

RHETORICAL FAILURE IN ENGLISH RENAISSANCE LITERATURE

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A dissertation submitted to the faculty of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the
Department of English and Comparative Literature.

Chapel Hill
2012

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ABSTRACT

ROBERT ERLE BARHAM: Rhetorical Failure in English Renaissance Literature
(Under the direction of Jessica Wolfe)

This dissertation examines scenes of failed persuasion in Renaissance literature. Although recent critical work has profiled early modern concerns with inarticulacy, critics for the most part have neglected a widespread interest in the limits of persuasive speech. Undergirded by humanist convictions about the power of eloquence, rhetoric's assumed utility guided education curricula throughout Renaissance England from grammar school to the Inns of Court. The imaginative literature of the period is a proving ground for this assumption as writers take formal persuasion into unusual scenarios to consider the limitations of rhetorical skill. Unlike rhetorical theory, Renaissance fictions dramatize scenarios in which some aspect of the speaker, audience, or situation dislocates persuasion. Fiction writers from Philip Sidney to John Milton use these moments to address central preoccupations in Renaissance culture. Examining rhetorical failure in amatory, religious, forensic, and deliberative contexts, which represent crucial sites of communication in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century life, I argue that early modern writers use such scenes to assess the value of eloquence, both for the individual and for early modern society, and to demonstrate their own rhetorical skill.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The debts of gratitude owed as a result of this project are considerable. I am obliged to all the members of my committee and to Dr. Megan Matchinske for their help and encouragement. They provided invaluable feedback and direction for the project at various stages. I owe a special debt to Jessica Wolfe and Reid Barbour. Along with being acclaimed scholars, they are wonderful teachers with a habit of seeing the best in their students—even ones who practice, as well as study, rhetorical failure. For their instruction and friendship, I am very grateful.

In the course of the project, the McLaurin-Eliason Dissertation Fellowship from UNC's Department of English and Comparative Literature afforded vital time for research. In the spring of 2010, the Folger Institute provided a grant-in-aid for Kathy Eden's "Reading, Writing, and Erasmus" seminar, where Dr. Eden and fellow seminar participants gave me great help at a crucial stage of writing. In addition, UNC's Graduate School, Program in Medieval and Early Modern Studies, English and Comparative Literature department, and Graduate and Professional Student Federation provided conference grants to present material from each of my chapters.

Fellow graduate students make UNC a wonderful place to study, and their camaraderie has been sustaining start to finish. I am particularly thankful for the Medieval and Renaissance cohort, past and present, who offered fellowship and guidance at every turn. Thanks especially to my friend and writing-group partner Kit Curtain who

graciously read versions of all my chapters. The dissertation is considerably better thanks to her.

Finally, I am most grateful to my parents. In addition to being extraordinarily generous with their love and support, they cultivated an appreciation for learning and the liberal arts from as early as I can remember. This dissertation is dedicated to them.

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INTRODUCTION

If the Renaissance orator was commonly regarded as “the emperor of mens minds & affections” how does one account for the many moments in early modern literature where persuasive speech fails its practitioners (Peacham, dedication)? While theorists celebrated the power of eloquence, the period from 1500 to 1700 found writers replaying in various keys the breakdown in rhetoric’s capacity to persuade. The following dissertation considers scenes of failed persuasion across sixteenth- and seventeenth-century literature, focusing particularly on those moments where rhetorically deft speech is useless. According to poets and playwrights, eloquence fails for different reasons—because of uncommon speakers, ranging from chaste female rhetors to spiritual reprobates, or because of unusual audiences, including rapists, an iron groom, rebellious angels, and God himself—all of which allow them to consider rhetoric’s utility and the various constraints on persuasive speech. The following study reveals a growing sense of the limitations of rhetorical skill for the individual and for English society, and the problems associated with applying classical rhetoric to Tudor-Stuart contexts.

Rhetorical failure is a technique of disenchantment by which persuasive strategies are laid bare when shown to be ineffective. These authors present skillful oratorical performances, but they often include cues by which the audiences within the text—and without—are able to “see through” the speeches, as it were, recognizing the rhetorical craft, the speakers’ designs on the addressees, and the reasons for their failure. For

instance, Pyrocles and Musidorus in Sidney's *The Old Arcadia* offer remarkably persuasive appeals based on the way they target their audience's emotions, but Sidney emphasizes the strategies from classical rhetoric that the princes deploy and suggests the extent to which justice would be compromised should their eloquence triumph. In the process, Sidney stresses the importance of reason for the proper ruling of both the state and the individual in the forensic conclusion to his romance. Similarly, Leander may be a "bold sharp sophister" in *Hero and Leander*, but Marlowe repeatedly reminds the reader that Leander's speeches are calculated attempts at seduction based on his copious appeals and incongruous reasoning. As a result, Marlowe argues that amatory success is incidental to seductive rhetoric. Such strategic disenchantment makes rhetorical failure a sophisticated and effective composition strategy: Renaissance writers flatter their readership by creating transparent rhetorical performances whereby audiences can both delight in the skill of an oration and recognize the reasons for miscarried persuasion. Moreover, these writers contribute to contemporary rhetorical theory by depicting eloquence in the most unusual circumstances, which elucidates how rhetorical speech operates with respect to both the speaker and the audience in situations not typically associated with formal persuasion. For example, instead of a senate chamber Shakespeare offers politically inflected eloquence in the context of a bedroom as a woman argues against sexual assault. Instead of a defendant pleading before a ruler, Sidney represents someone who happens to be the sovereign's son, unbeknownst to either. Renaissance literature offers such extraordinary situations whereby the operation of eloquence can be fleshed out and the limits of rhetorical skill exposed.

Literature offers a unique perspective on rhetoric's intersection with key aspects of early modern life and culture because it attends to the boundaries of rhetorical skill, as well its dangers, unlike Renaissance rhetorical theory. Brian Vickers has noted that contrary to rhetorical theory, rhetoric can be used for good or bad ends in Renaissance literature.¹ Often scenes of rhetorical failure feature the "wrong sorts" of orators, many of which are morally suspect as Vickers rightly observes. But these scenes also emphasize the occasions when eloquence is practically useless. Whether spoken by the "wrong sorts" of orators or heard by unreceptive audiences, these encounters allow Renaissance writers to consider the parameters of rhetoric's power and utility, which contemporary rhetorical theory neglected. Noting the way theoretical works emphasize the power of eloquence, exclude the operation of the passions, depict the operation of rhetoric in the public sphere, and focus on eloquence strictly in service of moral ends, Renaissance writers flout rhetorical theory outright, as well as give a more robust depiction of how persuasion was thought to work. Often they create contextual failures: while the eloquence deployed by the speakers would work in the right circumstances, they arrange it such that the speeches fail in order to highlight the inhibiting or disqualifying aspects of the situation. As a result, Renaissance literature features its own lessons in rhetorical theory. These writers show the various factors that do and perhaps *should* inhibit persuasion in Renaissance England. Their descriptive and prescriptive explanations range from forces in the human constitution, such as out-of-control passions, to checks on persuasive eloquence by civic authorities such as a judge impervious to emotional appeals.

¹ See Brian Vickers's "'The Power of Persuasion': Images of the Orator, Elyot to Shakespeare" in *Renaissance Eloquence* (Berkeley: U of California Press, 1983) 411-35.

As is frequently noted by literary critics and students of rhetorical theory, English rhetorics stress the sheer power of eloquence. For example, in his anecdotal evidence about the skillful use of language from *The Arte of English Poesie*, George Puttenham says that, “none other can so well beate [reason] into the ignorant head, as the well spoken and eloquent man” (117). Like Thomas Wilson and others, Puttenham also references the myth of the Gallic Hercules drawing men by the ears to illustrate what eloquence can do (Vickers, “‘The Power of Persuasion’: Images of the Orator, Elyot to Shakespeare” 418).² Henry Peacham’s remark in *The Garden of Eloquence* embodies the Renaissance message about oratorical power: “[...] what he [the orator] commendeth is beloued, what he dispraiseth is abhorred, what he perswadeth is obeied, & what he disswadeth is auoided: so that he is in a manner the emperour of mens minds & affections, and next to the omnipotent God in the power of perswasion, by grace, & diuine assistance” (dedication). Following Cicero’s lead from *De Oratore* in his description of the union of wisdom and eloquence, Peacham notes the divine similitude revealed in the orator’s complete control over his audience. Like those of Quintilian and Cicero, humanist rhetorics represent eloquent persuasion as supremely potent. This strain of rhetorical theory is so pronounced (and its implications so emphasized in literary criticism) that an alternate tradition of failed persuasion, one with a number of classical and biblical precursors, has been ignored. In the course of the project, I investigate some of these classical antecedents for rhetorical failure despite the extraordinary claims for the power of eloquence in Renaissance rhetorics.

² Hercules Gallicus is referenced in Lucian’s *Herakles*; like Hermes, the Gallic Hercules was associated with godlike eloquence, symbolized by a cord leading from his tongue to his auditor’s ears (Rebhorn 131, note 10).

Rhetorical failure has substantial classical precedent both in literature and rhetorical theory. As George Kennedy points out, for example, the *Iliad* enshrines the limits of formal persuasion in one of the more famous moments of Homer's epic. In book 9, an embassy sent to convince Achilles to return to battle offers speeches by Odysseus, Phoenix, and Ajax, with various strategic appeals, all of which are unsuccessful (*Classical Rhetoric* 12).³ Rhetorical failure at this point in the *Iliad* means the inability of those closest to Achilles to persuade him, which stresses a conflict between private interest and corporate good, personal principles and public duty. As we shall see in chapter 4, John Milton's own contribution to the epic tradition likewise makes strategic use of rhetorical failure; *Paradise Lost* features a series of orators whose conspicuously ineffective speech is integral to their moral valor.

Prescriptive theoretical works from the classical tradition treat rhetorical failure as well. Throughout his *Institutio Oratoria*, one of the most influential classical rhetorical handbooks in Renaissance England, Quintilian describes failed persuasion along with the power of eloquence over the emotions. In book 2, addressing his critics, Quintilian notes: "[...] our orator and his art, as we define it, are independent of results. The speaker aims at victory, it is true, but if he speaks well, he has lived up to the ideals of his art, even if he is defeated. [...] the orator's purpose is fulfilled if he has spoken well. For the art of rhetoric, as I shall show later, is realized in action, not in the result obtained" (335, 337). This passage is a far cry from Henry Peacham's message about the orator as "the

³ Regarding the import of this moment, Kennedy observes: "For all the artistic quality of the speeches, the ninth book of the *Iliad* is a picture of the failure of rhetoric in dealing with a highly personal situation. Arguments based on practical expedencies are not persuasive, and the attempt to awaken passions is here counterproductive. Personal loyalty and friendships are what make the greatest impression. In the first work of European literature we are brought face to face with some of the limitations of rhetoric" (*Classical Rhetoric* 12).

emperour of mens minds & affections.” Separating the quality of the speech from its effects, the delivery from the audience’s reception, Quintilian allows for the possibility of unsuccessful eloquence, a theoretical position largely ignored by Renaissance rhetorical theorists.⁴

Following the Roman rhetorical tradition as he does, Augustine also allows for failed persuasion in *De Doctrina Christiana*. In book 4 he says, “However, if he cannot do this [i.e. say wisely what he cannot say eloquently], let him so order his life that he not only prepares a reward for himself, but also so that he offers an example to others, and his way of living may be, as it were, an eloquent speech” (166). Here Augustine refines the Roman rhetorical tradition of the orator as good man, the *vir bonus dicendi peritus*, with a theological approach: whereas Quintilian proposes that an orator must be good to be eloquent, Augustine says that goodness can be a kind of eloquence. In *Paradise Lost*, John Milton deploys this Augustinian idea that a speaker’s success or failure encompasses more than language and that his very life might be an eloquent example to others.

Drawing from such precursors, I analyze moments of failed persuasion from Renaissance fictions according to principles from the classical and Renaissance rhetorical traditions, with special attention to the ideas expressed, their organization, the tropes and schemes deployed, the manner of delivery, and the situation—in each case showing how and why the speech fails, and to what end. Because of rhetoric’s place in the educational curriculum and its assumed capacity to represent and facilitate communication, rhetorical

⁴ Another classical precedent for rhetorical failure comes from what Lynn Enterline has dubbed “scenes of impossible demand” from Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* in which various characters from Narcissus to Orpheus cannot persuade their audiences (14). Enterline’s work usefully portrays this antecedent for rhetorical failure derived from the Ovidian tradition of unresponsiveness. For Ovid’s influence on scenes of failed persuasion, see chapter 1 below.

training in the English Renaissance was connected to a multitude of activities, both professional and social. As a result, scenes of rhetorical failure have extensive theological, aesthetic, moral and political implications, and my dissertation examines these scenes in light of Renaissance physiology, moral philosophy, and theology, as well as the classical rhetorical tradition. In the process, this project surveys a wide range of materials including rhetorical handbooks, sermons, diaries, and preaching manuals, and it draws on political, religious, and educational history. My aim is to characterize literary thinking about the role of eloquence in English culture.

Scenes of rhetorical failure are the means by which Renaissance writers interrogate the humanist education program with its use of classical texts and assumed utility for English culture in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.⁵ Practically speaking, rhetoric was part of the training for politics, religion, and law in Renaissance England. As Francis Bacon put it, eloquence was supposed to prevail “in an active life” (237). While rhetoric was connected to the realm of public affairs, lack of available positions frequently undermined its connection to civil service. As George Puttenham suggests in *The Art of English Poesy*, poetry could be written to demonstrate fitness for state service (e.g. 250), but such work often evaded those seeking preferment. In 1611 Bacon warned James I that the surplus of grammar schools cultivated more scholars than the state could sustain.⁶ What rhetorical failure offers as a literary strategy—among other

⁵ In *Aristotle's Rhetoric: An Art of Character*, Eugene Garver clarifies the tension between the civic and professional function of the discipline according to Aristotle's *Rhetoric*. Renaissance writers also highlight conflicts between its professional utility and civic function, as well as the difficulties associated with transposing classical rhetorical theory and practice to English culture.

⁶ Bacon notes, “[...] there being more scholars bred than the State can prefer and employ, and the active part of that life not bearing a proportion to the preparation, it must needs fall out that many persons will be bred unfit for other vocations, and unprofitable for that in which they were bred up, which fill the realm full of indigent, idle and wanton people, who are but *materia rerum novarum*” (Stachniewski 70).

things—is a means of critiquing this situation. Thomas Nashe provides one such example. In *Pierce Penniless his Supplication to the Devil*, Nashe protests the practical failings of rhetorical skill, but this protest is a component of his authorial persona. Rhetorical failure is crucial to Pierce’s ethos, one which he distinguishes from the model of “Gentle Sir Philip Sidney”; it is part of his satire as he protests scarce incentive for poetic labors, and in the course of the work even the devil won’t reward Pierce for his efforts. Pierce’s comments are a deployment of rhetorical failure, in this case playing up the difficulties of securing reward and recognition.

It is important to note that rhetorical failure refers to the speaker’s failure and not the author’s. The chief irony of this device is that rhetorical failure is rhetorically effective: by depicting scenes of failed persuasion, writers like Nashe demonstrate the benefits of their training and education, often while critiquing the larger cultural apparatus which prescribed and guaranteed the discipline’s use. To put it another way, their indictment of the discipline’s presumed utility for contemporary life is undermined by the very execution of that indictment. The discipline of Renaissance rhetoric was supple enough to allow for uses beyond orthodox prescriptions, even uses that flouted those very prescriptions.

When one starts looking for contemporary concerns with failed persuasion in Renaissance England, the examples multiply quickly. Offered by writers of various stripes, these examples clarify the culture’s investment in persuasive speech. In fact, these moments represent the anxious undercurrent to the extravagant claims for eloquence offered by theorists like Peacham, Puttenham, and Wilson. Many of these examples address persuasion’s role in civic polity. As Arthur Ferguson notes in *The*

Articulate Citizen and The English Renaissance, the political counselor had fewer counterparts in fifteenth century England and this role emerged partly as a result of economic developments that contributed to the articulate citizen's disposition toward government policy and public discourse. In literary representations of the articulate citizen's role, the rhetorical situation is fraught with danger for the advisor who must persuade the monarch regarding a particular course of action.

One literary example that dramatizes rhetorical failure in the context of political counsel is Norton and Sackville's *Gorboduc*. *Gorboduc* confirms the purpose of humanist training for civic service as the counselors lay out alternatives and Eubulus, the advisor *par excellence*, selects the best choice and augments the recommendation that the king not divide the kingdom between Ferrex and Porrex. Rhetorical failure, in this case failure to convince a king not to split his kingdom, entails civil war. Along with evoking fears of uncertain succession, the play's use of rhetorical failure confirms both the professional role of the advisor and the stakes of that role for its original audience, composed as it was for fellow members of the Inner Temple during the 1561-62 Christmas festivities.

Shakespeare recognized the power of rhetorical failure represented in *Gorboduc*'s context of political counsel, offering his own version in *King Lear*. Protesting Lear's decision to exclude Cordelia and divide his kingdom between Regan and Goneril, Kent fails to dissuade his king despite harsh and forthright speech calculated to jar Lear from his folly. For instance, Kent says:

[...] Be Kent unmannerly

When Lear is mad. What wouldst thou do old man?

Think'st thou that duty shall have dread to speak
When power to flattery bows? To plainness honour's bound
When majesty falls to folly. Reserve thy state,
And in thy best consideration check
This hideous rashness. Answer my life my judgement,
Thy youngest daughter does not love thee least,
Nor are those empty-hearted whose low sounds
Reverb no hollowness. (1.1.143-52)

Contrasting his plain speech with the extravagant flattery used by Regan and Goneril, Kent suits his style to the occasion with a strategically indecorous rhetorical performance. He attempts to shock Lear from his potentially tragic decision by addressing the king with irreverence, calling him “old man” and using the informal, second-person address “thou.” Nevertheless, he does so to no avail. As in *Gorboduc*, civil war results in part from rhetorical failure at the outset of *King Lear*.

Renaissance writers who consider rhetoric's utility certainly do not confine themselves to the political realm. As my first two chapters will show, their treatment of vexed persuasion in amatory and religious contexts depicts rhetoric's function with regard to the individual, rather than the state. Moments of failed persuasion in these contexts emphasize idiosyncratic, personal, and psychological aspects of persuasive speech. For instance, poetry in the 1590s features rhetorical failure in amatory contexts whereby authors consider the faculties that inhibit or enable persuasion based on the operation of reason and emotion in the Renaissance body. Writers like Marlowe, Shakespeare, and Nashe focus especially on the faculties at work in persuasion—both its

composition and its reception. Regarding rhetorical failure in religious contexts, Christopher Marlowe uses failed eloquence as a proxy for human skill and learning, which are useless in the spiritual economy that he represents in *Doctor Faustus*. Rhetoric's conspicuous failure as a tool of persuasion is crucial to the tragic conclusion of the play.

But even as these writers focus on eloquence in ostensibly private situations, political consequences often attend such scenes. One such instance of rhetorical failure in a religious setting that illustrates the tangle of personal and political implications comes from Robert Burton's *The Anatomy of Melancholy*. His depiction of religious melancholy relates to contemporary religious and political turmoil resulting from Calvinist theology. Despite his emphasis on the power of speech—drawing as he does on the tradition of classical medical writings and the rhetorical tradition—Burton mentions a type of melancholy impervious to persuasion. According to Burton, to be beyond the power of persuasion in this regard indicates doctrinal and emotional obduracy, a condition with dangerous implications. In the last section of the work, the capacity to withstand persuasion indicates religious melancholy with two extreme types in particular: atheists and religious zealots. As Angus Gowland has shown, Burton relates the latter to radical Calvinism and its message about the fixity of predestination, and this portion of Burton's work contributes to contemporary political and religious debates (190-2). Burton's portrayal of those suffering from this doctrine suggests that they might not be turned from thoughts of damnation, and he subsequently offers material to dissuade these tormented souls from such dotage. Failed persuasion in *The Anatomy of Melancholy* represents the inability to convince schismatics of their folly. Given the political climate

of the 1620s and 30s, this potential failure has serious political implications as well because it entails ecclesiastical and civic discord more broadly.

Scenes of rhetorical failure point to a growing sense of the limitations of rhetorical skill for English society. As proof of this larger trend, the monarchy's relationship to eloquence transforms in the course of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Just a brief survey of the Tudor-Stuart monarchs illustrates this change. For example, Mary Tudor, a student of Juan Luis Vives, demonstrated rhetorical training and the power of eloquence in action with her speech before the Guildhall in 1554, in which she appealed to her London audience for support against the rebellion by Thomas Wyatt II, a rhetorical performance enshrined in Foxe's *Acts and Monuments* (Greenblatt 2006, 667). Renowned for her eloquence, Queen Elizabeth is a master of rhetorical skill, especially in her speeches to parliament. Apart from the canny and effective self-presentation and political acumen revealed in these works, they demonstrate "remarkable [...] beauty and power" (Marcus xi). James I's prescriptions to his son regarding the importance of eloquence would have drawn assent from any number of contemporary rhetorical theorists: in his *Basilikon Doron* (1599), a work dedicated to Charles' older brother, James affirms the connection between eloquence and civil polity. In his address to Prince Henry, James quotes from Cicero's *De Oratore* and stresses the importance of eloquence and the connection between speech and action, word and gesture, and gives particular recommendations about what styles of verbal and written speech his son should use when king.

In marked contrast, Charles I's avowed reticence, especially regarding his communications with parliament, shows a change in the relationship between rhetoric

and the monarchy.⁷ For example, in his address to his first parliament, he declares “I thank God that the business of this time is of such a nature that it needs no eloquence to set it forth, for I am neither able to do it, nor doth it stand with my nature to spend much time in words” (Seel 35).⁸ While the King’s reticence is often connected to his speech impediment, this remark nevertheless represents a considerable departure from the previous association of eloquence and civil polity, which his father stressed in *Basilikon Doron*. Charles’ disposition marks a change in the culture’s disposition toward classical rhetoric, and the literature of the period both anticipates and mirrors this change.⁹ Using scenes of rhetorical failure, poets and playwrights demonstrate the diminution of eloquence in English culture over the course of the early modern period.

If recent work on early modern rhetoric illustrates how principles from some widely available handbooks shaped various political, religious, historical, and poetic writings in English culture—Peter Mack’s, for example, in *Elizabethan Rhetoric: Theory and Practice*—this project works in reverse, showing that early modern writings counter important tenets from classical and contemporary rhetorical theory for particular effects. Jeff Dolven’s excellent *Scenes of Instruction in Renaissance Romance* provides a model

⁷ For a discussion of Charles’s public persona and disposition toward eloquence, see Kevin Sharpe’s *The Personal Rule of Charles I* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1992).

⁸ It is important to note that this remark is not quite an instance of *dubitatio* like Antony’s “I am no orator as Brutus is” from Shakespeare’s *Julius Caesar* or in a number of Elizabeth’s addresses to parliament. While Antony casts doubt on his own fluency for rhetorical effect, this does not seem to be Charles’s strategy.

⁹ In the seventeenth century, for example, Abraham Cowley unmakes the orator-as-civilizer myth (as Wayne Rebhorn dubs it) in his essay “The Dangers of an honest man in much company” published in *Several Discourses by Way of Essays, in Verse and Prose* (1668). Cowley reverses this commonplace idea, which is repeated from Cicero to Quintilian, Thomas Wilson to George Puttenham, and the import of his revision is considerable. In this essay, Cowley says that while “eloquence and philosophy” first united men into societies, he wishes that they could unravel all they had woven, so that there could be a return to innocence instead of a general civilized assembly that is rife with cozening and murder (Witherspoon and Warnke 473-6).

for studying how Renaissance fiction authors relate to governing assumptions about humanist methods of instruction. Like Richard Helgerson in *Elizabethan Prodigals*, Dolven illustrates their productively vexed exploration of and resistance to pedagogical theory.

My focus is anticipated by Neil Rhodes' *The Power of Eloquence and English Renaissance Literature*. Rhodes offers a familiar chronological account of the belief in the power of eloquence, which he sees flourishing in the sixteenth century but that is subsequently challenged in the early seventeenth century.¹⁰ Contrary to Rhodes' argument, however, I show that the English Renaissance had an abiding concern with the ineffectiveness of persuasive appeals, and that writers speculated about the futility of eloquence near the outset of the humanist education program—even though such speculation seems to intensify in the course of the seventeenth century. The project demonstrates that rhetorical failure was a common and useful composition strategy, as well as a potent critique of the very discipline that fostered its use.

Most recently, Carla Mazzio in *The Inarticulate Renaissance: Language Trouble in an Age of Eloquence* has addressed issues related to this project, profiling as she does the breakdown of speech at the moment of utterance. She argues that critical discussions of the “age of eloquence” have occasionally distorted our understanding of the era, especially those that ignore the work of Renaissance writers interested in linguistic dysfunction. According to Mazzio, inarticulacy ranges from silence to mumbling with implications that touch on the growth of vernacular language, print culture, and religious and educational change. Her discussion of the creative uses of inarticulacy as a wide-ranging phenomenon is very helpful. Yet Mazzio does not account for the breakdown of

¹⁰ See Rhodes, page viii.

speech at the moment of reception or the implications of rhetorically deft speech that is nonetheless useless. Like Mazzio's, my project counters the established history of Renaissance rhetorical theory through the literature of the period, but it also attends to the classical rhetorical tradition.

Tracing scenes of rhetorical failure from the 1580s through the 1660s, this dissertation demonstrates a persistent skepticism about rhetoric's utility for English culture. This skepticism culminates in John Milton's *Paradise Lost*, which dramatizes contemporary doubts about eloquence's political function. Milton's message about the practical utility of rhetorical skill—both for the individual and the state—is quite bleak. Nevertheless, rhetorical failure in *Paradise Lost* entails approbation of the author, an achievement that exemplifies the principal benefit of this rhetorical strategy.

While my project might seem most pertinent to those interested in Renaissance rhetoric, a history of this rhetorical strategy offers important insights into early modern life. Quentin Skinner's delineation of "speech acts" set forth in *Visions of Politics* informs my methodology, so rather than merely cataloging instances of rhetorical failure, I recover to some extent what these writers were doing *in* depicting rhetorical failure with regard to specific contexts. As readers will note below, my chapters are organized by theme rather than by genre—"amatory persuasion" versus "poetry," or "religious persuasion" versus "sermons." Such an organization focuses on the significance of the technique for key Renaissance concerns. For example, "religious persuasion" canvases contemporary debates about preaching, salvation, and the role of the Holy Spirit in homiletics. My project offers considerable findings for those interested in the history of ideas—and more pointedly—the extent to which we are heirs to developments in early

modern thought and culture. The topics profiled in each of my chapters concern those interested in the history of gender and sexuality, political and religious thought, human physiology, notions of authorship, philosophy of education, and the recovery of classical thought between 1500 and 1700.

From failed seductions to the origins of the human Fall, the following chapters explore rhetorical practice in four major arenas of rhetorical persuasion that encompass early modern thinking about the nature of human expression and communication: sexuality, religion, law, and politics. Addressing scenes of amatory, religious, forensic, and deliberative persuasion, I show how rhetorical failure relates to problems specific to each of these contexts.

In erotic narratives influenced by Petrarch and Ovid, Elizabethan writers portray the ungovernable nature of eros with scenes of failed persuasion, which is the subject of chapter 1. Christopher Marlowe, William Shakespeare, and Thomas Nashe consider rhetoric's relationship to sexuality in the literature of the 1590s with depictions of ineffectual seduction and the inability of eloquence to thwart sexual assault. These authors question the efficacy of emotional appeals all the while appealing to the affections of their readers through language, an irony that draws attention to the text's own rhetorical dexterity.

Christopher Marlowe represents the narrow utility of Faustus's eloquence in *Doctor Faustus*, the focus of chapter 2's treatment of rhetoric in religious contexts. As a university-educated scholar, a proxy for those produced at Oxford and Cambridge, Faustus demonstrates his considerable rhetorical training, and in the process he contravenes rhetoric's association with moral probity in sixteenth-century rhetorical

theory. Faustus can persuade demons, defeat them in disputation, and even recover the classical world through poetry, but he cannot repent nor can he be persuaded to repent. In the course of the play, Marlowe stresses the limits of eloquence, making Faustus's verbal ability little better than the necromancy and Catholic ritual to which he compares it. Marlowe translates contemporary descriptions of spiritual reprobation into a theatrical context, using that context to dramatize the dire consequences of the "dead letter," scripture's inefficacy apart from the Holy Spirit.

Philip Sidney and Edmund Spenser portray rhetorical failure in the forensic contexts addressed in chapter 3, representing rhetorical power circumscribed for the sake of justice in *The Old Arcadia* and *The Faerie Queene*, book 5. Both writers advocate institutional safeguards for the dangerous power of eloquence by creating agents of justice that are invulnerable to persuasive appeals, whether an ideal ruler who disregards emotional appeals entirely, evaluating the proceedings strictly according to reason and justice in *The Old Arcadia*, or state-sponsored "mightie hands" executing "righteous doome" in *The Faerie Queene*.

Whereas eloquence signaled the ascendancy from barbarism to civilization in the classical rhetorical tradition, it is precisely the instrument that enables Satan to move the angels and Eve to rebellion in *Paradise Lost*. Along with eloquence's catastrophic misuse, however, Milton exploits classical deliberative oratory to depict a series of rhetors whose ineffective speech highlights their heroism. For Milton, the stories of Abdiel, Enoch, Moses, and Noah represent the role of the righteous public speaker, and their unheeded orations testify to the faults of a degenerate era and people. As I argue in chapter 4, the poet represents himself according to this model as one who has

communicated truth in spite of an unpersuaded and oppositional crowd. As a result, Milton uses rhetorical failure to indict his own era and redeem his civic role in the 1640s and 50s.

My dissertation shows that rhetorical failure was rhetorically effective for the writers who deployed it. In a culture of intense rhetorical competition between writers who made a living by artfully employing techniques of persuasion, rhetorical failure critiqued the very discipline that fostered its use by challenging assumptions about the function of eloquence in English culture. These writers' virtuoso application of persuasive speech in strange scenarios displayed their rhetorical dexterity, and the imaginative literature is more compelling because it includes eloquence that fails. They take advantage of the division between internal and external audiences, for persuasive appeals move the reader or theatergoer if not the fictional addressee. While eloquence may betray the speaker, it has not failed the author, and this paradox highlights the changing and supple discipline that was Renaissance rhetoric. Rhetorical failure enabled these writers to challenge faith in the power and utility of eloquence, to offer sophisticated rhetorical theory in their writing, and to valorize their roles as authors. As a result, their works reimagine rhetoric in service of singular, creative minds.

CHAPTER 1

“WHEN DEEP PERSUADING ORATORY FAILS”: SCENES OF AMATORY PERSUASION IN THE 1590S

One of the characteristics of the “humanist literary class” in Elizabethan England is their shared knowledge of rhetorical principles, cultivated in professional and educational institutions from grammar school to the Inns of Court (Hulse 36). A number of Elizabethan writers offer scenes of failed persuasion in amatory contexts for the pleasure of this readership, invoking and subverting rhetorical rules in order to represent a vexed relationship between desire and verbal expression. Whether depicting ineffectual speeches of seduction or dissuasion, these writers all represent the ungovernable nature of eros. Considering some of the most prominent examples, in *Hero and Leander* and *Venus and Adonis* Christopher Marlowe and William Shakespeare emphasize the unreliability of eloquence to compel the object of one’s affection. In *The Unfortunate Traveller* and *The Rape of Lucrece*, Thomas Nashe and Shakespeare feature “graver” triumphs of desire over reason and pity in which eloquence is powerless to thwart sexual assault. As the following pages will show, these works share an interest in failed amatory persuasion based on its usefulness for meditating on Renaissance psychology, politics, and theology and its power as a literary device. As Marlowe, Shakespeare, and Nashe question the value of appealing to the affections through language, they appeal to the affections of their readership, and this irony draws attention to the rhetorical dexterity operating in their writings. The environment of rhetorical competition is an impetus to

inventive uses of rhetorical failure as these fellow Elizabethans offer rival versions. In the course of the 1590s, they creatively recast elements of failed persuasion with each successive rendition in order to depict new and different aspects of rhetoric's relationship to desire and to display their own skillful eloquence.

I.

According to Georgia Brown, Christopher Marlowe's *Hero and Leander* is a poem about artistic mastery leading to erotic triumph. As she puts it, "*Hero and Leander* [...] sets up a mutually constitutive relationship between artistic mastery and erotic success. The more accomplished their rhetoric, the more successful the characters are in getting what they want, and this includes the narrator" (2004, 116-7). Rhetoric and eros are certainly linked throughout the poem, and Brown rightly points out the narrative's skill in delay and digression for the reader's enjoyment. But Brown misrepresents a key aspect of the poem, which Marlowe reiterates throughout: amatory success is incidental to the rhetoric of seduction. Artistic mastery and erotic triumph may be mutually constitutive for the narrator, but not for the characters. This coincidence of eloquence and eros featured in *Hero and Leander* is no less enjoyable because one does not produce the other.

Leander's appeal to Hero exemplifies failed amatory persuasion in the poem: like Faustus's conjuring in *The Tragical History of Doctor Faustus*, Leander's words dramatize intent and persuade only insofar as his audience is already favorably disposed. When he first addresses Hero, Leander, "like to a bold sharp sophister," produces a range of appeals to convince Hero, and despite suggesting the impotence of his speech (i.e. "I would my rude words had the influence / To lead thy thoughts as thy fair looks do

mine”), he still aims at persuasion (197, 200-1).¹ With conspicuous craft deployed in his petition, Leander identifies his words as “rude,” “spotless,” and full of “simplicity and naked truth” at the speech’s outset, which only highlights the cleverness of his subsequent arguments as he transitions from praise to the miscellaneous reasons she should give in to his suit (200, 207, 208). Leander says that Hero forced him to love her (206, 323-4); that she was made to love rather than gaze upon (223); that restraint is deleterious, selfish, immoral, ignorant, and idolatrous (229-31; 234-48; 259-64); that use confers worth (232-4); and that there is a divine mandate to enjoy (253-4). The metaphorical logic blurs in his rapid succession of appeals as well, as he mentions sparkling diamonds surpassing flaring glass, sailing ships, musical instruments, shiny, oft-handled brass vessels, rich ore, loaned and interest-producing treasure, rich robes, sealed palaces, hoarded wealth, a fair gem, and bullion. His oration thus features a lover’s *copia*: abundant arguments with a metaphorical treasure chest that amplify his speech in service of persuasion.

Leander’s appeals jar when one looks for coherence because each argument is discrete. In light of one another, his arguments are often incongruous, if not outright contradictory. For example, Leander argues that chastity is not a virtue because it is not acquired. This assertion ignores the trial implicit in his petition not to mention that Hero’s self-restraint could be viewed as an honorable deed. What’s more, Leander appeals to Diana, the virgin goddess of chastity, referencing a transcendent embodiment of something that he just said was a nonentity. Leander also punctuates his argument that “vile tongues” may impede Hero’s pursuit of immortal fame through chastity by

¹ Passages from *Hero and Leander* are taken from *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, ed. Stephen Greenblatt et al., 8th ed. Vol. B (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2006) 1004-22.

articulating the slander himself, thereby becoming one of those vile tongues: “But you are fair, aye me! so wondrous fair, / So young, so gentle, and so debonair, / As Greece will think, if this you live alone, / Some one or other keeps you as his own” (287-290). Such aspects of his speech illustrate the way Leander musters any appeal that might serve his purpose, one after another. Leander may be the ingenuous speaker that Marlowe is not, which is to say that Leander’s skill may surpass his guile and his arguments may not be as self-evidently contradictory to himself because they are mustered in “cheerful hope.” Nevertheless, the artifice conveyed in the serviceable torrent of near-contradictory arguments would have delighted the rhetorically-minded Elizabethan audience. As Cheney and Strier note, Leander’s moniker “sophister” could also refer to a second- or third-year Cambridge University student, which invites identification with part of the poem’s audience (197).

Another feature of Leander’s speech would have delighted the rhetorically-trained audience: he rehearses a series of maxims to bolster his arguments, using a device associated with moral probity and good judgment for the sake of seduction. *Sententia* is a brief adage inserted into a speech to give it authority (Sonnino 166-7). George Puttenham calls this figure the “Director” or “Sage Sayer” whose purpose is to teach wisdom and good behavior (Whigham and Rebhorn 321). In the course of Leander’s speech to Hero, I count sixteen or so uses of this figure, ranging from remarks like “Beauty alone is lost, too warily kept” to “A diamond set in lead his worth retains” (328, 215). According to George Puttenham, *sententiae* should be used sparingly, because in excess they “breed loathsomnesse” (197). So what are we to make of Leander’s proverbial barrage? Instead of loathsomeness, Leander’s frequent use of this figure

breeds humor. As we have seen, his arguments are rapid and inconsistent to the point that his vested interest in the outcome is most conspicuous, rather than the compelling reasons for her consent. His use of *sententiae* is part of this effect.²

The narrator uses *sententiae* as well, frequently offering maxims about love ranging from “True love is mute, and oft amazed stands” to “Love is not full of pity, as men say, / But deaf and cruel, where he means to prey” (186, 771-2). What do we make of the narrator’s proverbial speech? Leander and the narrator’s shared medium is part of the comedy. Puttenham’s warning about “lothsomnesse” is telling because it suggests that one or two *sententiae* are helpful as rehearsed truisms that bolster a speaker’s point. But both Leander and the narrator use numerous *sententiae*. As a result, their persuasive intent is laid bare: in Leander’s case, these figures are tailored to his purpose, namely to seduce. With the narrator, there is a difference in degree but not kind. Like Leander, the narrator commandeers the rhetorical vehicle for wisdom and good behavior in order to address love, romance, and sexuality, providing the poem’s readers with the rules of love. Unlike Leander’s, however, the narrator’s *sententiae* also accommodate the extravagances and follies of eros such as Leander’s rejecting the rebukes of his father and swimming the Hellespont (623-4) and Neptune’s seeking a gift for Leander (705-6). These rules are unreliable, however, as demonstrated by the way events of the poem occasionally contradict the narrator’s *sententiae*. While Leander possesses a kind of innocent craftiness compelled by desire and his uses of this figure therefore are informed

² In *Scenes of Instruction in Renaissance Romance*, Jeff Dolven points out a skepticism regarding the humanist education program in Renaissance romances from Lyly’s *Euphues* to the 1596 *Faerie Queene*. As Dolven notes, *sententiae* are key figures in Renaissance education and consequently in the skeptical representations of that education. For example, he points to Sidney’s use of *sententiae* as the definitive aspect of Euarchus’s rhetoric in the *Arcadia* because of the figure’s association with authority; it conveys wisdom yet is also identifiable with his unfortunately rigid ruling in the trial scene (124-5). Brown also notes Marlowe’s use of *sententiae*, relating it to the poem’s “mock-heroic perspective” in which such maxims are unreliable; see “Gender and Voice in *Hero and Leander*,” 153.

by his naiveté as a lover, the narrator's *sententiae* are governed by his knowing tone in light of all the poem's erotic encounters. In both cases, however, the readership sees the vagaries and mutability of erotic experience through the rehearsal of such adages:

Leander's *sententiae* demonstrate his desire rather than persuade and the narrator's *sententiae* express how love is *supposed* to work rather than how it actually does. Both Leander and the narrator thereby delight their immediate audiences with this figure.

Jason Scott-Warren and Warren Boutcher note that the explicitly erotic subject matter of *Hero and Leander* flouts humanist methods of reading (38-9). It is important to note too that Marlowe's use of *sententiae* in erotic contexts allows him to co-opt a classical rhetorical figure for his own creative ends. Using *sententiae* to depict amatory rhetorical failure, Marlowe thus contends with the rhetorical tradition as well as his fellow Elizabethans.

Certainly Leander's words please Hero, but they do not persuade her. Like Mephistopheles in *Doctor Faustus*, Hero confirms that Leander's "rude words" work, but not in the way he intended: they do not convince Hero based on argument, organization, or technical execution. She replies: "Who taught thee rhetoric to deceive a maid? / Aye me, such words as these should I abhor, / And yet I like them for the orator" (338-40).

