The Genre of Logic and Artifice:
Dialectic, Rhetoric, and English Dialogues 1400–1600,
Hoccleve to Spenser

by

Judith A. Deitch

A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
Graduate Department of English
University of Toronto

© by Judith A. Deitch 1998
The author has granted a non-exclusive licence allowing the National Library of Canada to reproduce, loan, distribute or sell copies of this thesis in microform, paper or electronic formats.

The author retains ownership of the copyright in this thesis. Neither the thesis nor substantial extracts from it may be printed or otherwise reproduced without the author’s permission.
Abstract

This study examines the genre of dialogue in English across a two-century period in order to investigate both the complexities of the literary form and the transition from medieval to Renaissance. After a review of the scholarship on dialogue, Chapter 1 makes the argument for a "dialectical" literary history as the theoretical foundation. Such a historical method accounts for contextualizing dialogue in two of the language arts of the university curriculum: dialectic and rhetoric. A third section places dialogue within current discussions of genre theory, differentiating it from drama, although the two forms share the same "situation of enunciating."

In Chapter 2, still part of the "orientation" of the study, early English dialogues are contextualized within institutional educational practices. Centring on an exposition of Reginald Pecock's Donet, dialogue is linked to literacy from the elementary stages through the most advanced type of debate--from catechism and primer through disputation. In this period, the conscious mind was structured like a dialogue.

Chapters 3 and 4 are comparative case studies taking one dialogue from each century. Chapter 3 deals with dialogues on death and dying. Thomas Hoccleve's Lerne to Dye, which inculcates a dialectical method of self-examination in the reader, is compared with Thomas More's Dialogue of Comfort, which uses dialectic to support the unity of reason and faith in the praeparatio ad mortem. Chapter 4 compares two dialogues of advice to the prince: Alain Chartier's Freende and Felaw, which explores the responsibilities of the public intellectual--the vox politica--to the common weal; and Edmund Spenser's Vewe of the present state of Irelande which engages "Machiavellian rhetoric" with its argument in utramque partem to both appropriate and subvert ideology. In each of the five dialogues, the interlocutors' positioning is found to be highly complex. Fifteenth-century dialogues reveal a strong rationalist tendency in a period known for the "waning" of intellectualism; sixteenth-century dialogues reveal continuities with the preceding era, dissecting points of view through the many-sidedness of this "genre of doubt."
Come now, and let us reason together...

-- Isaiah 1:18
Acknowledgements

The biblical admonition to put one's house in order requires here the not unpleasant task of expressing gratitude to all those who accompanied me on the long journey to completion. First of all I would like to dedicate this work to my supervisor, E. Ruth Harvey, whose transformation from skepsis to belief was the single most motivating force along the way. Her assurance one afternoon in the Warburg Institute, "It's waiting for you," became a touchstone when confidence lagged. Of the others who walked with me down this road I want to thank Joan Gibson for giving me many opportunities for sharing thoughts on more than Renaissance dialogues; Patricia Vicari for fostering my work; Alan Bewell for bringing me to realize the need for a theoretical foundation; and Ian Dennis who taught me to say, "Today is the first day of the rest of my thesis." My father, Dr. Daniel Deitch, and my husband, Ernst van der Sloot, gave me their unqualified support. Of the friends who cared for my intellectual, scholarly, professional and personal well-being, Mary Catherine Davidson, Goran Stanivukovic, Linda Hutjens, Justin Lewis, and Jane Couchman must be named. Mrs. Joan Harvey extended hospitality during a research trip to England. Financial assistance for my research was provided by: the Ontario Graduate Scholarship; the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada; Victoria College, University of Toronto; and the School of Graduate Studies Travel Grant, University of Toronto.
Table of Contents

