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Passionate eloquence: rhetoric and emotion in Medieval English poetry

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PASSIONATE ELOQUENCE: RHETORIC AND EMOTION IN MEDIEVAL ENGLISH POETRY

by

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CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

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PH.D. THESIS

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For men decide far more problems by hate, or love, or lust, or rage, or sorrow, or joy, or hope, or fear, or illusion, or some other inward emotion than by reality, or authority, or any legal standard, or judicial precedent, or law.

Cicero, *De oratore*

ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines the ways three medieval English poets used the ancient art of rhetoric to shape their poetic compositions and to make their messages more persuasive to reading and listening audiences. Although these poets employed all three of the traditional modes of persuasion—appeals to *logos* (reasoning), *ethos* (character) and *pathos* (emotion)—this examination focuses primarily on the ways these poets sought to elicit and control emotional responses in their audiences, thereby exposing an emotional dimension in these texts that is not commonly contemplated by critics of these poems. And while the ability of poets to affect audiences emotionally in the pursuit of persuasive agendas was often considered the *sine qua non* of rhetorical artistry in the Middle Ages, not enough attention has been given to the ways those efforts may shed light on common modern critical approaches to these poems, as well as on their overall interpretation.

The first chapter examines how Chaucer, in *The Franklin's Tale*, uses rhetorical doctrines of style, and in particular the "colors of rhetoric," to develop an emotional dimension in his retelling of an old story from Boccaccio. I then show how the Franklin attempts to use the emotional responses of his audience to move them toward accepting a sophisticated notion of empathy as a remedy for the socio-cultural disruptions that troubled late fourteenth-century English society.

In the second chapter, I examine how the anonymous twelfth- or thirteenth century author of *The Owl and the Nightingale* uses rhetorical invention and style to evoke powerful emotional responses in his audience in order to vivify the debate engaged in by the poem's two avian adversaries. In part, it is the emotional vehemence of their antagonism that shows why the contest they are engaged should be regarded as a specifically rhetorical form of

activity, and I argue that the poet's uncommon display of rhetorical talent is meant as a plea for his professional preferment.

The third chapter examines the way the Anglo-Saxon poet Cynewulf uses the art of rhetoric—conceived of in the period as an art of eloquence—to heighten and intensify his audience's emotional engagement with his Old English retelling of an antique Latin narrative of the martyrdom of Saint Juliana. Specifically, I argue that the poet's use of a highly stylized *ornatus* and his rhetorically grounded modifications to the story both serve to move his Anglo-Saxon audience to a more passionate embrace of the saint's holiness and a fiercer rejection of the evils that threaten their Christian values.

PUBLIC ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines the ways three medieval English poets used the ancient art of rhetoric to shape their poetic compositions and to make their messages more persuasive to reading and listening audiences: Chaucer, in "The Franklin's Tale" from his *Canterbury Tales*; the anonymous poet of the twelfth- or thirteenth-century poem *The Owl and the Nightingale*; and Cynewulf, the Anglo-Saxon poet of the Old English poem *Juliana*. Although these poets employed all three of the traditional modes of persuasion—appeals to *logos* (reasoning), *ethos* (character) and *pathos* (emotion)—this examination focuses primarily on the ways these poets sought to elicit and control emotional responses in their audiences, thereby exposing an emotional dimension in these texts that is not commonly contemplated by critics of these poems. And while the ability of poets to affect audiences emotionally in the pursuit of persuasive agendas was often considered the *sine qua non* of rhetorical artistry in the Middle Ages, not enough attention has been given to the ways those efforts may shed light on common modern critical approaches to these poems, as well as on their overall interpretation.

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INTRODUCTION

While it is nearly impossible to imagine the existence of a medieval poem entirely devoid of emotional color and texture, analysis of the role of the emotions in medieval literary texts remains underdeveloped in criticism. At the same time, while investigation into the role of rhetoric in medieval poetry has become much more common among critics in the last several decades, the rhetorical analysis of the emotions in poetry continues to lag behind. For much of the early part of the twentieth century, rhetorical analysis of medieval literary texts consisted largely of identifying the elements of the traditional rhetorical system that were thought to serve as the intellectual and conventional sources of certain textual features that were not otherwise easily explained. For example, not a few critics set out to identify the traditional tropes and figures of rhetoric in particular medieval poems, but either failed or refused to speculate about the significance of such elements to the overall intention or meaning of the work. Since for much of this period, the presence of rhetoric in medieval literary texts was generally thought by critics to be guided by ossified convention and self-indulgent ostentation, it is not surprising that the general attitude towards rhetoric among critics was most usually characterized by a certain ambivalence. From a historical perspective, we can see rhetoric clearly enough as a practical concern among medieval poets, but to the extent that its purposes are understood only generally, and its functions and aims only abstractly, its presence seemed often to entail more apology than examination. In this sense, theorizing medieval rhetoric often meant explaining it away. Because critics could not often fit a general, ahistorical theory of rhetoric into particular, manifestly poetic uses of rhetoric as they found them, they often seemed compelled to write them off as adjunctive but inessential and customary habit, or as the mere "overcoding" of extra-signifying functions.

At other times, the problem was conquered by a loud silence. Perhaps the best illustration of the rupture this approach causes was demonstrated by no less a critic than C.S. Lewis, who, in his *English Literature in the Sixteenth Century*, employs an almost perverse *occultatio*, dismissing the entire subject of rhetoric after saying that it "constitutes the greatest barrier between us and our ancestors," that in it "more than anything else, the continuity of the old European tradition was embodied," that "nearly all our older poetry was written and read by men to whom the distinction between poetry and rhetoric, in its modern form, would have been meaningless," and that "probably all our literary histories, certainly that on which I am engaged, are vitiated by our lack of sympathy on this point."[1] The ambivalence of literary critics to medieval rhetoric is also due, in no small part, to the attitude of earlier literary historians like Baldwin and Atkins, who tended to prize the purported purity of classical rhetoric over its supposedly debased medieval forms.[2] In a review of *English Literary Criticism*, McKeon wrote that Atkins, had he taken a different approach, "might have been saved the embarrassment of discovering rhetoric to be both the villain and the hero—indifferently and for the same reason—in the emergent vernacular literature of the English Middle Ages."[3]

As I have mentioned, the latter half of the twentieth century, and especially the last few decades, have seen a great change in critical attitudes toward medieval rhetoric and its presence in and influence on literary and poetic texts. On the whole, however, much of this

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[1] C.S. Lewis, *English Literature in the Sixteenth Century excluding Drama*, vol. 3, *The Oxford History of English Literature*, ed F.P. Wilson and Bonamy Dobrée (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1954), 61. See also Ong's handling of this example: Walter J. Ong, *Rhetoric, Romance, and Technology: Studies in the Interaction of*

[2] Charles Sears Baldwin, *Medieval Rhetoric and Poetic (to 1400): Interpreted from Representative Works* (Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, 1959, c. 1928), and J.W.H. Atkins, *English Literary Criticism: The Medieval Phase* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1943).

[3] Richard McKeon, review of "English Literary Criticism," *Modern Philology* 42 (1944): 59 – 60.

change, and the renewed interest in a robust understanding of medieval rhetoric, has been more easily observed among literary historians than among literary critics, and the application of a sophisticated understanding of medieval rhetoric to the explication of textual features and even global interpretive concerns remains relatively underdeveloped. Even in light of a renewed acceptance of rhetoric as an important intellectual discipline and ubiquitous cultural institution during the Middle Ages, critics and historians alike have tended to treat the history of rhetoric in the medieval period more as a history of forms than as a history of the uses to which those forms could be put.

In the chapter studies that follow, I will resist that tendency in regard to two fundamental principles that ought to be considered in any rhetorical analysis of medieval literary works. The first is the principle that rhetorical activity is essentially conative and teleonomic. In the terms of traditional rhetoric, this means maintaining a constant awareness that the fundamental aim of rhetoric is persuasion. While there is nothing controversial about the suggestion that medieval poets intended to persuade their audiences through their use of rhetoric, the persuasive motive of all (or nearly all) medieval poetry still receives scant attention among literary critics. This is only partly due to the common assumption among critics that the primary motive behind the use of rhetorical-poetic methods is aesthetic, as distinct from persuasive. Again, this assumption is changing, but many critics still see the choice between aesthetic motivation and persuasive motivation as one of mutual exclusivity. The second principle I observe throughout is that the use of emotions in the process of persuasion is an essential component of rhetoric from its earliest point. Medieval poets follow that tradition both on the prescriptive advice of classical and early medieval rhetoricians as well as the prescriptive injunctions of the tradition of poetics extending from

Horace into the development of specifically poetic application of rhetorical principles in the later Middle Ages—which is to say that the emotions form a vital component of both persuasive and aesthetic motivations.

That persuasion is a primary goal of the art of rhetoric, and by extension a primary goal of the speeches and writings that took their impulse from the art, is again uncontested by any medieval literary critic that I know of. For most rhetoricians, persuasion is nothing more than the *sine qua non* of the art, for the simple fact that if the message turns out not to be persuasive, it need not have been written down or communicated. But why should this awareness be so neglected in relation to the project of unfolding the particular intentions and general meanings of medieval literary works? Is it because of the lack of consideration for persuasion that continues to haunt the history of medieval rhetoric? Take, for instance, Murphy's *Rhetoric in the Middle Ages*, which has been called by Copeland the foundational survey of medieval rhetoric, and which is still the most widely consulted resource on the history of medieval rhetoric among critics of medieval literature who wish to understand the larger picture. Though he does not deny that persuasion is the aim of rhetoric, Murphy gives no place to a treatment of persuasion either as a fundamental concept of rhetoric or even simply as an end of rhetoric in the traditional system.[4] On the other hand, consider the opinion of Ward, who writes that "rhetorical theory continued to be of use to medieval man,

[4] James J. Murphy, *Rhetoric in the Middle Ages* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: Univ. of California Press, 1974). For a supporting argument, consider that the index to Murphy's *Rhetoric in the Middle Ages* contains only three entries for the term *persuasion*. This is quite unusual in a book about the history of rhetoric. Moreover, none of these entries points to any actual discussion, but simply refer to the appearance of the term. Compare this with the index for *persuasion* in *Medieval Eloquence*, a Murphy-edited volume of articles by other authors. There we find ten entries, each of which points to a discussion in which these various authors consider persuasion as a fundamental goal, indeed a touchstone of medieval rhetoric. See James J. Murphy, ed., *Medieval Eloquence: Studies in the Theory and Practice of Medieval Rhetoric* (Berekely and Los Angeles: Univ. of California Press, 1978).

in roughly its ancient dress, because he continued to be confronted by situations that required persuasion at a nontechnical level."[5] As Ward explains:

> All study of rhetoric in medieval times was motivated by more than inertia or antiquarianism or a socio-vocational structure that paid a class of people to think, write and teach more or less what they wished to. A heightened interest in the full apparatus of classical rhetorical theory, or at least in any part or parts of the *De inventione* and *Ad herennium* other than the passages on *elocutio*, a near staple in the slow moving, meditative Latin culture of the time, suggests a crisis of communication: between king and adviser, between opposed political or religious parties or factions, between personal enemies, between educationalists with conflicting views, between conflicting professional classes and social groups, between the bearers of Christian truth, their opponents, and the bulk of mankind.[6]

Though many other, more recent histories of medieval rhetoric appear highly attuned to the importance of persuasion in the rhetorical system, and that changing awareness seems to be reflected more and more in recent work by literary critics, it is still the case that a surprising amount of criticism that turns to medieval rhetoric for illumination finds little room for the concept of persuasion as a primary factor in the literary choices medieval poets made. Where such attention is given, the importance of persuasion is often raised only obliquely, usually by means of a statement that such-and-such medieval writer has chosen this or that rhetorical form primarily "for the sake of effect." Or else critics find the discussions about medieval rhetoric to be so abstruse that they overlook the deep foundations of rhetorical thinking in the Middle Ages and treat the explicit appearance of rhetoric in medieval texts largely as a matter of convention and ceremony, rather than as a matter of the persuasive uses to which its forms could be put. While awareness of rhetoric as an architectonic art, what McKeon has

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[5] John O. Ward, "From Antiquity to the Renaissance: Glosses and Commentaries on Cicero's *Rhetorica*," in Murphy, *Medieval Eloquence* (1978): 25 – 67, 64.

[6] *Ibid.*, 65.

called a global art of production and communication,[7] has been growing, and has prompted some truly wide-ranging and innovative approaches to medieval literature, it remains true that the deep principles of the art are seldom applied to close interpretation of specific textual features, even those features that practically cry out for rhetorical elucidation. And it is still true that those deep rhetorical principles which gave shape and purpose to so much writing during the Middle Ages are not considered fully in application to the overall meanings of texts, especially those texts that have prompted so much reflection and interest from so many different directions that the histories of the interpretations of those texts have become indistinguishable from the histories of the controversies surrounding their interpretation. It is those texts in particular that most need to be addressed from a rhetorical perspective, for if there is any discipline that is by definition designed to address controversy, it is rhetoric. As an architectonic art, rhetoric possesses the framework, terminology, methods, and conceptual categories that make it not only a flexible and enduring discipline, but also a discipline consciously engineered to organize the material of disputes into coherent arrangements that promote both resolution and new ways of thinking about old questions. Nothing needs to be said here about the fact that literary criticism is itself a thoroughly rhetorical endeavor. Indeed, the architectonic nature of rhetoric is what gives it the power to organize other disciplines into a schema of the liberal arts, for example, and the reason why rhetoric was at times during the Middle Ages called queen among the sciences, precisely because it could coherently order the functions and contents of the other arts into a large number of

[7] As Copeland and Sluiter explain, "Rhetoric is an architectonic system: it looks at large structures, at the composition as a whole from conceptual plan to its realization in the orator's delivery of the speech, and at the effects of discourse on the audience" (Rita Copeland and Ineke Sluiter, eds., *Medieval Grammar and Rhetoric: Language Arts and Literary Theory, AD 300 – 1475* [Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2009], 32).

permutations, all of which could be seen to satisfy the specific interests and intellectual needs that had prompted such schemes in the first place.

As for the role of the emotions, it is the case, as I have said, that they are fundamental to the process of persuasion even in the earliest theories and practices of the Greek rhetoricians. The ability to see an audience's emotional disposition as an available means of persuasion is nearly constant in the practice of rhetoric, even where the principle is implicit, and the technical discussion of the emotions is neglected in theorization. Aristotle had theorized the emotions, as had Cicero, but what the tradition took from those discussions most of all was not a particular view of the nature of the emotions, but the impulse to evoke emotional responses in audiences that would serve to promote or even consummate the process of persuasion that had begun in appeals to reason and character.

More recently, a group of medieval historians, led by Rosenwein, have begun to study the emotions as a discrete subject in medieval history.[8] This study was prompted by the observation that investigation into the social, religious, political and institutional expression of emotion in medieval texts could teach us about medieval concepts of the emotions and attitudes toward the emotions that were transcultural and susceptible of theorization as well as historically contingent and localizable, thus making the emotions a matter of interest to a wide range of historians. Unfortunately, none of these newer historical approaches to medieval emotions considers them or their history from the point of view of rhetoric. Though none of them explicitly contemplates the ways that textual expressions of emotion may

[8] See the special section in the journal *Early Modern Europe* introduced as a debate: Catherine Cubitt, "The History of the Emotions: A Debate," *Early Modern Europe* 10 (2001): 225 – 27; also in this special section, see: Barbara H. Rosenwein, "Writing without Fear about Early Medieval Emotions," 229 – 34; Stuart Airlie, "The History of Emotions and Emotional History," 235 – 41; Mary Garrison, "The Study of Emotions in Early Medieval History: Some Starting Points," 243 – 50; Carolyne Larrington, "The Psychology of Emotion and Study of the Medieval Period," 251 – 56.

harbor persuasive designs on their intended readers, there is among these studies a historically rigorous concept of the social construction of emotion, regardless of the socio-political or institutional context (or perhaps on account of it), and awareness that emotional expression is meant to affect the audiences toward which it was directed. Even where such expressions appear to be governed by conventional *topoi*, there are not there merely for show. Or perhaps we should say that although they are there "on display" (so to speak), this does not make them superficial or cosmetic. In addition, Rosenwein's development of the concept of "emotional communities" points us in the direction of a crucial principle of any rhetorical consideration of the emotions, which is the fact that an audience's emotional makeup is always local and specific, of a certain time and place, previously disposed to and more susceptible to some emotional factors than others, and variously influenced by the kinds of emotional expression they have already been exposed to.[9] This means not only that particular audiences may be more easily won over by certain kinds of emotional persuasion than other audiences, but also that the same audience may be won or lost by the specific choices rhetoricians must make, as well as by the timing and general emotional tenor of the message that is sent.

The Studies

In the chapters that follow, I will investigate three individual medieval poems for the ways they set out to trigger emotional responses in their intended audiences, and consider how those responses may serve the persuasive motivations of the poets who composed them. To be clear, these are not studies of the representation of emotion in medieval poems, but studies

[9] Barbara H. Rosenwein, *Emotional Communities in the Early Middle Ages* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 2006).

of the way poets use emotions to move audiences toward persuasive goals. Each of the three poems, Chaucer's *The Franklin's Tale*, the anonymous *Owl and the Nightingale*, and Cynewulf's *Juliana*, were chosen for one particular reason: all three of them parade their rhetoricity, and by so doing invite specifically rhetorical readings. Chaucer's Franklin announces the rhetoricity of his tale by pretending, in his prologue, to know nothing of Cicero and Horace, and nothing of the "colors of rhetoric"; the author of *The Owl and the Nightingale* announces his rhetorical intentions by calling his poem an *altercatio* at the outset and by demonstrating over and over again the emotional power of rhetoric; and finally, Cynewulf advertises the rhetorical nature of his adaptation of the Latin saint's life by calling Juliana's eloquence *æpplede gold*, a trope or meta-trope called *transumptio* that unites the vernacular, Anglo-Saxon poetic tradition with the Christian, Latin tradition of eloquence.

In chapter 1, "Colours of Rethoryk Been to Me Queynte": Empathy and Rhetorical Idealism in *The Franklin's Tale*," I begin by examining the Franklin, the story's narrator, from the point of view of his status as one of Chaucer's "new men." As Middleton's concept indicates, the "new men" were a class of non-aristocratic civil servants who had attained a new political and cultural prominence in fourteenth-century England, and who shared a common set of cultural and literary ideals and aspirations. As a "new man," the Franklin—whose very name provides us insight into his status as one who can speak plainly and truthfully—begins to expand the scope of his literary and cultural idealism to include a genuine concern for the role emotions play in human interactions, and by providing us with a privileged perspective on the subjective assessments and internal conditions of his main characters. And he uses an essentially Ciceronian philosophy of rhetoric and a late medieval doctrine of rhetorical style to accomplish his aims. Where several of the narrating characters

of Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales* present tales whose rhetorical aim is to persuade their audience that the application of personal virtue would serve to overcome the social and political divisions of late-fourteenth-century English society, the Franklin instead seems to focus on the development of empathy and sensitivity to the emotional perspectives of others as a socially ameliorative power. At the beginning of his tale, a retelling of a story from Boccaccio's *Filocolo* re-cast as a Breton Lay, the Franklin awakens our empathy for Dorigen, his heroine, and then complicates the narrative by introducing us to the internal condition of Aurelius, Dorigen's suitor. The moral and emotional conflict that emerges from the juxtaposition of these two competing perspectives prompts the crisis that pushes the story's plotline: an impossible bargain that threatens to bring moral ruin to all the characters in the narrative. By linking the emotional conditions of his characters to the literary and poetic style of his presentation, and by raising his audience's emotional awareness through the formal techniques of rhetorical poetry—in particular the "colors of rhetoric"—the Franklin presents us with a complex and nuanced view of the need for (and value of) an emotional sensitivity that is commensurate with a sensitivity to literary style and its expressive values. Many critics feel that the story's *demande* ending, which may appear to operate as a kind of *deus ex machina*, is somewhat precious and awkwardly imposed on the story's moral crisis, and leads to an unsatisfactory resolution in which the ethical problems of the narrative drama remain unresolved. I argue instead that the climax and denouement arise instead out of the emotional dimension that the Franklin has added to the original tale by means of his stylistic techniques and rhetorical inventions. Rather than reading the story as an incomplete promise or as Chaucer's ironic comment on the vicissitudes of human nature, I read the story as a sincere, if somewhat idealistic and sentimental, attempt to show that

empathy and the literary sensitivity that gives rise to it can indeed provide an answer to the disruption and disunity of contemporary English society.

In chapter 2, "He Mot Gon to al Mid Ginne": Emotion, Ingenuity and the Rhetoric of *Altercatio* in *The Owl and the Nightingale*," I begin by examining the difference between *altercatio*, an explicitly rhetorical activity with classical provenance, and the scholastic, philosophical disputation that most critics believe is the operant framework of the poem's debate format. By comparing the format of the *O&N* to the discussion of *altercatio* in Quintilian's *Institutio oratoria*, I argue that the generic expectations commonly applied by critics to the poem are in fact out of place, and should not be applied to a poem that demonstrates such a fundamental preference for rhetorical expression over philosophic disputation. By showing that the poem does not belong to the "debate genre" in the sense that critics usually apply the term—if not expressly then by a vague sense of what philosophical disputation requires—I allow for the potential to read the poem's forms not as faulty and illogical attempts to argue properly, but as expressly rhetorical attempts to seek argumentative advantage and expose the opposing advocates as well as the poem's judges (who are in reality its readers) to the power of emotional persuasion. By showing that what are considered vices in philosophical and dialectical argumentation can actually be seen as virtues in rhetorical argument, and by demonstrating the birds' willingness to rely on ingenuity, or cunning intelligence, instead of logically correct demonstrations of self-evident truth, I begin to counter the critical consensus that the poem is a sort of satire, either a mocking spoof of the debate genre itself or a sardonic comment on the sinfulness of human quarrelsomeness. I argue that the avian adversaries in the poem demonstrate through their use of rhetorical invention and stylistic technique an eagerness to win over the poem's judges by

means of their ingenious advantage-seeking and the force of their emotional manipulations, and that this process, which seeks partisan victory over philosophical superiority, and probability over logical correctness, is aimed at a very precise rhetorical goal: to persuade the poet's superiors that he is worthy of professional advancement. In this view, the poem's rhetoricity is its chief asset, and where the role of rhetoric in the poem is continuously overlooked or downplayed in the criticism of the poem, I argue instead that the poet intends to demonstrate his skill at rhetorical invention and argumentation as the primary basis for his preferment.

In chapter 3, "Æpplede Gold": The Motives of Eloquence in Cynewulf's *Juliana*," I explore the poet's modifications to his Latin exemplar, the late antique *passio*, or saint's life, of the Christian martyr Juliana, which is a prose narrative written in the *sermo humilis*, or "humble style." By showing how Cynewulf's adaptations are guided by traditional rhetoric in the invention (or re-invention) of the story's characters and plot, and especially by his elevation of the poem's stylistic level in several areas, I demonstrate how the poet sets out to re-animate the narrative's emotional effects in his intended audience, which was much different in circumstances and worldview from the audience of the original prose narrative. Calling upon the traditional Ciceronian principle made relevant to Christian literature by St. Augustine, that the use of emotional force in persuasion, and in particular the reliance on the ornate "grand style" of rhetorical poetry, is necessary for the winning of audiences who may assent intellectually to the ideas presented to them but who may not be willing to actually act on those ideas, I argue that Cynewulf's stylistic elevations and his development of an emotional dimension not present in the original story are meant to elicit a more passionate affective response from his intended audience than could be accomplished by a

straightforward Old English translation of his source. In particular, Cynewulf's particular presentation of Juliana as an eloquent spokeswoman for Christianity is an attempt to model for his audience the value of such emotional persuasion. In this way, Juliana becomes an emblem of Christian triumph not just because of her embrace of Christianity against daunting opposition, but also because of the way she unites eloquence and wisdom in an embodiment of values that were prized both by Christian Latin culture and traditional Anglo-Saxon culture. Cynewulf's selective use of a highly rhetorical *ornatus*, which engages the emotions through the poem's style, is an attempt to affect his intended audience more deeply than could be accomplished without it. Many critics feel that the poet's modifications to the story represent a generally overwrought attempt to focus his audience's attention on the lurid clash between the Christian values of the saint and the secular, heroic *ethos* of her persecutors, exposing a moral dynamic that is the narrative's main emphasis. I argue, on the other hand, that the clash of opposing values and cultures (Christian versus native Anglo-Saxon) in the poem represent the poet's attempt to raise the latent conflict in his audience between opposing cultural allegiances to the level of an open moral question that can only be adequately answered by a sincere and passionate emotional engagement with the saint's suffering, martyrdom, and eventual Christian triumph. The saint's overcoming of her persecutors' attempts to oppress her becomes a symbol not of Christian victory over the native heroic values of secular poetry, but a symbol of the adaptation of those traditional heroic values to a new Christian worldview.

An Overview of the Emotions in Rhetoric up to the Middle Ages

Rhetoric has from the beginning concerned itself with the way an audience's emotions could be used to serve the process of persuasion. As Green suggests in his treatment of emotion in *The Encyclopedia of Rhetoric*, "the concern for *pathos* is one of the most distinctive aspects of a rhetorical approach to language, and of all aspects it has occasioned the greatest amount of controversy."[10] In Greek rhetoric, Green continues, "the term referred variously to the state or condition of the human soul, usually as a result of what the soul has experienced, and by extension to the kind of language that can introduce such states."[11]

Although Aristotle was the first to formally analyze and theorize the emotions, the concern for emotion among rhetoricians predates him, and goes back to the earliest discussions of rhetoric among the Greeks. Aristotle was also the first to categorize *pathos* as one of the three basic sources for rhetorical proofs, as a means of persuasion and as a complement to both *ethos* (character) and *logos* (reasoning), giving the emotions an integral role to play in the ordinary conception of almost any persuasive situation. Since he synthesized a number of earlier theoretical strains and set up a rhetorical system in which emotion plays such a key, formally designated role, Aristotle's work is considered by historians as the first, and perhaps the most important systematic treatment of emotion and its uses in the tradition of rhetoric.[12] But, as a result of its long history within the tradition of rhetoric, the view of rhetoricians and theorists on the role of the emotions, their function and place in the rhetorical system, have varied widely from place to place and time to time.

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[10] Lawrence D. Green, "Pathos," in *The Encyclopedia of Rhetoric*, ed. Thomas O. Sloane (New York and Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2001), 554 – 69, 554.

[11] *Ibid*, 555.

[12] Aristote, *Rhetoric*, trans. George A. Kennedy, *Aristotle on Rhetoric: A Theory of Civic Discourse* (New York and Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1991)

Controversies in the field abound, as Green has noted. For many contemporary rhetoricians, these controversies center mainly on questions concerning the precise nature of the emotions (what causes them? what role do they play in the process of judgment?) and the precise nature of their use in persuasion.[13] One current critical debate, for example, concerns the long-standing question of whether the emotions are irrational, or whether they do in fact participate with reason, or some other cognitive process, in their formation—e.g. as proportional responses to external stimuli.[14] While ancient Greek theorists appear to have found questions about the irrationality of the emotions somewhat less controversial than most thinkers who have addressed the question since the Early Modern period, they nevertheless found room for some disagreement. For some the answer to the question opened up an array of opportunities for rhetoric, while for others it represented only a problem. If the emotions were wholly irrational, then their use in persuasion would simply be fraught with impossible risks. But even if the emotions are in some way rational, quasi-rational, or otherwise responsive to the cognitive processes of rhetoric, the difficulty persists, since it would suggest that the emotions are still capable of overriding reason in the production of human judgments. "For some rhetors," says Green, "the term [*pathos*] conveys little more than the sense that an auditor's state of mind can cloud or supersede his rational capacities for making decisions."[15] Even Aristotle himself wrote that, "it is wrong to warp the [judge's] feelings, to arouse him to anger, jealousy, or compassion, which would be like making the rule crooked

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[13] See Amélie O. Rorty, ed., *Essays on Aristotle's Rhetoric*," Philosophical Traditions 6 (Berkeley, 1996); also, H.M. Gardiner, Ruth Clark Metcalf, and John G. Beebe-Center, eds., *Feeling and Emotion: A History of Theories* (Salt Lake City, UT: American Book Publishing, 1937).

[14] See Martha C. Nussbaum, *Upheavals of Thought: The Intelligence of Emotions* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2001).

[15] Green, "Pathos," 555.

which one intended to use."[16] In light of this attitude, it is easy to see why the controversy over the precise nature of the emotions was less important historically than the controversy over the ethical nature of rhetoric, which addressed questions like: when is it licit to use an audience's emotions to persuade them? Under what conditions do rhetoricians cross the line between evoking an appropriate affective response and actually using the emotions to cloud an audience's judgment? As we might expect, differing views on the rationality or irrationality of the emotions, along with the notional ethics of their use, have had a substantial impact on how rhetoricians should go about stirring the emotions, what conditions might improve or detract from their usefulness, and of course, the basic question of whether using emotional appeals to persuade people is even ethically conscionable.

In its most basic form, an appeal to *pathos* is an appeal to the emotions or passions (from the Latin—to "suffer" or "undergo") of an audience as a means of persuading them to accept certain ideas or values presented for their assent. Generally speaking, medieval rhetoricians tended to follow the instruction and practice of the ancients on the principle that the emotions were to be conceived of primarily as a spur to "move" audiences to some kind of action in furtherance of the persuasive aim, which was to be accomplished more by means of reasoning and appeals to *ethos*, but this is only the most conservative of many possible views. Of course, this also brings into question the definition of *persuasion*. Does it admit of degrees? Is it marked by the simple change in the audience's belief or attitude, the assent given to a proposition put before them? Or does it also require some change in action to be considered persuasion? The controversy over the precise nature of persuasion is a discussion

[16] Aristotle, *The 'Art' of Rhetoric*, trans. John Henry Freese, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press; London: St. Edmundsbury Press, 1926; rpt. 2000), 1.1.3 – 7.

for another place, but without doubt the concept of persuasion itself always depends in some way on the rhetorician's view of the role emotions play in the process.

For Aristotle, *pathos* appeals are distinguished from appeals to *ethos* (character), which redound primarily to the person of the speaker and are said to be the basis of his ability to capture the benevolence and credit of his audience, and appeals to *logos* (reasoning), which appeals redound primarily to the matter under discussion and often bear the traces of formal and informal logic. The three together form his basic system for identifying and drawing upon the available means of persuasion in any given situation. In the ideal persuasive situation, the rhetorician would use reasoning to provide causes for a change in belief or action, appeals to *ethos* to raise his own credibility with the audience, and appeals to emotion would act as a motive to persuasion or action, to add support to the overall claim and to "seal the deal," as it were. Because of the ongoing concern around the rhetorical uses of emotion—whether such appeals were intended to supersede an audience's rational faculties or instead to form an adjunct to rational and ethical appeals—the matter remained in some dispute among classical theorists. Without doubt, intense upheavals of emotion are capable of overwhelming the judgments of undisturbed reason, and thus can form the sole basis of persuasion at least in some instances, but it is not clear that they must always do so. Some among the early Greeks felt it was advantageous to use the affective power of language to persuade regardless of the relation to reason, or even to the truth; others felt that emotional arousal in an audience could be used to help an audience reach the truth in an important way, and thus could be used in some situations without jeopardizing reason or justice. Others, unsurprisingly, found this argument to be more about the nature of rhetoric, its powers and responsibilities, than the nature of the emotions *per se*. Historians now tend to agree that

Aristotle's apparent ambivalence about the ethical nature of emotional appeals was not directed at rhetoric itself, but rather addressed a view common among many Greek theorists and practitioners, especially the Sophists, that the *psychogogic* power of rhetoric was its primary feature. In this view, rhetoric was a sort of "enchantment" whose function was to beguile and overwhelm an audience emotionally. Fortenbaugh points to the sentiment of the Sophist Gorgias, for whom "being overcome by emotions is analogous to rape."[17] Put simply, Aristotle felt that Greek rhetoric had suffered from too much emphasis on the emotions. Earlier debates concerning the general nature of the emotions that began with the Greeks revolved heavily around the popular ideal of the consummate orator, who could masterfully stir up and assuage the emotions, intensifying or mollifying them like a conductor coaxing music out of an orchestra. Again, the main question to be answered was whether the emotions were ancillary to judgment or constitutive of it. For the orator whose responsibility was to take control of what was considered to be a passive audience, the question of whether and how to evoke an emotional response was a question of agency. Was the orator using emotion merely to "push" an audience to act on a judgment they had already reached, or was the orator setting reason aside and actually providing the judgments to be reached in the form of their emotional correlatives? Who was the real agent of change in such a situation? For many, and Plato foremost among them, it was the apparent power of emotion to circumvent or overthrow reason in the shaping of other minds that made rhetoric a danger to be avoided rather than a tool to be used. The argument could be made, however, that Plato had used just such rhetorical manipulation to evoke an emotional response that was hostile to rhetoric.

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[17] William W. Fortenbaugh, "Aristotle's *Rhetoric* on Emotions," in *Aristotle: the Classical Heritage of Rhetoric*, ed. K.V. Erickson (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1974), 232.

Obviously, it was understood early on that in situations where the reasoning offered on both sides of a question was seen to be largely equal, and where the character of both speakers was generally unimpeachable, the spur of an audience's emotion could affect the outcome of the case in either direction, but the question remained: do the emotions offer support to the process of persuasion, or do the emotions themselves constitute those judgments which are the ends of persuasion? It took Aristotle's intervention to put such questions into an analytical framework of rhetoric from which they could be answered both pragmatically and theoretically. Concerning *pathos*, Aristotle was responding to what he saw as too much interest in the emotions among earlier Greeks, who often treated it to the exclusion of the other parts of rhetoric. In his *Rhetoric*, Aristotle offers a more balanced, systematic view in which *pathos* has a part to play that is no more important or less important than either *logos* or *ethos*—though it must be noted that Aristotle did not concern himself here with the whole range of human emotion, but only to those *pathe* that concerned the public audiences of oratory to which rhetors addressed themselves. As such, it was a limited view of emotion, but one that was better suited to the needs of rhetoric than to a general psychology or philosophy. On the question of agency that we have just raised, whether or not the emotions are ancillary or constitutive of judgment, contemporary rhetoricians tend to agree that Aristotle saw them as both. For even though he seemed to think, as many did, that the use of emotions to persuade judges in deliberative and forensic situations could sometimes be wrong, he clearly did not believe that the emotions were always out of place in rhetoric—indeed his systematic examination of individual emotions in the second book of his *Rhetoric* testifies to their importance in his rhetorical system. For Aristotle, it was more a matter of balance: he appears to consider it faulty to rely solely on the emotions for

persuasion, and his system finds a place for them in which their unique power is coordinated with the other powers of rhetoric in order to avoid the most corrosive outcomes.

In this observation we can also find a reflection of the pragmatic notion that the emotions are an indispensible part of the human psyche. For Aristotle, the *pathe* were formed on the dual foundation of pleasure and pain, those positive or negative dispositions that occur in every soul and manifest in action and judgment. An appeal to *pathos*, then, motivates human judgment as a result of the pleasant or painful dispositions of the kind that produce or lead to changes in thinking and acting.[18] Although in its most basic formulation, Aristotle's concept of the (rhetorical) emotions does not deal in terms of ancillary or constitutive natures—those are terms applied by modern theorists—it is clear that Aristotle wishes us to understand that the emotions are motivators, that they motivate both actions and judgments. On that point all later writers on rhetoric seem to agree. Aristotle also considered the emotions to be intrinsic to the *enthymeme*, which is to say that the emotions form an essential component of Aristotle's basic form of rhetorical argument. Again, all later theorists seem to agree that emotions always have some role to play in rhetorical practice, and there seems to be a consensus around the idea that they should not be the sole concern of the practicing rhetorician. There is much more to be said about Aristotle's theory of the emotions, to be sure, but the point that needs to be made here is that nearly all rhetorical theorists have thought it necessary and conscientious to consider the emotions whenever attempting persuasion.

Turning to the place of emotions in the rhetorical system of the Romans, which is often identified generally as the Ciceronian system, we see trends that look back on the rhetorical inheritance from the Greeks as well as trends that mark the Romans as different in

[18] See Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 2.2 – 12.

their regard for emotion. "What Aristotle and Cicero share," writes Green, "is an understanding that emotions are based on beliefs, and the rhetor can change those underlying beliefs," and that transformation of an audience is "likely to be accomplished by amplification and devices of language more than by reason alone."[19] Clearly the Romans considered the emotions as motivators of action and judgment.

Green argues that "the similarities between *pathos* in Athenian and Roman rhetoric do not run deep," but he does notice that the "theatrical aspects of emotional appeal are found in both traditions."[20] Both before and during Cicero's career as an orator, the Roman courts were filled with emotional spectacle. Green cites two instances found in Cicero's *De oratore* that demonstrate such theatricality: in the first, "the corrupt official Servius Galba hoisted a young orphan onto his shoulders in a bid for pity," and in the second, "the advocate for the former consul and general Manius Aquilius, who wore mourning clothes to his own trial, ripped open the old man's garment to show the scars he bore from a lifetime of battles fought for Rome."[21] Though we will have more to say about this specific mechanism of emotional appeal later, it is important to note here that the Romans appeared to be as ready to use dramatic, visual spectacle to appeal to the emotions as they were to rely on the creation of linguistic spectacle, as the Sophists had promoted. And there is no doubt that the Sophistic inheritance was vital to the Roman practice of public oratory. Green suggests that the Roman

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[19] Green, "Pathos," 560.

[20] *Ibid.*, 559. See also G.C. Fiske and M.A. Grant, *Cicero's De Oratore and Horace's Ars Poetica* (Madison, 1929), 41: "An examination of the index of Wilkins' edition of Cicero's *De oratore* under the headings *histrio*, *Scaena, tragicus, tragoedus, tragoedia*, *comodia*, *Rosicus*, *tibicen*, *tibia*, shows how frequently Cicero draws upon analogies from the stage for his delineation of the orator's art." For the connection between drama and rhetoric in the Middle Ages, see Jody Enders, *Rhetoric and the Origins of Medieval Drama* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1992).

[21] Green, "Pathos," 559. See also Cicero, *De oratore*, trans E.W. Sutton, 2 vols., Loeb Classical Library, (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard Univ. Press; London: Heineman, 1942; rpt. 1979), 1.53 and 2.47.

taste for theatricality in all things was mostly responsible, but the obvious predilection among Roman orators and writers for exuberant language and stylistic effusiveness attests to the influence of at least one major strand of Greek rhetorical thought. "Thus, the twin notions of stylistic delight and pathetic intensification were built into Roman oratory," writes Green, even before the large-scale importation of Hellenistic theories of style into Roman thought.[22] And indeed, stylistic delight and pathetic intensification remained the two most dominant modes of emotional persuasion throughout the Middle Ages. That the Romans were borrowing Greek models of style even before they came to adopt Greek theories of style also points to another characteristic feature of Roman rhetoric: its pragmatism. In Roman instruction, the empirical observation of rhetorical practice and the imitation of stylistic excellence appeared to be even more important than the underpinning theories of style that gave shape to them. The essential point for us to take from the transformation of Greek rhetoric among the Romans, though, is that it became common to think of both spectacle and of stylistic operations in terms of their emotional impact. Again, this common attitude was bequeathed by the Romans to the rhetorical thinking of later ages. Dramatic spectacle, the verbal creation of imagery and stylistic elaboration were all practiced and theorized as if their main purpose was to elicit, control, and direct an audience's emotional responses.

It is also clear that the Romans rhetoricians passed on to later ages an attitude toward the emotions that considered them connected in an important way to the process of reasoning and judgment, and thus were crucial to consider in any situation where complete persuasion was the desired outcome. For Cicero, the emotions drive any impulse to action that ought to result from an orator's successful attempt at persuasion. Appeal to emotion is therefore an essential task of the successful orator. As the primary instigator to action, the emotions must

[22] Green, "Pathos," 560.

be evoked and enlisted in any form of persuasion that is manifest in a change in action as well as the incipient causes of action such as belief and attitude. As such, appeals to emotion can only be reliably disregarded in situations where no action is expected as the result of successful persuasion—which is to say, almost never. The logical demonstrations of dialectic, for example, may have no need of emotional appeal, thought it has often been said that the emotional dimension necessary to rhetoric is chief among those characteristics that most distinguished it from dialectic. Interestingly, in contemporary critical rhetoric the emotional dimension of rhetoric and the lack of such a dimension in dialectic (which Aristotle called the *antistrophos* to rhetoric) is considered in connection with the kinds of audiences addressed by both arts. Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, for example, in *The New Rhetoric*, argue that dialectic addresses itself to a universal audience, non-contingent and non-situated, concerning which agreement is necessary insofar as the reason is the sole arbiter of logical demonstration.[23] Rhetoric, on the other hand, addresses particular audiences, contingent, partial, and situated, concerning which agreement is dependent on the way the rhetorician addresses the whole range of human faculties, not just reason. This concerns not only stylistic expression, but even invention, since an audience's pre-existing emotional states of mind will determine the acceptability of certain premises and kinds of arguments put forward for their approval. Thus, even after the Cartesian separation of mind and body, modern rhetoricians do not generally depart from Aristotle's view that emotion is intrinsic to rhetoric even where the primary focus of persuasion is on *logos*. The idea that rhetoric could be distinguished from dialectic primarily on the basis of its approach to

[23] Chaim Perelman and Lucie Olbrechts-Tyteca, *The New Rhetoric: A Treatise on Argumentation* (Notre Dame: Univ. of Notre Dame Press, 1969).

feelings and beliefs was not foreign to the Middle Ages,[24] and indeed the concept of "emotional communities" promoted by medieval historians such as Rosenwein attests to the importance of considering the partiality, the historical, temporal and regional contingencies that make specific audiences different from the concept of a universal audience—a difference that makes the emotional dimension of persuasion essential in any persuasive effort.

In addition to a supportive theory of the emotions, there is also the pragmatism typical of the Roman system that considers their use something of a foregone conclusion: the emotions do exist, and they do influence our actions and judgments, so they should be used to persuade whenever possible. The early Roman handbooks on rhetoric, such as Cicero's *De inventione* and the pseudo-Ciceronian *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, in their instructions for winning judicial cases, for example, take it as a matter of course that defendants will want to attempt to elicit the judges' pity as part of their defense, while prosecutors will routinely try to evoke the judges' anger and indignation and to direct it at defendants in the hopes of conviction.[25] No weight is ever given to the notion that judges should be left to decide cases on the basis of reasoning or character alone. The early Roman handbooks, it should be said, relied very little on formal theorization of the emotions, especially they type of systematic treatment they received from Aristotle. For the most part, these works pass along what was commonly thought and practiced among Roman jurists during the republic. It took the mature works of Cicero, in particular the *De orator* and the *Orator*, and later the thought of Quintilian, for Roman rhetoric to develop a more sophisticated and more philosophical

[24] Giles of Rome, in a late medieval commentary on Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, conceives of the relation between rhetoric and dialectic in just such terms; see Copeland and Sluiter, *Medieval Grammar and Rhetoric*, 797 – 811.

[25] Cicero, *De inventione*, trans. H. M. Hubbell, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press; London: Heineman, 1949; rpt. 1976), and [Cicero], *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, ed. and trans. Harry Caplan, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard Univ. Press; London: Heineman, 1954; rpt. 1977).

approach to the emotions. Cicero's more fully developed ideas about the nature and function of the emotions in rhetoric heavily influenced the thought of many medieval writers later concerned to clarify the central ideas of rhetoric for the Middle Ages, and to transform rhetoric toward a new encounter with the Christian worldview. Chief among those thinkers whose debt to Cicero was significant was St. Augustine, who had himself been an accomplished student and teacher of rhetoric, and whose views we will discuss further on.

An older, perhaps wiser Cicero than the one we encounter in the *De inventione* has this to say:

> All the mental emotions, with which nature has endowed the human race, are to be intimately understood, because it is in calming or kindling the feelings of the audience that the full power and science of oratory are to be brought into play. To this there should be added a certain humor, flashes of wit, the culture befitting a gentleman, and readiness and terseness alike in repelling and in delivering the attack, the whole being combined with a delicate charm and urbanity.[26]

Evidently, by the time of his writing of the *De oratore*, Cicero had found the time to reflect on the emotional dimension of rhetoric more deeply, and there are three crucial points to be made about his development of a more philosophically oriented view. The first is that, in apparent sympathy with Aristotle, Cicero considers foremost the orator's responsibility to thoroughly grasp the nature of each emotion, its origins, its expression and its effect upon listeners, in order to use them most effectively and responsibly. The scope of Cicero's debt to Aristotle here is murky, though, because of the difficulty scholars have had with reconciling Aristotle's treatment of individual emotions to the treatment of Cicero in the *De oratore*. Many of these differences may be traced to the deep influence of the Stoic tradition on

[26] Cicero, *De oratore* 1.17.

