

ing the environmental crisis could be potentially helpful for the conversion of the unconcerned and/or lesser concerned scholars, whose numbers are not inconsiderable. These folks are admittedly not the audience for whom this book was prepared. However, they are arguably the ones who most need to examine the volume and ponder the proposals presented.

Despite this complaint, *Greening the College Curriculum* is an important book. Providing, as it does, a fairly comprehensive plan for the integration of environmental education into the liberal arts curriculum, it is unique. Hopefully, it will reach a wide audience in the academic community and have a beneficial impact on the presentation of topical materials to the current generation of students.—*James W. Williams, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.*

Lanham, Richard. *The Electronic Word: Democracy, Technology, and the Arts.* Chicago and London: University of Chicago Pr., 1994. 285p. \$14.95. (ISBN 0-226-46885-2.) LC 93-13884.

This volume is a polished rhetorical performance by an unabashed and distinguished rhetorician, president of Rhetorica, Inc. (the note on the jacket does not explain the nature of this enterprise) and former director of the Writing Programs at the University of California-Los Angeles, who welcomes the computer as the means by which Western education will return to "a rhetorical pedagogy" and to the rhetorical *paideia*. Lanham is long on promise and enthusiasm but short on specifics, to some extent understandably so because much is yet to be discovered about how the computer will influence Western education.

The first seven of Lanham's ten chapters have appeared elsewhere (in shorter forms, in two cases) between 1989 and 1992, and many of them began life as lectures at various learned venues, as the author freely informs us in headnotes that detail the past lives of each chapter.

The headnote to chapter 8 explains the argumentative structure that Lanham has been building in the preceding chapters, and this is probably the best place for a reader to turn before reading the earlier material. In fact, given that the first seven chapters often cover the same ground in different ways and rehearse what Lanham sees as the polarities of Western culture several times, reading it and perhaps dipping and skimming the earlier chapters would be a practical response to the book. Two of the chapters (3 and 7) are pivotal and deserve more than "dip-and-skim"; in the former, he argues for the rhetorical convergence of disciplinary thought in all areas of learning, and in the latter, he explores "The 'Q' Question" about "what the arts are good for, about how moral and formal truths can be related to one another in human life."

In the latter portions of the book, chapters 8 to 10, after he has set forth his argument, Lanham takes on alternative views, specifically those in recently published works. He is very good at sniffing out the extravagant statement and using it to flog the author of an opposing view, sometimes with an arrogance matching and even surpassing that of his adversary. With an attentiveness to rhetorical effect, Lanham ends the book on a more moderate note—a Socratic dialogue of sorts in which he takes on Curmudgeon, something of an alter ego but also a beloved former teacher to whom Lanham allows a few points but whom he wins over, more or less, to his own position in the end. By this time, his own position also is more cautiously stated, though still overwhelmingly optimistic.

One of the dangers in writing about technology is that it changes so fast, as do attitudes toward it. Lanham launches his argument with the assertion that "humanists are such natural Luddites and have become so used to regarding technology—and especially the computer—as an enemy that it takes some temerity to call the personal computer a possible

friend." The Luddites, if that is what they were, have for the most part left the field now, and those of us who remain can scarcely imagine how we ever taught writing or carried out our own research without the computer. However, as we become more familiar with this technology and become increasingly reliant on it, we also are troubled by potential problems—for example, the expense of maintaining it and of keeping up with rapid developments. Will material on CD-ROMs still be accessible when that technology is displaced? Can we be confident, in times of financial restraints such as we now experience, that CD-ROM readers will be maintained or that information now stored on CD-ROMs will be transferred to newer forms?

Lanham argues that the computer will produce a more active/ interactive reader and create an active/interactive social community of readers and researchers. Possibly, but the question remains whether that active reader's activity will include reflection and deliberation or merely be a response to what is on the screen. And recognition that the social activity in which the computer user engages is, at times, unproductive and even antisocial is leading more and more educational institutions to limit the amount of time per week a student may spend on the Internet. (Visiting a few white power Net sites will persuade anyone that the social aspects of the computer can be frighteningly antisocial.) For some of us, computer time is being limited by the fact that our institutions are billing us for using home modems to connect with the university's mainframe. Such concerns may seem niggling in the face of the optimism and breadth of Lanham's generalizations, but they are the reality tempering all grand hopes and dreams.

Anyone searching for a vision of the future electronic library in this book will be disappointed. Apart from very general statements that online publication has great potential for the future and that

books cannot be the (sole) basis for future planning of libraries and the education of librarians, Lanham has little to say. With apparent implications for the rest of us, he quotes a recommendation from a large law firm that the periodicals in its library "should be sold and replaced with their CD-ROM equivalents." How wonderful it would be, for those of us in literature, to have on searchable CD-ROMs the contents of those massive volumes of *Publications of the Modern Language Association* and other journals

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whose high-acid paper crumbles as we turn the pages! Would that our libraries had the budgets of large law firms!

Rhetoricians are a feisty lot, determined to assert their place in the academy—and rightly so. Lanham is certainly better at this than almost any other rhetorician with whom I have had contact. When he goes after his Curmudgeons and Luddites, he does so with impressive vigor and, at times, a bit of slipperiness, too. Will rhetoric be the means by which all intellectual enterprise will converge and permit us to live in Lanham's idealized world of oscillations and bistability? Probably not, but it is fun to watch Lanham argue the point.—George R. Keiser, *Kansas State University, Manhattan*.

Mantovani, Giuseppe. *New Communication Environments: From Everyday to Virtual*. London, England, and Bristol, Penn.: Taylor & Francis, 1996. 152p. \$69.95 cloth (ISBN 0-7484-0395-7); \$29.95 paper (ISBN 0-7484-0396-5). LC 96-20158.

In graduate school, I had occasion to attend a dinner party hosted by a renowned poet and critic for several of his