PART I: ORIENTATION

Preface vii

1 Introduction: Context, Theory, Method 1
   I. The state of scholarship on medieval and Renaissance English dialogue 1
      Dialogue bibliographies 9
      Dialogue classifications 11
   II. Historical method and the theory of literary history 20
      The history of literary history 22
      Epistemology of "the referent" 27
      New Historicism? 33
      "Dialectical" literary history 41
      A prospective epistemology for literary history 45
   II. The genre of dialogue 53
      Current theory of genre 58
      Genera mixta 62
      Genera historica 63
      Is dialogue a genre? 67
      The mode dialogismus vs. the genre dialogue 75

2 From "Donet" to Disputation: Reginald Pecock's Dialogues and Educational Practice in the Middle Ages and Renaissance 84
   Primary forms of literacy: the "donet" and dialogue 84
   Pecock's educational program 86
   Pecock's Donet and dialogue grammars 93
   Questions and answers in educational dialogues 99
   "ffadir" and "sone" in Donet and disputation 112
   The Donet, disputation, and syllogistic argument 124

PART II: CASE STUDIES

3 Dialectic and Dialogues of Dying, Death and Self-Comfort: Thomas Hoccleve and Thomas More 134
   Dialectic and dialogue 142
   I. Hoccleve's How to Lerne to Dye: dialogue, death, self-comfort 145
      From death to the art of dying 145
      The spiritual education of the self in Lerne to Dye 149
   Dialogue as method 159
II. Thomas More's Dialogue of Comfort: a gymnastic dialogue of the self 164
   Placing Thomas More: between medieval and humanist 164
   Death and the construction of the ethical self in More and Hoccleve 171
   More's gymnastic dialogue 173
   Dialectic and suicide in Book II: aporetic reasoning in dialogue 176
   Faith and reason in Book III 184

4 Rhetoric and the Dialogue of Political Persuasion: 191
   Alain Chartier and Edmund Spenser
   Rhetoric and politics in the Middle Ages and Renaissance 191
   Dialogue and the "author's mouthpiece" 198

I. Chartier, dialogue, and the rhetoric of political advice 207
   Freende and Felaw: authority and interlocution 214
   Freende and Felaw: the role of the intellectual and the politics of advice 222

II. Reclaiming Spenser's Vewe of the present state of Irelande as dialogue 232
   Ireniues and Eudosius: interlocutors in dialogue 238
   Directing and objecting: a formalist description of Eudosius's role 245
   Advice to the prince and "Machiavellian rhetoric" in the Vewe 253

Conclusion 266

Bibliographies 273
   Abbreviations 273
   Primary Sources 274
   Secondary Sources 280
PART I: ORIENTATION

Preface

Antiquum morem dialogorum...si quis hoc tempore praecptis litterarum includere, atque ad aliquam artis rationem revocare velit, rem ille meo judicio aggrediatur difficilem, ac multis partibus impeditam. Etenim si considerare attente, & contemplari diligenter voluerit, profecto paucas artes, ac disciplinas inveniet, quae tam multis ad tractandum sint obstructae difficultatibus, quam quae in figendis sermonibus, quemadmodum dialogus, occupantur.

[Whoever should desire at this time to include the ancient custom of dialogue within the precepts of literature, or to place it within a system of the arts, would, in my opinion, enter into a difficult business, and encounter obstacles on many sides. Even if he were to consider closely and to contemplate carefully, he would find that there are really few arts or disciplines which are obstructed in their treatment by so many difficulties as this one which is occupied in forming discourse in the manner of the dialogue.]¹

Beginning an analysis of dialogues today calls for an awareness of obstructions and difficulties just as it did when Carlo Sigonio penned these opening words of the dedicatory epistle to his De dialogo liber in the mid-sixteenth century. Their sentiment--not only of the difficulty of assessing and contextualizing dialogue within a framework of literary history and language arts, but also of the implied absence of previous attempts (Sigonio is consciously trying to fill a gap

