

**The Medium was the Message:
Classical Rhetoric and the Materiality of
Language from Empedocles to Shakespeare**

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Abstract

Chapters One and Two are an analytical history of classical rhetorical theory from the early Greeks to Quintilian, with a focus on the issues of form and the medium-message dynamic.

Chapter Three covers Renaissance rhetoric, analysing the ways in which the ideas traced during the first two chapters informed rhetorical theory and practice, as exemplified by the sixteenth-century curriculum and the treatises of Erasmus. It is argued that during the Renaissance there was a wide-ranging, but ultimately unified, culture of the medium, which incorporated not only rhetoric but also the other arts of the *trivium*, as well as fields such as prosodic theory.

Chapter Four begins by explaining that the formalist paradigm explored during the preceding chapters could be used as the foundation for any one of a number of medium-centred literary investigations, but that for the purposes of this study we shall be examining Cratylid language-use. The reasons for pursuing this line of enquiry are set out, and the status, and dearth, of this type of study within literary criticism are explored. Then, after a summary of Cratylid thought in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the rest of Chapter Four and the whole of Chapters Five and Six consist of an investigation into Cratylid devices within Renaissance poetry. Around twenty poets are discussed, with a particular emphasis on Wyatt, Sidney, Spenser, and Shakespeare.

The conclusion argues for a return to rhetoric, and makes use of the ideas covered in the main body of the dissertation to shed light on the condition of modern-day literary criticism, wherein an anachronistic, and sometimes fanatical, romanticism has distorted our understanding of the past. The misreading of the *De Copia* by twentieth-century rhetorical commentators is used as a case-study.

There is an appendix on Longinus. The reasons for including this, and for keeping it separate from the rest of the dissertation, are given in Chapter Two.

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Declaration

Some of the close-reading sections in the later chapters are, in line with the *Graduate Handbook*, revised versions of discussions which formed part of my M.A. dissertation.

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There ain't half been some clever bastards.

- Ian Dury.

Chapter 1

The Medium and the Message within Rhetorical Theory from Empedocles to Demetrius

No sooner has one learnt that the word 'rhetoric' means 'the art of eloquence', thus aligning oneself with the classical and Renaissance interpretation of the term, and so avoiding the modern connotations of 'argument' or 'persuasion', than one discovers that, for some of the most eminent of the ancient Greek rhetoricians, it did in fact mean 'the art of persuading an audience':

Rhetoric, then, may be defined as the faculty of discovering the possible means of persuasion in reference to any subject whatsoever.

(Aristotle, *The Art of Rhetoric*, I.II.2. The same point had been made by Plato: *Gorgias*, 453a, 454b, and 534a-b.)

The Art of Rhetoric is essentially a legal guidebook, and is mostly given over to the handling of argument. It covers topics such as how to overturn a courtroom opponent's claims by using counter-syllogisms (II.XXV.1), or by finding inconsistencies in the reasoning of the other side (II.XXIV.3). (The *Gorgias*, likewise, tends to limit rhetoric to a specifically legal function, e.g. 454a-b.) Subjects such as these, being more concerned with thought and content than with expression, would, later in the history of the liberal arts, almost certainly have been put under the heading of either logic or dialectic, two of the companion disciplines, rather than under that of rhetoric, which came increasingly to be associated with issues of style. This is not to say, though, that Aristotle entirely neglects the question of language-use, for even in this, the most content-led of the great works on rhetoric, discussions about form and style occur with reasonable frequency. This applies in particular to the last of the three books, which contains, for example, an account of the periodic or 'chopped' style (III.IX.3), and also a section on metre (III.VIII.4) which would not look out of place in the *Poetics*. As Aristotle himself puts it at the opening of the third book, 'It is not sufficient to know what one ought to say; one must also know how to say it' (III.I.2).

The binary formula of the how and the what, as laid down by Aristotle, is taken up by Quintilian, one of the greatest and most influential of his Roman successors:

But as two questions arise from this subject, *how*, and *what*, we ought principally to write, I shall consider them both in this order.

(*Institutio Oratoria*, X.III.5.)¹

The same terms were later used by Pico della Mirandola in a letter of 1485 to Ermolao Barbaro, in which he states that philosophers are concerned with 'the what of writing', whilst others are more concerned with 'the how'.² This dichotomy was to become a commonplace of English Renaissance culture within both criticism and literature:

... I wil not so much stand upon the manner as the matter of my precepts.
(George Gascoigne.)³

Were the manner so very fine, as the matter is very good ...
(Gabriel Harvey.)⁴

Caesar: I do not much dislike the matter, but
The manner of his speech ...
(Shakespeare, *Antony and Cleopatra*, II.ii.117-18.)

Oscar Wilde, still the most incisive critic of the modern age to have written on classical rhetoric, uses this binary regularly, and even, on occasion, in its Renaissance formulation, as seen, for example, in his essay 'The Gospel According to Walt Whitman', where the latter's book *November Boughs* is described as putting on record Whitman's 'aim and motive' regarding both 'the manner and the matter of his work'.⁵ The division into manner and matter has continued into more recent times:

... verbal style, the *how* rather than the *what* ...
(William K. Wimsatt, Jr.)⁶

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1. These, and all subsequent emphases within quotations, are taken from the source.
 2. In Brian Vickers, *In Defence of Rhetoric* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), p. 187.
 3. *Certayne Notes of Instruction Concerning the Making of Verse or Ryme in English*, Part 3, 1575. In G. Gregory Smith, ed., *Elizabethan Critical Essays*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1904), I, p. 49.
 4. From *Of Reformed Versifying, &c.*, a letter to Spenser, 1579 or 1580. In *ibid.*, p. 103.
 5. *The Artist as Critic*, ed. Richard Ellman (London: W.H. Allen, 1970), p. 121
 6. *The Verbal Icon* (New York: The Noonday Press, 1954), p. xiv.

The function of criticism should be to show how it is what it is, even that it is what it is, rather than to show what it means.

(Susan Sontag.)¹

'The "What" and the "How": Perspectival Representation and the Phenomenal World.'

(E.H. Gombrich.)²

In critical theory . . . we can learn to make our first question 'How does the text work?' not 'What does it mean?'

(Peter Washington.)³

In the present discussion, the division into the how and the what of expression, whether it be called form/content, manner/matter, or medium/message, will be a key concept.

It is tempting to think of Aristotelian and Roman rhetoric as being all of a piece, especially when no less a figure than Cicero seems to imply that there is a direct continuity between the two:

. . . for to say nothing of Greece, which was always desirous to hold the first place in eloquence, and Athens, that inventress of all literature, in which the utmost power of oratory was both discovered and brought to perfection. In this very city of ours, assuredly, no studies were ever pursued with more earnestness than those tending to the acquisition of eloquence . . .

Having heard the Greek orators, and gained an acquaintance with Greek literature, and procured instructors, our countrymen were inflamed with an incredible passion for eloquence.

(*De Oratore*, LIV.)

This passage makes the crucially important point - perhaps the single most important point that it is possible to make about high culture in the West - that rhetoric is nothing less than the cornerstone of the classical literary tradition. If we run the early-Greek and the Roman forms of rhetoric together too thoroughly, however, we miss an important development. Beyond the similarities, such as the emphasis, in both Aristotle's *Rhetoric* and many of the

1. 'Against Interpretation.' In David Lodge, ed., *20th Century Literary Criticism* (Harlow, Essex: Longman, 1972), p. 660.

2. Title of an article in Richard Rudner and Israel Scheffler, eds., *Logic and Art* (Indianapolis and New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1972), pp. 129-49.

3. *Fraud* (London: Fontana Press, 1989), p. 176.

Latin works which succeeded it, on forensic oratory, rhetoricians during the Roman period accord significantly more weight to the practical mechanics of eloquence. The intellectual foundation for this difference in approach is summarised by Quintilian, who, implicitly invoking and countering Aristotle's definition of rhetoric as being the faculty of discovering 'possible means of persuasion' (I.II.2.), tells us that oratory (which is in this case synonymous with rhetoric) is less the art of 'persuasion' than 'the science of speaking well' (*Institutio Oratoria*, II.XV.34), and then explicitly warns against using any definition of rhetoric which would tie it down to its results (II.XV.35). Moreover, so keen is he to establish the definition of oratory or rhetoric as being the science of eloquence, that shortly afterwards he restates this point twice over, first telling us that 'Aeneas defines oratory well, saying that it is *to speak according to the excellence of speech*' (II.XV.36), and then that 'if oratory be *the art of speaking well*, its object and ultimate end must be *to speak well*' (II.XV.38). Brian Vickers uses this description of the nature of rhetoric as the basis for his own definition. At the start of the first chapter of his *Classical Rhetoric in English Poetry*, he describes rhetoric as:

'the art of speaking well', the art of effective communication, in speech or writing. It is not simply, in the words of one definition, 'the art of persuasion'.

He goes on to quote the great E.R. Curtius: 'Rhetoric signifies "the craft of speech"'.¹

On the face of it, Quintilian's definition of rhetoric as eloquence, or the 'science of speaking well', appears to be of only limited significance, for, however it is defined, the careful use of speech within any kind of legal or political setting involves eloquence as its means, and persuasion as its end. It is therefore hard to see how rebranding it could make any practical difference. Nevertheless, by pushing back the definition of rhetoric from its effect (which in the case of Aristotle's system is persuasion) to the means by which that effect is produced (i.e. the skilful manipulation of words), and, furthermore, in a move

1. (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1970, reprinted with annotated bibliography 1989), both quotations from p. 15.

which anticipates art for art's sake, by making eloquence an end in itself - the 'object and ultimate end' of 'the art of speaking well' being 'to speak well' - Quintilian gives rhetoric a place and a purpose of its own, independent of any particular application.

However, Quintilian's redefinition is a result, rather than a cause, of this fundamental change. It is an affirmation of a shift which had, in fact, already taken place. Quintilian gives the credit for his definition to the third century B.C. Stoic philosophers Cleanthes of Assus and Chrysippus (II.XV.35). Just as one has to steer clear of thinking of the Aristotelian and the Roman schools as constituting a single system, so, equally, one has to resist attributing the differences between these schools to Roman innovation. Given the status of Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, and given the equally venerated position of the main Latin rhetorical texts, it is easy to attribute the turn towards style, eloquence, or the 'excellence of speech' to the Romans, and thus overlook the trail-blazing work of the Greeks who were Aristotle's immediate successors. Yet it is these unjustly-neglected writers who deserve, more than anyone else, to be remembered for giving western civilization its tradition of highly-sophisticated literary formalism and aestheticism, a tradition which was to dominate written culture for over two thousand years, and which was to include not only the works of the Romans, but also the works of Shakespeare and of all the other luminaries of Renaissance literature. The most immediate influence on the rhetorical system of the English Renaissance was the work of the main Roman rhetoricians, but before examining the late-classical texts, which we shall do in the next chapter, we need to consider the ground-breaking work which was produced after Aristotle and before Cicero. This will help to illuminate, and account for, the remarkable medium-centred methodologies which came to prominence during the Roman and Renaissance eras. It will be useful to start with a brief survey of the origins of rhetoric.

According to H.I. Marrou, rhetoric as a taught discipline - as distinct from the rhetoric evinced by the use of figures in the earliest Greek literary works, including those of Homer - had arisen in Sicily during the middle decades of the fifth century B.C., and had been born out of the need to debate cases of land ownership following the expulsion of the

tyrants of the Theron (c.471 B.C.) and Hieron (c.463 B.C.) dynasties. Corax and Tisias are said to have been the first teachers of rhetoric, and to have written a handbook on judicial oratory, which is now lost.¹ Quintilian says that Corax was the first person to write on rhetoric - *Institutio Oratoria*, II.XVII.7 - and Cicero in the *De Oratore* reports that Socrates referred to Corax and Tisias as the founders of rhetoric (I.C.XX). Gorgias, who had been a pupil of Tisias,² and who arrived in Athens from his native Sicily in 427 B.C., helped to popularise the art of rhetoric in Greece. But he also left it open to attack. Along with some of his fellow Sophists, such as Protagoras, Gorgias had concentrated so hard on eristics (debating for victory) that the pragmatic art of arguing a case from one side or the other came to overshadow, says Plato, the single and unified nature of fact and truth. In *Phaedrus*, Plato speaks of how rhetoric uncouples reality from the perception of reality:

Socrates: Then the man who follows the rules of the art will make the same jury think the same action just one moment and unjust the next, as he pleases?

Phaedrus: Of course.

(261)

Later in the *Phaedrus*, Plato has Socrates focus on the Sicilians:

Then there are Tisias and Gorgias. Shall we leave buried in oblivion men who saw that probability is to be rated higher than truth, and who would make trivial matters appear great and great matters trivial simply by the forcefulness of their speech . . . ?

(267)

Isocrates (436-338 B.C), a contemporary of Plato, likewise urges the teachers of eristics to 'give up the use of this claptrap, which pretends to prove things by verbal quibbles, which in fact have long since been refuted, and to pursue the truth [*aletheian*]' (*Helen*, 4).

According to Diogenes Laertius, in his *Lives of the Eminent Philosophers*, Protagoras was the first of the early Greeks to maintain that it is possible to argue in favour of any idea

1. H.L. Marrou, *A History of Education in Antiquity*, trans. George Lamb (London: Sheed and Ward, 1956), p. 53.

2. Walter Hamilton, in his edition of the *Phaedrus* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973), p. 84, n. 2.

whatsoever (IX.51).¹ In a passage which anticipates and rebuts the subjectivist and relativist tenets of our own zeitgeist, Plato, in the *Gorgias*, has Socrates gain the concession from Gorgias that whilst 'conviction' can be 'either true or false', 'knowledge' is absolute (454d). (This foreshadows the famous statement of 1926 by C. P. Scott, editor of *The Manchester Guardian*, that 'Comment is free, but facts are sacred'.)² Plato continues his attack on the relativism of the Sicilians by arguing that this kind of rhetoric takes no account of morality (455a).

To reverse the definition of Quintilian, then, the school of Gorgias was apparently more interested in eloquence as a means of persuasion than as a science and as a goal in its own right. Rhetoric had been born not out of a desire to promote morality or justice, to gain and disseminate knowledge, or to speak movingly or entertainingly as an end in itself, but out of political, economic and legal pragmatism. It was not the luminous art of beautiful and edifying eloquence, but the dark art of manipulation and spin. Plato's claims regarding the amoral nature of rhetoric were then, in turn, rebutted by Aristotle, who, echoing Isocrates (*Nicocles*, 3-4), argued that anything, with the exception of virtue, could be used to do harm, and that one should therefore not single out rhetoric as being especially culpable (*Rhetoric*, 1355b). This response to Plato can, in retrospect, be summarised by the Roman maxim *abusus non tollit usum*, 'misuse does not nullify proper use'.³

On one level, with the last word in these disputes going to Aristotle's pro-rhetoric camp, the latter put the rhetoricians back in business, and the ensuing wave of rhetorical scholars would seem to merit the denomination 'Aristotelian'. However, rather than remaining locked within the terms of Gorgianism, Platonism, or Aristotelianism, the following generations started out in a new direction. The disputes of the preceding decades seem to have led to a backlash, with the leaders of rhetoric turning away from the theoretical,

1. See also Marrou, p. 51, and Vickers, 1970, pp. 18-19.

2. In Angela Partington, ed., *The Oxford Dictionary of Quotations* (London, New York, Sydney and Toronto: B.C.A., 1992), p. 559.

3. Eugene Ehrlich, *Nil Desperandum: A Dictionary of Latin Tags and Phrases* (London: Guild Publishing, 1986), p. 21.

speculative, and moral issues which had preoccupied their forebears, and instead concentrating on the purely technical aspects of their art. On another level, this new approach arguably constitutes an ultimate victory for the Platonists, in the sense that even though Plato's criticisms of rhetoric had primarily been made on abstract, moral grounds, his prescriptions for its future had included - alongside his belief that rhetoric should be used to promote goodness (*Gorgias*, 504d-e) - a call for a more formalist approach to the arts of language.

In the *Phaedrus*, Plato outlines a method of analysis which, according to Walter Hamilton in the notes to his translation, is newly-devised, and announced here for the first time - although Plato himself attributes it in part to Hippocrates.¹ This system is based upon division and classification by genus and species, and it helped to form the basis of the stringently objective approach which is the key feature of the later Greeks, and which was to dominate rhetorical enquiry for more than two millennia. Its meticulous, anatomising method could have come straight out of an Enlightenment guide to scientific research.

Plato's Socrates explains this procedure as follows:

What then have Hippocrates and Truth to say on this subject? Surely that if we are to form a clear notion of the nature of anything at all, we must first determine whether the subject about which we wish to acquire both scientific knowledge for ourselves, and the ability to impart that knowledge to others, is simple or complex. If it is simple, we must examine its natural function, both active and passive: what does it act upon, and what acts upon it? If it is complex, we must determine the number of its parts, and in the case of each of these parts, go through the same process which applies to the simple whole: how, and on what, does it produce an effect, and how, and by what, is an effect produced upon it?

(270)

Although Plato then moves from this methodological outline straight into a discussion concerning rhetoric, announcing that he will describe how 'to teach the art of speaking on scientific lines' (270), he does not, unfortunately, go on to examine eloquence. His primary focus is on the soul and how it may be affected by words (271), rather than on

1. Plato, 1973, pp. 79-80. Regarding Hippocratic and Platonic epistemology, see Jouanna Jacques, *Hippocrates*, trans. M.B. DeBevoise (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), pp. 256-58.

language-use as such. When he does mention the specifics of verbal form, he does so in a summarising kind of way, which is both sweeping and elliptical, and alludes to knowledge which the reader is clearly expected to have gained already, rather than imparting such information anew (this is, after all, a work of philosophy rather than of rhetoric). His Socrates states:

. . . when, I say, he has grasped all this, and knows besides when to speak and when to refrain, and can distinguish when to employ and when to eschew the various rhetorical devices of conciseness, and pathos, and exaggeration, and so on, that he has learnt, then, and not until then, can he be said to have perfectly mastered his art.

(272)

Even though Plato does not go into the arts of language in any detail, the analytical principles set out in the *Phaedrus* are possibly the biggest factor behind the major change of direction from the generally broad approach to rhetoric which is characteristic of Aristotle, to the more wholeheartedly scientific method which was soon to replace it, and which arguably began with Theophrastus. Another possibility, as mentioned above, is that this move towards grounded objectivity was not a development from, but rather a reaction against, the abstract debates which had dominated the preceding decades. A further possibility is that this is not a new direction at all. Aristotle criticises the technical bent of Licymnius, a pupil of Gorgias (*Rhetoric*, 3.13),¹ and if we bring together the fact that the earliest rhetoricians, whose work is now lost, may have been as technical as the post-Aristotelians, and the fact that the Platonic, and even the (notably more technical) Aristotelian, works on rhetoric were never intended to be formalist studies of language-use, then it may be the case that the genre of the rhetorical manual ran substantially unchanged from Licymnius, and the other early rhetoricians who are mentioned in the later texts as being technically-minded, such as Theodorus (*Rhetoric*, III. XIII) and Polus (*Phaedrus*, 267), through to Theophrastus, Demetrius, and beyond.² Then again, given the pragmatic

1. See also Hamilton in Plato, 1973, p. 84.

2. The possible indebtedness of the post-Aristotelian materialists to the pre-Socratic materialists is discussed by Josiah B. Gould in his *The Philosophy of Chrysippus* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1970), pp. 22-24.

and legal origins of rhetoric, and given the powerful influence of the Gorgian school, it seems likely that, however technical the early works might have been, these analytical energies were directed towards persuasion and argumentative method, rather than towards eloquence as an area of knowledge in its own right. A good illustration of this is the anonymous, pseudo-Aristotelian handbook of the fourth century B.C., the *Rhetorica ad Alexandrum*. Cited by modern critics¹ as an example of hard-line formalism, its technical rigour is in fact applied, as in most of the *Rhetoric*, to argumentative method, with no reference at all being made to use of language. Yet another possibility is that the new approach arose less out of a turning away from the Gorgian/anti-Gorgian polarities than out of a creative tension between the two, with the true origin of formalist rhetoric being the confluence of the murky waters of eristics and pragmatic wrangling, and the purer, truth-based waters of Socratic philosophy. Whichever of these is correct, it is certainly the case that there is no conclusive surviving evidence for a truly formalist conception of rhetoric prior to Plato, and that it was around the time of Plato, Aristotle and Theophrastus that a truly medium-based approach to the arts of language - that is, one which treated the art of language-use as an autonomous area of investigation, rather than as an adjunct to eristics - was born.

Whatever its ultimate origins, then, the recorded history of strictly formalist rhetorical study only begins in earnest with Aristotle's immediate successors. Moreover, even if we work from this reasonably safe starting-point, we still have to contend with the fact that any examination of the rhetorical work of Theophrastus has to be based more on inference than on actual texts. Living from c.370 to c.280 B.C., Theophrastus was born only about fourteen years after Aristotle (384-22 B.C.); yet it seems that his work on rhetoric, which is now mostly lost, was closer to the stylistic and analytical methods of the Romans and the late Greeks than to Aristotle's more theoretical approach, and so it may well mark the key move away from the content- or argument-led type of rhetoric towards that which is based

1. E.g. G.M.A. Grube, *The Greek and Roman Critics* (London: Methuen, 1965), pp. 99-100.

primarily on verbal form as a field of knowledge in its own right. George A. Kennedy, who is basing his conclusions mainly on inferences drawn from the back-references made by the later rhetoricians such as Demetrius, whose quotations from the original text now form the only extant sources, highlights the importance of Theophrastus's theory of the 'virtues of style'. These virtues include, for example, clarity, and the skilled use of rhetorical figures.¹ According to Vickers, meanwhile, his chief significance is that he may have been the first writer to have given the rhetorical figures a section all to themselves. Vickers calls this a 'small but important step',² although given that this move seems to have inaugurated the entire tradition of figural lists right down to Puttenham and Peacham, via Susenbrotus, this is something of an understatement.

Despite the absence of the original texts, it is possible to go beyond the simple possibility that Theophrastus might have given the figures a separate chapter, and make some conjectures as regards his actual methodology within that putative section. Insofar as Aristotle had included some formalist elements in his *Rhetoric* and *Poetics*, and bearing in mind the fact that Theophrastus was slightly the younger of the two, it may be said that Theophrastus took up where Aristotle left off. This seems especially likely when one considers their close personal and academic ties.³ Not only was Theophrastus Aristotle's nephew, but he also travelled with him and worked alongside him (in 347-44 B.C.), and they resided together at Assos and at Stagira. Moreover, when Aristotle passed on, in 322 B.C., Theophrastus, his successor as head of the Peripatetic school, took over his teaching and research, and inherited his library. Even so, Theophrastus appears to have

1. In Thomas O. Sloane, ed., *The Encyclopedia of Rhetoric* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 101 and 112. This rhetorical lineage is also discussed by Stephen Usher in his edition of Dionysius, *Dionysius of Halicarnassus: The Critical Essays*, 2 vols. (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press; London: William Heinemann, 1974), I, pp. xii-xiii.

2. Vickers, 1970, p. 22.

3. The biographical facts regarding Theophrastus are from Jeffrey Rusten in *Theophrastus: 'Characters'; Herodas: Mimes; Cercidas and the Choliambic Poets*, ed. and trans. Jeffrey Rusten, I.C. Cunningham, and A.D. Knox (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1993), p. 4; Grube, 1965, p. 103; William W. Fortenbaugh et al., eds., *Theophrastus of Eresus: Sources for his Life, Writings, Thought and Influence* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1992), pp. 1 and 91; Benedict Einarson and George K.K. Link in their edition of Theophrastus, *De Causis Plantarum*, 3 vols. (London: William Heinemann; Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1976), I, p. vii; and Kennedy in Sloane, ed., p. 98.

taken the pursuit of knowledge in a new - and, historically, highly significant - direction, replacing Aristotle's 'cautious empiricism' with a harder-edged approach.¹ Basing their analyses on the fragments preserved within the works of the later rhetoricians, Grube notes that Theophrastus appears to have outdone Aristotle as regards the thoroughness of their respective works on metrical theory (p. 105), and Doreen C. Innes points out other areas of difference, such as Theophrastus's greater tolerance of stylistic ornament.² On the other hand, Grube and Innes also note marked areas of continuity between the two, whilst acknowledging that there is insufficient surviving evidence for one to come to any strong conclusions either way.³ Given the extreme brevity and scarcity of the fragments, it may instead be better to look at the issue from a new angle. By locating the lost writings amongst some of the surviving non-rhetorical works, it may be possible for us to get closer to finding the origin of the truly formalist, post-Gorgian, medium-centred school of rhetoric which was ultimately to become such a dominant force within Renaissance Europe.

Despite his strong links with Aristotle, and despite the latter's imposing intellectual presence, a number of commentators, who between them cover a huge range of Theophrastus texts, have noted many points of divergence,⁴ including numerous instances where Theophrastus has gone beyond Aristotelian precedents in terms of logical or technical rigour. Keimpe Algra, for instance, who examines works which deal with the philosophical problem of the nature of 'place' and 'space', concludes, in a way which chimes exactly with the Grube discussion about metrical theory, that Theophrastus's solution 'appears to be far superior from a systematic point of view' to that proposed by

1. Gould, p. 24.

2. 'Theophrastus and the Theory of Style' in William W. Fortenbaugh, ed., *Theophrastus of Eresus: On His Life and Work* (New Brunswick and Oxford: Transaction Books, 1985), pp. 251-67. Ornament mentioned p. 255.

3. Grube, 1965, e.g. pp. 103-104; and Innes in Fortenbaugh, ed., e.g. pp. 251-52

4. E.g., W.D. Ross and F.H. Fobes in their edition of Theophrastus's *Metaphysics* (Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1929), pp. xii-xiii; John Vallance in Fortenbaugh, ed., p. 252; and Eve Browning Cole in William W. Fortenbaugh and Dimitri Gutas, eds., *Theophrastus: His Psychological, Doxographical, and Scientific Writings* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1992), pp. 44-62.

Aristotle.¹ The Theophrastus writings on animals include another illuminating point of departure from the work of his uncle. Aristotle had reacted against the humane stance of Empedocles (c.493-33 B.C.) and Pythagoras (fl. c.530 B.C.), by speaking in terms of a dichotomy between human beings and the other species.² Theophrastus then reasserts the humane position. As with his scientific studies, he goes back to first principles, observing that both human and non-human animals have skin and flesh, and then working relentlessly outwards, via the appetites, impulses, and so on, until he has incontrovertibly established the fact that there is kinship between all sentient beings. Another argument which he uses to prove the same point is to start from our love for, and literal kinship with, our immediate relatives, and then move on to our more distant relatives, followed by all of our fellow citizens, and so on, until the circle of compassion embraces all the beings who share the planet with us.³ These arguments do not represent any great advance, in that Empedocles had already drawn parallels between the species, and had spoken of 'all things' having intelligence.⁴ Nor are the Theophrastus passages immediately striking on a polemical level. Empedocles had illustrated the principle of a single, divine soul fragmented into the awareness which is within all living beings, with the horrifying account of a man who unwittingly murders his son, whose consciousness, being part of that one consciousness, is, of necessity, within a sacrificial animal:

. . . the father, deaf to his cries, slays him in his house and prepares an evil feast. In the same way son seizes father, and children their mother, and having bereaved them of life devour the flesh of those they love.⁵

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1. In Fortenbaugh and Gutas, eds., pp. 162-65. See also Fortenbaugh et al., eds., p. 1; George Malcolm Stratton, *Theophrastus and the Greek Physiological Psychology Before Aristotle* (Amsterdam: E.J. Bonset, 1917), pp. 57-58; and Gould's investigation into Theophrastus's critique of Aristotle's doctrine of motion (p. 24).
 2. *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1161a-b. See also Cole in Fortenbaugh and Gutas, eds., pp. 45-51, 55, and 61.
 3. Fragments derived from Porphyry's *De Abstinentia*, 3.25. See also Cole in *ibid.*, pp. 54-55.
 4. Empedocles, *The Extant Fragments*, ed. M.R. Wright (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1981): see Wright's discussion on pp. 61 and 63, plus fragments 71, 72, and 100.
 5. Empedocles Fragment 124.

Plutarch (c.46-c.120 A.D.), in his *Moralia*, likewise describes the eating of creatures as 'savage, self-indulgent and wicked', and a 'monstrously dreadful act',¹ and Leonardo wonders why the earth does not open up and devour those who 'use their stomach as a sepulchre', and thus 'no longer display in the sight of heaven so cruel and horrible a monster'.² Yet Theophrastus's cold, logical challenge to Aristotle - Eve Browning Cole states that this particular point of divergence may be 'deeply consequential'³ - may suggest, alongside the other evidence (see above), that he was willing and able to outdo Aristotle when it came to scrutinising the arts of language-use. A brief look at two of the extant works for which Theophrastus is now best known, the *Historia Plantarum* and the *De Causis Plantarum*, and then at some potential counter-evidence, will complete the picture.

The scientific principles set out in the *Phaedrus* underpin the Theophrastean botanical texts in terms of not only their overall anatomising spirit:

In considering the distinctive characters of plants and their nature generally one must take into account their parts, their qualities, the ways in which their life originates, and the course which it follows in each case.

(*Historia Plantarum*, A.I.1-5.)

but also their specific analytical formulae. Benedict Einarson and George K. K. Link, in their commentary on the *De Causis Plantarum*, make this point, along with the further, crucial point that the method set out in the *Phaedrus* is a blueprint for all fields of enquiry:

The threefold distinction of the nature of the tree, the nature of the country, and the operation of man, is based on the program laid down in the *Phaedrus* . . . for a true art of rhetoric (and indeed for any art: cf. 271B8-C1).

(p.xv)

Given that Plato makes it clear that his methodology has a universal applicability; given that Theophrastus studied directly under Plato,⁴ and in some ways was as much a Platonist

1. Plutarch Fragment 193.

2. Notebook extracts, nos. 844 and 1296.

3. In Fortenbaugh and Gutas, eds., p. 52.

4. Fortenbaugh in Fortenbaugh et al., eds., p. 1.

as he was an Aristotelian;¹ and given that Theophrastus uses the analytical principles of the *Phaedrus* in his botanical works (despite the fact that this particular application is not mentioned by Plato), one can probably assume that in his lost book on rhetoric, and in particular within that section of the work which is said to have been given over exclusively to a treatment of the figures, Theophrastus made use of the method outlined in the *Phaedrus*. This is especially likely given that Plato himself makes the study of rhetoric his number one priority for the application of his scheme. It therefore seems probable that the missing text had the same kind of objective, painstaking, matter-of-fact usefulness which marks the botanical works:

. . . the general causes: early fruiting are all that are (1) neither very fluid (2) nor with cold sap, and that further have fruit that is (3) naked or (4) wrapped in their membranes or that have (5) juice which on ripening is watery and not thick.

(*De Causis Plantarum*, I.17.4.)

However, in his *Historia Animalium*, Aristotle had employed a methodology which is in some respects similar to that which is used in the Theophrastus botanical works.² Indeed, Aristotle was so committed to this type of enquiry that he spent twelve years doing scientific research, and the *Historia Animalium* was in fact the first book ever undertaken on zoology.³ Furthermore, like Plato in the *Gorgias* and the *Phaedrus*, he criticises the rhetorical and dialectical work of Gorgias as being insufficiently systematic and analytical (*Sophistical Refutations*, 183b 36-39). Yet despite his scientific work, and apparent wish to apply such rigour to rhetoric, the *Rhetoric* is, on the whole, further removed from the technicalities of word-use than one might expect. So, on the face of it, the same may be true of Theophrastus, hence apparently undermining the chances that the latter will have approached verbal forms in the same analytical spirit which we see in his approach to plant

1. This is discussed by Ross and Fobes in *Theophrastus*, 1929, pp. xii-xiii.

2. The relationship between the two is discussed in more detail in William W. Fortenbaugh and Robert W. Sharples, eds., *Theophrastean Studies* (New Brunswick: Transaction Books, 1988) by, respectively, Georg Wöhrlé (p. 4), John Vallance (p. 32), and Allan Gotthelf (Chapter Seven).

3. Kennedy in Sloane, ed., p. 98; and J.C. Stobart, *The Glory That Was Greece* (London: Sidgwick and Jackson; New York: St. Martin's Press, 1961), p. 232.

forms. Doreen C. Innes, meanwhile, in the aforementioned article which compares the few, short, extant fragments of Theophrastus's rhetorical work with Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, points out some of the differences between the two, but also mentions the similarities,¹ and even challenges the traditional consensus amongst classical scholars regarding the significance of Theophrastus, saying that he may not be as original as has sometimes been claimed.² Whether either of these counter-arguments ultimately holds up is uncertain. J. Donald Hughes makes a strong case for the Theophrastus enquiries into nature having greater rigour, and a more objective underlying scientific philosophy, than those of Aristotle,³ thus skewing the ostensibly clear-cut parallelism between the *Historia Animalium* and the botanical works of his pupil. Again, the analyses made by Innes are based on textual fragments which are too few in number, too ambiguous, and possibly too unrepresentative, to clinch the argument against Theophrastus's rhetorical originality. Equally, though, despite the strong and varied contextual hints which we have found to support the traditional view about his contribution to the new rhetoric, and despite the 'virtues of style', and other specific rhetorical issues which will be mentioned shortly, there is too little surviving direct evidence to determine the full extent of his status as an innovator and his influence on later writers. (It is worth bearing in mind that the bibliographical situation is such that even when it comes to Aristotle, one of the lucky ones in terms of textual preservation, we have lost an entire work on rhetoric - the early *Gryllus*.)⁴ As regards the apportioning of credit amongst particular individuals, the whole question of the rise of the medium must, then, remain open.

Yet the broader causes for the evolution of rhetoric into an objective science are clearly visible. The reason why the medium of style came to be granted so much respect and analytical attention during the years following Socrates and Plato is that the Greeks were

1. These conflicting signals are discussed throughout Chapter Six of Grube, 1965.

2. In Fortenbaugh, ed. See, especially, pp. 252-53.

3. 'Theophrastus as Ecologist' in Fortenbaugh and Sharples, eds., p. 68.

4. Kennedy in Sloane, ed., p. 98.

taking exactly that approach with regard to every possible field of knowledge. Aristotle's remarkable and unique position as a founder of entire new academic disciplines is discussed by Kennedy:

Unlike previous teachers, he offered separate lecture courses on subjects specified as dealing with physics, metaphysics, politics, ethics, dialectic, poetic, rhetoric, and other subjects, and these lectures originated modern conceptions of the disciplines.¹

Theophrastus, in turn, wrote an astonishing two hundred and twenty-five works, and these include, in addition to those already mentioned, ground-breaking investigations into stones and fire - which were later known as the *De lapidibus* and the *De igne*² - and thirteen monographs on medicine,³ not to mention texts on cooking, earthquakes, and logic.⁴ Theophrastus might well have been directly responsible for the change in rhetoric, but even if he was not, the approach to learning which he and Aristotle helped to inaugurate certainly was. The reason, then, why eloquence came to be treated as a subject worthy of explication in its own right, as opposed to being simply an auxiliary of eristics, is that the Greeks, like Sir Francis Bacon, took all knowledge to be their province.⁵ Their objective, logical approach had universal applicability, and their spirit of enquiry knew no limits, speeding outwards in every possible direction. The study of eloquence, at the heart of which is the study of the stylistic medium, was borne up on a massive wave of intellectual advancement.

Between the fourth and first centuries B.C., rhetoric grew as a force within the Greek-speaking world, and rhetorical training constituted a major part of the education of young men, following on from instruction at grammar schools. It is known, mainly via accounts

1. In Sloane, ed., p. 98.

2. Discussed by Vallance in Fortenbaugh and Sharples, eds., p. 36; and by Hans Daiber in Fortenbaugh and Gutas, eds., p. 166.

3. As discussed by Jaap Mansfield in Fortenbaugh and Gutas, eds., p. 66.

4. A full list of the works is given in Fortenbaugh et al., eds., pp. 27-41.

5. Letter to Lord Burleigh, 1592. Francis Bacon, *The Major Works*, ed. Brian Vickers (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 20.

given of it during the next couple of centuries, as being a time when the study of stylistics, and in particular of the rhetorical figures, came to prominence. As part of this, and as mentioned earlier in relation to Quintilian, the Stoic philosophers Cleanthes of Assus (fl. 262, d. 232 B.C.) and Chrysippus (290 - 207 B.C.) defined rhetoric as being the art of speaking well, rather than the art of persuasion. All of this is in line with what one would expect from the rhetorical work which followed in the wake of the *Phaedrus*, Aristotle and Theophrastus. Sadly, however, virtually no trace of the rhetorical texts which were written between Theophrastus and the Romans has survived.¹ It will therefore be necessary to skip forwards in time to Demetrius, and his outstanding rhetorical treatise, *On Style*. Quite how big a skip that is has been a vexed question for many years, and has still not been convincingly resolved. At one stage, scholars identified Demetrius with Demetrius of Phalerum, who was only slightly younger than Theophrastus, and who was hence working in the third and fourth centuries B.C..² Wimsatt and Brooks, Gombrich, and Schenkeveld place him, by contrast, in the first century A.D..³ Grube, meanwhile, although ruling out Demetrius of Phalerum as the author, gives a seemingly strong case for a composition date of around 270 B.C..⁴ Brian Vickers, normally one of the most helpful historians of rhetoric, has done little to clear up the confusion by going for an each-way bet, calling him 'Demetrius of Phalerum' in his index, then dating him to the first or second century B.C. in the main book (p. 51), but later on putting him back again into the third century B.C. (p. 305) - all without any explanatory comment.⁵ George A. Kennedy, writing more recently, comes to what appears to be a sensible compromise, putting Demetrius in the second quarter of the first century B.C., on the grounds that 'the author is familiar with

1. For these points, see William K. Wimsatt, Jr. and Cleanth Brooks, *Literary Criticism* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1957), pp. 77-78; Vickers, 1970, p. 22; and Kennedy in Sloane, ed., pp. 100-101 and 103.

2. See Fortenbaugh in Demetrius of Phalerum, *Demetrius of Phalerum*, ed. William W. Fortenbaugh (New Brunswick: Transaction, 2000), p. 5.

3. Wimsatt and Brooks, p. 102; E.H. Gombrich, *Art and Illusion* (London: Phaidon Press, 1977), p. 318; and Dirk Marie Schenkeveld, *Studies in Demetrius 'On Style'* (Amsterdam: A. Hakkert, 1964), pp. 145-46.

4. *A Greek Critic, Demetrius On Style* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1961), pp. 39-56, and appendices.

5. Vickers, 1988. The 270 B.C. date mentioned by Vickers (p. 305) is presumably taken from Grube.

Aristotle's *On Rhetoric*, not well-known before then, and yet not concerned with the Atticism debate, which arose later in the century'.¹ But if *On Rhetoric* was known to anyone before the first quarter of that century, then it is likely to have been known to a leading Greek rhetorician such as Demetrius, and so Kennedy's chronological back-stop is not necessarily secure. Given that whichever set of years one chooses for Demetrius may well be incorrect, the current discussion will avoid settling on a particular date. We shall look at Demetrius before we turn to Cicero (106-43 B.C.), not because he is definitely earlier, but because even if he in fact came after Cicero, he nevertheless has, as even Schenkeveld concedes (p. 146), a pre-Ciceronian take on rhetoric. Plus, of course, he was a Greek. For these reasons, his work forms a natural bridge between the two eras.

Demetrius starts by discussing clauses, and this concern with verbal structure is maintained throughout the work. As we go along, we are given many accounts of rhetorical figures, such as *anaphora*, the repetition of a word or words at the beginnings of successive clauses, and *epiphora*, the repetition of a word or words at the ends of successive clauses (both at I.25). The following account of *epanalepsis* is typical of his method of exposition. By offering us, first of all, an explanation in the abstract, and then an illustration of the figure at work, and, finally, a further explanation in the form of a comment on the example, Demetrius renders the meaning and function of the verbal figure as clear and as concrete as the Theophrastus accounts of plants and trees (and presumably of rhetorical schemes):

'Epanalepsis' is the repetition of the same particle in the course of a lengthy sentence; as, 'all Philip's acts indeed - how he subjected Thrace, and seized the Chersonese, and besieged Byzantium, and neglected to restore Amphipolis - these things, indeed, I shall pass over'. It may be said that the repetition of the particle 'indeed' reminds us of the prelude and sets us again at the beginning of the sentence.

(IV.196)

With this practical, objective treatment of the figures acting as a solid foundation,

1. In Sloane, ed., p. 104.

Demetrius is able to use several different sub-methods of analysis and explication. The most obvious of these is simply to point out the occurrence of, and the semantic and aesthetic effects of, formal features in the works of various major writers. So, for example, he talks about the graceful use of *anaphora* in some lines by Sappho (III.141-2), the sense of 'verbal dignity' which derives from the careful handling of syllables in Thucydides (II.40), and the cumulative force which results from the combined use of *epanaphora*, *asyndeton* and *homoeoteleuton* in a passage from Aeschines (V.268). Demetrius also offers insights into rhetoric, and the issues surrounding it, which show a level of self-awareness which could only have arisen out of the advanced science of eloquence which had been developed over the previous centuries. For example, he describes how the poet Epicharmus plays with rhetorical convention to humorous effect:

'One time in their midst was I, another time beside them I.' The same thing is said, and there is no real opposition. But the turn of style, counterfeiting an antithesis, suggests a desire to mislead. Probably the comic poet employed the antithesis to raise a laugh, and also in mockery of the rhetoricians.
(I.24)

This particular passage is an example of literary criticism rising to match the sophistication of literary practice. As T.S. Eliot says in his 1923 essay, 'The Function of Criticism': 'The critical activity finds its highest, its true fulfilment in a kind of union with creation in the labour of the artist'.¹ Writers are usually ahead of the game when it comes to appreciating the importance of language-use. Critics are free to disengage from the text in question, and move into areas of abstract speculation regarding issues such as symbolism, possible biographical content, and the socio-political discussions which tend to arise when commentators work centrifugally, spiralling out away from literature. By contrast, those who write literary works of art can never move too far away from the linguistic nuts and bolts of word-choice and word-configuration. Adrian Mitchell speaks of reading out one of his new poems to an audience, and then taking it in for repair:

1. *Selected Prose*, ed. Frank Kermode (London and Boston: Faber and Faber, 1975), p. 74.

. . . nothing happens, apart from two people shuffling their knees in stanza three. Afterwards, I crawl under the poem and inspect its axles. There you are - a jagged hole in the third stanza, meaning pouring out down the gutter. I fix the hole, try the poem out on the next audience. Maybe this time it moves. Maybe it still won't start, and I'll leave it in the garage until I find time to work on it again.¹

Given the highly-advanced state of literary culture in ancient Greece, it seems likely that practice had always been ahead of theory, and that, as seen with the Demetrius comment on Epicharmus, above, the rhetoricians were, by paying rigorous attention to formal features and their literary application, bringing the world of criticism up to par with that of composition. (It may even be the case that the art of rhetoric itself originally derives from reverse engineering - that is, the noting and codifying of the speech patterns of the best speakers and writers.)² It is a sign of the flexible and inclusive nature of rhetoric that it can so easily incorporate counter-currents such as this knowing and ironic use of formal convention. Another kind of apparent anti-rhetoricism which Demetrius builds into his map of rhetoric is the artless style, which is in fact one of the most artful styles of all. He praises the deployment of rhetorical figures in an impromptu (I.27-8) or disguised (III. 182) way. This type of language-use, which had been briefly mentioned and praised in Aristotle's *Rhetoric* (1404b), and which will be discussed fully in due course, was to become a core principle under the Romans and through into the Renaissance as the 'ars est celare artem', or *sprezzatura*, ideal. Demetrius is not simply defining verbal figures; he has looked at the medium of style from every possible angle. His fellow Greeks had been enquiring into fields such as natural history in a remarkably thoroughgoing manner, looking, for example, not only at the anatomy of a plant at a given moment, but also at its yearly cycle, life-cycle, conditions for growth, population density, geographical location, and so on. In the same way, Demetrius examines the subject of eloquence in the round, granting it a level of scrutiny which is probably far greater than that which had been

1. Adrian Mitchell, *Greatest Hits* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Bloodaxe Books, 1991), p. 12.

2. Quintilian puts this forward as a possibility: *Institutio Oratoria*, III.II.3.

granted to it by any of the pre-*Phaedrus* generations of rhetorician. If not new at the time of writing - too little is known about those who came between the Aristototele-Theophrastus generation and Demetrius to be able to say, with any certainty, how much Demetrius is being innovative, and how much he is simply bringing together the work of others - this is still, so far as we can date it accurately, the earliest of the extant texts to show a fully-developed system of rhetoric in action.

