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*Main Article:*

## **The Art of Rhetoric as Self-Discipline: Interdisciplinarity, Inner Necessity, and the Construction of a Research Agenda**

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### **Abstract**

I explore in this essay an ethically grounded method for structuring a program of study. Rather than attempt to delimit a discipline or to reinforce disciplinarity, I suggest a means of creatively narrowing the scope of research, namely by focusing on inner necessity and conscience. The art of rhetoric as self-discipline is an extension of inner necessity and a framework in which scholars may come to integrate the more rational and more artistic, more public and more private elements of their personalities by exploring the influence of symbols on their lives. By conceptualizing the art of rhetoric as a “self-discipline,” I affirm the significance of all these elements and suggest that their harmonious blending will enhance the pleasures and utilities of discourse.

**Keywords:** rhetoric; disciplinarity; inquiry; pre-Socratics; music; musica poetica

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She saw the prairie, flat in giant patches or rolling in long hummocks. The width and bigness of it, which had expanded her spirit an hour ago, began to frighten her. It spread out so; it went on so uncontrollably; she could never know it. (Lewis, 1996, p. 28)

[An orator] has not a knowledge of all causes, and yet he ought to be able to speak upon all. On what causes, then, will he speak? On such as he has

learned. The same will be the case also with regard to the arts and sciences; those on which he shall have to speak he will study for the occasion, and on those which he has studied he will speak. (Quintilian, trans. 1990, p. 333)

The rise of professionalism, which in the United States commenced in earnest in the early years following the Civil War (1861-1865), has been characterized for more than a century by disciplinary regimes under which academic research agenda have been closely proscribed. Notwithstanding, many US scholars, who may have been trained in or hired directly into interdisciplinary programs or departments, today range over one or more zones of disciplinary contact. A scholar in an era of relaxing discipline, I, like countless others, navigate a sea of potential topics, methods, and epistemologies, a “sea with its thousand roads” (to appropriate a figure of Michel Foucault [1965, p. 11], who, coincidentally, was reflecting on madness).

As academe becomes more integrated as a location of research, the question of what might or should constitute a program of study will become increasingly perplexing. This essay relates how researchers influenced by the gravitational pull of multiple disciplines might develop a rationale rendering defensible a scholarly path not only to ourselves but to colleagues and students who hold comparatively traditional views on disciplinarity. Personal experiences, interests, and convictions have profoundly influenced my own decisions about the subjects that will engage my attention, the inquiries to which I will dedicate my life’s energy.

## 1. The Art of Rhetoric as Self-Discipline

Plato defines *rhetoric* as the art of influencing the soul through words; Aristotle, the faculty of discovering in the particular case the available means of persuasion; Quintilian, the science of speaking well, or that art or talent by which discourse is adapted to its end. These founding fathers of the tradition do insist that rhetoric’s sphere is the study of verbal language. We reside, however, in “a spiritual city, subject to sudden disturbances for which neither architects nor mathematicians have made allowance” (Kandinsky, 1947, p. 31). Although most rhetoricians continue to conceive of the discipline as concerned with the study of writing and speaking to persuade, it happens that, usually with a nod or a bow to the ancients, multifarious subjects have entered rhetoric’s tent; some have remained; others have departed and may return; still others, unknown, approach. In the 1500s, for instance, Listenius founded *musica poetica* on the rhetoric of the oration. His work has been furthered by composers and music theorists throughout the centuries, including Leonard Bernstein (1918-1990), who lectured extensively on the literary language of concert music (see *The Unanswered Question: Six Talks at Harvard*, a collection of his thoughts on this theme [Bernstein, 1976]). Visual images and graphic design are rhetorical commonplaces today, and recent issues of key disciplinary journals have included articles analyzing physical processes or sports activities.

Rhetoricians are perhaps uniquely positioned to engage in interdisciplinary research, as Cicero suggests when he writes, “No man can be an orator complete in all points of merit who has not attained a knowledge of all important subjects and arts” (Cicero, trans. 1990,

p. 202). The question that concerns me is in fact how the rhetorician, faced with this crush of possibilities, is to define rhetoric for the purpose of formulating a scholarly program. My own solution has been to conceptualize *the art of rhetoric as self-discipline*, an extension of inner necessity and a framework in which I may come to integrate the more rational and more artistic, more public and more private elements of my personality by exploring the influences of symbols on my life. Rather than attempt to nudge others down the path I am following, or indeed to urge any path at all, I offer in this essay a means of focusing one's research. Although I present my ideas within the discipline I know best--rhetoric, the suggestions I offer here will, I hope, be relevant to readers from many fields.

Elinor W. Gadon (2007), author of "My Life's Journey as Researcher," narrates her struggle to make an academic career a "journey of discovery--of who [she is], of the world around [her], and the meaning of life" (section 2). She recalls this struggle as rooted in an early childhood episode during which "an instinctive and uncontrollable desire to know the world, and not just be a mute participant" (section 3)--an episode centering around inquiry, pleasure, and self-expressiveness, of "bodily experience fully lived" (section 3)--was physically disciplined, thus foreshadowing the transgressive character of the self-contextualizing research she would pursue as an adult in academe. Ultimately, her journey took her to India, where she became a pilgrim seeking validation of art and experience as a compass for her scholarly course, and to the California Institute of Integrative Studies, where she designed a PhD program in women's studies that allowed students to create "their own approach to *integral research* they named 'organic inquiry,' which used ongoing self-reflection as a key practice" (section 4).