Cicero's thinking, both here and in other places.[27] The second critical point to make here is that by the time of the *De oratore*, Cicero had come to think of emotional persuasion as the consummation of the orator's art. No longer simply an adjunct to or a component of rational persuasion (which could be accomplished by any adequately prepared advocate), emotional persuasion was the *sine qua non* of the ideal orator's performance. Again, this is based on the concept, most fully developed in the *De oratore*, that the emotions provide motivation that completes the process of rational persuasion and transforms assent into behavior and action. The third and last point to made explicit here is Cicero's apparent conflation of *ethos* and *pathos*, for his remarks about the wit and culture of the orator's performance indicates that some of the emotions evoked by the ideal speaker, though they are appeals to *ethos* meant to reflect specifically on the person of the orator himself (rather than on the subject of the discourse or the object of its ministrations), are nevertheless emotions, and must be aligned with the emotional tenor of the discourse as a whole. Where Aristotle had posited a tripartite division of the means of persuasion into *logos*, *ethos*, and *pathos*, Cicero had apparently found both *ethos* and *pathos* to be mainly emotional in nature, as distinct from the process of reasoning, and different only according to the elements of the directedness: the orator has a duty to elicit positive emotions toward his own person and to associate the evocation of positive or negative emotions with the various subjects of his discourse, depending in practice on the particular rhetorical aim of his persuasive efforts.

Although Cicero does not appear to be interested in a deep psychological analysis of the emotions, there are traces of a psychological view embedded in his recommendations for

[27] Cicero's *Tusculan Disputations*, e.g.; see Margaret Graver, *Cicero on the Emotions: Tusculan Disputations 3 and 4* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 2002). See also Nussbaum, *Upheavals of Thought*.

the appeal to emotions. For example, Cicero suggests that the orator should feel for himself any emotion he wishes to awaken in an audience:

> 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.[28]

Cicero justifies this requirement first on practical grounds: how can the orator expect audiences to feel emotions that he cannot or does not feel himself? "For the very quality of the diction," he explains, "employed to stir the feelings of others, stirs the speaker himself even more deeply than any of his hearers."[29] Practically speaking, the performance of the speech constitutes a test of its emotional power even for the orator. If it does not arouse his own feelings, it may not be very persuasive after all. Cicero defends the principle on ethical grounds as well, telling us that if the orator is thought to be feigning an emotional upheaval, he will earn the distrust of his listeners, reduce his own *ethos* and so diminish the effectiveness of his speech. In applying this principle to literature, it might be argued that it is not needful for the poet to feel the emotions he wishes to inspire in others, since unlike the orator who must be physically present during the presentation of arguments and so invite comparison between the emotional quality of his delivery and the emotional quality of his arguments, poets and dramatists are removed generally from the circumstances of their being heard. Interestingly, though, Cicero argues that on both practical and ethical grounds even writers must feel the emotions they wish to stir up. He gives us an example of an actor whose performance of a certain stage play always moves him, saying, "Now if that player, though

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[28] Cicero, *De oratore* 2.189.

[29] *Ibid.* 2.191.

acting it daily, could never act that scene without emotion, do you really think that Pacuvius, when he wrote it, was in a calm and careless frame of mind?"[30]

Certainly by the time of Quintilian, Roman rhetoric had generally conflated the Aristotelian concepts of *ethos* and *pathos*, distinguishing them both from *logos* as means of emotional persuasion. Quintilian used the Greek term *pathe* to name the violent upheaval of emotion, while keeping the term *ethos* to describe those milder emotions whose capture would result in the attention and benevolence of the audience.[31] Also important for a discussion of Quintilian's thoughts on emotion is his endorsement of Cicero's idea that orators should feel the emotions they wish to stir up. "The heart of the matter," Quintilian tells us, "as regards arousing emotions, so far as I can see, lies in being moved by them oneself."[32] Quintilian in fact offers up a technique designed to help orators do just that, and this particular discussion is one *locus classicus* of the notion that imagery impacts on the emotions largely in the same way as does direct visual experience.[33] This technique is also an essential component of the rhetorically saturated tradition of poetics that began with Horace's *Ars poetica*, with its principle of "*ut pictura poesis*" (as is a painting, so is poetry). Like other Roman rhetoricians, Quintilian takes it as axiomatic that direct sensation, especially visual perception, has an unmediated power to produce emotional responses:

> Hence the practice of bringing the accused into court dirty and unkempt, and their children and parents with them, while we see the prosecution displaying the bloody sword, the bits of bone taken from the wound, the blood-bespattered clothing, the

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[30] *Ibid*. 2.193.

[31] Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria*, ed. and trans. Donald A. Russell, 4 vols., Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press; London, 2001), 6.2.8 – 11.

[32] *Ibid.* 6.2.26.

[33] See P.H. Schrÿvers, "Invention, Imagination et Theorie des Emotions chez Cicéron et Quintilien," in *Rhetoric Revalued*: *Papers from the International Society for the History of Rhetoric*," ed. Brian Vickers, Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies 19 (Binghampton: CMERS, 1982), 47 – 58.

> unbandaging of wounds, the stripped bodies with the marks of the scourge. These things commonly make an enormous impression because they confront people's minds directly with the facts.[34]

As it had been for Cicero, the primary source of the orator's own emotion, and thus the source of his audience's emotion, is derived from the matter under discussion, the facts of the case. However, drawing on earlier Greek ideas, Quintilian says,

> the person who will show the greatest power in the expression of emotion will be the person who has properly formed what the Greeks call *phantasiai* (let us call them 'visions'), by which the images of absent things are presented to the mind in such a way that we seem actually to see them with our eyes and have them physically present to us."[35]

The result of this process of vivid description and visualization will be "*enargeia*, what Cicero calls *illustratio* and *evidentia*, a quality which makes us seem not so much to be talking about something as exhibiting it. Emotions will ensue just as if we were present at the event itself."[36] And, in a move that would have a large impact on later rhetorical instruction throughout the Middle Ages, Quintilian recommends the exercise of *enargeia* for students, saying, "even in school, it is proper that the student should be moved by his subject and imagine it to be real… we play the part of an orphan, a shipwrecked man, or someone in jeopardy: what is the point of taking on these roles if we do not also assume the emotions?"[37]

Turning to the early medieval encounter with rhetoric, we take up the ideas of St. Augustine of Hippo, whose work undertook the adaptation of classical rhetoric to accommodate a new, Christian worldview, and for the purpose of a new task: to convert the people to the faith and to help them live well within it. It should be noted at the outset that

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[34] *Ibid.* 6.1.30.

[35] *Ibid*. 2.6.29.

[36] *Ibid.* 2.6.32.

[37] *Ibid*. 2.6.36.

although Augustine's contribution to a Christian rhetoric is great, it is not our purpose here to discuss all the ways that his thoughts helped form a general outlook on the power and responsibility of rhetoric that held throughout most of the Middle Ages.[38] Rather, we focus here on two of Augustine's contributions that are most pertinent to the role of emotions in rhetoric. The first is his response to the controversy over the ethical nature of rhetoric, which was newly inflected by the Christian concern over the proper use of teachings expounded by the (godless) ancients and worries over the potential dangers of relying on pagan doctrine. The second contribution is Augustine's formulation of the Ciceronian concept of the *genera dicendi* (genres of speaking) and its linkage to the *officia* (duties) of the orator, especially as they reflect on the use of emotions to persuade.

Where for the most part the ancient controversy over the ethics of rhetoric tended to focus on questions concerning the uses of emotion, Augustine tended toward the expanded view which included questions about rhetoric as a whole, and attempted to address the potential dangers of using a non-Christian art to defend and promote the Christian faith. For now it was no longer only the emotional power of rhetoric to lead listeners away from reason that was cause for concern, but the power of rhetoric in general to lead people away from the truth as revealed in scriptures. This was the old Platonic distrust of rhetoric, awakened to a new situation. Begun probably in 397 and finished between 426 and 427, the work *De Doctrina Christiana* "is Augustine's major contribution to the history and theory of rhetoric…" writes Kennedy, "it represents Augustine's views at the end of a lifetime of Christian study and preaching. What Augustine says about Christian rhetoric here is

[38] One brief but very helpful synopsis of Augustine's contributions to rhetoric can be found in: George A. Kennedy, *Classical Rhetoric and its Christian & Secular Tradition from Ancient to Modern Times* (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1980), 149 – 60.

generally in accord with his own practice."[39] Augustine's answer to the question of whether Christians should use classical rhetoric to defend and promote the faith was decisive for the history of rhetoric in the Middle Ages, and contains the famous analogy of the "Egyptian gold":

> If those who are called philosophers, especially the Platonists, have said things which are indeed true and are well accommodated to our faith, they should not be feared: rather, what they have said should be taken from them as from unjust possessors and converted to our use. Just as the Egyptians had not only idols and grave burdens which the people of Israel detested and avoided, so also they had vases and ornaments of gold and silver and clothing which the Israelites took with them secretly when they fled, as if to put them to better use.[40]

Certainly we should put Cicero on that list of those Augustine calls philosophers, and not just because it was Cicero's *Hortensius* that began Augustine's intellectual reawakening that eventually led to his conversion to Christianity in 387, and not just because Augustine's thoughts on Christian rhetoric were so heavily influenced by Cicero, but also because his view of Cicero was very likely colored heavily by the fourth-century work of Victorinus, whose Neoplatonic commentary on the *De inventione* highlights Cicero's own insistence on the conjunction of wisdom and eloquence.[41] As Copeland and Sluiter explain, Victorinus understood

> discipline or art as a form of moral ascesis through which the soul can return to its transcendent origins: through the arts, and especially through the language arts, the soul seeks emancipation, and the inner essence of the perfect good, wisdom, is imaged forth in the eloquence that is thereby achieved.[42]

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[39] Kennedy, *Classical Rhetoric*, 153.

[40] Augustine, *De Doctrina Christiana* (On Christian Doctrine), trans. D.W. Robertson, Jr., The Library of Liberal Arts (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1958), 2.60.

[41] Marius Victorinus, *Explanationes in Ciceronis rhetoricam*, in *Rhetores latini minores*, ed. C. Halm (Leipzig: Teubner, 1863; rpt. Dubuque, IA: Brown Reprint Library, 1964), 153 – 304.

[42] Copeland and Sluiter, *Medieval Grammar and Rhetoric*, 53; see also 104 – 24. Victorinus's commentary had a pervasive infuence on the tradition of commentaries on the *De inventione* and *Rhetorica ad Herennium* throughout the Middle Ages. This commentary tradition points to Cicero's introduction to the *De inventione* as

How little reflection it takes to see in this a preparation for the transformation of rhetoric into a Christian art that Augustine was to take up. Defining "wisdom" as the true knowledge of God as revealed through scripture, Augustine would quite naturally have turned to Ciceronian rhetoric as the source of an eloquence that could unite with such wisdom in order to explicate the faith and defend it against ignorance and unbelief. In book 4 we find Augustine wrestling with the practical questions of promoting Christian eloquence. There Augustine refuses to treat the subject of classical rhetoric in any detail, saying both that students could learn it elsewhere and that those who needed Christian eloquence could learn just as much from the speeches and writings of the eloquent as they could from formal instruction. He does, however, begin to expound a practical method of Christian eloquence with reference to the mature Cicero's concept of the *officia*, or duties, of the orator, especially as they concern the traditional *genera dicendi*, or "genres" (styles) of rhetoric. In book 2 of the *De oratore* Cicero had proposed a scheme in which the duties or responsibilities of the orator, "to teach, to delight, and to sway," (*docere*, *delectare*, *movere*) were aligned with the Aristotelian modes of proof, *logos*, *ethos* and *pathos*,[43] and further aligned with the "levels" of style (primarily in terms of diction and ornamentation) appropriate to each of the orator's tasks. To "teach" (*docere*) basically meant to "inform" or to "reason with" and was appropriate to the low or humble style, which was marked by clarity and simplicity of diction; to "delight" (*delectare*) referred to the need of an orator to win the goodwill and attentiveness of his audience, and the middle style was most appropriate; and to "sway" (*movere*) meant to move audiences by stirring up their emotions

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the *locus classicus* for the idea that the power of eloquence is a civilizing force, and indeed is at the root of the formation of civilization out of brute chaos.

[43] See esp. Cicero, *De oratore* 2.115 – 16, 2. 178 and 2.182.

toward the persuasive goal of the speech, with the primary vehicle being the "grand" or high style, often later also called the "grave" or "heavy" style, which exhibited all the emotional force of language the orator could muster. To describe the actions of orators working in accordance with these duties, Augustine relies on the terms *probere*, *conciliare*, *flectere* ("to prove," "to conciliate," and "to bend") found not in the *De oratore* but in Cicero's *Orator*, which choice, although it may have some consequence for an in-depth discussion of the nature of Augustine's borrowing from Cicero, nevertheless remains rather faithful to the original scheme. In the responsibility to "move" or "bend" audiences, Augustine was right in line with Cicero's teaching. Cicero had written, "For men decide far more problems by hate, or love, or lust, or rage, or sorrow, or joy, or hope, or fear, or illusion, or some other inward emotion than by reality, or authority, or any legal standard, or judicial precedent, or statute."[44] As Kennedy notes, "Augustine thinks that it is necessary to delight a listener in order to retain him as a listener," and this is consistent with Ciceronian rhetorical principles; also "it is necessary to move him in order to impel him to do what is right. Moving is equated with persuasion."[45] Just as Cicero had equated emotional persuasion with the consummation of the orator's art, the *sine qua non* of ideal persuasion, so Augustine recommends the use of emotional persuasion to "bend" toward action those who know the truth but do not wish to act upon it. Moving or bending an audience by means of emotion was the highest, most complete form of persuasion. It should be noted moreover that Augustine's thoughts on the importance of emotional persuasion were founded on his concept of a faculty psychology in which reason and will (*voluntas*) were separate. This view makes more explicit than even Cicero the notion that the emotions motivate the will act, whether or not the will has been

[44] Cicero, *De oratore* 2.178.

[45] Kennedy, *Classical Rhetoric*, 156.

informed by the rational faculty. It is for this reason that Augustine, like Cicero, considered persuasion somehow incomplete without the involvement of the emotions. It should also be noted that in moving toward a scheme in which the levels of style in oratory were aligned with the duties of an orator and the conventional modes of proof, Augustine was moving away from the classical conception of style, which was tied by the concept of *decorum* to notions about what particular subject matter was fitting for each style. The well known thesis of Auerbach explores this concept, suggesting that divine revelation, as the foremost truth important to a Christian orator, meant that although discussions of the salvation of souls formed the highest, most serious cause a Christian orator could treat, the basic needs of conversion required the use of the *sermo humilis*, or "humble" style. Thus for Auerbach, Augustine's reorganization represented an overturning of a basic orienting principle of style in pagan rhetoric, and would have significant consequences for theories of literary style in later medieval thought.[46] In fact, Augustine's appropriations and revaluations of classical rhetoric on the whole were to have a fundamental impact on the way classical rhetoric was preserved and practiced in the Middle Ages. According to Copeland, "The effects of this over the next one thousand years almost defy summary because of its virtually universal impact on Christian thought about discourse."[47]

The last subject that requires a brief coverage in this overview is the linkage of rhetoric, and the rhetoric of emotions, to the subject of poetry both before and during the Middle Ages. As Lewis had remarked, it was not ordinarily conceivable by literary theorists and practitioners to distinguish rhetoric from poetics in any substantial way. While it is

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[46] Erich Auerbach, *Literary Language and Its Public in Late Latin Antiquity and in the Middle Ages*, trans. Ralph Manheim, Bollingen Ser. LXXIV (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1965), 25 – 66 on the *sermo humilis*.

[47] Rita Copeland, "Medieval Rhetoric: An Overview," in *The Encyclopedia of Rhetoric*, ed. Thomas O. Sloane (Oxford, 2001), 469 – 479, 472.

inadequate to say that classical and medieval thinkers conceived of poetry simply as rhetoric in verse, it is true that no classical or medieval conception of poetry could be coherently articulated without reference to rhetoric, and it was quite common for both Greek and Roman writers to cite examples from the poets when discussing the principles of style—though it was not only a concern for style that related poetics to rhetoric. This close connection was made closer in the late antique period when it became more common for parts of rhetorical pedagogy to be handled in early instruction by teachers of Grammar in conjunction with the basic principles of literary composition. The tradition of study and commentary on Horace's *Ars poetica* was just as unbroken as the study and commentary on the early Ciceronian rhetorical handbooks, and the two traditions were closely linked in pedagogy as well as in the practice of working poets. As Copeland explains,

> Because the Ars poetica was a cornerstone of schooling, it was also one of the classical texts most familiar to active medieval poets, including vernacular poets such as Jean de Meun and Chaucer, who could avail themselves of Horatian precepts about translation as a legitimate form of imitation and 'invention' of subject matter.[48]

Though it was not a highly theoretical text, Horace's prescriptive advice on poetry was greatly indebted to rhetoric not only for its notions about style and arrangement, but also for its rhetorical view on invention. The famous Horatian dictum, *ut pictura poesis*, reinforces the rhetorical practice of *enargeia*, the vivid description so essential to poetry, and like Cicero and Quintilian, Horace considers the effective production of visualization principally in terms of its emotional impact. Moreover, "Horace offers a famous ethical justification for poetry as both instructive and pleasurable," writes Copeland, "themes which resonate with the Ciceronian rhetorical doctrine that the orator's task is to prove, please, and persuade."[49]

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[48] Copeland, "Medieval Rhetoric," 471.

[49] *Ibid*.

With later medieval developments in the area of poetics, the *artes poetriae* tradition of Geoffrey of Vinsauf's *Poetria nova*, for example, came an even greater melding of poetics and rhetoric, and those doctrines, even when (or perhaps especially when) they limited themselves to stylistics, continued to conceive of emotional response as an essential component of both aesthetic and persuasive motivations.

CHAPTER 1

"COLOURS OF RETHORYK BEEN TO ME QUEYNTE": EMPATHY AND RHETORICAL IDEALISM IN *THE FRANKLIN'S TALE*[50]

Among Chaucer's pilgrims, as with Chaucer and his contemporaries like Gower and Langland, the question of how to establish and maintain *wys accord* among individuals and groups in a time of great social upheaval is an important one. The concern for order and social harmony has a plainly political dimension in these works—though it is addressed often obliquely—as a matter of maintaining accord in civil government and the prevailing social order amid the contemporary crises of disunity and discord. According to Alcuin Blamires, there is a strongly coded urgency in these works:

> What was clear to many, from the closing years of Edward's reign through the fraught years of Richard's, was that division stalked the land, both among the lords and between commons and lords. Chaucer's General Prologue begs to be seen in that context as a projection of the restoration of social and political amity or *felaweshipe*."[51]

Among Chaucer's pilgrims, the Franklin is not alone in his concern for the problem of maintaining social amity, and this concern should be examined in terms of the Franklin's status as one of what Anne Middleton has called Chaucer's "new men." Much like their familiar counterparts of other eras (Middleton cites the Tudor period), the Franklin, the Man of Law, the Monk, the Clerk and the Squire are all recognized as members of a newly ascendant class: "lower gentry and civil and legal professionals who attained office and

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[50] Geoffrey Chaucer, "The Franklin's Prologue and Tale," *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. Larry D. Benson, 3rd ed. (Houghton, 1987), 178 – 189.

[51] Alcuin Blamires, "Crisis and Dissent," in *A Companion to Chaucer*, ed. Peter Brown (Blackwell, 2000), 133 – 48, 145.

privilege in significant numbers."[52] What distinguishes the "new men" from the other pilgrims is "a characteristic set of educational, literary, social, and civil ideals that seems to have attained cultural prominence with them."[53] Many critics have since recognized the real possibility that the sensibility of these new men may reflect the values and ideals of Chaucer's most cherished audience who, like himself, would have shared similar status. Though she does not use the phrase, the sensibility Middleton describes can be succinctly captured by the term *Ciceronian idealism*, after the political and rhetorical philosophy of Cicero (who was himself a "new man" of the Roman Republic during an era of social and political crisis). In Middleton's view, Chaucer's "new men" share a common set of narrative and rhetorical practices as well as a "common kind of self-consciousness: they preface and interlace their tales with profuse instructions on how to take them, and in doing so present some shared assumptions about the place of literature in the world, and the means by which it achieves its good effects."[54] For these reasons, the new men "agree that the pleasure and the use of literature are one thing, and are realized in worldly performance." As Middleton explains:

> The good of the story lies not only in the exemplary virtues it depicts, the kernel of content, but in the virtues required to derive pleasure from it: the capacity for wonder, sympathy, and thoughtful speculation—in short, in sensitivity to style and its expressive values.[55]

In a very important sense, the Franklin's story sets out to inspire wonder, sympathy and thoughtful speculation, and the fact that he sees sensitivity to style and its expressive value as

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[52] Anne Middleton, "Chaucer's 'New Men' and the Good of Literature in the *Canterbury Tales"* in *Literature and Society*, ed. Edward W. Said (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1980), 15 – 56, 15.

[53] *Ibid.*, 15.

[54] *Ibid.*, 16.

[55] *Ibid.*

a virtue necessary to derive both pleasure and wisdom from his tale is made clear by both his prologue and by his words to the Squire and the Host that instigate and precede his telling.

Like the other new men, the Franklin's interest in the problems of achieving social amity is diffuse, both broad and specific. The narrative framework and the *dramatis personae* of his tale imply he will explore questions of harmony and disunity through the workings of the interpersonal relationships in his story. While at the end of his narration he does open up the *entente* of his tale to the potential of a wider social and civic applicability, the primary interest of the narrative drama focuses on the difficulty and instability of accord between individuals. What the Franklin seems to find most interesting and troubling about the problems of maintaining accord among individuals is the difficulty presented by human nature. As he tells us:

> For in this world, certain, ther no wight is
> That he ne dooth or seith somtyme amys.
> Ire, siknesse, or constellacioun,
> Wyn, wo, or chaungynge of complexioun
> Causeth ful ofte to doon amys or speken.
> On every wrong a man may nat be wreken. (779 – 784)

The sentiment that no one is perfect may seem like a literary commonplace, but the salient feature of the Franklin's list is that it is primarily emotional. Emotion drives the reasons why people do each other amiss, whether it is anger, joy, grief or even an intrinsic humor or change in mood. Thus, the key to understanding the ways in which fellowship is disrupted, and how it may be restored, lies in understanding the emotions of others. Line 784 may be read to mean that there are simply too many wrongs for someone to avenge himself on every one, but the following couplet makes it clear that the sense lies elsewhere: "After the tyme moste be temperaunce / To every wight that kan on governaunce" (785 – 86). The Franklin is actually telling us that mere reciprocity or revenge is not the solution to so many personal

affronts. And though he may seem to be saying instead that the straightforward application of a personal virtue such as *temperaunce* or *pacience* (773) can provide a remedy, the story that unfolds afterward demonstrates repeatedly that it is not lack of personal virtue that confounds the restoration of amity, but rather a lack of sensitivity to and understanding of the perspectives and emotions of others. Temperance is a virtue exercised independently of the actions of others, and the practice of patience, while it certainly requires ethical consideration of others, requires no special sensitivity to their expressions or their internal, emotional conditions. The cure the Franklin seems to be driving at lies more in the direction of compassion or empathy. Where some of Chaucer's other pilgrims do seem to propose that the application of personal virtue would help to overcome social division in spite of the vicissitudes of human emotion, the Franklin's tale appears to argue that empathy can help overcome that division by focusing precisely on the emotions, as well as on the perceptions and perspectives that give rise to them.

Like the other new men, the Franklin is highly attentive to the way his tale will be taken by his audience, and he is keen to mark out the conditions under which he expects to be listened to. This signaling includes all the ambitions characteristic of the new men. In his words to the Squire he has already begun to formulate his ideal of vernacular eloquence, expressing admiration for the Squire's ability to speak "*so feelingly"* and for his *gentilesse*. As Middleton argues:

> The most cherished and distinct practice of the Chaucer's new men is that they 'kidnap' terms, genres, and modes of idealization that traditionally support cultic values … into idealizing fictions of their own that shift the traditional uses for these terms and cultic objects. 'Gentilesse,' 'chivalry,' 'suffraunce,' 'patience,' for example, are stretched and recombined in fictions whose most characteristic effect is to call our attention to the process of fictional idealization itself, and the process of telling, reading, or hearing a story so as to sustain its practical life in the world.[56]

[56] Middleton, "Chaucer's 'New Men,' " 16.

We may see, in the lengthy perambulation that begins his tale, the Franklin beginning to engage in this "kidnapping" of terms and modes of idealization traditionally supporting cultic values, but he is not stretching and reconfiguring *temperaunce* and *pacience*, for he does not use these words anywhere else in the tale. His kidnapping instead targets the concepts of *gentilesse* and *franchise*, which as terms for worthy and generous conduct are, in the Franklin's telling, no longer circumscribed by the requirements of aristocratic birth and high station. He also kidnaps the concept of *pitee*, shifting it over the course of his tale from the older, restricted sense of chivalrous piety, combining it with *routhe* to express a more open, modern and worldly sense of compassion and empathy.

In the enclosed, cultic space of older romance, the values of *gentilesse* and *pitee* were already deeply connected. In medieval romance, the ability and willingness to feel pity is the marker of nobility. As the Squire says, repeating a commonplace of romance poetry, "That pitee renneth soone in gentil herte, / Feelynge his similitude in peynes smerte, / Is preved alday…" (479 – 81). In this old, romantic and classical sense, pity is like nobility or *gentilesse*: a special quality of those who are born to high estate. It marks them off from those in the lower orders as a sort of differential, not only in the sensitivity of their perception, but also crucially in their power to alleviate suffering or to refuse to alleviate it. Classically, pity names the feeling that accompanies the recognition of suffering in another who does not appear to deserve it. While this recognition may imply the need or opportunity to mitigate the suffering, pity in its classical form (as well as its cultic medieval form) always retains the sense of a certain distance separating the observer from the sufferer. It is a distance not closed simply by the alleviation of suffering. Thus, while pity recognizes the reality of another's suffering, the sufferer remains always an *object* of pity. It is for this

reason that the Franklin sees the need to transform chivalrous piety into something else: as an elite emotion, pity cannot effect social change.

Empathy, on the other hand, is transactional in a way that pity is not. Empathy is the sharing of another's perspective and emotion that entails a certain kind of proximity and togetherness: fellowship. In pity, there is a subject and an object; in empathy there are two or more subjects linked together. Though empathy need not by definition include a component of suffering, when it does it can be easily mistaken for pity. Unlike pity, however, empathy collapses the distance in perspective between sufferer and observer. In the context of romance poetry, pity is neither egalitarian nor socially transformative, even though it may be morally probative. In the Franklin's estimation, empathy can indeed be socially transformative, and this is why he invests so much effort, in the telling of his tale, to examining the emotional and perspectival transactions of his characters.

Ethos, Pathos and the 'New Man'

In his prologue the Franklin begins by showing his admiration for the values embodied by his source material, a Breton lay. As Middleton explains:

> The newness of a new man's ethos will be disguised and diffuse in his story, characteristically—and paradoxically—appearing as an earnest and insistent honoring of old ways and the received high culture, for it is these to which he wishes to show himself accustomed and entitled.[57]

However, the Franklin's ethical interest in old stories regards them "not as the repository of doctrine or cultic example, but as the locus for narrative of general ethical idealization, meant

[57] *Ibid.*, 17.

for modern worthies to admire, and thereby to display the virtues of civilized man."[58] This is clearer in the second half of his prologue, where the Franklin ironically professes his lack of sophisticated learning. In his very noticeable mention of Parnassus, Cicero and the colors of rhetoric he reveals the presence of a highly wrought rhetorico-poetic method at work in his tale. Like the values behind his source material, the sophisticated learning behind his method comes from a body of traditional, received learning, but his handling of it in the prologue indicates his intention to put this lore to new uses in his story.

In his storytelling, the Franklin takes many turns at the high rhetorical style of poetic narration, and in these passages we should see not simply the effect of a sophistication aiming to please the refined tastes of high culture, but also the Franklin's earnest attempt to realize rhetorically the virtues of his story in its performance—the expressive and ethical values he wishes to inculcate in his audience—in an effort to embody his ideal of vernacular eloquence in worldly application. He uses the traditional, conventional rhetorical practices of the *artes poetriae* tradition in two important ways. First, by using descriptive and dramatic amplification as a form of composition to re-compose parts of the original source poem (probably Menedon's story in the fourth book of Boccaccio's *Il Filocolo*), the Franklin effectively reconfigures the story in order to direct it more effectively toward his new rhetorical purpose. By this method the Franklin is able to use Boccaccio's old story as the *locus* "for a narrative of general ethical idealization" (to use Middleton's words) while allowing it to appear as the *source* of that idealization, effectively disguising and diffusing the newness of his rhetorical aim. Second, he uses the stylistic techniques offered by the tradition of rhetorical poetics for the purposes of elaborative figuration and evaluative coloration, by which means he is able to create new layers of implication within the

[58] *Ibid.*, 18.

narrative, to reshape the implications already existing in the older story, and to cultivate his audience's awareness of those implications as a function of the narration itself.

Among all of his stylistic devices, there is a key technique that enables the Franklin to provide access to the interior spaces of his characters, which is what enables our sensitivity to their emotions as well as enabling the dramatic irony that complicates the plot as it moves forward, and we should look for that key exactly where he tells us to find it in his prologue: in his use of the colors of rhetoric. The *colores* of rhetoric denote traditional devices of verbal embellishment dating back to the period of Roman rhetoric, but the term is also used to name a special class of stylistic exornations that received further development in the thirteenth century by Geoffrey of Vinsauf, who is more widely known as the author of the *Poetria Nova*, the most well-known treatise in the *artes poetriae* tradition.[59] It is well known that Chaucer was familiar with Vinsauf's *Poetria Nova*, and while it is certain that he knew of the *colores rhetorici*, he may also have been aware of Vinsauf's smaller treatise, the *Summa de coloribus rhetoricis*.[60]

In contemporary connotations the *colores* tend to appear as superficial decoration, aesthetic or cosmetic surplus, but this is not the sense in which either Vinsauf or the Franklin use the term. Though he seems to be coy about his learning in the arts of rhetoric and poetry, calling himself a "burel man" (716), we know from the expert craftsmanship of his story that the Franklin is well versed in telling a tale full of flourishing stylistic adornment and copious detail. While the Franklin seems to be engaged in a bit of irony in claiming to be untutored in rhetoric and poetry, he is actually telling us that he is taking a different view of the utility of

[59] Murphy notes that in later medieval usage *color* supersedes *exornatio* and *figura* in generally denoting figurative language (Murphy, *Rhetoric in the Middle Ages*, 189 – 90).

[60] Both the *Poetria Nova* and the *Summa de coloribus rhetoricis* are found in Edmond Faral, *Les Arts Poétiques du XIIe et du XIIIe Siècle* (Paris, 1923), 194 – 262, and 321 – 27, respectively.

rhetorical and poetic finesse in storytelling: it helps us communicate more clearly and effectively what would otherwise remain undisclosed and hard to see, like the emotions. When the Franklin says, "Thyng that I speke, it moot be bare and pleyn" (720), we may be tempted to read this as a denouncement of stylistic adornment—and indeed even some of Chaucer's contemporaries may have read it this way—but in fact, as we can tell from the context of his prologue and the circumstances of his performance within the narrative frame of the storytelling contest, the Franklin is revealing a very different, more sophisticated position here. In the Franklin's view, which unfolds in contrast to the performance of the Squire, the purpose of stylistic adornment and the invention of detail is to lay bare the object of the poet's discourse for his audience rather than to disguise it, to reveal a speaker's true intentions rather than to obscure them or render them ambiguous.

This view puts the Franklin close to the position of the mature Cicero, who thought of the *colores* as a certain kind of lighting or illumination (*lumenes*), a metaphor designed to bring out the epistemic aspect of his rhetorical tools. Geoffrey of Vinsauf's development of the colors goes further, identifying them as techniques specifically for signifying inward emotions and interior experience. These *colores* help shape our perception of another's perspective. Use of the colors, as of stylistic adornment in general, allows us to see clearly what would otherwise be dark or obscure, difficult to perceive, and this is what the Franklin means by comparing the colors of rhetoric to the colors of flowers in the fields, which enable us to make them out against the background. He also compares the colors of rhetoric to the colors of dyes and paints, by which artists can show us clearly something that exists, but not in nature. In this comparison the colors are artificial as opposed to natural, but not artificial as opposed to true. In this view, the tools of rhetorical poetics are instrumental rather than

cosmetic, and poets have the same need of them as artists do of dyes and paints. "*Ut pictura poesis*," as Horace says.

In contrast, the Squire's dazzling array of rhetorical and poetic embellishments had the effect of increasing, rather than decreasing, the distance between his audience and the material of his story. Despite his capacity to delight listeners with the virtuosity of his performance, the Squire's manner of display had ended up obscuring the purpose of his story and making his effort appear guided by vanity and ostentation. This kind of storytelling, according to the Franklin, is not quite the stuff of eloquence, and his interruption of the Squire, for all its politeness and apologetics, does nonetheless bring about the end of the Squire's narration. For the Franklin, a virtuosic display is not an end in itself, but a means to further the idealistic agenda of the new men: to restore fellowship and social amity through sophisticated poetry. His audience's sensitivity to the expressive values of his rhetorical style reveal not just a means of delighting them, but also a means of persuading them.

Amplification as Rhetorical Method

In the rhetorical tradition of medieval poetics, amplification serves as the primary vehicle of composition in an incipient theory of intertextuality, and amplification is controlled by topical invention, arrangement and stylistic elaboration.[61] It is taken for granted that behind the poet's new composition, such as Boccaccio's *Decameron* 10.5 or Chaucer's *Franklin's Tale* lies a source text or an intertext like Menedon's story in Boccaccio's *Il Filocolo*, where

[61] *Invention*, *disposition* (arrangment) and *elocution* (style) are three of the five canons of rhetoric in the classical tradition; see *De inventione* and *Rhetorica ad Herennium.* The canons of *memory* and *delivery* are left out because these address the requirements of oratory rather than poetry.

the *materia* of the new story can be found, explored, and adapted to new uses. As Edwards puts it:

> When medieval writers seek to tell a story already contained in an antecedent text, invention follows an established procedure. The first step is a critical reading of the source text both for what is said and for what remains possible but unstated in the original. The writer negotiates the language and silences of the source to see what else might be explored.[62]

Edwards also quotes Geoffrey of Vinsauf, who advises poets not "to follow the tracks of the words (*vestigia verborum*)" but to be silent where the text speaks and to speak where the text is silent.[63] As Vinsauf would have it, where the source text or intertext speaks voluminously (often by amplification), the new text should pass over or else abbreviate; where the source text contains unexplored possibilities, the new poem should find new ways to speak.[64] That is, the new text should be amplified in chosen places in order to develop new themes and new ideas for implication and emphasis that are not found in the original source. The new poet will use amplification to give shape to the new conceptualization of the story's meaning in a way that can be described as a new rhetorical purpose or aim for the work as a whole. In this case and in comparison with both of Boccaccio's versions of the story, Chaucer's re-conceptualization appears to reorient the story toward a much greater, and much more meaningful, focus on the emotional dynamics of the narrative drama. Each opportunity for amplification can be regarded as an opportunity to reshape the source toward a new overall

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[62] Robert R. Edwards, "Rewriting Menedon's Story: *Decameron* 10.5 and the *Franklin's Tale*," in *The* Decameron *and the* Canterbury Tales: *New Essays on an Old Question*, ed. Leonard M. Koff and Brenda D. Schildgen (Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson Univ. Press, 2000), 226 – 46, 228.

[63] Edwards, "Rewriting Menedon's Story," 228; Geoffrey of Vinsauf, *Documentum de modo et arte dictandi et versificandi*, in Faral, *Les artes poétiques*, 309 – 10.

[64] Ernest Gallo recognizes Vinsauf as the first rhetorician "to give theoretical expression to the medieval method of reworking one's sources… by amplifying themes and incidents left undeveloped in their sources, and by abbreviating material therein developed at length" (Ernest Gallo, *the Poetria Nova and its Sources in Early Rhetorical Doctrine* [the Hague: Mouton, 1971], 224).

entente, which is the newer poet's purpose in re-engaging the older work. Far from searching for an original approach to an old poem for novelty's sake, the adapting poet is responding to a new reason to tell the story, just as he searches for new ways to make that reason appealing to a new audience.

When a new poem is to be created out of the materials of an old poem, the first step to be taken is the uncovering of these new perspectives, new explorations of plot and character, points of view, and the development of new uses for the basic narrative. This is the role of invention in its earliest stages. As we might expect, there is some critical disagreement as to what particular kinds of revisions of the older poem might be envisioned by a formal art of rhetoric or poetics, and some would deny that certain radical revisions of narrative elements such as plot, characterization or point-of-view could be prompted by such an art. As sympathetic as he is to the role of rhetoric in both Chaucer's and Boccaccio's (*Decameron* 10.5) revisions of the Menedon story, even Edwards is ambivalent about the scope of its power, saying, "Their revisions follow the protocols enunciated in medieval literary theory for rewriting an antecedent text, but they do not produce a solely aesthetic or formal reconfiguration of the basic narrative. Rather, they reconceive Menedon's story in markedly different social visions and historical contexts."[65] It is also not uncommon for literary critics to consider the limited treatment of the comprehensive system of rhetoric in the medieval *artes poetriae* and conclude that rhetoric itself had become severely restricted and overly concerned with stylistic principles by the late Middle Ages. From there it is a small step to the claim that any poetic alterations that exceed simple, formal and stylistic modification have by definition also exceed the scope of rhetoric. Such a view is a misunderstanding of the history of rhetoric. Though it is less common today, is was not unusual to see literary

[65] Edwards, "Rewriting Menedon's Story," 226.

critics prefer something thought to be outside the scope of rhetorical theory, such as the poet's mercurial genius, as the prompt for significant changes that alter the fundamental contours of a source narrative, so that important poets might be rescued from the charge of being subservient to the uninspired demands of a putatively purely formal art.

But regardless of the immediate source of certain authorial reconfigurations of existing poems—whether it is rhetorical precept or something else—any change of meaning from the older poem to the newer poem should be recognized as requiring guidance from rhetoric insofar as the choice is motivated by the primary imperative to persuade. If, for example, Chaucer's choice to present the *Franklin's Tale* as if it were a Breton lai makes certain demands on his audience's sense of the story, if this alteration in some way changes the meaning of the poem for audiences in the performative context of the Franklin's storytelling, then it is in fact a rhetorical choice whether or not its inspiration came from a book, a passing thought, or a whispering bird. And as it turns out, there may be a very good rhetorical reason behind Chaucer's choice of genre. As Helen Cooper notes, the Breton lai tends to be shorter than other kinds of romances, more likely to focus on a single episode instead of a long series of episodes, and, she adds, "it also tends to focus much more on emotion than event: its primary interest is in the internal lives of its characters."[66] The *Franklin's Tale* exhibits these same qualities, and "they are highlighted by its juxtaposition with the wide-ranging romance of the *Squire's Tale*."

The next phase in creating the new material is the move from abstract to practical, and it requires use of the tools of invention, so the poet must turn to topical invention, which follows the plan of the new conceptualization and which will provide the content of an

[66] Helen Cooper, *Oxford Guides to Chaucer: the* Canterbury Tales, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1996), 232.

amplification, out of which the new contours and new implications of the story will develop. Since new, amplified interpolations quite frequently deal with characters, places and events, it is common to see topics drawn directly from the attributes of persons, places and events found in the classical manuals. It is not unusual, though, to find topics drawn from other sources. The purpose of these topics, or *loci*, is to provide basic "places," or units of content, that will receive stylistic elaboration in a later phase of composition. To be clear, though, the idea of "phases" of composition is more explanatory than descriptive, as these phases are not necessarily discrete or serial.

In its schematic form, the next step in the rhetorical project concerns disposition or arrangement, the operation of which has a more restricted scope here than it does in other kinds of rhetorical composition, where the entire work is to be generated "whole cloth" around the topics provided by invention. This is because an overall plan for the poetic work already exists in the source text, and it is expected that the poet in working with this material will generally follow the outline of the older work—though not always or in every way. The *Franklin's Tale* is a perfect illustration of just how different the new poem can be from its predecessors while still following the basic outline of the original plot.

From here we turn to stylistic elaboration, the last phase of the compositional procedure. In the tradition of the *artes poetriae* amplification is largely a matter of how the poet handles the elements of style. Where the other phases of the compositional process we are outlining here are often covered briefly or obliquely in these works, the particulars of stylistic amplification are treated at great length. It has often been assumed by modern critics that the expansive treatment of style in the works of Geoffrey of Vinsauf and Matthew of Vendôme, among others, and the relative paucity of their considerations for the other

traditional canons of rhetoric indicate that the *artes poetriae* represent a "bastardized" medieval rhetoric, sequestered from the larger tradition of rhetoric that permeates classical learning and later Early Modern thought. However, in keeping with the very oldest notion of the process of rhetoric, which is to find and use the available means of persuasion, the process of stylistic elaboration forms a fundamental component of an integrated whole. The stylistic manuals of the Middle Ages are meant to supplement the larger corpus of traditional rhetorical theory and doctrine, not as a substitute for them, but as further refinements and explorations of the conventional stylistic doctrines.

Because its primary mechanism is affective or emotional, rather than propositional, style is always deeply connected to the aesthetic process, but insofar as its purpose is, in modern rhetorical terminology, a matter of increasing the intensity of an audience's adherence to certain values and ideas presented for its assent, stylistic manipulation, whether evaluative or elaborative, is never purely decorative or cosmetic. Kelly explains:

> Amplification as a compositional device taught by the twelfth- and thirteenth-century arts of poetry… is not merely additional material added to no obvious purpose; rather it lays stress on a given subject, dwells upon it in order to elicit the sense desired by the author.[67]

According to Payne, the most obvious manner in which figurative language can function in any narrative is "by producing the suggestions or associations which are generally described as 'atmospheric'."[68] His explanation is precise:

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[67] Douglas Kelly, *Medieval Imagination: Rhetoric and the Poetry of Courtly Love* (Madison: Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 1978), 70; Kelly also cites Faral: "As defined by Faral, 'les théoriciens du XIIe et du XIIIe siècle entendent [by amplification] 'développer, allonger (un récit)' " (*Arts poétiques*, 61). See also: Gallo, *The Poetria Nova,* 159 – 66, Robert O. Payne, *The Key of Remembrance: A Study of Chaucer's Poetics* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1963), 46 – 47; and Fritz Peter Knapp, "Vergleich und Exempel in der lateinischen Rhetorik und Poetik von der Mitte des 12. bis zur Mitte des 13. Jahrhunderts," *Studi medievali*, n.s. 3, 14 (1973): 443 – 511, 460 – 68.

[68] Payne, *Key of Remembrance*, 192.

> The decoration should provide the affective substance which in a sense 'fills up' the areas of amplification, although that way of putting it overemphasizes the purely qualitative aspects of the term *amplification*. That is, the various areas of structural alteration… will be bound together by a style which can control implication, and move from one level of it to another.[69]

In Payne's terminology, amplification, whether it is a mode of description or dramatic characterization, is the instrument of "elaborative figuration" and "evaluative coloration." Elaborative figuration "helps to direct the horizontal movement of the narrative as well as to connect it vertically with the thematic development."[70] Evaluative coloration is a subtler notion, but as we will see in a close examination of the Franklin's use of the colors of rhetoric, it is just as important to the overall process of creating implication and engaging in an audience the processes of consideration and judgment by providing an evaluative perspective on the material and characters being presented and by enabling and encouraging affective response.

Descriptive Amplification and Dramatic Characterization: the Introduction of Aurelius

In the *Franklin's Tale*, the introduction of Aurelius is a rather straightforward example of how rhetorical amplification can accomplish elaborative figuration by description and, in this case, dramatic characterization as well. It also shows how evaluative coloration, here indicated by the use of the *colores*, can help shape our readerly orientation to the ongoing drama even when it may appear at first glance to be a simple description.