One analytical method which Demetrius uses with particular frequency is the rewriting of a given quotation in such a way as to contrast the first version, with its effective, well-judged use of a particular rhetorical scheme or a particular rhythm, with a new version which has essentially the same content, but which has been put into a form which lacks the stylistic strengths, and hence the effectiveness, of the original. This kind of procedure, which was to take on crucial significance within sixteenth-century rhetorical pedagogy, is the literary equivalent of demonstrating the crucial importance of movie soundtracks by playing a car-chase scene from a serious action film, complete with its original background of evocatively edgy music, and then replaying it, this time accompanied by the kind of jaunty soundtrack which is used during the chases in *Tom and Jerry* cartoons. It ain't what you say, it's the way that you say it.

Anadiplosis is the ordering of words so that they form the pattern AB, BC, CD, and so on. The following account of 'climax', a sub-type of *anadiplosis* whereby the meanings of the interlocking phrases have a rising level of emotional intensity, is typical of the Demetrius paraphrase-based analyses. By using the subject-matter as a constant, and the style as a variable, he demonstrates the crucial importance of phrasing as a determinant of the meaning and effect of any given passage:

The figure called 'climax' may also be employed. It is exemplified in the following sentence of Demosthenes: 'I did not speak thus, and then fail to move a resolution; I did not move a resolution, and then fail to act as an envoy; I did not act as an envoy, and then fail to convince the Thebans'. This sentence seems to climb ever higher and higher. If it were rewritten thus, 'having expressed my views and moved a resolution, I acted as an

envoy and convinced the Thebans,' it would be a mere recital of events, with nothing forcible about it.

(V.270. Similar analyses can be found at II.46, III.184, III.185, and V.255.)

On Style is entirely given over to instructing the reader about how best to achieve maximum impact. This 'forcible' approach has, in more recent times, been almost completely replaced by the 'recital of events' principle, with educationalists and linguistic philosophers, from Hobbes and Locke onwards, arguing for the centrality of content to the exclusion of formal considerations. (We shall be looking at the division between the classical school and the Enlightenment and Romanticist schools later on.) In anticipation of the kind of objections which, if they arose now, could be labelled Enlightenment-minded, Demetrius, near the end of a quotation from Ctesias, confronts the anti-formalist, utilitarian approach to language-use:

'... But first he wrote a letter upbraiding the woman thus: "I saved you, aye, you were saved through me; and now I have perished through you".'

Here a critic who prided himself on his brevity might say that there is a useless repetition in 'I saved you' and 'you were saved through me', the two statements conveying the same idea. But if you take away one of the two, you will also take away the vividness and the emotional effect of vividness.
(IV.213-14)

The potential critic who 'pride[s] himself on his brevity', and who would describe the phrase from Ctesias as containing a 'useless' repetition, would, like the modern utilitarians, be working on the principle that it is valid to concentrate on subject-matter to the exclusion of the verbal form. (Which here consists of *tautologia* or *synonymia* - from which we get the two modern-day words.) By using the gist of the passages as the sole means of comparing the Ctesias version with an abbreviation, such critics would inevitably privilege the condensed version over the original on the grounds that it is more economical. Conversely, and paradoxically, by taking the opposite tack, and refusing to make the content the be-all and end-all of composition, the writer is able to achieve far more in the way of complexity, nuance, psychological and aesthetic charge, and the 'emotional effect of vividness' - all of which serve, and help to constitute, the subject-matter. Anti-formalism

is thus self-defeating in that in its efforts to focus on the meaning, and so avoid 'useless' verbiage, it ends up, to adapt Tagore's phrase about bigotry and truth, trying to keep content safe in its hand with a grip that kills it.¹ As Pater states in his essay 'The School of Giorgione', 'the mere matter of a poem' is 'nothing without the form, the spirit of the handling',² or as Flaubert puts it, 'the idea only exists by virtue of the form'.³ It is hence only through a mastery of the medium that the message is able to shine. Only then can 'clear expression flood with light the hearer's mind' (*On Style*, I.17).

Demetrius's criticism always rests upon the binary division of form and content, a binary which he sometimes invokes explicitly: 'The effect may reside in the thought . . . It may also be found in the words' (III.188).⁴ The matching of thought and words (which the Latin rhetoricians called 'decorum') is usually preferable, but in those cases where a passage has the kind of subject-matter which could potentially cause it to come across as flat and pedestrian, a disproportionately elevated style can, on occasion, confer a level of charm, as seen in an excerpt from the *Republic* which Demetrius analyses at III.184, or of grandeur, as discussed in the following passage, which goes a long way beyond that which could be achieved by a less eloquent expression of the same content:

It often happens that connectives which follow one another in close succession make even small things great, as in Homer the names of the Boeotian towns, though ordinary and insignificant, possess a certain pomp and circumstance owing to the accumulated connectives, for example in the line:

'And in Schoenus and Scolus, and midst Eteonus' hill-clefts deep.'
(II.54. The Homer excerpt is taken from the *Iliad* ii.497.)

At the opposite end of the scale, when the medium and the message are brought into such exact unity that the words enact the content, this can confer a resonance which is more

1. In Partington, ed., p. 678.

2. *Essays on Literature and Art*, ed. Jennifer Uglow (London: J.M. Dent & Sons, 1973), p. 51.

3. In Pater's essay 'Style'. *Ibid.*, p. 84.

4. See also III.184 and V.267.

intense than that which would be possible in a non-mimetic paraphrase of the same subject-matter:

Cacophony (harshness of sound) is often vivid, as in the lines:

'And together laid hold on twain, and dashed them against the ground
Like whelps: down gushed the brain, and bespattered the rock-floor round.'

Or:

'And upward and downward and thwartward and slantward they tramped
evermore.'

Homer intends the cacophony to suggest the broken ground, all imitation having an element of vividness.

Onomatopoeic words produce a vivid effect, because their formation is imitative. The participle 'lapping' is an instance in point.

(IV.219-20. Illustrations taken from the
Odyssey, ix.289 and the *Iliad*, xxiii.116.)¹

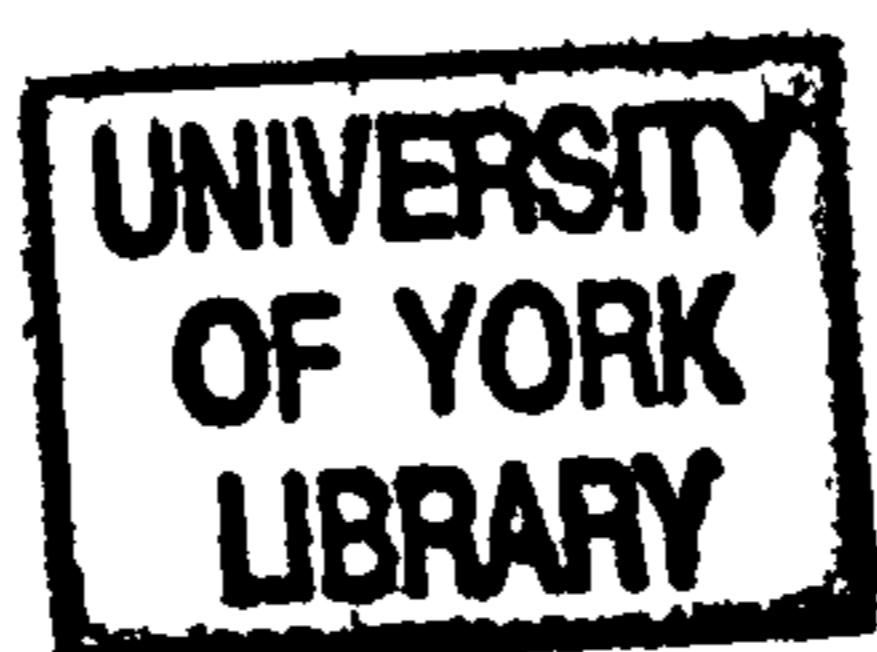
The onomatopoeic style, as seen in the examples above, or as seen in Plato's use of an unusually long, unbroken clause in the *Republic* to imitate the sound of the pipe which he is discussing (as examined in *On Style*, III.185), is the epitome of what Pater calls the 'correspondence of the term to its import'.² We shall return to the issue of mimetic devices in the later chapters.

A key idea within Pater's discussions regarding a unity in literature between form and content is that 'all art', in his famous phrase, 'constantly aspires towards the condition of music' on account of the fact that in music there is 'no matter of sentiment or thought' which is 'separable from the special form in which it is conveyed to us'.³ It is its purely formal quality which makes music, for Demetrius no less than for Pater, a model for verbal structure and its aesthetic function. In the following passage, Demetrius traces the patterning of vowels to Egypt, and thence to music:

1. Here, as elsewhere, I am obviously relying on the skill of the translator to capture some of the effect of the original.

2. From 'Style', in Pater, p. 88.

3. From 'The School of Giorgione', in *ibid.*, pp. 51 and 49.



In Egypt the priests, when singing hymns in praise of the gods, employ the seven vowels, which they utter in due succession; and the sound of these letters is so euphonious that men listen to it in place of flute and lyre.
(II.71)

In the words of Michael Taylor, 'It is the concept of the aesthetic that is behind all formalist criticism'.¹ Here, Demetrius makes use of paraphrase, and also employs the idea of a parallel between beautiful verbal form and beautiful musical form:

Plato employs a delightful cadence . . . when saying with regard to musical instruments 'the lyre for you is left, then, in the town'. Invert the order and say 'in the town is left for you the lyre', and you will be doing what is tantamount to changing the melody.

(II.185)

At one stage, this same set of literary-critical nodal points leads Demetrius to the strikingly aestheticist conclusion that 'the resolution and the concurrence' of sounds within some poetical forms 'have the effect of actually making the words sing themselves' (II.70).

These ideas are also discussed by Quintilian (I.X.9-29).

In contrast to Aristotle, then, Demetrius shows a consistent and passionate commitment to the principle of form. This approach is in starker contrast still to that which prevails within our own educational system, where, as will be seen in Chapter Three, progressively less emphasis is being placed on language-use, and where the employment of a well-organised stylistic or grammatical medium is often thought to be superfluous as long as the overall gist somehow manages to struggle out from beneath the wreckage of bad form. As Russ McDonald puts it, 'We have been worrying obsessively about the message while doing our best to ignore the messenger'.² Modern criticism has, he says, been

devoting itself especially to social or cultural meaning and thus endorsing what has been described [by Burckhardt] as 'our all too ready flight from [words] to the things they point to'. That phrase was written in the 1960s,

1. *Shakespeare Criticism in the Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 116.

2. *Shakespeare and the Arts of Language* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001A), p. 9.

and since then the velocity of the flight has greatly accelerated, so much so that the materiality of the medium is often neglected entirely.¹

Towards the end of the book, Demetrius sums up his concept of form with a striking simile which, as we shall see, was to be taken up by the later rhetoricians. Although he goes on to illustrate his idea within the broad terms of genre-change, rather than, as in the case of the paraphrase examples given above, as part of a discussion concerning precise, mechanical variations of phraseology, the simile itself brings to bear on linguistic form the same sense of objective, grounded physicality which one finds in the Theophrastus treatises on botanical form. As an aid to the understanding of the 'materiality of the medium' it is hard to think of a more apposite image:

In fine, it is with language as with a lump of wax, out of which one man will mould a dog, another a horse. One will deal with his subject by way of exposition and asseveration, saying (for example) that 'men leave property to their children, but they do not therewith leave the knowledge which will wisely use the legacy'. . . . Another will (as Xenophon commonly does) express the same thought in the way of precept, as 'men ought to leave not only money to their children, but also the knowledge which will use the money rightly.'

(V.296)

It was his decision to treat eloquence with as much objectivity as any other branch of science which enabled Demetrius to bequeath a brilliant model of formalist rhetorical enquiry to future generations. This visionary commitment to the medium, as distinct from simply the message, made it possible for the Ancient Greeks to hand down to us

. . . the most flawless system of criticism that the world has ever seen. . . . [T]hey elaborated the criticism of language, considered in the light of the . . . material of that art, to a point which we, with our . . . system of reasonable or emotional emphasis, can barely if at all attain; studying, for instance, the metrical movements of a prose as scientifically as a modern musician studies harmony and counterpoint, and, I need hardly say, with much keener aesthetic instinct. In this they were right, as they were right in all things.

(Oscar Wilde, 'The Critic as Artist'.)²

1. *Ibid.*, p. 3.

2. *The Complete Works* (London and Glasgow: Collins, 1966), p. 1016.

Chapter 2

The Medium and the Message within Late-Classical Rhetorical Theory

Whom then do men regard with awe? What speaker do they behold with astonishment? At whom do they utter exclamations? Whom do they consider as a deity, if I may use the expression, amongst mortals? He who speaks distinctly, explicitly, copiously, and luminously . . .

(Cicero, *De Oratore*, III.XIV.)

Encouraged by the formalist elements in Aristotle, such as his expositions of metre (for example, *Rhetoric* III.VIII.4 or *Poetics* 1447b) or of grammatical and morphological types (for instance, *Poetics* 1456b-57b and 1457a-58a), and, above all, bolstered by the formalist approach of the post-Aristotelian Greeks - including those whose works are lost, but whose influence has survived via other writers - the rhetoricians of the Roman age set about analysing and explicating the whole vast field of verbal expression. It will now be useful to look in more detail at how they did this; and thereby to assess the nature and the status, during the first centuries B.C. and A.D., of the medium as distinct from the message, the how as distinct from the what, of verbal communication.

When the Latin rhetoricians stand back and assess the nature of their art, they always speak in terms of a middle way between art and nature; and, more specifically, of steering a safe course between the Scylla of an exclusively content-based approach, which would focus so exclusively on the what of expression that it would entirely ignore issues of form, and the Charybdis of an extreme formalism which would concentrate so much on the how that it would disregard content. In terms of the Romans, the art of eloquence involves three stages (in oratory, these are accompanied by two further stages, *memoria* and *pronuntiatio*). The first is *inventio*, or the finding of material. This subject-matter is then given an overall shape and sequence in the second stage, *dispositio*. The last stage, *elocutio*, is concerned with the finding and sequencing of the actual words on the page. As well as denoting three stages in a process, *inventio*, *dispositio*, and *elocutio* also represent a spectrum, with the content or what at the *inventio* end and the form or how at the *elocutio* end. The potential charge that eloquence was, or could become, meaningless verbiage, was such a serious one, then as now, that the rhetoricians are always careful to

mention the crucial importance of content and *inventio* - in the *De Inventione*, Cicero even calls this stage of composition 'the first and most important part of rhetoric' (II.LIX.178) - and to point out that formal rules should be handled with a sense of expediency and adaptability (e.g., Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria*, II.XIII). As Cicero points out, this time in the *De Oratore*, 'A knowledge of a vast number of things is necessary, without which volubility of words is ridiculous' (I.V) (see also Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria*, IX.III.100); and again, later on in Book I, he remarks:

What savours so much of madness as the empty sound of words, even the choicest and most elegant, when there is no sense or knowledge contained in them?

(I.XII)

Yet however keen they may be not to let art and form obliterate considerations of nature and content, the Latin rhetoricians are careful not to fall off the horse on the other side by following nature at the expense of art. Indeed, those who are thought to have made this mistake are subjected to the most unsparing ridicule, as is seen in the following passage from the *Ars Poetica*:

Democritus believes that native talent is a greater boon than wretched art, and shuts out from Helicon poets in their sober senses. A goodly number take no pains to pare their nails or to shave their beards: they haunt lonely places and shun the bath.¹

(ll. 295-98)

The rhetoricians disavow both extremes with equal determination. Furthermore, unlike art critics of recent times, who are often predisposed to finding schisms, conflicts, anxieties, and so on, the critics of the classical age seem to have had a generally syncretic cast of thought, seeking to find or create, not only a balance between extremes, as seen most famously in Aristotle's doctrine of the Middle Way, but also an actual harmony between what are ostensibly contradictory and oppositional elements. Thus, Horace tells us that:

1. 'Shun the bath' implies both scruffiness (following on from the 'pare the nails' comment) and also, tying in with the frequenting of 'lonely places', a lack of sociability. The baths were important meeting-places.

For my part, I do not see of what avail is either study, when not enriched by Nature's vein, or native wit, if untrained; so truly does each claim the other's aid, and make with it a friendly league.

(ll. 409-11)

Cicero makes essentially the same point, here conceptualising the symbiosis of art and nature by using the metaphor of form as the illumination of content:

Neither can embellishments of language be found without arrangement and expression of thoughts, nor can thoughts be made to shine without the light of language.

(*De Oratore*, III.VII.)

He goes on to say that language 'ought to throw a light upon things' (III.XIII), and in *Brutus* he describes the rhetorical figures as giving 'a lustre to our sentiments' (XXXVII).

Such comments imply a kind of complementary equivalence between the two aspects of rhetoric. Yet however 'friendly' the 'league' between art and nature, and however much thought and the expression of thought are always, and necessarily, symbiotic, it becomes clear, as one reads Cicero and the other Romans, that, behind the theoretical claims which imply a parity of status between the two sides, form is, in practice, slightly ahead of content. Even though Cicero is, on the whole, far more given to the abstract discussion of rhetorical matters than to the practical explication of rhetorical figures, a fact which he himself acknowledges (*De Oratore* III.XXXVI and III.LV), the following list gives an idea of the categorising thoroughness which distinguishes late-classical rhetoric from that of Aristotle:

. . . antithesis, asyndeton, declination, reprehension, exclamation, diminution; the use of the same word in different cases . . . division; continuation; interruption; imagery; answering your own questions; immutation; disjunction; order; relation, digression and circumscription.

(*De Oratore*, III.LIV.)

As we have seen, Demetrius had helped to initiate the critical device whereby a literary passage is compared with a paraphrase of the same content in order to demonstrate the supreme importance of precise and well-judged phraseology. In the *Orator*, Cicero - assuming, of course, that he came later - takes the lead from Demetrius, several times

rewriting quotations in order to show how content and effect inhere in form:

. . . *patris dictum sapiens temeritas fili comprobavit*; it was marvellous what a shout arose from the crowd at this ditrochee. Was it not, I ask, the rhythm which produced this? Change the order of the words and write it this way: *comprobavit fili temeritas*. The effect is now gone . . .

(lxiii.214)

Quintilian, in turn, cites one of the rewrite passages from *Orator (Institutio Oratoria, IX.IV.14)*, and elsewhere states:

Let the reader take to pieces any sentence that he has thought forcibly, agreeably, or gracefully expressed, and alter the arrangement of the words, and all the force, agreeableness, and grace, will at once disappear.

(*Institutio Oratoria, IX.II.54.*
See also IX.II.78.)

Cicero even follows Demetrius (*On Style, V. 270*) in using this analytical method to examine the work of Demosthenes:

Those famous thunderbolts of his would not have sped with such vibrant power if they had not been whirled onward by rhythm.

(lxx.234)

At one stage, Cicero applies this rule purely to syntax. This is an especially strong point to make regarding a phrase in Latin, a language which, being so heavily inflected, is far more syntactically flexible than modern English, with its fixed Subject-Verb-Object pattern. Having given contrasting syntactical permutations of the same material, he concludes:

Do you see that if the order of the words is slightly changed, then, though the words are the same and the thought is the same, the symmetry is destroyed, and so the whole sentence collapses?

(lxx.233)

This lineage from Demetrius and Cicero to Quintilian is paralleled and underpinned by the continued use of the Demetrius wax image. Both the *De Oratore* (III. XLV) and the *Institutio Oratoria* (X.V) use this exact same analogy to describe the verbal reformulation - or remoulding - principle. In the *Orator*, Cicero again talks in terms of the materialist, plastic nature of verbal form, speaking of language as being 'soft, pliant, and so flexible

that it can be reshaped in any way at all' (xvi.52). The Demetrian uses of paraphrase also prepare the way for the great treatments of, and insights into, style, and the how-what dynamic, in the works of Dionysius of Halicarnassus, Longinus, and, ultimately, of Erasmus. In classical rhetoric, from the Greeks to the Renaissance, paraphrase is used to demonstrate the very impossibility of paraphrase. That is, by concentrating on content rather than form, and by consequently assuming that any kind of how is acceptable provided that the what is somehow conveyed, one misses out on the whole purpose, beauty, and wonder, of literature. In the next chapter, we shall find Erasmus making exactly this point. Moreover, the same set of ideas continues right through into the twentieth century and beyond (although this increasingly involves going against the grain of the prevailing orthodoxies within literary criticism). In his essay 'Criticism Inc.', first published in 1937, John Crowe Ransom warns against dealing with 'some abstract or prose content taken out of the work' rather than with the work itself,¹ and in an essay which first appeared in 1964, 'Against Interpretation', Susan Sontag, echoing not only Ransom but also the famous 'heresy of paraphrase' warning offered by Cleanth Brooks,² likewise advises against 'reducing the work of art to its content and then interpreting *that*'.³ Writing in 1997, Helen Vendler makes the same point: 'A set of remarks on a poem which would be equally true of a prose paraphrase of that poem is not, by my standards, interpretation at all'.⁴

Although Cicero's paraphrase-based analyses, and the fact that the longest section of the *Orator* is on metre, demonstrate his appreciation of the medium of expression, it is only when we take a step back, from *elocutio* to *dispositio*, that we can make a rounded assessment of Ciceronian formalism. The rhetorical system tends to separate devices of

1. In Lodge, ed., p. 236.

2. *The Well-Wrought Urn* (London: Dennis Dobson, 1968), p. 164.

3. In Lodge, ed., p. 656.

4. *The Art of Shakespeare's Sonnets* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1997), p. 40.

expression into tropes, that is, patterns of thought and content, which include features such as *metaphor* or *hyperbole*, and figures of speech, which are sometimes called simply 'figures' or 'schemes', and include features such as *hypozeuxis*, where each clause within a sentence has both a verb and a subject.¹ (The division into schemes of thought and schemes of language is seen in, for example, Quintilian (IX.1.1-18 and 28-36) and Longinus (8.1).) In Chapter XXXIX of the *Orator*, then, Cicero first of all gives a list of stylistic figures, or figures 'of speech':

... words are redoubled and repeated, or repeated with a slight change, or several successive phrases begin with the same words or end with the same, or have both figures, or the same word is repeated at the beginning of a clause or at the end ...

(135)

and so on. Immediately afterwards, at 136, he introduces the section on the handling of subject-matter by saying that figures of thought are of greater importance ('maiora sunt') than those of speech, thus echoing his sentiment in the earlier *De Inventione* that *inventio* is 'maxima parte rhetoricae' (ILLIX.178). But whilst one might expect the *Orator* then to head, by way of contrast, into an entirely content-led discussion (Cicero has, after all, divided his account into two separate halves), there follows, instead, a list of 'figures of thought' which is so much centred upon ideas of structure and sequence that it is almost as formalist as his section on stylistic figures. The reference to syllogism is indicative of how far this formalist handling of subject-matter overlaps with logic:

He will announce what he is about to discuss and sum up when concluding a topic; he will bring himself back to the subject; he will repeat what he has said; he will use a syllogism ...

(XXXIX.136)

Moreover, such is the dominance of form that Cicero even qualifies the above passage with an injunction that the above schemes should not be employed without due attention being

1. Richard A. Lanham, *A Handlist of Rhetorical Terms* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1991), p. 88.

paid to matters of style.

This, in turn, opens up the whole issue of *inventio*. Given that in our own neo-Romantic era creativity is a virtual synonym for 'spontaneity', and is more a function of madness than of method, it is important to bear in mind that, for classical and Renaissance writers, invention does not imply generation *ex nihilo*.¹ It in fact means the exact opposite: that is, one searches through pre-existent material in the world of objects and of thought in order to find out what one wants to say. Despite framing his description within the limiting Aristotelian terms of 'persuasion', the critic Donald Lemen Clark goes right to the heart of *inventio* when he calls it 'finding', or 'the art of exploring the material to discover all the arguments which may be brought to bear'.² This idea has huge implications for the entire issue of the how and the what, of the medium and the message. If even the content-based, *inventio* end of the *inventio-elocutio* spectrum involves a process of selecting and ordering, then there is nowhere within the rhetorical scheme of things which is dominated by the principle of content to the exclusion of the principle of form, for content is itself already being shaped and sequenced even as it comes into being. In other words, far from being a purely generative force, spontaneously overflowing with powerful feelings, or with storylines, or with any other kind of content, *inventio* is instead a structuring, or even restraining, principle. Invention, inspiration, and creativity, are thus a function not of Dionysus, but of Apollo. *Inventio* is, then, the first stage in a process of steadily-increasing structural refinement. It acts as a filtering and shaping principle, reducing chaos to order as subject-matter passes from the relatively unstructured and limitless world of thought and experience into the world of oratorical or literary content. This is, in miniature, analogous to the classical model of Creation, from which it may well ultimately derive:

1. Vickers, 1970, p. 62.

2. *Rhetoric and Poetry in the Renaissance* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1922), p. 27.

And of a shapeless and confused mass,
By his through-piercing and digesting power,
The turning vault of heaven formed was.
(Sir John Davies, *Orchestra*, ll. 128-30.)

Dispositio next orders this material further, before, at the *elocutio* stage, the content is transmuted into the final verbal incarnation, with all of the minute stylistic detail which that involves. Form, in its widest sense, thus dominates not just the final stages, but every part, of the compositional process.

The importance accorded to the medium of expression is yet more apparent when we turn from Cicero to the author of the *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, who was Cicero's contemporary (both were writing during the first half of the first century B.C., and the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* has, in the past, actually been attributed to Cicero),¹ and to Quintilian, whose *Institutio Oratoria*, although written about a hundred and fifty years later, in the second half of the first century A.D., is nevertheless notably similar in approach to the works of Cicero and to the *Ad Herennium*. The *Ad Herennium* and the *Institutio* range right across the whole terrain of eloquence, and include accounts of figures such as, to take one at random, *aposiopesis* (*Institutio Oratoria*, IX.II.54) - that is, the breaking off from a speech or a section of writing in mid-flow, usually for emotive effect - in a way which is, especially in the *Ad Herennium*, astonishingly thorough, both in terms of the number of schemes covered, and in terms of the depth and clarity of analysis given to each one. Typically, there is a technical definition of the figure, plus illustrations showing how it works in practice, including comments on its semantic and aesthetic effects. Even though the figures themselves are Greek (and hence bear Greek names), they are here classified and systematised more thoroughly than in any of the surviving works which predate them, and possibly more thoroughly than ever before.² The Roman Empire extended into virtually every corner of the known world, not simply reaching across a vast area, but also

1. Please see the entry in the bibliography for the Caplan edition of the *Ad Herennium*.

2. This is discussed in Vickers, 1970, pp. 24-25.

ordering all of the individual territories within it, on every level from government and religion through to transport and plumbing. The authors of the *Institutio Oratoria* and the *Ad Herennium*, aided by their Greek forebears and pathfinders, set about mastering the world of eloquence with the same spirit of ambition and practical derring-do which drove their countrymen when they were mastering the world itself. The amount of information covered, and the meticulous and exhaustive attention paid to the medium of expression, are breathtaking. The following passage gives an idea of the taut, painstaking approach - itself an object lesson in the rhetorical handling of material - which makes this possible, and which makes the *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, in the words of the nineteenth-century rhetoricist critic Spengel, 'a book more precious than gold':¹

Synonymy or Interpretation is the figure which does not duplicate the same word by repeating it, but replaces the word that has been used by another of the same meaning, as follows: 'You have overturned the republic from its roots; you have demolished the state from its foundations.' Again: 'You have impiously beaten your father; you have criminally laid hand upon your parent.' The hearer cannot but be impressed when the force of the first expression is renewed by the explanatory synonym.

Reciprocal Change occurs when two discrepant thoughts are so expressed by transposition that the latter follows from the former although contradictory to it, as follows . . .

(IV.XXVIII.38-39)

Quintilian sometimes matches, and even outdoes, this level of objective formalism. Nor is this approach limited to accounts of the figures. Here, for example, in a discussion of metrical feet, he treats the verbal medium with the same practical, concrete, technical precision seen in the Theophrastus accounts of physical form:

The Dochmius also, consisting of Bacchius and Iambic and Cretic, forms a stable and austere clausula. And the Spondee, which Demosthenes used a great deal, should not always be preceded by the same foot. It is best preceded by a Cretic. . . . It is of some importance (as I said above) whether the two feet are contained within a single word or are separate. *Criminis causa* is strong; *archipiratae* is effeminate, as, even more, are words where a Tribrach precedes; *facilitates*, *temeritates*. This is because there is a time

1. Quoted by Caplan in his edition, p. xxxiv. It has not been possible to find the original source.

unit concealed in the actual division between the words, as in the Spondee in the middle of a pentameter, which does not produce a correct verse if it consists of the final syllable of one word and the initial syllable of the next.
(IX.IV.97-98)

These types of formalist exposition, continued over hundreds of examples, constitute a remarkable achievement in their own right. Moreover, both the *Ad Herennium* and the *Institutio Oratoria* were also to act as vital resources for the classical and Renaissance educationalists. In the light of magisterial works such as these, it is no wonder that Tacitus should refer to rhetoric as the 'omnium artium domina' and that Martianus Capella should describe it as being the 'rerum omnium regina'.¹ As E.H. Gombrich says: 'In classical writings on rhetoric we have perhaps the most careful analysis of any expressive medium ever undertaken'.²

In terms of rhetorical theory, however, some of the greatest breakthroughs during this period are to be found in *On Literary Composition*, by Dionysius of Halicarnassus (c.40-c.8 B.C.). The 'careful analysis' of the 'expressive medium' takes many forms. Whereas the great strength of the encyclopaedic sections of the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* and the *Institutio Oratoria* is the tight focus of their analyses, the great strength of *On Literary Composition*, one of the most sophisticated and insightful texts in the history of rhetoric, is that in its account of the medium of expression it combines this same kind of intensity with an extraordinarily far-reaching blend of literary criticism, phonetics, and linguistic philosophy. On one level, Dionysius shares a lot of common ground with Demetrius. The two certainly cover many of the same topics. To take just one of their many points of contact, Dionysius speaks of the formal equivalence of literature and music in a way which recalls the Demetrius passages cited in the last chapter:

The science of civil oratory is, after all, a kind of musical science, differing from vocal and instrumental music in degree, not in kind. In oratory, as in

1. Both quoted in Vickers, 1988, p. 181.

2. Page 317.

music, the phrases possess melody, rhythm, variety, and appropriateness; so that here too the ear delights in the melodies, is stirred by the rhythms.

(Part 11)

The difference between them is partly one of degree. We saw in the last chapter how Demetrius demonstrates a fierce commitment to the principle of form. In Dionysius this spirit is even stronger, both in terms of his theoretical explorations of the nature of composition, and as regards his analytical applications of those principles. We have seen how Demetrius makes regular use of paraphrasing; and we have, furthermore, seen how Cicero in the *Orator* not only follows this general procedure of rewriting quotations, but also, at one point, refines this analytical technique in such a way that only the syntactical sequencing of the words is altered (lxx. 234). This form of examination represents the acme of medium-based criticism. The fact that the variations are based not on an overall gist, but on identical content, means that this type of comparison is the acid test of the centrality and power of word-patterning. Cicero had at one point gone beyond Demetrius by freezing the available word selection, thereby narrowing the paraphrase down to the level of syntactical permutation; and Dionysius, in turn, with his *On Literary Composition*, goes beyond Cicero, placing the same-words-different-permutation method at the very heart of both his rhetorical theory and his literary-critical practice. This raises the concept of the medium to unprecedented heights. The Greek term *synthesis*, from which the 'composition' of the translated title has been derived, literally means 'putting together', giving it stronger formalist connotations than the term 'composition' normally implies.¹ Although he tells us, in Part 1, that he is planning to write a book about word-selection in a year's time (this was either not written, or was written and has subsequently been lost),² Dionysius is nevertheless absolutely clear about the status of word-order. Whereas

1. [Please see p. 196.] William Little, H.W. Fowler, and Jessie Coulson, *The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*. Revised and edited by C.T. Onions. Third edition, revised by G.W.S. Friedrichsen. 2 vols.. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973.) Vol. II, pp. 2222, 2225, and 2283. Also Stephen Usher in *Dionysius of Halicarnassus*, Vol. II, p. 5. For all of the points relating to Greek etymology, a key source is the vocabulary guide in F. Kinchin Smith and T.W. Melliush, *Greek* (Kent: Hodder and Stoughton Educational, 1968), pp. 293-316.

2. Usher, loc. cit. and p. 19.

Theophrastus had, it seems, split his work on style into vocabulary-selection and word-sequencing,¹ Dionysius not only grants syntax this same kind of autonomy, but actually elevates it above word-choice. Quintilian was to write that word-order matters 'just as much' as word-choice (IX.IV.13, and also X.I.8), but Dionysius goes further. In Part 2, he writes:

Although, in proper order at least, the arrangement of words falls into second place when the subject of style is under consideration, since the selection of words takes precedence and is assumed to have been made, yet for the achievement of pleasing, persuasive and powerful effects in discourse it is far more potent than the other . . .

He goes on to tell us, later in the same section, that word-arrangement 'possesses so much importance and power that it surpasses and outweighs all of the other's achievements'; and, further, he moves straight from this to a comparison of word-craft to physical crafts such as building, carpentry, and embroidery, stating that in these practical arts, as in the art of eloquence, 'the potentialities of composition are second in logical order to those of selection, but are prior in strength'.

This brings us to another crucially important aspect of *On Literary Composition*. In the modern 'getting-the-gist'² school of thought, the hope is to render grammar, syntax, and so on, invisible and immaterial by concentrating exclusively on the content which lies beyond. This emasculation of the concept of form is directly antithetical to the approach of classical rhetoric as a whole, and in particular to that of classical rhetoric at its most theoretically sophisticated. In the work of Dionysius - and Longinus - the medium of expression is not only rendered visible, but also tangible. As with the Demetrius wax image which we discussed towards the end of the previous chapter, Dionysius employs concrete analogical models in order to bring home to his audience the idea of the objective, material nature of word-use. In the following passage, for instance, he has been speaking

1. *Ibid.*, p. 19.

2. An unnamed teacher of G.C.S.E. French, quoted in Melanie Phillips, *All Must Have Prizes* (London: Little, Brown and Company, 1997), p. 24.

of composition as a three-stage process, whereby one should assess which word-combinations are likely to produce the desired effect, and then consider how 'each of the parts which are to be fitted together should be shaped so as to improve the harmonious appearance of the whole', and so on. He then amplifies this point by employing a set of images which are emphatically concrete:

The effect of each of these processes I shall explain more clearly by means of analogies drawn from the productive arts which are familiar to all - house-building, ship-building, and the like. When a builder has supplied himself with the materials from which he intends to construct the house - stones, timber, tiling, and all the rest - he proceeds at once to put together the building from these, paying close attention to the following three questions: what stone, timber, and brick, is to be fitted together with what other stone, timber, and brick; next how each of the materials that are being so joined should be fitted, and on which of its sides; thirdly, if anything fits badly, how that very piece can be pared down and trimmed and made to fit well.

(Part 6)

Elsewhere, he speaks of syllables as being 'the raw material from which the fabric of the words is woven' (Part 13), and uses the metaphor of replaiting to describe the same stylistic-reconfiguration principle which Demetrius had described by using the image of remoulded wax (Part 25). (It is interesting to note that the modern word 'text' comes from the Latin *texere*, meaning 'to weave'.)¹ Again, Demetrius had spoken of a passage from Hecataeus as follows:

Here the members seem thrown upon one another in a heap without the binding or propping, and without the mutual support, which we find in periods. The members in a periodic style may, in fact, be compared to the stones which support and hold together a vaulted dome. The members of the disconnected style resemble stones which are simply thrown about near one another and not built into a structure.

(I.12-13)

Dionysius uses almost the same image. The austere style, he says,

requires that the words shall stand firmly on their own feet and occupy strong positions; and that the parts of the sentence shall be at considerable

1. Little, Fowler, and Coulson, Vol. II, p. 2273.

distances from one another, separated by perceptible intervals. It does not mind admitting harsh and dissonant collocations, like blocks of natural stone laid together in building, with their sides not cut square or polished smooth, but remaining unworked and rough-hewn.

(Part 22)

The two core rhetorical principles of Dionysius, that word-sequencing is even more important than word-choice, and that verbal composition has all of the objectivity of a physical craft, lead up to, and provide a foundation for, his analyses of the medium-message dynamic within literary works. Of a passage in the *Odyssey* (16. 1-16), he writes:

... the whole passage is woven together from the most commonplace, humble words. ... Indeed, if the metre is broken up, these very same lines will appear ordinary and unworthy of admiration: for there are no noble metaphors in them, nor instances of *hypallage* or *catachresis*, nor any other form of figurative language; nor again many recondite, strange or newly-coined words. What alternative, therefore, is left but to attribute the beauty of the style to the composition [*sunthesin*, or 'putting-together']?

(Part 3)

He then makes the same set of points regarding Herodotus (Parts 3 and 4) and two extracts from the *Iliad* (Part 4), and later on he does the same kind of analysis using passages from Thucydides (Part 7) and Demosthenes (Parts 7 and 8). The syntactical examination of Demosthenes in Part 8 consists of an account of the *On the Crown* passage which had been analysed in the same paraphrase-based way by Demetrius, and is a clear borrowing. Elsewhere, though, his close readings lead into striking and original accounts of form, and of its ability to shape or destroy content and its effects. In Part 4, having just concluded numerous analyses of literary works, he expands on the Demetrius wax image, and on his own replaiting idea, to produce, using a personifying image drawn from mythology, one of the most penetrating and vivid explanations of the how-what dynamic in the whole of the rhetorical canon, and one which, as we shall see, paves the way for rhetorical pedagogic practice during the sixteenth century. Homer's Athene, he writes,

used to make the same Odysseus appear in different forms at different times - at one time small, wrinkled, and ugly, 'resembling a pitiful, aged beggar',¹ and at another time, by another touch of the same wand, 'she rendered him taller to see, and broader; and she made his wavy hair to fall over his shoulders like the hyacinth flower'.² So also does composition take the same words, and make the ideas that they convey appear misshapen, beggarly, and mean, and at other times sublime, rich, and beautiful. And this is, after all, what makes the difference between one poet or orator and another - the dexterity with which they arrange their words. Almost all the ancient writers made a special study of it, with the result that their metres, their lyrics, and their prose, are works of beauty.

This concept of stylistic malleability was to become, more than fifteen hundred years later, the lynchpin of the rhetorical theory and training of Erasmus.

Whilst the rewriting of a passage in order to demonstrate the effect of embodying the same content within a different linguistic form is the quintessential example of the medium-message principle in literary criticism, the quintessential instance of this same principle at work within literary composition is the employment of words in such a way that the form reflects or reifies the subject-matter. In the previous chapter, we saw Demetrius briefly mentioning some of the passages in Homer and in Plato where the words enact their own meaning. Not only is this kind of language-use situated (like decorum) right at the interface of the medium and the message, but it is also a unique case of the medium actually embodying the message. It functions as an exact verbal simulacrum of the qualities which it describes, so that the how materialises the what. The references which Demetrius makes to stylistic enactment, like the comments on mimetic language which sometimes arise within modern criticism, tend to be merely asides. That is, such observations are both self-contained and brief, and do not form an especially important or integrated part of the main discussions. Dionysius, on the other hand, goes into the whole question of verbal enactment with extreme thoroughness. Given his vigorously objective conception of words, it is no surprise that Dionysius should have an interest in examples from literature where word-use corporealises meaning. However, the degree of

1. *Odyssey*, 16.273, 17.202, and 24.157.

2. *Ibid.*, 6.230-31 and 23.157-58.

attention which he gives to mimetic devices is remarkable, and represents a first for rhetorical commentary. Because of the outstanding importance of Dionysius in the history of enactment criticism, and the centrality of enactment devices to the later stages of the present study, we need to look at these sections of *On Literary Composition* in detail.

Demetrius had noted the mimetic language in the description of Sisyphus in the *Odyssey* xi.595:

It is the concurrence of long vowels which is most appropriately employed in the elevated style, as in the words 'that rock he heaved uphillward'. . . .
The line has actually reproduced the mighty heaving of the stone.
(II. 72)

When Dionysius turns to this same episode, the result is one of the most meticulous and celebrated passages in classical literary criticism. Just as, in Part 15, he had introduced his considerations of mimesis via the concept of decorum, so here, at the start of Part 20, he begins by announcing the general topic of form-content appropriateness, or *preponotos*, and then homes in on its *mimetikon* subset:

The good poet or orator should be ready to imitate the things which he is describing in words, not only in the choice of the words but also in the composition. This is what Homer, that most inspired poet, usually does, although he is working with only one metre and a few rhythms. But within these limits he is always producing novel effects and working in artistic refinements, so that we see the events as clearly when they are described to us as if they were actually happening. I shall quote a few from the many examples that could be taken as typical.

Next, he quotes the passage where Sisyphus slowly and painfully edges himself and his boulder up towards the summit, and then gives a penetrating account of how the language of these lines mirrors the halting, dragging quality of the action which is described - that is, of how the language conveys information not simply via the conventional semantic link between words and their referents, but iconically and experientially, via their acoustic properties as artistically-arranged patterns of sound. Whereas the reference to the same passage in Demetrius is limited to a brief mention of the use of long vowels, Dionysius goes into the whole topic exhaustively, uncovering the full set of mechanics which lies

behind, and produces, the final effect. He considers matters such as the relative frequency of the long syllables in relation to the short ones, and the vocal retardation caused by the juxtaposition of vowel sounds. He also includes a marvellous definition of dactylic and spondaic rhythms, which, being 'the longest possible', take 'the longest stride'. He then summarises these various aspects of form in terms of their capacity as signifiers:

Now what is the effect of each of these details? The monosyllabic and disyllabic words, leaving many intervals between each other, portray the long duration of the action; while the long syllables, which have a holding, delaying quality, portray the resistance, the weight and the difficulty. The drawing-in of breath between the words, and also the juxtaposition of rough letters, indicate the pauses in his efforts, the delays, and the size of his labour; and the rhythms, when considered in respect of their length, portray the straining of his limbs, his dragging effort as he rolls his burden, and the pushing upwards of the stone.

Finally, Dionysius analyses the ensuing set of lines from the Sisyphus passage, where Homer speaks of how the boulder suddenly crashes back down the hill (Demetrius had only mentioned the ascent). Having quoted the relevant part, he asks, 'Do not the words, when thus combined, tumble downhill together with the impetus of the rock?' and goes on to provide a detailed examination of the syllable types and vowel combinations which make the words 'glide into one another' in such a way as to form a single, rushing, unimpeded continuum of sound. He then points out similar patterns in relation to metre, and ends: 'There is nothing to prevent a line fashioned from rhythms such as these from being rapid, rounded, and flowing'. As Stephen Usher says in the introduction to his edition, 'No work of ancient literary criticism provides a more penetrating insight into the practical mechanics of stylistic analysis than Dionysius' treatise *On Literary Composition*' (p. 12). The above analysis of Homer's Sisyphus description is the fullest commentary on the literary deployment of a mimetic device in the whole of classical antiquity. But in order to gain a deeper understanding of the place of mimesis within his criticism, it will be helpful not only to go back to the point earlier in the book where Dionysius lays the groundwork for his examination of the Sisyphus passage, but also to look at his Platonic foundations.

The *Cratylus* was, and remains, the key text within the philosophical tradition of the 'motivated sign'. That is, the theory that instead of being merely arbitrary tokens of meaning, words are iconically related, through etymology, onomatopoeic sound symbolism, or some other type of connection, to their referent. During Plato's dialogue, Hermogenes (like Saussure, Althusser, Macherey, and Ducrot)¹ argues that language is self-contained, there being no resemblance or connection between words and things; whereas the position of Cratylus is that language is mimetic of reality:

Socrates: Then if primitive or first nouns are meant to be representations of things, can you think of any better way of framing them than to assimilate them as closely as possible to those objects which they are to represent? Or do you prefer the notion of Hermogenes and of many others, who say that names are conventional, and have a meaning to those who have agreed about them, and who have previous knowledge of the things intended by them, and that it is convention which makes a name right . . . ?

(427d)

Shortly afterwards, Cratylus agrees with Socrates that 'representation by likeness' is infinitely better than 'representation by any chance sign' (434a) and that 'words should as far as possible resemble things' (435c). So strong was the connection between word-formation and mimesis within Ancient Greek culture that *onomatopoeia* meant both 'onomatopoeia' and 'new word'.² The link between etymology and sound symbolism then continues within the Roman texts (e.g. *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, VI.XXXI.42, and *Institutio Oratoria*, VIII.VI.31-3). Plato and Aristotle prepared the way for the extension of this principle of formal mimesis from etymology through into stylistics. Plato speaks of a division between mimetic and descriptive types of representation (*Republic*, 392D-394D), as does Aristotle (*Poetics*, 1448b), and this gives us the useful analytical binary³ (this pair of terms will be employed during the chapters on sixteenth-century literature)

1. Ross Chambers, *Story and Situation* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984), p. 4.

2. Schenkeveld, p. 107.

3. For more on this, see Gerard Genette, *Narrative Discourse*, trans. Jane E. Lewin (New York: Cornell University Press, 1980), pp. 162-63; and R.C. Cross and A.D. Woozley, *Plato's Republic: A Philosophical Commentary* (London and Basingstoke: The Macmillan Press, 1964), p. 270.

of mimesis and diegesis, the latter coming from the Greek for 'narrative', and also meaning 'a statement of the case'.¹ However, both Plato and Aristotle are speaking of mimesis in the sense of dramatic imitation, as distinct from the enactment of content through style. So whilst Dionysius follows Plato and others in his investigation of individual letters and words in Part 14, and whilst his examination, in Part 15, of the relationship between word-form and semantic charge is Cratylic, his continuation of this set of ideas into stylistics marks a new and significant development.

