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Jane Sutton

Mari Lee Mifsud

University of Richmond, mmifsud@richmond.eduFollow this and additional works at: <http://scholarship.richmond.edu/rhetoric-faculty-publications>Part of the [Rhetoric Commons](#)

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Towards an Alloiostrictrophic Rhetoric

Jane S. Sutton, Professor of Communication Arts and Sciences
The Pennsylvania State University, York
York, PA 17404
Phone: 717.771.4160
FAX: 717.771. 8404
Email: jss@psu.edu

Mari Lee Mifsud, Associate Professor of Rhetoric
University of Richmond, VA. 23173.
Phone: 804.287.6513
Email: mmifsud@richmond.edu

Towards an *Alloiostrophic* Rhetoric

This essay offers the exigence and outlines a strategy for theorizing “*alloiostrophic* rhetoric” and the practices and possibilities of such a theory. In brief, *alloiostrophic* rhetoric is one that turns towards difference, diversity, and the other. We explore such questions as the following: Why is a theory of *alloiostrophic* rhetoric needed? What are its primary characteristics? How might *alloiostrophic* rhetoric be performed?

As the preposition *towards* in our title indicates, this essay is, by necessity, a sketch. The necessity arises, in part, from the scarce historical resources of this trope, *alloiostrophos*, and in part from a received tradition—dominated by attention to metaphor—that fails to imagine how to write, speak, and perform *alloiostrophically*. This latter point we take up momentarily. As for the former, *alloiostrophos* is not a trope that the history of rhetoric recognizes. Despite its presence in Liddell, Scott, and Jones (LSJ 1996, 69-70) as both “*alloiostrophos*” and “*alloiotropos*,” this figure cannot be found anywhere in the rhetorical tradition, not anywhere from Aristotle to Kenneth Burke, nor in any handbooks on rhetoric whether in antiquity or contemporary times.¹ Yet the term resides in its adjectival form in the ancient Greek lexicon. We take this as an invitation to theorize. The scarce textual record of this trope is not a constraint for us but an opportunity to imagine *alloiostrophic* rhetoric: why it is necessary, what characteristics it displays, and how might it be performed.

Why Theorize *Alloiostrophos*?

“My love is a red rose.”² Poets, rhetoricians, and tragedians could identify this expression as a metaphor. Who could write, speak or perform an *alloiostrophos*? As it turns out (according to Hephaestio and later commentators), Aeschylus, Aristophanes, and Sophocles wrote *alloiostrophes*.³ Yet, *alloiostrophos* is unexplored in the realm of rhetoric. Worse yet it is structurally eclipsed by the privileged status of metaphor.

From Aristotle’s privileging of metaphor as the means to bring ideas before the eyes (1994), to Kenneth Burke’s privileging of metaphor as the means of identification (1969a; 1969b), metaphor has held a primary position in rhetorical theory. This primacy of metaphor does not seem capricious. As Hayden White (1978) explains it, metaphor is necessary to the process of understanding. Understanding in general is a metaphoric process rendering the unfamiliar familiar by asserting a similarity in a difference (5). Moreover, White observes that metaphor is even the master of the four master tropes. As he puts it, once recognizing the metaphoric character of understanding, “we may then distinguish metonymy and synecdoche, as secondary forms of metaphor...” (72).

The primacy of metaphor does not go unnoticed. Paul Ricoeur (1977) goes so far as to say that in the rhetorical tradition tropological resources have been “progressively closed” to all but metaphor (45). Gérard Genette observes that at the beginning of the twentieth century, metaphor alone survived the “great shipwreck of rhetoric and this miraculous survival is obviously neither fortuitous nor insignificant” (1982, 114).⁴ No one forecasts the primacy of metaphor more wryly than Wayne Booth: “I have in fact extrapolated with my pocket calculator to the year 2039; at that point there will be more students of metaphor than people” (1978, 47).

