Rhetorical Roots and Media Future: How Podcasting Fits into the Computers and Writing Classroom

Episode 4: Rethinking the Old in New Ways—Arrangement and Style

By Jennifer L. Bowie
Transcript of the Podcast
http://kairos.technorhetoric.net/16.2/topoi/bowie/ep4.html

Welcome to "Rhetorical Roots and Media Future: How podcasting Fits into the Computers and Writing Classroom" a multimodal project exploring podcasting as a part of a writing class. You are listening to Episode 4: "Rethinking the Old in New Ways—Arrangement and Style." This is a seven episode podcast series with an interconnected webtext published in *Kairos: A Journal of Rhetoric, Technology, and Pedagogy*. A full transcript of each episode is available on the website and in the lyrics field of this MP3 file.

I am Dr. Jennifer L. Bowie, your host for this series and a Senior Usability Research Analyst for The Home Depot website. This work draws from my experience as an Assistant Professor at Georgia State University. Inside and outside the academy, I teach and research podcasting, digital media, writing, usability, and rhetoric

In this episode, I continue my discussion of "Rethinking the Old in New Ways" by exploring the next two parts of the rhetorical canon: arrangement and style. Without further ado, let us begin Episode 4!

Arrangement

Arrangement is the second canon to consider and reconsider with podcasting. Arrangement, the order of discourse, is impacted by the media of podcasting, as media and genre generally impact arrangement. The first thing to consider is whether podcasting is a genre and if there are subgenres. Since podcasting is so young, this may be hard to fully determine, but this is a good issue to bring up with students. Class discussions on podcasting as a genre often seem clearer to students than the analysis of print genres. Many podcasts are quite different from other audio texts, such as radio shows and certainly different from text in non-audio forms, such as blog posts, memos, emails, and so on. In addition, there is such a variety of podcasts and podcast types that this may lead to some interesting discussions as to what counts as a genre, media, and category. Walch and Lafferty list 18 podcast genres, with the last genre "other genres". The 18 include educational, gaming, music, news, politics, couple casts, comedy, religious and spiritual, called "godcasts", and interviews. While many of these have genre specific aspects such as content, arrangement, and other features that allow them to be categorized, many podcasts integrate components that may be found in a variety of these podcast genres. In addition, listening to an assortment of podcasts, especially from a variety of these categories, students may analyze an array of arrangement methods. They may consider the commonalties of arrangement in their chosen categories, but also can consider what works well in other categories and why the differences exist. For example, should they include

- ♦ **Pre-intro:** episode specific information such as date and episode title to let the listener know which episode she is listening to before she invests more

time in the episode and in case she does not have access to a screen to see this information

♦ **Intro:** an approximately 45 second introduction to get listeners hooked and introduce the topic

♦ **Outro:** the closing information which often includes email addresses, website url, creative commons license information, closing saying, source and transcript information, and so on

Students who consider and reconsider the canon of arrangement in writing podcasts have some of the same arrangement issues as the typical text, such as which point to put first, second, third, and the genre conventions. But podcasting offers other arrangements considerations. Deciding whether to include music may be more of an invention area, but where to include it is an arrangement concern. Should they start with music? Have musical transitions? End with music? Put music after the title segment? These additional arrangement considerations seem to also make the students more aware of traditional arrangement considerations and often results in a more thoughtful arrangement of their podcasting texts. In addition, students seem to take this awareness and deeper consideration of arrangement to texts in other media, resulting in improved arrangement skills.

Style

While students may easily relate the third canon, style, in podcasting back to rhetoric's roots, style is one of the more difficult concepts for many of my students to grasp with written texts. Style has, at times during the history of rhetoric, only been considered