It is to be expected that literary analysts will sometimes make reference to mimetic language. These devices are pleasing for their display of technical skill, and are often extremely effective in semantic and aesthetic terms, so they are always bound to attract some kind of attention from commentators. But Dionysius goes several stages beyond this. He analyses mimetic language in a minutely scientific way (the spirit of Theophrastus stands behind every line), and positions his analyses at the end, and culmination point, of a long discussion about the acoustic effects which are available to the Greek writers, meaning that everything he says in the literary examinations has been clarified and corroborated in advance. He then takes this formidably solid, objective form of linguistic-literary criticism, and strengthens it yet further by underpinning it with Cratylic language theory. Demetrius had mentioned onomatopoeia only in passing, and without any reference either to Cratylism or to stylistics:

Our authorities define 'onomatopoeic' words as those which are uttered in imitation of an emotion or an action, as 'hissed' and 'lapping'.²
(*On Style*, II. 94.)³

By contrast, Dionysius creates, through the adaptation and unification of older concepts and practices regarding the medium, a new analytical system made up of prosodic and

1. Little, Fowler, and Coulson, Vol. I, p. 545.

2. *Odyssey* ix.394; and *Iliad* xvi.161.

3. There is a discussion concerning Demetrius and etymology in Schenkeveld, pp. 107-115.

phonetic science, affective literary criticism, and Platonic language theory. The following passage, which gives the clearest account of the mimetic principle to be found either in the work of Dionysius or anywhere else in the rhetorical canon, is of such importance that it needs to be quoted in full. The Homeric attributions have, for ease of reference, been given in brackets rather than as footnotes.

Countless such lines are to be found in Homer, representing length of time, bodily size, extremity of emotion, immobility of position, or some similar effect, by nothing more than the artistic arrangement of the syllables; while other lines are wrought in the opposite way to portray brevity, speed, urgency, and the like. For example:

Convulsively wailing to her handmaids she cried. [Il. 22.476.] and

And scared were the charioteers beholding that tireless flame. [Il. 18.225.]

In the first of these the halting of [Andromache's] breath is indicated, and her loss of control of her voice; in the second, the mental distraction [of the charioteers]¹ and the unexpectedness of their terror. The effect in both cases is due to the reduction of the number of syllables of the words.

Thus the poets and prose authors, on their own account, look to the subject they are treating and furnish it with words which suit it and illustrate it, as I said. But they also borrow many words from earlier writers, in the form in which they fashioned them - words which imitate things, as is the case in these examples:

With thunderous roar the mighty billow crashed upon the shore. [Od. 5.402.]

And he with yelping cry flew headlong down the wind's strong blast. [Il. 12.207.]

[The wave] *Resounds upon the mighty strand, the ocean crashes round.* [Il. 2.210.]

Alert, he watched for hissing arrows and for clattering spears. [Il. 16.361.]

The great source and teacher in these matters is Nature, who prompts us to imitate, and to coin words which represent things according to certain resemblances which are based upon reason and appeal to our intelligence. It is she who has taught us to speak of the bellowing of bulls, the whinnying of horses . . . and a host of other similar imitations of sound, shape, action, feeling, movement, stillness, and anything else whatsoever. These matters have been discussed at length by our predecessors, the most important work being that of the first writer to introduce the subject of etymology, Plato the Socratic, in his *Cratylus* especially, but in many places elsewhere.

(Parts 15-16)

1. Both of these sets of parantheses are from Usher.

In order to appreciate the full significance of this passage, one must understand the nature of the relationship between conventional and natural verbal signification, and how the ostensibly conflicting terms of this theoretical binary are, in practice, complementary rather than contradictory. At the one extreme there is descriptive Cratylism, which holds that words have some kind of connection with their referent, above and beyond that of the conventional semantic link; and at the other extreme is descriptive Hermogenism, which holds that no such connection exists. But, in practice, between these polarities there lie two kinds of middle way. The first maintains that although words are, in general, arbitrary, they are in some cases motivated. The second, which can overlap with the first, is that of prescriptive, rather than descriptive, Cratylism: the belief that all (or at least most) of the lexicon is arbitrary, but that we should aim, through our use of language, to bring words as close as possible to that which they denote. As Plato's *Cratylus* says, 'words should as far as possible resemble things' (*Cratylus* 435c). It is prescriptive Cratylism, expanded from word-form to stylistics, which informs the enactment discussions in Dionysius. As we shall see, during the sixteenth century prescriptive Cratylism and rhetorical stylistics interacted not only with each other, but also with other aspects of the literary and linguistic scene.

Dr. Samuel Johnson argues that parts - but not all - of the Dionysian accounts of Homeric enactment are unconvincing, and the validity of his anti-mimetic arguments has, in turn, been queried.¹ Yet whatever the truth about the Homer citations, and however high or low we choose to set the bar regarding the acceptability of the evidence, the ultimate significance of these passages lies less in what they tell us about Homer than in what they tell us about Dionysian rhetoric. Even if it were indeed the case that Dionysius sometimes sees more than is there, then this would in itself be still further proof of the status of the medium within late-classical rhetorical theory. It was believed that the how had the power to signify, and the passages quoted above either prove beyond doubt that this is indeed the

1. For example by John Conington. See Johnson's *Lives of the English Poets*, ed. George Birkbeck Hill, 3 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1905), Vol. III, pp. 231-32, note no. 4. Objections to Cratylism will be covered in more detail during Chapter Four.

case within some of the most famous passages of Homer, or else, depending on whether or not Johnson has a sound case, they demonstrate that this belief was strong enough to encourage Dionysius to exaggerate its presence. Moreover, the interaction between rhetoric and literature was two-way, meaning that mimetic criticism was, at worst, a self-fulfilling prophecy: even Johnson acknowledges that accounts of signifying form encouraged its use amongst the classical writers, and that Virgil makes frequent and indisputable use of mimetic figures.¹

Dionysius takes a more variegated approach to the medium of expression than most of his contemporaries, and builds up a sophisticated and wide-ranging mode of criticism which incorporates and extends the materialist approach to form established by his predecessors. This methodological breadth makes *On Literary Composition* every bit as valuable a contribution to rhetorical formalism as the mammoth encyclopaediae of figures contained within the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* and the *Institutio Oratoria*. The greatest rhetorical text of all, though, in terms of the critical application of a medium-based philosophy of literature, is the astonishing *Peri Hupsous*, or *On the Sublime*, a work of unknown authorship which is traditionally ascribed to 'Longinus'. The author seems, like Dionysius, to have been a Greek who had moved to Rome,² but who, again like Dionysius, had held on to the kind of fiery, pioneering intellectual sophistication which was the hallmark of the Greek rhetorical tradition. Unfortunately, the text was rediscovered so late that it is uncertain what influence, if any, it had on sixteenth-century English rhetorical and literary culture. However, no enquiry into classical rhetoric, and in particular into the medium-message dynamic within classical rhetoric, would be complete without it. An appendix on Longinus has therefore been added.

1. We shall be looking at this again in Chapter Four.

2. Wimsatt and Brooks, p. 98.

Chapter 3

The Medium, the Message and Education during the English Renaissance

. . . the number of things that men have drawn from rhetoric, as from a divine fountain, is almost infinite . . . Nothing nobler, better, or more divine, can be found in human affairs than aptness of speech.

(George of Trebizond (1395-1472 or 1473), *Oratio de Laudibus Eloquentie*.)¹

On the face of it, the journey of rhetorical formalism from the classical world to the Renaissance appears to resemble that of a motorbike stunt rider leaping across a canyon. The study of the medium of expression begins in earnest with Plato, Aristotle, and Theophrastus, gathers a huge amount of momentum under the Romans and the later Greeks, as if in anticipation of the jump across time which it has to make, and then bounds clean over a thousand-year-wide chasm of ignorance, before landing, remarkably intact, in the fifteenth century. Parts of this interpretation are true. In particular, rhetoric did indeed arrive virtually unscathed in Renaissance Europe. But how it made its journey there is a vexed question, and one which we have space to cover only in outline. We shall briefly consider how rhetorical culture during the Renaissance compares with that of the Middle Ages, before looking in detail at the medium-message dynamic within sixteenth-century rhetorical and educational theory and practice.

Until humanist scholars salvaged them during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, many of the great classical treatises were simply not available during the years which followed the fall of Rome. The main body of Quintilian's *Institutio Oratoria* was not rediscovered until 1416, when it was unearthed in a monastery, in a cell at the bottom of a tower, 'safe and unharmed, though covered with mould and filthy with dust', by the great book-finder Poggio Bracciolini;² complete versions of Cicero's *De Oratore*, *Brutus*, and *Orator* resurfaced only in 1421, in the form of a single manuscript which was discovered by

1. In Wayne A. Rebhorn, ed. and trans., *Renaissance Debates on Rhetoric* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2000), pp. 32-33.

2. Vickers, 1988, pp. 254-55. For spellbinding accounts of the work of Bracciolini and the other collectors, see John Addington Symonds, *Renaissance in Italy Vol. 7: The Revival of Learning* (London: Smith, Elder, & Co., 1897), pp. 96-102 and 125-29.

Gerardo Landriani, Bishop of Lodi;¹ and it was not until the end of the fifteenth century that the complete works of Cicero became available in England, in printed editions imported from the Continent.² Editions of Dionysius's *On Literary Composition* did not appear until the first decade of the sixteenth century,³ and Longinus became available only in 1554. On the other hand, the *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, Cicero's *De Inventione*, Aristotle's *Art of Rhetoric*, and Demetrius's *On Style*⁴ were all known during the Middle Ages, and so the bibliographical distinction between the mediaeval and Renaissance periods is more one of degree than of absolute contrast. The issue of the status of rhetoric as an academic discipline during the course of these few centuries is more ambiguous still. As we saw in Chapter One, rhetoric had, for Aristotle, overlapped with, and been partly subsumed under, logic. The Romans of the fourth century A.D. then partially subsumed it under grammar.⁵ The Middle Ages reproduced this general pattern, with Aquinas and subsequent scholars demoting rhetoric in favour of both logic and grammar.⁶ Then again, within one or two scholarly and generic contexts, rhetoric in fact seems to have flourished during the Middle Ages as never before. In particular, the *artes dictaminis* - guidebooks on how to write business letters and so on - involved, says Vickers, 'the most elaborate development of techniques for the manipulation of words in human history'.⁷ Discussing Guido Faba, the author of one such manual, the *Summa Dictaminis*, he writes:

In the *artes dictaminis* attention is given to form, shape, order, rhythm. The letter-writer, Guido says, has to cultivate 'devices of great elegance', such as

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1. Heinrich F. Plett in Sloane, ed., p. 673.
 2. Howard Jones, *Master Tully: Cicero in Tudor England* (Nieuwkoop: De Graaf, 1998), p. 114.
 3. Stephen Usher in Dionysius of Halicarnassus, Vol. I, pp. xxviii-xxix.
 4. Sloane in Sloane, ed., p. 673; Vickers, 1988, p. 216; and Richard McKeon in R.S. Crane et al., *Critics and Criticism Ancient and Modern*, ed. R.S. Crane (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1952), p. 292.
 5. Vickers, 1988, p. 221.
 6. McKeon in Crane et al., pp. 276 and 280; Wimsatt and Brooks, p. 131; Vickers, 1970, pp. 29-30 and 39; and Vickers, 1988, pp. 185, 220, and 222.
 7. 1988, p. 235.

varying the place of the verb, changing word-order, placing the 'more elegant words . . . at the beginning and end of the sentence', and even attending to 'word-stress'.

(1988, p. 236, citing the critic Faulhaber.)

The art of writing eloquent sermons took off in a similar way.¹ Moreover, as Vickers, E.R. Curtius, and E. Faral all point out, poetry in Europe during the Middle Ages is heavily indebted to figural rhetoric, as derived from the original texts, and in particular the fourth book of the *Ad Herennium*, or else from the mediaeval rhetoricians such as Geoffrey of Vinsauf, author of the *Poetria Nova*.² Much the same can be said of Anglo-Saxon literature. The first rhetorical handbook produced in Britain was the *Liber Schematorum et Troporum*, written by the Venerable Bede in about 701 A.D.,³ and, whether it derives from this or from other sources, there seems to be a lot of evidence for the use of the figures within Anglo-Saxon verse.⁴

The current academic zeitgeist tends to insist upon the removal of chronological dividing lines, and also tends to treat claims made by the writers of earlier ages, and humanists in particular, with a high degree of scepticism.⁵ The obvious thing to do, then, according to this current school of thought, is to merge the Renaissance with the earlier epochs of post-classical Europe (just as the term 'Renaissance' has, in recent decades, often been replaced by the term 'Early Modern', the use of which implies a continuity between early and late modernity), and to see the anti-mediaeval bent of scholars such as Ermolao Barbaro - who, in a letter to Pico della Mirandola written in April 1485, condemns the uneducated, non-rhetorical nature of the mediaeval scholastics (who are 'dull, rude, uncultured barbarians')⁶

1. Vickers, 1970, p. 34.

2. Ibid., p. 35.

3. Wilbur Samuel Howell, *Logic and Rhetoric in England, 1500-1700* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1956), p. 116.

4. See Adeline Courtney Bartlett, *The Larger Rhetorical Patterns in Anglo-Saxon Poetry* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1935), incl. pp. 10, 17, and 30-48.

5. As seen, for instance, in Tony Davies, *Humanism* (London and New York: Routledge, 1997), pp. 100-101; and Alan Stewart in Jonathan Woolfson, ed., *Reassessing Tudor Humanism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), pp. 78-98.

6. Vickers, 1988, p. 184.

- as simply self-fashioning-through-opposition on the part of Renaissance humanism. The fact that rhetoric is so clearly discernible within literary culture during the Middle Ages and earlier certainly seems to indicate that we should not take the claims of the humanists entirely at face value. Yet if, rather than gauging the progress of rhetoric solely in terms of its clear and verifiable presence, or lack of it, within different time periods - which would lead us to find what is almost an unbroken continuum running from Rome, via St. Augustine, Bede, and the rest, right through to Erasmus - we instead measure its progress in terms of the scale of that presence, then there is, in fact, a clear contrast between the Renaissance and the thousand years which preceded it.

Although the Middle Ages had had access to some of the ancient rhetorical texts, they had not always viewed them in rhetorical terms: that is, as guides to the art of eloquence. In particular, the mediaeval downgrading of rhetoric in relation to the other disciplines meant that Aristotle's *Rhetoric* was largely seen as a study of ethics or psychology.¹ Similarly, the *De Oratore* received little attention during those years, despite being arguably the most important rhetorical work of all time. This could not be further removed from the wholehearted and industrious rhetoricism of the Renaissance. Barbaro, in the letter cited above, accuses the mediaeval scholars of having privileged *res* - things or content - over *verba*, or words and eloquence.² However true (or not) it might have been of the Middle Ages, this claim could never have been made about the Renaissance. Indeed, so strong was the attention paid to language and language-use during this period that Sir Francis Bacon, as part of his scheme for the elevation of objects and material science over words and abstract thought, was to write, famously, that people had taken the love of language to excess, choosing 'to hunt more after words than matter'.³ As a condemnation, this is no less, and possibly more, contentious than Barbaro's verdict on the Middle Ages; but it is

1. Vickers, 1988, pp. 255-56. Also Roberto Weiss, *Humanism in England During the Fifteenth Century* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1941), p. 3.

2. Vickers, *op. cit.*, p. 185.

3. From *The Advancement of Learning* (1605), in Rehorn, ed., p. 267.

nevertheless the case that by the time of Bacon's comment classical rhetoric had attained a level of importance which was entirely unprecedented within the post-Roman world. In bibliographical terms alone, the achievements of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries are extraordinary, the original classical works being tracked down, bought (or smuggled out), patched up, and brought back to life, with so much care and attention, not to mention enthusiasm, that the literal meaning of the term 'Renaissance' as the 'rebirth' of classical learning is entirely validated. In our own age, when so many wonderful old books are being transported, as if in tumbrils, straight from public libraries to landfill sites, it is salutary to note that Bracciolini was so driven in his mission to save manuscripts from neglect and destruction that he would compare the plight of such books to that of living friends, lying in hospital or in prison, and desperately looking to him for help.¹ The spread of printing was of crucial importance for this new learning, giving countless thousands of Europeans access to the great rhetorical works. So, for example, Aldus Manutius published, in 1508-09, his *Rhetores Graeci*, which contained the *Rhetoric* and the *Poetics* of Aristotle, Demetrius's *On Style*, and Dionysius's *On Literary Composition*.² Moreover, a large number of new rhetorical works, including those of Erasmus, which we shall discuss in due course, appeared during the course of the Renaissance. Johannes Sturm wrote sixteen books on rhetoric during the middle decades of the sixteenth century; in 1559, Giovanni Baptista Bernardi published his vast figural encyclopedia, the *Thesaurus Rhetoricae*, which covers five thousand rhetorical terms; and in 1619 Nicholas Caussin brought out his *Eloquentiae Sacrae et Humanae Parallela Libri XVI*, which comes to over a thousand pages.³ As Vickers, making use of statistics provided by James J. Murphy, says, the number of rhetorical editions, commentaries, and new works at this time is 'truly staggering', with humanism bestowing upon rhetoric 'a greater status than ever before'.⁴

1. Gilbert Arthur Highet, *The Classical Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1949). p. 15.

2. Vickers, 1988, p. 255.

3. *Ibid.*, loc. cit. and pp. 268-69.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 256.

During the Renaissance, rhetoric became the 'queen of the liberal arts'.¹ George of Trebizond (1395-1472 or 1473), who in 1433 or 1434 completed his vast *Rhetoricum Libri Quinque*, the first comprehensive post-classical book on the subject,² tells us in his *Oratio de Laudibus Eloquentie* that there is 'nothing more pleasant to know and hear, nothing so regal, so liberal, so magnificent' as eloquence.³ Philip Melanchthon (1497-1560), another leading light of the rhetorical scene, states in his *The Praise of Eloquence* (1523) that 'the sun sees nothing better, nothing grander on earth',⁴ and in England, Thomas Wilson (c.1524-81) in *The Art of Rhetoric* (1553) describes the eloquent man as being 'half a god'.⁵ Rhetoric was the key to civilization and to wisdom. Erasmus states in his *De Ratione Studii*, of 1511:

Since things are learnt only by the sounds we attach to them, a person who is not skilled in the force of language is, of necessity, short-sighted, deluded, and unbalanced in his judgement of things as well.

(*Collected Works*, Vol. 24, p. 666)

The entire Renaissance educational system, with staunch rhetoricians and grammarians such as Erasmus at the helm, was imbued with the same philosophy. It will be helpful to examine this system in the light of the themes which we covered in the first two chapters, and in particular that of the how-what, or medium-message, dynamic.

The single most striking feature of the sixteenth-century curriculum is that it went about everything with a degree of thoroughness and discipline which would be alien to a present-day military parade ground, let alone a present-day classroom. T.W. Baldwin quotes from the statute governing the week's schedule at the Hertford six-form school, a routine which, he says, is typical of education during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Despite its importance, the passage is too long to be quoted in full, but it includes the following:

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1. Rebhorn in Rebhorn, ed., p. 1.
 2. Rebhorn in *ibid.*, p. 27.
 3. In *ibid.*, p. 34.
 4. In *ibid.*, p. 102.
 5. In *ibid.*, p. 176.

Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday; morning: 1. Notes and exercises of the sermon examyned. 2. Every forme to say their parts of the gramer (Latine or Greeke) by some fower of every forme uncertaynely chosen and some other called out to repeate on the sudden. 3. The last lecture to be repeated memoriter . . .

Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday afternoone; - 1. From half an hour after one till three, construe and parse their Lectures gyven in the forenoon, and if any neglect, examyne them; and lett the master use diligence to tell what is to be observed. 2. Correct the exercise gyven in the forenoon and observe the differences of the Phrases of Orators from the poets. 3. Give some vulgares to be presently turned into Latine or Latine into Greeke, or lett some of the chiefest make fower verses or more of the matter of their lecture. 4. Give every forme a rule either in the Accidence, Gramer or Greeke, to be repeated next morneinge. 5. Lett there be some questions or disputacions grammaticall used amongst the schollers.¹

And so on. Given the rigorous educational ethos of this time, and given the rapid increase in the number of grammar schools (by 1575 there were three hundred and sixty of them), all of which modelled themselves on the pioneering public schools such as St. Paul's, Eton, Winchester, and Westminster,² any discipline which was dominant within the school system would soon be dominant within the cultural life of the nation. If juggling had been at the centre of the school system instead of the *trivium*, England would have produced whole generations of young men able to juggle a dozen objects at once. The system was custom-built to cultivate a phenomenally high level of expertise. Just as Soviet-era Russian schools produced, through hot-housing, world-class chess players, so the Renaissance schools produced grandmasters of eloquence.

In the figural instruction given as part of the school curriculum, and in the works of commentators such as Henry Peacham, whose detailed accounts of the rhetorical figures as given in his *The Garden of Eloquence* (1577) follow in a direct line from the *Ad Herennium* and Quintilian down through Susenbrotus, the Renaissance adopted wholesale the late-classical preoccupation with the precise detail of word-use. (Robert Ralph Bolgar gives the major credit for this rediscovery to Chrysoloras, who lectured on Greek and

1. In T.W. Baldwin, *William Shakspeare's Small Latine & Lesse Greeke*, 2 vols. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1944), Vol. I, p. 373.

2. Vickers, 1970, p. 47; and Joanna Martindale in Joanna Martindale, ed., *English Humanism* (London, Sydney, and Dover, New Hampshire: Croom Helm, 1985), p. 23.

rhetoric at Florence from 1396.)¹ Hence the uncompromisingly medium-based position of Rudolph Agricola (1443/44-1485). Echoing the statement of Dionysius in Part 2 of his *On Literary Composition* that 'for the achievement of pleasing, persuasion, and powerful effects' word-arrangement is 'far more potent' than word-selection (as covered in Chapter Two), and adapting this idea, so that it here applies to the *inventio-elocutio* relationship, Agricola writes in his *De inventione dialectica libri tres* of 1479:

It is from the language of the speech itself that people derive what delights them. . . . Therefore, in a speech the source of pleasure is not so much the subject itself as the mutations of language by means of which it is expressed.²

In a similar vein, Philip Melanchthon speaks in his *Rhetoric* (1546) of *elocutio* as being the unique and defining component of rhetoric, this serving to distinguish it from dialectic, which overlaps with *inventio* and *dispositio*.³

In the previous chapter we saw how it is in some respects better to look at *elocutio* alongside *inventio* and *dispositio*, rather than on its own, as this enables us to gain a rounded idea about the way in which the formal principle operates within rhetoric; and we then saw, during the Cicero discussion, how the first two parts of rhetoric, which are ostensibly centred more on subject-matter than on style, are just as driven by concepts of structure as is the last part. The same holds true during the Renaissance. Whereas modern, pupil-led curricula tend to be based upon the romanticist idea of abiogenetic creativity and self-expression, with the teacher adopting a hands-off approach:

There is no specific structure for conferencing as there needs to be openness and spontaneity in the sharing session. . . . Teachers should try to get the child to take the lead . . .⁴

1. *The Classical Heritage and its Beneficiaries* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1954), p. 268.

2. In Rebhorn, ed., p. 55.

3. See Baldwin, Vol. II, p. 10. For further discussion regarding the complex issue of the rhetoric-dialectic boundary, see Richard McKeon in R.S. Crane et al., pp. 293-95.

4. P. March and L. Ljungdahl in Gordon Winch et al., *Literacy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 200.

the Renaissance rhetorical system, by contrast, was founded upon the idea that freedom of expression was the end-point, rather than the starting-point, of rhetorical training, and that until the pupils attained a mastery over the how of writing and speaking, at which stage they could choose their own themes and treatments, the teacher should provide a sound structure and a strong degree of guidance. This included giving pupils a grounding in the topics, or *sententiae*, as set out in books such as the *Adages* of Erasmus (c.1533-36).

Whereas the modern system aims to give pupils expressive freedom by not giving them anything at all - that is, by encouraging them to find their own material, whether *ex nihilo* or else in their own life-experiences - the Renaissance school system aimed to give pupils (eventual) expressive freedom by providing them with a huge mass of topics, maxims, and so on, through which, with the aid of extensive training in language manipulation, they could ultimately navigate their own course. The following, from the *De Ratione Studii*, gives an idea of the lengths to which education in the Renaissance went in order to cultivate an oceanic mind in its scholars. The teacher, Erasmus writes, should have

a theme or memorable historical episode to set before the boys. For instance: the rash self-confidence of Marcellus undermined the Roman state; the prudent delaying tactics of Fabius [Quintilian] restored it. Although here there is also an underlying general principle that over-hasty schemes seldom turn out well. Likewise: it would be difficult to decide who was the sillier, Crates who threw his gold into the sea, or Midas who held it to be the supreme good. . . .

But it would be no great trouble to collect a number of examples of this type from the historians, in particular Valerius Maximus. Or he should employ mythology, for example: Hercules won immortality for himself by vanquishing monsters; or the Muses take special delight in springs and groves and shun the smoky cities. Or he should make use of a fable; for example: the lark was correct to teach that one should not entrust to a friend business which one can finish by oneself.

(Pp. 676-77.)

The effect of such works on those who passed through the Renaissance school system was profound. The learning of the *sententiae* enriched the mind and expanded the imaginative and intellectual horizons, and was the polar opposite of the modern subjectivist approach, whereby pupils are encouraged to read and write only about what is relevant to what they have already learnt or experienced, and are thus taught 'merely to look at their own

reflection in the mirror'.¹ The same process greatly enriched literary composition:

From the *Sententiae Pueriles* . . . from Cato with accompaniments, and from the collections of *sententiae* on which to make themes, Shakspeare would get that set toward sententiality and topicality which was to make of his works the best English garden for gathering flowers.²

Hence, too, Shakespeare's lack of originality in the romanticist sense of the term:

Whatever the sixteenth century was, intentionally original it was never. Its avowed philosophy and conscious practice was through imitation so to analyze the old that by imitative synthesis the old might be reincarnated in the new. . . .

Shakspeare never originated anything; literary types, verse forms, plots, etc., etc.. And yet he is one of the most original authors who has ever lived . . .³

Just as we saw with regard to the classical age, the principles of selection and ordering are evident throughout the *inventio-dispositio-elocutio* process. Rather than involving the spontaneous or personal generation of ideas and words, literary creation during the sixteenth century chiefly consisted of the selection and handling of pre-existent material, and of the cultivation of new seeds planted in old soil.

In the second book of the *De Copia* (1512), the most important rhetorical work written during the Renaissance, Erasmus, using the same kind of ambitious, panoptic approach which we saw in the above *De Ratione* passage, tells us:

Having made up your mind to cover the whole field of literature in your reading (and anyone who wishes to be thought educated must do this at least once in his life), first provide yourself with a full list of subjects. . . .

So prepare yourself a sufficient number of headings, and arrange them as you please, subdivide them into the appropriate sections, and under each section add your commonplaces and maxims; and then whatever you come across in any author, particularly if it is rather striking, you will be able to note down immediately in the proper place, be it an anecdote, or a fable, or an illustrative example, or a strange incident, or a maxim, or a witty remark, or a remark notable for some other quality, or a proverb, or a metaphor, or a simile.

1. Phillips, p. 91.

2. Baldwin, Vol. I, p. 752.

3. Ibid., Vol. II, pp. 677-78.

This has the double advantage of fixing what you have read more firmly in your mind, and getting you into the habit of using the riches supplied by your reading. Some people have much material stored up so to speak in their vaults, but when it comes to speaking or writing they are remarkably ill-supplied and impoverished. A third result is that whatever the occasion demands, you will have the materials for a speech ready to hand, as you have all the pigeonholes duly arranged so that you can extract just what you want from them.

No discipline is so remote from rhetoric that you cannot use it to enrich your collection.

(pp. 635 and 638)

Unlike the modern writer, then, for whom the generation of subject-matter is a process which is without form, and sometimes void, the Renaissance rhetorician goes about selecting material in as concrete and organised a fashion as a chair-maker selecting cuts of wood. As Terence Cave says, 'Res do not emerge from the mind as spontaneous "ideas"; they are already there, embodied in language, forming the materials of a writing exercise'.¹

Given the high level of structural control which is evident at the *inventio* stage, it is small wonder that as the content reaches the more formalist, medium-orientated, stages of the compositional process, the degree of order and control becomes intense. Indeed, training in *dispositio* and *elocutio* provided a conceptual framework and set of terms for the writer or speaker which are so sophisticated, thoroughgoing, and useful, that they were adopted wholesale by scholars of the sister arts of painting, architecture, sculpture, and music.² Here, Erasmus explains the structure of an 'elaboration', that is, an expansion of, and hence an enrichment of, a maxim:

A complete 'elaboration' contains seven parts: statement, reason, rephrasing of statement (to which one can add the reason restated), statement from the contrary, comparison, illustrative example, conclusion.

(*De Copia*, p. 630.)

He goes on to give a highly-detailed example and explanation of how this process works in practice. Not only is this level of formal organisation striking in itself, but it also occurs in

1. Terence Christopher Cave, *The Cornucopian Text: Problems of Writing in the French Renaissance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), p. 19.

2. See Vickers, 1988, whole of Chapter Seven.

Book II, which is ostensibly given over to the subject-matter mentioned in the title (*De Duplici Copia Verborum ac Rerum*). That is, even though this book is about *inventio*, which is, relatively speaking, the most free-wheeling of the three stages of composition, it is almost entirely concerned with issues of structure. From the very first paragraph of this book, form is so dominant that Erasmus goes straight into the typically *dispositio*-based art of *divisio*. So, in addition to the fact that *inventio* is, as we have just seen, bound up with principles of structure and systematisation, it is also encroached upon by the yet more formalist art of *dispositio*. There is no place within Renaissance rhetoric for the non-formal. Throughout the *De Copia*, the *inventio*, or what, stage is almost entirely crowded out, or annexed, by the *dispositio*, or how, stage. Underlying this is the shifting relationship between the two giant tectonic plates of logic and rhetoric itself. Whilst the former, which is in essence a thought- or message-centred art, had been very much a discipline in its own right during the Middle Ages, the humanists now subsumed it under rhetoric, reducing it 'to [the] function of aiding exposition'.¹ Rather than being an end in itself, it now had, in the form of rhetorical *dispositio*, the more modest task of acting as an intermediary, formalising content in preparation for the final, crowning processes of *elocutio*. All roads - including, as we shall see, that of grammar - led towards the adept handling of the verbal medium. Logic was, in its own way, just as formalist as rhetoric, and it was, indeed, this very quality which made it so useful as a ready-made template for the rules of *dispositio*, and which had, conversely, allowed logic to overlap with, and even eclipse, rhetoric within Aristotle's *Rhetoric*. But during the Middle Ages logic stood apart from the art of speaking and writing, its formalism being centred upon ideas, rather than upon eloquence. Then, in the Renaissance, the very same formal categories which were used to order the what as part of logic took on a central function within the how of rhetoric.

In stark contrast to today's educational climate, where rules and guidelines are reduced or even eliminated, the Erasmian method is built upon a resounding commitment to form.

1. William Harrison Woodward, *Studies in Education During the Age of the Renaissance, 1400-1600* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1906), p. 283.

It is often possible to detect a sense of the writer's delight behind descriptions of structural procedures. On one occasion, Erasmus tells us, the teacher should

set a fable, on another a short but meaningful narrative, on another an aphorism composed of four parts, with a comparison between each of the two parts or with an accompanying reason attached to each. At one time the adducing of proofs should be dealt with in its five parts, at another the dilemma in two. . . .

He should of course set out the principles governing connection and what form the best transition would take: from the opening section to the main outline, from the main outline to the division, from the division to the proofs, from proposition to proposition, from reason to reason, from the proofs to the epilogue or peroration.

(*De Ratione Studii*, pp. 678 and 681.)

This *dispositio* passage outdoes even the rhetoricians of the classical age in its sense of order and discipline. The real high point of formalist rhetoric during the Renaissance, however, is its achievement in the field of *elocutio*, and, more specifically, in the set of formal translation exercises which lies at its heart. In the opening chapters, we saw how classical rhetoricians from Demetrius onwards would rewrite a passage in such a way that its content, or message, remained essentially the same, whilst its stylistic medium was altered. This change of language affects the aesthetic impact, tonal range, and so on, thereby demonstrating the importance of incarnating the subject-matter within that particular stylistic form. This same-message-different-medium procedure was to become the foundation for the transpositional exercises which were the centrepiece of Renaissance *elocutio* training.

The most fundamental way in which pupils during the Renaissance were taught to transfer the message from one verbal medium to another was through instruction in the classical languages, which (in addition to composition in Latin and Greek, which bypassed the vernacular altogether) involved intensive training in how to translate into and out of Latin and Greek.¹ With Latin - which Foster Watson describes as 'the treasure-house of all

1. As described, for example, in the *De Ratione Studii*, pp. 678-79.

erudition'¹ - being the international written and spoken language of scholarship,² and with pupils being allowed to speak only Latin and Greek during the school day,³ those who passed through the educational system became adept linguists from an early age. Not only would the pupil learn to translate into the classical languages, which is a far harder task than translating the other way round, but he would also learn how to write in different styles, such as that of a letter by Cicero or Pliny (*De Ratione*, p. 679). One can best understand the remarkable degree of verbal exactitude which prevailed in the teaching of schoolchildren in the sixteenth century by comparing it with the 'getting-the-gist'⁴ ethos which prevails in the language teaching of the modern age, the results of which are here described by Derek McCulloch, a German tutor at Surrey University:

Now, *anything* that passes for communication is considered good. There's a 'good enough' philosophy in the schools. My students can't understand German word order. They don't understand who is doing what to whom in a sentence. For years I've been giving them a Heinrich Boll short story which starts: 'I was standing in the harbour looking at the gulls when a policeman noticed my face.' One after another, these students write in German: 'My face noticed the policeman'. They can't see the . . . difference between 'He has a bad teacher' and 'He is a bad teacher'. In 1993, 31 out of 36 first-year students couldn't write the latter sentence in German.⁵

In another test which he gave his undergraduates McCulloch found that 'out of more than 40 students with A and B grades at A-level, hardly any could translate correctly the phrase: "Please close the window". All but two found that translating "The train she came on was late" was quite beyond them'.⁶

Alongside a knowledge of vocabulary and accidence, Renaissance training in Latin and

1. In Juan Luis Vives, *Tudor School-boy Life: The Dialogues of Juan Luis Vives*, trans. Foster Watson (London: Frank Cass, 1908), p. xxi. (In a similar spirit, Smith and Melluish state that 'Greek is a door that opens straight to Paradise', p. xii.)

2. Watson in Vives, p. xx.

3. Baldwin, Vol. I, p. 166.

4. See Phillips, pp. 23-24.

5. In *ibid.*, pp. 9-10.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 10.

Greek instilled a high degree of syntactical skill, a skill which was an especially important aspect of composition in English (the 'vernacular') at a time when there was far greater word-sequencing flexibility than there is today. Modern English has a comparatively fixed word order,¹ dominated as it is by the patterning of Subject, Verb, and Object in that sequence.² During the sixteenth century, however, there was no such default setting. Whilst the loss of Old English inflections³ meant that word-order had become more important for indicating grammatical relationships, and was therefore less flexible than it had been, and was S.V.O. most of the time, syntax, especially in verse,⁴ was still largely in a state of fluidity, and variations - or 'permutations' - on S.V.O. were a common feature. In effect, the Renaissance poets had, in comparison with writers now, a whole extra tier of verbal choices. Moreover, the medium of the syntactic permutation had the power to signify. Victoria Helms, for example, shows how Shakespeare and Jonson use verb-end structures, which inherently create an elevated tone and a sense of rarefied otherness, as part of the characterisation of the nobility and of fairies (in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, about a third of such syntactic permutations are spoken by Puck).⁵

If translation into and out of the classical languages and syntactical sequencing were two of the most obvious and fundamental ways in which the Renaissance writer learnt how to remould content from one type of linguistic embodiment to another, overlapping with these were many other ways by which the message could be reformulated. One of these was to vary the grammatical medium. William Kempe, in his *The Education of Children* (1588), advises that the teacher of those in the first five forms of grammar school (that is, those

1. Randolph Quirk, Sidney Greenbaum, Geoffrey Leech, and Jan Svartvik, *A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language*, with an index by David Crystal (London and New York: Longman Group, 1985), p. 51.

2. Regarding the rise of S.V.O., see Victoria Helms, *Form and Function of Displaced Sentence Elements in William Shakespeare's 'A Midsummer Night's Dream' [etc.]* (Tübingen: Eberhard-Karls University, 1995), p. 88; Manfred Görlach, *Introduction to Early Modern English* (Cambridge, etc.: Cambridge University Press, 1978, trans. into English 1991), p. 107; and Charles Barber, *The English Language: A Historical Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 161.

3. Helms, op. cit., p. 121.

4. Görlach, pp. 107-108.

5. Helms, op. cit., p. 95. See also McDonald, 2001A, *passim*.

between the ages of seven and eleven) should set out a sentence in English

which the Schollar shall expresse by like phrase in Latin. And if the Schollar have learned and rendered this short Lecture, *Pater bonus diligit filium probum*, *A good father loveth an honest sonne*, the Maister may propound the like sentence with diversitie, first of Nombres, then of Genders, thirdly Persons, fourthly of Tenses, fifthly of the forme of the Verbe . . .¹

This knowledge of, and skill in, the varying of grammatical constructions became part of the tool-kit in the quest, amongst all the available stylistic options, for the perfect verbal realisation of any given thought. In the now little-known *Brevis de copia praeceptio*, first published in 1518, Erasmus writes:

First of all, then, as I said, the subject itself must be set forth in choice and appropriate words. Next, say it in different words, if any are found that convey the same meaning; there are plenty of these. After that, when individual synonyms fail you must use metaphors, provided the metaphor is not an extravagant one. When you run out of these you'll have to shift to passives (if you've been speaking in the active voice). They afford fully as many expressions as the actives provided. Then we'll change the verbs, if you like, either into verbal nouns or participles. Last of all, when we've changed adverbs into nouns, then nouns into various parts of speech, we'll say it in an opposite way: either change affirmative speech into negative or the reverse, or put a positive statement into the form of a question.

(*Collected Works*, Vol. 39, pp. 165-66.)

Then in the *De Copia* itself, under the heading of 'Variety' or '*Enallage*', he writes:

We may have an adjective substituted for a noun or vice versa; for example, *iuxta sententiam Homeri* 'according to Homer's view', *iuxta sententiam Homericam* 'according to the Homeric view'; *vir mire facundus* 'a wonderfully eloquent man', *vir mira facundia* 'a man of wonderful eloquence'; *insignite impudens* 'strikingly impudent', *insignita impudentia* 'of striking impudence'. Or an active verb may be changed into a passive and vice versa: *plurimam habeo gratiam* 'I feel great gratitude', *plurima tibi a me habetur gratia* 'great gratitude is felt by me towards you'; *magna me tenet admiratio* 'great wonder overcomes me', *magna teneor admiratione* 'I am overcome by great wonder. . .

(*Collected Works*, Vol. 24. Book I, Section 13, p. 321.)

In terms of the amount of time spent on each, the Renaissance school curriculum was about equally given over to grammar and rhetoric, but rhetoric had the upper hand in that most

1. In Baldwin, Vol. I, p. 444.

rhetorical instruction came after training in grammar, with the teaching of grammar dominating the lower school and the teaching of rhetoric dominating the upper.¹ As indicated by the above example, where a rhetorical exercise takes up where a grammatical one leaves off, the placing of rhetoric after grammar in terms of the school years allowed a natural, organic progression from the one to the other. Grammar was, and is, a crucial step on the road towards eloquence.

Whilst individual types of variation have occasionally been covered in an *ad hoc* way by modern commentators, the grand unifying idea of the how, whereby content is recast in different ways, a governing concept which brings together all of these different aspects of formal variation, has never been traced up until now, either in relation to the *De Copia* or in relation to the educational system itself; yet it is vital to gain an understanding of the nature, scale, and centrality, of this principle if we wish to gain an appreciation of how rhetorical formalism, and the medium-message dynamic, impacted upon Renaissance literary compositional practice. The fact that the teaching of maxims involved the use of tightly-ordered categories and lists, and the fact that simply leaving everything to the pupil's imagination was not an option within the classicist mind, meant, as we saw a moment ago, that matters of content were never divorced from considerations of form. Another way in which form held sway over content is to be seen in the use of *sententiae* as the raw material upon which verbal skills could be practised, the content being imbibed mainly as a by-product of the rhetorical and grammatical training. In the *De Ratione*, an extensive list of topics, covering everything from the Greek myths to natural history, is prefaced by the following. Once he has taught his pupils some of the grammatical principles, says Erasmus, the schoolmaster should

let the boys be invited to some author as well fitted as possible for that function [of illustrating grammar], and for the custom of speaking and writing. Here he will diligently drill in as they arise precepts already taught and the examples, to

1. Baldwin, Vol. I, p. 167.

which he will also add not a little, as already preparing for greater things. From hence they ought now to be exercised in themes. . . . [L]et them have some witty or delectable *sententia*, but which is not repugnant to the boyish mind, so that while doing something else, at the same time they may learn something which will later be of use in graver studies.¹

Turning from Renaissance education, with its intense focus on verbal rules and structures, to the situation in Britain over the last couple of decades, the contrast is stark. Whereas the educationalists of the sixteenth century could hardly have been more committed to the mastering and ordering of the verbal medium, educationalists over the last twenty or thirty years could hardly have been more committed to the dismantling of the few remaining vestiges of the formalist curriculum. Summing up the present crisis in literacy, and the radically anti-formalist ideology which has brought it about, Phillips writes:

This is all about perceptions of power and privilege and the need to impose the egalitarian nirvana. Literacy divided sheep from goats; such division was unacceptable; therefore literacy must go. Let them watch videos instead. But . . . literacy does *not* divide the population. It enfranchises everyone. . . .

Education has passed into the hands of philistines. From failure to teach infants to read, through to the repudiation of grammar . . . the new illiteracy was blessed by a cowed and enfeebled establishment that no longer believed it had the right to engage its critical faculties except to support the notion that anything goes. . . .

Britain is now de-educating. The whole of the British education system, from infant classes to degree courses, has been corrupted by these ideas.²

Elsewhere, Phillips quotes the educational adviser Peter Traves, who claims that 'As children learn to read, they feel less powerful', and that illiteracy, with its 'potential to liberate', is therefore preferable (p. 180), and Terry Furlong, the person put in charge of drawing up the national curriculum for English teaching during the 1990s, who described proposals to teach the classics of English literature as 'another go at perverting the collective psyche of the nation' (p. 182). According to the influential teacher-training manual *Read With Me* (1985), by Liz Waterland, 'reading cannot be taught in a formal,

1. As this passage derives from a later edition than that used by Knott, I am quoting from the translation provided by Baldwin (Vol. I, pp. 85-86).

2. Pages 96, 120, and 185.

sequenced way', whilst *The Politics of Reading* (1993), by Morag Styles and Mary Jane Drummond, openly recommends an approach to learning which is 'uneven and untidy, individual and unpredictable'.¹ This anti-formalist, primitivist approach² to education has served to bring about the largest peace-time drop in literacy ever recorded,³ and has led to a situation where foreign-language students at Oxford University often cannot understand the difference between an adjective and an adverb;⁴ where someone with three A grades at A-Level can write 'I would of gone';⁵ and where, according to a survey carried out by researchers at Newcastle University, over half of university graduates training to become primary school teachers do not know that 'and' is a conjunction and that 'in' is a preposition.⁶ This same situation led the Department of English Literature at the University of East Anglia to start issuing freshers with a booklet which explains what paragraphs are, and which tells them how to use the various punctuation marks, including the full stop.⁷ A professional writer drafted in to teach writing skills at an unspecified university reported back:

What is worrying . . . is that these young people are students of English literature at an 'élite' university. They ought to have attained, by this stage, a reasonably high level of written proficiency, but . . . they have genuine difficulty in writing a basic English sentence.⁸

If we now turn from literacy within the top academic tier of present-day nineteen- and twenty-year-olds to the education of the average schoolchild during the sixteenth century, we find William Kempe advising that the pupil be made to

1. In *ibid.*, pp. 92 and 95.

2. See Brian Cox in *ibid.*, p. 117.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 75.

4. As reported by an Oxford tutor. *Ibid.*, p. 9.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 102.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 113.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 2.