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[69] *Ibid*., 191; Payne is also quick to point out "in the medieval rhetorical concept of poetry, 'affective' must involve judgement reached through emotional conviction, not simply emotional response" (191, n. 35).

[70] *Ibid.*, 196, n. 41.

Dorigen is by herself in the garden while others dance and play. Then, "Upon this daunce, amonges othere men, / Daunced a squire biforn Dorigen" (925–26). The Franklin makes use of a color beginning in the next line: "That fresher was and jolyer of array" (927). This is the figure *conjunctum*, the use of clauses or phrases expressing similar ideas held together by a verb between. Here the Franklin begins to shape our impressions of the man we are just meeting: he is not like the other men in Dorigen's presence. A line later, we encounter *articulus* in both lines of the couplet: "He syngeth, daunceth, passynge any man / That is, or was, sith that the world bigan." (930) The couplet ends with a *significatio* (*implication*) meaning "since the beginning of time." This is also a form of *hyperbole*, and its use in praise to *signify* an other-than-literal meaning is common in poetry, but this should not be taken to indicate mere formality. Beyond the notion that hyperbole signifies by exaggeration, the figure expresses the emotional perspective that comes along with the idea. Here the Franklin is telling us not only that the squire's skills easily surpassed the other men, but also that this was exciting to witness. There is a more striking *articulus* a few lines ahead, punctuating with pauses all the qualities that make Aurelius seem more than worthy: "Yong, strong, right virtuous, and riche, and wys, / And wel beloved, and holden in greet prys" (933 – 34). The last clause is a *circuitio* (paraphrase) to add to or clarify the sense of the preceding clause.

Having painted a small portrait of what kind of man this Aurelius was, the Franklin moves to another inventional topic, describing his feelings for Dorigen while being careful to point out that she was wholly unaware of them. "This lusty squire," the Franklin continues, "servant to Venus, / Which that ycleped was Aurelius, / Hadde loved hire best of any creature / Two yeer and moore, as was his aventure," (937 – 40). These four lines set out Aurelius'

feelings for Dorigen quite plainly and without much adornment, yet the Franklin continues to amplify their sense for almost twenty-five lines. The phrase "servant to Venus" is an important use of *epithet*, because it characterizes Aurelius quite precisely, which sets the tone of the amplification to follow. Concerning *epithet*, Matthew of Vendôme gives this instruction: "… everyone should be designated by that epithet which is strongest in him and for which he is best known."[71] If the Franklin is following the method faithfully, this establishes a typology that means the chief feature of this character Aurelius is his status as a lover.

The next couplet turns things up a notch: "But never dorste he tellen hire his grevaunce. / Withouten coppe he drank al his penaunce" (941 – 42). The word *grevaunce* is a *translatio*, (metaphor) substituting a term for suffering in place of a word for loving, which is befitting a servant of Venus. It is a metaphor common enough in the poetry of romance to be easily understood, but it is still striking if we're sensitive to it, especially as it is followed by a *significatio* in the next line. If the explanatory note to the text is correct and "to drink without a cup" is an idiom meaning "to suffer intensely," then line 942 is indeed a *significatio*.[72] Even if the phrase means only "to drink deeply," and is more an instance of *circuitio* (paraphrase) than *significatio*, the sense of the line is fulfilled by the presence of another *translatio* in the term *penaunce*, which though it has the connotation of suffering, is still used out of place here. Thus, in just these two lines we have either two or all three of the

[71] Matthew of Vendome*, Ars Versificatoria*, 28, § 44. Kelly cites Matthew of Vendôme's instructions on the use of *epithet* to show that they are not analytical devices, but that "they refer to the type represented by the individual… Thus epithets provide a taxonomy that classifies their subject; they do not individualize it in the modern sense. All attributes that distinguish the subject from others of the same class must be ignored" (Kelly, *Medieval Imagination*, 71).

[72] Explanatory Notes to Benson, *Riverside Chaucer*, 898. In his *Summa*, Vinsauf says that *significatio* occurs when a "phrase is expressed with a certain similarity and out-of-placeness," (Faral, *Les Arts poétiques*, 326).

"difficult" ornaments: colors recommended by Geoffrey of Vinsauf for use in "heavy" material.

In the next three lines, restating the hidden nature of Aurelius's pains, we find three instances of a condensed *repetitio* (*anaphora*) with the letters 'd', 's' and 'w': "He was despeyred; no thyng dorste he seye, / Save in his songes somwhat wolde he wreye / His wo…" (943 – 45). In the next line, the Franklin turns to a condensed form of *conversio* (*antistrophe*) in the word endings before turning back to *repetitio* in the line after: "He seyde he lovede and was biloved no thyng. / Of swich matere made he manye layes" (946 – 47). Line 948 contains more *articulus*: "Songes, compleintes, roundels, virelayes"; line 950 contains another *significatio* by analogy: "But langwissheth as a furye dooth in helle"; and lines 953 – 54 contain an *occultatio* (often mistakenly called *occupatio*), which is a way of saying what one will not say: "In oother manere than ye heere me seye, / Ne dorste he nat to hire his wo biwreye."[73]

In these lines the Franklin is pressing upon us the worthiness of Aurelius. This well decorated amplification then turns toward shaping our impressions on the subject of Aurelius's feelings for Dorigen. Since the Franklin is careful to repeat several times that Dorigen knows nothing of Aurelius' infatuation with her, we know this amplification is for our benefit, allowing us to see what is mostly hidden: the intensity of Aurelius' emotion. We can draw from this that the Franklin finds it insufficient to simply say that Aurelius was a worthy squire who harbored a strong but secret infatuation for Dorigen. He is actually working here to secure his audience's emotional conviction regarding Aurelius' motive for acting. He does this precisely to help shape our response to what happens next, when

[73] The term *occupatio* comes from an erroneous reading in the *Rhetoric Ad Herennium*; see Henry A. Kelly, "*Occupatio* as Negative Narration: A Mistake for *Occultatio/Praeteritio*," *Journal of Modern Philology* 74 (1976 – 77): 311 – 15.

Aurelius confronts Dorigen in private to show himself and press her to requite his love (despite the fact that she is happily married). If we were not at this point so sensitive to his great worthiness as well as to the intensity of his emotion, we might find Aurelius' choice to press Dorigen somewhat churlish. Instead, we see a good man motivated by strong feeling seeking to unburden himself. The average emotional response to this is likely somewhat ambivalent: on the one hand, we may feel a certain sympathy for Aurelius, but on the other, there is an awakening sense of apprehension. We may ask ourselves how we are supposed to feel. And though the question may linger, when we see Aurelius press his suit upon Dorigen, whether his actions are in keeping with those of a virtuous man, our awareness of his feelings and his motivation complicates the issue, and it keeps us from making a quick, facile judgment about his character. In a similar way, the presence of the "heavy" colors (*circuitio*, *translatio*, *significatio*), which are recommended by the rhetorical tradition for use in serious or "weighty" materials, helps to steer us away from facile readings or the unwarranted detection of ironic or satirical *entente* on the part of the narrator.

What is more, this greater awareness on our part, even though it may be the product of the poem's seemingly nonessential "atmospherics," engages the process of judgment and complicates it, and by doing so may help to expose a deeper layer of conflict in the story: a developing struggle between the competing ethical codes of chivalry and Christian morality. These particular dynamics may be latent in Menedon's narration, in keeping with the story's inherent interest in conflicting social mores, but they remain undeveloped and therefore unavailable to enrich Boccaccio's story, because there is no amplification there of the suitor. Without the amplification, there is no way to establish any emotional motivation or subjective perspective on the drama. The suitor in Boccaccio pursues the lady because it is

his role in the story to do so, and his unadorned presence invites a relatively simple moral judgment about his actions and character.

Dramatic Characterization and Evaluative Coloration: Dorigen's First Oration

Although the preceding analysis may have been enough to demonstrate the power of amplification and rhetorical color to deeply animate an otherwise plain narrative, we should also take a closer look at Dorigen as we move forward in our explication of the *Franklin's Tale*. For the character of Dorigen is even more central to the story than Aurelius, as it is her actions and choices that produce the central crisis of the tale: a bargain in which she promises to return the squire's love if he can perform an impossible task. And aside from Aurelius, Dorigen is the only other character to receive substantial treatment by amplification and dramatic characterization. In fact, the Franklin's first rhetorical treatment of her character comes very early in the narrative, even before the introduction of Aurelius. It is more than simply another example of amplification and rhetorical color, but constitutes an even weightier illustration of the capacity of rhetoric to unleash an emotionally laden perspective upon the story, one with the power to alter our attitudes toward the whole of the narrative yet to come.

In the original work by Boccaccio, neither the unwanted suitor, who is called Taralfo, nor the married noblewoman being pursued receive much in the way of characterization. In that much shorter story, both characters more clearly represent types. They are functions of the plot, not necessarily in need of the same level of exposure their corresponding figures receive in Chaucer's tale. While the Franklin's characters are, of course, also more typical than fully individuated figures, his choice to amplify where their initial roles are concerned

points directly to the Franklin's intention to pursue a new line with his story. By exposing us to the inner experience and hidden drives of Aurelius and Dorigen, the Franklin frames their interaction partly as a function of their feelings and also shapes our reading of the dynamics of their relationship.

It is also important to note that Franklin's version has Aurelius pursue Dorigen privately where Menedon's suitor pursues the object of his attention with an intentional publicity. This is a small but very significant re-orientation of the story, since the source of the lady's anxiety in Menedon's story is gossip, the public perception of her suitor's activity, rather than the suitor's actual motives or her own existential circumstance. By eliminating such a large area of concern, the immediate and public implications of the suitor's actions, the Franklin puts the focus more directly on the private interaction of his characters, which generates greater need for the exposition of their internal emotional states and motivations. In Menedon's story, the unwanted love-pursuit is itself the cause of the lady's distress, and for this lady, as several critics points out, the impossibility of the task she assigns is the very index of its significance to the story: she means to make her suitor lose interest and go away by giving him a task he cannot complete. For Dorigen, distress is already present before the introduction of Aurelius, so the need, during her interaction with him, for us to see her motivation is powerfully increased. In addition, and in contrast to both of Boccaccio's versions of the story, Dorigen's already-present distress is generated by an unselfish concern: her anxiousness for her husband's safety. Unlike Menedon, the Franklin wants us to reflect more deeply on Dorigen's actual response to Aurelius, and not to make the same assumptions about its origin or *entente*.

In order for the complexity of perspective and emotion (as well as judgment) to emerge from the interaction between Dorigen and her suitor, her perspective, the experiential reality of her character, must be available to us. For us to view the "grisly" rocks as a symbol of her "bitter peyenes smerte" (865), her anxiety at her husband's absence, we must first know how it feels for her to miss him. This is simple enough, but once the symbolic connection is made (857 – 61) her heartache becomes attached to the appearance of the rocks itself; it becomes a matter of belief for her that their very presence is connected to her emotional turmoil. She is persuaded. For Dorigen, these "rokkes blake" become an evil that she does not understand: they fill her with a fear that makes "hir herte quake" (860). She is unqualified to reconcile their presence with God's goodness (865 – 84), unable to accept the putatively logical cause of their existence as something she cannot understand (885 – 92), and she is unwilling to take comfort in the certainties of theodicy: "To clerkes lete I al disputison" (890). The only certainty is that her fear causes her real distress (893).

Goeffrey of Vinsauf can help us navigate the subtleties here. He follows the tradition of the *Rhetorica Ad Herennium* and of Horace's *Ars Poetica* in conceiving of the use of figure and color as generally appropriate to the heightened sentiment of the "heavy" style, the *oratio gravis*. But in his *Summa* Vinsauf also treats the *colores* in a more clearly delimited subset of uses, as techniques for the production and framing of emotionality and vital sensation required by serious poetry. These are epistemic tools. Here Vinsauf recommends them principally for the mimetic animation of intense affective states.[74] In the *Summa* Vinsauf presents a special selection of tools used in bringing about the (often sudden) appearance of emotions, attitudes and states of mind in order to animate the material

[74] In this manner, the colors, or at least a subset of them, are not chiefly the indices of emotion, meant to signify emotions by reference to them, but rather techniques for the active display of emotion, from which they may also achieve the status of emotional indices by semiotic extension.

dramatically, the end purpose of which is belief and persuasion. After explaining and exemplifying each of the *colores*, Vinsauf has this to say about their use:

> Take note that from the aforementioned exornations certain ones are necessary for certain material; specifically, for material that is drawn from *anger* or *indignation* or *grief* or *desire* or *hatred* or *madness*, these are required: repetitio, articulus, exclamatio, conduplicatio [repetition of words], dubitatio [wavering], subjectio [answering one's own questions]; in heavy material, these difficult [exornations] are to be used: circuitio [periphrase], translatio [metaphor], significatio [implication or emphasis].[75]

Here Vinsauf enumerates six powerful affective movements and six exornations necessary to awaken them, but we shouldn't rush to see here six discrete sets of correlations, since such a logical procedure would vitiate the forces of language the poet takes such pains to expose us to. We do not experience powerful emotions serially or discretely: anger intrudes on us, desire overtakes us, grief engulfs us, etc. But though they may not be the result of logical deliberation and mindful action, these emotions are nonetheless responsive judgments to the forces that impose themselves on our awareness. And though they are normally contingent upon ephemeral phenomena, it is uncareful to generalize them all as irrational.[76] To experience an emotion is to form a judgment. Though not an argument in itself, to undergo such an upheaval is to be subject to a point of view, and thus is a kind of persuasion.

Anne Scott's examination of Dorigen calls her epistemic mode a "subjectivist knowing": "Dorigen shows herself to be persuaded firmly by her sensory perception and 'unitive' experiences with her environment."[77] Quoting Brewer, Scott explains *unitive* as a

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[75] Geoffrey of Vinsauf*, Summa* (Faral, *Les Arts poétiques*, 325).

[76] Even in the view of Aristotle and the Stoics, whose influence on the philosophical and rhetorical thinking of the Ciceronian tradition is deep, the emotions are characterized as transactional movements, upheavals caused by intelligible, phenomenal events to which they are normatively proportional; see Graver, *Cicero on the Emotions*.

[77] Anne Scott, " 'Considerynge the beste on every side': Ethics, Empathy, and Epistemology in *The Franklin's Tale*," *Chaucer Review* 29 (1995): 390 – 415.

term "to describe the 'connectedness… between observation, thought, feeling, and values' that defines such a person's perceptions of his or her environment."[78] While Dorigen's unitive experience does not render her unable to use analytical reason or logical inference, Scott explains, her preoccupation takes on a solipsistic, "obsessive quality" that severely hinders her judgment. Dorigen's amplified complaint (865 – 93) clearly demonstrates the practiced methods for making the invisible movements of the soul come to light in the material signs of language. It is fairly saturated with the kinds of *color* Vinsauf recommends for generating a heightened emotional tenor.

What is critical for our understanding of the narrative here is not simply the fact that Dorigen is upset. If the application of *color* to amplification for dramatic characterization is always intended for effect according to the design of the work, it becomes quite clear why the Franklin goes to such length to dramatize Dorigen's internal situation and encourage us to imaginatively reconstruct her experience: it gives us a chance to see and feel for ourselves how the appearance of the rocks and her emotional response to them affects Dorigen's judgment upon other things. In other words, it gives us a chance to recognize Dorigen's judgment as a product of lived, felt experience, so that no matter how irrational it may seem, we do not see it only or even primarily as a failure of reason. Critics claiming that Dorigen's whole *pleynte* is meant to be read satirically—because she so clearly lacks an objective or philosophically informed perspective—have missed this. The only way to read her whole complaint as ironic is to remain insensitive to the emotional dynamics exposed by it.

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[78] Scott, " 'Considerynge,"; Derek Brewer, "Malory and the Archaic Mind," in *Arthurian Literature* I, ed. Richard Barber (Woodbridge, Suff: Brewer, 1981), 111. Scott also cites Walter Ong's *Orality and Literacy* for the view that 'unitive' participatory engagement in the 'human lifeworld' is a feature of oral traditions rather than of written discourses, which allow conceptual and analytical distance from lived experience (Walter J. Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* [London: Methuen, 1982]).

It is possible to read her entire soliloquy (865 – 93) as a *circuitio* (circumlocution) in terms of its emphasis. It is indeed a drawn-out recitation of her situation. Her first several lines reveal *dubitatio* (doubt), which is when we waver or hesitate in what we wish to say, which is then capped off with *exclamatio* (outcry):

> Eterne God, that thurgh thy perveiaunce
> Ledest the world by certein governaunce,
> In ydel, as men seyn, ye no thyng make.
> But, Lord, thise grisly feendly rokkes blake
> That semen rather a foul confusion
> Of werk than any fair creacion
> Of swich a parfit wys God and a stable,
> Why han ye wrought this werk unresonable? (865 – 72)

Continuing, there is also skillful *articulus*: "for by this werk, south, north, ne west, ne eest / ther nys yfostred man, ne bryd, ne beest" (873 – 74). There is also *conduplicatio* (duplication), or repetition for emphasis and emotional effect: "That ye swiche meenes make it to destroyen, / Whiche meenes do no good, but ever anoyen?" (883 – 84). Then *conduplicatio* with *subjectio* (answering one's own questions): "Se ye nat, Lord, how mankynde it destroyeth? / An hundred thousand bodyes of mankynde / Han rokkes slayn" (876 – 78). We could go on, but beyond all the questioning, answering, wavering, there is the effect all this is having. The rocks are killing her, too: "This rokkes slayn myn herte for the feere" (893). This is unquestionably a heavy color, a *significatio* in the verb, substituting *consequens pro antecedente*, where "slay" stands for "trouble" or "oppress." Or else it is a kind of *translatio* (metaphor), in this case a synecdoche in the object, so that "myn herte" means "me." In either case, the outward expression animates Dorigen's inward condition by indicating the subjective nature of her assessment: she believes her fear of the rocks is killing her, and being convinced of it, she is seriously distressed.

Of course the colors in her speech are not the only quality to mark out its overt rhetoricality. The structure and context of the passage make it easy to spot as an oratorical declamation intended for display. The whole speech is a kind of *apostrophe* addressed to God—whose absence seems to be registered by the tone of her delivery—but aimed directly at the Franklin's audience, and at us, to foster not only an awareness of her emotional state as a function of the narrative, but also to elicit a sympathetic response. At this point, questions about the appropriateness of Dorigen's fear become moot. Since we see that rightly or wrongly her condition exists, we must accept it, at least provisionally, as Dorigen's reality. If we are moved to sympathy by it, so much the better.

If we keep this in mind for later, when Aurelius confronts Dorigen, we will see how her distress comes right back to her when he addresses her: " 'Madame,' quod he, 'by God that this world made, / So that I wiste it myghte youre herte glade,' " (967 – 8). It does not make her heart glad to think about the world God has made (or at least the parts of it that includes things like the black rocks), and she has gone to the garden at the instigation of her friends precisely to get away from such thoughts. Here is Aurelius dragging her right back to it, unwittingly of course. He intends to put her at ease with his greeting, but because we know what he doesn't, we can see it having the opposite effect. Next, he adds to her distress by contaminating her with his own:

> My gerdon is but brestying of myn herte.
> Madame, reweth upon my peynes smerte;
> For with a word ye may me sleen or save.
> Heere at youre feet God wolde that I were grave!" (973 – 6)

In the first place, there is *significatio* (implication) in line 973, for surely she would not really consider causing a broken heart any way to grant a reward. It is not difficult to understand the further stress this places on her, since it is an implicit accusation. Only three lines later, his

imitation of the submissive gesture of love service, placing himself at her feet, turns into an outburst, or *exclamatio*, in which he wishes for death. We can easily picture her glancing at her feet and stepping back from the imagined grave, and we should certainly admire the Franklin for his ability to create *enargeia* (vivid description) with a single word.

Aurelius's declaration substantially changes Dorigen's perception of him, which changes her perspective, and she tells him he may take her refusal for a "fynal answere" (987). But this speech has also awakened her own empathy, for she continues "in pley"—not as an amusement, but as a kind of open-ended responsiveness. She has noticed the intensity of his woeful display and is pressed by her sense of compassion to attenuate it. Though a number of critical readings take the Franklin's words "in pley" to mean that Dorigen approaches her transaction with Aurelius as a sort of game, there is nothing in the *Franklin's Tale* to support the argument necessary to sustain this interpretation: that Dorigen's guilelessness is a product of foolishness. By awakening Dorigen's empathy, Aurelius has created an opportunity, a potential instrumentality, the ends of which are not yet in sight. It is "in pley" not because it is part of the inchoate logic or necessity of her response, but because she has detected his emotional upheaval and been moved by it. And having been moved to pity him in his plight, Dorigen wants to show it. For we know that displaying the symptoms of emotional upheavals is part of the normal experience of having them, as it is a normative element of the social dimension of empathy, since detection of emotional signs by others activates similar states in ourselves.

Social creatures share emotions in order to create linkages that allow them to also share perspectives and respond to situations—especially stressful ones—in common. If the display and detection of emotional upheaval in this interaction between Dorigen and her

unwanted suitor is not the heuristic we self-consciously turn to for understanding this narrative performance, it is only because this sort of activity is so ordinary for us that we are generally not fully aware of it. But this does not mean we do not perceive it. We do not need to consciously examine this dimension of signification in order to grasp the nature of the communication, and this may be why we do not, in criticism, always attribute to it the enormous power it really has.

If we read Dorigen's continuation as an emotional response to an emotional situation, there is nothing irrational or immediately foolish about it. She wants to be compassionate, so she finds a way to indicate to Aurelius that she is with him in suffering (*com-passion*), despite the fact that she must refuse to alleviate his. The outward form of their bargain is the means for demonstrating empathy because Dorigen's response is meant to be a transaction. We can easily see that the bargain is purely symbolic for her, because when he asks if she will offer any other way, she declines, and then says: "For wel I woot that it shal never bityde" (1001). She even explains that what she means by offering him an impossible bargain is for him to let it go: "Lat swiche folies out of your herte slyde" (1002). Our previous exposure to Dorigen's perspective and internal condition, which is wholly absent from both of Boccaccio's versions of the story, turns out to be crucial here, since we can see the similarity in their situations in a way that Aurelius cannot. Dorigen also wishes for something she cannot have, but Aurelius has no empathetic awareness of her case. But we can also see the danger in the similarity, since we have seen how difficult it is for Dorigen to let go of the object of her wish, and we can expect him to have similar difficulty. While she is busy trying to let him down easy, he is busy trying not to see it as a let-down. He does not understand her

display for what it is, since he so strongly wants the opportunity for a further transaction to remain open.

We have seen now for ourselves how both characters are motivated by emotion, and so, in this critical moment of the narrative, the establishment of what critics refer to as the "rash" bargain appears not foolish but merely unfortunate. The idea that we should lay blame squarely on misfortune, rather than some other cause, is supported later by Dorigen herself, when she addresses her second lament to "Fortune" (1355), to whom she "pleynes." In the moment of the bargain the immediate emotional and ethical demands of the situation override any impulse on Dorigen's part to engage in extended moral or philosophical introspection, and she simply fails to speculate about the potential moral danger she is putting herself in. Though we already know that Dorigen is not one to give herself over to philosophical introspection, it is not lack of prudence that causes her to overlook the danger, but rather her emotional sensitivity. And it is most likely that lack of sensitivity to the emotional significance of the situation is what causes so many critics to see her choice here as one between wisdom and folly. It is not. It is a choice between empathy and indifference. Is this the Franklin's way of telling us that choosing empathy will lead to disastrous results? The obvious impulse is to answer "no," even though the Franklin has clearly shown us that emotional sensitivity and emotionally based action has serious consequences, because of a nascent sense that the consequences in this story have not yet been completely worked out. We are being taught to read an old story in a new way. Partly because of the kind of story this is, with its basis in folktale motifs and its tendency to retreat from actual verisimilitude, and partly because of the way we are being taught to reflect on the value of emotional awareness, we may begin to suspect, before having reached the end of the story, that empathy

will rescue Dorigen from the terrible fate her own compassion seems to have prepared for her. Even though the *Franklin's Tale* follows the plot of the older narrative rather faithfully, a new dimension has been added to the stable elements of the story, an emotional dimension, and our attention has been brought to it as a function of the Franklin's stylistic performance. The new story now includes a layer of implication that is almost wholly lacking in the source poem, and to the extent that we have become aware of it, it functions as a guide to our further reading: we are now attuned to the way the presence of emotion alters the plain sense of unfolding events.

The various thematic readings of Dorigen's promise to Aurelius all demonstrate how, as a strategy, thematic reading tends to disregard the dynamic interactions between emotion and judgment, motivation and action, etc. that give the drama its ethical scope and provide the kinds of narrative exigencies and contingencies which resist reduction to simple moral principles, the application of which is thought to provide resolution to the ideational conflicts of the narrative. For example, the conflict between Christian and chivalric ethical codes may invite speculation, in a thematic reading, about the differences between the codes and the moral implications of a choice between them, but such thematic readings tend to ignore the fact that such a choice is, for the characters in the story, fraught with emotion. For them, the conflict has real repercussions, and the choice of one over the other brings real consequences that extend well beyond moral and philosophical implications. Investment in the thematic meaning of the controversy overlooks the possibility that Aurelius chooses to follow the chivalric ethical code and Dorigen appears to choose the Christian ethical code because in each case the choice furthers their emotional interests. As long as the emotional dynamics and subjective perspectives arising from the poem's rhetorical technique continue to animate

the narration, no conflict in the story can ever be purely thematic. In other words, the emotional dynamism of the tale's unfolding narrative has the effect of confounding the orderly function of the tale's thematic elements, so any reading that has a hope of producing a cogent thematic function for the tale must render the tale's emotional dynamics inert, either by ignoring them or by framing them as the product of a satirical intent for the purpose of reinforcing the thematic reading. None of this is meant to suggest that thematic readings of the *Franklin's Tale* cannot succeed at providing various kinds of insights; I mean only that when they come at the cost of failing to recognize how thoroughly imbued the tale is with feeling and sentiment and how much of our sense of the tale is conditional upon the quality of our recognition of emotion, such insights tend to produce information at the expense of clarity.

The Awakening of Empathy

Having laid the groundwork for our appreciation of the emotional dimension early in the narrative, the Franklin can expect it to guide and inform our reading of the later events, even though the plot does, for the most part, hew closely to the account of the source. In other words, our awareness of the emotional dynamics of the story provides an opportunity to see a new set of implications working even in those places in the story where the Franklin has not drastically altered or amplified on the original poem. The second confrontation between Dorigen and Aurelius is a good example of this. At that point in the story, Aurelius has spent more than two years pining away for her, and he has enlisted the aid of a Clerk of Orleans, who uses "magik natureel" to fulfill the impossible request, making it appear as if the rocks have been removed when they suddenly seem to disappear. Aurelius approaches Dorigen and

reminds her of his feelings for her, repeating the imagery he had used in the garden: "Nere it that I for yow have swich disese / That I moste dyen heere at youre foot anon … Ye sle me gilteless for verray peyne" (1314 – 15, 18). He is so blind to any empathy coming from her that he seems to believe she will not even care if he dies, and so he appeals foremost to her integrity rather than her compassion. He tells her that she has a choice to make about the pledge she gave: "But of my deeth thogh that ye have no routhe, / Avyseth yow er that ye breke youre trouthe" (1319 – 20), and he reminds her for fifteen more lines about the pledge, and then announces his news:

> I have do so as ye comanded me;
> And if ye vouche sauf, ye may go see.
> Dooth as yow list; have youre biheste in mynde, 1335
> For, quyk or deed, right there ye shal me fynde.
> In yow lith al to do me lyve or deye—
> But wel I woot the rokkes been awaye. (1333 – 38)

When Aurelius announces the disappearance of the rocks, which is woven together with the signals of his intention to hold her to her bargain, the intensity of Dorigen's response is vivid: " 'Allas' quod she, 'that ever this sholde happe! / For wende I nevere by possibilitee / That swich a monstre or merveille myghte be! / It is agayns the proces of nature' " (1342 – 45). She uses *exclamatio* again, to register her shock and dismay at finding her impossible request fulfilled. She calls the occurrence "monstre" and "merveille," which is *significatio* or *translatio*, and completes the rejoinder with *circuitio*, circling back around to fill out the sense of the metaphor. These are not very gentle things for Dorigen to say, especially to Aurelius, who has just brought her the news with such hopeful eagerness. She is cursing. Her outburst exceeds the boundaries of courteous behavior, and it ruptures the mask of her decorum and captures our attention, drawing our focus to the way emotion is still working to shape the interaction between these characters.

We also have to see that Aurelius won't attend to her outburst the same way we will, since it will affect us but not him. Because he's been so busy imagining what he wants to happen next, it hasn't occurred to him that his announcement should bring about the return of all of Dorigen's emotional distress—after all, years have passed since the initial bargain was struck. For Aurelius, the appearance of the rocks has been a fact without any necessary value, and he was not attuned to the bargain as a show of empathy because he was not able to recognize Dorigen's real intentions. Perhaps he even saw the impossibility of the task as a kind of test—like his analogues in Boccaccio's stories—in accordance with the courtly conventions he is so persuaded by to prove the strength of his love. Though she had asked him to "remoeve alle the rokkes" (993), he heard this only as a request to make them disappear, "that ther nys no stoon ysene" (996). He did not understand the nature of her request because he did not share her perspective and was not sensitive to her emotional state. He did not see her gesture as a show of compassion because it did not grant him his wish. Now, at a crucial moment for the outcome of the tale, his insensitivity and unsympathetic cheer threatens to undo her all over again.

The important thing for a rhetorician to know is that in order for empathy to work, the conditions for it must be readily apparent. The Franklin does not wish to argue us into agreeing that we *should* feel pity for Dorigen; he just wants us to feel it. We should not have to establish dialectically the necessity of pity before deciding to feel it. How does he manage to make a mediated operation, the imaginative reconstruction of Dorigen's experience, appear immediate? Here the use of the color *exclamatio* and the heavy colors of *circuitio*, *translatio* and *significatio* short-circuit any enthymemic or syllogistic reasoning. Instead of reasoning from the cause, we jump spontaneously to the judgment implicit in her acting this

way.[79] The Franklin knows with certainty that this operation will work on his audience as surely as we recognize that it is not working on Aurelius. His own motivation has blinded him to Dorigen's true intentions in making the bargain, and his own emotional state continues to render him insensitive to the suffering he is causing her all over again. After the tale's long digression covering the activity of Aurelius and the Clerk of Orleans, the reengagement of the emotional dynamics that have animated the central conflict in the Franklin's version of the story, along with the Aurelius's failure to empathize with Dorigen and alleviate her suffering, instigate the most overtly rhetorical "set-piece" in the tale, Dorigen's second soliloquy (1355 – 1456).

Dorigen's pathetic apostrophe is worth a brief investigation for two reasons. The first is that it constitutes an obvious digression in the narrative that has attracted much critical attention on its own; the second is that because of its easily recognized rhetoricity it has created a set of questions in that criticism about the role of rhetoric itself in the tale. It is worth noting that the soliloquy, most often called Dorigen's Complaint or Dorigen's Lament (not to be confused with her first soliloquy), is so easily spotted as rhetoric because of its format and because it clearly breaks with the narrative pattern into which it is inserted: just over one hundred lines of poetry listing over twenty *exempla*, one right after another, concerning famous pre-Christian women who would rather die or kill themselves than be raped and otherwise assaulted, as well as (curiously) women who would rather slay themselves than be forced into second marriages—all of this material being taken from a single source: Jerome's *Adversus Jovinianum* 1.41 – 46. Without that intervening body of criticism, it might be enough to say that the rhetoric of this complaint works very differently

[79] Interest in the psychological structure of this operation goes all the way back to Aristotle's treatment of the emotions in the second book of his *Rhetoric*.

than the rhetoric of elaborative figuration and evaluative coloration we have seen at work in other parts of the tale, but is directed toward a similar purpose. Although much of the interpretation of this massive digression has been muddied by an apparent modern distaste for such overt rhetorical displays, it is also possible to see in it a heavy-handedness on the part of the Franklin (or of Chaucer himself) that just may have had a similar off-putting affect on Chaucer's own intended audience. The primary question this raises is: given that the digression seems designed to operate rhetorically more by the blunt force of relentless repetition than by nuances of style and narrative performance, what goal is it supposed to achieve?

Sledd details many of the ways the complaint has been regarded as unsuccessful, including the idea that Chaucer was either slavishly following a rhetorical convention or else that he was mocking one, which in either case casts a suspicious light on Chaucer's reputation as a composer of poetry. Whether or not the supposed failure here is thought to be due to rhetoric, the general opinion was that the complaint was too long, too digressive, too disorganized… a "clumsy patchwork"[80] Sledd instead shows how carefully organized the complaint may truly be, if read with some care, and given how much similarity he shows existing between it and other rhetorically organized set-pieces (orations) both within and outside of Chaucer's corpus, the views that Dorigen's complaint lacks unity, direction or clear purpose are shown to be poorly founded and unfairly judgmental.

It is not our purpose here to uncover all the ways Dorigen's complaint can be shown to exhibit care and purpose in its composition, nor to remark further on the fact that this oration, along with so many other of Chaucer's remarkably sophisticated uses of the rhetorical tradition, was unceremoniously reviled on as many fronts as it was praised by

[80] James Sledd, "Dorigen's Complaint," *Modern Philology* 45 (1947): 36 – 45, 37.

earlier twentieth-century critics. Rather, we should move from the general rehabilitation of the speech to show what the complaint could accomplish rhetorically in the context of the existing story. "Heavy pathos would have stopped the story in its tracks," Sledd writes:

> Make Dorigen's dilemma seem really insoluble, make her danger too truly threatening, and automatically the generosity of Aurelius provides an explosive emotional release. What audience would have any feeling left for the generosity of the Orleans clerk or any interest in the Franklin's question, now made pert and shallow by the rousing of so much emotion? A deeply pathetic Complaint would demand, quite simply, the re-writing of the entire tale."[81]

While Sledd is not shy about his opinion regarding the complaint, it is difficult to imagine how a reading could be more off the mark. Even passing over one of the central consistencies of the entire rhetorical tradition—that heightened emotion is proper to the most elevated language and carefully wrought style, even to the point of reserving it as one of the high style's most characteristic features—it requires no stretch of the imagination to view Dorigen's pathetic soliloquy as intentionally preparing the grounds for an emotional release to be provided by Aurelius's reversal at the climax of the story. Nothing is made shallow by that. Even an "explosive" release would not necessarily be out of place, given the Franklin's tendency before this point to elicit emotions from us which are then frustrated by the narrative action. An "explosive" emotional release at the climax of the story might be exactly what the Franklin's performance calls for, and there is nothing but Sledd's prudish distaste for emotion to say that the Franklin's, or Chaucer's, dignity is somehow lessened by its presence. The idiosyncrasy of Sledd's approach, despite its capacity to persuade some critics, is revealed in his equation of emotionalism with crudeness when he writes, "in that re-writing, the Franklin's apology for 'rude speche' would be the first lines to disappear."[82]

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[81] Ibid., 42.

[82] *Ibid*.

Somehow Sledd manages to conclude that as "a deliberate bit of rhetorical extravagance," Dorigen's complaint is "intended actually as an assurance that all shall yet go well."[83] This would require us to disregard all the qualities of Dorigen's complaint that make it seem like a fairly overt bid for our sympathy in light of her fear (and our fear) that she is morally doomed. The heightened emotion of this digressive amplification arises out of its extravagance, not in spite of it.

To be fair, one of the primary impulses for Sledd's reading has come from a respect for the rhetorical tradition that seems less common among critics of that generation. He correctly reads the *Franklin's Prologue* partly as an attempt to disguise or demur about the degree of his reliance on rhetoric in the telling of his tale. Sledd also recognizes the general rule that the rhetorical impulse should be as unobtrusive as possible, so as to disguise the nakedness of any strategic ploy, but he makes the mistake of reading the extravagance of Dorigen's complaint, which is clearly intended as a rhetorical display, as a marker of its incomprehensibility, and this incomprehensibility is taken to be a mirror of Dorigen's state of mind. Thus, Sledd concludes that the mimetic structure of the complaint and the names of the women it raises all mean in the end that nothing in the story can really turn out badly: "the vehemence of her desire for courage betrays her fear,"[84] Sledd suggests, and it creates an attitude of detached sympathy, but her fear comes to nothing as she continues to vacillate, and this means that her intent to die rather than dishonor herself is finally a ruse.

Gerald Morgan later took up the case of Dorigen's complaint on the basis of its rhetoric, and his grasp of the rhetorical tradition, including Chaucer's fondness for its intricacies, founds a strong argument: "From Chaucer's own practice we can see that the

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[83] *Ibid*.

[84] *Ibid*., 43.

apostrophe or complaint is a rhetorical device designed for the expression of heightened emotion in the most serious of all poetic contexts."[85] Furthermore, he explains:

> If we insist upon reading the Franklin's Tale in light of the principles that are contained in the classical rhetorical tradition, then we shall not find difficulty in making sense of Dorigen's complaint. We shall find that each *exemplum* has been chosen because of its relevance to a certain pattern of moral exposition.[86]

Morgan creates a critical schema to show that "Dorigen focuses our attention upon three key concepts in the moral experience of the tale—chastity, fidelity and honour—and presents them to us in a logical sequence," and that by choosing from among Jerome's available exempla and modifying them in her complaint (1367 – 1408), they "provide a perfectly coherent exposition of these concepts and of their relationship."[87] In showing how Chaucer takes some deft liberties when dealing with Jerome's *exempla* (as we should expect), Morgan also exposes Chaucer's, or at least the Franklin's, willingness to reshape his source material for rhetorical effect: "Dorigen's complaint was constructed by Chaucer in obedience to the laws of literary composition that he inherited from a classical past and that had informed his own poetic practice from the beginning."[88] The sustained treatment of these moral categories in a refined scheme is intended to reinforce the seriousness of these values within the moral scope of the tale. For Morgan, "we can be in no doubt that for Dorigen these are the guiding principles that inform her relationship with Arveragus," (94) and he concludes that "the great weight of *exempla*… should cause us to withhold simple moral solutions for a complex set of

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[85] Gerald Morgan, "A Defence of Dorigen's Complaint," *Medium Aevum* 46 (1977): 78 – 97, 80.

[86] *Ibid*., 77.

[87] *Ibid*., 85.

[88] *Ibid*., 93.

circumstances."[89] And there is, in this view, a straightforward connection between the high seriousness of the moral issues dealt with in the complaint and the rhetorical force with which it operates.

"A rationalistic commentator might feel that Dorigen's grief is somewhat excessive," Morgan argues, "… but it is necessary to distinguish between the authenticity of Dorigen's feelings and the stylized presentation of them; indeed the stylized presentation is a very sure indication of their authenticity, for it allies her with [other romance heroines within and outside of Chaucer's oeuvre]"[90] This is precisely because the stylized presentation of Dorigen's grief is covered by literary and rhetorical convention. We should not judge it by the standards of a naturalistic demonstration of emotion or by reference to our own experience of emotional distress. "It is important," Morgan writes, "that we be able to place Dorigen's suffering within a pattern of literary experience, and thus to realize the depth of her anguish. We are bound to proceed by way of literary analogy."[91] In Morgan's view, when it is read this way, as a formalized presentation of heightened emotional tenor with clear analogues in both literary and rhetorical convention, the use of the complaint turns out to be quite commensurate with the "seriousness of the moral issues that are treated" by the *Franklin's Tale* as a whole. This means that however obtuse it may seem in the context of a moderately lengthy but extraordinarily adroit narrative performance, and despite however uncomfortable its format may seem to be for modern readers, the project of Dorigen's complaint appears wholly in keeping with the rhetorical aim of the *Franklin's Tale* in

[89] *Ibid*., 94 – 95.

[90] *Ibid*., 79 – 80.

[91] *Ibid*., 80.

general, which is to supply an older poem with a new emotional dimension that will reveal the Franklin's earnest interest in the restorative power of empathy.

It is with that high moral seriousness in mind that we should return to the story to investigate the confrontation between Dorigen and Arveragus that follows the complaint, but before doing so, one more brief digression is in order because of an issue raised by Sledd in connection to Dorigen's complaint regarding the difficulty the Franklin faces in maintaining both high seriousness and shrewd rhetorical force in a story such as the one he tells. It is an issue of maintaining balance between extremes in order to make the story work without coming to seem either farcical or pretentious. "The Franklin has set himself a pretty problem," Sledd contends:

> If his 'moralitee' is not to be absurd, his tale must be believable; and yet the tale must be removed from the shifts and chances of this world, for, though the plot is dangerously close to tragedy, the heroes and heroine must come safe to a good end. A tale of ideal *trouthe* and *gentilesse* cannot be funny and photographic; yet, if told too earnestly, it will invite parody. A difficult balance must be maintained throughout; neither pure tragedy will do, nor pure comedy, pure pathos nor pure humor; and a bridge must be thrown across the gulf between everyday life and never-never land.[92]

To understand the need for such a balancing act in the narrative, as well as to uncover the poetic and rhetorical operations that ground that balancing act within the narrative, we must turn to the character of the Franklin himself. And we would do well to remember that as a primary feature of the *Canterbury Tales*, the interposition between the actual author and the actual audience of the poem of a fictional narrating subject speaking to other fictional subjects is one of Chaucer's most important and most powerful rhetorical strategies. The nature of the Franklin's character as a rhetorical strategy not only sheds light on the tale's *entente*—the notion of what the story is more or less about—but also helps us to understand why the Franklin narrates the story in such a particular manner; why he is so interested in

[92] Sledd, "Dorigen's Complaint," 41.

the question of social amity and fellowship; why he focuses so closely on emotion; and why he has chosen the Breton lay as his vehicle. It is not simply that details of his personal biography should reflect the primary interests we ought to see at work in his narration, but also that his personal characteristics tell us of the social contexts, the conflicts, causes and allegiances that are all embodied in his person, which helps us to understand his perspective on the story (or even to uncover competing perspectives) as well as the symptoms of that perspective as they are indicated by the sympathies and antagonisms arising in his narration. The character of the narrator, in other words, tells us not only about what is narrated, but also about how and why the story is told in a particular way. The key term in this particular analysis comes from Chaucer's introduction of the Franklin in the *General Prologue*, where the poet calls him a "worthy *vavasour*" (360). Critics have often concluded that Chaucer's use of the term here denotes a real, historical social station, meant as a legal clarification of the Franklin's status, but Carruthers shows that this interpretation is refuted by English legal history. She turns instead to the vavasour's literary pedigree to shed light on Chaucer's usage: "The vavasour is a conventional figure from French romance; the word's provenance in English until the fifteenth century is entirely within the context of romance," in which context vavasours are invariably "good, honest, generous, elderly gentlemen."[93] While this certainly helps us confirm the sincerity of Chaucer's initial portrait of the Franklin, it also sheds light on the delicate balancing act he sets out to accomplish with his tale. As Carruthers explains, the overwhelming emotional disposition of the literary character of the vavasour is that of nostalgia:

> They represent the best of a world that is passing, an old-fashioned goodness and social bond imperiled by the treachery and power of younger, rasher men. At the same time, the vavasor's idealized depiction is qualified by the nostalgia which clings

[93] Mary Carruthers, "The Gentilesse of Chaucer's Franklin," *Criticism* 1 (1981): 283 – 300, 291.

> unmistakably to these dear old dads…. That same nostalgia surrounds Chaucer's Franklin; it is the quality which gives final focus to his function in *The Canterbury Tales.*[94]

Perhaps the Franklin's nostalgic nature is a subtle wink from Chaucer, meant to indicate to us that the Franklin may not be very realistic in his expectations of his audience and his hopes for what they might take away from his story. His earnestness is not just a direct appeal to *ethos*, it is also a delicate escape hatch from the requirement that his story be either wholly fabulous, or wholly realistic. As his identity is a fictional creation, we should not be surprised to find that the Franklin's character is shaped as much by literary tradition as by any of Chaucer's real interests in interrogating the growing complexity of the social order of the fourteenth century, the emergence of new social classes and the increasing social mobility of their members.

No Help for Dorigen?

