unfamiliar with the scripture, and so they are finding comfort in reminiscing about the person's life and not the scripture. And I have no problem with remembering relationships, but it seems that people do not know what to do when people are not believers. More and more eulogies are being given by family members. Some of the music is contrary to scripture. I have no problem with family members and friends giving eulogies because I am not accountable for what is said—I am not misleading anybody biblically, and we will make a distinct change when we go into the funeral sermon anyway. (1996)

On balance the majority of interviewees could not describe characteristics of a secular funeral that make it different from a religious funeral, apart from possible references to God being made in religious funerals.

Table 18

Question Twenty-Two: Are there differences between religious and secular funerals, and if so, can you explain them?

| Response | Frequency |
|---|---|
| I do not know if there are differences. | 6 |
| The difference is that God is mentioned in religious funerals. | 3 |
| I have heard of secular funerals but know little about them. | 2 |
| There is no such thing as a secular funeral. | 1 |

## Question Twenty-Three

Are there differences in ceremonies by: age, sex, social status (workers/professionals), devout/irreligious?

The short answer to question number Twenty-Three, "Are there differences in ceremonies by age, sex, social status, and religiosity?" is "yes." The more complicated answer is that the differences cannot easily be summarized in tabular form. Each of the four differences, age, sex, social status, and religiosity, have various influences; however, some patterns are identifiable.

Several differences have already been mentioned. Age plays a big role in the determination of the content of messages. For instance, as one interviewee noted regarding the issue of age, "We would read different scriptures and we are trying to minister to the people who are there; the loss of a child

is one of the most difficult things to do and the younger the child the more difficult" (May, 1996). Similarly, as Wingard noted:

> Sometimes there are little nuances that are there. Someone who has lived a long life it is easy to pick up on things that the community already knows. Whereas in the case of a young suicide you are dealing with guilt and other issues. Someone who's life has not been an open book. (1996)

The more common response to the issue of age was that: "If an eight year old dies, it may be difficult to find experiences to reference when their life was so short and you may end up dealing with the painful and fearful memories involved; while the eulogy to the 80 year old will contain references to their life, experiences, humor, etcetera." (Snellgrove, 1996). Similarly, Moss, speaking of the constraints of the audience explains, "If a person is older and has been in a nursing home, you might have 15-20 people; if it is a young person, especially [in] high school, you will have huge crowds; when you go back down to an infant you will have a small group" (1996). Finally, according to Atkinson:

> I see great differences. If you go to a child's funeral it will be much more emotional. Because the person has not had their "time" so to speak. As opposed to if you are at a service for an elderly person who has had a lingering illness the family may look on the funeral as a "release"—and it may be too bad it did not happen sooner. That was not put very well but you understand. (1996)

Obviously then, the length of life that an individual has lived does play a central role in the construction of a "useful" and "fulfilling" eulogy. This factor, that the more a person has done, the easier it is to eulogize him/her has been treated as irrelevant in the literature on eulogies. The assumption has simply been that all people lead worthwhile lives.

The next factor in Question Twenty-Three, sex, was regarded by most interviewees as an insignificant variable. One common and descriptive response was that made by Hurley, who suggested topological differences: "I do not know how this would make a difference except in terms of 'she was a wonderful Mother' and 'he was a wonderful Father'" (1996). Atkinson, a funeral home director, however, did point out some interesting differences when he noted that:

> Yes [there are differences], but this may not be so obvious. You tend to have a matriarch or a patriarch no matter what type of family you have. That may be a situation with a large family and a grandmother who kept the family together, they may realize that they will not have that anymore. Also, the relationship of the surviving spouse may play a role. If the remaining spouse had a tendency to try to give their partner the best of everything, they may play that out in the service. (1996)

As with sex, the third variable inquired about, social status, was not regarded as significant.

Most interviewees felt that social status "should not," at least consciously, play a role in eulogistic messages. Snellgrove for example, pointed out that there are obvious topological differences in terms of the message, noting: "I would not use Victor Hugo with a janitor who does not have the background" (1996). Others noted how the social status of the deceased might influence the "appearance" of the funeral service. Atkinson offered an apt description of this, explaining that:

> Some may want a very ostentatious service because they see this as the last chance to give the person something they could not give them before, or as a last time to give them anything. Most services are like the way that the person has lived their life. If they have not been ostentatious in their everyday life, their service is not likely to be. This may make a difference if the person was prominent or if the family was close knit and does not feel like sharing the time with the

> public. Perhaps if they have been very public, they may feel the opposite like the community deserves to have a last chance to see the family. (1996; cf., Benefiel, 1996; Rojjanaprapayon, 1996)

Rick Hurley, however, observed that there are slight stylistic differences in eulogistic messages depending on social status. As Hurley explains:

> As far as I'm concerned, what I do is the same no matter what social status they find themselves in. However, I would say that professionals and those who may be more articulate, maybe a little more sophisticated, may ask for more in the service. They would be the one's more likely to give me something to read or they would want to say something rather than those who do not have the social, economic, and educational background. But it is certainly not by my design that I would do anything different. I take the input from the families and work with what they give me. So in that sense I would say that education level and their involvement in the church make a difference. (1996)

Finally, Moss, like Hurley, also observed slight differences suggesting that, "professionals generally have a larger turnout than do those who are not. Those who are homemakers generally have a more personal funeral in that family members may want to say or read something" (1996).

The final area of concern in Question Twenty-Three was religiosity. Most interviewees believed that this does affect the tone of the message. Essentially, if the person being eulogized was religious, it was considered easier to find something to say about him/her, to find common ground. As Day explained, "If a member of the congregation has contributed a great deal, we can devote time to talking about their accomplishments and contributions" (1996). Robertson, echoed Day, explaining that, "With a devout person you have their life and faith to draw upon and you can hold up the godless as exemplars of what 'not' to do" (1996). Finally, Goode suggested, "It is easier

to preach about the devout because it can be directed to their relationship with God" (1996).

Other interviewees, however, expressed concern over preachers who try to "preach people into heaven," suggesting that candor should be part of all services. Wingard explained this when he said that:

> Sometimes a person who was an active church person, their life speaks for itself. Sometimes a person is an ornery old cuss. I remember once when this funeral was taking place and this old reprobate is laying in the casket and the preacher is just waxing eloquent about all of his character and this mother leans over to her son and says, "son, you go over there and see if that's your pa in that casket." (1996)

The theme of honesty on the part of eulogists was very prevalent in the interview responses and, as noted previously, is not altogether consistent with some of the scholarly writings on eulogies in the literature.

Pfaltzgraff-Eller explained what happens when an individual does not have close ties with a religious community and is eulogized: "I get more general when the audience is more generic so that I can appeal to the whole audience. My general sense is that everyone has a feeling about God [so I draw on that]" (1996).

Still other interviewees suggested that if an individual was not a member of their faith, they would not even conduct a eulogy for them. As May suggested:

> We do not give, or lead, funerals for people who are non-Christians. Not because we believe that we are better than them, but that when uncle George dies after never having had an interest in God, we cannot preach someone into heaven. What we do have is a devotional service that is not designed to talk about George per se, but instead to help the people who live on after George deal with his loss. (1996)

This ideological stance can be traced back to interview questions One and Four where many interviewees noted that the religious component was an essential aspect of eulogies and funeral services.

As suggested herein, the factors, age, sex, social status, and religiosity, play an important role in the construction of eulogistic messages and serve to suggest potential topoi and provide the basis for what might be said in a eulogy. Question Twenty-Three adds to an understanding of eulogies not simply by identifying these argumentative commonplaces, but also because greater insight is provided into how eulogists perceive their roles and craft their messages.

## Question Twenty-Four

Do funeral services actually serve to console the bereaved?

Question Twenty-Four was little more than a "set-up question" for question twenty-five where interviewees were asked to suggest ways in which eulogies serve to console the bereaved. What is significant here is that virtually all interviewees believed (on some level) that eulogies actually serve to console the bereaved. This belief is consistent with the assumptions made in the literature on funerary oratory. Responses to Question Twenty-Four are summarized in Table 19.

Table 19

Question Twenty-Four: Do funeral services actually serve to console the bereaved?

| Response | Number |
|---|---|
| Yes (People will remember the "spirit" of the service). | 21 |
| No | 0 |
| I don't know. | 2 |

## Question Twenty-five

If they do, what are some strategies for accomplishing this effectively?

Question Twenty-Five was the final interview question. Interviewees were asked to explain how funeral services in general comforted survivors. This question was generic, that is, it was not linked to eulogies per se; eulogies themselves might be influenced by more strategies such as the ones already described by the interviewees in earlier responses. Since interviewees had already commented at length regarding what eulogies can do, or should do, this question was included merely to ascertain whether the claims regarding funeral services as "consoling/comforting" could be linked to eulogies as the scholarly literature has done, or if the interviewees saw characteristics of the funeral as accomplishing that task. Responses to question twenty-five are summarized in Table 20.

As the interview responses suggest, the primary acts of comfort are seen to emerge most strongly from the sermonic aspect of the funeral service and not from the eulogy per se. Several comforting strategies were identified

by the interviewees that mirror strategies found in the comforting literature mentioned in Chapter One. For example, number three (Question 25) below, the idea that physical contact provides a modicum of comfort, is consistent with some comforting literature that suggests that "familiar" touches, hugs, etcetera, can alleviate some of the distress felt by someone grieving (cf., Samter, 1983; Bryson, 1996). Similarly, the ideas expressed by interviewees in questions One and Two, that the message of "salvation" and the idea of having "faith," do and "should" comfort those in distress emerge again. Hurley described both of these strategies, the comfort of the scriptures and the comfort of close physical contact, when he said:

> I would say that the thing that makes it most effective is when they know, or have assurance of eternal life. The other thing that ministers to them is that personal time I spend with them before and after. Another thing is when other believers in Christ come around to offer them comfort and to just be with them. So it is not just me doing it but when the body of Christ, or the church does what it should do, when people are around hugging them and offering them comfort and care. Also the Scriptures are comforting, and the promise of Christ is comforting. (1996)

Interestingly, however, the reliance on symbols and extra-worldly assurances to comfort individuals in their time of grief, spoken of so often by interviewees—the majority of whom, I should add, are well trained and well educated—appears nowhere in the scholarly literature on comforting (cf., Burleson and Goldsmith, 1996, for a recent review of comforting literature).

More than being able to account for whether the themes mentioned above have heretofore been examined by scholars, one purpose of this research, and of this question in particular, was to identify the strategies for effective comforting considered valuable by the interviewees. At this point in

the understanding of funerary oratory the primary strategies are not fully understood. Father Levi and Rabbi Weingart both offer explanations of how the interaction of ritual and an assortment of comforting strategies undoubtedly serve to alleviate the suffering of many individuals who have recently experienced the death of a loved one. As Levi explains:

> The rituals are powerful—all seem important [and contain 2,000 years of wisdom]. The rituals are designed to be flexible; if you have symbols, you use them. When the time in the committal service comes when we allow people to sprinkle the holy water, they all want to do it. It helps them say good-bye. The symbols serve the greatest purpose. (1996)

Weingart further suggested that:

> I think the tone of the prayers, the tone of the readings, the atmosphere that is created by the eulogy, all of it put together hopefully provides some degree of comfort. Plus the personal contact between the Rabbi and the family. And then usually in Jewish tradition, people gather at the home of the family for a meal of consolation which is served to them and then through the period of mourning, especially during the first week, friends and comforters can drop by the house to offer their sympathies. Then on the Sabbath immediately following the person's death the family comes to the synagogue where again, during the prayer, a doxology and hymn of praise to God, we mention those who have died during the last week and those who have died in the last year following on the anniversary of that particular Sabbath service. (1996)

The role of the symbolic in offering comfort comes up repeatedly in the interviews. And, once again, the "themes" ("focus on deceased," "focus on survivors," "focus on death," "focus on religion") reemerged, from questions One and Four, suggesting that particular themes are part of all funeral services in general and perhaps of eulogies in particular.

Table 20

Question Twenty-Five: If they do [console], what are some strategies for accomplishing this effectively?

| Response | Frequency[a] |
|---|---|
| 1. Giving witness to their faith is comforting; the service reinforces their belief. | 12 |
| 2. The message in the sermon is comforting. | 7 |
| 3. Physical contact comforts. | 7 |
| 4. The ritual itself has value and comforts. | 6 |
| 5. The sense of completion/closure/finality that the service provides is comforting. | 4 |
| 6. The family and friends support, and their coming together can lead to growth, rebuilding of relationships, and is comforting. | 3 |
| 7. The funeral helps people confront death and is comforting. | 3 |
| 8. The knowledge that the deceased is in a "better place" comforts. | 3 |
| 9. Helping people work through their grief is comforting. | 2 |
| 10. Ministering before the service is comforting. | 2 |
| 11. The funeral allows the bereaved to publicly grieve/mourn and is comforting as a result of this. | 2 |
| 12. Symbols (candles, pall, music, prayers) provide a comforting setting for the funeral. | 2 |
| 13. It is comforting when a eulogist actually speaks of the deceased like they were well known to him/her. | 1 |

[a]Interviewees were encouraged to give more than one response.

## Summary of Interview Data

Obviously these interview responses do not encompass the entirety of theory and belief in the area of eulogies and funeral oratory. They only begin to scratch the surface for that matter, offering little more than interesting "observations" at some points. However, given the dearth of information on everyday eulogies and funeral services, the framework they provide aids in an understanding of eulogies themselves. These "observations" form the basis of the framework within which the critique that follows takes place.

The boundaries suggested by the interviewees regarding what eulogies are/do, and how we can tell a eulogy from a funeral sermon were used by this researcher to separate eulogies from other aspects of the funerals attended and recorded. Transcripts of these "eulogies" are examined in detail later, in Chapter Four, the Generic Critique.

# CHAPTER THREE: GENERIC CRITICISM

## Introduction to Chapter Three

The six objectives of this chapter are: (1) to provide an explanation of what Genre/Generic[19] Criticism is in general; (2) to review the literature on Generic Criticism; (3) to explain why a distinction has been made between Genre/Generic criticism; (4) to explain how Generic Criticism has been, or "should be," conducted; (5) to explain what Generic Criticism will mean in this dissertation, and to explain what Generic considerations will be addressed in this dissertation; and (6) to provide an explanation of why eulogies as an area of criticism constitute a genre and, why this "genre" is worthy of critical analysis.

Generic criticism was used in this study because genre criticism is a methodology intended to account for the rhetorical features of social practice, and account for the communication of diverse rhetorical agents and situations. Generic criticism was also selected as a methodology because it is flexible enough to consider both rhetorical events/situations and rhetorical messages.

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[19]The terms "Genre" and "Generic" have been used more or less interchangeably in the literature on Genre/Generic Criticism. In this essay I will be using both terms more or less interchangeably.

## Genre/Generic Criticism

Genre/Generic criticism is a method of critical analysis that seeks to make sense of discourse thought to be part of coherent, or related, areas of human communication. There are subtle distinctions important in this area of criticism. For example: why is a distinction made between Genre and Generic criticism?; can one genre be distinguished from another genre?; and, is Generic Criticism really criticism or is it more accurately a theoretical methodology? These distinctions are addressed below. For now, a genre refers to a rhetorically coherent easily recognized area of social discourse. Examples of genres include: sermons, weddings, funerals, public apologies, and inaugural addresses. What make these communicative discourses "genres" is that they occur within predictable frameworks of situation (or occasion), audience, and speaker. Martin explains:

> A rhetorical genre is produced by a recurrent, distinctive relationship among three elements, (1) occasion, (2) audience and (3) speaker-role, from which springs discourse necessarily displaying recurrent similarities in theme, style, tactics, and perhaps presentational elements. (1976, p. 247)

Jamieson notes that "Genre, a word borrowed from French, signifies a distinct species of form, type, or kind" of rhetoric (1973, p. 162). Genres, then, refer to special cases of rhetorical action/interaction. Not every instance of rhetorical interaction can, or even should, be classified as a genre: for example, a child asking his/her mother for cookies probably does not represent a genre of discourse since, in most cases, the rhetoric employed is not <u>bounded</u> by the situation, audience, or speaker. Rhetoricians are interested in genres

because of their capacity to "clarify and not just classify" instances of communicative interaction (Frye, 1957, p. 247; cf., Bostdorff, 1987; Jamieson, 1973, 1975).

Generic "criticism," as a method, proceeds from the assumption that critique of particular rhetorical genres, such as funeral oratory, can shed light on the social function(s) served by the genre being examined. Generic Criticism reveals characteristics of institutionalized rhetorical practices of value to rhetors, critics, and theorists of communication, and also serves as a guide to those rhetors participating in, or contributing to, the rhetorical genre in the future. As Hart, in his text Modern Rhetorical Criticism, explains:

> [A] genre is a class of messages having important structural and content similarities, which, as a class, create special expectations in listeners. Inaugural addresses, then, constitute a genre, because they share textual features and are delivered in similar circumstances every four years. . . . Generic study is the study of such [related] constraints. It describes patterns of discourse and explains their recurrence. (1990, pp. 183, 186)

A Genre critique, then, as Hart explains, is a method of critical analysis that seeks to make sense of a body of discourse that "shares" particular characteristics.

An example of a "genre" may help clarify generic criticism. Because the sections that follow in this chapter are devoted to delineating "rhetorical" genres, this example will be of a well known televisual (movie, television, video) genre. To date, none of the discussions of generic criticism have used an example of this sort.

Undoubtedly most readers are familiar with the genre of the "Western" in the movie and television industry. The genre consists of particular formu-

laic features: that is, it generally takes place within a particular historical epoch. The genre also dictates that particular formulaic characters will surface in the course of the story: the "fearless" Sheriff, the "meaner-than-mean" villain(s), the Indians, the kindhearted prostitute.[20] Finally, particular formulaic events are expected to occur: good will triumph over evil, there will be a happy ending, the hero will usually experience some sort of epiphany that leads him to transform his life, "turn-over-a-new-leaf," or, as is often the case, get married (cf., Ellison, 1996, pp. 86-97, for an excellent discussion of what happens when these conventions are violated).

These diverse characteristics represent the framework of a recognizable, predictable, and coherent art form. Rhetorical genres are not unlike movie genres. That is, they provide critics, theorists, and rhetors with a framework for understanding and interpreting events which seem to share particular characteristics, which seem to cohere. By having an understanding of what a "comedy," a "tragedy," an "opera," or a "horror movie" is, citizens, as well as critics, are capable of making judgments relevant to their expectations. They are better able to understand what they are seeing because the genre provides a framework.

The section that follows contains a review of the literature on generic criticism in an historical manner, with special attention paid to particular

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[20]There are also many predictable variations on each of these characters. The Sheriff can, for example, be a "washed up ol' sot" who reforms in the nick of time to save the town's people (cf., "True Grit," and "The Unforgiven"); he, or they (although there can be more than one hero, the hero is almost always a man), can also be an anti-hero, of sorts, who although he saves the town's people, is not regarded any higher than the "bad-guys" (cf., "A Fistful of Dollars," and "The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly").

trends and controversies surrounding the practice of generic criticism. What should be clear by the end of this discussion is that generic criticism is uniquely suited as a critical methodology because of its capacity to examine a rhetorical phenomena in a variety of ways. This literature review should also clarify certain significant factors regarding generic criticism—including the genre/generic distinction, the audience effects criterion, the examination of rhetorical situations, and the identification of rhetorical genres. What should also be clear from this discussion is that generic criticism, as a methodology, like any methodology, contains research limitations—including the apriori designation of genres, "genre hunting," and "generic classification."

## Generic Criticism Literature Review

This section contains a review of the literature on generic criticism and was an attempt to: (1) explain the role of this literature review; and (2) historically consider the relevant research in the reviews of genre criticism, including both the theoretical works on genre and the critical works that inform generic practice.

### Role of This Literature Review

This literature review is organized chronologically. The intent is to cover the literature in a way that will inform the analysis that follows. A chronological approach was selected because of its capacity to illuminate the

trends and developments, the "skirmishes and allegiances," that have occurred in the area of genre criticism over the past thirty years. Some scholars have conducted topical (or "generic," as Bostdorff, 1987, calls it) critiques of the generic literature. Although I touch on these scholars' treatments of the literature, I believe such an approach serves more of a "straw-man" function, setting up scholarly arguments that are easy to knock down and ignore. The literature on generic criticism is quite extensive. Depending on what one includes in the categories, tens of books and hundreds of articles could be reviewed. Such a review here would be unnecessary, however, in light of the excellent treatments of the genre as a whole already conducted (cf., Bostdorff, 1987; Campbell and Jamieson, 1978; Foss, 1983; and other scholars reviewed in this chapter). As a result, no attempt will be made to discuss all of the "questionable" instances of genre studies. Instead, this section will be a focus on the central essays in genre criticism and will conclude with a brief review of some of the studies relevant to generic criticism.

## Previous Reviews of Genre Theory

In this section, previous treatments of genre theory will be reviewed. All relevant genre criticism is not reviewed but, instead, "trends" in generic theory are identified. This discussion will proceed chronologically, and will provide a framework of theories for use in discussing the generic critiques that follow. The following individuals will be considered because of their contributions to genre theory: Frye (1957), Black (1965), Campbell and

Jamieson (1978), Harrell and Linkugel (1978), Conley (1979), Fisher (1980), Miller (1984), Bostdorff (1987), and Hart (1990).

## Northrop Frye

Northrop Frye's text, Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays (1957) is one of the earlier discussions of genre criticism.[21] While Frye's text is devoted to literary criticism rather than rhetorical criticism, his contributions have been acknowledged by all scholars of genre criticism. For Frye, genres are products of transactions between "the poet and his publics" (p. 247). According to Frye:

> We complained in our introduction that the theory of genres was an undeveloped subject in criticism. We have the three generic[22] terms drama, epic, and lyric, derived from the Greeks, but we use the latter two chiefly as jargon or trade slang for long and short (or shorter) poems respectively. . . .
>
> The basis of the generic distinction in literature appears to be the radical of presentation. Words may be acted in front of a spectator; they may be spoken in front of a listener; they may be sung or chanted; or they may be written for a reader. Criticism, we note resignedly in passing, has no word for the individual member of an author's audience, and the word "audience" itself does not really cover all genres, as it is slightly illogical to describe the readers of a book as an audience. . . . Genre is determined by the conditions established between the poet and his public. (pp. 246-247)

Clearly Fry's conception of genre is not particularly instructive to contemporary scholars of rhetorical criticism. His conception, based in Literature, contains no recognition, or acknowledgment, of how rhetorical situations (cf.,

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[21]Aristotle's Rhetoric, with its discussion of forensic, epideictic, and deliberative genres of rhetoric is generally considered to be the first conceptualization of rhetorical genres.

[22]Notice the early interchangeable use by Frye of the terms "generic" and "genre" in this quotation. This distinction is discussed later in this chapter.

Bitzer, 1968) can influence the construction of rhetorical messages. Frye does, however, note the situatedness of genres when he explains that:

> [W]e are largely concerned with diction and linguistic elements, we must limit our survey mainly to a specific language, which will be English: this means that a good deal of what we say will be true only of English, but it is hoped that the main principles can be adapted to other languages as well. (p. 251)

Frye is also credited with what is undoubtedly one of the most often cited passages in the annals of generic criticism. Frye writes: "the purpose of criticism by genres is not so much to classify as to clarify . . . traditions and affinities" (p. 247; cf., Bostdorff, 1987; Jamieson, 1973, 1975). This conception of genre as "more than just classification" is a thread that runs through much of the theory and criticism of genres, and is evident in the scholarship of Bostdorff (1987), Conley, (1979), Jamieson (1973, 1975) and others.

## Edwin Black

Edwin Black, penned what has been identified as another central work in genre criticism (cf., Fisher, 1980, p. 289). Black in his text Rhetorical Criticism: A Study in Method (1965), proposed what he called an "alternative to neo-Aristotelianism" (p. 132). Black's alternative frame of reference involves the conceptualization of a hypothetical continuum for conceiving of rhetoric. At one end of the "continuum" Black places "didacticism," which refers to "promoting a disinterested, transitory, approbation" (p. 133); at the other end Black places "a form of suasion promoting radical, permanent, extensive alterations in belief" (p. 133). In employing the continuum Black

claims that: (1) "there is a limited number of situations in which a rhetor can find himself"; (2) "there is a limited number of ways in which a rhetor can and will respond rhetorically to any given situation type"; (3) we must assume the recurrence of particular situation types through history which will inform possible responses; and (4) we can place the congregations of rhetorical discourses along the continuum in a more or less arbitrary way according to their persuasive potential (pp. 133-134).

Although Black proposes his generic schema as an "alternative to neo-Aristotelianism," his framework (and critique) is steeped in neo-Aristotelianism. His continuum places great emphasis on "audience effects," a concern that is difficult to evaluate or resolve adequately. Black's four rhetorical constraints imply at least three constituent elements: effects, strategy, and situation (p. 136); however, his continuum acknowledges only the emphasis on audience effects: *ala* neo-Aristotelianism and Herbert Wichelns, Black's mentor (cf., Wichelns, 1958). Black acknowledges this limitation, claiming:

> We can construct a scale by any of the constituents of the rhetorical transaction: strategies, situations, or effects. Since these three elements are intimately related and interact, a scale of one will perforce involve the other two. If one has a scale of strategies, for example, it means that this scale will also relate to situations and effects, whether one wants it to or not. (1965, p. 136)

Black displays his theoretical predispositions, however, when he writes that "We know relatively little about strategies; . . . our knowledge of rhetorical situations is somewhat fuller, but it is still scanty. We seem to know most about audience effects" (p. 136).