Just as Faustus's moral state revealed in his necromantic conjuring entices Mephistopheles, Hero responds to Leander's speech apart from winning words. The poem's gloss on her reaction confirms that Leander's speech extends their interaction and mutual attraction, merely continuing what has already begun: "These arguments he used, and many more, / Wherewith she yielded, that was won before. / Hero's looks yielded, but her words made war: / Women are won when they begin to jar. / Thus, having

swallowed Cupid's golden hook, / The more she strived, the deeper was she strook" (329-30). Apart from the joke about the "many more" arguments that Leander used (this remark comes after a breathless tour of Leander's various petitions), these lines remind the reader of the moment Hero first saw Leander, at which point her "gentle heart was strook." This repeated phrase suggests that Leander's speech extends the amatory progress rather than simply achieving his persuasive intent (165). To confirm Hero's favorable reaction coterminous with her ostensible consternation at his speech, Hero echoes Leander's words by repeating his exclamation "aye me" from his previous portrayal of her beauty (i.e. "But you are fair, aye me! so wondrous fair"). This verbal echo suggests the lovers' harmony despite her dismay.

Marlowe communicates a dichotomy between speech and a speaker's aims throughout the entire poem: persuasive words do not compel so much as compliment, gloss, or extend the erotic pursuit. Marlowe includes other examples of this dichotomy such as when Hero inadvertently says "Come thither," when departing from Leander. According to the narrator, her tongue "tripped," and the accidental expression signifies the "motions of her heart," against which she struggles in vain. Marlowe further confirms this message about the unreliability and inefficacy of speech in an amorous context with the story of Mercury's romantic pursuit of a country maid, who flees the god when he threatens her chastity. The narrator notes: "Away she ran; / After went Mercury, who used such cunning / As she, to hear his tale, left off her running. / Maids are not won by brutish force and might, / But speeches full of pleasure and delight. / And knowing Hermes courted her, was glad / That she such loveliness and beauty had / As could provoke his liking [...]" (416-23). Admittedly, the maid ceases her flight at Mercury's

tale, but this is hardly a successful seduction. The immediate emphasis on the maid's delight in the power of her own loveliness and beauty undercuts any claims for the inherent power of Mercury's speech, a point that is reinforced by her subsequent request that Mercury fetch the nectar of the gods. Thus the god of eloquence himself cannot seduce with persuasive words alone. The narrator's words ironically gloss the poem's events: speeches do not win maids in fact and "brutish force and might" are integral to the poem's erotic encounters.

Marlowe demonstrates yet another instance of failed amatory persuasion with Neptune's interaction with Leander. Neptune attempts to seduce Leander with a tale of shepherd playing with a lovely boy. Nevertheless, "ere half this tale was done" Leander interrupts him with the cry "Ay me!" echoing Hero's previous response to his seduction speech earlier in the poem, announcing his own desire to flee from the sea god. Neptune subsequently follows the wisdom of amatory persuasion pithily conveyed by the narrator's *sententia*—"a gift prevails / When deep persuading oratory fails"—but Neptune's errand just affords Leander the chance to escape. The sequence of events resembles Mercury's interaction with the country maid with a similar undermining of easy confidence in the rules of seduction. Such a prescription is akin to the erotic *sententia* from the Mercury episode (i.e. "Maids are not won by brutish force and might, / But speeches full of pleasure and delight"). The *sententia* about gift-giving ironically renders Neptune's plan for the enjoyment of the audience who would have recognized the limited efficacy of persuasion in the world of the poem. The narrator remarks during Hero and Leander's dalliance that "Love always makes those eloquent that have it" (556).

Be that as it may, such eloquence is not serviceable based on its effects. Eloquence—like Neptune’s gift giving—serves desire only insofar as it reveals it.

If eloquence and amatory persuasion do not win maids, what does? In the course of the poem, we are told repeatedly that attraction and its erotic trajectory are ultimately governed by desire separate from eloquence, often with the specific manifestation of love at first sight. For example, Cupid’s arrow strikes Leander upon his first making eye-contact with Hero. Likewise Leander’s “amorous look” strikes Hero’s heart (161-66). While Hero entertains Leander’s verbal arguments, the narrator notes that she was “won before” (330). The amatory interactions in the sub-plots illustrate this procedure by contrast: Mercury’s “cunning” courtship does not win the country maid. Neither does Neptune’s “deep persuading oratory” persuade Leander. The narrator describes the causation at work in love a number of times. For example, when he depicts the lovers’ first meeting in Hero’s tower, the narrator notes, “But know you not that creatures wanting sense / By nature have a mutual appetite, / And wanting organs to advance a step, / Moved by love’s force, unto each other leap? / Much more in subjects having intellect / Some hidden influence breeds like effect.” (539-544). *Hero and Leander* shows that subjects having intellect can gloss this “hidden influence,” and while their gloss is part of the drama, they do not control the hidden influence. The narrator’s lessons in love delight Marlowe’s readership because they highlight the ungovernable nature of eros.

Just as one cannot constrain, coerce, or control eros in the object of one’s affection by means of eloquence, so this ungovernable quality relates to one’s own

experience of passion. For instance, the narrator describes Leander and Hero's first meeting as follows:

And modestly they [Hero's eyelids] opened as she rose;
Thence flew love's arrow with the golden head,
And thus Leander was enamored.
Stone still he stood, and evermore he gazed,
Till with the fire that from his countenance blazed,
Relenting Hero's gentle heart was strook;
Such force and virtue hath an amorous look.
It lies not in our power to love or hate,
For will in us is overruled by fate. (159-68)

When Leander and Hero see one another, they are struck with love through their eyes, and the poem thereby flouts contemporary convictions about the governable nature of passion. According to the Thomistic-influenced Renaissance conception of the passions contemporary to Marlowe's poem, love and hatred are concupiscible passions directed toward an object, and reason can and should rule them; nevertheless, the passions are naturally aligned with the senses, and together they can undermine reason and will (Wright 94-5; 129). According to Thomas Wright, the passions and the senses work together, with a strong "friendship" because of their immediate cooperation when someone perceives an object and experiences a passion straight away.³ In contrast to Renaissance moral philosophy, however, the gods are primary influences in Marlowe's version of Musaeus's classical tale, so the narrator insists that it is "fate" and not love that

³ Wright notes: "Besides, sense and passions, as they have had a league the longer, so their friendship is stronger; for all the time of our infancy and childhood our sense were joint friends in such sort with passions, and whatsoever was hurtful to the one was an enemy to the other" (95).

overrules the will. Their actions are circumscribed by forces beyond their control, forces which are often not clearly determinant.

The poem's failed amatory persuasion draws upon the Petrarchan narrative while transforming it according to a comic design. William Kerrigan and Gordon Braden have noted the way *Hero and Leander* breaks with Petrarchism as the lovers "get out of their weird Petrarchan outfits and into real sexual consummation," even while retaining aspects of the Petrarch's sonnet sequence, particularly with the representation of Hero's resistance and Leander's pursuit (175). But *Hero and Leander* also demonstrates one further relationship with Petrarchism: the generative power of failed speech. Petrarchism is characterized by a static situation resulting from Laura's indifference and then her death; Laura's refusal, however, is artistically productive, generating for instance meditations on her beauty, the merit of his love, and the unfairness of her rejection (159-63). Marlowe retains this aspect of Petrarchism, namely the failure of speech to produce the beloved's acceptance. As with Petrarch's encounter with Laura, *Hero and Leander* features love at first sight, but *both* Hero and Leander are struck by Cupid's arrow, not just Leander. Consequently, Leander demonstrates the solicitous rhetorical performance represented in Petrarchan sonnet sequence. While it fails to persuade Hero, the romance is consummated nonetheless. Rhetoric fails and Leander still gets the girl. This failure is key to the erotic scheme of *Hero and Leander*. Instead of seduction as a consequence of artistry, Marlowe offers a series of situations illustrating mercurial erotic encounters in which rhetoric and eros are delightfully coincident but not consequential. In that sense, rhetoric manifests desire, declaring it and often in comic ways, but it does not produce consummation in any one-to-one ratio.

II.

Failed seduction is comically productive, no less so than when Love herself is the speaker. Like Marlowe, Shakespeare uses the composition strategy of failed persuasion in *Venus and Adonis*, only this time the gender roles of pursuer and pursued are reversed. A female speaker attempts to seduce a demure male youth, putting on the “masculine persuasive force” of male seducers, and the reversal of roles is part of the delight of the poem. As in *Hero and Leander*, *Venus and Adonis* features persuasive oratory with fruitless, misdirected, and unintended effects. While ostensibly similar elements are at play, including ineffective oratory, physical violence, and the operation of passions, they are transformed according to Shakespeare’s distinctive configuration. Shakespeare’s version of rhetorical failure in *Venus and Adonis* exploits the conventions of unsuccessful persuasion in the way that Renaissance writers often transformed existing models:⁴ he subverts the recipe of failed amatory persuasion using a female speaker whose physiology is at the forefront of the poem’s concerns, and he makes his rendition of rhetorical failure the etiological origin of the sorrows of love. In his poem, the exception becomes the rule.

Similar to Leander, whom the narrator likens to a “bold sharp sophister,” Venus is the “bold-faced suitor” who woos Adonis with persuasive speech (197, 6). The better part of Shakespeare’s poem consists of the voluble goddess’s unremitting attempts to seduce as she marshals argument after argument, reason after reason, for Adonis’s consent. At one point, Venus offers a catalogue of illustrations akin to Leander’s arguments in *Hero and Leander*: “Torches are made to light, jewels to wear, / Dainties to

⁴ Gavin Alexander notes: “If anything is typical of the Renaissance literary mentality, it is this habit of conceiving of patterns and transformations in relation to models, norms, and conventions” (xlvi).

taste, fresh beauty for the use, / Herbs for their smell, and sappy plants to bear. / Things growing to themselves are growth's abuse; / Seeds spring from seeds, and beauty breedeth beauty: / Thou wast begot: to get it is thy duty" (163-8).⁵ Venus's arguments have a similar effect to Leander's, assembling as she does an abundance of metaphorical material intended to persuade, but her speech features a more robust appeal to the senses with taste, touch, smell, as well as sight. Venus's seduction is not confined to this metaphorical *copia*, but also includes an extensive range of praise, cajoling, playful reprimand, enticement, and arguments drawn from nature, the gods, and the prohibitive tale of Narcissus. Moreover, given Venus's recalcitrant addressee, her speech also includes the strategy of delay, keeping Adonis at hand with stories intended to postpone his departure—telling him of the boar and arguing at length about the hare as a more suitable hunting alternative. As Colin Burrow notes, Elizabethan erotic poems often feature such digressions (29), but it is significant that Venus herself offers the story of the hare in service of her seduction. Unlike Marlowe's digression regarding Mercury in *Hero and Leander*, the story of the hare shows the way Shakespeare gives Venus rhetorical agency.

Venus uses physical force along with her seductive words just like her male counterparts do in *Hero and Leander*: Mercury ("Till in his twining arms he locked her fast"), Neptune ("therefore on him seized"), and Leander ("His hands he cast upon her like a snare") (403, 642, 743). In the course of her wooing, for example, Venus "seizeth" Adonis's hand, plucks him from his horse, pushes him, and restrains him with locked fingers and "twining arms" when he struggles, all of which recall the terms of physical force in Marlowe's poem (25, 30, 41, 227-8, 256,). Unlike *Hero and Leander*, however,

⁵ Burrow points out the way Venus's "conventional arguments for procreation" parallel Leander's (184).

Adonis reciprocates when his refusing look strikes Venus unconscious. In a momentary reversal of pursuer and pursued during which Adonis approximates Venus's violent affection in an attempt to revive her, he claps her, wrings her nose, strikes her cheeks, bends her fingers, "holds her pulses hard," and chafes her lips (468, 475-77).

In spite of Venus's use of physical force and steady stream of eloquence, Adonis will not be persuaded. When he can get a word in edgewise, Adonis points out that her seduction has no effect, and he explicitly rejects her verbal artistry (e.g. "I hate not love, but your device in love") (789). When he finally breaks from Venus's verbal onslaught, Adonis notes:

"If love hath lent you twenty thousand tongues,
And every tongue more moving than your own,
Bewitching like the wanton mermaid's songs,
Yet from mine ear the tempting tune is blown,
For know my heart stands armed in mine ear,
And will not let a false sound enter there,

"Lest the deceiving harmony should run
Into the quiet closure of my breast,
And then my little heart were quite undone,
In his bed-chamber to be barred of rest.
No, lady, no; my heart longs not to groan,
But soundly sleeps, while not it sleeps alone. (775-86)

Shakespeare attends to the artistically generative power of failed speech like that found in the Petrarchan sonnet sequence. Adonis carefully explains the inefficacy of her eloquence based on the way it is intended to work upon his passions and their seat, the heart. Adonis's repeated refusals explaining precisely how Venus's speech is not working (i.e. "my heart stands armed in mine ear") leads to Venus's lamentations and objections like that of a Petrarchan lover.

Unlike Marlowe in *Hero and Leander*, Shakespeare investigates the physiology of unrequited love and the consequential operation of the passions.⁶ Repeatedly, the poem focuses on the physical effects resulting from Venus's desire for Adonis and from his refusal. In the course of the poem, we get physical reactions to desire such as "trembling in her passion," and "She red, and hot, as coals of glowing fire," as well as to rejection when, for instance, she falls down at Adonis's look or laments the debilitating disdain she sees in his eyes (27, 35, 463, and 500-2). The height of the poem's concern with how unrequited love affects both the passions and the senses comes at the poem's tragic conclusion. When Venus hears the ominous cries of Adonis's dogs, her reaction is a transmuted version of Adonis's rejection earlier in the poem (i.e. "my heart stands armed in mine ear, / And will not let a false sound enter there"). The narrator notes: "This dismal cry rings sadly in her ear, / Through which it enters to surprise her heart, / Who overcome by doubt and bloodless fear, With cold-pale weakness numbs each feeling part" (889-92). Aural effects give way to visual ones when Venus views Adonis's body ravaged by the boar:

So at his bloody view her eyes are fled

⁶ For another depiction of the physiology of unrequited love, see *The Faerie Queene*, book 3, especially cantos 1-3.

Into the deep-dark cabins of her head,

Where they resign their office, and their light

To the disposing of her troubled brain,

Who bids them still consort with ugly night,

And never would the heart with looks again,

Who, like a king perplexed in his throne,

By their suggestion gives a deadly groan [...]. (1037-44)⁷

As with the love at first sight featured in *Hero and Leander*, Shakespeare addresses the relationship between sight and passion, only in this case it is thwarted passion. Venus's body is in upheaval based on what she sees, and in standard Renaissance physiological terms, Shakespeare represents that upheaval with a courtly metaphor: her heart, "like a king perplexed in his throne," is unsettled. With her core faculty so disturbed, Venus's body and senses revolt: the poem consequently notes that her voice is stopped, her joints are frozen, and her eyes mistake what she sees.

Shakespeare attends especially to the relationship between speech and the passions. Instead of persuasive oratory moving her audience, Venus's speech often redounds upon the speaker; it is her heart that is acted upon in the course of the poem, not Adonis's. Repeatedly, Shakespeare focuses on the influence of overwhelming desire on expression. For example, we get "This said, impatience chokes her pleading tongue, / And swelling passion doth provoke a pause" and "And now she weeps, and now she fain would speak, / And now her sobs do her intendments break" (217-18, 221-2). Like the

⁷ For a treatment of the syntactical implications of this passage with regard to Venus's troubled state of mind, see Burrow 39-40.

narrator in *Hero and Leander*, Shakespeare glosses the relationship between verbal expression and passion with a *sententia* of his own:

For lovers say the heart hath treble wrong
When it is barred the abidance of the tongue.

An oven that is stopped, or river stayed,
Burneth more hotly, swelleth with more rage:
So of concealed sorrow may be said.
Free vent of words love's fire doth assuage;
But when the heart's attorney once is mute
The client breaks, as desp'rate in his suit. (329-36)

Shakespeare's *sententia* emphasizes the way expression can purge excess passion and thereby save a lover from increasing physiological imbalance. His emphasis here reflects the poem's general concern with how speech affects the speaker's emotions rather than the audience's.

As we have seen, violence attends physical seduction in *Venus and Adonis*. This relationship is played for comedy early in the poem—with the way Venus manhandles Adonis almost immediately, for example—but the two are still linked when the poem shifts from comedy to tragedy. When Venus encounters Adonis's mangled body, she imagines that the boar's attempted persuasion resulted in Adonis's death:

If he did see his face, why then I know
He thought to kiss him, and hath killed him so.

“’Tis true, ’tis true, thus was Adonis slain:
He ran upon the boar with his sharp spear,
Who would not whet his teeth at him again,
But by a kiss thought to persuade him there,
And, nuzzling in his flank, the loving swine
Sheathed unaware the tusk in his soft groin.

“Had I been toothed like him I must confess

With kissing him I should have killed him first [...]. (1109-18)

Venus re-imagines the confrontation between Adonis and the boar as misdirected affection. What starts out as a hypothetical situation (with the conditional “If”) becomes conviction that she seizes upon (i.e. “’Tis true, ’tis true”). She conceives of the confrontation between Adonis and the boar as a failed love suit like her own, reflecting how she thinks love works: rather than obtaining its desired object, the expression of desire will have unintended consequences.

The poem transitions from the comic to the tragic as Venus rehearses her attempted seduction in a tragically fruitless pantomime, re-enacting her failed love suit from earlier in the poem that recalls Adonis’s refusal: “She looks upon his lips, and they are pale; / She takes him by the hand, and that is cold; / She whispers in his ears a heavy tale, / As if they heard the woeful words she told; / She lifts the coffer-lids that close his eyes, / Where, lo, two lamps burnt out in darkness lies” (1123-1128). This passage recalls their previous interaction, evoking Venus’s attention to Adonis’s lips (e.g. 19), her taking his hand (25), offering him a tale (74), and looking into his eyes (119). But

Adonis is as deaf to her suit as he was previously (i.e. “Yet from mine ear the tempting tune is blown, / For know my heart stands armed in mine ear, / And will not let a false sound enter there”). Venus subsequently moves to her prophecy regarding the inevitable torments of eros, and in her predictions we find the bodily ravages with which the poem has been concerned, as well as the problems of persuasive speech: “The strongest body shall it make most weak, / Strike the wise dumb, and teach the fool to speak” (1145-6). The poem’s etiological conclusion thereby makes rhetorical failure integral to the experience of love.

As we have seen in *Hero and Leander* and *Venus and Adonis*, the erotic impetus takes the form of both physical force and persuasive words, in part because the latter is conceived as a power akin to the former in the period. This association certainly has classical precedent. In his *Institutio Oratoria*, for example, Quintilian mentions the power of eloquence to “drag” audiences by its force, and to “throw them off their balance” through emotional appeals (365). So when John Donne refers to his words’ “masculine persuasive force” in Elegy 16, he is well supported by the rhetorical tradition—and is perhaps less metaphorical than modern readers might suppose (118). Since persuasive words are represented in terms of might and both are configured as interconnected vehicles for eros, military metaphors often attend descriptions of attempted seduction. Love and war are associated in part because physical and verbal forces are deployed in both contexts. The twining of verbal and physical onslaught goes back at least to the *Art of Love* in which Ovid urges persistence in seduction and offers the metaphor of military attack: “Don’t forget, / Troy took a long time to fall, but it fell: /

Persist and you'll take even Penelope's citadel.”⁸ The transposition of persuasive force from military to erotic contexts is pervasive in English Renaissance literature in the 1590s, not just with *Hero and Leander* and *Venus and Adonis*.⁹ In Samuel Daniel's *Complaint of Rosamond* (1592), for example, Daniel juxtaposes Henry II's military victories with his conquest by Rosamond's beauty. Moving from Henry's “victories in France” to the “hotter wars within his bosom” inspired by her glance, Rosamond portrays his attempted seduction in military terms: “[...] he serves and sue'th, / And seeks all means to undermine my youth. / Which never by assault he could recover, / So well encamped in strength of chaste desires; / My clean-armed thoughts repelled an unchaste lover;” (162, 165, 202-6). While Rosamond repels the king, she is no match for the eloquence of a matron who convinces her to accept the king's advances. The poem suggests this woman was sent by the king (“One of my sex, of place and nature bad, / Was set in ambush to entrap my youth”). Apart from the “ambush” metaphor, contemporary readers would have seen further military associations given that eloquence conquers where force could not. In *The Art of Rhetoric* (1560), one of the most published rhetorical handbooks of the Elizabethan period, Thomas Wilson relates a story of Cineas from Plutarch's *Life of Pyrrhus* who was able to conquer cities that King Pyrrhus could not. Wilson notes:

And so it came to pass that through the pithy eloquence of this noble
orator divers strong castles and fortresses were peaceably given up into the

⁸ “Penelopen ipsam, persta modo, tempore vinces: / Capta vides sero Pergama, capta tamen” (1.477-8).

⁹ Adonis's military metaphor in his protest regarding Venus's attempted seduction is illustrative: “Remove your siege from my unyielding heart: / To love's alarms it will not ope the gate. / Dismiss your vows, your feigned tears, your flatt'ry. / For where a heart is hard they make no batt'ry” (423-26). To cite another example of the contemporary interest in considering correspondences between love and war, Shakespeare's *Much Ado About Nothing* (1600) stages the commingling of military and erotic (as well as domestic) contexts as Don Pedro and company experience the uneasy transition from warfare to wooing.

hands of Pyrrhus, which he should have found very hard and tedious to win by the sword. [...] Good was that orator that could do so much, and wise was that king which would use such a mean. For if the worthiness of eloquence may move us, what worthier thing can there be than with a word to win cities and whole countries? If profit may persuade, what greater gain can we have than without bloodshed achieve to a conquest?

(35)

Similar to Cineas, the matron conquers where the king was unable, and Daniel implies the utility of eloquence in both military and erotic contexts. Like the Gallic Hercules symbolized by a cord leading from his tongue to his auditor's ears (Rebhorn 131), the story of Cineas and King Henry's persuasive emissary in Daniel's *Complaint of Rosamond* testify to rhetorical success and the power of eloquence. But what happens when rhetorical skill is deployed to thwart seduction or sexual violence—when physical force is pitted against the force of eloquence, as it were? Given the metaphorical association of military and erotic campaigns, it is not surprising that when verbal seduction fails, violence ensues.¹⁰ Amongst the erotic narratives of the 1590s, two authors in particular set in opposition eloquence and violence, using rhetorical failure to do so: Thomas Nashe and William Shakespeare.¹¹

¹⁰ The scenario retains the military associations even when violence is the primary means rather than persuasion. Like Ovid's metaphor of military attack, the female body often is configured as a space under siege in Renaissance literature—by Thomas Nashe ("On the hard boards he threw her, and used his knee as an iron ram to beat ope the two-leaved gate of her chastity" 336) and Shakespeare ("His hand as proud of such a dignity,/ Smoking with pride, marched on to make his stand/ On her bare breast, the heart of all her land" 438) for example. See below.

¹¹ The role of violence in erotic contexts in both classical and Renaissance works can be unsettling in light of modern sensibilities. Consequently, I have tried to strike a balance between seeking precision and accuracy with regard to the material and maintaining a respectful acknowledgement of the horrors of real

III.

Katherine Duncan-Jones has proposed that a rivalry existed between Thomas Nashe and William Shakespeare, prompted by a struggle for patronage. Nashe's *The Unfortunate Traveller* was first published in the fall of 1594 with a dedication to Henry Wriothesley, Earl of Southampton. On its second printing, however, this dedication is conspicuously absent. According to Duncan-Jones, Nashe failed to garner support from Southampton for a number of offensive aspects of *The Unfortunate Traveller* including his fawning dedication and two distasteful passages: the tournament in Florence with its ridicule of court pageantry and the Esdras-Heraclide rape scene (69). About this last part, she notes: "As far as Shakespeare is concerned, Nashe was dealing out a right and a left: mocking both the rape scene in his popular *Titus*, and the suicide of Lucretia, theme of the second of his poetic offerings to Southampton" (72). In the early 1590s both Shakespeare and Nashe sought patronage, but whether or not Nashe mocked Shakespeare's work, it seems more useful to note the composition strategy connecting *The Unfortunate Traveller* and *The Rape of Lucrece*, which has considerable import given the era in which they first appeared. In a culture of intense competition between writers who made a living off rhetoric, these works feature conspicuous rhetorical failure. In rape scenes from both works, ornate speeches of dissuasion, which contain various tropes and schemes, fail completely, but the ineffectual rhetoric amplifies the violence that ensues because it is skillfully rendered, patently compelling, and supposed to work. Brian Vickers's account of Renaissance rhetoric's supposed efficacy clarifies the incongruity between these artful orations and their inability to move: "We are dealing

sexual violence. For a helpful clarification on this point, see William Kerrigan and Gordon Braden's *The Idea of the Renaissance* (Baltimore: John Hopkins UP, 1989) 247-8.

with a central rhetorical tradition found throughout Europe, in all types of school, that, if the appropriate devices are used, appeal to the feelings is guaranteed to be effective” (*In Defence of Rhetoric* 284-5). The failure of the rhetor *in* the story, however, only enhances success of the rhetor *of* the story. Heraclide and Lucrece do not dissuade the rapists, but the discrepancy between eloquent persuasion and brutal unresponsiveness is artistically useful.

As many critics have pointed out, Nashe satirizes various characters based on their manner of expression in *The Unfortunate Traveller*, and examples range from the Earl of Surrey to the Anabaptists. The university scholars in Wittenberg, for example, provide commentary on rhetoric itself.¹² The satirical effects in these scenes come from Nashe’s characterization of the academic atmosphere, which consists of pageantry and bombast. The outfits that adorn the scholars (“hooded hypocrisy and doctorly accoutrements”), like the “choice stuff” that adorns their speech, are emblematic of the coterie’s triviality (291-2).¹³ Nashe stresses rhetoric’s artificiality by portraying orations that are isolated from significance and efficacious only in their absurdity. With these scenes in Wittenberg, Nashe prepares the reader for a different kind of critique of rhetoric, one based on rhetoric’s practical ineffectiveness: the Esdras-Heraclide rape scene.

¹² For an explanation of some of these specific references in the Wittenberg scenes, see Ronald B. McKerrow, *The Works of Thomas Nashe*. Ed. Ronald B. McKerrow. Rev. ed. Vol. 4. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1958) 272-5. All passages from *The Unfortunate Traveller* are cited parenthetically from *The Unfortunate Traveller and Other Works*, ed. J. B. Steane (New York: Penguin Books, 1972) 251-370.

¹³ For the philosophy of language at play in Nashe’s work, see Jonathan Crewe’s *Unredeemed Rhetoric: Thomas Nashe and the Scandal of Authorship* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins UP, 1982) and Reid Barbour’s *Deciphering Elizabethan Fiction* (Newark: U of Delaware Press, 1993). For example, Barbour catalogues the use of the term “stuff” in Nashe’s lexicon, relating its sense of copious materiality to contemporary prose narratives and the cultural moment in Elizabethan England.

When the “notable banditto” Esdras of Granado assails Heraclide, he does so with words as well as violence, and their confrontation is as much rhetorical as it is physical. In their war of words, each speaker carefully attends to the other’s language, and both appropriate and exploit the other’s speech. At the outset, Esdras addresses Heraclide: “‘This is the eight-score house,’ quoth he, ‘that hath done homage unto me, and here I will prevail or I will be torn to pieces’” (333). What is striking about Heraclide’s reply is her confiscation of Esdras’s language. She takes his opening remarks and uses them in her defense: “A man that hath an inevitable huge stone hanging only by a hair over his head, which he looks, every Pater-Nosterwhile, to fall and pash him in pieces, will not he be submissively sorrowful for his transgressions, refrain himself from the least thought of folly, and purify his spirit with contrition and penitence? God’s hand like a huge stone hangs inevitably over thy head” (334). With the phrase “pash him in pieces,” she takes Esdras’s hypothetical remark (i.e. “[...] here I will prevail or I will be torn to pieces”) and gives it theological consequence. Esdras used the phrase to accent the inevitability of her fate, but Heraclide begins her oration by commandeering his language and suggesting the inevitability of Esdras’s doom.

With the repetition of “death,” Heraclide accents one of the main themes of her speech: divine retribution. She declares:

Death I deemed my friend (friends fly from us in adversity); death, the devil, and all the ministering spirits of temptation are watching about thee to entrap thy soul, by my abuse, to eternal damnation. It is thy soul thou mayest save, only by saving mine honour. Death will have thy body infallibly for breaking into my house, that he had selected for his private

habitation. If thou ever camest of a woman, or hopest to be saved by the seed of a woman, pity a woman. (334)

In this portion of the speech, Heraclide appropriates not just Esdras's language, but also his use of death as a device to inspire terror (e.g. "execrable murders"), giving it back to him with theological characterization. She returns to the Christological appeal from her opening remarks (e.g. "My soul is my saviour's. To him I have bequeathed it; from him can no man take it. Jesu, Jesu, spare me indefiled for thy spouse! Jesu, Jesu, never fail those that put their trust in thee!") (333) with the phrase "or hopest to be saved by the seed of a woman," an indirect reference to Genesis 3:15 and Christ's salvific role.¹⁴ In addition, she links their fates by combining the state of his soul and her honor, once again asserting her individuality in contrast to his host of victims. She is a matron who has seen the death of loved ones, rather than another conquest to be swayed by the promise of gifts or threats of death. The identity she presents to Esdras reverberates through the oration, signified by the repetition of "woman."

Moreover, Heraclide counters Esdras's exceptional status, as one "countenanced and borne out by the Pope" with a "charter above scripture," by claiming one of her own. She declares: "Even as the age of goats is known by the knots on their horns, so think the anger of God apparently visioned or shown unto thee in the knitting of my brows. A hundred have I buried out of my house, at all whose departures I have been present. A Hundred's infection is mixed with my breath. Lo, now I breathe upon thee, a hundred deaths come upon thee" (334). Here she harnesses the atmosphere that pervades Nashe's plague-ridden Rome, as well as the experience of the death of her family. Details about

¹⁴ For various Renaissance interpretations of this verse, see C. A. Patrides, "The 'Protoevangelium' in Renaissance Theology and *Paradise Lost*."

the city's abounding in contagion, which Jack gives us just before this scene, only strengthen Heraclide's appeal. She channels the surrounding putrefaction to give her speech greater rhetorical force. The assumption is that surely Esdras could be made to feel the impulse to repentance when, as Heraclide spills her potentially infectious breath toward him, his actions are keenly represented as tempting fate and God for the last time. She also represents herself as "friend" of death, a walking emissary with the ability to infect Esdras, but also the ability to offer him repentance (334). Heraclide transforms the moment from just another occasion for Esdras to continue his exploitation of ruin and misery, to an opportunity to leave his path of destruction (i.e. "Either renounce God's image, or renounce the wicked mind thou bearest") here in the dwelling of death itself (i.e. "that he had selected for his private habitation") (334).

Esdras answers Heraclide's speech by rebutting the terms of her argument: "I tell thee I have cast the dice an hundred times for the galleys in Spain and yet still missed the ill chance. [...] Any kinswoman that I have, knew she were not a whore, myself would make her one. Thou art a whore; thou shalt be whore, in spite of religion or precise ceremonies" (335). Esdras counters Heraclide's identity as death's emissary and his as a potential penitent. He echoes her hyperbolic "hundred deaths" with his "hundred times" successful evasion of the galleys, and he emphasizes his own identity as a villain, too, with the diabolical implications of "myself would make her one." In the last section of his speech, Esdras cruelly manipulates Heraclide's terms: he mocks her repetition of "woman," as well as the binary opposition and conditional she set up ("Either...or" and "If thou be a man..."), and circumscribes her identity and fate: "Thou art a whore." Thus

he vehemently rejects both her identity and the opportunity for redemption that she offers. The violence of his speech anticipates his subsequent actions.

Katherine Duncan-Jones points out that Heraclide's fate evokes the rape scene from Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus* based on Jack's narration of the event after the rhetorical exchange between Heraclide and Esdras: "On the hard boards he threw her, and used his knee as an iron ram to beat ope the two-leaved gate of her chastity. Her husband's dead body he made pillow to his abomination" (336). In *Titus Andronicus*, Chiron and his brother Demetrius plan to rape Lavinia upon the dead body of her husband, "And make his dead trunk pillow to our lust" (2.2.130). As Duncan-Jones notes, the similarity of the situation and language suggests that Nashe draws on *Titus Andronicus*. He departs from Shakespeare's rape scene, however, by creating a highly verbal heroine, rather than the muted and mutilated Lavinia, and he has the rapist counter with rhetorical, and then physical violence. What establishes a further connection to *Titus* is that Heraclide is an ironical rendition of Lavinia. Instead of a silenced rape victim, Nashe creates a voluble victim who unpacks her trauma with words, monopolizing the narrative until the point of her death.¹⁵

If Nashe had this scene from *Titus* in mind for the scenario set forth in *The Unfortunate Traveller*, then Shakespeare probably did too as he returns to just such a moment a few years later. As with the rape scene in *The Unfortunate Traveller*, in Shakespeare's *The Rape of Lucrece* (1594), the reader is acutely aware of the rhetorical

¹⁵ The difference between these two representations of rape victims may be explained, in part, according to the needs of genre and the contrast between the stage and the page. Lavinia's silence is more theatrically effective than speech. As Frank Kermode notes, "silence itself could be eloquent," a principle that Shakespeare learns and subsequently deploys, for example, in *King Lear* with Gloucester's silent presence on an empty stage in act 5, scene 2 (11).

confrontation as Lucrece employs figures of speech and thought to move Tarquin to remit his course.

The confrontation between Tarquin and Lucrece is preceded by various presentations of Lucrece's beauty, whether by Collatine, the narrator, or Tarquin. By the time Tarquin threatens Lucrece in her bedchamber, rhetoric's import in the poem—from its role in character presentation, to its influence on their motivations and self-understanding—is well established. Richard Lanham underscores this point: "The poem has become, by this point, clearly a study in dramatic motive. It should not surprise us, therefore, that Tarquin's attempt to persuade Lucrece, and her reply, are both developed within a rhetorical reality" (101). I take Lanham's term "rhetorical reality" to mean that because the poem is primarily concerned with rhetoric, the characters' motives and actions will be represented by, and impelled by, rhetoric. Shakespeare foregrounds rhetoric at every turn, and this "rhetorical reality" directs Tarquin's assault, as well as Lucrece's defense. In *The Rape of Lucrece* rhetoric is as much the subject of the poem as the event of the title.

In her article "'The Blazon of Sweet Beauty's Best': Shakespeare's *Lucrece*," Nancy Vickers stresses that rape is the inevitable consequence of Collatine's initial description of Lucrece (102). While his thoughts return to Collatine's portrayal (e.g. "Now thinks he that her husband's shallow tongue, / The niggard prodigal that praised her so, / In that high task hath done her beauty wrong"),¹⁶ Tarquin soon supplies his own details, concentrating on the features that inflame his lust as he scrutinizes Lucrece in her bedchamber: "With more than admiration he admired / Her azure veins, her alabaster

¹⁶ Passages from *The Rape of Lucrece* are quoted from *The Complete Sonnets and Poems*, ed. Colin Burrow (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2002) 237-338.

skin,/ Her coral lips, her snow-white dimpled chin” (78-80, 419-20). Tarquin concludes this violating inspection by placing his hand on Lucrece’s breast: “His hand as proud of such a dignity,/ Smoking with pride, marched on to make his stand/ On her bare breast, the heart of all her land” (437-9). This section of the poem shows how Tarquin fixates on her various aspects. Lucrece is the composite of certain features, whether emphasized by his “greedy eye-balls” in her bedroom, or by Collatine’s account of her beauty. At this point in the narrative, the implicit question is, “if Collatine’s rhetoric can set the events in motion, can Lucrece’s rhetoric stop them?”

Before Lucrece even gives her speech, however, the narrator characterizes her defense:

But when a black-fac’d cloud the world doth threat,
In his dim mist th’aspiring mountains hiding,
From earth’s dark womb some gentle gust doth get,
Which blow these pitchy vapors from their bidding,
Hind’ring their present fall by this dividing;
So his unhallowed haste her words delays,
And moody Pluto winks while Orpheus plays. (547-53)

As Lynn Enterline notes, Shakespeare associates Lucrece with Orpheus, “one of the most powerful Renaissance figures for the persuasive powers of poetry” (169). Not only does he exalt Lucrece’s eloquence with this Orphic comparison and suggest the inevitable outcome of events (i.e. her speech “delays” rather than stops), the narrator also inaugurates one of the motifs of Lucrece’s defense. Just as the narrator describes “a black-fac’d cloud” containing “pitchy vapors,” Lucrece often represents Tarquin’s act as

a contaminant (e.g. “there falls into thy boundless flood/ Black lust, dishonour, shame, misgoverning”) (653-54). The narrator’s description prepares the reader for the skill and futility of Lucrece’s words, as well as a key theme of her speech.

When she does reply to Tarquin, Lucrece counters her preceding representations in the poem. For instance, in lines 587-8 the rhetorical figure *asyndeton*¹⁷ works against Tarquin’s figurative dismembering: “If ever man were moved with woman’s moans / Be moved with my tears, my sighs, my groans.” Aside from suggesting a quickly deployed defense, the omission of expected conjunctions in lines 587 and 588 presents the unified actions of a someone in duress, as opposed to his state of inflamed lust. While using two *polysyndetons*¹⁸ here—substituting “and” for “my” before “sighs” and “groans”—would satisfy the meter, the use of “my” emphasizes Lucrece’s ownership of “tears,” “sighs,” and “groans,” and it also implies ownership of those aspects of her body upon which Tarquin has fixated, having waked her as he did with a gesture of possession.

Along with counteracting her preceding representation, Lucrece’s use of *asyndeton* presents Tarquin with an alternative identity. When describing his presence in Lucrece’s bedroom, Tarquin notes:

My will that marks thee for my earth’s delight,
Which I to conquer sought with all my might;
But as reproof and reason beat it dead,
By thy bright beauty was it newly bred.

¹⁷ For definitions of *asyndeton*, or *dissolutio*, the strategic absence of conjunctions between words or phrases, see Sonnino 78-9.

¹⁸ For definitions of *polysyndeton*, or *acervatio*, the strategic use of conjunctions between words or phrases, see Sonnino 19-20.

.....

But nothing can affection's course control,

Or stop the headlong fury of his speed. (487-90, 500-1)

According to Tarquin's argument, he can no longer defeat his will with "reproof and reason" because of her beauty. He presents himself as passion's slave and thereby foists blame on her. In lines 600 and 601, she remarks, "Thou art not what thou seem'st, and if the same,/ Thou seem'st not what thou art, a god, a king." Joining these three terms—"what thou art," "god," and "king" (with another strategic use of *asyndeton*)—Lucrece merges them into an identity greater than a casualty of unconquerable desire for her. Stressing the incongruity between her representation of Tarquin and his present actions, Lucrece refutes Tarquin's declaration of unruly affections by suggesting that "what thou art, a god, a king" can certainly subdue his passion and exercise restraint.

Lucrece employs an explicitly political appeal as well, stressing the extent to which Tarquin serves as a royal exemplar. She notes: "For princes are the glass, the school, the book, / Where subjects' eyes do learn, do read, do look" (615-16). In his introduction to *The Complete Sonnets & Poems*, Colin Burrow describes the political connotations of Lucrece's appeal in lines 610-23:

Early readers of the poem would have heard behind the voice of Lucrece at this point that of Erasmus ('The tyrant strives to be feared, the king to be loved'), or any one of a dozen contributors to the genre of humanist prince-books. Her words would have won an easy nod of assent from early readers, who would instinctively feel that princes *should* seek to be feared through love, and *should* provide exemplary government. (52)

As Burrow points out, Shakespeare has Lucrece appeal to Tarquin in terms of the proper actions and disposition of a prince. Throughout her defense, Lucrece emphasizes the political significance of Tarquin's conduct. As we have seen, Lucrece's speech is rhetorically complex and compelling in its deft answer to Tarquin's threat.¹⁹

Part of what makes these orations by Heraclide and Lucrece unusual is that they come from unusual characters: chaste female rhetors. Patricia Parker has described the proscription of women's study of rhetoric in the Renaissance. She notes:

The reason behind this prohibition—and the sense that rhetoric was outside the sphere or proper place of women—had to do with the nature of rhetoric as specifically *public* speaking, the humanist training of young men to argue persuasively in public, including in the courts, a link of rhetoric with judicial cases (*causae*) which can, of course, be traced back to Cicero and Quintilian. It was the public nature of rhetoric—taking women outside their proper 'province' or place—which disqualified them, in a long tradition dating from as ancient an authority as Aristotle's strictures that women were to be not only silent but identified with the property of the home and with the private sphere, with a private rather than a common place. (104)

¹⁹ Along with the scene from *Titus Andronicus*, Lucrece's defense calls to mind another of Shakespeare's rhetorical confrontations. In act 1, scene 2 of *Richard III* Richard seduces Anne by adroitly reacting to her rhetoric. Having just killed her husband and her father-in-law, whose body is present at their exchange, Richard adapts his rhetoric to, and is provoked by, Anne's responses. In his introduction to *Richard III* in *The Norton Shakespeare*, Stephen Greenblatt points out the connection between Richard and Tarquin: "[Richard's] politics, and hence the sexuality implied by that politics, is transgressive; it thrives on the violation of social and natural bonds. His is the psychology of the rapist, and the character in Shakespeare closest to Richard III is the rapist Tarquin (in *The Rape of Lucrece*), whose lust is excited precisely by the barriers he is forced to overcome" (544). A comparison of these two moments shows Shakespeare's interest in depicting sexual aggression through rhetorical conflict.

