

The Burkean Jam: Rhet/Comp, Revision and Blues, and the Universal Chorus

Marvin Diogenes

Imagine you enter a jam session. You come late. When you arrive, others have long preceded you, and they are engaged in a heated jam, a jam too heated for them to pause and tell you exactly what it is about. In fact, the jam had already begun long before any of them got there, so that no one present is qualified to retrace for you all the songs that had gone before. You listen for a while, until you decide that you have caught the tenor of the set; then you put in your oar. Someone answers with a verse; you answer with a verse of your own; another riffs off of your chorus; another takes a solo off the bridge, to either the delight or dismay of the room, depending upon the quality of the player's chops. However, the jam is interminable. The hour grows late, you must depart. And you do depart, with the jam still vigorously in progress.

Kenneth Burke and Harry Chapin, *The Philosophy of Literary Chords*

The Universal Requirement. We've all had to make our way through it, and the "all" includes every singer, songwriter, and band of the twentieth century. The experience of first-year composition has been endlessly explored and analyzed, but what hasn't been documented is the trauma (and occasional joys), the deep psychic wound (and occasional levitation of the spirit) left by the experience. Such trauma leaves the individual and the community no choice but to repress the memory, to erase it if possible, to cover it over with less painful narratives of lost love, teenage anomie, and struggles with the Man.

The work of the Composition Blues Band is to return the repressed to consciousness, to bring the trauma of composition to light in the hopes that all of us can find peace with our lot and let the healing begin. This is arduous archival work, as the original lyrics of the rhet/comp canon are buried in dusty notebooks, on scribbled drafts, on restroom walls from Asbury Park Community College to the University of Texas-Lubbock. One might ven-

ture that the entire massive apparatus of pop music, the rock biz, the star-making machinery of the popular song, exists to keep the story of FYC well-hidden. The CBB will not allow this to continue. We will seek out the lost original lyrics of the rhet/comp canon wherever the search takes us, and we will continue to bring the lyrics to the rhet/comp community, as we have in presentations at CCCC, WPA, and other venues.

It's a commonplace that great art comes from great pain, and what's more painful than a life in composition? That's why so many songwriters first found their voice in FYC, as students. What's more surprising, and shamefully unknown, is how many of these artists followed their tsouris, extending their relationship with rhet/comp as writing teachers, scholars, and even as WPAs. We offer an overview of our archival work below.

A NOTE ON THE COSA NOSTRADAMUS EFFECT

Early in our archival work, we noticed the astonishing prescience of the songwriters whose work we uncovered, a phenomenon that we came to call the Cosa Nostradamus Effect. This translates as, "It's our thing, and we know exactly what's going to happen." How else to account for the Big Bopper foreseeing the political correctness controversy in "Sex, Class, and Race" or Elvis Costello anticipating the abolitionist movement in "Writing's an Elective." The Effect is particularly evident in the tech-savvy predictions of The Eagles in "Wiki Woman" and Cat Stevens in "Wired World." As our work evolved, we accepted that everything about the field was "always already" in play.

CLASSICAL RHETORIC FOR THE MODERN ROCKER: TOPOI!

The renewed interest in classical rhetoric that flowered in Edward Corbett's *Classical Rhetoric for the Modern Student* and such canonized articles as Wayne Booth's "The Rhetorical Stance" was anticipated in the rhet/comp rock of the fifties. The rhetorical turn got off to a duck-walking start when Chuck Berry simultaneously reinvented the blues and retold the story of rhetoric's spread to a new generation in "Rhetor B. Goode," a project for his classical rhetoric survey course.

Before the modern era, five hundred B.C.
 They overthrew a tyrant down in Sicily
 The people there contested every point they could
 Taught by a sophist boy called Rhetor B. Goode
 He never ever learned to read or write so well
 But he could argue both sides as persuasive as hell

Go, go,
 Go, Rhetor, go, go, go
 Go, Rhetor, go, go, go
 Go, Rhetor, go, go, go
 Go, Rhetor, go, go, go
 Rhetor B. Goode

When Rhetor got no tenure down at Syracuse
 He went peripatetic, yeah, he got real loose
 Wearin' out his sandals ramblin' Athens way
 The Greeks all gathered 'round to hear that Rhetor play
 He said, "I bring you practical philosophy,
 and the thing about the truth is its contingency"

Go, go...

