1 The open hand: Meet Rhetoric and Composition

> Why was it necessary to imagine freshman English as separate – as different enough from the other English, or the other Englishes represented in the curriculum, to require a separate professional organization?
>
> David Bartholomae, Chair's Address to the 1988 CCCC Convention (172)

> So we must keep trying anything and everything, improvising, borrowing from others, developing from others, dialectically using one text as comment upon another, schematizing; using the incentive to new wanderings, returning from these excursions to schematize again, being oversubtle when the straining seems to promise some further glimpse, and making amends by reduction to very simple anecdotes.
>
> Kenneth Burke, *A Rhetoric of Motives* (265)

This book is an introduction to a field, an emerging (although over 2,500 years old) and especially exciting (although often technical and service-oriented) academic discipline. Although not everyone would agree that "Rhetoric and Composition" is the best name for this field, it is in some sense situated (most people would agree) at the intersection of the art of persuasion (or "rhetoric") and the process of writing (or "composition"). Narrowly conceived, this is a field that is predominantly North American, focused mostly on higher education, arising in the latter half of the twentieth century. More expansively, this is a field that extends into every aspect of communication, from the beginnings of learning to the end of life, worldwide, throughout history, perhaps extending even beyond the human species.[1] On the one hand, a surprisingly small proportion of people outside of this field seem to be aware of even the most fundamental research in it – as much of what passes for instruction in "Language Arts" or "English" or "Communication" appears to

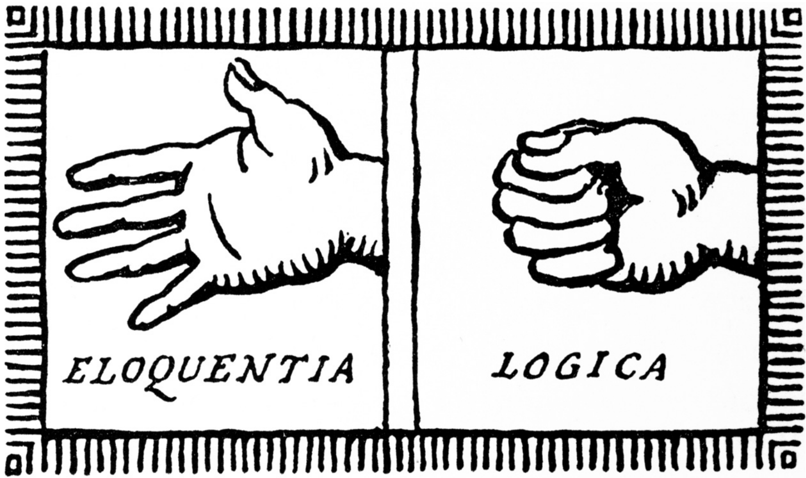

Figure 1.1 Eloquentia and Logica, an open hand and a closed fist, taken from a Renaissance rhetoric text.

be relatively uninformed: Curricular administrators, school boards, and teachers, as we shall see, continue to do many of the very things that decades of research and the consensus of experts have declared to be ineffective and sometimes even possibly injurious. On the other hand, knowledgeable teachers and scholars, from the elementary grades into post-graduate training, have been celebrating for over thirty years a radical transformation in writing pedagogy, not only within the language arts but also across the curriculum.[2] It is, in other words, an especially interesting and vital academic field.

Thus, all sorts of readers are imagined for this book, but most immediately I am thinking of people who want to know more about this discipline because they are entering it, or considering doing so, or even find themselves within it, willingly perhaps, or not. My audience certainly includes graduate students primarily in Literature or Rhetoric and Composition programs, but also in Film, Rhetoric, Theory, Speech, Communication, and other fields that provide teachers for college writing courses. You may in fact be reading this book because you are taking a teacher-training course in a composition

program, preparing to teach writing for the first time, or perhaps even teaching writing as you are learning how to do it. (That, as you might suspect, will in fact always be the case, and it's one of many charms and delights of this field – that even the people who are most informed and adept are constantly learning their craft, discovering new and stimulating things, often from their students, and sometimes from other experts.) But I am also thinking of teachers in any field who might be interested in helping their students communicate more effectively. This part of the audience thus includes not only people who will call themselves writing teachers, but historians, third-grade social studies teachers, biologists, legal theorists, and others. Indeed, given the foundational nature of this field, I would hope this book will appeal to almost anyone with intellectual curiosity.

Both "rhetoric" and "composition," taken separately, are terms with complex, shifting, contested meanings. These terms and their meanings are part of an ongoing struggle to define and determine what the field is and ought to be, and this multiplicity and resistance to closure is in fact another aspect of what makes this field so interesting and alive. Before putting the two terms together in the chapters that follow, let's consider briefly the sense of each apart – a task that will lead directly to a brief explanation of what's in the rest of this book.

THE RHETORIC OF "RHETORIC"

Rhetoric's beginning supposedly occurred in Syracuse, Sicily, around 467–466 BCE when someone named Corax began teaching the art of persuasive argument to paying customers. Many Syracusans had lost their property and wealth under a succession of tyrants, and a new government and judicial system, requiring citizens to represent themselves, offered the opportunity to set things right. Here at the origins of rhetoric we can see its great potential to do good, its inspiring relationship to justice, free speech, and democratic institutions – and at the same time we can also easily see rhetoric's dark side, for

what if your clever neighbor can argue more convincingly that your olive trees belong to him? Indeed, legend has it that Tisias, Corax's student, refused to pay for his instruction, and so Corax sued him, arguing, "You must pay if you win the case, thus proving the value of my lessons; and you must pay if you lose, since the court will force you." But Tisias countered, "I will pay nothing, because losing would prove your teaching was worthless, and winning would absolve me from paying."

At a glance, this story seems to support the popular idea that "rhetoric" is just a bag of verbal tricks. When politicians accuse one another of engaging in "rhetoric," they aren't referring to carefully reasoned and persuasive arguments. And rhetorical training in this story seems only to have given Corax and Tisias the skill to be irritating, as the case was thrown out by the judge, who said, legend has it, "From a bad crow, a bad egg." The judge is playing on "Corax," which means "crow," and some scholars, thinking that these names and the story itself are a bit too clever, have wondered if these guys really existed (see Cole), while others doubt at least the accuracy of the fifth-century date (see Schiappa). Rhetoric's big bang, like cosmology's, is in fact based on indirect evidence and conjecture, yet even if Corax refined and adapted pre-existing ideas, or a group of later teachers invented him, perhaps to give their own ideas more credibility, it seems clear that some sort of formal teaching of argumentation, especially in a judicial setting, was emerging in and around fifth-century Greece.[3] Where there is teaching, can textbooks be far behind? And so within decades a substantial number of authorities had come forward, mostly it seems with advice on the structure of a speech (how many parts, what goes in each part), or with examples of the various parts to be emulated or perhaps even memorized.[4]

At some point, training in argument and persuasion was included in Plato's famous Academy, which was founded in 387 BCE. The Greek term *rhētorikē* may have been coined by Plato, adapting the word *rhētōr*, a legal term that designated among other things a person who addressed a public body (from the ancient Greek *erō*,