As an interdisciplinary scholar interested in pursuing research that reflects social and institutional goals in light of the personal, I have found it useful to compare Gadon's narrative to Gerard de Zeeuw's (2005) writing on *high quality experience*. Whereas Gadon focuses on the individual in order to explore research methods and topics, De Zeeuw's concern is an alternative to knowledge acquisition as it is often understood by humanists. De Zeeuw describes such experience as emerging from a collaborative process depending on the functioning of what members of my own discipline would likely term *discourse communities*. According to De Zeeuw, "high quality experience is not achieved by individuals, but only by a special kind of collective, that which achieves stability as part of executing its collective task" (section 5). This type of experience is by no means antithetical to the type Gadon describes, for she relates how powerful her desires to be part of a family, a religious community, and an academic circle have been, as well as how profoundly these collectives have influenced the quality of experience she has gained. The key insight that De Zeeuw brings to a discussion of interdisciplinarity is the notion that the intellectual freedom Gadon and so many academicians seek is made possible, on one level, through the work of multiple collectives. All collectives, read *disciplines* here, constrain members and so restrict their freedom. Yet each of us "may become a member of many stable collectives [e.g., disciplines] in parallel--and in this way gain the ability to freely choose what high quality experiences to acquire and when" (De Zeeuw, 2005, section 6). Loss of one type of freedom thus can be offset by increase

of another type. Interdisciplinarity represents, in this scheme, a virtually boundless source of potential high quality experience for scholars.

The founder of nonrepresentational painting in the West, Wassily Kandinsky (1947) is remarkably clear on the cultural importance of both collective and personal responsibility. Kandinsky has theorized “inner necessity” for colleagues in visual art, in a way that can help scholars across academe address the question of how to design a scholarly program in an era of dilating interdisciplinarity. His thoughts on art and artists are applicable to scholarship and scholars:

- (1) Every artist, as a creator, has something in him which demands expression (this is the element of personality).
- (2) Every artist, as the child of his time, is impelled to express the spirit of his age (this is the element of style)--dictated by the period and particular country to which the artist belongs (it is doubtful how long the latter distinction will continue).
- (3) Every artist, as a servant of art, has to help the cause of art (this is the quintessence of art, which is constant in all ages and among all nationalities). (p. 52)

This article, for instance, was generated out of my own inner necessity to explore a self-referential formulation of rhetoric, one that reflects a personality influenced by a love for art and science and a concern for the culture that has shaped me, examples of the first two sources of inner necessity. Regarding the assistance I might give my colleagues in rhetoric, or how I might act as “a servant of art,” I hope to contribute to an awareness that music and spirituality are part of a vast, largely unplumbed, aquifer of fit rhetorical topics and that the personal has a place in our discipline.

Lloyd Bitzer writes that a rhetorical “exigence is an imperfection marked by urgency; it is a defect, an obstacle, something waiting to be done, a thing which is other than it should be” (as cited in Goodwin, 1998, p. 1). I suggest that the rhetorician’s inner necessity is the primary exigence and ideally should motivate rhetorical acts. Such a rhetorical practice I call a “self-discipline.” But *the art of rhetoric as self-discipline* is not synonymous with “rhetoric as self-expression.” “Self-discipline” implies dissatisfaction with the self in its “natural” state as well as an effort to direct one’s impulses constructively.

The art of rhetoric as self-discipline insists on rhetoric’s transformational potential: the rhetorician is engaged in self-reflection and open to discovering and exploring those topics that have the most powerful effects on her; equally important are her attempts to articulate personal interests in ways that she believes will contribute positively to her culture. Bearing in mind her experiences, aptitudes, needs, and desires, the rhetorician attempts to identify and to fulfill her true and most pressing obligations to self and society. Rhetorical exigencies arising from injustice, for instance, would not fail to be addressed by rhetoricians engaged in self-discipline. Rhetoric so conceived has many of the strengths of the perspectivist approach to criticism advocated by Ellen Messer-

Davidow, for her approach to the limits of subjectivity and objectivity as theoretical postures

would bring together, in processes of knowing, the personal and cultural, subjective and objective--replacing dichotomies with a systemic understanding of how and what we see. It would explain how we affiliate culturally, acquire a self-centered perspective, experience the perspectives of others, and deploy multiple perspectives in inquiry. (as cited in Simpson, 1996, p. 88)

Taken together, the terms *self* and *discipline* frame a model of the art of rhetoric that acknowledges the significance of the rhetorician's inner life in choice of subject and mode of study and that simultaneously requires on her part an authentic effort to make her activity socially vital.

## 2. Inquiry Before the Disciplines

I have envisioned a rhetoric that coaxes out of the shadows those elements of the rhetorician's self that tend to be ignored or disciplined in favor of a less perspectival knowledge, and as a result I have often found myself returning to the "ancient debate" between philosophy and rhetoric. Philosophy, as Aristotle taught, was an objective method for establishing truth; rhetoric, a means of persuading people to believe what the speaker wished. Aristotle set the terms of that debate, and by invoking the distinction one accepts his terms. But since at least the time of Francis Bacon, traditional philosophy has been challenged methodically and its founding assumptions disputed so successfully that by now little of that discipline's objectivism is defended seriously.

Rhetoricians of our day, with their own understandings of language, truth, and power, have been subjecting Aristotle's conception of rhetoric to rigorous critique and reform as well. Susan Jarratt (2002), for instance, has militated for "a broader definition of 'rhetoric' and what counts as 'rhetorical' practice" (p. 12), recommendations that are at the heart of this article. Citing Jeffrey Walker's (2000) claims that lyric poetry is "the nearest relation to, and indeed the precursor for . . . the later 'rhetorical' tradition" and that the lyric served as "culturally and politically significant discourse" (Walker, p. 140), Jarratt follows in the tradition of "numerous feminist historians of rhetoric" who "have argued for the necessity of identifying rhetorical practices outside the boundaries of the named tradition." She finds strong support for her position in Page duBois' (1995) research on Sappho, which "identifies ancient rhetoric as a contested field with no stable point of origin" and "terms the self-referential texts of the rhetorical tradition 'metarhetoric,' freeing up 'rhetoric' for wider use."

Like these feminist historians, I believe it is an appropriate time to look back as well as forward, but well past the horizon established by Aristotle, to prior thinkers, that is, to the pre-Socratics, women and men who most accurately might be called *inquirers*. Their broadness of mind and intellectual integrity are reminiscent of the "insatiable curiosity, .

. . . sense of adventure, and commitment to value-laden education” that Gadon (2006) ascribes to the “researcher *par excellence*” (section 1).