After Dorigen has "pleyned" for three days and two nights, and her soliloquy has reanimated for us all of the emotional stress of her situation (and recast the danger, which is no longer merely oppressive but now deadly), Arveragus returns home to find her weeping. Having noticed her emotional turmoil, he asks for the reason. Her first response, " 'Allas,' quod she, "that ever I was born!" (1463), is another *exclamatio*, signaling again the intensity of her internal condition. The Franklin informs us, in the form of an *occultatio*, that Dorigen fills her husband in on the situation: she "toold hym al as ye han herd bifore; / It nedeth nat reherce it yow namoore" (1465 – 66). Arveragus's initial response seems like nothing so much as blithe disregard for her obvious distress, and it makes Aurelius's insensitivity appear

[94] Ibid., 292.

almost chivalric: "with glad chiere" and "in freendly wyse," Arveragus asks, "Is there oght elles, Dorigen, but this?" (1467, 69). If we have harbored any grudge against the character of Aurelius for failing to register Dorigen's pleas for compassion, Arveragus's seemingly casual dismissal of her suffering must seem designed to actively enrage us. This marks the Franklin's mastery over the emotional manipulation of his audience, for the callousness of the knight's treatment of his wife is Chaucer's own addition to the Boccaccio poem. In Menedon's story, we are told that after asking on several occasions for the cause of his wife's melancholy, the husband finally hears her account of dreadful thing that has transpired. "When the knight heard this," we read, "he thought for a long time, and knowing in his heart the lady's purity, said this: 'Go, secretly keep your oath, and give Tarolfo what you promised freely; he has earned it fairly and with great labor.' "[95] When, in that version of the story, the lady begins to weep and say she would rather kill herself than bring dishonor or displeasure, her husband's reply shows how eager he is not to blame her for her own failure, but to alleviate it:

> To her the knight replied, "Lady, truly I do not want you to kill yourself on this account, or even make yourself melancholy about it; it is no displeasure to me, go and do what you promised, for I shall hold you no less dear to me for it; but once you have done it, next time beware of making such promises, even when it seems to you that the thing you have asked for is impossible to have.[96]

Where the knight in Boccaccio wishes mostly to console his wife and put the unfortunate situation in a better light, the Franklin's knight, Arveragus, seems almost as intent on destroying his wife. At first his response seems measured, as if he were rising above the emotion of the moment in his concern for a higher sense of ethical well being:

> It may be wel, paraventure, yet to day.

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[95] Giovanni Boccaccio, *Il Filocolo*, trans. Donald Cheney and Thomas Bergin (New York: Garland, 1985), 260.

[96] *Ibid*., 260 – 61.

> Ye shul youre trouthe holden, by my fay!
> For God so wisly have mercy upon me,
> I hadde wel levere ystiked for to be
> For verray love which that I to yow have,
> But if ye sholde youre trouthe kepe and save.
> Trouthe is the hyeste thyng that man may kepe (1473 – 78)

But his effort to keep calm is betrayed by the *exclamatio* "by my fay!" as well as by his wish for God's mercy that he would rather be stabbed than see her fail to keep her promise. Then, suddenly, his composure fails completely: "But with that word he brast anon to wepe" (1480). Where Boccaccio's knight was anxious to let his wife know he did not wish her to die, Arveragus appears ready to take Dorigen's life himself:

> And seyde, 'I yow forbede, up peyne of deeth,
> That nevere, whil thee lasteth lyf ne breeth,
> To no wight telle thou of this aventure—
> As I may best, I wol my wo endure—
> Ne make no contenance of hevynesse,
> That folk of yow may demen harm or gesse. (1481 – 86)

At this point, Arveragus seems as far away from empathy as one can be. His first concern is for his own "wo," the irruption of which has been signaled by his bursting into tears. This passage not only marks Arveragus as a man whose own emotional upheaval punctures the mask of his *gentilesse*, but it also presents him as a bully and a hypocrite, for he threatens to kill his wife if she makes her shame public and taints his own good reputation by proxy. This is a man, we must remember, who swore to exercise no "maistrie" over his wife "agayn hir wyl" (747 – 48), and who had hoped to live in a double bliss: the peaceful, prosperous "wys accord" of an equal marriage, and (because the arrangement was not public knowledge) also the "soveraynetee" of a worldly man of some degree. Far from feeling any compassion for his wife's unbearable dilemma, Arveragus is overcome by his own emotional distress and is

unwilling or even unable to comfort her. Instead, he orders his wife to commit adultery in secret, unready as he is to countenance the loss of her "trouthe" even at the cost of her virtue.

A good number of critics have attempted to read Arveragus as the real hero of the story. Kearney, for example, suggests that the similarity of Dorigen's and Aurelius's reliance on perception should be juxtaposed against Arveragus' confidence in abstract principles.[97] This view might be compelling if Arveragus had stopped talking after asking Dorigen whether anything besides the monstrous dilemma was bothering her, and not demonstrated a loss of confidence by bursting into tears. His pithy platitude about the value of "trouthe" may sound like wisdom to an insensitive ear, but keeping "trouthe" does not necessarily preclude a show of compassion, nor is it necessarily wise to pursue "trouthe" without regard for the cost. At the very least, there is a disconnect between the primacy Arveragus places on "trouthe" and his willingness to forbid his wife from making any true sign of her internal condition. If "trouthe" is the highest thing anyone can keep, why is right to order her to lie about it? Kearney aligns Dorigen's and Aurelius's behavior against the value of Arveragus's patient governance of himself according to the dictates of external order, saying, "both recognize, of course, that 'this wyde world' is governed by an external order and not by men's passions.[98] However, such a capitulation to an external order at the expense of emotion is what is lacking in Dorigen and Aurelius. And if our reading of the tale has been sensitive up to this point, we are also probably like Dorigen and Aurelius in our unwillingness to let emotion be cast as an illusory distraction from some higher truth. Whether their emotional

[97] A.M. Kearney, "Truth and Illusion in *The Franklin's Tale*," *Essays in Criticism* 19 (1969): 245 – 53. It is disappointing, if not entirely unsurprising, that Kearney, who exhibits such sensitivity to Chaucer's rhetorical maneuvers in the *Franklin's Tale*, is especially hostile to rhetoric, using the term and its synonyms to denote the false and worthless even as he credits Chaucer's "conscious artistry" with the spellbinding effect the tale has had on some of its critics (252).

[98] *Ibid*., 248.

motivation has lead them to act rightly or wrongly, it has lead them to act, and thus is real enough to consider problematic rather than illusory. Let us also not forget that the Franklin has told us, at the very beginning of his tale, that such is the case for everyone: emotion drives us each to do amiss. In any case, calling Arveragus's reaction to Dorigen's dilemma any kind of patient self-governance is odd, as it denies what is plainly the case with the knight: that the justice of his decision cannot be reconciled with how he feels at the very moment when critics argue his own feelings ought to be irrelevant to him. One cannot help but sense that an unfortunate pattern occurs often in this line of criticism, when readerly intransigence to the demands of the emotional dimension of the tale are so frequently connected to the dismissal of (or even outright hostility to) the Franklin's use of rhetoric. Where the Franklin's rhetorical efforts are slighted or overlooked, theories abound that fail to account for the earnest significance of the story's emotional transactions. In light of the emotional dynamics of this episode, however, Arveragus's resistance to the realities of circumstance and his attempted reliance on principle and external order over emotion ring quite hollow.

After receiving such a blow to any hope we may yet harbor that Dorigen's emotional and ethical dilemma will be resolved, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that her fate is truly sealed. The masterful Franklin knows this very well, which is why at this point he turns away from the tale momentarily to address his audience. This aside also has no analogue in either of Boccaccio's versions of the story. Speaking of Arveragus's reaction, he says:

> Paraventure an heep of yow, ywis,
> Wol holden hym a lewed man in this
> That he wol putte his wyf in jupartie.
> Herkneth the tale er ye upon hire crie.
> She may have bettre fortune than yow semeth;
> And whan that ye han herd the tale, demeth. (1493 – 98)

Where it would otherwise have appeared that Dorigen's fate is sealed by the dictates of external order, which arrive in the form of Arveragus's determination to hold "trouthe" above all else and his decision to exercise the mastery over his wife that he had formerly forsworn, here is the Franklin clearly announcing that the external order will not hold sway. As we look ahead to the conclusion of the story, the Franklin is encouraging us to anticipate how the internal order of the passions will determine the final outcome.

Aurelius Comes Around

Only the final instance of Dorigen's distressful outburst causes Aurelius to see his complicity in her suffering. When he accidentally runs into her and asks her where she is going, she tells him "half as she were mad": "Unto the gardyn, as myn housbonde bad, / My trouthe for to hold—allas, allas!" (1511 – 13). *Exclamatio* again, this time with *conduplicatio*. We should notice that these outward signs of the disturbing truth are precisely what Arveragus has prohibited his wife from making. Perhaps because she insists so intensely, through the half-insane gesturing that we cannot imagine but by the combination of her words and the Franklin's, or perhaps it is only that Aurelius is caught off guard, unprepared to meet her—whatever it is, Dorigen's internal condition finally pierces his senses: her perspective becomes his as well, and he finally sees through her eyes. This prepares him for the restoration that finally rescues Dorigen from an awful outcome. He realizes that he could have understood the bargain the way she did, if he'd cared to. Seeing her in this state, Aurelius "gan wondren on this cas, / And in his herte hadde greet compassioun / Of hire and of hire lamentacioun" (1515 – 16). He begins to readjust his perception of the situation: "And

in his herte he caughte of this greet routhe, / Considerynge the beste on every syde" (1520 – 21). Aurelius finally sees his own "sidedness" and partiality, and is moved to release her from the oath she had sworn in an act of integrity and franchise. This act triggers the restoration of accord, first between himself and Dorigen, and then between himself and the Clerk/magician, and it is instigated precisely by empathy, not pity, for Aurelius does not see her as beneath him. Rather, he sees himself and his complicity in her situation, and he sees his role in putting here there.

Scott calls the rehabilitation of Aurelius a "constructivist knowing."[99] In his first real act of attunement to Dorigen, he hears "not merely the words she says but their emotional *tone*, 'half as she were mad,' " and in his active understanding, "he escapes from the literal mindedness that typified his initial interaction with Dorigen, in which he is guilty of hearing only the letter, not the spirit, of her rash promise."[100] The adjustment requires his active use of the imagination, as a faculty of perception, observation and judgment. Scott says, "To the medieval philosopher, thinking upon the 'possible' or 'probable' was a difficult task; such an act of cognition involved an act of will rather than a passive reception of sensory stimuli… a process that focused on the act of thinking rather than on the object of one's thoughts."[101] It is clear, though, that what might have been difficult for the medieval philosopher should not have posed much of a challenge at all to the medieval rhetorician, since *probability* is the very domain of rhetoric. For a rhetorician to call upon an audience's imagination as a faculty of observation and judgment is routine, and his effort to motivate an audience by an affect which will alter both the observations and the judgments they produce is part and parcel of

[99] Scott, "Considerynge," 406 – 09.

[100] *Ibid*.

[101] *Ibid*.

the art of rhetoric—the consummation of the orator's art, as Cicero said. Hence, however challenging it might be to provide a philosophical explanation for Aurelius's sudden about-face, a rhetorical explanation is within easy reach: Dorigen's use of color, the affective motion of her speech (and gestures), triggers for Aurelius—just as it already had for us—an active mode of rhetorical judgment that is the application of understanding to the situatedness of her utterance. That is to say, the rhetoric of her behavior activates the process of consideration and judgment about the probable cause of her suffering, and elicits the response that is commensurate not with abstract axioms but with the actual conditions of her situation. It is only when Aurelius begins to see the situation from the other angles—"considerynge the beste on every syde"—that he begins to see the "cherlyssh wrecchednesse" of holding her "agayns franchise and alle gentilesse" (1523 – 24). It is not unmotivated charity that finally causes him to reconsider, but rather the impact that Dorigen's distress finally has upon him. She motivates him to appropriate ethical behavior by activating his empathy and redirecting his understanding. This does not happen in either of Boccaccio's versions of the story. This is eloquence in a nutshell. Aurelius is finally able to see her suffering in the signs she gives of it. Imagining the situation from her position gives him what he needs to see the narrowness of his own view, and it causes him to release her from her vow. She now becomes the "treweste and the beste wyf" (1539) to him. He had not thought of her this way before, because she had appeared willing, to him, to break her *trouthe* for the granting of a wish. This act of reconciliation with her is also implicitly Aurelius's act of reconciliation with the Franklin's audience, for we have been sympathetic to Dorigen all along, and for reasons that are only now coming into Aurelius's ken—reasons that had been provided to us not as facts in evidence but as responsive judgments to the actions and inward

thoughts presented to us through the imagination by the rhetoric of the Franklin's performance.

When Aurelius confronts the Clerk and asks him to consider taking installments on his debt, the Clerk responds by asking him if he had not gotten what he'd asked for: "Hastow nat had thy lady as thee liketh?" (1589). Aurelius sighs sorrowfully when he says "no," displaying his own emotional state, and the Clerk asks to know the reason. The Franklin intrudes here on the dialogue, explaining that "Aurelius his tale anon bigan, / And tolde hym al, as ye had herd bifoore" (1592 – 93). Aurelius retells the tale as we have heard it, in the same way it was told to us. What does the Franklin mean if not that Aurelius reproduces the tale in full color, preserving all the multiplicity of appearance and partiality of perspective that the fiction has made possible? More important, what does it tell us of the Franklin's commitment to the ethical value of sensitivity to style and its expressive value, to use Middleton's terms again, that the central ethical dilemma of the story is resolved by the active listening of characters who are attuned to hearing what is communicated through and by emotion? The Franklin's "kidnapping" of the terms *gentilesse* and *pitee*, and his use of these terms as modes of idealization is finally complete. Aurelius explains to the Clerk that Dorigen had been innocent, something he had not understood to this point: "And that hir trouthe she swoor thurgh innocence, / She nevere erst hadde herde speke of apperance" (1601 – 02). Aurelius explains that he was moved by compassion to release her, and in the act of retelling the story, he moves the clerk to release him in turn—each act of *gentilesse* and franchise is motivated by the empathy that is awakened in the act of storytelling.

What remains then is an illustration of how the Franklin's rhetorico-poetic method can lead readers and listeners to an understanding and acceptance of the personal and social

benefits he sees in the practice of empathy, which are tied closely, in his telling, to the virtues of *gentilesse* and *franchise*. It is here that the Franklin's status as a new man is indispensible to our interpretation. For the proponents of Ciceronian Idealism like Chaucer's new men, the answer lies in the unity of eloquence and wisdom—or, to use Chaucer's terminology, the union of *sentence* and *solaas*. As Middleton has explained, the crux of the new man's sensibilities lies in the idea that the pleasure and use of literature are the same thing, and are realized in worldly performance. The exemplary virtue presented by the story's "kernel of content" (the virtue of empathy) is seen by the Franklin as emphatically linked to the virtues required to derive pleasure from its telling: "the capacity for wonder, sympathy, and thoughtful speculation." In this case, the capacity for empathy as an exemplary virtue is identified and awakened by his audience's sensitivity to the Franklin's style and the expressive values of his storytelling. In other words, the virtue of empathy is just as much embodied by the way the story is told as it is recommended by the story's narrative action and denouement. The embodiment, or realization, in poetry of the unity of eloquence and wisdom enables the linking together of what might otherwise be seen as separate functions of storytelling: to please an audience and to profit it.

CHAPTER 2

"HE MOT GON TO AL MID GINNE": EMOTION, INGENUITY AND THE RHETORIC OF *ALTERCATIO* IN *THE OWL AND THE NIGHTINGALE*[102]

For many modern critics of medieval poetry, the wit and genius of *The Owl and the Nightingale* are thought to be located in a perceived incongruity between the formal, procedural and theoretical constraints of medieval dialectical debate and the actual manner in which the two avian adversaries in the poem harass and harangue each other: disruptively, passionately, and with near total disregard for formal logic, as well as with an apparent lack of concern for supposed objective truth, or for any other philosophical goals. In brief, it is generally supposed that the poem is clever and funny, or else somehow subversive, because the two birds engaged in the debate are so bad at debating and so blind to the proper function and purpose of scholastic disputation. In this interpretation, the birds' lack of geniality, their supposed contempt for procedure, their unwillingness to develop arguments according to necessary propositions, universal reason or strict adherence to self-evident facts all mark them as foolish and insincere. At the same time, critics all recognize the non-viability of taking the poet himself as foolish and insincere, since his work shows such undeniable evidence of sharp intelligence and urbanity, exceptional industry and diligence, a light touch and a remarkable eye for charming detail. From this clash of characteristics, the critics now tend to conclude that the entire poem is a sort of "burlesque satire" of the genre of debate poetry, a sardonic jab at human contentiousness.

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[102] Anonymous, *The Owl and the Nightingale: Text and Translation*, ed. and trans. Neil Cartlidge (Exeter: Univ. of Exeter Press, 2001).

But what if the contest that takes place in this poem is not in any precise sense a *debate*? What if the expectations that set up and delimit our readerly interpretation of the poem are not, after all, appropriate to the poem we have, but are rather applicable only to a class of literary works to which the *O&N* does not in fact belong? If that is the case, a very different interpretation may emerge: a reading in which the poet's intention is not to provoke his audience into ridicule and then conscientious self-reflection, but rather one in which the poet seeks to inspire wonder and delight at his display of rhetorical skill and inventiveness, as well as to stir up both positive and negative emotions in his audience. In this reading, if the birds refuse to obey strict dialectical procedure it is not because they are foolish, but simply because the contest in which they are engaged calls for a different set of procedures. Rather than see their peripatetic argumentative styles, their advantage seeking and their zealous appeals to character and emotion as insincere masks, we could begin to see them as the strategies of adroit but embattled competitors in a rhetorical contest. In this light, the two avian advocates should no longer be regarded as failures for not accomplishing what they do not set out to do. We should we see the reality of verbal contentiousness not as the butt of some cleverly framed joke, but rather as the field upon which these two adversaries engage each other.

Overturning the critical consensus about the proper generic frame for the poem is not as complicated as it might at first seem. The judgment that the *O&N* is not a genuine member of the debate genre is the implication of the observation made by Wells in 1916:

> Most of the similarities to other pieces are such merely in the bare fact of general similarity; the embodiment, the use, the prominence, and the extent of influence, of the characteristic, are always unlike those other pieces.[103]

[103] John Edwin Wells, *A Manual of the Writings in Middle English: 1050 – 1400* (New Haven and London: Yale Univ. Press, 1916), 420.

If this observation is insufficient on its own to disqualify the *O&N* as a debate poem, there is plenty more. For example, there is the trajectory of critical interpretation itself. "It was once fashionable to read the poem as allegory," remarks Gardner, who first proposed the burlesque theory, "finding it a debate between pleasure and asceticism, gaiety and gravity, art and philosophy, the minstrel and the preacher, or the love poet and the didactic poet."[104] The problem with the allegorical reading is that the poem exhibits all of these oppositions without organizing its debate around any single pair of them. As Gardner puts it, "the debate is manifestly all of these things and therefore centrally none of them."[105] Instead, the Owl and the Nightingale are both plainly characters in a drama, not cutouts representing idealized attributes in a rationalized (or irrationalized) pageant of disputation. In this respect, the poet's realistic treatment of the two birds, this poem is distinguished from the other works in the debate tradition. Yet somehow it has been missed that the chief reason for dismissing the allegorical reading is also, by definition, the most compelling reason for excluding the poem from the debate genre: in its central aspect, it is not like the other debate poems.

If the *O&N* is not a debate poem, then what is it? The Latin term *altercatio* appears in the rubric above the MS text of the poem: "*Incipit Altercatio inter filomenam & bubonem*." This word seems to have been accepted by modern readers as denoting "debate" or "quarrel" in a very general sense, perhaps on the model of the Modern English term *altercation*, as a descriptor of the type of action occurring in the narrative. *Altercatio* is also, however, a term of art in rhetoric, referring to a kind of discourse in a law court which is not continuous, but where advocates seek to defeat opponents by interposed questions and answers, often full of

[104] John Gardner, "*The Owl and the Nightingale:* A Burlesque," *Papers on Language and Literature* 2 (1966): 3 – 12, 4.

[105] *Ibid.*

emotional vigor and mingled with invective and abuse. This sounds very much like the poem we have.

In Roman judicial settings, the *altercatio*, or "legal wrangling" was a distinct activity from the "set speech," or continuous address before the court. And while the general concern of the early Roman handbooks of rhetoric such as Cicero's *De inventione* and the pseudo-Ciceronian *Rhetorica ad Herennium* was aimed toward practical use in the set speech, the theorizing, precepts and advice they offered is also applicable to the *altercatio*. The only difference is that in set speeches, each advocate presents his own position and arguments while criticizing and refuting idealized versions of his opponent's arguments. In other words, the set speech allows the advocate to present his opponent's position in a way that is shaped to help his own case. In an *altercatio*, advocates must confront their opponent's arguments directly, and without the benefit of being able to control the exact order and presentation of arguments or the overall structure of the discourse. Because the *altercatio* offers such an exceptional opportunity to employ the critical skills of argumentation, it was often used in the training of advocates to hone their rhetorical expertise. Later, it was routinely used to introduce schoolboys to the tools and methods of rhetoric. It was also sometimes considered a preeminent occasion for accomplished orators to display their skills. In the domain of schoolroom practice, *altercatio* also opened up an opportunity to learn in a way that is quite proper to rhetoric—agonistically and in an impromptu manner. It also afforded students the opportunity to engage on both sides of any question, and students were given such a challenge regularly. In Latin, the practice is called arguing *in utramque partem*. The ability to argue effectively on either side of any issue was an expected outcome of traditional preparation in the rhetorical art.

Stanley also makes mention of two types of disputation common in medieval schools during the era of the poem; though he calls both *disputation*, one is more clearly akin to dialectical debate and the other is more clearly akin to *altercatio*:

> In the Middle ages debates owed their popularity to the place they had in the educational system. There was great emphasis on rhetorical training, and pupils were asked to assume roles in disputation with each other. Disputation was used to practise pupils in logical argumentation. Whoever silenced his opponent, by forcing him into a position that he cannot argue himself out of, gains victory in the debate. Also at a higher level of education, in the training of lawyers, use was made of disputation. In this type of fictitious litigation the disputant who used language best, and who could best blind his opponent by tricks of logic, was the victor, applauded by his teachers and his fellow-students.[106]

Where other writers of rhetorical treatises had discussed it only tangentially, Quintilian devotes an entire chapter in the sixth book of his *Institutio oratoria* to practical advice concerning the *altercatio*. The priorities and recommendations we find there are indeed so closely reflective of the concerns of the adversaries in the *O&N*—as well as those of the poem's narrator—that we should not be surprised if we discovered that the poet had Quintilian's book at his elbow as he composed. Almost everything Quintilian has to say about *altercatio* puts us rather directly in mind of the *O&N*. His first remark is that of the five canons of rhetoric, *altercatio* is essentially a matter of invention.[107] The format of the *altercatio* renders disposition, or formal arrangement, largely irrelevant; its circumstances leave contestants in no great need for the ornaments of elocution (though they may be useful); and it poses no unique challenges for memory or delivery.

The essence of invention is the development of non-technical proofs in the form of arguments. Through invention, Quintilian says, adversaries must seek to impress their strongest arguments on the judge's memory and refute false statements. This means the

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[106] Eric G. Stanley, ed., *The Owl and the Nightingale* (London: Nelson, 1960), 27.

[107] Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria* 6.4.1

ability to discover persuasive arguments in support of claims and refutations is the primary avenue to victory, and this is precisely how the Owl and the Nightingale both act throughout the poem.

Rhetorical Invention Versus Dialectical Invention

Through rhetorical invention, the two opponents seek to dominate each other by the volume, the intensity and the strategic effects of their arguments. Arguments are constructed by the use of *loci*, or topics, and they achieve volume by the techniques of amplification and repetition with variation. The chief thing to keep in mind in reading the *O&N* as an *altercatio* is that as a type of *eristic*, an agonistic competition, its goals are very different from those of logical disputation.[108] In eristic, adversaries seek victory over their opponents, not harmonious philosophical synthesis, and that victory comes through persuading a judge or judges to take one side of an issue over the other. As a result, the characteristics of *altercatio* are much different from those of disputation, and the available means of persuasion range over a much wider territory. Whereas disputation relies on the use of syllogistic logic and of deductive and inductive reasoning, the most effective methods of rhetoric consist of advantage-seeking and affective motivation. As Aristotle tells us, rhetorical argument, in contrast to dialectic argument, is limited to questions upon which a variety of opinion is possible. Scholastic debate, on the other hand, is limited to questions for which the demonstration of necessary truths is sufficient. If there is a single key to understanding why

[108] While the invocation of *eristic* or agonistic conflict often brings to the minds of critics the worst impulses of human agents, the foundations of rhetoric as the art of persuasion can be located in such archetypal situations. Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca have this to say: "Because of the unity between speech and speaker, most discussions, especially if before witnesses, partake somewhat of the nature of a duel, in which victory rather than agreement is sought: the abuses to which eristic argument has led are well known. The quest for victory is not, however, merely a sign of puerile ambition or a manifestation of pride, it is also a means by which the speaker can create for himself better conditions for persuasion" (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, *The New Rhetoric*, 320).

we must see the contest presented by the *O&N* as rhetorical rather than dialectical, it is in the acknowledgement of a simple fact: the most deeply animating issues of this quarrel—which bird is better? Which is more beneficial to humanity?—are questions that cannot be sufficiently resolved by the application of logical necessity or self-evident truth. It is for this reason that we see the primary emphasis on strategies of advantage-seeking and affective motivation. Simply put, the animating questions of the poem are the kind of questions upon which a variety of legitimate opinions is possible, and so their resolution must rely upon the presentation of more or less probable truths leading to persuasion. There are no facts to be uncovered here which would make the preference for one bird over the other either necessary or self-evident. Thus, we must recognize that the avian adversaries of the *O&N* are concerned primarily with persuading a judge of the probable truths of their arguments by means of the non-technical proofs of rhetoric: *logos*, *ethos* and *pathos*. Quintilian tells us that in the very common cases that depend solely or partly on non-technical proofs, "the fiercest battle is in the altercation."[109]

It is generally possible in an *altercatio* for one advocate to dominate another through the sheer number of topics deployed, but the intensification or augmentation of certain arguments and the diminishment of others is seldom neglected. Arguments achieve their force and strategic effect by the type of *loci*, by techniques of amplification and repetition, and by the use of affective appeals to *ethos*, or "character," and *pathos*, or "emotion." Advocates can also augment the intensity of their arguments or diminish the force of opposing arguments by means of stylistic modifications, the boundary between invention and style being quite permeable. Thus, the function of arguments is governed by rhetorical motive, the aim of persuasion, rather than by the demands of inductive validity.

[109] Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria* 6.4.4

In this respect, the preferred argumentative procedure of both the Owl and the Nightingale is easily observed: both of them tend to pile up *loci* as a way of offering reasons (*logos*) to support their claims while at the same time appealing to character and to the emotion of the implied judges (*ethos* and *pathos*). Instead of developing inductive syllogisms, they rely instead on the enumeration of topics and the affective appeals mobilized by them to give their respective positions weight and strength. They use the common topics of confirmation and refutation found in the rhetorical handbooks to build up probable cases for favorable judgment. They use other topics, such as the topics of indignation and commiseration, to arouse enmity for their opponent and sympathy for themselves, as well as to sway the audience toward or away from certain value propositions, which they then associate with themselves or their adversary. In fact, the frequency of direct invective and the amount of verbal abuse each of the birds heaps upon the other, even though it is perfectly in keeping with the rough-and-tumble of *altercatio*, has tended to disguise the fact that most of the poem's highly emotional tenor is generated less directly, by their use of topics and strategies to influence the minds of the judges—who are in reality the poem's readers.

Topical Invention, Amplification, Repetition and Variety

A demonstration of the basic procedure is in order here, so we will look at part of the Nightingale's first speech to see how she turns an initial assertion, that the Owl is *unwigt* (33), or "unnatural" and hated by all "bird-kind," into a full-blown argument by her use of topical invention, amplification, repetition and variety. The basic topics to be used in building arguments come under the heading of *confirmatio*, and thus are generally referred to as topics of confirmation and refutation. Confirmation or proof "is the part of the oration

which by marshaling arguments lends credit, authority, and support to our case…"[110] According to Cicero, "All propositions are supported in argument by attributes of persons or of actions. We hold the following to be the attributes of persons: name, nature, manner of life, fortune, habit, feeling, interests, purposes, achievements, accidents, speeches made."[111] By means of these topics, the Nightingale begins to build her case against the Owl:

> Ich wot þat þu art unmilde
> Wiþ hom þat ne muȝe from þe schilde,
> & þu tukest wroþe & vuele,
> Whar þu miȝt, over smale fuȝele.
> Vorþi þu art loþ al fuel-kunne,
> & alle ho þe driueþ honne,
> & þe bischricheþ & bigredet,
> & wel narewe þe biledet;
> & ek forþe þe sulue mose,
> Hire þonkes, wolde þe totose!
> (61-70; I know that you are cruel to those who can't shield themselves from you, and you bully small fowls maliciously and wickedly wherever you can. This is why you are hated by all bird-kind, and [why] they drive you away from here, and [why] they shriek and cry out at you, and pursue you closely; and why even the tit herself would willingly tear you apart.)

The first couplet, lines 61 – 62, uses a topic of personal attribute, either the Owl's nature, manner of life or habit, to give the reason why the Nightingale claims the Owl is unnatural: she is cruel to small birds who can't protect themselves.[112] The following couplet, 63 – 64, is essentially an amplification of the first, unnecessary for logical completeness, but which allows the Nightingale to pile on synonyms for the Owl's cruelty. It is also likely that these lines draw from Cicero's second topic of *indignatio* to increase the emotional vigor of the

[110] Cicero, *De inventione* 1.24.34

[111] *ibid.*

[112] Cicero differentiates the personal attributes of nature, manner of life, habit, and so forth from each other not in order to require uniform consistency in the invention of topical arguments, but in order to provide a larger number of specific topics (*loci*) from which to begin drawing arguments. Thus, rhetorical analysis does not require the precise identification of a source topic (e.g., whether it is 'nature' or 'manner of life' or 'habit') to show how the strategy may be effective.

charge. The ten topics of *indignatio* are found in both the *De inventione* and the *Rhetorica Ad Herennium*, and are to be used when the orator wishes to arouse "great hatred against some person, or violent offense at some action."[113] The second topic is, according to Cicero, "the one in which it is shown, with a display of passion emphasized by amplification, who is affected by this act which we are denouncing"; those affected may be all or the great majority, which Cicero calls "the most dreadful"; or they may be one's superiors, "those whose authority gives ground for *indignatio*," which is "most unbecoming"; or they may be one's equals "in spirit, fortune or physique," which Cicero calls "most unjust"; or those affected may be one's inferiors, which is "most arrogant."[114] By mentioning in line 64 the "small fowls" who are the target of the Owl's aggression, the Nightingale is naming those affected by the Owl's cruelty as her own (the Nightingale's) equals or else as the Owl's inferiors. The purpose then is to arouse the audience's ire against the Owl for arrogance or injustice. By mentioning "all bird-kind" in the next couplet, the Nightingale expands the sense of who is affected by the Owl's cruelty to include everyone, which is "the most dreadful."

Strategically, the Nightingale also draws our attention to the Owl's willingness to act so cruelly by adding, "*whar þu migt*" ('wherever you can'). In line 65, the Nightingale utilizes the logical indicator *Vorþi* ('because of this') to show that the following, how the other birds treat her, is directly linked to her cruel character, showing the effects of the purported cause. Lines 66 – 69 use the figure of *repetitio* to build a list of the small birds'

[113] Cicero, *De inventione* 1.53.100 – 105; Cf. *Rhetorica Ad Herrenium* 2.30.47 – 50. The first ten topics are nearly identical in their treatment by both authors. Cicero's list for *indignatio* contains fifteen topics as opposed to pseudo-Cicero's ten, but his last five are redundant, and could probably be gathered under the preceding topics.

[114] Cicero, *De inventione* 1.53.101.

responses to the Owl. It is clearly amplification, and it is this kind of reiterative maneuver, preferring to aim at a kind of poetic eloquence rather than straightforward logical demonstration, that most clearly shows the Nightingale's preference for rhetoric over logic. The last couplet is a demonstration of the range of the Owl's enemies. The Nightingale cleverly moves from the very general idea that all small birds hate the Owl to a very specific instance: even one of the smallest, the titmouse, is eager to destroy her. These ten lines, launched from one topic, begin to manifest the rhetorical strength of the Nightingale's case. She continues:

> Þu art lodlich to biholde,
> & þu art loþ in monie volde:
> Þi bodi is short; þi swore is smal;
> Grettere is þin heued þan þu al.
> Þin eȝene boþ col-blake & brode,
> Riȝt swo ho weren ipeint mid wode:
> Þu starest so þu wille abiten
> Al þat þu mi[ȝ]t mid cliure smiten.
> Þi bile is stif & scharp & hoked,
> Riȝt so an owel þat is croked:
> Þar-mid þu clackes[t] oft & longe—
> & þat is on of þine songe!
> (71 – 82; You are hateful to behold, and you are repulsive in many ways. Your body is short, you neck is scrawny, your head is bigger than the rest of you; your eyes are coal-black and wide, as if they were painted with woad. You stare as if you would devour all whom you could strike with your claws. Your bill is hard and sharp and hooked, just like a flesh-hook that is crooked: with it you clack often and long, and that is one of your songs!)

This next group of lines changes the topic to the Owl's appearance, which is clearly drawn from the personal attribute of the Owl's nature.[115] The entire pattern of the Nightingale's description of the Owl is an instance of amplification. Again the Nightingale moves from the general, "you are hateful to behold," to the specific, detailing the many ways (*monie volde*)

[115] In addition to covering such primary attributes as gender, birthplace, family, etc., the topic of nature extend into consideration of "such advantages and disadvantages as are given to mind and body by nature, as for example: whether one is strong or weak, tall or short, handsome or ugly, swift or slow…" (Cicero, *De inventione* 1.24.35).

the Owl is so. In a pattern that may be intended as a verbal *mimesis* of the description itself, she begins with short, balanced clauses concerning the Owl's short body and scrawny neck, and moves to a full line describing the great size of her head. It is not a flattering picture. Next, there are multiple ways to describe the Owl's eyes, including the use of *vivid description* ("as if they were painted with woad") to increase the presence of the object of discourse in the minds of an audience—attempting to increase the intensity of disdain for the Owl. The couplet of lines 78 – 79 moves from the description of the Owl's eyes to a depiction of how she uses them, perhaps drawn from the topic of "manner of life" to again dwell on the Owl's behavior toward her physical inferiors. What the Nightingale means to suggest is that even the Owl's eyes betray her fierce, "unnatural" character. From here, she moves to describe the Owl's bill, again drawing a vivid image of her appearance as a function of the Owl's evil nature. In addition to the visual image of the crooked "flesh-hook," the Nightingale gives us also an auditory correlative: the "clacking" sound she makes with her mouth, which describes her mannerisms in a severe light. From here, the Nightingale moves onto new territory:

> Ac þu þretest to mine fleshe:
> Mid þine cliures woldest me meshe.
> Þe were icundur to one frogge
> [Þat sit at mulne vnder cogge.]
> Snailes, mus, & fule wiȝte
> Boþ þine cunde & þine riȝte.
> Þu sittest adai & fliȝst aniȝt:
> Þu cuþest þat þu art on vnwiȝt.
>
> (83 – 90; And you threaten my flesh, with your claws you would mash me. A frog that sits under a mill wheel is more your sort of thing. Snails, mice and foul creatures are both your kind and your right. You sit by day and fly by night, you prove that you are unnatural.)

After turning from description of the Owl's bill to description of the power of her claws, the Nightingale offers another precious image, vivid in its detail, to again draw a picture of the

Owl's foul nature. From the frog sitting under a mill wheel to the snails, mice and other slimy creatures, this topic aligns the Owl with everything that invites disgust. The Nightingale is not pulling any punches when it comes to defining the Owl's nature, describing the repulsive as the Owl's natural domain. We should also notice here what detractors of rhetoric would call the Nightingale's "sleight of hand." The rhetorical strategy she is pursuing here utilizes rhetoric's power to facilitate the conversion of values into facts. We will examine this kind of conversion in other instances later on, but for now it is important to notice that the Nightingale's contention, that the Owl is repulsive, is essentially a statement of value, not of fact. As an argument in support of her main claim that the Owl is "unnatural," the Nightingale creates here a false equivalence between repulsiveness and unnaturalness that elides the difference between facts and values. Though there is nothing in reality which requires us to equate repulsive creatures with unnatural creatures—indeed, nature abounds with things that can invite disgust—the Nightingale's deft maneuver may pass rather quietly, working to secure our adherence to her basic claim without inviting much attention to what would be called, in logical argumentation, a *non sequitur*.

Next, using the topic of nature again, the Nightingale returns her initial charge, that the Owl is "unnatural," by claiming, in the language of logic, that this is proved (*þu cuþest*) through the Owl's nocturnal behavior. Despite the Nightingale's pretensions to logic—and let us not forget that the impression of "logicalness" can be a powerful rhetorical strategy—it is evident that her harangue aims to gather its force not by precise and direct logical demonstration, but by the lengthy rhetorical demonstrations of amplification, vivid imagery, and the force of repetition and variation. It is also evident by now how even the basic method

of topical invention is loaded with appeals to character (*ethos*) and emotion (*pathos*). Still the Nightingale is not finished:

> Þu art lodlich & unclene—
> Bi þine neste ich hit mene,
> & ek bi þine fule brode:
> Þu fedest on hom a wel ful fode!
> Vel wostu þat hi doþ þarinne—
> Hi fuleþ hit up to þe chinne;
> Ho sitteþ þar so hi bo bisne,
> Warbi men segget a uorbisne:
> 'Dahet habbe þat ilke best
> Þat fuleþ his owe nest.'
> (91 – 100; You are hateful and unclean, by which I mean your nest, and also your foul brood. You feed them on very filthy food. Well you know what they do in there, they foul it up to their chins: they sit there as if they were poor-sighted. For that men have a saying: 'Cursed be the beast that fouls its own nest.')

What seems like a restatement of the general claim in line 91 becomes a *correctio* (*ich hit mene*) whereby the Nightingale zeroes in on another topic: the Owl's childrearing.[116] Following more vivid description of the Owl's filthy brood and filthy nest, she adduces another tactic, quotation, by asserting, "for that men have a saying." The *aphorism* or maxim—in this instance, "Cursed be the beast that fouls its own nest"—is gathered under the topic of authority because it points to the sentiment of a named authority or else the general authority of "what people think."[117] The appeal to authority works to bolster an argument to the degree that it borrows the prestige that is attached to the authoritative source. Basically, the Nightingale is making the point that she is not the only one who thinks this way about the Owl. She also has it on good authority.

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[116] The figure of *correctio*, ("setting straight") may often be used as a kind of *prolepsis* (anticipation), which "forsees and forestalls" possible objections to an argument; see *correctio* in Richard Lanham, *A Handlist of Rhetorical Terms*, 2nd ed. (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1991).

[117] Both birds lay claim to the topic of authority several times throughout the poem, offering both general sayings and sayings that are attributed specifically to King Alfred. Both of the poem's editors make clear that none of these sayings are actually traceable to the real authority of the historical king.

What the Nightingale does next is a perfect example of her ingenuity. Perhaps sensing that her topical invention may have reached a saturation point with her audience, she turns to *narratio*, "telling a story," which both Cicero and pseudo-Cicero classify not as a figure, but as the second part of the six-part classical oration. But since this is an *altercatio* and not a set speech, the *narratio* can go wherever the advocate feels it will be most useful. While the ostensible purpose of the narration is to provide a (historical) background to the argument being made, no competent rhetorician would miss the potential of *narratio* to be "spun" into a further strategic effort to impugn the adversary. The Nightingale's *narratio* begins with a formulaic invocation, "Þat oþer ger" (some years ago), which is akin to saying, "Once upon a time." She tells of how a falcon was breeding but did not watch over her nest carefully. As a result, she says, the Owl snuck into the nest—interestingly, she addresses the Owl directly: "þarto þu stele in o dai" (you stole in there one day)—and laid one of her own "filthy" eggs. When all the eggs hatched, and the falcon has fed them, she noticed that one side of the nest had been fouled. Angered by this, the falcon demanded to know who did it. At this point the Nightingale switches from *narratio* to *sermocinatio*, a rehearsal of direct speech, which is essentially an act of ventriloquism. In the mimicked voice of the falcon and her chicks, the Nightingale continues her tale with a combination of *narratio* and *sermocinatio*:

Þe faucun was wroþ wit his bridde,
& lude ȝal & sterne chidde:
'Segget me, wo hauet þis ido!
Ov nas neuer icunde þarto:
Hit was idon ov a loþ viste.
Segget me ȝif ȝe hit wiste!'
Þo quaþ þat on & quad þat oþer:
'Iwis it was ure oȝe broþer—
Þe ȝond þat haue[þ] þat grete heued.
Wai þat he nis þarof bireued.
Worp hit ut mid þe alre wurste
Þat his necke him toberste!'

> Þe faucun ilefde his bridde,
> & nom þat fule brid amidde,
> & warp hit of þan wilde bowe,
> Þar pie & crowe hit todrowe.
> (111 – 126; The falcon was angry with her brood, and yelled loudly and sternly chided: "Tell me who has done this? You have never been the kind to do this: a horrible farting has been done to you. Tell me if you know who it was." First said the one and then the other: "Truly it was our other brother, the one over there with the great big head: alas that he is not deprived of it! Fling him out with all the worst so that his neck breaks!" The falcon believed her brood, and took that filthy chick from their midst and tossed him from the wild branch, where the magpies and crows tore him apart.)

Clearly, such a tactic would be perfectly objectionable in the other kind of disputation, since the Nightingale is obviously making all of this up. The point, however, is not to convince the Owl that she has done something she has not, but rather to register a powerful impression on her audience that the Owl is despicable. In that sense, the *narratio* and the *sermocinatio* supply another form for amplification; she is not saying anything new here, but she says it in a new way. After this, the Nightingale returns to topical invention to complete her first argument against the Owl. In line 127 she returns to the topic of authority, "Herbi men segget a bispel" (whereby men have a saying), and fills it out with another *correctio* in the next line: "þeȝ hit ne bo fuliche spel" (though it is not completely a fable). The "saying" she quotes appears to directly affirm the story she has just told:

> Also hit is bi þan ungode
> Þat is icumen of fule brode,
> & is meind wit fro monne:
> Euer he cuþ þat he com þonne;
> Þat he com of þan adel-eye,
> Þeȝ he a fro neste leie.
> Þeȝ appel trendli fron þon trowe
> Þar he & oþer mid growe,
> Þeȝ he bo þarfrom bicume,
> He cuþ wel whonene he is icume.'
> (129 – 38; "So it is with an evil man who comes from a filthy brood, and is mixed up with respectable men: ever he proves where he comes from, that he comes from an addled egg, though he lie in a respectable nest. The apple might roll from the tree where it grew together with others, though it arrives from somewhere else, it proves

well whence it comes.")

Since the "saying" she quotes takes over ten lines of poetry, and includes within it the possibility of several aphorisms having been rolled up together, it seems suspiciously phony, or at least heavily exaggerated. Of course, as we have seen, the Nightingale is not shy about providing the most fulsome support she can for her arguments. She is less concerned with accuracy and concision than with the kind of comprehensiveness that can keep an audience's attention and rile up their emotions.

At this point, there is no need for a close examination of the Owl's argumentative procedure. She uses very much the same set of tools that the Nightingale does: the topics of confirmation and refutation; topics of *indignatio* (as well as *conquestio*, which is the reverse of *indignatio*, where the orator attempts to win sympathy for herself instead of enmity for her opponent); the topic of authority, which most often in this poem comes in the form of Alfredian aphorisms—the prestige of Alfred being unparalleled in the minds of both birds. Both birds are keen on amplification and vivid imagery, and both are eager to provide listeners with a variety of arguments. In short, the basic strategic method of both birds is the same.

The Role of Rhetorical Devices in Argument

While an audience of readers trained by rhetoric to identify and appreciate the basic operations of rhetorical argumentation such as we have already examined would be fully capable of arriving at a reading of *The Owl and the Nightingale* that is generally not contemplated by contemporary scholarship on the poem, we should understand that neither avian advocate in the poem would be (or should be) content to employ only the most basic

tools in the effort to build up a favorable case for judgment. Neither would the narrator be so effusive in his praise for their techniques as he appears to be if their achievements extended no further than what could be accomplished by newcomers to rhetorical study. Their rhetoric goes much deeper than what we could expect from a schoolroom exercise. Both birds deploy such a wide array of rhetorical devices in support of their arguments that we could not name and examine them all without committing to a book-length study. Some of these devices, however, are so easy to spot (despite having been overlooked by modern readings) and so central to the conative interest of the poet himself, that we should examine at least a few to further our view of the deeper rhetoric of the poem.