"to speak"). But Plato's writings indicate that his attitude toward *rhêtorikê*, as he encountered it, was at best ambiguous and arguably quite negative. The Academy was remarkable not for its persuasive lectures and speeches, but for its innovative reliance on Socratic questioning (and also for its innovative admission of women – an orientation arguably not unrelated to learning by conversational inquiry). In Plato's *Gorgias*, rhetoric is defined as the training and practice that produce an art of public speaking, which sounds innocent enough unless you mistrust language and the public – which Plato certainly did. But Plato's problems with rhetoric can be seen most clearly in his *Phaedrus*, the work that deals most extensively with rhetoric, where such training is referred to as the "art of enchanting the soul" or "the art of winning the soul by discourse" (576). Plato does not believe that the people who are doing all this training – in particular those who were called "the sophists" – have any clue about the nature of the soul or the dangers of enchanting it, and he also worries that the focus on winning an argument is dangerously foolish. Someone who is entirely ignorant of the truth but has memorized dazzling phrases and strategies, who has learned tricks of logic and verbal manipulation (that is, from Plato's point of view, someone who has studied with the sophists), can be more compelling than someone else who is actually a knowledgeable expert. Plato does not simply dismiss rhetoric (as is sometimes suggested), for he does observe in the *Phaedrus* how an art of rhetoric based on an understanding of the soul and an inquiry into truth might be possible. But he is deeply troubled by the sophists' approach to rhetoric, which is based on what seems probable and plausible and moving to most people. This is the aspect of rhetoric that would lead John Locke some 2,000 years later, in his monumental *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690), to call rhetoric "that powerful instrument of error and deceit" (508), and it is the usual meaning of "rhetoric" in modern-day politics, used as a dismissive insult, often preceded by "just" or "merely."[5]

Western civilization might have veered away from rhetoric altogether, if we really thoroughly despised it, and toward something

like the Vulcan civilization in the *Star Trek* universe, in which all sorts of persuasive appeals and verbal manipulation are shunned in favor of logic and truth. Plato did after all famously ban the poets from his utopian *Republic* and put the philosophers in charge (having no knowledge of Vulcan science officers).[6] But Aristotle changed everything, altering intellectual history in virtually every discipline, and (most importantly for our interests here) rescuing rhetoric in particular.

Aristotle came to teach at Plato's Academy, and the classes he offered included the school's first lectures on rhetoric – apparently as an afternoon elective or special interest course – during two different periods, from 367 to 347, and 335 to 323 BCE. So many textbooks on rhetoric had already appeared at that point, apparently, that Aristotle thought it would be useful to produce a summary of them all, the *Synagōgē tekhnōn* ("A Collection of Arts").[7] All of the rhetorical handbooks that Aristotle might have included have now disappeared, perhaps because his guide rendered them unnecessary; and Aristotle's synthesis itself has also been lost, perhaps because his own later work, *On Rhetoric*, which appears to be based on his lectures, so thoroughly eclipsed both these handbooks and his summary.[8] Aristotle's opening sentences seem designed to address the worries – articulated by Plato among others – that rhetoric is merely a formulaic means to an end, equally susceptible to good and evil applications, and perhaps even more attractive to unscrupulous people: "Rhetoric," Aristotle begins, "is an *antistrophos* [counterpart, or correlative, or coordinate, or converse, or mirror-image] to dialectic …." (28), an assertion that assumes of course that Aristotle's audience knew what he meant by "dialectic," which was apparently so familiar that in his textbook on dialectic, the *Topics*, Aristotle never feels the need to define explicitly his subject.[9] We can gather easily enough, however, from various sources that "dialectic" for Aristotle is the art that is concerned with a certain kind of logical argument. Aristotle's students engaged in this philosophical disputation often, and this

practice became an essential part of education through the Middle Ages and beyond.

In a dialectical exercise, one student would adopt a thesis – say, "Old teachers are better than young ones" – and another student would be assigned to oppose this position. But instead of simply arguing with each other, one student would ask questions that could be answered "yes" or "no," and the other student would have to respond and explain, following certain logical rules. The questioner's goal would be to force the respondent, by a chain of reasoning, either to accept the thesis or to contradict himself. If for instance the questioner could get the respondent to agree that "Energy and enthusiasm are the most important attributes of effective teachers," then the questioner might be able to force the respondent, based on this premise, to agree that youthful teachers may be better, despite their inexperience. The respondent's job, in other words, was to resist the questioner's efforts and thereby maintain the thesis in this verbal chess match.

If rhetoric deals with one person persuading others in an extended speech, and dialectic deals with two people engaged in a particular kind of debate, then how in the world are they mirror images or counterparts for Aristotle? Why does he say this? Although Athenian citizens, if they could afford it, might hire someone else to compose their arguments, they had by law to represent themselves in court. For someone who might be listening to (or reading) Aristotle's lectures in hopes of finding some practical advice, this opening is certainly not very promising. "I want to know how to represent myself more effectively in court next Thursday," we can imagine someone responding, "and this guy Aristotle is on some philosophical quest to define his subject!" But Aristotle has his purposes, as we shall see, when he notes that dialectic and rhetoric are counterparts in that they both deal with common opinions and probable knowledge, not with specialized expertise and scientific certainty. There is no particular field of knowledge to draw from in a dialectical dispute or a rhetorical performance: dialectic and rhetoric apply to everything.

Dialectic proceeds according to logical rules, which Aristotle claims elsewhere to have discovered and presents in a series of works that came to be known as the *Organon*, or "The Tool."[10] Rhetoric employs similar kinds of logical progressions, taking an audience from some established or assumed propositions to their logical conclusions, but rhetoric adheres less rigorously to logical rules (you don't have to spell out all of your supporting assumptions, for instance), and rhetoric also makes use of how the speaker is perceived, the style of what is said, and how the audience is reacting emotionally. An ancient comparison likens dialectic to a closed fist, and rhetoric to an open hand – an odd comparison, perhaps, but we might think of dialectic as a karate match, featuring contestants competing according to strict rules of procedure and scoring, whereas rhetoric is a politician shaking hands, patting backs, holding babies, reaching out and touching people to create feelings of relationship and common interest.[11]

Also, Aristotle says, rhetoric and its counterpart dialectic are alike in that both are endeavors undertaken by all people "to a certain extent," as they "try both to test and maintain an argument [as in dialectic] and to defend themselves and attack [others, as in rhetoric]" (29).[12] While some people argue and persuade without much skill ("randomly" Aristotle says), other people have "an ability acquired by habit," and it is "possible to observe the cause why some succeed by habit and others accidentally." And "such observation" is precisely what Aristotle will proceed to offer us, which "is the activity of an art [tekhnē]" (29). For students or parents or teachers over the ages who might have wondered why some kind of rhetorical study has been required of students in medieval monasteries and in twenty-first century vocational schools, in the grammar schools of Shakespeare's England and the most elite modern research universities, Aristotle has captured here one driving idea: every human being who is capable of thought and articulation is going to argue with other human beings, inevitably and necessarily, and it is possible to learn how to argue more effectively: there is an art beyond

luck or trial-and-error. It is an important and ultimately ethical art, Aristotle asserts, "because the true and the just are by nature stronger than their opposites" (34). We just need everyone to be able to argue effectively in order to arrive at the true and the just.