According to Richard McKirahan (1994), the project of the pre-Socratics is best understood in light of the Greek word *historeô*, or “‘inquiry,’ a general term that is different from ‘science’ and ‘philosophy’ as we understand them *in that it does not prescribe a specific subject matter or method*” (p. 75, emphasis mine). Suggesting an enterprise vastly larger in scope than our *history*, *historeô* entailed active investigation--if not eye-witness examination--and knowing, not through synthesis of the wisdom of the ages, but through the inquiring subject’s critical evaluation of observation and experience. Friedrich Nietzsche (1962) writes that the pre-Socratics, Greeks of “the tragic age” who began practicing this type of inquiry in about 600 B.C.E., constituted the “pure types” for all subsequent philosophers (p. 32).

The pre-Socratic inquirers, the prototypes for all philosophers and rhetoricians and in fact for all scholars who followed were not, as is likely in the disciplines today, constructing knowledge incrementally within an already-fortified edifice although they were part of a loose knowledge tradition, to be sure. They speculated widely and wildly about the structure of the universe, the role of the gods, the place of humans, the possibilities for culture. They were unabashedly preoccupied with themselves and their places in the universe. It is their spirit that I believe has the power to revitalize the arts of rhetoric today. Inquiry into spirituality and sound, to name just a few of the topics long marginalized in a logocentric discipline such as my own, much to the detriment of human flourishing, has an extensive history in Western thought and can be traced at least as far back as Hesiod. (Appendices A and B present potential research topics for interdisciplinary rhetorical research in these fields.) The Greeks had addressed these subjects in depth before the appearance of the Sophists or Aristotle’s demarcation of the boundary between rhetoric and philosophy.

### **2.1. Spirituality and the Pre-Socratic Inquirers**

The pre-Socratics were preoccupied with sifting religious conceptions. Sappho of Lesbos, born around 610 B.C.E., most likely participated in women’s religious festivals sponsored by the shrine complex in the island of Lesbos, which housed the sanctuary of Hera, Zeus, and Dionysus (Walker, 2000, p. 223). Sappho frequently addressed her poems to the gods, including Hera, the Muses, and Eros, but because of her own amatory disposition, treated Aphrodite as a favorite and confidante. That she was visited by the gods and spoke with them, as she describes in her poetry, was, “for Sappho undoubtedly reality,” writes Hermann Frankel (1962). “She associate[d] with the gods of her world as did the epic heroes. . . . For her the gods [did] not stand in another, separate space behind human existence” (p. 185).

The Pre-Socratics, who lived between about 610 and 425 B.C.E., evidenced, on the whole, a deep spirituality. One of the many qualities that makes these thinkers remarkable is their interest in critiquing established religions and in creating systems better able to answer their own spiritual needs. Those who came after Sappho were more

likely to demonstrate skepticism towards than respect for such anthropomorphic conceptualizations of divinity. Thales of Miletus demythologized physical processes, for instance, by claiming that earthquakes were the result of the literal movement of water and not the handiwork of Poseidon. And according to Anaximander of Miletus, “that which truly is . . . cannot possess definite characteristics, or it would come-to-be and pass away like all the other things. In order that coming-to-be shall not cease, primal being must be indefinite” (McKirahan, 1994, p. 47). Asserting that the gods had nothing to do with creating or sustaining the universe, Anaximenes of Miletus, too, broke with the anthropomorphic tradition. Xenophanes of Colophon “lash[ed] the Olympians with vigor and point[ed] the way to a rational theology” (p. 60), claiming among other things that Hesiod’s *Theogeny* was impious because it denied the gods’ eternality. Pythagoras of Samos endorsed the doctrine of transmigration and claimed to recall a former life as a certain fisherman named Pyrrhus; he further dissolved the barrier between gods and humans, for body and soul were separate according to his system, and all humans, animals, and plants had not only a physical form but an eternal essence. Pythagoras preached self-purification to his followers, the *akousmatikoi*, who embraced his beliefs, practiced his numerology, and honored his sometimes bizarre proscriptions. Dispensing with many of the revolutions in religious thought that had preceded him, Heraclitus of Ephesus, a man otherwise dissatisfied with many things, evidenced, like Sappho, respect for the gods and their rituals. In contrast, Anaxagoras of Clazomenae postulated the *nous*, or the cosmogonic “mind,” the “universal cosmic principle of change,” which “knows all things that are being mixed together and separated off and separated apart” and “sets in order all things” (p. 221). Empedocles of Acragas believed himself to be a fallen god, or one of the *daimones*, and his worldview, which posited a universe governed by two forces--love and strife.

## 2.2. The Senses and the Pre-Socratic Inquirers

Likewise, these ancient Greeks dispensed with commonsense notions of the relations among the senses, the mind, and truth. Posing impenetrable questions regarding the nature of perception, many of which, in various forms, recur in our own conversations about the possibilities and limitations of objectivity and subjectivity, the pre-Socratics set about establishing frameworks for inquiry that more closely reflected their own certainties.

In Sappho’s poetry, the highest purpose of the senses is to perceive the beautiful/the love object. So doing, the body is loosened and the senses are overwhelmed, charmed, entranced, drunken (Frankel, 1962); hypopoetic existence signals abandonment by the goddess of love. In sharp contrast, Anaximander viewed the senses critically, rejecting “some sense-based judgments in favor of others, and [appealing] to mathematical and logical considerations” to prove that the earth was stable at the center of the universe (McKirahan, 1994, p. 40). Recognizing the limits within which human perception takes place, Xenophanes observed that “if god had not created yellow honey, [humans] would say that figs are far sweeter” (p. 68). Heraclitus believed that the senses could be put to appropriate use by the wise only, for “eyes and ears are bad witnesses to people if they

have barbarian souls” (p. 118). He also observed that inasmuch as nature must be interpreted, language cannot be expected to be transparent.