Rhetor was a speaker of such wizardry
 Made the best appear the worser for a modest fee
 His potent words had power close to absolute
 Don't ask about his ethics, boy, that point is moot
 When Plato had a problem with the oversight
 Begged him, "Rhetor be good tonight"

Elvis Presley was given the syllabus and reading list from the course Berry took by his manager, Colonel Tom Parker, an act that many still characterize as an unjust appropriation, and some more bluntly as an act of theft. Berry's influence can be observed clearly in Presley's "Rhetoric Hotel," in which Presley struggles to find a home within contingency, bereft of the certainty offered by Plato's stern metaphysics.

Ever since my Plato left me
 I found a new place to dwell
 Among doubts and probabilities
 In the Rhetoric Hotel

I'm so uncertain
 I'm so uncertain, baby
 I'm so uncertain I could cry

I said to Aristotle
 Please get me back on track
 He handed me some lecture notes
 Read these and you'll get the knack

It's just a techné
 It's just a techné, baby
 It's just a techné, don't you cry

A guy dressed in a toga
 Said his name was Cicero
 "Everything about everything
 is all you need to know"

Along came old Quintilian
 Instituting oratory
 He said, "Be a good guy all your life,
 then you can be hortatory"

Knowledge and virtue
 Knowledge and virtue, sonny
 Knowledge and virtue show the way

The path wasn't without obstacles for "The King of Rhet 'n' Comp." His plan to teach at the university level never came to fruition, leading him to celebrated but bittersweet appearances on *The Steve Allen Show* and later *The Ed Sullivan Show*. The rockabilly poignancy of "Adjunct Blues" documents the painful failure that led Elvis to a life in the spotlight and an untimely end. When he was singing to a basset hound on national television, or on *Sullivan* with the camera aimed high to avoid showing his hands at work on a prospectus for a book growing out of his dissertation, he was dreaming of a 2-2 load and generous research funding.

One was my B.A.
 Masters made two
 Finally got past ABD
 My Ph.D. is through
 Now don't you
 give me those adjunct blues
 Cause I did everything
 Lay off of those adjunct blues

Took all the classes
 Read all the books
 Listed the sources
 Cited the schnooks
 Wrote a dissertation
 insightful and true
 Then I wrote it all again
 when you said to make it new

Now don't you...

Got me a vita
 long as my arm
 Letters testifyin'
 to my scholarly charm
 Sent out my vita
 from Quebec to Peru
 No one wants to hire me
 My loans are coming due

Now don't you...

I'd work in the city
 Breathe in the smog
 Wouldn't mind the country
 Sleep in a log
 I'd serve on committees
 plus a heavy teaching load
 I'd swallow all my theory
 Heck, I'd even teach the modes

Now don't you...

Not everyone embraced the rhetorical turn or the wild newfangled music that served as its vehicle. Current-traditionalist Peggy Lee spoke out breathily for focus in "Thesis," a reductive though seductive view of the relationship between writer and reader, with exigency and purpose mere afterthoughts.

Some folks justify exploration
 Think the journey's really the key

Let's just say I don't have the patience
 That's just navel-gazing to me
 I want some thesis to assist me
 Thesis gotta be in plain sight
 Thesis in the opening, thesis to shine like a light

Everybody's gotta have thesis, that is something you all know
 Thesis isn't such a new thing, thesis started long ago

Romeo loved Juliet
 With a feeling that he couldn't name
 Stood there under the balcony
 Julie didn't know why he came
 He had no thesis, to assist her
 Thesis to focus the tropes
 Thesis to inspire, with no thesis Romeo's on the ropes

Now I've finished reading your essay
 Crystal clear the point that you made
 Thesis there to guide my reading
 Original or readymade
 You gave me thesis to assist me
 Thesis there at every turn
 Thesis till the ending, it's the only way to learn
 It's the only way to learn

Buddy Holly answered by putting forward the importance of invention strategies in "Topoi."

