Rhetoric in the Rest of the West

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Edited by

Shane Borrowman, Robert L. Lively
and Marcia Kmetz

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FOREWORD

JAMES J. MURPHY

This is a mind-bending book.

From Carol Poster's three opening sentences in Chapter One to Madame Gournay's final plea for equality at the end of Chapter Ten, the reader is challenged to take on ideas so new that the familiar may begin to look suspicious.

For those readers unaccustomed to thinking about Vikings and Etruscans at the same time, or who may be offended by links between Quintilian and African "griots," this book offers an opportunity for thinking outside the proverbial rhetorical "box." Even the well-studied (over-studied?) Margery Kempe and Anne Askew—"the history of rhetoric looks different when women are included"—are looked at in different ways.

Yet this book is not an iconoclastic striving to tear down the received and the well known. Instead, it is merely subversive, in a way that Quintilian, that great examiner of the well known, would surely have approved.

INTRODUCTION

STILL A GREAT STORY

SHANE BORROWMAN, ROBERT L. LIVELY AND MARCIA KMETZ

> It has always been easy to learn lessons from history, but all too often this is simply the case of using the past to justify modern ideas.
> —Adrian Goldsworthy, *How Rome Fell: Death of a Superpower*[1]

In what is arguably both the most concise and dismissive characterization of rhetoric's past, Thomas P. Miller famously argues that "The rhetorical tradition is a fiction that has just about outlasted its usefulness."[2] Within the confines of his argument—and the state of the field at the time of its genesis in the early 1990s—Miller is largely correct. Any straight line drawn between ancient Greece and the modern world, between the lessons of the Sophists and rhapsodes of Attic Greece and the courses of study common to most Ph.D. programs in rhetoric and composition, is only straight when viewed from a great distance—like China's Great Wall viewed from the moon. Certainly Miller's argument that the field's historians must better attend to the rhetoric of traditions is one to heed.

History, as criticized by Miller, is most comfortably written through the exaggerated and aggravated lens of hyperbolic certainty: Facts are known and knowable, and right interpretations of those facts are possible. Such absolutism is rare, although not unknown, among modern academic historians (including Miller), but the cultural impetus to view historical events as "stories waiting to be told" is impossible to escape, given the knee-jerk centrality of narrative-making to human communication—and the fact that one act of narration builds upon another, with the ultimate effect of conflation of factuality and narrativity.[3] The act of historical interpretation is eclipsed in the making of a historical narrative, eliding the complexity and intricacy of the process of historical construction.

It is not our purpose here to argue the rhetorics of historiography or the merits of one way of "doing" history over another. What matters most to us and to the authors of the chapters that follow is this: One historical narrative justifies another, reciprocally, and narrative patterns imposed or implied by earlier writers become invisible frames within which only certain acts of interpretation are privileged or even possible. In *How Rome Fell*, for example, Adrian Goldsworthy spends nearly as much time explaining what is neither known nor knowable with certainty as he does offering his own compelling story of the last throes of Rome's western half. This criticism is an outgrowth of two competing narratives in modern historical scholarship on Rome: In the most traditional histories, which Goldsworthy lays at the feet of Edward Gibbon, Rome reached its peak beneath emperors such as Trajan and Hadrian, "decent and capable men . . . [who] eventually died natural deaths."[4] Gibbon's story, like the histories that followed, is one of, well, decline and fall. Gibbon (*et al*.) writes a good history, tells a good story, provides a narrative pattern that—wittingly or otherwise—is accepted virtually worldwide: Rome rose, grew decadent and foolish and weak, and fell. Roman order led to medieval chaos.

But Goldsworthy makes it clear from the outset that his argument about Rome is, in the end, another telling of the story Gibbon would call an echo of his own: "The focus" of my book, writes Goldsworthy, "must always be on the factors and events that led to the eventual fall of the empire, and this is the story that this book attempts to tell. It is undoubtedly one of both decline and fall."[5] He writes of a Roman world rarely at peace for long after 217 CE without an internal civil war breaking out,[6] a world simultaneously in conflict and competition with virtually countless external tribal groups who can, in the end, be said to have murdered a body politic already too sick to resist.[7] There are narratives, Goldsworthy mentions in passing, in which Rome did not fall and, instead, simply transformed into something else, something different militarily and politically and culturally and territorially. Still Roman. Just different in virtually every way.

The arguments of such historians may have merit, particularly when they champion the sort of "narrative history" that has been less valued by the larger community of classical historians,[8] but *How Rome Fell* is unambiguous in its argument that such non-Gibbon interpretations are, in the end, wrong.

Similarly to Adrian Goldsworthy, Robin Waterfield, in *Why Socrates Died*,[9] devotes more attention to detailing the Athenian context of Socrates' trial and enumerating the corner and edge pieces of the puzzle

which are only educated guesses—such as the number of jurors to hear the case against Socrates—than he devotes to exploring the Socratic Problem left by Xenophon and Plato. Waterfield's argument is a narrative act of interpretation, an historical house built upon sand—but the foundation is stronger for the knowledge of its granulated grounding. And its significance is not inconsiderable, given the poverty of easily accessible yet well-conceived histories of early Greek philosophy and culture for historians engaged in only tangentially related studies of rhetoric.