As an illustrating example, take both birds' use of the device of *onomatopoeia*, the effect that occurs when the sound of a word is thought to imitate (naturally, as it were) the referent of the word. By imitation, the figure highlights certain characteristics of description over others. Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca classify the device as a "figure of presence," since its use is generally thought to be a matter of making "the object of discourse present to the mind."[118] It is easily understood how *onomatopoeia* might make a mind focus differently on the object of discourse than any of its lexical alternatives, but in the hyper-opportunistic environment of the contest between these birds, the figure actually creates an effect that *The New Rhetoric* would classify under "figures of choice," which are generally methods of interpreting data in a way that is favorable to the advocate using them. Though *onomatopoeia* is traditionally classified as an element of cosmetic style, a verbal nicety, both birds in the poem use it argumentatively, weaponizing it as a kind of truncated enthymeme or informal syllogism: an entire argument sharpened down to a single point. In the first instance, occurring very early in the poem, the Nightingale tells the Owl, "Me luste bet speten þane

[118] Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, *The New Rhetoric*, 174.

singe / Of þine fule gogelinge." (39 – 40; I would rather spit than sing because of your foul yowling.) The narrator has just told us how repulsive the Owl is to the Nightingale, and the Nightingale has claimed that the Owl is an "unwigt," going on to support the claim with testimony about how her heart flees and her tongue fails her every time the Owl is nearby. The *onomatopoeia* highlights the repulsive characteristics of the Owl's singing, thereby shortening the enthymeme—which would go something like: "your singing is unnatural because it sounds like painful howling"—down to a single word, *gogelinge*, which has greater rhetorical force than a syllogistic argument because of the supposedly natural relationship between signifier and signified. In this way, the Nightingale disguises a contentious claim as a straightforward description. But there is more to it: because the *onomatopoeia* characterizes the Owl's singing voice, the device also unleashes the rhetorical force of *ethos* and *pathos*. Anyone who has heard "yowling" (which is almost everyone, of course) might be more likely to agree that the source of such a sound was unnatural or undesirable, which makes this use an appeal to *ethos*, a further charge against the character of the Owl. Further, almost no one who has heard "yowling" will agree that the sound is pleasant, and thus it is also an appeal to *pathos*, a feeling, like revulsion, which could motivate us to take sides against the source of such unpleasantness. As we might expect, the Nightingale's charge creates a serious emotional response in the Owl, angering her: "Vor hire horte was so gret / Þat wel-neg hire fnast atschet" (43 – 44; for her heart was so swollen that her breath almost burst from her). She replies with an *onomatopoeia* of her own: "West þu þat ich ne cunne singe / Þeg ich ne cunne of writelinge?" (47 – 48; do you think that I cannot sing because I know nothing of twittering?) As we might expect, the Owl's use of the device mirrors the technique of the Nightingale, employing it as a foreshortened enthymeme that

highlights the trifling aspect of the Nightingale's singing and also appeals to character and emotion, in this case characterizing the Nightingale as trivial.

Another example of the argumentative use of *onomatopoeia* occurs in line 220, when the Nightingale says, "Wi dostu þat unwigtis doþ? / Þu singest a nigt & nogt a dai: / & al þi song is 'wailawai!' " (218 – 220; Why do you do what unnatural creatures do? You sing by night and not by day, and all your song is 'moan, moan, moan.') The Nightingale uses the same word again in line 412, "Þu singest a winter 'wolawo!' " (412; all winter you sing 'woe, woe, woe!'), but by changing the vowels of the word in this instance she subtly changes the sense and the characterization of the Owl's singing, from annoying to outright doleful. The Owl gets another turn in at line 655, where she says, "Site nu stille, chaterestre!" (655; Now sit still, you chatterbox!)

A special case occurs in line 256, where, having been formed *ad hoc* from the term *nigtingale*, the word *galegale* perches just on the edge of *onomatopoeia*. What is most interesting here is that the device is compounded with the technique of *oratorical definition*, which makes explicit the enthymeme implied by the newly minted word: "Ho quaþ, 'Þu attest 'nigtingale': / Þu migtest bet hoten 'galegale', / Vor þu havest to monie tale." (255 – 57; She said, "You are called 'nightingale': you might better be called 'galegale,' since you have too many things to say.) Although the argumentative use of *onomatopoeia* may be among the slightest of rhetorical techniques in a contest that constantly employs more exaggerated invective, the fact that it is used several times by both birds throughout the poem shows plainly that neither of these birds will leave even the smallest stone unturned in their search for some kind of argumentative advantage.

Some examples of the other kinds of verbal advantage seeking will be appropriate to examine here. The aforementioned technique of *oratorical definition*, for instance, operates as a "figure of choice" in the poem in a way very similar to *onomatopoeia*: by making what is an arguable assertion appear as mere description, and by making the audience's choices about certain data for them, the figure offers what is essentially an interpretation of data as if it were merely a description of fact. It is this kind of effect that prompts Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, in *The New Rhetoric*, to classify *oratorical definition* as a "figure of choice": definition is an act of interpretation, which according to Perelman and Olbrecths-Tyteca is "one of the essential modes of choice," and which can thus "give rise to an argumentative figure."[119]

Oratorical definition "is a figure relating to choice, because it makes use of the structure of a definition not to give the meaning of a word, but to bring to the fore certain aspects of the facts which might otherwise remain in the background of our consciousness."[120] In other words, this technique only masquerades as neutral description, while actually giving the user the opportunity to frame facts, events and persons in an advantageous light, making claims that what would otherwise seem open to argument appear to be settled questions. One particularly strong example of *oratorical definition* is found early in the poem, when the Owl attempts to refute the Nightingale's earlier charge that she is a kind of mutant, unnatural (*unwigt*) creature by redefining herself as a bird of prey:

> Ich habbe bile stif & stronge
> & gode cliuers scharp & longe:
> So hit becumeþ to hauekes cunne.
> Hit is min higte, hit is mi wunne,
> Þat ich me drage to mine cunde.

[119] Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, *The New Rhetoric*, 172.

[120] *Ibid.*

> Ne mai me no man þareuore schende.
> (269 – 74; I have a beak hard and strong and good claws sharp and long, as is becoming to a hawk's kin. It is my delight, it is my joy that I take after my own kind. No man may therefore reproach me.)

It is a strong tack for the Owl to take, since the Nightingale has already mentioned many of the Owl's physical characteristics, like her stiff beak and strong claws, to launch her charge of unnaturalness. Here the Owl, by defining herself as a kind of hawk, gives those same physical characteristics a whole different color. By aligning herself physically with the hawk, she aligns her nature with the characteristics of the hawk that are desirable: fierceness, nobility and grandeur rather than furtiveness and monstrosity. The Owl's cleverness, however, goes even deeper than that. At the center of the Nightingale's charge is the mention of one of the Owl's characteristics she cannot deny: the Owl is a nocturnal animal. The hawk is not, and this difference (if it were noticed) would vitiate the effect the Owl is aiming at. But since the diurnal nature of the hawk is not a characteristic that immediately comes to mind when the subject comes up, the Owl's maneuver essentially skirts the issue. Because the Owl could not refute the nocturnal charge directly, she had to either admit it—something we do not expect her to do—or combat it by an oblique method. Can she dissipate the force of the negative association between nocturnal creatures and unnaturalness by simply suppressing it? It certainly seems so, at least temporarily. By a simple redefinition, she alters the Nightingale's ugly caricature of her into an image of upstanding righteousness, but she also looks to draw scrutiny away from the flawed premise of her argument. This is what she means when she wraps up this particular argumentative tactic this way: "On me hit is wel isene: / Vor rigte cunde ich am so kene." (275 – 76; It is easily seen that I am fierce because I'm true to my kind.) By claiming that the conclusion is easily observed, she may be able to

move the audience on to the next topic before they have time to realize her premise is problematic: she may be fierce, but not in fact because she is like other hawks. She isn't.

As we should expect, the Nightingale also makes use of *oratorical definition*. A potent example comes much later in the poem, after the Owl has spoken at length about the extent of her *wisdom* and her knowledge of divination (*tacninge*). She presents a careful argument: that her powers of prognostication are helpful to humans, since "An grete duntes beoþ þe lasse / Gef me ikepþ mid iwarnesse." (1227 – 28; A great blow is lessened if one looks out with awareness); that her foreknowledge of disasters is not to be taken as causation, since "Þah ich iseo his harm biuore, / Ne comeþ hit nogt of me þarauore." (1235 – 36; though I saw [a man's] harm beforehand, it does not therefore come from me); and that she sings of future events in order to warn people: "Ah ich heom singe for ich wolde / Þat hi wel understonde schulde / Þat sum unselþe heom is ihende." (1261 – 63; I sing to them because I want them to understand that some misfortune is at hand). At this point the Owl has placed a great deal of weight on the positive value of her power of foresight, and called it a product of her *wisdom*, but she has also risked a great deal, since these arguments are essentially support for her position on the main issue at stake in this part of the poem, which is the question of which bird is more helpful to humankind. From the Owl's perspective, her ability makes her the better bet when it comes to helping people, but the Nightingale threatens to turn this all into a liability by means of one small act of redefinition. She says:

> 'Wat!' heo seide, 'Hule, artu wod?
> Þu geolpest of seolliche wisdome:
> Þu nustest wanene he þe come—
> Bute hit of wicchecrefte were.
> Þarof, þu wrecche, moste þe skere,
> Gif þu wult among manne boe,
> Oþer þu most of londe fleo.

> (1298 – 1304; 'What?' she said, "Owl, are you crazy? You boast of marvelous wisdom: you know not where it comes from—unless it is from witchcraft. Of that, you wretch, you must clear yourself, if you wish to live among men, or else you must flee this country.)

Not ordinarily one to be so easily discomfited by the Owl's self-aggrandizement, the Nightingale's initial *exclamatio*, or excited outburst, is a deliberate (maybe even cynical) ploy to arouse the emotions of the audience against the Owl's audacity, placed just ahead of her redefinition of the Owl's *wisdom* as a form of witchcraft. The exclamation is, so to speak, a bit of extra sauce to go with the repudiation she is about to serve up. It is obvious that the technique of *oratorical definition* is used here to recast the Owl's *wisdom* as a form of forbidden, scandalous knowledge. If it is effective, it is a real accomplishment, since it refutes nearly a hundred lines of the Owl's painstaking presentation of her foresight as a valuable aid to mankind.

We should also notice that the Nightingale's strategy here probably makes use of the seventh "topic of indignation" found under the heading of *amplification* in book two of the *Rhetorica Ad Herrenium*. Again, these are the topics to be used in stirring up in the hearers' strong emotion against one's opponent, or to create a strong sense of indignation at the opponent's arguments. "By means of the seventh commonplace," says the author, "we show that it is a foul crime (*taetrum facinus*), cruel (*crudele*), sacrilegious (*nefarium*) and ruthless (*tyrannicum*)."[121] Witchcraft would certainly fall under the definition of a foul and sacrilegious crime, and the Nightingale's charge here certainly appears to be engineered for producing outrage, as the indignation implicit in the opening *exclamatio* makes clear.

From here we turn briefly to *periphrasis*, another of *The New Rhetoric*'s "figures of choice," which can be used to "qualify someone [or something] in a manner that helps the

[121] [Cicero], *Rhetorica ad Herrenium* 2.30.49.

argument."[122] *Periphrasis*, as paraphrase or word substitution, is a common enough literary device that it does not need much elaboration. "Many periphrases," writes Perelman, "can be analyzed in terms of such figures as *synecdoche* or *metonymy*, whose function is not essentially that of choice," but they may serve that purpose when they exercise the same function as *oratorical definition*.[123] Paraphrase may use substitution instead of definition to draw out particular characteristics that may not arise from the use of the substituted word, and in this way it becomes an argumentative figure. One easily spotted *periphrasis* occurs during an argument about both birds' relative usefulness to mankind. The Owl says:

> Get ich can do wel gode wike:
> Vor ich can loki mann wike.
> An mine wike boþ wel gode,
> Vor ich helpe to manne uode:
> Ich can nimen mus at berne,
> An ek at chirche in þe derne.
> Vor me is lof to Cristes huse,
> To clansi hit wiþ fule muse.
> (603 – 610; Yet I can do many good services, for I can watch over men's houses. And my service is very good, for I help men with their food: I can catch mice in the barn, and also at church in the darkness. For I love Christ's house, and to rid it of filthy mice.)

One might argue that the appearance of "Christ's house" in line 609 is just a way to avoid repeating the word *chirche* twice in two lines, but the figure does do more than just offer another term with which to align the Owl with Christianity (as opposed to the allegedly irreligious Nightingale). The figure brings forward all the emotional and character appeal implicit in the argument. Where a church, like a barn, is just a building, Christ's home is a dwelling place, a place of communion, and for the Owl to practice her natural proclivities there, hunting prey in the darkened corners of human buildings, is to raise her activity to the

[122] Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, *The New Rhetoric*, 174; Cf. [Cicero], *Rhetorica ad Herrenium*: *"periphrasis* (*circumitio*) is a manner of speech used to express a simple idea by means of circumlocution" (4.32.43).

[123] Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, *The New Rhetoric*, 173.

status of an act of devotion. Where we might expect her hunting to be a means of serving herself, the Owl wishes to put herself in communion with other Christians in service of Christ. With the substitution of terms here, we get a much more adroit appeal to *ethos* and *pathos* from the Owl.

Much the same effect occurs when the Nightingale uses *periphrases*, though in the example furnished here, she uses them to denounce the Owl instead of raising her own profile. She says,

> Dahet euer suich budel in tune
> Þat euer bodeþ unwreste rune, 1170
> An euer bringeþ vuele tiþinge
> An þat euer specþ of vuele þinge!
> God almigti wurþe him wroþ,
> An al þat werieþ linnene cloþ!
> (1169 – 74; An eternal curse upon such a beadle [town-crier] in town, who always bodes bad news, and always brings evil tidings, and who always speaks of terrible things! May the wrath of God almighty and all who wear linen cloth be upon him!)

It may not be entirely clear to us, who read it now, why calling the Owl a "town-crier" should bring with it such vitriol as the negative associations here attest. Cartlidge's explanatory note suggests "the Nightingale is appealing to the principle that no one welcomes a bringer of bad tidings," and that she may be making use of a proverb here.[124] Without doubt, this is the tack the Nightingale has been taking with regard to the Owl's prognostication, but she may be using the *periphrasis* to connect the Owl's foretelling with an easily recognized visual emblem. As a substitution, the concrete image of the beadle vivifies the act of bringing bad news. Since vivid description is one of the most common methods of arousing emotions, this particular figure is most likely a direct appeal to emotion. It is likely the same case with the paraphrase "all who wear linen cloth" to mean "all respectable people," or else more specifically, "the clergy." The Nightingale has a difficult task to cast the Owl's *wisdom* as an

[124] Cartlidge, *The Owl and the Nightingale*, 78.

evil thing, and the substitutions in this passage have the effect of making her charges seem more concrete, more readily tangible, in order to carry the negative associations farther than she may be able to with propositional argument alone.

There is one more example of *periphrasis* worth examining, if only briefly, for the simple reason that its use reinforces the grounding *metalepsis* of the poem as a whole, and by doing this shows that particular verbal strategies are not only methods of seeking advantage in the specific context of the birds' arguments, but also reflect the poet's own strategic aims in a way that seeks to affect our overall reading of the poem. The Owl has just finished making the arguments we previously investigated in which she compares herself to a hawk, and she turns, as both birds do several times, to the larger subject of her song:

> Get þu me seist of oþer þinge:
> & telst þat ich ne can nogt singe,
> Ac al mi rorde is woning
> & to ihire grislich þing.
> Þat nis nogt soþ: ich singe efne,
> Mid fulle dreme & lude stefne.
> Þu wenist þat ech song bo grislich
> Þat þine pipinge nis ilich.
> Mi stefne is bold & nogt unorne:
> Ho is ilich one grete horne—
> & þin is ilich one pipe
> Of one smale wode unripe.
>
> (309 – 20; Yet you speak to me of other things and tell me that I cannot sing, and that my singing voice is all moaning and a grisly thing to hear. That is not true: I sing smoothly, with full melody and loud voice. You think that any song is ghastly that isn't like your piping. My voice is bold and not at all feeble: It is like one great horn—and yours is like a whistle made from a small, unripe weed.)

The substitution of a great horn and a small pipe or whistle for the respective voices of the Owl and the Nightingale does seem to be after the same goal as the other examples of *periphrasis*: the persuasive effect of an interpretive or argumentative description. The great big horn and the tiny reed pipe are both immediate visual indices of the comparison the Owl

is trying to draw, bringing the vivid imagery into the service of an argument in which her voice seems much more desirable to hear. But the comparison also creates an auditory "image" that invites us to compare the sounds of their respective voices to the kinds of arguments they make. This is the *metalepsis* previously referred to. *Metalepsis* is a trope, according to Quintilian, which elicits what Lanham terms "a kind of compressed chain of metaphorical reasoning."[125] As one of the grounding tropes of the entire poem, the poet enlists a series of terms to link the natural singing voices of the two birds to their respective styles of verbal presentation, whereby references to the birds' singing become also references to their respective manners of argumentation. Linking terms here, like *horn* and *pipe* point in one direction toward music and song, and at the same time point metaphorically to styles of arguing. Singing stands for speaking, and speaking stands for singing. This is seen throughout the poem when one bird or the other challenges her opponent on the grounds of her verbal presentation, or argumentation, but expresses that challenge in terms of a singing voice—which is precisely what it happening in the cited passage. The Owl is asserting that her own singing voice is rich and smooth, like the sound of a horn, where the Nightingale's voice is thin and reedy. It takes no great stretch of imagination to understand the Owl is here speaking about the different ways the two advocates proceed in argumentation. Obviously, the Owl is not merely referring to their singing voices, but also beyond them to their personal styles of arguing—as though the Nightingale's arguments were thin and weak, as opposed to her own arguments, which are fulsome and robust. In this way, the substitution of the *periphrasis* unveils a strategy pursued not only by both birds, but by the poet himself. The fact that these linking terms are grounded in a foundation of *metalepsis* is what gives them more rhetorical power than the simple *similes* and *metaphors* they appear to be: every

[125] See *transsumptio* in Lanham, *Handlist*, 99.

instance engages the entire chain of metaphor and brings to mind all the other instances in which the connection between singing and speech is raised. It is this chain of metaphor that constantly reinforces the ideational linkage between the poem's fictional, aesthetic impulses and the rhetoricality of the poem's subject matter. What makes this *metalepsis* particularly potent for this reading of the *O&N* is that it is the exact same example that Quintilian uses to define the trope:

> *Metalepsis* or *transumptio*…" he writes, "makes a path from one thing to another… It is in the nature of *metalepsis* to be a sort of intermediate step between the term transferred <and the thing to which it is transferred>; it does not signify anything in itself, but provides the transition… The commonest example is: *cano* ("I sing") equals *canto*, <*canto* equals> *dico* ("I say"), therefore *cano* equals *dico*..."[126]

It appears again that the words of the poem are so close to the thoughts of Quintilian that it seems difficult to imagine the poet working without his book close at hand.

The Role of Ingenuity

The next thing Quintilian says about *altercatio* is that what is needed most is "a quick and nimble mind" (*ingenio veloci ac mobile*) and "prompt and penetrating thought" (*animo praesenti et acri*). Such an observation could have come straight out of a reading of the *O&N*, and in fact, the poem's narrator echoes this advice quite closely, even adopting Quintilian's terminology with the newly minted English word *ginne* (669, 765), a cognate to the Latin *ingenio* meaning "cunning intelligence."[127] Quintilian tells us ingenuity is necessary in *altercatio* because the advocate has little time to think, and must speak "off the cuff" or

[126] Quintilian, *Instituto oratoria* 8.2.447.

[127] The Middle English noun *ginne*, meaning "cunning," "cleverness," or "ingenuity," seems to have come into English from French in the early thirteenth century. It is then connected indirectly to the Latin term *ingenium*, meaning "natural talent" or "ability" but which in the medieval usage more strongly indicates cleverness or intricacy. The word *ginne* in English gained an additional denotation as a "device", "mechanism" or "clever contrivance," which probably began as a metonymy for the produce of clever, cunning minds.

"on the fly." Quintilian says, along with the mature Cicero, that this quickness of mind comes from natural ability (hence the term *ingenio*), but that like other gifts of nature it can be improved by art, by which he means the art of rhetoric.

In the poem, the Nightingale is the figure who most ardently invokes the central importance of cunning intelligence to the power of rhetorical argument—although, as we shall see, the narrator's concern for ingenuity lags not far behind hers. On more than one occasion, she even pursues a line of argumentation that attempts to align the prestige of cleverness with her own character, even claiming her cunning intelligence is at the foundation of her own rhetorical prowess. She poses her own wit and ingenuity as a counterbalance to the physical power of the Owl and her capacity for violence, and by proposing the verbal power that is the product of such ingenuity as a countervailing force to the tendency of such conflicts to invite physical violence, she both recreates the traditional link between rhetoric and ingenuity as well as echoing the traditional source, in Cicero's introduction to the *De inventione*, of the well known notion that eloquence is itself a preferable and adequate alternative to physical force.

Near the beginning of the *Owl and the Nightingale*, while the Owl is busy trying to intimidate the Nightingale with the threat of a physical confrontation (which she would easily win), the Nightingale is busy trying to defuse the possibility of violence by reminding the Owl that she will remain out of harm's reach and by working to translate the conflict between them away from the field of physical combat and onto the field of verbal contest. At one point, the Owl says, "Whi neltu flon into þe bare / & sewi ware unker bo / Of brigter howe, of uairur blo?" (150 – 52; Why don't you fly out into the open and show which of us is of brighter hue, of fairer complexion?) This is a barely concealed threat of violence, which the

Nightingale knows well. She responds with further invective for sixteen lines, accusing the Owl of deceit and treachery before offering the reason she will not succumb: "Ne speddestu nogt mid þine unwrenche / For ich am war & can wel blenche" (169 – 70; You will not succeed with your wicked tricks, for I am wary and can well dodge). To *blenche*, or "dodge" in this instance means not only to physically avoid the threat the Owl poses, but also refers to the Nightingale's talent for verbal maneuvering that comes from her cleverness and experience, her intellectual dexterity which she considers her chief asset. In fact, she restates her diffidence in the face of the threat by reinforcing it:

> Ne helpþ nogt þat þu bo to þriste:
> Ich wolde vigte bet mid liste
> Þan þu mid al þine strengþe.
> (171 – 73; Nor will it help you that you are bold: I would fight better with cunning than you with all your strength.)

The Nightingale knows her cunning would serve her better in a verbal contest than her physical agility would against the Owl's superior power, which is why she offers the form of the *altercatio* as an alternative to violent conflict a few lines later:

> & fo we on mid rigte dome,
> Mid faire worde & mid ysome.
> Þeg we ne bo at one acorde,
> We muge bet mid fayre worde,
> Witute cheste & bute figte,
> Plaidi mid foge & mid rigte:
> & mai hure eiþer wat hi wile,
> Mid rigte segge & mid sckile.
> (179 – 86; So let us continue with good judgment, with fair and peaceable words. Though we are not in accord, we might plead our cases better with fair and correct words and with right, without rancor and without fighting; and let each of us say what she will with upright speech and with reason.)

Here the Nightingale convinces the Owl to engage in a verbal *altercatio* rather than a physical altercation, and her plea is full of the precise, technical language that calls to mind a formal legal proceeding as well as makes clear the rhetorical nature of the contest she calls

for. The sentiment echoes the Ciceronian commonplace that rhetoric is the remedial alternative to physical violence, and it appears that the Nightingale is appealing to a rhetorical contest rather than a philosophical or logical debate: she uses the terms *dome* and *plaidi*, specifically citing the milieu of the court, and she uses the phrases *faire worde* and *fayre worde*, meaning "attractive" or "beautiful" words rather than "equitable" ones, implying that the strength of arguments will derive from their appeal, their ability to move and delight listeners. The recurrence of the word *rigte* in these lines may seem an equivocation for readers inclined to equate "right" with "true," but the variety of its use throughout the poem suggests much greater semantic ambiguity than that, and she is likely using the term to simply denote apt words.[128] Beyond that, her use of the term *sckile*, which means "reason" or "discrimination" and is connected with the modern English term *skill*, signals plainly that it is their performance that ought to be judged, their skill at pleading. The Nightingale intends to engage in a contest in which she will use her verbal skill to overcome a more powerful opponent, and she casts her cunning intelligence as the source of that skill.

Not content to merely assert the power of cunning intelligence that she wields, the Nightingale elsewhere offers a lengthy dissertation on its worth after being hard pressed by the Owl:

> For ich kan craft & ich kan liste,
> An wareuore ich am þus þriste.
> Ich kan wit & song mani eine:
> Ne triste ich to non oþer maine.
> Vor soþ hit is þat seide Alured:
> 'Ne mai no strengþe aȝen red.'
> Oft spet wel a lute liste,
> Þar muche strengþe sholde miste.
> Mid lutle strengþe, þurȝ ginne,
> Castel & burȝ me mai iwinne.

[128] The glossary entries for *rigte* in both Stanley's and Cartlidge's editions of the poem attest to the wide range of meanings the word has in the poem.

> Mid liste me mai walle felle,
> An worpe of horsse kniȝtes snelle.
> Vuel strengþe is lutel wurþ,
> Ac wisdom [ne wurþ neuer vnwurþ: 770
> Þu myht iseo þurh alle þing
> Þat wisdom] naueþ non euening.
> (757 – 72; I have craft and I have cunning, and therefore I am this bold. I have wit and know many a song, nor do I trust in any other force: for it is true what Alfred said: there can be no strength against strategy. Often a little cunning succeeds well, where great strength should fail: with but little strength, through ingenuity, castles and towns may be won. With cunning walls may be felled and eager knights thrown from their horses. Evil strength is worth little, but wisdom never becomes worthless: you can see through all things that wisdom has no equal.)

We can see immediately that the Nightingale frames up her dissertation on the value of cunning with the same methods she uses throughout to construct her other arguments: here is topical invention, amplification and proverbial authority. She follows this with a *narratione* involving draft horses (773-82), who despite their strength are captive to the will of men, even of little children, because of their lack of wits; she says that mankind's *crafte* overcomes all other earthly creatures (783-92); she asks the Owl a rhetorical question (793-94); and then she goes on for forty more lines of *narratio* involving wrestlers, foxes and hounds, cats, (795-836) all brimming with vivid detail to illustrate how this one skill, cunning intelligence, trumps all others.

But this is the Nightingale's point of view, after all, and we shouldn't be surprised at all at her self-aggrandizement on the subject of her own cunning intelligence. What is surprising is the extent to which her position on the value of ingenuity merely echoes that of the narrator. We have already seen one instance in which the Nightingale has been caught in a bind with regard to her options for responding. Let us examine another instance, and keep an eye on what the narrator has to say about her situation. After the Owl has given a speech of one hundred lines in which she makes several claims against the Nightingale, and hands

out a few choice insults, she winds down her speech by calling the Nightingale a "chatterer," and then says this: "Nere þu neuer ibunde uastre. / Hereto ne uindestu neuer andsware. / Hong up þin ax! Nu þu migt fare!" (656 – 58; Never have you been bound faster. To all this you'll never find an answer. Hang up your axe! You might as well give up!). At this point, the narrator intervenes to appraise the situation:

> Þe niȝtingale at þisse worde
> Was wel neȝ ut of rede iworþe;
> An þoȝte ȝorne on hire mode
> ȜIf ho oȝt elles understode,
> ȜIf ho kuþe oȝt bute singe,
> Þat miȝte helpe to oþer þinge.
> Herto ho moste andswere uinde,
> Oþer mid alle bon bihinde;
> (659 – 66; At these words, the Nightingale was almost at a loss for a strategy, and she thought eagerly in her mind if she knew anything else, if she could do anything but sing, that might be helpful to other creatures. To this she had to find an answer or she would be at a disadvantage in everything.

At this point, rather than return us to the action immediately, the narrator here takes us on a detour through his own thoughts on the subject of ingenuity:

> An hit is suþe strong to fiȝte
> Aȝen soþ & aȝen riȝte.
> He mot gon to al mid ginne,
> Wan þe horte boþ on winne:
> An þe man mot on oþer segge,
> He mot bihemmen & bilegge,
> ȜIf muþ wiþute mai biwro,
> Þat me þe horte noȝt niso:
> An sone mai a word misreke,
> Þar muþ shal aȝen horte speke;
> (667 – 76; And it is quite hard to fight against truth and against right. He must go to it with all ingenuity when his heart is flagging: a person must say something more, he must hem and gloss over, if speaking out can cover up, so that true feelings can not be seen. And quickly a word may go off track when the mouth speaks against the heart.)

The narrator continues on to say that there is, nevertheless, always a stratagem available to one who can think it up (679 – 80); he offers a pair of aphoristic couplets to the effect that the

wit is never so keen as when the strategy is in doubt (681 – 82); he adduces another saying from King Alfred, "Wone þe bale is alre hecst, / þonne is þe bote alre necst" (687 – 88; When disaster looms the largest, that is when the remedy is nearest.) All of this is to say that the narrator himself believes that ingenuity arises out of crisis and strong need, and will not fail those who act bravely to keep it up, and he goes on to tell us this for many more lines before leaving us back at with the Nightingale's response to the Owl:

> Þe niȝtingale al hire hoȝe
> Mid rede hadde wel bitoȝe.
> Among þe harde, among þe toȝte,
> Ful wel mid rede hire biþoȝte;
> An hadde andsuere gode ifunde 705
> Among al hire harde stunde.
> (701 – 706; The Nightingale covered all her anxiety with strategy; among the difficulties, among the narrow straits, she considered her strategy thoroughly, and had found a good answer among all her hard circumstances.)

The Nightingale's "good answer" is, of course, that she has cunning, and that her one ability is better than anything the Owl can muster.

Pleader's Tricks

There is more to say about Quintilian's further advice to those engaging in *altercatio*, that it most requires cunning and a quick mind, and the way this sentiment is reflected throughout the poem. Again in keeping with their interest in the methods of advantage-seeking and affective motivation, both birds engage in clever manipulation of their material—the *plaites wrenche* or "pleader's tricks" (472) they both claim to be so canny about—in order to present their cases in a light most advantageous and most likely to move the opinions of their audience. Close examination of their clever manipulations reveals their reliance on several methods for augmenting and diminishing the force of arguments. Among the tactics for

augmenting force are: drawing conclusions without adherence to premises, which can happen in several ways; deliberate overestimation of argumentative effect, a dissociation which requires an advocate to speak and act as if her conclusions are stronger than she believes them to be; and, in rare cases, even excessive moderation, or reticence, which invites audiences to draw conclusions for themselves (especially where such conclusions have been tacitly prepared). Tactics for diminishing the force of opposing arguments also include other methods of creating dissociations, such as emphasizing the qualities of the speaker over the material of the argument, as well as creating dissociations between the effectiveness and validity of arguments. In addition to their cunning use of invention, the birds' cleverness is also manifest in their stylistic manipulations, often embedded within their inventions. Again and again, the poem's stylistic flourishes turn out to be oblique or covert attempts on the part of both birds to strengthen or diminish the force of arguments, to realize value propositions and employ the affective power of poetry to supplement their positions.

As we should expect, both birds draw conclusions without adherence to premises throughout the poem. In light of the nature of the poem as a rhetorical display, and the fact that the conflict unfolds without resolution or any commentary on specific arguments—since the narrator never tells us explicitly whose premises should be considered established—it might be said that this strategy of drawing particular conclusions from disputable premises is in fact the operating mode of both avian participants in the contest. Anywhere where aspects of the birds' conflict focus more attention on the arguing itself, and on the person of the arguer, than on the material of the arguments can be said to show evidence of an attempt to augment the force of arguments. According to Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, "this occurs particularly in quasi-logical argumentation that purports to be demonstrative, when in reality

it is only such by virtue of premises that can be disputed."[129] Though this is sometimes denounced as trickery, *The New Rhetoric* considers it "nothing but a crude form of an unavoidable process."[130] Without any doubt, both birds endeavor throughout to push their conclusions farther than a strict assessment of the argumentative material would allow, and both birds clearly operate as if their interlocutor's specific adherence is either given or not required. There are so many examples that any reader familiar enough with the poem should be able to recall at least a few instances without terrific effort. But there are, in fact, different ways that drawing conclusions without adherence to premises operates in specific cases. Throughout the poem, the Nightingale overvalues the strength of her arguments by trying to "extend specific agreements reached in the course of discussion without the interlocutor's having given specific adherence."[131] This happens every time the Nightingale returns to the subject of the Owl's "unnaturalness." Even though the Owl makes a forceful effort to refute these arguments every time the matter comes up—and plenty of readers might feel she's been quite successful at fending the accusations off—the Nightingale continues to attack the issue, acting each time as if she's merely adding to the arguments she's already made… as if her previous arguments continued to stand up, as if everyone has already agreed to her conclusions. In one instance, she even tries to extend specific agreements in order to draw a second conclusion from her premises without additional argumentative support. From lines 215 to 232, the Nightingale attempts to gain adherence to two premises. The first, that the Owl is a nocturnal creature, is a fact. Even though we may consider it a fact without any necessary value, it is something we can be expected to agree within the course of the

[129] Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, *The New Rhetoric*, 466.

[130] *Ibid.*

[131] *Ibid*.

discussion. The second premise, that a preference for darkness is the sign of an evil nature (231-32), is a value proposition rather than a fact, but it is still present enough in common belief to assume it is somewhat easily adhered to. Thus, we may treat these two premises as having gained at least tacit agreement in the course of discussion. At this point, the argument that the Owl is an evil creature because of her preference for darkness is as close to a "valid" argument as any we might come across in the poem. But the Nightingale is not satisfied, and seeks to extend this agreement to a second, further conclusion. Adducing "a wise saying" (233), supposedly from the writings of King Alfred himself (under the topic of authority) to the effect that "he hides away who knows that he is foul." (236) "Ich wene þat þu dost also," the Nightingale says, "Vor þu fligst nigtes euer mo." (237 – 38; I think you do also, because you are always flying by night.) Now the Nightingale is claiming not only that the Owl is an evil creature because she is nocturnal, but also that the Owl's nocturnal behavior is a kind of hiding, which makes the Owl fully aware of her own "foulness," a conclusion entirely unsupported by even by premises she can probably claim to have agreement on.

In addition, techniques of augmenting the force of arguments often involve considering as debatable any conclusion that has already been established, and it is related to drawing conclusions without adherence to premises in the sense that it involves a willful decision to keep the argument going despite the imposition of reasonable premises and valid (or at least seemingly valid) conclusions. As we'd expect, both birds resist conclusions throughout the poem as a way to keep the argument going, but some instances are striking for the way they overtly thumb their noses at solid argumentative technique. As an example, witness the Owl's response to the turn of argument we've just looked at, in which the Nightingale concludes the Owl is a twice-wicked creature: first Owl launches the

onomatopoetic "galegale" attack (which we've already examined), lambasting the Nightingale for her shallowness, then she follows up with a tirade concerning the Nightingale's conclusion:

> Lat þine tunge habbe spale!
> Þu wenest þat þes dai bo þin oȝe:
> Lat me nu habbe mine þroȝe! 260
> Bo nu stille & lat me speke!
> Ich wille bon of þe awreke;
> & lust hu ich con me bitelle,
> Mid riȝte soþe, witute spelle.
> (258 – 64; Let your tongue have a rest! You think you've won the day: let me have my turn. Be now still and let me speak, I will be avenged of you. And listen how I can defend myself with straight truth and without blather.)

This is almost taunting, since the message the Owl sends is here is that she recognizes the Nightingale's acting as if she'd scored against her, but she seems to insist that this is all really just a matter of taking turns. What the Owl's *prolepsis* (anticipation) appears to promise is a refutation, a stark refutation without verbal trickery, but that is not what she ends up providing, for simply continuing to debate an established point is an easier task to carry out than providing a cogent refutation. The next thing the Owl does is to compare herself to a hawk (again, in a passage we've already examined). This turn of argument, as we have seen, doesn't actually refute anything, but rather tends to disguise the fact that the Owl is simply shifting away from the issue at hand rather than answering a charge. The Owl does appear to offer a refutation to the Nightingale's charge that she hides away by speaking for many lines about how she is hated by all the small birds who constantly harass her. By hiding away, she claims, she finds the peace that she so earnestly desires. This isn't an entirely ridiculous refutation, and she has a point to make—even though refutation in this sense could be considered simply another way to treat established conclusions as debatable—but the refutation itself takes up only several lines of a speech that is over one-hundred lines. The

rest of the speech ranges over a series of topics that are barely related to this specific issue, but which touch upon several other issues that crop up repeatedly over the course of the whole debate. Rather than focus on a specific refutation, the Owl makes a heap of countercharges that touch upon much of what the Nightingale has said up to this point. Though the Owl is, in broad terms, the more focused and rigorous arguer of the two birds, her attempt to augment the force of her counterargument to the Nightingale about her furtive nocturnal habits are not focused, though they might claim to be rigorous. She simply buries the Nightingale's attack in a mountain of argumentative responses. Even the Owl is more interested in (and apparently adept at) drawing conclusions without adherence to premises and considering as debatable any conclusion that has been established.

One of the key methods of augmenting the force of arguments is even simpler, in theory, than the other methods we've just seen. Deliberate overestimation of the strength of arguments shows up in several forms throughout the poem and is often signaled, as are other stratagems, by the use of *prolepsis* (anticipation). Both birds do, from time to time, simply announce to the opponent that the next argument will demolish all opposition and settle the contest, as when the Owl says, regarding the Nightingale's charge that her singing in winter is the sign of an evil creature, "Ich habbe herto god ansuare, / Anon iredi & al gare" (487 – 88; For that I have a good answer, immediately ready and all prepared.) The most potent instruction in the value of this approach, however, comes from the mouth of the narrator himself. Immediately after the Owl's long and wide-ranging response to the Nightingale we've just looked at, he offers this:

> Þe niȝtingale in hire þoȝte
> Aþold al þis, & longe þoȝte
> Wat ho þarafter miȝte segge:
> Vor ho ne miȝte noȝt alegge

Þat þe hule hadde hire ised,
Vor he spac boþe riȝt an red.
An hire ofþuȝte þat ho hadde
Þe speche so for uorþ iladde;
An was oferd þat hire answare
Ne wurþe noȝt ariȝt ifare.
(391 – 400; The Nightingale in her mind considered all this and thought long about what she might say thereafter: for she could not refute what the Owl had said to her, for she had spoken both truth and sense. And she regretted that she had let the speech go on for so long, and was afraid that her answer would not work out properly.)

The narrator's interjection here paints a bleak picture for the Nightingale. She seems to have been bested by the Owl's counterattack, and she is unready of response. The narrator, however, has no advice for her now about what kind of argument she can make, but he clearly does not consider this situation to be an end to the debate. His only concern is how she might respond in such a situation. Since the Owl has apparently made an unanswerable charge, readers who are tuned in to the poem as an exaggerated spectacle of poor scholastic disputation will have trouble making sense of the narrator's continuation (especially since he is the narrator and not the Nightingale herself):

Ac noþeles he spac boldeliche,
Vor he is wis þat hardeliche
Wiþ is uo berþ grete ilete,
Þat he uor areȝþe hit ne forlete—
Vor suich worþ bold ȝif þu fliȝst,
Þat wule flo ȝif þu nisvicst.
Ȝif he isiþ þat þu nart areȝ,
He wile of bore wurchen bareȝ:
& forþi, þeȝ þe Niȝtingale
Were aferd, ho spac bolde tale.
(401 – 10; But nonetheless she spoke boldly, for he is wise who bravely puts up a good show against his foe, so that he does not give up out of cowardice: for he will become bold if you flee, who would flee himself if you don't give up; if he sees that you are not a coward, he will turn from boar into barrow-pig. And because of this, though the Nightingale was afraid, she made a bold speech.)

This is what deliberate overestimation of the strength of arguments requires, and when the Nightingale continues, after this pause, to harangue the Owl for her winter behavior, we see

that she is quite accomplished in this strategy. Any arguer who puts forward a conclusion as more certain than he or she believes it to be must engage her own person in the argument and use the prestige attached to it in order to persuade judge and jury to look past the argument on its own terms. For Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, this is especially effective if the prestige of a person is part of what is at issue in the controversy.[132]

When it comes to diminishing the force of opposing arguments, these birds are also not at a loss for technique. Perelman suggests that "either in advance, or after delivery, the effect of some arguments can be played down by attributing their effect to factors inherent in the person of the speaker, instead of to their own value."[133] This diminishment can take place at several levels. "At the level of opinion," Perelman continues, "the impact of a harsh appraisal may be lessened by pointing out the person making it is usually severe in his judgment. He will then cease to be regarded as an objective judge, but will be seen as one whose coefficient of severity should be discounted."[134] This strategy bubbles up from time to time in the poem, but is perhaps most easily seen in this short retort from the Owl: "An hit is for þine alde niþe / Þat þu me akursedest oðer siðe" (1183 – 84; And it is because of your inveterate malice that you curse me yet again.) While it may be clear by this point in the poem that Nightingale should not be considered an objective judge, by raising the opinion explicitly in the course of her response the Owl hopes to remind her audience that they can regard the Nightingale's charges not as the arguments of an adroit advocate, but as the product of a malicious temperament. It is a move intended to take the sting out of an accusation, and it often works. Of course, like so many, this strategy is a double-edged

[132] Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, *The New Rhetoric*, 467.

[133] *Ibid*.

[134] *Ibid*.

sword, as *The New Rhetoric* shows: "the same line of reasoning obviously entitles one to attribute more importance to the least sign of praise or approbation emanating from such a person."[135]

At the level of discourse, the strategy of diminishing the force of arguments by pointing to such qualities of the speaker as "his wit, humor, talent, prestige, and power of suggestion" creates a dissociation between "the real intrinsic force of the arguments and their apparent strengths, a compound of what properly belongs to them and other elements." In practical terms, advocates who use this strategy will routinely treat argumentation as if it were made up of more than just the intrinsic force of arguments.[136] Such treatment is as clear a sign as any in the poem that we are in the realm of rhetoric rather than the realm of logic. It requires little scrutiny to see the argumentation of the *O&N* as a veritable parade of such dissociations between intrinsic and extrinsic qualities. Rhetorical argumentation routinely presents us with a compound of qualities, some of which, such as logical validity, belong to the intrinsic force of arguments, while others, such as the quality of delivery and the character of the speaker may also affect the force of argumentation despite their often being extrinsic to the makeup of arguments themselves. This is where the *Owl and the Nightingale* shines, and this is one way in which rhetorical argument is seen as most distinct from the logical or quasi-logical argument of scholastic disputation and dialectic. Rhetoric is messy and complicated in ways that dialectic is not. On the level of discourse, there are other powerful dissociations that factor into the force of argumentation. There is, for instance, a dissociation between the universal audience of logical argumentation, which Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca suggest is "untouched by the prestige attaching to the speaker," and the

[135] *Ibid*.

[136] *Ibid*.

particular audiences of specific arguments who will in fact be swayed by qualities attaching to the character of the speaker. Since the notion of a "universal" audience is, in itself, an appeal to the primacy of reason over character and emotion, all rhetorical argumentation depends on this dissociation to effect appeals to *ethos* and *pathos*. Take, for example, the audience of small birds referred to in the poem. It is easy to see that their appraisal of the Nightingale's arguments will be shaped by those qualities of the Nightingale that they share as a group. The Nightingale's argument that her ingenuity is an effective counter to the Owl's physical power will likely be regarded as more forceful by the wren and the titmouse than by the hawks and falcons, who do not share that physical vulnerability. To treat audiences as particular rather than universal, as the locus of values and perspectives that are not shared by all is to open up those audiences to the forces of argumentation that are not directly derived from the intrinsic qualities of particular arguments. Except for the explicit demonstrations of logical argumentation, this applies to all arguments. And this means that unless there is something distinctly wrong with any argument whose force is derived from a compound of qualities, there is nothing distinctly wrong about a discourse made up of such argumentation. To be sure, the poem is quite messy and complicated, but this does not make it a case of poor argumentation. Quite the same can be said about the common dissociation between the effectiveness and the validity of arguments. And to say little here is to say enough: unless one has never been in an argument, it is impossible to believe that all arguments must be logically valid in order to be effective.