Synthesizing much of the dialogue on perception that had come before him and thereafter making an astonishing leap, Parmenides of Elea constructed “the first explicit statement of the contrast between reason and the senses, which immediately became and has since remained one of the focal points of philosophical discussion” (p. 165). Although mortals see plurality in the world, Parmenides considered the senses impediments to discovering the truth about reality, which he believed to be One. Thus, by reason, he said, man approaches the truth more closely than by sense perception. In Nietzsche’s (1962) words, both Parmenides and his student Zeno of Elea took as the “starting point of their proof . . . the wholly unprovable, improbable assumption that with our capacity to form concepts we possess the decisive and highest criterion as to being and nonbeing, i.e., as to objective reality and its antithesis” (p. 87).

According to Heraclitus, “sight tells falsehoods” (McKirahan, 1994, p. 118) although “eyes are more accurate witnesses than the ears” (p. 119). Parmenides asserted that mortals are benighted because they accept as reality what they see. Anaxagoras’s paradox of color was meant to confirm that the eyes fail to see truly, for if a drop of black paint is mixed into a bucket of white, the color will change, but the eye will not distinguish this change until many more drops of black are added. Yet he reasserted that the senses, though feeble, helped humans to know the world.

Although Zeno and Parmenides distrusted the senses, and especially hearing, the Pythagorians sought transcendental truth through music. Credited with having discovered the intervals of octave, fifth, and fourth, Pythagoras realized that by placing a finger directly in the center of a monochrome’s string and strumming, a musician creates a tone one octave above the tone of the string plucked when loose. By placing a finger two-thirds up the string and plucking, the musician creates a tone one fifth above the original tone. Finally, by placing the finger three-quarters of the way up the string and plucking, the musician creates a tone one fourth above the original tone. These tones can be represented by the ratios 1:1, 1:2, 2:3, and 3:4, the denominators of which form the “tetractys of the decad” (because one plus two plus three plus four equals ten), which the Pythagoreans considered sacred ratio and by which they “swore their most solemn oaths” (McKirahan, 1994, p. 93).

Since, like all the pre-Socratics, Pythagoras obviously belonged to no formal discipline, he arrived at choices of subject matter in ways that scholars in the twentyfirst century may be unaccustomed to. When determining what research to pursue, we might bear in mind our undergraduate and graduate educations, the journals and books that respected peers read and contribute to, and departmental, college, and university guidelines for achieving promotion and tenure. But the case of Pythagoras suggests that the pre-Socratics indulged what we would probably describe as avocational interests. Clearly, Pythagoras was musically inclined; whether he discovered the octave or not, he enjoyed fiddling around with musical instruments. By exploring this knack deeply, he transformed a hobby into a heuristic that allowed him to explore the harmony of the



spheres: ultimately, he and his students were satisfied that he had discovered fundamental laws of the cosmos in a one-stringed instrument.

### **3. The Rhetoric of Music: An Illustration of Claiming the Art of Rhetoric as Self-Discipline**

As a young woman, I indulged in what Roland Barthes calls the mimetic fantasy, and as an amateur musician found much pleasure and no small amount of pain in my studies. The pain arose from recognizing I would never be a brilliant *Lucia*, or, failing that, a folk singer of any distinction, or even, in those last dark hours, an unobjectionable accompanist; the pleasure, from hard-won competencies and from listening to others do what I longed to myself. When in my midthirties I sensed that the possibility of a life dedicated to music had abandoned me, I enrolled in a graduate program in rhetoric.

To my delight, I reeled beneath rhetoric's vast tent and often heard a kind of music there. Yet I soon realized that my discipline tended to define itself in technical, pedagogical, theoretical, and political terms of a rather uniform timbre and range. Strange, I thought, for a field more like Henry James's "loose baggy monster" than any other coherent field of study alive and vibrating in the world! And yet by no means did I question the importance of what was being accomplished. It seemed to me only that, given the view, more of us might be leaping the stile. What was being ignored was a broader and broadening sense of what rhetoric is and of what is worth studying, and a sense that less proscribed discussion and more pleasure are birthrights of this profession.

The ancient Greeks situated music as a branch of mathematics and, for hundreds of years after Plato, musical training in the West was considered fundamental to ethical, intellectual, and even professional development. But music plays only a minor part in public education in the United States today. In this context, it is unsurprising that music's connection to rhetoric is nearly inaudible, although interest in music is recurrent throughout the rhetorical tradition: Plato, Boethius, Augustine, Bacon, Wollstonecraft, and Nietzsche (among many others) have remarked upon it. This section explores how the discipline of rhetoric might be enriched through the study of music. The heuristic I choose for this exploration was created by one of the founders of the tradition, Aristotle, who saw all discourse as created for the purpose of persuasion through appeals to *ethos*, *logos*, or *pathos*, a taxonomy still widely applied by rhetoricians.

According to musicologist K. Marie Stolba (1998), *ethos* had two prevailing senses for the Greeks: (a) the Aristotelian sense of morals and character and (b) defining aspects of a musical mode that were thought to affect both. The Phrygian mode, associated with Dionysus, was thought to encourage violence and emotion; the Mixolydian mode, tender restraint and mournfulness; the Dorian mode, chastity and fortitude; the Lydian mode, amorousness. The assumption of an especially direct connection between music and soul was also Augustine's, who first resisted listening to chants because of their sensuality but later rationalized that, being directed at God, they had beneficial effects on human character. In *What is Art?* Leo Tolstoy (1960) deplored the degenerate fans of opera and, by extension, the effects of all "trivialized" forms of art on their performers and

audiences. Today, discomfort with Rap music's misogynistic lyrics is commonplace, and concerned parents will insist that music CDs be labeled for graphic sex or violence. Thus, belief in the power of music to degrade individual character and society endures.