All of my trying
 All of my squinting
 I need to know
 How to do some thinking
 Topoi, so orderly
 Topoi, they help me see
 They do invent for me

All of my time
 Staring and waiting
 For the available
 Means of persuasion

Topoi, so orderly
 Topoi, they help me see
 They do invent for me

**THE DAY THE MUSIC DIED: BUDDY, RITCHIE,
 AND THE BIG BOPPER R.I.P.**

Aided by rhet/comp rock's common and special topics, Buddy Holly generated dozens of key works, but his career was tragically cut short as he was flying out of Clear Lake, Iowa after performing at a meeting of the Iowa English Teachers Association, en route to another NCTE affiliate in Fargo, North Dakota, part of a whirlwind tour of Midwestern pedagogical gatherings. Traveling with Buddy was Ritchie Valens, who had been discovered as a high school student in Pacoima, California, delivering his bilingual tongue-in-cheek take on the rules he was learning in 10th grade English, "La Comma."

Para usar la comma
 Para usar la comma
 se necessita coordinating conjunction
 coordinating conjunction
 si no tiene, si no tiene semi-colon
 Yo no soy comma splicer
 Yo no soy comma splicer
 Soy capitan punctuation
 Soy capitan

Comma, Comma
 Comma, Comma
 Comma, Comma
 Comma, ay

Para poner un punto
 Para poner un punto
 se necesita una sentence completa
 una sentence completa
 con subject y verba se hace completa
 Yo no soy fragment maker
 Yo no soy fragment maker
 Soy capitan punctuation
 Soy capitan

Comma, comma...

Nunca usa first person
 Nunca usa first person
 no necesita opinion subjectiva
 es opinion subjectiva
 si no tiene, si no tiene los facts todos
 Yo no soy ego hombre
 Yo no soy ego hombre
 Soy rational, no digo “yo”
 Soy rational

Comma, comma...

Also on the flight was the Big Bopper, JP Richardson, a North Central Texas State English department head who had hit it big with “Sex, Class, and Race,” an eerie but boisterous anticipation of the political correctness debates that would follow decades later.

Sex, class, and race are in my face
 They pin my tale to the ground
 They’re crippling up my walk
 and tripping up my talk
 Classroom spinnin’ ‘round and ‘round
 Ain’t nothing I observe
 that don’t strike a nerve
 They say it’s all malarkey
 from the patriarchy
 I was always boss
 Paradise is lost
 I’ve been tossed
 Oh, baby, my goose is cooked

Spoken:
 Hello, Baby
 I mean Ms. Baby
 You say be there by eight
 And don’t pontificate
 You say don’t be such a shmendrick
 Don’t be phallogocentric
 Oh, Baby,

Ms. Baby,
 I don't know what you want

Sex, class, and race don't know their place
 Turn my tale upside down
 They just cannot forgive
 my master narrative
 My masculine pronouns
 I can't say a word
 they can't make absurd
 They heap condemnation
 on my strong foundation
 They say I'm obtuse
 'bout my privileged roost
 I've been plucked
 Oh, baby, my goose is cooked

The music may have died that snowy night, but the universal requirement has far more than nine lives, and countless thousands continued to enroll in classes, compose essays, and ultimately turn the experience into song.

RANTS ACROSS THE WATER: THE BRITISH INVASION

The roiling rhet/comp rock scene in the States couldn't help but snag the attention of British wannabe rockers. Driven by insecurity about their lack of standardized writing courses (grousing that the term "universal requirement" carried with it the same xenophobic arrogance as baseball's blithe staging of the "World Series"), the Rolling Stones, struggling through assignments at the London School of Economics, wrote "Three to Five Sources." The song dramatizes both their raiding of American rhet/comp rock and their parallel anxiety about poaching intellectual property.

Research assignment
 One-third of the grade
 Teacher's intention
 to see of what I'm made
 Now it's the last minute
 And the library's closed
 My internet connection
 is kind of indisposed

Three to five sources

That's what the guidelines say
 Three to five sources
 I will find them some day

My choice of topic,
 which the teacher must approve
 Should be in the public interest
 So there's opinion to move
 So I started with abortion
 'Cause it worked back in high school
 Teacher said that was off limits
 So I switched to welfare rules

Three to five sources...

