The Plays of Christopher Marlowe and George Peele: Rhetoric and Renaissance Sensibility

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ABSTRACT

This work is concerned with the evaluation of rhetoric as an essential aspect of Renaissance sensibility. It is an analysis of the Renaissance world viewed in terms of literary style and aesthetic. Eight plays are analysed in some detail: four by George Peele: *The Battle of Alcazar*, *Edward I*, *David and Bethsabe*, and *The Arraignment of Paris*; and four by Christopher Marlowe: *Dido Queen of Carthage, Tamburlaine Part One*, *Dr Faustus* and *Edward II*. The work is thus partly a comparative study of two important Renaissance playwrights; it seeks to establish Peele in particular as an important figure in the history and evolution of the theatre. Verbal rhetoric is consistently linked to an analysis of the visual, so that the reader/viewer is encouraged to assess the plays holistically, as unified works of art. Emphasis is placed throughout on the dangers of reading Renaissance plays with anachronistic expectations of realism derived from modern drama; the importance of Elizabethan audience expectation and reaction is considered, and through this the wider artistic sensibility of the period is assessed.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction: The Rhetorical and Linguistic Context

On one level, this work is simply a rhetorical analysis of selected works by two important Elizabethan dramatists: Christopher Marlowe and George Peele. At the same time, it is an attempt to demonstrate in as thorough a manner as possible how integral was the part that a knowledge of rhetoric played in the composition of Elizabethan drama generally. This second aim is connected with my choice of playwrights. This is a deliberately non-Shakespearean study, not because Shakespeare fails to be infinitely interesting as regards rhetoric, but because his overwhelming dominance and individual genius may serve to obscure more general trends in the history of the drama; Shakespeare's transformative power is so great that the works of other dramatists can sometimes seem (erroneously, I believe) like the raw material from which he constructed his great plays. Yet such dramatists each had an individual contribution to make, just as each was in touch, in his different way, with the current of his times. Neither can these dramatists be viewed entirely in isolation from each other: they influenced one another, being almost certainly aware of each other's works. I have chosen Marlowe and Peele as representatives of this Elizabethan drama, because both are writers of acknowledged quality. In addition, both wrote a series of dramas which demonstrate a continuous, varied, and lively engagement with both rhetoric and theatre, resulting in the production of works which display a wide range of verbal and visual techniques: *The Battle of Alcazar* is an entirely different kind of play from *The Arraignment of Paris*, for instance, and

Tamburlaine lies at an enormous distance in all kinds of ways from *Edward II*. Again, though these two playwrights were contemporaries, had much in common (they were both, of course, 'University Wits'), and shared the same cultural space, their works offer opportunities for comparison and contrast which can only help to enliven and sharpen analysis.

More specifically, this work concerns itself with *ethical* rhetoric. That such a study as this confines itself to a particular *area* of rhetoric is in part due to the necessity of achieving the sufficient thoroughness of analysis. For the same reason, we have confined ourselves to an analysis of four plays in each writer's canon: Peele's *The Battle of Alcazar*, *Edward I*, *David and Bethsabe*, and *The Arraignment of Paris*; and Marlowe's *Dido Queen of Carthage*, *Tamburlaine Part One*, *Doctor Faustus*, and *Edward II*). But the primary reason is that ethical rhetoric has special significances: it has supreme importance for the building up of stage characters and their interaction, and its dual nature creates an interesting field for analysis. By this latter point I mean that it consists both of the rhetoric of morality and the rhetoric of delight. In this work we have called this delight *delectatio*, from the Latin verb *delectare*, to delight. The interplay between these two aspects of an overall *ethos* is complex, fascinating, and revealing of Elizabethan attitudes to both theatre and rhetoric: it often reflects the tensions of an age replete with conflicting systems of Puritanism and Humanism. That poetry, so closely tied to rhetoric in this age, was viewed as essentially ethical is the thesis of Sidney's *Apology for Poetry*, in which Sidney says that the 'right' poets 'most properly do imitate to teach and delight . . . and delight to move men to take that goodness in hand, which without delight they would fly as from a stranger, and teach, to make them know that goodness where unto they

are moved.'[1] As we shall see, such a close harmony between *ethos* and delight is not always to be found in the drama. Our rhetorical analysis, then, is not simply a mechanical exercise in identifying the use of figures of speech (although we are always keen to demonstrate such usage), but an attempt to show how rhetoric is synthesized in an overall artistic experience which brings together rhetoric, theatrical display, character, morality, and audience response.