Black, after conducting a critique of "exhortative discourse" that draws upon his conception of "genre" analysis, claims that persuasive discourse that focuses primarily on the "stirring of emotions"—as opposed to secondarily as in Aristotle—represents a derivative "genre." He concludes that "concrete description" and the substitution of "is" or "will be" for "should" or "should be" are two strategies of exhortative discourse (p. 143, 147). Black's critique, (perhaps in light of Frye's admonition to "clarify rather than classify"), represents an attempt to make sense of a rhetorical "strategy," rather than merely to identify the conditions under which such discourse might occur.

Both Black and Frye deal with genre in distinct ways. Frye indicates clearly that his interest lies in the formal, linguistic, characteristics of language, that is, with "how language is used within this genre or that genre" (1957, pp. 246 ff.), with genre referring to a seemingly objective event or type of discourse. Black, however, views genre as the strategic use of particular types, or kinds, of discourse within relatively flexible or plastic contexts. For Black then, genre takes on a distinctive Aristotelian tincture that tends to favor persuasion; for Frye, the focus of genre critique is on the function of discourse within particular contexts—to use Black's terms, the focus is on the situation rather than the effects. Campbell and Jamieson, discussed next, raise other important issues.

Karlyn Kohrs Campbell and Kathleen Hall Jamieson

Campbell and Jamieson's text, Form and Genre: Shaping Rhetorical Action (1978), provides an early, sophisticated, discussion of genre theory in rhetorical criticism. Campbell and Jamieson's discussion of genre criticism is found in the introductory chapter of their text, "Form and Genre in Rhetorical Criticism: An Introduction,"[23] which attempts to:

> 1) trace, briefly, the beginnings of formal and generic concerns in the modern history of rhetorical criticism; 2) discuss some selected criticisms that make generic claims; 3) examine the relationship between the concepts of "form" and "genre"; 4) suggest the role of the generic perspective in the total enterprise of criticism; 5) introduce this volume of essays. (1978, p. 12)

Because of the ubiquitousness of Campbell and Jamieson's ideas, each is discussed in some detail here.

In Campbell and Jamieson's first section they conduct a critique of the history of generic theory, not unlike my critique here. Although Campbell and Jamieson begin their critique with Wichelns, rather than Black, they do acknowledge Black's text as the first of formal discussions about genre theory.

In Campbell and Jamieson's second section, "Generic Criticisms," they discuss several essays that have employed what they consider to be generic approaches. In their discussion, Campbell and Jamieson explain how generic criticism might proceed from either inductive or deductive frameworks (cf.,

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[23]Also found in Campbell and Jamieson's text and dealing with genre is an interesting essay by Herbert W. Simons titled, "'Genre-alizing' About Rhetoric: A Scientific Approach"; Simons' essay, although provocative, is not directly relevant to the present discussion.

pp. 16-18). They also provide an example from Jamieson's work that supports their own critical efforts noting:

> Jamieson also proceeds inductively but within a more limited body of discourses, papal encyclicals. However, she does not assume a genre; she examines these discourses to determine if one exists. . . . She reminds us most strongly that rhetorical acts are born into a symbolic/rhetorical context as well as into an historical/political milieu. Once again, the genre which emerges is a complex of elements—a constellation of substantive, stylistic and situational characteristics. . . . Like Hart, Campbell's approach to contemporary women's rights rhetoric is inductive." (p. 17)

It is this "constellation of substantive, stylistic and situational characteristics" that Campbell and Jamieson are best known for; it is also this theme that is elaborated upon throughout the remainder of their essay (discussed below). Campbell and Jamieson conclude their section two by noting four "constants of generic criticism":

> 1) Classification is justified only by the critical illumination it produces, not by the neatness of a classificatory schema; 2) Generic criticism is taken as a means towards systematic, close textual analysis; 3) A genre is a complex, amalgam, a constellation of substantive, stylistic and situational elements; 4) Generic analysis reveals both the conventions and affinities that a work shares with others; it uncovers the unique elements in the rhetorical act. (p. 18)

In Campbell and Jamieson's next section, section three, "Form and Genre," they explain that genres are shaped by an "internal dynamic"; that is, by "stylistic and substantive responses to perceived situational demands" (pp. 18-20). In other words, Campbell and Jamieson acknowledge that genres exist (apriori) and that they can be identified by reference to the rhetoric that constitutes them (this distinction becomes important later on in this discussion); however, for Campbell and Jamieson, what is most important is not that there are genres of discourse, but that genres exist because constella-

tions of forms that exist in isolation in "other discourses," recur predictably to form genres. As Campbell and Jamieson explain it, "a genre is given its character by a fusion of forms, not by its individual elements" (p. 21).

In their fourth section, "Genre and Criticism," Campbell and Jamieson suggest that all rhetoric is influenced by prior rhetoric, a point made by others before and after Campbell and Jamieson (cf., Frye, 1957; Fisher, 1980). They also claim that the act of generic criticism would, ultimately, "culminate in a developmental history of rhetoric that would permit the critic to generalize beyond the individual event" (p. 27). As should be clear by now, Campbell and Jamieson are interested in explaining generic fusions and not genres per se. Campbell and Jamieson's approach necessarily assumes apriori categories of discourse—an assumption that seriously flaws their overall approach. In short, Campbell and Jamieson see generic criticism as an "approach" suitable for use with other critical methodologies (cf., pp. 27 ff.), but not as a critical methodology in-and-of itself. Campbell and Jamieson's approach represents a significant step beyond Frye and Black in terms of furthering understanding of what a genre does and how one is identified. However, their approach also has limitations because of their unwillingness to acknowledge genre as a potential critical approach, in spite of its complexity, and because of their willingness to accept apriori genre categories, such as the eulogy (pp. 20-21), but, at the same time, to also assume that certain generic strategies are only "categories" and not genres.

Jackson Harrell and Wil A. Linkugel

Harrell and Linkugel's essay represents yet another strand in the theorizing about genre. Their title, "On Rhetorical Genre: An Organizing Perspective" (1978), reveals, the focus of their interests: to identify and classify (competing or related) rhetorical genres (pp. 262-263). Like Black, Harrell and Linkugel propose a continuum upon which discourse might be placed; however, unlike Black, Harrell and Linkugel's interests lie not in developing a method of rhetorical criticism, but, rather, in developing a theoretical framework within which related discourse might be evaluated. According to Harrell and Linkugel:

> One initial task of rhetorical critics, therefore, is to develop a compensatory schema which will allow the systematic classification of rhetorical discourse. Preliminary to such a schema is an understanding of rhetorical genre. We think that rhetorical genres stem from *organizing principles* found in *recurring situations* that generate discourse characterized by a family of *common factors.* (1978, p. 263, their emphasis)

In Harrell and Linkugel, genre emerges as constituted of situations and recurring factors or commonplaces (Topoi). Herein is one of the first major steps, since Bitzer's "Rhetorical Situation" (1968), and beyond the neo-Aristotelianism of "audience effects" so ubiquitous in Black.[24]

Harrell and Linkugel's continuum stretches from "Immanence" to "Transcendence" and reflects the belief that classification is an innate characteristic of human thought (p. 266). "Immanence" refers to "'face value' observation and inference [as a] . . . primary means of classification" (p. 266). Immanent classification, then, according to Harrell and Linkugel, "consists of descriptive groupings of objects which common-sense perception tells us look alike, even though they may not be entirely the same" (p. 266).

"Transcendent" classification, "on the other hand, inheres in the concept of normative participation. Norms represent central tendencies which are analytically derived, not inferred from surface observation" (p. 266). Harrell and Linkugel note methodological differences between these two approaches:

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[24]Bitzer's article, "The Rhetorical Situation" (1968), provides the basis for much of the thought on situation in genre analysis. According to Bitzer, "rhetorical situations" are the result of the merging of "persons, events, objects, relations, and an exigence which strongly invites utterance" (p. 5). Bitzer sees three factors as significant: exigence, audience, and constraints. An exigence, according to Bitzer, is "an imperfection marked by urgency; it is a defect, an obstacle, something waiting to be done, a thing which is other than it should be" (p. 6); Audience according to Bitzer includes only those auditors who can be persuaded, and who have the capacity to effect change; finally, constraints refer to factors beyond a rhetor's control such as an audience's original beliefs, as well as the style of the rhetor and the logic of the arguments he confronts (pp. 6-8). For Bitzer, every rhetorical situation necessarily calls for, and contains, a fitting, or proper, response (p. 11). Responses to Bitzer are numerous and varied and found in Communication journals for nearly thirty years following the publication of "The Rhetorical Situation."

> The difference between these two systems of classifications is a difference in methodology. The critic using immanent classification looks for and observes similarities which common sense tells him are there. Appearance rather than analysis is central to his method. Use of transcendent classification, alternatively, derives norms from the analytic study of a certain type of object. His work in discovering norms transcends the individual objects under consideration. (266)

In view of these methodological differences, Harrell and Linkugel propose four organizing principles for classification of discourse: De facto, Structural, Motivational, and Archetypal (pp. 264-265). Harrell and Linkugel place the four organizing principles along their continuum from immanence to transcendence (see Figure 1 below).

Harrell and Linkugel's Continuum.

| **Immanence** | | | **Transcendence** |
|---|---|---|---|
| **De facto** | **Structural** | **Motivational** | **Archetypal** |

Figure 1

The organizing principle of De Facto classification falls closest to the immanence end of the continuum and refers to common sense perception. Common sense perception may suggest calling a group of speeches "eulogies" simply because they took place at funerals (p. 264). Harrell and Linkugel's second grouping is by Structural classification. Structural classification calls for using characteristic patterns of language as the organizing principle. For example, a funeral sermon and a eulogy might be combined because of structural similarities (p. 264). Motivational is the third organizational principle proposed by Harrell and Linkugel. As its name implies, motivational derives its name from an analysis of the motive state of a rhetor. For example,

"consolation" might be the primary motive in a speech given at a funeral (p. 264). The final classification principle, Archetypal, and the one falling closest to the Transcendent end of the continuum, refers to an analysis that identifies persuasive images buried deep within an audience's psyche. In a funeral setting, for example, one might explore the "life-after-death" imagery contained in the oratory surrounding the event.

Much of the remainder of Harrell and Linkugel's essay is devoted to an elaboration of their analytic strategies, to a discussion of Bitzer's "Rhetorical Situation," and to what constitutes a rhetorical situation. They conclude by noting that the critic's task, at base, should involve: "generic description, generic participation, and generic application" (p. 274). "Generic description involves at least two basic operations: identification of motivational precedents of the genre and mapping of the characteristics (i.e., normative) factors within the genre" (p. 274); "Generic participation consists of determining what speeches participate in which genres" (p. 275); "Generic application" is where criticism enters. Generic application involves applying the characteristics identified by generic description to the analysis of discourse thought to belong to given genres (p. 276).

Harrell and Linkugel's essay goes beyond Frye, Black, and Campbell and Jamieson, with their respective critical emphases on textual features, audience effects, and critique of generic stylistic features. Their factorial approach offers both a rationale for identification and critique of genres, as well as principles and methods to apply to critique. Still, their approach does have limitations. Its reliance on a Bitzerian notion of situation and an as-

sumption of apriori genres smacks of neo-Aristotelianism, though, it is a significant step forward from Black and Frye. The next essay, Conley's "Ancient Rhetoric and Modern Genre Criticism" (1979), was written at nearly the same time as Harrell and Linkugel's essay and raises some important issues related to Genre criticism—many still relevant in 1997.

Thomas Conley

As alluded to above, Conley's article, "Ancient rhetoric and modern genre criticism" (1979), is not so much a generic critique, as it is a critique of generic criticism. Conley's insightful essay, contains some attempts to discredit the genre theory of his day. I will begin this section by discussing the inadequacies in Conley's critique and conclude by discussing its merits.

Conley begins his essay by invoking Aristotle, and his conception of forensic, deliberative, and epideictic genres. According to Conley:

> While Aristotle recognizes that speakers in different situations must address different issues and hence will give different kinds of speeches, he does not deduce genres from works created in this or that form. His analysis is based rather on his perception of the different roles and expectations of different "hearers." Nor, strictly speaking, is there a notion anywhere in the Rhetoric of "genre" as a set of rules for making an artifact. (1979, p. 47, footnotes omitted)

At first Conley's observations here seem innocuous. That is to say, the implication seems to be that genre critics are simply reading something into Aristotle and into genres that is not appropriate. However, as my discussion above has revealed, critics/theorists of genre have not simply drawn on Aristotle for guidance; they began with Aristotle, and then drew on the

two-thousand year tradition of theory and criticism that has followed Aristotle. The most generous interpretation of Conley's claims here is that he misinterpreted the interests of genre critics. More accurately, however, perhaps Conley intentionally employed fallacious reasoning (argument ad ignorantiam, argument ad verecundiam, and Strawman) and attempted to obfuscate the issues at stake. Because Aristotle never wrote about genres is not surprising—Aristotle was busy writing about a variety of things and did not seem to exhaust any area. This does not establish that genres are figments of modern critics' imaginations or that genre criticism has no place or no value.

Conley, as a respected classical scholar, knew, of course, that the Hellenistic world was considerably less complicated economically, socially, hierarchically, and politically, than the latter day twentieth century world. His claim that Hellenistic rhetorical theorists had no conception of special oratorical situations apart from Aristotle's three genres of forensic, deliberative, and epideictic, is suspect. As Ziolkowski notes in his text, Thucydides and the Tradition of Funeral Speeches at Athens (1981), the "genre" of funeral orations was well established in Aristotle's day (cf., also Kent 1991). The ancient Greeks believed that funeral orations should follow a certain formulaic structure and also believed that particular issues ought to be addressed in the speeches to the dead. Thus, Ziolkowski, in essence, describes characteristics of a genre.

A second instance where Conley seems more interested in discrediting genre criticism than critiquing it objectively is when he accuses genre critics,

notably Ware and Linkugel, of simply rediscovering loci rather than of identifying actual genres. According to Conley: "what Ware and Linkugel seem actually to have discovered—or perhaps rediscovered—are not genres or subgenres but commonplaces, loci" (p. 49). Conley is aware of the enormous difference between what is meant by genre and what is meant by loci. Although some genre critics may have implied that generic criticism could be used to discover loci (cf., Harrell and Linkugel, 1978), none to date have envisioned such use as the raison d'etre of genre criticism.

Where Conley does seem to hit the mark in his critique of genre theory, although these complaints are not original with Conley, is when he notes that two of its problems are: "(1) the fact that seeing acts of discourse through the prism of genre theory guarantees a blindness to a good deal of what is going on in them and (2) the tendency of generic classification to proliferate into tiresome and useless taxonomies" (p. 53). What Conley claims here is in fact the case with much of the genre theory of his day. Later in this chapter, Conley's concerns will be raised again and discussed in greater detail.

In 1979, when Conley's essay was published, his call to return to neo-Aristotelian rhetorical theory probably seemed attractive to many. His essay, however, did little to advance generic theory. Based on subsequent scholarship in the area of generic criticism, his essay made little impact. In the next essay to be discussed, "Genre: Concepts and applications in rhetorical criticism" (1980), Walter Fisher reiterates some of the criticisms of genre theory raised by Conley, and also clarifies other aspects of genre criticism

previously in contention, such as what constitutes a genre, and how genres contribute to rhetorical theorizing.

Walter Fisher

Fisher locates the genesis of rhetorical theorizing about genre with Black's pivotal text, Rhetorical Criticism: A Study in Method (1965). He then credits Kenneth Burke with "revolutionizing the conception of what is rhetorical" (p. 289). The significance of this move is substantial. Fisher acknowledges an important point: "that generic concepts, whether in regard to the nature or the forms of rhetorical discourse, determine the character of specific acts of criticism" (1980, p. 290). It is precisely on this matter that Conley, as noted above, equivocates, seeking to reinforce an Aristotelian rhetorical stance. What Fisher acknowledges is that the screens (to use Kenneth Burke's phrase) through which one views reality, necessarily, have an influence on what the person sees. Fisher goes on to "explore" four questions in the course of his essay: (1) "what is a genre?," (2) "how are genres constituted?," (3) "how are genres manifested in specific rhetorical criticisms?," and (4) "what are the ways genres contribute to the tasks of rhetorical criticism?" (p. 290).

Fisher's answer to his first question, "what is a genre?," is fairly straightforward. According to Fisher, a genre is a category derived by inductive inference (p. 291). Fisher notes that there are no one-of-a-kind genres;

they are established by "comparison and evaluation" (p. 290). Fisher concludes that:

> The test of a genre, any generalization, is the degree of understanding it provides of phenomena. This test is also, it should be noted, the measure of rhetorical criticism. As genre and criticism are productive of useful understanding of things, they perform their highest function. (p. 299)

Genres then, represent not just categorization for the sake of categorization, but rather, categorization as a means of clarification.

Fisher's definition of genre is not surprising, and mirrors definitions heretofore offered by most other scholars of genre. The answer to his second question, "how are genres constituted?," clarifies one of the concerns raised by many of the critics of genre criticism: that is, that genre critics are not doing "criticism" but merely classifying discourse (cf., Conley, 1979, p. 49). In answering this question, Fisher points out that:

> Critics not only adopted Aristotle's categories of deliberative, forensic, and epideictic, they also took on his view that the means of persuasion were "proofs," rational demonstrations of ethos, pathos, and pistis. The outcome of these studies was a host of studies with common topics, composition, and conclusions. Genre served not as "terministic screens" but as "deterministic screens." I do not mean to suggest that a "neo-Aristotelian" strategy of criticism is never an appropriate one, rather that it is not always appropriate." (1980, pp. 292-293)

Fisher goes on to explain that discourse can be explained "variously" according to four levels of generality: the first, according to broad categories of discourse, such as "forms, functions, and/or relationships to reality" (p. 262); the second, according to classifications of discourse such as "rhetoric, dialectic, poetics" (p. 262); the third, according to the classifications of discourses within the categories described in number two (p. 263). Fisher notes some important considerations relating to this third level:

> It is on this level, where the conventions that make a genre are most sharply designated, that three problems arise for the critic: the tendency to impose genre on a work, missing its distinctive qualities (as in much "neo-Aristotelian criticism"); the tendency to describe or classify rather than to explain or evaluate a work (as in much that passes for neo-Aristotelian and Burkean rhetorical criticism); and the tendency to write theory rather than criticism. (p. 294)

These problems are legitimate concerns and will be taken up below, in section four where the conduct of generic criticism is dealt with. The fourth level of generality, according to Fisher, is discourse according to style. Examples of analysis at this level include Carpenter's "Historical Jeremiad . . ." (1978), and Brummett's "Premillennial apocalyptic . . ." (1984).

In answer to Fisher's third question, "how are genres manifested in specific rhetorical criticism?," Fisher's response is that they are manifested by virtue of the way the rhetorical critic interprets the discourse involved. All criticism, Fisher claims, is Genre Criticism; and most discourse analysis, according to Fisher, falls within the third level of generality[25] (p. 295).

Fisher's answer to his fourth question, "what are the ways genres contribute to the tasks of rhetorical criticism?," provides support for the endeavor of generic criticism in general, and support for its incorporation into this dissertation as a methodology in particular. According to Fisher, genre contributes to rhetorical criticism in three ways: (1) genre is an indispensable component in the knowledge of the critic; (2) genres indicate critical considerations relevant to the nature of a given work; and (3) genre provides a theoretical basis for criticism, not a complete one, but a necessary and useful one (pp. 298-299).

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[25]Fisher's essay contains a lengthy bibliography of "Genre Studies of Political Discourse" (pp. 296-298) that some scholars will find useful.

One final aspect of Fisher's essay needs to be addressed before moving on, and that is the claim Fisher makes in his conclusion: "Genre is an aspect of critical method, not a critical method in and of itself" (p. 299). Here Fisher, even after a powerful defense of generic criticism, seems to lapse into the "neo-Aristotelianism" present in the previous critiques of generic criticism. That is, Fisher concludes his essay by claiming that generic criticism is an aspect of rhetorical theory but is not a critical methodology itself. The problem with this claim, and this will be discussed in more detail below, is that it misses the purpose of criticism: to extend, refine, or clarify, rhetorical theory, criticism, and practice. The purpose of many generic critiques that have been conducted is to build theory, and to do so by critiquing rhetorical practice. As the definition above indicates (to extend, refine, or clarify, rhetorical theory, criticism, or practice), this procedure, critiquing rhetoric, is rhetorical criticism. Thus, the claim that genre criticism is not a critical method is problematic.

Carolyn Miller

Miller's essay, "Genre as Social Action" (1984), is yet another theoretical position in regard to generic criticism. Miller claims her approach, a "semiotic" approach to genre analysis, uses "social action" to determine if an event should properly be called a genre; however, Miller's approach actually turns out to be nothing more than another attempt to classify discourse, much as was done by Harrell and Linkugel, Fisher, and others. Miller begins

her essay by invoking Conley's criticisms of genre theory as leading to "reductionism" and "tiresome and useless taxonomies" (Miller, p. 151), an ironic claim in light of the fact that she then goes on to present a variety of taxonomies and hierarchies of her own. Miller claims that:

> The variety of critical approaches referred to above [Black, Ware and Linkugel, etc.] indicates the many ways one might classify discourse, but if the term "genre" is to mean anything theoretically or critically useful, it cannot refer to just any category or kind of discourse. One concern in rhetorical theory, then, is to make of rhetorical genre a stable classifying concept; another is to ensure that the concept is rhetorically sound. (1984, p. 151)

Miller claims that she will address both of these concerns "by developing a perspective on genre that relies on areas of agreement in previous work and connects those areas to corroborating material" (p. 151).[26] Already, as the quotation above illustrates, Miller reveals her own penchant for classification. What Miller's essay does offer, however, is a new perspective from which to define genres. Previous to Miller, as noted above, scholars focused on generic interpretations based on textual critique (Frye), audience effects

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[26]Of import to Miller's project is what Hirsch has observed about generic interpretation:

> An interpreter's notion of the type of meaning he confronts will powerfully influence his understanding of details. This phenomenon will recur at every level of sophistication and is the primary reason for disagreements among qualified interpreters.
>
> This seems to suggest that an interpretation is helplessly defendant on the generic conception with which the interpreter happens to start, but such a conclusion would be misleadingly simple and despairing, as the occasional recognition of misunderstandings proves (1967, pp. 75-56).

Hirsch is referring here to two issues: the first, that the imagined or believed framework (or genre) within which one confronts an artifact or event will perforce influence an individual's interpretation; the second is that understanding (or meaning) should come from interpretation and not from the frame one starts with. In both cases, however, the genre and the interpretation, are intertwined.

(Black), situation (Harrell and Linkugel), and a combination of factors (Fisher). Miller's "semiotic" approach provides another perspective; as Miller notes: "I will be arguing that a rhetorically sound definition of genre must be centered not on the substance or the form of discourse but on the action it is used to accomplish" (p. 151). Miller's approach attempts to ground genre critique in rhetorical practice.

Miller devotes the majority of her essay to critiquing several central essays on generic criticism. Her critique is used as the basis for her theoretical framework. According to Miller, there are three issues related to defining rhetorical genres: (1) the problem of clarifying the relationship between rhetoric and its context or situation; (2) understanding the way in which genres "fuse" situational with formal substantive features (cf., Campbell and Jamieson, 1978; Jamieson and Campbell, 1982); and (3) locating genres on a hierarchical scale of generalizations about language use (p. 155).

For Miller, the relationship between rhetoric and its context of situation may be understood in terms of intersubjectivity. Miller believes that situations are recurrent and, not a result of perception but of definition (p. 156). As Miller explains it: "Recurrence is an intersubjective phenomenon, a social occurrence, and cannot be understood on materialist terms" (p. 156). Miller believes that before people act, they "interpret" situations and assign meanings to them.

Miller's second issue, "understanding the way in which genres 'fuse' situational with formal substantive features," has to do with how we identify genres. Miller believes that Campbell and Jamieson's (1978) "fusion of

forms" provides a useful starting point for understanding genres. According to Miller: "A particular kind of fusion of substance and form is essential to symbolic meaning. . . . Substance . . . constitutes the aspects of the common experience that are being symbolized . . . form is perceived as the ways in which substance is symbolized . . ." (p. 159).

Miller's third "definitional" issue has to do with locating genres in a hierarchy useful for generalizing about language. Drawing on the work of Searle and speech act theory, and Toulminian analysis, Miller generates a hierarchy of meaning (see Figure 2) she believes useful for understanding genre. Miller's hierarchy places Genre between "form of life" and "episode or strategy," she also considers two other hierarchical frameworks in her analysis to establish the utility of her own (p. 162):

Miller's Hierarchy of Meaning

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Human Nature | | |
| Culture | | |
| Form of Life | Form of Life | |
| Genre | Encounter | |
| Episode or Strategy | Episode | Episode |
| Speech Act | Symbolic Act | Speech Act |
| Locution | | Proposition |
| Language | | |
| Experience | | Behavior |

Figure 2

According to Miller, "'experience' is idiosyncratic and incommunicable"; upon it rests "language" which presupposes "experience"; at the levels of "locution," and "speech act," motives, or intentions, predominate; "episodes or strategies"

refer to what Miller calls “form” and “substance”; “genre,” then, refers to the fusion of “form” and “substance” and provides the basis for fusions at higher levels of meaning such as “form of life,” and “culture”; finally, “human nature” refers to archetypal human psychology and human reasoning (pp. 161-162).

Miller’s discussion is obtuse, and disjointed. Denise Bostdorff provides an illustration that may help to clarify what Miller means. According to Bostdorff:

> A ransom note, for instance, must contain a certain substance: who has been kidnapped, how the receiver of the note may obtain the victim’s release, and perhaps an instruction not to inform the police. In the note, this substance will be fused with form if it is to make any sense; the message will be anonymous, probably brief, and may include highly-threatening word choices. Miller’s point is that this fusion of substance and form is given meaning (a ransom note) only through a particular social context. (1987, p. 24)

Miller’s essay, while interesting, offers little new to an understanding of generic critique. Her distinctions are somewhat pedantic and vague, she provides virtually no examples of how a critic or theorist might apply her conceptions to the analysis of a body of discourse, and she provides no means of evaluating whether a layperson is actually seeing or experiencing a genre in the same way the critic is.