Whereas Ricoeur, Genette, and Booth all recognize the reduction of tropological resources to all but metaphor, we find Chaim Perelman and Luce Olbrechts-Tyteca (1969) to give a robust explanation of why this reduction is a problem. They note that the reduction of tropes to all but a few, especially metaphor, disregards the argumentative role of tropes. This is so because figures were not, as Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca note, “invented as ornaments” (167). To reduce the tropes is to limit the practice of argumentation precisely at the point of interaction between people and their use of language where choices and responsibility become articulated. Hence to reduce the tropes to all but metaphor reduces our freedom, responsibility, and choices.

Moreover, the primacy of metaphor in rhetoric limits the space for difference. Metaphor inserts all that is familiar into difference, thereby making it difficult to make contact with difference *as difference*. In metaphoric systems, difference enters the realm of understanding in the form of the self-same. Such understanding is compounded by metaphor’s ubiquity which irresistibly draws difference into the form of the self-same. This ubiquity eclipses all the more an ability to make contact with difference *as difference*.

By recognizing such problems with the primacy of metaphor, we find a need to bracket what Ricoeur calls metaphor’s “dictatorial position” (1977, 45) and expand awareness of the tropological resources for attending to difference. We need this figure of *alloiostrophos* to turn us towards difference and make an outside incursion into the regions eclipsed by metaphor. As outsiders, we can no longer, as Hélène Cixous and Catherine Clement write, continue to build rhetoric as the empire of the self-same (1986, 78-93). The future of rhetoric, speaking *alloiostrophically* as outsiders, requires that

rhetoric open itself up to a reconsideration of the tropes and the promise they hold for inventiveness, otherness, and difference.

What Characteristics Does *Alloiostrophos* Display?

With etymological play, we approach the question—what characteristics does *alloiostrophos* display. We see this word in two parts: *strophos* and strangeness. The “turn” of the *strophos* is defined by the “difference,” “diversity,” “alteration,” and “strangeness” of the *alloîos* (LSJ 1996, p. 69). This turn is less about a gesture of cultural sensitivity and more about the alteration of the very gesture. Insofar as the gesture of cultural sensitivity is prefigured by metaphor, it enacts a self-same turn, rendering the unfamiliar other familiar. The success of cultural sensitivity is cast in terms of charity or inclusion towards the other. In contrast, a strophic gesture defined by *alloîos* fundamentally alters the constitution of the self-same/other relation.

In order to illuminate this alteration, we return to play with etymology, this time focusing on *alloîos*. Unlike *alloiostrophos* which does not exist in the received rhetorical tradition as a trope, *alloiôsis* does exist, yet not without marginalization. Quintilian includes *alloiôsis* as a figure (1921, 9.3.92) but unfortunately gives no examples. Renaissance rhetorical theorist Thomas Swynnerton (Rex 1999) lists *alloiôsis* fifth,⁵ after metaphor, synecdoche, metonymy, and irony, which of course are known today as the master tropes (Burke 1969a, 503-517). But despite Swynnerton’s scriptural references to *alloiôsis*, the trope, as Brian Vickers (2002) observes, has been largely forgotten or ignored by rhetoricians since the reformation (100).

Such a marginal position of *alloiôos* as a trope of difference might call for a reclamation project, to excavate the material remains of *alloiôsis* to strengthen it as a trope of difference. In this manner, we would search for examples of *alloiôsis*. As much as we would like to explore this path, this manner of proceeding is problematic. We believe that theorizing *alloiostrophos* comes before finding examples of *alloiôsis*. Without a new way of seeing (ie. a new theory), any examples of *alloiôsis* we might find risk being understood only through the primacy of metaphor via an antistrophic rhetoric.