The story of the received tradition in rhetorical studies is, like Gibbon and Goldsworthy's tales of the fall of Rome, a good story—useful in its place and no more prone to error and exaggeration than any similarly targeted professional origin narrative. Such a genesis tale gravitates naturally to great figures and great texts, a gravitational pull that eventually throws out counter-narratives championing other figures and texts, a historical push-pull characterized by Miller and others as the workings of centripetal and centrifugal forces of culture. Either metaphor of *physis* manages to characterize the problem but not to provide simple explanation for its purpose at a basic level of narrative: Narratives of history "make the structure of interpretation appear to be (the same as) the structure of factuality" (parentheses in original).[10] Events appear chronologically—from arbitrarily chosen points of starting and stopping—and the events within the chronology are implicitly linked by notions of cause and effect, with explicit links being established in the historical narratives that accumulate around the chronologies and counter-chronologies.

While rhetoric should never abandon hyperbole as a strategy of argumentation, particularly in oral argument, there is no longer a place for it in rhetoric's study of its own history, just as there is no longer a place for arbitrarily choosing the points at which our histories start and stop without at least acknowledging that such a choice is a decision more about narration than valuation. Our present circumstances are the product of our understanding of the past. Within the general, malleable frame of the rhetorical tradition—as it is normally conceived, with its roots in ancient Greek culture—we must construct a different present by studying our received tradition with more nuance. Even if we continue to start with Socrates as we generate our tale and trail that narrative to the most recent meeting of the Conference on College Composition and Communication, the interpretive acts within that frame need to lead us to and through the same well-worn memes.

We must—or at least may—study the history of rhetoric not as *the* history or perhaps even *a* history but rather as our memory, our shared sense of our common heritage. Conceiving of our past as memory rather

than as history allows for a more natural turn to study of the pattern of memory itself, the pattern of meaning making that we apply again and again in our stories of Socrates and the Sophists, the current-traditionalists and the post post-modernists. Describing the mnemonic outline of his life early in *This House of Sky*, Ivan Doig instructively writes, "[W]hy is the pattern of remembered instants so uneven, so gapped and rutted and plunging and soaring? I can only believe it is because memory takes its pattern from the earliest moments in the mind, from childhood. And childhood is a most queer flame-lit and shadow-chilled time."[11] A look at the narratives of rhetoric's childhood reveals an odd pattern of dismissiveness and decisiveness, apprehension and abandonment,. As early as 403 BCE, laws were passed in Athens "aimed at the perceived menace of rhetorical teaching,"[12] and both Sophists and rhapsodes—the primary agents of literacy in Greek antiquity—were commonly in the unenviable position of all metics: valued for their skills but subject to institutionalized discrimination in virtually all city states, democracy or oligarchy or tyranny.

A mnemonic turn away from the wandering teachers of literacy to the better-known, Athenian-based figures of the rhetorical tradition does little to improve the memory's point of origin. Socrates left no written records of his own, and the character of Socrates constructed by Plato is both dismissive of virtually all practical forms of rhetoric and quite different from the character of Socrates constructed by Xenophon. Gorgias and Isocrates have both suffered the neglect of a tradition that saw little value in them—other than as foils for the patriarchal figures of Plato *et al.*—and Aristotle's legacy, within rhetoric, is a set of lecture notes cobbled together and edited across time into a form that may or may not resemble its original.

In *The Location of Culture*, Homi K. Bhabha describes remembering in a way that both echoes Doig (albeit in a radically different context) and solidly sets the pattern the rhetorical tradition has followed in our modern conception of it: "Remembering is never a quiet act of introspection or retrospection. It is a painful re-membering, a putting together of the dismembered past to make sense of the trauma of the present."[13] It is a re-membering that we attempt in the chapters that follow, but this re-membering takes place entirely within the confines of the Western tradition itself, rather than among the traditions of persuasion that developed within their own cultural contexts.

The history of rhetoric is studied in rhetoric and composition programs, at both the M.A. and Ph.D. levels, as an urbanized Western phenomenon, with texts such as *A Synoptic History of Classical Rhetoric* (Murphy &

Katula, LEA, 2003) arguing that the art of rhetoric itself could only develop in a democratic environment such as that provided in ancient Greece, especially the Athenian polis. *The Rhetorical Tradition* (Bizzell and Herzberg, Bedford/St. Martin's, 2001) deals strictly with western rhetoricians from Greece and its cultural children across Europe, as does the aforementioned *A Synoptic History of Classical Rhetoric* and *Readings from Classical Rhetoric* (Matsen, Rollinson, and Sousa, SIU Press, 1990). In the works of leading-historian George A. Kennedy, such as *Classical Rhetoric and Its Christian and Secular Tradition* (UNC Press, 1999) and *A New History of Classical Rhetoric* (Princeton UP, 1994), the breadth of rhetoric is studied in favor of the depth, and only the dominant tradition receives attention. The failed traditions that developed side-by-side are obscured, ignored, and undervalued. The same is true of other (newer) anthologies, such as *Rhetoric Before and Beyond the Greeks* (Lipson and Binkley, SUNY Press, 2004), where the rhetorical traditions of non-Western cultures are studied essentially in isolation. Little cultural-crossover is considered—such as the Egyptian influence on Greek education—and no indebtedness to the Arab world for the very existence of some Classical texts is acknowledged. Rather than repeat this same pattern of memory with a new set of essays, in the chapters that follow, we attempt to re-member the rhetorical tradition, from its roots in the rhapsodic practices of wandering Greek rhapsodes to the shifting webs of sponsorship, friendship, and patronage supporting the production and dissemination of the works of Marie de Gournay.