Music can also be shown to involve the rhetorical appeal to *logos*, or logic--not only in terms of the obvious issues of textual settings or of conventional patterns, for example, aria and variation or the sonata form, but in many subtle, cabalistic, and, I presume, for most of us, mainly hidden ways. Gregorian chants were based on three intervals--the unity, the fourth, and the fifth, since these had been acknowledged in Greek musicomathematical theory to be "perfect." Up until the middle ages, the chant did not allow intervals of thirds or sixths, intervals without which contemporary popular music, let alone Baroque, Classical, and Romantic music, would be unrecognizable. The chant's "strangeness" to our ears derives precisely from these constraints, which can be traced to Pythagoras's mathematical explorations. J. S. Bach's (1685-1750) *St. Matthew Passion* has been shown to base certain passages on the number 14 (a biblically important number, as with the generations leading up to and away from the Babylonian captivity, and with the generations leading up to Christ's birth; 14 also happens to be the numerological representation of the name *Bach*. For an in-depth treatment of the mathematical sleight-of-hand occurring in this one composition, see Mellers, 1980). The logic of music is a preoccupation of modern classical composers. Béla Bartók (1881-1945) based the first movement of his *Music for Strings, Celeste, and Percussion* on a Fibonacci series and on the "golden section." Olivier Messiaen (1908-1992) composed at times by formally alternating whole and half-steps, incorporating rhythmic palindromes and constructing complex chords based on the higher harmonics of a fundamental tone. Milton Babbitt (1916-) has created highly sophisticated compositions based on all-combinatorial and durational sets (personal conversation with C. Bleyle). John Corigliano (1938- ) won the 2001 Pulitzer Prize in Music for the *Symphony No. 2 for String Orchestra*, a composition that he characterized as a reverse fugue.

It hardly needs stating that the key rhetorical term *pathos*, or the appeal to emotion, is fundamental to music. In the eighteenth century, "the musical aesthetic was most often discussed in terms of rhetoric. Just as it was the goal of rhetoric to persuade audiences, so it was the goal of music to move the listener" (Bonds, as cited in Whittall, 1993, p. 88). Outside of general notions of music's emotional appeal to both humans and nonhumans, there were until the modern era conventional opinions about the emotional values of certain keys, just as there had been, earlier, such beliefs about the modes. For instance, the key of D major was associated with joy; the well-known Christmas song "Joy to the World," written by George Frideric Handel (1685-1789) is in the key of D. The key of D minor was associated with somberness; Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827) chose it for his *Missa Solemnis* and Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791) for his *Requiem*. The key of F major was associated with arcadia. Handel arias such as "He shall feed his flock" and "Come unto Him," Johann Sebastian Bach's (1685-1750) *Christmas Oratorio*, and the Pastoral Symphony of Beethoven all are written in the key of F major (personal conversation with C. Bleyle). King and Jensen (1995) identify a surprising intersection between Reggae and the imagined seat of the emotions: "Proclaimed throughout the

world as ‘music of the heart,’” they write, “the tempo of reggae (72-90 beats per minute) is similar to the pulse of the human heart” (p. 28).

Richard Wagner (1813-1883) makes explicit the geometric expansion of emotional meaning made possible by the application of music to words:

The characteristic distinction between the word poet and the tone poet consists in this: The word poet has concentrated an infinitude of scattered moments of action, sensation, and expression--only cognizable by the understanding--to a point the most accessible to his feeling; now comes the tone poet, who has to expand this concentrated, compact point to the utmost fullness of its emotional content. (Goldman & Springchorn, 1964, p. 207)

#### **4. But Isn't Rhetoric Supposed to be About Politics?**

Any fear that to study music a rhetorician would need to abandon cultural critique and transformation for the tools and comforts of elite aesthetic discourse is unfounded. Like all modes of artistic expression, music is articulated to historical moments.

Musical instruments made of mammoth bones have been dated to 18,000 B.C.E., and from these prehistoric artifacts a ligature between culture and music may be inferred as lasting. Music has long been a language associated with religious experience. The Hurrians of 1400 B.C.E. seemed to have used music exclusively for religious events; there is evidence from about 400 years later that the Hebrews were using *ta'amim* symbols to indicate melodic formulae in the Torah. Today, worship, no matter where, will almost surely involve singing, chanting, dancing, instrumental music, mantra, or *azz'an*.

But why so many differences in musical tradition? “The art of sound lies entirely within the domain of culture,” writes Lévi-Strauss (1997, p. 107), and by this he means there is no “natural” music. According to music theorist Tomlinson, “the most profound and authentic meanings of music will be found not in musical works themselves but behind them, in the varieties of discourse that give rise to them” (as cited in Bose, 1996, p. 9).

“Music is what I am going to speak about,” lectured Igor Stravinsky (1882-1971), “But before I do that, it is absolutely essential in order that this particular problem may be the better delimited and placed, that I say a few words to you in very general terms about the Russian Revolution” (Stravinsky, 1970, p. 99). Thus he introduced a series of personal observations on how Soviet music reflected and contributed to the political culture of his own day:

In a new opera, *In the Storm*, they have even reached the point of making Lenin appear on the stage. As for the famous adaptations which I have just mentioned, I can tell you that quite recently the *Nutcracker* of Tchaikovsky was restored to the ballet repertory, not without modifying its plot and libretto, which were found to be of too mystical a coloring and thus

dangerous, as well as foreign, to the Soviet spectator. In a like manner, after endless hesitations and numerous revision, Glinka's celebrated opera *A Life for the Czar* has once more taken place in the repertory under the title of *Ivan Soussanine*. The word *Czar* was replaced as the occasion required by the words *Country*, *Homeland*, and *People*. One should not seek an explanation of this patriotic setting in Glinka's music, but rather in the national-defense propaganda. Lacking any authentic forms of expression of its own, the communist patriotism imposed upon the Soviet government by the pressure of events expressed itself, via subversion, through one of the purest masterpieces of classical Russian music, a masterpiece which had been conceived and composed in entirely different circumstances and embodied an entirely different meaning. (p. 113)

A music teacher of mine, who embellished most lectures with political observations, was also a choir director at a local Methodist church and knowledgeable about the life of Martin Luther and the music evolving out of the Reformation. This teacher demonstrated how the secular song "*Mein G'müth ist mir Verwirret*," which begins, "*Mein gmuth ist mir verwirret/Das macht ein Junfrau zart*," or "My peace of mind is disturbed by a tender maiden," was appropriated by J. S. Bach as the basis of his sublime aria "*O Haupt voll Blut und Wunden*," or "O head full of blood and wounds," the recurring chorale of the *St. Matthew Passion*. Indeed, Luther, to whom is attributed the unlevitical sentiment "Anyone who bad-mouths polyphony should be thrown in a pile of shit," transformed many secular songs, even those with racy origins, into hymns (personal conversation with C. Bleyle). "*Ein' feste Burge ist unser Gott*," or "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God," in many hymnals attributed to Luther, was a well-known theme on which inductees into guilds were required to produce variations. In addition to churchifying secular music, Luther tacitly authorized hymns such as "*Erhalt uns, Herr, bei deinem Wort*," which expressed the sentiment "Lord, protect us by Thy word, And put an end to the murdering Pope and Turk." German Protestants of the time produced a flourishing trade in parodies on Catholic hymns. (This is the converse political turn taken in the evolution of "*O Haupt voll Blut und Wunden*.")