In this essay our focus, therefore, is not on reclaiming *alloiôsis* for the rhetorical tradition but on theorizing a new turn for rhetoric, a new *strophos*, an *alloiostrophos* that would deviate from the normative *strophos*—*antistrophos*—upon which rhetorical theory is built. In his opening line, Aristotle uses the trope *antistrophos* to define rhetoric through dialectic (1354a). As we have argued elsewhere, this antistrophic theorizing is a catastrophe for rhetoric, for it favors the familiar, the metaphorical, and turns down difference (Sutton and Mifsud 2002).⁶ We were directed to the idea of catastrophe by Aristotle, when in Book 3 of the *Rhetoric* he writes that the style of rhetoric—as the *antistrophos* to dialectic—should be a catastrophic style. The catastrophic style means to turn (*strophos*) down (*cata*). For Aristotle, this turning down is equivalent to coming to a rest. This rest is commonly referred to as a period. We take the catastrophic style as implicative of a kind of argument.⁷ This argument aspires towards a conclusion. This conclusion is pleasurable because one comes to a rest—or period—rather than going on and on and on as in the running style (1409a.26-27).

If we take a closer look at the catastrophic style, we notice something else. As the catastrophic or periodic style reaches an end, it does so through unreflective agreement.

This unreflective agreement is produced by the explicit expression of logical connectors. For example one would say, “I woke because I was thirsty,” rather than, “I woke, and I was thirsty.” The agreement secured here—“I woke because I was thirsty”—is a causal relation. The connector “because” hierarchically organizes two experiences—that of waking and of being thirsty. This explicit expression “because” imposes a particular conclusion.⁸ So while it may seem an exaggeration to say that this agreement is unreflective and diminishes freedom, choice, and responsibility, we hold true to this claim. We see at this mundane grammatical level an eclipse of the exigence of the imagination. Why imagine other possibilities of why one woke after a causal explanation of thirst is expressed?

This example although perhaps appearing trivial shows much more of our core concern. That unreflective agreement secured at such a mundane grammatical level is a foundation of catastrophe, of turning down the other. In effect, the psychological impulse of the catastrophic periodic style is to turn our attention away from other possibilities. This distractive effect eclipses our ability to imagine something other, and manipulates our experience of differences.

We enlarge our view of periodic style now, moving from the grammatical to the rhetorical level. Specifically we focus on the logical connection between rhetoric and dialectic that Aristotle establishes in his rhetorical theory, beginning with his opening line: “Rhetoric is the antistrophe to dialectic.”⁹ In this line, through the figure antistrophe, Aristotle establishes a metaphoric relation between rhetoric and dialectic. In his commentary *The Rhetoric of Aristotle*, E. M. Cope (1877) suggests as much “When applied in its strict and proper sense it [*antistrophos*] denotes an exact correspondence in

detail, as a facsimile or counterpart' (2).” In our essay “Figuring Rhetoric,” we explain how Cope explores the relationship between dialectic and rhetoric: “By ‘strict and proper sense,’ Cope is referring to the grammatical structure of SPN—subject plus a predicate nominative—as a ‘logic.’ So structured through *antistrophos*, rhetoric and dialectic then become ‘convertible,’ which is to say rhetoric and dialectic are ‘identical in meaning’ and ‘precisely similar in all respect’”(Sutton and Mifsud 2002, 30-31).

Not only is a metaphoric relation figured in this first line, it is figured so in a catastrophic style. The catastrophic style here is evinced by the use of the copulative “is.”¹⁰ Note that Aristotle follows this opening line by identifying only the similarities between rhetoric and dialectic, saying nothing of their differences. So from the start Aristotle “metaphorizes” rhetoric catastrophically through dialectic. This metaphoric rendering colonizes rhetoric’s difference and puts its theory in the service of the empire of reasoning ruled by dialectic.

To return to Cixous and Clement’s critique of classical rhetoric, this building of the empire of the self-same forces “the orator . . . to unwind a thin thread, dry and taut” (1986, 93). In our previous examples of periodic style at both the grammatical and rhetorical levels, we experience performances of this thin thread, dry and taut, unwinding. This thread is a symbol of the line of meaning imposed by the catastrophic style. The thinness of the thread is an effect of the reductive quality of logical connectors—like “because”—and the copulative “is.” To speak catastrophically is to stay the threaded course, and avoid multiplicity and perhaps irrationality. As the orator unwinds this thin thread and makes it to the end, the orator, in Aristotle’s terms, achieves a pleasurable

resting place. Drawing from Cixous and Clement, we find this resting place akin to death, namely the death of difference.