But such a summation does a disservice to significant stops along this metaphorical and historical Appian Way and disregards the ties that bind together the chapters that follow.

In "The Rhetoric of 'Rhetoric' in Ancient Rhetorical Historiography," Carol Poster analyzes our field's use of the term that has defined it, dogged it, and denigrated it from the beginning: Plato's (or perhaps Socrates' [or perhaps Plato's Socrates']) *rhetorike*, which made its textual appearance in fifth/fourth-century Attica. While her analysis of the broad and deep definitional problems endemic to "rhetoric" is both thorough and engaging, Poster's mapping of some blurred scholarly margins is extraordinary—the equivalent, metaphorically, of replacing a medieval map's "here there be saerpents" representation of the Atlantic Ocean with a full image from Google Maps. Specifically, Poster considers such complicated figures as Aspasia, who may have been a powerful political mover and stellar teacher of rhetoric . . . if she existed at all. We cannot invent figures, she argues, but we cannot claim actual figures and then invest them with rhetorical properties, either. Not everything can be

rhetoric if rhetoric is to have any true definition. Lines must be drawn. If the field of rhetoric and composition is to trace its beginnings to figures such as Plato and Aristotle, then the field must also accept at least some of their foundational work on the general topic, the terms it uses, the study of civic discourse it represents.

But beginnings, as we argued earlier in reference to *This House of Sky*, have consequences for everything that comes later. A rhetorical tradition that begins with the sophists (when they plant their feet in the Athenian *agora*), followed by figures such as Aspasia (integrally linked, along with Socrates, to Pericles and the Golden Age of Athens) and Aristotle (linked through his father to Philip of Macedon and through his own actions to Alexander the Great) is a civic tradition, a history of rhetoric that virtually ignores the world beyond centers of power such as Athens and Rome. Marcia Kmetz turns this received tradition on its side, exploring both the rhetorical/poetical tradition to evolve from the works of Hesiod (virtually ignored in rhetoric and composition studies) and the dissemination of those works by and among rhapsodes, traveling poets and speakers who bear more than a small resemblance to sophists. An exploration of the rural, rather than civic, rhetorical tradition begins here.

Following Poster and Kmetz, both literally and figuratively, Richard Leo Enos the role that Etruscans played in the development of Roman literacy practices. The Roman Empire stands, in the Western memory, on ever-shifting sand. Edward Gibbons' narrative of Rome as a great empire that collapsed beneath its own weight of corruption and in-fighting is useful and well-entrenched. At the same time that the Empire is praised for its size and martial prowess, it is denigrated for its significant reliance upon Greek culture (its virtual plagiarism of Greek culture, according to some historians) and its skills at administration over innovation. Both praise and criticism of Rome can be offered, and neither epideictic vein taps into the rich ore mined here by Enos, who considers the role that Etruscan culture played in the development of Roman scholarship (including art and even civic planning). The challenging task Enos sets for himself is to consider how historians of rhetoric may most usefully consider the pervasive influence of the Etruscans on Rome…when it is virtually impossible to separate out the influences of Greece. Because the Etruscans had connections—through trade, especially, but also through the adoption of shared writing systems, etc.—with other Mediterranean cultures, particularly the Carthaginians and Phoenicians, significant evidence of their own cultural practices exists. The problem Enos identifies—as much through his actual work as through his actual words—is one that rhetorical studies must address now or suffer later: By

producing generation after generation of scholars in rhetoric who have neither knowledge of Latin nor of Greek, the translation of primary texts and the field work in the Greek and Roman soil is outsourced to archaeologists, classicists, and other members of the academy who labor under their own agendas and research and write for their own purposes. New work on the Greeks and Romans is now marginalized work within the field of rhetoric.

While Poster considers, in part, the rhetoric of letter writing and Enos does a deep reading of a dominant culture's marginalized foundation blocks, Paul Lynch pulls both analytical threads together in his consideration of the rhetoric of St. Patrick's *Letter to Coroticus*. Lynch begins by considering both the ways in which St. Patrick fails in his specific use of the Gospel of Matthew and larger failures as a result of his time in captivity. Most significantly, however, Lynch combines the scholarly approaches of Poster and Enos, arguing that St. Patrick's rhetorical practices can be studied in isolation…but that there's really no good reason to do so. Subtracting the consideration of context—be that context Ireland in St. Patrick's time, or the genre of letter writing as it then existed in Europe, or the specific genre of the Christianized letter as it had developed across centuries—subtracts virtually all meaning from the rhetorical analysis. In an analysis that is both penetrating and engaging, Lynch moves from a consideration of the rhetorical situation of St. Patrick's *Letter* through a deep reading of the *Letter* itself—a deep reading that exposes deep wellsprings of meaning in a marginalized rhetorical backwater that truly matters.

Continuing the analysis of marginalized rhetorical practices in already marginalized medieval European locations, Robert L. Lively guides readers through the forensic practices of the Norsemen as they are represented in several sagas. The study of forensic rhetoric is not new to rhetoric—not new since Aristotle, at least—but Lively makes the topic dance to a new turn, considering not only the practices of an already marginalized, misunderstood, and misrepresented group but also considering those forensic rhetorical practices as they are represented by members of an almost exclusively oral culture—one more likely to be written about (negatively) than to do much writing of its own. What Lively's work represents is, perhaps, the best scholars of rhetoric have to offer; he approaches works in translation, but his analysis relies upon the best practices developed within departments of English across the last hundred years; he interrogates his sources, takes from them what truths he feels can most fully be extracted, and accepts the remaining points while acknowledging—either explicitly or implicitly—their limits as textual

markers of rhetorical practices on the outside of Europe's rhetorical tradition.