As Parker points out, there was a firm precedent of female exclusion from rhetoric in classical and Renaissance rhetorical theory.²⁰ According to Parker, there were two poles in female types based on the rhetorical tradition: voluble women who were necessarily sexually rapacious and silent women who were chaste matrons of the home. She describes these categories as follows: “The extravagantly ‘mooveable’ and talkative harlot—with the extreme example of the woman publicly arguing her ‘case’—provides the influential monitory antitype to the shamefast and silent woman, modestly observing her proper place and moving within a circumscribed sphere” (107). But Heraclide and Lucrece, who are chaste *and* oratorical women, fit neither of these categories. They do not contravene their “proper place” by public argument; rather they must defend themselves within a “circumscribed sphere.”

An example from George Puttenham’s *The Arte of English Poesie* elucidates the exceptional nature of Heraclide and Lucrece’s addresses. Describing the value of using rhetorical figures, George Puttenham says that figures “inueigle and appassionate the mind,” such that members of the Areopagus in ancient Greece forbade figurative speeches because of figures’ tendency to pervert the judge’s mind, “the very rule of iustice,” by way of affection (128-29).²¹ Contrasting the poet with these ancient pleaders, Puttenham notes:

²⁰ Peter Mack echoes Parker’s description of the exclusive nature of rhetorical theory and practice: “Communicative expectations create possibilities for individual expression, but they also institute zones of exclusion. People who cannot master the structures of discourse agreed by a particular community or who do not know the arguments it considers persuasive are excluded from direct participation in debate. Their views will only be listened to if they are translated by someone who understands the expectations and who is recognized (by manner of speech as well as personally) as belonging to the group” (3).

²¹ For a helpful note on Puttenham’s reference to the Areopagites and his source material, see Wayne A. Rebhorn’s *Renaissance Debates on Rhetoric* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2000) 213.

[...] our maker or Poet is appointed not for a iudge, but rather for a pleader,
and that of pleasant & louely causes and nothing perillous, such as be
those for the triall of life, limme, or liuelyhood; and before iudges neither
sower nor seuere, but in the eare of princely dames, yong ladies,
gentlewomen and courtiers, beyng all for the most part either meeke of
nature, or of pleasant humour [...]. (129)

Nashe and Shakespeare seem to reverse the oratorical scenario that Puttenham sets forth. In *The Unfortunate Traveller* and *The Rape of Lucrece*, the Poet-orator is a gentlewoman who pleads not for a pleasant and lovely cause, but for a stay of rape; the situation is exactly that of a perilous trial of life and limb. Each offers a defense and tailors the speech to effect an acquittal from an audience of one. For the rhetorically active rape victim, the judge and accuser are perversely one and the same. But the reader judges as well. Based on the nature of these rhetorically informed scenes, we are invited to assess the quality and likely success of Heraclide and Lucrece's speeches, as well as the responses to them.

Lynn Enterline has described what she calls "scenes of impossible demand" based on an Ovidian tradition of unresponsiveness in Renaissance poetry, which is a useful characterization of these two scenes. She notes:

In thinking through the many complex problems raised by figures for lost voices in the Ovidian tradition, I discovered a peculiar but telltale sign of Ovid's presence in Renaissance poetry: the scene of an impossible demand. This is usually, but not always, the demand for love or for pity from someone who will give neither. In the *Metamorphoses*, very few

characters ever persuade their listeners to respond [...]. It is as if the hopelessness of the scene [...] augments the beauty, pathos, or rhetorical ingenuity of words spoken to no avail. (14)

Enterline depicts as “deeply Ovidian” the way in which Lucrece’s speech not only fails to avert, but further incites, Tarquin’s lust, but this moment applies to Heraclide and Esdras as well (14). Trained as they likely were at grammar school in giving voice to characters from antiquity, Nashe and Shakespeare give their characters speeches that utterly fail to move the addressees. Verbal artifice is useful for the authors, but not the speakers.

Along with the exceptional nature of these speakers demonstrated by the rhetorical tradition, each author undercuts the gravity of rhetorical failure within the works themselves. As a number of critics have pointed out, there is a plainly burlesque quality to Heraclide’s speeches. For example, Katherine Duncan-Jones notes: “Blending the rape scene in *Titus* with the account of Hecuba and Pyrrus in his own and Marlowe’s *Dido*, Nashe inflates the motif of tragic beldame to a climax of absurdity. Heraclide’s suicide cannot be taken as anything but burlesque [...]” (71). Certainly there is an exaggerated quality to the presentation of the scene, evident even in Heraclide’s first response to the threat of rape: “‘Ah’ quoth Heraclide with a heart-rending sigh, ‘art thou ordained to be worse plague to me than the plague itself?’” (333). The phrase “heart-rending sigh,” illustrates this aspect of the scene: simultaneously at work are Jack’s characterization “heart-rending” and Heraclide’s rhetorically useful sigh, which adds pathos to her speech. The burlesque quality only intensifies as the narrative moves toward Heraclide’s suicide, such that when her husband wakes and casts aside her body, the scene is unmistakably outrageous.

Religious satire is present too. Describing her as “forsaken,” Jack emphasizes God’s failure to save her, and he anticipates the militant religious piety that characterizes her suicide. Both Shakespeare and Nashe use these rape scenes to explore the victims’ notion of guilt, but Heraclide’s religious language is hyperbolic. Her first words upon waking may stand for the rest of her speech: “Have I lived to make my husband’s body the bier to carry me to hell? Had filthy pleasure no other pillow to lean upon but his spreaded limbs? On thy flesh my fault shall be imprinted at the day of resurrection” (337). Her conviction is so acute that she punishes herself for the sin, and execution is her penance. But adopting what should be a divine role makes her particularly culpable, in both the artistic scheme of *The Unfortunate Traveller* as well as in Renaissance theology. By making Heraclide the subject of mockery too, these burlesque qualities mitigate the horror of the scene, as well as the effect of rhetorical failure.

Just as the satirical element of Nashe’s artistic project undercuts the gravity of the Heraclide rape scene, so does the relentless and self-conscious eloquence that characterizes *The Rape of Lucrece*. Like satire in *The Unfortunate Traveller*, the exquisite fluency of events, speeches, and narration rendered in poetic form all undercut the immediacy of Shakespeare’s rape scene. The victims’ speeches of defense, however, are no less artful; their rhetorical failures, no less significant.

One of the effects of having a rhetorically ornate speech of defense fail is that rhetoric seems useless. Its force is undermined. Both Shakespeare and Nashe, however, re-establish rhetoric’s efficacy at the close of their works, albeit in different ways. The anxiety aroused by rhetorical failure, which is mitigated by the atypical speakers and

circumstances, is finally answered by the conclusion of each work. But as we shall see, both works feature an uneasy recovery of the power and utility of rhetorical skill.

At the end of *The Rape of Lucrece*, Shakespeare has Lucrece achieve a kind of rhetorical efficacy otherwise unavailable to her. The theme of contamination in her defense prefigures the depiction of Lucrece's body after her suicide:

And, bubbling from her breast, it doth divide

In two slow rivers, that the crimson blood

Circles her body in on every side,

Who, like a late-sacked island, vastly stood

Bare and unpeopled in this fearful flood.

Some of her blood still pure and red remained,

And some looked black, and that false Tarquin stained. (1737-43)

Lucrece's metaphorical use of the language of pollution and corruption with which she tried to dissuade Tarquin earlier in the poem is literally represented here. That the blood "looked" black emphasizes the act of interpreting her body, which is the culmination of Lucrece's language of embodying the defilement (e.g. "My stained blood") (1181). Here she physically represents the corrupting act, the perversion of social and political relations.²² Lucrece is finally an emblem for political regeneration.²³ The tradition of feminine rhetorical figures, as well as conspicuous discussions of women in the

²² For a discussion of how the myth of Lucrece's rape relates to writing, ideology, and social and political relations in fifteenth-century Florentine humanism, see Stephanie Jed's *Chaste Thinking: The Rape of Lucretia and the Birth of Humanism* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1989).

²³ Lynn Enterline describes this moment in similar terms: "[...] Lucrece explicitly uses her body as a text, turning suicide into a kind of writing when she becomes the author of her own 'plot of death.' At first, she describes her body as a brutally literal legacy or possession: she 'bequeaths' her 'stained blood' to Tarquin, her body 'to the knife' (1181, 1184). But soon Shakespeare's second Philomela imagines her body itself as a kind of last testament or 'will,' a textual 'legacy' or 'example' for her husband's perusal [...]" (153-4).

exclusively male discipline of Renaissance and classical rhetorical theory²⁴, suggests something of the inevitability of Lucrece's end in *The Rape of Lucrece*. Shakespeare has Lucrece transform her body into a kind of rhetorical figure at the close of the poem, and it is her only figure to succeed, moving her kinsmen to action.

In *The Unfortunate Traveller*, Nashe re-asserts the power of rhetoric as well. While Heraclide fails to dissuade Esdras, Esdras is forced into the position of victim later in the story, and like Heraclide he must form a rhetorical defense of his own. At one point, he notes, "Heraclide, now think I on thy tears sown in the dust, the tears that my bloody mind made barren. In revenge of thee, God hardens this man's heart against me" (365-66). Along with an explicit reference to Heraclide, his "long suppliant oration" (366) features appeals to reason and emotion like Heraclide's, but Nashe puts greater emphasis on his mercurial movement from one point to another, all signifying his fearful attempt to escape the death sentence. Cutwolfe responds to him with the same awful resolve that previously characterized Esdras's reply to Heraclide.

Jack interprets Esdras's fate as divinely appointed because of the rape and suicide of Heraclide. Lorna Hutson rightly points out the "blatantly self-contradictory" morality that Jack offers (243) given Heraclide's suicide and forfeit of theological credit with "heaven's treasury" (Nashe 363). Moreover, identifying Esdras's fate as divinely prescribed makes Cutwolfe God's agent, which is precisely what Cutwolfe says and what makes him so abominable in the scheme of *The Unfortunate Traveller*. Hutson explains that this theme is present throughout the book: the problematic relationship between the culpable wrong-doer, who is providentially ordained but who cannot appeal to that role to

²⁴ For example, Patricia Parker describes Cicero's presentation of metaphor in *De Oratore*, which implies a feminine quality to the trope's movements, and she gives numerous examples of "the insertion of 'women' into what might be expected to be simply a neutral discussion of tropes" in Renaissance writing (107-8).

exculpate or justify himself. Cutwolfe's philosophy that "revenge is whatsoever we call law or justice" is cultural and theological sacrilege (e.g. "The farther we wade in revenge, the nearer come we to the throne of the Almighty") (369). Moreover, his doctrine of revenge is comparable to Heraclide's suicide as both attempt to arrogate God's power. An anathema to God and man, Cutwolfe is consequently obliterated. The line about destruction with its providential implications—"pash," "torn," and "crushed in pieces"—which had been bandied from Esdras to Heraclide to Cutwolfe, finds its fulfillment in Cutwolfe's execution.

Esdras's end has an awful and fitting correspondence to the Heraclide rape scene. His fate relates to his previous crime because when *The Unfortunate Traveller* was written, rape in England was punishable by death "without the benefit of clergy" according to Elizabethan statute 18. Eliz. cap. 7 (Burrow 66). Just as the common-law offence of rape included a spiritually punitive element to the sentence, so Nashe dispatches Esdras with a similar punishment, albeit amplified: not only is Esdras denied shrift before his execution, but he also undertakes an anti-confession. Nashe dispatches the rapist in a way that jibes with English common law, thereby creating a resolution that adheres to English customs. Readers would have a sense of aptness in Esdras's death, and Jack's interpretation is compelling because Esdras's manner of execution suits his misdeeds. In addition, whereas the efficacy of speech had been compromised in the Heraclide rape scene, Esdras's fate re-asserts it. Cutwolfe prompts such a lesson by forcing Esdras's diabolical confession, after which he shoots him in the throat to prevent repentance. The description of Esdras's corpse shows the success of enforced

blasphemy: “His body being dead looked as black as a toad; the devil presently branded it for his own” (Nashe 369). Esdras’s speech seals his destruction.

Esdras’s demise and the re-affirmation of rhetoric contribute to the story’s fitting resolution. Jack is silenced and returned to England, and his brief catalogue of events differs starkly from his voluble and impish verbiage in the opening. Faced with a garrulous miscreant, perhaps an extreme extension of his knavish ways, Jack is ostensibly repentant, and he returns home. The reader can harness the host of English associations to endorse this homecoming. It is a realm of Wilton’s benign tricks, “lambs” versus “wolves,” and “plainest-dealing souls that ever God put life in” (342). For as Lorna Hutson notes, “The page produces a perfunctory moral about the unsearchable book of destiny and hastens back, repentant, to the safe confines of the English court, ready to regain credit with the king of England who has remained in the background throughout the narrative as the ultimate practical source of discursive power” (243). Rhetorical efficacy has been undermined and subsequently reaffirmed with a particularly English connotation given Esdras’s fate. However, the book’s conclusion is a troubled recovery given all that has transpired. Because language has been so rigorously questioned and put to unusual uses, we are left with a disillusioned perspective. The resolution of both works feature only a seeming recovery of the efficacy of speech because in both cases, physical violence is the salient force whereby characters influence those around them. The power of Lucrece’s figure-like body, Heraclide’s curse on Esdras, and Esdras’s imposed blasphemy results from violence not potent speech.

Both Nashe and Shakespeare were trained in the humanist education system, which regarded rhetoric as vital, so the general similarity between these two scenes in

The Unfortunate Traveller and *The Rape of Lucrece*, as well as their foregrounding of rhetoric, should not surprise. By ornamenting and intensifying the speeches of their victims, as well as accentuating their unresponsive attackers, Shakespeare and Nashe likely drew a stronger response from their audiences, who would have recognized the rhetorically full speeches. As Peter Mack notes, regarding one's audience is the primary characteristic of a rhetorical pedagogy, and the grammar school created the Elizabethan audience (41, 47). The speeches of Heraclide and Lucrece also represent a kind of sophisticated application both of rhetorical training and of creative reinterpretation of a classical text. Ovid's *Metamorphoses* was a staple of Elizabethan grammar schools, interpreted primarily as an assortment of moral stories (Mack 35), and these two rape scenes recast the Philomela story. Both writers take Philomela's skill demonstrated in book 4 of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and place it before the rape: the expressive powers demonstrated in Philomela's weaving, Nashe and Shakespeare impart to their rape victims. Only now the artistic power is at work in the victims' resistance.²⁵

To return to the subject of rivalry, Nashe's probable parody of Shakespeare's work demonstrates a competitive literary culture in which a scene evolves as it is reinterpreted by two writers. In *Titus Andronicus*, Lavinia's fate can seem bizarre as Marcus expounds on her state for nearly fifty lines while she stands mute and bleeding. Frank Kermode has explained the scene in terms of Shakespeare's use of non-dramatic poetic qualities in a dramatic setting, explaining that the dramatic spectacle is an attempt to surpass its classical precursors in the violation of the female body; she is missing hands as well as her tongue and thus cannot weave her story like her Ovidian counterpart

²⁵ It is important to note too that speeches of Heraclide and Lucrece also recall Ovid's *Heroides* with its collection of protestations by Greek and Roman heroines who use expressive powers to considerable effect in epistolary form.

(7-11). Both Nashe and Shakespeare draw on the artistic potential of this scene when they address the rape scene as subject matter with Heraclide and Lucrece. Like Lavinia, Lucrece's violated body becomes the impetus for exposition and revenge; however, Shakespeare gives Lucrece greater agency. Instead of a male character unpacking her violated state, Lucrece does it herself with all the attendant effects and significance. Nashe too has a garrulous female victim. An articulation of her condition, choices of response to the violation, her sense of agency and culpability, are all now possible subjects for exposition.

By portraying rhetorical failure as they do, both authors recognize the same paradox that rhetorical failure is rhetorically effective. The failed rhetoric is useful as a framing device because the speeches highlight the act of sexual violence. In his introduction to *The Motives of Eloquence*, Richard Lanham remarks, "Rhetorical man is an actor; his reality public, dramatic. His sense of identity, his self, depends on the reassurance of daily histrionic reenactment. He is thus centered in time and concrete local event. The lowest common denominator of his life is a social situation" (4). Heraclide's and Lucrece's rhetorical arguments heighten the reader's awareness of their situations because the complex social interaction denoted by rhetoric ceases as their rhetoric ceases, at the moment of sexual assault. Both authors use animal imagery to call attention to the social breakdown. This imagery is present throughout both scenes, but each author emphasizes it at the moment of physical violence. Shakespeare has the scene move suddenly to the animal world in order to accentuate Lucrece's silence and the end of her rhetorical defense: "The wolf hath seized his prey, the poor lamb cries" (677). Nashe has Jack Wilton note: "He grasped her by the ivory throat and shook her as a

mastiff would shake a young bear [...]” (335-6). Rhetoric’s manifest failure as a tool of persuasion, both for Heraclide and for Lucrece, accents the perversion of rape, whether in the context of Jack’s episodic adventures or the prehistory of the Roman republic, and the use of animal imagery dramatizes such.

In Shakespeare’s case, the animal imagery also invokes a Renaissance conception of the passions. Drawing from Thomas Aquinas, Thomas Wright illustrates the six concupiscible passions using the wolf and the sheep in *The Passions of the Mind in General* (1601):

First, the wolf loveth the flesh of the sheep; then, he desireth to have it; thirdly, he rejoiceth in his prey when he hath gotten it. Contrarywise, the sheep hateth the wolf as an evil thing in himself, and thereupon detesteth him as hurtful to herself; and finally if the wolf seize upon her she paineth and grieveth to become his prey. Thus we have love, desire, delight, hatred, abomination, grief or heaviness, the six passions of our coveting appetite. (106)²⁶

Shakespeare’s metaphor illustrates the play of passions in shorthand, as Tarquin and Lucrece exhibit contrary emotions. Moreover, the wolf-lamb metaphor highlights the degenerative physiology entailed by Tarquin’s sexual predation. Tarquin’s desire overwhelms his will, such that he is governed by his appetite; consequently, Shakespeare identifies him with a wolf that follows his concupiscible appetite because he has no

²⁶ William Newbold points out that Aquinas’s *Summa Theologica* is Wright’s main source for his explanation of the passions. According to Aquinas, animals follow their appetites like the sheep that flees the wolf, and such responses to their appetites are immediate and unmitigated, unlike humans who should be commanded by their wills. For an account of Wright’s conception of human faculties and Aquinas’s influence on Wright, see Newbold’s introduction to *The Passions of the Mind in General*, 37-40.

counteracting faculty. His actions transform Lucrece too: having deployed eloquence for defense, she is now characterized primarily by her emotive cries.

Just as rhetorical failure highlights the barbarity of Esdras's and Tarquin's assaults, each scene is potent because rhetorical failure is culturally provocative. Both writers portray sexual violence by exploiting a commonly held conviction about rhetoric that has much force behind it, namely that the right words, used in the right way, are guaranteed to be persuasive (Vickers, *In Defence of Rhetoric* 284-5). Colin Burrow highlights the conspicuous futility of Lucrece's speech: "Shakespeare's decision to make her argue against Tarquin would have come as a shock to many early readers, and would have drawn attention to the practical ineffectiveness of her rhetoric" (275, note 586). Given the considerable similarities between the two scenes, this shock applies to Heraclide's oration as well. It is noteworthy that these scenes of rhetorical defense happen in extraordinary circumstances. Heraclide's rape occurs in plague-ridden Rome, in a home ravaged by death, at the hands of an "execrable murderer." Similarly, Shakespeare's rape scene occurs at night, in private quarters, by "the villain Tarquin," and it leads to the advent of Roman republicanism. These circumstances may qualify the extent to which rhetorical failure is transgressive, but they also make the operation of formal rhetoric conspicuous because it is stark against such unusual backgrounds. Using failed persuasion as they do, Nashe and Shakespeare consider the nature and limits of rhetorical skill. Like the non-rhetorical reasons Leander succeeds in his seduction, Heraclide and Lucrece fail in their dissuasions because of the bestial desire of the rapists. As a result, the corresponding feature of these scenes is a triumph of desire and physical force, likewise with other contemporary versions of rhetorical failure in amatory

contexts. As in *Hero and Leander* and *Venus and Adonis*, emotional forces overwhelm, and violence prevails. Eloquence is incidental within the narrative.

IV.

Looking back on Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew* in Jacobean England (c. 1611), John Fletcher lampoons the "masculine persuasive force," and especially the form it took with Petruccio's "railing rope tricks"(1.2.107) in *The Tamer Tamed; Or, The Woman's Prize*. In Fletcher's sequel, Petruccio and Petronius repeatedly fail to persuade Maria while she continually outdoes them in clever speech, exploiting their words just as Petruccio did to Katherine in *The Taming of the Shrew*. At one point in the play, Livia tries to enter the house that Maria and Bianca have barricaded in act 2, scene 1, and the women portray her attempt as an unpersuasive love suit by a smooth and eloquent orator. Recalling Shakespeare's *Rape of Lucrece*, Bianca portrays Livia as Sinon trying to enter Troy, just as Lucrece portrayed Tarquin. With a startling analogy, she grants that Troy will burn but that like Aeneas she will carry Maria on her back to found a new Amazonian race. This analogy points up Fletcher's play as an artistic response to Shakespeare's work, and it highlights the play's counter-cultural depiction of a temporary revolution against patriarchy. In a play that subverts its predecessor's work, women recognize how they have been configured as physical spaces, and Fletcher has them act out a pantomime for sexual assault, whether verbal or physical. Consequently, Fletcher represents failed physical and verbal assault for the sake of a temporary revolt akin to *Lysistrata*.

As suggested by my emphasis on the similarities between *Hero and Leander*, *Venus and Adonis*, *The Unfortunate Traveler*, and *The Rape of Lucrece*, as well as *The*

Taming of the Shrew and *The Woman's Prize*, there is a sense in which all of these moments are primarily about male competition. As Nancy Vickers has shown, rhetorical competition between male writers makes its way into the works themselves. Often the works explicitly acknowledge rival male eloquence. For example, looking back on these erotic narratives almost two decades after *The Rape of Lucrece*, Shakespeare reworks the scene from his minor epic in act 1 of *Cymbeline* (ca. 1611), again deploying rhetorical failure but varying the outcome to highlight competitive male persuasion. While Giacomo fails to seduce Innogen, he persuades Posthumus of her infidelity rather than resorting to force as Tarquin did (although Shakespeare invokes the scene from *Lucrece* by having Giacomo survey the sleeping Innogen and the layout of her bedroom). Instead of epideictic rhetorical performance leading to rape, it leads to a counter-performance: Posthumus describes his beloved's fidelity, then Giacomo describes her infidelity, doing so using the art adorning her bedroom, which is similar to the way Lucrece used her tapestries to meditate on her condition and potential course of action. Along with describing the mole beneath Innogen's breast and producing her bracelet, Giacomo describes the tapestry showing the meeting of Cleopatra and Antony, a chimney piece carving of Diana bathing, and two cupids featured on the bedchamber roof, thereby convincing Posthumus that his knowledge could only result from successful seduction. Rival male eloquence in *Cymbeline* thereby invites association with its use in Shakespeare's sonnets (e.g. "...I think my love as rare/ As any she belied with false compare" in Sonnet 130), but also Nashe and Shakespeare's mutual pursuit of patronage from Earl of Southampton in the 1590s when they wrote *The Unfortunate Traveller* and *The Rape of Lucrece*. Failed seduction leads to the use of art to convince a male rival.

This exchange between Posthumus and Giacomo represents male rhetorical rivalry at the end of the sixteenth century and beginning of the seventeenth. Rhetorical failure is one of the primary means by which these writers competed with one another.

To use Cicero's terms, rhetorical failure enabled these writers both to teach (*docere*) and to delight and move (*delectare*, and *movere*). In the first instance, they supplement contemporary rhetorical theory by applying formal rhetoric in uncommon scenarios thereby illustrating how eloquence works—or more pointedly how it does not. The second aspect of this composition strategy is that it is employed to delight and to move their readership, who for the most part shared the same rhetorical training and convictions about how eloquence operates, who should use it, where and when.

Rhetorical failure allowed these writers to depict the effects of eros in various ways—whether for comedy as is the case with Marlowe's "bold, sharp sophister" who rehearses speeches that do not work but who gets the girl nonetheless or Shakespeare's female seducer who puts on the practices of verbal and physical assault; or for tragedy, as with Lucrece and Heraclide whose powerful speeches highlight the debasement of their attackers and the nature of sexual assault. Rhetorical failure was one of the primary composition strategies by which they were able to creatively explore new territories, surprise their readership, capitalize on the classical tradition, and exploit one another's writings. In each of these cases, rhetorical failure is a form of competitive *sprezzatura*: a composition strategy that demonstrates their ingenuity and that affords them distinction apart from, and at the expense of, their predecessors and peers.

CHAPTER 2

RHETORIC AND REPROBATION IN CHRISTOPHER MARLOWE'S *DOCTOR FAUSTUS*

In his first soliloquy from *The Tragical History of Doctor Faustus*, Faustus dismisses logic, medicine, law, and divinity in his tour of the practical aims of learning. Despite his declaration to “level at the end of *every* art,” Faustus omits a major contemporary discipline, which is conspicuous given its importance in sixteenth-century English curricula from grammar school to university (1.1.4, emphasis mine).¹ Why does he not foreswear rhetoric?² This discipline was certainly a principal subject in Faustus’s education, one evidently integral to his scholarly success.³ What’s more, Faustus draws upon his rhetorical training throughout his magical career as well. Marlowe repeatedly emphasizes the way Faustus relies on his rhetorical skill in the course of the play, and this dependence both contributes to his downfall and reveals his identity as a spiritual reprobate. Like any number of rhetorically skilled miscreants in Elizabethan theatre, Faustus flouts rhetoric’s association with goodness and godliness in sixteenth-century rhetorical theory, from Thomas Wilson’s correlation of eloquence and virtuous living to

¹ Unless otherwise noted, all quotations are from the 1604 version in *Dr. Faustus A- and B-texts (1604, 1616): Christopher Marlowe And His Collaborator and Revisers*, ed. David Bevington and Eric Rasmussen (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1993).

² Harry Levin argues that rhetoric is implicated in Faustus’s reference to logic, which Faustus discounts because of its instrumentality. He notes: “Against Aristotle he quotes the axiom of Ramus that the end of logic is ‘to dispute well’ (36); and, since rhetoric itself is a means toward some further end, it does not gratify Faustus’s *libido sciendi*” (113). While indebted to Levin’s work, I find he mischaracterizes Faustus’s relationship to the discipline. Rhetoric gratifies Faustus precisely because of its instrumentality.

³ See for example lines 1.1.115-7 and 1.2.1-2.

Henry Peacham's description of eloquence as divine grace.⁴ Marlowe brings the abuses of rhetorical skill closer to home in *The Tragical History* because Faustus is a university-educated scholar, a proxy for those produced at Oxford and Cambridge. In Faustus's case, eloquence certainly seems to prevail "in an active life," just as Francis Bacon supposed it would (237). Deploying his considerable rhetorical proficiency from the start, Faustus can persuade demons, defeat them in disputation, and even recover the classical world through poetry. Nevertheless, rhetoric's capacity is circumscribed. Faustus cannot repent nor can he be persuaded to repent. Marlowe stresses the limits of rhetorical skill, making Faustus's verbal dexterity little better than the necromancy and Catholic ritual to which he compares it.

To illustrate rhetorical failure using Marlowe's works may seem counterintuitive given that his characters are known for their efficacious speech. One recalls Tamburlaine's "high astounding terms" that match his "conquering sword" or Barabas's Machiavellian persuasions. But the practical ineffectiveness of eloquence can be jarring in Renaissance works, and no more so than in Marlowe's plays. When an oration fails a Marlovian character, the futility is conspicuous, and it invites explanation. This chapter contends that Marlowe uses rhetorical failure to dramatize Faustus's plight. In the following pages, I show how Faustus uses rhetoric throughout the play and subsequently how Marlowe draws on contemporary theology to depict Faustus's reprobation. Finally, I connect Marlowe's staging of reprobation to Elizabethan discussions of eloquence and its role in two competing venues: the pulpit and the stage.

⁴ For a treatment of the way Shakespeare's characters often contravene these principles in sixteenth-century rhetorical handbooks, see Vickers, "'The Power of Persuasion': Images of the Orator, Elyot to Shakespeare" 422-35.

I.

Although Faustus exempts rhetoric from his opening soliloquy, his characterization of magic echoes contemporary praise for eloquence and the power it confers.⁵ At the end of his speech, Faustus notes:

These metaphysics of magicians
And necromantic books are heavenly,
Lines, circles, signs, letters, and characters—
Ay, these are those that Faustus most desires.
O, what a world of profit and delight,
Of power, of honour, of omnipotence,
Is promised to the studious artisan!
All things that move between the quiet poles
Shall be at my command. Emperors and kings
Are but obeyed in their several provinces,
Nor can they raise the wind or rend the clouds;
But his dominion that exceeds in this
Stretcheth as far as doth the mind of man.
A sound magician is a mighty god.
Here, Faustus, try thy brains to gain a deity. (1.1.51-65)

⁵ Harry Levin notes the broader implications of this speech, arguing that its deliberate ambiguity evokes Marlowe's own learning and artistry: "Faustus's references to his magical art, like Prospero's, sustain the additional ambiguity of referring us back to the author's literary artistry, to the 'lines' and 'sceanes,' the 'letters and characters' in which Marlowe himself set the end of scholarism. As a scholar-poet, Marlowe had been taught that the aim of poetry was profit and delight. Is it the scholar, the conjurer, or the artist who can make good this boast? 'O what a world of profit and delight [...]' (114).

“Heavenly” in line 2 is a word associated with eloquence in contemporary literature, both implicitly as a description of its divine origins and explicitly as a term of praise. In *The Art of Rhetoric* (1553), for example, Thomas Wilson gives a Christian version of the myth of the orator in which eloquence is God-given (Rebhorn 175). As Wilson’s preface heading makes clear—“Eloquence First Given by God, and After Lost by Man, and Last Repaired by God Again”—mankind forfeited eloquence with the fall of Adam, but God restored it so man might return from barbarism to civilization by means of persuasion (41). What’s more, the divine status achieved by the skilled magician that Faustus emphasizes in his speech (e.g. “a mighty god” and “to gain a deity”) recalls Henry Peacham’s praise for the orator (e.g. “[...] he is in a manner the emperor of men’s minds and affections, and next to the omnipotent God in the power of persuasion by grace and divine assistance”) (dedication). Subsequent to *Doctor Faustus*’s first performance, the phrase “heavenly eloquence” appears in Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet* but also a passage from Samuel Daniel’s *Musophilus* (1599), which sounds surprisingly like Faustus’s soliloquy:

Power above powers, O heav’nly eloquence,
That with the strong rein of commanding words,
Dost manage, guide, and master th’eminence
Of men’s affections, more than all their swords:
Shall we not offer to thy excellence
The richest treasure that our wit affords?
Thou that canst do much more with one poor pen
Than all the powers of princes can effect,

And draw, divert, dispose and fashion men

Better than force or rigor can direct [...]. (929-38)

Daniel's characterization of the way eloquence can "master th'eminence / Of men's affections" likely owes its origin to Peacham, but the supremacy of eloquence's "power" and the way it surpasses earthly rulers recalls the terms of Faustus's speech. This passage suggests the extent to which Faustus's praise for magic could have called to mind the power of rhetoric for contemporary audiences, especially in light of his rhetorical skill. With a few substitutions—"tropes and schemes" for "Lines, circles, signs, letters, and characters," and "orator" for "magician"—Faustus's speech could suffice as a standard Renaissance *encomium* to eloquence. Marlowe implicitly invokes the power of eloquence at the outset of *Doctor Faustus*, and he subsequently highlights Faustus's dependence on his rhetorical skill.

Faustus explicitly associates rhetoric and necromancy immediately after his opening soliloquy. Describing his interest in magic to Valdes and Cornelius, he notes: "And I, that have with concise syllogisms / Gravelled the pastors of the German Church / And made the flow'ring pride of Wittenberg / Swarm to my problems as the infernal spirits / On sweet Musaeus when he came to hell, / Will be as cunning as Agrippa was, / Whose shadows made all Europe honour him" (1.1.114-20). Scholarly disputation looks like magic based on Faustus's similes: already having made Wittenberg academics swarm like spirits, he resolves to be like Agrippa whose capacity to summon specters brought him recognition analogous to Faustus's fame within the university.⁶ He makes

⁶ According to Peter Mack's description of the Oxford and Cambridge curricula during the Elizabethan period, disputation was the fundamental test of argumentative skill, and it was connected increasingly to rhetorical training (74). As a result, Faustus's achievements in disputation indicate his rhetorical talent.

the transition to magic seem natural, inevitable even, based on this comparison. In fact, rhetorical skill facilitated his interest in necromancy according to the Chorus, which says that Faustus's excellence in theological disputation inspired the pride leading to pursuit of "a devilish exercise" (prologue, 23). Faustus foregrounds his rhetorical skill in his request to Valdes and Cornelius, but more importantly he stresses its power, which graveled pastors and made students swarm. Faustus portrays magic as an extension of rhetoric with its analogous capacity.

Faustus's association of rhetorical and necromantic skills is warranted based on their similar methods. Like rhetoric, necromancy uses linguistic formulae to bring about a speaker's wishes. Marlowe accurately represents necromantic conjuring, emphasizing the verbal means of achieving the operator's will. In scene 3, Faustus conjures for the first time, attempting to summon and command Mephistopheles:

May the gods of Acheron be propitious to me! Let the threefold power of
Jehovah be strong! Spirits of fire, air, water, and earth, all hail! Lucifer,
Prince of the East, Beelzebub, monarch of burning hell, and Demogorgon,
we ask your favour that Mephistopheles may appear and rise. Why do you
delay? By Jehovah, Gehenna, and the holy water which I now sprinkle,
and by the sign of the cross I now make, and by our prayers, may
Mephistopheles himself arise at our command! (126, translated by
Bevington and Rasmussen)

Nevertheless, while I am attending primarily to Faustus's rhetorical skill, his logical errors in the course of his disputations with Mephistopheles have implications for dialectic as well as rhetoric.

Here Faustus uses the basic conjuring formula from the necromantic tradition.⁷ For example, he uses Latin as the language most likely to have an effect on demons, and he appropriates devotional elements (Kieckhefer 17), modeling his speech on a ninth-century hymn, *Veni creator spiritus* (Omerod and Wortham 22). In addition, Faustus renews his efforts halfway through the conjuration (e.g. “Why do you delay?”), which represents the struggle to overpower spirits often found in these instructions (Kieckhefer 14, 134). Not only does the demon appear, but he amends his appearance at Faustus’s order, thereby validating Faustus’s sense of his own verbal power: “I see there’s virtue in my heavenly words” (1.3.28).

Just as Faustus celebrates the capacity of necromantic words, Mephistopheles disabuses him of this view, which is Faustus’s first encounter with the limits of verbal power in the play. Faustus’s conjuring strictly observes necromantic conventions, but almost immediately Mephistopheles reveals that conjuring does not work, at least not according to the belief undergirding such conventions, namely that invocations of higher powers force spirits to obey. When Faustus questions Mephistopheles about the power of “conjuring speeches” to raise him, Mephistopheles replies:

That was the cause, but yet *per accidens*.

For when we hear one rack the name of God,

Abjure the Scriptures and his Savior Christ,

We fly in hope to get his glorious soul,

⁷ In his book *Forbidden Rites*, Richard Kieckhefer describes four rudiments for commanding spirits in the necromantic tradition (127), each of which appears in Faustus’s speech: the declaration of intent (“we ask” and “at our command”), address to particular spirits (“Mephistopheles” and “Mephistopheles himself”), invocation of spiritual powers, both sacred and demonic (“the gods of Acheron,” “the threefold power of Jehovah,” “Spirits of fire, air, water, and earth,” “Lucifer, Prince of the East, Beelzebub, [...] Demogorgon,” and “Jehovah, Gehenna”), and the instruction (“appear and rise” and “arise”).

Nor will we come unless he use such means

Whereby he is in danger to be damned.

Therefore, the shortest cut for conjuring

Is stoutly to abjure the Trinity

And pray devoutly to the prince of hell. (1.3.47-55)

As a number of critics point out, Mephistopheles explains conjuring with scholastic precision. His term “per accidens” recalls Aristotle’s four causes in *Metaphysics* 1.1-10, as well as the discussion of “proper” and “accidental” causes in book 5.2 (Ormerod and Wortham 26). According to Mephistopheles, the invocation of greater powers does not constrain him. Instead, conjuration reveals the speaker’s moral condition, demonstrated by a willingness to “rack the name of God,” which entices Mephistopheles and his fellow demons. By explaining that “conjuring speeches” have no intrinsic force, Marlowe represents the predominant contemporary understanding of necromancy, which insisted that words themselves have no efficacy in the spiritual realms and only a pact obliges the devil.⁸ The “per accidens” explanation departs from the *English Faust Book*, which suggests Marlowe’s interest in playing up the limited efficacy of conjuration. This moment corresponds to the limited efficacy of Leander’s appeal to Hero in *Hero and*

⁸ See William Perkins’s published sermon *A Discourse of the Damned Art of Witchcraft* (1608) 138, or Book 1 of James I’s *Demonology* (1597) for such descriptions of conjuring. In *Demonology*, for example, Epistemon explains that magical rituals used in necromancy have no inherent power over the devil; rather the devil obliges himself through a pact to obtain the necromancer’s body and soul (Normand and Roberts 364). Robert H. West argues that Mephistopheles’ account of conjuring “squares exactly [...] with the scholastic view dominant in the West since Aquinas” (224). Even so, traditional religious practices in England prior to the Reformation show a widespread belief in the intrinsic power of ritualistic language. Based on his study of English lay religion, Eamon Duffy shows that there was a common belief in the inherent power of Latin words taken from liturgy and scripture even until the eve of the Reformation. He traces this “apparently crudely mechanical view of the power of ‘good words’” throughout late medieval England (256), arguing that a belief in the power of such prayers was part of popular religion from the court down, including clerical and lay devotion (279). While popular religion pre-Reformation tended toward a belief in the inherent power of religious and liturgical speech, *Doctor Faustus* represents the predominant, post-Reformation view.

Leander addressed in the previous chapter because Faustus's words express intent but do not constrain or coerce his audience. Just as Hero responds to Leander's speech based on the speaker's identity rather than the craft or force of the words themselves, Faustus's moral state entices Mephistopheles, a reaction based on an inadvertent declaration of ethos. In this scene as in *Hero and Leander*, Marlowe emphasizes a disassociation between words and their intended results.

According to Mephistopheles, successful conjuring means convincing demons of one's spiritual condition, and Faustus embraces this amended procedure because it accommodates his rhetorical skill. Faustus subsequently conveys his dedication in the terms that Mephistopheles sets forth, whether abjuring the godly or embracing the diabolical. When he exchanges his body and soul for twenty-four years of Mephistopheles' service, Faustus says, "*Consummatum est*. This bill is ended, / And Faustus hath bequeathed his soul to Lucifer" (2.1.74-75). This phrase from John 19:30 signifies Faustus's pledge to the diabolical venture, and he repeatedly persuades the demons of his commitment with similar expressions. In act 3, scene 1, for example, Faustus swears, "Now, by the kingdoms of infernal rule, / Of Styx, Acheron, and the fiery lake / Of ever-burning Phlegethon, I swear / That I do long to see the monuments / And situation of bright splendid Rome" (44-49). Swearing by infernal entities, Faustus conveys the extent of his desire guided by the second half of Mephistopheles' recipe for conjuring: "abjure the Trinity" and "pray devoutly to the prince of hell." Even the diabolical contract is not strictly binding but is another form of persuasion since Faustus re-confirms his pledge in act 5, scene 1.

