

Quarterly Journal of Speech

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MS ID #: 05-027

Reviewer: B

MS Title: “Hystericizing Huey: Psychoanalysis, Charismatic Monumentalism, and Southern Demagoguery”

Comments to the Author/s

I found this essay intriguing, but believe it is in need of additional thought and revision. Specifically:

- (1) The set-up of the essay is confusing. We are led to believe that the analysis will focus on the monuments of Huey Long and the New State Capitol of Louisiana; however, the major portion of the analysis is actually about the robot version of Huey Long, an exhibit that is not even mentioned in the introduction and thesis. It also is odd to start with a photograph before the essay even begins.
- (2) Related to #1, the biggest issue that I have with the essay is that it can't seem to decide exactly what it wants to do. The author says that he/she wants to provide a psychoanalytic theory of demagogic rhetoric, but focuses only on monuments and on an exhibit of Long. While the author gives us various reasons for why he/she is focused only on the present, the explanations are also frustrating since: (a) rhetorical critics do not examine only current messages and (b) the author suggested earlier that his/her theory could explain demagogic rhetoric. If the latter is true, shouldn't the author be able to apply the theory to circumstances where Long spoke, as well? I suggest that the author rethink and refocus: (a) Could this essay instead be about how psychoanalytic theory might explain the role of demagoguery in public monuments/memorials/museums? If so, it seems the author should look further into the wealth of analyses that exist on collective memory and on visual rhetoric to enrich his/her analysis. If the author wants to suggest—as he/she alludes at the end of the current essay—that this theory can apply to more traditional rhetorical messages (e.g. Bill Clinton), then it would be helpful to provide a bit of evidence to suggest how this might be so. On the other hand, if the author wants to argue (b) that his/her theory can explain demagogic rhetoric in general, then I'd really like to see it applied not just to monuments. I realize, as the author states, that the message is not the only piece of the puzzle from the view of psychoanalytic theory, but still it is very important, particularly to this journal's readers. If so, show us how rhetorical critics might use the theory to deal with more

traditional rhetorical discourse. Right now, the author makes the excellent point that male rhetors in “the age of the telegraph and radio” made use of the feminine style. The author also indicates the shortcomings of past analyses of Long’s discourse. If the author can’t show us how his/her theory would do better, though, he/she will have a tough time convincing rhetorical critics of the merit of his/her approach.

- (3) I also suggest that the author go through this essay and check for proofing errors. Sometimes words are missing (e.g., p. 16, last line of first paragraph: “mobility styles” should be “mobility of styles” or incorrectly rendered (p. 18, 6th line in first paragraph should be “subjects” not “subject” and 3rd line from bottom should include the word “imagining” not “imaging”).
- (4) Finally, as an aside, who are the faces that appear behind Long’s one hand in the statue? Are they significant in any way – the hand is near them, but yet he is turned away? Do they imagine themselves as the building that he desires? Food for thought if author continues with the focus on the monuments. . . .

Overall, this essay attempts to break new ground, but needs to consider its audience and focus more carefully. I encourage the author to do so, as his/her insights may be very useful once further developed.