In "Recovering the Arabic Aristotle: Ibn Sina and Ibn Rushd on the Logic of Civic and Poetic Discourse," Shane Borrowman considers the ways in which Classical Aristotelian scholarship drew no meaningful distinction between poetic and public discourse. To unpack this argument, he focuses particularly on Medieval Arabic scholars in both the Middle East and in Muslim-controlled Spain, al-Andalus. *The Organon*, he argues, is an artificial division of the Aristotelian corpus to begin with…and it is, therefore, only logical to include works such as the *Rhetoric* and the *Poetics*, when a convincing case can be made—especially based upon historical precedent. This work builds on the arguments proffered by Kmetz regarding the conflation of poetry and other forms of speech from the very beginning of the rhetorical tradition, while demanding a focus not upon the rural world beyond Europe's civic centers but upon the world at the margins of Europe itself.

Caleb Corkery, like Borrowman, moves the focus of this consideration of the European rhetorical tradition to another marginalized space: Africa. Given that North Africa was a significant part of the Roman Empire for nearly its entire existence and that Roman systems of education (along with such stereotypical mainstays as gladiatorial combat and theatrical performances) enjoyed great influence throughout both North and West Africa, it is natural to consider the ways in which ideas of citizenship and the proper role of the orator spread. This is the cultural figure Corkery examines, the African *griot* who was, in significant ways, similar to the *rhapsodes* examined by Kmetz at the sort of cultural margin defined and explored by Lively and Lynch.

While Corkery focuses upon the power of the Medieval *griot*, Peiling Zhao argues that simply including a female figure in male-centered rhetorics of the middle ages is not enough, as Carol Poster argued in chapter one. Instead, we must both consider Margery Kempe and reconsider the entire scope and depth of rhetoric, rather than simply pushing another marginalized figure into the study of *ars grammatica*, *ars dictimanis*, and *ars praedicandi*—grammar, letter writing, and preaching. Such practices, in either educational or practical settings, were male-dominated, and considering Margery Kempe against such realities is unfair; rather, she must be considered in context and on her own terms, as she defined them.

In considering the figure of Anne Askew, Susan Kirtley ties together threads of argument first spun here by Poster and Zhao. Opposed to a good number of institutionalized figures and forces in the male-dominated 16th-

century world of Great Britain, Askew's *Examinations* offer a fascinating example of marginalized rhetoric at work in and on the world…both in its own time and afterwards. Building indirectly upon the work of Borrowman, Kirtley offers yet another example of the pervasive ways in which the works of Aristotle survived the medieval period and thrived into the Renaissance.

In "Montaignian Webs of Sponsorship: Recovering the Life and Work of Marie de Gournay," Katherine E. Tirabassi concludes this volume with a consideration of the give-and-take between and among a significant historical figure in the rhetorical tradition, Michel de Montaigne, and an all but ignored figure, Marie de Gournay—who edited Montaigne's *Essays* and presented them in the form we know today. Tirabassi offers a fascinating consideration of the institution of sponsorship and the written word—an important and under-studied aspect of textual production and dissemination for more than two thousand years. Her success and influence allowed de Gournay to have an impact on writers far beyond her own circle, and Tirabassi ends with a consideration of what this shifting web of sponsorship, friendship and authorial/editorial endeavor more than 500 years ago might mean for composition today.

This is a fitting final statement for a volume that begins with the practices or oratorical and poetical discourse in ancient Greece and covers a range of topics within the rhetorical tradition, which is, itself, inextricably bound to the discipline of composition studies.

Notes

[1] Adrian Goldswarthy, *How Rome Fell: Death of a Superpower*, (New Haven: Yale UP, 1993).
[2] Thomas P. Miller, "Reinventing Rhetorical Traditions," in *Learning from the Histories of Rhetoric: Essays in Honor of Winifred Bryan Horner*, ed. Theresa Enos (Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 1993), 26.
[3] Hayden White, *The Content of Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1987), 169-172.
[4] Goldswarthy, *How Rome Fell*, 50.
[5] *Ibid.*, 9.
[6] *Ibid.*, 408.
[7] *Ibid.*, 415.
[8] *Ibid.*, 407.
[9] Robin Waterfield, *Why Socrates Died*, (New York: Norton, 2009).
[10] Robert F. Berkhofer, *Beyond the Great Story: History as Text and Discourse*, (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1995), 60.
[11] Ivan Doig, *This House of Sky: Landscapes of a Western Mind*, (Orlando, FL: Harcourt, 1978), 10.

[12] Waterfield, *Why Socrates Died*, 124.
[13] Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2004), 90.

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

CHAPTER ONE

THE RHETORIC OF "RHETORIC" IN ANCIENT RHETORICAL HISTORIOGRAPHY

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It is obvious why rhetoricians frequently use the term "rhetoric" in its various inflections ("rhetorical," "rhetorician," "rhetoricity," etc.) in historical studies of the theory, pedagogy, and practice of verbal skills. Somewhat less obvious are the conditions under which use can become of abuse of the term, both as term proper and as conceptual frame. This chapter discusses how over-reliance, in historical studies of verbal skills, on "rhetoric" as self-explanatory term and conceptual category engenders problems of method and canon in disciplinary practices and self-understanding, remediable, in part, by more cautious deployment of the term.