Affirming life, not only for difference but for rhetoric, we turn now to explore how the trope *alloiostrophos* enacts its turn towards difference.

How Might *Alloiostrophos* Turn Towards Difference?

We take our first clue from the ancient Greek lexicon. According to Liddell, Scott, and Jones (LSJ), *alloiostrophos* is “of the irregular strophes, i.e. not consisting of alternate strophe and antistrophe” (1996, 69). Hence, *alloiostrophos* cannot move metaphorically as antistrophe can. How then can it move? We see it move metonymically. Whereas Hayden White, as we have earlier referenced, believes metonymy to be a mere subset of metaphor (reminiscent of Burke’s master tropes), we follow now Roman Jakobson (1971). Jakobson believes metonymy to be a distinct figure from metaphor. We see this distinction readily through rhetorical effect: with metaphor producing assimilation, for example, rendering two distinct phenomena the same; and, with metonymy producing association, for example, juxtaposing two phenomena rendering them distinct. In this section, we address the irregular movement of *alloiostrophos* as metonymical. We do so by juxtaposing the antistrophic and *alloiostrophic* movements.

The antistrophic movement to the extent that it aspires to conclusion takes conclusion as its telos, and in its movement towards this telos turns down other possibilities. The *alloiostrophic* movement is an exertion towards other possibilities, and takes the recognition or imagination of other possibilities as its telos. The regular

movement of the antistrophic system is assimilative (metaphoric), where parts entering a whole lose their distinction for the greater good of the whole. The irregular movement of the *alloiostrophic* system is aggregative (metonymic), where parts entering a whole do not lose their distinction but exist side by side within a unity. This irregular movement transfigures the space of speech so that alterity can speak beyond the rule of metaphor. So *alloiostrophic* rhetoric turns to the complexity of possibility; therein lies its end, its telos. This presents a paradox, because in an antistrophic rhetoric the end is a resting place, whereas in an *alloiostrophic* rhetoric the end is a place of possibility.

To illuminate this movement, we turn to the work of sociologist Saskia Sassen. In a November 2007 keynote address given at the Union for Democratic Communications Conference to an audience of international, interdisciplinary scholars and activists working towards the emancipation of communication systems and practices to enhance democracy, she used the example of the technology teacher and the citizens in a retirement home.¹¹ We see in this example the crucial differences between the antistrophic and the *alloiostrophic* rhetorical movements.

Though Sassen (2007b) never mentions rhetoric, nor seems to recognize the rhetorical movement at play in her example, we do. Sassen problematizes the received tradition, which we would call antistrophic, in which technology is brought to the members of a retirement home and the members of the community are to be drawn to that technology by the discourse. Technology teachers wish to make contact with elders so as to expand the reach of technology and to assimilate elders into the technological world. The teachers take as their end-point teaching elders to use e-mail, develop Web pages, blog, and so on. We recognize the antistrophic movement of their rhetoric, as the teachers

operate with a fixed telos defined from within the culture of technology. Their movement out to the elders is a way to bring these elders to the telos. As Sassen points out, this seems only on the surface a worthy movement, but its results are a catastrophe, where the lived experience of the elders is turned down as the multiplicity of their worlds is assimilated (metamorphized) into the unity of the technological world. Not only, as Sassen notes, are elders demoralized in the process of recognizing their worlds have been bypassed by technology, but this demoralization leads to a constrained ability for elders to learn.

Sassen offers as an alternative approach, something that we see as *alloiostrophic*. She argues that technology teachers must approach the retirement home in a way other than the received tradition of teaching technology. Rather than operating from the fixed telos which arises from within the self-same technological system, the teacher must go out of this system to the multiple and diverse lived experiences of the elders and must attend to and deal with the complexity of their difference. So now the teacher is faced with the prospect of learning these other worlds—of the quilt maker, the beekeeper, the bridge player, the grandparent, and so on. When the teacher moves out towards these worlds and takes this as the beginning of teaching technology, and at the same time these worlds meet the technological from the particularities and idiosyncrasies of their lived experience, the multiple meetings enact the irregular and metonymical movement of *alloiostrophos*. So now the end of these meetings is not to subdue or catastrophize the other in the name of teaching technology; rather, the end becomes beginning points for creating something other than the colonizing power of technology on the one hand, and the marginalization of elders living without technology on the other.