Conjuring by subordinate characters corroborates Mephistopheles' description of how necromancy works, relying on persuasion rather than coercion. In act 3, scene 2, Robin conjures Mephistopheles with adulterated Latin, which confirms that necromantic formulae do not constrain spirits. Upon arrival, Mephistopheles says, "Monarch of hell, under whose black survey / Great potentates do kneel with awful fear, / Upon whose altars thousand souls do lie, / How am I vexed with these villains' charms! From Constantinople am I hither come / Only for pleasure of these damned slaves" (3.2.29-34). According to David Ormerod and Christopher Wortham, this speech contradicts Mephistopheles' description of "per accidens" conjuring because he laments being summoned against his will (26). While this argument is plausible, Mephistopheles likelier comes of his own accord but immediately regards Robin and Rafe as inferior to Faustus, which prompts his speech. According to such a reading, Robin's words sufficiently entice Mephistopheles, but he rankles at having traveled so far for such meager quarry—"damned slaves" as Mephistopheles puts it—whose slapdash conjuration comically renders Faustus's circumstances but without his commitment to the venture or proximity to damnation.⁹ Such a joke mocks the attendants as well as the devil.

Subsequent to Mephistopheles' "per accidens" explanation, Faustus uses his rhetorical skill to convince demons of his fidelity. The demons too are rhetorically proficient, and their exchanges with Faustus feature various persuasive appeals.¹⁰ For example, in act 2, scene 3, Lucifer uses *exprobatio*, a scheme used to accuse an adversary of "ingratitude, and impietie" (Peacham 73): "We come to tell thee thou dost injure us. /

⁹ See Bevington and Rasmussen, 170, for a similar reading of this scene.

¹⁰ For an incisive look at the rhetorical figures in *Doctor Faustus*, see Frederick Burwick's "Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*: Two Manners, the Argumentative and the Passionate," *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* 70 (1969): 121-45.

Thou talk'st of Christ, contrary to thy promise. / Thou shouldst not think of God. Think of the devil, / And of his dame, too" (90-93). Lucifer's *exprobatio* shows Marlowe's ironic stress on the utility of rhetoric given that the devil himself accuses Faustus of impiety. In response to the reprimand, Faustus pledges his fealty with the figure *euche*, a fervent vow (Peacham 67): "[...] Faustus vows never to look to heaven, / Never to name God or to pray to him, / To burn his Scriptures, slay his ministers, / And make my spirits pull his churches down" (95-8). Like the two blood-deeds, this pledge convinces the demons of his good faith. Later in the play, Mephistopheles uses *exprobatio* like Lucifer but adds a physical threat for good measure: "Thou traitor, Faustus, I arrest thy soul / For disobedience to my sovereign lord. / Revolt, or I'll in piecemeal tear thy flesh" (5.1.67-69). Demonstrating his reliance upon rhetorical skill, Faustus immediately responds with *philophronesis*, a figure in which a speaker uses mild speech, promises, or submission to avert cruelty (Peacham 96): "Sweet Mephistopheles, entreat thy lord / To pardon my unjust presumption, / And with my blood again I will confirm / My former vow I made to Lucifer" (70-73). Peacham celebrates the virtue of *philophronesis* "in respect of ciuill pollicie and spirituall wisdom" [...] (97). Like Lucifer's previous use of *exprobatio*, *philophronesis* has an ironic overtone given that Peacham links it with "spirituall wisdom" producing "grace and mercy" and Faustus deploys it to persuade a demon (97).

Faustus's use of one rhetorical figure in particular shows his reliance on rhetorical skill throughout the play, which he uses to persuade both demons and himself. According to Henry Peacham in *The Garden of Eloquence* (1577), *adhortatio* is a figure by which an orator "exhorteth and perswadeth his hearers to do something"; rather than a

mere exhortation, this figure entails using a command with reasons for consenting, and Peacham stresses its force (77-8). Its similarity to Faustus's exhortations in his conjuration in act 1, scene 3 (e.g. "[...] arise at our command!") indicates Faustus's predilection for the force of command. One remarkable aspect of his manner of speaking is his imperative address throughout the play, commanding as he does over forty times. Faustus's use of *adhortatio* relates to this grammatical mood because all his pronouncements sound like this figure, even when the attendant support is absent.

In scenes of private deliberation, Marlowe represents Faustus as a self-persuader, and *adhortatio* is the rhetorical means by which Faustus seeks resolve.¹¹ Faustus's typical rhetorical progression is an extended *ratiocinatio*, or reasoning through question and answer, using *adhortatio* to exhort himself (Sonnino 154). In his first speech, Faustus employs *ratiocinatio* to evaluate the ends of major university disciplines, after which he uses *adhortatio* to advocate magic in 1.1.65. He uses this same rhetorical progression during moments of irresolution in 2.1.1-14 and 4.1.139-144. It is not surprising that a play dealing with moral choice features *adhortatio* so prominently, for this figure is an effective "instrument of counsell" according to Henry Peacham (78). As such, *adhortatio* appears throughout the play: the Old Man uses it to appeal to Faustus (5.1.36), as do the good and evil angels (1.1.73-9). Peacham emphasizes *adhortatio*'s potential for abuse with its capacity to seduce "vnstable minds into false religion and vanities [...], which Sathan doth alwaies further to the vttermost of his power" (78). This last phrase gives an evocative gloss on Faustus's use of *adhortatio*, which typifies his

¹¹ Berwick shows how Marlowe uses rhetorical figures in the argumentative mode to represent Faustus's reflection on good and evil, a strategy that both expresses Faustus's character through habitually evil choices and extends the play's tension between salvation and damnation (121-3). He notes especially Faustus's alternating use of figures of self-deliberation like *aporia* and *anthypophora* and figures of decision like *adhortatio* (123-5).

rhetorical habits: Faustus renews his commitment to diabolical pursuits with *adhortatio*, thereby seducing his own mind.¹² In this regard, Faustus's self-deliberations recall the Despaire episode from *The Faerie Queene*, book 1, canto 9. Signifying an aspect of Redcrosse's interior state, Despaire incisively conveys the knight's failings, the certainty of further sin and greater judgment, and the consequent benefit of suicide. Despaire overwhelms Redcrosse with his persuasive skill to the point that Una has to intervene before he takes his own life. Faustus likewise uses rhetorical skill to convince himself of his own lack of access to salvation (e.g. "Despair in God and trust in Beelzebub") (2.1.5). Like Spenser, Marlowe represents the danger of rhetorical skill in service of despair, especially when such despair is informed by the logic of election.

Apart from its persuasive function, Faustus exults in the intellectual autonomy that rhetorical skill affords him. For example, he responds to Mephistopheles' reference to damnation in act 1, scene 3, with the following: "This word 'damnation' terrifies not him, / For he confounds hell in Elysium. / His ghost be with the old philosophers!" (60-62). Here Faustus uses *meiosis*, a rhetorical figure of detraction whereby one substitutes a closely related term in order "to make the thing appeare lesse then it is, or verie litle" (Peacham 168). He replaces one name for the afterlife with another, substituting "Elysium," a region of eternal repose, for "hell," a region of divine punishment. The verb "confound" recalls the *Oxford English Dictionary*'s definition "to discomfit in argument, silence, confute (a person, or a statement, opinion)," which suggests Faustus's

¹² *Adhortatio*'s repeated use implies evanescent effects, however, suggesting that the appearance of control Faustus achieves through rhetorical skill is both temporary and delusory.

sense that their exchange is a disputation, treating “hell” as a term to be contested.¹³

Faustus demonstrates his learning and the mercurial power that rhetoric affords him by swapping the pagan term for the Christian one in a pithy turn of phrase.

In act 2, scene 1, Faustus displays the rhetorical skill that cultivated his scholarly reputation, being one who was “wont to make our schools ring with ‘*sic probo*’” as the scholar puts it (1.2.1-2):

FAUSTUS. Come, I think hell’s a fable.

MEPHISTOPHELES. Ay, think so still, till experience change thy mind.

FAUSTUS. Why, think’st thou then that Faustus shall be damned?

MEPHISTOPHELES. Ay, of necessity, for here’s the scroll

Wherein thou hast given thy soul to Lucifer.

FAUSTUS. Ay, and body too. But what of that?

Think’st thou that Faustus is so fond

To imagine that after this life there is any pain?

Tush, these are trifles and mere old wives tales.

MEPHISTOPHELES. But, Faustus, I am an instance to prove the contrary,

For I am damned and am now in hell.

FAUSTUS. How? Now in hell? Nay, an this be hell,

I’ll willingly be damned here. What? Walking, disputing,

etc.? But leaving off this, let me have a wife [...]. (2.1.130-43)

¹³ “Confound, verb.” *OED Online*. March 2012. Oxford University Press. 23 May 2012
<<http://www.oed.com>>.

This exchange shows Faustus's rhetorical dexterity, deriding as he does a formidable opponent. Using *martyria*, a figure confirming something by one's own experience (Peacham 85), Mephistopheles appeals to himself to illustrate the un-restricted nature of hell (i.e. "I am an instance to prove the contrary, / For I am damned, and am now in hell"), and he does so in the formal language of disputation (i.e. "prove the contrary"). Faustus subsequently exploits Mephistopheles' answer, co-opting the authority of experience. He uses the figure *epitrope*, "a forme of speech by which the speaker granteth to some thing ironically" (Peacham 112) to mock the assertion that hell is at hand even as the two of them speak, appealing to his own experience at that very moment: "Nay, an this be hell, / I'll willingly be damned here. What? Walking, disputing, / etc.?" (112). Faustus's sarcastic rebuttal is telling because he uses his desire for rhetorical effect (i.e. "I'll willingly be damned here"), a strategy that he deploys often.¹⁴ His prompt turn to lust (i.e. "let me have a wife") suggests that Faustus considers no implications beyond his successful disputation. Faustus's success reveals his conviction that externals are contingent and determined by their best rhetorical (and dialectical) rendering, one that he provides thanks to his university-derived skill.

A similar moment of verbal fencing occurs when Faustus once more exploits Mephistopheles' remarks in act 2, scene 3, but this time the two dispute "heaven" rather than "hell":

FAUSTUS. When I behold the heavens, then I repent
 And curse thee, wicked Mephistopheles,
 Because thou hast deprived me of those joys.

¹⁴ Burwick notes Faustus's increasing use of *apodioxis*, a figure whereby one rejects the absurdity of an argument, which he says indicates Faustus's growing discontentment with the information Mephistopheles provides (134-5).

MEPHISTOPHELES. Why Faustus,

Think'st thou heaven is such a glorious thing?

I tell thee, 'tis not half so fair as thou

Or any man that breathes on earth.

FAUSTUS. How provest thou that?

MEPHISTOPHELES. It was made for man; therefore is man more
excellent.

FAUSTUS. If it were made for man, 'twas made for me.

I will renounce this magic and repent. (1-11)

Again we have the language of disputation with Faustus's verb "provest."

Mephistopheles distracts Faustus from repentance by diminishing his estimation of heaven. In response, Faustus wrests the discussion back to his own regret by using Mephistopheles' own line of reasoning just as he did with the appeal to experience in 2.1. Following Mephistopheles' introduction of the purposes for which something was made, Faustus substitutes the particular "me" for the general "man" as a corollary to Mephistopheles' remark. As these two moments illustrate, Faustus is a deft rhetorician, especially when it comes to university-like disputations, and his rhetorical success affords him the appearance of control.

The subordinate characters mirror Faustus's skill in disputation, as Frederick Berwick and others have noted.¹⁵ Similar to their conjuring, however, Wagner's and Robin's disputations are chiefly comic and lack the gravity associated with Faustus's

¹⁵ Burwick notes that Wagner mimics his master's "fallacious arguments" (127), and Bevington and Rasmussen observe the way Wagner "parodies his master's triumphs in disputation" (122). For analysis of the comedic wordplay in act 1, scenes 2 and 4, see Burwick 127-9 and Bevington and Rasmussen 122-4 and 132-7.

combination of rhetorical skill and theological error. For example, Wagner exploits the scholars' questions in act 1, scene 2:

FIRST SCHOLAR. How now, sirrah, where's thy master?

WAGNER. God in heaven knows.

SECOND SCHOLAR. Why, dost not thou know?

WAGNER. Yes, I know, but that follows not.

FIRST SCHOLAR. Go to, sirrah! Leave your jesting, and tell us where he is. (1.2.5-10)

Wagner uses *apoplanesis*, an equivocal reply, with his remark, "God in heaven knows," then he scorns the incongruity of the Second Scholar's question, "...but that follows not" (Burwick 128). This exchange culminates in Wagner's extended mockery of their enquiries using *epiplexis*, a scolding question: "For is not he *corpus naturale*? And is not that *mobile*? Then, wherefore should you ask me such a question?" (129). Wagner himself is the subject of rhetorical abuse only two scenes later as Robin the clown frustrates him with similar banter. Wagner is now in the position of the scholars:

WAGNER. [...] But sirrah, leave your jesting, and bind yourself presently unto me for seven years, or I'll turn all the lice about thee into familiars, and they shall tear thee in pieces.

ROBIN. Do you hear, sir? You may save that labour. They are too familiar with me already. 'Swounds, they are as bold with my flesh as if they had paid for my meat and drink. (1.4.25-31)

Repeating Wagner's term for evil spirits to describe the lice upon his skin, Robin uses the figure *adnominatio* by which the same word is repeated in a different case (Sonnino 24-

5). During their exchange, Robin frustrates Wagner mainly through wordplay rather than the more complex figures that Wagner used with the scholars, which suggests a comic devolution of rhetorical style as these exchanges descend the social ladder. Along with *adnominatio*, Robin uses *paronomasia*, substituting words that sound alike (Sonnino 26-7): he transforms “stavesacre” into “knave’s acre,” “guilders” into “gridirons” and “Balioll and Belcher” into “Banios and Belcheos.” Because Robin is a clown, it is not clear to what extent he misunderstands Wagner or pretends to misunderstand him.¹⁶ While Robin’s intentionality is opaque, his exploitation of Wagner’s words is no less effective. Like Faustus who was born “base of stock” yet profited in divinity at Wittenberg thanks in part to his rhetorical skill, his comic imitators get the best of their betters using rhetorical skill.

In Faustus’s scene with the Pope and Friars, Marlowe mocks Catholic trust in the inherent power of ritualistic speech, which he ostensibly contrasts with Faustus’s rhetorical skill. Like Faustus’s conjuration before “per accidens” clarification, the Friars rely on “*Maledicat Dominus!*” to curse Faustus for his pranks in act 3, scene 1. Faustus ridicules their practice with a necromantic jingle (i.e. “How? Bell, book, and candle, candle, book, and bell, / Forward and backward, to curse Faustus to hell”), repeating their ritualistic items forward and backward just as he did before Mephistopheles clarified how conjuring actually works (i.e. “[...] Jehovah’s name, / Forward and backward anagrammatised”) (3.1.84-5 and 1.3.8-9). Faustus’s rhetorical skill enables pointed, anti-Catholic humor as he draws on contemporary associations of Catholic ritual and

¹⁶ Bevington and Rasmussen see Robin’s misunderstandings as a deliberate ruse, and they relate his role in *Doctor Faustus* to the *zanni* from the Italian *commedia dell’arte* tradition (133).

conjuring based on their mutual belief in the force of ritualistic language.¹⁷ But his own repetition of items in reverse order using the rhetorical scheme *antimetabole* gives him no real advantage over the papists (Sonnino 42). Like Wagner's and Robin's banter, his rhetorical skill is good for a laugh.

Despite its capacity to convey his desire, Faustus's rhetorical skill is often irrelevant to the action, demonstrated by his exchange with Mephistopheles in act 4, scene 1, when he requests return to Wittenberg:

FAUSTUS. Now, Mephistopheles, the restless course
That time doth run with calm and silent foot,
Short'ning my days and thread of vital life,
Calls for the payment of my latest years.
Therefore, sweet Mephistopheles, let us make haste
To Wittenberg.

MEPHISTOPHELES. What, will you go on horseback or on foot?

FAUSTUS. Nay, till I am past this fair and pleasant green,
I'll walk on foot. (100-8)

These eight lines are dense with rhetorical figures: the *prosopopoeia* describing time as a living creature, *polysyndetons*—or added conjunctions—that create parallel clauses (i.e.

¹⁷ This scene reflects protestant associations of Catholicism and conjuring, such as those found in William Perkins's *A Discourse of the Damned Art of Witchcraft* (1608) and Reginald Scot's *The Discoverie of Witchcraft* (1584). Regarding Catholic rituals, for example, Perkins notes: "[...] the vsing of Exorcisms, that is, certaine set formes of words vsed in way of adjuration, for some extraordinarie ende. A pactise vsuall in the Church of Rome, whereby the priest coniures the salt, holy-water, creame, spittle, pal[les], &c. all which are in truth meere enchantements. For howsoeuer the Councell of Trent hath ratified them by their decrees, & so commended them to general vse within the compasse of the Popish Church; yet they haue in them no power or abilitie of blessing or cursing, either by nature, or by Gods appoyntment" (150). Like Perkins's description of the conjuring priest, Reginald Scot dedicates an entire chapter of *The Discoverie of Witchcraft* to such a comparison, and he includes a "popish conjuration by a great doctor of the Romish church" (361). His assessment is blunt: "I SEE no difference betweene these and popish conjurations; for they agree in order, words, and matter, differing in no circumstance, but that the papists doo it without shame openlie, the other doo it in hugger mugger secretlie" (361).

“calm and silent,” “fair and pleasant”), and *pleonasm* (“vital life), which uses the superfluous “vital” for emphasis (Sonnino 54-6, 19-20, and 156-7). In addition, the placement of “restless” suggests a *hyperbaton*, or transposed word (179-80), which is part of the *prosopopoeia*, hence an attribute of “time” rather than “course.” But “restless” also applies to Faustus, who wants to return home. These figures slow down the language even as they communicate the speed with which time moves. Walking while time runs, Faustus counters time’s “foot” with his own. The harmonious expression of desire with concomitant action recalls Tamburlaine, who both threatens with “high astounding terms” and scourges kingdoms “with his conquering sword” (prologue, 5-6). But even though Faustus slows down his language and leisurely enjoys the scenery, time still runs. Marlowe thereby highlights the incongruity between Faustus’s reliance upon rhetorical skill and its incapacity to do anything but convey his desire. Here as in the final scene of the play, words cannot stop time.

In act 5, scene 1, Faustus exhibits the epitome of his rhetorical powers. Picking up on his friend’s earlier remark about Helen, “Too simple is my wit to tell her praise,” (5.1.26) Faustus proves he is up to the challenge:

Was this the face that launched a thousand ships
And burnt the topless towers of Ilium?
Sweet Helen, make me immortal with a kiss.
Her lips sucks forth my soul. See where it flies!
Come, Helen, come, give me my soul again.
Here will I dwell, for heaven be in these lips,
And all is dross that is not Helena.

I will be Paris, and for love of thee
 Instead of Troy shall Wittenberg be sacked,
 And I will combat with weak Menelaus,
 And wear thy colours on my plumed crest.
 Yea, I will wound Achilles in the heel
 And then return to Helen for a kiss. (5.1.91-103)

One might argue that this scene reveals Faustus's arrested development: by composing this *encomium* Faustus is like an Elizabethan prodigal returning to the exercises of his youth.¹⁸ Because it is prefaced by a fellow scholar's inability to praise Helen adequately, Faustus seems as if he is once again proving his rhetorical skill at university. Like his disputations in act 2, his *encomium* to Helen demonstrates scholarly habits, but unlike a student with an assigned *encomium* from Aphthonius' *Progymnasmata*, Faustus provides the learned eloquence that transforms a *succubus* into "that peerless dame of Greece" (5.1.14 and 21). His *encomium* recovers the classical world, and as a number of critics have pointed out, his achievement embodies the hope of various intellectual endeavors in the English Renaissance from school exercises to political philosophy.¹⁹ Faustus creates a simulacrum of classical life that subsumes his own world (e.g. "I will be Paris, and for love of thee / Instead of Troy shall Wittenberg be sacked [...]), and in the process, he returns the discipline of rhetoric to its pre-Christian origins, reveling as he does in Homer's *Iliad* here and in references from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* in subsequent lines.

¹⁸ For the juvenile associations of love poetry during the Elizabethan period, see Clark Hulse's *Metamorphic Verse: The Elizabethan Minor Epic*. For a treatment of the "prodigal" archetype, see Richard Helgerson's *The Elizabethan Prodigals*.

¹⁹ For example, Paul Cantor points out that the Helen scene represents the hope for the revival of classical antiquity and the conflict between classical and Christian cultures at work in the Renaissance more broadly (11-12). Stephen Orgel too notes the scholarly derivations of Faustus's desire for Helen, "the quintessential emanation of humanist passion" (Kastan 396).

Certainly Faustus's performance justifies his representation as a poet when the Chorus links him with "Apollo's laurel bough" (epilogue, 2).

In these few lines, Faustus creates a version of the Elizabethan minor epic, which shows his virtuoso rhetorical skill, but like the theological errors revealed in his disputations with Mephistopheles, the genre's associations are ominous. Demonstrating the Renaissance appreciation for *multum in parvo*, Faustus's *encomium* to Helen evokes the Elizabethan minor epic's overt and problematic sexuality, as well as its concern with causation and transformative desire.²⁰ With its blatant sexuality, the Helen scene recalls the erotic subject matter of narratives like Marlowe's *Hero and Leander*, as well as Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis* and *The Rape of Lucrece*. And like Elizabethan minor epics, the sexuality is fraught with peril given that Helen is actually a demon. Describing this aspect of the genre, William Keach notes that, "[...] sexual fulfillment is either tragically frustrated or severely qualified by an emphasis on the comic, violent, and grotesque aspects of erotic experience" in such works (144). In addition, these poems frequently address causation and inaugural events (even if superficially) such as the founding of the Roman republic in *The Rape of Lucrece* or the establishment of troubled eros in *Venus and Adonis*. These lines likewise treat causation for Faustus characterizes Helen not merely as the "admirablest lady that ever lived," which is how the First Scholar describes her, but as the very reason for the Trojan War (i.e. "[...] that launched a thousand ships, / And burnt the topless towers of Ilium") (5.1.12, 91-2). Moreover, with Faustus's emphasis on transformative desire, his *encomium* recalls the way minor epics explored this *Metamorphoses*-derived theme. Colin Burrow describes this theme from

²⁰ For a treatment of the Elizabethan minor epic, see Hulse, William Keach's *Elizabethan Erotic Narratives*, and Colin Burrow's introduction to *Shakespeare: The Complete Sonnets and Poems*, 16-23.

Ovid's poem to which Elizabethan writers attended: "Metamorphosis often enters Ovid's tales as a means of exploring the ways in which desire warps and transforms those who experience it" (19).²¹ Faustus describes the tryst as inaugural and explanatory, which reveals a desire apart from sexual longing. He wants this moment to be causal, and he wants it to subsume his own circumstances. His learned eloquence affords a syncretism of classical and contemporary culture; thus Faustus becomes Paris, and Troy becomes Wittenberg. Yet his rhetorical skill is only momentarily transformative. Faustus is like the Helen-loving, Menelaus-combating Paris in this scene, but when next he appears, the First Scholar notes the change in his looks based on fear of damnation.²² Despite its poetry, theatrical power, and wish fulfillment, Faustus's *encomium* and attendant tryst only temporarily extinguish "Those thoughts that do dissuade" him from his pact. Faustus's rendition of the Elizabethan minor epic reflects the genre's concern with failed eloquence—from Lucrece's attempt to dissuade Tarquin in *The Rape of Lucrece* to the unsuccessful seduction featured in *Hero and Leander*. At this point in the play, when Faustus's rhetorical powers are at their height, the limits of rhetorical skill are conspicuous, suggested by the invocation of the minor epic genre.

In his article, "'Heavenly Words': Marlowe's Faustus as a Renaissance Magician," William Blackburn argues that Faustus's main problem is his confusion of words and things and that Faustus is infatuated "with language as an end rather than a means" (7). At odds with this reading is Faustus's trust in the utility of language, which

²¹ On a similar note, Hulse describes the wish fulfillment at work in Elizabethan minor epics: "The relationship of sonnet to minor epic is inevitably that of reality to wish fulfillment. The poet-lover, faced with refusal, acts out his desires in mythological dress [...]" (69).

²² Hulse points out that in *Hero and Leander* short-lived moments of poetic hyperbole are undercut with an "ironic deflation that is characteristically Ovidian," as with Leander's elevating Hero to divine status for example (9-10).

his self-persuasions and disputations with Mephistopheles demonstrate. Faustus's conviction results from his experience at Wittenberg, which cultivated confidence both in rhetorical power and his capacity to exercise that power. The university trained him and provided a context to gravel pastors and make students swarm, but this lesson does not translate to life outside Wittenberg.²³ Language's capacity is circumscribed, and Faustus's rhetorical skill is inconsequential. The incongruity between the promises of eloquence and its actual usefulness recalls Marlowe's association of Mercury and poverty—of learned eloquence and destitution—in *Hero and Leander*. Throughout the play, Marlowe emphasizes disparity between Faustus's confidence in rhetoric and its limited utility. Its crucial failure comes in Faustus's last soliloquy.

II.

Elizabethan writers often apply their rhetorical training to represent scenarios on the cultural periphery, and as a result rhetorical failure features speakers, audiences, and situations not usually associated with formal rhetoric. As we have seen in the previous chapter, the failure of persuasive eloquence may result from a speaker's unusual ethos (like Lucrece who co-opts formal rhetoric in Shakespeare's *The Rape of Lucrece*) or an auditor's barbarisms (like Esdras of Granado in Nashe's *The Unfortunate Traveller*). Whether a stay of rape in a Roman bedchamber or a deathbed plea before destruction, such moments contravene rhetoric's connections to politics and law in ancient Greece and Rome, as well as its civic associations in Elizabethan England. In *Doctor Faustus*,

²³ Although Blackburn attributes the breakdown to Faustus's confusion about words and things, he does identify the extent to which language fails him at the end of the play: "His tendency to indulge himself in this way grows throughout the play, as we see language becoming more and more a closed symbolic system, less and less magical, less and less able to effect changes in the world Marlowe's protagonist inhabits. Finally, the manipulation of language becomes an end in itself for Faustus, an alternative, rather than a means, to truth and self transformation" (7).

the last scene of failed persuasion is similar: God, heedless of Faustus's appeals, is the atypical audience, and Faustus, the scholar who has made a deal with the devil, is the unusual speaker. In Faustus's case, rhetorical failure results primarily from his condition as a reprobate.

Faustus's rhetoric skill is futile at the play's end. The eloquence by which Faustus recovers the classical world like the verbal dexterity he uses to dispute with demons cannot prevent damnation. Faustus uses various appeals to achieve alleviation, none of which succeed. Consequently, his last soliloquy shows his reliance on rhetorical means as well as the limits of such means. One might object to this appraisal, arguing that Faustus's anguish is rhetorically rendered because he is a character in a play written in blank verse. After all, to what extent can one distinguish Faustus's rhetorical effects from Marlowe's? Differentiating the two is admittedly tricky given the overlapping goals of author and character, but to conflate Faustus's rhetorical dexterity with Marlowe's obscures the extent to which the final speech coheres with Faustus's previous behavior.

The rhetorical elements of this speech represent emotional fervor, but they do so persuasively with evidence of Faustus's—as well as Marlowe's—rhetorical skill. Faustus's soliloquy contains a host of rhetorical figures intended to move his audience's emotions. For instance, Faustus explicitly mourns his fate in the course of the speech, objecting to his own begetting at one point, which exemplifies the figure *threnos*. Describing this scheme as one whereby a speaker may lament “his owne calamitie,” Henry Peacham cites biblical precedent with the lamentations in Job chapter three where Job laments being born, similarly invoking his parents (66).²⁴ According to Peacham,

²⁴ “Why died not I in the birth? Why did not I perish as soone as I came out of the wombe? Why set me upon their knees? Why gaue they me sucke with their breasts?” (Peacham 67).

this figure, “riseth from the feeling of miserie, so it serueth and it is most forcible and mightie to moue pittie and compassion in the hearer” (67). Rhetorical student that he is, Faustus draws on all three oratorical modes in the course of the play: deliberative with his frequent considerations of good and evil, epideictic with his *encomium* to Helen, and forensic with this final petition. Approaching judgment, fear of punishment, and ideas of fate and responsibility, all evoke the judicial context. In this forensic speech, Faustus uses emotional appeals such as *threnos* to move “pittie and compassion” in his audience.

Faustus’s commands recall his imperative voice throughout the play, as well as his use of *adhortatio*. In his final soliloquy, Faustus exhorts the spheres to stop (68), the sun to make perpetual day (70-1), and Lucifer to spare him (81). He commands the mountains and hills to fall on him (84), the earth to harbor him (88), the stars to draw him up, separating body from soul and sending the latter to heaven (89-90). He also commands his body to turn to air (116), and his soul to turn to drops of water (118). Commanding these various entities, Faustus uses *apostrophe*, a figure that George Puttenham calls “turnetale” in which one turns from addressee to addressee in the course of a speech (199). The use of *apostrophe* recalls the opening soliloquy in which Faustus moves from one discipline to another (e.g. “Physic, Farewell! Where is Justinian?”), giving the play a kind of symmetry with these two soliloquies. The similar rhetorical form draws attention to his move from confident exultation in the beginning to anguish at the end. Faustus’s sundry commands express fear through verbal movement from item to item, but they also call to mind his sense that speech can *do* things. These exhortations indicate the use of language not just to convey the speed of the approaching deadline or his terror at its approach but also Faustus’s attempt to forestall it. At the threshold of

damnation, however, Faustus's rhetorical skill is practically useless. His pleas have no purchase on the assorted powers that he addresses in the play's final moments, which include stars, nature, Christ, Lucifer, God, and Mephistopheles. The futility of Faustus's rhetorical skill recalls the friars' curses from act 3. Whereas his education encouraged faith in rhetoric, various tropes and schemes are just as powerless as the "certain set formes of words" used by the Church of Rome (Perkins, *A Discourse of the Damned Art of Witchcraft*, 150).

Faustus's references seem utilitarian because he rapidly moves through disparate traditions, both classical and Christian, from invoking metempsychosis to quoting Christ. He considers everything at his disposal to get a reprieve, whether resurrection or annihilation. Faustus appeals to God for salvation after a finite time in hell (98-103), and he asks God to avert his wrath (e.g. "My God, my God, look not so fierce on me!") (120). But he also uses a line from Ovid's *Amores* (i.e. "*O lente, lente currite noctis equi!*"), citing a lover's desire to hinder the approach of day; he imputes blame on astrological influence in an address to "stars that reign'd" at his birth; and he considers the Pythagorean notion of metempsychosis as an attractive alternative to damnation (74, 89-90, 107).²⁵ As classical references, these remarks recall Faustus's rhetorical sleight of hand from act 1, scene 3, in which he substituted Elysium for hell, and his re-creation of the classical world in the *encomium* to Helen, reminding us once again of his classical learning. Unlike those moments, however, Faustus is more aware of his proclivities based on the way he describes metempsychosis (e.g. "*were that true*") (107). Prior to this

²⁵ To illustrate a similar use of metempsychosis from Renaissance drama, in *Twelfth Night* (1601) Feste disguised as the curate Sir Topas interrogates Malvolio using this doctrine during the mock exorcism in act 4, scene 2. Although it provides fodder for Feste's ridicule, Malvolio's orthodox response confirms the doctrine's unorthodox associations: "I think nobly of the soul, and no way approve his [Pythagoras'] opinion" (4.2.48-9).

soliloquy, Faustus's classical affinities, of which rhetoric is a part, connect him to both scholarly and political communities: like the scholars with their interest in Helen of Troy, the Emperor longs to see Alexander the Great, "Chief spectacle of the world's pre-eminence," and Alexander's paramour (4.1.30). Here, however, classical references are Faustus's means of dilating upon his own anguish.

Similar to his Job-like laments in which Faustus mourns his own existence with biblical precedent, he appeals to God using the words of Christ. His petition "My God, my God, look not so fierce on me!" echoes Matthew 27:46 in which Jesus cries "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" which is itself a phrase taken from Psalm 22:1 (5.2.120). Faustus's "My God, my God [...]" recalls his earlier use of Christ's words with "*Consummatum Est*." Reading these expressions as Faustus's (and Marlowe's) construction of an identity opposing his culture's dominant ideology is certainly compelling, but the devotional uses of these expressions in the late medieval and Renaissance periods indicate their immediate function within *Doctor Faustus*: Faustus uses two of the seven final expressions of Christ to persuade.²⁶ As Eamon Duffy notes, the seven expressions of Christ on the cross informed numerous prayers and meditations, which often appealed to Christ's first-hand understanding of human suffering, and the expressions were associated with assurances of powerful remedy and protection in the late medieval period (248-50). By the late sixteenth century, these seven

²⁶ For the self-fashioning implications of Faustus's use of "*Consummatum Est*," see Stephen Greenblatt's "Marlowe and the Will to Absolute Play" in *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (Chicago: U of Chicago Press, 1980) 193-221. For example, Greenblatt notes:

Unlike Christ, who is his own transcendent object, and whose career is precisely the realization of himself, Faustus, and all of Marlowe's self-fashioning heroes, must posit an object in order to exist. [...] And if both the self and object so constituted are tragically bounded by the dominant ideology against which they vainly struggle, Marlowe's heroes nevertheless manifest a theatrical energy that distinguishes their words as well as their actions from the surrounding society. (214)

sayings still had devotional use.²⁷ In *A Salve for a Sicke Man* (1597), for example, William Perkins cites the last words of Christ and other final remarks by biblical figures as well as church fathers and reformers, which he says are “very excellent and comfortable and full of grace” (159). When Faustus uses “*Consummatum Est*,” he persuades Mephistopheles in the terms Mephistopheles said were so effective, using a devotional expression for blasphemy, which is akin to racking the name of God. Likewise, Faustus attempts to persuade God with “My God, my God,” desperately invoking Christ’s desperation in hopes that the words will work somehow.²⁸

While rhetorically conveyed desire is effective with demons, it is not with God. By expressing his anguish, Faustus follows the classical rhetorical tradition, which says that a speaker must be moved to affect his audience. Quintilian expresses this principle in his *Institutio Oratoria*: “And moreover it is impossible for the listener to feel indignation, hatred or ill-will, to be terrified of anything, or reduced to tears of compassion, unless all those emotions, which the advocate would inspire in the arbitrator, are visibly stamped or rather branded on the advocate himself” (2.333). According to contemporary theology, however, the Holy Spirit determines the success of Faustus’s repentance. In *The Arte of Prophecyng* (translated by Thomas Tuke in 1607), William Perkins describes the Holy Spirit’s work in conversion: “Then let the Gospell be preached, in the preaching wherof the holy Spirit worketh effectually vnto saluation. For

²⁷ For a survey of English *ars moriendi* devotional literature and the evolution of deathbed practices from the fifteenth to the seventeenth centuries, see Nancy Lee Beaty’s *The Craft of Dying: A Study in The Literary Tradition of the Ars Moriendi in England* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1970).

²⁸ Faustus’s biblical references reflect his transition from persuading demons throughout the play to trying to persuade God at the end. Frederick Burwick observes this shift: “Several examples of Faustus’s mockery (*mycterismus*) of Biblical phrases occur throughout the first half of the drama (e.g. the blasphemous paraphrase of the First Commandment: ‘There is no chief but onely *Belsibub*,’ iii, 62). The Biblical allusions in the last scene, however, indicate Faustus’s passionate struggle for repentance” (131).

whilst he reneweth men, that they may begin to will and to worke those things that are pleasing to God, he doth truely and properly bring forth in them that sorrow which is according to God and repentance vnto saluation” (111). Elizabethan theatergoers would have seen Faustus’s speech as futile because of an absence of the Holy Spirit’s bringing about “repentance vnto saluation.”

Another example from *Doctor Faustus* shows that apart from the operation of the Holy Spirit persuasive speech aimed at either repentance or conversion is ineffectual: the Old Man’s petition in act 5, scene 1. He characterizes Faustus’s “vile and loathsome filthiness” with its corrupting stench and Faustus’s consequent need for the cleansing blood of “thy Saviour sweet,” thereby following prescriptions from contemporary preaching manuals such as Niels Hemmingsen’s *The Preacher* (1574) and William Perkins *The Arte of Prophecyng* (1607) (5.1.42, 46).²⁹ The Old Man petitions Faustus in straightforward terms, relying most prominently on repetition. He uses *epanodos*, an iterative scheme whereby one repeats the main terms of one’s argument in the course of presenting it (Sonnino 158-59): with “steps,” “sweet,” “blood,” “tears,” and “mercy,” the Old Man characterizes Faustus’s misdirection, the alternate course, and the means of repentance. “Sweet” is crucial to the Old Man’s appeal because by describing the path leading to the way of life as “sweet,” he employs a term that signifies delectation throughout the play, and especially Faustus’s delectation. “Sweet” appears twenty-four times in *Doctor Faustus*, including the Chorus’ reference to scholars who delight in disputation and Faustus’s joy in magic; Faustus uses it to refer to analytics, Valdes, the

²⁹ Perkins explains the dual application of the law and the gospel in preaching: “For when the word is preached there is one operation of the Law, and another of the Gospel” (100). Whereas the law points out the “disease of sinne,” the Gospel provides the remedy (100). Likewise Hemmingsen uses the language of disease and medicine. He says the godly preacher “should first touche the byle of the wycked man, by the threatening of the law, that his deisease beyinge knowen, maye the more easelye bee cured” (60).

poet Musaeus, and Mephistopheles. In the scene with the Old Man, however, “sweet” signifies Faustus’s shifting allegiance: the Old Man and Faustus address one another with this descriptor until Mephistopheles threatens violence, and once again Faustus addresses him as “Sweet Mephistopheles,” indicating his resumed attempt at achieving rapport with the demon. Faustus subsequently uses “sweet” to characterize Helen and her “embracings.” The Old Man’s speech does comfort Faustus (e.g. “[...] I feel thy words / To comfort my distressed soul”), and dissuade him from rebellion (e.g. “[...] that base and crooked age / That durst dissuade me from thy Lucifer”), but it does so only temporarily (5.1.58-9, 76-7). As James Sims notes, the Old Man’s speech is filled with biblical allusions (26).³⁰ According to William Perkins, however, such scriptural appeals can be entirely inconsequential:

The power of Gods word commeth not from this, that it is a word, and barely vttered out of the mouth of a man: for so it is a dead letter: but it proceedeth from the powerfull operation of the spirit, annexed by Gods promise thereunto, when it is vttered, read, and conceiued which operation if it were taken away, the word might be preached a thousand yeares together, without any fruit or effect, either to saluation or condemnation.

(*A Discourse of the Damned Art of Witchcraft* 144-5)

Apart from the Spirit’s work, the Old Man’s use of scripture is just a “dead letter,” similar to Faustus’s use of Matthew 27:46, “My God, my God [...].”

³⁰ Sims notes that the Old Man’s description of an angel hovering over Faustus with a “vial full of precious grace” (5.1.55) alludes to the pouring out of vials found in Revelation but the Old Man reverses the sense of this image; vials are more often than not associated with judgment not grace as in Revelation 16:1: “And I heard a great voice out of the temple saying to the seven angels, Go your ways, and pour out vials of the wrath of God upon the earth” (27). According to Sims, therefore, this biblical reference raises questions about the very possibility of Faustus’s being accepted by God.

Marlowe uses rhetorical failure similar to the Old Man's appeal and Faustus's last plea to considerable effect in other works as well. The Virgin's speech at the end of *Tamburlaine the Great, Part I* is a notable example. As part of an emissary sent to deter Tamburlaine from destroying Damascus in act 5, scene 1, she creates a rhetorical performance calculated to elicit "pity," using *epanodos* by repeating this central term of her argument. A number of other figures illustrate the rigor of her appeal. Donald Peet observes that the Virgin amplifies her speech with the figure *distributio*: instead of asking Tamburlaine to spare the people of Damascus in general, she vividly pleads for the various inhabitants, including infants, married couples, and the aged—describing, for example, the "silver hairs" of the aged, and the "tears of ruth and blood" of husbands and wives embracing in their marriage beds (143). She also praises Tamburlaine, exalting him throughout the speech, and she appeals to his reason by blaming the "ruthless governor" for the city's previous refusal of his mercy. Tamburlaine's response is immediate and intractable: "Virgins, in vain you labor to prevent / That which mine honor swears shall be performed" (5.1.106-7). As Peet notes, Marlowe makes the virgin's petition as persuasive as possible, which consequently shows Tamburlaine's cruel capacity to withstand her speech (144). Marlowe develops this rhetorical strategy from his first theatrical success *Tamburlaine the Great, Part I*: he uses rhetorical failure again in *Doctor Faustus*, but this time the supplicant and protagonist are one and the same, and the rhetorical failure augments a tragic ending.