Evaluate assertions
 Build an argument sublime
 Try some academic journals
 Not just Newsweek and Time
 Documentation
 Proper form for every cite
 It is called plagiarism
 when you come off too erudite

Three to five sources
 MLA or APA
 Three to five sources
 I will cite them some day

The Kinks, blessed with a sunny irreverence, didn't worry about attribution or influences when they cheerfully aligned themselves with their Greenwich Village friends, the TA staff at NYU, generating the anthemic "Oy Vey, I Wish They Could Write" out of a sense of the solidarity of rhet/comp rockers everywhere.

I'd be content to read their work in the daytime
 Seems I have to read their work all of the time
 The only time I sleep at night is by desk side
 Seems I have to read their work all of the time
 Oy veh, I wish they could write
 Oy veh, I'll be up all night

Oy veh, I wish they could write

I believe that every theme lasts forever
 Out of a thousand million words, ten are clever
 The only time I sleep at night is by desk side
 Seems I have to read their work all of the time
 Oy veh, I wish they could write
 Oy veh, I'll be up all night
 Oy veh, I wish they could write

The sixties didn't end the synergy of the U.S. and U.K. scenes. While he was still Declan McManus, son of a bandleader/teacher in Paddington, Elvis Costello pledged allegiance to a father of the rhetorical turn in "Rhetorical Stance," a banner heralding the new wave of interest in rhet/comp.

Romeo was desperate, he had pages to fill
 Crossed out every sentence 'cause his purpose was nil
 Wayne Booth he was waitin' with a classical net
 He said, "Listen to me and we'll save your ass yet"

You gotta know about rhetorical stance
 You gotta know about rhetorical stance
 You gotta know it
 Cause you've tried and you've tried
 But you're decontextualized
 Yes, your subject is unfocused, your audience too wide

You gotta have a character sincere but not uptight
 Cater to their feelings while you instruct and delight
 Writing in a vacuum is just not gonna do it
 It's a fluid situation and you gotta adapt to it

You gotta know about rhetorical stance...

Romeo denied that Wayne could help him out
 If everything's rhetorical, there'll always be doubt
 You can learn the lingo from any TA geek
 What's the use of learnin' if it's certainty you seek

You gotta know about rhetorical stance...

BABY, I’LL SHARE MY CRAFT: STUDENT LORE

Ritchie Valens’ “Comma” was by no means the last word on student lore devoted to negotiating the first-year requirement. Bob Dylan spoke for his generation on every important classroom issue, though he insisted he was “just a writer,” not a messiah. He addressed the ubiquity of the dominant essay forms of the time in “Everybody Must Use Modes.”

It’s Narration when you have to tell a tale
 Description when you must have more detail
 Exposition when your facts are on parade
 Persuasion when your aim is to persuade
 Old man Montaigne just hit the road
 Everybody must use modes

They’ll mode you when it’s causes you assess
 They’ll mode you when you discern more from less
 They’ll mode you when you draw a clear contrast
 They’ll mode you when you compare first and last
 How can you tell the tadpoles from the toads
 Everybody must use modes

They’ll mode you when you must define your terms
 They’ll mode you when you classify earthworms
 They’ll mode you when the sets must be discrete
 They’ll mode you when your sets must be complete
 How can you tell the line’s been toed
 Everybody must use modes

They’ll mode you when you want to find an answer
 They’ll mode you when you divide dance from dancer
 They’ll mode you when you want to ponder why
 They’ll mode you when you want to sit and cry
 Let’s break Ma Nature’s secret codes
 Everybody must use modes

The Bard of Hibbing articulated the exasperation of students dealing with the pedagogical flavor of the month, whether it be the early stirrings of expressivist techniques or cultural critique in “All I Really Want to Do.”

I don’t want to express myself
 Coalesce or confess myself

Address myself, outguess myself
 Undress, assess, or duress myself
 All I really want to do
 is get a good grade from you

I ain't lookin' to write too well
 Cite, delight, or recite too well
 Extemporize well, categorize well
 Apprise, surprise, or analyze well
 All I really want to do
 is get a good grade from you

I don't want to describe my kin
 Explore my sin or delve within
 Be selective or reflective
 Be directive or be effective
 All I really want to do
 is get a good grade from you

I don't want to explore the world
 Abhor, deplore, or implore the world
 Valorize, problematize
 Theorize, contextualize
 All I really want to do
 is get a good grade from you

A decade or so later and some hundreds of miles to the east, Bruce Springsteen brought his ironic insouciance to a rousing celebration of perhaps the most durable staple of old-fashioned rhet/comp 'n' roll in "Five Paragraphs."