8. Quoted, without a full attribution, by Hilary Spurling in 'The Writing's on the Wall', *The Sunday Times*, 26th March, 2006, p. 11.

reade over the rudiments of the Latin toong, and then learne by hart the parts of speache with their properties, as the derivation and composition of words: the forming of Nombres, Cases, and Genders, in every declension of Nounes: the forming of diminutives in Substantives, of comparisons in Adjectives: so the forming of Nombres, Persons, Tenses and Moodes, in every Conjugation of all sorts of Verbes: whereof he shall rehearse afterwards some part ordinarily every day, illustrating the same with examples of divers Nounes and Verbes. And so having learned the concordances of speach, made plaine unto him by the examples there added, *and being about eight yeeres old*, let him move foorth into the second fourme . . .¹

In Shakespeare's England, no less than in Cicero's Rome, 'no studies were ever pursued with more earnestness than those tending to the acquisition of eloquence' (*De Oratore*, I.IV).

As well as learning how to transpose content from one grammatical form to another, as outlined in the *De Copia* Book I Section 13 passage (quoted on p. 65), pupils also became adept at shaping and reshaping material by using the rhetorical figures. Drawing on the great classical texts, most noticeably the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* and Quintilian's *Institutio Oratoria*, the Renaissance curriculum gave pupils a thorough grounding in the rhetorical schemes and figures.² The vast scope of figural rhetoric was mentioned in Chapter Two in relation to the Romans, but it is worth reiterating in connection with the Renaissance; and whilst it is impossible to convey here a proper idea of the precision and range of these devices, the following, which is a sample drawn from Richard Lanham's *A Handlist of Rhetorical Terms* (1991) (pp. 182-95), consisting of less than a tenth of those entries beginning with the letter 'a', gives a brief glimpse of how this amazing system worked in sixteenth-century England:

adianoeta: an expression that has an obvious meaning and an unsuspected secret one beneath.

alloiosis: breaking down a subject into alternatives.

anadiplosis: repetition of the last word of one line or clause to begin the next.

1. In Baldwin, Vol. I, pp. 443-44. (My italics.)

2. See *ibid.*, p. 446.

anantapodoton: omission of a correlative clause from a sentence.

antimetabole: inverting the order of repeated words.

antiptosis: substitution of one case for another.

antistasis: repetition of a word in a different or contrary sense.

aphaeresis: omitting a syllable from the beginning of a word.

apophasis: pretending to deny what is really affirmed.

asteismus: facetious or mocking answer that plays on a word.

auxesis: words or clauses placed in climactic order.

In addition to being an extraordinarily powerful science in its own right, rhetoric also performed a linking function between its fellow arts in the *trivium*. As the above list shows, the rhetorical terms incorporate aspects of both grammar (*antiptosis*) and logic or dialectic (*alloiosis*). This range means that the scope of rhetoric as a single, but also remarkably eclectic, art of the how of expression is almost boundless. The intensity of the school system meant that, as with translation between languages, and as with syntax and grammar, pupils became adept at using this massive figural and schematic system to craft the expressive medium into the most effective possible form. The figures, in common with syntax and the rest, exist independently of subject-matter. Their application will, in line with the key rhetorical idea of decorum, have been made with due regard to the thematic context, but they exist as forms in their own right, and were taught and mastered as such, much as a musician will learn scales and technical skills as an activity which is preparatory to, but distinct from, that of performance. Even if it had involved nothing but the figures and schemes, rhetoric would have been an astonishing cultural phenomenon.

Another crucially important facet of the medium-centred formulation and reformulation system was that of prosody. Just as pupils were drilled in how to transpose content from one language to another, from one syntactical permutation to another, from one genre to another, and from one grammatical and/or figural form to another, so they learnt to remould the material of language in or out of verse, or else from one metrical form to another. They should, says Erasmus,

be regularly instructed to turn verse into prose and at different times to put prose into verse. . . . They should express, again and again, the same proposition in different words and styles. Sometimes they should vary the expression of the same proposition in Greek and Latin, in verse and prose. Sometimes they should recast the same proposition in five or six kinds of metre which the teacher has prescribed. Sometimes they should recast the same proposition in as many forms and figures as possible.

(*De Ratione Studii*, p. 679.)

In the opening chapters, we looked at the close link between rhetoric and literary composition, especially from Demetrius onwards, and the relationship between the two continued to be so close during the sixteenth century that the whole of Renaissance literature could fairly be called a branch of rhetoric. As well as learning about the figures and other formal matters in isolation, pupils were put to 'learning and handling good authors' and taught to 'observe in authors all the use of the Artes',¹ and 'then, through imitation, the boy was to learn to use these devices in his own work'.² That is, the white light of a finished literary work was passed through the analytical prism of rhetoric, splitting apart its constituent elements. These how-based components - syntactical patterns, grammatical schemes, and so on - were then mastered by the pupil, before eventually being unified once more in a new literary composition. The curriculum at Canterbury (Marlowe's school), as recorded in a statute of 1541, summarises much of what we have discussed so far, and shows how, as the school years progressed, the multifarious strands of training in the verbal medium coalesced to form a vast, unified rhetoricist system which encompassed all aspects of the how of expression, and which had at its centre the Demetrian and Dionysian principle of reshaping the verbal form. The document describes the grammatical instruction given during years one to three, and then continues:

In the Fourth Form the boys shall be taught to know the Latin syntax readily; and shall be practised in the stories of poets, and familiar letters of learned men and the like.

In the Fifth Form they shall commit to memory [in Latin] the Figures of . . .

1. Thomas Kempe in Baldwin, Vol. II, p. 1.

2. Baldwin in *ibid.*, loc. cit..

Oratory and the rules for making verses; and at the same time shall be practised in making verses and polishing themes; then they shall be versed in translating the chastest Poets and the best Historians.

Lastly, in the Sixth Form they shall be instructed in the formulas of 'Copiousness of Words and Things' written by Erasmus; and learn to make varyings of speech in every mood, so that they may acquire the faculty of speaking Latin

The Head Master . . . shall come into school by 7 o'clock to perform his duty of teaching thoroughly. He too every other day shall make some English sentence into Latin and teach the flock committed to him to change it into many forms.¹

Used as the culmination point of a pupil's training in the transposition of content 'into many forms', the *De Copia* has special importance for our inquiry into the nature, and position, of the medium of language-use within Renaissance literary culture. An appreciation of its pedagogic methodology is essential if we are to get to grips not only with rhetoric but also with the model of word-use which underlies it, wherein language is a malleable, quasi-material entity: a concept which we saw at work in the classical texts, and especially in those of the Greeks, and which returned in force under Erasmus. We shall now examine the *De Copia* in greater detail, before concluding our analyses of classical and Renaissance rhetoric with a look at those aspects of the formal medium which go beyond the *trivium*.

As the most illustrious rhetorician and educationalist of the Renaissance, Erasmus was the key player in the formation of the new school system, both in broad terms, by promoting the rise of humanism during the first two decades of the sixteenth-century,² and in highly specific terms, by helping to devise the new curriculum. His *De Duplici Copia Verborum ac Rerum*, commonly known as the *De Copia*, was first published in 1512, and was dedicated to St. Paul's school, which had recently been re-founded by his friend Dean John Colet. Thereafter, it became a crucially important part of the humanist school curriculum throughout both England and Europe. The *De Ratione Studii* was produced at about the same time (1511), and as part of the same educational mission,³ but it is the *De Copia*

1. In Baldwin, Vol. I, p. 165.

2. See Woodward, 1906, pp. 106-109.

3. Ibid., p. 109. Also Craig R. Thompson in Erasmus, Vol. 24, p. 280.

which holds first place, not only amongst the works of Erasmus, but also amongst all the rhetorical works produced during the Renaissance. It was so instantly popular that from 1512 onwards it was reprinted at least twice each year until the end of the sixteenth century, often in editions produced by up to three different presses.¹ Betty I. Knott sums up the situation:

On its first publication the work was received with great acclaim, not only in England but on the Continent. . . . Already in 1516 John Watson writes to Erasmus reporting his experiences in Italy: 'You are famous everywhere in Italy, especially among the leading scholars. It is incredible with what enthusiasm they welcome everywhere your *Copia*'. . . .

De Copia was before long adopted as a textbook of rhetoric in schools and universities throughout northern Europe; so widespread did its use become that it was worth pirating, summarizing, excerpting, turning into a question-and-answer manual, and making the subject of commentaries. Editions, both authorized and unauthorized, of the work in its various forms poured from the presses of Germany, the Netherlands, and Paris.²

The aim of the work is to equip the student with the ability to adopt any style:

The purpose of these instructions is . . . to give you the choice, once you understand the principles, of emulating the laconic style if you so fancy, or of imitating the exuberance of Asianism, or of expressing yourself in the intermediate style of Rhodes.

(Section 6. This passage echoes Cicero, *Orator*, xxi.70, and Quintilian X.II.21-26.)

Erasmus particularly hopes that his training régime will enable us to write in the 'abundant' style:

The speech of man is a magnificent and impressive thing when it surges along like a golden river, with thoughts and words pouring out in rich abundance. . . . Such considerations have induced me to put forward some ideas on *copia*, the abundant style, myself, treating its two aspects of content and expression, and giving some examples and patterns.

(Opening of Section 1)

Early in the *De Copia*, Erasmus recommends that those who are studying the art of

1. J.K. Sowards, 'Erasmus and the Apologetic Textbook: A Study of the *De Duplici Copia Verborum ac Rerum*', *Studies in Philology*, 55 (1958), 122-135, pp. 123-24.

2. In Erasmus, Vol. 24, pp. 282-83.

eloquence should learn how to 'turn one idea into more shapes than Proteus himself is supposed to have turned into'. They should

frequently take a group of sentences and deliberately set out to express each of them in as many versions as possible, as Quintilian advises. They should, to use the analogy of a piece of wax, be moulded into one shape after another. . . . It will be of enormous value to take apart the fabric of poetry and reweave it into prose, and, vice versa, to bind the freer language of prose under the rules of metre . . .

(Section 9)¹

Given that Erasmus cites Quintilian just before he uses the wax image, and given that he credits the *Institutio Oratoria* as being the main forerunner of the *De Copia*, even to the point of suggesting that his own work is a supplement to Quintilian (Section 2), it is all too easy to assume that he is simply alluding to an incidental aside contained within a single source. This assumption appears to have been made by Betty I. Knott, for example, in the commentary to her translation of the work, where her footnote for the above passage refers only to Quintilian. In fact, as we saw in the first two chapters, the wax analogy and similar explanatory images are a recurrent feature of the classical texts. Further, Dionysius draws a striking analogy between composition and Homer's Athene (whom Erasmus swaps for Proteus) in order to illustrate the nature and importance of formal malleability (Part 4). The reshaping of phrases which Erasmus describes in the above passage is the cornerstone of his teaching method throughout the first book, where he takes us through various techniques for generating synonymous phrases. It is this same protean take on the shaping and reshaping of verbal form which was to underpin the instruction in the 1541 statute of Canterbury school that the master shall make the pupils transform a phrase 'into many forms',² and the recommendation by William Kempe that a speech should be changed 'into another like sentence, but altered with many varieties'.³ Although the expansion of the rewriting principle into an entire school of stylistic training was his own innovation - the

1. As there are some inaccuracies in the Knott translation, I have adapted it slightly.

2. In Baldwin, Vol. I, p. 165; and see present chapter, p. 72.

3. In Baldwin, *op. cit.*, p. 444.

closest we get to a glimpse of this in the ancient world is the claim in the *Institutio Oratoria* that 'Sulpicius is said to have practised no other form of exercise' but paraphrasing (X.V.4) - by basing his synonymic methodology upon the materialist, plastic model of verbal form which was so central to the ancient writers, Erasmus places his work at the very heart of the great rhetorical tradition.

Important as the same-message-different-medium principle was during the classical period, it was generally used as an explicatory supplement to the main business in hand, which was to give an account of the figures, and of other aspects of rhetoric. However, with those works now written, and, with the exception of Longinus, available, and with much of the job of learning the grammatical and rhetorical forms already completed by the time the pupil reaches, at or near the end of the curriculum, the *De Copia*,¹ Erasmus is free to develop the reformulation idea further. Whilst the classical rhetoricians had primarily used rephrasing in order to demonstrate the effects of embodying the same what within a how other than that chosen by the original speaker or author, Erasmus instead takes everything back a step, to the point where that verbal choice has not yet been made. The task which he has set himself is the mammoth one of enabling us to have available a full range of phrasing options for the expression of absolutely anything. He does not, needless to say, try to write out every possible phrase for every possible situation; but he does the next best thing, which is to give us the verbal wherewithal for generating countless possible phrasing options for whichever situation arises. Just as *inventio* is not about generation *ex nihilo*, but rather about the selection of already-existent material in the worlds of matter or of thought, so the next two stages in the compositional process, *dispositio* and *elocutio*, are not about grabbing hold of the first verbal form which pops into our heads as if out of nowhere (as Quintilian says at X.III.5 and X.I.13), but instead about having before us, and then selecting appropriately from, a huge array of possible formal vehicles for conveying any given message. This process of rejecting all but one of the possible phrasings, leaving

1. See, for example, Sister Miriam Joseph, *Shakespeare's Use of the Arts of Language* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1947), p. 9.

behind only the most desirable form, may be likened to the famous sealed-figure concept set out by Alberti and Michelangelo, whereby one removes 'that which is superfluous in a given material, sculpting and making a form appear in the marble, or a man's figure which was hidden there from the first and *in potenza*' (Alberti, *De Statua*, c.1464).¹ Demetrius (*On Style*, e.g. IV. 213-14) and Longinus (*On the Sublime*, e.g. 3.2) had roundly tackled the utilitarians and proto-romanticists who would denigrate form, and in the opening lines of the *De Ratione*, Erasmus likewise speaks of the 'false economy' of those who focus on the message to the exclusion of the medium. In the *De Copia* he confronts the just-the-gist school of thought with a statement which is, today, more pertinent than ever:

. . . a great mistake is made by those who consider that it makes no difference how anything is expressed, provided it can be understood somehow or other.
(Section 10)²

In *The Praise of Eloquence* (1523), Philip Melanchthon similarly argues against those who 'do not think it matters whether they use any particular kind of language, provided that they explain their subject'.³ Setting himself against the anti-formalists - that is, those who would deny that one should privilege one stylistic medium over others which carry the same semantic kernel - Erasmus hopes to enable us to express ourselves in the most effective way we can by making sure that we have access to as wide a range of verbal options as possible. As Richard Waswo observes, 'Style ultimately depends on one's awareness of available alternatives'.⁴ After the introduction, and a brief consideration of some general points to do with language, the first book of the *De Copia* - which comprises more than three-quarters of the total work - launches into its job as a practical training manual on the art of eloquence. The simplest way to expand one's number of potential phrasing options,

1. Trans. Bartoli, and quoted in R.J. Clements, *Michelangelo's Theory of Art* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1963), p. 22.

2. Page references will be added for citations from within longer sections.

3. In Rebhorn, ed., p. 100.

4. *The Fatal Mirror* (Charlottesville, Virginia: University Press of Virginia, 1972), p. 76.

Erasmus begins, is simply to have pairs or groups of straightforward synonyms readily to hand. So, for instance, one can say either *ensis* or *gladius*, both of which mean 'sword'. Then, over the next forty pages, he elaborates on ways in which we can increase our number of synonymic alternatives, going, one by one, through different formal categories, such as the creation of compound words (Section 11, p. 311), the use of foreign loan-words (Section 11, p. 314), or the employment of terms which have a metaphoric relationship to the concept in question (for example, using 'hear' for 'obey') (Section 16). These methods include grammatical modes of variation, for instance the twin options *dono te libro* ('I present you with a book') and *dono tibi librum* ('I present a book to you'), with their subtle differences of nuance (Section 13, p. 326). (It is interesting to note that he left his mark on grammar teaching by contributing to Lyly's grammatical handbook, a work which was, like the *De Copia*, commissioned by Dean Colet for St. Paul's, and which was to become the standard school grammar for well over two hundred years.)¹ This synthesis of different formal categories into a single, but multi-faceted, system for varying the medium of expression overlaps with, and provides a culmination point for, the how-based verbal supersystem which we have seen at work in the curriculum of the *trivium*, with its breathtakingly thorough drilling in the interlocking arts of rhetorical and grammatical reconfiguration. After the initial accounts of some of 'the various forms that can be employed to change the expression while the underlying meaning stays the same' (Section 32), comes the best-known part of the work, where he justifies his earlier claim that we should be able to take a phrase and 'vary it in two or three hundred ways with no trouble at all' (Section 9) by giving us a demonstration of exactly that. He takes the wide variety of methods which he has outlined up to this point, and brings them to bear on a single short statement, viz.: 'Your letter pleased me mightily' (*Tuae literae me magnopere delectarunt*) (start of Section 33). Beginning with this core sentence, he sets out to test 'how far we can go in transforming the basic expression into a protean variety of shapes', and this results

1. Martindale in Martindale, ed., p. 23.

in a list running to one hundred and fortyseven rephrasings of the initial line, which includes versions such as 'I found singular pleasure in your letter' (*Epistola tua sum unice delectatus*) and 'Wonderful to relate how your letter entranced me' (*Delectarunt miri in modum tuae me literae*) (both p. 351). As if this were not enough to prove his point, he then, in the same section, takes the phrase 'Always, as long as I live, I shall remember you' (*semper dum vivam tui meminero*), which is 'not of itself particularly fertile or suggestive, so that it may be all the more apparent how effective this technique of substitution can be' (p. 354), and gives us no fewer than two hundred different formulations. Along the way, the reader is able to 'recognize the different types of variation from the examples given earlier' (p. 355). Finally, he writes:

But let us make an end, as it is not our purpose to demonstrate how far we ourselves can go in inventing alternatives, but to show students by actual example the value of this exercise for the development of wealth of expression . . .
(p. 364)

The two main aims behind this exercise, then, are to illustrate the formal procedures which he had outlined earlier on, and to impress upon the reader, by sheer weight of numbers, the effectiveness of this method in expanding one's range of expressive options. From here through to the end of Book I - which, in the Betty I. Knott translation, runs to two hundred and five pages - Erasmus returns to the same instructional method which led up to the 'Your letter' and 'Always' sections, going through a large number of variation categories, and listing examples for each. So, for instance, in Section 46, 'Varying the expression of the superlative', the list of illustrative sentences includes:

praeter omnes te diligit: he loves you above all.

supra cunctos tuae gloriae favet: beyond all he supports your advancement.

ante omnia rei studendum: before all else we must put our minds to the business.
(p. 383)

As the above lines show, the synonymous relationship between the lines in the list need not apply to the whole phrase, but can focus instead on just the relevant units within the clause,

which in this particular case means the 'expression of the superlative' collocations 'praeter omnes', 'supra cunctos', and 'ante omnia'. These categories are often broken down into sub-types, and the lists are sometimes interspersed with comments on usage. The same spirit of rigorous, materialist analytical sophistication which sprang up in ancient Greece, and which typified the leading rhetoricians of the classical age, informs the entire work, and, in the light of a training régime such as this, it is small wonder that the Renaissance schoolroom bred a race of giants. Yet the basic principle which underlies all of these sections is simple and unchanging. Erasmus takes us through these synonym-based lists, and encourages us to form our own ('readers can invent similar phrases for themselves', Section 33, p. 365), because through gaining a familiarity with, and mastery over, modes of formal variation, we can develop our ability to formulate phrasing options, and thus become more eloquent.

Book II, on the elaboration and enrichment of subject-matter, has an equally straightforward methodology. First, we are told to 'take something that can be expressed in brief and general terms, and expand it and separate it into its constituent parts' (Method 1). Erasmus himself then expands on the topic of expansion, with a long list of elaboration types, such as Method 2, the giving of details about preceding events, Method 5, the introduction of vivid passages of description, Method 6, 'digressing from the strict arrangement of the material', Method 11, 'the accumulation of proofs and arguments', and so on, all of which are geared, like the methods given in Book I, to the development of our expressive powers. Such is the sweep, clarity, and usefulness of the complete work, that one can instantly see why it attracted such a phenomenal degree of admiration within a culture which was driven by the ideals of rhetorical eloquence. It represents the best of the Renaissance spirit, in that it both incorporates and goes beyond classical precedents, breaking new ground with its extension of the paraphrase idea into a full-scale method of instruction, whilst at the same time remaining entirely loyal to the core principle of classical rhetoric: an objective and exhaustive focus on the how of expression, founded upon a technical and materialist conceptualisation of verbal form. The *De Copia* was, and is, a

masterpiece, and as deserving of reverence as the classical texts themselves. It was also destined to be the last of the great works on rhetoric.

Our examinations of the Renaissance curriculum and of the *De Copia* show that rhetoric in the sixteenth century constitutes a supersystem which, by combining a whole host of verbal transposition methods, ranging from large-scale grammatical modes of variation to subtle differences of vocabulary and nuance, covers the entire diapason of possible verbal media for any given message. It does not seem to have been noticed before that these different kinds of variation form a unified, integrated scheme - Marion Trousdale has perhaps come the closest, with a brief mention of the similarity between the transpositions in the *De Copia* and those found in generative grammar¹ - but it is important, if one is to understand the full force and nature of rhetorical formalism within Renaissance literary culture, to recognise the extent to which these many different strands of formal variation ultimately link up into a single, multi-faceted art of eloquence, based around the central, governing principle of shaping and reshaping the medium. Grammar, prosody, and the rest, were not desultory phenomena, as they would be if they were taught now, but interlocking and complementary outcomes of a unified formalist *modus operandi* which underpinned and linked together every possible aspect of language-use. The various aspects of this formalist scheme are always, and necessarily, interwoven. It is not possible to master the symmetries of the rhetorical figures without knowing about grammar, or to become adept at the handling of metre and verse patterns without understanding syntax, and so on. Yet this set of inextricably-linked formal principles was rendered yet more cohesive by the training régimes themselves. The *De Copia*, in particular, demands the ability to apply, simultaneously and in a unified way, many different types of formal expertise, as seen, for example, in the 'Your letter' and 'Always' lists. The amount of ground covered during the course of the Renaissance training in eloquence is quite staggering, combining (as had Quintilian) the technical spirit of the early Greeks with the

1. *Shakespeare and the Rhetoricians* (London: Scolar Press, 1982), p. 52.

epic proportions of Cicero. Given this, and given its incorporation and interlinking of so many semi-autonomous formalist systems, rhetorical-grammatical education in the sixteenth century is more than deserving of the appellation 'supersystem'. However, this supersystem is in its turn part of a still larger formalist system, one which includes, but goes beyond, the *trivium*. Space does not allow us to explore this wider picture in detail - a full account of the medium of language-use during the Renaissance would require, at the very least, a monograph-length study of its own - but it is still possible to sketch out two ways in which our model of Renaissance rhetoricist culture could usefully be expanded. These sketches will enable us to get closer to a comprehensive understanding of the medium during the sixteenth century, and will point the way ahead to possible future study in this vast, important, but grossly neglected, field.

One area which would merit inclusion within a full-scale topography is that of the English language, or vernacular, and its rising status, relative to Greek and Latin, during the course of the sixteenth century. (Paradoxically, the rise of 'the' vernacular, which is ostensibly a nationalist, Anglocentric, trend, was in fact a Europe-wide phenomenon.)¹ The definitive work on the ascent of the English vernacular remains *The Triumph of the English Language* (1953) by R.F. Jones.² There are striking correlations between the patterns which we have observed during our discussions regarding language-use and the patterns which Jones describes during his account of the rise of English. We have noted, for instance, the ways in which classical rhetoricians set themselves up in opposition to the proto-romanticist, just-the-gist school of thought, whereby words are treated in a similar way to modern fast-food packaging: that is, necessary as a means of (semantic) transmission, but without any value beyond this lowly utilitarian function. We have seen how a key feature of the rhetorical formalist tradition, from the Platonic, Aristotelian and Theophrastean period through to Erasmus, is that language and language-use are treated as

1. Regarding the rise of vernaculars other than English, see Sister Miriam Joseph, p. 8; Hightet, p. 275; and G. Castor, *Pléiade Poetics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1964), p. 8.

2. (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press.)

phenomena which are, independently of their semantic freight, worthy of study and respect in their own right. According to Jones, it is precisely this mode of thought which acted as the mainspring for the rise of the vernacular:

Writers came to view the native speech as the most valuable possession of the English people, and as an end in itself rather than as a means to an end. It was not viewed merely as a [vehicle for] literary conceptions; its refinement furnished an objective for literary activity. To serve the mother tongue was proposed as one motive in writing as early as Spenser and as late as Milton. Although there was a nationalistic element in this linguistic pride, and although the latter was found in more countries than England, an authentic source of it lay in the literal discovery by the Elizabethans that the vernacular could be used rhetorically, a discovery which raised the language to a higher plane than it had ever enjoyed and which gave it an identity independent of its use.

(p. 212)

It would be hard to think of a description of language which would more neatly dovetail with the ideas which we have covered during the course of these three chapters. Nor is the affinity between rhetoric and the history of the vernacular restricted to the last quarter of the sixteenth century. The teaching of the classical languages instilled not only a high level of verbal skill but also an intense consciousness and self-consciousness regarding the expressive medium.¹ Within our own culture, which almost exclusively employs the vernacular, there is far less awareness of the word. Even before the vernacular attained its triumph, the rivalry between English and the other languages had had the effect of foregrounding the means of expression. The English language was not simply background noise, rendered inaudible through habituation, but a live and fiercely-debated issue.² Jones notes the existence of various bridges between rhetoric and the vernacular, pointing out that stylistic training made people 'acutely conscious of their linguistic medium' (pp. 29-30); that rhetorical eloquence served to refine and energise the vernacular, thus raising its status in relation to the classical languages, which had always tended to dominate the world

1. See Richard Waswo, *Language and Meaning in the Renaissance* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), p. 135.

2. For full details of these debates, see Jones again, for example pp. 5-18 and 168-92. Also Charles Barber, *Early Modern English* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1976), pp. 53-70; and Robert Burchfield, *The English Language* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), p. 81.

of eloquence (see, for example, p. 173);¹ and that rhetorical handbooks increasingly made use of illustrations drawn from vernacular literature.² However, Jones does not explore the interaction between these two fields at any length. It is also worth pointing out that historians of rhetoric and historians of language-change have not often acknowledged the extent to which their disciplines overlap. As well as sharing the same ultimate foundation - a close attention to words and their uses - the two areas are also confluent in many of their practical details, sometimes using alternative names for the same things. For instance, historical linguists use the phrase 'zero morpheme derivation', or else 'conversion', to describe the process whereby a word is coined via an alteration of grammatical status, without any change in word-form (for example, 'gossip' as a noun gave rise to 'gossip' as a verb in 1590).³ A rhetorician, on the other hand, would probably see this process as a version of *catachresis* or *anthimeria*. Again, what linguists call 'affixation' would come under the general heading of *metaplasma*; and suffixation, easily the main source of new vocabulary in Early Modern English,⁴ must have come easily to those who had been drilled in the rhetorical art of *polyptoton*.⁵ Given that the rhetorical system and the rise of the vernacular are both such titanic forces within Renaissance verbal culture, and given the high degree of compatibility between the summary of attitudes to the vernacular as set out in the above quotation from Jones and the features which we have found at work within the classical rhetorical tradition, it is safe to say that a full investigation of the relationship between the two would prove highly productive, and one hopes that this gap in research will be filled before too long.

Another way of expanding our understanding of the rhetoricist (and grammatical) culture of the Renaissance would be to examine the interplay between verbal formalism and

1. See also Barber, *op.cit.*, pp. 70-79.

2. See, for example, Richard Stanyhurst and George Puttenham in Smith, ed., Vol. I, p. 137, and Vol. II, pp. 62-63, respectively. For critical discussion about this area, see Hight, p. 110, and Barber, 1976, p. 71.

3. Little, Fowler, and Coulson, Vol. I, p. 873.

4. Barber, *op. cit.*, p. 221.

5. For definitions of all these rhetorical terms, see Lanham.

numerical, geometrical, or Pythagorean, formalism. Apparently inherited from the Ancient Egyptians,¹ geometry, including sacred geometry, lay at the heart of much Greek learning, including philosophy and theology,² and it went on to have a profound effect on artistic theory and practice. The key principle of the Pythagorean geometrical cosmology is that 'All is Number'.³ This means, in the words of Heninger, that all things are 'interrelated in a vast network determined by the numbers/forms/ideas residing in the mind of deity',⁴ and that one can gain a true understanding of the universe and its constituent elements, from music to biology, only through a knowledge of Number and Form, including a knowledge of geometrical and mathematical phenomena such as the Fibonacci series and, related to this, the Golden Section. As the great twentieth-century Pythagorean geometrician Ricky Foulkes states:

Number, like pattern, is one of the fundamental conditions of existence. The Pythagoreans held that the Cosmos was ultimately intelligible in terms of number. . . . Well might Plato have placed, over the door to his Academy, the warning 'Let none ignorant of geometry enter here', for without the aid of geometry any attempt to unravel the secrets of the Universe would prove quite futile.⁵

Elsewhere, Foulkes applies the Pythagorean method to the world of nature. Discussing the *phi* ratio (1:1.618...), which is the figure of logarithmic progression towards which the Fibonacci numbers increasingly approximate as the series progresses, he writes:

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1. See Nigel Pennick, *Sacred Geometry* (Wellingborough: Turnstone Press, 1980), Chapter Four; and Cornelius Lanczos, *Space Through the Ages: The Evolution of Geometrical Ideas from Pythagoras to Hilbert and Einstein* (London: Academic Press, 1970), p. 11.
 2. Lanczos, p. 26.
 3. See Rudolf Wittkower, *Architectural Principles in the Age of Humanism*, fifth edition (Chichester, West Sussex: Academy Editions, 1998), p. 38.
 4. S.K. Heninger, Jr., *The Subtext of Form in the English Renaissance* (University Park, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994), p. 45.
 5. 'The Pyramid: A Universal Healing Pattern' (Part III), *The Radionics Journal*, 25:4 (1979), 8-12, p. 10.

Based on the *phi* ratio . . . the logarithmic spiral corresponds precisely with the biological principle that governs the growth of the mollusc's shell. The ancient Egyptians not only employed this ratio in the construction of the Great Pyramid at Giza, but it also figures prominently in their art and sculpture. . . .

Plants show an extraordinary predilection for numbers of the Fibonacci series. Equiangular spirals are formed by the tiny florets in the cores of daisy blossoms. The eye sees these spirals as two distinct sets, radiating clockwise and anti-clockwise, exhibiting adjacent numbers of the Fibonacci series. . . . Comparable arrangements of opposing spirals are found in the pine cone, 5 and 8, and in the pineapple, 8 and 13.¹

When asked by one of his pupils what God did, Plato is said to have replied, 'God always geometrizes';² and in the *Timaeus*, the most important of the Pythagorean texts to survive into the Renaissance, Plato explores this set of ideas both in broad, cosmic terms (e.g. the discussion of eternity at 37d) and in highly specific mathematical and geometrical terms (e.g. the account of triangles and planes at 54d-55c).³ It is hardly surprising that an intellectual tradition which is so much given over to formalism in its theology and science should also show a strong formalist bent within the world of verbal art. In addition to bolstering artistic formalism in a fairly general way, by exalting Form and Number, the *Timaeus* also had implications for art in far more specific terms, through the twinned concepts of aesthetic or spiritual engagement and the formal (and sometimes magical) correspondence between microcosm and macrocosm. Plato writes:

Harmony, possessing motions allied to the revolutions of our soul . . . was given us by the Muses for the purpose of reducing the dissonant circulation of the soul to an order and symphony accommodated to its nature. Rhythm too was bestowed on us for this purpose; that we might properly harmonize that habit in our nature, which for the most part is void of measure, indigent of the Graces.

(*Timaeus*, 47d-e; and see Longinus, 39.3 and 36.1.)

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1. 'The Pyramid: A Universal Healing Pattern' (Part II), *The Radionics Journal*, 25:3 (1979), 11-14, p. 12.
 2. See Lanczos, p. 21; and Ernst Robert Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, trans. from the German by Willard R. Trask (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1953), p. 544.
 3. Foulkes, likewise, combines the spiritual with the scientific, most notably in his unpublished book-length study of gematria. For further details, please see the bibliography.

These ideas resurfaced in the Renaissance intact, and took on a level of importance which rivalled that which they had held within classical culture:

In Raphael's time the Pythagoreo-Platonic tradition was hardly less important than the truth of revealed religion. In fact, the philosophical work of the Renaissance was focused on the attempt to reconcile Plato and Christianity. One tried to interpret the great harmony created by God in terms of Platonic numerical order. Artists were convinced that their work should echo this universal harmony. If not, it was discordant and out of tune with universal principles.¹

Pythagoreanism exerted a powerful influence on all of the arts. In particular, Pythagorean geometry was probably the single most important element within classical architectural theory, as set out in the work of the great first century B.C. Roman, Vitruvius,² and in that of his illustrious Renaissance successor, Alberti.³ Wylie Sypher writes memorably of *quattrocento* architecture that:

In these churches, so luminously planned, Christ is no longer the suffering mediaeval man who is crucified but a Pythagorean creative principle, Christ Pantocrator, a Logos-God whose divinity is expressed by symmetries.⁴

Pythagoreanism similarly lent itself to the arts of dancing⁵ and music,⁶ and also to the visual arts. According to Wittkower, 'Nobody expressed his belief in the efficacy of harmonic ratios behind all visual phenomena with more conviction than Leonardo',⁷ and Leonardo himself asks: 'Do you not know that our soul is composed of harmony?'.⁸ This same set of formalist ideas plays a crucial rôle in English Renaissance literature. It

1. Wittkower, p. 154.

2. See Pennick, Chapter Seven.

3. Ibid., Chapter Eleven; and Wittkower, e.g. pp. 18-19, 31, 50, and 109.

4. Wylie Sypher, *Four Stages of Renaissance Style* (New York: Doubleday, 1955), p. 63.

5. See, for example, Woodward, 1906, pp. 292-93.

6. For a discussion regarding Pythagorean music theory, including its influence on Boethius, see Wittkower, p. 109.

7. Ibid., pp. 113-14. See also Forrest G. Robinson, *The Shape of Things Known* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1972), p. 82.

8. *Paragone: A Comparison of the Arts by Leonardo da Vinci* (London, New York, and Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1949), p. 68.

goes beyond the scope of the present study to explore this area, and in particular the relationship between verbal and non-verbal types of formalism, in any detail, but it is worth quoting some general remarks by Heninger, who is perhaps the most wide-ranging and incisive critic to have written on Pythagorean formalism within Renaissance literature. As with the comments by Jones on the vernacular, Heninger's account of Pythagorean poetics could almost have been tailor-made to complement the foregoing rhetoricist examination of the medium:

As an aesthetic imperative, in order to make his artefact artistically acceptable, the poet must endow his poem with proportion and harmony, the mathematical display of cosmic perfection. . . . In such a poem, content is merely ancillary to form. . . . The experience of reading, then, involves apprehension of the subject matter only as a means of comprehending the proportion and harmony that reveal the form.¹

Heninger primarily has in mind Spenserian poetry, the Pythagorean aspects of which have been extensively analysed by, respectively, Allen Kent Hiatt² and Alastair Fowler.³

Elsewhere, Heninger writes:

In Spenser's poetics . . . the macrocosm is the object of imitation, which is imaged forth in some cosmic form; and it is this form that becomes the poet's chief vehicle of expression. Poetic meaning is conveyed primarily through form rather than subject matter. . . . He implements this poetics in poem after poem.⁴

As well as informing the compositional practice of an obvious Pythagorean such as Spenser, the Renaissance investment in Number and geometrical forms underlies the whole of Early Modern poetics in the sense that it helps to account for the astonishing degree of attention which was paid to prosody. Cicero had spoken of the 'harmonious numbers' of

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1. In Gary F. Waller and Michael D. Moore, eds., *Sir Philip Sidney and the Interpretation of Renaissance Culture: The Poet in His Time and Ours: A Collection of Critical and Scholarly Essays* (London: Croom Helm; Totowa, New Jersey: Barnes & Noble, 1984), p. 5.
 2. *Short Time's Endless Monument* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1960).
 3. *Spenser and the Numbers of Time* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1964); and *Triumphal Forms* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970).
 4. *Sidney and Spenser: The Poet as Maker* (University Park, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1989), p. 324.

prosody in the *De Oratore*, e.g. III. XLIV-XLV and LII, and works such as George Puttenham's *The Arte of English Poesie* (1589) go into immense detail regarding all aspects of the structural medium, such as rhyme schemes, types of pattern poetry, and so on, with scarcely a nod being given to the semantic content. (Castor makes this same point in relation to late sixteenth-century French verse, observing that 'a great deal of attention is being paid to the outward form of poetry and, apart from a few brief recommendations as to which topics should be dealt with in short-lined stanza-forms and which in long-lined stanzas, very little attention is given to the content'.)¹ And then, of course, there is the almost ubiquitous presence of the iambic line, its da-DUM da-DUM rhythm beating like a heart at the centre of Renaissance verse. That the Elizabethans, especially, were 'concerned before everything with practical matters of form'² is a function of the ultimate indebtedness of the Renaissance to the early Greeks. Sir Philip Sidney is working within the Greek tradition not only when he makes his overtly Pythagorean reference to 'the planet-like music of poetry' (*The Defence Of Poesy*, l. 1534) but also when he writes his highly technical *Nota* on vowels and diphthongs in the *First Eclogues* of the *Old Arcadia*. The idea of Number was an essential component of the actual definition of what constituted eloquence, as seen in Samuel Daniel's *A Defence of Ryme* (1603), which speaks of 'true number, measure, eloquence, and the perfection of speech' (p. 135), thus fusing the ideals of rhetoric with the statement in the apocryphal but influential *Wisdom of Solomon* that God 'ordered all things by measure and number and weight' (11.20).³ It also helped to define what constituted poetry, as seen in Sir Thomas Campion's *On English Verse* (1602):

I will first generally handle the nature of Numbers. . . . When we speake of a Poeme written in number, we consider not only the distinct number of the sillables, but also their value, which is contained in the length or shortnes of their sound. . . . The world is made by Simmetry and proportion, and is in

1. Pages 14-15.

2. Smith in Smith, ed., Vol. I, p. lxxiii.

3. See John MacQueen, *Numerology* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1985), p. 113.

that respect compared to Musick, and Musick to Poetry.¹

Moreover, 1588 saw the first recorded use of 'numbers' as an actual synonym for 'verses'.²

William Webbe, in his *Discourse of English Poetrie* of 1586, makes almost the same point as Campion, but in terms which are even closer to the medium/message themes of our rhetorical study. Poetry is, he says, best defined as being

any worke [which] is learnedly compiled in measurable speeche, and framed in wordes contayning number or proportion of just syllables, delighting the readers or hearers as well by the apt and decent framing of words in equall resemblance of quantity, commonly called verse, as by the skylfull handling of the matter whereof it is intreated.³

Heated disputes such as the hexameter controversy,⁴ and the three-way battle between Campion, Daniel and Jonson over the issue of rhyme,⁵ raged between eminent literary figures regarding the relative status of different components of poetic form. Once again, all of this dovetails with the rhetorical and grammatical focus on the medium of writing which so dominated sixteenth-century education. Rhetoric, followed by grammar, was the single biggest factor within Renaissance literary formalism, and therefore holds the centre ground within the present study. Yet despite this, and despite the serious dearth of corroborative work on the overall Renaissance formalist system by researchers, who have looked only at its constituent elements (Vickers covers rhetoric, Jones the vernacular, and so on) without examining the larger, governing scheme of thought which underlies and unites them, the above short accounts of the rise of the vernacular and of Pythagorean and prosodic formalism, and of the affinity between these areas and rhetoric, indicate that however much rhetoric constituted a verbal supersystem, this in turn combined forces with other formalist, medium-centred systems, which overlapped and interacted with, but were not bounded by,

1. In Smith, ed., Vol. II, pp. 328-29. See also Aristotle's *Poetics*, 1447b.

2. Little, Fowler, and Coulson, Vol. II, p. 1344.

3. In Smith, ed., Vol. I, p. 248.

4. As discussed by Smith in Smith, ed., Vol. I, p. 1.

5. As discussed by Smith in *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 457.

the arts of the *trivium*. During the sixteenth century, a multitude of formalist, how-based considerations, ranging from the technicalities of the rhetorical figures and Erasmian synonymic training - which ultimately derive from the materialist strand of Greek thought - through to mystical Pythagorean aesthetics and number symbolism, crowded in on compositional practice from every side. The Renaissance, more than any other period in English history, was a time when the medium vied for supremacy with the message.

Chapter 4

The Medium as the Message: Cratylist Devices within English Renaissance Poetry (Part One)

The examination of rhetoric and the formalist medium which constitutes Chapters One to Three, including the medium-based paradigm of literary culture which it gradually constructs, could be used as the basis for any one of a number of critical discussions. It would be possible, for instance, to use the foregoing accounts as a starting-point for a consideration of the evocative use of periphrastic descriptions within the work of Shakespeare and others. Aristotle notes that loftiness of style can be achieved through the 'use of the description instead of the name of a thing - for instance, do not say "circle", but "a plane figure, all the points of which are equidistant from the centre"' (*Rhetoric*, III.VI.6), and this idea is then taken up by Longinus (32.5) and Erasmus (*De Copia*, I.16). It is precisely this determination not to go for the what in a direct and obvious way,¹ but instead to route the content through the stylistic and imaginative by-ways of the how, which gives the works of Shakespeare their astonishing variety of expression. Other types of critical analysis which would readily follow on from the preceding explorations of the medium include strictly formalist investigations of style and prosody. A knowledge of the how-based culture of the Renaissance allows one to square the circle of historicism and formalism, two modes of enquiry which have often been regarded as mutually exclusive.² Movements such as New Historicism and Cultural Materialism set themselves up in opposition to formalism, as part of what Peter Washington calls 'a master narrative' within which radical criticism regards itself as 'the white knight of progress destined to rescue the distressed maiden of humankind from the bourgeois dragon', and within which anti-formalism must 'cultivate a stance of permanent rebellion' against formalist criticism, which, however thoroughly it has been marginalised by the political schools, is still perpetually treated as an 'orthodoxy' which 'must be slain again and again'.³ Yet, as the recent New Formalist study of rhetoric and related phenomena shows, the more closely one

1. See Demetrius, *On Style*, IV.213-14, as discussed in the opening chapter (p. 23).

2. For example by Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1980), pp. 4 and 136.

3. Pages 40, 46 and 55.

attends to the details of verbal structure, the more closely one comes to aligning oneself with, and historically reconstructing, the true spirit of the Renaissance, an age which was more interested in anapests than in typical present-day historicist topics such as identity politics.

The critical application which we shall in fact pursue is the study of mimetic or Cratylid language-use, of the type seen during the account of Dionysius in Chapter Two. Whilst the rhetoricist and medium-based systems uncovered during the course of the first chapters could lead into, and provide a useful cultural and analytical context for, one of the many other possible avenues of how-based literary research, there are several reasons for taking up this particular line of enquiry in preference to any of the others. Firstly, as has been mentioned during the Dionysius section, such language-use operates right on the cusp of the medium and the message, which makes such devices a quintessential literary embodiment of all the ideas we have covered up to now. Secondly, as we shall see in a moment, Cratylism was an especially lively issue during the Renaissance. This gives the use of mimetic form during the sixteenth century added cultural significance. Thirdly, and perhaps most importantly, this is an astonishingly rich area not only in terms of the large number of literary examples involved, but also in terms of the sheer quality and beauty of many of these occurrences. The study of mimetic devices affords a rare opportunity to explore, and discern the verbal mechanics behind, some of the most wonderful literature ever written. The final reason for following up this particular lead is that even though many critics have made passing references to single enactment devices within a single poem - and some of these comments will be quoted in due course - no study has ever been made of sixteenth-century mimetic figures in their entirety. Given that Cratylid stylistic enactment contributes to the success of many of the most outstanding poems in the Renaissance canon, the lack of work in this area constitutes a significant gap in research. This gap is no less evident in relation to drama, but our investigations will centre on non-dramatic poetry, as this will allow a greater degree of focus, making it possible for us to examine, for instance, some of the highly specific lines of influence within the verse

tradition, such as the adaptation of Wyatt enactment devices by his Elizabethan successors.