¹ Carlo Sigonio, De dialogo liber in quo de personis, de locis, ac tempore scribendi dialogi vocatis ad examen antiquorum philosophorum auctoritatibus, elegantissime disserit, Opera Omnia, ed. Ludovico Antonio Muratoria, vol. 6. (Milan, 1737) 432. Translation mine.
left by Aristotle's Poetics)--has been echoed periodically when the need to theorize dialogue resurges. Thus Dryden, writing 150 years later, laments that the whole art of dialogue "wou'd ask an entire Volume to perform"; it is a work "long Wanted, and much desir'd, of which the Ancients have not sufficiently inform'd us," and, he goes on to say, "I question whether any Man, now living, can treat it accurately."² At about the same time in France, Rémond de Saint-Mard wrote prefatory to his own discussion of the genre, "the nature of dialogue has never been recognized; this is the destiny of simple things."³ In 1886 Victorian scholar C.H. Herford echoed these sentiments with regard to the neglect of the polemical dialogues of the sixteenth century as he set about to remedy the situation with his admirable discussion:

The history of these remarkable works has never, to my knowledge, been written. They had suffered the fate to which a hybrid genre is always liable but which it does not invariably merit, of being neglected by both the classes to whom it partially appeals. Lying between the purely dogmatic treatise, on the one hand, and the professed drama on the other, they have proved too doctrinal for the men of literature, too literary for the


³ "La Nature du Dialogue n'a jamais été éclaircie. C'est la Destinée des choses simples." From Discours sur la nature du dialogue (1713), quoted and translated by Jon Snyder, Writing the Scene of Speaking: Theories of Dialogue in the Late Italian Renaissance (Stanford, Ca.: Stanford UP, 1989) 1.
men of doctrine. 4

In this century, and in recent years, literary scholars and critics, as well as historians who have ventured to work on the subject, again note the absence of a coherent scholarly discussion of the form; often this leads them to call for further work on dialogue. Thus in 1972 Francis Lee Utley in his bibliography of Middle English "Dialogues, Debates, and Catechisms" stated "that almost every poem in this chapter provides major challenges to the investigator." 5 In 1990, in the same field of Middle English debate poetry, Thomas L. Reed, Jr. noted that "it is at the very least surprising that so few studies of the many and varied pre-modern--and especially medieval--exemplars of the genre have been produced." His own critical study, he says, as a full-length survey in English of the genre during the Middle Ages, is without known precedent. 6 Just five years earlier in 1985, K.J. Wilson marked the gaps in dialogue scholarship and contended that it is not only English dialogue which demands scholarly attention: "The whole question of the continuity of


6 Thomas L. Reed, Jr., Middle English Debate Poetry and the Aesthetics of Irresolution (Columbia: U of Missouri Press, 1990) 1 and 1 n.2.
dialogue in the first millennium and the Middle Ages still awaits a comprehensive historical analysis"; and again, "The topic of the continuity of postclassical dialogue--which includes (1) Christian debates, (2) early questions and answers, and (3) the medieval colloquy--awaits a full-scale historical study." In a monograph on Thomas Starkey published in 1989, historian T.F. Mayer declares this absence of modern critical resources on dialogue to extend into the Renaissance: "The study of sixteenth-century dialogue--whether English or continental--is in its infancy, despite the long-standing recognition of the humanist predilection for political dialogue in particular." Fellow historian Peter Burke corroborates this stance in a seminal article issued in the same year:

The trouble is that the Renaissance dialogue is rarely studied as a whole. As a period phenomenon it is still somewhat undervalued, even if specific examples of the genre are admired and taken seriously. It is worth reflecting for a moment on the number and importance of the texts of the period which take this form...

as his brief survey goes on to do. Most recently, Virginia Cox writing in 1992 shares the opinion that dialogue is recognized

---


but never discussed:

Though it is generally acknowledged to be one of the most characteristic literary forms of the Renaissance, the dialogue remains curiously invisible in the literary history of the period. A small number of isolated masterpieces have, of course, attracted their share of attention, but there have been few attempts to grasp the phenomenon of literary dialogue as a whole, and what critical observation there has been has all too often been limited to vague diagnoses of the dialogic Zeitgeist of the age.¹⁰

Cox goes on to decry the continued "lack of any substantial and coherent theoretical discussion of the genre" three centuries after Dryden.¹¹

Each one of these scholars, with the addition of perhaps an equal number again, has contributed significantly to our present understanding of dialogue, but confusion and repetition in covering the same ground persists, as does the profound sentiment of having only just scratched the surface. Awareness of dialogue literature today in either medieval or Renaissance studies is extremely low, with many scholars not even bothering to register the form of the dialogue works they have read. Among specialists on dialogue, divided by widely differing national traditions, consensus is lacking and discussion is too isolated and sporadic to even establish basic premisses, even though independently there is a certain amount of agreement.