In this example, we can see that both antistrophic and *alloiostrophic* rhetoric might be said to begin with a wish to make contact with the other. The antistrophic rhetoric wishes for a contact that would gain the adherence of interlocutors and secure their assent and mental cooperation (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca 1969, 16). Antistrophic contact prefigures the possibility of familiarity and the self-same. The *alloiostrophic* rhetoric wishes for a contact that would recognize and attend to the complexity of other possibilities as well as diversity and difference. So *alloiostrophos* is an irregular turn motivated by a wish to take us to other possibilities in a way that would permit contact without catastrophe. *Alloiostrophos* prefigures the possibility of alterity alongside of, rather than contesting or reducing the space of rhetoric with all its hierarchical privileges.

So whereas the regularity of the antistrophic rhetoric is performed through a metaphor of similarity, the irregularity of *alloiostrophic* rhetoric is performed through a metonymy of difference. Whereas metaphor moves to a collective via an assimilation of difference into the self-same, a metonymy generates differences as an aggregate. As an aggregate, differences do not lose their distinction in the process of coming into a collective.¹² As such, differences are related in *apposition* within an aggregate, that is to say differentiated from the other (Lily 1763, 172). In appositional relations, differences form an aggregate as a collective.

Whereas antistrophic rhetoric is configured in the space of the agora, the public space for speech, *alloiostrophic* rhetoric is configured in the idiosyncratic and particular lived reality of alterity. In other words, we do not just have bodies to speak the phrase “I wake because I am thirsty,” but we are bodies. That makes all the difference. As such, the

retirement home and its community of citizens is not the space of *alloiostrophic* rhetoric. Rather, the space of *alloiostrophic* rhetoric is in the individual practices of the quilt maker, the beekeeper, the bridge player, the grandparent, and so on in their relation to technology. We note that this movement towards the space of the individual and the particular is the very movement that antistrophic rhetoric closes off. This is made evident to us in Aristotle's *Rhetoric* (1356b-1357a) as rhetoric is said to attend not to each person, not to Socrates or Callias as individuals, but to the general culture of people which the Greeks referred to as *endoxa*.¹³

Whereas the Sassen example shows how *alloiostrophic* rhetoric functions in rhetorical practice, we wish to explore as well how it functions in rhetorical theorizing. To what extent does *alloiostrophic* rhetoric re-theorize "rhetoric?" We claim that it does so by way of opening rhetorical space to individuals. We ask then, to what extent do we dare theorize a rhetorical space from an individual perspective rather than social? Given the rhetorical tradition, it might be better to ask, to what extent can we (dare) imagine such a space? Particularly rhetoric's desire to become reconciled to dialectic casts the individual in dramatic terms of craziness, madness, and nonsense. This becomes particularly clear in the W. Rhys Roberts translation: just as medicine does not theorize about what will help to cure Socrates or Callias, but only about what will help to cure any or all of a given class of patients, in the same way the theory of rhetoric is concerned with what seems probable to people of a given type, and this is true of dialectic also, "Dialectic does not construct its syllogisms out of haphazard materials, such as the fancies of crazy people . . .". And neither does rhetoric. So the fear of handing over the art of rhetoric to the individual ostensibly would invite anarchy, undermining the system

of civic discourse, just as handing over the art of dialectic to fancies of crazy people would undermine the system of rationality. This is how we understand Aristotle's consistent eclipsing of the individual whether in his alignment of rhetoric with dialectic for their shared concern with things within the general ken, or the impossibility of building a theory on the particular.

It might be a surprise to Aristotle that advancements in medicine turn to the individual. This is evident in contemporary cancer treatments. Significant advances in medicine have indeed come by attending to what will cure Socrates' and Callias' cancer. New drugs are tailored to fit the individual. If we can entertain the idea of systematizing an art of medicine through individuals, we can do the same for rhetoric. Especially given rhetoric's unique relation with the particular and its vast rhetorical resources, it seems reasonable to fashion a theory of rhetoric that does not turn *down* the individual but turns out to the individual.