That this glaring omission in Renaissance study has existed for so long may in part be a result of the pervasive Hermogenism which has taken hold of modern stylistic scholarship. Some critics, including those influenced by Saussure,¹ have even questioned whether it is possible for the medium to correspond with the message at all, on the grounds that a stylistic feature used for a particular enactment may not be enactive on another occasion,² and that sound and sense constitute 'separate, independent sign systems'.³ Another approach has been to cite examples of sloppy and unconvincing claims regarding mimesis, and to imply, on the basis of this, that all Cratylid study is necessarily suspect.⁴ These arguments have various internal weaknesses, such as the unsubstantiated assumption that all cases of a formal feature must be mimetic in order for one instance to be so,⁵ or that simply because sound and sense are different things it is impossible for them to have any properties in common. The greatest weakness of such arguments, though, is that they are disproved as soon as one turns to the real, tangible, indisputable examples of stylistic enactment. Aware of this, such critics have been forced, by the evidence, to surrender most of their polemical ground within the same articles in which they make the case against Cratylism. Dr. Samuel Johnson, the patron saint of modern Hermogenism, spends so long quoting and celebrating examples of Cratylid language-use that one ends up wondering why he began arguing in the first place.⁶ His position is not nearly as hard-line as critics have suggested, and ultimately consists of a keen appreciation of enactment

1. James I. Wimsatt, 'Rhyme/Reason, Chaucer/Pope, Icon/Symbol', *Modern Language Quarterly*, 55 (1994), 17-46, p. 20.

2. Mark Womack, 'Shakespearean Prosody Unbound', *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, 45 (2003), 1-12, p. 6. For an earlier example of this argument, see Johnson, 1905, Vol. III, pp. 231-32.

3. James I. Wimsatt, p. 19.

4. Again, one of the first critics to do this was Johnson. See his essay No. 94, from the *Rambler* of 9th February 1751, in *The Yale Edition of the Works of Samuel Johnson*, Vol. IV: *The Rambler* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1969), 135-43, p. 140.

5. Regarding this presupposition in Johnson, see Hill's note no. 4 in Johnson, 1905, Vol. III, pp. 231-32.

6. See, again, Johnson's essay No. 94 in Johnson, 1969, pp. 136-37 and 138-39; and also his essay No. 92, from the *Rambler* of 2nd February 1751, *op. cit.*, 121-30, pp. 125-28.

devices tempered by moments of Lockean conventionalism and by the sensible caveat that when we are discussing mimetic language we should take care not to imagine more correspondences than are in fact there.¹ James I. Wimsatt, having spent much of his discussion implying that form and meaning can never correspond, eventually states that the Renaissance poets 'increasingly made use of sound mimetically',² and even Mark Womack, who sometimes comes close to stating that all mimetic figures - and potentially, one can assume, every other rhetorical figure as well - exist solely in the eye of the beholder, still admits that examples of enactive language-use 'do, of course, exist'.³ Once all of these concessions have been made, the residual question is not whether or not stylistic Cratylism exists, but why some commentators have questioned whether or not it exists, including attacking the semiotic grounds of that existence, whilst at the same time admitting that it is real. In the case of current stylistic criticism, the answer may lie less in the realm of textual study than in that of academic politics.

Like all rhetorical devices, enactment figures were sometimes mentioned in the works produced by the eternal⁴ whipping boy which is New Criticism, and this has caused mimetic devices to be damned by association. Rather than retaining and refining the best of past scholarship, and moving ahead with mimetic enquiry, modern stylistic criticism has allowed a justified antipathy towards the woolly subjectivism of bad mimetic commentary to give rise to an unjustified suspicion of Cratylist devices themselves. This is made doubly erroneous by the fact that if enactment has to be tied in with any one school of analysis, it should be that of classical, and especially Dionysian, rhetoric, not New Criticism, the members of which were so preoccupied with issues of content that they referred to enactment either briefly or not at all. The New Critics did not produce a single book or article with a primary, or secondary, focus on enactive form, and, even if they had,

1. Johnson, 1969, p. 122 (article no. 92), and p. 136 (article no. 94). Also Johnson, 1905, Vol. III, pp. 230-32.

2. Page 43.

3. Pages 2-3.

4. James I. Wimsatt, writing in 1994, refers to New Critics as 'recent theorists', p. 19.

then this would still have been no reason for abandoning such a valuable line of enquiry. (Paradoxically, if they had given anything like as much attention to mimetic language as modern-day Hermogenists imply, then they would probably have built up a collection of unambiguously enactive figures so substantial that their existence would not have been queried by subsequent scholars.) Having nevertheless chosen to make mimetic commentary totemic of New Criticism, and fearing that their own school would be linked with the earlier one, modern stylistics scholars have jettisoned a vital area of rhetorical research. The earlier schools of criticism were insufficiently systematic (and insufficiently interested in enactment) to do justice to Cratylism, and modern stylistics has shied away from using its more objective and technical critical apparatus to make good this shortfall because it falsely equates such research with the errors of past scholarship. In throwing out the baby of mimetic study with the bathwater of bad criticism, stylistics has impoverished its coverage of Renaissance language-use. James I. Wimsatt and Womack have correctly pointed out that poetic form and its sounds can serve 'musical rather than verbal sense', and that 'metre need not reinforce meaning to have value',¹ but their use of these facts as a pretext for prolonging the banishment of mimetic study is unwarranted. For the sake of extending our knowledge of Renaissance poetics, stylistics should accommodate all modes of language-use within its list of permitted subject areas. Provided that the assessment of enactment figures adopts a sufficiently objective and technical methodology, and provided that one steers a middle course between excessive credulity and easy cynicism, there is no reason why the use of mimetic devices cannot claim its rightful place as a legitimate and enlightening topic of study.

Cratylism, which passed down - via St. Augustine and others² - to Erasmus,³ Richard

1. James I. Wimsatt, p. 21, and Womack, p. 2, respectively.

2. See Waswo, 1987, pp. 32, 253-55, and 280; Heninger, 1989, p. 183; Peter Matthews in Giulio Lepschy, ed., *History of Linguistics Vol. II: Classical and Medieval Linguistics* (London and New York: Longman, 1990, English translation 1994), p. 3; and Diana B. Altegoer, *Reckoning Words* (Madison, New Jersey: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2000), p. 48.

3. E.g., *De Copia*, Book II, p. 638, and *De Ratione Studii*, p. 674. His suggestion in the *De Pueris Instituendis* (1529) that Cratylid ideas be used as teaching aids is discussed by Jean-Claude Margolin in Richard L. DeMolen, ed., *Essays on the Works of Erasmus* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978), pp. 226-27.

Mulcaster - Spenser's master at the Merchant Taylors' School¹ - and beyond,² had an especially strong following during the sixteenth century, when it fused with Adamicism, the doctrine that words and their designata were unified within the original, Adamic language, but were then separated. Cratylism is, in and of itself, yet another facet of the culture of the medium. It works alongside the *trivium* and the rest, and takes its place in the formalist supersystem outlined in the last chapter: Richard Carew (1598?-1639?) cites various motivated words - those which 'seeme to be derived from the very natures' of their meaning - to demonstrate the power of the vernacular;³ Adamicism overlaps with Pythagoreanism, as will be discussed in a moment; and within the Protestant-Renaissance mindset there was sometimes a confluence of rhetoricist and Adamicist discourses, as shown, for example, in the heading to the Preface of Thomas Wilson's 1560 *Art of Rhetoric*: 'Eloquence first given by God, and after lost by man, and last repayed by God againe'. Cratylism-Adamicism is bound up with, and strengthened by, the Protestant veneration of the Word,⁴ and by its central position within the mystical teachings⁵ of Boehme, Dee, Agrippa, Reuchlin, Pico, and Ficino.⁶ Esoteric Cratylism-Adamicism included Cabalism, which, being based upon the numbered letter system of gematria,⁷

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1. For an account of Mulcaster's interest in the *Cratylus*, see Martha Craig in Paul J. Alpers, ed., *Elizabethan Poetry: Modern Essays in Criticism* (London, Oxford, and New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), p. 468.
 2. For an explication of the Cratylist foundations of iconicity studies, a branch of modern linguistics, see John Earl Joseph, *Limiting the Arbitrary* (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: John Benjamins, 2000), pp. 197-98.
 3. *The Excellency of English*, c.1595-96, in Smith, ed., Vol. II, p. 287. For a brief discussion about Sidney and the link between the vernacular and Adamicism, see Elizabeth Cook, *Seeing Through Words* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1986), p. 65.
 4. Regarding the links between Protestantism, print, and Luther's *sola scriptura* idea, see Patrick Collinson in Michael Hattaway, ed., *A Companion to English Renaissance Literature and Culture* (Malden, Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers, 2000), pp. 27-33. For an examination of the Renaissance Protestant idea of Christ as embodied language, see Brian Cummings, *The Literary Culture of the Reformation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 105-106 and 109, and Bruce Mansfield, *Erasmus in the Twentieth Century* (Toronto and London: University of Toronto Press, 2003), p. 178.
 5. For general accounts of the relationship between Cratylism and the occult, see Waswo, 1987, p. 285; James J. Bono, *The Word of God and the Languages of Man* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1995), pp. 32, 44, and 52; and A.F. Kinney in Hattaway, ed., p. 341.
 6. Hans Aarsleff, *From Locke to Saussure* (London: Athlone, 1982), p. 282; and Bono, pp. 41-42, 44, 51, and 124.
 7. Regarding Cabalism, see S.K. Heninger, Jr., *Touches of Sweet Harmony* (San Marino, California: Huntington Library, 1974), pp. 245-46; Aarsleff, pp. 260, 262, and 281; MacQueen, p. 101; Heninger, 1989, pp. 120-22; Bono, pp. 47, 126, and 143; and Kinney in Hattaway, ed., p. 341. Regarding gematria, see Dudley Underwood, *Numerology* (Washington, D.C.: Mathematical Association of America, 1997), pp. 47-53.

is in turn tied in, via the notion of signifying form and number, with Pythagorean proportional mathematics, as demonstrated by Foulkes,¹ Bono, and Heninger.² A belief in the magical properties of language, with words or letters corresponding to that which they represent, goes back at least as far as Ancient Egypt, where one finds what must be the ultimate example of a verbal form-content enactment. W.V. Davies speaks of the attempts which were sometimes made to

limit the power of certain hieroglyphics, especially those depicting human beings, birds and animals. These were deemed to have considerable potential for harm when located in magically 'sensitive' areas, like the walls of a burial chamber or the sides of a sarcophagus. The fear was that they might assume an independent hostile life of their own and consume the food offerings intended for the deceased or even attack the dead body itself. Steps were therefore taken to neutralise the danger that they posed. Sometimes such hieroglyphics were simply suppressed and replaced by anodyne substitutes. On other occasions they were modified in some way to immobilise them. The bodies of human figures and the heads of insects and snakes were omitted, the bodies of birds truncated, the bodies of certain animals severed in two, and the tails of snakes abbreviated.³

Whilst an arbitrary, Hermogenist relationship between word and referent was held to be the normal condition of everyday, 'fallen' language, it was at the same time thought that language could, in a verbal simulation of fallen man seeking redemption,⁴ or of the embodied soul trying to achieve a Platonic (or Puritan) ascendance out of the material plane, be restored to its original, pure state. Jacob Boehme (1575-1624) claimed to be able to discern an already-existent Adamic association at work within ordinary language during moments of mystical inspiration, whilst others held that our ordinary language had irrecoverably lost all vestiges of its Adamic source, but that by speaking in tongues we could nevertheless bring together words and things.⁵ Seventeenth-century linguistic

1. Throughout the 1979 articles, and the unpublished book (see bibliography).

2. Bono, pp. 41-42, and Heninger, 1974, pp. 247-48.

3. In J.T. Hooker et al., *Reading the Past: Ancient Writing from Cuneiform to the Alphabet*, introduced by J.T. Hooker (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), p. 91.

4. Murray Krieger, *Ekphrasis* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982), p. 156.

5. For Boehme, see Aarsleff, p. 282, and Bono, pp. 51-52. Regarding speaking in tongues, see Bono, p. 155.

science then sought to arrive at the same union, or reunion, of word and object through the creation of new languages which consisted of motivated signs.¹ The leading light of this movement was John Wilkins, who brought out his *An Essay Towards a Real Character and a Philosophical Language* in 1668. According to Seth Ward, one of his colleagues, this project sought to attain exactly the same end (i.e., a natural language) as those of the Cabalists and the Rosicrucians, but from a different direction.² By the same rule, stylistic enactment inscribes or embodies the subject-matter within the verbal form, and thus uses fallen, arbitrary language to recapture a Cratylist or Adamic unity of word and thought. Murray Krieger speaks of the quest for a 'pre-fallen language of corporeal presence through fallen language' (p. 10). Partly owing to a slight misreading of Egyptian hieroglyphics, many during the Renaissance believed the Adamic language to have been pictorial. Krieger, again, states: 'The fall from a pictorial substitute into an arbitrary code marks the end of a language of pure presence, of immediate representation' (p. 135).

One reason for the popularity of Cratylist ideas during the sixteenth century is that Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679) and John Locke (1632-1704), whose Hermogenism came to dominate linguistic thought, were not yet on the scene. Yet what at first sight appears to be a contradiction between the Cratylist and Hermogenist strands of the early Enlightenment is best explained by the fact that the two are in fact opposite sides of the same Hermogenist coin. Built into prescriptive Cratylism is a Hermogenist model of language in its ordinary, unimproved state. Whilst the Hermogenist position emphasises the damage, prescriptive Cratylism, in its various forms, emphasises the remedy: that is, the possibility that the ruins of Babel can be repaired; and one of the sites for this reconciliation is poetry. Although a Cratylist mimetic device employed within an Elizabethan sonnet may not at first glance appear to share much ground either with Cabalism or with the language experiments which were to arise out of the intellectual ferment surrounding the establishment of the Royal

1. For more on sixteenth- and seventeenth-century language ideas, see (in addition to Aarsleff and Bono) Waswo, 1987, and Murray Cohen, *Sensible Words: Linguistic Practice in England, 1640-1785* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977), Chapter 1.

2. In Aarsleff, p. 262.

Society, the same principle, that of prescriptive Cratylism, is the basis of all three. We shall begin with a consideration of Sir Thomas Wyatt (c.1503-42).

One of the commonest types of Cratylist stylistic feature is that whereby the last words of a poem or a section of verse refer to an ending, so that the semantic content reflects the cessation which the words enact on a textual level. Although they sometimes take a metapoetic form (as in Petrarch's *Rime sparse*, No. 18), they usually depend upon a more oblique correspondence between text and meaning, the closural words referring to a cessation other than the cessation of the text, with the coalescence of form and content thus taking place on an analogical level. Many examples of this are to be found within classical texts:

. . . tecum obeam libens!
(Horace, Bk. III, *Ode IX*, l. 24)

English mediaeval verse:

God send us all good ending.
(Anon., *The Hunting of the Cheviot*, l. 292)

and the *Rime sparse*:

Che la morte s'appressa e 'l viver fugge.
(No. 79, l. 14)

One of the best-known instances after the sixteenth century is Milton's 'calm of mind, all passion spent', which ends *Samson Agonistes*. We shall look at how closural mimesis works in conjunction with other enactive modes shortly; but, as one would expect, closural enactment frequently operates in isolation, as, for instance, in Wyatt's *To rail or jest*:

Too long delays and changing at the last.
(l. 14)

or in *The Sun hath twice brought forth*, by Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey (c.1517-47):

. . . and by my death be seen.
(l. 55)

Given its presence in all literary periods, that Wyatt and Surrey should use closural forms of enactment is not surprising. In some poems, though, they extend this kind of closural enactment figure in such a way that the very fact of cessation is itself thematised, with the move from words to silence or blankness mirroring and reifying the idea of silence as expressed on a semantic level. In these 'silence enactments', the blank text following the poem becomes part of the mimesis:

. . . Such as I was, such will I be -
Your own. What would ye more of me?
(Surrey, *Since fortune's wrath*, ll. 23-24)

More sophisticated still are those examples of enactment which involve the full body of the verse. If closural enactments operate at the interface of semantic content and the ends of texts - that is, by pairing thematic and textual cessation - then, correspondingly, the most direct way in which Cratylic enactment can be employed within the main structure of a poem is by pairing concepts of recurrence or continuation with textual recurrence or continuation. We shall begin with a consideration of some of the analogical kinds of cumulative enactment, before moving on to metapoetic examples.

Excluding translations and rondeaux (the latter allowing just the three repetitions), Wyatt wrote twenty-three poems which include burdens; of these, fifteen have burdens which recur five or more times, and hence create a particularly emphatic repetitive effect. Out of these fifteen, five contain refrains which harness this repetition to mimetic ends. That is, a third of Wyatt's most heavily repetitive poems employ cumulative enactment. Mediaeval English poets, by contrast, hardly ever include this device. Chaucer makes use of the refrain to emphasise a key idea or phrase - e.g. 'My lady cometh, that al this may disteyne', from the Prologue to *The Legend of Good Women* - but seems never to have employed burdens in a mimetic way. In fact, the only example in English prior to the sixteenth

century appears to be Dunbar's 'All erdly joy returns in pane', which, with an occasional variation of phrase, recurs at four-line intervals throughout *Of Lentren in the first morning*. Here, the line enacts the 'return', analogically illustrating the meaning, and thereby imbuing the whole poem with a sense of inevitability and unity, and, with these, an enhanced aesthetic charge. The sheer frequency of such Cratylid figures in Wyatt is remarkable, and demonstrates how decisively the medium-based climate of the Renaissance stamped its identity onto compositional practice. Another reason why form was so often made to materialise content was that the pre-Enlightenment poets (as with the old story about why bumble-bees can fly despite having tiny wings) hadn't been told that it was impossible.

One of the most effective of Wyatt's uses of cumulative enactment occurs in the song *In aeternum*, where the eponymous phrase constitutes every fourth line of the poem. The opening stanzas read:

In aeternum I was once determed,
 For to have loved and my mind affirmed,
 That with my heart it should be confirmed,
In aeternum.

Forthwith I found the thing that I might like,
 And sought with love to warm her heart alike,
 For, as methought, I should not see the like
In aeternum.

The insistent repetition of such a terse and resounding phrase as '*In aeternum*' would, especially when coupled with the macaronic switch to Latin, create a frisson, and enhance the depth of meaning, even if it were not enactive; but as it is the phrase has the effect of bringing together meaning and the sequential act of perceiving the words, and thus forms a pointedly mimetic and mutually-illustrative combination of sense and sound, the diuturnity implications of the content being acted out by the recurrence.¹ Moreover, the elevation which this creates fuses, in turn, with the pathos already inherent in the subject-matter.

In several poems, Wyatt employs a refrain which is cumulatively enactive, that is, one

1. Circles, and/or circular verse forms, as symbols of eternity, are discussed in MacQueen, p. 111; Heninger, 1989, pp. 315 and 317; and the Foulkes manuscript, pp. 61-62.

which refers to continuation, but then modifies this burden when it constitutes the last line, so that it acknowledges its function as a marker of closure. In other words, these texts comment, whether metapoetically or analogically, on their own progress, for as long as this lasts, and then comment on their own impending cessation, the medium thus shadowing the message at every point. In *Comfort thyself* the persona, addressing his own heart, asks:

Why sighs thou, heart, and wilt not break?
(l. 4)

and then:

Why sighs thou then and wilt not break?
(ll. 8, 12, 16, and 20)

and finally:

Sigh there thy last and therewith break.
(l. 24)

As with *In aeternum*, the self-commentary is analogical, which means that '... wilt not break?' and then '... therewith break' refer to the heart and its anguish, rather than to the text directly. However, the associations between the two are secured not only by the fact that the deferral of, and then arrival at, the 'break' of text and heart correlate throughout, but also that sighing overlaps physically with speaking, and that Wyatt pairs the two both in this poem (ll. 8-12) and elsewhere:

... Where shall I fet
Such sighs that I may sigh my fill
And then again my plaints repeat?
(*Where shall I have . . .*, ll. 2-4)

In the closing lines, the self-referentiality which has been present throughout is finally wound in so tightly - 'Seek on thyself thyself to wreak . . .' (l. 22) - that the meaning implodes, so to speak, just as the poem itself reaches closure (two lines later):

Then in her sight, to move her heart,
Seek on thyself thyself to wreak
That she may know thou suffered'st smart.
Sigh there thy last and therewith break.
(*Comfort thyself*, ll. 21-24)

(Petrarch may be an influence here. Thomas M. Greene discusses similar figures in the *Rime sparse*.)¹ Before this point is reached the poem even finds time, at the end of the penultimate stanza, to look back, metaphorically, on the verse which has so far been written. Here the present tense, which has kept the narrative and the act of composition parallel throughout, and the distance from 'heart' in line 4, which makes the substitute personal pronoun more freely applicable to the poet himself and to his lamentation, pull the verse fully into itself:

Alas, thou dost prolong thy pain.
(l. 19)²

The line thus turns the entire poem into an analogical enactment of its theme: a futile, unheeded vocalisation of grief. The cumulative enactment of the refrain is therefore combined with other enactive effects to produce a complex and unified whole which delivers a remarkable aesthetic impact.

Forget not yet is based upon the same mimetic structure. The words 'Forget not yet' begin and end the first four stanzas, and then the final refrain is modified to 'Forget not this'. In addition to its function within the amatory scheme, the former phrase signifies deferral, or continuation; the poem thus has the same obliquely self-descriptive character as *Comfort thyself*. Furthermore, the closing phrase can be taken as a reference to the declaration which has constituted the entire stanza up to that point:

Forget not then thine own approved
The which so long hath thee so loved
Whose steadfast faith yet never moved . . .
(ll. 17-19)

1. *The Light in Troy* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1982), p. 255.

2. Surrey uses similar self-references in *If care*, l. 32, *So cruel prison*, ll. 51-52, and *The sun hath twice*, ll. 49-51.

or else the demonstrative pronoun may be read more expansively so that the referent becomes the poem itself, which then retrospectively acts as an embodiment of the devotional stance which has been described. Given that complexities and ambiguities are so common throughout Wyatt's verse, it seems likely that both readings are intended at once, and, if so, then this dual meaning brings diegesis (the intra-stanza referent) and metapoesis (the whole-poem referent) together. More important than any such technical virtuosity, however, is the fact that the enactive use of the refrain structure, by exploiting the serial nature of speech, creates an affecting sense of time passing during the reception of the poem, and analogically and iconically illustrates the passing of time which is central to the actual meaning ('My great travail . . . The weary life . . . assays . . . The painful patience', lines, 3, 6, 9, 11, and so on). This decorous reinforcement of content greatly intensifies the affective impact, even though the very fact that the mimesis so closely follows the contours of the narrative means that the effect works unobtrusively, via, on the whole, shared characteristics between the medium of the textual flow and the subject-matter, rather than through overt or unambiguous metapoesis.

The aesthetic resonance which is added by enactment may, however, be even more powerful in one of Wyatt's most metapoetic - and celebrated - lyrics, *My lute, awake!* Opinion is divided as to whether or not his poetry was originally set to music. Winifred Maynard argues that it was; John Hollander, that it was not.¹ Either way, the speaker is still foregrounding his own art, so the reflexively-commentating aspect remains substantially the same. The lyric begins with a highly unusual opening enactment. Following the same principle seen in the closural enactments, where an ending refers to an ending, so here a phrase which refers to a beginning is at the beginning. Line 3 then alludes to its own location in the verse relative to this beginning, its site thus illustratively embodying the meaning. And the next two lines, likewise, speak from their particular location early in the

1. See Winifred Maynard, 'The Lyrics of Wyatt: Poems or Songs?', *Review of English Studies*, New Series, 16 (1965), 1-13 (Pt. 1) and 245-57 (Pt. 2); and John Hollander, *The Untuning of the Sky: Ideas of Music in English Poetry, 1500-1700* (Hamden, Connecticut: Archon Books, 1993), pp. 129-30. See also Elizabeth Heale, *Wyatt, Surrey, and Early Tudor Poetry* (London and New York: Longman, 1998), p. 110; and R.A. Rebholz in his edition of Wyatt: *The Complete Poems* (London: Penguin Books, 1997), p. 408.

song, and look ahead to the ending, so framing the entire poem, foregrounding the eventual closure, and perfectly setting up the partial recapitulation of the opening stanza which concludes the poem:

My lute, awake! Perform the last
Labour that thou and I shall waste,
And end that I have now begun;
For when this song is sung and past,
My lute, be still for I have done.
(ll. 1-5)

Now cease, my lute. This is the last
Labour that thou and I shall waste
And ended is that we begun.
Now is this song both sung and past.
My lute, be still, for I have done.
(Last stanza.)

The final verse begins by announcing its own terminal position; 'ended is that we begun', two lines later, gathers together the collective emphasis of the '... I have done' refrains, which have functioned as miniature closural enactments at the end of every stanza; and the last two lines then drive home the sense of closure by referring to cessation in three different ways, via the 'song', the 'lute', and 'I'. This mimetic structure imbues every aspect of the poem with the air of a self-aware performance; with an harmonious unity both of form and content and of intention and achievement; and, ultimately, with a subtle melancholy which is inextricable from the melancholy implicit in the love narrative itself.

In *My pen, take pain*, Wyatt goes further still, producing what is one of the most overtly mimetic poems ever written, and one which surpasses in metapoetic audacity even *My lute, awake!*, which, in both the Folger and the Stark manuscripts, it precedes. Indeed, it is a literary manifestation of the same bold mannerist reflexivity which informs Parmigianino's *Self-Portrait in a Convex Mirror* of 1524, composed about a decade earlier.¹ Wyatt's verse would have been circulated and read in handwritten form, giving the pen-based self-

1. Regarding Parmigianino, see Sypher, p. 112, and L.E. Semler, *The English Mannerist Poets and the Visual Arts* (London: Associated University Press; Madison, Teaneck: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1998), p. 241.

reference an even more arrestingly physical enactment:

My pen, take pain a little space
To follow that which doth me chase
And hath in hold my heart so sore.
But when thou hast this brought to pass,
My pen, I prithee, write no more.
(ll. 1-5)

The illustration of semantic content is therefore carried out not just by the choice and arrangement of words (exordial content: exordial location) but also by the very fact that the words are on the paper at all. Next, the 'write no more' closure of each stanza weaves a wistful thread of finality - similar to that created by the *My lute, awake!* refrain - into the fabric of the poem, and reinforces the subject-matter. After giving us, as in *My lute, awake!*, a metapoetic comment part-way through which alludes to its own location towards the end of the verse ('My pen, yet write a little more', l. 20), the poem brings itself to an end by way of a pen/self-expression figure:

Since thou hast taken pain this space
To follow that which doth me chase
And hath in hold my heart so sore,
Now hast thou brought my mind to pass.
My pen, I prithee, write no more.
(ll. 29-30)

A similar fusion of diegesis and mimesis, and of elegy and compositional wit, is to be seen in the final stanza of *In mourning wise*:

The trickling tears doth fall so from my eyes,
I scarce may write, my paper is so wet.

As in *My pen, take pain*, the physical text will, for the original audience, have given tremendous force to the mimetic embodiment of content for the original audience. The speaker's 'tears begin to run' in line 25, and the tragic story itself, as the conceit has it, is so overwhelming that it brings the act of writing to an end. However - unlike *My pen, take pain* - this is still, in the last analysis, an 'occasional' poem which is concerned with an historical event, rather than with its own textuality. The enactive moments supplement,

and arise from, the narrative, energising the content and intensifying the aesthetic impact.

This brings us to an important point in our consideration of Wyatt's overall poetic method and his use of enactive figures. So far we have looked at the effectiveness of these mimetic devices in generally abstract aesthetic terms. Although in our own post-Romantic age such judgements tend to be fairly amorphous and subjective, for writers and audiences in the sixteenth century these responses were far more channelled. The dominant rhetoricist-stylistic school during the early English Renaissance was that of Cicero, who outlines the deficiencies of an 'unpolished' style on the one hand, and of an overly 'ornate' style on the other. He states that the orator should instead adopt a 'tempered' tone which is both 'elegant', and at the same time 'plain' (see, for example, *De Oratore*, Bk. I, Chapters V, VI, and VII).¹ Wyatt occasionally writes in a style which is similar to that of Skelton and others of the 'rude and homely' English tradition² - as seen, for instance, in *I have sought long with steadfastness* - but Tottel's emendations of his supposed roughness of scansion have long been discredited, and throughout most of his verse Wyatt does indeed unerringly combine elegance with plainness. His strategies for achieving this tempered style would seem to be manifold. Elizabeth Heale, for example, argues that his adoption of the frottola song-form allowed him to blend 'a fashionable Italianate sophistication' with the "popular" ballet styles inherited from the mediaeval vernacular tradition' (p. 83). A comparable reconciliation of opposites might also have been necessary for Wyatt on a professional level. A diplomat for most of his life,³ and often operating in dangerous circumstances - he was sent to the Tower in 1541 - Wyatt had to work within a courtly system which demanded, as Greenblatt says, a mixture of 'playfulness and danger' and 'idealism and cynicism',⁴ and, according to Heale, of an 'honest, bluff' self-presentation and incisive

1. Also Heale, p. 117. The importance of elegance also comes up in Erasmus: *De Copia*, Book II, Sections 10 and 11, and *De Ratione Studii*, p. 683.

2. George Puttenham, *The Arte of English Poesie*, in Smith, ed., Vol. II, pp. 62-64.

3. Greenblatt, p. 141

4. Page 137. See also pp. 91 and 124.

reasoning.¹

Whether derived from rhetorical practice alone, or from rhetorical practice plus this wider ethos which also demanded balance, the stylistic middle way was highly conducive to, and productive of, enactment figures. All such devices are, in one sense, extremely simple, relying, as they do, on a straightforward matching of form and content. For this reason they are popular in children's books, where, in a less dangerous version of the snake hieroglyphs discussed at the start of the present chapter, the 's' of 'snake' can be made to represent an actual snake,² and so on. Alongside this plainness, though, goes the fact that the self-reflexive wit of enactment figures endows them with an undercurrent of dextrous control:

Therefore, farewell, my life, my death,
My gain, my loss, my salve, my sore.
Farewell also, with you, my breath,
For I am gone for evermore.
(Wyatt, *Where shall I have*, ll. 41-44. Ending.)

Verbal mimesis is, then, ideally suited to Wyatt's 'tempered' style; and this, along with all the factors which we have traced in the earlier discussions, helps to explain why he adopted it to the extent to which he did, and with such extraordinary results. The frequency and skill with which he employed these schemes also help to account for their popularity with the Elizabethans. If the Ciceronian ideal is a factor in Wyatt's choice of the enactment method, then this may also explain why so many of his refrain poems, in particular, are mimetic. The ordered discipline and symmetry of the burden repetitions give an impression of control and 'elegance' - indeed, the *De Oratore* (III.LIV) (like the *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, IV.XIV.21) specifically states that repetition is a likely source of elegance - whilst the repetition is still, in itself, 'plain'. So, when refrains and mimesis are brought together, each matches the tempered quality of the other, and the result is a

1. Page 117. See also Greenblatt, p. 143.

2. David Crystal, *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Language* (Cambridge, etc.: Cambridge University Press, 1987), p. 184.

decorous and unified whole.

Although many of his burden poems are also enactment poems, many of Wyatt's enactive lyrics do not include a burden. In *I abide and abide*, the word 'abide'/'abiding' appears nine times in the space of one sonnet, this recurrence cumulatively enacting the idea of diuturnity as connoted by the word itself. *The joy so short* contains heavy *synonymia*-based repetition which metaphorically and iconically illustrates the 'constancy' meaning of the paraphrastic clauses: 'remain shall . . . shall not change . . . will not I remove . . . steadfast . . . causeless to remain'. Much the same theme is augmented in much the same way in the sonnet *Each man me telleth*: 'Change you no more . . . still after one rate . . . the same state . . . shall not be variable . . . always one . . . firm and stable'. Again, an astonishing five lyrics continually repeat the word 'patience', or one of its grammatical variants, either in the burden (*Since Love will needs*), or at the start of each stanza (*Patience, though I have not*), or else in sequences within the main parts of the stanzas. The latter usually involve the appearance of the term in every other line (*Patience, for I have wrong, Patience of all my smart* (first two stanzas), and *Patience for my device* (third stanza)). *Patience of all my smart* employs the word ten times in thirty lines, and *Patience for my device* uses it eleven times in twenty-four lines. Moreover, all these lyrics except *Since Love will needs*, where Wyatt uses tetrameters, consist of trimeter six-line stanzas, this making the repetitions especially dense. *Patience of all my smart* is representative of the 'patience' group:

Patience of all my smart
For Fortune is turned awry!
Patience must ease my heart
That mourns continually.
Patience to suffer wrong
Is a patience too long.

Patience to have a nay
Of that I most desire!
Patience to have alway
And ever burn like fire!
Patience without desert
Is grounder of my smart.

Who can with merry heart
Set forth some pleasant song
That always feels but smart
And never hath but wrong?
Yet patience evermore
Must heal the wound and sore.

Patience to be content
With froward Fortune's train!
Patience to thee intent
Somewhat to slake my pain!
I see no remedy
But suffer patiently.

To plain where is none ear
My chance is chanced so,
For it doth well appear
My friend is turned my foe.
But since there is no defence
I must take patience.

In all of the 'patience' lyrics, the semantic import of the word is gradually, cumulatively, mimed simply through its recurrence; but the above poem also includes a more complex form of enactment. The lines are trimeters, meaning that the word 'patience' in lines such as 'Patience of all my smart' (line 1) has two syllables. In line 6, however, the scansion is ambiguous. One possible position for the first stress is on the first word, which would then put the second stress on the first syllable of 'patience', and the third on 'long'. However, normally the only circumstances under which one would find a fronted stress like this is when it forms part of an inverted frontal iamb (in effect, a trochee), which is then followed by an ordinary iamb for the second foot. This pattern is seen, in fact, in line 5, the first half of the couplet. Yet if line 6 is scanned in this way it does not have the necessary pair of unstressed syllables between the first two beats, and in any case when it is read like this there is an extra unstressed syllable between the second and third stresses. It is possible to put dactyls or anapests into the middle of iambic schemes, but they sound so clumsy that it seems unlikely that this is what was intended. The other way to scan these lines is to leave the first two words unstressed, which is a more likely spot for the extra unstressed syllable than between beats two and three, and which would fit the meaning better (monosyllables which need little semantic emphasis tend not to be stressed), and then to read the remaining

syllables as alternately stressed and unstressed beats. After the initial unstressed beat of 'Is', then, the rest of the line is regular iambic. This creates a diaeresis on the second vowel sound of 'patience', so that the word has three syllables instead of two, with the stresses falling on the first and third; and this, in turn - especially by contrast with the two-syllable 'patience' in lines 1, 3, and 5 - makes the three-syllable 'patience' of line 6 mimetic, with the slowness of the pronunciation mirroring the idea of slowness denoted by the word itself. Such a reading is supported by the fact that the closing lines both of this poem ('I must take patience') and of *Patience, though I have not* ('Is a painful patience') seem to have the same mimetic diaeresis, with the intensity of signification similarly underscoring the climax of the patience theme.

The effects of Wyatt's enactment figures vary greatly from poem to poem. In *Since Love will needs*, the refrain 'To serve and suffer patiently' achieves the same kind of incantatory evocation of eternity conveyed by *In aeternum*, with the medium of expression iconically embodying the perpetual nature of the servitude, and thereby augmenting the sense of pathos which arises from the apparently eternal misery of the speaker. In *Patience of all my smart*, on the other hand, the speaker takes a more active, and arguably sardonic, position; although he eventually accedes to the idea of continuing to bear his load patiently, the repetitions on the way to getting there mimic and reinforce, through the how of expression, the unreasonably relentless nature of this burden. Yet despite its range of application, mimetic language-use retains essentially the same function in every case: to render the subject-matter more vivid, this being a fundamental rhetorical aim,¹ to unite medium and message so that they create a resonant and aesthetically pleasing whole (which is also a fundamental rhetorical goal);² and, in short, to make the poems more effective. As Plato's *Cratylus* says, 'Representation by likeness, Socrates, is infinitely better than representation by any chance sign' (*Cratylus*, 434a).

1. See, e.g., *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, IV.XXXIV.45 and IV.LV.68, and Quintilian VIII.III.62 and IX.II.40.

2. See, e.g., *Ars Poetica*, l. 24.

Chapter 5

The Medium as the Message: Cratylist Devices within English Renaissance Poetry (Part Two)

The presence and importance of Cratylid figures within Wyatt's verse are incontrovertible. In the 'patience' group, for example, the recurrences, like the repetition of 'abide' in *I abide and abide*, like the *synonymic* 'constancy' mimesis in both *The joy so short* and *Each man me telleth*, and like the metrical-pronunciation enactment in the line 'Is a patience too long', are the verse equivalent of writing 'CAPITAL LETTERS', 'this clause has five words', or 'repetition, repetition, repetition', so clear and strong is their mimetic form. Poems such as these are classic examples of the culture of the medium informing *dispositio* and *inventio*. Continuing to bear in mind this underlying paradigm, and now adding to the formalist and Cratylid influences the works of Wyatt and Surrey, whom Puttenham was to call 'the two chief lanternes of light to all others that have since employed their pennes upon English Poesie',¹ we shall now investigate the use of mimetic figures within the poetry of the Elizabethans.

During the second half of the sixteenth century, with the Humanist school system even more firmly established than it had been during the first, and with a far greater number of ancient rhetorical texts in circulation, the scene was set, intellectually and culturally, for stylistic mimesis to carry out a yet more prominent and complex set of functions than those which we have seen at work in the poetry of Wyatt. Sir Philip Sidney (1554-86) was the first major lyric poet after Surrey, and the first English writer to compose a sonnet sequence in its true sense: that is, a collection of fourteen-line 'discrete lyrics in the service of a unified narrative'.² As well as being one of the greatest poets of the age in his own right, he also ushered in sonnet cycles as palmary, and as diverse, as those of Daniel, Drayton, Spenser, and Shakespeare. In fact, such was his cultural (and cult) status that entire handbooks of rhetoric were based on his works.³ *Astrophil and Stella* (composed c.1581-83, published 1591) will therefore hold first place in these Elizabethan chapters, both in the

1. *The Arte of English Poesie* (1589), in Smith, ed., Vol. II, p. 65.

2. Steven W. May, *The Elizabethan Courtier Poets* (Asheville, North Carolina: Pegasus Press, 1999), p. 228. (May's definition excludes Thomas Watson's *Hekatompathia* of 1582.)

3. Perhaps the best-known example is Abraham Fraunce's *The Arcadian Rhetoric* of 1588. See also Michael R.G. Spiller, *The Development of the Sonnet* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), pp. 106 and 214.

sense that we shall examine it before turning to the other writers, and in the sense that the other writers will frequently be looked at in the light of Sidney's influence.

In addition to the general awareness of natural language within Renaissance thought, a more direct link between Sidney's poetic stance and the mimetic mode of signification is set out in *The Defence of Poesy* (c.1581), where he equates poetry with mimesis, 'that is to say, a representing, counterfeiting, or figuring forth . . .' (ll. 220-21). As he points out later in the *Defence*, when he uses the term 'representing' he means something which is distinct from mere 'reporting' - 'the difference betwixt reporting and representing' (ll. 1297-98) - and so 'figuring forth' indicates the actual reification of thought through the verbal medium, mimesis as opposed to simply diegesis (the latter being 'a narrative; a statement of the case').¹ Poetry, therefore, is concerned with the embodying of thought: that is, with making and doing, rather than simply telling. This is supported by the fact that Aristotle, from whom Sidney derives his 'figuring forth' statement (see ll. 219-21), emphasises the point that 'poets' literally means 'makers' (*Poetics* 1447b)². Moreover, Sidney himself gives the etymology of the word 'poet': 'It cometh of this word *poiein*, which is, to make', (ll. 150-54). Such ideas of physicality, which we first found in the Greeks, underpin the Sidney 'figuring forth' passage and create a virtual definition of stylistic enactment, especially when one takes into account the slight alteration to the meaning of the verb 'to figure' which has occurred since the sixteenth century. According to the *S.O.E.D.*, up until 1779 it could mean 'to resemble in form'.³ Visvanath Chatterjee clarifies this point:

Sidney accepts Aristotle's definition of poetry as mimesis, and he understands the true implication of this 'imitation'; this is not exact reproduction, but 'figuring forth', i.e. giving figure (= form) to things, the form being an imitation in the sense of being the exact reflection or counterpart of the content.⁴

1. Little, Fowler, and Coulson, Vol. I, p. 545.

2. See also Puttenham in Smith, ed., Vol. II, p. 3.

3. Little, Fowler, and Coulson, Vol. I, p. 749.

4. In Sir Philip Sidney, *An Apology for Poetry*, ed. Visvanath Chatterjee (Hyderabad: Orient Longman, 1975), p. xvi.

For the Renaissance as much as for the classical ages, language was more than just an arbitrarily constructed, and therefore paraphraseable, carrier of a message; it was a tangible medium which could, in the words of Sir Francis Bacon, have 'an affinity with the things signified',¹ and which could mimetically incarnate that to which it referred. We shall return to Sidney's poetic theory once we have looked at some of the enactment devices in *Astrophil and Stella*.

During the Wyatt discussion, we came across opening enactments. These are also to be found in *Astrophil*, but with differences which can largely be traced to stylistic models, and which will be evident as our survey takes us through the various mimetic figures at work in the sonnet cycles. The first of the *Astrophil* exordial enactments occurs in No. 34:

Come, let me write. 'And to what end?' To ease
A burdened heart. 'How can words ease, which are
'The glasses of thy daily vexing care?'

(ll. 1-3)

Here, the opening clause wittily advertises its status as an opening clause, and therefore does what it says, and reifies what it says, in the very act of saying it. The medium and the message fuse, and the concept is 'figured forth'. Similar opening enactments are later used in Michael Drayton's *Ideas Mirrour* (No. 31) and the anonymous *Zepheria* (No. 17), both published in 1594, and in the cycles of Shakespeare and Spenser, which we shall turn to shortly.

As well as being a display of wit, the 'Come, let me write' opening is also entirely continuous with the main body of a poem which, as we then find out, is concerned throughout with the act of writing. Textuality is a key theme in *Astrophil*. Although the topic of reader-reception had featured in early Renaissance sonnets, including the *Rime sparse* ('Voi ch'ascoltate...', No. 1, opening words), it is a measure of the increased self-consciousness regarding the medium of language in the later Renaissance that the interpretation and/or effects of words and signs are such frequent topics throughout

1. From his discussion concerning hieroglyphics in *The Advancement of Learning*, 1605, II.xvi.3.

Sidney's sequence:¹

But never heeds the fruit of writer's mind . . .
(No. 11, l. 8)

The orator so far men's hearts doth bind . . .
(No. 58, l. 2)

Well, how so thou interpret the contents . . .
(No. 67, l. 12)

Nor are these half-reflexive lines simply witty add-ons to the core theme of the sonnet cycle; very often the more witty and metapoetic the devices are, the more crucial they are to the love story. There are several dozen references to textuality throughout the sequence, where the love content and the theme of writing unite. These include:

And now employ the remnant of my wit
To make myself believe that all is well,
While with a feeling skill I paint my hell.
(No. 2, ll. 12-14)

Then grew my tongue and pen records unto thy glory;
I thought all words were lost, that were not spent of thee . . .
(*Fifth Song*, ll. 3-4)

What sobs can give words grace my grief to show?
What ink is black enough to paint my woe?
(No. 93, ll. 2-3)

Even though not all reflexive language is mimetic, all mimetic language is reflexive to the extent that one aspect of a poem (its formal medium) enacts another (its content). Consequently, the fact that the concept of textual self-reference permeates the sequence, and is inseparable from the love story, provides almost endless scope for the creation of thematically congruous enactment figures. The same is true of the other sonnet cycles which we shall be considering.

1. This is discussed by Fernando Galvan, "I am not I, pitie the tale of me": Reading and Writing (in) *Astrophil and Stella*, *Journal of the Spanish Society for English Renaissance Studies*, 4 (1993), 41-62.

In No. 34, no sooner are the first two beats of the first line delivered than the next witty scheme, the unexpected *hypophora* sequence (a figure where a speaker alternately asks questions and answers them),¹ gets under way. This second figure allows the theme of self-questioning to be mimetically dramatised, rather than just diegetically described. Longinus, speaking of similar passages, says that 'the impassioned rapidity of question and answer and the device of self-objection have made the remark, in virtue of its figurative form, not only more sublime, but more credible' (*On the Sublime*, 18.1). However, even though the switch from exordial to dramatic mimesis is technically accomplished, the tone of the poem is uniformly casual and even effervescent; Sidney wears his masterly *elocutio* very lightly.

This brings us to a crucial principle of late-Renaissance rhetoric. Coined by Castiglione in *Il Libro del Cortegiano* (1528),² and further popularised by the home-grown English courtesy books, the word *sprezzatura* denotes a gay 'well-practised naturalness',³ redolent of Ovid's maxim, as found in the *Ars Amatoria*, that 'ars est celare artem'. This same principle is to be found in Aristotle, who says of stylistic figures that 'of course it is absurd to be found obviously using this sort of thing' (*Poetics*, 1458b); in Demetrius (*On Style*, e.g. I.27-28 and III.182); in Cicero (e.g. *De Oratore*, I.V and II.C, and *Orator*, v.20-vi.20); in Longinus, who says that 'art is perfect when it looks like nature' (*On the Sublime*, 22.1 - see also 177.1-2); and Puttenham, who says that 'the chief prayse and cunning of our Poet is in the discreet using of his figures' (*The Arte of English Poesie*, III. i, ll. 21-22). Moreover, this rhetorical tradition interlocks with the specific subculture within which Sidney worked. By the 1580s, *sprezzatura*, the 'master trope of the courtier',⁴ had huge importance for the upper echelons, both in social-courtly terms - 'the casual ease with

1. Lanham, p. 87. The use of the dialogue form in *Astrophil* No. 34 is examined by Robert Langford Montgomery, *Symmetry and Sense: The Poetry of Sir Philip Sidney* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1961), pp. 80-82.