Had Lady Rhetoric (the academic subjects were traditionally depicted as women) wanted to hire a high-powered advertising agency to do a makeover for her, dispelling the idea that she was available to serve evil and goodness alike, and that her charms often made the truth more difficult to discern, clouding perception with emotion and flash, it is hard to imagine how she could have done better than Aristotle, Inc. Rhetoric may not have been a core subject when Aristotle began lecturing on it, but it would soon for many centuries become essential to the foundations of learning, forming along with Dialectic and Grammar what came to be known as "the Trivium," the three basic subjects of human discourse (see Wagner).

And this elevating association – rhetoric, a distinctive and essential art, is dialectic's partner – sets the stage for Aristotle's more explicit and influential definition at the beginning of his second chapter:

> Let rhetoric be [defined as] an ability, in each [particular] case, to see the available means of persuasion. This is the function of no other art; for each of the others is instructive and persuasive about its own subject: for example, medicine about health and disease[,] and geometry about the properties of magnitudes[,] and arithmetic about numbers[,] and similarly in the case of the other arts and sciences. But rhetoric seems to be able to observe the persuasive about "the given," so to speak. That, too, is why we say it does not include technical knowledge of any particular, defined genus [of subjects]. (Kennedy, trans. 36–7)[13]

Aristotle aims to establish that rhetoric is a separate academic domain, comparable to medicine, geometry, and arithmetic as well as dialectic – as if subjects might be known by the company they

Figure 1.2 This image of Rhetorica is from a set of fifty engraved prints depicting various entities, including the seven liberal arts. Although the engraved cards are usually called the Mantegna Tarot, they are actually not Tarot cards, nor are they most likely by Mantegna. The unknown artist is generally agreed to be Italian, and the engravings were created about 1465. Many of the surviving cards are in poor condition.

keep. Rhetoric however, unlike medicine or geometry (but like dialectic), is not confined to a particular body of technical knowledge, but rather is applicable to whatever topic is under discussion – "the given." With this range and importance, rhetoric in Aristotle's definition here seems surprisingly intellectual and passive, directing our attention away from what it might do or perform in the world, and toward the internal knowledge and insight it offers. Rhetoric is "an ability," not even an action or performance, allowing one "to see" what strategies might be used to persuade, but not necessarily to use them. Compare Aristotle's philosophical stance, for instance, to Gerard Hauser's definition of rhetoric in his *Introduction to Rhetorical Theory* as "an *instrumental* use of language," in which "One person engages another person in an exchange of symbols to accomplish some goal." Rhetoric, Hauser asserts, "is not communication for communication's sake" (3); it's persuasion, aimed at getting something done.

Many other definitions are similarly goal-oriented, and they foreground the "available means of persuasion" that are beyond logic. Francis Bacon's sixteenth-century definition, for instance, describes rhetoric as "the application of reason to imagination for the better moving of the will" (177), and George Campbell in the eighteenth century defines rhetoric as "that art or talent by which discourse is adapted to its end," identifying the four possible ends as enlightening an audience's understanding, pleasing their imaginations, moving their passions, and influencing their wills (1). For Bacon and Campbell, reason is part of rhetoric, but so are the imagination and the passions. Although he expresses a variety of views in his *Rhetoric*, Aristotle is clearly uncomfortable, especially here at the outset, with the idea of rhetoric as simply a means to an end. Thus Aristotle says in his opening paragraphs that "it is wrong to warp the jury by leading them into anger or envy or pity: that is the same as if someone made a straight edge crooked before using it" (30), but this elevated sentiment falls away as the treatise unfolds. Realistically, Aristotle has to acknowledge the effectiveness of playing to an

audience's emotions, and he will go on to devote much of his work to understanding the different kinds of people and the different appeals that will work.

The "Aristotelian theory of rhetoric," as Sharon Crowley says in her *Ancient Rhetorics for Contemporary Students*, reflecting a consensus view, is "usually what is meant when a modern scholar or teacher refers to classical rhetoric" (24). And yet, strangely enough, for centuries Aristotle's *Rhetoric* was neglected or read as a work on ethics, politics, and psychology, receiving in the twentieth century "more scholarly attention … than it did during all the rest of its long history." As Thomas Conley says, "For all the ingenuity – indeed genius – shown in it, the *Rhetoric* failed to exercise much influence in the centuries after Aristotle's death" (17) and was widely disregarded as a rhetorical achievement well into the nineteenth century. We'll return to Aristotle's influence and his historical place in Chapter 5 below, but for now it is easy enough to imagine how the range of meanings of "rhetoric" in his work might undermine his popularity. At one end of the spectrum, Aristotle envisions a rhetoric that is paired with dialectic: essentially logical, an established academic discipline, useful to everyone. From this vantage point, rhetoric is not defined by what is successful, for its "function is not to persuade but to see the available means of persuasion in each case, as is true in all the other arts": in medicine for example, Aristotle says, it is possible "to treat well those who cannot recover health" (35). One might make a wonderful speech and lose the case, but still be successful in rhetorical terms. Indeed, Aristotle, who is not known for any speech he wrote or delivered, who is said to have been called "the Reader" by Plato, and who is in fact reported to have had a speech impediment, crafts a definition that defines rhetorical success not in terms of accomplishing a particular goal, or even in terms of making a persuasive speech, but rather in terms of *seeing* how one might make an effective speech. At the other end of the spectrum, away from this theoretical or philosophical rhetoric, is "rhetoric" for the real world, which Aristotle pragmatically comes to

embrace. We need to know how to present ourselves, how to size up our audiences and say what will spark their imaginations and move their emotions. Theory is nice, but if your olive trees are on the line, then winning is what counts, at least from this other end of the rhetorical spectrum.

Rhetoricians may well wish that we had some other term for rhetoric's dark side, when persuasion crosses over to manipulation ("bloviation" is a good candidate, I think), but the single term can remind us, if we have only "rhetoric," that there is no "pure" communication or any unbiased persuasion: what one person thinks of as "rhetoric" in Quintilian's sense, "a good man speaking well" (*vir bonus dicendi peritus*), from a different point of view is "mere rhetoric." So, relatively speaking, is every assertion an instance of "rhetoric"? Are human beings always making use of "the available means of persuasion," or adapting any discourse "to its end"? If I say "Good morning," for instance, am I engaging in rhetoric? It may be difficult to think of this as "rhetorical," but I'm not saying "Howdy" or "Cheers," which send different messages, or "Guten Tag" or "What's shakin' dudes?" or "Dear God, where's the coffee?" I am making a choice when I fashion a greeting (even if the choice is to mumble the same thing everyone else is saying, the most innocuous and non-defining greeting), and I am shaping language toward some goal.