One dissertation can hardly hope to fill these gaps, but

¹⁰ Cox xi.
¹¹ Cox 1.
it can make a contribution by presenting a new approach and redefinition of the problems surrounding the topic of dialogue in early- and pre-modern Europe. This study is indebted to and will build upon the work of the past which has started to shift the examination of dialogue literature away from taxonomies and schemes of classification, or the compilation of bibliographies (which, however, were all vital for initial organization of the subject), towards a more considered exposition of the matter of its discourse; in short, a shift from form to content. By grouping dialogues broadly along discursive lines, by asking whether dialogue attracts certain subjects to itself, whether there is a thematics of dialogue and not as might seem to be the case that dialogues could be written on anything, but rather positing topical constraints, the present project will attempt to enlarge the parameters of the scholarly discussion.

The purpose of this study is two-fold: to argue that dialogues constitute a literary genre in their own right within a literary historical context, and to investigate the inflections of this genre across a finite historical period. Both the literary form and era are under examination. In a certain way, the constant "genre" enables a reconsideration of the construct "period." The transition from medieval to Renaissance, or from pre- to early-modern, is, like the study of dialogues, long overdue for re-examination. It is the intention here that a consideration of dialogues across two
centuries seldom yoked together in English studies will cast up insights into the continuities and discontinuities between the Middle Ages and the Renaissance--two periods urgently in need of reassessment in relation to one another. As the recent coining of the phrase "early modern" makes clear in merely replicating the same division, this seems to be one institutional construct which is exceedingly difficult to escape. Like substituting "C.E." for "A.D.," the new terminology leaves questions of the basis of period division unanswered or even unasked.\(^{12}\)

In another way, of course, genre itself is anything but a stable or constant "given"; it is as susceptible to change and fluctuation, as problematic as periodicity. To examine the inflections of the dialogue genre is the major object of this study. But first dialogues, often dismissed as proto-drama or non-literary in form, need to be clarified in literary-generic

\(^{12}\) I am tempted to try "Medaissance" not only to underline the problem, but to free my prose from the cumbersome double-barreled nomenclature otherwise required for the period 1400-1600. Ernst Robert Curtius could write fifty years ago with more optimism on scholarly progress with the problem of periodicity than could be felt today: "Antiquity, the Middle Ages, the Modern Period are names for three epochs of European history--names which are scientifically 'preposterous' (Alfred Dove) but indispensable for mutual comprehension on the practical level. The most meaningless of them is the concept of the Middle Ages--a coinage of the Italian Humanists and only comprehensible from their point of view. Concerning the limits of these periods, and the problem of periodization in general, there has been much controversy. The discussion has been fruitful insofar as it has cast a clearer light on certain less well-explored epochs." European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages, trans. Willard R. Trask (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton UP, 1953) 20.
terms, and I will be making the explicit argument that dialogues are a genre.

Although I may be the first to see this as requiring a full discussion, I am not the first to insist on this distinction. Despite his opening caveat, or in order to show himself as an adept, Sigonio completed his treatise and perhaps thought to have laid the problem of theorizing dialogue to rest. His opening implicitly suggests two points which relate to my project. First, regarding genre (and this is not as insignificant as it may seem), for Sigonio there is no question but that there is a body of works which can be classed as dialogues; that is, that the matter for study exists—there are things called dialogues (and as Aristotle said, there can be no science without an existing subject matter). Since Utley identifies 76 major kinds of dialogues—some with numerous variants—in Middle English, even while excluding works by authors important enough to merit their own bibliographical chapter such as Chaucer, Gower, Usk, Lydgate, and Chartier; and Deakins, Day, and Crawford identify several hundreds for sixteenth-century England, one might say that there is even a very large field of endeavour (certainly on the basis of numbers alone dialogue would rank higher than epic and perhaps even pastoral or tragedy).¹³

