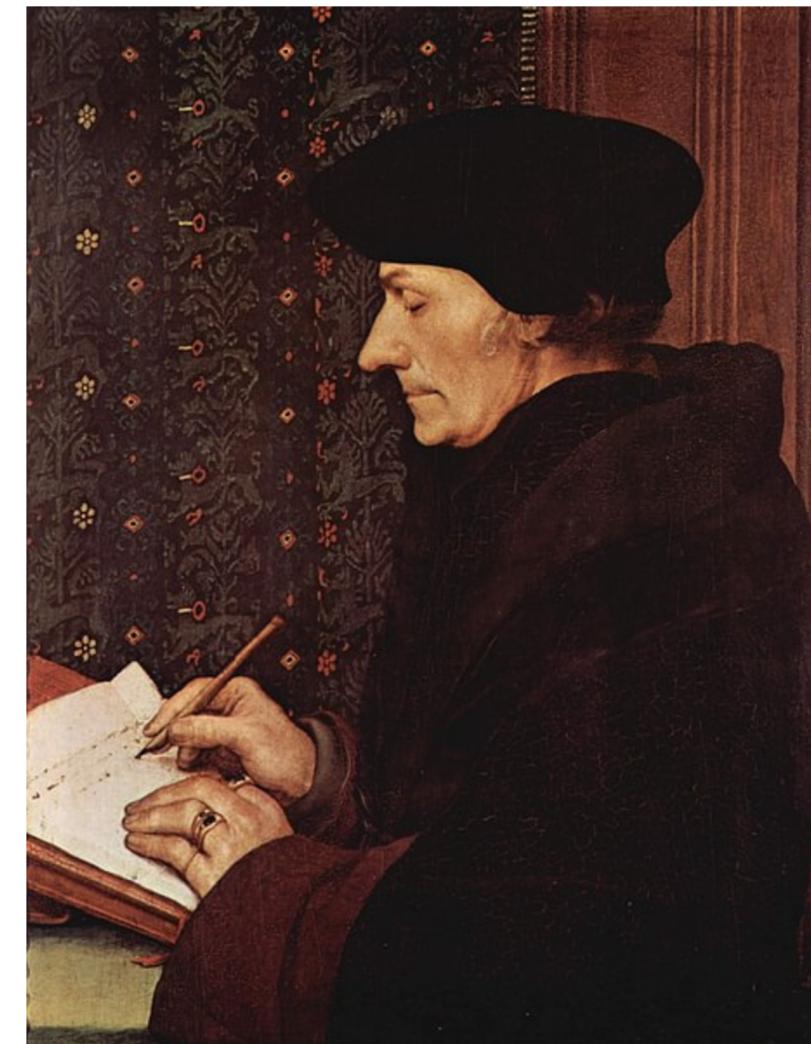


# An Erasmian Dance of Rhetoric in Remixes of brat and it's completely different but also still brat

## Background & Methods

### Applied Theories



#### Erasmian rhetorical theories

Desiderius Erasmus was a 15th century rhetorician and humanist, best known today for his works *On Copia*, *Ecclesiastes*, and *The Praise of Folly*.

- Rhetoric: persuasive speech and its components
- **Copious rhetoric:** the variability of language allows for a precise meaning to be communicated through the right words
- Stylized text: poetic yet purposeful language

#### Feminist Lens

Feminism advocates for uplifting women and the inclusion of all women in the fight for equality. A feminist critique seeks to assess how well a text accomplishes this via rhetoric. Fourth-wave feminist scholars argue for bodily autonomy:

- the right to be safe in sexual encounters and find justice for abuse
- the right to control one's own reproductive organs

## Case Study

**brat and it's completely different but also still brat**  
The album *brat* by Charli XCX rose to fame in the summer of 2024, inciting the trend of "brat summer" across the globe. This trend combined the alt femininity of the 80s with cyber-pop of the late 2000s, and worked to reclaim the word 'brat' as a badge of independence. After a series of remixed singles, Charli XCX released this album of one remix of each original song.