Rhetorical Historiography and the Problem of Universals

Terms such as "rhetoric," "philosophy," and "grammar," like "justice," "evil," and "truth," are by their nature abstract and universal rather than descriptions of concrete particulars. Unlike proper names (e.g. Confucius, St. Thomas Aquinas, Richard Whately), or unique descriptions, (e.g. "my desk" or "the podium in classroom Stong 213 which still has the temporary duct tape repairs made five years ago"), they do not refer to any distinct individual things. Nor is the term "rhetoric" one which could, in some clear and non-circular fashion be derived by a process of complete induction, *i.e.* while one might, as a thought experiment, imagine enumerating all "statues of Napoleon" or "purebred Siamese cats" or "Homeric papyri," no possible enumerative process will lead inductively to a set of instances demonstrating commonalities from which a general definition of rhetoric or similarly abstract term such as "justice" or "piety"

can be derived.[1] Instead, one must have as a starting point for listing instances of rhetoric a complex and contested definition in place. Of course, this is true for Siamese cats, as well – one cannot categorize a cat as Siamese without some prior categories, as it were, of cats and types of cat, and "purebred" and "Siamese" have somewhat fuzzy boundaries – at what point of dilution of ancestry does a cat cease to be Siamese? or is "Siamese" defined officially by Cat Fanciers' Association (or other recognized bodies), much as "Japanese citizen" or "Canadian permanent resident" is a legal category enforced by national governments? Nonetheless, the overwhelming majority of cases of "Siamese cat" can be investigated in a fairly straightforward manner, usually starting with generally agreed upon descriptions to assemble a set of "typical" Siamese cats (small furry animals with blue eyes, pale bodies, darker ears and paws, ability to sire or bear similar progeny) which then can be used to refine the initial definition of Siamese cat, in order to judge borderline cases. If one were to stumble accidentally upon the tail of a Siamese cat, after discovering the additional *differentiae* "capable of uttering an extraordinary variety of piercingly loud noises" and "possessed of and skilled in using very sharp claws," one would have no difficulty assigning the offended possessor of said tail to the category of cat (Siamese), as opposed to other species of the same size (dog, racoon, opossum) or breeds (tabby, Maine coon, angora).

The procedures outlined above for identifying Siamese cats will not work for rhetoric. The first problem is that in the case of cats, although there have been new breeds developed, and shifts in classification of breeds by various specialists, the pre-colonial temple cat of Thailand differs only slightly from the contemporary western one; the two can easily interbreed. A person comparing languages can assume that *chat*, *feles*, *Katze*, and *cat* all may sound to the ear or appear on the page in a variety of forms, but nonetheless refer to the same thing. One can reasonably speak of equivalent terms across different languages. For "rhetoric," however, such is not the case. In fact, it is difficult even to ask in any coherent manner what it might mean for a language outside the sphere of influence of Graeco-Roman culture to have a term equivalent to "rhetoric," without first having to invoke problematic equivalences in the social, legal, and cultural institutions and traditions which form the contexts for verbal skills pedagogy, theory, and performance.

The term *rhêtorikê* is Greek, the word having its origin in the first half of the fourth century, possibly (but not certainly) as a Platonic coinage.[2] It was one of a group of new technical terms ending in the suffix "*ikê*" which were coined in the period, primarily in academic circles, to facilitate new systems of abstract thought."[3] The specific circumstances in which

rhetoric evolved in ancient Greece (and, later, Rome and the Graeco-Roman empire) were ones in which formal institutions of courtroom and assembly, with official systems of formal written laws, decrees, and contracts, were established mechanisms of social regulation and conflict resolution. Rhetoric was understood, therefore, within a context in which there were clearly delimited occasions and genres of public speaking which were part of the functioning of well-understood and defined traditions and institutions.

There are several distinct activities in relation to which the term, in Greek, Latin, and their immediate cultural successors, is deployed:

Theory: prescriptions for or descriptions of how verbal skills should be or are used.

Pedagogy: the act of teaching verbal skills.

Handbooks: works inculcating theories or including models for verbal composition.

Verbal Performance: one of some type of generically distinctive (non-everyday) verbal performance (perhaps more properly termed "oratory").

Quality of Persuasion: as in "X's rhetoric" or "mere rhetoric" in which the force of the term is a contrast between consciously (often speciously) persuasive and putatively unmarked speech.