Rhetoric, as Aristotle said, is about particular situations, and you can imagine the different rhetorical effects of using "Guten Tag" to begin a breakfast meeting of the German club (I'm friendly and I at least know how to say "good day" in German, but perhaps not "Guten Morgen"), or the French club (I'm either dumb, or trying to be amusing, or at the wrong meeting, or something), or the Parents and Teachers Association (maybe I've just been to Germany and I'm showing off, or we are going to discuss starting a German language course?). If a greeting is rhetorical, then perhaps all language is rhetoric – and this notion, as you can imagine, is intoxicating to some. "We are twenty-five-hundred years old," Victor Vitanza says, and "We inform all the other disciplines." "We're in control," Susan Jarratt

says, "we're the master discipline over these other disciplines."[14] Some scholars even include images, architecture, music, and more under the purview of rhetoric, and George Kennedy even suggests that animals use symbol systems rhetorically: "Rhetoric in the most general sense may perhaps be identified with the energy inherent in communication: the emotional energy that impels the speaker to speak, the physical energy expended in the utterance, the energy level coded in the message, and the energy experienced by the recipient in decoding the message" ("A Hoot in the Dark" 2).

So "rhetoric" resides somewhere between (a) "professional training for making a legal argument" and (b) "the energy inherent in all communication." In light of the preceding overview, where should we place "rhetoric" for the purposes of this book – as in "Rhetoric and Composition"? Here's a framework to get us started:

(1) "Rhetoric" refers to practical instruction in how to make an argument and persuade others more effectively. Such instruction, which goes back to ancient times, originally focused on oral arguments, but those apparently were often written down or composed in writing to be memorized, and the line between teaching oral and written rhetoric is a fuzzy one at best.

(2) "Rhetoric" also refers to the strategies that people use in shaping discourse for particular purposes. These strategies might be the result of (1) above, or the product of observing people persuading, or trial and error. The strategies might be elegant or crude, motivated by noble and lofty aims or the most disgusting cowardice or greed.

(3) "Rhetoric" also refers to the study of (1) and (2). Such study is thus limited in theory to everything there is to know about human beings (to understand how they generate and receive persuasion), and everything there is to know about language (although it is possible to talk meaningfully about the rhetoric of music, or architecture, or wrestling, for purposes of expediency we've got to draw the line somewhere!). Some interests, to

be sure, seem more directly related to rhetoric than others: the study of morals and ethics, for instance, seems immediately useful for the light it might shed on how people are persuaded to make decisions and choices; the study of literature also seems closely related because of its interest in carefully weighing language and intention and effect.

THE COMPOSITION OF "COMPOSITION"

As a school subject, for much of its long history, "rhetoric" has been at the heart of education. It was essential to the "rounded education," the *enkyklios paideia*, that evolved throughout the Hellenistic world. The Roman and Western medieval world continued this tradition as the *artes liberales*, which we still call "the liberal arts" – liberal, historically, in the sense of "free": those disciplines suitable for anyone who is free to study them, who does not have to study for a particular vocation, who is not an unskilled laborer, or a slave. As we just noted, rhetoric, logic, and grammar formed the three discourse arts, the trivium.

Rhetoric flourished with the Renaissance's enthusiasm for eloquence, its celebration of human wit and ornament, its passion for ancient learning. Although the body of theory and practice that comprised the long tradition of rhetoric certainly changed over its history, there is a clearly identifiable rhetorical tradition that would be familiar to Aristotle, Cicero, Quintilian, Augustine, Boethius, Martianus Capella, Chaucer, Shakespeare, Dryden, Pope, Swift, Johnson, and many others, well into the nineteenth century. With the Enlightenment, however, as the explanatory power of science grew, the fortunes of rhetoric declined. Faith in numbers, experiment, and observation expanded; concerns deepened about the slipperiness and delusiveness of words. Until fairly recently, it appeared to most scholars that rhetoric for all practical purposes expired sometime in the nineteenth century, "that there *was* no nineteenth-century rhetoric," as Robert Connors puts it (*Composition-Rhetoric*, 2). The obituaries were premature however because the historians of rhetoric were in

Figure 1.3 This image, from Gregorius Reisch's *Margarita philosophica*, printed in 1583 (by Sebastian Henricpetri in Basle), illustrates how the student (lower left corner) can only get into the castle of knowledge by means of Grammar (the Lady with the tablet). The two most famous grammarians prior to 1583, Donatus and Priscian, occupy the bottom floors. Above them, different figures represent each field of knowledge: Aristotle for Logic; Cicero, Rhetoric; Boethius, Mathematics; Pythagoras, Music; Euclid, Geometry; Ptolemy, Astronomy; Plato for Physics; Seneca, Ethics; and at the top, Peter Lombard for Theology.

Speech or Communication (or Speech Communication) departments; looking for oral rhetoric, Connors says, they failed to see that "written rhetoric … is the great contribution of the nineteenth century" (2).

Advances in technology no doubt played some role in the increasing importance of writing in nineteenth-century education, and especially in American colleges: the development of inexpensive and durable paper, the invention of the mechanical pencil in 1822, the fountain pen in 1850, the attached eraser in 1858, and the typewriter in 1868, for example, all helped to make a classroom emphasis on writing more practicable. Debating societies and oratorical exercises were popular student activities on nineteenth-century campuses. But for their classes, students regularly wrote essays, and professors commented on them in brief conferences.[15] This relationship between students writing and professors conferring and coaching was transformed by various developments, including the Morrill Act of 1862, which established the Agricultural and Mechanical Colleges and helped to inaugurate, after 1865, after the US Civil War, the age of the modern universities, with undergraduate and graduate programs, faculty ranks, various specialized departments, and most importantly larger and larger numbers of students. Professors found themselves better able to comment on a piece of writing than to observe and critique students debating (most teachers can read a speech much faster than a student can deliver it; we can scribble comments in a margin faster than we can have a conversation about a performance).

Writing was also crucial to the ongoing emergence of the modern disciplines and modern scholarship. Whereas the medieval doctoral candidate needed to be able to think on his feet, to defend his thesis orally in public against anyone who might want to argue, the modern scholar published his (and eventually her) findings. Scientific truth was not going to be discovered by debate, but by experiment and observation, and conveyed best by plain and simple language, not rhetorical display – in writing. The most influential rhetoric textbook during this emerging modern period emphasized

writing: Hugh Blair's *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres* had a stunning 130 editions between 1783 and 1911, making it arguably the most popular textbook ever printed. Blair assumed that students would improve their writing most effectively by studying good writing, and he therefore emphasized the importance of cultivating good taste in students, who should read and analyze the greatest literature, the *belles lettres*.