Well, now I've had my share of schoolin'
 So I know just what to do
 Ain't no matter what topic I'm doin'
 Got a plan and it's clearly foolproof
 Well, baby, I got the secret
 It's such a simple thing that you'll laugh
 Though the teacher don't want me to leak it
 Baby, I'll share my craft
 It don't take a whole lot of thinkin'
 It comes down to basic math

You gotta have your five paragraphs
 Thesis in the front, thesis in the back
 Between there are three chunks
 Thesis fore and aft, then you got it right
 Gotta have three reasons and you'll sleep sound at night
 Honey, don't you worry if you got them you're on track with those
 five paragraphs, five paragraphs

Well, now, way back in the Bible
 Eve and Adam had a writing class
 And the Lord he was the teacher
 He wanted them to do well and pass
 So he assigned a personal essay
 about what Eden meant to them
 He wanted them to be authentic
 Tell the truth and then say amen
 But the serpent, he had a method
 that would make that assignment a snap
 He told them 'bout the five paragraphs
 Eden in the front, Eden in the back
 Between there are three chunks
 Eden fore and aft, ain't this garden nice
 Eve, just list three reasons and you'll stay in paradise
 Adam, don't you worry, God will pat you on the back
 for those five paragraphs, five paragraphs

Now, some folks say it's scary
 That I never use less or more
 Some say it's arbitrary
 It could even be six or four
 But I love how they're always stable
 I count on how they're always true
 Just one number to remember
 And the fingers of one hand will do
 I can do it with my eyes closed
 'Cause I'm always walkin' down the same path
 I gotta have my five paragraphs
 Thesis in the front, thesis in the back
 Between there are three chunks
 Thesis fore and aft, then you got it right
 Gotta have three reasons and you'll sleep sound at night

Honey, don't you worry, if you got them, you're on track
 with those five paragraphs, five paragraphs

MEET THE NEW BOSS: THE WPA BLUES

Even though his life was short, Buddy Holly's love affair with all things rhetorical led him to see the future allure (and trap) of WPA work, as detailed in the earliest song about writing program administration that we've recovered, "WPA."

WPA
 Why do I comply
 WPA
 I can't tell you why
 I say I'm gonna leave
 I know that's a lie
 'Cause WPA's never die

Well, they're fundin' all my sections
 Give me some discretion
 An office, an assistant, a reduced load too
 They say they love me dearly
 and then they cut severely
 Come next year Comp may be through

Oh, WPA...

Well, they give me some release time
 Some planning and police time
 The budget and the schedule and the complaints too
 They say they need me sweetly
 But as for tenure, we'll see
 Your publications are too few

Oh, WPA...
 WPA (Cuckoo)
 WPA (Cuckoo)
 WPA (Cuckoo)

Bob Dylan, with his ability to occupy all subject positions in the national myth, saw the same bleak future for WPAs, voicing his warning with the world-weariness he brought to so many of his early songs in “Writing Czar.”

I ain't gonna be the writing czar no more
 I ain't gonna be the writing czar no more
 I can't sleep at night 'cause I overuse TAs
 They're enriched by the training if not by the pay
 A few years down the road they'll be out the door
 I ain't gonna be the writing czar no more

I ain't gonna be the writing czar no more (2)
 I sponsor program parties at least two times a year
 I put out beer and pretzels and say “Glad you're here”
 Between bites they want to know when I can pay them more
 I ain't gonna be the writing czar no more

I ain't gonna be the writing czar no more (2)
 One hundred writing teachers writing comments till they drop
 The teachers may turn over but the comments never stop
 And still the students' writing is fair to poor
 I ain't gonna be the writing czar no more

I ain't gonna be the writing czar no more (2)
 I go to every conference regardless of the cost
 Jim Sledd hurts my feelings by calling me a boss
 when all I do is mind the company store
 I ain't gonna be the writing czar no more

Elvis Costello weighed in on the counterpoint to dissatisfaction with WPA work with his imagining of a future without the universal requirement in “Writing's an Elective.”