Rhetorical Criticism: Analysis of texts as models for composition, e.g. Dionysus of Halicarnassus' discussion of how the Attic orators should be read and used by aspiring orators.[4]

Late twentieth and early twenty-first century theorists have introduced multiple specialized usages as well. In all cases, the types of verbal skills included or excluded have displayed immense variability. In some periods and cultures, for example, "rhetoric" might encompass all prose composition, and in others only a limited group of advanced or specialized skills. Moreover, many verbal arts which were not categorized as rhetorical by writers of their own periods may well be of actual or potential interest to scholars who would now identify themselves as historians of rhetoric. Such historical variability renders suspect any account of "rhetoric" as having some fixed denotative meaning constitutive of a conceptual domain. Moreover, comprehending the term "rhetoric" presupposes an underlying system of language functioning as grounds for production of meaning. Scholars approach "rhetoric" through various different philosophies of language, including the formalist, realist, inductivist, nominalist, and sermonic.[5]

The baseline approach for the discipline, is one that might be described as somewhere between realism and historicized formalism. It

underlies many of the major surveys of history of rhetoric, and has provided a conceptual framework particularly useful for broad scale construction of the history of western rhetoric within the Graeco-Roman tradition. It presumes that for a term to be comprehensible, it must have some determinant referent or conditions of usage (albeit with potential local variations); thus, one can study rhetoric as some coherent thing in one culture, with useful explanatory value for what seem cognate phenomena in cultures with no specific linguistic equivalents. This realist method is perhaps best exemplified in the work of George Kennedy,[6] in which its signal virtues of clarity, coherence, and consistency are displayed. The major weakness of this approach is that it may impose order where there is none, fitting disparate verbal activities onto a Procrustean bed, distorting the shape of some, and amputating, as it were, other verbal activities which do not fit the conceptual model of rhetoric. An immensely influential example of a case in which an author radically distorted the shape of a non-rhetorical verbal genre to fit a preconceived structure of rhetorical theory is Herman the German's translation of Averroës' *Middle Commentary on Aristotle's Poetics*, in which drama is assimilated to epideictic oratory, with tragedy being a version of encomium, or the art of praise, and comedy, vituperation, or the art of blame. Although Kennedy's comprehensive approach to Graeco-Roman culture saves his work from the pitfalls of extracting the "rhetorical" too far from the context in which it is embedded, such decontextualization remains a significant danger in studies (especially large scale diachronic and cross-cultural ones) which approach "rhetoric" from realist presumptions about the nature of universal terms.

Robert Gaines' corpus-based model for the study of ancient rhetoric, one which might be described as a "complete inductivist" one, like that of Kennedy, is grounded in and grounds for meticulous scholarship.[7] There is much merit in the notion of assembling and enumerating all ancient rhetorical texts to provide materials for using complete induction in ancient rhetorical scholarship. Rather than making claims, for example, that "the enthymeme is a truncated syllogism" or "late antique rhetoric is marked by a shift from the rhetoric of assemblies and courtroom to epideictic display," this model enables scholars to make specific claims about all uses of the term "enthymeme" in Greek rhetorical texts or to graph the relative numbers of orations of each genre over time by assembling a list of extant orations and orations mentioned in other texts, and counting them.[8] Such studies can take advantage of much relatively new computer technology, and the results of massive database projects such as *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae (TLG), Thesaurus Linguae Latinae*

(TLL), the *Advanced Papyrological Information System* (APIS) and the Perseus Project.[9] They are pre-eminently fundable. In a granting culture where humanistic projects must compete with scientific and social scientific ones, and convince reviewers from multiple disciplines, exhaustive enumeration and statistical analysis are particularly appealing. However, before one can assemble or analyse a corpus, one must define, as it were, set membership conditions. While this can be very effective for studies of the use of specific terms such as "sophist" or "enthymeme," it is less effective for conceptual categories, for it would demand a strict one-to-one mapping of concept and singular terms, something that relies on a far greater uniformity of usage than is actually observable, as well as questionable philosophical assumptions about the functioning of language. The process of complete induction is of no help before one knows what criteria are to be used in selecting the cases which constitute the complete set to be studied. While the *TLG* can define its scope by language and dates,[10] the question of, for example, "all orations in the *tria genera causarum*" is more complicated. It is not known, with any degree of certainty, whether the preserved versions of speeches by Lysias were actual forensic speeches as given in court, revisions thereof, or a fictional speeches designed to promote Lysias' skills as logographer. Even more complicated is the extant version of Cicero's *Pro Milone*.[11] The oral original was a speech given in the courtroom (albeit with quite substantial political significance). The extant written version, however, is something produced at a later date, perhaps as a model for other orators or perhaps for political purposes. Should it be assigned to the category of forensic, deliberative, or epideictic oratory? If the published versions of Cicero's speeches were intended as advertisements of his rhetorical prowess or as pedagogical models, they might be considered historically grounded *controversiae*, but if the purpose of publication was immediately political, then they would be, in intent, quasi-deliberative. This leads a further difficulty – are genres defined by form or purpose? In other words, should a work be considered deliberative if its intent is to influence legislation, whether a speech (such as the Mytilene debate recorded by Thucydides), or a pamphlet (Isocrates' Panathenaic oration), or should only setting and external form be considered when assigning a work to a genre?

In all these cases, enumeration of numbers of orations in given genres requires prior generic sorting and definition. Thus the question of whether epideictic replaced forensic and deliberative cases as the most significant form of oratory under the Roman Empire, cannot be solved simply by enumeration, for two reasons: (1) definition of what is to be counted must precede counting and (2) what constitutes “significant” is not determinable

merely by numbers. Just as there is only one Canadian Prime Minister at a given time, but s/he may well be more politically significant than most of the more numerous backbenchers, so to it might be possible to claim that immensely popular displays by famous sophists were more significant in some manner than the innumerable minor Graeco-Egyptian courtroom cases concerning taxation or pig theft. Whether, however, one considers the exemplary elite sophists of Philostratus' *Lives* more or less important than the village administrations of Menches or Petaus is a matter prior to, and to a degree, independent of, evidence. Just as G. E. Moore cautions us against the "naturalistic fallacy" of assuming ethical ends are empirically determinable,[12] so too we must be aware that "significance" like "goodness" is a value judgement rather than a description, and always relative to person and circumstance.