2. As discussed in Peter DeSa Wiggins, *Donne, Castiglione, and the Poetry of Courtliness* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000), p. 90; and Frank Whigham, *Ambition and Privilege: The Social Tropes of Elizabethan Courtesy Theory* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), pp. 33 and 90-94.

3. Lanham, p. 143.

4. Whigham, p. 93.

which someone has been schooled to meet the demands of very complex and exacting rules', and thus attain the 'courtly ideal'¹ - and also, overlapping with this, in terms of writing style. So closely associated is he with this principle that Sidney is even invoked by several modern-day commentators as the defining exemplar of the *sprezzatura* ideal.² The explicit recommendation of the 'ars est celare artem' approach by Sidney himself includes this, from the *Defence*:

. . .where the other, using art to show art, and not to hide art (as in these cases he should do), flieth from nature, and indeed abuseth art.

(ll. 1449-51. Also, e.g., 'A careless comeliness', *Lamon's Tale*, l. 213.)

Moreover, the self-effacing mimetic inventiveness of No. 34 does not end with the *antiphora* figure. In line 11, Astrophil suddenly abandons the self-dialogue, and declares:

Peace, foolish wit; with wit my wit is marred.

This, despite its brevity, is one of the most splendid, and overt, enactments in the entire sequence. The repetitive word-play (or *traductio*) on 'wit' turns the 'wit' back on itself, and the phrase thus acts out, in compressed form, the reflexive confusion and doubt of the previous lines, as well as reifying, on an immediate level, the implosive meaning of the phrase itself. As Rosalie Littell Colie says, this is a 'line about wit' written using 'the most rhetorically compressed wit';³ and the line thereby enactively mimes and epitomises its own content.

Furthermore, 'marred', as Colie also notes, 'belies itself', in that the line is in fact *elevated* 'with wit'.⁴ Not only does the enactment illustrate content, therefore, but in doing this so

1. M.H. Abrams, *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, sixth edition (Fort Worth, etc.: Harcourt Brace College Publishers, 1993), p. 178.

2. E.g., *ibid.*, loc. cit.; Kenneth Myrick, *Sir Philip Sidney as a Literary Craftsman* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1965), pp. 313-14; and Robin Sowerby, *The Classical Legacy in Renaissance Poetry* (London and New York: Longman, 1994), p. 145.

3. *Paradoxia Epidemica: The Renaissance Tradition of Paradox* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1966), p. 93.

4. *Ibid.*, loc. cit.

cleverly it also enacts a refutation, and in fact an inversion, of the self-disparagement. Both the modesty and the adroit *elocutio* demanded by court society are thus accomplished in one deft move. The original audience could even have perceived the dextrous use of mimesis both as an example of *sprezzatura* and as a subtle, parodic over-achievement of *sprezzatura* expectations, the former perhaps being that of Astrophil, with the latter being that of Sidney. If so, this split-level structure would certainly match the alienation of the preceding dialogue, where 'Astrophil', as a persona, is rendered metapoetic by the unexpected, and even mannerist, foregrounding of the speaker(s). The 'wit' figure is, then, a quintessential example of how the overall medium-centred approach to linguistic expression in English Renaissance culture can, when it encounters the more localised culture of Elizabethan courtly wit, give rise to verbal structures of extraordinary finesse and precision. *Astrophil* No. 34 is a treasure-house of mimetic figures, and we shall return to it later on.

Further poems in the Sidney sequence which contain exordial enactments include No. 40:

As good to write, as for to lie and groan.
O Stella dear, how much thy power hath wrought,
That hast my mind, none of the basest, brought
My still kept course, while others sleep, to moan.

Once more, the words not only narrate the theme, but also act out and embody it, and this structural ingenuity is again underplayed through the use of a markedly informal tone. More specifically, the grammatical dependence and the *isocolon* (i.e., the parallel structure of successive phrases) bind the initial clause to the subsequent clause ('as for to lie and groan'), a clause which in its turn sets up the love theme. The sonnet, viewed backwards, tapers into the pre-textual, non-verbal state of insomniac anxiety which is then described; and so the verse, when spoken or read, glides effortlessly from silence/inarticulacy, to articulacy, to articulacy thematised, and from there to adoration. The medium of the written word and the message of the (in)articulacy and love themes thus coalesce into an aesthetically-pleasing, and apparently inevitable, whole. A similar progression from

silence to text to theme is to be seen at the start of No. 94:

Grief, find the words; for thou hast made my brain
So dark with misty vapours, which arise
From out thy heavy mould, that inbent eyes
Can scarce discern the shape of mine own pain.

The word 'grief' is not in itself important to the mimetic effect, which is in fact centred upon 'find the words'. The result is that the reflexive device is framed by the arresting opening word on the one side, which resonates forwards, and by the dependent 'for thou', which links back, on the other. The enactment figure is thus partly submerged in the middle, this once again giving the sparkling inventiveness an air of restrained - and apparently accidental - sophistication. That his use of mimetic devices has so rarely been noted is, in itself, testimony to the fact that Sidney is highly adept at hiding the wires which enable his poems to fly.

Perhaps with the above sonnets in mind, Shakespeare, too, employs opening enactments. Like Sidney, he makes textuality a core theme throughout his sequence, and this in turn provides an environment wherein dazzling mimetic figures are readily generated. In No. 39, a sonnet about adoration and its expression, the opening enactment constitutes just one half of a question, which then turns out to be continuous with two subsequent questions:

O how thy worth with manners may I sing,
When thou art all the better part of me?
What can mine own praise to mine own self bring?
And what is't but mine own when I praise thee?

Thus, as is the case with Sidney, the ingenious mimesis is underplayed, and thereby underscored, in true *sprezzatura* fashion. Similar self-questioning opening enactments are to be found in, for example, Spenser's *Amoretti* (1595) No. 43, and in sonnet No. 17 of the anonymous *Zepheria* cycle of 1594 (mentioned above). In all of these poems, the fact that the witty mimesis centres upon the theme of inarticulacy gives the figure understated, and so accentuated, throwaway flair.

Like those in Wyatt, Elizabethan enactments which enlist the flow of the verse to mimetic

ends occur with greater frequency than the exordial type, perhaps because, working over a larger section of verse than just the opening, they have more scope for development. In *Astrophil* No. 19, the ink on the page before us unifies telling and showing, medium and message, generating and embodying that which it denotes through the act of denotation itself:

My very ink turns straight to Stella's name . . .
(l. 6)

As with the Tudor pen figures, the fact that Sidney's poem will originally have been read in manuscript form, and perhaps even in the poet's own hand, will have resulted in a striking blend of diegesis and mimesis, and of narrative and the physical act of narration. *Astrophil* then doubts whether he should be writing anything at all, thus actualising the 'while I run, repent' principle in line 4:

I willing run, yet while I run, repent.
My best wits still their own disgrace invent;
My very ink turns straight to Stella's name;
And yet my words, as them my pen doth frame,
Advise themselves that they are vainly spent,
For though she pass all things, yet what is all
That unto me, who fare like him that both
Looks to the skies, and in a ditch doth fall?
(ll. 4-11)

The mimesis of the 'very ink' enactment is therefore harnessed by the *sprezzatura* mode, the self-doubt gaining ground, on the level of content, as the verse proceeds; and so down-playing, as in the exordial schemes, the verbal skill which the enactments require. Once again, not only telling and showing, but also virtuosity and nonchalance, are combined.

Almost the same figure is handled with a similar degree of understatement in No. 34, where the ink expended in the course of the first twelve lines is suddenly and unexpectedly thematised, so that the physicality of the text on the page once again embodies content:

Thus write I while I doubt to write, and wreak
My harms on ink's poor loss . . .
(ll. 12-13)

The use of the reflexively deictic 'thus' is reminiscent of Wyatt's 'that thus doth make me moan' (*In mourning wise*, l. 6) and Surrey's 'Thus I within my woeful breast her picture paint and grave' (*If care do cause men cry*, l. 32), and of course Sidney's pen motif follows on from Wyatt's *My pen, take pain*. But Sidney's lines are self-effacing ('poor loss') in a way that would have been alien to the earlier poets.

The above scheme acts as a mimetic 'figuring forth' of an idea expressed only diegetically in the *Defence*. The latter contains numerous references to the author's literary unworthiness, including the 'inky tribute' passage (ll. 1213-16), and then, towards the end: 'I conjure you all that have had the evil luck to read this ink-wasting toy of mine . . .' (ll. 1510-11). Whilst in the *Defence* the wasted ink references are part of the courtly convention of authorial self-disparagement which often appears in works around this time, in *Astrophil* No. 34 the combination of poetry and mimesis has transformed this exact same concept into a verbal emblem which offers as proof ('Thus') of its theme the very words on the page in front of us. The thought is, therefore, shown to us in the actual medium of expression, as a 'speaking picture' (*Defence*, l. 419), although in a manner which ensures that, as in the case of the 'with wit my wit' line earlier on in the poem, the self-criticism 'belies itself'. So, once again, the two principal aims of the courtier-poet, sophisticated *elocutio* and apparent nonchalance, are achieved in one go through language which, in perfect accord with the *sprezzatura* ideal, 'reports' modesty but 'represents'¹ finesse.

It is a central contention of this study that the specific configuration of words on the page, as distinct from simply their content, was crucial to Renaissance compositional practice. As Russ McDonald has said recently, when discussing Shakespeare's language, 'In other words, there is no such thing as in other words'² The comparisons between excerpts from the *Defence* and *Astrophil and Stella* underline just how far poetry can outdo, in signifying power, a bare-content equivalent. In the same way that 'these men . . .

1. *Defence*, ll. 1297-98.

2. *The Bedford Companion to Shakespeare* (Boston and New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2001B), p. 36.

by their own disgracefulness disgrace the most graceful poesy' (*Defence*, l. 1202) - the most dense verbal pattern in the work - is left behind by the even more densely-patterned *polyptotic epizeuxis* of 'Which even of sweetness sweetest sweetener art' (*Astrophil* No. 79, l. 2), so the various instances where a passage in the *Defence* is mimetically poeticised in *Astrophil* demonstrate the superiority of art, in its full sense, over lesser modes of expression. Sidney, having set out his own philosophy in the *Defence*, is, then, putting into practice the contrast which he himself draws therein between the philosopher and the poet. The latter

yieldeth to the powers of the mind an image of that whereof the philosopher bestoweth but a wordish description, which doth neither strike, pierce, nor possess the sight of the soul so much as that other doth . . . the philosopher with his learned definitions . . . replenisheth the memory with many infallible grounds of wisdom, which, notwithstanding, lie dark before the imaginative and judging power, if they be not illuminated or figured forth by the speaking picture of poesy.

(ll. 402-19)

In the above, he is echoing the rephrasing principle which we found in the works of the great rhetoricians, from Demetrius to Erasmus.

Further, Sidney elaborates upon the difference 'betwixt reporting and representing' (*Defence*, ll. 1297-98), or between 'a wordish description' (l. 404) and one which is 'illuminated or figured forth by the speaking picture of poesy' (l. 418-19). Firstly, on a theoretical level, and as part of his general prioritising of 'manner' over bare 'matter' (this binary model appears in lines 285 and 1459), he makes 'figuring forth' continuous with his idea that 'Nature never set forth the earth in so rich tapestry as divers poets have done Her world is brazen, the poets only deliver a golden' (ll. 182-85). Secondly, on the level of practical *elocutio*, the Cratylist telling/showing or diegesis/mimesis distinction unites with Sidney's commitment to the rhetorical principles of *energia*,¹ which is a 'general term for vigor and verve, of whatever sort, in expression',² and *enargia*, a sub-set of

1. See l. 1393.

2. Lanham, p. 65.

energia, meaning vividness of description.¹ Throughout the classical and Renaissance rhetorical texts, emphasis is placed on the importance of expressing something in such a way as to evoke something so intensely that we seem to experience it at first hand. This is often described as placing the subject 'ante oculos'.² Or as Sidney puts it:

... all virtues, vices, and passions so in their own natural seats laid to the view, that we seem not to hear of them, but clearly to see through them.

(*Defence*, ll. 437-38. See also ll.402-405 and 414-19.)

Enactment is a quintessential form of the *energia* or *evidentia* mode of *elocutio*:

It is Ocular Demonstration when an event is so described in words that the business seems to be enacted [that is, 'ut geri negotium'] and the subject to pass vividly before our eyes.

(*Rhetorica ad Herennium*, IV.LV.68)

The rhetorical culture of the Renaissance, with its classicist emphasis on form and the expressive medium, alongside the strong influence of Cratylid thought during the late-sixteenth century, make this period highly conducive to the use of mimetic figures. But, in more immediate terms, one of the best explanations as to why mimetic language-use arises with such frequency within Renaissance compositional practice is the simple and obvious one that, in accordance with the rhetorical doctrine of *energia*, Cratylid devices rendered the works far more graphic and effective.

With the exception of the 'with wit my wit is marred' mimesis from the metapoetic *Astrophil* No. 74, the Elizabethan enactments which we have considered so far have been informed to a greater or lesser extent by the *sprezzatura* 'ars est celare artem' principle. However, many of the Elizabethan enactment figures involve a more overt kind of

1. The principle of *energia* is discussed, without being named, at ll. 437-38, 402-405, and 414-19.

2. E.g., *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, Book IV, Chapters XXXIV.45, XLV.59, XLVII.60, XLVIII.61, and LV.68-69; Cicero's *De Oratore*, ILLXXXVII, ILLXL, and ILLII-LV, and *De Inventione*, LLIV; and Quintilian's *Institutio Oratoria*, VIII.III.62 and IX.II.40. Among the early Greeks, this idea is used by Aristotle (*Rhetoric* III.XI.1-2), and among the later Greeks it is used by Dionysius (*On Literary Composition*, Pt.20). During the Renaissance, it appears in Rudolph Agricola (*De Inventione*, III.4) (as discussed in Cave, p. 32); Erasmus (*De Copia*, Bk. II, Method 5); and Puttenham (*The Arte of English Poesie*, Bk. III, Chapter III). See also Vickers, 1988, pp. 320-22, and Heninger, 1989, pp. 96-97.

mimesis. The famous opening sonnet of *Astrophil and Stella* enacts its own theme throughout:

Loving in truth, and fain in verse my love to show,
That she (dear she) might take some pleasure of my pain;
Pleasure might cause her read, reading might make her know;
Knowledge might pity win, and pity grace obtain;
I sought fit words to paint the blackest face of woe,
Studying inventions fine, her wits to entertain;
Oft turning others' leaves, to see if thence would flow
Some fresh and fruitful showers upon my sunburnt brain.
But words came halting forth, wanting invention's stay;
Invention, nature's child, fled step-dame study's blows;
And others' feet still seemed but strangers in my way.
Thus great with child to speak, and helpless in my throes,
Biting my truant pen, beating myself for spite,
'Fool,' said my muse to me; 'look in thy heart, and write'.

The impression of stagnation is initially enacted by the delaying of the first main verb, 'sought', until the fifth line. This creates space for a long chain of interlocking subordinate clauses:

..... might take
..... might cause might make ...
..... might...win [might] grace obtain ...

The above structure incorporates a retarding combination of *polyptoton* (the repetition of a root, with a changed suffix) and *anadiplosis* (using the last word of one clause to begin the next clause),¹ and initiates the use of the caesura over no fewer than nine lines. Not until the clipped, *hypophora* (question-and-answer) sequence of No. 34, in fact, does a sonnet contain more mid-line breaks. Likewise, there is a frequent use of the gerund form, which appears eight times; no other *Astrophil* sonnet employs it this often. All of these features serve to disrupt and slow down the verbal and semantic flow, and hence to reify the 'words came halting forth' conceit.

The metrical scheme, too, contributes to this delaying effect. Surrey had used

1. Extended *anadiplosis* such as this is also known as 'climax' or '*gradatio*' (see, for example, *De Ratione Studii*, p. 677).

Alexandrines (e.g. in *Too dearly had I bought*) and even fourteeners (e.g. in *Good ladies*) for longer poems, but the use of Alexandrines for a sonnet is a Sidney innovation. The extra beat augments the sense of stagnation, just as it does in No. 6, the next sonnet to use Alexandrines instead of pentameters, where it mimes the slow-paced 'pain his pen doth move' (l. 11) anti-Petrarchan irony, and in the *Seventh Song*, where it illustratively enacts and reifies the 'cloyed with wit' (l. 3) topic. The 'others' feet' pun in line 11 accentuates this.¹ Puttenham, likewise, associates metrical feet with anatomical feet (II.iii), as does the author of the play *The Pilgrimage to Parnassus*, produced around 1600, whose character Madido speaks of voyaging to

the land of *Sintaxis*, a land full of joyners, and from thenc came I to *Prosodia*, a litell iland, where are men of 6 feete longe, which were never mentioned in Sir John Mandefilde's cronicle.²

The powerful conjunction of mimetic devices in *Astrophil* No. 1 illustrates, delineates, and accentuates the semantic freight, and the motivated relationship between expression and meaning results in a remarkable directness of signification. Sidney's ability to supercharge language finds a very different, and non-mimetic, outlet in his letter to Edmund Molyneux:

Mr Molyneux: Few words are best. My letters to my father have come to the eyes of some: neither can I condemn any but you for it. If it be so, you have played the very knave with me; and so I will make you know if I have good proof of it. But that for so much as is past. For that is to come, I assure you before God, that if ever I know you do so much as read any letter I write to my father, without his commandment or my consent, I will thrust my dagger into you. And trust to it, for I speak it in earnest. In the mean time, farewell. From Court, this last of May 1578.

By me

Philip Sidney.³

Elocutio had many uses.

1. This pun is mentioned by David Kalstone in Alpers, ed., p. 205.

2. Quoted in Baldwin, Vol. I, p. 753. The authorship and date for *The Pilgrimage to Parnassus* are uncertain.

3. In Sir Philip Sidney, *A Critical Edition of the Major Works*, ed. Katherine Duncan-Jones (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), p. 284. (All the other Sidney quotes are similarly from this edition.)

The steadily intensifying log-jam in No. 1 reaches complete stasis in lines 12-13, with their multiple premodifiers, which, lacking any temporal or causal relationships, are potentially endless:

Thus great with child to speak, and helpless in my throes,
Biting my truant pen, beating myself for spite . . .

The *anadiplosis* of lines 2-4 had at least offered slow progress, gradually leading into the 'sought fit words' theme in the second quatrain. Lines 13 and 14, though, simply revolve on the spot, like wheels stuck in mud; in a kind of non-progressive *accumulatio*, each adjectival clause digs the poem in still further. Right the way through, then, the theme of poetic stasis is exactly 'figured forth' by the poetic stasis of the verse itself. The verbal medium not only shadows the theme of non-progression *per se*, but also shadows the growing intensity of such stasis. The language-use thus exactly matches and underscores the content moment by moment, and goes far beyond any generalised, underlying decorum between topic and form.

As it turns out, the above modifying clauses do not, in fact, modify anything. Instead, the intervention of the muse in the closing line, like the 'Give me some food' irruption of Desire in No. 71, unexpectedly appropriates the speaking rôle and so cuts through the Gordian knot which the preceding lines have tied:

'Fool,' said my muse to me; 'look in thy heart, and write.'

Over the whole of the first thirteen lines, a counterpoint has been established between the verbal linear progression of the verse on the one hand, and the deferral of action which constitutes the subject-matter on the other; and, with the closing imperative, this same process/stasis binary is both inverted and maintained. That is, the cessation of the verse sequence on the level of form exactly coincides with the inception of the act of writing on the level of content. A similar pattern was later to be used in a sonnet by Michael Drayton (1563-1631) which is no less celebrated than the Sidney lyric, the magnificent *Idea* No. 61, *Since there's no help*:

Now at the last gasp of love's latest breath,
When, his pulse failing, passion speechless lies,
When faith is kneeling by his bed of death,
And innocence is closing up his eyes,
Now if thou wouldst, when all have given him over,
From death to life thou mightst him yet recover.

In the case of the Sidney poem, the incremental, circling, non-progressing tension followed by sudden release is the poetic equivalent of whirling an object round and then suddenly letting it go, thus getting *Astrophil and Stella*, in terms of inventive energy, off to a flying start.

Mimetic language allows one to meet, in one go, the two key rhetorical objectives of *amplification* and *illustration* - as twinned by Cicero in the *De Oratore* III.LIII - by *showing* instead of merely *telling*:

For how can you commend a thing more acceptably to our attention than by telling us it is extraordinary and by showing us it is evident? There is no looking at a comet if it be either little or obscure, and we love and look on the sun above all stars for these two excellencies, his greatness, his clearness: such in speech is amplification and illustration.

(John Hoskyns, *Directions for Speech and Style*, 1599, p. 17.)

In terms of parody, the particular strength of verbal enactment is that it can enable one not only to create, in order to mock, a simulacrum of that which one derides; but also, on the same principle used by satirical cartoonists when making caricatures, it allows one to recreate the object of representation in accentuated form. So the intention of *Astrophil* No. 1 seems to be to mock, through the use of parodically exaggerated replication, the compositional practice of some of Sidney's contemporaries. The obvious target for this criticism is Petrarchanism. Sidney tells us in the *Defence* that many poets

so coldly . . . apply fiery speeches, as men that had rather read lovers' writings - and so caught up certain swelling phrases which hang together, like a man that once told my father that the wind was at north-west and by south, because he would be sure to name winds enough - than that in truth they feel those passions, which easily (as I think) may be bewrayed by that same forcibleness or *energia* (as the Greeks call it) of the writer.

(ll. 1387-93)

As Duncan-Jones notes, 'so coldly . . . apply fiery' is clearly an allusion to the trademark

oxymorons of the Petrarchans¹ (see also the 'freezing fires' of *Astrophil* No. 6). The link between No. 1 and the questioning of excessive Petrarchanism is also reinforced by the fact that No. 15, which is so similar to No. 1 in both theme and structure, directly mentions Petrarch.

In the opening sonnet, then, as with other mimetic passages we have seen in *Astrophil*, Sidney takes an idea found in the *Defence* and renders it 'illuminated or figured forth by the speaking picture of poesy' (ll. 418-19). The poem is an emblematic enactment of what can happen when a poet 'maketh matter for a conceit' (*Defence*, l. 828) and depends solely on other 'lovers' writings' (l. 1388). Given that, as David Kalstone says, the English sonneteers were 'subject at once to the currents and countercurrents' of the continental Renaissance, and if Sidney in his sequence therefore 'revitalizes the Petrarchan vision while calling its values into question',² then the mimetic language of his exordial sonnet allows him to go in both directions simultaneously, enactively mocking over-dependence on 'others' leaves' (l.7) with such *energia*³ that he can kick-start the English sonnet cycles with all the compositional self-assurance of an unquestioning Petrarchan. Hence, once again, the self-disparagement 'belies itself', the poem 'reporting and representing' the 'words came halting forth' scheme, and, in the act of doing so, 'representing' Sidney's astonishing powers of *elocutio*.

Petrarchanism, however, may not be the only target of the mimesis. One of the few interpretations of *Astrophil* No. 1 which critics have not yet advanced is that it is an opening salvo aimed, if not at Cicero himself, then at slavish Ciceronianism. This reading would coexist, rather than conflict, with the anti-Petrarchan interpretation, and appears especially convincing if one compares the sonnet with the following, taken from the satirical *Ciceronianus* (1528) of Erasmus:

1. In Sidney, 1989.

2. *Sidney's Poetry: Contexts and Interpretations* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1970), p. 2.

3. Neil Rudenstine in Alpers, ed., pp. 221-33 covers *energia* in Sidney.

I read as many letters of Cicero as possible; I consult all my lists; I select some words strikingly Ciceronian, some tropes, and phrases, and rhythms. Finally, when furnished sufficiently with this kind of material, I examine what figures of speech I can use and where I can use them. Then I return to the question of sentences. For it is now a work of art to find meanings for these verbal embellishments.

(Part ii, p. 31)¹

Furthermore, shortly after the 'so coldly' passage quoted above, and whilst still elaborating on his criticism of derivative poetry, Sidney himself refers to Tully (Cicero) and to 'Nizolian paper books', the latter including the *Thesaurus Ciceronianus*, published in 1535.² The probable dates for the composition of *Astrophil* - 1581-83 - would have been exactly the right moment for Sidney to have been reviving the attack on excessive Ciceronianism. Anti-Ciceronianism had been given fresh impetus just a few years earlier with the appearance of Gabriel Harvey's own *Ciceronianus* in 1577, and with the attack on the 'nizolian' method by Sidney's friend Henri Estienne in *Nizoliodidascalus*, published in 1578.³ Further support for an anti-Ciceronian interpretation of *Astrophil* No. 1 comes from a letter written by Sir Philip Sidney to his brother, Robert, on 18th October, 1580:

So you can speak and write Latin not barbarously, I never require great study in Ciceronianism, the chief abuse of Oxford, 'Qui dum verba sectantur, res ipsas negligunt'.⁴

Just as, in lines 1387-88 of the *Defence*, Sidney turns the ice-fire Petrarchan figure back on Petrarchanism, so in *Astrophil* No. 1 he appears to be using a parodic stylistic enactment to turn the (alleged) tenet of the Ciceronians, that subject-matter should dominate expression, back on Ciceronianism.

Although Cicero had undoubtedly been the most revered and imitated of the classical rhetoricians during the Middle Ages, and whilst he had continued to dominate stylistics

1. See also George Williamson, *The Senecan Amble: A Study of Prose from Bacon to Collier* (London: Faber & Faber, 1951), pp. 12-13.

2. Duncan-Jones in Sidney, 1989, p. 388.

3. Duncan-Jones in *ibid.*, loc. cit.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 293. There is also evidence of anti-Ciceronianism in the *Defence*. This is discussed by Williamson, pp. 68-69, and Montgomery, pp. 4-5 and 65-72.

during the time of Wyatt and Surrey, by the last decades of the sixteenth century his influence was rivalled by that of Seneca. For the late English Renaissance, Senecanism tended to be a correlative of anti-Ciceronianism. Essentially, late-sixteenth-century versifiers could choose the 'rolling, musical sentences of Cicero' or the 'terse, pointed sentences of Seneca'.¹ This dichotomy was a variation on the well-known classical stylistic binary of Asianism and Atticism, the former being more expansive, and the latter, which is recommended by Quintilian (XII.X.20), being 'compressed and energetic'.² Wyatt translates Seneca in *Stand whoso list*,³ where, in the Arundel Harington version, he renders not only the Senecan 'matter' but also the Senecan 'manner' into English. He writes with a jagged, almost colloquial, tone, which could not be further removed from his trademark simplicity and grace:

For him death grip'th right hard by the crop
That is much known of other, and of himself, alas,
Doth die unknown, dazed, with dreadful face.
(ll. 8-10)

As the notes by R.A. Rebholz show, Wyatt here even outdoes the original. A literal translation would have 'Death lies heavy on him' in place of line 8, above.⁴ This poem appeared in Tottel's *Miscellany*, where there is also a translation of Seneca by Surrey, *Brittle beautie*. For both poets, however, Senecanism represented only a brief detour. The Senecan model is markedly more abrupt than the Ciceronian, as is evident here:

Non possum nunc per obsequium nec molliter adsequi tam dolorem;
frangendus est.

(*Ad Marciam: De Consolatione*, I.8, ll. 8-9.)

It is presumably lines such as these that Dryden is thinking of when he complains that

1. Marion Wynne-Davies, ed., *The Renaissance* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 1994), p. 103.

2. *Institutio Oratoria*, XII.X.16

3. See Sowerby, p. 88.

4. In Wyatt, p. 372.

Seneca's Latin 'has nothing in it of the purity and elegance of Augustus his times'.¹ Even so, it can have a harmony of its own. In the following, the neatly bracketing, and in fact enactive, placing of the 'circum' prefix at both ends of the sentence 'encircles' the words and their meaning:

Circumfudit me ex longo frugalitatis situ venientem multo splendore luxuria
et undique circumsonuit.

(*Ad Serenum: De Tranquillitate Animi*, L.9, ll. 1-2.)²

Moreover, the 'frangendus est' clause, from the previous quotation, is also mimetic, in that the style is itself 'broken' up, the decorum between theme and expression being tight enough to form a subtle illustration of content. The Senecan style is clearly no less conducive than the Ciceronian to the creation of mimetic devices.

Schemes like these serve to 'clarify, reinforce, "point" meaning'; this being, by definition, the most important feature of the 'pointed' style, which is itself 'usually called Senecan'.³ Stylistic enactment 'points' meaning by embodying it and metaphorically spelling it out, which hence places it in the latter half of Puttenham's division between figures which are merely ornamental, and those which are functional: '. . . some serving to give gloss only to a language, some to give it efficacy by sense' (*The Arte of English Poesie*, III.III, ll. 13-14). The Senecan style was popularised during the second half of the sixteenth century both by its inclusion in the school curriculum,⁴ and by the literary cross-winds from drama, where Senecan tragedy - either written by him⁵ or inspired by him⁶ - had been gaining ground.

1. 'The Life of Plutarch' (1683) in *The Works of John Dryden*, ed. Sir Walter Scott and George Edward Bateman Saintsbury (Edinburgh: William Paterson, 1882-93), Vol. 17, p. 76. See also Sowerby, p. 88.

2. This mimetic *epanalepsis* may have been encouraged by, and developed from, a non-mimetic example of *epanalepsis* as discussed in the *Rhetorica ad Herennium*: 'Commotus non es, cum tibi pedes mater amplexaretur, non es commotus?' (IV.xxviii.38). Another likely source is a line from Demosthenes' *De Corona* 143, which was, says Harry Caplan, part of 'a favourite passage with the rhetoricians'. See Caplan's note in his edition of the *Ad Herennium*, p. 324.

3. Lanham, p. 116.

4. See, for example, Jean R. Brink in Hattaway, ed., p. 102.

5. See Andrew Sanders, *The Short Oxford History of English Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 105.

6. See Wynne-Davies, p. 248

It may even be the case that 'no other single writer of the ancient world has exercised a comparable influence on both the prose and the verse of subsequent literature'.¹ Moreover, Senecanism received an additional boost with the appearance of Thomas Newton's *Seneca: His Tenne Tragedies* in 1581, the very year during which Sidney probably began work on his sonnet sequence. A natural, angular, and occasionally chopped, style, is evident throughout *Astrophil and Stella*. Senecanism is certainly a far more important factor here than it is in the Tudor lyrics. One reason for this may be that Sidney found a compatibility between his Protestant ethos and the 'strictness and . . . individualism of conduct' of the Stoics.² This Senecan tendency is also revealed in the *Defence*, where he incorporates an actual quotation from Seneca (ll. 750-51),³ and where he later refers to the Senecan style in highly positive terms. *Gorboduc* (Thomas Norton and Thomas Sackville, 1561), is, he says, 'full of stately speeches and well-sounding phrases, climbing to the height of Seneca his style' (ll. 1260-61).

1. C.D.N. Costa, *Seneca* (London and Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1974), p. vii.

2. Wynne-Davies, ed., loc. cit.

3. See Sowerby, p. 88.

Chapter 6

The Medium as the Message: Cratylist Devices within English Renaissance Poetry (Part Three)

Returning from Sidney's *Defence* to the poetry itself, we find that *Astrophil and Stella* No. 1 contains, in addition to the features examined in the last chapter, a further enactment device which, though small-scale, points ahead to more extensive versions in this sequence and in the poetry of Spenser and Shakespeare. Lines 7 to 8, at the centre of the stagnation, momentarily enact the fluency towards which the speaker is aspiring. This mimetic shadowing of the meaning, which, through contrast, accentuates - and is accentuated by - the retardation mimesis throughout the rest of the poem, is brought about by the placing of the word 'flow' at the end of the only line in the sonnet which has no end-stop, so that the term 'flow' itself marks a moment of textual flow:

Oft turning others' leaves, to see if thence would flow
Some fresh and fruitful showers upon my sunburnt brain.

Again, in *Astrophil* No. 74 there are two consecutive enjambements (the only ones in the whole sonnet) which end with 'so smooth an ease' and then 'flow', the medium of the words enacting the 'flow / in verse' which is being described. As in No. 1, the fluency contrasts with anti-progression elements, which this time consist of increasingly chopped phrases in the ensuing lines:

How falls it then, that with so smooth an ease
My thoughts I speak, and what I speak doth flow
In verse, and that my verse best wits doth please?
Guess we the cause: 'What, is it thus?' Fie, no;
'Or so?' Much less. 'How then?' Sure, thus it is;
My lips are sweet, inspired with Stella's kiss.
(Sestet)

Senecan brevity therefore contrapuntally foregrounds the mimetic run-ons; and these in turn give Senecan 'point' to the meaning.

Emblems are based upon the same telling/showing dynamic which informs stylistic mimesis, so it is hardly surprising that one can often find examples of the latter in emblem books. Emblem No. II, *There is no end of all his labour*, for instance, from Book II of the 1635 *Emblems* of Francis Quarles (1592-1644), begins with this mimetic run-on:

How our widened arms can over-stretch
Their own dimensions! . . .

This resembles the

Have every pelting river made so proud
That they have overborne their continents . . .
(*A Midsummer Night's Dream*, II.i.91-92.)

mimetic run-on in a speech by Titania. Whilst the Quarles enjambement is accentuated by the heavy caesura which follows, the unbounded, unimpeded quality of the Shakespeare run-on is, conversely, enhanced by the fact that this is the first time for over two hundred and fifty verse lines that there have been two adjacent lines without any caesurae at all. The lack of both line-breaks and an end-stop mimics the quality which is described.

The above enjambement enactments operate in the same way as those of *Astrophil* No. 1 and No. 74. With all of these run-ons, the effect is, as with mimetic language-use in general, to corporealize the meaning, and thus render the lines more lively and engaging than a semantically equivalent non-mimetic version. Given its context, the Quarles figure could be termed a 'stylistic emblem', with the mimesis performing the same illustrative function in relation to the verbal content as an emblematic picture in relation to its accompanying verse. George Herbert (1593-1633) often works at the junction of emblem and style. In *Easter Wings*, the overall (and well-known) mimetic structure - the concrete, visual depiction of angelic wings - is complemented by further reflexive touches. The words 'poor' (l. 5) and 'thin' (l. 15) mark the poorest or thinnest points of the stanzas, and the words 'With thee / Let me combine' do themselves combine, through grammar and enjambement, and initiate the expansion in the second half of the second stanza, which climbs metrically, visually, and semantically, to the closing line: 'Affliction shall advance the flight in me'. In addition to the display of wit, such devices help to ensure that the poem operates interactively, drawing the reader in towards the spiritual content during the act of reading. We shall return to Herbert's spiritual and experiential poetics in a moment. A further interesting example of the junction between stylistic enactment and emblematics

is the concrete poem *The Pillar of Fame* from *Hesperides* (1648) by Robert Herrick (1591-1674), where the last lines - 'But stand for ever by his owne / Firme and well fixt foundation' - expand in relation to those which precede them, and thus form the 'Firme and well fixt foundation' which they describe.¹

Enactment through enjambement is also to be found in *The Faerie Queene*. End-stops are employed for the vast majority of lines in Spenser's epic, and so the use of two or more consecutive run-ons is unusual. The enactment structure which we have just seen at work in *Astrophil* No. 74, where run-ons and mid-line breaks are played off against each other to mimetic ends, is, in the following passage, taken to new levels. Here, the evil and chaotic aspects of Duessa (chaos at that time having far more sinister implications than it does now) are inscribed into the verbal medium. The natural resting point for the words, the line ending, is persistently run over, and this, in conjunction with the equally persistent use of the caesura, serves to displace all of the clauses sideways, the sentence structure running counter to the verse structure. The strict order of the Spenserian stanza form antithetically underscores the stylistic enactment of chaos:

Then bowing downe her aged backe, she kist
The wicked witch saying: In that faire face
The false resemblance of Deceipt, I wist
Did closely lurke; yet so true-seeming grace
It carried, that I scarce in darkesome place
Could it discerne, though I the mother bee
Of falshood, and root of Duessaes race.
O welcome child, whom I have longd to see,
And now have seene unwares. Lo now I go with thee.
(I:V.27)

(Waswo discusses a similar enactment in Fulke Greville's (1554-1628) *Caelica* No. 2.)²

To borrow the terms used by Longinus when he discusses a 'crushing' enactment in the *Iliad*, Spenser has made the words 'correspond with the emotion of the moment', and has

1. See Norman K. Farmer, Jr., *Poets and the Visual Arts in Renaissance England* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1984), p. 70. For a discussion regarding the link between emblems and Cratyism, see Michael Bath, *Speaking Pictures* (London and New York: Longman, 1994), p. 3.

2. 1972, p. 46.

'stamped the special character of the danger on the diction' (*On the Sublime*, 10.6).

Enjambement is used to mimic the chaos of evil, bewitchment, dissimulation, and so on, in many other sections of the poem (e.g. I:XII.33, II:III.4, and II:III.19). In some places, run-ons are used to imitate the unrestrained quality of violent actions or emotions. Yet, however anarchic in appearance, such language-use is aligned with the turbulence of the subject-matter, and so, as Samuel Daniel puts it, 'sometimes to beguile the eare with a running out, and passing over the Ryme, as no bound to stay us in the line where the violence of the matter will breake thorow, is rather gracefull then otherwise'.¹ The following lines contain two different kinds of enactment. First, a short, but quintessential, aggregate enactment ('turne againe . . . turnd againe') mimics the relentless nature of the fight, the physical violence of which is then, in turn, enacted by a triple enjambement. The aggregate and run-on types of mimesis thus work together, with the how augmenting the what at every stage; and, as in the I:V.27 passage quoted above, the enjambement works in conjunction with the caesurae in order to cause the greatest possible degree of disorder:

Him in a narrow place he overtooke,
And fierce assailing forst him turne againe:
Sternely he turnd againe, when he strooke
With his sharp steele, and ran at him amaine
With open mouth, that seemed to containe
A full good pecke within the utmost brim . . .
(VI. XII. 26)²

The result is arresting and evocative. Passages such as these are the *elocutio* equivalent of a pop-up book, the ideas coming straight off the page in reified form.

The high incidence of Cratylid devices in Spenser may partly be explained by the fact that in addition to the medium-based literary culture as a whole, which was available to anyone who had been through the English Renaissance school system, Spenser could also have had a more specific and personal set of associations with Cratylid thought than did

1. *A Defence of Rhyme* (c.1603), in Smith, ed., Vol. II, p. 382.

2. Robinson (pp. 155-57) discusses the use of stylistic enactment to enrich the depiction of a similar scene in the *New Arcadia*.

most writers:

Richard Mulcaster, Spenser's master at the Merchant Taylors' School, cites the *Cratylus* in the peroration to the first part of his *Elementarie*, 1582, proving the existence and importance of 'right names' . . . and Richard Wills, commonly regarded as the Willye of Spenser's *Shepherd's Calendar*, in his *De Re Poetica*, 1573, gives a nearly verbatim rendering of a passage from Marsilio Ficino's introduction to the dialogue for his Latin edition of Plato.¹

Craig also mentions the references to Cratylism in *Lawier's Logike*, written by the Ramist Abraham Fraunce, and printed in London in 1588.² Given that this book contains, alongside its Cratylist discussion, extended analyses of *The Shepherd's Calendar*, then its publication could well have given impetus to Spenser's Cratylist method - both as regards mimetic language-use and as regards the Cratylist etymology of the protagonists' names³ - in *The Faerie Queene*, the first half of which went to the printer in the November of the following year.⁴ (Perhaps with the *Faerie Queene* enactments in mind, Sir Walter Raleigh (1552?-1618), in his *Ocean's Love to Cynthia*,⁵ uses a caesura-enjambement-caesura enactment: 'It's now an idle labour, and a tale / Told out of time, that dulls . . .', ll. 357-58.)

Chaos enactments are used extensively in the works of George Herbert, and are to be found in some of his most successful lyrics. In *Deniall*, for example, the enactment of the message through the mimetic deployment of rhyme and metre accounts for much of the poem's affective power. The boldly unorthodox form plays against the expectations of an audience which will have been thoroughly drilled in the (usually) unnegotiable orderliness of Renaissance prosody. The first stanza runs:

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1. Craig in Alpers, ed., p. 468. See also Willy Maley in Andrew Hadfield, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Spenser* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 170.
 2. In op. cit., p. 469.
 3. The latter is discussed throughout Craig's chapter in Alpers, ed.. For a similar account of Cratylist etymology in Milton, see John Leonard, *Naming in Paradise: Milton and the Language of Adam and Eve* (Oxford: Clarendon Press; New York: Oxford University Press, 1990).
 4. From p. 188 of Dorothy Eagle, reviser, *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of English Literature*, second edition. (London: Oxford University Press, 1970. Based on the fourth edition of the *Oxford Companion to English Literature*, ed. Sir Paul Harvey, 1932, and John Mulgan, 1939.)
 5. Date unknown.

When my devotions could not pierce
Thy silent ears;
Then was my heart broken, as was my verse:
My breast was full of fears
And disorder.

With the first four lines containing four, two, five, and three stresses respectively; with the trochee on 'broken' forming a 'break' in the iambic rhythm; and with the run-on into line five, a continuation which in its turn helps to establish iambic regularity only for this to crash back into a 'disorder' of scansion on the word 'disorder', this stanza constitutes a small masterclass in the employment of Cratylid language.

The same kinds of enactive scheme are then employed throughout the next four verses. The immediate and straightforward parallelism, and causal link, between the persona's emotional state and the mode of expression is accentuated by Herbert's subtle activation in the reader's mind of the Pythagorean as-above-so-below philosophical system, which links the spiritual and prosodic planes in isomorphic harmony. The last two verses run:

Therefore my soul lay out of sight,
Untuned, unstrung:
My feeble spirit, unable to look right,
Like a nipped blossom, hung
Discontented. 25

O cheer and tune my heartless breast,
Defer no time;
That so thy favors granting my request,
They and my mind may chime,
And mend my rhyme.
(ll. 21-30)

Just as the disordered how reifies the disordered what in the first five stanzas, so the mimetic relationship between medium and message continues into the closing stanza, this time through the enactment of order. The observance of end-stops, the iambic structure of the last line, which matches line 27 both in rhyme and in the number of feet, the use of rhyme at the end, on the actual word 'rhyme', and the 'chime' (l. 29) between God's favours and the speaker's mind, and between these two and the rhyme itself, resolve the psychic and prosodic tensions of the preceding lines, and create a sense, through tangible

enactment, of spiritual healing and grace.

A similar pattern is employed in *The Collar*. The chaotic arrangement of the metre and the rhyme-scheme matches the emotional disorder, and this randomness is foregrounded by the fact that the sounds of the line-endings recur so often. The first fourteen lines contain just six rhyme sounds (Shakespearean sonnets use seven), and this gives us plenty of time to grow familiar with them, and to notice their disordered placing. The turmoil ultimately builds up to the enactive run-on of lines 33-34 (the only run-on in the whole poem to cover two full lines), where the words grow so 'fierce and wild' that they burst through the constraints of the verse form at the actual words 'fierce and wild'. These lines then set up the closing rhymes, which mimic the sudden restoration of order as God speaks. As in *Deniall*, disorder and then order, and the contrast between the two, are reified:

But as I raved and grew more fierce and wild
At every word,
Me thoughts I heard one calling, *Child*:
And I replied, *My Lord*.

Other examples of enactment in Herbert include the pruning of letters in *Paradise*, which mirrors the spiritual pruning experienced by the speaker; the indeterminate stanza endings of *The Water-Course*, where alternative closures mime the alternative spiritual paths which are described; and the mimetic disorder of the enjambements in *Church-Monuments*.¹

Given the overall Cratylist and mimetic culture of the age, and the extent of his own creative genius, it is impossible to say whether or not Shakespeare's use of enactment devices could ever be reliably traced back to Sidney, Spenser, or anyone else. However, there are distinct similarities between the types of mimetic language-use in the poetry of Shakespeare and in that of his immediate predecessors. Frank Kermode, for example, looks at the ways in which syntactical turbulence mirrors and embodies psychological

1. Enactment in *Church-Monuments* is covered by Achsah Guibbory, *Ceremony and Community from Herbert to Milton* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 66-67. For further discussion about Herbert's use of form-content correspondences, such as the employment of triples in *Trinity Sunday*, see Colie, e.g. p. 195.

turbulence in *Coriolanus*;¹ and in Sonnet No. 116 the only strong mid-line impediment to the verse-flow over the course of the entire poem is marked by the actual word 'impediments', an interruption which is accentuated by the preceding run-on:

Let me not to the marriage of true minds
Admit impediments; love is not love . . .
(ll. 1-2)

In this example, the halting scheme which we found in the Sidney and Spenser poems over a number of lines is handled with the conciseness of the Sidney flow enjambements.