To borrow a phrase from Frank Kermode, Marlowe often creates a "sense of an ending" by orchestrating downfalls in spite of the rhetorical skill that his protagonists have depended upon. For example, at the end of *The Massacre at Paris* the Duke of

Guise convinces Charles IX, King of France of his loyalty (i.e. “Then farwell *Guise*, the King and thou are friends”), until Epernounge alternately persuades the King of Guise’s perfidy (i.e. “But trust him not my Lord, for had your highnesse / Seene with what pompe he entred *Paris* [...]”) (scene 19, lines 67-8). Likewise with *The Jew of Malta*: Ferneze’s betrayal and a momentary union between Christian and Turk end Barabas’s final deception. Similar to Faustus’s attempt at repentance, Barabas dies just when he has committed his “policy” to better ends, deceiving Calymath on behalf of Malta. Although Tamburlaine frames his own death as a kind of victory, even he must accommodate the words to his mortality in *Tamburlaine, Part II*. Marlowe eliminates these Machiavels and the Scourge of God in such a way as to stress rhetorical machinations practiced in vain. These protagonists use rhetorical proficiency to their advantage, but in Marlovian theatre, identity finally trumps rhetorical skill.

III.

It makes sense that someone who likely worked for the government’s intelligence service would depict the utility of rhetorical skill since such a job depended on rhetorical agility, the capacity to persuasively convey political or religious commitments. Marlowe’s dramaturgical skills, however, allow him to represent the limits of that skill for dramatic effect. In Faustus’s case, failed persuasion means an inability to acquit himself, thereby undermining the utility and efficacy of rhetorical skill—for the speaker, that is, not the author. Drawing on contemporary concerns about the spiritual implications of one’s speech, Marlowe has Faustus speak in a way that reveals his spiritual condition. Just as Mephistopheles interprets Faustus’s “per accidens” conjuring, making assumptions about his spiritual state, Marlowe invites the play’s audience to do

the same. In *Doctor Faustus*, language is a tool for Faustus, *and* an indicator of his reprobation for the audience.³¹

At the very moment his rhetorical skill fails him, Faustus corroborates contemporary notions of spiritual reprobation. In Thomas Norton's 1561 translation of the *Institutes*, for example, Calvin describes reprobates who seek God's mercy but who do not actually repent:

For he [Paul] doth not say that pardon is denied them if they turne to the lord: but he vtterly denieth that they can rise vnto repentance, bycause they are by the iust judgement of God stricken with eternal blindnesse for their vnthankfulness. And it maketh nothyng to the contrarie that afterward he applieth to this purpose the example of Esau, whiche in vaine attempted with howling and wepyng to recouer his right of the firste begotten. And no more doth that threatenynge of the Prophet. When they crie, I will not heare. For in such phrases of speeche is meante neyther the true conuersion nor callyng vpon God, but that carefulnesse of the wicked wherewith beyng bound, they are compelled in extremitie to loke vnto that which before they carelesly neglected, that there is no good thing for them but in the Lordes helpe. But this they doe not so much call vpon, as they mourne that it is taken from them. Therefore the Prophet meaneth nothing

³¹ For *Doctor Faustus*'s associations with reprobation, John Calvin's *Institutes*, and William Perkins's contemporary rendering of Calvinist theology, see Arthur F. Kinney's introduction to the play in *Renaissance Drama: An Anthology of Plays and Entertainments* (Malden: Blackwell Publishers, 1999) 155-162. In addition, the 2005 Norton Critical Edition of *Doctor Faustus* includes excerpts from Perkins's *A Golden Chain* and Calvin's *The Institution of the Christian Religion* alongside the play. While the associate of the Faustus with the predestinarian theology of John Calvin and William Perkins is now a critical commonplace, I hope to show that Marlowe's portrayal of Faustus's reprobation also relates to his message about the circumscribed utility of a rhetorical education.

els by Cryeng, and the Apostle nothing els by Weping, but that horrible
torment which by desperation fretteth and vexeth the wicked. (135-6)

Faustus demonstrates Calvin's message that in spite of their desperation spiritual reprobates cannot technically repent. He is "compelled in extremitie to loke vnto that which before [he] carelesly neglected." But even as Faustus deploys verbal dexterity to get a reprieve, he simultaneously conveys his state of reprobation and inability to repent. His attempt to call on God epitomizes this aspect of his soliloquy: "Ah, rend not my heart for naming of my Christ! / Yet will I call on him. O, spare me, Lucifer!" (5.2.80-1). While trying to name Christ, Faustus inadvertently names "Lucifer," which is an example of the figure *apocarteresis*, a switch from one object of deliverance to another (Burwick 141). Similarly, his refrains between petitions indicate a conviction about his own damnation. These range from "The devil will come, and Faustus must be damned" to "But mine must live still to be plagued in hell" (76, 112). Faustus tries to use his rhetorical skill to get a reprieve even while conveying his anguish and reprobation. Marlowe thereby dramatizes Calvin's phrase "horrible torment."

Faustus's final prayer represents counterfeit repentance according to the criteria set forth by William Perkins as well. Perkins differentiates false and true contrition in *A Reformed Catholike*:³²

That, repentance stands specially for practise, in contrition of heart,
confession of mouth, & satisfaction in worke or deed. Touching contrition
there be two kinds thereof: Legal, and Euangelical. Legal contrition is
nothing but a remorse of conscience for sinne in regard of the wrath &

³² Perkins addresses the distinction between false and true contrition in *The Art of Prophecyng* as well. See *The Art of Prophecyng* 110.

iudgement of God, & it is no grace of God at all; nor any part, or, cause of repentance: but onely an occasion thereof, & that by the mercie of God: for of it selfe, it is the sting of the law and the very entrance into the pit of hel. Euangelical contrition is, when a repentant sinner is greeued for his sinnes, not so much for feare of hell, or, any other punishment; as because he hath offended & displeased so good and mercifull a God. (316-7)

As Calvin classified two types of sorrow in the *Institutes*, so Perkins insists on the ostensible likeness but remarkable difference between two kinds of contrition, legal and evangelical. While Faustus acknowledges sin as an offense against God (“sinne as it is sinne,” as Perkins puts it), he avoids true repentance by fixating upon his punishment rather than the nature of his offense. He mourns his coming sentence (i.e. “Now hast thou but one bare hour to live, / And then thou must be damned perpetually”) just as he does in the conversation with his fellow scholars (i.e. “[Faustus] must remain in hell for ever. Hell, / ah, hell, for ever! Sweet friends, what shall become of / Faustus, being in hell for ever?”) (5.2.66-67 and 25-27). As a result, Marlowe dramatizes what the *English Faust Book* declares outright, that Faustus never expressed “repentance truly” and was “in all his opinions doubtfull, without faith or hope” (qtd. in Levin 132).

Along with dramatizing false repentance, Marlowe gives audiences ample evidence of Faustus’s mistaken theology, which is fodder for his rhetorical skill. As numerous critics have pointed out, Faustus cites the consequences of sin but omits grace and forgiveness in his scriptural references, which he rehearses in order to dismiss divinity as a field of study. Faustus’s selective reading would have called to mind what Perkins calls the “right cutting” of scripture, a metaphor that he takes from 2 Timothy

2:15 to describe the parsing of scripture to produce doctrine (*The Arte of Prophecyng*, 90). According to Perkins, if not properly handled, any doctrine can be drawn from any place (96). Another example of Faustus's conspicuously mistaken theology comes from act 4, scene 1, in which Faustus uses Christ's forgiveness of the thief on the cross to allay fears about his encroaching deadline: "Tush! Christ did call the thief upon the cross; / Then rest thee, Faustus, quiet in conceit" (4.1.143-4). In *A Salve for a Sicke Man* (1597), Perkins says the thief is a special case illustrating Christ's goodness even during extreme suffering (59-60). Marlowe has Faustus demonstrate flawed judgment by making "an ordinarie rule of an extraordinarie example" (59-60). In addition, during his final speech, Faustus addresses, "You stars that reigned at my nativity, / Whose influence hath allotted death and hell" (5.2.89-90). In *A Golden Chaine* (1591), Perkins says astrology substitutes false causality for true, namely God's sovereignty. He notes, "That Astrologie, teaching by the casting of Natiuities, what men will be, is ridiculous, and impious: because it determineth that such shall be very like in life, and conuersation, whom God in his predestination hath made vnlike" (178). Faustus's address to the stars reveals his inability to subordinate classical doctrines to Christianity, recalling his rhetorical syncretism earlier in the play (i.e. "For he confounds hell in Elysium"). While Perkins associates the two kinds of causality—astrological and theological—to differentiate them and condemn astrology, Faustus does not subordinate one to the other, illustrating his co-mingled intellectual traditions.

The Old Man uses the language of election as a counterpoint to Faustus's language of false repentance. When the devils torment him at Faustus's command, the Old Man says, "Satan begins to sift me with his pride. / As in this furnace, God shall try

my faith” (5.1.114-15). The Old Man alludes to two biblical passages here, Jesus’ warning to Peter in Luke 22:31 (i.e. “Satan hath desyred after you, that he might sifte you even as wheate,”) and the description of tribulation found in 1 Peter 1:7 (i.e. “That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ”) (Sims 26). The Old Man identifies his distress with God-ordained persecution that distinguishes members of the true church, invoking a well-established Protestant tradition. Martin Luther lists suffering as one of the marks of the true church in “On the Councils and the Church” (1539):

[Christian people] must endure every misfortune and persecution, all kinds of trials and evil from the devil, the world, and the flesh (as the Lord’s Prayer indicates) by inward sadness, timidity, fear, outward poverty, contempt, illness, and weakness, in order to become like their head, Christ. And the only reason they must suffer is that they steadfastly adhere to Christ and God’s word, enduring this for the sake of Christ, Matthew 5[:11], “Blessed are you when men persecute you on my account.” [....] Wherever you see or hear this, you may know that the holy Christi church is there as Christ says in Matthew 5[:11-12], “Blessed are you when men revile you and utter all kinds of evil against you on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven.” This too is a holy possession whereby the Holy Spirit not only sanctifies his people, but also blesses them. (375)

Applying Luther's conception of suffering to his own situation, the Old Man accepts demonic harassment and attributes it ultimately to God's purposes (i.e. "*God shall try my faith*"). Marlowe contrasts two versions of torment and responses to that torment. Both the Old Man and Faustus use their suffering, verbally unpacking it to divergent ends: the Old Man to confirm his Christian identity and to rebuke the demons (i.e. "Ambitious fiends, see how the heavens smiles / At your repulse and laughs your state to scorn!") and Faustus to plea for reprieve (5.1.117-18).³³ Consequently, Marlowe juxtaposes the language of election with the language of reprobation.

Outside the theatre, Elizabethan audiences were urged to withhold judgment about the spiritual conditions of their neighbors. For example, William Perkins encourages suspended assessment concerning "Gods predestination" and "the Estate of men uncalled" in *A Direction for the Government of the Tongue According to Gods Word* (1593) (9-10). Contemporary theological treatises categorized spiritual states in general, however, as is the case with Perkins's own *Golden Chaine*. Preaching manuals also delineated the type of audience members that preachers should expect so they could apply doctrines "according to the diuers condition of men and people," as Perkins phrases it (*The Art of Prophecyng*, 102). Such general spiritual classification was ubiquitous, but Elizabethans were encouraged to suspend judgment about their neighbors' spiritual states in particular. One means of classifying the "diuers condition of men and people" was through their language. Despite its value as a spiritual gauge, Perkins exhorts his audience not to judge the words and actions of one's neighbor:

³³ The Old Man's reference to God's laughter in this speech alludes to Psalm 2:4 "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision" (Sims 26).

SOBRIETIE in judgement is when a man either suspendeth his opinion of his neighbours saying or doings, or else speaketh as charitably as he can, by saying as little as may be, if the thing be euill: or by interpreting all in better parte; if the speech or action be doubtfull. Therefore doe thus: despise not thy neighbour, but thinke thy selfe as badde a sinner, and that the like defectes may befall thee. If thou canst not excuse his doing, excuse his intent, which may be good: or if the deede be euill, thinke it was done of ignorance: if thou canst not no way excuse him, thinke some great temptation befell him, and that thou shouldest be worse, if the like temptation befell thee: and giue God thanks that the like as yet hath not befallen thee. Despise not a man being a sinner, for though he be euill to day, he may turne to morrow. (*A Direction for the Government of the Tongue* 40-1)

While directing his readership to govern the tongue, Perkins spells out the finer implications of its misuse so that they can recognize such. Perkins's instructions suggest the weight attributed to one's speech in Renaissance England. To illustrate the extent of this importance, Perkins even considers the ethics of laughter and "Christ helpe you" in response to sneezes.

Marlowe encourages speculation about Faustus's spiritual state with his vacillation between wickedness and contrition, and the theatre provided a venue in which audiences need not suspend their judgment or practice the charitable interpretation that Perkins advocates. No doubt accompanied by the rhetorical elements of gesture and voice aimed at conveying Faustus's spiritual condition, his speech especially provided

theatergoers with evidence of reprobation. This aspect of the play points to the ubiquitous emphasis on the revelatory aspects of one's speech found in Renaissance writings from Erasmus to Thomas Wright. Ben Jonson's entry for "*oratio imago animi*" in his *Timber: or Discoveries* summarizes this contemporary conviction about language, which informs Marlowe's portrayal of *Faustus*: "Speech is the image of the soul" (435).³⁴

IV.

If the pulpit and the stage are viewed as rivals to the extent that Bryan Crockett, Michael O'Connell, and Jeffrey Knapp have proposed, Marlowe caters to contemporary audiences by creating an eloquent rhetoric of reprobation, which suggests *Doctor Faustus's* specific contribution to an Elizabethan anti-theatrical prejudice.³⁵ In the first published English anti-theatrical tract in 1577, John Northbrooke notes an unsettling preference for plays over sermons among contemporary theater-goers:

And by the long suffering and permitting of these vain plays, it hath
stricken such a blind zeal into the hearts of the people that they shame not
to say and affirm openly that players are as good as sermons, and that they
learn as much or more at a play than they do at God's word preached.
God be merciful to this realm of England, for we begin to have itching ear,
and loath that heavenly manna, as appeareth by their slow and negligent

³⁴ This entry in Jonson's *Discoveries* illustrates the connection between rhetoric and ethics in his own work and the way his characters' speech reflects their moral states, especially in *Volpone* (1606), *Epicoene* (1609), *The Alchemist* (1610), and *Bartholomew Fair* (1614): "Language most shows a man: speak that I may see thee. It springs out the most retired, and inmost parts of us, and is the image of the parent of it, the mind. No glass renders a man's form or likeness so true as his speech. Nay, it is likened to a man: and as we consider feature, and composition in a man; so words in language: in the greatness, aptness, sound, structure, and harmony of it" (435).

³⁵ See for example Bryan Crockett's *The Play of Paradox: Stage and Sermon in Renaissance England* (Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania Press, 1995), Michael O'Connell's *The Idolatrous Eye: Iconoclasm and Theater in Early-Modern England* (New York: Oxford UP, 2000), and Jeffrey Knapp's *Shakespeare's Tribe: Church, Nation, and Theater in Renaissance England* (Chicago: U of Chicago Press, 2002).

coming unto sermons, and running so fast, and so many, continually unto plays. (Pollard 8)

Northbrooke (speaking here under the guise of “Age”) is appalled at the assertion that plays provide superior pedagogical service to sermons. Despite the intervening years, *Doctor Faustus* threatens the pulpit and the realm according to Northbrooke’s terms. The play confirms an orthodox theological message regarding reprobation, and it does so in eloquent language for audiences trained to appreciate such, thereby gratifying the “itching ear.” Faustus may speak like a reprobate and invert prescriptions from Renaissance *ars praedicandi*, but like protagonists from Marlowe’s other plays, his orations are virtuoso, drawing as he does on classical and biblical allusions, Latin poetry, and rhetorical tropes and schemes.

A number of works contemporary to *Doctor Faustus* point out the inadequacies of orthodox preaching in light of the Elizabethan audience’s desire for oratorical eloquence, including Nashe’s *Christ’s Teares Over Jerusalem* and John Manningham’s diary. In *Christ’s Teares Over Jerusalem* (1593), Nashe disparages “ridiculous dul Preachers” who have unstudied, unprepared deliveries characterized by little substance, so that consequently “a great number had rather heare a iarring blacke-sant, then one of theyr balde Sermons” (123).³⁶ Nashe also says that these preachers are the cause of contemporary atheism. Because such atheists are characterized by “a superabundance of witte,” Nashe says preachers must use greater wit and artful preaching, fighting fire with fire:

³⁶ By “iarring blacke-sant,” presumably Nashe refers to a profane song or “parodic hymn.” See “black sanctus, n.” *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, <<http://www.oed.com>>.

If you count it prophane to arte-enamel your speech to empeirce, and make a conscience to sweeten your tunes to catch soules, Religion (through you) shal reape infamy. [...] These Atheists (with whom you are to encounter) are speciall men of witte. The Romish Seminaries haue not allured vnto them so many good wits as Atheisme. It is the superabundance of witte that makes Atheists: wil you then hope to beate them down with fusty brown-bread dorbellisme? No, no, either you must straine your wits and Ela about theirs, and so entice them to your preachings, and ouer-turne them, or els with distordred hayle-shotte of Scriptures shall you neuer scare them. (124)

Elaborating on his recommendation that they should make their works more efficacious through enticing artistry, he insists that “Logique, Rethorique, History, Phylosophy, Musique, Poetry, all are the handmaides of Diuinitie” (126). *Doctor Faustus* dramatizes the same association of ideas in Nashe’s work: while Catholics are inconsequential and the orthodox appeals to Faustus are ineffectual, Faustus’s “superabundance of witte” is the real impediment. Moreover, Faustus’s speeches demonstrate the various “handmaides of Diuinitie.” Nashe’s remarks are telling in light of *Doctor Faustus*’s vivid depiction of reprobation. While recognizing the profanity and blasphemy of Faustus’s speeches, Elizabethan theater-goers likely would have been enticed to prefer a dramatization of reprobation over a “balde sermon.”

John Manningham’s diary corroborates Nashe’s point that early-modern auditors had definite preferences regarding aural performance. Written in 1602-3, about the time that Philip Henslowe paid Samuel Rowley and William Bird for additions to *Doctor*

Faustus (Bevington and Rasmussen 49), Manningham's diary confirms the presence of audiences with a predilection for eloquence. As his sermon transcriptions reveal, Manningham is a tough critic, noting their qualities (e.g. "It was a verry learned, eloquent, relligious, and moving sermon; his prayer, both in the beginning and conclusion, was soe fervent and effectuall for hir Majestie that he left few eyes drye") and deficiencies (e.g. "[...] he hath a sounding laboured artificiall pronunciacion; he regards that soe muche that his speache hath no more matter then needes in it") (206, 232). The preachers themselves frequently worry about poor reception, indicating their awareness of fastidious auditors like Manningham. Manningham notes several sermons in which the ministers preached about preaching, explicitly mentioning the difficulty of their calling and task, as well as the conditions necessary for positive reception.³⁷ Their concerns include a perceived contempt of ministers among audiences, especially relating to the preacher's charge to reprehend sins. As Manningham's diary attests, English preachers around the turn of the century were anxious about their audiences. This anxiety about reception seems warranted, given the presence of auditors like Manningham who scrutinized sermons.

Contemporary preachers represented in Manningham's diary also make strategic use of failed persuasion to admonish their audiences. For example, a number of these preachers emphasize the likelihood of an unheeded oration based on the presence of corrupt addressees. These men argue that they will have fulfilled their charge despite a heedless audience, whom they render "unexcusable" (60). Consequently, the bad listener

³⁷ See especially pages 68 and 71.

is a *negative exemplum* for their audiences.³⁸ When Sanders mentions “bad hearers” or Dr. Montague references the sinner who stops up his ears (57), contemporary audiences might have been chastened to tune in, or to flatter themselves by contrast. Either way, both preachers foreground failed persuasion for persuasive results. Like the self-referential oratorical moments found in Elizabethan and Jacobean theatre,³⁹ Manningham’s diary features numerous instances of preachers calling attention to the nature of their undertaking and the audience’s responses—or lack thereof. Because both the stage and the pulpit were venues for auditors like Manningham, it is not surprising that their rhetorical strategies overlap.

Marlowe borrows from contemporary *ars praedicandi* in order to construct Faustus’s rhetoric of reprobation. Faustus’s orations contravene specific prescriptions in preaching manuals including Niels Hemmingsen’s *The Preacher, or Methode of Preaching* (1574), Hyperius’s *The Practise of Preaching* (1577), and William Perkins *The Arte of Prophecyng* (1607). For example, Faustus’s final prayer reads like an anti-sermon according to Perkins’s rules for preaching in *The Arte of Prophecyng*. Perkins says two things should guide a sermon: “the hiding of humane wisdom, and the

³⁸ An effective early print version of this rhetorical technique can be seen in Erasmus’ dedicatory letter to Paul Volz published with his 1518 edition of *Enchiridion militis Christiani*. In the letter, which addresses the purpose and influence of the *Enchiridion*, Erasmus notes that his work did not win over its original audience, John the German. John’s prominent resistance to the *Enchiridion* with its guide to Christian living has a persuasive function for Erasmus’ audience: it highlights the dangerous desire for life at court (which Erasmus indicts elsewhere, as in the *Praise of Folly* for example), rather than one following Christ. Moreover, it affirms a better response by way of contrast with John. John, then, is part of the overall persuasive apparatus of 1518 *Enchiridion*. John’s reaction, placed as it is immediately at the outset of Erasmus’ letter to Volz, is a technique by which Erasmus offers a *negative exemplum*, a response to the *Enchiridion* that the audience should avoid.

³⁹ One such example is Cleopatra’s famous pronouncement in *Antony and Cleopatra*. Speaking to Dolabella, Cleopatra notes: “Thou, an Egyptian puppet shall be shown / In Rome, as well as I. Mechanic slaves / With greasy aprons, rules, and hammers shall / Uplift us to the view. In their thick breaths, / Rank of gross diet, shall we be enclouded, / And forced to drink their vapour. [...] The quick comedians / Extemporally will stage us, and present / Our Alexandrian revels. Antony / Shall be brought drunken forth, and I shall see / Some squeaking Cleopatra boy my greatness / I’th’ posture of a whore” (5.2.204-8; 212-17).

demonstration (or showing) of the spirit” (132). Regarding the first, he observes, “Humane wisdom must be concealed, whether it be in the matter of the sermon, or in the setting forth of the words: because the preaching of the word is the Testimonie of God, and the profession of the knowledge of Christ, and not of humane skill: and againe, because the hearers ought not to ascribe their faith to the gifts of men, but to the power of Gods word” (133). As a result, the speaker should avoid “words of arts” as well as “Greeke and Latin phrases” (135). Regarding the second rule, the demonstration of the spirit, Perkins notes: “The Demonstration of the spirit is, when as the Minister of the word doth in the time of preaching so behaue himselfe, that all, euen ignorant persons & vnbeleeuers may iudge, that it is not so much hee that speaketh, as the Spirit of God in him and by him” (133). Admittedly, Perkins’s recommendations are for preaching; nevertheless, Marlowe reverses these recommendations in Faustus’s final soliloquy, which suggests its theatrical power and striking contrast to pulpit orations at the time. Faustus’s speech displays his erudition, invoking as he does Greek philosophy and Latin phrases, and it invites association with divine reprobation such that “euen ignorant persons & vnbeleeuers may iudge.”

Representing the culmination of an education in the classics, Faustus’s rhetorical skill would have confirmed the worst suspicions about the effects of classical literature: he is rhetorically deft but morally debased. Faustus’s use of Ovid in particular would have been considered morally dangerous but rhetorically powerful. For anti-theatrical writers like John Northbrooke, Stephen Gosson, Philip Stubbes, and Henry Crosse, Ovid signifies a threat to English society.⁴⁰ Whether defended by a pro-theatre writer like

⁴⁰ For examples of their remarks on Ovid, see Tanya Pollard’s *Shakespeare’s Theater: A Sourcebook* (Malden: Blackwell Pub., 2004).

Thomas Lodge or indicted by an anti-theatrical writer like Northbrooke, Ovid often represents both enticing and dangerous wantonness in debates about the theatre.

Marlowe provides fodder for anti-theatrical objections, depicting as he does Faustus's captivating oratory with its Ovidian references.

Despite Faustus's moral turpitude, his speech likely confirmed convictions about the transcendent nature of eloquence. Renaissance rhetorical theory often associates eloquence with moral probity. One recalls the conclusion to Thomas Wilson's *The Art of Rhetoric* for instance: "[...] the good will not speak evil and the wicked cannot speak well" (244). Nevertheless, Elizabethan writers argue too that eloquence can be put to sacred or profane uses. This picture of eloquence's instrumentality tends toward Aristotle's definition of rhetoric, which is the art of seeking out the available means of persuasion.⁴¹ For example, Thomas Nashe takes such a position in his *encomium* to Henry Smith in *Pierce Penniless his Supplication to the Devil* (1592). He celebrates the preacher by blurring the distinction between religious and poetic rhetorical power:

How admirably shine those divines above the common mediocrity, that
have tasted the sweet springs of Parnassus? Silver-tongued Smith, whose
well-tuned style hath made thy death the general tears of the Muses,
quaintly couldst thou devise heavenly ditties to Apollo's lute, and teach
stately verse to trip it as smoothly as if Ovid and thou had but one soul.
Hence alone did it proceed, that thou wert such a plausible pulpit man, that
before thou enteredst into the rough ways of theology, thou refinedst,
preparedst, and purifidest thy mind with sweet poetry. If a simple man's

⁴¹ For a book length study of Aristotle's *Rhetoric* and the extent to which Aristotle investigates the possibility of a civic art of rhetoric versus a professional one, see Eugene Garver's *Aristotle's Rhetoric: An Art of Character* (Chicago: U of Chicago Press, 1994).

censure may be admitted to speak in such an open theatre of opinions, I never saw abundant reading better mixed with delight, or sentences, which no man can challenge of profane affectation, sounding more melodious to the ear or piercing more deep to the heart. (90-1)

In his commendation of Smith's ability to teach, delight, and move, Nashe suggests that rhetorical power is merely adapted to different contexts. Like the speaker in Herbert's *The Forerunners* whose rhetorical devices, "sweet phrases, lovely metaphors," are cleaned up and brought from "stews and brothels" to church, Nashe implies that eloquence can have sacred or profane uses but that power is its salient feature given the association of Ovid and Smith (Herbert 166).⁴² In *Doctor Faustus*, Marlowe reverses the process of decontamination represented in Herbert's poem and in Elizabethan education curricula and rhetorical theory more broadly: tropes and schemes—especially ones like *philophronesis* associated with "spiritual wisdom"—are used for immorality even while contributing to Faustus's powerful eloquence.

V.

With Faustus's plan to secure better clothes for fellow students (1.1.92-3), the books that entice him throughout the play, or his desire to return to Wittenberg at his contract's end, Marlowe reminds the audience of Faustus's university background. Perhaps the most important of these is his use of rhetoric. Rhetorical instruction at

⁴² One of Nashe's favorite biblical illustrations likewise asserts the power of eloquence. In *Pierce Penniless his Supplication to the Devil*, *Christ's Teares Over Jerusalem* and *The Unfortunate Traveller*, Nashe references Christ's casting out devils from a man into a herd of swine, and with each reference Nashe suggests the power of eloquence to coerce, control, and correct. In *The Unfortunate Traveller*, for example, this reference illustrates Aretino's capacity to produce demonstrable effects with his writing: "No hour but he sent a whole legion of devils into some herd of swine or other" (309). Nashe cites Christ's rhetorical power in a profane context for satire and social critique. His biblical reference is the reverse of his *encomium* for Smith, which appealed to Ovid's rhetorical power in a religious context. In both cases, he co-mingles sacred and profane eloquence.

Oxford and Cambridge was closely connected to classical literature (Mack 52), so even Faustus's poetic references call attention to his rhetorical training—from his stop at “learned Maro's golden tomb” (3.1.13) during his European tour with Mephistopheles to his Ovidian and Homeric allusions.

Because Faustus's skill is inadequate for repentance, nature triumphs over rhetorical art at the play's end. His rhetorical skill entailed accomplishments with the scholarly, political, and even infernal communities, but such agency is irrelevant to his participation in the religious community, or more precisely the Body of Christ. Yet Faustus's means are also the playwright's. Marlowe stresses the incongruity between Faustus's confidence in the utility of rhetoric and the extent to which it fails him, even while drawing on such rhetorical training himself. Jason Scott-Warren notes a similar irony in *Hero and Leander*—especially with Marlowe's association of Mercury and Poverty—by pointing out the poem's “calculated assault on the ideas that made it possible” (39). So Marlowe illustrates the circumscribed utility of a rhetorical education while demonstrating that very same utility; what elevates Faustus is what allows Marlowe to create an effective play.

Yet in *Doctor Faustus*, language is less a tool for Faustus than an indicator of his reprobation for the demons and theatergoers alike. Just as Mephistopheles interprets Faustus's spiritual state from his “per accidens” conjuring, Marlowe invites the play's audience to do the same. With Faustus's final soliloquy especially, Marlowe represents a rhetoric of reprobation: rhetorically informed anguish demonstrating the Holy Spirit's absence. As Debora Shuger has shown, Augustinian-influenced preaching, which

stresses the role of the passions, emerges in the sixteenth century.⁴³ With *Doctor Faustus*, Marlowe shows that the passionate display of reprobation could be effective in a theatrical context. Creating a rhetoric of reprobation as he does, Marlowe dramatizes an orthodox theological message about reprobates and their relationship to rhetorical appeals, whether as unsuccessful speakers or unresponsive audience members. He also caters to the contemporary desire for eloquence. Rhetorical failure in *Doctor Faustus* is entirely orthodox based on Faustus's status as a reprobate, but the passionate demonstration of reprobation offers an alluring alternative to contemporary preaching. Given the Renaissance appreciation of paradox—of positions contrary to convention—this aspect of the play likely delighted Marlowe's contemporaries, or at least the irreverent ones.

⁴³ See Debora Shuger's *Sacred Rhetoric: The Christian Grand Style in The English Renaissance* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1988).

CHAPTER 3

JUSTICE AND EMOTIONAL APPEALS IN PHILIP SIDNEY'S *ARCADIA* AND EDMUND SPENSER'S *THE FAERIE QUEENE*, BOOK 5

Trial scenes and moments of forensic pleading afford English Renaissance writers a means of narrative authority represented by the law. Whether standing for state, monarchical, or divine powers, this authority often evaluates the ideas, characters, and events at work in each fiction more broadly. For example, one recalls Shylock's claim of a pound of flesh as penalty for Antonio's bond-forfeiture from a particularly famous English Renaissance trial scene. Shakespeare uses this moment in *The Merchant of Venice* to focus the conflict between various political, religious, and cultural ideas at work in the play. These include mercy and justice, citizen and alien, Christian and Jew, and homosocial and marital bonds.¹ Nashe's *The Unfortunate Traveller* and Webster's *The White Devil* feature similar uses of trial scenes. In the same way, Philip Sidney and Edmund Spenser use scenes of forensic pleading to evaluate the rhetorical eloquence deployed by various characters in *The Old Arcadia* and *The Faerie Queene*.

In the previous chapter, Marlowe's version of rhetorical failure in *Doctor Faustus* illustrated the circumscribed power of eloquence with regard to spiritual reprobates: neither could Faustus be persuaded to repent nor could he use his rhetorical skill for

¹ For a look at depictions of the law in English Renaissance literature, especially as a means of considering the "social production of meaning" and institutional knowledge and authority (251), see Bradin Cormack's "Law: Poetry and Jurisdiction" in *A New Companion to English Renaissance Literature and Culture*, ed. Michael Hattaway, Vol. 1. (London: Blackwell, 2010) 248-62. Cormack notes, "The trial scene is dramatically effective, because, independent of whether it is shown to uphold justice or pervert justice, it stands always as a forceful instance of human activity in the process of making meanings that have a measurable effect in the world" (251).

repentance. Similar to Marlowe, both Sidney and Spenser are interested in the utility of rhetorical skill. Like Faustus's reliance upon his university-endowed rhetorical proficiency, characters in *The Old Arcadia* and *The Faerie Queene* use rhetorically informed pleas aimed at a judge's emotions in order to acquit themselves, but to no avail. Nevertheless, this failure does not preclude their moving either the judge or the immediate audience. Both Sidney's and Spenser's legal judgments occur in spite of emotional responses, thereby acknowledging rhetorical power even while demonstrating that it can—and should be—checked in forensic contexts. Although the means of circumscription differ, rhetoric's restricted utility is part of the design of each work. In the following pages, I present two major classical discussions of emotional appeals that inform Spenser and Sidney's works, and subsequently how each author draws on these discussions to construct rhetorical failure in a forensic setting.

The following chapter examines representations of one of the three major genres from the classical rhetorical tradition: forensic oratory. As George Kennedy notes, Aristotle originated the three genres (i.e. forensic, deliberative, and epideictic) and their characteristics in his *Rhetoric*, all of which were generally adopted by subsequent writers (*The Art of Rhetoric in the Roman World, 300 B. C. – A. D. 300* 72, 80). As noted in the preceding chapters, the persuasive speeches in amatory and religious contexts can feature co-mingled aspects of these three major categories—as can forensic speeches for that matter. Unlike amatory and religious persuasion, however, forensic oratory coheres around a number of distinctive features: it is concerned primarily with justice; it focuses on past events; and it is addressed to a judge (73). Sidney and Spenser draw on these characteristics to construct their scenes of forensic rhetorical failure as both writers

recognize the troubling capacity of emotional appeals in a forensic setting, one in which justice is the primary end.

I.

While both the Greek and Roman rhetorical traditions agree about the efficacy of emotional appeals in forensic contexts, they disagree about their validity. In *On Rhetoric*, Aristotle affirms Greek laws that confine trial arguments to fact rather than emotional appeals. He also condemns outright the practice of confusing the jury by leading them into emotional turmoil. In book 1, chapter 1, he notes: [...] for verbal attack and pity and anger and such emotions of the mind do not relate to fact but are appeals to the jurymen. [...] for it is wrong to warp the jury by leading them into anger or envy or pity: that is the same as if someone made a straight-edge ruler crooked before using it” (31-2).

Aristotle’s position is unequivocal: emotional appeals like those advocated in the fourth-century rhetorical handbooks do not relate to details of the case, and what’s more, they distort a jury’s apprehension of the facts.² Contrary to Aristotle’s position on emotional appeals in ancient Greece, Quintilian argues for their vital role in forensic pleading in the imperial government of first-century Rome. In his prescriptions for effective forensic persuasion, he assumes the presence of a judge subject to emotions, and he recommends that these be the orator’s principal object. While such a strategy depends upon a kind of

² Later in the treatise, however, Aristotle describes evoking and using an audience’s emotions for particular ends (see 2.2-11). George Kennedy explains this apparent incongruity citing Jurgen Sprute’s work on the *Rhetoric*: while in this passage from chapter one Aristotle describes the ideal function of rhetoric in the ideal state, in chapter two he moves to its actual operation in contemporary Greek society (*On Rhetoric: A Theory of Civic Discourse* 29).

deceit,³ the judge can become invested in the orator's case as result of emotional appeals.

Explaining the judge's potential engagement, Quintilian notes:

For as soon as they [the judges] begin to be angry, to feel favourably disposed, to hate or pity, they begin to take a personal interest in the case, and just as lovers are incapable of forming a reasoned judgment on the beauty of the object of their affections, because passion forestalls the sense of sight, so the judge, when overcome by his emotions, abandons all attempt to enquire into the truth of the arguments, is swept along by the tide of passion, and yields himself unquestioning to the torrent. [...]

When those tears, which are the aim of most perorations, well forth from his eyes, is he not giving his verdict for all to see? It is to this, therefore, that the orator must devote all his powers, 'There lie the task and toil!'

Without this all else is bare and meagre, devoid of charm. For it is in its power over emotions that the life and soul of oratory is to be found. (2: 419-21)

Using the remarkable simile that compares a judge to a lover, Quintilian characterizes emotional appeals as the vital aspect of forensic persuasion, "the life and soul" of this kind of oratory.

Sixteenth-century English rhetorical theorists recognize both the Greek and Roman traditions, but they downplay Aristotle's critique in their emphasis on emotional

³ Quintilian notes, "[...] their thoughts have actually to be led away from the contemplation of the truth" (2: 419). Rhetorical guile recurs in Quintilian's discussion of forensic oratory in the *Institutio Oratoria*. For example, in book 4 he discusses the *narratio*'s statement of facts and mentions the capacity of oratorical art, which can succeed in "hoodwinking the judge" (83). And when discussing the speaker's enumeration of propositions to the judge, he notes: "Sometimes we shall even have to hoodwink the judge and work upon him by various artifices so that he may think that our aim is other than what it really is" (139).

appeals. In *The Art of English Poesy* (1589), for example, George Puttenham draws on Aristotle when illustrating the power of rhetorical figures to “inveigle and appassionate the mind.” Taking his illustrations from *On Rhetoric*, he notes the Areopagus’s prohibition and Aristotle’s timber analogy (Rebhorn 213). But Puttenham is interested in Aristotle’s position primarily as a means of confirming the power of figurative speech to arouse the emotions, rather than considering the validity of such appeals in a forensic context.

One of the most extensive engagements with Aristotle’s discussion of emotional appeals in sixteenth-century England is John Rainolds’s series of lectures on *Rhetoric*. These explicitly address Aristotle’s disqualification of such appeals in a forensic context.⁴ In the 1570s Rainolds lectured on the *Rhetoric*, and while his lectures treat only the first seven chapters of book 1, he brings his sense of Aristotle’s entire work to bear on each of these chapters (Green 53). Rainolds is obviously animated by Aristotle’s argument about the illegitimacy of emotional appeals, demonstrated by the extent of his engagement with this portion of the *Rhetoric*. He lists each of Aristotle’s objections and refutes them point by point. His goal is to establish the power of emotional appeals for good, showing that this capacity supersedes their potential misuse.

As Lawrence Green observes, Rainolds disagrees with Aristotle because the two hold different conceptions of the role that emotions play in human reasoning.⁵ Aristotle is concerned with the influence of emotional appeals on the acceptability of various

⁴ As Frank Whigham and Wayne Rebhorn note, Lucian addresses this topic in *Anacharsis* 19, as does Castiglione in *The Book of the Courtier* 4.23.475 (Hoby 277) (239).

⁵ Green notes, “Thus, where Aristotle studies the passions to gauge the acceptability of premises, Rainolds instead wants direct access to the emotions because the emotions, not the intellect, finally impel action” (76).

premises; consequently, he censures the way such appeals impose on intellectual assent. In contrast, Rainolds stresses their effect on the will. As a result, he holds that emotional appeals are essential to moving an audience to good. Rainolds notes:

Now then, to sum up a long discussion in a few words, the passions must be excited, not for the harm they do but for the good, not so they twist the straight but that they straighten the crooked; so that they ward off vice, iniquity, and disgrace; so that they defend virtue, justice, and probity. For this reason the professors of rhetoric are most undeservedly censured by Aristotle for teaching a system of handling emotions. (151-3)⁶

To bolster his position, Rainolds cites both “sacred and profane” texts (151). His classical authorities include Plato, Cicero and Quintilian, as well as Aristotle’s own descriptions of the emotions later in the *Rhetoric*. But more important to his argument are those sources informed by Christian theology, including Augustine’s *De Doctrina Christiana*, Erasmus’ *Ecclesiastes* and Hyperius’s *The Practice of Preaching*, as well as scriptural examples such as the prophet Jeremiah and the Apostle Paul (151).⁷ Like other sixteenth-century English rhetorical theorists, Rainolds emphasizes the validity of the emotions from a particularly Christian standpoint: “Emotion, therefore, is a natural commotion of the soul, imparted by God for following good and fleeing evil” (143).

Rainolds’ portrayal of the trial of Socrates also illustrates the Renaissance emphasis on the power of emotional appeals. Rainolds notes that “innocent Socrates”

⁶ Rainolds does allow that the professors’ sole emphasis on emotions to the exclusion of arguments rightly deserved Aristotle’s criticism: “But because they taught this [the handling of emotions] alone, and did not explain arguments, his censure surely is merited” (153).