This turn toward the study of writing, using literature both as a model and a subject for students, marks a dramatic departure from the rhetorical tradition's focus on the process of creating and delivering a persuasive argument for specific occasions. Blair's view of invention – of how writers think of things to say – was especially significant, for he assumed that it was "beyond the power of art to give any real assistance" in this endeavor (399). The writer must rely on "a thorough knowledge of the subject, and profound meditation upon it," he said, which sounds reasonable enough, but not very helpful. If discovery occurs outside the realm of rhetoric, and if rhetoric is concerned with written not spoken texts, then rhetoric as it was understood for many centuries is in effect reduced to organization and style. Thus, Blair's strikingly popular lectures radically diminished the significance of traditional rhetoric, valorized style and taste, and elevated the analysis and appreciation of literature. A number of textbooks by American imitators of Blair further expanded his influence and began to put "rhetoric" and "composition" together, linking an emphasis on writing to the ancient tradition of persuasion: George Quackenbos's *Advanced Course of Composition and Rhetoric* (1855), James Boyd's *Elements of Rhetoric and Literary Composition* (1844), and John Hart's *A Manual of Composition and Rhetoric* (1870), for example.[16]

The familiar history of the Boylston Professor of Rhetoric at Harvard is the story of how "rhetoric" connected to or morphed into "composition" in higher education:[17] In 1806, the first holder of the Boylston Chair, John Quincy Adams, United States Senator and future President, vowed to inspire his students with the precepts of

"ancient oratory," and Adams taught classical rhetoric's art of persuasion as a foundation of democratic engagement. The next Boylston Chair, Joseph McKean, a minister, turned away from the richness of classical rhetoric, preferring instead the ecclesiastical simplicity of the Puritans, teaching students to write and speak clearly and correctly. The next Boylston Professor of Rhetoric, Edward Channing in 1819, revealed a similar disdain for the rhetorical tradition, noting in a remarkable sentence in his inaugural lecture, "We have now many other and more quiet ways of forming and expressing public sentiment, than public discussion in popular assemblies" (qtd. Heinrichs 40). Channing believed it was important (and "more quiet") to teach writing, to show students how to communicate clearly, and if the ancient principles of rhetoric were ever needed, then "It [rhetoric] would awake from the sleep of two thousand years without the aid of the rhetorician."

Channing, known affectionately as "Potty," was so uninterested in awakening the sleeping rhetoric that he himself, as the Boylston Professor of Rhetoric, did not teach rhetoric, but assigned it to an assistant (his "bland, superior look,/ cold as a moonbeam on a frozen brook," as his famous student, Oliver Wendell Holmes put it). But Channing did teach writing to Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, and many others over his popular thirty-two year career, while the next Boylston Chair, Francis James Child, abandoned rhetoric entirely to focus on appreciating literature. "I feel only little interest in what is called declamation," Child wrote to his employer, Harvard's president, "and would much rather be a teacher of dancing" (qtd. Heinrichs 42). Child truthfully changed the title of his course from "Rhetoric and Criticism" to "English Language and Literature." With Child's successor, Adams Sherman Hill, "the high priest of correctness" as Harvard historian Samuel Eliot Morison called him, the foundation for the modern split in English Departments was clearly laid: serious scholars (in the more spacious offices) study literature and language; service-oriented teachers (usually sharing smaller offices) instill good grammar into students (who

should have already learned it). Subsequent holders of the Boylston Chair in Rhetoric – poets and literary critics – have tended blissfully to ignore rhetoric.

But if one had to point to one event, one turning point at which the implications of Blair and many followers come to fruition, at which the oral-rhetorical tradition tipped decisively toward written composition and the modern Rhetoric and Composition course, a candidate would certainly be the institution of a written entrance exam at Harvard in 1874. Such an exam, necessarily subjective, must either confirm that things are fine (and no action needs to be taken) or that there is a problem (in which case, money needs to be spent, and people given power). It is not therefore surprising that the exam revealed a problem, but it is still nonetheless startling to learn that over half the students admitted to Harvard failed this initial exam, sparking the first national crisis regarding the poor writing skills of American boys. Harvard immediately charged the secondary schools to do a better job preparing their students – not by any means the last instance of buck-passing with regard to writing skills. But Harvard then soon created in the 1880s English A – "the prototype for the required freshman course in composition that within fifteen years would be standard at almost every college in America," as Robert Connors puts it (*Composition-Rhetoric* 11).

Thus, the specialized focus on the teaching of writing in higher education originates in the United States as a remedial endeavor. Other colleges and universities quickly followed Harvard's lead in this urgent effort, and in some other universe the most experienced and accomplished teachers and professors might have taken on this difficult challenge, but women, adjuncts, and graduate students have typically been assigned to teach composition in our world, as Richard Miller and many others have noted.[18] To be sure, the sheer scale of this undertaking also seemed to preclude the extensive use of regular faculty in composition: In 1894 for instance, at the University of Michigan, four English teachers and two graduate assistants faced 1,198 students; even at Harvard, twenty teachers were responsible

for 2,000 students. Thus, it has often been noted that "Rhetoric and Composition" emerged as a teaching field unlike any other: whereas other disciplines coalesced out of a critical mass of knowledge and methods (like Biology or Physics or Psychology) or in response to vocational training (like Nursing or Accounting or Law), the teaching of writing addressed a basic skill, preparatory to other disciplines, but not a true field of scholarship itself.

In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, some brilliant and prominent scholars and teachers were seriously interested in rhetoric in the richest sense and devoted to teaching writing as more than grammatical correctness and structural clarity – Barrett Wendell, Fred Newton Scott, Gertrude Buck, and others. But these were exceptions, and composition was for the most part consigned to the academic basement, figuratively if not literally. Another turning point occurred in the fortunes of "composition," however, in 1949 when the Conference on College Composition and Communication was founded; or 1958, when the Basic Issues Conference drew national attention to writing instruction; or 1963, when Braddock, Lloyd-Jones, and Schoer published *Research in Written Composition*; or 1966, when British and American educators gathered at Dartmouth to advocate interactive and expressive writing pedagogy; or 1971, when Janet Emig published *The Composing Processes of Twelfth Graders* and James Kinneavy published *A Theory of Discourse*; or perhaps 1978, when Mina Shaughnessy published *Errors and Expectations*; or at all these moments and more as a cluster of key ideas – writing as a mode of discovery, teach process not product, the teacher as a researcher, the intelligent logic of errors and dialects, to pick a few of the most obvious – helped to promote the ideas that rhetoric and composition ought to be taken seriously as a field; that smart people could devote themselves to it; that one could make an academic career with such a focus.

Today, the "Composition" part of the field's name casts a wide and arguably porous net: it would certainly include anyone who is assigned to teach writing in a required college or university

course, which might include "Writing" in its title, or "Rhetoric" or "Composition" or both, in any order (informally abbreviated Comp-Rhet, Rhet-Comp, Comp). It would also arguably include anyone who is teaching a high school or preparatory school course in the "language arts." And it would also seem to include people in any number of other educational settings, since the teaching of writing can certainly reach beyond courses with "composition" or "writing" in their titles. Composition is thus unusual in its potential interdisciplinarity: Most people would think it odd if a biologist or engineer argued that every class ought to include biology or engineering, but many people think it sounds quite reasonable to say that writing should be part of every subject – that writing is a powerful catalyst to learning, whether the subject is literary studies, anthropology, or even mathematics.