Denise Bostdorff

Denise Bostdorff’s essay “‘To clarify rather than to classify’: A dramatistic approach to generic criticism” (1987), is included here because of the insight of her critique. Although Bostdorff offers very little that is new in the

way of substance to the conduct of generic criticism,[27] she does provide insight into how generic criticism might be conceived and viewed. By Bostdorff's own admission, her critique is conducted generically, that is, she attempts to "isolate, examine, and explain the ways in which previous critics have conceived of genre" (p. 3). Bostdorff, in the course of her critique, groups theorists according to four perspectives: neo-Aristotelian, formalist, factoral, and social action. Each of these perspectives has been discussed here. For example, Black's perspective is "neo-Aristotelian"; Campbell and Jamieson's, is an example of "formalist" criticism because it is based on the "form" that discourse takes; Harrell and Linkugel's perspective is "factoral" approach because of their emphasis on classifying discourse; Miller's perspective is "social action" because of her emphasis on "practice."

Bostdorff also provides a distinction between genre and generic criticism that seems artificial. According to Bostdorff, "genre criticism is the classification of pieces of discourse" (p. 30); generic criticism, according to Bostdorff, "examines the similarities and dissimilarities of discourse to provide illumination. One could reverse the words "genre" and "generic" in Bostdorff's explanations and not lose conceptual ground. There appears to be

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[27]The second half of Bostdorff's essay is devoted to explaining the use of Burkean theory within generic criticism. Her essay is a response to claims that genre theory is <u>not</u> a methodology (cf., Fisher, 1980). As argued above, I find such a position untenable. To say that no criticism is taking place when one examines and evaluates a type, or variety, of discourse is unreasonable. This aspect of Bostdorff's essay will not be critiqued for two reasons: (1) Burkean theory is less useful for illuminating the phenomenon I am examining here; and (2) Bostdorff's essay is derived from her doctoral dissertation and is part of a more substantial argument made there. Those interested in the viability of her position should consult the original work (cf., especially, ch. 2).

no difference in the use of the two words in common parlance and theory, as has been noted above, and will be discussed below; and Bostdorff's distinction serves only to say: "generic critics do not just classify but also clarify."

Ironically, in light of the title of Bostdorff's essay, Bostdorff's critique is an excellent "classifying" of generic criticism into coherent and related categories. Bostdorff's critique of the various genre theorists, however, offers little insight into the nature or conduct of generic criticism as a methodology. Her critique of the "categories" of generic criticism end where Conley and Fisher did, which is to say, her critique ends with the conclusion that generic criticism is not much of a method. Here is where Bostdorff's essay falls short. As I hope has been made clear above, and as I will elaborate on below, the writings on generic criticism have offered many insightful suggestions and strategies whereby genres of discourse may be critiqued; however, where they fail is in providing any synthesis of the various perspectives and possibilities available in generic criticism. Hart is included here next because his Book, Modern Rhetorical Criticism (1990), does just what I am suggesting should be done in generic criticism: that is, provide a synthesis of theory and strategies for conduct of rhetorical criticism.

Roderick Hart

Hart's contributions to generic criticism are to provide a summary of the basic assumptions of generic criticism, and to offer a variety of "critical probes" to consider when conducting research. For Hart, rhetoric refers to

"the art of using language to help people narrow their choices among specifiable, if not specified, policy options" (1990, p. 4, Hart's emphasis). Thus, rhetoric, for Hart, is about persuasion, and the critic's job is to explain how it functions. Hart sees generic criticism as one of the critical methods useful to delimit language use.

According to Hart: (1) generic patterns necessarily develop from a variety of recurrent social situations; (2) generic patterns reveal societal truth, that is, through careful examination of related discourses, generic critics are able to identify trends and patterns not obvious to other critics of discourse; (3) knowledge of generic forces is largely implicit, thus, if critics need to spend the majority of their time "proving" that discourses constitute a genre, they are likely not doing generic criticism; 4) generic patterns stabilize social life, that is, generic patterns are usually built on social convention and, as a result, serve a socially productive function; and (5) generic patterns affect subsequent perceptions (pp. 187-189). As mentioned above (in footnote 25), Hirsch (1967) claims genres are part of the framework used to interpret social events. This conceptualization is similar to the assumption in Attribution theory that people make sense out of the world based on observations and experiences that have shaped their lives (Seibold and Spitzberg, 1982).

Beyond the "basic assumptions" listed above, Hart's list of "critical probes" for research include ten items:

(1) Do verbal patterns give unity to the ideas, values, language, or methods of organization employed in the text?
(2) Have these patterns been observed so often that they have become standard?
(3) Do these patterns dominate the message? That is, how idiosyncratic is the speaker?
(4) What generic label best fits this text? Is the message characterized merely by topic (a sermon), situation (a televised sermon), or can it be described with more conceptually ambitious labels (a religious diatribe)?
(5) How tight are the generic constraints and what accounts for their rigidity or looseness?
(6) If the rhetorical situation is partly traditional (a western movie), does it also have novel rhetorical features (a Chinese cowboy in the lead)?
(7) If the rhetorical situation is comparatively unprecedented (a televised advertisement for condoms), is any generic borrowing being done (a scientist's testimonial for the product)?
(8) Does the speaker provide generic clues to help listeners ("I'm your psychiatrist, not your mate. We can be candid but not lovers")? Is the specter of previous rhetorical events invoked ("Speak to me as if I were an old friend")?
(9) Does the speaker offset generic inference by distinguishing this message from its ancestors ("Dear friend, this is not just another piece of junk mail . . .")?
(10) Given the generic constraints in place, was the speaker successful (on strategic, psychological, moral, or other, grounds)? (pp. 193-194, Hart's emphasis)

Apart from Hart's emphasis on "patterns," his critical probes seem to have little bearing on generic criticism per se. Hart never fully explains what it means to be concerned specifically with genre. His "reasons" for conducting generic criticism refer readers to other essays on genre criticism (pp. 192-193; cf., also, Jamieson, 1975; Brummett, 1984)—which is probably what a useful text on criticism should do—however, his explanation of genre reveals little of the controversy surrounding genre illustrated above. Hart concludes his section on genre by claiming, cryptically, that "structure and content are siblings; form is a cousin. They [structure, content, and form] cannot be treated separately without fundamentally destroying the natural complexity

of human communication. If content gives speech its substance, structure gives it its variety" (pp. 194-195). Hart recognizes the complexity of human communication and sees genre as a means of understanding and resolving its paradoxes. With Hart's admonitions in mind, a brief summary of the authors heretofore discussed, is offered.

## Summary of Generic Theorists

Each of the theorists discussed above was included for historical and practical reasons: each theorist has an idiosyncratic view of genre theory, and the majority are regularly cited in literature reviews of genre/generic criticism.

Frye and Black are often referred to as genre theorists because of their early commentaries. That is, their names appear in virtually every textbook and scholarly essay about genre theory and criticism. Both Frye and Black say important things, but their contributions are limited. Frye, for example, is the first writer on genre to point out that genre has a transactional character that involves meeting the expectations of audience members, and also, perpetuating, or participating in, a socially defined ritual. Frye also pointed out that "the purpose of criticism by genres is not so much to classify as to clarify such traditions and affinities" (1957, p. 247); that is: genre critiques are not conducted to explain genres per se, genres are critiqued to explain rhetorical theory and practice.

Black, as noted previously, introduced a situationally based conception of genre criticism that seems very Bitzerian in character[28] claiming that: (1) "there is a limited number of situations in which a rhetor can find himself"; (2) "there is a limited number of ways in which a rhetor can and will respond rhetorically to any given situation type"; (3) the recurrence of particular situation types through history must be assumed, and will inform possible responses; and (4) congregations of rhetorical discourses may be placed along a scale in a more or less arbitrary way according to their persuasive potential (1965, pp. 133-134). His critique of "exhortative" genre, however, reveals a conception of genre more as "strategies" than as generic "situations."

Campbell and Jamieson raise a number of significant issues in their collaborative works, Form and Genre: Shaping Rhetorical Action (Campbell and Jamieson, 1978), and, "Rhetorical hybrids: Fusions of generic elements" (Jamieson and Campbell, 1982). The first being that generic criticism can be conducted either as an inductive or deductive activity. They also note that the goal of generic criticism should be more than mere classification and should involve close textual analysis to revel the situatedness of a body of discourse and it relationship to other similar/related discourse.

Campbell and Jamieson introduce the idea that genres are comprised of rhetorical forms that combine, or fuse, to create successful or unsuccessful rhetorical events. Their idea of fusions is a contribution to rhetorical crit-

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[28]A more accurate statement, chronologically, would be, "Bitzer sounded very Blackish." Lloyd Bitzer's "Rhetorical Situation" was published three years after Black's Rhetorical Criticism text. Bitzer and Black were contemporaries, collaborated as editors on The Prospect of Rhetoric (1971), and shared similar views of rhetorical theory and practice.

icism rather than generic theory per se, and provides little insight into the conduct of generic critique or what it might be used for.

Harrell and Linkugel's (1978) contribution to generic theory is a series of categories within which discourse might be grouped to judge whether the discourse in question shares common characteristics and, thus, may be considered a genre. To the extent that Harrell and Linkugel offer theoretical categories of classification, their essay contributes to an understanding of genre theory. Additionally, as discussed below, Harrell and Linkugel's categories are useful as critical categories; thus, Harrell and Linkugel's essay also contributes to generic criticism.

Conley (1979), provides an interesting, albeit polemical, critique of genre theory. His discussion adds little to the conduct of generic criticism, and his criticisms seem little more than "Strawman" arguments. Fisher (1980), however, has more of substance to say. Fisher contends that genres are categories of discourse that are useful for understanding rhetorical discourse. Fisher answers four questions: (1) what is a genre?; (2) how are genres constituted?; (3) how are genres manifested in specific rhetorical criticism?; and (4) what are the ways genres contribute to the tasks of rhetorical criticism? (p. 290). He concludes that: (1) genre is an indispensable component in the knowledge of a critic; (2) genres indicate critical considerations relevant to the nature of a given work; and (3) genre provides a theoretical basis for criticism, not a complete one, but a necessary and useful one (1980, pp. 298-299).

Miller's "semiotic approach to genre analysis" (1984), offers little more than a different classificatory scheme. While Miller points out that generic critics must support their claims by reference to other theories and research—a good idea when conducting any research—her own approach to generic critique is rather pedantic and wandering to be of much value to generic critics. Her claim that rhetorical "situations" (or genres) are simply "intersubjective" is counter to virtually all other writers on genre theory.

Bostdorff's (1987) essay was included here because it provides excellent summaries and discussions of previous research on genre theory. Bostdorff's essay, however, does not break new ground regarding the conduct of generic criticism. Her essay, more interested in fleshing out an alternative critical methodology, does not say a great deal about the conduct of generic criticism qua criticism. Similarly, Hart's (1990) chapter on generic criticism provides an apt critique of what "good" generic criticism can accomplish, but provides little in the way of generic theory for the scholar interested in conducting criticism. Hart does, however, provide a list of critical probes useful for the conduct of generic criticism and an explanation of its possibilities.

The essays in this section were examined chronologically and comparatively so that the major concerns and issues of generic criticism might best be highlighted. Several issues emerged regarding the assumptions of generic criticism, the goals of generic criticism, and approaches to the conduct of generic criticism.

In the next section, a critique will be provided of several essays that have employed generic frameworks, to point out the benefits and drawbacks

associated with the generic method. Following these essays, is a brief summary of the generic essays discussed, and a detailed discussion of the genre/generic distinction.

## Review of Essays on Genre Criticism

The studies discussed heretofore have focused on generic theory, now several essays in generic criticism will be discussed. The studies to be discussed include: Aly's, "The Gallows Speech: A Lost Genre" (1969); Baird's, "The Rhetoric of Youth in Controversy Against the Religious Establishment" (1970); Brummett's, "Premillennial Apocalyptic as a Rhetorical Genre" (1984); and Dowling, "Terrorism and the Media: A Rhetorical Genre" (1986).

Each of these essays offers insight into the conduct of generic criticism: Aly, provides insight into the role played by genres in society in general, and into a specific genre, gallows speaking, in particular; Baird provides insight into what happens when a critic fails to establish what constitutes a genre, or that a genre in fact exists; Brummett provides an excellent example of what a useful and heuristically generative critique might do; his critique also provides insight into how the generic critique in this dissertation proceeded; finally, Dowling, like Baird, provides an example of how a failure to delimit genre can affect the validity and usefulness of a critique.

I have intentionally included examples of what I consider to be both effective and inadequate generic criticism. Hopefully, after this discussion,

the issues at stake in generic critique will be clear, as well as how they are manifested in this dissertation.

Bower Aly

Aly's critique, "The Gallows Speech: A Lost Genre" (1969), an examination of nineteenth century gallows speeches, is exceptional for a number of reasons. First, Aly provides justification for viewing his rhetorical artifacts as constituting a related genre. As has been noted, most scholars theorizing about genres have envisioned them as constituted of recurring situations, audiences, and rhetorical constraints. Aly explains of gallows speeches:

> [I]n the nineteenth century a man about to die by legal process had three rights established by the mores if not by the statutes: to eat a good meal before being hanged, to have the consolations of religion provided by a minister of the gospel, and to make a speech. (1969, p. 206)

Aly further explains that even in the absence of legal due process, gallows speeches consisted of "predictable themes" and occasions. The emphasis on allowing some final words to the soon-to-be-executed was an accepted practice. Although the audiences for gallows speeches varied in size and demographics, Aly's explanation of the event seems compelling enough for readers to believe that gallows speaking was indeed a well known and fairly common genre.

Aly's essay, more than an attempt to "prove" the existence of a genre of discourse, goes further; Aly conducts a critique of gallows discourse that identifies its generic characteristics as well as the characteristics of "excep-

tional" speeches. What Aly does, then, is "clarifies" not just "classifies" his discourse. Baird's essay "The Rhetoric of Youth in Controversy Against the Religious Establishment," however, does not succeed in the same way.

John E. Baird

Baird's essay, "The Rhetoric of Youth in Controversy Against the Religious Establishment" (1970), is an attempt to make sense of a body of discourse that could be called "rebellion discourse."[29] Baird is especially interested in delimiting the scope of youth's anti-religion discourse and identifying its roots. Baird explains:

> The study of the speech of the religious rebellion, then, falls into two general classifications: (1) a look at the speakers involved and (2) some mention of the religious issues around which the conversations take place. The speakers, in turn, fall into two groups: (1) the young people themselves who express their religious view to one other [sic] in coffee shops, on the campus, and wherever else young people meet, and (2) their more outspoken elders who articulate for general consumption the radical views which a great number of young people hold. (1970, p. 54)

Baird's essay is an obvious attempt to "classify" rhetorical discourse, but it does little to "clarify" it; as a result, the essay is problematic for several reasons: (1) it never establishes a shared audience, speaker, or context, and (2) it fails to establish that the issues, rhetors, and events identified are even comparable.

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[29]Baird's essay is included here for two reasons: first, his essay has been included in other scholars' bibliographies as an instance of generic critique; second, one of the claims by critics of genre theory is that genre studies are usually just exercises in "classification" and have titles such as "the rhetoric of . . .," Baird's essay is one of these.

As Baird explains, “study of the speech of the religious rebellion, then, falls into two general classifications . . .”; if this is true, why then is the study of religious rebellion divided along these boundaries rather than those of context, content, speakers, or socioeconomics? Obviously Baird is speaking of a particular kind of religious rebellion, that is to say, rebellion among the intellectual elite. Baird nowhere mentions the vast numbers of “working class” youth who, at the time he was writing, embraced the faith of their parents just as their parents did of their parents. Nor does Baird mention, although he may not have been aware of it at the time, the trend in youth toward the more dynamic and cohesive evangelical religions that was taking place (cf., D’Antonio, 1989; Moen, 1989; Leege, 1992).

The central point here, essentially, is not that Baird conducted a poor “generic” critique, but rather, a poor rhetorical critique. For Baird’s critique to have been useful as a generic critique, he would have had to establish that his selected rhetoric, audience, and contexts were somehow cohesive and related. Baird does not do this, nor does Baird provide a very convincing rationale for why the discourse he examined sheds any light on the views held by “youth.” Baird’s critique (of the rhetoric of youthful rebellion against religion) is based upon a series of questionnaire responses from university community clergy. As a result, no claim that his analysis has identified a genre, either in terms of rhetorical context or content, can be made. The next essay to be considered, Brummett’s “Premillennial Apocalyptic as a Rhetorical Genre” (1984), is an example of a more rhetorically useful and theoretically generative generic critique.

Barry Brummett

Brummett's essay "Premillennial Apocalyptic as a Rhetorical Genre" (1984), is excellent as a generic critique for two reasons. First, Brummett delimits, or classifies, the type of speaker, the audience, and the situational constraints associated with the "genre" in the body of his essay; and second, Brummett "clarifies" the types of rhetorical strategies associated with his genre. Brummett not only "classifies," he "clarifies." Brummett explains that he will "show that Premillennial apocalyptic always addresses the same sort of audience experiencing the same sort of exigency, with similar rhetorical strategies" (p. 85).

Brummett's critique of Premillennial apocalyptic rhetoric is drawn from a number of scholarly texts concerned with apocalyptic philosophy and discourse. The value of his essay to genre critique in general is that it provides a framework within which to view a body of generic discourse; the value of his critique in particular is that it provides an example of a particular, recurrent, type of rhetorical discourse with insight into how the discourse functions practically, how it functions rhetorically, and what the impact is of using particular rhetorical strategies over others. Brummett's essay, then, expresses something not previously known about a body of discourse that all would likely agree is related. His critique is not just categorical but critical—which surely should be the hallmark of all generic criticism. The last essay to be considered, before moving to a discussion of the difference between generic and genre critique, is Dowling's essay, "Terrorism and the

Media: A Rhetorical Genre" (1986). Dowling's essay is included here, as was Baird's, as a contrast to "effective" generic critique.

Ralph E. Dowling

Dowling's essay, "Terrorism and the Media: A Rhetorical Genre" (1986), as its name implies, is an attempt to explain the rhetoric employed by terrorists. Dowling, however, makes the assumption that "rhetorical" equals "rhetoric." His critique, while insightful, is not really a critique of rhetoric per se (that is, of rhetoric as persuasive language, etc.), but of "rhetorical" events (bombings, etc.), that generate rhetoric and dialogue. As Dowling explains: "My purpose is to identify the situational demands influencing political terrorists, the recurrent forms of a terrorist genre, the rhetorical purposes of terrorists, and the probable results of proposed responses to terrorism" (pp. 12-13). Thus, Dowling sets forth to identify a "genre," not to conduct a generic critique. The problem with such an approach, however, is that Dowling's essay is designed to "prove" that his genre exists and not to critique a genre (a social phenomena involving recurrent situations, audiences, and constraints). Dowling suggests that the media respond to terrorism in predictable ways, and that terrorism often provokes predictable responses from the media; however, the existence of a genre is not evident from Dowling's essay. According to Hart, genre critiques that spend their time "proving" they have found a genre, often have not (1990, pp. 187 ff.). In contrast, Dowling's essay is devoted almost entirely to establishing that a terrorist

genre exists. As a result, his critique is a classification rather than a clarifying effort, an important distinction often made by generic theorists.

For there to be a genre of "terrorism and the media," evidence would have to exist that (1) terrorists use, or communicate with, the media in predictable and recurrent ways, (2) that the media respond in recurrent and predictable ways, and (3) that audience(s) for terrorism are comparable or related. Obviously, the third characteristic can never be assumed. An audience's response to terrorism necessarily varies when the media have freedom to publish stories the way they desire, and when they do not. Dowling's lengthy attempt to establish the existence of a particular genre does little to advance understanding of genre critique, terrorism as a rhetorical strategy, or terrorist rhetoric. The problem with Dowling's critique is not that there are no rhetorical aspects to terrorism that can be identified, but that terrorism is not establishable as a genre.

Summary of Genre Criticism

Aly's article, "The Gallows Speech: A Lost Genre" (1969), reported one of the first, and better, generic critiques conducted. His discussion described not only the situational bound characteristics of his rhetorical genre, but also contained a critique of representative gallows speeches to illumine the genre under consideration. By contrast, Baird's essay, on "Youth in Controversy" (1970), fails to convincingly delimit the boundaries of the genre he is examining, nor does Baird "clarify" the genre.

Brummett's (1984) essay is another example of an excellent generic critique. Like Aly, Brummett provides a plausible framework within which to view his rhetorical genre, and goes on to critique instances of that genre. Through the course of Brummett's discussion, the reader comes to understand how the genre of apocalypse rhetoric functions, as well as how it might be critiqued or understood when one encounters it. Dowling's (1986) essay, like Baird's, is an example of a genre study that lacks a coherent analytical framework. Dowling's essay is an attempt to "prove" he has found a genre; as the critics of genre would say, Dowling is "genre hunting." His essay sheds little light on terrorism as a rhetorical genre; indeed, he never establishes that it <u>is</u> a genre.

The major issue identified here is that genre critique requires evidence that a genre exists prior to, or during the, effort to critique that genre. This issue receives more attention later. In the next section, the distinction between "genre" and "generic" criticism will be discussed, with an emphasis on the difference between generic "situations" and generic "strategies." As already noted, however, the distinction between "genre" and "generic" is largely contrived.

## <u>The Difference Between "Genre" and "Generic" Criticism</u>

Before moving to a discussion of genre/generic criticism proper, a distinction must be made between generic <u>situations</u> and generic rhetorical <u>strategies</u>. Generic "situations" and "strategies" have been referred to as

genres and genre strategies. However, both terms refer to slightly different conceptions of genre.

## Generic Situations/Strategies

Generic "situations" refers to rhetorical situations where any "reasonable" individual, not prone to recalcitrance, would have to acknowledge share similarities in situation, audience, and constraints. Examples of generic situations are weddings, funerals, acceptance speeches, inaugurals, hostage negotiations, and oaths. Each of these situations may vary widely. Funerals obviously vary by religious, cultural, and socioeconomic contexts. However, when one prepares to attend a funeral, certain predetermined, socially conditioned, expectations are in mind.

Generic "strategies" refers to types of rhetorical "responses" or persuasive strategies that share similar characteristics but may be used in a variety of situations. Examples of generic strategies are: apology, apocalyptic rhetoric, Jeremiad, epideictic oratory, and resignation. Generic strategies, in contradistinction to generic situations, do not vary much in terms of formal properties—Apocalyptic rhetoric, for example, may be employed by politicians as well as by ministers, or by sociologists as well as by political scientists—however, their utility, or value, lies precisely in their applicability within different contexts. For a nation to understand the significance of apology is as important as for a child to understand significance of apology, differing only substantively.

## Genre/Generic Criticism

Some scholars (cf., Bostdorff, 1987), make a distinction between genre and generic. For Bostdorff, genre refers to a distinct category or kind of discourse, while generic refers to a critical methodology that seeks to unravel the relations between varieties of discourse and their "potential" relationships (1987, pp. 30-33). As Bostdorff explains:

> Genre criticism is the classification of pieces of discourse that share significant similarities. . . . In contrast to genre criticism, generic criticism examines the similarities and dissimilarities of discourse to provide illumination; the aim, in the words of Frye [p. 247], is "not so much to classify as to clarify." (1987, pp. 30-31)

Bostdorff's use of Frye to bolster her case is ironic. For, immediately preceding the quotation used by Bostdorff, Frye had written: "The purpose of criticism by genres is . . ." (p. 247, my emphasis). As noted in the discussion of Frye earlier in this chapter, Frye himself uses the words "genre" and "generic" somewhat interchangeably.

Bostdorff is one of the small number of theorists/critics who makes a distinction between the terms "genre" and "generic," other scholars simply utilize the single term "genre" to encompass theory and artifact, much as "rhetoric" is used to refer to both a subject of study and a methodology of studying it. Black is perhaps the best, and first, example of scholars who use "genre" in the encompassing sense. Throughout his text, Black consistently refers to his method as a method of "genre" critique. As Black explains:

> [O]nce we recognize a genre of discourse that operates differently [differently than Aristotle's three categories of forensic, deliberative, and epideictic], then we are outside the purview of Aristotle's theory. Such a genre of discourse is that in which the evocation of an emotion-

> al response in the audience induces belief in the situation to which the emotion is appropriate. (1965, p. 138)

Black's ubiquitous use of genre is also noteworthy because of its uniqueness. As noted above, by "genre" Black means "audience effects," and his use of the term encompasses both rhetorical situations and strategies. Black's method seeks to critique discourse that share similarities (generic strategies) as well as discourse of or relating to a coherent category (generic situation). Black is not the only scholar to rely solely on the use of the term "genre"—Fisher (1980), and Miller (1984) also utilize only the term "genre" in the course of their critiques.

Perhaps it is from the usage of such scholars that Bostdorff draws her distinction between the two terms. Fisher, for example, claims that, "genre provides a theoretical basis for criticism, not a complete one, but a necessary and useful one" (p. 299). Similarly, Miller claims that, ". . . if the term genre is to mean anything theoretically or critically useful, it cannot refer to just any category or kind of discourse. . . . a rhetorically sound definition of genre must be centered not on the substance or form of discourse but on the action it is used to accomplish" (p. 151).

Upon closer examination, however, both Fisher's and Miller's distinctions seem artificial. Fisher is not referring to genre as a critical method but to an apriori set of categories that are used to understand other rhetorical contexts. When Miller claims that, ". . . genre provides a theoretical basis for criticism, not a complete one . . ." (p. 299), she seems to be ignoring the generally agreed upon claim that one of the functions of rhetorical criticism is to extend, refine, or clarify theory. Thus, when Fisher claims in the next para-

graph that "The danger of genre is that it can overwhelm the critic. The essential stance of the critic must be informed innocence" (p. 299), what he is ignoring is that a critic may be interested in examining a genre for what it may inform scholars about rhetorical practice. Miller, as Fisher, is primarily interested in developing a means of delimiting genres and not in explaining what a theory of genres might do. Miller never distinguishes between genres or generic, perhaps because of writing style or perhaps intentionally.

