

HABILITATION THESIS
Rhetorics in English Literary and Non-Literary Discourse

Professing Rhetorics in English-Language Literary and Non-Literary Discourse: Life,
Logos and Practices across Selves, Time and Space

(ENGLISH PHILOLOGY)

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Abstract

Drawing its premise from the observation of psychologist George A. Kelly that “people, too, are events”, this habilitation thesis provides a personal-functional and social-role intellectual autobiography of a unique professional career of a trans-disciplinary, transnational and multi-sector nature, but with the twin constructs of *logos* and *ethos* as its unifying core. For this philosophical reason, and given the diversity of professional functions that co-existed (academic, policy specialist and Church missionary), the text of the thesis is necessarily essayistic and probing (but not idiosyncratic, in that personal observations are buttressed by references to a wide and deep range of academic sources, both my own and many others). It reflects my considered life-view that anyone who attempts to ‘profess’ knowledge, especially in the areas of language and literature, need to possess (in a Socratic sense) a wise, examined sense of self, with both strengths and shortcomings openly acknowledged. In this way, I believe I honor both the legacy of the subject of my PhD dissertation, late literary critic Wayne C. Booth of the University of Chicago (USA), and my own academic advisors and mentors.

My wide-ranging, multifaceted career, which began in 1983 in the USA (as a high school teacher and part-time Government instructor in my native Texas), has lead me to work on

five Continents (to date). Since obtaining my PhD from The Ohio State University in 1992, I have continuously held full-time academic posts carrying out a complete range of professorial duties in Romania, Liberia, Korea, and now Papua New Guinea (where I serve as a full Professor). My teaching/research and graduate advising topics have covered rhetoric, communication and literary criticism (the specializations of my PhD work at Columbus) and mass media/political structure studies (the specializations of my MA work at the University of North Texas, USA). My first degree at the University of Texas/Arlington provided me a foundation in both Radio-TV broadcasting/production and political science (double major). During my post-Masters and PhD study period in the USA, I taught a wide variety of university subjects for varied higher education institutions in both Texas and Ohio.

Once I took my first full-time post-PhD academic appointment with the (then) Civic Education Project of the (Soros) Open Society Foundation posted in Bucharest (from 1992-1994), I found myself intimately involved with the theory and practice of curricula reform of the social sciences (as well as teaching) and then (because I was seconded to a private University) involvement in issues of academic quality assurance and accreditation followed. This professional focus led to a long-standing cooperation with the European Centre for Higher Education (UNESCO CEPES) in Bucharest from 1996 until the Centre closed in 2011) where (by writing many scholarly reviews of higher education policy books for the journal *Higher Education in Europe* and editing varied publications of the Centre) I gained another specialization in international higher education policy. In the following time period (1994-1998), I also expanded my teaching experience beyond UNEX-AZ by leading seminars and courses at the Academy of Economic Sciences (teaching Philosophy in its Faculty of Foreign Languages), as well as at the University of Bucharest (in the Faculty of Foreign Languages and in the Faculty of Sociology).

In 1998, I traveled to the Republic of Korea to teach at Kyonggi University in Suwon English language, Media, and Social Work courses, and to work as an international relations adviser to the office of the Vice-Chancellor (Pro-Rector) of International Relations. In 2000, I returned to Romania by accepting the invitation of late Rector

Dumitru Ciocoi-Pop to teach at LBUS. Over a span of 13 years (until June 2013), I taught full-time in the Faculty of Letters and Arts, in the Department of German and English Studies (except when I took periodic visiting professor positions abroad, teaching in a Department of Global Communication and Culture at Hannam University in Korea and in a range of Departments at Cuttington University in Liberia), performing research, thesis advising and institutional service. Since then, I have maintained advising and research links with LBUS and the Faculty while working full-time at the Papua New Guinea University of Technology in the Department of Communication and Development Studies.

The LBUS position I held (as the C. Peter Magrath” Center [invited] Professor) was a specially crafted one (with full agreement of the Rector), in that it was carried out in conjunction with the Episcopal Church of the USA, in that I had been appointed a Missionary to Romania (with intended services to Cuttington University in Liberia). As the thesis clearly demonstrates, I successfully incorporated that activity into the fabric of my academic duties, which strengthened both. (I held this ecclesiastical position until October 2009.)

In the habilitation thesis, I show that, over my career of three academic ‘lives’ (in the USA, in Romania, and now Papua New Guinea), I have nonetheless maintained a unifying strand of research activity that, grounded in the philosophy of what George Kelly called “constructive alternativism”, allows me to write of varied topics (literature, critical-cultural studies, social psychology of communication, higher education policy and theology) in an engaging, serious (but not somber) fashion which allows my readers to productively make with me what psychologist Edward de Bono called “lateral” intellectual connections between disparate fields, as well as traditional intellectual connections in a “vertical” manner. In the schema of educationalist Ernest L. Boyer (*Scholarship Reconsidered: Priorities of the Professoriate*), my strength as a scholar is in synthesizing knowledge from varied fields into new ‘probes’ of knowing, in words of Marshall McLuhan. My consistent academic publishing covers the years 1982 to the present in the above-mentioned academic areas, mostly, but not exclusively, in Romanian

journals, and I believe its products have been well-received by noted scholars, both in Romania and abroad.

I therefore trust the doctoral school at LBUS will find my contribution noted herein a worthy one.