The Perspective of the Narrator

If we have shown by this point in our analysis that the most common negative appraisal of *The Owl and the Nightingale* in contemporary criticism—that the poem is a pageant of poor argumentation—is unwarranted and likely abetted by lack of familiarity with the rhetorical tradition in which both avian adversaries and the narrator are immersed, then it is possible at this point to engage in our own *prolepsis* and say that the next set of points, about the narrator's perspective on the conflict, will almost certainly put a cap on the last argument that could possibly defend the "burlesque satire" reading. For unless the narrator is wholly neutral in the contest—and we have seen clearly that he isn't—or the narrator is wholly partisan—which is also clearly not true—then we cannot discount his perspective and must take his thoughts seriously.[137] And in any reading of the poem the narrator has only two main concerns. He believes that the emotions are fundamental to argumentation, and he believes that good argumentation shows evidence of boldness and ingenuity. It would only be possible to read his concerns as ironic if they were the exact opposite of the argumentation we come to find in the poem, but in fact both birds do indeed argue in the fashion of the narrator's recommendations and we cannot lump him in with them as unreliable agents. He has given us nothing to doubt his sincerity throughout.

Over the course of the poem, the eavesdropping narrator has nothing to say about the matters over which the birds are fighting. Throughout, when he does comment on the ongoing action, he is focused primarily on two things: he directs our attention to the emotional states of the two disputants (especially as they arise out of the conditions of argumentation), and he comments on the quality of their respective argumentative and rhetorical strategies. He appears to have no interest in judging the logic or illogic of

[137] For a perspective on the narrator as an "unannounced *rhetor*," see Nancy M. Reale, "Rhetorical Strategies in *The Owl and the Nightingale*," *Philological Quarterly* 63 (1984): 417 – 29.

particular arguments, and he passes no judgment on either bird for the overall truth or falseness of their claims. Most of his indications of their emotions are brief and easy to spot, but the fact that they are so frequently bound up with his commentary on the form and manner in which the birds engage each other strongly suggests that his main interest is in the argumentation rather than the arguments. He examines how the antagonists perceive the conflict internally, how they engage the adversary emotionally, and how they elicit the kinds of responses they are after. The most important point to make here—a point on which there has been scant critical attention—is that we get nothing from the narrator to help us judge the dispute in terms of the validity of their claims and refutations, nor does he discuss at any point which bird has the better case to make. If the poem is, as many critics now tend to think, a mocking spoof of human contentiousness, the poem's narrator doesn't seem to be in on the joke. In fact, in a seeming contradiction to the conventional critical reading, the narrator twice directs our attention to a moment in which the Owl has spoken "truth" and might be seen to have clinched a victory, but in each situation he considers instead how the Nightingale can press forward despite the disadvantage. Twice the narrator commends the Nightingale for not giving up in the face of those challenges. As a result, although both birds act like self-righteous advocates—and many critics have pointed this out—we can only really conclude that, for the narrator at least, the question of which bird has the more correct or righteous position is simply not at issue.

In most cases, the narrator's commentary on the birds' emotional states takes the form of simple, direct observation, but there are a few occasions where he is indirect, attesting to a mood by signifying its effect. For example, when the Nightingale first catches sight of the Owl sitting nearby on her ivy-colored tree stump, "hi behold & overseg" (30; she looked at

her and sneered). In another example, after the Nightingale's opening, a brief barrage of disparagement and personal insult, the narrator tells us: "Þos Hule abod fort hit was eve: / Ho ne migte no leng bileve, / Vor hir horte was so gret / Þat wel-nig hire fnast atschet" (41 – 44; The Owl waited until it was nearly evening: she could no longer endure it, for her heart was so swollen that it nearly burst from her chest). In another instance, "Þe Hule ne abot nogt swiþ longe / Ah gef ondsware starke & stronge" (1175 - 76; The Owl did not wait for very long, but gave an answer sharp and strong). Here the narrator shows us the Owl's emotional agitation by registering her impatience. The figure here is probably *litotes* (understatement), which intensifies the sentiment by understating its effect. The words he uses to describe her response, "starke & stronge," take us back to the very beginning of the poem, where he had characterized the overall "pleading" of both birds.

There are also many examples of the narrator commenting directly on the birds' emotional states. Right after telling us at the beginning that he'd overheard their "grete tale," he notices their demeanor: "An aiþer agen oþer sval, / & let þat uole mod ut al" (7 – 8; Each swelled up against the other, and let out her foul mood.) In their excited states, he tells us, each bird said the worst she could about the others character (*custe*) and in particular about the other's song (9 – 11). The narrator then connects their mood directly to the quality of their dispute: "Hi holde plaiding suþe strong" (12; they held a very strong pleading). This does not sound like someone who looks down at emotionalism in argumentation; it sounds like someone who recognizes how integral emotion is to an argumentative performance. Near the beginning of the poem, before the Nightingale even starts speaking, he gives several lines of careful description of her physical environment: in the corner of a field, upon a fair bough surrounded by blossoms and a thick hedge mingled with reeds and green sedge (13 – 24). He

then announces how she felt: “Ho was þe gladur uor þe rise / & song a vele cunne wise” (19 – 20; She was happier for [the safety of] the branches and sang in many different modes). This couplet is the first to closely connect the Nightingale’s emotional state to the quality of her speech, a close connection that is maintained throughout the poem. Following this, the narrator says the sound she made seemed like music: more like the sound of harps and pipes than something produced by a throat (21 – 24). This touches on the grounding *metalepsis* of the poem that we’ve already examined, the metaphorical linking of singing with speaking, and it introduces the quality of emotions into that formula. As we have seen, the *metalepsis* clues us in to the very important connection between the quality of singing and the quality of argumentation in the poem, but here it also shows us crucially how the emotional states these birds experience affect their ability to argue. We should expect in this poem to see the mutual interdependence of emotion, which gives us affective argumentation, and the quality of singing, which gives us effective argumentation. The most salient qualities, for the narrator, of each bird’s verbal activity becomes apparent: it is the aesthetic and emotional quality of their “songs” and the effect their performances have on listeners that the poet wishes to call our attention to.

A bit further on, while giving answer to a threat of physical violence from the Owl, the Nightingale follows up with the amplification of nearly eighty lines of speech in which she runs through a gamut of inventional topics of the sort designated by the rhetoricians as suitable for degrading, insulting and reproaching on opponent (55 – 138). Her speech seems distinctly designed to enrage the Owl, and when she finishes, the narrator rewards her with praise: “He song so lude & scharpe, / Rigte so me grulde schille harpe” (141 – 42; She sang so loud and so sharp, just as if someone were strumming ringing harps). This is high praise

for an argument that engages in no deductive reasoning or logical demonstration. In response, the Owl turned her eyes downward "& sat tosvolk & ibolwe / Also ho hadde one frogge isvolge" (145 – 46; and sat swollen with rage, as if she had swallowed a frog). The narrator adds, "For ho wel wiste & was iwar / Þat ho song hire a bisemar" (147 – 48; for well she knew and was aware that she had sung to her an insult).

There are other instances of the narrator's simple and direct commentary on the birds' emotional states. For example, "Þos Hule luste suþe longe / & was oftoned suþe stronge" (253 – 54; the Owl listened for a long time and was strongly annoyed); and also this: "Þe Hule was wroþ, to cheste rad. / Mid þisse worde hire eyen abrad" (1043 – 44; the Owl was angry, eager to quarrel. With these words, her eyes widened); as well as this:

> Þe Hule was glad of swuche tale
> Heo þoȝte þatte Nihtegale,
> Þah heo wel speke ate frume,
> Hadde at þen ende misnume;
> (1511 – 14; The Owl was glad for such a speech. She thought the Nightingale, though she had spoken well at the beginning, had gone amiss at the end.)

As a final example, the narrator once gives both a direct indication of emotion and provides an indirect index of it, and he again connects the quality of argumentation directly to the resulting emotion:

> Þe Niȝtingale sat & siȝte
> & hohful was—& ful wel miȝte,
> For þe Hule swo ispeke hadde
> An hire speche swo iladde,
> Heo was hoþful & erede, 1295
> Hwat heo þarafter hire sede.
> (1291 – 96; the Nightingale sat and sighed and was concerned—as she should have been, for the Owl had spoken in such a way and her speech had come to such a point, that she was anxious and uncertain about what she could say after that.)

This is the second time we see the Nightingale contemplating the possibility of defeat, and yet again we see her refuse to relent, despite the fact that she is quite unsettled inwardly. As

we have learned by this point in the poem, the Nightingale is not one to be utterly confounded, but the narrator seems to find this neither lamentable nor off-putting. He simply tells us: "Ah neoþeles heo hire understod" (1297; but nonetheless she formed a plan). Interestingly, the Nightingale speaks for so long after this—over two hundred lines—that we never learn if the Owl was able to discern her consternation from the only outward sign she has given of it: a sigh.

One of the chief reasons why the narrator wants us to have an insight into the birds' specific emotional states is given to us by the narrator himself. After noting the Nightingale's embarrassment at the Owl's attack on her personal hygiene—"the Owl had twitted her for the places where she perched and sang… behind the house, among the weeds, where people go to do their business" (933 – 38)[138]—he then says,

> An sat sumdel & heo biþohte,
> An wiste wel on hire þohte
> Þe wraþþe binemeþ monnes red.
> For hit seide þe King Alfred:
> 'Selde erendeð wel þe loþe
> An selde plaideð wel þe wroþe.'
> (939 – 44; And she sat for a while and she thought, and she knew well in her mind that wrath takes away a person's reason. As King Alfred said: 'he seldom intercedes who hates you, and he seldom pleads well who is angry').

Though it is not the only reason we should be tuned into the emotional states that arguers experience, the effects of anger on argumentative performance are not negligible either in theory (or proverb) or in actual practice. Not only will anger and hatred prevent one from "pleading well," but it will also prevent judges from interceding on behalf of those against whom hatred and anger have been inspired. The narrator tells us why:

> For wraþþe meinþ þe horte blod
> Þat hit floweþ so wilde flod,
> An al þe heorte ouergeþ,

[138] This is Cartlidge's translation of lines 933 – 38.

> Þat heo naueþ no þing bute breþ,
> An so forleost al hire liht,
> Þat heo ni siþ soþ ne riht.
> Þe Niȝtingale hi understod
> An ouergan lette hire mod.
> He mihte bet speken a sele
> Þan mid wraþþe wordes deale.
> (945 – 54; For wrath stirs up the heart's blood so that it flows like a wild flood, and overwhelms the heart so that it holds nothing but vapor; and is so deprived of all its light that it sees neither truth nor right. The Nightingale thought about this and let her mood dissipate. She could speak better in a happy mood than trade in angry words.)

Although the narrator does comment from time to time on the particular substance of the birds' wrangling without always focusing specifically on an emotional response, a careful reading shows that he has only paused to note when one of the birds has presented a particularly challenging argumentative maneuver. In other words, the poem's narrator is highly interested in the birds' argumentative strategy, and the ingenuity required, rather than the specific matters under dispute. In these instances, his comments refrain from judgments of logical validity or pronouncements about a prevailing truth, though as we have seen, he does not shy away from telling us how the combatants feel. In lines 391 – 410, for example, he gives us an extended comment on the Nightingale's performance. She is in a bind, he informs us, because she does not know how to promptly refute (*alegge*) what the Owl has just said, "Vor he spac boþe rigt and red" (396; for she spoke both right and reasonably). It is not immediately clear whether the narrator means to indicate that what the Owl has said is "correct" and "true"—Cartlidge translates this line "she had spoken both truth and sense"—or if he is merely describing the quality of her performance, as he has done with the Nightingale. If the word *rigt* in this line is an adverb rather than a noun, he might simply be saying that the Owl spoke "well and with good sense." It is not enough to infer that the Owl has offered an unassailable argument. But, as the narrator is pointing out, the Owl has indeed

presented the Nightingale with a tremendous obstacle if she wishes to fight on. He describes her mental state this way: "An hire ofþuȝte þat ho hadde / Þe speche so for vorþ iladde; / An was oferd þat hire answare / Ne wurþe nogt arigt ifare" (397 – 400; She regretted that she had allowed the speech to go so far; and she was afraid that her response might not work properly). Again, the narrator is pointing to the Nightingale's performance rather than the content of her argument. The object of her fear, he tells us, is not what the Owl has just said, but her own ability to elicit the desired effect in her response. The sense here is that at this crucial moment the Owl has the upper hand, not because her argument cannot be refuted, but because she has put up a solid defense and by doing so has shaken the Nightingale's confidence and caused her to doubt her own skill. What concerns the narrator at this moment is not the fact that the Owl has spoken correctly, but that the Owl seems to be winning. The narrator follows up quickly, telling us that despite her fear the Nightingale "spac boldeliche" (401; spoke boldly). As we have seen, he adduces some support for her manner of pressing on by formulating a generalized aphorism: "Vor he is wis þat hardeliche / Wiþ is uor berþ grete ilete, / Þat he uor aregþe hit ne forlete" (402 – 04; For he is wise who against his foe assertively bears a brave demeanor, that he not give up out of cowardice). Clearly this is strategic advice, not about what to argue, but about how to argue, and it hinges on the expression of emotion: acting bravely when one is inwardly afraid. The narrator signals his approval of the tactical approach by amplifying the sense in the next few lines, (405 – 10, previously quoted) lines that finish with the precious image of a hog castrated by an adversary's truculence.

In a complementary instance that occurs not long after this, the narrator characterizes the Owl's approach, which appears calm and calculating in contrast to the Nightingale's. The

Nightingale has told us already that she is wary of stratagems and knows well how to dodge them, and the narrator seems to have confirmed it; she has told us also that her quick wit is her chief asset and that her cunning is more than a match for the Owl's physical strength. The Owl's rhetorical approach is not quick or cunning but disciplined and methodical:

> Þos Hule luste & leide an hord
> Al þis mot, word after word;
> An after þogte hu he migte
> Ansuere uinde best mid rigte, 470
> (467 – 70; The Owl listened and laid a horde [store] of all these arguments, word after word; and after she thought of how she might find the best and most appropriate response.)

It may appear, at first, that unlike the Nightingale, the Owl's performance is neither motivated by nor directed toward an emotional response, but as he had previously for the Nightingale, the narrator adduces further support for the Owl's approach by appealing to a generalized aphorism that highlights the power of emotion: "Vor he mot hine ful wel biþenche / þat is aferd of plaites wrenche" (471 – 72; for he must consider very carefully, whoever is afraid of argumentative stratagems). Since the Nightingale's approach to argumentation is plainly built upon *plaites wrenche*, we may also see in these lines the narrator's indication of the Owl's emotional state: the presence of a fear similar to that of the Nightingale's in the face of a tough opponent.

A Critical Reevaluation

If we have accumulated enough evidence so far to persuade an informed audience that the makeup of the poem is thoroughly indebted to the traditions of rhetoric, that the deployment of rhetoric in the poem is self-conscious and meant as a display, and that the poet was possessed of an unusual amount of skill and grace in his approach to this rhetorical display—

even to the point of exposing an enthusiasm for the work of the rhetorician—then what remains is to point out how all of this should overturn the general consensus on the overall interpretation of the poem. In other words, it should show that the *Owl and the Nightingale* is not necessarily a "burlesque satire" aimed at mocking the idiocy of human quarrelsomeness. But first, let us confront head-on the common critical notion that rhetoric has no major role to play in the poem.

While the poem's latest editor, Neil Cartlidge, speaks of the difficulty twentieth-century scholars have in "trying to define its meaning in terms of a referential pattern which the poem itself never makes explicit," the poet does appear to make the proper referential frame quite explicit—obvious even, calling it an *altercatio* right at the outset.[139] The lion's share of the poem's general interpretive problems may lie in a simple lack of critical awareness of the scope and nature of rhetoric. Even Cartlidge closes in on an acknowledgment of the predominant role of rhetoric in the poem without recognizing how nearly he's missed it. Weighing in against even vaguely allegorical readings he says, "The birds' insistence that they are representative of particular values should be seen primarily as a rhetorical strategy within the debate," but then he veers away, without a clear reason, from the unmistakable conclusion by suggesting that the birds' self-definition as rhetorical strategists is a "role not authorized by the poem itself."[140] This is wholly inaccurate. There is no explanation given as to why this must be so, and there is plenty of evidence to indicate the reverse: that this role is precisely what the poem authorizes. Even as he resists the critical tendency of the allegorizers to see the birds' relationship as a static tableau, Cartlidge notices that the "principles on which they disagree are not clearly fixed," and then adds, "Indeed,

[139] Cartlidge, *The Owl and the Nightingale*, xvi.

[140] *Ibid.*, xviii.

many of the arguments that they deploy against each other seem unplanned, opportunistic and governed more by rhetorical effect than by inductive rigour."[141] This is precisely correct: the contest is intended to demonstrate mastery of rhetorical invention and skilled dexterity in argumentation rather than rigorous logic and incontrovertible truth. But Cartlidge blithely offers this observation as evidence that the birds' dispute is ill disciplined, not that it is governed by a different discipline than the one critics have preferred to see at work. This preference seems to be motivated by a very common, very modern, but unreflective assumption that disagreement is always and only a sign of error. The need to see logic as the only remedy for disagreement lies in the presumption that, in the words of Perelman and Olbrecths-Tyteca,

> A rational science cannot indeed be content with more or less probable opinions; it must elaborate a system of necessary propositions which will impose itself on every rational being, concerning which agreement is inevitable.[142]

The notion, however, that all problems of disagreement are only open to resolution by the application of pure logic is a fallacy of post-Cartesian rationalism, and can hardly be properly applied to the author of a medieval poem or to his intended readers. Moreover, the very existence of rhetoric testifies to the possibility of a rational science that deals with probable opinions. Perhaps many of the poem's critics simply don't realize this. Summarizing the prevailing view of literary critics on the subject of medieval debate, Fletcher writes:

> The debate normally aims to get somewhere, to resolve issues and close upon a truth. As such, it was a valuable heuristic tool in the late-medieval period. Yet our poem, supremely aware of the constructed nature of the debate medium in which truth was traditionally thought to be accessible, comes close to presenting truth equally as a

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[141] *Ibid.*

[142] Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, *The New Rhetoric*, 2.

> construct rather than an absolute. Further, it seems to ask, 'Who's worried about getting at the truth when there's rhetoric?'[143]

Why does he say the poem "comes close," to presenting truth as a construct? And whence the authority to declare the truth of logic to be preeminent and ubiquitous in the Middle Ages? Why does it always have to be a choice between truth and rhetoric? As we have seen, sometimes, and on some issues, the only real choice is between rhetoric and nothing. This exposes the weakness of Fletcher's conclusion that a choice to pursue rhetoric was always somehow subversive, a "carnivalesque" dethroning of a "key cultural practice." Rhetoric itself was a key cultural practice of medieval Europe, and outside of the rarified circles of the universities it was likely to be much easier to find than logic. Since when, after all, has the work of the everyday world been organized around the pursuit of absolutes?

But this fixation on logic over rhetoric in the criticism of the poem may also be made more obtuse by a serious lack of appreciation for rhetorical artistry. Again Cartlidge:

> It is not implausible that the poet had a thorough grounding in rhetoric, but if so his use of its techniques is never so incongruous or so demonstrative as to suggest that the poem was designed to function as an exercise in rhetorical display. After all, rhetoric was essentially a descriptive science, rather than a prescriptive one.[144]

It is quite insensitive to suggest that the high quality of the poem's composition is sufficient to rule out a self-consciously rhetorical motive. Only a deep misunderstanding can lead to the argument that a rhetorical display must be awful or off-putting in order to be intended as a rhetorical display. This attitude might be summed up by saying, "if it is beautiful, it is poetry; if it is intrusive, it is rhetoric." That is an uncritical position. Cartlidge's lack of critical judgment here, however, is even more acute than it may at first appear, since only those entirely unfamiliar with Cicero and Quintilian could claim that rhetoric was purely

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[143] Alan J. Fletcher, "Middle English Debate Literature," in *Readings in Medieval Texts: Interpreting Old and Middle English Literature*, ed. David Johnson and Elain Treharne (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2005), 242.
[144] Cartlidge, *The Owl and the Nightingale*, xx.

descriptive and not prescriptive. Beyond that there is another question: how could anyone, after reading this poem, declare its rhetoric was not demonstrative? For many readers, the poem's rhetoric is incongruous, to be sure, but it seems most of the critics who argue this way take it as a given that rhetoric is not the point of the poem. This amounts to a circular argument. Before we assign the fault to Cartlidge alone, let us consider that at one time it was quite common in the criticism of medieval literature to regard the overt presence of rhetoric in a text as a tedious annoyance, a leftover from the days when poets were the slavish servants of ossified doctrine. For this attitude we have only to recall the influence of romanticism on earlier medieval philologists. Romanticism's distaste for rhetoric needs no long explication here.

Then there is Cartlidge's further objection—almost the opposite of the first—that the poem is not orderly enough to be read as rhetoric. The orderliness that he refers to is the pattern of set speeches common to traditional oratory. It is true that many writers in the Middle Ages took the prescriptions the ancients had given on the arrangement of the judicial set-speech and applied them to many other kinds of written products, but Cartlidge seems to be arguing that the poet shows no evidence that he has followed some requirement by rhetoric that all rhetorical compositions be structured according to a single, certain prescribed order. Of course, this is another common misunderstanding, as the rhetorical patterns so widely observed by critics in medieval texts are normative rather than dogmatic, and the traditional instructions that inform them are generally flexible in their demands. The prescriptions of rhetoric always presume a set of choices to be made for reasons that are understandable to anyone trying to compose a text—which is to say that the rhetoricians, whether they are discussing arrangement, disposition or some other canon of rhetoric, never

claim their advice about organization should be followed without reason or purpose. The choice of what advice to follow, and how to follow it, is always, always guided by the specific purpose of the work at hand. This is why rhetoric is an art that requires training and experience to master, and is not simply a blueprint to be followed. To Cartlidge's claim that there is a real difference between a text like the *O&N* and other texts "which medieval rhetoric directly stamped with certain patterns and movements of thought,"[145] there is Quintilian's initial observation of *altercatio*, that it is essentially a matter of invention, having no occasion for formal arrangement. The formal patterns and movements of thought behind a judicial set speech—its *exordium*, *narratio*, *partitio*, *confirmatio* and peroration, for example—would be easy to spot by readers familiar with rhetorical tradition, but because the very format of *altercatio* requires spontaneity and opportunism, the orderly arrangement observed so plainly in other medieval texts heavily indebted to formal rhetoric is more disguised here (though not absent), and its formal patterns and movements of thought are determined here by at least two different orators with opposing agendas and very different worldviews. That is not what make rhetoric absent in the poem, but what makes it so recognizably present. In other words, we can refute Cartlidge's second objection simply on the grounds that not all self-consciously rhetorical products exhibit the same patterns and movements of thought. It is also possible to interject here that the lack of superficial orderliness may indicate a poet even more skilled than the average medieval writer, and even more indebted to the tradition of rhetoric, simply because in the Ciceronian view part of the "art" of rhetoric consists of disguising its artfulness.

If that is not enough to refute his objections, there is also enough clear evidence in Carson's explication of the *O&N* to demonstrate that Cartlidge is entirely mistaken about the

[145] *Ibid.*, xxi.

lack of rhetorical structure in the poem.[146] Carson's study shows that while the dramatic altercation of the poem may appear disorganized, the poem as a whole exhibits a careful and orderly arrangement that is quite clearly guided by a thorough knowledge of the prescriptive advice offered by the Roman rhetorical manuals. Despite the clear case she makes that the poem is heavily indebted to works such as the *De inventione*, the *Rhetoric ad Herennium*, Quintilian's *Institutes* and the works of the mature Cicero, Cartlidge does not appear to be alone in having passed over her findings.

Carson's initial claim is that the general tendency to focus on the content of the debate has obscured the fact that the mutually exclusive worldviews taken by the poem's adversaries do "coalesce into a closely-worked argument in favor of" the poem's purported author, one Nicholas of Guilford, who is named in the poem.[147] Given how noticeable it is that the two birds disagree vehemently on every single issue except the worth of Nicholas, Carson's effort to locate some aspect of the poet's rhetorical intention in the fact of that agreement is curiously rare in the large body of criticism surrounding the work. Most critics who have ventured into the question of general intent have sought to locate it in the bare fact of Nicholas' name being mentioned. Carson's conclusion is that the poet's use of rhetoric reveals his knowledge about "English legal procedure and contemporary issues," and combines it with "a wealth of fable and maxim… in such a way that all elements converge to make the request on Nicholas' behalf both forceful in argument and attractive in

[146] M. Angela Carson, "Rhetorical Structure in *The Owl and the Nightingale*," *Speculum* 42 (Jan. 1967): 92 – 103.

[147] Carson, "Rhetorical Structure," 93.

presentation."[148] This is easily consistent with the basic requirements of any rhetorical reading.

Considering the poem's overall framework to be "an example of oratorical rhetoric according to the three *genera* of argument: forensic, epideictic, and deliberative," Carson re-engages the critical question of the poem's larger rhetorical motive, reading it specifically, where many others have read it generally, as an effort to secure a preferment for Nicholas. Considering the poet's overarching aim as matter of moving "one or more persons to a decision," Carson suggests that "the general intention of the poem is that of deliberative oratory," which is then aided by certain limited uses of the forensic and epideictic genres for support.[149] Calling it a "flexible norm," Carson reviews the traditional structure of a speech offered by classical rhetoricians—*exordium*, *narration*, *partition*, *confirmation*, *refutation* and *peroration*—and compares the prescriptions behind them to the overall composition of the poem (rather than the composition of its constituent parts).[150] She notes that the exordium "is intended to make auditors attentive, receptive, and well disposed,"[151] and then shows how the initial framing and the introduction of fabular elements at the beginning of the poem set out to create that receptiveness according to the instructions of the *De inventione* and the *Rhetorica Ad Herennium*. She also points out that confirmation and refutation "do not concern themselves with scientifically demonstrated truths, about which there can be no

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[148] *Ibid*.

[149] *Ibid*.

[150] Cicero, *De inventione* 1.14.19; [Cicero], *Rhetorica Ad Herennium* 1.2.4.

[151] Carson, "Rhetorical Structure," 94, citing: Cicero, *De inventione* 1.15.20 and [Cicero] *Rhetorica Ad Herennium* 1.4.6, and Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria* 4.1.5.

debate, but with such contingent and approximate truths as lead to a difference of opinion."[152]

While Carson's observations on the mechanisms of deliberative rhetoric at work in the poem are both incisive and revealing, and deserving of a wider hearing than she seems to have had, her analysis of the role of epideictic and forensic rhetoric in the poem is weakened by a significant oversimplification of the nature of the rhetorical system and an underestimation of the scope of rhetoric in the poem. Carson's study does go quite far toward supporting the general thesis of this chapter: that the *O&N* is indeed a self-consciously rhetorical product, that is intended to be read as such, and that it is quite sincere in its attempt to be persuasive (even if it is not as "serious" in its handling of conventional fabular material). But there is a more acute oversight in Carson's reading of the poem that mars her conclusion and lessens the overall interpretive value of her analysis. That oversight is her decision to regard the argumentative, agonistic material of the poem as outside of the scope of its rhetoric. In other words, she still tends to agree with critics who believe that the elements of the poem constituting its "debate" have little relation to rhetoric, and she considers the skillful use and display of rhetoric to be limited to the overall framework and general intention of the poem. The idea that rhetoric has informed only the outer wrapping of the poem, and not touched its inner core, is a tremendous concession to the conventional readings of the poem for someone so well acquainted with the primary rhetorical source material. Any reading guided by a deeper knowledge of traditional rhetoric should be able to come away with at least two conclusions that Carson appears to have narrowly avoided. The first conclusion is that, contrary to the prevailing view, its core material, its argumentative

[152] Carson, "Rhetorical Structure," 94, quoting: Donald L. Clark, *Rhetoric in Greco-Roman Education* (New York, 1957), 117; see also, Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1.2.3.

content, is so thoroughly indebted to the rhetorical resources Carson names—especially in regard to its dependence on the forensic (judicial) and epideictic (demonstrative) genres—that it should be read as a manifest intention of the poet to openly display his rhetorical learning. The second conclusion follows from the first: that a display of his rhetorical mastery in all areas is part of his plea for preferment. The poet intends for his display of rhetorical skill to serve, at least in part, as grounds for his preferment. This includes his skill at composing arguments, and not just his skill at composing poems. If any part of that preferment involved the opportunity to engage in the occupations of law, the case is that much clearer. Who could ignore, after all, the qualifications of someone both so well trained and so naturally gifted in the skills so necessary to the practice of law? How would such a demonstration not benefit someone interested in putting those skills to work?

The current critical consensus on the overall interpretation follows what Kathryn Hume calls the "burlesque satire" theory. The theory has developed in stages, taking its initial impetus from John Gardner's 1966 essay, which calls the poem a *burlesque*. For Gardner, no adequate interpretation of the poem could proceed without reference to the poem's humor, but he continued to regard it as axiomatic that an analysis of positions, rather than an analysis of the poem's drama, held the key to understanding the poem's meaning. This led him to put forward the argument that "in form the poem burlesques the debate genre."[153] In this line of reasoning, the birds are meant to be seen as inept interlocutors in a philosophical debate, and poorer advocates than those seen in other poems presenting philosophical debates. This is as much as saying the contest between the two, their *altercatio*, is not the point of the poem at all, but merely a vehicle to make fun of the debate genre. The poem is, in this view, essentially a parody of debate. But this interpretation only works if our

[153] Gardner, "*The Owl and the Nightingale*," 4.

reading of the poem is governed by the expectations appropriate to the debate genre, as parody requires the sense of an inversion of the proper protocols for proceeding. But if the poem does not follow the contours of the debate genre—in its avoidance of allegory, for example, or lack of dialectical synthesis, for another—it cannot be a parody of them. How can the poem be about the debate genre itself, even an irreverent inversion of the concept of debate, if the positions of these two birds are in no way dependent upon the subjects they delve into? If this were a "proper" debate, aimed at the discovery of truth through the dialectic process, we should rightly expect that the introduction of new topics and new arguments into the debate would require an adjustment of positions on the part of the interlocutors. This never happens. If this were a parody of debate, the introduction of new questions and new arguments would still require a realignment of positions, only the interlocutors would seem to do it poorly, illogically and fallaciously. They don't do it at all. Every time one of their arguments reaches an impasse, these birds do nothing more than return to the warehouse of rhetorical invention to search for more ammunition. Their arguments never result in the modifications of positions or issues, but only modification of strategies and tactics. The subjects covered by their argument may vary constantly, but the basic questions at the center of the controversy never change. And we should remember that the basic questions of this controversy are not the kind of questions that produce necessary conclusions, regarding which agreement is inevitable. Leaving dialectic out of the picture is not the same as presenting dialectic as poorly managed. The latter may invite parodic reading, but the former simply invites a different paradigm for reading.

The upshot of the "burlesque satire" view is that beyond the notion that the poem mocks the conventions of debate poems—no one ever mentions why a poet would do this,

and the counterargument that the poet needs no motive is tendentious at best—Gardner is able to argue that the poem presents "a comic view of man, whose concern is too often—and all too understandably—not with truth but with winning.[154] Maybe this is true, but a concern for winning, especially within a prescribed set of rules, is not always lamentable. Someone, perhaps a lawyer, should have explained to Gardner that sometimes, especially in an adversarial system, winning is the best guarantee we have of the truth. Granted, it is an imperfect truth, contingent, time-bound, human and fallible, but it is quite often the only kind of truth we have access to. Frankly, it is naïve to call an acceptance of that reality foolish, for without it we could have no hope in the law. Any other view would have to regard as humorous any attempt to cope with reality that doesn't depend solely on dialectic. These are not solid grounds for imposing an interpretation on any poem that is as easy to misunderstand as this one.

Hume's further development of the "burlesque satire" theory takes its cue from Gardner, but leaves his central conclusion behind. According to Hume,

> The burlesque-satire reading first recommended itself to me when I was trying to understand to what extent the birds' arguments were meant to be taken seriously, and how the humour was supposed to affect audience response.[155]

But the comic handling of certain characteristics of the debate is not enough on its own to establish that the poem is meant as a satire. Indeed, if it were, we would have to conclude that all poems with comically handled elements are cases of satire. The presence of humour is not enough, by itself, to establish the motive of the poem. The poem is indeed full of humorous moments, and much of the humor involves exaggeration. Exaggerating for

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[154] *Ibid.*, 12.

[155] Kathryn Hume, *The Owl and the Nightingale: The Poem and its Critics* (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1975), 112.

humorous effect is certainly one of the hallmarks of satire, as it tends to invite us to look for irony, but the most we can say about the O&N because of this is that it seems to have a satirical bent, not that the poem itself is a work belonging to the genre of satire. Certainly the ability of the poem to produce a humorous response is meaningful, but humor is not the only emotional response the poem works to elicit. To call the work a satire is to suggest that the only meaningful response to the poem is to laugh. Readers of the poem do indeed laugh, but they laugh at the birds, not at the poem or the poet. We also become impatient with them, find ourselves angry with them, are cajoled into sympathy with them, etc. The emotional responses the poem invites from us are many and varied, and that puts us well beyond the (relatively) simple confines of satire. Calling the poem a satire because the birds are funny is as conjecturally flimsy as calling the poem a polemic because the birds are angry. When we add in the fact that for most critics in this camp the supposed illogic of the debate is the source of a majority of its humor, we can see that the temptation to read for satire is largely a product of the mistaken attempt to reconcile the concrete evidence of the poem with a set of readerly expectations that are not truly meant to be applied to it. The category mistake, reading the poem as an example of the debate genre, is largely responsible for the impulse to make sense out of the poem in any way that presents itself.

There is another, more cogent reason for rejecting Hume's particular version of the burlesque-satire theory, and that reason lies in the inherent weakness of its explanatory power. However much the burlesque-satire might seem to be the only one that can make sense out of the poem as a whole, the conclusion we are meant to draw from the theory does not in fact make much sense. Hume goes out of her way to disagree with Gardner—whom she credits, along with Hieatt, with the invention of the theory—by pointing out that while he

may have correctly identified the mode of the poem as satire, he has mistaken the object of its satire. For Gardner, the object of mockery is the debate genre, but Hume insists that the goal of the poem is not to mock the debate genre but rather to mock "human contentiousness" itself:

> Gardner reads the poem as a burlesque on the literary debate tradition rather than on the general sin of quarreling… However, he never shows how this comic humour surrounding the birds makes the *genre* the object of satire, rather than the birds themselves or the causes they espouse… He calls the poem a 'joke on the debate genre' because some characteristics of debate—conflict, types of subject, resolution—are handled comically. But comic handling of these elements as he describes it need only to make this an amusing debate, not one whose *form* is being made fun of."[156]

By this, she means to argue that the poet has produced a poem in which "human" arguers show how foolish and faulty human beings become when they engage in "quarrelsome" activity. It is not the form of the poem but its deliberate purpose Hume wants to expose to critical scrutiny. The goal of the poem, in this view, is to produce an aversion to argumentation through mockery. Of course, this would mean that we have a poet who likely spent his boyhood and probably most of his adult life in the study and pursuit of a discipline, rhetoric, that he finally wishes us to find repugnant. Why would he turn his back on all he had learned? And why would he do it this way? Can we really believe we have here a poet who poured himself fully into the task of unfolding a highly elaborate and finely detailed argument, full of life and feeling, only to persuade us to find it foolish and sinful to believe that engaging in argumentation has any probative or long-lasting value? How can we believe that a poet this gifted would use his gift to show us that the gift itself was worthless? If the poet was trained as a lawyer, or interested in the pursuit of a lawyerly occupation, the juxtaposition of skill and intent here would be even more obtuse, since we would essentially

[156] Hume, *The Owl and the Nightingale*, 113.

have a professional arguer making an argument that arguing should be avoided. And if this poet thought "quarreling" was so sinful, why the lighthearted touch? Couldn't the tone of the poem lead some readers astray, thinking that "human contentiousness" looks like a lot of fun? And if the poem is indeed a plea for preferment, how would offering up a mockery of sinful quarrelsomeness be likely to impress the poet's superiors, who were also perhaps engaged in lawyerly pursuits or at least likely to find them important? How would this be helpful to the poet's professional advancement? It doesn't seem like the right lever to pull. One of the touchstones of critical practice is the belief that better explanations reveal the weaknesses of previous theories, but we might conclude, at this point, that the weaknesses of Hume's satire-burlesque theory show themselves even without the light of another hypothesis shining on them.

One of the greatest difficulties of the conventional readings on the question of the poet's general intent lies in explaining how a particular interpretation supports a plea for preferment. The difficulty is most acute for the burlesque satire school, since it is indeed hard to say what the poet thought he would gain by offering such a work to his superiors. If the poet meant to offer mere mockery as a qualification for advancement, some commentators have noted, such an act may have seemed somewhat subversive. If that mockery was aimed at ridiculing and thereby minimizing the very practice of verbal contestation—an activity seldom unimportant to legal practitioners in any age—the results would have to be seen not only as doubly subversive, but also rhetorically insane.

Showing a tendency toward subversiveness hardly seems like the most appropriate way of getting noticed; presenting a rhetorically informed argument that denies the value of the very activity that rhetorical skill and learning makes possible would certainly be likely to

gain notice, but not in any helpful or positive way. If the poem is not after all a satire or a certain kind of debate, however, this problem essentially goes away. Beyond that, there is another factor that has not been noticed by any critic of the poem—a factor that was only briefly mentioned at the beginning of this chapter: if the poem demonstrates any single achievement above all others, it demonstrates the poet's ability to argue effectively on both sides of any issue. As previously mentioned, it is called arguing *in utramque partem* in Latin. The technique was a popular and longstanding tradition in the teaching of judicial and forensic rhetoric, and this poem's author likely engaged in this activity in the classroom, possibly dozens or even hundreds of times during the years he studied rhetoric in school. In this poem, after all, one poet is the single author of two mutually exclusive and antagonistic worldviews, and where a philosopher may be oriented toward synthesis, a lawyer must be oriented toward analysis. Many critics have noticed that the two birds seem so evenly matched as to have reached almost a deadlock in the competition, but none seems to be aware that one of the most fundamental goals of rhetorical training is developing the ability to argue effectively on both sides of any question. If there were a single skill capable of marking someone as a consummate practitioner of judicial, deliberative or even epideictic rhetoric, this is the one. It is woven into the very fabric of the poem.

If the governing paradigm of the poem ought to be legal and rhetorical, rather than disputational and logical—if it is really an *altercatio* rather than a *debate*—then the function and effect of the two birds' argumentative strategies ought to be encountered in a very different light than the one that currently guides most interpretations of this poem. Critics of the poem have overwhelmingly ignored the decidedly rhetorical cast of the poem as a whole, or else mistakenly relegated its application of rhetoric to superficial aspects of the poem's

composition. This has led not only to confusion and error, but also to the production of overly elaborate explanations for textual problems that have more to do with the way the poem is read than what it actually says. At the same time, the same critics who have pronounced against reading the poem for its rhetorical effect have been drawn so deeply into its subtleties and so moved by the poet's artifices that they seem to have been persuaded by it without realizing. As Cannon writes, the effect of the poem "can be detected in the way that normally subtle readers choose to oppose the poem as if they were one of the disputants within it…"[157] The power of this poem to continue, after all this time, generating such passionate arguments about its meaning is a truer testimony to its stunning achievement than any narrow victory over its enigmatic problems.

[157] Christopher Cannon, "*The Owl and the Nightingale and the Meaning of Life*," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 34 (2004): 251 – 78, 251.

CHAPTER 3

"ÆPPLEDE GOLD": THE MOTIVES OF ELOQUENCE IN CYNEWULF'S *JULIANA*[158]

Immediately after Saint Juliana makes her last triumphal speech, and the final sword stroke ends her life, the Anglo-Saxon poet Cynewulf tells us that the miscreant (*synscaþa*) Heliseus, who had played one of the main antagonists in the drama of her martyrdom, was in a fugitive mood (*sceohmod*) and departed with his troop of men on a ship. In the last episode of the saint's life, Cynewulf's narrative has followed the narrative line of his Latin exemplar, the *Passio S. Julianae*, up to a point.[159] The author of the Latin prose narrative ends the story with:

> Praefectus atuem Eleusius, cum navigasset in sua suburbano, venit tempestas valida, et mersit navem ipsius, et mortui sunt viri numero .xxxiiii. Et cum iactasset eos aqua in locum desertum, sic ab avibus et feris corpora eorum devorata sunt.
> (22; While the Prefect Eleusius was sailing to his home, however, a powerful storm came, and sunk his ship, and thirty-four men died. And when the water had tossed them ashore in a deserted place, their bodies were devoured by birds and wild animals.

But then, the Old English poem diverges markedly from its source. After explaining that their journey was a confirmation of their defeat—these men wandered for a long time, many died

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[158] Cynewulf, *Juliana*, ed. Rosemary Woolf (Exeter: Univ. of Exeter Press, 1955; rev. ed. 1993).

[159] While it has long been known that Cynewulf followed a Latin source in composing his poem, some doubt has existed as to precisely which redaction of the *Passio* he used. Woolf proposed that the earliest extant life of Juliana, printed by the Bollandists in *Acta Sanctorum*, Febr. II, 873 ff., might not have been the exact version Cynewulf had before him. Although the gaps in the Exeter book increase the difficulty of determining this, she notes the similarity of action, phraseology, and suggests that his original was closely related. Lapidge has made a convincing case that Cynewulf's examplar is remarkably close to, and possibly identical with, the version of the *Passio* found in MS Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, lat. 10861 (Michael Lapidge, "Cynewulf and the *Passio S. Julianae*," in *Unlocking the Wordhord: Anglo-Saxon Studies in Memory of Edward B. Irving, Jr.*, ed. Mark C. Amodio and Katherine O'Brien O'Keeffe [Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 2003], 147 – 71). In fact, Cynewulf shares an error which is unique to the Paris manuscript in the very same passage I have been discussing, counting the number of drowned men as thirty-four rather than twenty-four. Lapidge prints the Latin text as an appendix, and quotations from this text will be cited by paragraph number.

deprived of joy and without hope—Cynewulf tells us they sought out hell (*helle sohton*), and presents us with a final narrative scene that could not have its complement in the Latin. Describing the state of that company in the denouement of the story, he writes:

> Ne thorftan tha thegnas in tham thystran ham,
> seo geneatscolu in tham neolan scraefe,
> to tham frumgare feohgestealde 685
> witedra wenan, thaet hy in winsele
> ofer beorsetle beagas thegon,
> æpplede gold.
> (683 – 88; Nor did those warriors have need, in that gloomy home, the troop of retainers in that deep pit, to expect their allotted treasure from that leader, or that they in that wine-hall, over the hall benches, would receive rings, *appled gold*.)

This *æpplede gold* is a curious expression, one that has given the lexicographers some trouble. Under an appendix to her edition of *Juliana* entitled "Words of Problematical Meaning," Woolf gives a long gloss on the phrase. Where some have rendered *æpplede* as "embossed," Woolf takes it to mean "apple-shaped," suggesting that the word metaphorically signifies "round."[160] Thus, this is some round, golden object, like a ring. The difficulty, for Woolf and the other glossators she cites, lies in dealing with such an apparently idiosyncratic abstraction—which, as a synonym of *beagas*, ought to refer to some type of treasure. There is no compelling reason to assume the adjective *æpplede* must refer to the physical characteristics of an object. What if *æpplede gold* is somehow like a ring, but not exactly like a ring? Perhaps it is not a treasure in the same sense.

Anderson suggests rather that the expression's significance derives not from its metonymic quality, but from its allusiveness. The phrase may have its origin in literary inspiration: "In Proverbs 25:11 . . . we read that 'Mala aurea in lectis argenteis, qui loquitur

[160] Woolf, *Juliana*, 88; cf. Andrew Breeze, "*Æpplede gold* in *Juliana*, *Elene*, and the *Phoenix*," *Notes &Queries* 44 (1997): 452 – 3.

verbum in tempore suo'." (Golden apples on silver beds, a word spoken in its own time).[161] Here, the golden apples more obviously present us with an image of eloquence. Anderson believes this metaphorical sense is clearly intended in a passage from *Elene*,[162] since it is more relevant to the context there, but he does not say exactly why the *æpplede gold* should be taken only literally in the passage from *Juliana*.[163] How is our understanding of the poem altered if we translate those lines (683–688) this way?

> Nor did those warriors have need, in that gloomy home, the troop of retainers in that deep pit, to expect their allotted treasure from that leader, or that they in that wine-hall, over the hall benches, would receive rings, or *words fitly spoken*.