With the exception of the four scholars mentioned above—Bostdorff Black, Miller, and Fisher—all of the other writers on genre/generic theory or criticism reviewed above employ the terms interchangeably.[30] Frye (1957), one of the most widely cited writers on genre criticism, uses both terms interchangeably. Hirsch, writing about genre as informative and necessary approach in critical evaluation, claims that "in the very act of revising our generic conception we will have started over again, and ultimately everything we understand will have been constituted and partly determined by the new generic conception. . . . [A]ll understanding of meaning is necessarily genre-bound" (1967, p. 76, my emphasis).

Campbell and Jamieson, who are cited by Bostdorff as supporting a distinction between genre and generic, use the terms interchangeably in both their text (1978, cf., esp. p. 12) and other essays. Consider for example this passage from Jamieson and Campbell:

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[30]Cf., Hirsch, 1967, esp. ch. 3, pp. 68-111; Bryant, 1973, p. 12; Ware and Linkugel, 1973; Jamieson, 1973, 1975; Martin, 1976; Harrell and Linkugel, 1978; Conley, 1979; Jamieson and Campbell, 1982; Brummett, 1984; Lucas, 1986; Downey, 1993.

> These comments by rhetorical critics and historians reflect Aristotle's understanding that elements of one genre may appear in another. . . . Such creative fusions are the subject of this paper. For our purposes, we shall label such generic blends "rhetorical hybrids," a metaphor intended to emphasize the productive but transitory character of these combinations. (1982, p. 147, my emphasis)

Based on this review of the use of genre/generic, then, clearly even Bostdorff is emphasizing the genre/generic distinction for a strategic purpose, rather than because of any genuine theoretical distinction: in Bostdorff's case, to support the integration of generic and Burkean analysis as a critical methodology (cf., Bostdorff, pp. 33 ff.). Given the interchangeable use of "genre" and "generic" in the literature, in the remainder of this dissertation the arbitrary distinctions employed by Bostdorff, Miller and Fisher will not pertain; however, the distinction between generic "situations" and generic "strategies" will be maintained.

## Summary of Genre/Generic Distinction

The distinction between generic "situations" and generic "strategies" is the central distinction discussed above. Generic situations are used to describe rhetorical events with recurrent characteristics; generic strategies are strategies of language use with coherent characteristics that can be applied in many situations.

A second issue considered was the utility of separating genre and generic. As described above, this separation is artificial. Most scholars writing on generic criticism use the terms "genre" and "generic" interchangeably, and most do not seem aware that there might be a relevant distinction

between the terms. The next section will describe how generic criticism has been applied by theorists and critics. Following this will be a discussion of how generic criticism was conducted in the present study.

## The Conduct of Generic Criticism

The purpose of this section is to catalogue the strategies, or considerations, of generic criticism that were heretofore mentioned in the course of the literature review. The areas to be considered here are: (1) identification of the previous conceptions of genre criticism, (2) a discussion of how genre criticism might be performed; and (3) a brief review of criticism to the generic approach.

Perhaps the most clearly delineated genre distinction made has been the one already discussed: genre/generic. While this distinction says a great deal about what is worthy of criticism, or evaluation, it says little about generic critique as a critical methodology. Obviously this is of great importance when such critics as Bostdorff (1987, pp. 3 ff.), Hart (1990, p. 186), and Ware and Linkugel (1977), claim that they are conducting "generic" critiques, or that generic critiques are even possible. The remainder of this section, then, is devoted to cataloging the issues in the literature—Bitzer's "Rhetorical Situation" (1965), and the "audience effects," criterion—that have been identified as relevant over the past forty years.

# Generic Criticism

A central consideration of generic criticism comes from one of the most often cited scholars in Communication—Lloyd Bitzer and his "Rhetorical Situation" (1968). The utility of the rhetorical situation has been the subject of debate for nearly thirty years. The rhetorical situation posits that there are genres, or recurring situations, and that rhetors are aware that certain situations (if not all), call for responses of one kind or another—what might be called "fitting responses." Thus, the rhetorical situation impels the generic critic to demonstrate, or prove, that the recurring situation(s) that s/he is evaluating are part of a broader trend of discursive practice. A critic then has an obligation to support, or make a convincing argument for, why his/her rhetorical phenomena is indeed part of a genre, and why it is appropriate to consider that discourse, at that time, in that light. The critic has an obligation, as with any scholar in any field, to provide evidence of the validity of the hypothetical constructs employed. Once a critic has offered support for his/her generic claims, s/he then needs to go beyond the mere categorization of discourse; s/he needs to begin clarifying and elaborating on the discourse under scrutiny.

Frye and Black raise what is perhaps the earliest consideration in criticism in general, and generic criticism in particular, and that is the assessment or importance of "audience effects." According to Frye, "Genre is determined by the conditions established between the poet and his public" (1957, p. 247); and according to Black, "our knowledge of rhetorical situations is

somewhat fuller, but it is still scanty. We seem to know most about audience effects" (1965, p. 136). As noted previously, Frye and Black have slightly different emphases in mind when they speak of "audience," Frye on the effects of the exchange itself on the audience, and Black on the effect of the exchange on the audience's beliefs/values. This distinction reflects a difference in interests in aesthetics and persuasion respectively. In both cases, however, some value is evident in understanding how rhetorical exchanges impact audiences.

In Communication research, as is well known, the "audience effects" criterion, as a critical probe, has long been suspect; "effects" on individuals are difficult, if not impossible, to assess. However, at the same time, informed rhetors operate from the assumption that audiences can be persuaded—if only the right combination of symbol and media can be marshaled to the effort. By assessing "intended" rhetorical effects, a generic critic can usefully gain insight into rhetors "goals." That is, generic rhetors can be queried regarding their intended goals, and users of persuasion and information can be queried regarding their goal(s) and beliefs in regard to rhetorical events.

Such an approach has limitations, of course, because not all rhetorical events occur regularly, such as situations of national and personal crisis, and not all rhetors have extensive experience dealing with recurrent social events. Nonetheless, Generic Criticism, is unique in that it explores recurrent rhetorical situations. Writers of inaugural addresses can be queried to see if they are aware of conventions associated with their genre; apologists

can be queried to discover if they were guided by any social or regulative constraint; rhetors who use generic rhetorical strategies such as “Jeremiad” can be interrogated to find if their use of this or that particular rhetorical strategy was intentional; and ministers can be asked if they intended to achieve any particular goal when they delivered their sermon or eulogy. Thus, although the generic critic can never establish any direct causal links between what was written or spoken and what “effect” said language had on an audience, a critic can interrogate rhetorical documents to discover if they employ predictable, regulative, patterns of language or rhetorical strategy, or whether individuals who regularly participate in generic situations believe that their words serve particular ends. To this extent, an examination of “audience effects” can prove useful and informative to generic critics.

Harrell and Linkugel in their essay, “On Rhetorical Genre: An Organizing Perspective” (1978), offer four categories of inquiry related to situation and audience effects. Their categories—De Facto, Structural, Motivational, and Archetypal—discussed above, are useful in making sense of generic discourse. As discussed above, de facto classification refers to “common sense” classification, a necessary prerequisite before a genre is explored in more detail. This step is related to justification of the rhetorical situation also discussed above. Structural classification calls for making sense of characteristic patterns of language and comes close to what Frye proposes when he talks about generic critique. Structural classification would also be necessary for a complete understanding of a genre of discourse and seems to be a logical step to take after a genre of discourse, or generic occasion, has

been identified. Harrell and Linkugel's third category of generic exploration, Motivational classification, derives its name from an examination of the motive state of a rhetor, and is not unlike what was discussed above with regards to "audience effects." While certainty of the effect discourse had on audience members cannot be known, an exploration of what motivated a rhetor and what strategies seem related to achieving his/her intended goal can be. Harrell and Linkugel's final category of classification, Archetypal, suggests that a critic has an obligation to make sense of the symbolic nature of generic discourse; that is, to analyze the motivational images and language that were used to achieve the ends desired by a rhetor in a generic situation.

Clearly Harrell and Linkugel's categories of inquiry draw on the insight of many previous scholars of genre theory. However, more remains to be explained by generic critics than the few items discussed herein. Genre criticism is often conducted as a dimension of rhetorical theory. That is to say, the critic's job is not just to explain how a body of discourse functions but also to provide standards by which to judge instances of future discourse, and by which to explain other occurrences of discourse considered part of the genre examined by the critic.

As Fisher explains, genre contributes to rhetorical criticism in three ways: (1) genre is an indispensable component in the knowledge of the critic; (2) genres indicate critical considerations relevant to the nature of a given work; and (3) genre provides a theoretical basis for criticism, not a complete one, but a necessary and useful one (1980, pp. 298-299). Fisher's three considerations imply for the critic a need to go beyond merely explaining how

discourse functions to making claims about what is possible with the discourse, and how the discourse might effectively be employed or understood by other rhetor/critics in the future.

Miller makes a similar claim to Fisher's when she suggests that critics should go beyond merely classifying, explaining, and evaluating discourse, to "develop a perspective on genre that relies on areas of agreement in previous work and connects those areas to corroborating material" (1984, p. 151). Miller and Fisher's admonitions are, obviously, of importance in any critical endeavor. Critics must be able to support their claims by reference to other similar/related works. Miller proposes her own hierarchy of meaning that seems more descriptive and less critical, and useful, than that proposed by Harrell and Linkugel. A relevant issue Miller broaches is her suggestion that Campbell and Jamieson's (1978) critique of rhetorical hybrids is a productive endeavor. This claim deserves some attention.

What Campbell and Jamieson propose is that rhetorical genres—essentially a Bitzerian notion of situation—are constituted of a variety of related discursive strategies or forms. Campbell and Jamieson (Campbell and Jamieson, 1978; Jamieson and Campbell, 1982) contend that by understanding how forms "fuse," or come together, in generic contexts, a critic can better predict their appearance and function within related future generic contexts. The problem with Campbell and Jamieson's fusion of forms thesis is that it implies that <u>apriori</u> categories of discourse necessarily exist. That is to say, it implies that a critic can automatically, or instinctively, recognize a genre of discourse when s/he sees it. This is of course problematic. The

relationship between varieties of Premillennial rhetoric, for example, was not inherent, nor readily apparent, to Barry Brummett (1984), merely because it contained some sort of tangible existence no one had noticed before. Premillennial rhetoric was made apparent by the efforts of Brummett who seized upon a body of discourse he recognized as insightful and valuable and described the function of it as a genre for future theorists/critics.

The approach described by Campbell and Jamieson, is critical; however, it assumes a post-generic understanding of a genre. Campbell and Jamieson propose a strategy of rhetorical critique, not of genre critique; they do not describe a method for understanding genres but describe a method for understanding the rhetorical members of genres. They point out that generic criticism should include close textual analysis if it is to illumine rhetorical discourse.

Roderick Hart's "critical probes" provides perhaps the final link necessary for understanding the role of generic critique. Hart suggests that the critic should look for "patterns" and similarities/dissimilarities, for commonplaces of "situation" and event, and for generic examples of excellence/failure with which to judge specific generic efforts. While this seems to be easy enough to do, what is to be done exactly is unclear. The next section is intended to provide an explanation of what might be done by a generic critic interested in conducting a critique of a generic "situations" and "strategies."

## Generic Inquiry

Generic criticism is similar to other types of rhetorical criticism. That is, a generic critic is informed by common-sense, experience, theory, and attempts to make sense out of a body of discourse in order to extend, refine, or clarify, rhetorical theory, criticism, or practice. Depending upon the generic critic's interests s/he may, as was the case in Campbell and Jamieson's critical endeavors, seek to clarify rhetorical theory and practice by examining a rhetorical artifact; or, s/he may, as did Brummett, seek to build or extend rhetorical theory by critiquing rhetorical practice. Depending on the critic's goal, the process will be slightly different.

If, like Campbell and Jamieson, for example, a critic is interested in explaining generic "fusions," the critic's method will be primarily an inductive method of close textual analysis (Campbell and Jamieson, 1978, cf., pp. 16-18). If however, as was the case with this study, the critic is interested in explaining and clarifying both a rhetorical situation and rhetorical strategies, the critic must employ both inductive and deductive strategies and not assume apriori that genres of discourse exist. A critic would not only search for commonplaces of event, situation and language, but would also need to compare instances of rhetorical practice with observed/identified generic strategies associated with the rhetorical event(s) in question. Critics need to know as much as possible about the generic events under consideration, and also introduce insight from other scholars, critics, history, and perhaps personal observation. Fisher explains the stance a critic is to adopt when he

explains that "The essential stance of the critic must be informed innocence. Telling a useful 'truth' about a remarkable work requires that the critic not only know about genre, it also necessitates that the critic know as much as possible about rhetorical things, especially history and theory" (1980. p. 299).

With an understanding of generic method in mind, as well as an awareness of how a generic critic might proceed, the next section is a brief discussion of the criticisms of genre as a method. Following this is a discussion of how the rhetorical critique conducted for this dissertation proceeded.

## Criticisms of Generic Theory

As Conley (1979) insightfully pointed out, generic critics often lapse into tiresome and useless taxonomies; similarly, as Bostdorff (1979) noted, the tendency of generic critics to assume apriori that genres exist leads to tautological efforts to "prove" their genre exists. Still, as Harrell and Linkugel's topology implies, the first step in generic analysis is identification of a genre. Although this descriptive step might be possible only after a body of "seemingly" related discourse is examined, a critic presents it as if it were known chronologically prior to his/her critique. Such, is not an instance of apriori classification. What Conley and Bostdorff are responding to is something quite different. Conley and Bostdorff are responding to the assumption that a genre must exist, or that a genre does exist, simply because a body of "related" discourse is examined. The discussion of Dowling's essay above illustrates that such an assumption is faulty. However, as the methodolog-

ical considerations described above make clear, a critic has a responsibility for accounting for generic commonalities; the best a critic can hope for, provided s/he is not forcing his/her discourse into a genre that may not exist, is to approach his/her critique with the "informed innocence" position Fisher described.

Another serious critique of generic criticism is the claim that "classification" separates a critic from the object of analysis (cf., Bostdorff, 1987; and Conley, 1979). This claim is certainly problematic; a critic is able to classify because s/he has immersed him/herself into the discourse to such an extent that he/she can now make claims about how it functions, claims that others could not make, much less even recognize. However, Conley and Bostdorff's observation that genre critique can lead to efforts to classify rather than clarify are right on the mark. Genre criticism, as with any rhetorical criticism, is conducted for the sake of illuminating rhetorical theory, criticism, or practice; it should not be conducted merely to classify discourse. The generic critic proceeds as s/he does because s/he believes that some body of rhetorical discourse, or practice, constitutes a coherent, and not widely understood realm of rhetoric.

## Summary/Conclusion of Generic Criticism

The principles of Generic Criticism discussed above include: (1) the "identification of the rhetorical situation/strategy under consideration and an explanation of what its boundaries are"; (2) the "identification of the intended

audience effects"; (3) the "structural classification of language"; (4) the "motivational classification of audience and rhetor"; (5) the "archetypal or symbolic examination of the language involved"; (6) the "identification of the strategies/considerations that a rhetor should be aware of when participating in the generic situation, or using the generic strategy in the future"; and (7), the "support of claims, where possible, and analysis of rhetorical events by reference to other bodies of critical, historical, political, or rhetorical theory."

Clearly generic criticism constitutes a coherent body of principles suitable for informing rhetorical theory, criticism, and practice. The next section details more precisely how generic critical strategies were employed in this study and what questions were answered by the critique.

## The Application of Generic Criticism in This Dissertation

This section contains an explanation of what was meant by "generic criticism" in this study, and an explanation of the generic issues addressed. Thus, the goal is an explanation of the rhetorical critique that follows.

The research questions that guided this study were: (1) How have eulogies been conceived, performed, and understood, historically and traditionally? (2) How are eulogies understood and practiced by professional clergy who conduct them? (3) What characteristics of eulogies make them particularly effective as vehicles of praise/consolation, and what other ends do they serve? And (4) what characteristics of the eulogies that have been

previously studied are found in everyday eulogies and what does this suggest for rhetorical theory/practice?

The rhetorical critique that follows focuses largely on questions three and four. Question one was answered essentially by the literature reviews on eulogies and funerary practice in Chapter One; question Two was answered in the analysis of the interview responses of clergy and other professionals presented in Chapter Two; questions Three and Four are answered through the generic critique that follows. Question Three was relevant to this exploration of eulogies because so much of the previous scholarship on funerary practice explicitly stated that praise and consolation are regular aspects of eulogies. Question Four was important because eulogies to everyday citizens are not like eulogies to great and important, social and political, community figures. In light of these overarching considerations and the principles of generic critique mentioned above, the critique that follows will proceed to a more detailed and systematic understanding of the ritual of eulogies in contemporary society. First, however, an explanation of how the critique will proceed is offered and an indication is given of what the strategies used should reveal.

As noted, the principles associated with generic critique include: (1) the "identification of the rhetorical situation/strategy under consideration and an explanation of what its boundaries are"; (2) the "identification of the intended audience effects"; (3) the "structural classification of language"; (4) the "motivational classification of audience and rhetor"; (5) the "archetypal or symbolic examination of the language involved"; (6) the "identification of the

strategies/considerations that a rhetor should be aware of when participating in the generic situation, or using the generic strategy in the future"; and (7), the "support of claims, where possible, and analysis of rhetorical events by reference to other bodies of critical, historical, political, or rhetorical theory." Each of these principles will be discussed in turn, and an explanation of how each principle is expected to yield theoretical insight into generic critique will be discussed.

As previously noted, generic critique is primarily a method of close textual analysis that usually consists of either inductive or deductive inquiry. The critique in this dissertation combines both of these strategies into a critical analysis that considers previous research, interview data, and a critique of representative examples of discourse from the alleged genre under consideration. The critique that follows utilized the seven generic principles identified to illuminate the generic rhetorical characteristics of eulogies. The critique drew on the insight gleaned from interviewing particular rhetors from a variety of religious, academic, and professional backgrounds.

The first principle of generic critique, (1) the "identification of the rhetorical situation/strategy under consideration and an explanation of what its boundaries are," refers to establishing that a genre exists, or delimiting what constitutes an occurrence or use of the situation/strategy under examination. This initial step, may be possible only after a critic has spent considerable time with a body of related discourse; that is, the "naming" of a genre may be possible only after a critique has been conducted. However, it is crucial, in terms of scholarly rigor, that a critic/theorist delimit a genre to

such an extent that other critics, theorists, and rhetors can identify instances where the genre in question applies, and also, distinguish instances of the genre from other genres. Of course, as critic's of genre have noted, the critic's job is not just to classify genres but also to clarify them, and some genres contain traces or "fusions," to use Campbell and Jamieson's term, of other generic forms. The purpose of this initial step is merely to establish that a genre exists. Calling a type of discourse a genre is a productive activity and produces a framework for discriminating between instances of one genre and another. Given the approach taken to gathering the discourse under consideration in this study, an initial task in the generic critique was to establish what a "common" eulogy is, as contrasted with a funeral sermon and a eulogy to "the great"; and, to provide a framework for understanding the remainder of the critique to follow.

The second principle, (2) the "identification of the intended audience effects," refers to an examination of the rhetorical goals present in the rhetoric under consideration, where a rhetor seems to be leading his/her audience, and whether the rhetorical strategies present indicate that a goal exists. This principle has to do with establishing that features of the genre under consideration are present in the minds of practitioners. Here it is not necessary to "prove" that practitioners or participants in the genre have <u>apriori</u> awareness of the genre's boundaries, possibilities, or potentialities—people everyday enact or participate in genres without the slightest awareness of their boundaries (weddings are but one example of this). Rather, what the critic seeks to do is explain what the discourse is intended to do,

the effects intended, to explain the generic strategy or ritual under scrutiny as constant from rhetor to rhetor, or situation to situation.

The third principle, (3) the "structural classification of language," refers to whether the rhetoric under consideration exhibits regular patterns related to occasion, effect, timing, location, etcetera?" This principle has to do with textual analysis of the discourse under investigation, to answer questions about its structure and intent. The generic critique of eulogies that follows integrated, where relevant, explicit comments by ministers—the most common practitioners of eulogies—to explain the structural characteristics of the eulogy.

The fourth principle, (4) the "motivational classification of audience and rhetor," refers to whether rhetor/audience related motives may be discerned from the rhetoric under examination." This principle has to do with the examination of language for traces of common intent on the part of rhetors. Here the intent of generic critique is to identify not just the "effect" of the language or strategies used, but also the characteristic "beliefs" or "motives" the rhetor has that causes him/her to say what s/he says, at that time, in that way. In terms of this critique, the goal was to explain how, if at all, religion, age, sex, socioeconomics, or politics affects rhetorical strategies used in eulogies. Beyond identifying (or classifying) motivational characteristics, however, the intent was to clarify how these motivational characteristics influence the construction of the rhetorical messages and whether the motivational factors influencing particular rhetors had an impact on the "effect" of the message.

The fifth principle, (5) the "archetypal or symbolic examination of the language involved," refers to the careful examination of discourse for symbolic, meta, ideological, and other characteristics. This principle has to do with carefully examining the discourse and genre under consideration to account for particular symbolic patterns, how the genre functions, and what social ends the genre might serve. Depending upon the discourse under consideration, and depending upon the particular predispositions and interests of the critics, symbolic analysis can vary widely, focusing on "ideograms" in one case (cf., McGee and Martin, 1983), or "persona" characteristics in another (cf., Black, 1970; Wander, 1984). The purpose of archetypal or symbolic critique is to provide a fuller understanding of the rhetorical "uses" and "functions" of the generic discourse/situation under examination. The critique in this dissertation attempted to identify some of the rhetorical strategies employed by rhetors when conducting funeral services and eulogies. To more fully understand this genre, information obtained from the interviews with clergy was taken into account.

The sixth principle, (6) the "identification of the strategies/considerations that a rhetor should be aware of when participating in the generic situation, or using the generic strategy in the future," refers to identifying what the underlying assumptions and rules of the type or rhetoric under consideration are. Principle six represents an attempt to flesh-out the actual, every-day practice of the discourse such that future critics, theorists, or rhetors, might effectively judge/evaluate instances of its enactment, or pro-

duce “effective” (persuasive, informative, moving, etc.) examples of the discourse under scrutiny.

Once again, this generic critique drew upon the interview responses from clergy and other eulogists to describe the “rules” or guidelines associated with the (“successful”) enactment of a eulogy, to provide criteria for critical evaluation of eulogies. As part of this discussion, the eulogies examined, and the principles identified were compared with the principles of “successful” eulogies previously identified in the scholarly literature.

Finally, the seventh principle, (7) the “support of claims, where possible, and analysis of rhetorical events by reference to other bodies of critical, historical, political, or rhetorical theory,” involves the consideration and incorporation by critics and theorists of other areas of research to the area under consideration. Where possible and appropriate, the literature on funerary practice, eulogies, and epideictic oratory, was incorporated into this critique to help explain the rhetorical strategies employed and the goals and intentions of the rhetors.

With an understanding of what a generic critique consists of, and how it is applied as a critical methodology, the final section of this discussion of “generic criticism” is devoted to describing why eulogies constitute a genre, and why they are worthy of the close scrutiny they receive in this study.

## Why Are Eulogies a Genre and Why Study Them?

The eulogy constitutes one of the most ubiquitous rituals in all of human history, and yet, as the recent interest in the area of death and dying

illustrates, rituals associated with death are not well understood (cf., Soros, 1994). In every culture, as Dobzhansky has observed:

> Only man buries his dead, and a burial is a sign of some reverence for death, which can hardly be felt by anyone who does not know that he too will die. . . . Veneration or fear of the dead is, of course, common if not universal among primitive peoples and the remains of ancient civilizations are mute testimony of a great intensity of these emotions. (1965, p. 63-64)

On the surface then, scholars would seem to have a vested interest in more fully understanding an area that plays such a central societal role. However, this "face-value" argument is flawed; merely because something is ubiquitous does not mean that it is worthy of critical analysis: take for instance Mc-Donalds, a nearly global phenomenon, which, although of some interest to an economist or business professional, is of limited interest to rhetorical scholars or food critics.

There is more rhetorical value to the eulogy than mere "face-value" however; the eulogy represents a rhetorical phenomenon. Even the most untrained critic can observe that it consists of commonalities of occasion, audience, and rhetorical constraints; it also consists of commonalities of language—as the limited scholarship on eulogies suggests.

Beyond these common situational and rhetorical characteristics of eulogies, however, are theoretical reasons for including it as a rhetorical genre worthy of scrutiny: that is, many theorists on genre have included the eulogy <u>apriori</u> as an example of a rhetorical genre—this in spite of the fact that there has been very little actual scholarship on eulogies. Consider the following claims about the function of eulogies from Campbell and Jamieson (1978), Jamieson (1978), and Jamieson and Campbell (1982), citing primarily

their own past research—not on eulogies per se—and that of an unpublished graduate student's thesis on eulogies: "One can look at a vast number of discourses delivered in response to the death of a member of a community and discover that, at least in Western cultures, they seem to evince essential similarities" (1978); and Hart citing no one, writes that: "Eulogies isolate the distinctive features of the deceased. . . . [E]ulogies make the dearly departed seem more dear. . . . And eulogies tell a selective history and project a diminished future" (1990). Similarly, as the several essays on eulogies previously cited indicate, the idea that a eulogy is a genre seems to be taken without question.