When an enlightened professor in the Anthropology or Maths department substantially includes writing as part of the coursework, and even assumes responsibility for improving students' writing skills, should we say then that these teachers have (bravely) moved into Rhetoric and Composition, or vice-versa? The "writing across the curriculum" (or WAC) movement, which dates back to the 1970s, tends to think of this symbiotic relationship in terms of writing specialists sharing their expertise with faculty in other fields, enabling students to "write to learn" in every subject. The "writing in the disciplines" (or WID) movement theorizes that there are distinctive discursive practices in different fields: learning to write as a biologist is not the same thing as learning to write as an anthropologist, and therefore the composition specialist cannot provide all the necessary writing expertise for writing in every discipline – at least not without entering into that discipline in some sense.[19] Whether one emphasizes writing to learn (across the curriculum) or learning to write (within disciplines), WAC and WID implicitly draw attention to a pivotal issue in the teaching of writing – the question of expertise, of professionalization. If a biologist can teach writing, in what sense is composition an academic specialization? This disciplinary

uncertainty, combined with the second-class citizenship of writing teachers, has led to considerable anxiety and, yes, rhetoric about the reality and place of the field. In fact, according to Louise Wetherbee Phelps, "From the 1960s to the present, much of the content of composition scholarship can be assimilated to the metagoal of rationally defining a discipline and legitimizing its intellectual work (and its practitioners) within the academy" (125).

In one very practical sense, "Rhetoric and Composition" is without question a specialization because about a quarter of the academic jobs advertised in the Modern Language Association's *Job Information List*, the "Help Wanted" pages for North American universities, have recently been in Rhetoric and Composition and related fields. Since nothing like a quarter of the doctoral graduates in English have taken their degrees in Rhetoric and Composition, it is indeed a particularly appealing specialization for those who would like a job. It is also a specialization, one could say, because more than seventy programs are granting PhDs in Rhetoric and Composition.[20] These graduate programs are relatively new, in academic terms at least, with the two oldest dating back to the 1960s, and seven others established in the 1970s. For many other jobs not "in" Rhetoric and Composition per se, some training and willingness in the teaching of writing are especially valued. Further, most English departments in research universities in the United States have faculty who list "Rhetoric and Composition" or "Composition" as their specialization, and some institutions even have separate departments.

Another measure of the vitality of "Rhetoric and Composition" as an academic endeavor would be the thirty-one or so journals currently publishing work related to the teaching of writing, or the various thriving organizations focusing on rhetoric and composition, with their increasingly popular annual meetings. One way to learn about this field would be simply to read the current issue of several journals and look at the annual programs of a few meetings: most of the journals are available in a major library or online (ask a reference librarian if you have trouble). You won't understand everything

you're reading, and in some cases you may not understand a great deal – you're entering a conversation that has been going on for several decades. But this kind of immersion, as with a language, allows you to learn a great deal quickly if you can tolerate the sure-to-decrease confusion.

Some Journals in Rhetoric and Composition

College English and *College Composition and Communication* are arguably the most significant general venues for composition studies, and both are usually accessible and interesting.

JAC: A Journal of Composition Theory (formerly the *Journal of Advanced Composition*), *Rhetoric Review, Rhetorica*, and *Pre-Text* cater especially to historical and theoretical issues.

English Journal focuses on writing before college.

Research in the Teaching of English features quantitative and empirical concerns.

Computers and Composition, *Journal of Basic Writing*, and, *Teaching English in the Two-Year College* reveal their particular interests in their titles.

Some organizations

CCCC (the Conference on College Composition and Communication), sometimes called "the 4Cs," started in 1949 with the stated purpose of supporting and promoting "the teaching and study of college composition and communication."

ISHR (the International Society for the History of Rhetoric), organized in 1977, aims to "promote the study of both the theory and practice of rhetoric in all periods and languages and the relationship of rhetoric to poetics, literary theory and criticism, philosophy, politics, religion, law and other aspects of the cultural context." Its biennial conference assembles "several hundred specialists in the history of rhetoric from around thirty countries."

MLA	(the Modern Language Association), which originated in 1883, is the umbrella organization for faculty in English and "foreign" languages, and it includes allied and affiliated associations related to rhetoric and composition, including the Association of Writers and Writing Programs, the Association for Documentary Editing, the Association of Teachers of Technical Writing.
NCA	(the National Communication Association), adopted its current name in 1997, but its inception can be traced back to the establishment of the National Association of Academic Teachers of Public Speaking in 1914, when Speech teachers separated from English teachers. As a scholarly society, the NCA "works to enhance the research and teaching on topics of both intellectual and social significance, representing the academic discipline of communication in those national efforts."
NCTE	(the National Council of Teachers of English), established in 1911, is dedicated to improving the teaching of "English" at all levels. NCTE therefore promotes research in the language arts, and strives to nurture teachers' professional careers.
ARS	(the Alliance of Rhetoric Society), started in 2001 to bring together scholars who study rhetoric and are dispersed in various disciplines, including communication studies, English, composition, rhetoric, and writing studies.

In other words, Rhetoric and Composition is a specialization, one could say, because it is perceived as such in academia. But such recognition has not come suddenly or easily. In 1984, in the opening sentence of their *Bedford Bibliography for Teachers of Writing*, Patricia Bizzell and Bruce Herzberg declared, "The study of composition is well established as a specialization in English, a serious discipline worthy of advanced graduate work." But the insistence here suggests an insecurity: not just "established," "discipline," and

"graduate work," but "*well* established," "*serious* discipline," and "*advanced* graduate work." In fact, as Bizzell and Herzberg (joined by Nedra Reynolds) acknowledge in the opening of their sixth edition, published in 2004, the earlier claim was "a statement of confidence and hope rather than a clear fact" – but now, they assert, "the study of composition seems unequivocally well established" (vii). And it is, to be sure, recognized as a field by the National Research Council's forthcoming assessment of US doctoral programs – the golden standard for ranking academic programs. However, "Rhetoric, Composition, and Technical Writing" was not listed in previous NRC rankings, in 1995 and 1983; in fact it was not listed in the initial version of the 2007 taxonomy, and it was added late, after some lobbying, only as an "Emerging Field" – along with "Film Studies," "Feminist, Gender, and Sexuality Studies," and "Race, Ethnicity, and Post-Colonial Studies," which are without question exciting and increasingly important fields, but which (again) generate only a fraction of the jobs that are advertised and filled in Rhetoric and Composition. Some disciplinary anxiety, in other words, would seem to be understandable.