Æpplede occurs only three times in the extant poetry, always appearing with *gold*, and is very likely to be Cynewulf's coinage.[164] If the expression is his, and if it has a key significance, as its rarity and the context of its usage implies, he may have relied on a model of eloquence much more traditional, and much more firmly grounded in late-antique Latin rhetorical poetics than many critics have suspected.[165] No doubt a polysemic sense is possible for the phrase *æpplede gold* as eloquence and as treasure—nor is there any doubt that both

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[161] Earl R. Anderson, *Cynewulf: Structure, Style, and Theme in His Poetry* (Rutherford: Fairleigh Dickinson Univ. Press, 1983), 16. The King James Version renders it this way: "A word fitly spoken *is like* apples of gold in pictures of silver" (Prv 25:11 AV).

[162] See *Elene* (1259), where the hero signified by the initial letter in Cynewulf's runic signature is said to have "gained treasure in the mead-hall and appled gold," which is to say "he was eloquent in the mead hall" (Anderson, *Cynewulf*, 16).

[163] In *Elene* "this symbolic interpretation is prepared for in the twenty lines preceding, which deal with the nature of poetic composition." (Anderson, *Cynewulf*, 16). These two instances of the expression are similar enough, although in *Juliana* it occurs just before the epilogue containing Cynewulf's signature, and unlike *Elene*, does not follow directly on a reflection of the nature of poetic expression. Perhaps it is because the literal sense of the expression fits so well into the narrative where it is in *Juliana*, and does not trouble the interpreter, that Anderson feels no need to push to reach a further figurative sense.

[164] Woolf's gloss on *æpplede* fails to mention that the adjective never appears with any noun other than *gold* (*Juliana*, 88).

[165] Each instance of the phrase *æpplede gold*, in *Elene*, *Juliana*, and *Pheonix*, is in a poetic text by Cynewulf or connected to him in some way; each Old English poem translates, or is heavily dependent upon a Latin examplar, and each of these Latin texts appears to be connected somehow to the school of Theodore and Hadrian at Canterbury.

senses can be applied here without a loss of coherence. To read it, we must collaborate in making it meaningful, and not treat it simply as a decorative phrase. But we must also not depart completely from the immediate denotative extension of the expression to reach the connotative aura of a Biblical and Latin inter-text, for the multiple senses of the expression rest on multiple referential bases. This is a complex and ambiguous sign.

If *aepplede gold* provides us with connotative access to a richer concept of treasure, one that links it to the immense value of skill in persuasive discourse, there should be no compulsion to take the expression as strictly literal in *Juliana* just for the fact that a literal reading fits the sense of the passage so well. The conversion from *mala aurea* to *aepplede gold*, where noun and adjective change places, appears to be an instance of *metalepsis* (LAT: *transumptio*), since it elicits a kind of "compressed chain of metaphorical reasoning."[166] We might also designate it a *metatrope*, since it operates by altering the meanings of other tropes. According to Quintilian:

> metalempsis, [sic] id est transumptio, quae ex alio [tropo] in aliud velut viam praestat. . . . Est enim haec in metalempsi natura, ut inter id quod transferetur <et id quo transfertur> sit medius quidam gradus, nihil ipse significans sed praebens transitum.[167]
> ([it is] *metalepsis*, that is, *transumptio*, which provides a sort of path from one [trope] to another . . . . it is in the nature of this *metalepsis* to be a kind of middle step between what is transferred and the thing to which it is being transferred, signifying nothing in itself, but providing the transit.)

If it is a case of *transumptio*, then the grammatical alteration from *mala aurea* to *aepplede gold* provides transit between a Latin scriptural symbol of eloquence and a common motif in

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[166] Lanham, *Handlist*, 99 – 100. The scope of *metalepsis* is controversial even in contemporary literary theory: it is either metaphorical allusion, or distinct from allusion (as *diachrony*, revisionary reinterpretation, intertextuality) and is variously defined as a figure, trope, or scheme; as a style unto itself; and even as a broad rhetorical strategy at the discursive level; see "Metalepsis or Transumption" in *The New Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, ed. Alex Preminger and T.V.F. Brogan (New York: MJF Books, 1993), 759 – 60.

[167] Quintillian, *Institutio oratoria* 8.6.

Old English heroic poetry of gift-giving. The giving of gifts is itself a potent token here, providing concrete transit to the abstract semiotic and cultural value of exchange.[168] If it is a metatrope for eloquence as a form of gift giving, the phrase *aepplede gold* is apposite, since this lexical exchange illuminates the transformative aspect of eloquence central to its traditional poetic value.[169] As a middle step rendering all of these senses available to interpretation simultaneously, the *transumptio* fuses inseparably together two separate but isomorphic socio-aesthetic codes: Latin literary-rhetorical convention with traditional Anglo-Saxon poetic technique.[170] *Æpplede gold* is both literally and figuratively a treasured gift between Anglo-Saxon leader and retainer. Yet, it also remains a proverbial symbol of eloquence connected to the Christian Latin culture of the narrative source. The enlargement of meaning made possible by the use of the metatrope clearly extends beyond surface embellishment, and harnesses the poetic power of a plainly rhetorical form of poetic invention, tied directly to stylistic expression, in order to frame a perspective on eloquence that was likely to have been crucial to the Anglo-Saxon understanding of this poem. This single example may demonstrate the key role that such devices may have played for a poet interested in integrating the processes of Latin rhetorical production and Anglo-Saxon poetic

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[168] It is worth pointing out a further correspondence between the gift of eloquence and the gift of treasure: in the context of hierarchical social and political relationships, such gifts take the form of *ornaments*, which are put on display as tokens to signify underlying social and communal values that cannot be expressed directly.

[169] Though it is a possibility as overlooked by the glossators of *æpplede* as it is by general investigations of rhetoric in early England, an appreciation for the inventional scope of such stylistic devices is long-standing in the traditions of rhetoric, extending from the Greek and Roman theorists through the Middle Ages, all the way, even, to *The New Rhetoric*, where Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca observe that "some figures, particularly *metalepsis*, can facilitate the transposition of values into facts. . ." (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, *The New Rhetoric*, 181).

[170] The linked use here of Latin stylistic invention and Old English composition reaffirms the need for critics to look beyond extrinsic methods, such as pedagogical instruction and direct-source study, to understand the nature of such an integrated rhetorical and poetic process, because although any number of conventional rhetoric handbooks can help us identify the device of *transumptio*, none of them can, by itself, explain the adroitness of its use here.

composition—processes that so far have remained largely disconnected in critical readings. Several studies of Cynewulf's signed poems, most notably Jehle's examination of his use of figures and tropes, have succeeded in establishing a critical consensus that the poet did in fact rely to some degree on traditional rhetorical methods, though the extent of that reliance is still disputed.[171] The tendency of *Juliana* critics, though, is not to deny or overlook the presence of rhetoric in the poem, but rather to underestimate the depth and power of its resources.[172]

Rhetorical Motive

Much of Cynewulf's Old English rendering of the story follows the Latin source rather directly, in the manner of a simple translation, but the poet also embellishes a great deal on the material provided by the Latin *Passio*, with changes not only to the *dramatis personae* and to certain elements of the plot, but also in the amplifications of the heroine's and other speeches, as well as important changes to the role and primacy of speech in the poem, and in many descriptive passages where the Latin is simple and plain, if not terse. When read sympathetically, all of the poet's enhancements to the source material have the effect of creating a more intense emotional impact on his Anglo-Saxon audience than would have

[171] See Dorothy Jehle, "Latin Rhetoric in the Signed Poems of Cynewulf," unpub. Ph.D. Diss. (Loyola University of Chicago, 1973); see also Robert E. Diamond, "The Diction of the Signed Poems of Cynewulf," *Philological Quarterly* 38 (1959): 228 – 41.

[172] For example, see Bjork: "The rhetorical sophistication of Old English poetry generally is not an entirely surprising phenomenon. Since English style in its written form probably moved towards emulating Latin models rather than the native spoken tongue, it would necessarily allow room for classical rhetorical effects. In addition, because rhetoric organizes language, it may have served the same function that punctuation does in modern English. Both devices help the reader to see how a passage is organized and how linguistic units relate to each other. But most importantly, organizing language for instructive ends becomes a pious act. Fitting words together in an effective manner expresses the force of truth and becomes a manifestation of power." (Robert E. Bjork, *The Old English Verse Saints' Lives: A Study in Direct Discourse and the Iconography of Style* [Toronto, 1985], 5 – 6).

been achieved by simply translating the original text into Old English prose. The nature of Cynewulf's adaptations to the original Latin *passio* have been well explored,[173] and without referring to the notion eloquence specifically, critics have tended to agree that in his translation the poet has put a high value on the power and effects of speech, to the point of equating words with deeds in the poem. Even Harbus, whose model of "articulate contact," in *Juliana* synthesizes and organizes much of what had been said earlier about the role of speech and speech acts in the poem, regards the primacy of speech and dialogue as the source of the poem's unfolding meaning, and Cynewulf's determination to foreground speech as central to his own concern in adapting the source.[174] The debate these critics have entered into, however, has been unjustifiably circumscribed by lack of interest in the emotional effects of the poet's contributions, and continues to center on the question of whether Cynewulf's adaptations are primarily motivated by didacticism or primarily by aestheticism. What the evidence of the present study shows, however, is that beyond his interest in teaching his audience, and beyond his interest in delighting them and capturing their attention, is the motivation to move them, to "bend" them toward a full-hearted embrace of the ideas he puts before them. For in the conventional scheme of Augustine and Cicero, the eloquent speaker has three duties: to teach his audience, to delight them, and to move them emotionally. Cynewulf's didactic and aesthetic motivations are clearly present, as critics have shown, but there is another layer to this work, one that is coordinated with the other

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[173] See James M. Garnett, "The Latin and Anglo-Saxon *Juliana*," *PMLA* 14 (1899): 279 – 98; Lenore MacGaffey Abraham, "Cynewulf's *Juliana*: A Case at Law," *Allegorica* 3 (1978): 172 – 89;. Robert E. Bjork, ed., *Cynewulf: Basic Readings* (New York and London: Garland, 1996), 171 – 92; Daniel Calder, *Cynewulf* (Boston: Twayne, 1981), 75 – 103; Anderson, *Cynewulf*, 84 – 102; John P. Hermann, "Language and Spirituality in Cynewulf's *Juliana*," *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 26 (1984): 263 – 81; Alexandra H. Olsen, *Speech, Song, and Poetic Craft: The Artistry of the Cynewulf Canon* (New York, 1984).

[174] Antonina Harbus, "Articulate Contact in *Juliana*, in *Verbal Encounters: Anglo-Saxon and Old Norse Studies for Roberta Frank*, ed. Antonina Harbus and Russell Poole (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 2005), 183 – 200.

two, and it is motivated by the story's need for an emotional arc that will touch the poet's audience specifically and deeply.

In the simplest terms, Cynewulf's modifications were made precisely with his own native audience in mind, rather than the native audience of the Latin *passio* or the very general audience of medieval Christianity. In harnessing the rhetorical and poetic mechanisms for elevating the story's *pathos* and *ethos*, the poet's interventions aim to arouse his audience's fiercest indignation at the corruption and cruelty of Helesius and his followers, to evoke a stronger pity for the incredible suffering of Juliana, and to spark a deeper hatred for the devil and all of his wicked wordcraft—and finally, to come to a desirable conclusion regarding the value of a sincere, wholehearted embrace of Christian identity. Certainly, the Latin narrative of Juliana's martyrdom is not entirely devoid of emotional elements, but the relative force of the appeal of these elements to a specifically Anglo-Saxon audience is in some doubt, and it is the force of the appeal to emotion that is crucial for our understanding of Cynewulf's undertaking. To understand it, we need only turn to the rhetorical imperative, found in the mature works of Cicero and transmitted by St. Augustine to the medieval world, that poets and other writers have need of strong, emotional persuasion in cases where audiences may be reluctant to fully embrace—or in modern rhetorical parlance, *adhere* to—propositions or ideals put forward for their assent. If the story of Juliana's martyrdom represents the poet's attempt to put forward a proposition, argument, or a "case" for his audience's consideration and assent, the use of a highly wrought emotional persuasion is sort of like the poet putting his thumb on the scale. It is a means to ensure the audience's favorable, enthusiastic, wholehearted acceptance. What is crucial to recognize is that the elevation of emotion in this poem is tied to the quality of an audience's reception rather than

to the relatively simple question of persuasion. To use highly emotional rhetoric is to attempt to push an audience—to "bend" or "move" in the terminology of Augustine and Cicero—past persuasion and into conviction, the kind of conviction that is manifest in feeling, attitude, habit and behavior. Put simply, where rhetorical appeals to *logos* aim to persuade audiences by giving them reasons to agree, rhetorical appeals to *ethos* and *pathos* seek to triumph over audiences by giving them emotional conviction.

Compared to the martyred saint of the *Passio S. Julianae*, the Anglo-Saxon figure of Juliana models the affective power of eloquence more plainly. Like her Latin counterpart, she speaks rather directly and succinctly, but since the poet has altered the dynamics of the situations in which she speaks, Cynewulf's Juliana is also foregrounded as an eloquent speaker, and she speaks with undeniable power and focus. Cynewulf also amplifies and embellishes her thoughts, and the thoughts of others, in language. Often, her diction is elevated and she speaks with a more elaborated passion than her Latin counterpart. More importantly, the OE poem dwells more frequently and more closely on the emotional effects of her speech. The saint constantly enrages those whom she opposes, and she inspires those whose hearts are open to her message. In these instances, the poet also speaks with a more focused passion than his antique counterpart. Cynewulf's narrative modifications to the Latin exemplar and his poetic embellishments, which combine refined stylistic techniques heavily dependent on both learned Latin rhetoric and native Anglo-Saxon traditions of poetry, seem to culminate in his vaunted poetic amplifications of descriptive passages—what some critics have called his "purple passages." In addition to tropes and figures common to both Latin and Germanic traditions like *metaphor*, *synecdoche*, *personification*, *hyperbole* and *climax*, the poet also employs rhetorical techniques of repetition and variation like *parataxis*,

apposition, *zeugma* and *paranomasia* that have analogues in Old English poetic style, as well as techniques drawn more directly from their differing conventions: *formulae* and *kennings* from Old English alongside *epistrophe* and *hyperbaton* from Latin rhetoric. Utilizing these resources, Cynewulf is able to amplify his appeals to *ethos* and *pathos* in order to heighten and intensify the emotional responses of his audience. To be sure, the Latin narrative of Juliana's suffering and death does evince some intention to impact its original audience emotionally, but its overall affective purpose appears to be more a matter of reassurance and encouragement, which is to say a matter of ideological *adherence*, rather than of an emotional struggle leading to psychological transformation, as is the case with Cynewulf's adaptation.

There is, of course, a wide range of critical opinion on the aesthetic quality and enduring value of Cynewulf's attempts to elevate his material to the level of heroic poetry, and of course the question of how well he succeeded will remain a matter of some dispute, but it should not be disputed that he made the attempt. And even with due regard for matters of taste, a careful reading reveals that the attempt was not made without the aid of a great deal of sophisticated learning, and more importantly, it was not made without a precise purpose. Given even the little we know for certain about the poet and his works, it is quite unlikely that his effort to create a grand epideictic work out of simple prose narrative was guided by vanity, a wish simply to display his own talents as a poet. Cynewulf's poetic manipulations of certain characters and plot elements appear more or less clearly aimed at creating a starker contrast between good and evil, even as he makes the conflict between Juliana and her oppressors more intimate and less polarized. Such modifications aim at creating a stronger but more morally complex sense of identification among his reading and

listening audiences, even as it also intensifies and elevates the emotional responses of listeners and readers alike to the narrative's unfolding events. But this more intense effect, though it has an artistic dimension, is not merely an elevation for its own sake. This effect has a rhetorical function that points in the direction of a more precise motive on the part of the poet. And because we are dealing with rhetoric, this function has everything to do with understanding the psychology of his audience—especially the qualities of his audience that make them different from the intended audience of the source—and his expectations about the quality of their reception of the material.

The Exigency of Audience

The question of why these kinds of modifications to the story should amount to the indication of an explicit persuasive intent, rather than just a desire on the poet's part to augment his source for aesthetic purposes, turns on the question of *exigency*, an added need in retelling the story that would make a more straightforward translation of the Latin prose into simple Old English prose inadequate on its own. The nature of this added need may be reflected in the difference between the intended audience of the original Latin narrative and the new audience of Cynewulf's poetic retelling. Harbus, repeating the claim of others that the poem was composed for a group of nuns, suggests that it may have been "designed for reading aloud in public veneration rather than for private contemplation," explaining that "the dialogue in the poem and its vernacular verse format lend themselves to incantation or recitation, and the dramatic aspect of much of the dialogue makes it suitable for an engaging

public delivery to a suitably inclined audience."[175] That is to say, the audience of Cynewulf's adaptation was very different from the audience of the original *passio*, and their reception of the poet's message would likely have had less significant impact upon them were it not for the poet's modifications, which were made in order to arouse their passions and direct them towards a more active engagement with the moral struggle of the story, and a more emotionally charged embrace of the saint's suffering and martyrdom as an outcome of that engagement.

The Latin *passio*, written in the *sermo humilis* or "humble" prose style, was most likely originally directed at less well educated members of the lower orders of late-antique society who identified themselves as Christians against the non-Christian or pagan affiliations of the political and cultural elite, represented in the story by the likes of the prefect Eleusius and Juliana's father, Africanus, who are clearly marked as wealthy, high in status and decidedly anti-Christian. The important thing to notice in the original story is that the suppression of Christianity and the oppression of Christians is not merely religious in nature. It is political and cultural. For the non-Christian elite of the story, the irruption of Christianity demonstrated by Juliana's profession of faith represented a serious threat to the existing structures of power. Indeed, one of the central promises communicated by the original story is that Christianity offers access to a kind of power the political and cultural elite had abjured, and a much greater power than they could overcome with violence. The message is that Christianity, though it may require suffering and even martyrdom, offers the humble a triumph over the kind of powerlessness they experience in this life, and a release

[175] Harbus, "Articulate Contact," 200. Harbus cites Rosemary Woolf, "Saint's Lives," in *Continuations and Beginnings: Studies in Old English Literature*, ed. E.G. Stanley (London, 1966), 37 – 66, 45. See also Shari Horner, "Spiritual Truth and Sexual Violence: the Old English *Juliana*, Anglo-Saxon Nuns, and the Discourse of Female Monastic Enclosure," *Signs* 19 (1994): 658 – 75.

from the conditions of oppression and servitude in the next one. This is a familiar pattern to students of early Christian saints' lives.

The values and allegiances celebrated so unambiguously by the Latin narrative would predictably have become more complicated and difficult when we consider its presentation to Cynewulf's most likely audience: Christianized members of the political and cultural elite who were neither powerless nor oppressed and therefore may have been less likely to identify intensely with the saint or her followers. If the portrait of the poet painted by Sisam is accurate, Cynewulf was a man of notable status and learning: a Mercian or Northumbrian cleric of the mid- to late-ninth century, as well as a man of cultivated taste and easy familiarity with both Latin literary culture and the native tradition of Anglo-Saxon heroic poetry.[176] He was probably well traveled and was evidently connected to at least some wealthy and high-ranking members of the Anglo-Saxon ruling elite. If his own writing is to be trusted, he was also clearly a devout Christian. If he ministered to the ranking Anglo-Saxon elite, who were neither oppressed nor wholly uneducated, he certainly would have noticed their closer similarity in status to the antagonists of Juliana's story. And if he felt any internal conflict between his own status and values as a well-connected and worldly man and the values a devout Christian ought to espouse, it is easy to suppose he would have noticed a similar internal conflict of values and loyalties in his audience. This is not because his audience would not have identified themselves as Christian, but because a sincere and wholehearted embrace of the kind of Christianity presented by this saint's life would seem to require a rejection of the cultural and political values that they would have inherited and

[176] Kenneth Sisam, "Cynewulf and His Poetry," in *Studies in the History of Old English Literature* (Oxford, 1953), 1 – 28.

claimed for themselves—values that supported identities and values upon which their political and cultural institutions would to some extent have depended.

It would seem a natural choice, given such an audience, for the poet to transform a humble prose narrative into an epideictic work that shared so many of the formal characteristics and inherited values of the heroic poetry that his listeners would have identified as their own. But this choice alone would not have resolved an internal conflict of loyalties between the new ways and the old ways, between the revolutionary Christian ethos and the conservative warrior ethos of early medieval Germanic societies. In fact, there is reason to think that some of Cynewulf's adaptations could have increased the likelihood that members of his audience would have sensed a certain degree of identification between themselves and the authors of Juliana's torments. In addition to his formal and stylistic accommodations to his audience's tastes, there are many narrative interpolations that seem to blur the distinction between Juliana's antagonists and high-ranking members of an Anglo-Saxon audience. In one of the most pointed examples, Cynewulf, in a departure from his Latin source, describes the collusion between Heliseus and Africanus with an image of unmistakable symbolic power: "the clamour of voices rose up when they, warlike men, leaned their spears together. Pagans they both were, father-in-law and son-in-law, cankered with sins" (62–65).[177] Though the agents in this scene are explicitly described as evil, the formula also immediately and vividly evokes the dominant image of the warrior ethos celebrated by the old heroic poetry. Surely, it was not the poet's endgame to portray members of his audience as the enemies of Christ, but it raises the latent issue of divided loyalties to the status of an open question.

[177] Cynewulf, *Juliana*, in *Anglo-Saxon Poetry*, ed. and trans. S.A.J. Bradley (London, 1982), 303.

In the simplest terms, Cynewulf's OE version of *Juliana* posits a choice for its audience—one with profound consequences—where the original assumes a choice that has already been made and offers its audience no troubling psychological dilemma, and therefore presents no need for its author to use the force of strong emotion to push readers toward the preferred judgment. If the nature of Cynewulf's audience was as I have described it, and the potential for a conflict of values was inherent, we can see in his poetic adaptations the clearer formulation of a rhetorical motive requiring the elevation of language and intensification of emotional response that his poem endeavors to create. In other words, the exigency of Cynewulf's audience prompted him to recompose, out of the humble language of the Latin prose original, a grander Old English poem that would more completely and adequately address the dilemma he (and they) faced. If this effort was at all successful, we may begin to credit Cynewulf's conventional rhetoric for providing him the means to emotionalize his material and thereby move his audience toward a deeper commitment to a potentially difficult compromise. Widening the scope, we can begin to better appreciate the role traditional rhetoric may have not simply in helping to convert the Anglo-Saxons, but in helping to thoroughly Christianizing them.

Framing Eloquence in *Juliana*

There are textual elements to indicate that a traditional rhetorical notion of eloquence is guiding Cynewulf's poetic reconstruction. Some, like the expression *æpplede gold*, may be difficult to recognize at first glance, while others are rather more direct. At a more local level, Cynewulf's intentions for rhetorical-poetic eloquence are also revealed in the poem in two significant, and interrelated, functional adaptations to the model provided by his Latin

exemplar. Both of these mediations point toward an understanding of eloquence as more than a generic ideal, and both can be said to reflect the motive for his work. The first of these interventions involves the poet's use of a vernacular *ornatus*, a highly wrought stylistic richness and expressive power of the kind often associated with the grand style of oratory and poetry in Latin rhetorical traditions.[178] This kind of amplification most explicitly marks the Old English poem's departure from the unassuming stylistic manner of the *Passio S. Julianae*, rendering the narrative stylistically akin to the epic-heroic mode of traditional vernacular verse. Although the Old English poem is not necessarily ornate or elevated throughout—which may account for the critical opinion of Woolf and others that *Juliana* is prosaic in comparison to secular Anglo-Saxon heroic poetry—a number of its passages do offer conspicuous contrast to the stylistic tendency of the Latin prose narrative, which is unquestionably an example of the late antique *sermo humilis*. The level of sophistication involved in this fusion of *genus grande* and vernacular *ornatus* must be the result of a closer acquaintance with the classical and late antique rhetorical tradition and its procedure for stylistic invention than commonly contemplated for the Anglo-Saxon period; it also provides evidence of a more confident sense of the rhetorical potential in the formal and aesthetic resources of traditional Old English poetry.

The second critical intervention is the poet's decision to present Juliana herself as a figure of eloquence. Her eloquence in speaking and preaching is presented as a holy virtue, a power by which the saint communicates the value of her sacrifice, turns the hearts and minds of witnesses and non-believers, and marks herself as a figure worthy of sympathy, emulation,

[178] For *ornatus* as a term for the distinguishing important characteristics of oratorical eloquence, see Debora K. Shuger, "The Grand Style and the 'Genera Dicendi' in Ancient Rhetoric," *Traditio* 40 (1984): 1 – 42; and Raymond DiLorenzo, "The Critique of Socrates in Cicero's *De Oratore: Ornatus* and the Nature of Wisdom," *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 11 (Fall 1978): 247 – 61.

and reverence. With respect to her tormentors, her eloquence represents an aspect of the saint's power that they cannot hope to overcome. Of these two adaptations, the first is an act of framing, of providing a receptive structure, or ground, for the second to operate; it is more directly dependent on learned rhetorical technique and poetic skill than the second, which is more indirectly dependent, requiring more changes to the narrative material than to the stylistic medium. More concisely, the elevated style of the translation forms the ground against which the figure of Juliana, as an embodiment of Christian eloquence, can be most effectively registered.

Ornatus and Amplification

Rhetorical amplification begins right from the outset of the poem to set a broader stage for the agonistic scope of the narrative, and to heighten the emotional intensity of the drama. Where the Latin has simply: "Denique temporibus Maximiani imperatoris persecutoris Christianae religionis . . ." (1; And then, in the time of the emperor Maximian, a persecutor of the Christian religion . . .), Cynewulf has expanded to:

þætte in dagum gelamp
Maximianes, se geond middangeard,
arleas cyning, eahtnysse ahof,
cwealde cristne men, circan fylde,
geat on græswong Godhergendra,
hæþen hildfruma, haligra blod,
ryhtfremmendra. Wæs his rice brad,
wid ond weorðlic ofer werþeode,
lytesna ofer ealne yrmenne grund.
Foron æfter burgum, swa he biboden hæfde,
þegnas þryðfulle; oft hi þræce rærdon,
dædum gedwolene, þa þe Dryhtnes æ
feodon þurh firencræft; Feondscype rærdon,
hofon hæþengield, halge cwelmdon,
breotun boccræftge, bærndon gecorene,

> gæston godes cempan gare ond lige.
> (2 – 17; It happened in the days of Maximian, that he inspired persecution throughout the world, the cruel king, slew Christian men, destroyed churches, shed on the grassy plain the blood of the holy, the righteous worshippers of God, that heathen prince. His kingdom was broad, ample and imposing over the nations, over almost the whole wide world. His powerful thanes went among the cities, as he had commanded; often, they carried out violence, wicked in their deeds, they who scorned God's law through their sinfulness; [they] aroused hostility, exalted idolatry, killed the holy, hewed down the learned, burned the chosen, terrified God's soldiers with spear and flame.)

The interpolation of these several lines into the beginning of the poem makes almost the whole of creation complicit in the struggle between God's benevolence and the utter malice of evil, and we can read it as a signal of the overtly enlarged typological significance of the narrative that follows. It subsumes the dramatic conflict of the story within the larger mythic structure of Christian eschatology. But this exposition would also have engaged the historical awareness of a ninth-century northern English audience, as it would have reminded them of a more immediate and local past. Here the poet's method of amplification aligns the violent persecution endured by early Christians with hardships in the collective memory of his Anglo-Saxon readership, illustrating a sympathetic connection between the two communities. Introducing the narrative conflict this way, the poet draws the attention of his audience to forces that had been more subtext or pretext in the Latin *Passio*. But it also works to reawaken the situated and local awareness of a Mercian or Southumbrian audience to the historical frame of their own experience. The force of the amplification is set in motion by a display of the *ethos* of Maximian and his deputies (who are not even mentioned in the Latin). No longer simply a persecutor of Christians, but a "cruel king" and "heathen prince," the emperor "stirred up" or "instigated" the violence against the faithful. His lieutenants, too, are positively evil: killers, like the emperor, and twisted idolaters. More than simply a display of *ethos*, however, the passage also elicits a poignant *pathos* that sets the mood of the whole

poem—a mood that, if it is present at all, is quietly attenuated in the Latin. In the Old English version, the whole world is afflicted by brutality and godlessness. Of course, the point is not that it required a great leap of the imagination for the poet to expand from "in the time of the emperor Maximian," to a vivid description of what happened in that time. But this violence is amplified according to an expressly rhetorical design: rendered in a *climax*, detailed with increasingly explicit imagery—the entire passage could be collected under the figure *demonstratio*, or "vivid description," a mechanism vital to the psychogogic affective orientation of poetic eloquence—as well as traditional poetic diction (e.g., *græswong*, *hildfruma*), and a slew of inspired *schemata* drawn from grammar or rhetoric.[179] The vernacular grand style that is the product of this fusion of traditions is more difficult and more valuable for Cynewulf's Christian rhetoric precisely because it is accomplished by obscuring the traces of its constructedness.

Lines 11 through 17 are indicative of what Bartlett calls the "incremental pattern" in Old English poetry, that is, "a series of more or less parallel steps which have a cumulative force."[180] The lines progress in balanced phrases, alternating between clauses containing appositions of the wicked thanes and clauses listing their crimes. In an instance of *climax*, the sequence culminates in the consolidation of both into the symbolic imagery of persecution rendered by the *metonymy* "with spear and flame." Besides *climax* and *metonymy*, the passage deploys other figures that contribute to the stirring effect: potential *hyperbole* occurs in lines 3, and 9 – 10; *ellipsis* in lines 5 – 6 creates emotional suspense; the *hyperbaton* of

[179] Parsing a passage in order to exhibit its schematic complexion can be a highly subjective affair, despite the efforts of nearly every writer on rhetorical style to define and fix the mechanisms of *ornatus*. In what follows, I will try to offer as full a range of possibilities as I can manage without rendering the description incoherent.

[180] A.C. Bartlett, *The Larger Rhetorical Patterns in Anglo-Saxon Poetry* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1935; repr. AMS Press, 1966).

line 8, along with the rare *epistrophe* of the verb *rærdon* in lines 12 and 14, separated by three kinds of apposition, lending the passage a measured gravity by heightening its language in a way that can clearly be heard. The poet looks to both Latin and Old English poetic codes; by fusing them tightly together in the process of composition he provides himself with a vernacular equivalent of the sophisticated and powerful style necessary for the conversion of a reluctant audience.

Working in conjunction with the use of *ornatus* in the amplification is the naturalization of the narrative exposition by means of a traditional invocation: "Hwæt! We ðæt hyrdon hæleð eahtian, / deman dædhwate," (1–2). The opening lines of the poem demonstrate, in miniature, the fusion of oral poetic convention with literate practice: the vernacular formula of interjection, *Hwæt*, with the plural verb declaring the oral conditions of poetic performance, which here is immediately followed by the literary figure of *chiasmus* of noun and infinitive, forward and reverse. The intimacy of this fusion is compounded when we realize that what may have at first appeared to be the poet's concession to an Anglo-Saxon audience—departing from the Christian Latin formulaic opening of the *Passio* in favor of a recognizably vernacular invocation—could in actuality also be a bid for favorable hearing by the audience on the Latin rhetorical model of the *exordium*. The opening of the *Passio* reads:

> Benignitas salvatoris nostri, martyrum perseuerantia conprobata, eo usque concessit ut et fidei amicos coronaret et inimicos eorum ex ipsis in eorum claustris erueret.
> (1; Our savior's mercy, attested by the perseverance of the martyrs, permitted it in the end that he crowned the friends of the faith and destroyed their enemies at their very gates).

As Weise's insightful reading of the opening lines elucidates, however, a number of divergent but potentially correct ways of understanding the significance the Old English

poem's words, specifically those caught in the initial *chiasmus*, leaves us with the sense that Cynewulf's opening departs as well from the clarity of the Latin version, in which the "friends of the faith" are "crowned" and their enemies "destroyed."[181] The *chiasmus*, a figure of reversal, becomes a token of the reverse in sense. In contrast to Thorpe's "We have heard that men persecuted judges prompt of deed," which has no relevance to the poem that follows, Weise translates: "Lo we have heard this, a warrior persecuted and judged those of bold deeds," signifying a reversal of the meaning of the exemplar: Heliseus as the warrior and Juliana as the one being judged. Blurring the lines between two opponents in patently ideological struggle is a strange opening gambit if we presume the poet wants the narrative only to reify an objective distinction between Juliana's righteousness and Heliseus's wickedness. According to Weise, the calculated and ironic ambiguity of Cynewulf's manipulation is "intended to capture the reader's attention, bemuse him, and incidentally, to suggest the possibility of deception through the clever manipulation of words."[182] How close this is to the topics of the traditional rhetorical *exordium*: to render listeners receptive, well disposed, and attentive.[183] More significant for our purposes, though, is that the poet's refusal to resolve the ambiguity seems an effective way of avoiding the imposition of a neutral authorial perspective on the circumstances of the impending conflict. It may signal a deep sensitivity to the attitude of an audience not quite ready to accept as objective the distinction between righteousness and evil so clearly marked out by the Latin version.

The difficulty of determining whether the opening lines of Cynewulf's poem are more influenced by vernacular poetic convention or by Latin rhetorical doctrine is a perfect

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[181] Judith A. Weise, "Ambiguity in Old English Poetry," *Neophilologus* 62 (1979): 588 – 91.

[182] *Ibid.* 590.

[183] See [Cicero] *Rhetorica Ad Herrenium* 1.4.7 and Cicero, *De inventione* 1.16.22 – 3.

complement to the ambiguity of his version of the narrative exposition. Bzdyl explores the significance of this seeming "about face" at the story's beginning, saying that instead of following the Latin in declaring the final victory of the saint right at the outset, Cynewulf

> depicts the situation from an almost purely materialistic perspective, as if it were being seen through the eyes of a man aware of the Christian commonplaces concerning the insignificance of earthly power and prosperity, yet not fully capable of accepting that belief, of seeing the world in those terms.[184]

But Bzdyl's willingness to read the move as a pure reflection of the poet's psyche, rather than as deliberate projection of authorial persona may be naïve. This situation, if it reflects the poet's expectation of a similar materialist inertia on the part of his audience, of course, cries out for the intensity of language that, as Augustine says, is designed to bend the will of those who know the truth but do not wish to act on it. What is so surprising here is how closely the adaptation of stylistic manner from the Latin source to the Old English poem echoes the deceptive reversal of sense—so that it seems, at least initially, that the apparent supremacy of the native poetic convention is a reflection of the apparent supremacy of the non-Christian enemies of the faith. The confrontation the poet is preparing us for now extends past the moral choice every Christian hearer must make whether to act on his faith, and into the ethical choice to be made in how to understand the very meaning of the words in which the spiritual dilemma is conveyed. Weise points out that the threat of verbal deception is a *leit-motif* of the poem. The same verdict has been rendered by other critics, if not always with the same acuity. Take Olsen, for example, who says: "In *Juliana*, the poetic language itself shows the audience that language can lead careless people astray."[185] What Olsen leaves out, however, is any recognition that the poetic language is also necessary to induce

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[184] Donald G. Bzdyl, "*Juliana*: Cynewulf's Dispeller of Delusion," *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* 86 (1985): 165 – 75.

[185] Olsen, *Speech, Song, and Poetic Craft*, 89.

people to take the better path. In a narrative that has been altered to highlight the centrality of wisdom and eloquence to the redemption of the Christian soul, we ought not lose track of the reality that the danger posed by poetic language is merely the inverse of the promise it holds—something both the poet and the devil in the story know very well.

A Focus on Emotion

Like the other poems in this study, we see this poet focusing more directly than the source on the emotional states of the narrative's characters, drawing attention to their inward conditions with precise language and, in effect, unfolding a significant new layer of meaning to the material that is not found in his exemplar. We see Cynewulf dwelling on the psychological dimension of the situation. In the Latin *Passio,* the first indication of an emotional motivation concerns the prefect Heliseus, of whom it is said, quite prosaically: "Elesius vero sponsus eius nuptiarum conpleri festivitatem cupiebat" (1; the bridegroom Elesius *desired* the celebration of his nuptials to be completed). What is notable to us is that the conflict between the main characters is set up here as a matter of interest, and is extrinsic to their feelings. In the Latin, Eliuseus is betrothed to Juliana, and wants to get on with it; Juliana wants only to go to church. There is no insinuation of the driving force of opposing passions, no foreshadowing of the tragic sweep of events yet to come. In the Old English, however, Cynewulf begins to characterize the prefect's condition a bit earlier on, giving us this: "ða his mod ongon / fæmnan lufian, (hine fyrwet bræc), / Iulianan" (26 – 28; then *his mind began to love the girl*, Juliana; *desire tormented him*.) But not much further on, when at her father's will she is betrothed to the prefect, Cynewulf gives us this for a translation of the aforementioned Latin passage: "þa wæs se weliga þæra wifgifta, / goldspedig guma, georn on

mode, / þæt him mon fromlicast fæmnan gegyrede, / bryd to bolde" (38 – 41; then was the rich one, the gold-wealthy man, *eager in his mind for the marriage*, that someone most speedily prepare the virgin for him, a bride for his house.) We see the poet intensifying the prefect's desire for the girl, and as he gives us a window into the man's mind, we see his more intense desire for her drive his eagerness to have her, which is made more expansive than the Latin by further description.

Of course, Cynewulf does not leave us in the dark about Juliana's inward state either. Where the *Passio* indicates Juliana's initial behavior is guided by prudence and poise, Cynewulf gives her an emotional perspective:

> ða wæs sio fæmne mid hyre fæder willan
> welegum biweddad; wyrd ne ful cuþe,
> freondrædenne hu heo from hogde,
> geong on gæste.
> (33 – 36; Then was this girl betrothed to the wealthy one, with her father willing; he would not know fully how she, young in spirit, *despised his affection*.)

Our poet omits the Latin's *loci* of praise, bypasses the conflict between interests, and goes right to the interior of both characters, marking the tension between them by the immediate force of their opposing passions. The early exchanges between the two in the Latin version seem to take place in private, the narrative effect being the sense that both are drawn almost unwillingly into the conflict that will end in death. In fact, the Latin Juliana's first refusal to marry Eliuseus until he accepts her religion is not even directly communicated by her, but is reported to him by a messenger. The Old English offers a conspicuous contrast to this. The tension does not build gradually out of the plot elements, but is rather heavily staged to produce the lurid clash that sets the saint's destiny in motion. Cynewulf begins in these lines to prepare for an effect. He foreshadows, out of the conflict of opposing passions, the framework of his eschatological motif, adding an authorial perspective on both characters'

interior states to the plot. Next, he offers a straightforward comparison, almost prosaic in the simple directness of its syntax and diction, and lacking interlacement: "Hire wæs godes egsa / mara in gemyndum, þonne eall þæt maþþumgestealdþe in þæs æþelinges ähtum wunade." (35b – 37; She was more mindful of her fear of God than all of the wealth in the prince's possession). The statement appears only to confirm that she is impervious to worldly temptations, but it implies as well, with *egsa*, that her way of thinking is similar to his: a calculated regard for power.

This puts the two on an even footing, not by devaluing her steadfastness, but by locating their opposition in the different objects of their zeal. A number of commentators on the poem have noticed how statements like this from the poet seem to put the notion of a "real" or psychologically compelling struggle between sin and salvation out of the question. We should only conclude that it puts the question of Juliana's salvation beyond question—she is already a saint, after all. And since her superiority to temptation cannot (theologically) extend to Cynewulf's audience, it is also possible to read a sharply ironic understatement in this line: by pointing out that Juliana's mindfulness of God was beyond reproach, the poet makes his readers aware that theirs is not.

After seeming to downshift stylistic registers, the poet then switches again to the perspective of the antagonist, dwelling for three-and-a-half lines on Heliseus's eagerness to have his bride handed over to him, before returning once more to her frame of mind and amplifying the previous comparison, this time with a detectable lift in poetic pitch:

> Heo þæs beornes lufan
> fæste wiðhogde, þeah þe feohgestreon
> under hordlocan, hyrsta unrim
> æhte ofer eorþan Heo þæt eal forseah,
> (41–44; She was resolved against this man's love, though he might possess coffers of treasure, countless jewels, possessions across the earth. She renounced it all)

The second comparison expands the first, demonstrating the strength of her resolve by arranging the external symbols of worldliness in another *climax*. The sense of mounting tension is also sped up by the rhetorical device, and then slowed again by the flat statement of renunciation that follows. It is clear that the poet wants his audience to evaluate their characters, but haven't the necessary judgments already been supplied by the stirring introduction? We already know this is not so difficult as to require the poet to display so much control over the pace and tenor of his poetic *passio*, but we should ask why Cynewulf gives the process almost twenty lines, and adds the *copia* when he was clearly able to characterize the approaching turmoil in only a few words.

Other similarities may appear even more inconsistent with an essential moral conflict: "Juliana, for example, is described as resolving to virginity 'georne' (29b: zealously), while Heliseus is described as 'georn on mode' in his eagerness to possess her as a bride (39b)."[186] The similarity of diction and syntax between them, as well as Cynewulf's use of similar terms to draw conflicting motives, points out again that neither the use of Latin rhetorical constructions nor a reliance on Old English heroic idiom is meant to stand as a symbolic correlative for Christian virtue or heathen wickedness. Despite the eschatological implications of the narrative framing, the conflict itself is not a simple dualism. Anderson's reaction to the critical view that claims Cynewulf simply rejected the heroic tradition arises out of just such stylistic ambiguities:

> The most difficult question raised by Cynewulf's supposed devaluation of the heroic in *Juliana* is the apparent inconsistency that we then find in Cynewulf's use of the heroic tradition. . . . [which] raises a more fundamental question about the ontology of the 'heroic': is it an ethos against which behavior is judged as good or bad? Or is the

[186] Anderson, *Cynewulf*, 91 – 92.

> heroic itself no more than a pattern of behavior [*habitus*], judged variously as good or bad depending on the ethical context in which it appears? [187]

Undoubtedly, the point of the dilation that occurs in these lines is not so much to transmit the plot of the narrative to readers, nor can the stylized presentations of *ethos* be seen to do anything but complicate the moral allegiances in conflict. The aim is to help the audience reconstruct the affective experience of these characters. Rather than simply report on the fact of an impending conflict (as the Latin author does), our poet wants his readers to feel caught up in the tension of mutually opposed forces, to be bound in the same net of exigencies and consequences as the saint and her approaching tormentors, and to be unable to resolve those forces by recourse to a simplistic moral scheme. Cynewulf wants his readers to be unable to feel themselves as anything but participants in the struggle, to be implicated in the moral outcome of the story, not just witnesses to it. Only by this method can he motivate readers to recognize the crisis of *Juliana* as a crisis of individual subjectivity. He is careful to avoid dwelling on plot elements—conditions, circumstances, etc.—the way the Latin version does, and prepares, instead, for the contest of wills to emerge from opposition of character and perspective represented by Juliana's speech and the speech of her interlocutors.

While it is clear early on that Cynewulf's transformations of the source text indicate a much fuller interest in the inward, emotional conditions of his characters, it is not as clear at this early stage that this interest points to a significant alteration of the way the story is read. In reading the Latin *Passio*, it is mostly the inexorable narrative logic of the martyr story that transmits the general sense of impending conflict. In Cynewulf's version, however, there is an unfolding sense that the imminent conflict is being driven by the emotional motivations of the characters. This gives the drama a human dimension that remains active alongside the

[187] *Ibid*; Anderson's conclusion: "Thus there is, in my view, no inconsistency in Cynewulf's treatment of the heroic in *Juliana* when compared to his other poems; only complexity" (92).

poem's more obvious cosmological dimension. There grows a dim sense that but for the attitudes and internal conditions of the players in this drama, the conflict might somehow be avoided or attenuated. In Cynewulf's telling, the struggle between Juliana and Heliseus is driven by animus and desire. At the opening of Juliana's first address to Heliseus she uses a performative verb, "Ic the maeg gesecgan" (46), to foreground what she is about to say as an *illocutionary act*, granting her response the status of an act by means of speech, as much as a promise. Perhaps we may even call it a *perlocutionary act*, since what she says next seems deliberately designed to provoke the reaction in Heliseus that it does, and because it explicitly includes its own consequences.[188] The sense of Juliana's first response as a formal act of speech is made clear by another of Cynewulf's adjustments. Where the Latin says she spoke "prudenter pertractans consilio," (1) he tells us she spoke to him before a crowd: "ond þæt word acwæð on wera mengu" (46). She says:

> Ic þe mæg gesecgan þæt þu þec sylfne ne þearft
> swiþor swencan. Gif þu soðne god
> lufast ond gelyfest, ond his lof rærest,
> ongietest gæsta Hleo, ic beo gearo sona 50
> unwaclice willan þines.
> (46 – 51; I am *able to say to you* that you need not distress yourself more severely; if you love the true God and believe and extol his love, [if you] recognize the protector of souls, I am prepared steadfastly and immediately to do your will.)