Here then are several reasons for a detailed examination of this phenomenon: (1) eulogies are significant, patterned, social activities that occur on a daily basis throughout the world; (2) eulogies are considered by most critics and observers to be ordered rhetorical events; and (3), eulogies are not widely understood—as the previous discussions have indicated, and as the critique that follows shows. In the section that follows, a critique of eighteen funeral orations gathered as data for this project is presented, along with the other generic characteristics and information, following the pattern described above. This generic critique integrated data from the interviews conducted for this project, and included other aspects of rhetorical theory useful for understanding the phenomenon of eulogies.

# CHAPTER FOUR: RHETORICAL CRITIQUE OF EULOGIES

## Overview of Chapter Four

Chapter Four is concerned with clarifying the genre of eulogies. Chapter Four is a synthesis of the findings of the rhetorical critique of the eighteen eulogies gathered for this study, the responses of the 25 interviewees presented in Chapter Two, and the information on funeral oratory and eulogies summarized in Chapter One. The seven principles of generic critique identified in Chapter Three are applied here. Once again, the seven principles are: (1) the "identification of the rhetorical situation/strategy under consideration and an explanation of what its boundaries are"; (2) the "identification of the intended audience effects"; (3) the "structural classification of language"; (4) the "motivational classification of audience and rhetor"; (5) the "archetypal or symbolic examination of the language involved"; (6) the "identification of the strategies/considerations that a rhetor should be aware of when participating in the generic situation, or using the generic strategy in the future"; and (7), the "support of claims, where possible, and analysis of rhetorical events by reference to other bodies of critical, historical, political, or rhetorical theory." Where possible, support for claims and analyses are made by reference to other bodies of critical, historical, political, and rhetorical theory. Each of the

critical areas are discussed in turn below, and an explanation of how each area yields theoretical insight into eulogies is also discussed.

## Explanation of the Rhetorical Situation of Eulogies

The eulogy is not a monolithic genre but is constituted of various types of eulogistic practices. For instance, the "academic" eulogies such as is exemplified by Mohrmann (1980), and Cherwitz and Hikins (1990), are often ironic, or sarcastic, in tone. This "type" of eulogy is not at all like what the majority of the scholars who have written about eulogies have envisioned. Rather, the scholarly literature has primarily concerned itself with elaborating characteristics of the "great person" eulogy. The great person eulogy, where the "great" deeds and accomplishments of important social and political figures are recounted, is not at all like the "everyday eulogy" discussed here.

In this first section of this chapter, the rhetorical boundaries (or situation) of the eulogies being critiqued are described to introduce a modicum of scholarly rigor into the analysis. This section is an explanation of how the eulogies analyzed are both representative of everyday eulogistic practice, and also unrepresentative of the "great person" eulogies of concern in the scholarly literature.

## Critique Area 1: Eulogies and Situation

A reasonable place to begin this discussion is by describing the actual rhetorical context within which eulogies take place. Earlier in this study, Peterson's comments regarding eulogies were related as follows:

> A eulogy has two distinctive characteristics which sets it apart from most other forms of public address: (1) it is meant to be delivered at a ceremonial occasion to honor the subject; and, (2) it is designed to be heard by an audience that already shares the speaker's respect, affection or admiration for the person being honored. The speaker's task then is to heighten the auditors' feeling of regard, love, or appreciation. (1983, p. 174)

Peterson's suggestion that eulogies take place in ceremonial settings is right on the mark. As suggested in Chapter Two, eulogies are seen by most of the interviewees in this study as part of the ritual associated with funeral ceremonies. Although, some interviewees saw other forms of ritualistic address as eulogistic, most agreed that the eulogy was, primarily, a funerary ritual. However, as suggested in Chapters One and Three, much of the past scholarship on eulogies has focused on the eulogy as part of quasi-political gatherings rather than funerals. Indeed, the "funeral" aspect of these speeches seems to be unimportant, even irrelevant, to the critics' interpretations. This difference in emphasis has not been because of scholarly predispositions to favor the secular, or social, aspect of a primarily religious ceremony (the funeral) over the religious, but rather, because the public eulogy to the "great citizen" is a very different social phenomenon than the funeral eulogy.

Thus, Peterson's suggestion that eulogies are given in ceremonial occasions to honor the deceased is quite correct; however, what makes a

difference is if the "ceremonial occasion" is taking place in the quasi-private space of a church or funeral home, or if the eulogy is taking place in an openly public place such as an arena, public building, or is a televised situation. In the case of a mass televised eulogistic event, such as is televised from the graveside of important social/political figures, several interviewees noted that the message of the eulogy would differ markedly. In fact, virtually all interviewees explained that what takes place at the grave side, the "committal service," is usually a very brief perfunctory ceremony and rarely does a full-fledged funeral service complete with eulogy take place there. In fact, quite often the case with public mass eulogies, or eulogies to the "great," is that they are used less to "console" an audience of close relatives and friends, and more to praise and uplift the deceased individual, and to hold the deceased up as an example of good citizenship.

Beyond these two differences—social location, and audience makeup and attitude—another factor of the eulogy to the "everyday citizen" has to do with the content of the messages transmitted in each situation. As suggested in the literature reviewed in Chapter One, and as suggested in the interview responses reported in Chapter Two, the eulogist's religious, spiritual, and cosmological orientation, as well as his/her perception of the role of ceremonial facilitator, all influence the type of message delivered. Of the twenty-eight individuals interviewed for this study, for example, half acknowledged that the eulogy is primarily a religious ritual that takes place at a funeral service, and that its primary purpose is to achieve a combination of goals including consoling the friends and family of the deceased, helping the survivors cope

with the death of the deceased, and transforming the relationship with the deceased from one of "friend of living community/family member" to "deceased," that is, to help the audience accept a changed relational state with the deceased. None of the interviewees said that a eulogy was primarily a speech in which the life of the deceased was praised, one in four claimed that the eulogy was to honor the deceased, and an equal number, one in four, suggested that the eulogy was a "faith building" activity. Interestingly, the scholarship conducted heretofore suggests that one of the primary purposes of eulogies is to praise the life of the deceased. The apparent contradiction in theory and findings, between the previous scholarship on eulogies and the present study, can be explained by reference to the three realms mentioned above: situation, audience, and rhetor. The influence of these realms will be clarified below.

None of the past scholarly work on eulogies has dealt with the religious/cosmological orientations of rhetors. The seeming unawareness, or unconcern, by scholars of the role played by religion and culture in eulogies is likely because previous scholarship on eulogies dealt with a different type (or genre) of eulogies. The "public" secular eulogy has an entirely different emphasis than that of "private" funerary eulogies. The religious orientations and doctrinal beliefs of ministers, rabbis, and priests, <u>do</u> influence the type of eulogistic messages they deliver. As mentioned in Chapter Two, not all interviewees even believe that eulogies do, or should, take place during funeral services. For some, such speeches are what scholars such as Rogge

and Ching (1966) suggest, should be more appropriately called speeches of "tribute."

One Lutheran interviewed, for example, suggested that funeral services should not "praise the deceased," as scholars on eulogies have suggested they do, but rather praise "God." Consider May's comments:

> We do not really do eulogies. Eulogies traditionally were a time of remembering how good uncle George was. And while we remember in our funeral message, in a brief time, the unique characteristics of uncle George, most of the message is clearly emphasizing how good God was to uncle George—it was God who loved him, God who took care of him, God who blessed him, God who watched over him, and now it is God who gives him eternal life in Jesus Christ. But the problems with this are these: uncle George was probably not that good. Some would say that "oh, so that is how you get into heaven, by being good like uncle George." Jesus never said that there was any way into heaven but by Him, thus, we do not do a traditional eulogy. (1996)

Similarly, another interviewee, a conservative Baptist, suggested that speakers (eulogists) at funeral services should not be permitted to praise the deceased because it is "anti-Bible." As Pastor Goode noted earlier in this study:

> I think more and more we are seeing families demanding eulogies, perhaps because we have less people in the church studying the scriptures, and more and more people who are unfamiliar with the scripture, and so they are finding comfort in reminiscing about the person's life and not the scripture. And I have no problem with remembering relationships, but it seems that people do not know what to do when people are not believers. More and more eulogies are being given by family members. Some of the music is contrary to scripture. I have no problem with family members and friends giving eulogies because I am not accountable for what I[s] [sic] said, I am not misleading anybody biblically, and we will make a distinct change when we go into the funeral sermon anyway. Even if the person was not saved there is nothing wrong with holding up good traits like being a good father or a patriot; however, if a person is not saved we should not let people think that doing good works can get you into heaven. (1996)

Still another interviewee, a Jehovah's Witness, suggested that eulogies are really part of the epideictic genre of "tribute" speaking and not merely a

speech given upon the death of someone. As Day puts it:

> It has come to be known as good words given at the death of someone. But in the strictest sense of the word that is not what an eulogy is. Modern usage of the word shows it being applied in a variety of contexts; we can eulogize living people or organizations, governments eulogize the league of nations, etc. In the context of death eulogies we do not give them. There is nothing wrong with saying good things about the deceased (and that takes place from time to time), but the purpose is not to honor the dead, but to bring honor to the arrangement instituted through Jehovah God through Jesus Christ. There is nothing wrong with talking about good times that a person had with an individual. (1996)

Finally, a fourth interviewee suggested that eulogies are not simply religious rituals but are more a matter of form, rather than content. Several interviewees, including one Mormon, suggested that they do not really give eulogies. However, upon further exploration in the interview, what the interviewee was suggesting took place as part of a funeral service in his faith would be classified by other interviewees as eulogistic. These considerations, then, suggest that there <u>are</u> essentially different manifestations of the same discursive social ritual, or perhaps different genres. The genre discussed here includes speeches given about the deceased at funerals, they are primarily biographical in nature with an emphasis on God and are intended to both praise the life of the deceased and console the living.

## Critique Area 2: Intended Audience Effects/Goals

The effects of a discursive event on an audience are difficult to assess and evaluate. One can never know with certainty, for instance, whether a persuasive speech has actuated an individual or merely served as the catalyst

for a variety of other beliefs, values, and attitudes that has led an individual to take action. Still, all rhetors have goals, and all rhetors try to maximize their chances of successfully achieving their goal by the skillful application of rhetorical principles. Rhetorical principles pertain to selecting relevant content, logical organization, skillful delivery, and the artistic application of language strategies such as figures of speech and tropes. Before discussing the intended "goals" of the eulogy, the relationship between funeral oratory in general, and eulogies in particular, must be clarified.

As suggested above, scholars who have studied eulogies to the "great" have not so much confused aspects of funeral oratory with eulogies, as they have been talking about entirely different social rituals. Many have suggested that "eulogies" serve important social ends such as celebrating the "great deeds" of an individual; unfortunately, when dealing with an individual who has done no "great deeds," such a claim seems misdirected. The intended goals of the eulogist giving a eulogy/funeral-sermon is not the same as the goals of the eulogist to the "great citizen."

As the interviewees noted, the eulogy is believed to have both secular and religious aspects. Difficulties arise when attempting to separate the eulogy from the funeral sermon in a contemporary funeral service. It is not entirely accurate to speak of individuals conducting funeral services as "eulogists," although they almost always deliver the eulogy and the sermon,[31]

[31]In this study, every funeral attended was conducted by a single individual who served as both eulogist and deliverer of a sermon. Although in several instances friends and family members were allowed to come forward and offer messages of their own as part of the service, all of these messages were fragmented and rambling and did not fit the descriptions offered for what a eulogy does.

nor is it entirely accurate to speak of the person conducting the funeral service as having distinct goals for the "eulogistic" part of the service, although the eulogy is identifiable as a separate component of most funeral services. The remainder of this section reflects the effort to identify the aspects of both the funeral service in general and the eulogy in particular.

In funeral oratory and eulogies, rhetors "hope" to accomplish a variety of objectives including: (1) consolation of the bereaved; (2) helping the bereaved come to terms with the death of a member of their family or community; and (3) celebrating the life of the deceased. These "goals" are accomplished through a variety of rhetorical strategies: (1) biographically recounting the life of the deceased; (2) calling on the faith of believers to strengthen them in their time of grief; and (3) linking symbolic aspects of the deceased's life to the lives of the survivors.

Goal One: Consolation

To accomplish the first goal, "consolation of the bereaved," rhetors draw upon a variety of rhetorical strategies, and are guided by specific doctrinal positions associated with their faith.[32] As presented in Chapter Two, regarding interview question Twenty-Four, virtually all interviewees asked if eulogies served to console the bereaved, believed, or at least hoped, that they did. Of the possible strategies interviewees identified as possible ways of

[32]Whether audiences at eulogies are actually consoled by the words spoken by eulogists is an entirely different issue than whether eulogists intend to console them.

consoling, the most common response (43%) was that: "Giving witness to their faith is comforting; the service reinforces their belief." The examination of the eulogies gathered for this critique revealed that the "eulogists" were attempting to comfort the bereaved by use of religious topoi thought to be comforting.

The use of religious topoi is noteworthy. The most common topoi found in the eulogies gathered for this study, appearing 144 times in the 18 eulogies examined, are references to "God." The next most common topoi, appearing 128 times, are references to "love" (often linked with God). Only in a distant third are references to "work," which is referenced 43 times and is associated with the rhetor's attempt to celebrate the life of the deceased (see Table 21, p. 197). These references are not equally dispersed among the eulogies examined; references to a "belief in God" were found in only six of the eighteen eulogies, while references to being a "hard worker" were more evenly dispersed, and were found in twelve of the eighteen eulogies examined.

Goal Two: To Help the Bereaved Come to Terms with Death

The second goal apparent in the eulogies examined and interviews conducted was, "seeking to help the bereaved come to terms with the death of a member of their family or community." Several interviewees noted, for example, that the symbols associated with the death ceremony—the pall, the holy water sprinkler, the presence of a casket (open or closed)—serve to reinforce the finality of death and help the bereaved come to terms with

death. Apart from the symbolic character of funeral ceremonies, however, particular rhetorical strategies are employed to help the bereaved come to terms with their loss. For example, eulogies are usually given in the past tense. Most interviewees were of the opinion that "God" and "Faith" are useful for helping the audience cope with grief. References to God are common (see Table 21). Another common topoi employed was "faith," which was present 34 times in five separate eulogies. References to an individual's everlasting "soul" going on to another state of being were made six times in seven eulogies.

Goal Three: Celebrating the Deceased's Life

A third goal of the "eulogists" interviewed in the study, "celebrating the life of the deceased," is the one most often identified by previous scholars. The chronological location of the discussion of the deceased's life, in funeral services suggests its inclusion for some significant reason. The placement of the discussion is usually near the beginning of the service. The critique conducted here reveals that nearly half (8/18 or 44%) of all funerals contain a biographical discussion of the deceased's life. This number is interesting inasmuch as virtually all of the interviewees suggested that funerals should include a biographical discussion of the deceased, what some called an "obituary."

Many of the funeral services conducted on a daily basis are conducted by individuals who had no relationship with either the deceased or his/her

family. All interviewees suggested that biographical discussions belong in funerals, but only half of the eulogies examined had biographical discussions in them. Often biographical material is omitted because eulogists' do not know the family well and do not know what to say about the deceased's life.

## Strategies for Achieving Goals

There were several strategies employed by eulogists for achieving their desired goals: (1) biographically recounting the life of the deceased; (2) calling on the faith of believers to strengthen them in their time of grief; and (3) linking symbolic aspects of the deceased's life to the lives of the survivors.

### Strategy One: Biographical Recount

The first of these strategies, biographically recounting the life of the deceased, was discussed above. Past-tense discussion of the deceased serve to help listeners come to terms with the death of the deceased. That is, "s/he once lived but lives no more." Similarly, jokes about eulogistic hyperbole aside, speaking well of the life the deceased lived, his/her accomplishments, passions, loves, and successes, serves to accomplish the three goals of the eulogists. That is, to hear the deeds of someone known being recounted is comforting; those attending a funeral are, as friends and family, and even acquaintances, to some extent, consubstantial (in a Burkean sense) with the deceased.

Speaking of the deceased's life in the past tense also serves a transformative function, suggesting to the audience that they now stand in a different relationship with the deceased. This acknowledgment of a new relationship with the deceased is believed to help survivors come to terms with their loss (cf., Fulton, 1976, pp. 29-30). Finally, the recounting that takes place of the deceased's life suggests to the audience ways in which the deceased's life should be emulated (or not).

Strategy Two: Calling on Faith

The application of the second strategy "calling on the faith of believers to strengthen them in their time of grief," is dependent on a variety of factors including the circumstances of the death. This strategy becomes especially important in cases where audience members feel as if they were to blame for an individual's death, such as in the case of a suicide, or if a death is especially traumatic, such as in the case of an infant's or child's death by accident or disease. Obviously in instances such as these, audience members have cause for concern for the eternal soul of the deceased, as well as a need to be reminded of their own faith—as a means of coping with the circumstances surrounding them.

The manner in which "faith" is employed as a topoi is dependent on the age of the deceased. In the case of an elderly person who has died, the eulogist has a "full life" worth of experiences and memories to draw upon. When eulogizing a child, however, the rhetor cannot draw on the "lived experiences"

of the deceased and often focuses differently on issues of faith to provide comfort for survivors.

## Strategy Three: Symbolic Aspects

Strategy three, "linking symbolic aspects of the deceased's life to the lives of the survivors," was employed especially as a means of consoling the audience members at a funeral. This strategy refers to the act of "implicating," or incorporating, audience members into the life of the deceased. This strategy includes efforts to refer to specific events in the deceased's life that the audience members participated in, as well as the use of religious symbols to comfort the audience by reminding them of the promise of an afterlife, the faith of the deceased, or their own faith. Essentially, when eulogists talk about such things as how "uncle Ted used to love to take the grandchildren fishing," s/he is making an effort to invoke positive memories for the audience. The strategy is an enthymematic move. Examples of "symbolic implication" is found throughout the eulogies examined for this study. Consider the following examples:

> A man with a sense of humor, Bud was also known to be a "softie," especially when it came to disciplining Sandy and Susan. The girls would misbehave, Prude would tell them they were "grounded for two weeks, get down to the basement—or the lower level—until your father gets home!" And with that the girls would sense [sic] a sigh of relief, because they knew that when Dad got home they would be freed, and there would be a reduced sentence.
>
> Jerry was a son, a brother, an uncle, a cousin, to many of you. And he was a friend to us all.

> Tom uh grew up like most kids, uh, fighting with his siblings, uh, playing sports—Katie told me how good of an athlete he was, she said some way he was able to, uh, not play a sport for a while and then just pick it up all of the sudden and go out and do, uh, tremendously at it.

The more overtly symbolic aspects of funeral practices such as the laying of a pall on the casket of the deceased, placing pictures of the deceased around the casket, kissing the deceased "one last time," throwing dirt on the casket after it has been laid in the grave, and the sprinkling of holy water on the deceased, are all part of the symbolic strategies designed to reach the eulogist's tripartite goals of comfort, transformation and celebration of the life of the deceased.

## Critique Area 3: Structural Classification

The third area to be discussed in this critique is the structural classification of language, which refers to how, or if, the rhetoric under consideration exhibits regular patterns related to organization, occasion, duration/timing, rhetorical structure, and location. Each area will be dealt with in detail.

### Eulogistic Organization

The eulogy's location in the context of the funeral service is relatively stable. That is, the eulogy tends to appear after a brief introduction, prayer, and obituary, and before the funeral sermon itself. The organization of the eulogy itself, however, is a bit more complicated. As noted in Chapter Two, and as this chapter will make clear, eulogies vary a great deal in terms of

internal structure, length, content, eloquence, and goals. Given that 14 of the 18 interviewees for this study claimed that they did not have an outline or guide for constructing eulogies (see Table 7), and given that none of the interviewees were aware of any internal structural dynamics that eulogies should follow, to claim that eulogies conform to a known structural pattern would be mistaken. A comparison of the 25 eulogies examined for this study reveals no "structural" similarities. The four interviewees for this project who said that they have guides provided "outlines" that they utilize to organize aspects of the funeral and the eulogy, and, while these "outlines" are somewhat similar, it would be a mistake to ascribe that structure to the remainder of the eulogies examined here, that is not there.

Eulogistic Occasion

Obviously the occasion for funerals and eulogies is the occasion of an individual's death. Although, Rogge and Ching (1966) are the only scholars to make a distinction between "eulogy" and "tribute," their distinction has merit.[33] That is, the "eulogist" is constrained by particular aspects of the situation—intense grief, sadness, guilt—and is called upon to respond in predictable ways. The speech of tribute, by contrast, usually is not marked by intense grief on the part of the audience, and the deceased may be spoken of in a more detached fashion. Examples of the impact of eulogistic occasions

[33]NB: what Rogge and Ching mean by a speech of "tribute" is equivalent to a "eulogy" in this study. That is, Rogge and Ching claim that eulogies are given long after an individual's death; whereas, in this study eulogies are speeches given soon after an individual's death.

on eulogists and speakers are in stark contrast to the more emotionally "controlled" speeches such as those spoken of by Rogge and Ching (1966). Consider the following examples:

> [Interspersed with great emotion and tears]. Carmen taught us about goldfish and hamsters, and white mice, and even a little seed that we planted in a styrofoam cup in kindergarten—they'll all die and so do we. But today we all feel a little better, because once again She's free to dance, jump-rope and fly on the swings. Thank you little Miss Teacher, you get an A-plus.

> [Interspersed with great emotion and tears]. Ah, Serena and I, and Gurney, which is Jim's secretary, and then Judy Redding, we put our thoughts together. And we want to just, I'm supposed to be able to read this and we are going to do it. Okay. I wasn't supposed to do this Charlie was going to do it but I can do it for Charlie. First I was going to do it and then Charlie was going to do it, but now I'm going to do it so I didn't practice, I thought you were practicing. Okay. You know Jason was only with us for ten years but he filled our hearts with a lifetime of joy, memories, and love.

## Eulogistic Time Constraints

The chronemic characteristics/constraints of the eulogy were also highly predictable. That is, the eulogist was often working under rigorous time constraints. S/he was often called upon by funeral directors and family members on short notice, to speak well of their dearly departed. Several interviewees indicated that in many cases, especially with those clergy who are willing to conduct a service for any member of the community if called on to do so, the "eulogist" had never met the deceased and had not had more than a few hours of contact with his/her friends and family members. The relatively shallow depth of the relationship between families and eulogists was apparent in several of the eulogies examined for this study:

> Jerry loved flowers—I was surprised to see so many around here. Someone asked me how the family was planning to honor him. I didn't know, but I just said: "likely with flowers."
>
> He played sports. Uh, probably fought some more with some of his siblings. Uh, teased his sisters—I'm throwing that in. I assume that because from what Lois and Katie said they enjoyed that type of relationship, getting in a good dig here and there. Uh. And uh, and then I imagine he probably fought a little more with some of the brothers and sisters.
>
> I heard that it was a fruitless experience to debate Art, unless of course you agreed with him on what the basic premises of the discussion were going to be. I heard stories about his knowledge of his work, and machinery with which he worked for thirty-five years as a machinist. I also heard the story about the Granddaughter showing up at the front door with suitcase in hand, informing her Grandfather that she had come to stay with him so that he could spoil her and then send her home. And I think Art did just that.

Because of the compressed preparatory time factor, and the fact that "eulogists" were often not well acquainted with the deceased, eulogists often have difficulty having much to say about a deceased person. Consider the following examples from the eulogies examined for this study:

> [The following remarks follow a prayer and sermon]. We come to pay respects and celebrate [the] life [of] . . . I didn't now her very well because she got sick [and was in the hospital] . . . I want to read two scriptures: . . .
>
> [Preceded by a prayer and "comments"]. Chad lived in a difficult time, let's face it [discussion of why the current times are difficult]. . . . I hope there is not anyone who has thought to themselves that this is the will of God. That is the most ridiculous statement one could make. . . . it is not God's will. . . . if you fail it is not God's will. . . . let's stop blaming God. . . . it is my belief that as Chad stands before God—gives an account, as the Bible says, of the life he lived in the flesh—God will understand. . . .

Thus, eulogies, especially when the eulogist was not well acquainted with the deceased, are often fairly short. The bulk of most funeral services where the "eulogist" does not know the deceased tends to be devoted to a more

lengthy "sermon." When the eulogist is well (or even somewhat) acquainted with the deceased, eulogies and sermons tend to be fairly equal in length.[34] Several interviewees indicated that dramatic regional/cultural differences exist in the duration of funeral ceremony (some lasting for hours).

## Eulogistic Rhetorical Structure

There exists a fairly coherent structure to the funeral ceremony that consists of an opening, a scripture reading, music, a eulogy, and a closing, followed by organ music indicating that the audience should depart (Wolfelt, 1994, pp. 58-59); the eulogy, in contradistinction to the funeral service is rarely so consistent. As noted in Chapter Two in the report of interview responses, only four interviewees indicated they applied a coherent outline to

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[34]Another interesting, but not surprising, side note to this discussion of the "eulogists" relationship with the deceased is that in the eulogies where the "eulogist" is not well acquainted with the deceased, the delivery of the eulogist is often quite poor—filled with many disfluencies and awkward pauses. However, when eulogists complete their eulogies and begin their sermon, their delivery often improves markedly. Consider the following example from a eulogy gathered for this study:

> And uh, uh, Floyd worked uh, for the city of Lafayette. For thirty-four years, he was a street department, and department of sanitation division [employee]. And uh, Floyd was born in [sic] uh, July the tenth, 1946. He was educated in Lafayette, uh, schools, and lived in Lafayette most of his life. He married, uh, Linda [name omitted], on June the fourth, 1992, at Graceland, uh, in Memphis Tennessee.