⁷ As Debora Shuger has shown, Renaissance rhetorics accentuate the role of the emotions in persuasion thereby demonstrating the influence of Augustine’s conception of human psychology; unlike ancient psychology in which reason and the emotions were opposed, Augustine makes emotions part of the human will in *De Doctrina Christiana* and *De Civitate Dei* (46-7).

was condemned because he did not stir his audience's emotions (147). By emphasizing the power of emotional appeals, however, Rainolds elides a key aspect of rhetorical theory, one that entails a considerably different portrayal of Socrates' death from Quintilian's *Institutio Oratoria* 11.1. In contrast to Rainolds, Quintilian argues that oratorical propriety is paramount, surpassing even persuasion as the end of oratory:

Too much insistence cannot be laid upon the point that no one can be said to speak appropriately who has not considered not merely what it is expedient, but also what it is becoming to say. I am well aware that these two considerations generally go hand in hand. For whatever is becoming is, as a rule, useful, and there is nothing that does more to conciliate the good-will of the judge than the observance or to alienate it than the disregard of these considerations. (4: 159)

According to Quintilian, Socrates' trial demonstrates a rhetorical precedent in which expediency must yield to what is becoming. Socrates could have acquitted himself had he used "ordinary forensic methods of defence," placated the judges with a compliant manner, and disproved the charges against him (159). But because such a strategy would have been unworthy of his character, he embraced the penalty as an honor (159-161). Quintilian sums up the situation as follows: "This instance alone shows that the end which the orator must keep in view is not persuasion, but speaking well, since there are occasions when to persuade would be a blot upon his honour" (161). Consequently, Socrates is the supreme example of speaking in a becoming manner, "the end which the orator must keep in view," which is to be expected given that Quintilian's definition of rhetoric—*bene dicendi scientiam*, "the science of speaking well"—does not depend upon

results (1: 315).⁸ The irony is that this paradigm is one intentionally divested of emotional power and hence immediate utility. Enshrined in the *Institutio Oratoria* is an example of speaking well that is characterized by failed persuasion. In marked contrast to Quintilian's portrayal, Rainolds ignores Socrates's consummate propriety. Instead, he stresses that Socrates did not avail himself of the power of emotional appeals.

But what about the capacity of emotional appeals to subvert justice—does Rainolds account for this aspect of rhetorical persuasion? Not only does he admit that emotional appeals can and do subvert justice, he cites numerous illustrations. These include Cicero's claim that he clouded the minds of the judges in his defense of Cluentius Aviti, mentioned in Quintilian's *Institutio Oratoria*, as well as Servius Sulpitius Galba's acquittal as a result of an appeal to pity despite his having murdered thousands of Lusitanians, which Cicero's *De Oratore* describes (129). But Rainolds argues that it is foolish to judge eloquence by its abuse, and that just because eloquence can be misused does not mean that it must be banished; one might as well try to disavow arguments because they can deceive, fire because it can burn a house, and food because it can hide poison (147). To cite its potential for good, Rainolds mentions Cicero's exploits achieved by stirring emotions—including putting down Verres, freeing Ligarius, removing Catiline, and plaguing Mark Antony (149). In addition, Rainolds argues that righteous men have been condemned for want of emotional appeals, citing Socrates as an example (147, 149). With regard to the capacity of emotional appeals to corrupt the

⁸ Later in book 2, Quintilian elaborates on this definition of rhetoric, confirming the extent to which Socrates can be a model of becoming oratory despite having not persuaded the jury: "But our orator and his art, as we define it, are independent of results. The speaker aims at victory, it is true, but if he speaks well, he has lived up to the ideals of his art, even if he is defeated. [...] So too the orator's purpose is fulfilled if he has spoken well. For the art of rhetoric, as I shall show later, is realized in action, not in the result obtained" (1: 335, 337).

minds of the jury explicitly mentioned in Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, Rainolds acknowledges that a judge's mind may be urged toward harm, but says the proper role of emotional appeals is to facilitate justice: "A judge will decide a case the more justly, the more vehemently he is aroused to hatred of the guilty, the more burningly aroused to pity for the innocent, swept away by the artifice of the orator" (147). Demonstrating the way Renaissance rhetorical theorists accented "eloquence in the service of the noblest human ideals" (Vickers, *In Defense of Rhetoric* 285), Rainolds exploits Aristotle's metaphor from *Rhetoric*: he insists on the power of emotional appeals to set a crooked rule straight.

Rainolds's argument that the virtue of eloquence outweighs its potential for abuse represents English Renaissance rhetorics more broadly, as writers from Thomas Wilson to Henry Peacham extol the power of emotional appeals to accomplish good. In contrast to rhetorical theory, however, Philip Sidney and Edmund Spenser create scenes of forensic pleading in which justice and emotional appeals are at odds. In both *The Old Arcadia* and *The Faerie Queene* book 5, various characters use emotional appeals to plead their cases, aiming their eloquence at a judge's pity and thereby pleading according to Quintilian's prescriptions. But both writers tacitly acknowledge Aristotle's description of the potential for emotional appeals to warp the jury, making "a straight-edge ruler crooked"; therefore, they limit the effects of such appeals.

II.

Philip Sidney studied at the Shrewsbury School and Oxford, likely developing a command of the classical rhetorical canon including Quintilian's *Institutio Oratoria* as a result. He also translated the first two books of Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, so he would have been well aware of Aristotle's condemnation of emotional appeals in a forensic context

(Worden 301). What effect did tensions between the Greek and Roman positions have on Sidney's representations of forensic pleading in *The Old Arcadia*? As we shall see, Sidney draws from both the Greek and Roman traditions to depict his forensic climax. The final trial features the capacity of emotional appeals to "appassionate" the mind, but Sidney circumscribes the power of emotional appeals with his representation of a judge who disregards them entirely.⁹

Before looking at the role of emotional appeals in the forensic climax of *The Old Arcadia*, it is important to establish how rhetorical skill functions in the preceding books or more precisely how the princes Pyrocles and Musidorus use their rhetorical skill before they are put on trial in book 5. Both princes use considerable eloquence to their advantage in pursuit of love. Such skill enables them to enter various social settings, persuade or dissuade at will, quell civil strife, and render assorted philosophical positions compelling. As a result, they demonstrate the power and utility of rhetorical skill even while travestying humanist principles of rhetorical theory and training in the process. Two examples from the *Arcadia* demonstrate the princes' rhetorical dexterity: Pyrocles's speech to the rebels and Musidorus's courtship of Philomela.

In book 2, Sidney demonstrates the power of eloquence when Pyrocles dissuades a crowd from rebellion. A look at Pyrocles's rhetorical strategy illustrates his cunning gauge of the situation and skill at deploying just the right persuasive devices. Despite the extraordinary circumstances, Pyrocles speaks like a counselor with a deliberative speech, which dissuades the mob by appealing to his Amazonian ethos and by representing the

⁹ Because of *The Old Arcadia*'s prominent focus on the efficacy and legitimacy of the princes' rhetorical skill as well as the way its forensic conclusion relates to this aspect of their conduct, I address *The Old Arcadia* exclusively, with occasional references to the editions of 1590 and 1593. Although it retains the forensic conclusion, the composite edition lacks this precise focus on the utility of rhetorical skill found in *The Old Arcadia*, as the following pages show.

rebellion in pointed cultural and political terms. Like an Elizabethan schoolboy composing an exercise from Aphthonius's *Progymnasmata*, Pyrocles creates an *ethopoeia*, a speech expressing the thoughts and feelings of a historical or imaginary person (Mack 42). But unlike the grammar school context, the *ethopoeia* is part of a role that Pyrocles inhabits, having disguised himself as the Amazonian in order to pursue Philoclea. What's more, the stakes of his rhetorical performance are high given that the mob threatens the royal family. Pyrocles's skill allows him not just to represent an Amazonian identity in the person of Cleophila but also to appeal to that fictional identity to make his argument, which hinges on his assumed and counterfeit ethos. Pyrocles begins his oration by immediately accounting for the three-fold breach of decorum: "An unused thing it is, and I think not heretofore seen, O Arcadians, that a woman should give public counsel to men; a stranger to the country people; and that lastly such a presence a private person, as I am, should possess the regal throne. But the strangeness of your action makes that used for virtue which your violent necessity imposeth" (Sidney 129). Having transferred the strangeness of the situation from his unusual address to their behavior, Pyrocles uses *philophronesis*, a trope used to assuage anger and obtain compassion through humble submission (Sonnino 35). To obtain the "grace and mercy" that this figure produces, Pyrocles offers himself as a sacrifice in the guise of an innocent woman and stranger who should be protected by the laws of hospitality (Peacham 97).

Pyrocles then puts their actions in political and cultural context. Just as he uses his assumed character for rhetorical effect, Pyrocles appeals to the crowd's identity, which he defines, noting their reputation throughout the world as "wise and quiet"

(130).¹⁰ He also presents their behavior from the perspective of their “hateful neighbours,” who would be gratified by the scene, and from the perspective of their “country” and “famous ancestors,” who would deplore such rebellion (130). His speech hinges on defining their motives as vehement affection instead of bloody rage, thereby transforming the “many-headed multitude” into “Loyal Arcadians” (131).

Sidney highlights Pyrocles’s success by emphasizing the way his speech works. The narrator describes its effect as follows: “The action Cleophila used, with a sweet magnanimity and stately mildness, did so pierce into their hearts [...]” (131). Rather than mere metaphor, the phrase “pierce into their hearts” indicates the precise operation of persuasion according to Renaissance physiology. Thomas Wright’s *The Passions of the Mind in General* (1601) clarifies this process. The heart is the place where the passions affect the human body, “the very seat of all Passions” (114). So when a persuasive speech pierces the heart, it stirs the passions, or affections, which in turn compel the will (94-5). Consequently, this phrase is a common expression for the power of eloquence in both contemporary rhetorical theory and literature. For instance, it recalls the way Despaire’s speech affects Redcrosse knight in *The Faerie Queene* book 1; we are told Despaire’s speech “his heart did perse” like a sword point (9.48.2). It also calls to mind Henry Peacham’s comparison of rhetorical figures and martial instruments in *The Garden of Eloquence* (1577) in which he notes the capacity of figures to pierce the affections (dedication).

¹⁰ Pyrocles appeals to the crowd according to the narrator’s characterization of their reputation in the very first sentence of *The Old Arcadia*: “Arcadia among all the provinces of Greece was ever had in singular reputation, partly for the sweetness of the air and other natural benefits, but principally for the moderate and well tempered minds of the people who [...] were the only people which, as by their justice and providence gave neither cause nor hope to their neighbours to annoy them, so were they not stirred with false praise to trouble others’ quiet, thinking it a small reward for the wasting of their own lives in ravening that their posterity should love after say they had done so” (4).

The capacity of eloquence to subdue and transform this mob, whose barbarism Sidney points out with phrases like “mutinous multitude,” “an unruly sort of clowns,” and “like enraged beasts” (123-4) with “savage howlings,” (126) demonstrates the power of eloquence over the ignorant multitude referenced throughout the rhetorical tradition. For example, this scene evokes the orator as civilizer myth found in classical works including Cicero’s *De Inventione*, Quintilian’s *Institutio Oratoria*, Horace’s *Ars Poetica*, as well as Renaissance rhetorics such as Thomas Wilson’s *The Art of Rhetoric*, which says that oratorical eloquence first raised uncivilized humanity from barbarism to civilization (Rebhorn 175). This scene also recalls John Rainolds’ lecture on Cicero’s exploits using emotional appeals, which include his quelling farmers’ revolts and restraining civic tumults (149). Another example of the power of rhetorical skill over the mad mob that Sidney likely had in mind comes from Augustine’s *De Doctrina Christiana*. In book 4, Augustine includes an anecdote about the capacity to squelch civil strife through persuasive speech. According to Augustine, he once intervened in an annual conflict in Caesarea of Mauretania in which inhabitants fought for days, a quarrel he characterizes as “a civil war, or rather [...] worse than civil” due to its violence between families and citizens (160). Using the grand style, which he associates with moving an audience, Augustine urged them to desist from such evil, and his speech successfully moves them, signified by their tears. This lachrymose evidence recalls Quintilian’s description of tears as the sign of successful emotional appeals to a judge. In 1601 Thomas Wright gives such scenarios a physiological explanation based on the power of the passions. He explains that public speakers can persuade a multitude by commanding their affections, which move the will in turn (90).¹¹ In Sidney’s *Arcadia*,

¹¹ Wright observes, “The same commodity may be gathered by all other Orators, as Ambassadors, Lawyers,

Pyrocles's capacity to transform the mob and prevent civil strife proves his eloquence and the power of emotional appeals.

Even as Pyrocles demonstrates eloquence and the utility of rhetorical skill, such skill does not serve “the noblest human ideals” represented in Renaissance rhetorical theory (Vickers, *In Defense of Rhetoric* 285). In fact, both princes often deploy rhetorical skill but not the attendant moral probity associated with eloquence in English sixteenth-century rhetorics. Thomas Wilson notes in *The Art of Rhetoric* that “[...] the good will not speak evil and the wicked cannot speak well,” but Sidney's princes offer a separate category: they are generally good characters who nevertheless speak well for private and occasionally morally suspect ends (244). Given the moral orator represented in Renaissance rhetorics, which reflects Quintilian's definition of the orator as *vir bonus dicendi peritus*, a “good man skilled in speaking,” Pyrocles flouts rhetoric's noble associations for his own utilitarian purposes (4: 355). Even in the expert oration with the mad mob, the ethos with which Pyrocles dissuades them is a lie. And later in *The Old Arcadia*, his skillful performance of the Amazonian ethos has unintended and deleterious consequences. As Richard Lanham notes, Pyrocles persuades Basilius not to return to his palace in Mantinea in book 3 because this turn of events would be disadvantageous to Pyrocles's pursuit of Philoclea, which makes Pyrocles culpable for subsequent events—or at least in part (*The Old Arcadia* 223). In the immediate context, the outcome is favorable for Pyrocles; however, his successful persuasion entails eventual disaster for the royal family and himself.

Magistrates, Captains, and whosoever would persuade a multitude, because if once they can stir a Passion or Affection in their Hearers, then they have almost half persuaded them [...]” (90).

Primarily responsible for their Arcadian adventures, Pyrocles is the leader of the two princes, and he performs the more spectacular rhetorical feats in the narrative; nevertheless, Musidorus has considerable rhetorical skill as well, which he too uses for private gain. In book 2, for example, he speaks in such a way to convey dual meanings, cloaking his private correspondence with Pamela in an ostensible courtship of Mopsa (98-108). Like Pyrocles does with Basilius, Musidorus in the guise of Dorus beguiles Mopsa along with Dametas and Miso in his pursuit of Pamela. As Katherine Duncan-Jones notes, Mopsa is a “pathetic casualty of the princes’ intrigues” (180). While Musidorus’s rhetorical artistry is laudable and the scene comic, eloquence in service of seduction and at the expense of a shepherd girl is at odds with Euarchus’s hopes for his son and nephew, as well as humanist rhetorical principles more broadly.

The forensic conclusion to Sidney’s *Arcadia* renders judgment on the princes’ behavior throughout the narrative as they face the judge Euarchus. As king and father, Euarchus embodies orthodox authority, calling to mind the patriarchal figures profiled in Richard Helgerson’s *Elizabethan Prodigals*. Again, the utility of rhetorical skill is on display as the princes plead to acquit both themselves and the princesses, often successfully moving the emotions of those present; however, their pleas are evaluated according to Euarchus’s jurisprudence through which Sidney explicitly considers the validity of emotional appeals in a forensic context. Sidney announces the move from romantic adventures to judgment with situational irony. Just before the trial, the narrator notes, “[...] Pyrocles was to plead for his life before that throne, in which throne lately before he had saved the duke’s life” (376). Whereas Pyrocles in the guise of Cleophila dissuaded the mob from the judgment seat, now he must plead before that very judgment

seat in a guise closer to his own—if not as “Pyrocles,” a prince nonetheless. Rhetorical skill served the princes well in their pursuit of love throughout the story, but here it encounters alternate criteria of assessment: evaluation according to reason, justice, and authority embodied by Euarchus.

In the course of the trial, both the prosecution and the defense deploy emotional appeals to the judge thereby following principles of pleading found in Roman rhetoric, especially Quintilian’s *Institutio Oratoria*. As prosecutor, Philanax constructs a series of emotional appeals, representing the basest motives on the part of the princes and highlighting deleterious consequences for Arcadia in a calculated attempt to elicit conviction. Philanax puts on the emotions he wishes to convey, following Quintilian’s argument that a speaker must be moved himself in order to move an audience.¹² As the king’s friend and counselor, certainly Philanax is affected by Basilius’s death and the ruin of the royal family, but one should note that Philanax represents his emotions for dramatic effect just as Quintilian prescribes. The narrator points out the way Philanax conveys his emotional turmoil:

But Philanax, that was even short-breathed at the first with the extreme vehemency he had to speak against them, stroking once or twice his forehead, and wiping his eyes (which either wept, or he would at that time have them seem to weep), looking first upon Pyrocles as if he had proclaimed all hatefulness against him, humbly turning to Euarchus (who

¹² In the treatment of forensic oratory in book 6.2, Quintilian says a speaker must be moved to move others: “The prime essential for stirring the emotions of others is, in my opinion, first to feel those emotions oneself. [...] Consequently, if we wish to give our words the appearance of sincerity, we must assimilate ourselves to the emotions of those who are genuinely so affected, and our eloquence must spring from the same feeling that we desire to produce in the mind of the judge” (2: 431-3).

with quiet gravity showed great attention), he thus began his oration.

(386)

The narrator's use of *epanorthosis*—a figure used to correct or restate an expression for the sake of amplification—highlights a tension between authentic and counterfeit grief with the parenthetical phrase, “which either wept, or he would at that time have them seem to weep” (Sonnino 65). Whether real or fashioned, his emotions serve his rhetorical performance. Philanax's grief aids his eloquence, or more precisely, his grief is part of his eloquence.

By highlighting his physical appearance and actions, Sidney underscores the role of *actio* or delivery in Philanax's appeal to the judge's emotions. Like classical works ranging from Quintilian's *Institutio Oratoria* to Cicero's *De Oratore*, sixteenth-century English works also cited the importance of delivery as well. For example, Thomas Wilson dedicates the last pages of *The Art of Rhetoric* (1553) to gesture. His commentary is brief, but he foregrounds classical precedent with Cicero's message that man's gesture is the speech of his body, taken from *De Oratore* 3.220-27 and also quoted in Quintilian's *Institutio Oratoria* 11.3.1 (Wilson 300). As James Cleary points out, gesture receives its fullest treatment in the following century with John Bulwer's *Chirologia: or the Natural Language of the Hand and Chironomia: or the Art of Manual Rhetoric* (1644), which is the first “systematic and thorough treatise in English devoted exclusively to the art of gesturing in public speaking,” complete with pictures representing the various gesture (xxvi). According to Bulwer's *Chirologia*, Philanax's manual gesture, “stroking once or twice his forehead,” is *Sollicite cogito*, a sign whereby

one conveys anguish: “To rub or scratch the head with the hands is their natural gesture who are in anguish or trouble of mind” (71).

Like Philanax’s anguished gesture, the princes maximize their rhetorical performance with visual rhetoric as well. Their physical appearance contributes to their portrayal as noble and virtuous. The narrator describes the role of their appearances just before the trial begins:

In this sort, with erected countenances, did these unfortunate princes suffer themselves to be led, showing aright by the comparison of them and Gynecia how to diverse persons compassion is diversely to be stirred. For as to Gynecia, a lady known of great estate and greatly esteemed, the more miserable representation was made of her sudden ruin, the more men’s hearts were forced to bewail such an evident witness of weak humanity; so to these men, not regarded because unknown, but rather (besides the detestation of their fact) hated as strangers, the more they should have fallen down in an abject semblance, the more, instead of compassion, they should have gotten contempt; but therefore were to use (as I may term it) the more violence of magnanimity, and so to conquer the expectation of the lookers with an extraordinary virtue. And such effect, indeed, it wrought in the whole assembly, their eyes yet standing as it were in balance to whether of them they should most direct their sight. (377)

This passage reads like a lesson in visual rhetoric, recalling Quintilian’s message about physical appearances in a forensic setting.¹³ As the narrator notes, the appearances of

¹³ In book 11.3, citing precedent with Cicero’s characterization of delivery as “a form of speech” and “a kind of physical eloquence,” Quintilian treats delivery at length, describing how voice, countenance,

Gynecia and the princes are tailored to stir “compassion” in the audience. Because the audience is aware of Gynecia’s “great estate,” her coarse garment and disheveled hair convey her sudden ruin and compel an emotional reaction (i.e. “men’s hearts were forced to bewail such an evident witness of weak humanity”).¹⁴ As the narrator notes, such a strategy on the part of the princes would have the opposite effect. Consequently, Pyrocles and Musidorus harness the “violence of magnanimity” by means of physical comeliness accented with clothes, jewels, and proud, “erected countenances.” As the narrator notes, even the rubies on Musidorus’s Persian tiara, “were enough to speak for him that they [the audience] had to judge of no mean personage” (377).

Along with their visual presentation to the audience, both Philanax and the princes employ verbal craft aimed at the emotions as well. According to English rhetorics, figurative language is the primary means of emotional appeal. For example, Henry Peacham in *The Garden of Eloquence* (1577) describes rhetorical figures as the “principal instruments” of persuasion that make the orator “in a manner the emperor of men’s minds *and affections*” (Rebhorn 226, emphasis mine). In *The Art of English Poesy* (1589), George Puttenham points out the capacity of figurative language to arouse the emotions (e.g. “appassionate”), along with its capacity to deceive (e.g. “inveigle”). In the course of the trial, both prosecution and defense use various tropes and schemes aimed at the emotions. For example, Philanax rehearses various epithets for Pyrocles, often with

gesture, and even the physical appearance of the pleader are corporeal elements that work alongside the language (4: 243). For instance, he treats an orator’s attire, explaining how the toga should be arranged to create an outfit that is “distinguished and manly” (317). But more importantly with regard to emotional appeals, Quintilian explicitly underscores the role of *actio* in evoking an audience’s emotions, with verbal and visual aspects of an oration operating in concert: “All emotional appeals will inevitably fall flat, unless they are given the fire that voice, look, and the whole carriage of the body can give them” (245). Even before his explicit treatment of *actio* in book 11, Quintilian notes in book 6.1 how a certain kind of physical appearance of either the clients or the orator can affect a court, provoking pity in the audience (2: 401-3).

¹⁴ Gynecia here recalls the typical appearance of heroines from the Elizabethan complaint genre as well.

sarcasm, to arouse the audience's scorn, including "this noble Amazon," "your ladyship," and "my lady Timopyrus" (388-9).¹⁵ One of his most common figures is *exuscitatio*, whereby a speaker stirs an audience's feelings through the use of one's own passion (Sonnino 96). As Lorna Challis has noted, Philanax represents his passion through passages of extended indignation (570), as with his series of questions regarding Pyrocles: "What can all the earth answer for his coming hither? Why alone, if he be a prince? How so richly jeweled, if he be not a prince? Why then a woman, if now a man? Why now Timopyrus, if then Cleophila? Was all this play for nothing? Or if it had an end, what end but the end of my dear master?" (Sidney 389). In addition, Philanax calls attention to his own vehemence to augment this effect: "Yet see, so far had my zeal to my beloved prince transported me that I had almost forgotten my second part [...]" (390). At the end of his opening speech recounting the princes' offenses, he concludes by paring *ecphonesis*, an emotional exclamation, with *aposiopesis*, a declaration of being overwhelmed by emotion (Sonnino 87, 142). *Ecphonesis* expresses one's own passion in order to move like passions in one's hearers (Peacham 62-3). Philanax declares, "Alas, though I have much more to say, I can say no more; for my tears and sighs interrupt my speech and force me to give myself over to my private sorrow" (Sidney 391). Philanax uses his own passion, both visual and verbal, for persuasive effect.

The princes likewise use various rhetorical figures aimed at the emotions in the course of the trial; however, their most pointed emotional appeals occur after it is

¹⁵ Lorna Challis too notes Philanax's sarcastic versions of Pyrocles's name, which she says is to imply effeminacy rather than the mere fact of his disguise (571). Like Philanax, the princes taunt their opponent with names like "mountebank," "the trim man," and "An honest and impartial examiner!" and "crocodile" with "bloody tears" (Sidney 393-5) in an attempt to characterize (as Pyrocles puts it) Philanax's "caviling supposition" versus their "direct declaration" (392).

revealed that Euarchus is their kinsmen.¹⁶ It is fitting that such emotional pleas should occur in the princes' final speeches to Euarchus after he reaffirms his sentence because according to Quintilian, it is in the peroration, the last part of a forensic speech, that orators should unleash the full extent of their emotional appeals, which he equates with loosing a "torrent of [...] eloquence" (2: 415). In their final orations to Euarchus, Musidorus and Pyrocles alternate speeches, which is similar to their sequence of orations in the course of the trial: like their opening inquiries regarding Pamela and Philoclea and responses to Philanax, first Musidorus speaks with vehemence, then Pyrocles gives a more effective rendition due to its subtlety and restraint.

Musidorus's speech is rife with emotional appeals, but the predominant tone is bitter invective in keeping with his manner throughout the trial (e.g. "O gods [...] and have you spared my life to bear these injuries of such a drivell?") (400). For instance, he opens with *sarcasmus*, a trope used to subdue folly and disrespect through bitter derision according to Henry Peacham (37-8): "'Enjoy thy bloody conquest, tyrannical Euarchus,' said he, 'for neither is convenient the title of a king to a murderer, nor the remembrance of kindred to a destroyer of his kindred. Go home and glory that it hath been in thy power shamefully to kill Musidorus. Let thy flattering orators dedicate crowns of laurel unto thee, that the first of thy race thou hast overthrown a prince of Thessalia'" (Sidney 412). With a combination of *optatio*, an explicit wishing on the part of the speaker used to move an audience's affections, and *cataplexis*, a threat, Musidorus wishes ill upon Euarchus and declares its certainty as a consequence of the ruling (Sonnino 137, 139): "But for me, I hope the Thessalians are not so degenerate from their ancestors but that

¹⁶ Given that Euarchus has taken on the role and title of protector of Arcadia and the princes have assumed the identities of Timopyrus and Palladius, their identities are hidden from one another until Kalodoulus arrives at the end of the trial, revealing the true identities of father, son, and nephew.

they will revenge my injury and their loss upon thee. I hope my death is no more unjust to me than it shall be bitter to thee. Howsoever it be, my death shall triumph over thy cruelty” (Sidney 412). One has trouble imagining an easy exchange between nephew and uncle after Basilius’s serendipitous revival. Calling him tyrannical, kindred-destroyer, and murderer, who is cruel with a devilish heart, Musidorus upbraids Euarchus and invokes an appeal to pity only to subordinate it to an appeal to character: “[...] then look upon this young Pyrocles with a manlike eye, if not with a pitiful” (412). Accepting his own death, Musidorus ends with an appeal for Pyrocles’s life. He concludes with *paranaesis*, a warning about the dangers of Euarchus’s ruling intended to dissuade him from executing Pyrocles (Sonnino 23): “Believe it, thy own subjects will detest thee for robbing them of such a prince, in whom they have right as well as thyself” (Sidney 413).

Pyrocles’s final address is also a passionate plea for his friend’s life, but in contrast to Musidorus, he demonstrates the three qualities that Quintilian says one’s delivery should possess: it should be conciliatory, persuasive, and moving (4: 329). His oration differs systematically from his cousin’s. For example, instead of Musidorus’s “rage of unkindness,” Pyrocles assumes a supplicating posture, “kneeling down with all humbleness” (Sidney 412-13). Pyrocles uses a number of the rhetorical strategies for appealing to the judge’s emotions that Quintilian explicitly advocates in the *Institutio Oratoria*’s segment dedicated to the peroration of a forensic speech, including invocation of the gods and “appealing to the judges by all that is near and dear to them [by presenting relatives of the accused] [...] especially if he, too, has children, a wife and parents” (2: 403-5). At the opening, he immediately laments the circumstances that have occurred in spite of good intentions to which he has directed his actions; this explanation

invokes his piety (i.e. “my daily prayers”) and shifts responsibility to the gods (i.e. “it hath pleased their unsearchable wisdoms to overthrow all the desires I had to serve you”) (Sidney 413). Unlike Musidorus who uses acid epithets and refrains from invoking their familial bond, Pyrocles twice addresses Euarchus as “father,” each time lingering on this relationship with conspicuous humility, indicated by parenthetical remarks: “O father (if my fault have not made me altogether unworthy so to term you)” and “O father (for since my death answers my fault while I live I may call upon that dear name)” (413-14). In addition, Pyrocles appeals to their mutual bond in the person of Pyrocles’s mother: “And if the remembrance of my virtuous mother (who once was dear unto you) may bear any sway with you [...]” (413). Like Musidorus, Pyrocles pleads for his friend’s life using *paranaesis*, but his warnings are two-fold, both personal and political. First he dehortes Euarchus based on appealing to him as a brother to Musidorus’s mother: “With what face will you look upon your sister when, [...] you take away, and in such sort take away, that which is more dear to her than all the world, and is the only comfort wherewith she nourisheth her old age?” (413-14). In addition, Pyrocles warns Euarchus not only that the Thessalians will execrate him (just as Musidorus warned about the Macedonians), but that he will leave Thessalia without a prince, thereby stressing the political implications of his ruling: “And take heed, [...] lest seeking too precise a course of justice, you be not thought most unjust in weakening your neighbour’s mighty estate by taking away their only pillar” (414).

In his last remarks, Pyrocles uses iterative figures to augment his petition. He notes: “If you do think my *death* sufficient for my fault, and do not desire to make my *death* more miserable than *death*, let these *dying* words of him that was once your son

pierce your ears. Let Musidorus *live*, and Pyrocles shall *live* in him, and you shall not want a child” (414, emphasis mine). With the repetition of “death,” Pyrocles deploys *copulatio*, a figure of repetition in which one or more words are repeated (Sonnino 64). According to the *Rhetorica Ad Herennium*, *conduplicatio* can amplify the subject under discussion or produce feelings of commiseration, and it makes a strong impression on an audience’s emotions (64). Repeating “death” three times (with a *polyptoton* “dying” adding a fourth iteration), Pyrocles adds gravity to his deathbed argument that sparing Musidorus saves Pyrocles from a fate worse than death. But another *copulatio* in the subsequent line balances Pyrocles’s emphasis on death. Repeating the word “live” twice, Pyrocles emphasizes the benefits of Musidorus’s pardon: Pyrocles will live on in a fashion given that these two were cousins and best friends, and Euarchus will still have a son in Musidorus.

Sidney includes reactions from the crowd to illustrate the efficacy of the emotional appeals in the course of the trial. For example, Pyrocles again demonstrates the power of eloquence over the multitude when he inquires after Philoclea, stirring the people to concern for their princess: “He had not spoken his last word when all the people, both of great and low estate, confirmed with an united murmur Pyrocles’ demand, longing, for the love generally was borne Philoclea, to know what they might hope of her” (380). The people are a gauge for the various emotional appeals in the course of the trial, illustrated for example when they react to Gynecia’s speech: “But a great while it was before anybody could be heard speak, the whole people concurring in a lamentable cry; so much had Gynecia’s words and behaviour stirred their hearts to a doleful compassion” (382). At the end of the trial before Euarchus’s first ruling, Sidney notes:

“While this matter was thus handling, a silent and, as it were, astonished attention possessed all the people; but as for Kerxenus, everything was spoken either by or of his dear guests moved an effect in him: sometimes tears, sometimes hopeful looks, sometimes whispering persuasions in their ears that stood by him, to seek the saving the two young princes” (403). And finally, at the end of the trial:

[...] [Musidorus] fell to entreat for Pyrocles, and Pyrocles as fast for Musidorus, each employing his wit how to show himself most worthy to die, to such an admiration of all the beholders that most of them, examining the matter by their own passions, thought Euarchus (as often extraordinary excellencies, not being rightly conceived, do rather offend than please) an obstinate-hearted man, and such a one, who being pitiless, his dominion must needs be insupportable. (414)

As the narrator notes, the emotional appeals have purchase on “most” of the beholders, who are swayed by their “passions.” Nevertheless, Euarchus does not succumb, and even as he looks to those who will execute his charge, everyone refrains (415).

The triumph of justice in spite of emotional appeals results from Euarchus’s exemplary role as ideal judge and ruler. The narrator clarifies Euarchus’s final ruling as follows:

But Euarchus, that felt his own misery more than they, and yet loved goodness more than himself, with such a sad assured behaviour as Cato killed himself withal, when he had heard the uttermost of that their speech tended unto, he commanded again they should be carried away, rising up from the seat (which he would much rather have wished should have been

his grave), and looking who would take the charge, wherto everyone was exceeding backward. (414-5)

The parenthetical description of his exceptional nature noted above (i.e. “as often extraordinary excellencies...”) shows that his ruling demonstrates that he is an “extraordinary” excellency.¹⁷ The Cato allusion highlights Euarchus’s stoic capacity to subordinate his “passions” in contrast to the Arcadian assembly. As Jeff Dolven has noted, Euarchus embodies the kind of ideal monarch described in the Erasmus’s *Insitutio principis christiani*: “‘The good, wise, and upright prince is simply a sort of embodiment of the law,’ a man who can ‘disregard emotional reactions and use only reason and judgment... the prince should be removed as far as possible from the low concerns and sordid emotions of the common people’” (Dolven 124, Erasmus, *Works*, 27:264, 221). In fact, Euarchus’s sentence and the conditions of his ruling agree comprehensively with Erasmus’ conception of the ideal prince, laws, and jurisprudence. Just as Erasmus prescribes, Euarchus demonstrates wise deliberations in harmony with the demands of the law, rules contrary to the “opinion of the mob,” and he affords the nobility no special treatment (Erasmus 72, 79).

Euarchus’s ruling denotes the proper government of both the state and the individual according to Renaissance moral philosophy. According to Thomas Wright, the affections can act like rebellious subjects, compelling the will and opposing reason, which is the monarch in the “commonweal of the soul” (Wright 141; also see 94-5).

¹⁷ According to Renaissance moral philosophy, Euarchus also demonstrates the wisdom prescribed for individuals with regard to emotionally stirring rhetorical appeals. In his chapter on policy in passion, Thomas Wright notes: “[...] when you are induced to anything by act, that is, by a tale well told in Rhetorical manner (flexibility of voice, gestures, actions or other oratorical persuasions), good I hold it a while for a man to suspend his judgement, and not to permit his will follow too far his motion, more artificial than natural, grounded upon affection rather than reason. [...] therefore every wise man ought rather to examine the Orator’s reason than to follow his intent with a seduced affection” (161).

When operating rightly, however, reason rules over the troublemaking emotions.¹⁸

Euarchus reflects the proper physiological operation of the faculties by disregarding emotional appeals in favor of reason. Sidney's conclusion therefore represents subordination of the affections in microcosm and macrocosm.

The forensic context allows Sidney to have the princes evaluated according to Euarchus's jurisprudence, which insists on a strict application of the law. Before his sentence, Euarchus explains his reasoning, having decided that the princes will be judged like private men: "There resteth, then, the second point: how to judge well. And that must undoubtedly be done, not by a free discourse of reason and skill of philosophy, but must be tied to the laws of Greece and municipal statutes of this dukedom" (404). Just as he invokes Greek laws, so he practices a jurisprudence similar to that represented in Aristotle's *Rhetoric* with regard to the capacity of the passions to distort a jury's reasoning. While emotional appeals are allowed during the Arcadian trial, Euarchus disregards them completely. Even before Euarchus's final ruling, Sidney repeatedly highlights the extent to which he disregards such rhetorical strategies. For example, after Pyrocles foment the people's concern for Philoclea, the narrator notes: "Euarchus, though neither regarding a prisoner's passionate prayer nor bearing over-plausible ears to a many-headed motion, yet well enough content to win their liking with things in themselves indifferent [...]" (380). After the speeches by the defense and prosecution, we get Euarchus's response again: "But the general multitude waited the judgement of Euarchus who, showing in his face no motions either at the one's or other's speech,

¹⁸ Wright uses a forensic metaphor to describe the way the passions can alter the imagination, which may become a "deceitful Counsellor" corrupting the judge in the "court of our imagination" (129).

letting pass the flowers of rhetoric and only marking whither their reasons tended [...]" (403).

Not only does Euarchus disregard emotional appeals, but he evaluates the princes' use of rhetoric. His ruling implicitly points out this aspect of their misdeeds: "Nay, I cannot in this case acknowledge you for mine; for never had I shepherd to my nephew, nor never had woman to my son. Your vices have degraded you from being princes, and have disannulled your birthright" (411-12). Their rhetorical skill has served what Euarchus condemns as their "vices" because representing themselves as a shepherd and an Amazonian, Musidorus and Pyrocles have degraded themselves. Even before Kalodoulus and Kerxenus's revelation of the princes' true identities, they continue this practice by putting on the identities of "Palladius" and "Timopyrus," by which they tacitly acknowledge the dubious nature of their undertaking: "[...] having first resolved with themselves that, whatsoever evil fell unto them, they should never upon no occasion utter their names—for the conserving the honour of their royal parentage—but took other names agreed upon [...]" (176). Euarchus condemns the dissimulation that rhetorical skill has afforded them.

Euarchus disregards emotional appeals in his ruling, but he is certainly not anti-rhetorical. In fact, he recognizes the efficacy of rhetorical craft and deploys its visual and verbal aspects himself. For instance, to cultivate the audience's sense of his authority and the gravity of the situation, he has the judgment throne brought into a green before the people. The narrator explains Euarchus's insight: "For Euarchus did wisely consider the people to be naturally taken with exterior shows far more than with inward consideration of the material points; and therefore in this new entry into so entangled a matter he would

leave nothing which might be either an armour or ornament unto him; and in these pompous ceremonies he well knew a secret of government much to consist” (375). Along with arranging the physical setting to his advantage, Euarchus cultivates a verbal style suited to objective, authoritative adjudication. As Lorna Challis observes, Euarchus’s speeches are sparing of rhetorical enhancement: he presents the facts, avoids rhythm and verbal repetition, and emphasizes logical transitions from one idea to the next (566). Jeff Dolven too notes that Euarchus demonstrates “the most densely sententious language in the book,” with a style especially suited to Arcadian law and the judgment seat based on Euarchus’s use of *sententia* (124). Just as Euarchus dismisses the emotional appeals during the trial, so he divests his ruling of emotional appeals.

As Dolven observes, readers may feel emotional dissonance resulting from sympathy for the princes on the one hand, having followed them for the previous four books, and the stringent justice administered by Euarchus on the other (125).¹⁹ Nevertheless, successful persuasion of Euarchus to the point of acquittal would have demonstrated the capacity of rhetoric to thwart justice. While Quintilian represented emotional appeals that sway a judge from the truth as a kind of hoodwinking, English rhetorical theory at the end of the sixteenth century did not have such a pejorative conception of the emotions and their role in human psychology as did Quintilian in first-

¹⁹ Dolven notes: “[Euarchus] is a harrowingly strict interpreter of the laws of the country. The story brings us to an appreciation of the limits of the law, perhaps the limits of *any* universal law, absent clemency or equity. If we have been able to laugh at the abuse of *sententia*, by the end of the trial we cannot wish for its true sense” (125). Dolven’s position regarding the stringency of Euarchus’s ruling is by no means exemplary. In “Sidney’s *Arcadia*: The Endings of the Three Versions,” for example, Peter Lindenbaum finds the princes’ eventual reprieve nearly unsatisfying given the way their behavior near the end of the *Arcadia* strains the reader’s sympathy: “The difficulty with the ending as it stands is not that Euarchus’ adherence to sacred rightfulness is undercut by the revival of Basilius and the pardon of the princes, but that at the particular point in the narrative when the pardon comes it appears almost undeserved” (208).

century Rome.²⁰ Nevertheless, despite both the Augustinian-informed conception of the emotions at work in Renaissance psychology and the power of emotional appeals affirmed in Renaissance rhetorical theory and demonstrated by the princes' audience, Sidney forestalls the princes' acquittal, which would have entailed a kind of hoodwinking. Their exoneration would have vindicated emotional appeals over reason, Euarchus's private identity as father and uncle over his role as protector of Arcadia, and aristocratic privilege over local laws.