A nominalist approach to the term "rhetoric" is more common among those committed to various postmodernisms. Nominalists presume no actual referent for the term itself, claiming, at most, that the term is deployed within a system of socially constructed difference, often determined by power relations. Everything and nothing can be consistently associated with the term. This approach, perhaps typified by the *soi disant* "neo-sophists" of the 1990s, has the putative virtue of inclusiveness. Nothing is excluded *prima faciae* by disciplinary or terminological boundaries, nor is anything excluded. The obvious virtues of this approach are the way in which it provides opportunity for twenty-first century western scholars to study works of cultures outside the Graeco-Roman tradition and also of marginalized groups (by race, religion, gender, income, etc.) of their own culture outside the elite institutions which often controlled access to rhetorical pedagogy and official occasions of oratorical performance. The nominalistic potential lack of terministic exclusivity also, paradoxically, results in an actual lack of inclusivity. If nothing is defined as essential, and nothing as peripheral, then, given the complexity of the art and the brevity of human life, the number of books read and discussed is prone to shrink.[13]

Absent fixed denotative meaning, "rhetoric" can become a charismatic term, invoking a value judgement within an ideological system rather than specific cultural phenomena. "Rhetoric" can become a *summum bonum*, around which positive judgements cluster, while its opposites ("anti-rhetorical," "foundational," "philosophical," "bellelettristic," etc.) become the *summum malum* of intellectual history. Thus any things which are considered "good" are heaped together with rhetoric (democracy, feminism, pluralism, etc.) and any things considered bad are assimilated to its opposites (philosophy, western logic, oppression, colonialism, etc.).

Richard Weaver's analysis of charismatic terms is particularly important for analysis of how the "rhetoric" is often used in the discipline. Although Sharon Crowley[14] has argued for banning Weaver from the classroom, placing him on a sort of cultural theorist's version of the Papal *Index Librorum Prohibitorum*, a conclusion of *nihil obstat* might be more judicious, despite Weaver’s rather strange theories about women. Texts, like people, are *simul justus et peccatore*.

Weaver’s critique of "God terms" can be used to critique the way "rhetoric" has become fetishized as an ultimate term within the subculture of rhetorical scholarship (including Crowley's essay about Weaver). For Weaver, as Bacon,[15] the ultimate was the divine, and to treat human creations as divine was a form of idolatry. Among contemporary rhetorical theorists, for the religious, the same objections apply–that it is a theological error to treat the human as divine; for the atheistic, of course, to treat anything as divine would be an error. Between the Charybdis of an idolatrous fetishization of the term rhetoric, grounded in a sermonic use of the term and the Scylla of pure nominalism, in which anything thus nothing is rhetorical, rhetoricians can steer a *via media* of what might be called historical or contextual formalism by carefully limiting uses of "rhetoric" in its various inflexions:

> ***Explicit reference***: if a work is routinely referred to by the term "rhetoric" or one of its cognates by writers close in historical period to the composition of that work, then it may legitimately be termed "rhetoric" or "rhetorical."
>
> ***Similarity to works explicitly termed rhetorical***: If a work very clearly belongs to the same genres as those explicitly termed "rhetorical," and is grouped with them in manuscripts or testimonia from the period of their composition, then they may be referred to using the term "rhetoric" or "rhetorical". For example, an ancient treatise on making political or legal speeches, unless explicitly described as not rhetorical, may be called rhetorical absent specific rejection of the term by the author.[16]
>
> ***Text or person or practice clearly self-identified as belonging within a fully defined discipline of rhetoric*:** In certain very limited periods and institutional settings (such as late twentieth century United States universities or the rhetorical chairs of late antique municipalities) rhetoric has been clearly identified as a discipline, and/or profession. Persons or works associated with such fully developed disciplines can be termed, respectively, "rhetorical" or "rhetorician". In cases when disciplinary boundaries are more fluid, such as ancient Athens, the term should not be applied or should only be used with extreme caution (is Demosthenes an "orator" or "politician"? Gorgias and Protagoras "*physiologoi,*"[17] "rhetoricians," "sophists" or some combination of all three?)

There are many cases, however, where the use of the term "rhetoric" was highly contested, or ambivalent. Philostratus contrasts Hermogenes' early success as a "sophist" with his later decline, despite Hermogenes, during this period of mediocrity, in which he was bereft of his sophistic skill, having written some of the most influential ancient technical rhetorical handbooks. For another example, whether the *progymnasmata* were the purview of rhetoricians or grammarians was a matter of some dispute; figures of speech were also studied by both grammarians and rhetoricians. To subsume "sophistic" and "rhetoric" or "grammatical" and "rhetorical" approaches to style under a single umbrella of "rhetoric" is to obscure the significance of such debates, and to reduce ancient verbal skills studies to something far more coherent and uniform than it actually was.