Then, she continues:

> Swylce ic þe secge, gif þu to sæmran gode
> þurh deofolgield dæde biþencest,
> hætsð hæþenweoh, ne meaht þu habban mec,
> ne geþreatian þe to gesingan. 55
> Næfre þu þæs swiðlic sar gegearwast
> þurh hæstne nið heardra wita,
> þæt þu mec onwende worda þissa."

[188] For *illocutionary* and *perlocutionary* speech acts, see J.L. Austin, *How To Do Things with Words*, ed. J.O. Urmson and Marina Sbisà, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962), 98 – 132. For a reading of *Juliana* from the perspective of contemporary semiotics and speech act theory, see Harbus, "Articulate Contact in *Juliana*."

> (52 – 58; Likewise, I say to you, if you place your trust in an inferior God through idolatry [devil-yielding], [if you] promise heathen tribute, you may not have me or bring it about to marry me by threatening; you will never prepare such severe suffering, through the harshness of your anger or hard punishments, that you turn me from these words.)

In Cynewulf's version of the story, Juliana does not dissemble first, as she does in the Latin, by implying her consent to marry on the condition that Eleuseis first become a prefect. (1) In Old English he is already a *gerefa*. Does Cynewulf omit this because he has already made Heliseus a prefect, or has he already made Heliseus a prefect in order to omit this? It seems very possible that the poet has departed from the Latin narrative in order to leave no trace of Juliana's initial response, which appears to be no more than a ruse to put off marriage. It would make sense to leave it out if it had the potential, by comparison, to make her second condition, that Heliseus convert to Christianity, seem like another potential ploy—and not as the sincere obstacle that Cynewulf wishes it to be.

The prefect's reaction to Juliana's first response is swift and severe. There is no corresponding indication of his mood in the Latin: "Audiens haec prefectus, vocavit patrem eius et dixit ei omnia verba quae ei mandaverat Iuliana." (2; The prefect, having heard this, called her father and told him everything Juliana had said.) In the Old English, the prefect's mood is unambiguous:

> Ða se æþeling wearð yrre gebolgen,
> firendædum fah, gehyrde þære fæmnan word:
> het ða gefetigan ferend snelle,
> hreoh ond hygeblind, haligre fæder,
> recene to rune.
> (58 – 62; At this the aetheling grew enraged with anger, stained with sinful deeds, as he heard the maid's words. he commanded swift messengers to fetch, rough and heart-blind, the holy one's father quickly to counsel.)

What happens next is a crucial moment in the narrative, both in Latin and in the Old English. The Latin shows immediately the heightened awareness of rhetorical nature of

communication in this poem when, despite his anger at her defiance, Juliana's father approaches her and addresses her first with blandishments apparently designed to coax her gently into compliance: "Filia mea dulcissima Iuliana, lux meorum oculorum, quare non vis accipere praefectum sponsum tuum? En vere volo illi conplere nuptias vestras." (2; My sweetest daughter, Juliana, light of my eyes, why do you not wish to accept the prefect as your spouse? In truth, I wish to make your marriage to him final.) Bjork correctly identifies the attempt made by her father to sway Juliana from her defiant position as a form of flattery, but by assuming flattery itself to be tautologically evil, he seems to miss the point of the contest.[189] For Juliana's responses could also be construed as a form of flattery, albeit with a very different audience. And, of course, Juliana is not one to accept such blandishments, so she refuses to change her position. Still, an interesting dynamic in the narrative is exposed here. As her father continues to question her in an attempt to understand her and to persuade her to change her mind, it is only the hardness of her position that pushes the narrative back towards her eventual punishment. Her father's willingness to at least attempt persuasion before trying to dissuade her with threats of violence marks a certain openness in his character that his daughter does not share. We may feel something for him in this difficulty. To his questions about why she refuses to worship the traditional gods, she continues to only to say that unless the prefect turns to the worship of the Christian god, she will not have him.

Just as in the *Passio*, in Cynewulf's poem Juliana's father is sympathetic to Heliseus from the start—he says he will turn her over if she really did say what the prefect is reporting. In one of the very few instances of an emotional cue in the Latin version, we read: "Et his dictis perrexit [ad filiam] suam cum magno furore." (And with these things having

[189] See Bjork, *The Old English Verse Saints' Lives*.

been said, he went to [his daughter] in a great fury.)[190] In the Old English, however, before we see the father's anger at the revelation of his daughter's defiance, we are first shown a scene that is clearly Cynewulf's interpolation. It is a scene that highlights the contextual and situational translation of the poem from a general Christian milieu to a specifically Anglo-Saxon one. The interpolation consists almost entirely of a single, vivid image that can only be meant to depict both Juliana's father and the prefect cooperating deliberately in the planning of evil, but it likely also had a clear emotional resonance for Cynewulf's Anglo-Saxon audience, who despite the moral implications of the scene may have detected in the image the warm glow of Anglo-Saxon heroic nostalgia:

> Reord up astag,
> siþþan hy togædre garas hlændon,
> hildeþremman. Hæðne wæron begen
> synnum seoce, sweor ond aþum.
> ða reordode rices hyrde
> wið þære fæmnan fæder frecne mode,
> daraðhæbbende
> (62 – 68; Speech rose up while the warriors leaned their spears together. Heathen were both, sick with sins, father-in-law and son-in-law. Then spoke the kingdom's guardian with the girl's father, fierce in mind, holding a spear.)

Heliseus tells her father that she has shown him dishonor, describes how her refusal has insulted him and distressed his mind. He says that she is guilty of blasphemy and that she worships alien gods. Only then do we see the father's great anger, the upheaval that was described in Latin as "cum magno furore" (2):

> Geswearc þa swiðferð sweor æfter worde,
> þære fæmnan fæder, ferðlocan onspeon:
> (78 – 79; Then the man violent of mind grew angry, the virgin's father, and swore after this speech, and disclosed his heart.)

[190] As with many versions of the Latin MS, the version that was likely Cynewulf's exemplar contains the error "ad familiam" for "ad filiam"; see Lapidge, "Cynewulf and the *Passio S. Julianae*."

This is quite an amplification of sentiment, and it shows again Cynewulf's interest in displaying the effects of Juliana's speech on her superiors. Where in the Latin, we are told only that Juliana's father promises the prefect that he will turn her over to him if what he says is true, Cynewulf actually gives him a speech to Heliseus, which praises him and promises loyalty before offering to turn over his daughter for whatever punishment he deems fitting. In Cynewulf's telling, Juliana's father even says to the prefect that he may execute her if he wishes.

It is not simply the emotional dynamics of speech that Cynewulf is underscoring here, but also the relationship dynamics between the narrative's characters are being exposed in a way that must have been at least somewhat unsettling to his Anglo-Saxon audience. Here is a mere girl who has clearly violated the established social order and defied two men who are in powerful positions (and we know they both expect to be obeyed). Despite the motive for her disobedience, her defiance is at once a spectacle and a very real political and cultural crisis. And yet, here is her father, who seems to cherish her on the one hand, while on the other he is plotting with a very wicked man to bring about the end of her life… and for a cause (Christianity) that this audience is at least nominally expected to respond positively to. The psychological tension in this scene is almost still palpable today. Even here, though, Cynewulf does not appear to be done with agitating our fluctuating emotional responses, for he also includes the detail, from the Latin source, that her father first approaches her with blandishments and an entreaty before turning to threats. Then he gives him a speech that at once brings to mind two very different views on the conflict: from one perspective it is carefully considered and even potentially prudent, but from another perspective it seems more like mere smooth talk designed to conceal a threat.

ðu eart dohtor min seo dyreste
ond seo sweteste in sefan minum,
ange for eorþan, minra eagna leoht,
Iuliana! þu on geaþe hafast
þurh þin orlegu unbiþyrfe
ofer witena dom wisan gefongen.
Wiðsæcest þu to swiþe sylfre rædes
þinum brydguman, se is betra þonne þu,
æþelra for eorþan, æhtspedigra
feohgestreona; He is to freonde god.
Forþon is þæs wyrþe, þæt þu þæs weres frige,
ece eadlufan, an ne forlæte.
(93 – 104: You are my daughter, the dearest and the sweetest in my heart, alone on earth the light in my eyes, Iuliana. you have in foolishness, through your unprofitable hostility, undertaken a course against wise men; you refuse too strongly and take your own counsel. Your betrothed, he is better than you, nobler with respect to land, richer in possessions; he is a good friend. Therefore, it is worthy that you should bless this man's love, forever, and not forsake it.)

These do not seem to be the words of a wicked man. Although Anglo-Saxon audiences hearing the poem would surely have understood that they were meant to side with the saint and her revolutionary fervor, there still must have been an emotional response to the threat her action posed to the traditional political and social order. It is as if Cynewulf were setting his audience up to experience emotionally the tension between two competing promises of order and stability, as if they were being asked to choose between two worldviews that were competing for supremacy in their hearts. In Juliana's answer to her father, she shifts gears, away from censure into poetic persuasion. She changes the register of her speech. Though her father, as Cynewulf has told us, is as sick with sin as Heliseus, she tries to coax him into seeing her point of view. She is disobedient, but not disrespectful. Of course, it does not work. He is more angered, but still she does not censure him or tell him that he will be visited with disasters, but only that his threats and punishments cause her no fear, nor will they persuade her to change her mind. She is telling him that the words she spoke are stronger than brute force. By now he is furious, ordering her to be scourged and telling her to change

her mind and take back the words she spoke before, when she scorned the worship of the gods. She simply tells him he will never teach her (*gelaeran*) to promise tribute to lies, deaf and dumb idolatry. She tells him he will never teach her to misuse words. Immediately after this, we are again given a glimpse into the father's emotional reaction:

> Eode þa fromlice fæmnan to spræce,
> anræd ond yfelþweorg, yrre gebolgen,
> þær he glædmode geonge wiste
> wic weardian.
> (89 – 92; He went boldly to speak to the maiden, resolute and wickedly antagonistic, swollen with rage, to where he knew the young girl of gentle mind was making her dwelling place.

And again, each time Juliana continues to defy him, we witness his rage:

> Hyre þa þurh yrre ageaf ondsware
> fæder feondlice, nales frætwe onheht:
> (117 – 18; Then to her, enraged, he gave answer in a hostile manner, the father, nor did he promise adornments.)

And also:

> Ða wæs ellenwod, yrre ond reþe,
> frecne ond ferðgrim, fæder wið dehter.
> (140 – 41; Then he was mad with rage, furious and fierce, terrible and savage in mind, father towards daughter.

Throughout the conflict between Juliana and her father and Heliseus, Cynewulf never shows her as having the same emotional impulses as them. Though at a later point she experiences the upheaval of fear, she is fearless of her human antagonists, and she is never seen to be angry or frustrated:

> Him seo unforhte ageaf ondsware
> þurh gæstgehygd, Iuliana:
> (147 – 48; She answered him, unafraid, out of her 'spiritual insight.')[191]

Cynewulf's heightened attention to emotional states even threatens to become overbearing as the conflict between Juliana and her superiors is drawn out for so long:

[191] "Spiritual insight" is Bradley's translation for *gæstgehygd*; see Bradley, *Anglo-Saxon Poetry*, 306.

> Hy þa þurh yrre Affricanus,
> fæder fæmnan ageaf on feonda geweald
> Heliseo.
> (158 – 59; Then Africanus, in his ire, the maid's father, gave her into the fiend's power, Heliseus.

The prefect, for his part, does not escape the poet's attention for long. After Juliana's last speech of defiance, the Latin gives us only this: "Audiens haec praefectus commutus iracundia iussit eam cedi." (4; Hearing this, having been moved to wrath, he ordered her to be taken away.) Cynewulf gives us more:

> Ða for þam folce frecne mode
> beotwordum spræc, bealg hine swiþe 185
> folcagende, ond þa fæmnan het
> þurh niðwræce nacode þennan,
> ond mid sweopum swingan synna lease.
> Ahlog þa se hererinc, hospwordum spræc:
> (184 – 89; Then before the people, fierce in mind, the leader spoke threats, greatly enraged himself, and ordered the maid, through severe punishment, to be stretched out naked, and beaten with scourges, though she was without sin. Then the warrior laughed, spoke words of contempt.)

The ferocity of his mood at this point is evident in the words Cynewulf puts in his mouth: "þis is ealdordom uncres gewynnes / on fruman gefongen!" (190 – 91; Thus is mastery in our struggle seized from the start!)

A Smooth-Tongued Devil

After Juliana is punished and thrown into jail, she is visited by a new enemy,[192] but the poet's intimate attention to the emotions of both protagonist and antagonist remains clear. Perhaps it is because the stakes have been raised, but Juliana's calm demeanor falls away. When the devil, in the guise of an angel, tells her of the punishments planned for her and that God has commanded her to spare herself, her fear and bewilderment are plainly evident. The *Passio*

[192] In Latin, he is identified as the demon Belial.

tells us only that Juliana first considers the messenger an angel and asks to know who he is: "Putabat Iuliana angelum fuisse et dicit illi: 'Tu quis es?' " (6; Juliana thought he was an angel and said to him: 'Who are you?'). Cynewulf's poem, however, tells us:

> Ða wæs seo fæmne for þam færspelle
> egsan geaclad, þe hyre se aglæca,
> wuldres wiþerbreca, wordum sægde.
> Ongan þa fæstlice ferð staþelian,
> geong grondorleas, to gode cleopian
> (267 – 71; Then was the virgin terrified with fear at the sudden message, what the evil creature, glory's adversary, told her with his words. Then the young innocent began swiftly to make her spirit steadfast, and called out to God.)

In both Latin and Old English, Juliana's prayer to God is filled with praise, but only Cynewulf also gives us a sense of her dread at the woeful news she's been given. In both stories, the answer comes to her immediately by way of a heavenly voice, which tells her to grab the messenger and hold him fast until he tells her the whole truth.

It is not so easy, upon casual reading, to tell the difference between the devil in Cynewulf's story from the devil in his source text. One part of the problem is that Cynewulf's poem is missing a great deal of text concerning the devil's speeches, which is due to missing leaves in the Exeter book manuscript. From what remains, we can tell that Cynewulf followed his source rather closely in this section of the poem. The first thing to notice, for our purposes here, is that both demons are master poet-rhetoricians. In the Latin, he speaks in a heighted and refined style that is not shared by the rest of the Latin *Passio*, marking him right away as a more dangerous enemy. His speech is rhythmical and full of poetic touches, like alliteration and *anaphora*, which elevate his confession into something more interesting than a recitation of facts, something more beguiling and potentially treacherous. He begins his confession with a series of balanced participial phrases that identify him in something like poetic terms: "Ego sum Iofer Niger, de malis malignus,

manibus oblectatus, homicidiis gaudens, amator luxuriae, amplectans pugnam, dissolvens pacem." (I am black Jopher, wicked in evil, delighted by fists, celebrator of murder, lover of extravagance, embracer of battle, dissolver of peace.) He then moves to a very long series of direct sentences detailing his actions, each beginning with a repeated formula, "ego sum qui feci":

> Ego sum qui feci Adam et Evam in Paradiso praevericare. Ego sum qui feci Abel interficiare fratre sua Cain. Ego sum qui feci omnem substantiam Job perire. Ego sum qui feci populum Israel in deserto idola venerari. Ego sum qui feci…
> (7; I am he who made Adam and Eve lie in Paradise. I am he who made Abel kill his brother Cain. I am he who made Job lose all his wealth. I am he who made the people of Israel venerate idols in the desert. I am he who …

In fact, the formula goes on for sixteen complete sentences, which detail a list of famous crimes, before the demon sums it up with this: "Ego ista omnia et alia deteriora feci cum fratribus meis" (7; I am the one who with my brothers made everything and everyone more degenerate.) In addition to these crimes, he has claimed credit for making Jerusalem burn, making Herod kill children, making the soldier with the lance puncture the side of Christ, making Nero crucify Peter and decapitate Paul, among other things. Though it is not likely anyone would argue that the writer of the *Passio* has hit any real poetic heights with such a mundane technique as the repetition of a single phrase, and there is even the case to be made that too much simple repetition without variation tends to vitiate the force one seeks to inculcate by repetition, but there is also the sense here that the extended use of a repeated formula tends to create a kind of rhythmic lulling to those listening to the recitation, and this lulling effect may have the result of glossing over or smoothing out the horror of the events and actions being narrated. This is precisely the kind of danger the devil represents in the Old English, too. In both texts the arrival of the demon on the scene represents a new phase in Juliana's struggle. He is a more dangerous enemy than either the father or the prefect exactly

because his skill with words has the power to alter perceptions and intentions. He can be persuasive. What may go without being noticed immediately is that both demons are also rhetoricians in terms of the main working method of being a demon—that is being a servant of evil. Although both claim at some point to have brought physical harm directly to humans, the main method of ruining saints and holy people is to corrupt them through persuasion and convince them to bring harm to themselves and others:

> Et ubi invenieremus prumptum ad opus Dei consistere, facimus eum desideria multa amplectere, convertentes animum eius ad ea quae adponimus ei, facientes errores in cogitationibus eius, et non permittimus illum vel in orationibus se adiuvare, neque in quodcumque opus bonum perseverare."
> (9; And when we have come upon someone eager to do the work of God, we make him embrace the many things he desires, turning his spirit toward those things we have placed in front of him, making errors in his judgment, and we do not permit him either to help himself in prayers, or to persevere in some other good work.)

In both Latin and Old English, the demon offers a litany of the famous and historical holy ones he has brought to perdition. Africanus and Heliseus are dangerous to Juliana, to be sure, but not so dangerous as the devil. They have power over her body but not her soul; they can torture her, even kill her, but they cannot force her, or persuade her, to submit. The devil that confronts her in her cell, however, seems to have the power of persuasion on his side. He has broken saints before, he tells her, by exploiting their weaknesses and turning their minds. Even at the moment where he seems to be truly on the losing side—physically confined and forced to tell her the truth—he is still sending a clear message: what hope could one lone girl have in the face of such skillful and conniving evil?

Cynewulf, for his part, gives this devil an even more poetic standard of self-expression, though his highly stylistic flourishes are also found in other places in the Old English poem. In the Old English, Cynewulf heightens both the *ethos* and the *pathos* of the scenes in the demon's confession by the manipulations of language. The Latin bears clear

marks of the simple, attenuated, almost flat colloquial speech that is distinctive of the *sermo humilis*, or plain style, in late antique Christina texts: the potentially dissipated force of extended *anaphora* without variation, the *pleonastic* use of pronouns and prepositions, such as "ego praeoccupavi," "ad Neronem," and "in regione," etc. The Old English, on the other hand, raises the stylistic register nearly to the level of *ornatus*, almost as if Cynewulf were composing in the grand style of Old English or Latin epic poetry. Although his translation of the first part of the confession—the litany of undescribed deeds beginning with *ego sum qui feci*—is missing from the manuscript, we can see the effect the poet is aiming at beginning with the devil's descriptions of his famous crimes:

> […] ealra cyninga cyning to cwale syllan.
> ða gen ic gecræfte þæt se cempa ongon
> Waldend wundian, (weorud to segon)
> þæt þær blod ond wæter bu tu ætgædre
> eorþan sohtun. Ða gen ic Herode
> in hyge bisweop þæt he Iohannes bibead
> heafde biheawan, ða se halga wer
> þære wiflufan wordum styrde,
> unryhtre æ. Eac ic gelærde
> Simon searoþoncum þæt he sacan ongon
> wiþ þa gecorenan Cristes þegnas,
> ond þa halgan weras hospe gerahte
> þurh deopne gedwolan, sægde hy dryas wæron.
> Neþde ic nearobregdum þær ic Neron bisweac,
> þæt he acwellan het Cristes þegnas,
> Petrus ond Paulus. Pilatus ær
> on rode aheng rodera Waldend,
> Meotud meahtigne minum larum.
> Swylce ic Egias eac gelærde
> þæt he unsnytrum Andreas het
> ahon haligne on heanne beam,
> þæt he of galgan his gæst onsende
> in wuldres wlite. Þus ic wraþra fela
> mid minum broþrum bealwa gefremede,
> sweartra synna, þe ic asecgan ne mæg,
> rume areccan, ne gerim witan,
> heardra heteþonca."
> (289 – 315; … to deliver the King of all kings to his slaughter. Then, moreover, I

> contrived that the soldier wounded the Lord (as the crowd looked on), so the blood and water both together sought the ground. Then also I incited Herod in his heart so that he commanded that John be beheaded, when the holy man rebuked with words his love for his wife, his unlawful marriage. I also persuaded Simon cunningly so that he strove to contend with the chosen servants of Christ, and with contumely attacked the holy men and, through profound error, said they were sorcerers. With evil tricks I dared to seduce Nero so that he ordered Christ's servants slaughtered, Peter and Paul. Before that Pilate hung the Ruler of Heaven on a cross, the mighty Lord, through my instructions. Likewise, I also persuaded Hegias to foolishly order that Andrew hang on a high tree, so that he sent forth his spirit from the gallows in a splendor of glory. Thus I, with my brothers, committed many wicked evils, black sins, that I may not narrate, nor relate fully, nor know the number of harsh, hateful thoughts.)

While Cynewulf has generally followed the sequence of the confession, he has expanded each item on the list in order to display more fully and vividly the *ethos* of both the demon and of his victims. Although the devil's *ethos* is tautological, the soldier, Herod, Simon, Nero, Pilate, and Hegias are all portrayed as willing participants in the persecution and deaths of Christian saints. They are corrupt and therefore corruptible by the devil's machinations. Especially noteworthy is Cynewulf's avoidance of any notion of possession in the case of Nero, removing any doubt about the emperor's own agency and participation in the murders of Peter and Paul.

The rigor of Cynewulf's presentation, the absolute clarity of the opposition of these characters to the heroine, and to God, is achieved by the amplification of *ethos*, consisting in the inclusion of those details of motivation and psychological characterization that make the crimes so compelling. Particularly effective exposition of the devil's own *ethos* is in the repeated use of adverbial modifiers like *nearobregdum* (with evil tricks), *searothancum* (cunningly), *minum larum* (by my instruction), and even the barely noticeable *swylce* (likewise) in line 307, which seems only to suggest the devil's pride at being able to keep adding items to his list. The *wraða fela* of the final segment of the passage, and the confessional *bealwa gefremede* are clear marks of *ethos* as well.

The details of this passage that express the *pathos* of the crimes, however, are even more compelling than those expressing *ethos*. In the first case there is *prosopopoeia*, or personification, in the description of the wounding of Christ, where the blood and water are said to have "sought the ground." Creating a vivid image, this stunning amplification of the soldier's act poignantly conveys the suffering of Christ's passion. The inclusion of *hyge*, meaning "heart" or "mind," in the incitation of Herod is a miniature testimony to the power of *pathos* to sway, since it expresses clearly the notion of Herod's inner participation in his crime, rather than the crime itself. The inclusion of Herod's motive for the crime personalizes it, suggesting the wrath John stirred up in him with his rebuke. The rebuke itself is described as an act accomplished *wordum*, "by words," clearly sustaining the motif of the power of eloquence that grounds the overall revision. The sanguine details Cynewulf included of Simon's crime suggest the intensity of Simon's envy: *he sacan ongon* (strove to contend), *hospe gerahte* (attacked with contumely), and *thurh deopne gedwolan* (through profound error). The powerful, vivid images evoked by certain verbs heightens *pathos*: the reappearance of the verb *acwellan* to describe Nero's "slaughter" of Peter and Paul, and the *aheng* of Pilate. The detail of Andrew sending forth his soul in line 310 is quite an affective addition to the episode of his hanging at the hands of Hegias.

Throughout this passage are tropes and figures that intensify the emotional effect and heighten the gracefulness and suppleness of the language. The familiar epithet *cyninga Cyning* is an example of *epitome*. There is the aforementioned *prosopopoeia* of the blood and water, which is a strikingly effective use of the pathetic fallacy. *Asyndeton* and *ellipsis* occur throughout the passage. This is largely because of the appositive clausal structure of Old English verse, but there is still something to be said about the poet's ability to harness these

effects to further heighten his other stylistic efforts. There is *paranomasia*, or word-play, with *rode* and *rodera* in line 305. *Anastrophe* in lines 309 – 310 in the separation of *Andreas* and *haligne* by the verb *het ahon*. The *heanne beam* of line 309 is most likely a *metaphor*. Finally, the phrase *ne gerim witan heardra heteþonce* (nor know the number of harsh, hateful thoughts) in the last lines certainly suggests *hyperbole*. Without doubt, the construction it takes part in, where the demon lists three escalating instances of what he cannot do—he cannot narrate, nor reckon fully, nor even know the number of—evokes the figure *climax*.

Juliana's Eloquence

The value of an affective eloquence is never highlighted or even mentioned by the Latin *passio* as a characteristic of the story's protagonist—or even as a motivating factor behind the story's narration. Eloquence is simply not part of that story. We have at this point, however, uncovered plenty of evidence to indicate that such a notion formed a very fundamental component of Cynewulf's rewriting of the story. At the end of the saint's confrontation with the devil in his retelling, moreover, there is something of a dead giveaway of the poet's intention to rely on affective eloquence as a motivator, when the devil actually calls Juliana eloquent and says that this is what has forced him to divulge his secrets and confess his many sins. The scholarship on the poem has witnessed a fair amount of attention being given to this quality of hers, as it appears to be a clear indication of a departure from the Latin version. For most critics of the poem, however, questions about the meaning of Juliana's eloquence have not been connected to the poet's choice to rely on a highly refined poetic style (in certain passages, at the least) to motivate his intended listeners to respond in specific ways to his retelling. For those critics who have ventured to look further into

Juliana's eloquence, its presence generally seems to have something to do with the question of Cynewulf's use of—and for some, his devaluation of—the "heroic" idiom of the secular Anglo-Saxon poetic tradition. There are also those who point to Juliana's power of speech as an aesthetically motivated reconstruction of her Latin persona. For certain, the presence of an uncommon power of speech as one of the qualities of Juliana's character reflects as much on the intrinsic role of eloquence in the native heroic Anglo-Saxon tradition as it does on the instrumental value of persuasive speech in the imported tradition of Latin rhetoric.

Anderson's treatment, which we have already glanced at, aims to show by close examination of Juliana's speeches how earlier critical attempts to claim the poet devalued the secular, heroic tradition were largely misguided. He argues instead that the opposition this kind of reading sets up between native heroic ethos and imported Christian *habitus* as a signifier of the opposition between the saint's holiness and the *gerefa*'s wickedness require a reductionist approach to a complex text.[193] Olsen follows Cherniss in claiming that Cynewulf uses heroic concepts in *Juliana* negatively, in order to highlight their inadequacy in comparison to Christian concepts and values, but she also concurs with Damico in acknowledging that many of the positive aspects of Juliana's character are figured in just such terms: she is "depicted as a Germanic 'ides'," her physical appearance is described as bright and radiant, and she is characterized by "sagacity of speech."[194] Further, Olsen argues that Cynewulf's purpose is to focus is on Juliana's words and the strength of mind they reveal, rather than on her physical actions, and that he omitted details of the narrative that did

[193] Anderson, *Cynewulf*.

[194] Alexandra H. Olsen, " 'Þe Þis Gied Wræce': Speech and Poetry in *Juliana*," in *Speech*, *Song*, *and Poetic Craft*, 83 – 112; Olsen is quoting from Michael D. Cherniss, *Ingeld and Christ: Heroic Concepts and Values in Old English Christian Poetry* (The Hauge: Mouton, 1972) as well as Helen Damico, "The Valkyrie Reflex in Old English Literature," *Allegorica* 5 (1980): 149 – 67.

not suit that purpose. By regarding the potential threat of poetic language to lead people astray as the uncomplicated gist of Cynewulf's amendments to his Latin source, Olsen does an injustice to the means by which the poet expresses the combined poetic allure and emotional power of commanding speech. She notices, for example, the special quality of the verb *hleoþrian*, which is used of the voice that comes from heaven to warn Juliana of the true nature of the devil that appears before her in an angel's form, but seems to underestimate its resonance in the poem: "Hyre stefn oncwæð, / wlitig of wolcnum, word hleoþrade" (282 – 83; a voice spoke out to her, beautiful from the heavens, resounded with these words). The Latin version has no such poetic lift: "Statimque vox facta est ad eam dicens…" (6; and immediately a voice came saying to her…). *Hleoþrian*, as Olsen observes, means to "make a sound with the voice." She also mentions its connotation of "singing" or "resounding," but passes on to tautological and theological aspects of its use here, neglecting important semantic connections: by characterizing the heavenly voice this way, Cynewulf aligns it with music and harmony, as in a song or the sound of instruments (*hleoþor*), lending the words of the heavenly reply (*word oncwæð*) an air of enchantment or beauty, which is affirmed by *wlitig*. This idea of musical, beautiful words also became a very common *metaphor* in Old English, just as it had the Latin tradition, for poetically or rhetorically crafted speech: *se hloðere* is glossed as *rethor* in the Old English Bede, in a reference to the Latin poet Prosper of Aquitane.[195] Olsen's translation of *word hleoþrade* here as "spoke the following speech," clearly falls short of the sense. In fact, the sense here seems to affirm the opposite of Olsen's assumption about poetic language, since it suggests the power of beautiful speech to uncover

[195] See Dictionary of Old English (Latin-Old English Glossaries: Holthausen 1917 290 – 92 'Die altenglischen Beda-Glossen,' *Archiv* 136: 290 – 92); and Bosworth & Toller: "*hleóþrere* (? v. *hleóþrian*), es; *m. A rhetorician* : —Se hloðere (hleóðrere ?, leóþere ? The gloss is: "Versibus heroicis Prosper *Rhetor* insinuat," Bd. l, 10; S. 48, 28) *rethor*, Txts. 180.

treachery rather than to conceal it.[196] Then there is the crux of it. By means of the same word, the devil aligns Juliana's power of speech to the beautiful speech of the heavenly voice that discloses his initial ruse:

> Hyre þæt deofol oncwæð:
> Nu ic þæt gehyre þurh þinne *hleoþorcwide*,
> þæt ic nyde sceal niþa gebæded
> mod meldian, swa þu me beodest,
> þreaned þolian.
> (460 – 464; To her the devil replied: 'Now I learn by hearing, through your resounding speech [eloquence; rhetoric], that I must needs, constrained by hate, tell my mind as you command me, [and] endure the punishing torment.')

The term *hleoþorcwide* appears only in Cynewulfian poetry: in *Christ II* (449) it refers to the speech of the angels who announced the birth of Christ; in *Phoenix* (393) it refers to the speech of God, as an appositive for *eces word*; in *Andreas* it refers to the speech of one of the saint's disciples, who tells the saint of their miraculous experience. In the Latin version, there is no such moment, although the devil certainly curses Juliana for her power over him. When the devil in Juliana's story aligns her speech with the speech that comes out of heaven, that comes from the mouths of only the holy, this is an admission of defeat. There must have been a joyous reaction among the members of Cynewulf's audience. How could there not have been? They had just witnessed a triumph. To be sure, this is not the triumph that counts in eschatological terms. That final victory is the whole point of the poem, and is the final token of the saint's worthiness, but that other victory, the triumph unto death, has the quality of inevitability—indeed it is a generic requirement—and it is difficult to be passionate about the inevitable. It is these other, preliminary victories, first over Helesius and Affricanus, and then over the devil, that provide the story's emotional momentum. Bjork notes that the speeches of the saint's interlocutors are ordered by a "gradual heightening of the persecutor's

[196] Olsen, *Speech, Song, and Poetic Craft*, 92.

linguistic sophistication," and he opposes to this the consistent control and balanced dignity of Juliana's own formal addresses.[197] This arc is intended to captivate audiences and raise the stakes of the unfolding drama, enlisting all of their rising passions toward one clear message: it is good to be a warrior for Christ. In this version of the story, when the final sword stroke comes, the saint's death only becomes the final sign of a triumph well prepared for and hard won.

A Clash of Perspectives

Frederick summarizes current scholarship on *Juliana* by exploring the frequently-repeated verdict that Cynewulf goes beyond merely imitating the style of Old English heroic poetry, as clearly as he moves beyond simply recreating his Latin source. She too concludes that the work indeed surpasses a mere fusion of Christian and Germanic traditions. He has, she writes:

> shaped the legend to his own purposes using several strategies. His broadest means to his ends are to omit details than an Anglo-Saxon audience would not have found pertinent and to elaborate sections that would have enhanced the poem's relevance and appeal."[198]

If the overall plan is to construct a poem that acts successfully on the minds of his Anglo-Saxon audience, it need not be argued that Cynewulf's broad means ought to be incorporated

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[197] Bjork, *The Old English Verse Saints' Lives*, 46ff. Bjork's purpose in this chapter is to show that Juliana's linguistic power is a symbolic concomitant of the superior truth of her cause: "The saint's linguistic consistency, the fusing of her words and deeds, indicates her spiritual stability. . ." (49).

[198] Jill Frederick, "Warring with Words: Cynewulf's *Juliana*," in *Readings in Medieval Texts: Interpreting Old and Middle English Literature*, ed. David Johnson and Elaine Treharne (Oxford University Press, 2005), 61 – 74, 63.

and understood within a primarily rhetorical perspective.[199] But what exactly is he enhancing the poem's relevance and appeal to? To give the straightforward answer—his audience—is to say very little, unless we have a better picture of the pertinent structures of those minds, and can see what they provided him as the available means of persuasion. Critics have frankly not troubled themselves enough over the character and likely mental disposition of Cynewulf's audience, assuming as they have a generic consistency of attitude and custom wherever Christianity can be assumed as a primary qualification of Anglo-Saxon audiences. Read rhetorically, the poem may indeed tell a different story. Frederick offers an expanded list of the most commonly observed original aspects of the Old English poem; if we understand these aspects to be the paths to the poet's rhetorical agenda, and not, as is too frequently assumed, his objective, we may indeed see a closer reflection of his audience. Among the list of the poem's achievements, all of which have been observed and scrutinized elsewhere, Frederick offers: the exaggerated qualities of the main characters, especially in Juliana and Heliseus, and the heightened contrast between them, strengthening the "underlying Christian motif, the cosmic struggle between good and evil"; the greater emphasis on the verbal contest between Juliana and the devil, which "gives greater weight and definition to the larger spiritual battle"; and the calculated use of the Anglo-Saxon social construct of *dryht* (the relationship between leader and retainer) to give "dramatic tension and irony" to the narrative.[200]

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[199] Frederick's treatment confirms that the *rhetorical meaning* of Cynewulf's work continues to be a critical objective, but the point has been made more explicitly by others: see, e.g., Daniel G. Calder, "The Art of Cynewulf's *Juliana*," *Modern Language Quarterly* 34 (1973): 355 – 71, and *idem*, *Cynewulf*; Joseph S. Wittig, "Figural Narrative in Cynewulf's *Juliana*," *Anglo-Saxon England* 4 (1975): 37 – 55, repr. in Bjork, *Cynewulf: Basic Readings*, 147 – 70; and Bjork, *The Old English Verse Saint's Lives*.

[200] Frederick, "Warring with Words," 63. The prominent appearance of these elements in the very last scene of the narrative—the heightened contrast between triumphant and defeated characters, the spiritual dimensions

These alone might be enough to demonstrate Cynewulf's ability to focus his poetic resources toward a deliberate, rhetorical outcome, but Frederick notices that beyond these, and beyond the poet's careful attention to patterns of poetic imagery, lies something deeper:

> woven throughout Cynewulf's language in *Juliana* is the juxtaposition of perspective corrupted and truth discerned that characterizes the battle between pagan and Christian, which moves the struggle between individuals—however one-dimensional they might be perceived to be—onto the cosmic level."[201]

The observation of juxtaposed vantage points within the poem appears to be a new wrinkle in *Juliana* criticism, and it is important because it suggests that the poet is offering his audience more than just the one-sidedness of a triumphalist Christian point of view. The poetic doubling of consciousness within the narrative framework is a "deep" rhetorical strategy to enlist the emotions of the audience in the process of persuasion, since the attitudes on display here are epistemic alternatives in conflict, that is to say they are human perspectives, which always have an emotional valence. The fact that one of these perspectives is "corrupted" cannot obscure the fact it belongs to someone, that it is realized by characters in a drama. It is evidence of the possibility of seeing things differently, and this contingency indicates that the poet is not merely supplying the judgments to be made, but is asking—maybe even requiring—his audience to participate in the process of making them.[202] As we shall see, this juxtaposition is brought to light by the poet's aesthetic framing, the fluent construction of poetic structure in which the *dramatis personae* can act out their perspectives through the conflict of rhetorically opposed discourse. The manufacturing of epistemic alternatives is part

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invoked by the metaphors for hell, and the use of *dryht*—all provide further evidence that *æpplede gold* is the key symbol of the poet's rhetorical plan.

[201] *Ibid*.

[202] The fact that so many critics, Frederick among them, have been lead so effortlessly to this judgment may be the best testimony of Cynewulf's rhetorical skill: it seems perfectly natural to conclude that Juliana's perspective is one of "truth discerned," but we should note that the author of the Latin *passio* never offered so explicitly the potential for divergent opinion.

of a rhetorical-poetic effect, one that exceeds the scope of any imputed didacticism or theological clarification: it is meant to be persuasive rather than simply edifying, so its signifying effect must go beyond an intellectualized assent to a narrow proposition. It must exceed simple moral dialectic and gain the kind of adherence that is manifested in interest, awareness, and action.

***Dryht*: Irony and Solidarity**

Returning briefly to the final narrative moment of *Juliana*, in which Heliseus and his company of *thegns* are left defeated and wandering in search of hell, we must observe what force Cynewulf's *transumptio*, his *æpplede gold*, derives from the litotic manner of the lines in which it occurs (683a – 88b): the troop of men who followed the persecutor Heliseus had no need to expect (*ne þorftan þa þegnas . . . wenan*) that they would receive rings, and "appled gold" (*beagas þegon, æpplede gold*). Readers of Old English poetry are familiar with the patterns of ironic exaggeration, usually labeled "understatement," that frequently occur in the poems. That "gloomy home" (683) and "dark pit" (684) we encounter may be the dark hold of a ship on its final voyage to hell, verbally converted into an erstwhile mead hall. Among the many valuable things these men no longer "have need of" there is the power of eloquence. More likely, *þystran ham* and *neolan scraefe* refer to hell itself, which those companions were said to have sought out in the previous sentence. If it is hell, and we recognize it as the devil's mead hall, then we are within the power of a much greater understatement. "The common type of understatement in Old English," writes Bracher, "is

achieved by the use of a negation: the denial of the opposite."[203] He also remarks that understatement is used "on occasion to express quantity, measure, and degree,"[204] and we can see that use at work in lines (683 – 88). That is, the poet's ironic affirmation Juliana's eloquence is accomplished through the total negation of her enemies' own powers of speech; the utter frustration of their need for *æpplede gold* is meant to confer an even greater degree of power and value on Juliana's eloquence than is directly expressed. It is from this irony that we should understand the evaluative inversion that follows, when the poet confirms his message by announcing the saint's triumph and praying for her aid—and citing his own imminent journey to the afterlife as the cause of his need for it.[205]

Retainers receiving gold in the mead hall is a common type-scene of the heroic tradition. As such, it is supposed to work to restate and reaffirm the core values of the traditional heroic ethos. Following Cherniss, who argues that Cynewulf uses traditional heroic values in *Juliana* as a foil to emphasize by contrast the values of his Christian heroine,[206] Olsen observes the relative scarcity of heroic type-scenes in *Juliana*, compared with the other signed poems of Cynewulf.[207] She claims that this scene (which is actually

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[203] Frederick Bracher, "Understatement in Old English Poetry," *PMLA* 52 (1937); 915 – 34; repr. in *Essential Articles for the Study of Old English Poetry*, ed. Jess B. Bessinger, Jr., and Stanley J. Kahrl (Hamden, CT: Archon, 1968), 228 – 54, 228). This is also the typical definition of the classical rhetorical form *litotes*.

[204] Bracher, "Understatement," 231.

[205] Cynewulf's *conquestio* (plea for mercy) is clearly a traditional rhetorical form, most often used in a peroration to inspire emotion. In this light, it may be instructive to notice how Cynewulf anticipates a disruption of unity to reinforce the pathos of his bid for the saint's compassion: in the lines immediately following this passage (688 – 99), the poet seeks to sway the saint to safeguard his own salvation while he looks ahead to the day when his soul will depart from his body, and the "sibbe toslitað sinhiwan tu" ("the united pair will dissolve their kinship"). Jehle refers us to the *De inventione* (1.55.106 – 109) where Cicero recommends the *conquestio* be effected by means of commonplaces—such as the separation of lovers—and she comments that *sinhiwan tu*, "originally a 'pair related by marriage' is a striking *periphrasis* for 'body and soul'." (Dorothy Jehle, *Latin Rhetoric in the Signed Poems of Cynewulf*, 78 – 9.)

[206] Cherniss, *Ingeld and Christ*.

[207] Olsen, *Speech, Song, and Poetic Craft*, 83 – 112.

combined with another common type-scene, the 'sea voyage') is supplied by Cynewulf to demonstrate the failure of the heroic ideal: "Cynewulf uses the type-scene to remind us of the normal actions of the epic hero. The type-scene, is therefore, one of the ways in which Cynewulf depicts Heliseus as villainous in part because he is heroic."[208] But this conclusion falls short once we have observed the poet's ironic turn on this traditional element. It is, in fact, not the presence of the type-scene itself, as Olsen suggests, but the inverted perspective we are given on it that creates the implied evaluation. In other words, it is not the nature of their heroic ethos that damns these men, but the quality of it, as demonstrated by the path they take to maintain it. They have had a choice all along.

At the end, it is the futility of their state, expecting what will never come in a situation where it usually does come—indeed, where an audience, too, might have expected it to come—that shows us the futility of opposing the saint's purpose, the might and merit of Christian apostolic mission, which is to persuade others to make a different choice. Thus, this last episode is not a demonstration of the vanity of the Anglo-Saxon hero *ethos* in the face of Christianity, but rather a showing of the emptiness of such an *ethos* in the absence of a larger, Christian purpose. One does not compete with God, nor did Heliseus and his men ever have any chance of defeating his saint and worldly stand-in. The have struggled against divine decree because they have been unable to see the cosmic scope of the conflict in which they have been engaged (until it is too late).

The result of their struggling is characterized at the end of the narrative not by our sense of their defeat, but by their own sense of being lost. The *litotes* in those lines inverts the normal outcome of the mead hall type-scene, and so it works immediately to affirm the value of, and the need for, the great power in eloquence and wisdom for those who would not

[208] *Ibid*., 84.

be so lost. Rather than denying the traditional Anglo-Saxon heroic ethos as a value, the poet is here reorienting it by recognizing it as an impulse that still requires a choice. Motive is not outcome, and the virtue of the warrior code depends on the ends toward which it is directed. We should read these lines as Cynewulf's active, poetic intervention between his Latin source and his Anglo-Saxon audience—not simply a trotting-out of traditional formulas, but a fundamentally and self-consciously rhetorical stratagem. It is not power his audience lacks, but direction and motivation.

As O'Brien O'Keeffe explains, "the ethos of heroic life pervades Old English literature, marking its conventions, imagery and values."[209] But that ethos also marked the tones and cadences of Old English poetry, pervaded its rhythms and registers. In poetry, at least, the character of the hero still had the appearance of a living thing for Cynewulf's Anglo-Saxon audience, and some vital concept of eloquence had always been a component of that ethos. It seems unlikely that Cynewulf could have found a better way to recalibrate older heroic attitudes and redirect them toward a newer Christian purpose than to use the power of speaking as his bridge. Warrior treasure was a valuable gift to give, as it was to receive. The *transumptio* in *aepplede gold* is a like a golden gift from poet to audience. By marking eloquence with the tokens of such an important transaction, Cynewulf is emulating the figure of Juliana he has just created, and forging a bond between himself and his audience.

[209] Katherine O'Brien O'Keeffe, "Heroic Values and Christian Ethics," in *The Cambridge Companion to Old English Literature*, ed. Malcom Godden and Michael Lapidge (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 107 – 125, 107.

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