So the antitrophic system eclipses the individual, and the *alloiostrophic* system turns out towards the individual. Now to ask the question, are we suggesting a binary of these two forms of rhetoric: the antitrophic and *alloiostrophic*? Are we suggesting a *dissoi logoi* between them as they figure the space of speech? Are we not setting up the *alloiostrophos* to win the debate? Not exactly in these terms. Yes, we have created a binary, but we wish to figure this binary through a metonymy of difference rather than a metaphor of similarity. The distinction lies in the latter assuming always an oppositional relation between the members of a set, where one member must be forced into the ruling power of the other. The metonymy of difference allows for distinction of members in a set without the metaphor of opposition. Instead this metonymy of difference frames the

members as *appositional* in the set. Given the figural reality of this appositional relation, we are working in an additive system of change, rather than a substitutive system, or a system of subtraction that violates the other by either turning down (subtracting) or forcing in (substituting).¹⁴ We can see that an appositional relation disrupts the catastrophe of the other. Rather than turning down the other, the other is added on, in a running style (*eironomê*), a rhetorical style Aristotle rejects (1409a.26-27).

This forever perpetual appositional contact of the antistrophic and *alloiostrophic* movements keeps alive both spaces, as well as the need to alter them. This point of contact is an irritant for both spaces, with the *alloiostrophos* irritating the antistrophic enforcement of similarity, and *antistrophos* irritating the *alloiostrophic* turn towards rhetorical anarchy. In effect, neither one could fold or embed the other into itself for the appositional, not the oppositional, movements sustain indeterminacy of function or telos and so neither one can ever be fully itself.

The juxtaposition of the antistrophic and *alloiostrophic* rhetoric offers a performance of an *alloiostrophos*. This in combination with our turn towards difference, namely our turn towards the anomaly of *alloiostrophos* in the rhetorical tradition, allows us to offer our essay as a performance of what *alloiostrophos* can do to imagine difference.

¹ Our emphasis here is on the rhetorical tradition, knowing that *alloiostrophos* or words in the same declension are found in the Greek corpus. There is a technical use of ἀλλοιόστροφον at Hephaestio's *de poëmatis* (69:15) located in Consbruch, ed. (1971), and available online at <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k25178s>. Especially noteworthy to the rhetorical tradition, as cited in Liddell, Henry George and Robert Scott and Sir Henry Stuart Jones, eds. 1968, 69 is the terms' use in reference to poetic practices of Aeschylus, Aristophanes, and Sophocles.

² For further discussion of this example see Sutton and Mifsud (2002, 40-41).

³ See Note 1 above.

⁴ The “great shipwreck of rhetoric” to which Genette refers is a reference to the conflict between rhetoric and philosophy at the end of the nineteenth century.

⁵ Swynnerton defines it this way: To be shorte, “Alleosis, is vnder one nature to vnderstande the other” (Rex 1999, 147).

⁶ For further discussion of antistrophe fusing rhetoric and dialectic, see Booth 2004, citing Sutton and Mifsud.

⁷ The position that style is implicative of a kind of argument draws from Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca (1969). See note 4 above.

⁸ For additional analysis see Mifsud (2007, 94-95).

⁹ For extended analysis see Sutton and Mifsud (2002).

¹⁰ The significance of the emergence of the copulative “is” grammar unique to fourth century language can be found in the following: Kahn (2003); Havelock (1981), (1986).

¹¹ Saskia Sassen (2007b). This Keynote Address given at the *International Conference of The Union for Democratic Communications* is related to Sassen (2006), (2007a), (2007c), and (2008).

¹² For additional commentary on the distinction between metaphor and metonymy, see Jakobson (1971).

¹³ See Sutton and Mifsud (2002) for discussion of the exclusion of the *individual* (36-37).

¹⁴ See Sutton and Mifsud (2002, 37-39).

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