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BOOK REVIEW

Traditions of Eloquence: The Jesuits & Modern Rhetorical Studies. Cinthia Gannett and John C. Brereton, Editors.

THE BRONX, NY: FORDHAM UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2015. XVIII + 444 PAGES.

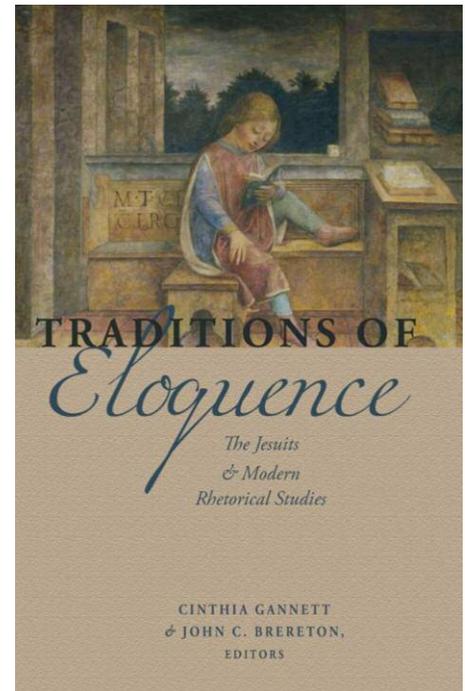
Reviewed by Laurie Ann Britt-Smith

“Eloquence,” as defined by John O’Malley, S.J., in the foreword to this collection, is “to mean what you say and to say what you mean – and to say it with grace, accuracy, and force.” Eloquence, or *eloquentia perfecta*, is a key outcome of Jesuit rhetorical practice, but as noted by editors Cinthia Gannett and John C. Brereton, the influence of this Jesuit twist on classical rhetoric, and by extension its influence on the Western system of education, has been neglected in contemporary scholarship. These essays are a first step toward rectifying this omission. The text is primarily the work of a consortium of rhetoric and composition scholars from across the 28 Jesuit colleges and universities. They have created an ambitious exploration of the order’s investment in education in the area of rhetorical theory and practice and of how that history is manifested in the work of contemporary rhetoric and composition programs and classrooms.

Organized in a loose three-part structure, each contribution can be read as a part of a whole or as an independent piece. Section One features essays linked through the use of history as a lens. Such a large framework allows for conversations that include the specific rhetorical moves made by St. Ignatius in his autobiography and the

Spiritual Exercises, the adaptation of classical rhetorical training by the Jesuits, the changing role of liberal education and Jesuit training, the relationship of the “Black Robes” to women’s religious orders in early North American educational institutions, and a comparison between rhetorical training historically and currently offered at the College of the Holy Cross and at Sogang University in South Korea. Although somewhat counterintuitive, that last one is actually the first essay in the collection. Written by Patricia Bizzell, it masterfully sets the tone for the entire text, establishing historical context while also discussing current affairs. Allowing for the largest possible audience, the introduction to each section and at least one essay in it provide a coherent chronological, theoretical, or pedagogical overview for those entering new territory or who need a helpful reminder/map of this intellectual terrain.

The remaining sections are narrower in scope but continue the pattern of establishing the conversation, breaking it into smaller parts and then expanding again into a larger consideration of the theme. Section Two covers the post-suppression era in Jesuit education in the United States, starting with three excellent chapters written by the



editors and by Steven Mailloux and Katherine H. Adams respectively, which review the history of rhetoric and writing studies in what has become the AJCU. These are followed by essays which showcase exemplar scholars who are irrevocably tied to the tradition: Walter Ong, Ed Corbett, Bernard Lonergan, and Paulo Freire. The section ends with a forum section of rhetoricians briefly reflecting of the importance of their Jesuit education.

Building on the momentum of those who influenced or were influenced by the tradition, the third section examines the application of Jesuit rhetoric through a discussion of *eloquentia perfecta* as translated in today’s pedagogies. The voices gathered here include some of the most respected in the field, for example, John Bean, whose *Engaging Ideas* is canonical in the discipline. Some essays focus on the circumstances found at specific universities that have larger application for other Jesuit institutions. K. J. Peters’s discussion of the core curricu-

lum at Loyola Marymount and others, like Vincent Casaregola's fascinating reconsideration of what "voice" means in a digital world, have implications for all who teach. The text closes with an Afterword by Joseph Janangelo. Titled "Technology, Diversity, and the Impression of Mission," it brings the discussion full circle, considering where the tradition, always intertwined with the Jesuit mission, is going as it is increasingly transferred to lay faculty who must accompany 21st-century students into new spaces and places.

The essays form a wondrous cacophony of ideas and individual styles. The effect is attending a large party with fabulous guests, each talking passionately about the subjects which they most care about. Such a wide-ranging conversation can cause a bit of alienation, even with the built-in moorings for the uninitiated. Those who have never been to this particular party may anticipate that the text will be awfully dry and boring. Fear not. One the advantages in joining these conversations is that they are led by men and women who at their core are teachers, teachers who are experts at making the kind of rhetorical moves that can captivate an audience. It is worth the effort to engage with this work and to consider what the next steps in such scholarship might be. After all, these skilled rhetoricians have cultivated in their own writing, and in their work with their students, eloquence.

Laurie Ann Britt-Smith, a former member of the Conversations seminar, is now the director of the Center for Writing at the College of the Holy Cross.



A student finds inspiration underneath a portrait of Saint Ignatius at Rockhurst University.