Review of: The Rhetorical Career of César Chávez by John C. Hammerback and Richard J. Jensen

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have consigned the organization to irrelevance, disintegration, and even destruction.

Finally, some readers will take issue with Field's style, which relies heavily on long and frequently tedious renditions of conference proceedings and of public statements and speeches by leaders.

Field has told a story that needed to be told, and specialists will appreciate that. Unfortunately, he has not told it as well as he might have.

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DAVID B. DANBOM


Against the backdrop of the Vietnam War and the American Civil Rights movement, César Chávez holds a distinctive place in American social history for giving voice to migrant farm workers. This "voice" is the subject of Hammerback and Jensen's erudite book, The Rhetorical Career of César Chávez. The authors trace the rhetorical campaigns of Chávez's public career from the middle 1960s to his death in 1993, relying upon extant data (in both Spanish and English) such as speeches and notes, essays, interviews, and responses to journalists. The authors' stated goal is "to resolve apparent contradictions raised by the life of this leader who was shy but sought publicity...who began with no noticeable resources and ended with spectacular accomplishments...and who professed to dislike speaking in public but enacted an extraordinary commitment to public address" (p. 9). They offer an accessible and useful explanation of the rhetorical criticism of "reconstitutive discourse" in order to explain how Chávez invented a political persona wherein his "communicated self-portrait [merged] with a substantive message [in order] to exert considerable influence on audiences" (p. 50). Moreover, they explain how Chávez "created rather than persuaded" (p. 54) his audiences, "liberating listeners to think and act more creatively, intelligently, and humanely" (p. 47).

This book raises a number of important questions, entirely apart from the authors' intended analysis. First, what are the limitations of rhetorical advocacy? The authors conclude that Chávez triumphed and failed because of his reliance on public address and charismatic leadership. As they put it, "Chávez's inability to make
the transition from advocate to bureaucrat internally weakened the United Farm Workers” (p. 156). This “inability” marks a more important contradiction in the life and work of Chávez than his humble beginnings or alleged shyness. That the authors frame his public life with the trappings of poverty and reticence may strike some as patronizing. Second, and on a related note, what are the limitations of charismatic leadership? What happens when social movements are built upon the rhetorical power and resonance of one (embodied) leader? The authors make a good case for Chávez’s intentions and efforts to transform his audiences into well-informed, fearless, committed union advocates. It is equally clear, however, that the waning influence of the movement in the last years of his life was due, in part, to Chávez’s position as its central icon. The study leaves this reader wondering if Chávez’s audience(s) constituted him, rather than the other way around. Third, how did Chávez’s rhetorical style and substance differ from that of the leadership of the AFL-CIO? The book emphasizes the tensions between Chávez and the Teamsters. But to what extent were those tensions embodied in rhetorical differences such as race-based poverty and deprivation, gender sensitivities, spiritual commitments, and consumption lifestyles?

In light of their central claim that “[a]n historical study of Chávez can reveal his accomplishments, life, and character, but a rhetorical study is necessary to explain more fully the man and his influence” (p. 190), some might find it ironic that the authors rely so heavily on the work of labor historians. I think it fair to say that Hammerback and Jensen have demonstrated the manner in which history and rhetorical studies are complementary disciplines of inquiry. Their work offers us a detailed explanation of how César Chávez was able to identify with diverse audiences through extraordinary rhetorical efficacy.

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A. SUSAN OWEN


Armando Navarro explores how the Mexicano majority of Crystal, Texas, who had been long repressed by a white minority, organized a new third party (La Raza Unida) and won and maintained control of the city council, the school board, and the Zavala County “Court” of Commissioners between 1970 and 1975. The