Mozart's operas *Il barbiere di Siviglia* and *Don Giovanni*, both based on the Beaumarchais plays that helped fuel the French Revolution, are additional examples of countless musical works with political overtones, as is the Ninth Symphony of Beethoven, who is said to have written the fourth movement, containing the chorus "*Alle Menschen werden Brüder*," as a response to Napoleon's coronation as emperor.

A more contemporary example is Reggae, which "challenge[s] Jamaica's neo-colonialist society's attempts to keep whites at the top and blacks at the bottom of the socio-economic structure" (King & Jensen, 1995, p. 17). King and Jensen classify Reggae as a music of protest, powerful by virtue of what it brings to "downpressed" groups--namely "an opportunity to participate publicly in voicing opinions which would normally be censored by the government" (p. 19). African-American spirituals, too, are richly rhetorical, in both political and poetic senses: "Deep River," to provide one example, reflects the rhetoricomusical principles discussed by Thomas Morley (1557-1602) and

consciously applied by Handel, Thomas Weelkes (1575-1623) and others (Richards, in press).

Wagner, who today may be as famous for his strident nationalism and anti-Semitism as for his Ring Cycle, makes the connection between music and politics explicit:

The poet's art has turned to politics: no one now can poetize, without politicizing. Yet the politician will never become a poet, precisely until he ceases to be a politician: but in a purely political world to be not a politician is as good as to say one does not exist at all; whosoever at this instant steals away from politics, he only belies his own being. (Goldman & Springchorn, 1964, p. 148)

Perhaps the reason we imagine that music is irrelevant to history is that we are not sufficiently knowledgeable about music or history. Quite literally, the ways in which musicians have participated in, and will continue to participate in, cultural transformation are endless.

## 5. Discipline and Enculturate

I still recall the disbelief I felt on the day more than a decade ago when I drove by my school's performance hall and first beheld the behemoth state-of-the-art electronic billboard emblazoned with Coca-Cola's logo. Since then, the student union "food court," once a down-at-heels cafeteria furnished with defaced tables and treacherous chairs, has become a garishly lit warehouse of fast food joints running the multicultural gamut from Taco Ball to Panda Express. Dozens of campus computer labs have been "donated" by Apple or IBM. The agricultural and life sciences college have received lucrative contracts and grants from the agrichemical industry; the bioengineering department, from the biotech industry; the engineering college, from the military industrial complex. According to its public relations materials, the school has been at various times in its recent history the first-ranked US institution of higher education in terms of options and licenses based on technologies invented and among the top dozen such institutions in terms of patents, active licenses and options, and generation of start-up companies. The school also has established a busy group of institutes and centers aimed at servicing the state's business needs, from management to research and development to fabrication. Its most illustrious research park often houses more than 50 companies linking the school to industry and business. In sum, the environment in which I received my PhD was redolent of *corporate culture* as invoked by Henry A. Giroux (2002) and others, for this school also was characterized by "an ensemble of ideological and institutional forces that function[ed] politically and pedagogically both to govern organizational life through senior managerial control and to fashion compliant workers, depoliticized consumers, and passive citizens" (p. 429).

Towards the end of my studies, I received an announcement that contained a list of dissertations just published in my program. I was astonished by the similarity in titles when I considered the students who had produced them: none of their unique interests or

talents was to be deduced from the titles of their research. The titles concerned digital literacy (identifying information has been changed in this paragraph), and I recalled that this was a special interest of the faculty directing those dissertations. Although I knew that the students might have chosen their chairs precisely because they themselves hoped to study this topic, I could not help wondering. One of the authors had frequently told me about her ongoing participation in multicultural education among gay high-school students participating in a playwriting workshop. Yet another of the authors, who was married to a Kuwaiti, had been considering a dissertation on the depictions of Middle Easterners appearing in *Time* magazine after 9/11. Outside of these authors, I knew of other colleagues who had been warned against including personal information in their dissertations; one had been forbidden to do so. But reproduction of faculty through their students, if this in fact was what had been going on, would not have been unique to my school. What of that powerhouse rhetoric program on the East Coast, where students referred to themselves as “Jonesclones,” Jones being the name of an especially eminent faculty member?

Not long after I was informed of the dissertation titles, I received this note in my e-mail inbox, from a graduate student writing to an interdepartmental listserv:

Hi Everyone,

I am writing this from dissertation hell . . . (actually from my little house in [state]). It just occurred to me that those of you who haven't started your diss. might benefit from the wacky things I am learning about the process, so here goes.

1. The diss. is as much about your major professor as it is about you and sometimes it's even about “hands on” committee members. Credibility and ego are at stake all around.
2. The diss. is a genre that we are not taught at [that institution]. However, it is a genre that is warped by the vision of your major professor, so in a sense it can't be taught completely.
3. You have to maintain your own vision. You have to OWN your diss.; get angry, argue. The process can become territorial--a real pissing contest.
4. You go in with a plan and somewhere in the middle, all your positivity and motivation crash. You are left with only the desire to finish. You decide to write the dissertation, not THE dissertation.
5. It is an insular process. No one gives a rat's behind about your wonderful topic. Your major professor, your friends, and your partners are mostly concerned about the process and/or how close you are to finishing. You have to sustain excitement about your topic in isolation.
6. Most importantly, you have to reach out for a boost from time to time. When you are thoroughly discouraged and depressed, ask those you trust to tell you you are pretty, witty, and wise. It may get you through the next 20 or 30 pages. (But don't ask your major professor; ego busting is part of the job description.) (Mohrbacher, personal communication, April 12, 2003)

Such strict disciplining of novice scholars is worlds away from the integral graduate education described by Gadon and referenced earlier in this article.