Likewise, in Sonnet No. 30, the phrase 'unused to flow' (l. 5) marks, excluding end-stops, the strongest break in the poem. In the 1609 Quarto this is made even more conspicuous by the use of brackets, instead of the commas which are used in some modern editions:

Then can I drown an eye (unused to flow)
For precious friends hid in death's dateless night . . .
(ll. 5-6)

A few lines later, Shakespeare enlists the metre to create a more sophisticated version of the above enactment. This time, the line is actually slowed down in order to mime the content:

And heavily from woe to woe tell o'er . . .
(l. 10)

Exactly the same device is to be found in Keats:

By gradual decay from beauty fell . . .
(*Isabella*, 1818, St. XXXII, l. 8)

Both 'from woe' and 'decay' are necessarily iambic, which disallows a dactylic reading of 'heavily' or 'gradual'. This gives them two heavy stresses, causing the words themselves to move 'heavily' or at a 'gradual' pace, and thus to enact their own meaning. Given that Keats seems to have based his trademark vowel and consonant patterns on similar features

1. *Shakespeare's Language* (London: Penguin Books, 2000), p. 16.

in Shakespeare's sonnets, and that he was a painstaking analyst, it is possible that he had Shakespeare's mimetic line in mind when he wrote his own. Likewise, the Elizabethan use of pronunciation-retardation enactment may, in its turn, have been inspired by the use of this same figure in earlier poems such as Wyatt's *Patience of all my smart and Patience, though I have not*, as discussed in the Wyatt chapter.

Again, in Sonnet No. 17, line 12, the word 'stretched' in

And stretched metre of an antique song

is made, through a combination of the iambic metre and the choice and syntax of the other words in the line, to take up, trochaically, two full syllables. Every other past participle in the sonnet has a contracted suffix, each of these precedes 'stretched', and lines 8 to 12 contain a greater number of preterite verbs than are to be found in any of the sixteen previous sonnets. All these features serve to emphasize the fact that the words 'stretched metre' have to be pronounced mimetically; that is, with a 'stretched metre'. We shall encounter other kinds of delay enactment in *Amoretti* and *Prothalamion*.

In No. 105, Shakespeare uses mimesis in a yet more starkly metapoetic way. Here, the only perfect *anaphora* in the entire cycle creates an exact correspondence between two lines, with the *isocolon* - the parallelism between successive lines or clauses - then being broken in the second part of the second line, where there is a prominent 'varying to other words' brought about by the actual phrase 'varying to other words':

'Fair, kind, and true' is all my argument,
'Fair, kind, and true', varying to other words . . .
(ll. 9-10)

These enactments produce a range of effects. In No. 116, the line interruption 'points' the content, thus lending support, through contrast, to the meditation on the constancy of love which follows. In the case of No. 30, the enactment devices foreground the distinction between speech and content, thus opening up a gap between narrative and narrator. This in turn supports the sense of detachment, of control over experience, which is crucial to the

conceit of the poem, and which informs other stylistic patterns in the sonnet such as the 'fore-bemoaned moan' *polyptoton* of line 11. In No. 17, the 'stretched metre' parodically mimes the elongated metres, such as hexameters,¹ which were employed by some of Shakespeare's contemporaries. The 'varying to other words' figure in No. 105 serves the overall theme of textual recurrence, *synonymia*, etc., upon which the poem is based, and is also a striking demonstration of verbal wit for its own sake.

Such breadth of application would seem to indicate that even these most overt of mimetic configurations have no centre or essence; that they serve merely to point or delineate semantic qualities which are already there, without conferring any tone or meaning of their own. However, the very presence of the mimesis carries its own significance. The mimesis explicitly enacts content, and the dazzlingly innovative mastery of language which is needed to do this implicitly enacts the virtuosity of the poet. Furthermore, whilst thematic figures can generally be tied to a specific semantic context - for example, winter often carries intimations of mortality - the whole attraction of linguistic figures was that they had an endless variability of application, and could be used to intensify any given semantic content. Peacham, for instance, explains how *epizeuxis*, or repetition without the use of intervening words, 'may serve aptly to expresse the vehemencie of any affection, whether it be of joy, sorrow, love, hatred, admiration or any such like' (pp. 47-48).² Furthermore, this principle applies not only to individual rhetorical figures, but also to rhetoric itself, which is, of course, the general 'science of speaking well',³ and which is therefore not tied to any particular context or application.

The last word in this examination of conspicuous verse-flow enactments must go to Sidney. In the *Defence* he criticises those poets who, amongst their other faults, employ

1. W.G. Ingram and Theodore Redpath discuss this allusion in their edition of the sonnets (London, etc.: Hodder and Stoughton, 1978), p. 42.

2. This passage is also discussed by Rosemond Tuve, *Elizabethan and Metaphysical Imagery* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2001), p. 188. Regarding the 'polysemous nature' of rhetorical figures, see Vickers, 1988, pp. 306-307 and 333.

3. Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria*, ILXVI.34. See also ILXVI.35-36.

alliteration too heavily, 'coursing of a letter, as if they were bound to follow the method of a dictionary' (ll. 1400-01). It does not seem to have been noticed before that alongside its more obvious, and still current, meaning of 'to hunt', 'course' also meant, until 1687, 'the action of running; a run'.¹ Hence, as well as suggesting that these overly alliterative poets hunt down, with the aid of a dictionary, words beginning with the same letter (Gascoigne,² likewise, had spoken of those who 'hunt a letter to death'),³ Sidney may also have in mind the fact that alliterative sequences often seem to 'run' along, a reading which is supported by the 'resty race renew' alliteration in *Astrophil* No. 80, line 12. The following enactment from No. 15 is, then, the perfect way for *Astrophil*-as-writer to illustrate, and parodically reify, this aspect of his complaint:

You that do dictionary's method bring
 Into your rhymes, running in rattling rows . . .
 (ll. 5-6)

In addition to the 'r' alliteration, he employs consecutive dactyls - 'running in rattling' - which, if the pulse of the main stresses is to remain even, must be read in a way which is itself rapid, 'running', or 'rattling'. The words thereby enact the 'rattling' quality - 'to say or utter in a rapid or lively manner' (Middle English onwards)⁴ - which is described. A similar metrical enactment is used in line 467 of *Orchestra* (1596) by Sir John Davies, where the trochaic inversion of the first foot squashes two syllables, instead of one, between the first two main stresses, meaning that if the regular beat, which has been established during the first two lines of the sentence, is to be maintained, then the words 'the quick' must be read quickly:

1. Little, Fowler, and Coulson, Vol. I, p. 442.

2. (1525?-77)

3. From *Certayne Notes of Instruction: The Making of Verse*, 1575, in Smith, ed., Vol. I, p. 52.

4. Little, Fowler, and Coulson, Vol. II, p. 1863.

With passages uncertain, to and fro,
Yet with a certain answer and consent
To the quick music of the instrument.

It was fairly common for the Elizabethans to mock excessive or clumsy alliteration, and for this to be done in phrases based on 'r' alliteration.¹ Borrowing from Chaucer's description of alliteration as 'Rym, Ram, Ruff', which he has cited a few pages earlier, Gascoigne advises poets not to 'chaunge good reason for rumbling rime',² and later speaks of 'riding rime'.³ Four years later, in 1579, in the Epistle to Gabriel Harvey at the front of *The Shepheardes Calender*, and echoing John Skelton's (1464?-1529) 'though my rhyme be ragged',⁴ E.K. speculates about whether the alliteration in the work which follows is intended to match the 'rusticall rudenesse of shepherds', and make their 'rymes more ragged and rusticall' (ll. 41-43), and goes on to speak of 'the rakehellye route of our ragged rymers (for so themselves use to hunt the letter)' (ll. 127-29). Then comes Sidney's metrically enactive rendering of the same thought; and afterwards, no doubt spurred on by this striking figure, Puttenham uses the phrase 'rude rayling rimer'.⁵ These various degrees of mimetic correspondence between form and content, ranging from the *Astrophil* No. 15 line to the less directly mimetic versions found elsewhere, could almost have been written specifically to demonstrate the superiority of fully mimetic language over more obliquely mimetic (Gascoigne, Spenser, Puttenham) and non-mimetic (the *Defence*) equivalents. That is, by adding the enactive layers of alliterative and metrical mimesis to the straightforward diegetic layer, the words can be made to shadow closely what is described, thus generating a more immediate rendering of the content, and within less space, than

1. An exception is Thomas Wilson, who illustrates his point about 'overmuch repetition of some one letter' with 'Pitiful poverty prayeth for a penny, but puffed presumption passeth not a point [etc.]' (*The Art of Rhetoric*, 1553, in McDonald, 2001B, p. 61).

2. In Smith, ed., loc. cit. (Chaucer reference: p. 47). Here and elsewhere 'rime' is used, through synecdoche, to denote 'verse'. See also, for instance, Shakespeare No. 55, line 2.

3. In op. cit., p. 56.

4. *Colin Cloute*, c.1522, l. 53.

5. *The Arte of English Poesie*, 1589, in Smith, ed., Vol. II, p. 87.

would otherwise be possible. Interestingly, the galloping dactylic rhythm, as initiated by the word 'running', might well have had an even stronger mimetic effect for its original courtly audience, as 'To run' could, before 1652, denote 'To ride on horseback at a quick pace; specifically to ride in a tournament, to tilt or joust'.¹ Sidney, an exemplary soldier, tilter, and jouster, is likely to have had this set of associations in mind when he composed the line, and his first audience is likely to have shared this connotative mental map. So successful is the device that John Hoskyns singles it out, and not only praises the line, but specifically refers to Sidney's illustratively mimetic use of his verbal medium:

Sir Philip Sidney, in *Astrophil and Stella* calls [excessive alliteration] the 'dictionary method' and the verses so made 'rhymes running in rattling rows', which is an example of it.²

In the instances which we have just seen, verse flow interacts with content through the use of dense and highly-wrought linguistic patterns; but the Elizabethan lyrics, like the Wyatt poems which we analysed earlier, also make use of longer, cumulative mimetic techniques.³ Between them, these cover a wide range of sub-types, and generate many different effects. Some late-sixteenth-century cumulative enactments operate in exactly the same way as those found in Wyatt. In particular, *Astrophil* No. 56 repeats the word 'patience'. This echoes the Wyatt 'patience' group, and suggests a mini-tradition:

Fie, school of patience, fie . . .
 No, patience; if thou wilt my good, then make
 Her come, and hear with patience my desire,
 And then with patience bid me bear my fire.
 (ll. 1 and 12-14)

As the seventeenth-century rhetorician John Smith was to write in his *The Myserie of Rhetorique Unvail'd* (1657), 'a word is by way of Emphasis so repeated that it denotes not

1. Little, Fowler, and Coulson, Vol. II, p. 1863.

2. Sidney's 'Arcadia' and the Rhetoric of English Prose, 1599, in Brian Vickers, ed., *English Renaissance Literary Criticism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999), pp. 408-409.

3. We encountered a small-scale example of this type of mimesis during the discussion about *The Faerie Queene*, VLXII.26 ('turne againe . . . turnd againe'). See above, p. 136.

only the thing signified, but the quality of the thing'.¹ In view of the fact that Wyatt uses 'patience' mimesis so often, it seems likely that Sidney is here following his lead, and even, given his highly literate audience, paying homage. It is this combination of *palilogia* (repetition for vehemence or fullness) and mimesis which accounts for the intensity of the closing challenge. A more complex form of cumulative recurrence is to be seen in No. 42, where the 'O eyes' (ll. 1, 5, and 11) and 'Do not . . . do not' (l. 7) repetitions, the *chiastic* (ABBA-patterned) verbal stasis in line 3, the 'Keep still . . . Yet still' (ll. 8 and 11) *isocolon*, and the delaying of the first main verb until line 7 - later, even, than in No. 1 - all serve, acting in concert, to generate a profound sense of stillness and perpetuity which reifies and emphasises the theme of permanence.²

In Chapter Four, we found that the recurrent elements in Wyatt's cumulatively mimetic lyrics were sometimes synonyms. This kind of *synonymia*, or *scesis onomaton*, is also employed by the Elizabethans, and sometimes in a way which strikingly recalls its use in the Tudor poems; as is immediately apparent if we place these reductions of a Wyatt sonnet and a Spenser sonnet together:

change you no more . . . still after one rate
 . . . the same state
 . . . not be variable
 . . . always one . . . firm and stable.
 (From *Each man telleth*)

. . . unmoved . . .
 . . . still persist . . .
 . . . firmer will abide
 . . . durefull . . .
 . . . shall endure for ever
 . . . naught but death can sever
 . . . ever shall remaine.
 (From *Amoretti* No.6)

Sir Robert Sidney uses mimetic synonyms to similar effect in the opening poem of his

1. Account of *plöche*, quoted in Vickers, 1988, p. 330.

2. 'Tant de fois' appears seven times in the first six lines of Ronsard's *Sonnets pour Hélène*, Bk. I, No. 19.

untitled sequence of about 1596: 'never dying fires . . . which not expires . . . shine still one, and alter not'. It is the simplicity and persistence of the *Amoretti* No. 6 mimesis which allows the poet to establish the tone of relentlessness and beauty which permeates the sonnet. The mimetic accretion of 'eternity' synonyms achieves much the same effect, but over a larger canvas, in Spenser's magnificent *Fowre Hymnes*,¹ e.g.: 'eternall . . . immortall . . . Th'eternal . . . th'immortal . . . endlesse . . . Never consum'd nor quencht' (*An Hymne of Heavenly Beautie*, Stanzas 2-6). Again, in *Amoretti* No. 87, the prolonged repetition of the slowness theme, which starts with 'Many long weary dayes' (l. 2) and continues until 'too long to last' (l. 13), occupies nearly the whole poem, and cumulatively mirrors the notion of delay and frustration, the lack of change between the *synonymia* phrases shadowing the persona's own lack of progress. In each of these cases, Spenser never forgets the strengths of Ciceronian 'elegance' and 'plainness'.²

However, true to the Elizabethan context of wit and linguistic virtuosity, Spenser also uses more complex types of mimetic structure when the situation demands. *Amoretti* No. 56 contains both cumulative enactment and closural enactment, the 'persistence' qualities of the former and the terminal force of the latter contrasting in such a way as to reinforce the meaning and augment the resonance of the imagery. The first eight lines build up the impression of the lady's extreme obduracy both on a diegetic level ('pittillesse . . . / . . . all things doth prostrate') and, concurrently with this, on a mimetic level. The unremitting nature of the 'fayre ye be sure, but . . . / As is a . . . ' (ll. 1-2 and 5-6) construction mirrors the unremitting nature of her scorn. The appearance of this pattern for a third time, now coupled with the consolidating rock simile, completes the scheme:

Fayre be ye sure, but hard and obstinate,
 As is a rocke amidst the raging floods:
 Gaynst which a ship of succour desolate,
 Doth suffer wreck both of her selfe and goods.
 (ll. 9-12)

1. Published 1596, but probably written in the 1570s.

2. See Chapter Four, p. 107, above.

The pivotally deictic 'that' of the couplet then changes the subject from the lady to the narrator, and initiates the triple closural enactment - which recalls the multiple closural enactment in the last two lines of Wyatt's *My lute, awake!*, as discussed earlier on - with its heavy semantic overlapping of cessation words:

That ship, that tree, and that same beast am I,
Whom ye doe wreck, doe ruine, and destroy.

The 'persistence' mimetic pattern here gives way to the strongest closural enactment possible, the three semantically forceful 'end' terms occupying the very last line. Moreover, these same three also recapitulate, in reverse order - 'vers rapportés'¹ - the core ideas of the three quatrains, thus gathering the full imaginative power of the whole poem into the concluding punch, and throwing the word flow into reverse. This increases yet further the terminal strength of the closural enactment scheme. The contrasting persist/persist and then stop/stop enactive correspondences give the sonnet a degree of intensified referentiality and aesthetic unity which goes beyond that which a non-mimetic version would achieve.

In his *Prothalamion* of 1596, Spenser makes use of extensive and elaborate types of cumulative enactment, and these include a highly complex delaying figure. In the *First Song of Astrophil and Stella*, Sidney had used the following line at the end of both the first and last stanzas, where 'endeth' creates a closural enactment:

Only in you my song begins and endeth.

Employing a slightly less overt temporal binary ('runne' / 'end'), Spenser closes every stanza of *Prothalamion* with a line which comes to symbolise, through repetition, and through the closural mimesis, the stasis-in-process, mortality-in-life, connotations of the line itself. This in turn goes some way towards accounting for the astonishing pathos and

1. See Hugh Maclean and Anne Lake Prescott in their edition of *Edmund Spenser's Poetry* (New York and London: W.W. Norton, 1993), p. 609.

sublimity of the poem, and for the 'timeless beauty of that mysterious refrain':¹

Sweete Themes runne softly, till I end my Song.

On the other hand, *Prothalamion* is also remarkable for the way in which it simultaneously generates, throughout, an overwhelming impression of forward movement. In addition to the sequential nature of the events, and the fact that the events themselves follow the course of a river, the number of references to flowing movement generates precisely the opposite effect to that of the hiatus between verse-flux and meaning seen in *Astrophil* No. 1. In 'swimming downe along' (l. 38) and 'passe along, / Adowne' (ll. 114-15), for example, the heavy semantic overlap of the lexical items creates a verbal and perceptual stream. At one point, this sense of steady forward progress is briefly counterpointed by an aurally mimetic delay enactment at line 118: 'Making his streame run slow'. The inverted foot (the trochaic 'making') increases the pace of delivery, because two upbeats instead of the usual single beat have to be fitted in between the first two main stresses. The resultant contrast in speed between the first three syllables and the second three, combined with the clashing 's' sounds, which force a separation between 'his' and 'streame', and combined again with the long vowel sounds on the second and third main beats ('streame' and 'slow')² ensures that the actual words 'Making his streame run slow' make the verbal stream 'run slow'. In Senecan terms, the mimetic *elocutio* 'clarifies, reinforces, "points" meaning';³ and, in the terms of Quintilian's discussion of onomatopoeia and Cratylist etymology, Spenser has achieved this effect by 'adapt[ing] the sound to the impressions produced by the things signified' (*De Institutione Oratoria*, VIII. VI.31). More specifically, the use of language to match and mimic the speed of the events which are described recalls Homer's description of Sisyphus, as analysed by Dionysius.

1. Ibid., p. 649.

2. Keats likewise uses long vowel sounds to slow down the end of a line: 'Thou foster-child of silence and slow time' (*Ode on a Grecian Urn*, 1820, l. 2).

3. Lanham, p. 116.

In *Epithalamion*, the sister poem to *Prothalamion*, the burden derives much of its affective poise and aesthetic weight from its mimetic and metapoetic repetition:

The woods shall to me answer and my eccho ring.
(ll. 18, 36, etc., with variations)

Here, in a recasting of the familiar 'echo' device, as seen for instance in the *Second Eclogues* of *The Old Arcadia*, the line 'answer[s]' and 'ecchoe[s]' itself, slowly building up a mimetic illustration of its own content. The idea of woods echoing appears many times in *The Faerie Queene*,¹ as well as in the sonnet *Chloris* No. 20 (1596) (ll. 1 and 9-12) by William Smith. But amongst Spenser's renderings of this theme, it is the mimetic version which possesses the greatest beauty.

As with so many of these examples, the immediate source appears to be Sidney, who had employed a similar device in the refrain of his own epithalamion, one of the first of its genre in English:

O Hymen long their coupled joys maintain.
(*Let mother earth*, from *The Old Arcadia: The Third Eclogues*.)

In Sidney's lyric, which may in turn have derived its enactive technique from Wyatt's *In aeternum*, duration itself is simulated ('maintain' occurs eleven times) as the verse proceeds. Other striking examples of this device include the repetition of the phrase 'in time' a dozen times in the space of a sonnet in Giles Fletcher the Elder's *Licia* No. 28 of 1593. The effect of this mimesis in the Sidney poem, as in Spenser's marriage poems, is to confer a poise and unity which combine with the incantatory, sanctifying tone of the repetition itself to create an overall atmosphere which is perfectly matched to the sacred rite which is being described. This is especially apposite given the elevated status accorded to marriage by the late-sixteenth-century Church. The spiritual aspects of the Spenser epithalamia are also augmented by a further type of mimesis: the numerological schemes which run right

1. E.g., I:VI.7 and 14; I:VIII.11; III.38; and II.III.20.

through the verse, and which signify on the level of sacred mathematics, sympathetic magic, and so on, rather than on a straightforward verbal level. Although the underlying links between rhetorical and Pythagorean formalism were noted earlier, these forms of mimesis do not come directly within the rhetoricist remit of the present analyses, and so we shall not be able to explore this topic here. Moreover, the range and significance of such numerological features have been the subject of dispute.¹ However, it is still safe to say that such patterns, whatever their scale and importance, are undeniably there; and, whilst they are not enactive in a Cratylist sense, they are nevertheless deliberately and profoundly mimetic.²

Somewhere between the enactments which are discussed above, with their immediate and direct correspondence of specific thematic strands and the mode of expression, and Pythagorean formalism, which has the potential to signify in a way which entirely bypasses the semantic freight of the words, for instance by setting up a meaningful, isomorphic correspondence between circular poetic form and the circle as a symbol of eternity,³ lies the use of formal patterning to enact, not specific words or broad cosmological principles, but the broad theme of the poem. *Ye goat-herd gods*, from the *Fourth Eclogues* of the *Old Arcadia*, is a double sestina, a form which involves ringing the changes on the same six words at the ends of the six-line stanzas, not just over the course of six stanzas, as with the single sestina form, but over twelve stanzas. This incessant repetition is made even more intense by the *anadiplosis*-type structure, whereby each stanza begins with a line which ends with the same word which closed the preceding stanza, and by the fact that the final

1. See Heatt, and Fowler 1964 and 1970. See also, for example, Millar MacLure in Christopher Ricks, ed., *English Poetry and Prose, 1540-1674* (London: Penguin Books, 1986), p. 49; and Elizabeth Bieman, *Plato Baptized: Towards the Interpretation of Spenser's Mimetic Fictions* (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 1988), p. 163.

2. As well as governing aspects of form, numerology is sometimes explicitly evoked on the level of content, e.g. *Parthenophil and Parthenophe* (1593) No. 84, by Barnabe Barnes.

3. See the examination of Wyatt's *In aeternum*, in Chapter Four, above. See also the discussion in Heninger, 1989, pp. 315 and 317, regarding *The Shepherdes Calendar* and the *Timaeus*; the account of the emblematics of circles in Renaissance masques in Peter M. Daly, *Literature in the Light of the Emblem* (Toronto and London: University of Toronto Press, 1979), p. 184; and Charles Hope and Elizabeth McGrath on Ficino and the image of a snake biting its tail as a symbol of Time in Jill Kraye, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Renaissance Humanism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 182.

word ('mountains') links right back to the first line. The poem is thus a sestina and a modified corona. The recurrences in a single sestina tend to be aesthetically pleasing, but the number of repetitions involved in a double sestina is so great that they become oppressive. As these pile up, the formal medium reifies the sense of desperation, and enacts the 'grow mad with music' (l. 60) theme. This poem is almost immediately succeeded by *I joy in grief*, which is a corona proper, consisting of rhyming ten-line stanzas, the last line of each being repeated *in toto* as the first line of the next, and with the last line looping right back to the first. Once again, the formal stasis and constriction acts as a Cratylist simulacrum, this time replicating the 'earthly fetters' (lines 90 and 91) lamentation. In each lyric, the content is gradually rendered more intense by the cumulatively enactive formal medium. One possible source for these two poems is Wyatt's *Such hap as I*, where each stanza refers back to, and qualifies, what has just been said at the end of the previous one: 'It helpeth not. / It helpeth not but to increase' (ll. 21-22), and so on. C.F. Williamson - though without going into a broader account of mimetic devices - takes up the story:

Such consistent reversals can hardly be accidental. In a poem which proclaims itself as an attempt to communicate an enigmatic experience, whose difficulty, judging from the imagery of cold and fire, and hunger amidst food, lies in its paradoxical and self-contradictory nature, can there be any doubt that Wyatt was using these repetitions with reversal to build into the very structure of his poem the quality of the experience with which it is concerned?¹

Returning to the Sidney family, both Lady Mary Wroth (1587-1651) and George Herbert use variations on this type of enactment. In the latter's *Sinnes Round*, for instance, which is a three-stanza corona, the form mirrors the reflexive circularity of the persona's spiritual meditation; and, alongside this general matching of form and content, Herbert has built in a metapoetic nod to his own employment of this device ('my offences course it in a ring'), a self-reference which dovetails with the spiritual inwardness. In *A Crown of Sonnets*

1. 'Wyatt's Use of Repetitions and Refrains', *English Literary Renaissance*, 12 (1982), 291-300, p. 293.

Dedicated to LOVE, from Lady Mary Wroth's *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus* (1621), the circular enactment as used in Sidney's *I joy in grief* and Herbert's *Sinnes Round* is taken a stage further. Firstly, the corona is on a larger scale, involving fourteen sonnets. This enclosed formal structure mimetically illustrates the 'strange labyrinth' theme (No. 1, first line). Secondly, a self-advertising formal enactment is built into the first transition between sonnets, and draws attention to the overall mimetic form of the sequence. The first sonnet ends:

Yet that which most my troubled sense doth move,
Is to leave all, and take the thread of Love.

The second begins:

Is to leave all, and take the thread of Love,
Which line straight leads unto the soul's content,
Where choice delights with pleasure's wings do move,
And idle fancy never room had lent.

The 'thread of Love' line acts as a verbal thread which leads us from the first sonnet to the second. Moreover, this formal and semantic thread leads us from a sonnet which is about being lost to one which is about being found, the journey from the one to the other being imitated by the how of expression. The 'line' pun in No. 2 line 2 underscores the mimesis, the verse alluding to, and delighting in, its own enactive ingenuity and artifice.

Wroth has received very little attention from scholars, critics, or anthologists. This is unjust, not only because a number of her poems are of a high quality, but also because, as shown by the above examples of mimesis, she very much works within, and sometimes extends, the formal traditions of Sidney and the rest. As with Drayton's *Idea* of 1619, chronology can to some extent give way to compositional factors, thus putting *Urania*, like *Idea*, within the broad category of the 'Elizabethan' school. If it had been viewed in this context, Wroth's work might have been given more attention.¹

1. I am hoping to do my own explicatory edition of Wroth.

The Elizabethan cumulative enactments which we have considered so far have, on the whole, been similar to earlier types. Indeed, we saw in the Wyatt section how even Tudor examples of the device could be traced back to earlier periods. In this next and last group of cumulative mimetic devices, however, the Elizabethan poets, especially Shakespeare, take up older reflexively mimetic schemes and turn them into something new. As discussed during Chapter Four, in Wyatt's *Comfort Thyself* the topic is pulled ever more tightly into itself until it reaches the crisis point of line 22 - 'Seek on thyself thyself to wreak' - which, in turn, precipitates the closure. Similar (although non-closural) phrases are used in *Astrophil* No. 33: 'But to myself myself did give the blow . . .' (l. 9); Daniel's *To Delia* No. 44: 'Unto herself, herself my love doth summon . . .' (l. 9); and Davies's *Orchestra*: 'Though in yourself yourself perceive not how' (l. 728). In each case, the doubling of the reflexive pronoun creates a mild form of enactment, in the sense that the second term duplicates the first, so that the words turn in on themselves, this lexical self-reference correlating with the thematic self-reference. On the other hand, these examples are limited by their brevity, and Sidney's 'myself myself' is perhaps meant to be read as a kind of flourish, rather than as an instance of full-scale mimesis, and in that case it should be put in the same category as the many non-enactive repetition and paradox figures which appear throughout *Astrophil*: 'That her grace gracious makes thy wrongs . . .' (No. 12, l. 6); 'It is a praise to praise, when thou art praised' (No. 35, l. 14); 'Which even of sweetness sweetest sweetener art . . .' (No. 79, l. 2); 'Restless rest, and living dying' (*Eighth Song*, l. 20); and 'I had been vexed, if vexed I had not been' (No. 87, l. 14).

Such tight patterning was to become a standard feature of the subsequent sonnet cycles. Especially highly-wrought poems include *Phyllis* No. 35 (1593) by Thomas Lodge, which ends 'And strengthless strive my weakness to devour', and *Fidessa* No. 16 (1596) by B. Griffin,¹ where cross-line *anadiplosis* runs the full length of the poem. The latter sonnet may even be the target of Sir John Davies's *Gullinge Sonnet* No. 3 (c.1594). Shakespeare

1. Griffin's first name is unknown.

takes the kind of brief repetitive self-reference found in the 'self . . . self' poems, above, and soups it up, rendering it fully and cumulatively mimetic. Thus, in his sonnets No. 1, No. 4, and No. 62, he builds up a densely-woven network of repetitive and enactive figures:

. . . thou . . . thine own
. . . thy . . . self-substantial
Thyself thy . . . thy sweet self

. . . thyself thy . . .
. . . thyself alone
Thou of thyself thy sweet self

. . . self-love . . . all mine eye
. . . myself mine . . .
. . . my glass shows me myself
Mine own self-love . . .
Self so self-loving . . .
. . . (my self) that for myself

Again, in the following stanza from *Venus and Adonis* (1593), there is a 'thine own' repetition ('thine own' works alongside 'self' repetitions in Shakespeare's sonnet No. 1, as shown above), and then the self-self pattern occurs twice in the space of three lines:

'Is thine own heart to thine own face affected?
Can thy right hand seize love upon thy left?
Then woo thyself, be of thyself rejected;
Steal thine own freedom, and complain on theft.
Narcissus so himself himself forsook,
And died to kiss his shadow in the brook.
(ll. 157-62)

In all these poems, the intensely reiterative verbal patterns cumulatively reify the self-contained reflexive stasis which is being described.¹ A comparable symmetry between linguistic and thematic closed systems is seen again in Sonnets No. 76 and No. 105, both of which are concerned with poetic recurrence, and hence metapoetic. In these two sonnets there is a whole range of enactive, reflexivity-based figures, including, for

1. Kermode (p. 70) discusses a slightly different form of reflexive enactment based on the splitting in two of the term 'selfsame' ('the self was not the same') in *The Phoenix and the Turtle*, l. 38.

instance, *synonymia* ('Why write I still all one, ever the same', No. 76, l. 5); *epanaleptic* *accidence* ('Spending again what is already spent', No. 76, l. 12); and *epiphora* ('To one, of one', No. 105, l. 4), all of which, through their form, mimic the repetitive quality which they describe. In both No. 76 and No. 105, the reflexive medium of the language shadows the reflexive message of the content (both poems are about writing), a process which also self-duplicates, in that the prominent nature of the correspondence between form and content is itself a demonstration of linguistic reflexivity. In all these examples, the mimesis is semiotically tied to, subservient to, and illustrative of, the thematic context; and yet, as one would expect of the works of the great Elizabethan sonneteers, the display of wit has a delight of its own. Just as a circus acrobat doesn't jump through a hoop simply in order to reach the other side of the hoop, so the more flamboyantly witty and metapoetic kinds of enactment are used not simply in order to augment the content, but also in order to be seen to be doing so.

As noted during the Wyatt section, closural enactments always account for a significant proportion of mimetic devices. In Shakespeare's sequence, all but three (that is, Nos. 4, 8, and 10) of the first dozen poems refer to death in the last line. Closural enactments in the sonnet cycles occasionally work in conjunction with other types of mimetic language-use, as we saw with *Amoretti* Nos. 56 and 87; and they frequently take a metapoetic form:

Therewithal away she went,
Leaving him so passion-rent
With what she had done and spoken,
That therewith my song is broken.
(*Astrophil, Eighth Song, ending.*)

One type of metapoetic closural enactment in particular seems to show a line of influence passing from Wyatt to Sidney and beyond. Wyatt uses a 'pen' scheme to end two of his lyrics (as discussed above, pp. 105-107), and when these endings and equivalents used by Sidney and by Matthew Roydon are juxtaposed, there are clear similarities:

Now hast thou brought my mind to pass.
My pen, I prithee, write no more.
(Wyatt, *My pen, take pain*, ll. 29-30.)

The trickling tears doth fall so from my eyes,
I scarce may write, my paper is so wet.
(Wyatt, *In mourning wise*, ll. 59-60.)

Cease, eager muse; peace pen, for my sake stay . . .
(*Astrophil*, No.70, l. 12.)

And here my pen is forced to shrink,
My tears discolour so mine ink.
(Roydon, *An Elegy; or, Friends Passion
for his Astrophel*, ll. 233-34.)¹

Drayton was to use the same concept in a non-closural position in *Ideas Mirrour (Amour* No. 1, 1594, ll. 1-4); and this image also appears towards the beginning of a stanza from *The Faerie Queene*:

And now it is empassioned so deepe,
For fairest *Unaes* sake, of whom I sing,
That my fraile eyes these lines with teares do steepe . . .
(I:III.2)

The fact that Roydon's *Elegy* was written for Sidney may indicate that he had noted the pen device in *Astrophil* No. 70, and, associating Sidney with the use of such figures, incorporated this pattern into the *Elegy* as part of his honorific scheme. Moreover, the fact that the Roydon and the Wyatt *In mourning wise* closures are virtually interchangeable suggests that the elegist, too, may be aware of the Wyatt example, and hence presumably of Sidney's own possible borrowing of this idea from Wyatt.

John Skelton had employed a form of 'pen' closural mimesis for *The Tunning of Elinour Rumming* (c.1517):

God give it ill hail!
For my fingers itch -
I have written too much
Of this mad mumming
Of Elinour Rumming.

1. See Sidney, 1989, Appendix D.

Thus endeth the geste
Of this worthy feast.

Quoth Skelton Laureat.

Although the pen enactment in *Astrophil* No. 70 can be traced back to Wyatt, and perhaps Skelton, and even Petrarch ('ond' io gridai con carta et con incostro . . .' from *Rime sparse* No. 23, l. 99), it is handled with Sidney's customary Elizabethan mercurial ease. As with the exordial enactments, the verse immediately moves on to the next witty device:

Cease, eager muse; peace pen, for my sake stay;
I give you here my hand for truth of this:
Wise silence is best music unto bliss.

(ll. 12-14)

In the above sonnet, the pen-based mimesis leads into a silence enactment. As seen during the Wyatt discussion, these occur where the post-textual space is made to serve the meaning: the very lack of any further words enacts, iconically and experientially, the content delivered by the closing lines. In the 'exordial' analyses we saw examples of lyrics which taper into the preceding blankness; and in 'silence' enactments the same process occurs, only this time in relation to the blankness which follows the text.¹

The simplest forms of silence enactment, although similar in function to the closural types, add a new terminal layer, with the cessation of speech or sound mentioned in the last words being illustrated by the transition from speech to silence which is the end of the poem. This kind of literary figure occurs in the classical period (e.g., Horace, Bk. III, *Ode III*, ll. 70-72), and its overall principle is described by Longinus:

A mere idea, without verbal expression, is sometimes admired for its nobility - just as Ajax's silence in the Vision of the Dead is grand, and indeed more sublime than any words could have been.

(*On the Sublime*, 9.1)

1. See also Ronsard, Bk. I, Nos. 2, 4, 16, 19, 24, and 40, and Bk. II, No. 4.

However, in the hands of Sidney, foregrounded silences, in addition to the enactive status which derives simply from the very fact of silence (as above), are sometimes imbued with their own connotative colouring, and thus play a very much more prominent and sophisticated rôle in the poetic scheme. Silence enactments, like the black marks shown here, can employ units of expression in such a way as to shape, and indeed confer a quasi-substance upon, what is, in itself, simply nothingness:



Spiller explains the *Astrophil* No. 70 ending thus:

[The poem] falls silent: the white space that follows the last line then becomes the ideal 'song' This is a witty deconstruction of sonnet-writing, which because it takes notice of the textual materiality of the sonnet on the page . . . goes well beyond Petrarch's . . . poems which say that they have failed as poems. (p. 112.)

Whilst it is undoubtedly the case that, like the other types of mimesis, silence enactments tie in with Sidney's perpetual concern with words and expression - 'What may words say, or what may words not say . . . ?' (No. 35, opening line) - in No. 70, above and beyond the text-centred or putatively 'deconstructive' aspect there is the wholly constructive fact that the enactive use of silence is perfectly suited to the conveying, and embodiment, of the marvellous and the ineffable.

The concept of inarticulacy appears regularly in *The Faerie Queene* (e.g. I:VII.41, I:X.55, I:XII.14, II:III.25, etc.), and is a major topic in, for example, Spenser's *An Hymne of Heavenly Beautie* from the *Fowre Hymnes* (e.g. ll. 6-7, 104-105, 204, and 225-31). The dozens of other works which feature this idea include Daniel's *To Delia* Nos. 17 and 55,

Drayton's *Idea* Nos. 35 and 57, Constable's *Diana* No. 8, and Wroth's *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus* No. 39. The popularity of this theme within Renaissance poetry as a whole, and the frequency of all kinds of mimetic device throughout *Astrophil*, mean that it is perhaps not surprising that Sidney's sequence should include a number of ingenious silence enactments. Judith Dundas mentions the artistic use of silence as described by Pliny the Elder in his *Natural History*, and as later cited and popularised by Cicero, Quintilian, and Alberti. Pliny gives an account of 'Timanthes's painting of the Sacrifice of Iphigenia, where Agamemnon's face is veiled to suggest an intensity of grief that the painter dare not attempt to represent directly'.¹ Again, M.L. Stapleton talks of erotic 'vanishing points' in Ovid, where omitted risqué detail is implied by the information which does appear.² Along the same lines, the *Ad Herennium* gives as one of the possible meanings of *significatio* that 'it permits the hearer himself to guess what the speaker has not mentioned' (IV.LIV.67).³ In *Astrophil* No. 70, and here in No. 77, Sidney uses what he does say in such a way as to enlist the post-textual blankness as an imaginative canvas:

That voice, which makes the soul plant himself in the ears;
 That conversation sweet, where such high comforts be,
 As construed in true speech, the name of heaven it bears,
 Makes me in my best thoughts and quiet'st judgement see
 That in no more but these I might be fully blessed:
 Yet ah, my maiden muse doth blush to tell the rest.
(Sestet.)

A device which is similar to this is then employed three times in three successive poems:

The friendly fray, where blows both wound and heal;
 The pretty death, while each in other live;
 Poor hope's first wealth, hostage of promised weal,
 Breakfast of love - but lo, lo, where she is:
 Cease we to praise, now pray we for a kiss.
(No. 79, ll. 13-14)

1. *Pencils Rhetorique: Renaissance Poets and the Art of Painting* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1970), p. 93.

2. *Harmful Eloquence* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Michigan University Press, 1996), p. 18.

3. Also Quintilian, VIII.III.84. For more on this, see Lanham, pp. 138-40.

But now, spite of my heart, my mouth will stay,
Loathing all lies, doubting this flattery is,
And no spur can his resty race renew,
Without how far this praise is short of you,
Sweet lip, you teach my mouth with one sweet kiss.
(No. 80, ll. 10-14)

Then since (dear life) you fain would have me peace,
And I, mad with delight, want wit to cease,
Stop you my mouth with still still kissing me.
(No. 81, ll. 12-14)

Each of these has a conceit which is based on the speech/silence/kiss interrelationship, and in all of these sonnets the zenith of passion is not reached until line 15. In No. 79 the ensuing blankness or lack of speech is made into a space within which the kiss can potentially take place;¹ and in both No. 80 and No. 81 the formally-dictated line 14 cessation is appropriated by the amatory scheme, the silence being ascribed to the effect of the hypothetical kiss, and hence enacting the semantic content of the final words. Other examples of silence enactment in Sidney include 'hoarse and dry, my pipes I now must spare', at the end of *As I behind a bush did sit*, from the *Second Eclogues* of *The Old Arcadia*, and the conventional admission of failure, 'No tongue can her perfections can tell', which closes *What tongue can her perfections tell . . . ?* (after the *Fourth Eclogues*). This figure also appears in Shakespeare Nos. 23, 83, 85, 102, 106, and 143; *Amoretti* Nos. 3, 17, and 43; *Ideas Mirrour* No. 39; and Mary Sidney's *A Dialogue Between Two Shepherds*.

The enactive use of silence is not restricted to love poetry, and one of the most powerful and thematically apposite uses of this figure is that which ends *The Soul compared to a River* from *Nosce Teipsum* (1599), by Davies. In gnostic fashion, the soul is defined as being a fragment of the Divine, living in exile in the world of matter and of time . . .

And yet this First True Cause and Last Good End
She cannot here so well and truly see . . .
(ll. 49-50)

1. For further discussion about kisses, see Richard A. McCabe in John Scattergood, ed., *Literature and Learning in Medieval and Renaissance England* (Blackrock, County Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1984), pp. 115-18.

Like the soul passing through life, as we read the poem we get only brief glimpses of the spiritual realm. Then, with the death of the poem/body, we pass beyond the bounds of mortal speech and thought. The transition to silence, as the verse ends, enacts the passage from matter and language to the ineffability of God:

But when in heaven she shall His Essence see,
This is her sovereign good and perfect bliss:
Her longings, wishings, hopes all finisht be,
Her joys are full, her motions rest in this:

There is she crown'd with garlands of content,
There doth she manna eat, and nectar drink;
That Presence doth such high delights present
As never tongue could speak nor heart could think.

Much of the spiritual and aesthetic resonance of the above ending is attributable to the union of the medium and the message. Yet the fact that the whole poem has been about access to the Divine means that such an ending is totally organic in terms of subject-matter, resulting in a seamless combination of inventive wit and decorous ease. Even so, however skilful and varied the silence enactments of Davies and the other poets who were writing in the 1590s and beyond, it was Sidney, as is so often the case, who had lighted the way. It is fitting, then - as with Roydon's elegy for Sidney, discussed earlier - that Sir Walter Raleigh should close his *Epitaph on Sir Philip Sidney* thus:

Scipio, Cicero, and Petrarch of our time,
Whose virtues, wounded by my worthless rhyme,
Let angels speak, and heaven thy praises tell.

We have seen devices which operate both inside and outside the text simultaneously, by objectifying it either as a passage of speech or as an artefact. Examples of this include the 'ink's poor loss' back-reference in *Astrophil* No. 34, discussed earlier, where the preceding words are objectified as an expenditure of ink. *Astrophil* No. 50, which begins with the line 'Stella, the fullness of my thoughts of thee', ends:

And now my pen these lines had dashed quite,
But that they stopped his fury from the same,
Because their forefront bare sweet Stella's name.

Daniel was later to use a similar technique in *Delia* Nos. 6 and 7:

And had she pity to conjoin with those,
Then who had heard the plaints I utter now?
(No. 6, ll. 11-12)¹

Then had no Censor's eye these lines surveyed . . .
(No. 7, l. 5)

and again in his *Complaint of Rosamond*:

And were it not thy favourable lines,
Re-edified the wrack of my decays:
And that thy accents willingly assigns
Some farther date, and give me longer days,
Few in this age had known my beauty's praise.
(ll. 715-19)

In each of these the very existence of the poem is thematised, which means that the semantic content is enacted, verified, and in a very real sense embodied, not by a particular choice or arrangement of words - as has been the case with all of the other enactments we have seen - but by the fact that there are any words there at all.

A variation on this same textual self-objectification principle lies behind one last form of enactment: that found in eternising verse, a genre which derives from Homer, Virgil, Pindar, and Horace ('Exegi monumentum aere perennius').² The famous Elizabethan eternising sonnets, which include Shakespeare Nos. 18, 19, 55, 63, 65, 81, and 107, and *Amoretti* No. 75,³ are all enactive in essentially the same way. These lyrics end with the claim that the sonnet, and therefore the beloved, will live on, a prediction which is founded

1. Cf. Ronsard: 'et m'en allay tout blesme, / Craignant que mon salut n'eust ton oeil offense', Bk. I, No. 16, ll. 13-14.

2. *Odes*, Bk. III, No. 30, opening line.

3. Other examples include *Delia* Nos. 2, 33, 37, 38, 39, 50, and 53; *Idea* Nos. 6, 44, 47, and 49; and the prefatory sonnet to Constable's *Diana*.

upon the idea that the poem is so magnificently resonant that it will be read and admired, and so preserved, for ever, and thereby escape the ravages of time. The mimesis in these cases does not inhere in any stylistic or other examinable features as such. What makes these works enactive is the fact that they are, especially in the case of the Shakespeare and Spenser examples, astonishingly accomplished, being perfectly realised in terms of imagery, diction, structure, conceit, and every other criterion of excellence; and that this literary excellence, in and of itself, constitutes an enactment and verification of the content, whether this assertion of greatness be explicit ('This pow'rful rhyme', Shakespeare No. 55) or implicit ('So long lives this', No. 18). Nothing less than the extraordinary rhetoricist literary culture which we examined during the first three chapters could have produced the range, sophistication, and frequency, of the Cratylid language forms which we have seen at work within Renaissance poetry. This same formalist culture also produced the sense of delight and confidence in the medium of expression which informs the great Elizabethan eternising sonnets. The best eternising poems both assert and validate their own eminence, unifying the medium and the message in such a way as to incarnate timeless, awe-inspiring artistic brilliance through the very language which lays claim to it.