In one sense the study of rhetoric can be seen as essentially the recovery of lost knowledge. This is why a knowledge of the pedagogical concerns of the Elizabethans and the rhetorical handbooks which were used (both in the Latin and vernacular) can give us a good deal of insight into their consciousness. This is why works such as T. W. Baldwin's[2] and Miriam Joseph's[3] are invaluable. But even this knowledge is not enough if we are fully to enter into the life of the Elizabethan theatre: it is necessary to view and read these plays not only in a rhetorical context, but in a theatrical one also, or more precisely, in a context which combines the two. Indeed, in this work I go beyond the narrowly rhetorical in considering other aspects of language, for the syntactic and metrical skills of Marlowe and Peele cannot be ignored if we are to take a truly synthesizing approach to their dramas.

This combination of linguistic dexterity in poetry, rhetoric and theatre tends to work against a realism viewed either as situational or psychological. This is why throughout this work we insist on looking at these plays in a way which is as close as possible to the viewpoint of their particular audiences, for it is only in doing so that we will gain a true assessment of their literary worth.

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[1] Sir Philip Sidney, *An Apology for Poetry; or, The Defence of Poesie*, ed. by Geoffrey Shepherd, 2nd edn (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1965), pp. 102-03.
[2] T. W. Baldwin, *William Shakespere's Small Latine and Lesse Greeke*, 2 vols (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1944).

Our aim should be to read and/or view these dramas as experiences which were enjoyed by their audiences much as modern audiences enjoy the opera; we should accept the conventions and not look for a realism unintended by their authors and unexpected by their audiences. By taking such a critical stance, we will be in a better position, when and if realism does occur, to appreciate the innovation. In order to thoroughly clarify my approach on this point, I have felt it necessary to evaluate in some detail some of the chief critics of Marlowe and Peele. Before we do this, however, it is necessary to remind the reader of some of the rhetorical and linguistic contexts in which these plays were produced.

We can be certain that both Marlowe and Peele, at Canterbury and Christ's Hospital respectively, had the benefit of intensive rhetorical training from the grammar school curriculum. All writing, of course, is rhetorical in one sense or another: we can find a host of rhetorical figures in Wordsworth, just as we can in, say, Sidney. But to the Elizabethan, who had such a rigorous education in technique, the use of rhetorical art, if not always a fully *conscious* application, was invariably foregrounded in a way which it was not in, say, the nineteenth century. Shepherd tells us that that the aim of Elizabethan rhetoric was 'to say the right thing to a particular audience to achieve the required aim.'[4] It was an essentially public technique, therefore, rather than a method of private expression. It helped, according to him, subsume 'the individual subject within a social unit.'[5] This view of rhetoric was indissolubly linked to the ideals of the new Humanism. During the Renaissance, great emphasis was given to the capacities of the human *will*, and Renaissance Humanists looked back on the

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[3] Sister Miriam Joseph, *Shakespeare's Use of the Arts of Language* (New York: Hafner, 1947).
[4] Simon Shepherd, *Marlowe and the Politics of Elizabethan Theatre* (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1986), p. 4.
[5] Shepherd, p. 4.

Middle Ages as a period of stultification of the will, when men were concerned with the barren subtleties of academic disputation, and when Scholasticism encouraged a withdrawal from the everyday political and social life of humanity.[6] This view, oversimplified though it was, helped highlight by contrast the ideals and practices of the Renaissance Humanists themselves; by constructing the Middle Ages in this way, they justified their own plans for education and society. They laid stress on the practical nature of rhetoric and the *vita activa*. Statements made in Cicero's *De inventione* were brought forward as evidence of the practical and essential nature of rhetoric in a civilized society. Although there were Humanists who themselves leant towards the contemplative life, they could not deny that Cicero had little complimentary to say about the *vita contemplativa* so beloved of the Scholastics. In his view, such a life could not lead men to civilization: 'To me, at least, it does not seem possible that a mute and voiceless wisdom could have turned men suddenly from their habits and introduced them to different patterns of life.'[7] According to Cicero, a wise eloquence was a political contribution to a civilized society. Renaissance rhetoric, then, had as its very basis, a broad *ethical* conception. But this was a *dynamic* ethic: such an *ethos* involved a certain strength or nobility which brought it closer to the Roman *virtus* than to the modern conception of a simple moral goodness; it was essentially creative and self-creative, in that by it Man could build and sustain the external society around him whilst at the same time

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[6] Thomas M. Conley, *Rhetoric in the European Tradition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), p. 110.

