

Nathaniel A. Rivers

Rhetorical Theory/Bruno Latour

*Enculturation*

“Introduction” Transcript

*Music begins: Johnny Greenwood, Nudnik Headache*

*Sliding title “Rhetorical Theory / Bruno Latour*

*Block quote:*

tell the humanists that *the more nonhumans share existence with humans, the more humane a collective is.* (*Pandora's Hope* 18)

*Slow pan over image of two boards, held together by glue, being pulled apart.*

Narration: Latour has been in and around rhetoric for some time: primarily, in technical communication and the rhetoric of science. However, Latour’s thought is now making inroads into rhetoric theory and writing studies, or composition more generally. Recent panels at CCCC and RSA have attempted to articulate rhetoric and Latour: to translate, to borrow from Latour, his work for our work.

*Slow pan over image of boards being held together by dozens of clamps.*

Narration: In this short video, which can be viewed as a response to this turn to Latour in rhetoric and composition, I’d like to make a brief case for why Latour’s work is important and necessary for rhetoric. This introduction is polemical inasmuch as it is cursory and underdeveloped. But in many ways there is nothing controversial about Latour for rhetoric.

*Slow pan over image of boards being held together by a few clamps.*

Narration: Rhetoric and composition reading Latour is like remembering something we think we have always known, but with a difference, with an edge of a not quite repressed memory. Where we are lofty, Latour brings us back down to the dusty and earthly.

*Block quote:*

Was it one thing to persuade a minister to provide a stock of graphite, and quite another to persuade a neutron to slow down enough to hit a uranium atom so as to provide three more neutrons? Yes and no (Latour, *Pandora's Hope* 89-90).

*Slow pan over image of hands cover boards in glue with brushes.*

Narration: Two basic assumptions inform my own interest in and use of Latour. First, rhetoric has historically been circumscribed by the strategic use of categories and lines: the move against rhetoric, then, has been to create categories and draw lines that delimit rhetoric's power and province.

*Slow pan over image of boards awaiting application of glue.*

Narration: Latour redraws or retraces these lines and categories in ways useful to rhetoric. The second is that rhetoric, broadly conceived, is the glue or the work of gluing together relationships. Rhetoric is the art or science of living together.

*Slow pan over image of recently glued boards.*

Narration: If we want rhetoric to be the glue of or for relations, or the work of relating (or perhaps unrelating), then, following Latour, rhetoric must account for the glue between humans and nonhumans and maybe even between nonhumans and nonhumans.

*Block quote:*

To be *intelligent*, as the word's etymology indicates, is to be able to hold all these [human and nonhuman] connections at once. (*Pandora's Hope* 90).