In his important and influential 1987 history, *Professing Literature*, it seemed to Gerald Graff that he could best tell the story of English studies without including the thousands of teachers and millions of students involved in writing pedagogy:

> I will deal only in passing with the teaching of composition, though the pioneer work of William Riley Parker, Wallace Douglas, and Richard Ohmann has shown that without that enterprise the teaching of literature could never have achieved its central status, and none of the issues I discuss would matter very much. (2)

Graff arguably does not fairly represent the position of William Riley Parker, whose classic essay "Where Do English Departments Come From?" does not exactly celebrate the teaching of composition, which he referred to as "the dismal, unflowering desert, freshman

theme-writing" (349). Richard Ohmann likewise exposed the troubling gap between the subject that the profession had chosen to study – literature, and the subject that created the funding for the profession – composition (94). Why did Graff make composition peripheral, even while acknowledging that literary study "could never have achieved its central status" without it, citing ambiguous testaments to its importance? In the same way, we might speculate, that a history of agriculture might "deal only in passing" with the workers in the fields. The real story concerns the literary class and "its central status," as Graff puts it, not the menial laborers.[21]

Of course, my comparison is arguably insensitive to those who risk life and limb to do the most unappealing jobs: teaching writing, while difficult, is not picking artichokes or carrying bricks. There is no evidence that teaching writing will, as one scholar has suggested, turn your brain into wet tissue paper. But this comparison between menial laborers and writing teachers is in fact a surprisingly recurrent theme in the field of Rhetoric and Composition. In 1992, for instance, surveying the development of composition from 1963, Donald McQuade noted that "metaphors from the work of such manual laborers as gardeners and janitors surfaced frequently" in discussions of the field. "More recently," McQuade continued, "composition instructors have been given the even more marginal identity of migrant workers – undocumented aliens, border crossers hired to cultivate, pick, and prepare the best in each year's new crop for delivery to more privileged people" (494–5). To some extent, the comparison works, as the undocumented (that is, untenured), migrant (that is, part-time, adjunct), and disadvantaged (that is, women, junior, service-oriented) teachers take on the jobs that the more privileged faculty shun.

It is however increasingly difficult in many respects for those who are specialists in Rhetoric and Composition to complain about the status of their field or their treatment. Simply because of supply and demand, salaries have often climbed higher for new faculty in Rhetoric and Composition than in other fields. Only the most backward English departments do not accept the idea that the teaching of

writing is a specialty, just like the teaching of Shakespeare, and that some of their faculty should have this expertise if they are going to offer those courses. In many research universities, it is true that graduate students generally do the bulk if not all of the teaching in Rhetoric and Composition courses, but this practice requires the employment of faculty who are trained to train those graduate students. The idea that anyone can teach writing effectively, without any preparation or expertise, is perhaps held only by the Flat Earth Society and a few other allied organizations. The struggle to establish Rhetoric and Composition as a distinct field in other words, has been won, to the extent that in some institutions Rhetoric and Composition faculty have been empowered to form their own independent departments, sometimes in alliance with Speech Communication faculty, joining together over the bridge of rhetoric.

Not everyone, however, as we noted at the beginning of this chapter, agrees with this marriage of Rhetoric and Composition (not to mention Speech). In the Modern Language Association's most recent edition of their *Introduction to Scholarship in Modern Languages and Literatures*, a prestigious and authoritative landmark, both Susan Jarratt, who wrote the chapter on "Rhetoric," and David Bartholomae, who wrote on "Composition," celebrate the assigning of separate chapters to these two terms. The case for separation has been made by Elizabeth Flynn, among others, who says that "rhetoric is the parent discipline of composition studies, but the latter is an identifiable field with its own institutional structure and purposes," and "serious problems arise if we conflate the two" (138–9). I would suggest, however, that more serious problems and missed opportunities arise if we do not connect the two. To be sure, one could argue that we need to distinguish, for instance, rhetoric's orality from composition's textuality – although the rhetorical tradition, including its speeches, has come down to us in writing, and composition's best practice depends upon conversations between and among students and teachers. Similarly, we would not want to lose sight of the contrast between rhetoric's long sweep through history, compared

with composition's recent flowering in academia. Student enrollment today in narrowly-defined "Rhetoric" courses is tiny compared to the vast armies of students who populate broadly-inclusive "Composition" courses. "Composition" as a term and as an educational requirement is a relatively new invention, whereas "Rhetoric" has lived through the centuries in the courtroom, the assembly, the memorial gathering. Composition's home is in the classroom, emerging in the nineteenth century. We can see this coming out, for example, by comparing Edgar Allan Poe's "The Principle of Composition," published in 1846, which deals only with creative writing, to Alexander Bain's *English Composition and Rhetoric: A Manual*, published in 1866, which is concerned with our subject here. These contrasts could easily be extended: the two terms are indeed distinct and different.

But the argument for calling this field "Rhetoric and Composition" insists, in fact, that the terms are, as Andrea Lunsford says, "not synonymous." Joining them is not conflating them, although I would note with Lunsford that they are "closely allied, often overlapping" (80). "Rhetoric," Lunsford says, "is interested in building and testing theories of persuasion primarily through the symbol system of language," and "composition is concerned with the way written texts come to be and the way they are used in the home, school, workplace, and public worlds we all inhabit" (46). This distinction sounds a bit like "theory" (rhetoric) plus "application" (composition), which reinforces the idea that composition is the lower status, or "applied" member of this binary. People in "rhetoric," this way of thinking might go, are scholars of history, philosophy, critical theory, classics, languages (the International Society for the History of Rhetoric impressively recognizes as its official languages English, French, German, Italian, Spanish, and Latin), and more. People in "composition" – well, it is possible to think that they "just" teach writing. They mark papers and deal with students.

In his landmark study in 1987, *The Making of Knowledge in Composition: Portrait of an Emerging Field*, Stephen North addresses

this issue of the status (real and perceived) of faculty in Composition by dividing them into Researchers, Scholars, and Practitioners (that is, teachers). Composition teachers, North observes, are the "lowliest members of the English academic community," "second-class academic citizens," inhabiting an "academic ghetto" (14). But North argues that the knowledge of teachers, or practitioners, ought to be given more value, even though this knowledge is private and is not generated by reliable empirical methods (28). North explains that he does not mean to be condescending when he refers to the knowledge of teachers as "lore"; but in terms of prestige and power, "lore" is an alternate form of knowledge that simply cannot compete with the normative knowledge of researchers and scholars. The politics of separating "Rhetoric" and "Composition" no doubt involve the effort to evade a secondary, applied, practical status for "Composition."

Separating the two terms may in fact tend to move each of them away from the practical and applied, and toward the theoretical and speculative. If the name of the field is not "Composition," Rhetoric's former partner, or sidekick, but rather "Composition Studies," a move that is getting some traction, then the field is arguably moved more securely out of the shadow of "Rhetoric." As early as 1983, Robert Connors was considering how "Composition Studies" aspired to the prestige of the sciences, and a variety of research projects informed by linguistics and empirical research sought to establish a firm scientific footing for writing pedagogy. Composition teachers, Connors noted, "have had an institutional inferiority complex, and we looked beyond our own discipline for something that would validate what we do" ("The Politics of Historiography" 30). This scientific quest has yielded some interesting results, but it has not produced a science of writing or teaching writing, and it has arguably generated more opposition and skepticism than science-like prestige. Composition's more immediate competitor for prestige, however, has always been literary studies, and many considerations of the relationship between literary studies and the teaching of writing have been undertaken – are they partners, antagonists, what?[22]

Susan Miller's *Textual Carnivals* has offered one of the most compelling new narratives displacing the "denigrating tale" that makes literary studies "high" and composition "low," but one cannot say that scholars outside Rhetoric and Composition have widely been persuaded by Miller's arguments. One of the most revealing assertions regarding the relative merits of Composition versus Literature has been made by John Schilb, who argues that Composition Studies "can analyze broad social questions better than literary studies can" (176). This assertion of superiority leads Schilb to look forward to the day when composition is "not a plodding servant of other disciplines but a key force in the diagnosis of the contemporary world" (188). It's an interesting strategy: If Composition Studies loses status as an applied subject, perhaps it can move beyond the manual labor of writing pedagogy by focusing on the analysis of "broad social questions" and "the diagnosis of the contemporary world."