Sidney acknowledges the capacity of rhetorical skill to move emotions while emphasizing Euarchus's impartial application of the law. As we have seen, when describing the power of emotional appeals in a forensic setting, Quintilian notes that a judge's tears indicate a sympathetic verdict and the extent to which he has been diverted from considerations of arguments, evidence, and truth to a passionate identification with the orator's case (419-21). In a marked departure from Quintilian's successfully seduced judge in the *Institutio Oratoria*, Euarchus's tears demonstrate justice guided by reason and in spite of his own feelings. His ruling affects himself as well as the Arcadian assembly: "With that, though he would have refrained them, a man might perceive the tears drop down his long white beard, which moved not only Kalodoulus and Kerxenus to roaring lamentations, but all the assembly dolefully to record that pitiful spectacle" (412). The unmitigated justice moves even Philanax who argued so vehemently against the princes: "Philanax himself could not abstain from great shows of pitying sorrow, and

²⁰ Deborah Shuger's characterization of the emotions in classical antiquity is helpful here. Paraphrasing Quintilian's passage from the *Institutio Oratoria* 6.2 in which he advocates leading a judge's mind from the truth, she notes, "In other words, the purpose of passionate oratory is to deceive. This function allows the grand style a very doubtful legitimacy, as philosophers in all eras have been quick to point out, but it is the inevitable result of ancient psychology, which viewed the emotions as at best subrational and at worst diseases" (45-6).

manifest withdrawing from performing the king's commandment" (412). Sidney makes a point of showing that Euarchus's ruling occurs despite his emotions. As Euarchus puts it: "[...] I prefer you much before my life, but I prefer justice as far before you" (411).

The trial scene's representation of emotional appeals relates to Sidney's comprehensive message about the power of the passions throughout *The Old Arcadia*.²¹ The passion of love is the reason for the princes' extended adventures in Arcadia in the first place. For instance, describing the effects wrought on Pyrocles by Philoclea's picture and Kerxenus's description of her, the narrator notes: "[...] and when with pity once his heart was made tender, according to the aptness of the humour, it received straight a cruel impression of that wonderful passion which to be defined is impossible, by reason no words reach near to the strange nature of it. They only know it which inwardly feel it. It is called love" (11-12). Despite his attempt to dissuade Pyrocles from his humour, Musidorus is shortly thereafter subject to this "wonderful passion" as well. Upon seeing Pamela, Musidorus too is struck by her beauty and wounded with "violence of love" (41). Just as Musidorus counseled him against "love, a passion, and the basest and fruitlessest of all passions," so Pyrocles playfully chides his friend regarding how a "worthy man's reason must ever have the masterhood" of the "passion" of love (19, 42). While suitable for pastoral adventures, however, passion's reign only exacerbates Arcadia's political instability. During the trial, the audience's experience of rhetorically evoked passion relates to the way the passions have held sway throughout *The Old Arcadia*, from the princes' own susceptibility to that of the royal family. Consequently,

²¹ While I am interested primarily in the passions as they are stirred through rhetorical means, Garrett A. Sullivan treats Sidney's work in terms of early modern notions of the passions, which "cut across body and environment," and the extent to which Sidney creates a "landscape of passions" in Arcadia (735, 740). See "Romance, Sleep, and the Passions in Sir Philip Sidney's *The Old Arcadia*," *ELH* 74:3 (2007): 735-57.

rhetorical failure—in this case, the princes’ inability to acquit themselves using emotional appeals—marks the end of the reign of the passions, signifying the return of order and political stability.

As Peter Lindenbaum has noted, two major changes in the 1593 *Arcadia* are the omission of Pyrocles and Philoclea’s sexual congress and Musidorus’s near-rape of Pamela, both of which indicate Sidney’s attempt to remove the princes’ susceptibility to sexual passion and consequently to make them more sympathetic (211). These revisions illustrate a rift in the artistic coherence of *The New Arcadia*, especially in light of my discussion of rhetorical appeals to the emotions. While *The New Arcadia*’s forensic conclusion retains Euarchus’s disregard of their emotional appeals and the dramatic irony resulting from Euarchus’s condemnation of his own son and nephew, the prince’s emotional petitions no longer relate to Sidney’s comprehensive message about the power of the passions, which are both enticing and potentially deleterious.

Sidney’s conclusion uses rhetorical failure for dramatic effect. The princes’ conspicuous failure to produce acquittal—especially Pyrocles’s eloquent speech of defense—highlights Euarchus’s character and jurisprudence, which are impervious to the recommended appeals for forensic oratory found in Quintilian’s *Institutio Oratoria*. Yet Sidney’s strategy allows for the efficacy of emotional appeals based on the responses of the princes’ immediate audience, including the assembled Arcadians and Euarchus. The limited utility of rhetorical skill in this forensic context celebrates the ideal ruler even while acknowledging the power of eloquence.

III.

Contrary to Renaissance rhetorics, Edmund Spenser has various malefactors use emotional appeals to plead their cases in book 5 of *The Faerie Queene*. In such moments of forensic persuasion, Spenser acknowledges both the Greek and Roman traditions of rhetorical theory: these characters observe Quintilian's rules for evoking a judge's pity, but because they are villains, they attempt to "warp the jury" by leading them into pity (31-2). Just as Sidney does with his forensic conclusion to the *Arcadia*, Spenser circumscribes the power of emotional appeals. Scenes of forensic rhetorical failure include the episodes with Munera, the Giant with the scales, and Duessa's trial.

Throughout *The Faerie Queene*, rhetorical skill is often subject to abuse by characters who render dangerous ideas in compelling ways. For example, one recalls Redcrosse knight's exchange with Despaire in book 1, canto 9. Looking to avenge the death of Sir Terwin, who with "wounding words" was persuaded to stab himself, Redcrosse zealously upbraids Despaire. In the ensuing debate, Redcrosse proves to be no match for the deft rhetorician, who advocates suicide with verbal skill informed by the logic of election.²² As previously noted, Despaire's speech is said to pierce Redcrosse's heart like a sword, signifying both the efficacy of his dangerous eloquence and its physiological operation. After his exchange with Redcrosse Knight, Despaire hangs himself just as he had done a "thousand" times before, thereby demonstrating a

²² It is important to note too that in this scene Despaire's rhetoric is supplemented with images and objects as well.

commitment to his own argument that conforms to Quintilian's prescription for stirring others' emotions by feeling them oneself (2: 431-3).²³

As the scene with Despaire demonstrates, Spenser focuses on the power of rhetoric to seduce. When he dramatizes justice in book 5, Spenser acknowledges this capacity as well; however, his agents of justice thwart deceitful persuasion through power. The opening of canto 4 characterizes the operation of justice in book 5:

Who so upon him selfe will take the skill
True Justice unto people to divide,
Had neede have mightie hands, for to fulfill
That, which he doth with righteous doome decide,
And for to maister wrong and puissant pride.
For vaine it is to deeme of things aright,
And makes wrong doers justice to deride,
Unlesse it be perform'd with dreadlesse might.

For power is the right hand of Justice truely hight. (4.1.1-9)

According to the logic of the poem, unless justice is performed with "dreadlesse might," it will be derided by "wrong doers" and vainly affirmed in name only. As these lines show, the hand is a chief metaphor in book 5, versions of which appear over ninety times from Munera's "suppliant hands" to Radigund's subjugated knights whose hands twist linen rather than wield swords (2.26.4, 5.22.9). The hand imagery in book 5 recalls the comparison of dialectic to a closed fist and rhetoric to an open palm, which is a common

²³ For instance, Quintilian admits, "I have frequently been so much moved while speaking, that I have not merely been wrought upon to tears, but have turned pale and shown all the symptoms of genuine grief" (2: 439).

Renaissance adage.²⁴ In the rhetorical tradition, the strength of eloquence is often represented in terms of physical force. One recalls Quintilian's description of the way emotional appeals drag and throw audiences off balance, George Puttenham's description of the eloquent man's capacity to beat reason into the ignorant head, or the figure of Hercules Gallicus, who signified the power of eloquence with chains stretching from his tongue to his followers' ears.²⁵ *The Faerie Queene* too acknowledges such violence with details like Despaire's heart-piercing speech from book 1. In book 5, however, physical violence replaces the metaphorical violence of persuasion. Power, "the right hand of Justice," represented by Talus' "iron paw," is paramount, and avenging hands supplant pleading hands (1.22.1).

The episode with Munera emphasizes Talus's role as "the right hand of justice," one who prevents persuasive dissimulation. Talus is impervious to force and bribery, but especially entreaty.²⁶ Upon capturing Munera, Talus sentences her as follows:

Yet for no pitty would he change the course
Of Justice, which in Talus hand did lye;
Who rudely hayld her forth without remorse,
Still holding up her suppliant hands on hye,
And kneeling at his feete submissively.
But he her suppliant hands, those hands of gold,

²⁴ Works ranging from Vives' *De Causis Corruptarum Artium* to Bacon's *The Advancement of Learning* mention this adage; Quintilian attributes the comparison to Zeno the Stoic in *Institutio Oratoria* book 2.20.7 (Rebhorn 84).

²⁵ Spenser presents a perversion of this image with the Blatant Beast in books 5 and 6.

²⁶ For the implications of Talus's invulnerability in light of Spenser's humanistic and chivalric values, see chapter 6, "Inhumanism: Spenser's Iron Man," of Jessica Wolfe's *Humanism, Machinery, and Renaissance Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2004) 203-35.

And eke her feete of silver trye,

Which sought unrighteousnesse, and justice sold,

Chopt off, and nayld on high, that all might them behold. (2.26.1-9)

Munera's twice-mentioned gesture of holding up "suppliant hands" is part of a rhetorical performance calculated to elicit pity. Like Sidney does with Philanax's anguished gestures, as well as Gynecia's and the princes' physical appearances in *The Old Arcadia*, Spenser invokes the art of delivery from the rhetorical tradition. The first expression that John Bulwer treats in *Chirologia [...] and Chironomia* is "supplico," or the stretching out of both hands as a natural expression of soliciting mercy and grace.²⁷ The initial entry in his first chirographic plate features supplicating hands, parallel and upraised like the image suggested by the Munera's petition. Nevertheless, the opening of canto 4 dictates "righteous doome" for the sake of justice in spite of Munera's appeal, so Spenser stresses Talus's imperviousness to her appeal, mentioning his lack of pity both here and in the previous stanza (like Munera's twice-mentioned "suppliant hands").

As a number of critics have pointed out, the scenes with Munera and Pollente comment on aristocratic abuses, but the manner of Munera's execution also conveys a message about the abuse of rhetorical skill. Hands are instruments of persuasion in the classical rhetorical tradition and especially important aspects of corporeal rhetoric. In his explanation of delivery in book 11.3, Quintilian describes manual rhetoric as follows:

As for the hands, without which all action would be crippled and

enfeebled, it is scarcely possible to describe the variety of their motions,

since they are almost as expressive as words. For other portions of the

²⁷ Bulwer illustrates "supplico" with references from such gestures in Plutarch's *Vitae Parallelae*, Livy's *Historia*, and *Isaiah* (21-22). For a treatment of the importance of supplication in ancient Mediterranean culture, see F. S. Naiden's *Ancient Supplication* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2007).

body merely help the speaker, whereas the hands may almost be said to speak. Do we not use them to demand, promise, summon, dismiss, threaten supplicate, express aversion to fear, question or deny? Do we not employ them to indicate joy, sorrow, hesitation, confession, penitence, measure, quantity, number and time? Have they not power to excite and prohibit, to express approval, wonder to shame? Do they not take the place of adverbs and pronouns when we point at place and things? In fact, though the peoples and nations of the earth speak a multitude of tongues, they share in common the universal language of the hands. (4: 289-91).

Certainly the public display of Munera's severed hands (and feet) like Pollente's dismembered head invokes the "spectacles of dismemberment [...] designed to remind the citizenry of their subject position in the body politic and to serve as grisly warnings" in Renaissance England, as Walter Lim has noted (54). But as the passage from Quintilian shows, the public display of Munera's hands emphasizes the means by which she has practiced evil, and it publicly conveys the vindication of justice. The Munera episode treats acquisitiveness and ill-gotten gains, emphasized by the precious metals of her hands and feet and attempt to avoid punishment by hiding under a "heape of gold." But Munera's punishment highlights her evil persuasiveness, which Spenser draws attention to by having Munera entreat Talus, seeking to prevail upon him with the "power of charms" (2.22.8). Her demise recalls a similar violent spectacle from classical Rome. After Cicero was executed in 43 BC, Marc Anthony had his hands and head nailed to the speaker's platform in the Forum (van Eck 2). As Caroline van Eck notes, Marc Anthony publicly demonstrated that Cicero could no longer use speech or gesture (2). Marc

Anthony thereby co-opted the very means by which Cicero had plagued him. One of the most prominent models of classical eloquence and eloquent statesmanship in the Renaissance was thereby dispatched to convey a message of political power and revenge. Talus too administers such violence, and with a similar objective. So not only do Spenser's agents of justice constrain deceitful persuasion, but they appropriate the power of persuasion, and especially corporeal persuasion, through violence.

In canto 9, the scene with Malfont is a similar example of the appropriation of persuasive power through violence. Shortly after entering Mercilla's kingdom, Arthur and Artegall note:

There as they entred at the Scriene, they saw
Some one, whose tongue was for his trespasse vyle
Nayld to a post, adjudged so by law:
For that therewith he falsely did revile,
And foule blaspheme that Queene for forged guile,
Both with bold speeches, which he blazed had,
And with lewd poems, which he did compyle;
For the bold title of a Poet bad

He on himselfe had ta'en, and rayling rymes had sprad. (9.25.1-9)

Like Munera's supplicating hands, Malfont's tongue is the offending instrument, which the verbs of misuse emphasize, including "revile" and "blaspheme." The phrase "adjudged so by law" conveys impersonal sentencing and reinforces the notion that this realm is one of "just judgements." Spenser's suspends the meaning of the name "Malfont" between maker of evil and fountain of evil speech, which conflates evil deeds

and words: “So now Malfont was plainely to be red; / Eyther for th’evill, which he did therein, / Or that he likened was to a welhed / Of evill words, and wicked sclaunders by him shed” (9.26.6-9). Again Spenser forestalls the power of eloquence, appropriates its capacity for deception, and conveys a message about power’s legitimacy in service of justice.

Spenser’s agents of justice in book 5 do employ verbal persuasion, but it is accompanied by force, demonstrated with Artegall’s debate with the Giant with the scales in canto 2. The Giant communicates his message of freedom and equality to gathering masses, and Spenser points out that his audience is “vulgar” and “simple,” composed of “fooles, women, and boys,” suggesting that persuasive speech is suspect not only because it is subject to abuse but because it appeals to the multitude—as with the similar popular support for Duessa later in book 5 (2.33.1,7 and 2.30.9). Artegall rebuts the Giant, challenging his anarchical position based on appeals to divine order, permanence, and hierarchy, and Talus subsequently destroys him and routs the “lawlesse multitude” that riots as a result (2.52.1). Because Talus is a gift from Astraea, he is associated with the divine order to which Artegall alludes in the exchange, and his violence validates Artegall’s authority and message.

Like Euarchus’s ruling in spite of his own tears in Sidney’s *Arcadia*, Spenser’s dual agents of justice, Artegall and Talus, produce both pity and efficient punishment. This strategy allows for the efficacy of eloquence while rendering it innocuous. For example, Munera supplicates Talus with a plea directly to his emotions, but it fails to move the iron groom. Spenser mitigates the effect of this rhetorical failure by presenting her guilt well before her final appeal and subsequent execution, namely that she and

Pollente enjoy the benefit of dishonest revenue. But Spenser's second agent of justice, Artegall, expresses pity while Talus executes punishment. After Talus arrests Munera, the following lines illustrate their dual actions: "[...] Thence he her drew, / By the faire lockes, and fowly did array, / Withouten pitty of her goodly hew, / That *Artegall* him selfe her seemelesse plight did rew" (2.25.6-9). While Talus is impervious to her pitiful appearance, Artegall is not, responding to the degradation of her "goodly hew." Consequently, Quintilian's prescription for eliciting sympathy still stands, but Munera receives her sentence nonetheless.

Duessa's trial scene in canto 9 parallels this separation of justice and pity demonstrated by Talus and Artegall. Spenser once again forestalls effective persuasion while allowing for displaced compassion. The trial is a forensic contest of two, well-supported positions (e.g. "The tryall of a great and weightie case, / Which on both sides was then debating hard") that both appeal to the jury's emotions (9.36.7-8). For example, following Quintilian's recommendations for appealing to pity with a visual display, Duessa's appearance garners considerable sympathy from the audience (i.e. "Yet in that wretched semblant, she did sure / The peoples great compassion unto her allure") (9.38.8-9). The prosecutor *Zeke* with his charming tongue immediately rehearses her various crimes, followed by a parade of witnesses to her guilt including Kingdoms care, Authority, law of Nations, Religion, and Justice. Duessa's own lineup of allegorical personages answers the prosecution; these include Pittie, Regard of womanhead, Daunger, Nobility of birth, and Griefe, the last of whom pleads and pours forth tears such that Prince Arthur is inclined to Duessa's side. Demonstrating the forensic tradition of using the judge's emotions both as a gauge and a means to success, Zeke recognizes that

Arthur is moved to pity Duessa, and he re-doubles his efforts, producing new accusations that win the prince to his position.²⁸ While Prince Arthur is temporarily moved by Duessa's appeal (i.e. "With the neare touch whereof in tender hart / The Brixton Prince was sore empassionate / And woxe inclined much unto her part"), Artegall is resolute (i.e. "But Artegall with constant firme intent, / For zeale of Justice was against her bent"), and the trial produces unanimous consent as to her guilt (i.e. "So was she guiltie deemed of them all") (9.46.1-3, 9.49.4-6).

One remarkable aspect of the trial scene is that Duessa is executed in spite of a successfully moved judge, which is a strategic part of forensic pleading according to Quintilian. Canto 9 notes Mercilla's response to Duessa at the end of the trial:

But she, whose Princely breast was touched nere
With piteous ruth of her so wretched plight,
Though plaine she saw by all, that she did heare,
That she of death was guiltie found by right,
Yet would not let just vengeance on her light;
But rather let in stead thereof to fall
Few perling drops from her faire lampes of light;
The which she covering with her purple pall
Would have the passion hid, and up arose withall. (9.50.1-9)

Despite definitive evidence of Duessa's guilt, Mercilla is moved by pity to the point of tears. In the next canto, however, we find that Duessa is sentenced in spite of this

²⁸ C. Hamilton observes that Duessa's appeal recalls Aristotle's terms for tragedy in the *Poetics* (Stoll 131). It is worth noting too that fear and pity are emotions that Quintilian says can be evoked in forensic trials (e.g. fear, or "metus," and pity, or "misericordia"), especially with garnering pity for the defendant (2: 391, 397).

compassion, even while Mercilla pities her to the very end: “But by her tempred without grieve or gall, / Till strong constraint did her thereto enforce. / And yet even then ruing her wilfull fall, / With more then needful natural remorse, / And yielding the last honour to her wretched corse” (10.4.5-9). Like Artegall’s response to Munera in canto 2, Mercilla expresses pity irrelevant to the outcome of the case but related to the ethos of the empathetic queen and judge. Mercilla can pity Duessa even while the correct ruling prevails, thereby proving the impartial justice by which Spenser characterizes Mercilla’s realm with lines such as “Dealing just judgements, that more not be broken / For any brybes, or threatens of any to be wroken,” and “She was about affaires of common wele, / Dealing Justice with indifferent grace” (9.24.8-9 and 9.36.3-4). The court functions like Talus in this scene, which efficiently judges and sentences Duessa.

Another trial scene that corresponds to Spenser’s portrayal of rhetorical failure in book 5 is Mutabilitie’s appeal to Nature from the Mutabilitie Cantos. Similar to Duessa and other pleaders in book 5, Mutabilitie’s rhetorical strategy conforms to Quintilian’s directions for forensic oratory in *Institutio Oratoria*. For example, speaking about the peroration of a forensic trial, Quintilian says that both parties should “seek to win the judge’s goodwill and to divert it from their opponent, as also to excite or assuage his emotions” and it is the accuser’s task especially to “rouse the judge” with emotional appeals (2: 389, 387). As the prosecutor, Mutabilitie attempts this approach with her use of rhetorical figures, her deft counterargument to Jove, and the visual pageant presented to Nature. Quintilian also notes that the best way for an accuser to incite the feelings of the judge is to amplify the charge, making it as “deplorable” as possible using “the nature of the act, the position of its author or the victim, the purpose, time, place and manner of

the act” (2: 391-3). Mutabilitie employs precisely this stratagem. In stanza 16, Mutabilitie argues that Jove has “unjustly” usurped her “heritage,” taking by violence what is hers by birthright, thereby stressing the unjust nature of the act and her position as the victim (7.7.16.6-7).

Before she speaks, Spenser describes her oration as a calculated rhetorical performance, featuring both gesture and rhetorical figures to strengthen her case: “And being lowe before her presence feld, / With meek obaysance and humilitie, / Thus gan her plaintiff Plea, with words to amplifie” (7.13.7-9). Mutabilitie amplifies her address with a number of figures. For example, she frequently deploys *comprobatio*, whereby one praises the audience to garner their favor (Sonnino 49). For the better part of her opening, she praises Nature and her justice,²⁹ and in the course of her oration, she uses titles of esteem like “o greatest goddesse, onely great,” “o soveraigne goddesse,” and “o thou greatest goddesse trew” (7.14.1, 7.16.1, and 7.56.6). She also uses the figure *commoratio*, a scheme by which the speaker dwells on one main point, in order to stress that she in fact rules over everything (Sonnino 40).³⁰ In response to Jove’s counterargument (i.e. although it changes all things under heaven, Time is in fact ruled by the gods), Mutabilitie uses *epitrope*, which entails conceding something ironically (Peacham 112). Granting that the gods control things even though such secret power is unseen, Mutabilitie argues that the gods themselves are subject to change.

²⁹ For example, Mutabilitie declares, “[...] I lowely fly / Seeking for Right, which I of thee entreat; / Who Right to all dost deale indifferently, / Damning all Wrong and tortiuos Injurie, / Which any of thy creatures doe to other / (Oppressing them with power, unequally) / Sith of them all thou art the equall mother, / And knittest each to’each, as brother unto brother” (7.14.2-9).

³⁰ Henry Peacham has a provocative caution regarding the use of *commoratio*: “Where virtue vseth this figure, it neither accuseth falsly nor defendeth fraudulently, but where craft and ill conscience beare the sway it doth both” (153). When guided by craft and ill conscience, *commoratio* necessarily entails false accusation. By virtue of being on the wrong side in the economy of Spenser’s poem, Mutabilitie “accuseth falsly,” making her case with craft.

Mutabilitie's parade of seasons, months, and times, as well as Life and Death, demonstrates the extent of her rule, and this visual argument connects her rhetorical strategy to the poet's own medium. Noting how the poem is often a "verbalization of Pageant," influenced by sundry forms of iconography from masques to emblems, C. S. Lewis describes this aspect of the poem: "By Pageant is meant a procession or group of symbolical figures in symbolical costume, often in symbolical surroundings. [...] For, just as a pageant or a masque is not completely dramatic, so Spenser's art is not completely narrative. Instead we are meant to *look* and to see the *shows* it presents" (3). Lewis calls Mutabilitie's parade of witnesses "the greatest of all the poem's pageants" (76). Like any number of allegorical and metaphorical processions in Spenser's poem from the very first appearance of Redcrosse knight, Una, the lamb, and dwarf (which Lewis points out) to the House of Pride, Mutabilitie's pageant is visually persuasive. Even as Spenser ultimately vindicates Mutabilitie's opposition, namely that there is permanence in the cycle of change, the similarity between her strategy and the poet's illustrates the extent to which her argument is compelling and skillfully made.

Mutabilitie loses her case in spite of rhetorical skill and persuasive appeals, which are certainly superior to Jove's. While Mutabilitie herself is not dispatched by force, Nature's ruling implicitly endorses violent succession as Andrew Hadfield points out: Jove himself conquered through force, and the sword that he used to defeat the Titans is passed to Artegall (xxi). This progression of authority reinforces the idea that power is the principal instrument of order. Mutabilitie cites Nature's role as the impartial arbitrator to which a creature appeals when oppressed by the "power" of another (7.14.7). Nevertheless, Nature's sentence implicitly authorizes such oppression—or at least points

out that some subjugation by force is cosmically sanctioned. Endorsing Jove's entitlement while opposing Mutabilitie's, Nature affirms the invisible order of which Mutabilitie is skeptical. This invisible order determines the legitimacy of violence.

In book 5 and the Mutabilitie Cantos, Spenser creates trial scenes that obviate both deceitful persuasion and travestied justice. In the process, Spenser undercuts rhetoric's civic role by vindicating orthodoxy and divine order in spite of rhetorical skill. Both Munera's and Duessa's appeals are made in spite of their guilt, which Spenser makes a point to emphasize, and both are met with efficient justice like other malefactors in book 5. Nevertheless, the implications for rhetoric are disconcerting—at least for rhetoric's ideal civic function represented in Renaissance rhetorical theory. Justice may be free from derision because it is performed with “dreadlesse might,” but Spenser's vision of impartial justice subordinates rhetoric to force. If power is the primary means of government, and emotional appeals are useless for self-defense, then rhetorical skill is largely irrelevant to both the ruler and the ruled. Quintilian notes that “the weapons of oratory” may be used for good or evil, but in book 5 of *The Faerie Queene* eloquence is immaterial (1: 323).

Scholars often note the “spectacles of dismemberment” in book 5, yet its representation of violence with regard to the rhetorical tradition has been neglected. According to “The Legend of Artegall,” verbal eloquence is practically irrelevant to government because corporeal violence supplants rhetorical skill. Consequently, power is not only the primary means of justice; it is the idiom of providential order. Unlike the corporeal rhetoric that was part of an orator's delivery in the rhetorical tradition, Spenser's agents of justice create their own corporeal rhetoric produced through

instruments appropriated from those who have abused persuasive skill—like Munera’s severed hands and feet or Malfont’s tongue nailed to a post.

IV.

The power of emotional appeals is a commonplace in the classical rhetorical tradition. Descriptions of their efficacy range from Gorgias’s explanation of the enchantment enabled by stirring an audience’s feelings to Quintilian’s account of throwing an audience off balance using emotional appeals.³¹ Even with such a well-established precedent, claims for emotional persuasion in England in the sixteenth century are especially bold. For example, one recalls Thomas Wilson’s portrayal of persuasion as moving the affections of an audience so that they are *forced* to acquiesce in *The Art of Rhetoric* (1553). Despite assertions about the extraordinary power of emotional appeals, rhetorical theorists at the end of the sixteenth century seem largely untroubled by their potential for abuse. As Brian Vickers puts it, Renaissance rhetorics focused instead on “eloquence in service of the noblest human ideals” (*In Defense of Rhetoric* 285). Elizabethan poets and playwrights, however, did consider the tension between the power of eloquence and its utility, recognizing the extent to which eloquence might not be put to strictly virtuous uses.³² Their fictions provide a more robust understanding of contemporary views of rhetoric because they focus on such tensions in Renaissance views of rhetoric, especially with regard to its capacity for misuse.

³¹ See page 42 of James Herrick’s *The History and Theory of Rhetoric* for a description of Gorgias’s association of “beautiful words and supernatural power” and Quintilian’s *Institutio Oratoria* 5.14.29 for his particular representation of emotional appeals (2: 365).

³² For example, Brian Vickers has shown Shakespeare’s presentation of “evil rhetoric,” the use of persuasion to control others, was an important complement to English rhetorical theory in the sixteenth century (“‘The Power of Persuasion’: Images of the Orator, Elyot to Shakespeare” 430).

Philip Sidney and Edmund Spenser contribute to rhetorical theory by illustrating rhetoric's capacity for harm, both intentional and unintentional, and especially the need to check the power of emotional appeals. In the process, they defy conventions from the rhetorical tradition. In *The Old Arcadia*, for example, the greatest orator is an Amazonian-disguised prince rather than Quintilian's *vir bonus dicendi peritus*; his rhetorical skill gives him power over both individuals and assemblies to the point that ultimate judgment requires a ruler impervious to eloquence. Similarly, Spenser subverts the myth of the orator as civilizer. In Thomas Wilson's version of the myth, God grants his elect the capacity to persuade mankind from barbarism to prosperity and moral good. In *The Faerie Queene*, however, persuasion serves the various miscreants of the poem. And in book 5, power—not eloquence—is the primary instrument of providence that executes justice and preserves order. Both Sidney and Spenser highlight the dangerous power of eloquence by creating agents of justice conspicuously invulnerable to manipulation by persuasive appeals.

CHAPTER 4

“SUFFERING FOR TRUTH’S SAKE / IS FORTITUDE TO HIGHEST VICTORY”: DELIBERATIVE PERSUASION IN JOHN MILTON’S *PARADISE LOST*

Using classical and Renaissance rhetorics, as well as passages from Milton’s poetry and “left-handed” prose, the following section evaluates Milton’s representation of persuasive speech in *Paradise Lost*. My primary concern is with the role of persuasion in civic polity according to the poem, and especially Milton’s representations of deliberation and political counsel. The implicit question of this chapter is what Milton thinks about the function of rhetoric: what purpose can eloquence serve—for the state, the individual, and the author? In the course of *Paradise Lost*, Milton exploits traditional expectations associated with classical deliberative oratory. Examples range from the council scenes in hell, with its rigged procedure, to the debate in heaven with Abdiel’s unheeded case for obedience. As with his vexed presentation of epic heroism in the figure of Satan, Milton deploys scenes of persuasive counsel for his distinctive poetic program, valorizing a series of moral rhetors—including Abdiel, Raphael, Enoch, Moses, and the poet himself—in a sustained critique of classical deliberative oratory. Rhetorical failure in *Paradise Lost* belongs exclusively to these good characters, and they are contrasted with Satan who is the eloquent persuader *par excellence*, at least in terms of his immediate audience. Recognizing Milton’s challenging representation of the practical value and function of eloquence adds to an understanding of the complexity of persuasion in *Paradise Lost*, but it also enhances our understanding of *Paradise Lost* as a Restoration

poem: Milton uses rhetorical failure to indict his age and redeem his political role in the 1640s and 50s. Unheeded eloquence testifies to the faults of his era and to Milton's work.

I.

A focus on the category of deliberative persuasion is crucial for understanding how Milton conceives of rhetoric, eloquence, and persuasive speech in *Paradise Lost*. According to the rhetorical tradition, the deliberative category of rhetoric is concerned primarily with the future, or rather how to achieve future ends based on decisions in the present. Not surprisingly, a poem concerned with man's first disobedience, and potential obedience, focuses on deliberation. *Paradise Lost* features set events based on Milton's source material in Genesis, but these events nevertheless involve the actions of free agents who deliberate. The poem concentrates on the compelling presentation of information (and in Satan's case, the seductive presentation) as preparation for moral choice. Consequently, my attention to "deliberative" persuasion includes civic contexts, especially council scenes, but also the persuasive presentation of ideas to be accepted or rejected by an individual or group—both public and private, collective and individual. This inclusion is dictated in part by Milton's recurring dramatization of deliberation throughout the poem. Because moral choice is one of the poem's core concerns, deliberative speech is too.¹

¹ For a focus on rhetoric as "a practical art of deliberation" in *Paradise Lost* (1), see chapter 6 of Wendy Olmsted's *Rhetoric: An Historical Introduction*, "Deception, Strong Speech, and Mild Discourse in Milton's Early Prose and *Paradise Lost*" (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2006). For example, Olmsted notes: "Though they are exiled from Eden at the end, *Paradise Lost* insists that 'The world was all before them, where to choose / Their place of rest,' lines that make the end of the poem a new beginning (XII.646-7). Mutual company, providence, and a capacity for a deliberation informed by rhetoric offer grounds for the choices that *Paradise Lost* envisions as at the center of human, cosmic, and religious transformations" (95).

Well before the composition of *Paradise Lost*, Milton's career in both prose and poetry shows a recurring concern with the category of deliberative persuasion and the presentation of alternative choices for his characters and readers. The example that comes to mind most readily is *Areopagitica*, the title of which associates Milton's deliberative oration with Isocrates' written speech to the Areopagus (Lewalski 191). The proliferation of voices in the 1640s and 50s that constitutes the backdrop for Milton's own promotion of "religious, domestic, and civil" liberty (*Second Defense* 831) meant that the public sphere was full of arguments in favor of particular stances. Milton himself characterized 1643 as a period featuring men "disputing, reasoning, reading, inventing, discoursing, even to a rarity and admiration, things not before discoursed or written of [...]" (*Areopagitica* 744).

The deliberative method of negotiating among alternative choices also shows up in Milton's poetry as well. For example, just as *Areopagitica* offers the audience a choice, moving them through a variety of alternatives, his poem Sonnet 19 (likely composed between 1652-5) uses a deliberative method:

When I consider how my light is spent,
E're half my days, in this dark world and wide,
And that one Talent which is death to hide,
Lodg'd with me useless, though my Soul more bent
To serve therewith my Maker, and present
My true account, lest he returning chide,
Doth God exact day-labour, light deny'd,
I fondly ask; But patience to prevent

That murmur, soon replies, God doth not need
Either man's work or his own gifts; who best
Bear his milde yoke, they serve him best; his State
Is Kingly. Thousands at his bidding speed
And post o'er Land and Ocean without rest:
They also serve who only stand and waite. (1-14)²

One of the poem's conspicuous features is the narrative progression of reasoning. The plot is deliberative: from the speaker's consideration of his predicament—with his double-bind of simultaneous responsibility and incapacity despite a willingness to serve—to a “fond” version of that predicament, to the welcomed rejoinder regarding God's sufficiency, and then the final rendering of the proper perspective. The speaker offers the lesson for the reader, but it has greater significance coming as it does in sequence, after self-accusation based on reckoning with Christ's charges. It's as much an interpretive trial too, as the speaker must reconcile Christ's words from the parable of the talents in Matthew 25:14-30, his description of night's approach in John 9:4, the parable of the vineyard in Matthew 20:1-16, as well as his remark from Matthew 11:30 that “my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”³ Milton is too learned and varied a poet to have one composition strategy characterize his work more broadly; nevertheless, a number of his shorter poems do feature a similar deliberative progression. These include Sonnet 11, “On the detraction which follw'd upon my writing certain treatises,” in which the speaker must make sense of the “barbarous noise” that greets his call to liberty. Like these

² Sonnet 19 and Sonnet 11 below are quoted from *John Milton: Complete Shorter Poems*, ed. Stella P. Revard (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009).

³ For the biblical references in Sonnet 19, see Revard 304.

shorter poems, *Paradise Lost* features a concern with right reasoning: the presentation of alternate choices, which rational agents must formulate, evaluate, and respond to.

The primary civic function of rhetoric in the Elizabethan era was as a tool of counsel. As Colin Burrow notes, “[...] the civic aspect of rhetoric in Elizabethan England was not displayed by speaking to the Senate, but by giving counsel” (52). But England in the 1640s is remarkably different; possibility seems to be the order of the day.

Widespread apocalyptic conceptions of the era, political, religious, economic, and civic unrest, all contribute to a contemporary understanding of the period as exceptional.⁴ By the time Milton composes *Paradise Lost*, however, his previous take on the public, civic function of rhetoric—e.g. men “disputing, reasoning, reading, inventing, discoursing, even to a rarity, and admiration” in the 1640s—is gone (*Areopagitica* 744). The poem shows Milton’s shift in emphasis from rhetoric as a tool of progress and possibility to a means of revealing the character of his moral agents. Rhetoric may be used or abused, but Milton’s focus is primarily on moral choice.

In the process of representing the artful presentation of alternatives, of reasoning for oneself and others, Milton comments on Renaissance rhetorical theory, which held extraordinary claims for the power and function of persuasive skill. Like other Renaissance works with characters and scenarios that flout the theoretical rules of eloquence, *Paradise Lost* contravenes rhetorical theory with evil persuasive speakers, good unpersuasive speakers, and eloquence as the means of the Fall. As a number of critics have pointed out, rhetorical theorists from Cicero to Thomas Wilson portray

⁴ For a description of the intellectual climate and politics of this period, see H. R. Trevor-Roper’s “Three Foreigners: The Philosophers of the Puritan Revolution,” in *Religion, the Reformation and Social Change, and Other Essays* (London: Macmillan, 1967) 237-93.

eloquence as the means of man's ascendancy from barbarism to civilization.⁵ For instance, Henry Peacham explains Horace's praise of Orpheus with the following observation:

The Poet here vnder the name of tigres and lions, meant not beasts but men, & such men as by their sauage nature & cruel manners, might well be compared to fierce tigres and deuouring lions, which notwithstanding by the mightie power of wisdom, and prudent art of perswasion were couerted from that most brutish condition of life, to the loue of humanitie, & polliticke gouernment, so mighty is the power of this happie vnion, (I meane of wisdom & eloquence) [...]. (dedication)

The mythic account of eloquent orators who through the "prudent art of perswasion" turned multitudes away from savagery can be found in such works as Elyot's *The Governor*, George Puttenham's *The Arte of English Poesie*, and Sidney's *Apology* to name a few (Vickers, "'The Power of Persuasion': Images of the Orator, Elyot to Shakespeare" 415). In contrast to the rhetorical tradition, persuasive speech is the means of the Fall in *Paradise Lost*; it enables Satan to move the angels and Eve to rebellion. Eloquence is traditionally located at the origin of order and civilization, but Milton locates it at the origin of man's great decent. Admittedly, eloquence is bound up with the very medium of Milton's epic. But in his re-imagining of Genesis, Milton makes eloquence—like other Miltonic values such as experience and self-esteem—subject to catastrophic misuse.

⁵ For example, see Stanley Fish's "Rhetoric" in *Rhetoric in an Antifoundational World* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1998) 43, and Vickers's "'The Power of Persuasion': Images of the Orator; Elyot to Shakespeare," 413-16.

Along with the orator-as-civilizer myth, Renaissance rhetorical handbooks frequently assert two principles: integrity is necessary for eloquence, and the efficacy of eloquence is certain (Vickers, “‘The Power of Persuasion’: Images of the Orator, Elyot to Shakespeare” 418-19). For example, chapter 24 of George Puttenham’s *The Arte of English Poesy* is titled, “Of decencie in behauiour which also belongs to the consideration of the Poet or maker” (231). As Puttenham’s heading suggests, these handbooks tie eloquent speech to virtuous lives, not merely the representation of virtue. Like the continued emphasis on the good aims of the orator, rhetorical handbooks also continually emphasize the sheer power of persuasion. In his anecdotal evidence about the skillful use of ornamental language, Puttenham notes that “none other can so well beate reason into the ignorant head, as the well spoken and eloquent man” (117). Both he and Thomas Wilson reference the myth of Hercules drawing men by the ears to illustrate the persuasive force of eloquence (Vickers, “‘The Power of Persuasion’: Images of the Orator, Elyot to Shakespeare” 418). Along with eloquence’s role in the Fall, Milton challenges these two rhetorical principles with successful corrupt speakers and ineffective pious ones. In *Paradise Lost*, the word “eloquence” (and related forms) appear(s) four times: the poet uses it to describe the discourse in Hell at the outset of Satan’s voyage in book 2, Adam and Eve’s prayer in book 5, as well as Satan’s temptation of Eve in book 9, and Raphael uses it to characterize Adam’s speech in book 8. As its various uses show, eloquence is not exclusively associated with one type of character. However, it is principally Satan who eloquently persuades.

II.

Almost immediately Milton associates effective persuasion with hell, the fallen angels, and Satan. One of the first demonstrations of efficacious oratory comes in book 1 as we observe speech with dramatic effects. After the epic catalogue of fallen angels, in response to his fellows' downcast looks as they gather on the infernal beach, Satan encourages them. We get the following characterization: "[...] he his wonted pride / Soon recollecting, with high words, that bore / Semblance of worth not substance, gently raised / Their fainted courage, and dispelled their fears. / Then straight commands that at the warlike sound / Of trumpets loud and clarions be upreared / His mighty standard [...]" (1. 527-33).⁶ Despite the poet's warning of fraudulence, which inaugurates a series of such characterizations that continue throughout the poem, Satan's "high words" take immediate effect. The oration intended to raise courage does just that in the subsequent lines: his standard "full high advanced," martial trumpets "upsent / A shout," thousands of banners "rise into the air," a forest of spears rise, and music begins such as "raised / To height of noblest temper heroes old / Arming to battle [...]" (536, 541-2, 545, 551-553). Even though we just get a gloss rather than the words themselves, the effect confirms the force of Satan's speech, and the imagery confirms his linguistic power. As a military leader calling troops into formation, Satan's high words cause the elevation he desires, and the poem begins associating him with effective language.