Nice plan, just one little defect
 Selling a course they must elect
 No more ensured enrollment
 No more first-year requirement

Now that writing's an elective
 There's no loot

Now that writing's an elective
 We're so moot, moot, moot, moot
 We acted up and then we got too smart
 Now we've been booted, yeah, we've got no part

Back then we should have seen the signs
 Critiques and quibbles up and down the line
 All so disgusted by the status quo
 Eminent voices saying "We got to close"
 They said "We can no longer aid or abet it"
 Now that abolition's here, we may soon regret it
 We don't know how much more of this they will take
 We're scheduling sections but they're not going to make

Now that writing's an elective...

We're alone now and we realize we're finished
 We still staff the standard courses but the staff will be diminished
 They call it market logic when we're below enrollment limits
 Someone's laughing at our problems cause we screwed up our business
 We don't know what to say to the TAs and adjuncts
 Who are ready to hear the worst about their sections' disappearance
 It took a lot of history to make things this way
 It only took our middle finger to blow it away

**THE SAD WOMEN (AND MEN) IN THE BASEMENT:
 JUST FOLKS, NEW WAVE, AND GRUNGE**

They will always be with us? Perhaps. It's certainly true that renderings of adjunct and part-timer experience have always been with us. An early example is folk rocker John Prine's tender account of his teacher, a freeway flyer with sections at three colleges, "Adjunct from Montgomery."

I am an old teacher
 Can't be none other
 My manner is mild
 I'm not one to be bold
 The outlook is frightening
 No one wants to hire
 From Little Rock to Atlanta
 The answer is no

Make me an adjunct
 I'll drive from Montgomery
 Give me the rosters
 Show me where to go
 Don't need an office
 Just a class I can go to
 The wages ain't livin'
 And there's no parking, I know

I once was a young turk
 I knew me the topoi
 I was something to look at
 Rhet/Comp theory man
 But that was a long time
 And no matter how I try
 The quarters just fly by
 Like a screen full of spam

Make me an adjunct...

The students are bitchin'
 I can hear them buzzing
 Don't want to do nothing
 But they all want an A
 I am that poor person
 Drive to work in the morning
 Drive home in the evening
 And still have mountains to grade

Make me an adjunct...

Every generation has to rewrite its key narratives, just as students need to rewrite essays about family crises and alternative energy sources. Chrisie Hynde had done her share of adjunct work in and around Akron, Ohio before she became the front woman for *The Pretenders*, as evidenced in "Big Old Teaching Load."

Got a big old teaching load
 It's starting to grind me
 I'm standing in the middle of life with my dreams behind me
 Go the extra mile for every one I teach

As long as they don't try showing up late
 Or using the Web just to cheat

Now come on baby
 I'm in crisis mode
 Come on now
 Got a big old teaching load, yeah

With a big old teaching load you see the darnedest things
 Sleepy eyes drooping down and sneers without pity
 Staring at your bloodshot eyes and old shoes
 Give you outdated research loaded with fibs
 Oh, I don't see a line I want to read
 When you teach a big chunk of the writing third world
 The typos just come with the scenery

Now come on baby...

A big old teaching load is like anvils in a sack
 I can't get from the desk to the car
 Without stopping to straighten my pack
 All their words are readymade
 When I get home, I have to grade
 No ivory tower Ph.D.
 I tend the kids, all ninety-three

Got a big old teaching load
 Come on now

From Alabama to Ohio to Seattle and its grunge scene, the plight of adjuncts wouldn't leave a sensitive soul alone. Kurt Cobain vented his rage in Nirvana's "Smells Like Adjunct Spirit."

It's adjunct fun
 It never ends
 You get to choose
 We get to bend
 No long accord
 Nothing assured
 I know, I know
 You're quite concerned

Hell, no (16 times)

Got no rights now
 We're not dangerous
 Here we are now
 Underpay us
 We do good work
 For low wages
 Here we are now
 Underpay us
 We ain't got no
 Nowhere to go
 We can't get no
 No quid pro quo
 Yeah

We're cursed for what we do best
 Like knock off jeans we've been distressed
 This adjunct group has always been
 We'll be right here until the end

Got no rights now...