But at this point the field has morphed into something other than its traditional mission of teaching students how to argue and write more effectively. As Louise Wetherbee Phelps says, "An emphasis on 'practice' is probably the single most distinctive feature of composition studies; the discipline's sense of moral purpose in teaching has pointedly shaped its intellectual curiosity and provided a reality check for its discourse and knowledge-making" (132). Social and cultural analysis are not off-limits in Rhetoric and Composition, but they should be at the service of teaching students how to work with language, as a commitment to teaching students how to express themselves more effectively, how to persuade others, how to use language adroitly, seems essential to the field. "Rhetoric and Composition" captures the richness of this commitment better than "Rhetoric," or "Composition," or "Composition Studies," or "Writing," I think.

So, "Composition" in the name of this field, like "Rhetoric," refers to three layers of attention:

(1) "Composition" refers to practical instruction in writing skills.
(2) It also refers to the study of how people write and learn to write.

(3) It can also refer to the consideration of (1) and (2), the kind of meta-analysis that characterizes "theory" in literary study.

What isn't included in "composition"? Creative writing? Usually not, although it is hard to argue that all writing isn't creative in some sense, but poets and fiction writers and dramatists generally do not believe they are teaching composition. Technical and scientific writing? Journalism? Advanced non-fiction or expository writing? These are all usually considered to be related to composition, and people who are interested in those areas usually pay attention to work in composition (and sometimes vice-versa) – but those interests are typically thought to be distinct from composition. What about the understanding of how children learn to write and develop? What about writing disabilities? Again, these interests demarcate the borders of this field, where theory and research are certainly related to composition, and may in fact be perceived to be crossing its borders. The same could be said of many interdisciplinary kinds of projects: the history of the invention of writing, the history of how children have been taught to write, the functioning of the brain in the act of writing, eye movements while writing, the effects of listening to music while writing, the effects of anxiety levels on writing, the impact of computers on writing. Someone who says he or she is working in "composition" might engage in any of these projects, which are arguably "in" composition to the extent that they deal with the teaching and learning of writing in a general educational sense. Testing molecules that may hold the cure for cancer isn't in "composition" – but the effects of writing on health, psychological and physical, and how to use writing to affect your health – yes, those can be in, I think. The manufacture of devices and materials on the nanoscale – not in there; but the study of the composing processes of scientists who are writing about nanoscience – yes, come on in.

Like other fields with two names (Biochemistry, Humanities Computing, Industrial Mathematics), Rhetoric and Composition does

involve some fruitful overlap and even tension, as theory and practice, past and present, speaking and writing, public and academic, work out different ways of engaging with human communication.

RHETORIC "AND" COMPOSITION

This introduction to the field of Rhetoric and Composition is organized in terms of one of its most enduring and influential concepts: it's called the "offices" of rhetoric, or the "canon," and it follows an idealized process of developing and giving a speech: invent ideas, arrange them, articulate them with style, memorize what to say, and then deliver it. There is actually some evidence, both historical and cognitive, that speakers and writers may actually begin with structure, with a notion of how their material is going to be arranged, even prior to content. By the same token, we might think of "style" as something that one adds to ideas that have already been invented and arranged, but more ideas may well occur to the writer or speaker in the act of articulating, and the arrangement also may be altered as the style and everything else unfolds. In this sequence, delivery comes after invention, arrangement, style, and memory, but it is easy to imagine how delivery might actually in some sense precede the other activities: you wouldn't invent the same speech for Kenneth Branagh (eloquent Shakespearean actor) and George W. Bush (oratorically-challenged former US president) to deliver. Memory obviously comes after invention, arrangement, and style – what is there to memorize until the speech is done? And yet how can one invent without materials already held in the mind? In some sense, aren't the pieces of what one wants to say already somewhere in the mind, waiting to be put together? In other words, although it's easy enough to challenge these offices as a sequence, this durable structure remains nonetheless a very useful construct for organizing this field.

Chapter 2, "Invention," talks about how writers get ideas – or rather, about how theorists and researchers and teachers have imagined that speakers and writers get ideas, and what different

pedagogies have developed from those assumptions. I explore here the intriguing relationship between originality and imitation, and how invention might illuminate (and extinguish) plagiarism. Chapter 3, "Arrangement," deals with what writers might learn or already know about structure. What are the parts of an essay? Does it make sense to think in terms of a template for a piece of writing? Is it liberating or constricting to follow a set form? This chapter evaluates what we know about structure and teaching structure in writing. "Style," Chapter 4, covers everything from the fixation on grammar and error, to the celebration of fluency and eloquence. Is style an outgrowth of who one is, or is a style a kind of verbal costume, assumed and adjusted in order to create a certain effect? What can we do to influence or expand our students' selves or wardrobes? Should we in fact infringe on such personal choices? Some strategies for enlarging a writer's stylistic performance are presented, along with some consideration of the more elusive question of how style constructs a person.

The fourth activity, taught for many centuries, is "Memory." Although Chapter 5, dealing with memory, does cover briefly the methods students have learned in order to recall their speeches, the focus in this chapter is on another kind of memory. Specifically, the chapter provides a brief historical overview – not by any means "the" history, but an attempt to bring together disparate facts and observations and speculations, not only orienting you but also enabling you to question very soon the too-neat order that has been imposed on a rich and diverse past. The final office, and the final chapter, is concerned with "Delivery." Again, the chapter considers briefly how students were taught to deliver speeches, and what teaching "delivery" might mean in a print culture, but my emphasis here is on delivering Rhetoric and Composition to the student: the craft of teaching. The teacher invents, arranges, and styles a course of study; there is certainly a rhetoric of teaching. My intrepid discussion ranges from the most mundane (Does it matter what a writing teacher wears? How

does one initiate and sustain discussion?) to the most philosophical (why are you teaching writing in the first place? Is writing instruction related to democracy?).

Here's an open hand: Welcome to the great adventure of Rhetoric and Composition.

The Problem: The blank paper or screen just sits there. It won't tell the writer what to say. No little voice is going to whisper in anyone's ear, "Here's a great idea…." Trying even harder to think of something to say will only make it more difficult. And doesn't the writer need a cup of coffee, was that the phone ringing upstairs, have the bills been paid this month, what was the name of that friendly soccer player last night…?

Oh, but when the ideas are flowing, when you are almost watching yourself putting down words as quickly as you can, even surprising yourself with your insight and creativity, then writing is about as much fun as anything else on the planet. If you haven't experienced this kind of writing groove, it's as if you've never eaten chocolate. You have a treat in store. If only there were some reliable way to get those ideas to flow….