**"Talk, Talk featuring Troye Sivan"**  
This remix turns the original text into a celebration of the speaker's emotional independence through the use of an accelerated, energized tempo.

**"I might say something stupid ft. The 1975 & Jon Hopkins"**  
This remix strips the facade of peace to reveal the turbulent inner dialogue of the speaker through fewer words and a flood of soft piano.

Though these two songs remix the originals differently, they are an effective case study to show the complex rhetorical aspects involved in a remix.

## Rhetorical Aspects of a Remix

### Conceptual Aspects

#### a. Remix as a conceptualized product.

A remix must be inherently connected to the original work(s). Erasmus declared in *Ecclesiastes* that good reading must come from good context (Bizzell & Herzberg 588). *brat and...* is contextualized by the original songs, the artists' brand image, and the genre of dance club pop.

#### b. Remix as an individual product.

A remix creates new meaning through its new form of production; it is unique, not a re-creation of the original. It creates an 'abundance' of music without duplicating music for the sake of quantity.

#### c. Remix as novelty.

A club remix in particular is designed to impassion its listeners through something new and unexpected. To create a remix that is effectively different from the original, the artist must **languish to their 'follies'** - revel in the bliss of unknowing - and create chaos in their designs.

#### d. Remix as madness.

Erasmus' "praise of folly" is a satirical mocking of 'it's nicer to stay in Plato's cave.' *brat and...* harnesses this concept to subvert the constant surveillance of women's bodies for the sake of mental peace by idolizing the 'nasty woman' who lives her life chaotically and irresponsibly.

### Interactive Aspects

#### a. Audience emotion as a guide to purpose.

There must be a rhetorical shift in the audience as well as the context. As a remix is created, the **meaning** is not meant to change, but the **purpose**. The purpose of "Talk Talk ft..." is now to dance; the purpose of "I might say..." is now for somber, individual reflection.

#### b. Class divide.

Dance club pop creates a connection between the celebrity and mundane, high-grossing and working class. The quality of Erasmian style comes from the intentional choice of genre to reach the widest possible audience. A remix must work quickly to hook the listener, and the dissociative, ever-happy lifestyle of Brat Summer is an effective lure for that.

### Technical Aspects

#### a. Six features of a remix.

These identified features make remix a distinct medium from alphabetic (solely written) text: **verbal**, **aural**, **visual**, **immediate**, **individual**, and **emotional** (Kuhn 1.5, Church 70). Additionally, it is the audience's responsibility to draw a conclusion from the text.

#### b. Sounds, instrumentals, and metalinguistics.

"Talk Talk ft..." uses a fast-paced beat and dynamic tone shifts in the lyrics and instrumentals, which are associated with quick and unrestrained movements. "I might say..." uses soft piano in a minor key, which is associated with calmness and/or sadness.

#### c. Autotune (digital vocal fry).

This effect is used as a grunge-feminist rebellion, as neither (male) featured artist takes on the effect. The artist continues her brand, positioning the remix as **congruent**, **not synonymous**.

#### d. Featured artists.

These contributors have a similar responsibility to the music/rhetoric as the main artist does, but a unique ability to change the music's meaning. They create remix as a "rhapsody," stitching together to form a new narrative (Kuhn 2.3).

## Conclusion

This analysis serves as proof of value of ancient tradition as well as pop culture, each an authority in their own right, yet stronger when merged. Through the changes of wording and sounds, remixes adhere to the Erasmian principle of copious rhetoric to produce a distinct yet similar meaning to the song's message. Though pop culture develops more rapidly than academic discussions can keep pace with, there is still benefit to understanding the ways in which rhetoric is present in our surroundings. If a remix of a popular dance club song can influence the way in which women are perceived - as is the case in the two songs discussed here - it should be considered a genre worth analysis. *brat* and its remixes are a prime example of the **active interchange of ideas involved in a social movement**. As a feminist collection, *brat* inherently argues for women's independence; as a **counter-cultural** form of feminism, it further promotes women's happiness in their free will.