It is also possible to identify areas of verbal skills study that were never, in their own periods, referred to as "rhetoric," which may be of interest to twenty-first century historians of rhetoric. Elementary literacy pedagogy, for example, was not considered a part of rhetoric in antiquity, and yet, especially because it drew participants (both teachers and learners) from a multiple social classes, and involved women rather than only men, as well as providing the foundation on which advanced rhetorical studies were grounded, is relevant to many of the concerns of contemporary rhetorical scholarship. Technologies of writing, although also not considered part of rhetoric proper in most periods (when the slavish tasks of mechanical reproduction of texts were separated from the liberal skills of composition), have increasingly come under the purview of rhetorical studies in recent decades. Thus contemporary rhetorical scholars may well wish to examine letter-cutting, tachygraphy, calligraphy, and related ancient activities, remaining sensitive to the ancient distinctions between composition (rhetoric) and production (mechanical literacy) and how these distinctions were embedded in social and economic hierarchies.[18]

Perhaps the best way to think through the ways in which the term "rhetoric" functions in our study of ancient verbal skills is to examine its boundary conditions. Thus, the next section of this chapter will examine briefly a few paradigmatic cases of ancient verbal skills practices or studies which exemplify the boundaries of the "rhetorical".

At the Boundaries of Rhetoric: Ancient Exempla

Many verbal skills are located at the boundaries of rhetoric, i.e. not *per se* rhetorical but having a well defined relationship to rhetoric. Typical

such relationships are:

Propaedeutic: some pedagogies are prerequisite to rhetorical studies. Before students enter into rhetorical studies, they complete basic literacy and some form of grammatical studies. Of propaedeutic cases, some, like basic literacy, are pursued both by those who will continue on to rhetoric and those who will not. Others, like progymnasmatic studies, are specifically designed as introductory to rhetoric.

Ancillary: certain studies can be ancillary or enabling for rhetoric. In some cases these are prerequisite, in some co-requisite, and in some elective. Shorthand and some legal knowledge were both useful for rhetorical studies and related careers but are not rhetorical *per se*. In some cases, these ancillary skills can become competitors to rhetoric, with schools competing for pupils and practitioners competing for clients.

Competitive/Alternative: Competition for lucrative positions and well-paying pupils among those educated in different traditions or among different individuals with similar backgrounds was common. Philosophers and sophists competed for positions of prestige (embassies, appointment to the museum of Alexandria), chairs, and pupils. Teachers of Latin and law competed with those of rhetoric for students who were preparing to become advocates. Specialists in letter-writing competed with specialists in declamation for the post of Imperial Secretary. Individuals, of course, often trained in multiple areas, moving from rhetoric to philosophy but then continuing to teach rhetoric until a philosophical teaching position opened up, studied Latin and law as well as rhetoric, or claiming expertise in letter-writing as well as declamation.

This chapter concludes by examining methods for studying two phenomena at the boundaries of rhetoric, arguing that (1) assimilating them into an overly broad rubric of "rhetoric" distorts their actual shape but (2) neglecting them distorts our understanding of verbal skills practices, theories and pedagogies of specific periods, and even deforms our understanding of rhetoric proper in those periods.

Writing Women *into* the History of Ancient Rhetoric

The very phrase, "writing women *into* the history of rhetoric"[19] is fraught with difficulties. Responses to this effort have been of two types, positive and negative, the former group favouring the inclusion of women on the grounds of benefit to contemporary society (assuming that

including a few female names in scholarly essays about ancient Greece will, albeit indirectly, result in more being elected to Parliament or appointed as executives in large corporations) and the latter group assenting to women's exclusion from histories of ancient rhetoric on the historical grounds of their absence therefrom in our primary sources.

Negative responses point out that this effort, like the one of a certain U.S. President to write weapons of mass destruction into the history of Iraq, is a case of pure mendacity, motivated by political aims (perhaps more benevolent in the former than the latter case, but no less fundamentally deceptive). There is little evidence of female involvement in what would have been termed "rhetoric" in antiquity. This negative response to efforts to include women in the contemporary histories of rhetoric has the merit of conforming to existing evidence; it has the fault, however, of lack of imagination or curiosity. Women obviously studied and practised certain types of verbal skills; to ignore this is to omit from our studies half of the world's population in the period in question. Given that the same lack of overtly denominated rhetorical activity is also the case for slaves, rural labourers, craftspeople, and in fact all but a small group of (primarily urban) elite males, restricting the study of ancient verbal skills merely to what was termed "rhetoric" is to make the discipline rather unsatisfactorily narrow, and of scant interest to the increasingly diverse populations of our classrooms.

Positive approaches to writing women into history of rhetoric, usually overtly or covertly motivated by concerns of social justice, fall into two general categories. The first category of positive response seeks to find women who were engaged in activities traditionally termed "rhetoric," and the second attempts to take almost any mention of anything ever done by a woman in antiquity and call it "rhetoric". Thus the task of incorporating women into ancient rhetorical histories requires either tendentious reading of evidence or using the term "rhetoric" in a way which would not be recognizable to the very women being discussed.

The reception of Diotima and Aspasia are cases of tendentious reading of ancient testimony. In the case of Diotima, there is no evidence for her historical existence. Like the goddess of Parmenides' prologue or personified Athenian laws in *Apology*, she fills a rather specific literary role, but there is no independent record which would confirm her as other than an allegorical figure. Moreover, the speech crafted for her is not precisely "rhetoric". Diotima’s discourse is described merely as a talk (*logos*) in the form of question and answer (*Symp*. 201d-e) a genre strongly contrasted throughout the Platonic dialogues with the long continuous discourses of rhetoric or sophistic display.