[7] Ac mihi quidem videtur hoc nec tacita nec inops dicendi sapientia perficere potuisse ut homines a consuetudine subito converteret et ad diversas rationes uitae traduceret. (*De inventione*, 1. 2. 3, in Cicero, *'De inventione', 'De optimo genere oratorum', 'Topica'*, trans. by H. M. Hubbell, Loeb Classical Library (London: Heinemann; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1949), pp. 3-345.

fortifying his own being. This is why Marlowe's Tamburlaine is such a typical product of Humanism.

Along with this idea of the transformative ethic went an increased awareness of the importance of *elocutio*,[8] or style, and the schemes and tropes which were its subject matter. It is sufficient for logic to construct and arrange cogent arguments, but rhetoric, having as its aim the influencing of people and events in the political and social arenas, requires other strategies. Quintilian makes it plain that *elocutio* is a vital part of rhetoric in Book 8 of his *Institutio oratoria*:

> The verb *eloqui* means the production and communication to the audience of all that the speaker has conceived in his mind, and without this power all the preliminary accomplishments of oratory are as useless as a sword that is permanently kept within its sheath . . . it is this which is the chief object of our study, the goal of all our exercises, and all our efforts at imitation, and it is to this that we devote the energies of a lifetime.[9]

The works of the likes of Mosellanus and Susenbrotus are ample testimony that the Renaissance took Quintilian to heart. The latter's *Epitome troporum ac schematum et grammaticorum et rhetoricorum* was an important grammar school text, and his work was the basis of such popular vernacular rhetorics as Sherry's *A Treatise of Schemes and Tropes*, Peacham's *Garden of Eloquence*, and Puttenham's *The Arte of English Poesie*. Yet Quintilian is equally concerned

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[8] The five parts of classical rhetoric are *inventio* (the discovery of arguments), *distributio* (arrangement), *elocutio* (style), *memoria* (memory), and *pronunciatio* (delivery).

[9] Eloqui . . . est omnia, quae mente conceperis, promere atque ad audientes perferre; sine quo supervacua sunt priora et similia gladio condito atque intra uaginam suam haerenti . . . hic studium plurimum adhibendum, hoc exercitatio petit, hoc imitatio, hic omnis aetas consumitur . . . (*The 'Institutio oratoria' of Quintilian*, ed. by H. E. Butler, Loeb Classical Library, 4 vols (London: Heinemann; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1921), III, 8, Prologue, 15-16).

with the other parts of rhetoric: invention (or the discovery of topics of

argument), arrangement, memory, and delivery. This is the five-fold division of

Cicero. And Humanists such as Erasmus were well aware of the dangers of a

concentration on the figures of speech alone. Erasmus' *De duplici copia*

verborum ac rerum commentarii duo, usually known as *De copia*, was one of

the central grammar school texts of the period.[10] And though *De copia* stresses

abundance of *expression*, it is careful to counterbalance this with a discussion of

the abundance of *subject matter*. Indeed, the work's very title makes plain the

equal importance of *elocutio* and *inventio*. Erasmus' opening paragraph sounds

a clear warning:

> 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. Yet the pursuit of speech like this involves considerable
>
> risk . . . We find that a good many mortal men who make great efforts to
>
> achieve this godlike power fall instead into mere glibness, which is both
>
> silly and offensive. They pile up a meaningless heap of words and
>
> expressions without any discrimination, and thus obscure the subject they
>
> are talking about, as well as belabouring the ears of their unfortunate
>
> audience. In fact, quite a few persons of no real education or
>
> understanding have, heaven help us, undertaken to give instruction in this
>
> very subject, and these, while professing a mastery of *copia*, have merely
>
> revealed their own total lack of it.[11]

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[10] Baldwin, II, 176-96.