“In ordinary existence,” Cixous writes, “Woman does not announce, does not begin things. It is agreed that she will not go after the object of her desire” (Cixous & Clément, 1986, p. 117). Because the author of the e-mail failed to have these ordinary expectations of her education, she reacted to it allergically, as if to an *anti-body*: her major professor’s vision was warped, the writing process was a pissing contest, no one gave a rat’s behind for the student’s ideas, her motivation and positivity crashed, her ego was busted, and *the* dissertation needed to be aborted.

I have written this essay with an interdisciplinary future in mind. In the present, however, as we all know, scholars who transgress disciplinary borders often do so at some risk. Like all symbolic systems, language, as Catherine Clément observes, gives rise to an “imaginary zone” of exclusion. She writes:

It is that zone we must try to remember today . . . [for] societies do not succeed in offering everyone the same way of fitting into the symbolic order; those who are, if one may say so, between symbolic systems, in the interstices, offside, are the ones who are afflicted with a dangerous symbolic mobility (Cixous & Clément, 1986, pp. 6-7).

Yet what, we might ask, is the function of a teacher? After all, has she not mastered a subject? Are students not paying to learn what she knows? Does she not have a responsibility to discipline? “What is the discourse of mastery?” Cixous asks Catherine Clément. Fittingly, she answers her own question:

There is one. It is what calls itself “the law” but is presented as “the open door” in precisely such a way that you never go to the other side of the door, that you never go to see “what is mastery?” So you never will know that there is no law and no mastery. That there is no master. The paradox of mastery is that it is made up of a sort of complex ideological secretion produced by an infinite quantity of doorkeepers. (Cixous & Clément, 1986, p. 138)

Teachers who strictly discipline advanced students (often colleagues in the teaching profession) are reinscribing their own values on those who may have something else to say altogether. Cixous envisions a form of love that also defines a healthy teacher-student relationship, one in which

each would take the risk of other, of difference, without feeling threatened by the existence of an otherness, rather, delighting to increase through the unknown that is there to discover, to respect, to favor, to cherish. This love would not be trapped in contradictions and ambivalences entailing the murder of the other indefinitely. (Cixous & Clément, 1986, p. 78)

The process of sublimation, or of (literary) production, is the Ariadne's thread by which the oppressed emerge from patriarchal structures. The corporatized university is such a structure, reproducing in the first case the Freudian family regimented by the patriarch and the patriarchally-identified woman, and resisted by neurotics and other children. But, as Clément notes, "The family does not exist in isolation, rather it truly supports and reflects the class struggle running through it" (Cixous & Clément, 1986, p. 152).

The graduate student in the corporatized university, and especially the student of English studies, works in an exploitive system but is able to exit it through literary or other creative production.

Everyone knows that a place exists which is not economically or politically indebted to all the vileness and compromise. That is not obliged to reproduce the system. That is writing. If there is a somewhere else that can escape the infernal repetition, it lies in that direction, where *it* writes itself, where *it* dreams, where *it* invents new worlds. (Cixous & Clément, 1986, p. 72)

The teacher, however, can ensure that no real liberation occurs within the institution by insisting that students' writing reproduce her own ideas and values. But the creative student must break at least some of the respected old crockery, because what is is not good enough:

Art is an expression of man's need for a harmonious and complete life, that is to say, his need for those major benefits of which a society of classes has deprived him. That is why a protest against reality, either conscious or unconscious, active or passive, optimistic or pessimistic, always forms part of a really creative piece of work. (Trotsky, 1970, p. 111)

The art of teaching is not to fill students' heads with knowledge (the banking model discredited by Paulo Freire and so many others), but to help them embrace possibilities. The world as it is broken and anyone with eyes to see knows this. Teachers have their own ideas, but these evidently are not sufficient for the world, nor are they sufficient for students who are truly engaged in learning, who know that "thinking the thinkable is not worth the effort" (Cixous, 1993, p. 38)--let alone thinking the already thought!

The dark side of institutional power was a frequent subject of Leon Trotsky, who, like Kandinsky, recognized the importance of inner necessity. Trotsky's extensive aesthetic writings were generated in part out of ideological differences with Stalin, who believed that inquiry should be channeled by the powerful for the ends of the institution. The problems with this commandeering of inquiry were recognized around the world:

The Marxian [academic] works do not transcend the limit of scholastic compilations which say over the same old ideas, endorsed in advance, and shuffled over the same old quotations according to the demands of the current administrative conjuncture. Millions of copies are distributed



through the state channels of books and brochures that are of no use to anybody, put together with the help of mucilage, flattery and other sticky substances. Marxists who might say something valuable and independent are sitting in prison, or forced into silence. (Trotsky, 1970, p. 104)

“The duller and more ignorant the dictator,” Trotsky concluded, “the more he feels called upon to prescribe the development of science, philosophy, and art” (p. 131).

As professional academics we are well aware of the pressures that graduates with interdisciplinary or otherwise unorthodox research agendas can encounter on entering the job market. It is our responsibility not only to apprise students of these pressures but also to explore the gaps in experience and understanding that our students hope to fill through a graduate education and, ultimately, a scholarly career.