The debate between Abdiel and Satan in book 5 demonstrates Satan's rhetorical talent, and it further emphasizes his capacity to do things with his language. The Argument at the book's outset underscores his persuasive powers (e.g. "he drew his

⁶ All passages from *Paradise Lost* are quoted from *Milton: Paradise Lost*, ed. Alastair Fowler, 2nd ed. (New York: Longman, 2006).

legions after him to the parts of the north, and there incited them to rebel with him, persuading all but only Abdiel [...]” (281). In the course of his orations, Satan converts the crowd to his position. Before he begins, the poet characterizes his speech with the phrase “with calumnious Art / Of counterfeited truth thus held their ears,” bidding the reader to remember that this is artful and sustained deceit (770-1). Satan opens with a formal address with the catalogue of “magnific titles” and *antipophora*, a figure of rhetorical questioning, to answer his own query regarding their obeisance to the Son: “Will ye submit your necks, and choose to bend / The supple knee? Ye will not, if I trust / To know ye right [...]” (773; 787-789). Satan works subtle praise into his grammar with the more formal second-person address “ye” and “your.” He also speaks collectively with “we,” “our,” and “us,” using the first-person singular pronoun only once. Satan’s address unites the angelic crowd under one mutual position, one that he defines, and he rouses them to his outlook by supposing they hold it already. Only Abdiel is “unseduced” (899).

As Brian Vickers notes, the power of persuasion has divine associations in Renaissance rhetorical theory (“‘The Power of Persuasion’: Images of the Orator, Elyot to Shakespeare” 418). One recalls, for instance, Henry Peacham’s remark that the orator is “next to the omnipotent God in the power of perswasion, by grace, & diuine assistance” (dedication). In *Paradise Lost*, Satan exemplifies this divine similitude. His use of eloquence dramatizes his tendency to adulterate, as one who ‘perverts best things / To worst abuse, or to thir meanest use’ (4.203-204). Consequently, his abuse of eloquent persuasion is lamentable, particularly when he uses it on himself. In light of rhetorical theory’s emphasis on the might of eloquence, his soliloquies in book 4 are self-

seductions. A number of critics have noted the manner in which Satan privately refutes his past statements to the point of dramatizing potential repentance in lines 32-112 (e.g. Fowler, 217-21). Based on his consistently efficacious speech throughout the poem, Satan's proximity to contrition depends upon how he directs himself as his own audience. For example:

So farewell hope, and with hope farewell fear,
Farewell remorse: all good to me is lost;
Evil be thou my good; by thee at least
Divided empire with heaven's king I hold
By thee, and more than half perhaps will reign;
As man ere long, and this new world shall know.
Thus while he spake, each passion dimmed his face
Thrice changed with pale, ire, envy and despair,
Which marred his borrowed visage, and betrayed
Him counterfeit, if any eye beheld. (4.108-117)

Certainly shame and anticipation of further transgression inhibit his repentance, but Satan conveys his resolve to rebel in rhetorically compelling ways. Beginning with the *antimetabole* in line 108, one of Milton's favorite figures, these lines commit Satan to his task. Again the poet glosses the dissimulation at work in his rhetoric as his visage belies the resolute speech (e.g. "betrayed / Him counterfeit"). Satan's words here are no mere psychological portrait: they reveal intent, but they also enact it. His rhetorical performance is the impetus to action. If Satan's words constitute strong persuasion, then

his proximity to repentance is closer, and his resolve to spoil Eden is more culpable too. In book 4 Satan is a self-seducer.⁷

Critics have noted how Satan uses courtly rhetoric to address Eve (see Fowler 501), but it's important to note too that Milton would have us liken Satan's persuasive powers to those of the consummate Homeric orator: Odysseus. When he first greets Eve, Satan addresses her as follows:

Wonder not, sovereign mistress, if perhaps
Thou canst, who art sole wonder, much less arm
Thy looks, the heaven of mildness, with disdain,
Displeased that I approach thee thus, and gaze
Insatiate, I thus single, nor have feared
Thy awful brow, more awful thus retired.
Fairest resemblance of thy maker fair,
Thee all things living gaze on, all things thine
By gift, and thy celestial beauty adore
With ravishment beheld, there best beheld
Where universally admired; but here
In this enclosure wild, these beasts among,
Beholders rude, and shallow discern
Half what in thee is fair, one man except,

⁷ In light of his perverse eloquence, Satan's entry into hell in book 10 and subsequent punishment are fitting penalties for such an orator. Having unpacked his adventures in heroic fashion, the poem notes: "So having said, awhile he stood, expecting / Their universal shout and high applause / To fill his ear, when contrary he hears / On all sides, from innumerable tongues / A dismal universal hiss, the sound / Of public scorn; he wondered, but not long / Had leisure, wondering at himself now more" (10.504-10). Like the transformation into a serpent, the hiss of public scorn is a punishment adapted to his transgressions because it counters Satan's seductive eloquence, which has held sway since book 1.

Who sees thee? (And what is one?) Who shouldst be seen

A goddess among gods, adored and served

By angels numberless, thy daily train. (9.532-48)

Only lines after referencing “old Laertes’ son” in his description of the garden (441),⁸ Milton again invokes Odysseus with an implicit comparison to Satan here. Satan’s speech recalls Odysseus’s address to Nausicaa in book 6 of Homer’s *Odyssey* where Odysseus uses a calculated address to an innocent princess, “[...] with words that would touch her heart and gain his purpose” (70). Each scenario features a similarly tricky rhetorical task: the persuader must address an innocent, alleviate her alarm, and ingratiate himself. Odysseus must gain the favor of a foreign princess, likely shocked at a naked and shipwrecked stranger, and Satan must insinuate himself with an unsuspecting Eve, surprised by an articulate beast. Both do so through a strategic invocation of wonder. Odysseus addresses Nausicaa as follows: “I have seen no mortal creature like you, no man, no woman; astonishment holds me as I gaze. [...] So now, my lady; I am all wonder and astonishment, and deepest reverence forbids me to touch your knees [...]” (70-71). Like Odysseus’s emphasis on his own “astonishment,” Satan’s speech recalls Odysseus’s based on his tactical use of wonder, transferring her surprise to himself and all those who behold her: Satan urges her to “wonder not,” then emphasizes her role as “sole wonder,” which “all things living gaze on” and behold with “ravishment.” This technique is a kind of deception that is part of Milton’s message about persuasive speech, and it shows up again later in the poem. When Eve first greets Adam after she has eaten the forbidden fruit, debated whether or not to share, and determined to facilitate his fall as

⁸ Fowler argues that this reference recalls Odysseus’s marveling at Alcinous’s garden in Homer’s *Odyssey* 7.112-35 (495).

well, she invokes wonder in a similar kind of misdirection: “Hast thou not wondered, Adam, at my stay?” (856). When Eve begins her speech to Adam with tactical misdirection similar to Satan, the technique underscores her fallen state and the extent to which she has adopted the persuasive speech of her tempter.⁹

Using “ambiguous” words is fundamental to Satan’s persuasive method. When Satan rouses his fellow angels to assemble in preparation for his swaying them to rebellion, for example, Raphael notes that he uses “ambiguous words and jealousies, to sound / Or taint integrity [...]” (5.703-4). Along with the capacity to equivocate and mislead in order to achieve his ends as Satan does with Uriel and Eve, the ambiguity of words also allows Satan the capacity for scorn and derision for the sheer delight of his troops. In book 6, for example, after Satan puns on the words “discharge” and “touch” just before the rebel angels introduce their new weapons in the war in heaven, Raphael notes: “So scoffing in ambiguous words [...]” (6.568).¹⁰ When Milton depicts Satan in *Paradise Regained*, he again associates Satan with ambiguous expression when Christ characterizes his oracles as “dark, / Ambiguous and with double sense deluding” (1.434-5).¹¹ As Alastair Fowler notes, the word can also mean “of doubtful position or classification, as partaking of two characters or being on the boundary line between,” and Milton uses this denotation when describing the hippopotamus and crocodile during creation in book 7 (i.e. “[...] ambiguous between sea and land / The river horse and scaly

⁹ Eve’s speech also parallels Satan’s in that Milton emphasizes a calculated persuasive performance in both cases. Like Satan’s “proem tuned” (549), Eve’s looks “came prologue, and apology to prompt” (854). Fowler notes the implication of insincerity in the theatrical simile (519). It’s important to note too that pre-Fall Adam pursues a calculus of decision-making apart from her persuasion, demonstrating that he makes the choice freely.

¹⁰ Citing Landor, Fowler notes the repeated puns that characterize book 6 and the war in heaven (367).

¹¹ Passages from *Paradise Regained* are quoted from *John Milton: Complete Poems and Major Prose*, ed. Merritt Hughes (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1957) 470-530.

crocodile”) (473-4).¹² This secondary meaning seems evocative for Satan’s association with “ambiguous,” moving as he does between different states and regions, from heaven to hell, hell to earth, and back again, not to mention that he takes the form of an amphibious toad when he whispers in Eve’s ear as she sleeps.

Despite Satan’s conspicuous use of ambiguous words, the poem prevents tidy categorization of equivocal speech. In fact, Milton would have us note Satan’s ambiguous words, but also that there is a moral use of ambiguous speech in the poem too. Like the raw material of Milton’s monist universe, ambiguous speech may be used or abused. It is not, however, inherently evil. For instance, God himself uses ambiguous speech when he praises Abdiel and commands the heavenly host to rout the rebel angels. He notes:

Servant of God, well done, well hast thou fought
The better fight, who single hast maintained
Against revolted multitudes the cause
Of truth, in a word mightier than they in arms;
And for the testimony of truth hast borne
Universal reproach, far worse to bear
Than violence: for this was all thy care
To stand approved in sight of God, though worlds
Judged thee perverse: the easier conquest now
Remains thee, aided by this host of friends,
Back on thy foes more glorious to return

¹² “Ambiguous, adj.” *OED Online*. March 2012. Oxford University Press. 23 May 2012 <<http://www.oed.com>>. See also Fowler 418.

Than scorned thou didst depart, and to subdue
By force, who reason for their law refuse,
Right reason for their law, and for their king
Messiah, who by right of merit reigns. (6.29-43)

As Stella Revard notes in *The War in Heaven: "Paradise Lost" and the Tradition of Satan's Rebellion*, God gives no promise of martial triumph (Fowler 342). But the phrase "easier conquest" suggests a simpler victory than we in fact get in the war in heaven, which features rampant destruction resulting in part from Satan's military technology. Even God's subsequent command to Michael suggests an unproblematic rout, as the rebels' place of punishment is ready and waiting:

Go Michael of celestial armies prince,
And thou in military prowess next
Gabriel, lead forth to battle these my sons
Invincible, lead forth my armed saints
By thousands and by millions ranged for fight;
Equal in number to the godless crew
Rebellious, them with fire and hostile arms
Fearless assault, and to the brow of heaven
Pursuing drive them out from God and bliss,
Into their place of punishment, the gulf
Of Tartarus, which ready opens wide
His fiery chaos to receive their fall. (6.44-55)

If God's words suggest perfunctory triumph, his audience encounters immediate incongruity with the appearance of Satan and his army (i.e. "Presented stood in terrible array / Of hideous length: before the cloudy van, / On the rough edge of battle ere it joined, / Satan with vast and haughty strides advanced, / Came towering, armed in adamant and gold") (6.106-110), which at least complicates God's simple declaration of Satan's degeneracy and the victory that will result.

Lest we think as fallen readers, *pace* Stanley Fish, that we are misguided, Abdiel too has to reconcile Satan's appearance with his moral condition and God's message about an "easier conquest." But reconcile Abdiel does: Milton makes a point of showing that Abdiel acts on faith, despite Satan's appearance, rehearsing God's message to himself before he acts: "His puissance, trusting in the almighty's aid, / I mean to try, whose reason I have tried / Unsound and false; nor is it aught but just, / That he who in debate of truth hath won, / Should win in arms, in both disputes alike / Victor; though brutish that contest and foul, / When reason hath to deal with force, yet so / Most reason is that reason overcome" (119-126). The victory is by no means easy, which makes God's remarks all the more conspicuous. Other examples of God's ambiguous speech include the provocatively titled Tree of Knowledge and his injunction regarding death. Like his speech to Abdiel, these examples are characterized by indefinite meaning, but God's descriptions are nonetheless sufficient for moral choice. In fact, their indeterminacy, or *under*-determinacy rather, requires moral choice, demonstrated here for example by the way Abdiel rehearses God's words before he challenges Satan. Whereas Satan's ambiguous speech is intended to deceive, God's ambiguous speech is intended to test. God's pronouncements in the prelapsarian world function like scripture in a

postlapsarian one: his creatures may have incomplete knowledge or encounter misleading appearances, but they are still required to obey given his prescriptions.

In addition to God's speech, other moral characters use ambiguous speech as well. Like Satan's use of ambiguity for derision with his puns in book 6, Raphael offers his own version of ambiguous words to explain the moment of Satan's fall. Describing Satan's reaction to the Father's exaltation of the Son, Raphael notes: "[...] he of the first,/ If not the first archangel, great in power, / In favour and pre-eminence, yet fraught / With envy against the Son of God, that day / Honoured by his great Father, an proclaimed / Messiah king anointed, could not bear / Through pride that sight, and *thought himself impaired*" (5.659-65, emphasis mine). Certainly we are to understand this line to mean that Satan considered himself slighted, but it also suggests that Satan impaired himself through thought, literally harming himself by thinking of his own standing. Given that God commands Raphael to converse with Adam and Eve—both to warn them of impending danger and render them inexcusable—Raphael's remark here seems like a fitting extension of God's ambiguous speech. Both the heavenly and diabolical deployments of ambiguous words may be considered effective, but they serve different purposes. One informs; the other persuades. The moral use of ambiguity can be opaque, as we have seen, but it allows for choice while being simultaneously obligatory and instructive. Satan's ambiguity is part of his compelling eloquence, which is immediately arresting. As a result, Satan is persuasive in a way that the moral characters are not.¹³

As in a number of his prose works, Milton's depiction of persuasive speech in *Paradise Lost* acknowledges the Ciceronian combination of wisdom and eloquence, for

¹³ For a study of Milton's attitude toward language from a natural-philosophical, post-Baconian standpoint, especially as it relates to ambiguity, see Peter C. Herman's *Destabilizing Milton: "Paradise Lost" and the Poetics of Incertitude* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).

the poet finds persuasion divorced from ethos constantly deplorable.¹⁴ By making such a distinction, Milton acknowledges the tradition of the orator as good man, found in classical, medieval, and Renaissance rhetorical handbooks.¹⁵ Throughout *Paradise Lost*, the poet frequently laments the capacity to persuade despite moral impoverishment. In book 2 for example, Belial “seemed / For dignity composed and high exploit: / But all was false and hollow [...]” (110-12). Repeatedly, the poet comments on persuasion used by deceitful characters. The poet only explicitly applies the word “eloquence” to Adam and Eve, noting during their prayer that “such prompt eloquence / flowed from their lips [...]” (5.149-50). During Satan’s temptation of Eve in book 9, however, the poet obliquely associates Satan with eloquence, characterizing Satan’s address with the following simile: “As when of old some orator renowned / In Athens or free Rome, where eloquence / Flourished, since mute, to some great cause addressed, Stood in himself collected, [...]” (670-73). Milton here manages to associate Satan with the supreme example of eloquence—a classical orator in democratic Athens or republican Rome—without actually calling Satan eloquent. While Milton withholds the term, he only technically retains the distinction between Ciceronian eloquence—the kind exclusively associated with the *vir bonus dicendi peritus*—and its counterfeit. Satan may not be “truly eloquent” according to Renaissance rhetorical theory, yet he nonetheless

¹⁴ In “An Apology for Smectymnuus,” for instance, Milton marries eloquence to morality: “For doubtless that indeed according to art is most eloquent, which returnes and approaches neerest to nature from whence it came; and they express nature best, who in their lives least wander from her safe leading, which may be called regenerate reason. So that how he should be truly eloquent who is not withal a good man, I see not” (287).

¹⁵ As Hanna Gray notes, Cicero’s picture of the virtuous orator in *De Oratore* epitomizes this tradition (504): “By one and the same power of eloquence the deceitful among mankind are brought to destruction, and the righteous to deliverance. Who more passionately than the orator can encourage to virtuous conduct, or more zealously then he reclaim from vicious courses? Who can more austere censure the wicked, or more gracefully praise men of worth? Whose invective can more forcibly subdue the power of lawless desire? Whose comfortable words can soothe grief more tenderly?” (1976, 1:223, *De Oratore* 2.9.35).

achieves the form and the persuasive effects of classical eloquence. The practical effect is a degradation of the classical orator akin to Milton's undoing of epic heroism in the course of the poem.¹⁶

Milton's invocation of the quintessential depiction of eloquence, the classical orator, is deceptive here: despite its ostensible excellence and use as a model for Renaissance rhetorical theory, Satan brings a postlapsarian art into the prelapsarian garden. As Joseph Wallace notes, Milton connects Satan to postlapsarian political systems with the comparison to "some orator renowned / in Athens or free Rome" in order to highlight the method of his temptation, which is to offer a solution to the inequality of God's created world (24).¹⁷ Satan's argument is about advancement: from snake to human, and from human to god, an argument that is distressingly similar to Raphael's description of possible spiritual ascendancy in book 5.¹⁸ As Wallace notes too, Satan hears about Eve's inequality and then persuades her of a means of advancement. Satan does so using rhetorically deft speech, which Milton explicitly characterizes as such. With regard to rhetorical speech in *Paradise Lost*, what we have are good and bad foils based on the forms they take in deliberative positions offered to Adam and Eve:

¹⁶ Frequently when classical rhetorical theorists give their versions of the ideal and virtuous orator, the *vir bonus dicendi peritus*, they set them back in time. For example, Cicero does so in *De Oratore* (54BC), by setting his philosophical dialogue on rhetoric and politics in the era of Marcus Antonius in 91 BC. Despite writing during the Roman imperial government, Quintilian venerates Cicero in his *Institutio Oratoria* (ca. 94 AD) as the embodiment of eloquence, the ideal union of wisdom of eloquence. Milton projects it forward in an undoing of the type.

¹⁷ For the way that "lots" are treated in relation to the "structuring function of inequality within God's creation," see Wallace's "Miltonic Proportions: Divine Distribution and the Nature of the Lot in *Paradise Lost*," *Milton Studies*, forthcoming.

¹⁸ Raphael notes: "[...] time may come when men / With angels may participate, and find / No inconvenient diet, nor too light fare: / And from these corporal nutriments perhaps / Your bodies may at last turn all to Spirit, / Improved by tract of time, and winged ascend / Ethereal, as we, or may at choice / Here or in heavenly paradise dwell; / If ye be found obedient, and retain / Unalterably firm his love entire / Whose progeny you are [...]" (5.493-503)

Satan's seductive persuasion contrasts with Raphael's conversation. Satan seduces whereas God orders the angel to "converse." In addition to the deliberative foils, Milton provides alternatives of upward mobility based on two contrasting types of orators, Satan and Abdiel: Satan successfully persuades in the course of his unsuccessful attempt to ascend whereas Abdiel fails to persuade, yet is elevated in the Father's esteem and among the heavenly hosts. This parallel is comparable to Raphael's description of eating, which parallels Satan's perverse rendition in the eating of the fruit from the Tree of Knowledge.

III.

Like the use of ambiguous words, persuasive speech is not the sole property of Satan and his fellows. Moral characters are capable of eloquence, but they employ it for benign purposes like prayer and conversation. For example, eloquence characterizes Adam and Eve's prayer in book 5 before the start of their workday, which is "prompt" and rapturous praise. In book 5, God sends Raphael to "render man inexcusable" according to the argument, which entails moral instruction: he is charged to "converse" with Adam "as friend with friend." Yet during this discourse, Raphael's speech has a similar effect to satanic persuasion. At the opening of book 8 Raphael has ended his speech, and we get its impression on Adam: "The angel ended, and in Adam's ear / So charming left his voice, that he a while / Thought him still speaking, still stood fixed to hear" (8.1-3). Adam is transfixed by Raphael's charming language and the ideas he relates, yet the angel's speech is governed by God's instruction to converse, not coerce. In book 9, Satan's words have the same rendering in terms of aural pleasure: "[...] and in her ears the sound / Yet rung of his persuasive words, impregned / With reason, to her seeming, and with truth" (736-38). Despite this ostensibly similar characterization,

prelapsarian speech like that of Raphael's exchange is characterized primarily by open discourse, whereas the postlapsarian speech of Satan and his fellows features soliloquys and calculated orations. Unlike Raphael's language, Satan's words have a penetrating quality, for they are twice described as making their way into the very heart of Eve (9.550 and 734) just as they 'infused / Bad influence into the unwary breast' of Beelzebub in book 5 (694-695).

The poem consistently demonstrates that forceful persuasion belongs to Satan exclusively. Moral eloquence in *Paradise Lost* is petitionary, instructive, even affecting, but it is not coercive as shown by Raphael and his fellow speakers in the poem including the unfallen Adam and Eve. As the poem progresses, however, another type of moral speaker emerges, established by Abdiel, Enoch, and Noah. In contrast to Satan's consummate eloquence and string of rhetorical successes, these speakers are characterized by rhetorical failure. Milton challenges Renaissance rhetorical theory with these orators who are virtuous yet conspicuously unpersuasive.

Regarding the first of these speakers, Abdiel's formal speech to Satan and the rebel angels in the deliberative council in book 5 is effective as a declaration of integrity but not as a means of persuasion.¹⁹ The argument of book 5 depicts Abdiel's speeches as a counterpoint to Satan's persuasion (e.g. "who in Argument dissuades and opposes him"). Just as he physically removes himself at the end of the address, Abdiel's oration separates him from Satan and the newly apostate crowd. For instance, Abdiel addresses

¹⁹ For studies of Milton's attitude toward parliamentary debate and the politics of council, see *Milton and Republicanism*, ed. David Armitage, Armand Himy, and Quentin Skinner (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1995), Nigel Smith's *Literature and Revolution in England, 1640-1660* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1994), Sharon Achinstein's *Milton and the Revolutionary Reader* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1994), as well as *Literature and Dissent in Milton's England* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2003), and chapter 6 of Wendy Olmsted's *Rhetoric: An Historical Introduction*, "Deception, Strong Speech, and Mild Discourse in Milton's Early Prose and *Paradise Lost*" (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2006).

his speech to Satan (“least of all from thee, ingrate”), which makes the speech less ingratiating (5.811). In keeping with his indignation at Satan’s blasphemy, Abdiel uses the informal “thee” and “thou,” rather than “you” and “ye.” While Satan conveys respect and admiration through his pronouns, Abdiel conveys reproach. The final lines establish the significance of the debate’s outcome:

So spake the Seraph Abdiel faithful found,
Among the faithless, faithful only he;
Among innumerable false, unmoved,
Unshaken, unseduced, unterrified
His loyalty he kept, his Love, his zeal;
Nor number, nor example with him wrought
To swerve from truth, or change his constant mind
Though single. [...]. (5.896-903)

This passage emphasizes the results of Satan’s speech and the honor due Abdiel as the lone dissenter. Abdiel is faithful precisely because he does not fall prey to all the things these lines suggest: he is not moved, shaken, seduced, or terrified. Yet while Abdiel is resolute, his speech does not convince any fellows to join him.²⁰

²⁰ Olmsted has described the extent to which Milton depicts the relationship between rhetoric and moral choice. According to Olmsted, Milton offers two contrasting forms, Satan’s seductive speech and Abdiel’s “strong” speech, which recalls the rhetorical style of Milton’s early pamphlets (88). I would add that the failure of Abdiel’s speech is indispensable for understanding how types of persuasive speech are represented in *Paradise Lost* because it is key to Abdiel’s moral valor, as well as the valor that Milton commends more broadly, for as Adam notes after his mountaintop vision, “[...] suffering for truth’s sake / Is fortitude to highest victory” (12.569-70). In addition, Abdiel’s speech shows the extent to which Milton values *parrhesia*, a scheme that Abraham Fraunce in *The Arcadian Rhetoricke* (1588) sums up as “a certain exclamation, when in the presence of those to whom otherwise we owe duty and reverence, we speak *boldly and confidently*” (Sonnino 127-8, emphasis mine). Abdiel’s version of *parrhesia* calls to mind biblical examples like the Apostles in Acts, especially Paul and Peter.

Adam's mountaintop vision of history in book 11 features two orators like Abdiel. These scenes have essentially similar elements: moral speaker, immoral audience, and failed persuasion. The first orator is Enoch:

In other part the sceptred heralds call
To council in the city gates; anon
Grey-headed men and grave, with warriors mixed,
Assemble, and harangues are heard, but soon
In factious opposition, till at last
Of middle age one rising, eminent
In wise deport, spake much of right and wrong,
Of justice, of religion, truth and peace,
And judgment from above: him old and young
Exploded, and had seized with violent hands,
Had not a cloud descending snatched him thence
Unseen amid the throng [...]. (11.660-671)

Milton emphasizes the deliberative context through details such as the call to council and the general assembly, and here as in book 5 a righteous speaker fails to move a rebellious group. The poet stresses the wisdom that characterizes Enoch's deportment and the truth that he speaks, along with his audience's violent reaction. "Exploded" conveys the audience's scorn for his message. Enoch fails to dissuade a "factious opposition" in his warlike age.²¹

Only lines later, Noah follows:

²¹ David Lowenstein in *Milton and the Drama of History* and Thomas Corns in *Regaining "Paradise Lost"* compare Enoch's situation with Milton's during the republic (Fowler 634).

At length a reverend sire among them came,
And of their doings great dislike declared,
And testified against their ways; he oft
Frequented their assemblies, whereso met,
Triumphs or festivals, and to them preached
Conversion and repentance, as to souls
In prison under judgments imminent:
But all in vain: which when he saw, he ceased
Contending, and removed his Tents far off [...]. (11.719-27)

Once again Milton stresses the deliberative context based on Noah's participation in the "assemblies" and role as public orator. Like Enoch, he communicates moral and theological truth, but his speech is futile. These two cases parallel Abdiel's speeches in the assembly north of heaven. Milton plays up their roles as public speakers, and in each case indicts a people and an age because a moral orator fails to persuade.²²

In book 4 of *Christian Doctrine*, Augustine provides theoretical precedent for the unheeded moral orators of *Paradise Lost*. Whereas Roman rhetorics propose that an orator must be good to be eloquent, Augustine says that goodness can be a kind of eloquence when he encourages the Christian speaker to "[...] so order his life that he not only prepares a reward for himself, but also so that he offers an example to others, and his way of living may be, as it were, an eloquence speech" (166). Augustine extends eloquence to the rhetor's life, apart from persuasive words, the likes of which Milton represents with Abdiel, Enoch, and Noah. Although their orations fail to persuade their

²² Milton's choice of heroes reflects Hebrews chapter 11, which venerates the faith of elders, including Enoch and Noah, all of whom demonstrate faith through their obedience.

immediate audiences, Milton offers their virtuous comportment as a moral and prophetic standard for his readership.²³

The unheeded orators featured in *Paradise Lost* embody Milton's distrust of the barbarous multitude and conception of a righteous orator previously represented in his poetry and prose. For instance, composed in late 1645 or early 1646 (Revard 299), Sonnet 11, "On the detraction which follw'd upon my writing certain treatises," also features this type, a righteous man communicating with a barbarous age:

I did but prompt the age to quit their clogs
By the known rules of antient libertie,
When strait a barbarous noise environs me
Of Owles and Cuckoes, Asses, Apes and Doggs.
As when those Hinds that were transform'd to Froggs
Raild at Latona's twin-born progenie
Which after held the Sun and Moon in fee.
But this is got by casting Pearl to Hoggs;
That bawle for freedom in their senceless mood,
And still revolt when truth would set them free.
Licence they mean when they cry libertie;
For who loves that, must first be wise and good;
But from that mark how far they roave we see

²³ Milton's *Of Education* also echoes Augustine's position: eloquence compels students to proper action, yet the teacher's "own example" is the primary means of spurring students on: "[...] he who hath the art and proper eloquence to catch them with, what with mild and effectual persuasions and what with the intimation of some fear, if need be, but chiefly by his own example, might in a short space gain them to an incredible diligence and courage, infusing into their young breasts such an ingenuous and noble ardor, as would not fail to make many of them renowned and matchless men" (633-34).

For all this wast of wealth, and loss of blood. (1-14)

Along with conveying the audience's degeneracy and culpable error,²⁴ Milton characterizes the clear and direct testimony to truth that he provides: he emphasizes that his is a straightforward undertaking, given that he *only* prompts them (i.e. "I did *but* prompt"). "Prompt" suggests incitement or a call to action, but the word's subordinate meaning, "to remind, put (a person) in mind," also attends its use here, as if the audience already knows the truth but has forgotten.²⁵ While the speaker appeals to his age using rules that are "known," the reaction to his simple reminder is immediately hostile: "When strait a barbarous noise environs me" (3). The speaker emphasizes the extent to which he is surrounded with the word "environs." One cannot help but recall Abdiel addressing the rebel angels, "alone / Encompassed round with foes" or Enoch "amid the throng" of violent opposition, all of which indicate Milton's distrust of the rabble (5.875-6 and 11.671). These aspects—the speaker's truth telling and isolation, as well as the audience's barbarism—all recall the various unfit audiences mentioned in *Paradise Lost*, including Abdiel's, Enoch's, and Noah's. As we shall see, this scene from Sonnet 11 also recalls the poet who composes, "In darkness, and with dangers compassed round" (7.27).

The poet represents himself according to the model of the righteous orator in *Paradise Lost*. The invocation to book 7 portrays a speaker like Abdiel, Enoch, and Noah, one who communicates truth in spite of an un-persuaded and oppositional crowd.

²⁴ With the biblical precedent of Christ's words in Matthew 7:6, "Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine," (Revard 299) the bestial imagery recalls the audience mentioned in the invocation to book 7 in *Paradise Lost*. Unlike animals, the audience here sins in their folly, having put off wisdom and goodness. The speaker's characterization of their wandering "from that mark" of wisdom and goodness, recalls the Greek term "hamartia."

²⁵ "Prompt." *OED Online*. March 2012. Oxford University Press. 23 May 2012 <<http://www.oed.com>>.

As Laura Knoppers points out in *Historicizing Milton*, the poet's reference to Orpheus in lines 32-38 has particular significance given the use of the Bacchus myth to represent the celebratory and joyous return of the monarchy with Charles II (90-91). These lines oppose Restoration ideology with their reference to the "barbarous dissonance / Of Bacchus and his revellers," and they represent Milton's risky political circumstances by invoking Orpheus's fate (90-1). As Knoppers observes, the phrase that describes Orpheus's effect on the natural world, "where woods and rocks had ears / To rapture," recalls Milton's picture of the biblical prophet Jeremiah in *The Ready and Easy Way*.²⁶ In the conclusion to that work, Milton speaks to a select audience of "sensible and ingenuous men" in spite of "the general defection of a misguided and abused multitude" (Hughes 898-99). Similarly, the poet petitions his muse for a "fit audience [...] though few" (31) here in the invocation to book 7. In both cases, the speaker conveys his message despite resolute opposition. The poet's use of the rhetorical figure *antimetabole* in lines 25 and 26 accentuates the corruption of his era, as well as its disorder given that *antimetabole* is a figure of reversal: "though fallen on evil days, / On evil days though fallen" (7.25-26). Combining the Orpheus myth with Jeremiah, Milton emphasizes the obstinacy of the crowd but also the righteous prophetic quality of his speech, which operates apart from persuasion. Milton's characterization of his era connects him to the other righteous orators in the poem. Unlike the exceptional Enoch, however, the poet must continue to address his perilous age and renegade audience much like Abdiel in the

²⁶ "Thus much I should perhaps have said though, I were sure I should have spoken only to trees and stones and had none to cry to, but with the prophet, 'Oh earth, earth, earth!' to tell the very soil itself what her perverse inhabitants are deaf to" (898).

war in heaven and Noah building an ark. This recurring type from Abdiel to Enoch and Noah culminates in the unheeded eloquence of the poet.²⁷

IV.

Milton's assessment of rhetoric and eloquence in *Paradise Lost* is complex, but it is not simply anti-rhetorical.²⁸ *Paradise Regained*, however, extends this point in *Paradise Lost* regarding eloquence's potential for abuse, and Milton explicitly disparages rhetorical artifice. For example, in response to Satan's celebration of Athenian culture in which he describes the eloquence practiced by its statesmen (4.268), Christ says:

This Orators thou then extoll'st, as those
The top of Eloquence, Statists indeed,
And lovers of thir Country, as may seem;
But herein to our Prophets far beneath,
As men divinely taught, and better teaching
The solid rules of Civil Government
In thir majestic unaffected style

²⁷ A passage from *Pro Se Defensio* (1655) in which Milton describes rhetorical training in the humanist education program clarifies the courage that he sees at work in the oratory of Abdiel, Enoch, and Noah as well as his own defense of republican government:

We, who as boys are accustomed under so many masters to sweat in the shade at eloquence, and who are convinced that its persuasive power consist in censure no less than in applause, may, it is true, safely and valiantly batter the names of ancient tyrants [...]. But yet, it was expected that those who thus spent a good part of their prime in mere pastime in the shade, should, at some after period, when the country, when the republic stood in need of their services, throw aside their foils, and dare the sun, and the dust, and the field; that they should at last have the courage to use in their contests hands and arms of flesh and blood, to brandish real weapons, to encounter a real enemy. (223-25)

²⁸ Richard Foster Jones suggested that by the time *Paradise Lost* was written trends in science and homiletics were leading to a redefinition of eloquence and substantial distrust of rhetoric. See Jones, "Science and English Prose Style in the Third Quarter of the Seventeenth Century," 75-110, and "The Attack on Pulpit Eloquence in the Restoration: An Episode in the Development of the Neo-Classical Standard for Prose," 111-142, in *The Seventeenth Century* (Stanford UP, 1951). Other evidence, however, mitigates such arguments about an epochal cultural shift, as Brian Vickers suggests: he notes that rhetorical handbooks were still thriving, for instance, as there were ten major publications in rhetoric between 1629 and 1699 (*English Poetry* 55).

Than all the Oratory of *Greece* and *Rome*.
In them is plainest taught, and easiest learnt,
What makes a Nation happy, and keeps it so,
What ruins Kingdoms, and lays Cities flat;
These only, with our Law, best form a King. (4.353-64)

Christ's reply treats rhetorical manner outright, privileging a "majestic unaffected stile."²⁹ In *Paradise Regained*, Satan is the failed rhetor based on his use and celebration of ornately persuasive rhetoric. He is explicitly portrayed as a rhetorician as the poet notes the "persuasive Rhetoric / That sleek't his tongue" (4.4-5). In response, Christ likes neither his talk, nor his offers (4.171).

In justifying the ways of God to man, especially the ways of God in the 1640s and '50s, Milton's conclusions hinder confidence in the easy operation of persuasive speech, at least as it is represented in Renaissance rhetorical theory. But what then do these conditions suggest about *Paradise Lost* as a rhetorical project? Milton makes an audience's integrity crucial for its receptivity to just persuasion. As a result, the poet's appeal for a "fit audience [...] though few" seems inevitable (7.31). But Milton bolsters the virtue associated with righteous oratory precisely because it fails. The results of such oratory matter less than its faithful execution, which is speaking truth even when faced with great opposition. The way persuasion works in *Paradise Lost*—with its immoral persuaders and misguided audiences—generally supports Christ's skeptical take on rhetoric in *Paradise Regained*. Nevertheless, Milton's assessment of rhetoric, eloquence,

²⁹ For critical arguments about Milton's use of the grand style, see *Milton's Grand Style* by Christopher Ricks (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963) and Debora Shuger's *Sacred Rhetoric: the Christian grand style in the English Renaissance* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1988).

and persuasion in *Paradise Lost* is more optimistic because of the righteous orators. Speaking despite barbarous dissonance, they provide eloquent ways of living.

EPILOGUE

FROM POLITY TO POETRY

Based on Milton's representation of persuasive speech in *Paradise Lost*, the implications for the utility of rhetorical skill are quite bleak—at least in personal and political if not spiritual contexts. If an immoral speaker can eloquently convince an audience, and an audience's moral standing supersedes the persuasiveness of any oration, then rhetoric's civic function is seriously compromised. Milton gives this view a much finer point in *Paradise Regained* as Christ denigrates the "resistless eloquence" of classical oratory especially with regard to its operation in civil government.

Along with offering imaginative renditions of Milton's own mistrust of eloquence's political uses from his prose works in the 1650s, *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained* dramatize contemporary positions on eloquence featured in political theory. Like Milton, Thomas Hobbes also argued for the unfortunate civic implications of persuasive power. Hobbes is critical of rhetoric's civic function, maintaining that it can harm and not help political assemblies.¹ As he says in the *Leviathan* (1651), orators "though they have great power to hurt, have little to save" (132). Hobbes notes that eloquent speakers are inclined to ambition because eloquence seems like wisdom both to

¹ While he is critical of rhetoric, one feature that connects Hobbes's portrayal of rhetoric from his translation of Thucydides (1629) to his *Behemoth* (published posthumously in 1682) is the power he attributes to rhetoric. Hobbes's perception of the power of rhetoric is consistent with the classical rhetorical tradition, particularly Cicero, who begins *De Inventione* with a declaration that rhetoric has been responsible for disasters in Rome and elsewhere (2-3). In contrast to Cicero, however, Hobbes does not think that the benefits of eloquence outweigh its disadvantages. Years later in *Behemoth*, Hobbes indicts eloquence in his explanations for the civil war. For instance, "A" notes that the love of Aristotle's and Cicero's eloquence led men to a love of their politics too, itself leading to rebellion (43).

the speaker and to the audience (63, 72), hence his fear of eloquence in assembly, which can set the commonwealth on fire (181). As a result, Hobbes advocates dialectical conversation with political counselors in order to examine their claims (181). According to Hobbes, eloquence is extremely seductive, dangerous, and deleterious for the commonwealth, a point that Milton dramatizes in *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained*.

Critics from Richard Foster Jones to Neil Rhodes have identified a skeptical stance toward rhetoric that emerges in the seventeenth century. But as we have seen, the seeds of this skepticism are at work decades earlier. Regarding the value of persuasive skill for the individual, scenes of amatory persuasion in the 1590s allow writers like Shakespeare, Nashe, and Marlowe to depict the lack of eloquence's practical benefit in the meeting of desire and rhetorical skill. Similarly, Marlowe's representation of Faustus's persuasive powers in a religious context leave the audience reckoning with the horrors of Faustus's petitions to God, which represent extraordinary rhetorical training and skill but are nevertheless unheeded. Like Milton, Sidney and Spenser dramatize anxiety about the capacity of eloquence, especially with regard to the assemblies responsive to Pyrocles and Musidorus in *The Old Arcadia* or the Giant with the Scales and Duessa in *The Faerie Queene*. Rhetorical failure in forensic contexts (i.e. the conspicuous inability to dissuade Sidney's and Spenser's agents of justice) is a strategy that calls attention to the dangerous power of eloquence and the need for institutional safeguards. Along with fleshing out sixteenth-century English rhetorical theory, writers from Sidney to Spenser, Marlowe to Shakespeare demonstrate a skeptical attitude toward eloquence and rhetorical skill through their use of rhetorical failure. *Paradise Lost* is the

culminating example of this rhetorical skepticism in English Renaissance literature because Milton's orators, "though they have great power to hurt, have little to save."

Like the preceding authors who deploy rhetorical failure, Milton's use of this technique calls attention to his own rhetorical dexterity. In Milton's case, however, he invites parallels between himself and the moral orators represented in *Paradise Lost*. More so than the other English Renaissance writers then, Milton demonstrates the chief advantage of rhetorical failure as a composition strategy: it leads to the veneration of the poet. A survey of rhetorical failure may demonstrate increasing skepticism about rhetorical skill for politics and society, but it also reveals that this technique draws attention to the author's skill. Whereas rhetoric may betray the polis, it does not betray the poet. As Colin Burrow notes, giving counsel is rhetoric's primary civic function in the early modern period (52). Poets, however, have recourse to their readership, and their counsel extends beyond mere civic service. Milton's political recommendations may have gone unheeded in the period leading up to the Restoration, but *Paradise Lost* justifies "the ways of God to men" and aligns Milton with Abdiel, Enoch, and Noah, as well as Homer and Virgil (1.26).

An ocean away, early American writers were reckoning with the implications of the power of eloquence, influenced as they were by the same rhetorical theory and training.² In England, however, decades of humanist education led to a rhetorical technique whereby authors could indict eloquence's power and utility in order to achieve poetic success, all the while drawing on educations intended to prepare them for state service. Milton is the consummate practitioner of rhetorical failure. *Paradise Lost*

² See Sandra Gustafson's *Eloquence is Power: Oratory and Performance in Early America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000).

conveys a message about eloquence's vexed utility for the state and the individual while deploying eloquence in service of moral and spiritual instruction, epic poetry, and authorial advancement. Milton's identity as an epic poet is fundamental to *Paradise Lost*, and rhetorical failure is key to the poem's success.

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