[11] Desiderius Erasmus, *De duplici copia uerborum ac rerum commentarii duo*, trans. by B. I. Knott, in *The Collected works of Erasmus*, ed. by R. A. B. Mynors, D. F. S. Thomson and others (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974-), XXIV: *Literary and Educational Writings 2: 'De copia' 'De ratione studii'*, ed. by Craig R Thompson (1978), pp. 280-659 (p. 295).

True style, then, according to Erasmus, is a result of the two abundances, the two *copias*, expression and matter.[12] This is why his treatise is not simply a set of academic exercises in varying, as was the practice of *amplificatio* in the Middle Ages.[13] Rather than merely imitating his predecessors, Erasmus makes his readers aware of the vast potentialities of human speech. The opening line of the above quote sounds a clarion call to all would-be orators, writers, and poets: '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.' Here is the spirit of the Renaissance as regards language: a sense of transformation, of power, of originality, of creativity. Again, one feels that Marlowe's Tamburlaine is the apotheosis, the materialization of Erasmus' ideal on the Renaissance stage. At the same time as rhetoric's subject matter was expanded, the practice of the Middle Ages in applying it to literary forms in general was continued: it was not only the orator who could make use of its techniques, but the poet also. Ben Jonson, in *Timber; or, Discoveries*, says that

> the *poet* is the neerest Borderer upon the Orator, and expresseth all his vertues, though he be tyed more to numbers; is his equall in ornament, and above him in his strengths . . . Because in moving the minds of men and stirring of affections (in which Oratory shewes and especially approves her eminence) hee chiefly excells.[14]

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[12] Interestingly, Cave argues that in Erasmus the two *copias* coalesce: '*Res* and *verba* slide together to become 'word-things'; the notion of a single domain (language) having a double aspect replaces that of two distinct domains, language and thought.' (Terence Cave, *The Cornucopian Text: Problems of Writing in the French Renaissance* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), p. 21). Seen in this light, all the arts of language take on a new significance with regard to Man's experience of the world. Words are no longer merely the semblance of things, but possess the energy of reality.

[13] Cave, pp. 8-9.

[14] *Timber; or, Discoveries*, in *Ben Jonson*, ed. by C. H. Herford and others, 10 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1925-50), VIII: *The Poems The Prose Works*, ed. by C. H. Herford, Percy and Evelyn Simpson (1947), pp. 563-649 (p. 640).

Such an attitude clearly helps to bring rhetoric and poetic drama to a closer synthesis.

The texts studied in the grammar schools were many. One of the chief classical texts that Marlowe and Peele would certainly have studied is the pseudo-Ciceronian *Rhetorica ad Herennium.* This work, which had been known since the twelfth century, was the basic elementary text of rhetoric, and T. W. Baldwin has shown that Shakespeare was highly familiar with it.[15] I refer to it at several key points in this work. The *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, like most classical rhetorics, deals chiefly with forensic oratory, although some space is given over to deliberative and *epideictic* forms.[16] In the first two books it gives a detailed analysis of the types and sub-types of judicial issues and topics of invention, or material for constructing arguments, to be used within each type. There are also sections on the arrangement of speeches as a whole, according to the traditional pattern of *exordium*, *narratio*, *divisio*, *confirmatio*, *refutatio*, and *conclusio*. Book four deals with *elocutio* and is largely a list, with examples, of figures of speech. For an additional source of *inventio* topics the Elizabethan schoolboy would have had Cicero's *Topica*,[17] and for a systematic exposition of schemes and tropes, Susenbrotus.[18] In terms of composition, however, the *Copia* was an incredibly rich source,[19] as were other works of Erasmus, such as *De conscribendis epistolis*.[20] But for a systematic outline, with numerous examples on how to enlarge upon a set theme, Aphthonius'

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[15] Baldwin, II, 69-107.

[16] The forensic, the deliberative, and the *epideictic* are the three kinds of oratory dealing with, respectively, accusation and defence, persuasion and dissuasion, and praize and blame. (Aristotle, *The 'Art' of Rhetoric*, trans. by John Henry Freese, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1926), 1358b.

[17] Baldwin, II, 108-37

[18] Ibid., pp. 138-75.

[19] Ibid., pp. 176-96.

[20] Ibid., pp. 239-87.