One day I wrote her name upon the strand,
But came the waves and washed it away:
Againe I wrote it with a second hand,
But came the tyde, and made my paynes his prey.
Vayne man, sayd she, that dost in vaine assay,
A mortall thing so to immortalize.
For I my selve shall lyke to this decay,
And eke my name bee wyped out lykewize.
Not so, (quod I) let baser things devize,
To dy in dust, but you shall live by fame:
My verse your vertues rare shall eternize,
And in the hevens wryte your glorious name,
Where whenas death shall all the world subdew,
Our love shall live, and later life renew.

(*Amoretti*, 75)

Conclusion

Occupying Powers

The writer cannot say, in so many words, that 'the purpose of the foregoing . . . has been . . .': that is a privilege reserved for scientists. Instead, it should sum up without seeming to do so; it should be a coda . . .¹

As a number of commentators have pointed out, the ability of radical literary theory to effect real-life social and political change is limited. Steven Watts has spoken of the ineffectual 'revolutionary posturing of prosperous academics', and Terry Eagleton has discussed the academy's 'ersatz iconoclasm'.² Conversely, and ironically, a return to rhetoric and grammar would be hugely beneficial not only for literary studies³ but also for the deprived and disenfranchised social groups which many anti-formalists claim to champion. Medium-based verbal training would improve levels of both literacy and articulacy, which would, in itself, be massively empowering;⁴ and it would increase awareness and knowledge of the persuasive techniques, including tricks such as strategic folksiness, of politicians, public-relations consultants, and journalists, making us better able to recognise when we are being manipulated.⁵ Wars are begun, and rights are stolen or willingly surrendered, because of what Wittgenstein called 'the bewitchment of our intelligence by means of language'.⁶ In his essay of 1946, 'Politics and the English Language', George Orwell offers fascinating insights into issues such as the use by politicians of justificatory euphemisms to describe acts of violence or oppression (p. 363), and how those in authority often use vague or inflated language which 'falls upon facts like

1. Richard D. Altick and John J. Fenstermaker, *The Art of Literary Research*, fourth edition (New York and London: W.W. Norton, 1993), p. 234.

2. Watts, 'Academe's Leftists are Something of a Fraud', *Chronicle of Higher Education*, 29th April, 1992, p. A40; and Eagleton, *The Illusions of Postmodernism* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1996), p. 17.

3. To see the full potential of rhetoric as a method for understanding literature, one has only to read Longinus. For further non-political arguments in favour of a return to rhetoric, see Vickers, 1970, pp. 36, 60, and 166-67, and Bernard Bergonzi, *Exploding English: Criticism, Theory, Culture* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), pp. 19, 52, 94, and 196.

4. See Phillips, pp. 13, 48, 68, 83, 87-89, 96, 117, 180-82, and 315.

5. Maxwell J. Atkinson, *Our Masters' Voices: The Language and Body of Politics* (London: Routledge, 1984), incl. pp. xii, 93, and 181.

6. In Waswo, 1987, p. 40.

soft snow, blurring all the outlines and covering up all the details' (p. 364).¹ For various reasons, rhetoric has often been equated with scheming and subterfuge, and the knee-jerk response to this has been to assume that if we abandon rhetorical training then we shall be able to reach a condition of straight-talking honesty, and be safeguarded against the black arts of eloquence. In fact, however, it is only through a knowledge of rhetoric that we can become immune to its misuse, become better able to recognise error and truth, and ensure that nobody, whether of the left or the right, can wield excessive control over the minds of others. However much formal language-training is sidelined, the most élite and influential tier of society will always manage to get its hands on the keys to eloquence. Politicians tend to follow a standard route from public school debating societies to the Oxford Union,² and it is no coincidence that so many political leaders, including Tony Blair and Gordon Brown, first trained as barristers. To deprive people of a grounding in grammar and rhetoric is, then, to disarm them in the face of the enemy:

Since we can't prevent malice and wickedness from taking possession of eloquence and using its assistance to execute pernicious plots, what other remedy remains for us to defend ourselves with except arms that are similar to those with which others wish to assault us? [We must not] present ourselves naked for combat.

(Guillaume du Vair (1556-1621), *On French Eloquence*, 1594.)³

Yet despite its potential to please all sides of the academy, from those in the mainstream right through to the small band of dissidents who believe in literature, the chances of classical rhetoric making a comeback seem slight, because, however compelling the case for bringing this about, those who wish to see the return of rhetoric are fighting, not against a reasoned position, but against an irrational hatred of structures and rules; a hatred which springs from a deep-seated, and largely unconscious, romanticist ideology which has been

1. In *Collected Essays* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1961).

2. Atkinson, p. 93.

3. In Rehorn, ed., p. 251. Cicero, in the *De Oratore*, had urged us to keep our rhetorical weapons to hand as a means of protection (LC.VIII), and this same argument is made by Atkinson, p. xii. Regarding the historical links between rhetoric and dissent, such as the banishment of rhetoricians by the Roman tyrants, see David Norbrook in *Renaissance Rhetoric*, ed. Peter Mack (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994), p. 141; Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa (1486-1535), in Rehorn, ed., p. 81; and Kennedy in Sloane, ed., p. 101.

gaining ground for two hundred years, and which could well keep its status as a hegemonic and oppressive orthodoxy for hundreds more:

The rôles of Professor Higgins and Eliza Doolittle have been reversed. Uncertain of our culture, we put ourselves to school in order to unlearn. Disavowal is the name of the game. Disavowal of anything that might be construed as privilege. Disavowal of the very idea of culture itself. . . . But what we reap we sowed some time ago, and in another place. Grasmere. Home to the most persuasive and enduring of all sentimentalizations of ordinary English speech. Home to the fallacy that what is plain is philosophical. Home to Wordsworthiness. . . . It's nearly two hundred years since Wordsworth paid his eloquent tribute to the inarticulate, and not a day goes by still in which the sophisticated do not walk in verbal terror of the simple, so powerful in this country is any argument which has nature on its side.

(Howard Jacobson.)¹

More often than not, a course will only be taught, a book or article will only be published, and a career will only be launched, if the researcher privileges life and nature over art, and culturalist and contextualist topics over attention to the text. In practice, this has often meant that research has centred upon modish, 1970s-type issues such as identity politics (how many stigmatised children had Lady Macbeth?). When not based upon social politics, 'literary research' tends to consist of amateur histories of things like the book trade. As John M. Ellis puts it, those with posts in literature departments 'write on anything but literature'.² Brian Vickers, meanwhile, demonstrates how rhetoric is 'not just neglected, but despised' by modern critics (1970, p. 60), and how this romanticist antipathy to form is prevalent even within rhetorical scholarship (pp. 88-91), with George A. Kennedy, of all people, speaking of 'the dreary and trivial instruction of the rhetoricians'.

The academy's anti-formalism, and the dominance of social, economic and political history over artistic considerations, including rhetorical history, account for the omissions in scholarship which this study has tried to make good. The first three chapters are designed to fill part of a vast gap in research both as regards the nature and evolution of

1. *Yo! Mrs. Askew*, a programme in the series *Think of England* (a Hawkshead Production for B.B.C. Television, 1991).

2. *Literature Lost: Social Agendas and the Corruption of the Humanities* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1997), p. 205.

classical rhetorical theory, and as regards the formalist paradigm of the Renaissance, the underlying and unified structures of which have been overlooked by an academy which has studied only one area of form at a time. Similarly, despite the remarkable prevalence and importance of enactment devices within sixteenth-century verse, nobody until now has analysed them in detail, *en masse*, and within the historical context of rhetoric and its attendant phenomena in the culture of the medium. This culture explains the unusually high incidence not only of enactive language-use but also of dozens of other stylistic figures at that time. It is also the prime mover behind many other aspects of Renaissance literature, including the most important aspect of all: that the standards of writing during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were staggeringly high. Yet the impact of rhetoric upon literature is often not fully understood even by rhetorical critics. Madeleine Doran, for instance, seems surprised that writers were able to make any use of their rhetorical training at all, and speaks of the 'extraordinary vitality with which the dry formulae of rhetoric were converted into fruitful uses'.¹ However, the ultimate testing-ground for the nature and depth of the phobic prejudice which rhetoric will have to overcome if it is to stand any chance at all against the current occupying powers is the reception of the bible of Renaissance rhetorical formalism, the *De Copia*, within modern scholarship.

Before looking at some of the readings and misreadings of the *De Copia*, it is first of all important to note that such discussions, whatever their merits and demerits, are pitifully thin on the ground, especially when one considers that we are dealing here with the single most important rhetorical text produced during the Renaissance. A search of the M.L.A. online bibliography, which mainly consists of works written over the last few decades, gives a snapshot of the current state of play. Typing in 'De Copia' yields just twelve results, as compared with the one thousand seven hundred and eight which come up if one types in 'Lacan'. 'Shakespeare AND copia' gets three results, whilst 'Shakespeare AND colonial' and 'Shakespeare AND postcolonial' together receive forty times this number, and

1. *Endeavors of Art: A Study of Form in Elizabethan Drama* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1954), p. 43; and see Vickers, 1970, p. 91.

'Shakespeare AND feminist' receives over ninety times as many.¹ In his *Desiderius Erasmus: Concerning the Aim and Method of Education* of 1904, Woodward noted that the *De Copia* had received far too little attention on the part of commentators;² and now, over a century later, Woodward's book remains the most recent full-length account of the literary and educational principles of Erasmus.³ Present-day literary historians sometimes appear to go out of their way to discuss anything but the work of Erasmus. Andrew Sanders, in the 'Renaissance and Reformation Literature 1510-1620' chapter of *The Short Oxford History of English Literature* (1996) packs thousands of facts and figures into its one hundred and three pages, including all kinds of historical ephemera, but neither the *De Copia* nor any of the classical works on rhetoric receives so much as a namecheck, either here or in any of the other chapters. Then again, as we shall see, when one does manage to track down modern critical assessments of the *De Copia*, the text is so often misconstrued that one can be left wondering whether it might have been better served if nothing had been written about it at all, and it had instead been left to speak for itself.

Writing at a time when classical learning still had a foothold in school and university curricula, Woodward has a respectful attitude both to Erasmus's rhetorical project, and to the whole issue of form. At one point, though, he commits an error which, as we shall see, arises in some of the later criticism. Woodward calls the work a 'storehouse of material for rhetorical uses' (p. 20), thus implying that the lists of examples are similar in kind to the collections of material found in the *Adagia*, and other texts which could accurately be described as 'storehouse[s] of material'.⁴ In fact, however, the lists in the *De Copia* merely give the illusion of being repositories. Each set of synonymous phrases is not simply a heap of information, but illustrates a particular formal principle. If these large groups of

1. Searches carried out on 20th April 2006.

2. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), p. 20.

3. This dearth is discussed by Erika Rummel, 'Erasmian Humanism in the Twentieth Century', *Comparative Criticism*, 23 (2001), 57-67, p. 61.

4. Sowards tries to make this same connection (pp. 127, 128, and 133).

illustrations can act as useful collections of ideas for phrasing, then no doubt that can be a helpful by-product of the system; but the key function of the lists is to illustrate and clarify the particular formal variation principle under which each list is grouped, which will in turn help us to improve our facility with language. To think of these catalogues as 'storehouses' is to commit an error of genre. This is a formalist guidebook, not a treasury.

The training method of the *De Copia* involves, as we saw in Chapter Three, the generation of numerous hows, or formal media, for the expression of any given what, or message, so that one can then choose the single most appropriate and effective option out of all the possible alternatives. Generating and weighing up a number of possible phrasings is not the same thing as using more than one phrasing within the finished composition. So, for example, one could say either 'The *De Copia* has been misread', or 'Literary critics have misrepresented the greatest work of rhetorical humanism', or 'Modern commentaries on Erasmus's *copia* guide are misleading', but one would almost certainly not use all three together, because, as with all synonymous statements, there is, by definition, a heavy semantic overlap between the different versions, and so using more than one at a time would be tautologous, clumsy, laboured, and so on. If one becomes adept, through Erasman rhetorical training, at producing a number of stylistic media for any given message, then this could come in useful when employing the *exergasia* device - that is, the figure whereby one repeats the same thought in different words - but synonymy as a tool for developing eloquence, and synonymy as a rhetorical figure, are entirely different things. To take the fact that the training régime and *exergasia* both happen to employ synonymous phrases, and conclude from this that Erasmus has written an *exergasia* manual, would be to confuse training and practice. This is an elementary mistake, and one which is, incidentally, the same as that committed by Baldrick at army camp:

I loved the training. All we had to do was bayonet sacks full of straw. Even I could do that. I remember saying to my mum, "These sacks will be easy to outwit in a battle situation".

(*Blackadder Goes Forth*, Episode 6.)

Such a reading would also grossly restrict the scope of the Erasmian system. *Exergasia* is simply one possible end-product of a training method which covers the entire range of verbal expression. The *De Copia* can no more be limited to *exergasia* than it can be limited to alliteration or to any other verbal pattern. To identify an infinitely wide-ranging compositional method with one possible outcome of that method is a basic error, yet because of the isomorphic relationship between the Erasmus lists and *exergasia* - they both contain synonyms, and so, at a glance, may appear similar - this mistake has claimed an extraordinary number of victims.

Once the synonymy has been erroneously transplanted from compositional training to the finished work, the way is then free for critics to conclude that Erasmus is encouraging the use of a dull and repetitive writing style. In fact, the exact opposite is true. By drawing attention to such an extraordinary array of phrasing possibilities for even the most simple of lines ('Your letter pleased me mightily'), Erasmus helps to ensure that one's composition can attain the greatest possible expressive range. As Woodward (1904) says, *copia* is not about 'tedious repetition'; it is about 'variety', 'brightness', and 'movement' (p. 128). He continues:

A student of the classical Renaissance, desirous to make a first-hand acquaintance with the art of expression as understood by humanist writers, cannot do better than make a careful analysis of the *De Copia*.

(Ibid..)

Although subsequent critics roundly ignored this advice, they didn't ignore each other, and the history of the *exergasia* trap provides an object lesson in how scholarly error can be copied and expanded from one decade to the next. In his 1958 article, 'Erasmus and the Apologetic Textbook' (see above, p. 73), Sowards calls the text 'the standard work on rhetorical dilation' (p. 123). But it is not, as Sowards assumes, a guide to *exergasia*, and so has nothing to do with 'dilation'. Moreover, Erasmus's methods, including the elaboration techniques given in the second book, are just as helpful for compression as they are for expansion, as he himself explains:

To take compression of language first, who will speak more succinctly than those who can readily, and without hesitation, pick out from a huge army of words, from the whole range of figures of speech, the feature that contributes most effectively to brevity? And as for compression of content, who will show the greatest mastery in setting out his subject in the fewest possible words, if not he who has carefully worked out what are the salient points of his case, the pillars so to speak on which it rests, distinguishing them from the subsidiary points, and the things brought in merely for embellishment? No one, in fact, will see more swiftly and surely what can be omitted without disadvantage than those who can see where and how to make additions.

(Section 5)

The *exergasia* misreading in turn causes Sowards to miss the crucial point that the two longest lists ('Your letter' and 'Always') are the culmination of the preceding discussions on formal variation. He instead calls this part of the work 'a brilliantly conceived digression'.¹ That is, he thinks of these sections as being solely a 'demonstration of virtuosity',² and thus overlooks their function as formalist teaching aids. He next repeats the idea that the *De Copia* is on 'the art of linguistic dilation', and then makes the astonishing claim that this, one of the most rigorously formalist works ever produced, is 'unsystematic'.³ The storehouse error, though not explicitly stated, is implied as a stepping stone between these two parts of his reading. That is, having decided that the work is telling us to pile up synonyms in the final composition, as opposed to piling up synonyms as an exercise in style, Sowards is at liberty to ignore its function as an instruction manual, and instead see it as a haphazard collection, or storehouse, of phrases. The fact that all the lists in question are compiled on, and are meant to clarify and illustrate, formalist principles, is never acknowledged. Moreover, as we saw in Chapter Three, even Book II, which is about *inventio* and *dispositio* rather than *elocutio*, is still organised along strictly formalist lines, and could hardly be less 'unsystematic'. In Sowards, then, the misreadings occur in a causal chain consisting of three stages: the *exergasia* error, then the compilation or storehouse error, and finally the anti-formalist verdict.

1. Page 136.

2. Ibid..

3. Both *ibid.*

Robert Ralph Bolgar, writing in 1954, devotes only one sentence to Book I, where he sums it up as dealing 'largely with vocabulary and with the various ways of replacing a word that has already been used' (p. 273). What Bolgar describes here is different from *exergasia* to the extent that the writer tries to avoid repetition, and to the extent that the synonymy does not necessarily consist of consecutive phrases. But, as with the identification of the *De Copia* with *exergasia*, this reading confuses application with training, and leads to an unwarranted restriction of scope. Like *exergasia* proper, the reformulation of what has already been said in order to avoid repetition is certainly one of the possible uses of the skills developed by the student of the *De Copia*. As Erasmus points out in Section 8 (and see Quintilian X.I.7), an immediate benefit of his system is that it can help to reduce the risk of *tautologia* (by which he means 'the repetition of a word or phrase', not synonymy). But steering clear of ungainly repetition is simply one application amongst many. That Bolgar mentions this particular usage, without mentioning that the first book has to do with selecting the best option from an array of choices, indicates that, like those who describe the book in terms of *exergasia* and 'dilation', he has missed the main point.

Donald B. King and H. David Rix, in the introduction to their 1963 translation of the *De Copia*, think that the work is to do with *exergasia*, and even build this misreading up into the assertion that *exergasia* constituted a general Renaissance stylistic ideal. They summarise the variation techniques outlined in Book I thus:

The next twenty chapters continue with methods of varying, for the key to the richness of style so highly prized in the Renaissance era was the repetition of an idea in skilfully varied diction.¹

It is hard to think of illustrations from Renaissance literature which would support such a claim. This failure to engage with, and hence understand, Erasmus's methodology is largely explained by their subsequent comment, when discussing textbooks on the figures,

1. (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Marquette University Press), p. 4.

that 'these systems . . . seldom rise above the level of pedantry' (p. 5). This is all part of what Brian Vickers calls academia's 'post-romantic animus against rhetoric'.¹ The *exergasia* interpretation has continued to plague Erasman commentary right up to the present day. As quoted above (p. 171), Woodward tells us both to avoid identifying the *De Copia* system with *exergasia*, and to avoid the consequent inference that Erasmus is encouraging a style weighed down by 'tedious repetition'. Yet, writing in 1982, Marion Trousdale claims that the *De Copia* leads to 'artful redundancy',² and Peter Mack, in 1996, states that:

Reading the examples of 200 ways of saying 'your letter pleased me greatly' [Mack has accidentally swapped round the figures for the two long lists] from Erasmus's *De Copia* may well have encouraged a tendency towards dense and repetitive writing.³

In fact, however, it is precisely this thoroughness of training which helps to explain why the Renaissance writers had such a facility with the stylistic medium, and were thus able to generate a body of literature which sparkles with variety and energy. Five years later, even Russ McDonald quotes the Proteus rephrasing passage from Erasmus's introduction in the middle of a discussion about dilation.⁴ The *exergasia* reading would not be so heinous if Erasmus had not expressly underlined the distinction between synonymic training exercises and synonymic compositional practice. As mentioned above, the introduction contains a warning against *tautologia*. In Section 12 of the first book - that is, right from the start of his many accounts of formal variation methods - Erasmus expands on this. He writes:

The accumulation of synonyms, such as I have been discussing, which the Greeks call *sunathroismos*, will not only enable us to avoid *omoiologia* (that is, a sameness of colour pervading the speech) if we find ourselves having to

1. 1988, p. 322.

2. Page 52.

3. In Kraye, ed., p. 91.

4. 2001A, p. 28.

repeat the same idea several times, but will also contribute to *deinosis* or vehemence: for example, he has gone, he has burst forth, he has escaped, he has fled; you have slain your parent, struck down your father, slaughtered your sire In my opinion, however, it is more suitable for exercises than real speeches; it is a very trying form of variation if you get into the habit of expressing the same idea over and over again in different words with the same meaning.

It is worth bearing in mind here that Quintilian, who had a greater influence on Erasmus than any of the other classical rhetoricians, argues that *exergasia* is not even a proper figure (IX.III.98). Erasmus next acknowledges that it is possible to employ *exergasia* in an appropriate and effective way, and illustrates this with lines from Virgil and Cicero (see also *De Copia*, Book II, Method 9), before returning to, and concluding this section with, his main point: that synonyms should appear side by side within the actual composition itself only in exceptional circumstances, that is, in those rare cases where one is absolutely certain that this feature is justified. If it is not, one runs the risk of simply making a fool of oneself:

Some public speakers of otherwise distinguished reputation, especially among the Italians, actually set out to waste time with strings of synonyms like this, as if that were some splendid achievement. It is just like someone expounding the verse from the psalm, 'Create in me a clean heart, O God' by saying 'Create in me a clean heart, a pure heart, an unsullied heart, a spotless heart, a heart free from stain, a heart untainted by sin, a purified heart, a heart that is washed, a heart white as snow,' and so on, right through the psalm. 'Richness' of this sort is practically *battologia*.

(Section 12)

So adamant is Erasmus about this that he makes the same point in the *Lingua* (written in 1525), where he relates the following tale:

Even the Gospels mention the reproach of *battologia*, though it came from a secular story about the shepherd Battus. Mercury was leading away stolen cattle, and gave Battus a cow to keep the theft quiet. He swore he would keep absolute silence, but when Mercury came back with a change of voice and appearance, and offered him a cow if he informed on the theft, he instantly said they were 'near to the mountains, near to the mountains they were'. The story goes that Mercury laughed, and, mimicking Battus' mannerism of speech, said: 'Traitor, it's me you're betraying, betraying my crime to myself'. Then he turned the fellow with the faithless tongue into a kind of stone, called *index*, 'an informer', by Latin speakers, which is used by goldsmiths to test gold.

(p. 273)

Passages such as these make it all the more unjust that the *De Copia* has been read as if it were a guide to synonymous, or 'dense and repetitive', writing. In fairness to the critics mentioned thus far, most of them provide accurate and helpful accounts of other aspects of the *De Copia*. For instance, Sowards sums up the aim of the *De Copia* as being 'to instil a ready command of language' (p. 128) - a statement which may seem elementary, but which goes beyond some modern readings - and even though Bolgar misinterprets Book I he still provides an entirely sound account of Book II (pp. 273-4). The same patterns hold true in more recent times, with Mack and McDonald both counterbalancing their *exergasia* misreadings with useful commentary on other aspects of the work, or on rhetoric itself. Mack is, incredibly, the only critic who clearly states (in contradiction of his *exergasia* reading) that the *De Copia* is based upon the idea of 'choosing among alternatives' (p. 91), and the work of McDonald, taken as a whole, shows him to be one of the few people in current literary study to give due weight to verbal form and its rhetorical context.

On the one hand, the high critical standard of commentators such as these makes their errors all the more inexplicable, and brings home the point that within the modern age, where the medium of expression is both undervalued and misunderstood, the most basic grasp of Erasmian compositional principles cannot be assumed even when the commentator is one of the true greats of old, and supposedly formalist, scholarship, or someone who is at the cutting edge of the New Formalism. On the other hand, those hoping, and failing, to find a reliable commentary on the core methodology of the *De Copia* at least have the cold comfort of knowing that the *exergasia* mistake arises out of a distortion of elements which are real (*exergasia* being an actual rhetorical figure), and that the critics concerned are familiar enough with rhetorical terms to know that there is such a thing as *exergasia* in the first place. By contrast, when we turn to the full-scale romanticist critics, we find absolutely no awareness of rhetorical principles at all.

In a letter to Martin Dorp, written in May 1515, Erasmus appeals for a reader 'who understands what I have written, who is fair and honest, who is eager for knowledge, and is not hell-bent on being critical'. Walter J. Ong, writing in 1971, dismisses the *De Copia*, a

work which is organised throughout according to technical categories such as 'periphrastic substitutes for the comparative' (Section 45), as a selection of 'informal jottings' (p. 30). After this, romanticist misinterpretations of the *De Copia* become more numerous, largely ousting the *exergasia* fallacy as the Erasmus commentators' error of choice. Cave, writing in 1979, speaks of Erasmus's 'distaste for systematization' (p. 22), and James McConica, in 1983, declares that 'what he disparaged was . . . the formal'.¹ Like the *exergasia* error, to which - as we saw with Sowards, and with King and Rix - it is sometimes related, the anti-formalist misreading has continued into the present century, with Ann Moss, in the 2001 *Encyclopedia of Rhetoric*, providing one of the most trenchantly Wordsworthian accounts of the *De Copia* ever written. She describes it as 'revelling in its own fertility of invention, unsystematized, mobile'.²

The most erroneous account of all, though, appeared in 1993. In their 1986 *From Humanism to the Humanities*, Anthony Grafton and Lisa Jardine make the 'storehouse' mistake, speaking of 'the manual of "copie", *de copia*, the rich and ready accumulation of matter for discourse' (p. 136). Then, in *Erasmus, Man of Letters* (1993),³ described on its cover as 'a stunning example of what historical scholarship can accomplish',⁴ Jardine repeats this error, and elaborates upon it in several different directions. First of all, she tries to claim, without giving any supporting evidence, that this particular misreading has the weight of scholarly consensus behind it. As we have seen, there have been many problems in the world of Erasman rhetorical scholarship, but the 'storehouse' or 'compilation' error is one which most critics up until Grafton and Jardine had managed to avoid. Next, and in the same sentence, Jardine combines the storehouse misreading with a romanticist misreading which rivals even that of Moss. Thirdly, and most egregiously of all, Jardine goes on to claim, a few paragraphs later, that, because of the grave flaws in Erasmus's

1. In *Universities, Society, and the Future*, ed. Nicholas Phillipson (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press), p. 41. This statement is cited approvingly in Grafton and Jardine's book (London: Duckworth, 1986), p. 143.

2. Entry for 'Copia' in Sloane, ed., p. 176.

3. (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press.)

4. Constance Jordan, quoted on the back cover.

project - flaws which have in fact been generated by her own misreading - the *De Copia* is a work which has no purpose. Furthermore, by the time we get to this second set of claims, the distancing 'consistently described as' clause of the earlier statement has been forgotten, and it becomes clear that this reading is in fact Jardine's own. She then rounds things off by repeating the 'storehouse' error. The two passages in question run as follows:

So we need to take a close and serious look at what might conceivably be considered to be the relationship between Agricola's *De inventione dialectica*, which is persistently characterised in the literature as a revised, humanistic handbook of dialectic for technical *argumentatio*, and Erasmus's *De Copia*, which is equally consistently described as a compilation of 'abundant speech' - of creative, and above all unstructured, linguistic virtuosity. . . .

The *De Copia* is . . . an unreadable text - we can construe it, we can translate it, we can recognise some of its sources and indebtednesses, but we cannot recognise a purpose for it, beyond the trite one of simple 'resourcing' - accumulating material.

(pp. 131-2)

Once the text has been thus scrutinised and found wanting, the way is then clear for Jardine to supply its omissions by pursuing her own politico-bibliographical 'quest for a context which gives meaning back to Erasmus's *De Copia*' (p. 144). Needless to say, the 'sources and indebtednesses' which she mentions do not appear to include any of the work's great classical progenitors, and, as the instruction manual for the most remarkable flowering of literary composition in history, the *De Copia* already possesses both 'meaning' and 'a purpose'.

None of this is to imply that Erasmus is a fanatically strict pedagogue in the mould of the oppressive patriarchal straw men which have been constructed by modern radicals.¹ In fact, he had ground-breakingly progressive views on issues such as the education of women² and the abusive employment of corporal punishment.³ But to claim that on the issue of language-use and training he is anything other than a formalist, and a leading

1. See Washington, p. 28.

2. See Woodward, 1904, pp. 148-53.

3. Sowards in J. Sperna Weiland and W.Th.M. Frijhoff, eds., *Erasmus of Rotterdam* (Leiden, etc.: E.J. Brill, 1988), discusses Erasmus's important work as an enlightened educational reformer.

formalist at that, is not only to misread the *De Copia*, but also to misread Renaissance culture itself. Whilst the *exergasia* misinterpretations which dominated the middle decades of the twentieth century are travesty enough, the anti-formalist readings of the last few decades outdo even these. The most straightforward explanation for the appalling misrepresentation of Erasmus, since the 1970s, as some kind of forerunner of Rousseau or Wordsworth, is that Ong, Cave, Jardine, and Moss, being anti-formalists, don't, by definition, have very much interest in rhetorical texts, and have therefore quite simply not read the opening sections of the work - where Erasmus unambiguously sets out his methodology and aims - and have instead gone straight to the synonymous lists. By approaching these sections without any context, such critics have been able to use the lists as a blank canvas onto which they can project their own anti-formalist beliefs. That is, they assume that these long lists must represent some kind of formless, romanticist, spontaneous overflow of language. Such glaring and anachronistic errors in other subject areas might not have gone unquestioned, but, because there is such a dearth of Erasman rhetorical scholarship, this is all lawless territory, and so the crimes have gone unrecognised and unpunished. If to the pure all things are pure, then to the romanticist the *De Copia* is romanticist. Having deprived it of the context of the rhetorical tradition, and of its own introduction and other explanatory sections, and having thereby found themselves faced with what Jardine calls (see above) an 'unreadable text' - which could be more accurately described as an 'unread text' - commentators have attempted to refashion Erasmus in their own image. The fact that this enterprise requires them to read the most formalist work of the most important formalist thinker of the most formalist age in English history as if it were anti-formalist has in no way dampened their enthusiasm and self-confidence as they attempt to batter the square peg of classicism into the round hole of romanticism. Reading Erasmus from within the modern age feels like throwing back the shutters and allowing light to flood into the darkness. But turning from Erasmus to the Erasmus commentators feels like closing them again. As Philip Melanchthon says, when discussing the same system of intellectual enquiry upon which the *De Copia* is based:

A world in which the monuments of Greek learning are unknown is a world where men are always children, or, to put it in another figure, are for ever groping their way through blinding mists.¹

The foregoing discussion tells us two things. Firstly, it tells us that Erasmus, the Prince of Humanists,² has been badly served by modern scholarship. Secondly, it tells us that a medium-based approach to verbal communication has not only been lost to us as a living entity, with language-use no longer being valued within the educational system, but has also been lost even as a past-tense, historical entity. One would have thought that, given the current state of the academy, the study of Erasmus would have acted as a life-raft for serious textual scholars, and that the *De Copia* would therefore have been in safe hands. But even those who specialise in rhetoric do not understand it, and so do not know what has been lost. Within accounts such as those of Ong and Jardine, the very existence of sixteenth-century rhetorical formalism is airbrushed from history. This kind of rabid anti-formalism has also hastened the death of the aesthetic, to the point where seminars on Donne's poetry focus solely on his social politics, and where one of the greatest passages in *Paradise Lost* can elicit a casually scornful: 'Milton just got a bit carried away'.³ The idea that these are works of art is rarely countenanced.

This pogrom against knowledge has resulted in the dismissal of the figural guides as 'pedantry'.⁴ Given that rhetoric had been a rigorously objective science ever since the *Phaedrus*, Aristotle, and Theophrastus, levelling such accusations against it makes as much sense as levelling them against a set of chemical formulae. In the case of the *De Copia*, what has resulted is an outright inversion of the truth. The above survey also scotches any illusions one might have had about the mid-twentieth century being a golden age for formalist criticism. The last few decades have seen a decline, but earlier readings include

1. Quoted, but not fully referenced, in Woodward, 1906, p. 114. This is not from *The Praise of Eloquence*, and it has not been possible to determine the primary source.

2. DeMolen in DeMolen, ed., p. vii.

3. Examples taken from undergraduate and postgraduate seminars at the University of York.

4. See the above citations of Vickers, and King and Rix.

many of the same errors. For an accurate picture of rhetoric one has to go right back to the original sixteenth-century and classical works. The primary sources still exist, regardless of the misleading critical apparatus which has been erected around them, and their methods are plain enough. But the question remains: can they be read? Within a romanticist educational ethos for which 'formalist' is a term of abuse, the science of the medium, the wonderful, boundless world of rhetoric, is, and may from now on remain, entirely beyond the limits of comprehension. The *De Copia*, this most brilliant and perspicuous of works, may, after all, have become an 'unreadable' text.

Appendix

Longinus

On the Sublime originally 'formed part of a compendious work in at least twenty-one books, entitled *Philological Discourses*, which also included *inter alia* a treatment of prose-rhythm',¹ and Longinus himself alludes to two full books of his, now lost, which dealt with word-arrangement (39.1). The kind of expertise and attention to detail which would have been needed in order to write entire books on metre and syntax are evident throughout the extant work. In several ways, *On the Sublime* represents the culmination of Graeco-Roman rhetoric. Probably written in the first, or even second, century A.D.,² it is to some extent a summary of the best which had been thought and said by the earlier rhetoricians. Like Quintilian, and continuing the reaction against Gorgias (as discussed in Chapter One), Longinus begins by telling us that rhetoric goes beyond 'persuasion' (1.4); like Aristotle and Horace, he speaks of the desirability of unity (10.1); like a large number of rhetoricians - most notably Dionysius - he gives accounts of those devices where form is employed in such a way as to enact content (10.6, 20.2, 22.4, and 43.3);³ and, like Cicero, he describes the relationship between ideas and eloquence in terms of light: 'It is indeed true that beautiful words are the light that illuminates thought' (30.2).⁴ Longinus, in common with most of his predecessors, divides figures into those of thought and those of language (8.1); analyses the use of figures within the works of great writers, such as Demosthenes (20.2) and Herodotus (42.1-5); and uses paraphrase to illustrate the importance of the stylistic medium (10.6, 18.1, 20.2, 39.4, 40.3, 43.3, etc.). In an echo of Demetrius, with his *Timaeian* linking of musical and verbal forms, Longinus describes composition as:

1. M.J. Boyd, 'Longinus, the *Philological Discourses*, etc.', *The Classical Quarterly*, VII (1957), 39-46, p. 46.

2. Richard Macksey, 'Longinus Reconsidered', *Modern Language Notes*, 108 (1993), 913-34, pp. 913-14, and Boyd, pp. 42 and 46, put *On the Sublime* in the first century, but Grube, 1965, pp. 340-43, favours the second.

3. The recommendation of Longinus that one should use natural signs rather than arbitrary ones is examined by George B. Walsh, *The Varieties of Enchantment* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984), p. 264.

4. Richard Macksey discusses the recurrent use of the image of light in Longinus. *Op. cit.*, pp. 915 and 921-22.

a harmony of words, man's natural instrument, penetrating not only the ears but the very soul. It arouses all kinds of conceptions of words and thoughts and objects, beauty and melody.

(39.3)

Like Quintilian, and like Cicero again, he counterbalances the purely formalist aspects of his discussion with a cautionary injunction that eloquence must have substance behind it (7.1); and later, in a passage which is reminiscent of lines 409-11 of the *Ars Poetica* (quoted towards the beginning of Chapter Two), he speaks of balancing art and nature. Impeccable phrasing, he says,

is generally a product of art; erratic excellence comes from natural greatness; therefore, art must always come to the aid of nature, and the combination of the two may well be perfection.

(36.4)

Yet just as a closer inspection of the relationship between art and nature in Roman rhetoric shows that art is ultimately the senior partner, as seen in Chapter Two, so, to an even greater extent, formalism is the ultimate driving force behind the work of Longinus. Moreover, this fact helps to account for his brilliance as a critic. Having started out with a definition of 'sublimity' as an 'eminence or elegance of discourse' which is the 'source of the distinction of the very greatest poets and prose writers' (1.3), his first argument is against those proto-romanticists who consider it a mistake to reduce the attainment of sublimity to technical rules, and who hold that greatness of eloquence 'is a natural product, and does not come by teaching' (2.1). He then supports this position with a sophisticated and far-reaching discussion which includes the bold point, presumably derived ultimately from the scientific studies of his Greek forebears, that even nature itself is 'not a random force and does not work altogether without method' (2.2). Longinus also places the order-chaos binary under the ultimate control of the art and order side of the polarity by fusing the two aspects of this duality into the unity of the artfully artless stylistic ideal:

People who in real life feel anger, fear, or indignation, or are distracted by jealousy or some other emotion . . . often put one thing forward and then rush off to something else, irrationally inserting some remark, and then hark back

again to their first point. . . . Thus hyperbaton is a means by which, in the best authors, imitation approaches the effect of nature. Art is perfect when it looks like nature, nature is felicitous when it embraces concealed art.

(22.1)

Whereas Horace's mockery of the anti-art faction as being a motley bunch of eccentric hermits (*Ars Poetica*, l. 298) is eventually counterbalanced by his recommendation that study and 'native wit' be joined in 'a friendly league', Longinus is far less interested in achieving a rapprochement between art and nature. At no point does he back-pedal from his trenchant and sardonic verdict, given early on in the book, that romanticist writers 'often fancy themselves possessed when they are merely playing the fool' (3.2). Instead, he keeps moving forwards, constantly exploring and honouring the wonders of verbal art. Along with Dionysius, and perhaps Demetrius, he is the most wholeheartedly formalist of the classical rhetorical theorists, and the results of this approach are spectacular.

As part of his commitment to style, Longinus uses paraphrase-based literary analyses - which are, as we have seen, a quintessential feature of that criticism which places a high value on the medium - with greater frequency than any other rhetorician. In the course of this fairly short book, he makes use of the same-message-different-medium principle to examine the work of Aristeas of Proconnesus, Homer, and Aratus (10.4-6); Archilochus (10.7); Demosthenes (10.7, 18.1 and 39.4); and Euripides (40.3). Within these analyses, Longinus implicitly, and sometimes explicitly, asserts the key formalist tenet that the meaning and effect of a passage arise not simply from the underlying content, but also from the way in which language is used:

Thus Heracles says after the killing of the children: 'I'm full of troubles, there's no room for more'. This is a very ordinary remark, but it has become sublime, as the situation demands. If you were to rearrange it, it would become apparent that it is in the composition, not in the sense, that the greatness of Euripides appears.

(40.3. The Euripides quotation is from *Hercules Furens* 1245. Longinus makes similar statements at 18.1 and 39.4.)

The most impressive and significant outcome of Longinus's commitment to the medium is his sheer brilliance as a literary critic, a brilliance which stems from an entirely grounded,

physical conception of word-use. He has a synaesthetic response to language, the sonic and visual characteristics of words impressing themselves upon him with all the solidity of touch. For Longinus, as for his fellow Roman-era Greeks Demetrius and Dionysius, the crafting of the medium of language into a literary work is as much of a plastic art as the crafting of the medium of iron into ironwork or the medium of stone into stonework. Indeed, whereas Amphion used art to charm stones and thus construct the walls of Thebes, under the system of Demetrius, Dionysius, and Longinus, the writer uses the principles of wall-building to charm words, and thus construct magnificent art. This selfsame approach to the medium of language enables Longinus to attain a level of critical insight which has never been surpassed. Here he comments on a passage from the (now lost) *Antiope* of Euripides, in which Circe is being tossed by a bull. Using a model of literary criticism within which words have as much materiality as stones, Longinus arrives at the following extraordinary account:

'And where it could, it writhed and twisted round, dragging at everything, rock, woman, oak, juggling with them all.'

The conception is fine in itself, but it has been improved by the fact that the word-harmony is not hurried and does not run smoothly; the words are propped up by one another and rest on the intervals between them; set wide apart like that, they give the impression of solid strength.

(40.4)

Just as it is his materialist philosophy of eloquence which provides a foundation for Longinus's investigations into the rhetorical features of literary works, so it is these close analyses of language-use which, in turn, provide a foundation for the final stage, the capstone, of his critical method: an unbridled, and even celebratory, sense of aesthetic appreciation, a sense which, as we have seen in the works of Demetrius and Dionysius, was particularly acute in the later Greek commentators. Another in this group is Philodemus (c.110-c.35 B.C.), who is said to have had a notably aestheticist approach to poetry and rhetoric, but whose work has survived only in the form of some badly-charred fragments of papyrus which were found amongst the ashes of Vesuvius. He was, appropriately enough, an Epicurean philosopher, and he seems to have carried these beliefs

across into his work on eloquence.¹ Like these other Greeks, although possibly to a unique degree, Longinus fuses the linguistic and the aesthetic, and hence the corporeal and the spiritual:

So when we come to great geniuses in literature . . . we have to conclude that such men . . . tower far above mortal stature. . . Sublimity raises us towards the spiritual greatness of the divine.

(36.1)

As Thomas Rice Henn says, 'The aspiration towards the divine runs through the whole book'.² The intellectual understanding, or appreciation, of a work is, for Longinus, inseparable from its aesthetic or emotional appreciation. Armed with this unified scientific-artistic sensibility, Longinus combines his technical readings with exclamations of enthusiasm and joy. If criticism over the last few decades has been dominated by studies of morbidity, 'the diseased body', and the like, then the work of Longinus epitomises (despite attempts to 'reconfigure it for a postmodern or feminist aesthetic')³ a diametrically opposed school of criticism. Of a passage in Herodotus, for instance, he writes: 'Do you see, my friend, how he grips your mind and takes it on a tour through all these places, making hearing as good as seeing?' (26.2; and see 9.9). For Longinus, as for Wilde, the literary arts are all about beauty and light and wonder.⁴

The first post-classical appearance of Longinus came in the form of the 1554 Italian edition by Robortelli,⁵ and following the Boileau translation of 1674, he was to become increasingly influential.⁶ Whether he was discovered in time for the English Renaissance

1. Kennedy in Sloane, ed., p. 104.

2. *Longinus and English Criticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1934), p. 11.

3. Laura Doyle, 'Sublime Barbarians in the Narrative of Empire; or Longinus at Sea in *The Waves*', *Modern Fiction Studies*, 42 (1996), 323-47, p. 323.

4. The lineage from *On the Sublime* down to the British aesthetic movement is discussed by Henn, pp. 129-30, and Macksey, pp. 930-31. The overall influence of classical rhetoric on the British and European aesthetic movements is discussed by Wimsatt and Brooks, p. 476.

5. Macksey, p. 925.

6. As discussed by D.A. Russell and Michael Winterbottom in the introduction to their edition, p. xvii. This is also mentioned in Vickers, 1970, p. 119, and Macksey, p. 926.

writers to have been influenced by him, either directly or else via the sixteenth-century Italian literary theorists such as Castelvetro,¹ or whether the apparent links, such as the drive towards aesthetically intense writing (see 11.3 and 33.1), are simply a result of the Elizabethans responding to many of the same rhetorical-aestheticist factors - in particular, the works of the earlier classical rhetoricians - and thereby reaching the same conclusions, is difficult to gauge, given the absence of research in this area. Yet whatever the extent of his effect on sixteenth-century literature, that the investigations into eloquence made during the classical age could have led up to the creation of such a remarkable work is testimony both to the incredibly advanced state of rhetorical culture in the Graeco-Roman world, and to the incomparable value of the rhetorical system itself.

Along with the loss of the Theophrastus text, the biggest regret for all who study classical rhetoric must be the fact that more than a quarter of the original Longinus text - which was short to begin with - is missing. The extant manuscript has five substantial lacunae. As well as losing parts of the literary-critical discussions which form the main body of the work, we have also lost a section near the beginning which may have expanded on the preceding passage, where Longinus deals with the relationship between art and nature. It is a tribute to the unfaltering excellence of *On the Sublime* that, even with so much material now missing from the commentary sections, and with what could well have been a highly important theoretical section also lost, it remains the most outstanding work of its kind ever written.

1. Regarding the possible influence of Italian theorists on the Elizabethans, see Smith, Vol. I, pp. lxxxvi-lxxxvii.

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- . At the time of his death in 1994, Ricky Foulkes had just completed a remarkable, book-length study of gematria, numerology, and related topics such as sacred geometry. The Radionics Association has recently expressed an interest in publishing it. For further information about the work of Ricky Foulkes, or for a copy of the manuscript/book, please contact Miles Layram, care of the Alumni Office, the University of York, England.
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- [Post-viva note: I was told at the viva (19.7.07) that I should have used the *O.E.D.*. I have now checked all my *S.O.E.D.* references (pp. 38, 40, 46, 83, 89, 113, 143, and 145) against the *O.E.D.*, and all these *S.O.E.D.* citations, and the points related to them, remain sound. However, if this project were to get to book stage, I would revise these sections, removing the references to the *S.O.E.D.*.]
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