Contrast this delivery filled with disfluencies with the somewhat improved delivery that follows it just a few minutes later:

> And you know the Bible says if we want friends we must show ourself friendly. When somebody shows their self friendly uh, they uh, have friends. . . . Floyd was always been a friend and he could be counted upon. He loved Elvis Presley and Linda and Floyd were married in Graceland.

their efforts, and more than half of the interviewees (14/22) indicated that they simply adapted to the audience. One explanation for the seeming lack of interest in the audiences' desires by clergy, is a belief by many clergy that they know better what mourners need; as a result, clergy often stress religious aspects over secular, or personal, aspects—this "religious favoritism" is practiced in spite of the fact that in our highly mobile society many funeral attendees come from places far away and often do not share the eulogist's religious beliefs.

Where eulogistic structural flexibility does exist in the funeral service, however, apart from issues of content, is in the flexibility accorded to the family in the construction of the service itself. The family, for example, makes the structural (or choreographic) arrangements of the funeral not with the minister but with the funeral home. Although a family desiring to have a service in a church obviously would need to contact the church in question and observe that church's traditions, when a family with no religious affiliations arranges a funeral with a funeral home, the funeral home usually informs the family of "traditional" practices, but is flexible in allowing an open or closed casket, playing of musical selections of choice, and structuring the service according to personal preferences such as to include poetry readings and selection of speakers (Benefiel, 1996).

In terms of how the eulogy will be positioned in relation to the service itself, that is, the music to be played, if any, and who is to speak, if anyone, the actual choreography is arranged ahead of time with a clergy person conducting the service. Several interviewees suggested that "if the family

asks to say something" they would, of course, allow them to; however, at the same time, other interviewees suggested that they do not volunteer such opportunities to the family. Of the eighteen funerals gathered for this study, audience members spoke at only two of them. It is also worth noting that the audience was only offered the chance to speak at two services. Both of the funerals where audience members spoke were services for children who had died. Apart from the minister/eulogist conducting the service, the following individuals spoke at the two funerals: (funeral 1) a teacher, a cousin, an uncle, a sister, a friend, and another friend (in that order); and (funeral 2) a friend, another friend, a family friend, and a family-friend/colleague (also in that order).

As already mentioned, some clergy, actually frown on practices such as the family playing "irreligious" music or becoming "overly emotional" at a service. The concern for spiritually "proper" funerary practices is interesting in light of the research on grief that suggests individuals need to be allowed to come to terms with their grief (cf., Cassem, 1976; Irion, 1976; Wingard, 1996). Similarly, such "cathartic" behavior may actually be of comfort to friends and loved ones who might be suffering by making their grief and pain more public. To this extent, efforts to encourage audience participation in eulogies may be advisable.

Eulogistic Location

As suggested by Peterson, "A eulogy has two distinctive characteristics which sets it apart from most other forms of public address: (1) it is meant to be delivered at a ceremonial occasion to honor the subject; and, (2) it is designed to be heard by an audience who already shares the speaker's respect, affection or admiration for the person being honored" (1983, p. 174). As reported in Chapter Two, virtually all interviewees saw the eulogy as part of funerary services, although some claimed not to perform such a ritual in their own services. The ceremonial occasion suggested by Peterson would occur at churches, funeral homes, and the grave side. An interesting feature of the eulogistic location, however, is that the eulogy is seen as a valuable social ritual for bringing people together who may not have interacted for many years. As the review of the funerary literature in Chapter One suggests, and as Peterson's insightful second observation above indicates, the coming together of friends and family for the purpose of honoring a departed community member serves a consolatory function. As some interviewees suggested, the "physical presence" of others is comforting. Spatial proximity has been noted by comforting scholars, as a means of transmitting messages of affection and consolation (cf., Kendall, 1996; Samter, 1983).

## Critique Area 4: Motivational Classification

The forth area of concern in this critique is motivational classification. As presented in Chapter Three, motivational classification refers to the rhetor/audience related motives that can be discerned from the rhetoric under examination. Discourse is examined for traces of common intent on the part of rhetors. Here the intent of generic critique is not to identify the "effect" of the language or strategies used, but to identify the characteristic "beliefs" or "motives" the rhetor has that causes him/her to say what s/he says, at that time, in that way. Motive here should not be understood in any Burkean sense. By motive is meant nothing more than what the rhetoric, or the rhetor, indicates about the reason why the rhetor in question is engaging in the discourse.

In terms of this critique, the goal was to explain how, if at all, external, or situational, factors such as religion, age, sex, socioeconomics, or politics influenced the rhetorical strategies used in eulogies and the messages produced. Beyond identifying and/or classifying motivational characteristics, however, the intent was also be to explain how these motivational characteristics influenced the construction of the rhetorical messages and whether the motivational factors influencing particular rhetors had an impact on the "effect" of the message.

As the interview data above suggested, several motivational concerns in funeral oratory and eulogies revolve around areas of religion and consolation. These concerns are related because of the doctrinal beliefs of most

eulogists regarding their roles as eulogists, and their roles as spiritual advisors/advocates.

## God As Comfort

Perhaps the most pervasive of these motivational concerns is the idea that God "should be" sufficient to comfort the bereaved. The word "pervasive" is used because of what it conveys about the assumptions that motivate the majority of the people who conduct eulogies, the clergy. Of course, many clergy do not consider the Bible or the "Scriptures" to be the only things they have to consider when conducting a eulogy, but, this motivational "topoi" permeated a great deal of the responses provided by the interviewees in this study.

The importance of God was articulated by a number of the interviewees, such as Kendall (an Ecumenical) who described his position on the after life as follows:

> To me, the essential thing is to believe in God and come back to God by faith. We need to understand that we are in a position where we need to be brought back to God; to be really successful as Christians we must believe in God, trust and believe in the holy spirit. (Kendall, 1996)

Similarly, Moss (an United Methodist) responded by suggesting:

> [O]ne thing that sets it [our religion] apart is that John Wesley speaks of a doctrine of prevenient grace (or grace that goes before God) reaching out and pulling us to Him. And that is the point, the thought I enjoy the most; even before I was a Christian I could feel God tugging at me. That is one thing that sets us apart from say the Calvinists and the Presbyterians. (Moss, 1996)

Finally, Goode (a Baptist) provided a slightly different explanation of how belief in the Bible motivated rhetors to draw on particular religious topoi in the construction of their eulogies and funeral messages. He stated:

> The Bible is our soul authority and we have no other source of truth except the Scripture. We believe that the Scriptures are inerrant, and I would add, and I think in this day we should add, and must add, the Bible is sufficient. It meets all of our needs. . . . [eulogies are becoming] more and more popular. But the decision [to have a eulogy] is up to the family and the minister. If we can do it, if it is biblical, and if it is not wrong we will try to do it but, we should guard against allowing the family to do/say "wild" things. (Goode, 1996)

Several of the interviewees emphasized the importance of "uplifting God" in funeral services, "giving witness to the gospel" and referring to "biblical sources," "building faith," using the bible for "inspiration," and being guided by the holy spirit. While such beliefs about the power of "the Word" are inspiring, they seem to be based on a limited understanding of what a funeral service ought to, should, or can accomplish, and seem to express less concern for the immediate psychological/emotional state of the bereaved. To this researcher's knowledge, no scholarship about comforting has determined that God <u>actually</u> consoles the bereaved; although, as suggested above, and is well known in Western culture, the <u>belief</u> that God comforts "those in need" permeates Christian religions. Whether a belief in God does, or does not, comfort is not at issue here. The issue is that one of the primary motivations for how eulogies are structured and delivered, and why clergy conduct them, seems to be the belief that exposing those in attendance at the service to the word "God" and/or to "the word of God," is an inherently valuable and comforting activity.

Several interviewees even went so far as to suggest that they do not conduct services for non-believers because they "cannot preach a non-believer into heaven," and suggested that the primary purpose of the message is to emphasize and glorify God and in a funeral service, that message cannot be sacrificed (cf., Day, 1996; May, 1996). Such beliefs obviously have bearing on the content of funeral services and the way they are conducted. This motivational topoi has not been identified by past scholars who have examined "eulogies to the great." As Kent (1991) suggests, eulogies to the great draw on particularistic topoi; in this study, the eulogy to the "everyday citizen" draws upon the belief of "faith in God" to console the bereaved. Additional topoi are discussed below and can be found in Table 21.

## Critique Area 5: Symbolic Examination

Area five is concerned with archetypal or symbolic examination of the language involved; that is, with identifying symbolic, meta, ideological, etc., characteristics of language that help explain how the rhetorical artifact/event in question functions and what social purpose it serves. Area five is concerned with examining the rhetorical discourse itself, to determine what symbolic issues can be identified.

A careful examination of the eulogies gathered for this dissertation reveals that there was an emphasis on particular linguistic terms and phrases. McGee and Martin (1983) call such phrases "ideograms," while Burke (1973) uses the somewhat ironic designation (given the content of this discus-

sion), "God" and "Devil" terms. A brief explanation of what both authors mean will facilitate the discussion to follow. Burke's God/Devil terms, which are associated with his idea of "Cluster-Agon" analysis, will be discussed first, followed by the ideograph of McGee and Martin. Thereafter will follow a discussion of metasituational issues.

## Cluster-Agon and God/Devil Terms

As a method, cluster-agon (CA) analysis is useful for identifying key words and phrases found, or used, in discourse and understanding their relationship(s) to other key terms and phrases. According to Burke, cluster analysis represents a "statistical," or actuarial, method (Burke, 1973, p. 18). That is, it seeks to identify and group language in an attempt to get at the relation of language to rhetorical events. The goal of cluster analysis is to enable a critic to ascertain the motive of the rhetor(s) who shaped a piece of discourse, as well as to ascertain the motives, or rationale, behind unique rhetorical strategies themselves. As Burke explained:

> [T]he work of every writer contains a set of implicit equations. He uses "associational clusters." And you may, by examining his work, find "what goes with what" in these clusters. . . . Afterwards, by inspecting his work "statistically," [or symbolically] we or he may disclose by objective citation the structure of motivation operating here. . . . The motivation out of which he writes is synonymous with the structural way in which he puts events and values together when he writes. (1973, pp. 19)

CA analysis, originally advanced by Burke, has subsequently been explicated and refined by several authors (cf., Berthold, 1976, Rueckert, 1963, pp. 83-111), however, surprisingly, it has not received widespread application.

One of the reasons may be that it does not seem to be suited for application to all types of discourse. That is, it is an especially useful means of making sense of bodies of discourse that have generic similarities.

Berthold concisely described how cluster analysis functions: the critic first analyzes a piece of discourse in an attempt to identify the terms that are most important to that discourse—the judgment and selection of key terms made according to their frequency and intensity of use. The goal of this careful search of terms is to arrive at, or determine, the rhetor's "ultimate," or "God" term, the term around which all other terms revolve, or are subordinate. Next, the critic must identify the "Good" terms, the lesser or counterparts of the God term. Once these clusters of God/Good terms is identified, agon (or Devil term) analysis can take place. Then, however, the analysis is not complete because the critic has not accounted for any conflict between the two (1976, p. 303-304). As Berthold describes it, "An agon analysis identifies those terms which are in opposition to each other, or 'what is vs. what'" (p. 303). The critic must identify the contexts within which the God and Devil terms appear as well as how they are interrelated. Relationships of clusters and agons can take a variety of forms including: (1) a term may be tied by conjunctions to other key terms, as well as to lesser God and Devil terms; (2) a term may be tied by conjunctions to other key terms through a cause-effect relationship; (3) two key terms may be tied together through imagery; (4) two key terms may be connected indirectly through mutual relationship to third terms; (5) two key terms may be connected because of the way in which they are used in a particular context (Burke, 1973, p. 3-117, esp. pp. 74-79; see

also, Berthold, 1976, p. 303). In this study, both cluster-agon analysis, and ideographic critique, were conducted to explain the generic characteristics of eulogies and not used as full-fledged critical methodologies.

## Ideographic Critique

According to McGee and Martin, "the ideograph is a link between rhetoric and ideology" (1983), much as Burkean "motives" are links between rhetoric and situations (Burke, 1984, p. 29 ff.). By "link," McGee and Martin are not referring to a metaphoric link in a chain, but rather, to ties useful for identifying or understanding ideology. The context wherein an ideograph appears tells the critic something about a rhetor's beliefs or motives, just as the context wherein motives appear tells the critic something about a rhetor's beliefs about a situation.

McGee and Martin's concern with ideographs is with truth and falsity in social contexts. According to McGee and Martin, the ideograph is a one word summary of an orientation toward the world (p. 7); ideographs identify and describe characteristic world-views held by individuals and groups. McGee and Martin explain:

> Both "myth" and "ideology" presuppose a fundamental falsity in the common metaphor which alleges the existence of a "social organism." "Ideology," however, assumes that the exposure of falsity is a moral act: though we have never experienced a "true consciousness," it is nonetheless theoretically accessible to us, and, because of such accessibility, we are morally remiss if we do not discard the false and approach the true. (1983, p. 2-3)

For McGee and Martin, however, ideological critique involves both a consideration of myth—the language that determines the shape and texture of an individual's reality—as well as a consideration of ideographic language—the technical language of slogans and buzz words easily mistaken for genuine political/philosophical/moral terminology. Ideological critique is bifurcated into (1) a consideration of what the language of the individual tells about his/her individual world view, that is, how the person uses language, what words are associated with other words and ideas, and in what ways they are associated; and (2), what a rhetor's political language of collective behavior, ideographs qua persuasion, tells us about that person's conception of the world. McGee and Martin go on to explain that:

> No one has ever seen an "equality" strutting up the driveway, so, if "equality" exists at all, it has meaning through its specific applications. In other words, we establish a meaning for "equality" by using the word as a description of a particular phenomenon; it has meaning only insofar as our description is acceptable, believable. If asked to make a case for "equality," that is to define the term, we are forced to make reference to its history by detailing the situations for which the word has been an appropriate description. (1983, p. 10)

According to McGee and Martin, "ideographs are one-term sums of an orientation, the species of 'God' or 'Ultimate' term[s]" (p. 7). To this extent then, McGee and Martin, and Burke, both see a utility in critiquing rhetoric for insight into the mind of an orator and the possible reaction of his/her audience. In the next section, the "ultimate" terms found in the eulogies examined for this study are presented.

Symbolic Discourse

An examination of the eulogies gathered for this study reveals an interesting cluster of what Burke calls God/Good terms. The terms are interesting from a Burkean standpoint because of what they reveal of the ideology of the eulogists, and because there seems to be no agons (or devil terms) present. Burke suggested that all discourse contains both "clusters" of Good terms and "agons," and relations between God and Devil terms.[35] Similarly, as suggested by Berthold, cluster analysis necessarily involves identification of discursive, or symbolic, conflict. Conflict, however, seems not to be present in the eulogies examined. A deeper reflection on epideictic discourse, such as is examined here, might suggest that epideictic discourse that seeks primarily to praise, such as eulogies, might be focused primarily on God/Good terms at the expense of ideological (or "Dramatistic" in Burke's terms) conflict. Of course, as Burke suggests in his "Definition of [Hu]man" (1966, p. 1 ff.) the intentional focus on one sociological, psychological, or political realm necessarily implies the opposite (identification by antithesis). Thus, while the eulogists considered here seem to focus on God/Good terms, such a focus necessarily implies that other possibilities (such as damnation) exists, even if not explicitly stated or found in the texts. All the interviewees in this study indicated that a belief in an afterlife was part of their theology. When a eulogist suggests than an individual "had a relationship with God," s/he is

[35]Whether Burke believes that all discourse contains agons is the subject of another dissertation. Certainly he would suggest that all discourse contains clusters of related terms—as do McGee and Martin.

also implying, necessarily, that the deceased is expected to be reunited with God soon; similarly, when a eulogist fails to refer to the existence of a relationship with God, s/he is also, necessarily, implying that the deceased may not be resting in as much peace as the audience would like.

As suggested above, such "implied" messages are part of all discourse. One can never be certain however, whether interpretations of a rhetor's "motives" (in a Burkean sense), or audience effects (in a neo-Aristotelian sense) are accurate. The remainder of the critique in this section is focused on the eulogies examined and accounts for its rhetorical character. The first symbolic term discussed is "God." The God/Good terms identified from the critique appear in Table 21.

Table 21

God/Good Terms Identified in the Critique

| Term | # of eulogies | # of Times |
|---|---|---|
| Belief in God | 6 | 144 |
| Love | 16 | 128 |
| Family | 14 | 59 |
| Work | 12 | 43 |
| Faith | 5 | 34 |
| Soul | 6 | 7 |
| Humor | 3 | 3 |
| Suffering | 3 | 3 |

The God Term: "God"

Two things are noteworthy. First, although the cluster called "Belief in God" appears more frequently than any other cluster of terms in the

funeral services, it only appears in six of the eulogies—an especially interesting finding in light of the fact that most Americans consistently claim to have a belief in a God and an afterlife. An explanation for this usage probably has as much to do with the beliefs of the eulogists as it does with the genre of eulogy itself. As reported in Chapter Two, the most sophisticated eulogies are given by clergy who are somewhat or well acquainted with the deceased. Many Clergy who conduct funeral services, however, are often not well acquainted with the deceased or his/her family, so not surprisingly clergy tend to shy away from discussions of the deceased's most sacred/intimate beliefs, such as those about religion, which they would have no direct insight into. Clergy likely draw on rhetorical strategies and topoi they are most acquainted with when faced with adverse or emotion-laden situations. This is not unlike teachers of Communication drawing on "communication" examples when explaining concepts, or a teacher of History using an analogy from recent or past history to explain a contemporary concept.

Second, when a eulogist draws on the religious topoi of God, s/he probably does so for a variety of pragmatic and ideological reasons. First, the use of religious topoi is "natural"—clergy work with religious ideas on an almost daily basis; second, the "sermon," replete with references to God and Jesus is part of the contemporary funeral service; and third, and perhaps more importantly, God, and the "afterlife" are thought by many clergy to be central aspects, or strategies, for dealing with emotional distress—at least that is what many of the clergy interviewed for this study and others have suggested (cf., Flesch, 1976; Hausmann, 1976; Pine, 1976; Reeves, 1976).

From a theological/ideological standpoint then, God is believed, both literally and metaphorically, to be comforting to friends and family members after a death. Still, direct references to individual's faith were found in only six of the eighteen eulogies. As already discussed, clergy are often reluctant (for whatever reason) to risk "preaching someone into heaven." As a result, clergy often utilize religious topoi in the sermon, that part of the service intended to reassure, uplift, and comfort, the audience, rather than including them in the eulogy where audience members could be left wondering if "that was their pa' up there in that casket or someone else." What is perhaps more interesting than the use of the God-term "God," are the lesser "good" terms of "love," "family," and "work," some of which have ideographic value.

Good-Terms/Ideographs: "Love," "Family," "Work"

Burke (1973) suggests that key terms in a discourse can be understood by their relationship to other key, secondary, and tertiary terms. Similarly, McGee and Martin (1983), suggest that the ideographic language used by rhetors is useful for informing critics of an individual's motives or ideological orientation toward the world. McGee and Martin go on to suggest, as Burke, that we can understand an individual's particular world view by understanding how s/he uses language, that is, what words are associated with other words. McGee and Martin also claim that an understanding of an individual's world view may be gained through identification of his/her persuasive use of ideographs, or ideographs-qua-persuasion.

"Love," "family," and "work" are all ideographs that permeate the funeral oratory examined in this study. For McGee and Martin, ideographs have meaning by their association with other ideographs and by their utility in support of ideological or idealistic positions. Of the three "good terms" identified in this study—"love," "family," and "work"—all are used to refer to ideologies associated with each-other, and all are associated with the God term "God" mentioned above. Consider the following excerpts from several eulogies examined for this study (emphasis added):

> She loved the lord—it was very evident, in her life—and she enjoyed going to church, worshiping the lord; and she enjoyed working for God. She was the type of person that whatever her hands bent to do, was available, was present, she was a willing worker for the lord.
>
> And what He wants, I'm sure, and I know what God wants, is for His life to be an encouragement to us. . . . And one thing that I've seen is that, um, he cared for his family, and the family was important. He passes that on. One thing that Doris said was that uh, in his working on automobiles he loved that so much.
>
> Our presence speaks of our love, our presence speaks of our compassion, our presence speaks of our spirit of caring. Our gathering together as a community of family and as a community of friends, and colleagues, and fellow workers, and fellow sojourners in this world stands as a testimony to our oneness as children of our creator, and as an affirmation of the life of Jason W. . . . And at a time like this we lean on one another in love. And I think that this is all that God really requires of us.
>
> John, who said he worked together for forty-seven years with his father, said that many people said you can't live, you cannot work, with your father that long and not split. But apparently Chester could do it, because Chester was a man of unconditional love. A man who enjoyed being with his family. Everyone who entered that family was treated like a family member. Dan said there is nothing negative to say about him—and how many people can you say that of?

Focusing on these excerpts alone, clearly these God/Good terms and ideographs are important in the eulogy and indicate something of the relevant

and perceived values of the eulogists. As mentioned above, "God" represents several ideologies. God is both literally and figuratively "love." Similarly, the "family of God," both a literal and metaphoric family to the Christian, is as significant as the person's earthly family. As noted above, "God" is mentioned often in these eulogies not because funeral services are <u>for</u> God, as emphasized by interviewees, but because God is "love," "comfort," "family"; God is mentioned because the eulogists believe, and believe that their audience believes, that God is helpful in such situations.

Clearly, as the excerpts above indicate, "love," "family," and "work" are also significant archetypes. Beyond the relationship of each of these terms to each-other, the ideographs stop, subvert, or prevent, debate. By definition, ideographs are one word summaries of ideological orientations. One does not introduce ideograms to debate an issue but to stop debate. To cite McGee and Martin at length on this point once again:

> No one has ever seen an "equality" strutting up the driveway, so, if "equality" exists at all, it has meaning through its specific applications. In other words, we establish a meaning for "equality" by using the word as a description of a particular phenomenon; it has meaning only insofar as our description is acceptable, believable. If asked to make a case for "equality," that is to define the term, we are forced to make reference to its history by detailing the situations for which the word has been an appropriate description. (1983, p. 10)

The summary of funeral research cited in Chapter One, suggested funerals serve to transmit basic societal values such as hierarchical positions, the value of (hard) work in a culture, and the value of the individual. When eulogists use the words "family," "love," or "work," they likely do so to suggest, not only, that "uncle Fred was a good man (or citizen) because he loved his family and he loved his work," but also to suggest that the audience

should take “uncle Fred” to be a model of a good father, brother, worker, husband, servant of God, and worker (or provider).

“Love,” “Family,” “work,” and “God” appear in virtually all of the eulogies examined in this study probably because they represent what is perhaps a central core of Midwestern American, if not all of the United States, ideology. “Family” and “work” are two ideograms that are, commonly used in political discourse in the United States. Not surprisingly, these ideograms melded with the themes of love, God, and others emerged in eulogistic discourse.

But what does this tell us about funeral oratory in general and the eulogy in particular? One important concern might be that these ideograms “suggest” that ideological topoi are the best, or particularly valuable social categories from which to construct eulogistic messages. This conclusion is probably premature however. Rather, what these consistent ideographic rhetorical strategies suggest is that these so-called “values” <u>are</u> shared among eulogists, or those individuals who are responsible for transmitting the cultural values of a people in times of adversity and strife. Whether these values are the same as what non-clerical eulogists might draw upon is unclear. However, as the funerary and eulogistic literature reviewed in Chapter One, and the interview responses from Chapter Two indicate, there are very different focuses present in eulogies to “the great” and eulogies to “everyday citizens.”

An ideographic analysis such as conducted here suggests that an explanation for the use of these terms and clusters (God, Family, Love, Work)

by clerical eulogists, rather than their use of great deeds as utilized by presidential eulogists, probably has more to do with differences among the eulogists rather than the situations or audiences—an interesting possibility in light of the fact that most of the research on eulogies has suggested that situation, audience, and rhetorical constraints (cf., Bitzer's, 1968, "Rhetorical Situation") are the major contributing factors. This critique suggests that the ideology of the eulogist might have a greater influence than the rhetorical context itself. The likelihood of "supporting" such a hypothesis, however, is virtually nil; the numerous "great person" critiques and Political Science works on great leaders has demonstrated the fruitlessness of such a task. One final symbolic/structural component is left to critique in this section and that is the influence of "metasituation" on the tone or perception of the event and message.

Metasituational Issues

Metasituational refers to communication or examination of communication within a particular situational context. In the context of this discussion, a metasituational critique refers to an examination of a eulogist's practice of reflecting on situational issues that have brought an audience together and the shared values held by that audience.

The interviewees for this study indicated that particular situational factors influence the content of their eulogies. For example, when a relationship existed between a eulogist and the deceased, the message of the eulogy

was likely to be much more personal. Similarly, when the context of the deceased's death had been particularly noteworthy—for example, suicide, infant death, murder, auto-accident—a eulogist was apt to spend some time dealing with issues relating to situational factors.

Metasituational discourse is present in nearly all funeral services and ranges from a simple reference such as, "we are gathered here today to celebrate the life of . . ." to a specific discussion of the causes of an individual's death such as, "God does not give children cancer because He is mean. . . . ." As the excerpts below indicate, and such introductions were found in almost all of the eulogies gathered for this study (16/18), some reflection on, or mention of, the rhetorical situation taking place occurred in most instances.

> I'm going to share a few words that tell us a little bit about Bud. Kind of a reminder if you will, a review course, in his life. A life that many of you shared in, some for a lengthy period of time, and others for a shorter period of time.
>
> We're gathered here today in memory of a grandson, and son, brother, and husband, and in memory of his life. We who knew him and loved him come here in memory of him, and uh, Floyd.
>
> Good afternoon, we're here to celebrate the life of Leonard N. It's been a long life for him, 68 years, and the last few have been kind of rough. But he kept a good attitude towards it all and though it all.
>
> We've gathered here today in the presence of God and one-another that we might remember, and affirm, and celebrate, the life of Jason W., affectionately known to many of his friends as Iggy.