Progymnasmata held pride of place.[21] This elementary manual by a Greek rhetorician, much augmented by Renaissance scholars with additional examples and commentary (*scholia*),[22] consisted of fourteen kinds of elementary exercises in writing themes: the retelling of a fable or myth (*fabula*), a short narrative (*narratio*), a theme upon the saying or deed of a known person (*chria*), a theme upon some wise saying or proverb (*sententia*), a theme refuting some statement or belief (*destructio*), a theme upholding the truth of some statement (*confirmatio*), commonplace or theme dwelling upon some abstract virtue or vice (*locus communis*), a eulogy or encomium (*laus*), a theme of dispraise (*vituperatio*), a comparison (*comparatio*), an imaginative speech declaimed by some person or abstraction (*ethopoeia*), an elaborate description (*enargeia*), a speech marshalling the arguments on either side of a debatable proposition (*thesis*), and, finally, a speech for and against a proposed or existing law (*legislatio*). This text was important in that it not only introduced the student to a variety of literary forms, such as the *fabula* and the *sententia*, but also gave him practice in the construction and destruction of arguments, and, in the *locus communis*, taught him to expand upon the good or evil tendencies of a character. Used in combination with Cicero's *Topica* these forms served to enhance and turn to use the theoretical knowledge contained in the first two books of the *Rhetorica ad Herennium*.

We can detect in these exercises the elements which were to form the armoury of the future dramatists. What Joel Altman calls 'sophistic relativism' pervaded the Elizabethan schoolboy's entire education: he was continually

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[21] Ibid., pp. 288-354.

[22] The most popular Latin translation was the one by Richard Lorich (Richard Rainolde, *The Foundacion of Rhetorike*, Scholars' Facsimiles & Reprints (New York, 1945), Introduction, p. xii), which was greatly augmented by *scolia* and examples.

encouraged to examine persons and events from shifting and often contradictory points of view.[23] Themes of praise and blame, for instance, could be developed with reference to the same subject, and the form of the *thesis* invited arguments for or against the proposition. This cultivation of the ability to take up different argumentative positions was a vital preparation for the dramatist, for not only did it teach him to create discourses, but also to set up the conflicts necessary for effective drama. Moreover, this deliberation could be used for the creation of character, as it could be internalized; in other words, it could form the basis of soliloquy. Character creation could only be further enhanced by the practice of the *ethopoeia*, for this was a deliberate fabrication of character through speech. It could take the form of a passionate outcry, which had its origins in the *conquestio*, the emotional pleading, of forensic oratory. Or it could invoke the characteristics of a certain genus of character, using *ethos* rather than *pathos*. Alternatively, it could mix both kinds. Richard Rainolde, in his English adaptation of Aphthonius, *A booke called the Foundacion of Rhetorike*, describes the three kinds thus:

> The *Ethopoeia* is in three sortes. The firste, a imitacion passive, which expresseth the affection, to whom it parteineth: whiche altogether expresseth the mocion of the mynde, as what patheticall and dolefull oracion, Hecuba the quene made, the citee of Troie destroied, her housbande, her children slaine. The second is called a morall imitacion, the whiche doeth set forthe onely, the maners of any one. The thirde is a mixt, the whiche setteth forthe, bothe the maners and the affection, as how, and after what sorte, Achilles spake upon Patroclus, he beyng

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23 Joel Altman, *The Tudor Play of Mind: Rhetorical Inquiry and the Development of Elizabethan Drama* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), pp. 43-44.

dedde, when for his sake, he determined to fight: the determinacion of

hym sheweth the maner. The frende slaine, the affection.[24]

These types were always composed with a view to such a specific situation, and

it is clear that the practice was always intimately related to drama. The close

connection between *ethopoeia* as an oratorical practice and a dramatic technique

was, in fact, recognized in classical times, as Quintilian's words testify:

> And as their [the client's] plea would awaken yet greater pity if they
>
> urged it with their own lips, so it is rendered to some extent all the more
>
> effective when it is, as it were, put into their mouths by their advocate: we
>
> may draw a parallel from the stage, where the actor's voice and delivery
>
> produce greater emotional effect when he is speaking in an assumed role
>
> than when he speaks in his own character.[25]

Here the close links between a rhetorical *ethos* and dramatic character creation

are clearly recognized.