## 6. Conclusion

My own discipline of rhetoric can be conceptualized not only as an abstract body of knowledge about communication generally or persuasion specifically but also as a series of unique collections of philosophies, theories, methodologies, tools, and modes instantiated in individuals, that is, unique, bodied, practicing rhetoricians. The more varied the collection, the more able the rhetorician and her discipline may be to make sense of the world, for, as Empedocles advised,

Look with every means of apprehension, in whatever way each thing is clear,  
Not holding any sight more in trust than [what comes] through hearing,  
Or loud-sounding hearing above the things made clear by the tongue,  
And do not at all hold back trust in any of the other members,  
Whatever way there is a channel for understanding, but  
Understand each thing in whatever way it is clear. (McKirahan, 1994, p. 235)

From this perspective, an interest in music and spirituality, for instance, a disinclination to focus on a narrow set of subjects, and the study of alternative philosophies, theories, tools, and modes that such predilections might require would advantage the inquirer. Empedocles states an ancient rationale for triangulation of a kind, enjoining his students to allow the mind to question the certainties of the senses, and the senses to challenge the mind’s cherished beliefs.

Turning for a last time to the pre-Socratics, we see that they not only were addressing themes of lasting value, but also were developing methods of inventing, arranging, and expressing thought. The pre-Socratics--scientists and oracles, philosophers and rhetoricians (or neither scientists nor oracles, neither philosophers nor rhetoricians)--regularly invented through record-keeping, speculating, observing, being self-reflexive, measuring, generalizing, associating, interpolating and extrapolating, contradicting, defining, understating and overstating, identifying, analyzing difference, arguing both

sides, and generating principles, paradigms, patterns, theorems, reductions, paradoxes, metaphors, similes, maxims, and analogies. They arranged their thoughts according to cause and effect, extremes and intermediates, stages, processes, genealogies, oppositions, proofs deductive and inductive, sequences, taxonomies, parallelisms, ratios. Their styles were at times iconoclastic, satirical, skeptical, scholastic, rational, ornamented, polemic, prophetic. They wrote philosophical treatises, religious manuals, and epic and lyric poetry.

These thinkers, who conducted their inquiries before the creation of the disciplines, represented, for Nietzsche, a republic of creative minds (Richards & David, 2008). By coming to know ourselves and to recognize our responsibilities more clearly, and by regularly experimenting with our ways of thought, knowledge, and expression, scholars across academe may also make a habit of that wonder which was part of the daily diet of the pre-Socratics, “dearest of all” thinkers to Nietzsche, “the collective representatives of the eternal intuitive type, the discoverers of ‘the beautiful possibilities of life’” (Nietzsche, 1962, p. 3).

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## **APPENDIX A**

### **Possible Research Topics in the Rhetoric of Religion**

1. It is possible to explore organized religion and the faith of individuals by analyzing the religious talks given at the various places of worship, instrumental music used to enhance the experience, lyrics of the music or of passages read aloud by groups of attendees or by individuals, iconography in homes and places of worship, the aesthetic of the sacred places themselves.
2. One might also address the possibility that there is a master narrative regarding religion that is provided by high-profile academic males. If so, are faithful academic women engaged in writing counternarratives in the feminist tradition?
3. What is the role played by religious dogma in the lives of individuals?

4. Thinkers such as Meister Eckhardt defy the categorization of Christianity as rigid, etc.; is there a spectrum of approaches to religious dogma that could be discovered from among current writers on the topic?
5. Religious hate crimes in the United States also are often racist events, e.g., the destruction of Black churches both in Birmingham during the Civil Rights era and the series of fires in the 1990s, the destruction of synagogues, the murder and harassment of Sikhs and Muslims after 9/11, the internment camps in Guatánemo Bay (death camps for certain Muslims). How can the tools and methods of rhetoric be used most effectively in addressing these issues?
6. Religious diversity is as much a part of cultural diversity as ethnicity, race, and class. How and why are religious beliefs and practices being marginalized in the discipline of rhetoric and professional communication?
7. Organized Christianity creates vast amounts of literature, e.g., *The Watchtower* and the *Awake!* of the Jehovah's Witnesses, or the more generic *Guideposts*. What rhetorical strategies do these publishers use? How do their strategies compare to the strategies, say, of business or technical writers?
8. What types of dialogues are being undertaken between members of different religions?
9. What do public figures, e.g., Martin Luther King, Jr. and Mahatma Gandhi, gain and what do they lose as a result of articulating spiritual belief to political movements?
10. To what extent is the notion of "false consciousness" validated in organized religions?

## **APPENDIX B**

### **Possible Research Topics in the Rhetoric of Film Music**

1. What is/has been the role of the director in the creation of film scores?
2. What is the role of silence in film scores (case in point: the last 15 minutes of *High Noon*)?
3. What effects can the use of a single song whose lyrics are known to the audience and which can therefore comment "wordlessly" on film action, have on the audience (e.g., Dmitri Tiomkin's "Do Not Forsake Me" in *High Noon*)?
4. In what ways is classical music used in film scores (e.g., Mendelssohn's music in Max Rhinehardt's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* [1935])?

5. What is the effect of rock and roll compilation scoring on audience reception of films?
6. What have been the roles played by musical performers of color in Hollywood film?
7. What degree of independence is enjoyed by film composers now, and what has been enjoyed in the past?
8. How do composers and directors collaborate?
9. What is the role of disturbing music in film, i.e., music that would seem deliberately not to turn the spectator into an “untroublesome viewing subject” (e.g., Bernard Herrmann’s [1911-1975] music in *Psycho* [1960])?
10. What types of information are not conveyable through film scores?
11. Do film composers find themselves falling back on certain techniques to heighten visual meaning? Verbal meaning?
12. In what ways are speech and sound effects connected to musical scores?
13. What part do film scorers play in the recording of films? How do they collaborate with sound engineers, if at all?
14. What strengths does music have as an art form that visual and verbal arts may not?
15. What might an understanding of film scoring contribute to the art of Web design, if anything?
16. What process do film composers use when they compose?
17. Do they consider themselves artists, technicians, or professionals, and why?
18. Under what circumstances is “aleatoric music” (chance music) used and why?
19. Do composers attempt to understand the “poetic intent” of a film? If so, what type of adjustments might it lead them to make?
20. What are the connections between opera and scoring for film?
21. What are the cutting edge technologies in scoring today, and how important is technology to the art of film music?
22. What is the status of women in the film scoring industry?

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