CANARIES IN THE COAL MINE: PROFESSIONAL CHALLENGES

Just as Russian writers in the 19th century were said to all have come out from Gogol's overcoat, many songwriters can be said to have come out of Elvis Presley's adjunct blues as they dealt with a range of professional disappointments and challenges, beginning even before they got their first jobs. Tom Petty, for instance, stalled at the dissertation stage at the University of Florida before, heartbroken, he led his band to California to find stand-in fame and fortune. He recounts his situation in "ABD."

I passed quals, I passed comps
 I don't talk too much about it
 TA stipend has run out
 There's no way I can revive it
 Everybody likes to tell me
 "Enough already with the anomie
 Hey, you don't have to live like an ABD"

Somewhere, some time
 Somehow I gotta make it happen
 Do the research, draft the draft
 Find a way to hold my angst in
 Don't like people tellin' me
 "You're in thrall to your lethargy
 Hey, you don't have to live like an ABD"

Adjunct work is the worst
 Freeway flying, like the Dutchman I'm cursed
 It wasn't supposed to be this way
 I was supposed to be a star at MLA (A!)

Somewhere, some time
 Some mentor must have approved my proposal
 Checked the oil, kicked the tires
 of my bibliographic U-Haul
 Now that mentor's surly and mean
 He's disgusted by my time-to-degree
 Hey, I don't want to live like an ABD

Finishing the dissertation doesn't solve every problem, though, as the job search has pitfalls of its own, as chronicled by Neil Young in "Four Jobs in Ohio." (Bandmate David Crosby covered similar ground in "Almost Cut My Hair," as did Stephen Stills in "Fellow Ships.")

October—the job list coming
 Two chapters down, three to go
 My dossier's out there drumming
 Four jobs in Ohio

Gotta get down to it
 Interviews coming around
 Trim the hair or let it grow?
 What if they ask me
 To be both glib and profound
 Can I pretend like I know?

Four jobs in Ohio
 Three jobs in Ohio

Two jobs in Ohio
 One job in Ohio
 No jobs in Ohio

Finding the grail of a tenure-track position does not guarantee an untroubled future either. For all his fame as an international ambassador of reggae music and Rastafarian philosophy, Bob Marley never escaped the judgments of his peers at the University of Kingston, as recorded in “Publish or Perish.”

Publish or perish, and the journals must be refereed
 Publish or perish, and the books must come out steadily

All around my department
 They're trying to break me down
 They say they can't bring me through safely
 If my articles are less than three
 If the new work is less than three
 They say

Publish or perish, with decorum and deference
 Publish or perish, write nothing that will give offense

Senior colleagues always baited me
 For what I don't know
 It seems that they are all agreed
 They say, “Your vita is just so-so
 You can't make it here on just so-so.”
 They say

Publish or perish, and the presses must have pedigrees
 Publish or perish, no fly-by-nights or vanities

Review came my way one day
 And the rumors were flyin'
 All of a sudden I see Chairman Top Down
 Aiming to shoot me down
 And he shot, he shot me down
 And he say,

Publish or perish, no reward for mediocrities
 Publish or perish, you talk too much, like Socrates

It's not only that you publish, but what you publish, as Bruce Springsteen learned when he joined the Rutgers faculty, with testimony in "Born in the MLA."

Went to school for my Ph.D.
 Great books were my pedigree
 I planned to make it on the theory scene
 Gonna tell the grad students what the theory mean
 Born in the MLA (4)

Woke up from those elitist dreams
 Lost my taste for universal themes
 In my profession now I'm just a slob
 Cause I teach composition to the human mob
 Scorned by the MLA (4)
 Scorned by the MLA

In my department I'm a mystery
 Colleagues call my work a travesty
 Don't teach the best that's been thought and said
 Don't spend my time with white guys long dead
 Scorned by the MLA (4)

Up for tenure, case was strong
 Publications were all wrong
 Taught too much, same old song

Couldn't list any MLA panel
 They wanted tweed but I come in flannel

Still tryin' to re-make history
 Want to find a site that's right for me
 MLA's got the biggest show
 But 4c's is the place I want to go
 Born in good old 4c's (4)

BORN TO BE WIRED: LIVING IN NEW TECH CITY

The profession has been transformed by technology, but there are persistent truths related to the travails of the human heart, as Cat Stevens, in an example of the Cosa Nostradamus Effect, noted in "Wired World."