An education system loaded with rhetoric is but one facet of an

Elizabethan Age which had an intense fascination for both the arts of language,

and, in intellectual circles at least, the ideals of the new Humanism; indeed, the

two went hand in hand. Just as Cicero had extolled the art of rhetoric above all

else,[26] so Thomas Wilson, in his 1585 edition of *The Arte of Rhetoric*, is in full

agreement with his classical predecessor as to the primacy of persuasion in the

setting up of civilization. In fact, he paraphrases Cicero:

> Neither can I see that men can have been brought by any other meanes, to
>
> live together in fellowship of life, to maintaine Cities, to deale, and

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[24] Rainolde, *The Foundacion of Rhetorike*, Fol. xlix.

[25]. . . quantoque essent miserabiliora si ea dicerent ipsi, tanto sunt quadam portione ad adficiendum potentiora cum uelut ipsorum ore dicuntur, ut scaenicis actoribus eadem uox eademque pronuntiatio plus ad mouendos adfectus sub persona ualet (Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria*, 6. 1. 26).

willingly obeye one another, if men at the first had not by art and

eloquence, persuaded that which they had full oft found out by reason.[27]

Although Wilson, like Cicero and his successor Quintilian, values eloquence

highly, he is concerned, like his classical predecessors and Erasmus, that matter

should be as important as manner, content as necessary as form. Yet over and

above the ideas of Elizabethan Humanists like Wilson there developed a kind of

language, based largely on the school rhetorics and influenced to a large extent

by the oratorical prose of the Middle Ages,[28] which had its basis in the often

mechanical application of the classical figures of style. Ciceronian rhetoric in its

original form had been reduced in the Middle Ages to a kind of formulary

rhetoric for the composition of sermons and letters, and Morris Croll has

suggested that what brought back the interest in highly schematic modes of

composition was the meeting of just this Mediaeval rhetoric with the emergent

vernacular tradition.[29] But whatever the reasons, the language of the English

Renaissance -- or at least that used in the circles of the higher classes -- tended

towards *ornateness*. In other words, the rhetoric of the Court became a stylistic

rhetoric; polite taste of the day demanded conformity to certain rules,[30] and

everyday patterns of speech were frowned on. Wilson himself recognized this.

After giving some examples of patterned speech, he avers that '. . . great lordes

would think themselves contemned, if learned men (when they speake before

them) sought not to speake in this sort.'[31] A highly patterned manner of speech,

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[26] *De inventione*, 1. 2. 3.
[27] *Wilson's 'Arte of Rhetorique'* [1560], ed. by G. H. Mair (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1909), Preface.
[28] *Style, Rhetoric, and Rhythm: Essays by Morris W. Croll*, ed. by J. Max Patrick and others (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966), p. 267.
[29] Ibid., p. 284.
[30] For a political explanation, see Wilbur Samuel Howell, *Logic and Rhetoric in England 1500-1700* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1956), p. 10.
[31] *Arte of Rhetorique*, p. 203.

that is, conferred a certain *ethical* standing on the speaker. This is a style seen in

its most concentrated form in John Lyly's *Euphues*, but Lyly was by no means

its inventor, though he brought it to its highest degree of sophistication and gave

added impetus to its dissemination. Essentially, it is a prose style based on the

antithetical balancing of members of equal length, whose grammatical structures

are identical. It depends for its effect, in other words, on *isocolon* and *parison*.

Patterning is further intensified by the use of repetition, sometimes of whole

words, sometimes of endings (*homoioteleuton*), sometimes of leading

consonants (*alliteration*), the latter taking place in adjacent words and/or

adjacent clauses. But the essence of the style would appear to be the balanced

antithesis, the continual nice weighing of idea. Writing seven years before

North's *Diall of Princes*, one of the possible sources of euphuism,[32] Princess

Elizabeth writes to Edward VI in the following manner:

> Like as the *rich* man that daily gathereth *riches* to *riches*, and to one
>
> bag of money layeth a great sort till it be infinite: so methinks your
>
> majesty, not being suffered with so many benefits and gentleness shewed
>
> to me afore this time, doth now increase them in *asking* and *desiring*
>
> where you may bid and command; requir*ing* a *thing* not *worthy* the
>
> *desiring* for itself, but made *worthy* for your highnesses' request. My
>
> picture I mean: in which if *the inward good mind* towards your grace
>
> might as well *be declared* as *the outward face and countenance* shall *be*
>
> *seen*, I would not *have tarried* the commandment, but *have prevented* it,
>
> nor *have* been *the last to grant* but *the first to offer* it . . . Of this also yet
>
> the *proof could not be great*, because the *occasions have been so small*;

[32] Clarence Griffin Child, *John Lyly and Euphuism* (Erlangen: Boheme, 1894), p. 104.

notwithstanding, as a dog hath a day, so may I perchance have time *to declare it in deeds*, which now *I do write them but in words*.[33]

Here indeed, as can be seen from my emphasis, is a good deal of *repetition*, *parison*, and *antithesis*. The effect is one of carefully controlled, reasoned thought. It gives the impression of a mind working strictly within carefully constructed bounds which it has set for itself. It is assured, in perfect control of its ideas. It is meant to convey decorum and to advance the ethical standing of the speaker. Yet a modern reader may find it difficult not to wish that Elizabeth ought to be getting to her point a good deal quicker. Nowadays we look for plain language, a more direct means of communication. Ascham, however, one of the great pedagogues of his day, said of Elizabeth that 'She approved a style chaste in its propriety and beautiful by perspicuity'.[34] These were the qualities admired in civilized communication: a kind of self-contained decorum linked to what was seen as lucidity of expression. This had important implications for the court drama, of which Lyly was to become the chief exponent.

Although euphuism in Lyly's plays is less intense and less continuous than in *Euphues* itself, it is nevertheless present throughout his dramatic output, particularly in the earlier dramas. But the exigencies of the court theatre made the forging of long speeches, in which euphuism is best displayed, less appropriate. Instead, Lyly often uses a kind of witty comic verbal fencing, which undoubtedly influenced Shakespeare in his comedies. In this extract from *Gallathea*, Cupid spars verbally with four of Diana's nymphs: Ramia, Larissa, Telusa, and Eurota, concerning the nature of love:

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[33] Ibid., p. 105.
[34] Ibid., p. 104.

Cupid. It is the true love knotte of a womans hart, therefore cannot be undone.

Ramia. That fals in sunder of it selfe.

Cupid. It was made of a mans thought, which will never hang together.

Larissa. You have undone that well.

Cupid. I, because it was never tide well.

Tel. To the rest, for she will give you no rest. These two knots are finely untied.

Cupid. It was because I never tide them; the one was knit by *Pluto*, not *Cupid*, by money, not love, the other by force, not faith, by appointment, not affection.

Ramia.Why doe you lay that knot aside?

Cupid. For death.

Tel. Why?

Cupid. Because the knot was knit by faith, and must onely be unknit of death.

Eurota. Why laugh you?

Cupid. Because it is the fairest and the falsest, doone with greatest arte and least trueth, with best collours and worst conceits.

Tel. Who tide it?

Cupid. A mans tongue.

Larissa. Why doe you put that in my bosome?

Cupid. Because it is onely for a womans bosome.

Larissa. Why what is it?

Cupid. A woman's hart.

> *Tel*. Come let us goe in, and tell that *Cupid* hath doone his taske; stay
>
> you behind *Larissa*, and see hee sleepe not, for love will be idle; and take
>
> heede you surfette not, for love will be wanton.[35]

This 'intertalking' of characters is what drives Lyly's dramas forward. There is a

continuous moral debate, which is sophisticated and ironic in that the antitheses

continually qualify varying points of view; the continual play of schemes creates

a fabric which is static and choppy, so that we often feel that we are in the midst

of an analytical debate. There is little real passion. Neither do we feel that the

characters are sufficiently individualized by such language: they often seem mere

mouthpieces for particular standpoints. But this only reinforces what we have

said about the practice of school exercises: the *ethopoeia* might have given

opportunity for character creation, but at the same time it tended to reinforce the

impression of set formulae. This is true even of the longer speeches which Lyly

often inserts into his dramas. In *Campaspe*, Alexander's general Hephestion

attempts to persuade his commander to abandon all thoughts of his confessed

love, and instead to take to the field where he belongs. But here the schemes are

enlivened by tropes:

