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implications of their study for improving women's agency in contemporary U.S. politics is instructive and insightful. This book should be of interest to rhetorical scholars, historians, political scientists, and practitioners alike. It is also a call for more women's stories to be told and more such studies to be done.

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Modern Occult Rhetoric: Mass Media and the Drama of Secrecy in the Twentieth Century. By Joshua Gunn. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2005; pp xxix + 340. \$49.75 cloth.

Joshua Gunn is familiar to most rhetorical scholars, with his name gracing the cover of (seemingly) every major journal in the field for the last few years. His intriguing topics, insightful analysis, exceptional writing, and wry humor abound throughout his work. *Modern Occult Rhetoric* is no exception. This book demonstrates Gunn's ability to deftly navigate difficult theoretical debates by grounding these debates in interesting case studies, a clear and engaging style, and an amazing balance between witty levity and academic seriousness. Reading the book is not only a productive intellectual endeavor but also a stimulating pleasure.

The title, however, might discourage potential readers. The occult sounds fascinating but perhaps not so useful for scholars whose topics are removed from secret societies, arcane rituals, witchcraft, devil worship, and horror films. Let me assure the reader, then, that secret intrigue is not the only reason to read this book. Gunn ties occultic rhetoric to such topics as genre theory, irony, the sublime, close textual analysis, rhetorical form, the rhetoric of authority, commodity fetishism, visual topoi, the mass media, Derrida's poststructuralism, and Lacanian psychoanalysis. In fact, Gunn is concerned to illustrate the ubiquity of occultic rhetoric in arenas as widely variant as popular culture, politics, and especially, the academy. Gunn views occultic rhetoric as a generic form, specifically a "theological form," whose basic, Platonic premise claims that truth is ineffable while paradoxically suggesting that its representational strategies provide the means to some "incommunicable human experience or more primal reality" (7). Occultic rhetoric thus promises access to an inexpressible, divine secret.

When viewed in this light, occultic rhetoric is a common feature of political discourse, popular culture, and academic theory. To give an example in Gunn's own words:

As I am writing this, our current Satanism is called "terrorism," and its many evil followers are an endless font of secrets, including nefarious plots to murder women

and children and to acquire “weapons of mass destruction” ... [U]ncovering these secrets has become an excuse for state-sponsored violence. Today, the crusade to uncover the secrets of the contemporary Yezedi has justified the invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq.... Whether his name is Osama bin-Laden or Anton LaVey, the Devil is here to stay. (203)

This level of clarity is a central concern of Gunn’s book. The author compares occultic rhetoric to academic practice because of the similarities of difficult terminology, initiation rituals, and the use of rhetoric to demarcate insiders from outsiders clearly. Gunn states that he agrees with arguments in favor of a thick theoretical vocabulary. He recognizes that the pressure to justify scholarly existence in an anti-intellectual American climate leads to reliance on a difficult theoretical argot: “In short, we are encouraged to be snotty” (235). Yet he implores us to remember that such practices are not simply defense mechanisms but are also means of excluding and disciplining outsiders. As an alternative, he wants scholars to balance theoretical acumen with a little commonsensical humility. Arrogance and exclusionary gestures brought a backlash against other occults, and he warns against a similar result for the academy. Thus, “If we recognize that the undoing of the modern magus was caused, in part, by the arrogance of autonomy and the blackmail of secrecy, then we should embrace the Fool as our patron saint” (236).

Gunn goes some ways toward painting his scholarly persona in the image of the fool. For instance, the quotation above is the second to last sentence, and the book’s front cover features the tarot card known as “The Fool” with Gunn’s name affixed to the bottom. Further, he begins the book with four nonsensical paragraphs interspersed with Deleuzian theory, occult references, and long, meandering sentences. After these paragraphs, Gunn quickly clarifies that such moments were a demonstration of the mysterious and difficult language of the occult and academic jargon alike.

In fact, it is this compulsion to clarify that I would like to focus on for the remainder of this review. I could not help but notice the sheer number of summaries. Each chapter features a straightforward preview and review, along with numerous internal summaries. The summaries are useful but so extensive that it feels like Gunn is worried the reader may not get it and thus needs constant hand-holding. Perhaps this is just my feeling and not a perception everyone will share. But the point I want to make about this compulsion to clarity is that it undermines Gunn’s claims that the fool is his patron saint. The fool cannot provide such incisive summaries because he or she is never quite sure what to think. Gunn’s persona, in contrast, conveys only clarity, control, and certainty. His deft weaving together of difficult theoretical

issues with legendarily dense occult texts in an easy-to-read style denies any foolishness. Gunn is no fool, for sure.

Gunn is, instead, like any scholar worth his or her salt, a skeptic: an insightful, penetrating, and careful skeptic. He admits as much in the many times he denies that occult texts hold any transcendent truths (32). Yet Gunn is not an ordinary skeptic, and this is perhaps where his persona offers some guidance for the embattled academic. Gunn is a skeptic *who wants to believe*. This claim is evidenced by frequent interludes about his personal occult experiences, by the fact that the longest quotations are from occult, not theoretical, texts, and by the genuine joy in his writing when he analyzes various occult systems. Gunn knows tarot cards are a likely sham but he puts himself on one nevertheless.

Perhaps this desire to believe is an equally significant addendum to the skeptical scholarly persona, as is a good dose of humility. Perhaps the popular distaste for intellectuals has as much to do with our inability to believe as it does with our arrogance. Skepticism produces valuable critical analysis but can go too far. An inability to stake a claim, to have faith, to defend a belief—*despite* the questions—marks scholars as out of touch with the concerns of those outside the ivory tower. In such complex and confusing times as ours, skepticism is a natural response. What many people desire instead is some assurance that belief is still possible, that skepticism does not necessitate paralysis and hopelessness. It is in this way that Gunn's writing offers a refreshing change of pace and a model for scholars facing intense pressure to justify their existence. The skeptic who wants to believe, particularly one influenced by poststructuralism, may seem like a paradoxical stance. But in such complex times, perhaps paradox is the scholar's best friend. In this instance, it certainly has produced a book that all scholars should want to read.

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Consumed: How Markets Corrupt Children, Infantilize Adults, and Swallow Citizens Whole. By Benjamin R. Barber. New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 2007; pp 416. \$16.95 paper.

Since Francis Fukuyama touted the "end of history" in 1989, scholars have debated the durability and isomorphous nature of democratic governments, their citizenry, and their culture. Western neoliberal democracies and the capitalistic economies that they share have come under attack for their failure to remain politically active domestically and culturally distinct internationally. The United States of America, in particular, often stands as the shallow,