"simple ornamentation" and many students first see it this way and not as the deeper, artful expression of ideas appropriate to one's purpose. Many of my students attempt writing in an "academic" style—with big words sometimes selected through Microsoft Word's thesaurus, long sentences, and a passive voice—which results in something that is not fun to write, read, or grade. However, the question of how it will be said becomes quite literal when the students are speaking their texts. Suddenly the spoken text issues of style such as dictation, accents, jargon, word choices, expression, and speed come into play. As both pathos and ethos are key when considering style, students begin to think about how an accent may give them pathos but decrease ethos, or vice versa (or even increase or decrease both). They consider how jargon may give them ethos with some audiences and decrease it with others. As their audience is no longer just the instructor, and possibly because they hear how ridiculous their academic written style sounds when spoken, students reconsider style in new and interesting ways. While this is often done more subtly, I've had two obvious examples of style choices among my student podcasts. Both my examples involve the artful use of accents. The first is a more serious use. A graduate student created a podcast critiquing the web design of Sint Maarten websites. As a native of Sint Maarten, the Dutch southern half of the island of Saint Martin/Sint Maarten, she used her native dialect for the podcast, which was quite different than the "normal American" dialect she used in class. This use of her native dialect and accent gives her podcast additional ethos, especially with her Sint Maarten audience. Here is a short example of her podcast.

[clips from podcasts]

My second example is two undergraduates in a senior seminar. For this class, pairs of students were given one week during the semester and had to create a "week in review" podcast covering their week. Their audience was mainly the class, but they knew these would also be posted on iTunes University afterward. The style one pair, Brett Jones and Arch Woodard, applied for their week in review was Pirate. They spoke like pirates, renamed everyone in the class with pirate names and gave us positions on the "Good Ship Kairos", and made several pirate references, while discussing what we covered that week, which was arrangement and style. They certainly applied a style that was not traditionally academic, yet they successfully met the assignment goals and created what was probably the favorite week in review podcast among their classmates. It was certainly one of the most memorable. This is a short example of their podcast and how they integrated Pirate with rhetoric.

[clips from podcasts]

With both these examples, their strong style choices would not have been clear, or perhaps even noticeable, in a written text. Because they were podcasting they could play with diction and accents in ways writing print texts does not allow. In both cases they made complex style decisions for their purpose and strengthened their arguments because of this. Both podcasts would have been fine without the accents and dialect, but these reinforce the text immensely and connect to the audience through ethos and pathos. By making extreme style choices in these texts, these three students opened up their style choices in their writing. By allowing and encouraging different, even radically different styles, we may allow our students to play with and, not coincidentally, learn about style in ways the written academic argument does not easily allow. In both my

examples I did nothing to encourage these radical styles, and only in the undergraduate class did we specifically discuss style. These styles came about through the students' own rhetorical decision making process. I plan to use these as examples in future classes to see how other students consider and reconsider style after listening to some of the effective options used previously.

This concludes Episode 4: "Rethinking the Old in New Ways—Arrangement and Style." Join me for episode 5, when I wrap up rethinking the rhetorical canon with memory and delivery. If you missed it, do check out episode 3, where I begin the discussion of rethinking the old and look at invention. In episode 6, I move onto rethinking other writing skills and in episode 7 I wrap this series up! Don't forget the introduction in episode 1 and review of the literature in episode 2. These all are, of course, part of the multimodal text "Rhetorical Roots and Media Future: How Podcasting Fits into the Computers and Writing Classroom."

 This multimodal text was published in *Kairos: A Journal of Rhetoric, Technology, and Pedagogy*. Please check out the full webtext on *Kairos* at http://kairos.technorhetoric.net/16.2/topoi/bowie. Full reference information, transcript, and links are available in the webtext and also in the lyrics field of the MP3. All student samples in this podcast were used with full permission. The music used in this podcast is "6" off *Ghosts I* by Nine Inch Nails, which is available under an Attribution-Noncommercial-Share Alike Creative Commons License.

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Thanks for listening!

Student Podcast Clips

- Hinds, Makeisha. (2009). "Episode 1" *Sint Maarten: Access Denied, a View and Critique of Sint Maarten's Web Design.* For English 8121 May 2009.
- Woodard, Arch, & Jones, Brett. (2008). "Week in Review Pirate Cast," for ENGL 4320:005:FA08, posted 10/15/08 on iTunes University.

Album Art

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- Brassey, Anna a. (1878-83). Illustration from *A Voyage in the Sunbeam, our Home on the Ocean for Eleven Months.* Image is in the public domain. Artist may not be Brassey, but no other information was available. http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Anna_Brassey_438-victorian-woman-writing-jornal.gif