> I can not tel *Alexander*, whether the reporte be more shameful to be
>
> heard, or the cause sorrowfull to be beleeved! What! is the sonne of
>
> *Phillip*, king of Macedon, become the subject of *Campaspe*, the captive
>
> of Thebes? Is that minde, whose greatnes the world could not containe,
>
> drawn within the compasse of an idle alluring eie? Wil you handle the
>
> spindle with *Hercules*, when you shoulde shake the speare with
>
> *Achilles*? Is the warlike sound of drumme and trumpe turned to the soft

[35] *Gallathea*, 4. 2. 34, in *The Complete Works of John Lyly*, ed. by R. Warwick Bond, 3 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1902), II, 429-72.

noyse of lire and lute? The neighing of barbed steeds, whose loudnes

filled the ayre with terrour, and whose breathes dimmed the sun with

smoak, converted to dilicate tunes and amorous glaunces . . . ?[36]

The antitheses, couched within the form of *erotemata*, bring home powerfully

the contrasts between the adjuncts of love and those of war. The image of the

vast mind of Alexander, which the world itself could not contain, being so shrunk

it is entrapped within a woman's eye, derives its effectiveness from being

hyperbolic as well as antithetical; it magnifies an idea; it is not simply a play on

sentence structure. It is a true trope, as is the comparison with *Hercules* and

Achilles, which is a kind of antithetical *antonomasia*, where the proper noun is

used for the quality associated with it: it brings out Alexander's god-like

qualities, as well as the nature of his fall from the nobility of war to the

effeminacy of love. The image of the barbed steeds who dim the sun is again

hyperbolic, so much so that it suggests the language of Marlowe's *Tamburlaine*.

But for all the tropes, patterning still remains to give the speech a rational

gloss. Hephestion attempts to confirm his proposition to Alexander that a 'soft

and yeelding minde should not be in him, whose hard and unconquered heart

hath made many yield'[37] by using a series of contrasts. Campaspe is one whose

'eies are framed by arte to inamour, & whose heart was made by nature to

inchaunt'[38], and 'Hermyns have faire skinnes, but fowle livers; Sepulchres fresh

colours, but rotten bones; women faire faces, but false heartes.'[39] Moreover,

'though she have heavenly giftes, vertue and bewtie, is she not of earthly mettall,

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[36] *Campaspe*, 2. 2. 29, in Bond, II, pp. 303-58.
[37] Ibid., 2. 2. 68.
[38] Ibid., 2. 2. 43.
[39] Ibid., 2. 2. 55.

flesh and bloud?'[40] Finally, Hephestion concludes that 'there is no surfeit so

dangerous as that of honney, nor anye poyson so deadly as that of love; in the

one phisicke cannot prevaile, nor in the other counsell.'[41] What emotions the

tropes generate are severely circumscribed by these carefully crafted

comparisons and contrasts. In other words, the *ethos* and *pathos* of the speech

is contained within its *logos*. Perhaps the best comment on it, however, is the

first line of Alexander's reply, which recognizes just this overwhelming primacy

of reason: "My case were light *Hephestion*, and not worthy to be called love, if

reason were a remedy, or sentences could salve, that sense cannot conceive.'[42]

Yet Alexander himself turns out not to be a really passionate lover, for he, as it

were, merely participates in the intellectual debate; his affirmations are forced by

the playwright into the language of *logos*: 'it is a king that loveth and *Alexander*,

whose affections are not to be measured by reason, being immortal, nor I feare

me to be borne, being intollerable.'[43] We are thus hardly surprised when, in the

final scene, Alexander willingly surrenders his love to a man more in keeping

with Campaspe's station. Lyly's self-contained world retains its set boundaries,

just as the language retains all emotion within its strict management. It is not,

then, that Lyly does not use tropes, but that they are subordinated to reason, and

therefore to the schematic language that reflects it. We can see in this the

beginnings of the witty repartee and sophisticated comic rhetoric which led to the

comedies of Shakespeare, save that the language lacks the variety which is one of

the requirements for the development of individual character. The psychological

interest is, in fact, minimal. But as we are at pains to point out in this work,

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[40] Ibid., 2. 2. 68.
[41] Ibid., 2. 2. 73.
[42] Ibid., 2. 2. 77.
[43] Ibid., 2. 2. 91.