The metasituational strategies function as a means of comforting, or helping the audience to accept the context, or situation, in which they have come together. As has already been noted, there is value in all parts of a funeral service. Witnessing the lifeless body of a loved-one in a casket is believed to

be useful for helping individuals accept the finality of death. Similarly, explicitly acknowledging the situation in which friends and family have come together can serve to reinforce both the finality of the deceased's life, and also the need on the part of auditors to begin moving forward with their own lives.

Metasituational dialogue is also interesting because, ironically, it is necessarily oriented on, or focused on, the past; however, it functions as a tool for coming to terms with the present or future. Thus, the metasituational focus serves as a dialogic/chronologic link between past and present: is a move to reflect on past events in a person's life, the events surrounding the event in question, and it suggests what the audience can, or should, learn from the event in question. Of course death in inevitable. However, if life is lived "as the deceased lived life," or if his/her "not-very-rewarding-life" is avoided, then the audience has an opportunity to attain the great reward of an afterlife on different terms. Metasituational dialogue is part of the overall rhetorical "tone" of a funeral service and facilitates treatment of difficult issues by the eulogist.

Critique area six includes some suggestions for clergy (or others) who are regularly (or even occasionally) called upon to deliver eulogies and conduct funeral services.

One final caveat is in order before moving to a discussion of the participatory considerations, and that is, every eulogy and funeral service considered in this study fall under the broad heading of "religious services." There were no "secular" eulogies considered in this study. In fact, according to the interviewees for this dissertation, not a single one of them claims to have

even heard such a eulogy—with the possible exception of a eulogy to a "great" person.

## Critique Area 6: Participatory Considerations

The final area to be discussed in this chapter relates to the constraints of participation in the genre. That is, apart from the rhetorical character of the discourse described above, what considerations, factors, constraints, were revealed through this critique, that informs the practice of this genre by competent rhetors in the future? This discussion is a critique of stylistic considerations.

Several interviewees suggested there are certain rituals that, because of their inherent social significance and impact on individuals' lives, have been remembered for their entire life. Weddings, christenings, and funerals fall into this category. Two interviewees explain:

> According to the AMA one in seven people have some sort of emotional problem and you are never sure what they might do; so you do not want anyone to go off from the emotional strain and you do not want people to remember the funeral as the time person X went off. They teach you in seminary school that there are three things people will always remember: their wedding, the preacher who buried their family members, and the preacher who dedicated their children. There is no excuse for one of these things not going off properly; I want the funeral to be as positive for the family as I can. (Hackett, 1996)

> [Do funerals actually serve to console?] Yes, yea they do. And they may not remember the actual words that we said, but they will remember the spirit of the service—"Joe would have liked this service." They would certainly have remembered it if I said "Joe was a scoundrel." . . . I think the eulogy is an important part of the worship service because people remember the spirit of what is said. It is probably an art form but it is not taught in seminary. (Snellgrove, 1996)

Obviously, ministers cannot know everything there is to know about ministering, anymore than academicians can know everything there is to know about their own subject matter. However, if what the interviewees and others have suggested is true, the funerary rituals are among the most important sort of ritual a clergyperson must conduct.

As the interviewees suggest, some social rituals inherently have more importance, or contain the capacity to leave a more lasting impression on those in attendance. The funeral service is one of those ceremonies and, apart from an understanding of the symbolic, technical, situational, motivational, and structural issues discussed above, several other important considerations should be understood.

As suggested above, perhaps the foremost consideration is the treatment of the funeral ritual as a special, very-important event. Toward this end, as one interviewee suggested, there is no excuse for not being on time and being prepared for a funeral service. Obviously, punctuality and adequate preparation are fundamental rhetorical considerations that apply to any important discursive event; however, as some interviewees suggested, there were times when they "forgot the name of the person being eulogized," or "did not have anything to say." For this reason in part, as explained above, many eulogists rely on the funeral sermon as their primary vehicle for making a funeral service memorable. In many of the services observed for this dissertation, the strength of the eulogist's delivery improved markedly as s/he moved from the eulogy, that part of the service least prepared for, to the

funeral sermon itself, the genre in which most religious servants are skilled in delivery, and the ritual in which they have usually had more experience.

## Rhetorical Admonitions for Eulogists

There are several admonitions for eulogists worth mentioning as this critique draws to a close: (1) eulogists should learn more about the person being eulogized; (2) eulogists should strive to be as polished when delivering a eulogy as when delivering the funeral sermon; (3) eulogists should draw upon real characteristics and traits of the deceased and the deceased's family and friends rather than attributing motivations, or "making up" characteristics of the deceased's life and personality; (4) the eulogist should try to link the life of the deceased to all segments of the audience; and finally, (5) eulogists should use multiple topoi or as many rhetorical strategies as they can when celebrating the life of the deceased in the eulogy.

The importance of the first of these admonitions, was clearly demonstrated in a funeral service attended for this study wherein the eulogist mentioned the deceased's name but twice, in the course of an approximately 30-minute service. Everything about the social ritual of eulogies suggests that such a practice would do little to create an emotional link among the audience, the minister, and the dearly departed, an objective of funeral services and an invaluable aspect of coming to terms with the death of a loved one.

The second admonition, that eulogists should strive to be as polished when delivering the eulogy as they are when delivering the funeral sermon, emerges from the discussion above. Delivery is one of the five canons of rhetoric and a polished, competent, delivery not only contributes to the ethos of the eulogist, but also makes the life of the deceased seem closer and more relevant to the audience.

The third admonition, that eulogists should draw upon real characteristics and traits of the deceased and the deceased's family and friends rather than attributing motivations, or "making up" characteristics of the deceased's life and personality, is related to the reasoning underlying the first and second admonitions. In several of the eighteen eulogies examined for this critique, the eulogists sought to create a link between the life of the deceased and the audience members in attendance at the funeral. One of the strategies used was to speak of historical, geographic, and communal events, as if the eulogist had experienced these events, when in fact the eulogist had not. Needless to say, these eulogies seemed contrived and fragmented. Those in attendance unlikely found discussions of events that "were probably going on at the time,"[36] as comforting as they would have found discussion of actual

[36]Many of the deceased were quite old, some in their eighties and nineties. The majority of the eulogists, as practicing ministers, clergy, rabbis, were often young compared with the audience members in attendance. Their attempts to integrate historical discussion of the events surrounding the lives of the deceased were genuine attempts to find common ground with the survivors of the deceased. What is being objected to here is not the attempt by eulogists to bring comfort to survivors by drawing on historical topoi, but rather, their "tone," which often seemed condescending. "The depression was probably a hard time for Fred" does not come off as either genuinely understanding of the events of the deceased's life or validating of the experiences of the audience. In part then, admonition three comes from an objection to rhetorical tone and not just content.

events shared by the members of the audience.

The fourth admonition, that eulogist should try to link the life of the deceased to all segments of the audience, refers to efforts to comfort, or reach all segments of an audience, spouse, brother(s), sister(s), and others, rather than simply chronicling the life of the deceased with an "obituary" and then moving on to the sermon as quickly as possible. The death of any family, friend, or community member is usually a traumatic experience. Eulogists should actively recognize and acknowledge the significance of the event for all segments of the audience and not simply try to dispense with the eulogy as quickly as possible.

Admonition five, that eulogists should use multiple topoi or as many rhetorical strategies as they can when celebrating the life of the deceased in the eulogy, as with the other four admonitions, suggests that eulogists should actively engage the life that the deceased lived by drawing on rhetorical links to all segments of the audience. The idea of utilizing multiple forms of support is certainly not a new idea in terms of persuasive speaking. But, as previously noted, eulogists are not speaking "persuasively," the audience already recognizes the importance of the subject and occasion. The eulogy, however, as noted throughout this chapter, has as a central feature a goal of comforting the audience. Thus, the eulogist is advised to bring into the eulogy many of the topoi identified above, and should seek to relate those topoi to the audience and their lived experience.

## Summary of Rhetorical Critique

In this chapter a "generic" rhetorical critique of eulogies has been provided. Six aspects of the genre of eulogies have been examined: (1) identification of the rhetorical situation/strategy; (2) identification of the intended audience effects; (3) structural classification of language; (4) motivational classification; (5) archetypal or symbolic examination of language; and (6) strategies/considerations that a rhetor should be aware of participates in the genre of eulogies.

In each section, specific issues were raised and related to existing rhetorical and eulogistic theory. Several important "themes" were identified, including: (1) the genre of eulogy is not a monolithic construct, there exists different types and varieties of eulogies including eulogies to "the great," and eulogies to "everyday citizens"; (2) the eulogy is a highly religious social ritual; (3) the eulogy is used to console the bereaved, help the bereaved accept the death of a friend/loved-one, and celebrate the life of the deceased—goals accomplished by biographical accounts of the deceased's life, efforts to help strengthen the survivors' beliefs in God, and the linking of symbolic aspects of the deceased's life with the survivors' lives; (4) the short time frame associated with eulogies, and a sometimes distant relationship among eulogist, the deceased, and family, often result in the use of predictable rhetorical strategies; (5) particular rhetorical topoi are used in the construction of appeals and reflect the ideology of working-class America and the Christian faith such as: God, Love, Family, Work, and Faith; (6) metasituational appeals are used to

help audience members cope with the death of loved ones; and (7), participants in the genre of eulogy should be aware of situational factors and work to have competent polished deliveries to draw upon multiple sources of rhetorical comfort.

In the next and final section of this dissertation, the Conclusion, the research questions from Chapter One are revisited to see if, and to what extent, they have been answered. In the conclusion, specific issues are raised about the methodology employed in this study, and directions for future research are suggested.

# CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

## Overview of Conclusion

The purpose of this conclusion is to clarify and reiterate the research findings and claims made by the author. Herein the research questions that gave rise to this study will be revisited and the value of the findings will be discussed. Additionally, in the classic tradition, the conclusion section of a dissertation provides an author with a forum within which to discuss the heuristic, or educational value, of his/her research, and recommend avenues for future research and inquiry, and that will also take place here. Finally, the conclusion is generally the one place in a dissertation where the author can say what s/he really believes the actual importance of the scholarly endeavor to be. The researcher can point out the basic deficiencies in the research design or method of inquiry employed, or, more positively, the researcher might explain why his/her research design was particularly useful or dynamic.

In this conclusion, each of the goals suggested will be met by first: discussing the research questions of this study, determining if they were the right questions, and if they were answered; second, discussing the heuristic value of this research to point out new areas of inquiry, to clarify what has

been learned, and to discuss the importance of this research; third, and finally, discussing issues related to the research design and methodology, and making final closing comments.

## Research Questions Revisited

This study sought to answer several questions relating to eulogies. Eulogies were to be examined from an historical perspective, from a professional, or practitioner perspective, from a critical perspective, and from a comparative perspective, where scholarly theory would be compared to actual practice. Four research questions were raised:

(1) How have eulogies been conceived, performed, and understood, historically and traditionally?

(2) How are eulogies understood and practiced by the professional clergy who conduct them?

(3) What characteristics of eulogies make them particularly effective as vehicles of praise/consolation, and what other ends do they serve?

(4) What characteristics of the eulogies that have been previously studied are found in everyday eulogies and what does this suggest for rhetorical theory/practice?

The following discussion addresses these research questions, to determine if they were appropriate, and if they were answered in the course of this dissertation.

## Goals of the Research Questions

The easiest inquiry to answer is if the research questions were adequately addressed. Each research question was dealt with in some detail. Research question One, regarding the historical understanding of eulogies, was answered in Chapter One. The discussion provided an historical and theoretical overview, a framework within which could be considered the rest of the research conducted for this study. The answer to research question One contained a consideration of funerals, funerary oratory, and eulogies. Some of the major points that emerged in Chapter One concerned the ways that eulogies have been idiosyncratically defined and the distinctions between funeral oratory in general and eulogies in particular. The discussion provided support for one of the overall claims made in this dissertation: eulogies are an important rhetorical social ritual and are not widely understood. The discussion in Chapter One was valuable because it provided background information on funeral oratory and helped limit the areas of further inquiry conducted in this study.

Research question Two, regarding how contemporary eulogists understand and conduct eulogies, was raised as a necessary inquiry in this study to provide insight into eulogies—insight valuable for informing the rhetorical critique of eulogies that followed—and insight into how eulogies may be understood in relation to past scholarship on the subject. Research question Two, then, was essentially a comparative inquiry, or an inquiry about validity, in a sense, to determine if the phenomenon of eulogies talked about in the

literature and critiqued and explored here, was indeed perceived as a coherent rhetorical genre, and understood in the same way by several contemporary practitioners.

Answers to Research Question Three, what the characteristics of eulogies that make them effective as vehicles of praise and consolation are, were found by comparing the past scholarship on eulogies with the more current and specific information gleaned from 25 interviewees. Also, the rhetorical critique that was conducted on the 18 eulogies gathered for this study revealed several strategies used by eulogists to both praise and console those attending funerals, and strategies which appeared to be rhetorically and theoretically sound—strategies include discussion of God and the afterlife, and efforts to link the deceased's life with the lives of the audience members present. Research question Three was incorporated into this study because much of the past scholarship on eulogies had suggested that eulogies serve to both praise the deceased and console the survivors.

Research Question Four was a comparative inquiry into the theoretical literature about eulogies and contemporary practice, to determine if the rhetorical genre described in the literature was consistent with its contemporary manifestations. Research question Four was included because of the obvious value of bringing both theoretical and practical bodies of work together to understand the phenomenon under consideration.

The next question for consideration here concerns the adequacy of <u>these</u> four research questions, rather than <u>others</u> which might have been raised.

## Adequacy of the Research Questions

In this section of the conclusion, the inquiry is raised of whether the research questions of this study were the right questions—that is, the most provocative and relevant—to ask? The answer is affirmative. The research questions asked combined historical, contemporary, and original research approaches to illumine the contemporary phenomenon of eulogies.

The questions asked were intended to further the heretofore limited understanding of eulogies found in the literature by conducting a critique of all aspects of the rhetorical genre. The research questions also were appropriate because they were written such that the genre of eulogies was examined as a multifarious phenomenon. As the Interview responses from Chapter Two revealed, and as the eulogies critiqued in Chapter Four revealed, the phenomenon of eulogies, while ubiquitous, is not monolithic.

Had the research questions been framed to examine the phenomenon of eulogies as much of the past scholarship on eulogies has—that is, as "great person" speeches—many of the unique contemporary characteristics of eulogies might have been overlooked. Similarly, if the "great person" eulogy assumption had been adopted in this study, and academicians, historians, reporters, or other "professional" speakers had been interviewed, instead of clergy and funeral home personnel, very different findings would have resulted. Thus, the structure and emphasis of the research questions led to relevant and provocative results.

Obviously, this study is not the "end-all and be-all" of scholarship on eulogies. There exists areas that have not been satisfactorily addressed. For example, in regard to Research question Three: "What characteristics of eulogies make them particularly effective as vehicles of praise/consolation, and what other ends do they serve?," whether eulogies are more or less comforting than funeral sermons, or whether the practice of eulogies is as comforting as possible is not clear. Still, this study, in answering research question Three, has identified "characteristics" of eulogies that make them effective rhetorical devices for consolation and praise—characteristics include, situational features such as the funerary setting, as well as rhetorical features such as language strategies used. This researcher believes that the findings reported in this dissertation have taken the scholarly community beyond the neo-Aristotelian "myopia" that characterizes much of the scholarship on eulogies, and identified some fresh areas of scholarship for pursuit.

## Heuristic Value

The next issue to be considered in this conclusion has to do with the "heuristic value" of this research and the future areas of inquiry suggested as a result of it. Although there are many important concerns identified in the various discussions throughout, three potential areas of inquiry are most evident: (1) the religious component of eulogies; (2) the comfort they provide; and (3) non-Christian/mainstream eulogies and what they reveal.

## Religious Component of Eulogies

One of the factors that emerged in the rhetorical critique for this study was the influence of religious ideology on the construction of both eulogies and funeral sermons. As suggested previously, many "eulogists" avoid delivering eulogies that might have an "anti-God" or "anti-religion" flavor, and so shy away from different, or "innovative" approaches. Religious topoi and doctrine exert an enormous influence on the construction of eulogies examined in this investigation.

One issue that this study did not address was what might be termed "religious variability," or how eulogies differ across religious traditions. This study was not an examination of how Catholic eulogies differ from Protestant, Jewish from Christian, or how Baha'i funerals differ from Mormon. Still, the findings of this study did reveal, although it was not a specific goal to do so, that differences most certainly do exist across religious traditions. Beyond obvious overt differences, more subtle differences exist within religious traditions, some being considerably more liberal and innovative than others. At this point of understanding about eulogies any statement about the impact of religious and cultural differences would be premature. Also worth mentioning is that dramatic cultural differences exist that may transcend religious differences and undoubtedly differ across geographic and international boundaries.

This study was an attempt to identify rhetorical strategies associated with eulogies, and identify strategies that are useful for creating more re-

warding/successful eulogies. Each of the religious/cultural factors mentioned above—dogmatic adherence to one rhetorical style, and religious and cultural variability—may have utility for explaining rhetoric in general and than-otological/eschatological rhetoric in particular. Consideration of "religious" differences, naturally enough, relates to consideration of the second issue raised above: (2) the comfort eulogies provide.

## Comfort in Eulogies

This study was not designed to be a full-fledged theoretical examination of comfort in funerary settings. Although one objective of the study was to identify some important aspects of comforting in the funeral literature examined, the information gleaned was rudimentary and incipient. What this study did illumine is that a dearth of scholarship seems to exist regarding the role of comfort or consolation within religions, especially in funerary settings, and that the aspects of comforting within religions have either been entirely ignored, or have not been viewed as relevant or important to an understanding of this area of inquiry. A number of important areas for further inquiry exist. For example, studies of the bereaved might be conducted that identify specific rhetorical/ceremonial strategies associated with funerals that serve to console. Similarly, a more careful examination and comparison of the comforting literature and funeral oratory may identify comforting strategies heretofore unlabeled or unidentified.

The final area to be discussed in this section is the value of understanding/studying non-Christian/non-mainstream religious traditions for their insight and contribution to contemporary rhetorical practices.

## Non-Christian/Non-Mainstream Eulogies

Based on the research conducted for this study, it should be apparent that many of the issues raised heretofore—pragmatic, religious, cultural, and situational—and present in the "great person" eulogies, <u>are</u> present in the "everyday" eulogies examined in this study; and this study has been a modest attempt to identify additional characteristics of contemporary eulogies overlooked in the previous research. What should also be clear, however, is that a great deal of research remains to be done. One area of inquiry that should prove to be fruitful is to learn more about the variety of eulogistic practices present in non-Christian and non-mainstream religious faiths. One of the interviewees in this study, Carol Black, "e-mailed" this researcher a description of a Baha'i funeral service. What is striking about the description of the service, as well as other religious and cultural funerary traditions described by other interviewees, is how <u>unlike</u> the mainstream this particular service is. In this funeral, an interview with the deceased is played as part of the service. The message describing the service was:

From: Carol Black
Subject: passing and funeral of Hamilton Niss (fwd)
To: mkent@omni.cc.purdue.edu (michael)
Date: Mon, 17 Feb 1997 07:57:00 -0500 (EST)

Just for your info.: (someone from Indy sent this out)

Dear Friends,

Yesterday, our beloved brother and fellow worker, Dr. Hamilton Niss, was laid to rest at the Washington Park North Cemetery. The funeral home was filled to overflowing with friends, family, and Baha'is from all over Indiana. The funeral home just let the crowd overflow into the hall as more people kept coming in.

The funeral was beautiful and featured a message and flower arrangement from the National Assembly honoring Ham's decades of devoted Baha'i service, an audio tape of an interview with Ham conducted by Barb Qualls, stories of Ham's early years by his sister Happy, and a beautiful selection of prayers and readings. Ham's grandchildren, Helena and Jennifer, had created a display featuring some old photos of Ham as a baby and teenager.

Baha'i Love,
Brian Wittman

The Baha'i funeral is but one example of deviance from the "mainstream" found in other religious traditions; others include the Church of Latter Day Saints (the Mormons), and the Jehovah's Witnesses. What differences between religious groups indicates, however, is that many areas of inquiry have received little attention. Possible areas of inquiry include: (1) the more creative or more common use of music, (2) the use of audio or video recording as part of eulogies or funeral services, (3) the more common display of photographs and slides, (4) the offering of family members and friends a chance to speak, or perhaps calling them to speak, (5) the preparing of eulogies ahead of time so that they might be more sophisticated, creative, and memorable, and (6) the developing of more sophisticated organizational

structures that seek to incorporate multiple comforting topoi, might all represent valuable areas of future inquiry.

## Methodological Issues

The third and final area to be discussed has to do with research design and methodological issues. As noted above, the combination of methodologies utilized here afforded an unusual perspective into the rhetorical characteristics of eulogies. However, there were several methodological shortcomings in this study that future researcher might work to overcome. The first has to do with access to eulogies.

Most of the eulogies gathered for this project were gathered from a single funeral home. Although the interviewees suggested that this funeral home was representative of those in the Lafayette area, it did not necessarily afford access to the most religious of eulogies, or eulogies given by clergy well acquainted with the deceased. That is to say, although virtually all interviewees suggested that the funeral home is one of the primary places for funerals, the most "polished" eulogies are likely to be given by those eulogist well acquainted with the deceased—and more funerals where a relationship between minister and deceased exist are conducted in churches than funeral homes. Thus, it is possible that the eulogies gathered from this primary location were (1) not as religious in nature as those in other locations, (2) less intimate than those in other locations, or (3) different for other reasons entirely. Clearly the eulogies gathered represented a different genre, or class

or eulogies, than previous scholarship had revealed; however, whether they were genuinely representative of funerals in general, or funerals in Lafayette Indiana, is not clear.

A second important methodological consideration is the issue of religious "secrecy," or perhaps religious persecution. Certain religions are, for various reasons, reluctant to disclose certain (or all) aspects of their doctrine/rituals to outsiders. Notable and well known examples are the Church of Jesus Christ of Latterday Saints (the Mormons) and the Jehovah's Witnesses who are often reluctant to discuss specific details of church doctrine with outsiders because such details are considered suitable only for members and church elders/leaders. Representatives from both of these groups (the Mormons and the Jehovah's Witnesses) did speak to this researcher and provided very useful and interesting information. However, both groups were also unwilling to provide printed copies of church texts for more careful analysis. Other religious organizations simply ignored the researcher's attempts to make contact. One religious group ignored three letters of inquiry, and literally dozens of phone calls; efforts to contact it were eventually abandoned.

A third research consideration has to do with the fact that clergy are busy. As a neophyte interviewer, I more or less assumed that clergy "only worked on Sunday," or perhaps on weekends. This was obviously a naive assumption. Most of the individuals who volunteered to be interviewees for this project led very active and busy lives. Were it not for the fact that this researcher set aside six weeks in the summer and made appointments at

interviewees' leisure, some interview data would have been difficult or impossible to gather.

Another important methodological area of concern are the issues associated with the critique of a rhetorical genre. Many times in this study the researcher has criticized past researchers for their confusion between funeral oratory in general and eulogistic oratory in particular; unfortunately, the researcher has been guilty of the same charge in this study on more than one occasion. There are several instances in this study where the researcher found himself saying more about funeral oratory than the genre of eulogies. Part of the semantic imprecision that has occurred in this study can be blamed on the nature of the phenomenon under study—the genre of eulogies. Like all "genres," eulogies are sophisticated and some overlap will inevitably occur.

A second rhetorical methodological concern involves the critique of a "genre" itself. Because the critique of "genre" involves the investigation not only of language and situation, but also of social and cultural factors, not as much "critique" of linguistic rhetoric is performed as might be desired by some readers. And because generic critiques necessarily looks at a "type" (or class) of rhetorical messages, critiques do not account for all of the unique characteristics of particular messages, and they do not look for examples of "great" messages to account for the phenomenon as a whole. For these reasons, generic critique may seem to be "explaining" rather than "critiquing" a phenomenon, however, that <u>is</u> one of its primary goals.

A final methodological rhetorical consideration is that when one examines messages of a particular class, or type, it is difficult to be sure that what one is examining is representative of the whole. That is, the eulogies examined for this study certainly are not representative of all eulogies, nor are they representative of all, or even most, Indiana eulogies. They have been critiqued only as a means of further explaining the genre of eulogy.

## Closing Comments

This study was an examination of eulogies in a way that was both original, and yielding of insightful data. In the course of this study it became clear that eulogies are not well understood and certainly not as monolithic as previous scholarship suggested. There are aspects of this study that are disturbing: (1) that so little is known about funerary rhetoric, and (2) that previous research seems to have ignored the "real world." Indictments of "ivory tower" academicians are not new; and the intent here is not to end this dissertation on a somewhat depressing note. Rather, I prefer to end by pointing out that researchers in the field of Communication may have as much to learn by studying the human communication of the "small and insignificant," as they do by studying the communication acts of the "great and important" people.

Because of the death of many great citizens of Indiana this research was possible, and that is sad. But, as one of the interviewees asked in the course of my interview, after a lengthy discussion of funeral practices, and in

an obvious proselytic moment: “Do you think there will ever come a time when we do not give eulogies?” To which I responded, “I hope not,” only to realize almost instantly the irony and inaccuracy of such a statement: for there to be funeral eulogies, people must die. However, the interviewee quickly remarked “Well, there will be one day when we never give funerals because there will be a time when people never die.” Such is the power of faith and the word. And, perhaps, such is the power of eulogies.

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# APPENDICES

# Appendix A:

## Research Exemption Approval

Research exemption on file, Purdue University

# Appendix B:

## Funeral Home Director Interview Guide

**Interviewee:**

**Occupation:**

**Location:**

**Date/Time:**

**Introduction:** Brief and simple overview of project.

1: If there is an average or "standard" procedure for funerals in the Lafayette area, could you describe it?

2: Where do funerals usually take place?
- 2.a: Graveside?
- 2.b: In your chapel?
- 2.c: In homes/private locations?
- 2.d: In Churches?