Now that I've made a website for you
 You say that you're a Webmaster too
 And it's breakin' my heart, you're surfin'
 Baby, I'm lurkin'
 But if you want to link, take good care
 Hope you make a lot of nice links out there
 But then a lot of nice links go dead out there

Oh, baby, baby, it's a wired world
 It's hard to get by on a cyber-smile
 Oh, baby, baby, it's a wired world
 I'll always recall you like a file, girl

I've seen a lot of what the web can do
 Need the latest downloads just to make it through
 And I never want to see you crash, girl
 A virus can thrash you
 So if you want to chat, take good care
 Hope you cruise a lot of nice MOOs out there
 Just remember that MOOs can turn bad out there

Oh, baby, baby, it's a wired world
 It's hard to get by on a cyber-smile
 Oh, baby, baby, it's a wired world
 I'll always recall you like a file, girl

La la la la la la dot.com
 La la la la la la dot.com
 La la la la la la dot.com

Oh, baby, baby, it's a wired world...

Also ahead of their time, the Eagles predicted the rise of open information banks in "Wiki Woman."

Maven fair, in she digs
 Really loves that wysiwyg
 Quick loads changes into the night
 She's a restless writer on an endless site

Woo hoo, wiki woman

See her wise replies
 Woo hoo, wiki woman
 She got a jones to revise

She runs the spell check into the night
 Don't use CamelCase, cause it don't look right
 Sketchy content from that same buffoon
 She blocks that IP address
 No more blithering loon

Woo hoo, wiki woman...

Well, you know she wants to cover
 This, that, and the other
 She don't have no time for nested tags
 And for every stub she's found
 She adds something more profound
 She can write straight through to morning
 Till her eyes have bags

Woo hoo, wiki woman...

In an example of disciplinary crossover (as well as the Cosa Nostradamus Effect), the Sons of the Pioneers saw clearly the temptations that technology would bring in "Ghost Writers on the Web."

As each semester lumbers on, the last assignment looms
 Explore an issue of your choice, let innate genius bloom
 But the teacher is a puzzle, each lecture sounds like Greek
 Just set your browser roamin'....give free enterprise a peek

Http (http)
 "W" three ("W" three)
 Ghost writers on the web

We've got ten thousand papers here, each one is tailor-made
 to satisfy the keenest eye if scrutiny is paid
 Proper documentation, each assertion circumspect
 Don't even have to proofread....the spelling is correct

Http (http)

Term papers free (term papers free)

Ghost writers on the web

They say the process movement will make us obsolete

Some teachers only give a grade when process is complete

We have outlines to prove inquiry, journal entries for each day

We even have some early drafts, evolving straight to “A”

Http (http)

Process pain-free (process pain-free)

Ghost writers on the web

THE SONG REMAINS THE SAME: DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The canon is vast. As Burke notes in his originary narrative, the “hour grows late,” and ultimately all of us must depart. The Composition Blues Band will do what it can before last call to restore as many songs as possible to the rhet/comp songbook.

NOTES

The lyrics for “Rhetor B. Goode,” “Rhetoric Hotel,” and “Adjunct Blues” first appeared in *Making and Unmaking the Prospects for Rhetoric: Selected Papers from the 1996 Rhetoric Society of America Conference*, ed. Theresa Enos and Richard McNabb, Mahwah, NJ; Lawrence Erlbaum, 1997. This RSA gathering marked the first report on the archival work of the Composition Blues Band.

EDITORIAL POST SCRIPT:

While we acknowledge Diogenes’ remarkable contribution, we must wonder how he managed to ignore Bob Seger’s immortal:

Here I am, marking red again

Here I am, full of rage

There I go, grading hard again

There I go, turn the page.

Finis