3: Are there differences by religion?

4: How often are they public and private?

5: What would you consider an "eulogy"—how would you define/describe it?

6: Who "usually" gives eulogies—family, friends, clergy, lay-clergy?

7: Are there differences between religious funerals and secular funerals?

8: Are there differences in ceremonies by
- 8.a: Age?
- 8.b: Sex?
- 8.c: Social Status (workers/professionals)?
- 8.d: Devout/Irreligious?

9: Are you usually contacted by family members or do clergy sometimes contact you on behalf of someone else?

10: Do you have any advice on how I might get access to eulogies?

11: I have been informed by several individuals that funerals are occasionally recorded, do you have any recordings of ceremonies either audio or video?

12: Do you have any transcripts of eulogies?

13: Given the setup of your chapel, would it be possible to observe/attend/record "public" ceremonies without disturbing anyone?

14: Do you have any questions for me?

## Appendix C:

## Funeral Home Directors Interview Solicitation Letter

Date

Address

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am writing to enlist your assistance with research that I am conducting. I am a graduate student at Purdue University working on research toward my Doctoral degree. For my dissertation I am examining funeral oratory, especially eulogies, across several religions. I am interested in learning how the oratory of one faith differs from that of another, and to what extent religious traditions influence funerary oratory.

I would like to arrange a meeting with you soon to ask a few questions—an informal interview of sorts. At this point in my research I am interested in how funeral services are generally conducted in Lafayette and West Lafayette. For example, are they conducted at the grave site, are they conducted in the churches of the deceased, are they conducted at your chapel, do they take place elsewhere such as homes or private locations? I also need to learn about whether I can gain access for my research. That is: would it be possible to "observe" funerary services conducted in your chapel? One of my primary concerns is of course to avoid causing any more grief for the bereaved. Thus, I am hoping that you will be able to offer some insight into how I might be able to conduct my research.

I hope to be able to talk with you at your convenience. I will be contacting you in a few days to see if we might set up a meeting. I suspect that my questions will only take about 30-45 minutes of your time. If you wish to set up an appointment with me before that time, I can be contacted at the address and phone number below, or at home at (317) 742-4453.

My advisor for this project is Professor Ralph Webb (also in the Department of Communication) and he may be contacted at (317) 494-3322 if you have any questions about the project that you might prefer to discuss with him.

I am looking forward to the chance to talk with you. Thank you in advance for your participation.

Sincerely,

Michael L. Kent
Teaching Assistant

Address (printed on Purdue stationary)

Note: Interview questions (appendix B, above) were attached to this letter.

## Appendix D:

## Final Interview Guide

**Interviewee:**

**Location:**

**Date/Time:**

**Introduction:** Brief and simple overview of project by me.

**Part I**

1. Could you briefly explain to me out of what religious tradition your church comes?

2. Are there particular aspects of your faith that set it apart from other similar/related faiths, what we might call the basic tenants?

3. Could you describe your faith's position on the afterlife?

4. Do the dead (souls) go to some place to be rewarded, judged, or punished?

5. Is the faith's position different from your own on the afterlife?

**Part II**

(1) What is a eulogy?

(2) Where are eulogies given?

(3) Are they always, often, rarely, given?

(4) How do you know you have heard a eulogy?

(5) How are they structured?

(6) Do you have an outline of the form that a eulogy should take?

(7) Do you have a pamphlet or guide provided by your faith?

(8) Did you learn this in seminary school, from colleagues, from experience, or does your faith have a prescribed format that you are expected to apply?

(9) Why do we give eulogies; what is their purpose?

(10) What would you tell somebody who had to give an eulogy?

(11) In the event that you have to give an eulogy, (or a sermon), how much time do you have to prepare?

(12) How do you decide what to say?

(13) Does your faith have a tradition of speaking (or eulogizing) at funeral services by members of the immediate family, friends, loved ones, etc.?

(14) Are eulogies given for the living, the dead, [your] God, or all three?

(15) Are you ever asked to give an eulogy, or participate in a funerary service for an individual whom you did not know, or know well

(16) Could you describe to me what might take place in a funeral service in your faith?

(17) Are you informed of the death of a church member by any formal channels such as funeral homes, etc.? How do you find out about this?

(18) In your experience, where do funerals usually take place in Lafayette/West Lafayette.
(18.a) Graveside?
(18.b) In funeral chapels?
(18.c) In homes/private locations?
(18.d) In Churches?

(19) If there is an average or "standard" procedure for funerals in the Lafayette area, could you describe it?

(20) Do you know if there are differences by religion, and if so, do you know what the differences are?

(21) How often are funerals public and private?

(22) Are there differences between religious funerals secular funerals and if so can you explain them?

(23) Are there differences in ceremonies by
(23 .a) Age?
(23 .b) Sex?
(23 .c) Social Status (workers/professionals)?
(23 .d) Devout/Irreligious?

(24) Do funeral services actually serve to console the bereaved?

(25) If they do, what are some strategies for accomplishing this effectively?

(26) Do you have any samples of eulogies recorded, videotaped, or written down (transcripts)?

(27) Do you have any advice on how I might get access to eulogies—do you know anyone who might have some?

(28) Given the location of your religious ceremonies, and/or the setup of your chapel, would it be possible to observe/attend/record "public" ceremonies without disturbing anyone?

(29) Do you have any questions for me?

Appendix E:

Sample Clergy Interview Transcript

**Note: Bishop Clark was a preliminary interviewee and was not asked questions 1-5 in section I. Answers have been compiled from the interview however.**

**Interviewee:** Bishop Clark: (Mormon) Latter Day Saints, Director of West Lafayette Institute of Religion.

**Location:** "The Institute" (two block from the Liberal Arts and Education Building at Purdue University).

**Date/Time:** 03.15.96/9:30 a.m.

**Part I**

**1.** Could you briefly explain to me out of what religious tradition your church comes?

**2.** Are there particular aspects of your faith that set it apart from other similar/related faiths, what we might call the basic tenets?

The Bishop very seldom ever preaches. We have a lay ministry and men and women speak all of the time. So when they are asked to give a talk at a funeral it is [just] another talk; and so they would not usually come to the Bishop for counsel.

**3.** Could you describe your faith's position on the afterlife?

**4.** Do the dead (souls) go to some place to be rewarded, judged, or punished?

**5.** Is the faith's position different from your own on the afterlife?

**Part II**

**(1)** What is a eulogy?

A biographical sketch of a person. We do not use the term or have the ceremony. Our funerals consist of a biographical sketch of a person and then a sermon which describes our concept of life after death. Also used as a faith building activity. We do it but do not call it a eulogy. I can read to you what our General Handbook of Instruction, which goes to all ministers says.

**(2)** Where are eulogies given?

Most funerals are held in the churches. Although if some family members are not around they may be held in the mortuary.

**(3)** Are they always, often, rarely, given?

Usually given. Biographical review and several (2-3) talks given—often blending the biographical/personal message with the spiritual message. Usually held in church.

**(4)** How do you know you have heard a eulogy?

Given at funerals and about the person's life.

**(5)** How are they structured?

When the person has passed away they are taken to the mortuary to be prepared and dressed. They then come to the church where there is a "viewing" or a "wake" where friends and family members can come in and look at the body. Right before the funeral is held there is a family prayer where everyone but family is excused and the coffin is closed after they have a final chance to say good by. Then the coffin is taken into the chapel where the funeral is held and. . . .

Ours, a half-hour service would be a short one. Since we are very family oriented, there is more of a family thing. The night before there is a viewing at the mortuary; then the day of the service the casket is brought to the church and placed in a room adjacent to the chapel. The family is there to greet those who have come to offer their condolences; then the non-family members are asked to leave and just the family stays for the closing of the casket and the final prayer. Then, when the casket is brought in the family comes in as a group. The family has the first two rows reserved and when they come in the rest of the congregations sits. Then at the conclusion the family is allowed to leave first to lead the procession and get to the funeral [location] for the burial.

Now our instruction are that It should be simple and dignified, with music and brief sermons centered on the gospel. The man conducting the service is instructed to allow family members to make closing remarks if they desire but that is up to the family's wishes.

In the Mormon faith, a "Bishop' is like a "Priest" or a "Minister." A Bishop has two counselors and he would normally perform the service but in his absence one of the counselors may perform it. And usually <u>we</u> would do it and not a mortician.

He would begin with introductory comments; then a hymn, and an opening prayer, another hymn or special music; then two "talks," one biographical and one faith promoting and consoling—often these blend.

**(6)** Do you have an outline of the form that a eulogy should take?

Probably not a clear cut pattern. But very faithful and uplifting. Stressing that there is a God and life after death. The deceased will be able to see Him and interact with Him on the other side.

**(7)** Do you have a pamphlet or guide provided by your faith?

Yes, see Question One above for details.

**(8)** Did you learn this in seminary school, from colleagues, from experience, or does your faith have a prescribed format that you are expected to apply?

**(9)** Why do we give eulogies; what is their purpose?

See Question One above. The funeral is seen as a "faith building activity" and a eulogy is part of the service because . . . unclear so far.

**(10)** What would you tell somebody who had to give a eulogy?

The family has the right to select who they want to speak. They select who will give the eulogy and sermon. They may select the Bishop if they like, and he may give some introductory and closing remarks because he is conducting the service.

**(11)** In the event that you have to give a eulogy, (or a sermon), how much time do you have to prepare?

It almost is determined by person who passes away. If long standing illness or sudden death.

**(12)** How do you decide what to say?

The person is familiar with the deceased already.

**(13)** Does your faith have a tradition of speaking (or eulogizing) at funeral services by members of the immediate family, friends, loved ones, etc.?

Yes, described above.

**(14)** Are eulogies given for the living, the dead, [your] God, or all three?

Our focus is not on preparing them for the afterlife. They go if they are ready or not and a sermon won't help. We see it as a way of remembering them and helping us finalize that relationship.

A lot of our services are focused on the afterlife. We have a strong faith expressed that there will be a "rejoining." One of the things that we believe for example is that in the marriage ceremony we marry for all time and eternity. So if a spouse dies the living spouse will be reunited with the dead spouse and family members again. I suppose that in any funeral this issue will come up again. [Side note: there is remarriage if a spouse dies].

**(15)** Are you ever asked to give a eulogy, or participate in a funerary service for an individual whom you did not know, or know well?

That can happen but I have never experienced that since I have been Bishop of our congregation [two years].

Q.: Any there any guidelines on burial?: No, they are fairly traditional our cemeteries are oriented on an east to west axis, etc.

**(16)** Could you describe to me what might take place in a funeral service in your faith?

See Question Five above.

**(17)** Are you informed of the death of a church member by any formal channels such as funeral homes, etc.? How do you find out about this?

We are usually informed by our members since we know them very well. We also have a lay ministry where every male member is paired up and they go out and visit every member of the congregation. Also, every female members are paired up and they visit every female in the congregation. Thus, the "home teachers" or family members would notify the Bishop.

**(18)** In your experience, where do funerals usually take place in Lafayette/-West Lafayette?

(18.a) Graveside?

Consists of dedication of grave site (in the form of a prayer). Every worthy male member [over 12] is ordained [12 year olds who are deacons, teachers, priests (reserved for the youth) until they are 12-18; then they advance to a higher priesthood: elders, high priests], so anyone in those Melchesdic higher priesthood could dedicate a grave.

(18.b) In funeral chapels?

Sometimes.

(18.c) In Homes/Private locations?

(18.d) In Churches?

Usually.

**(19)** If there is an average or "standard" procedure for funerals in the Lafayette area, could you describe it?

**(20)** Do you know if there are differences by religion, and if so, do you know what the differences are?

**(21)** How often are funerals public and private?

Almost all of ours are open. I could imagine where someone might want one but I have never heard of one. We cue off the needs of the family.

**(22)** Are there differences between religious funerals and secular funerals and if so can you explain them?

Not asked.

**(23)** Are there differences in ceremonies by
(23 .a) Age?
(23 .b) Sex?
(23 .c) Social Status (workers/professionals)?
(23 .d) Devout/Irreligious?

Not aware of these factors influencing things. The format is fairly general: one to four speakers, congregational hymns, etc. Those factors [above] should not play a role.

**(24)** Do funeral services actually serve to console the bereaved?

I don't know. I think you hear a lot about this grieving process from these social scientists. I don't know what it would be like if we didn't have it. We always have funerals. Does it help to console in contrast to not having one? I don't know. Because we always have them, people see them as a means of termination. All faiths want to feel completion not just ours.

**(25)** If they do, what are some strategies for accomplishing this effectively?

**(26)** Do you have any samples of eulogies recorded, videotaped, or written down (transcripts)?

No.

**(27)** Do you have any advice how I might get access to eulogies—do you know anyone who might have some?

**(28)** Given the location of your religious ceremonies, and/or the setup of your chapel, would it be possible to observe/attend/record "public" ceremonies without disturbing anyone?

**(29)** Do you have any questions for me?

I would like to see your completed project. Are we typical of other faiths?

We do not accept fees.

Appendix F:

Clergy Letters and Follow-up Letters

## Original Clergy Letter

Friday, June 14, 1996

Michael L. Kent
Purdue University, Dept. of Communication
1366 Liberal Arts and Education Building 2114
West Lafayette Indiana 47907-1366
Work (317) 496-2771/494-3429
Home/Message (317) 742-4453

David Blumofe
Sons of Abraham Synagogue
661 N. Seventh Street
Lafayette, IN 47904

Dear Sir,

I am a graduate student at Purdue University working on research toward my Doctoral degree in Communication. I am studying funeral oratory, especially eulogies, across several religions. I am interested in learning how the funeral oratory of one faith differs from that of another. I am writing to request your assistance with the research I am conducting.

My intent is to contribute to our understanding of the grief and consolation that is experienced by family, friends, and loved-ones, by examining how funerals are structured, and the language used in eulogies and funeral sermons.

I would like to arrange an interview with you. Interviews will last about 45-60 minutes—most have averaged 40 minutes so far. For your convenience, I have attached a copy of my interview questions with this letter so that you may know ahead of time my interests.

Provided you are willing, I will arrange an interview time with you in about two weeks. I can be contacted at the address and phone numbers above if you have any additional questions. I will be out of town for the next few weeks, however, so I will not be able to respond to your messages immediately.

My advisor for this project is Professor Ralph Webb (also in the Department of Communication) and he may be contacted at (317) 494-3322 if you have any questions about the project that you would prefer to discuss with him.

I look forward to the chance to talk with you.

Sincerely,

Michael L. Kent
Graduate Teaching Assistant
Purdue University, Dept. of Communication

**Follow-up Clergy Letter**

Wade Hardy
Christian Science Committee on Publication
55 Monument Circle
Suite 1125
Indianapolis IN 46204

Dear Sir,

Thank you for your response to my messages for Ed Bryson. As I mentioned on the phone, I am interested in interviewing you for my research. Below you will find a brief explanation of my project and my interview questions. You indicated on the phone that you would be unavailable for several weeks; if you could leave me a message when you are available for an interview I would appreciate it.

As I explained on the phone, I am a graduate student at Purdue University working on research toward my Doctoral degree in Communication. I am studying funeral oratory, especially eulogies, across several religions. I am interested in learning how the funeral oratory of one faith differs from that of another. I am writing to request your assistance with the research I am conducting.

My intent is to contribute to our understanding of the grief and consolation that is experienced by family, friends, and loved-ones, by examining how funerals are structured, and the language used in eulogies and funeral sermons.

I would like to arrange an interview with you. Interviews will last about 45-60 minutes—most have averaged 45 minutes so far. For your convenience, I have attached a copy of my interview questions with this letter so that you may know ahead of time my interests.

Provided you are willing, we can arrange an interview time when you are available in a few weeks. I can be contacted at the address and phone numbers above if you have any additional questions or would like to schedule an interview with me. I will be available for interviews July and August at your convenience.

My advisor for this project is Professor Ralph Webb (also in the Department of Communication) and he may be contacted at (317) 494-3322 if you have any questions about the project that you would prefer to discuss with him.

I look forward to the chance to talk with you.

Sincerely,

Michael L. Kent
Graduate Teaching Assistant
Purdue University, Dept. of Communication

# Appendix G:

## Sample Eulogy Transcripts

**Funeral # 11 (Last Name Omitted)**
Elvis music before service and after.

Introduction:
We're gathered here today in memory of a grandson, and son, brother, and husband, and in memory of his life. We who knew him and loved him come here in memory of him, and uh, Floyd uh •X•, Floyd lived life his forty and nine years, and uh, living here in Lafayette most of his life on and around this area, passed away on Saturday, May the fourth, in Home hospital. And uh, uh, Floyd worked uh for the city of Lafayette for thirty four years, he has a street department, and department of sanitation division. And uh, Floyd was born in uh July the tenth, 1946. He was educated in Lafayette uh schools and lived in Lafayette most of his life. He married uh Linda, L. Southern, on June the Fourth, 1992 at Graceland, uh in Memphis Tenn. and she survives. Surviving are three daughters: Kristina, Liz Sherlock, of Lafayette; Ms. Jan (Than?) Regina Neil of West Lafayette; Amber •X•, uh Veno, of West Lafayette; and two stepdaughters Jennifer Wagoner and Rochelle Wagoner, and his mother Katherine, Katherine King, two sisters Miss. James Bobby Trees, and Mrs. jack uh Hellen Clemens, and all of Lafayette, and three brothers: Louie •X• and Larry Milburg, both of Lafayette, and Boyd •X• West Lafayette.

And uh, we feel honored today to be able to stand here in this place and be with this family and be here in this service. Uh Linda is our niece and uh we uh hadn't gotten to know Floyd real well but uh we appreciated him, and had met him and talked to him, and appreciated him and his life. His wife Linda uh was a niece, and is a niece, but uh even seemed like more like a daughter. She lived with us and stayed with us uh a great deal of time when she was young, and uh, uh we feel honored to be able to stand here with the family, and with Linda, and uh, appreciate uh, appreciate being a part of Floyd's life. You know anybody we meet in life, uh, we meet that person and we know him, and have met him, and they become a part of our life. And ah, uh make like an indelible print in our life they, once we know a person; and uh they become a part of our life once we know them; and uh, when their life's over, their life's finished here on earth, uh we miss them, because they've been a part of our life.

And uh, uh, Linda and the family have written up a little bit, so this will help you along with some things about Floyd that you might not have known. Uh, and uh, uh, I have here Floyd means, uh his name means friend. I've always been interested in people's names—what they meant—and uh, uh, I don't know weather Linda knew that but ah, I've always been uh. . . .

Sermon:
And you know the bible says if we want friends we must show ourself friendly; when somebody shows their self friendly uh, they uh have friends . . . Floyd was always been a friend and he could be counted upon. He loved Elvis Presley and Linda and Floyd were married in Graceland. . . . Loved family and friends. . . . Loved different activities. . . . Loved to fish, and loved westerns. . . . Had Indian blood (Apache and Cherokee). . . . Helped friend get to work on time. . . . Was a little superstitious. . . . Carried a large horseshoe, three rabbit's foots, would not work on Friday the 13th, carried a buckeye, marbles, Indian-head coins, a knife, and four-leaf clover. . . . Floyd wanted good luck in life. The Bible says life is like a vapor. . . . Death is a part of life and death is inevitable. . . . [random bible reading]. . . . Floyd loved, and that is a great part of life . . . [random psalm readings and rambling]. . . . Soul lives on forever-and-ever. . . . We need to make preparation to meet God. . . .

Prayer:
Let us pray: Dear heavenly Father, as we come before you today . . . [emphasis on "Lord." "Please help him," etc.].

Elvis music.

**Funeral # 6 (Last Name Omitted)**
Rev. Virginia Nead, officiating.

Introduction:
It's good of all you to come, to share today, in the celebration of the life of Aubrey •X•. He was a special person. From the time he was born until the time he separated from this life to the next. He made friends. He was a good and steadfast person. A child of God who heard the call and responded affirmatively. Christ has gone before us in death showing us the way to eternal life. The lord has given, the lord now receives that which has been loaned to us. We remember the good days that we have shared with Aubrey, and we're thankful for the gift of his love as husband, as uncle, as friend. So if faith in God's eternal love, understanding that all of our days are numbered, we come to celebrate this life which has been lived to the glory of god. Let us bow our heads in prayer.

Prayer
Dear God, you know that one who has been loved and treasured has been taken from our midst. . . .

The Scriptures tell us that all flesh is as grass. . . . Make your presence and your healing bond known to Dorris, to Greg and Walter who have come so far from the West and his beloved niece and nephew who are here from Canada Judy and . . . [get your notes straight...] Jerry.

Lords Prayer. . . . Amen.

We invite you now to quiet meditation as our organist plays Amazing Grace....

As most of you are probably aware, Aubrey was the type of person that planned ahead. He was organized, and so he helped prepare this service. And part of his request were scriptures to be read—and to be read from King James version—so those psalms which I read to you and the new testament scripture have been requested by Aubrey. The first is a psalm . . . 23rd Psalm: the lord is my shepherd. The next psalm that he requested is another one that is familiar . . . make a joyful noise unto the lord all ye lands. . . . I'm sure all of you recognize that as the 100th Psalm .. . . And the other one which is so frequently read at this time, which gives us comfort also, God's ever abiding love and safety, Psalm 121, I will lift up my eyes unto the hills. . . . and in the new testament another scripture which used so frequently at this time, and this scripture is found in John, chapter 14, vs. 1-8: let not your heart be troubled, if you believe in God believe also in me. In my father's house are many mansions. If it were not so I would have told you. . . .

I'm going to ask a question, and I bet there are very, very few in this room that know the answer to that question. Do you know what happened sixty nine years ago this very day? I see smiles on the faces of those who are part of the family. The answer is this: that Aubrey •X• and Dorris Ebe met on a

blind date. That was quite an event. There's more to the story than that. The rest of the story is that when they met, there were a group of young men and a group of young women and Aubrey had been matched with someone else with whom he did not particularly take a shine to. And he said: "she's the one who I would like to go out with." And this was Dorris. And so the time came that they continued to love and to cherish one another and the time came that they became husband and wife. Aubrey was a man who knew what he wanted and he went after her.

He was the kind of person who loved and cherished the gifts of God. He was a man who used his talents and his gifts to the glory of God. And so when we say good by to Aubrey at this time, we remember the many things that he shared with us, and the kind of person he was and the opportunities he grabbed a hold of and made happen for himself.

But I was talking to the family yesterday and they were telling me about his love of nature and wildlife and the kind of character that he had that people [garbled]. I thought of a poem. They were talking about the early years of his life. When he was starting out when he was in Nova Scotia and decided to come to the United States to continue his education and while he was here [garbled] . . . I like this particular poem. . . .

If you think back on the world in which Aubrey lived and grew up in, it was probably, I would imagine, since I have been to Nova Scotia, a very pleasant environment. But he had a need to get out, and get about the job in the world that he wanted to accomplish. And so though he enjoyed West Chester, Nova Scotia he decided that after his undergraduate education, he went from [garbled] that he would then go to Brown university in the United States. It was leaving all that was warm, and comfortable, and familiar, where his family was, to venture into a new part of the world. I'm not sure if he would agree that his wings were folded close into his side until he started to sour—and probably did some souring up in Nova Scotia as well—but I would imagine that that world became too small for him and he decided that there were other things that he needed to do.

At Brown University he worked toward his degree, a Masters degree in science, and then began his Ph.D. degree. Now if you think of the timing of this, Aubrey was born in 1905 so we are looking at the late twenties and the early thirties, and all of you in this room are old enough to remember what took place at this time. These were times of great challenge when the world was going kind of crazy with the stock market crash and the depression. And I think I can talk about the depression in here without the thought of a lot of groans from young people who say oh, don't tell me about that again. But those of us who lived through it understand what I'm saying. It was a time of high risk and a time when people stayed put and tried to pull in rather than reaching out. But this was not the way for Aubrey and he decided that in 1930 that he and Dorris would be married and they would launch out on a

life together. And they would take risks and they would do what needed to be done for him to be able to use his talents and his abilities.

Doris was teaching Latin, and Algebra, and English, as a young school teacher and they decided to in 1935 to make a change and to come to Purdue University. This was the heart of the depression, these were difficult times, and Purdue did not even offer them a full-time position [so what's new?]; they simply said "there is an opportunity here" and basically it depends on you what happens. Well as you know, Aubrey stayed a long time. [garbled] But he contributed also to the math library. Doris said that it was true that he was not a research person but he loved to teach. He accompanied graduate students as they worked through their degrees. [garbled and nearly incomprehensible at this point] he was active chair at [garbled] invited into Sigma Phi professional society and continued to be productive even after he retired in 1972. He did not, like some folks, turn away and walk into the corner or into the nest but used many opportunities to help others. One of the things he did was go to home Hospital. [garbled] moved to Florida in winter . . . taught bible class in Florida . . . gardened, bird watched, rescued a poinsettia plant, worked hand-in-hand with everything . . . been to every state in the U.S . . . watched basketball. . . .

Likened Aubrey to a disciple; read (Luke 19:29) scripture. . . .

Reminded of a song . . . "remember him . . . when the sun rises and the birds sing. . . ."

Let us pray. . . .

# VITA

# VITA

Michael Kent was born in Massachusetts on October 6, 1965, and raised in Fairbanks Alaska.

He received his Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of Alaska Fairbanks in 1990, majoring in Speech Communication. He received his Master's of Science degree from the University of Oregon, in 1992, in Rhetoric and Communication.

Michael taught classes at the University of Alaska Fairbanks, before attending Purdue University to begin work on his doctoral degree. In December, 1997, Michael received his Doctor of Philosophy degree from Purdue University in Rhetoric. His current research interests include Communication Ethics, Public Relations, Disciplinary/Academic Communication, Mass Communication, Funeral Oratory, Thanotology/Eschatology, and Religious Communication.