In the passage cited Sigonio refers to the *mos dialogorum* (the habit, manner, or custom of writing dialogues), which is an *ars* and *disciplina*, belonging to the larger domain of literature. Second, then, as the use of the word *ars* makes clear, and as he expounds in the work, dialogue belongs to what the early- and pre-modern period would define as two of the language arts: rhetoric and dialectic. Again, this is something that has frequently been said about dialogue but will be subjected here to renewed consideration as an intellectual milieu—an historical context for the writing of dialogues, though not strictly assignable to the university arts course rules. Rhetoric and dialectic, like medieval and Renaissance, are usually relegated to separate studies. I will argue that the particular development and prominence of these two language arts underlies the validity of the study of dialogue in this period. Rather than let this stand as a vague indication of dialogic Zeitgeist, it is a part of this work which is to be proven.

After a brief but more detailed prospectus of the scholarship to date on dialogues, part one of the project begins with a discussion of the theoretical framework and methodological practices to be employed here in an effort to foreground assumptions as much as possible and make clear aims of Renaissance dialogues.

14 Sigonio also links dialogue to poetics, but ignores the third language art, grammar, in his theorizing.
and objectives, as well as to insert this work squarely within a context of scholarship. The rationale for an historical approach to dialogue, in light of the current discussion of literary history and historicism(s) is paired with an examination of genre theory and its application to literary works. Since dialogue is a concept that has found extensive resonance in the twentieth century it may be of great interest now to explore what a period of prolific dialogue writing produced. This modern interest, however, can lead to the use of the term dialogue in a sometimes vague and indiscriminate way: if everything is "dialogue" it attenuates the term so that there is no place for the things of the past themselves, and we are reduced to the not uncommon irony of charging dialogues with being "undialogic." The historical grounding of this study attempts to work toward a vision of how the literary genre of dialogue would have been defined when it was a prominent and hugely practiced form, rather than starting from modern assumptions: be they those of Bakhtin, Buber, Rorty, linguistics, language theory, or any other abstract theory of the dialogic. Hence the importance of both the historical approach and the concept of genre.

The second chapter of Part I establishes the educational context for dialogue-writing in the chosen two-century period and centres on a discussion of Reginald Pecock's Donet, which ties in institutional practices from grammars through university disputations.
Part II of the dissertation is divided into two chapters, one linking dialogue and dialectic, the other dialogue and rhetoric. Each of the two case studies compares a dialogue of the fifteenth century with a dialogue of the sixteenth century. Under dialectic, chapter three focuses on the thematics of death in dialogue literature comparing Thomas Hoccleve's *How to Lerne to Dye* and Thomas More's *Dialogue of Comfort against Tribulation*. Under rhetoric, chapter four examines political persuasion or advice to the prince in "dialogues of council," and compares the English translation of Alain Chartier's *A famylyer Dyaloge of the Freende and the Felaw* with Edmund Spenser's *A vewe of the present state of Irelande*.

Many kinds of dialogues and many topics that dialogues represent are not included in this outline, the largest segment being dialogues of religious controversy which truly merit a study of their own. A projected chapter on the matter of women in dialogue, and one on interclass debate or estates dialogue had to be omitted because of length limits.¹⁵ None

¹⁵ The chapter on women would have included Thomas Elyot's *Defense of Good Women* and Edmund Tilney's *Flowre of Friendship* from the sixteenth century, and Dunbar's *Twa Mariit Wemen*, pastourell, and bird debates from the fifteenth. The chapter on interclass debate would focus on Sir Thomas Smith's *Discourse of This Realm of England*, with reference to Lydgate's *Horse, Goose, and Sheep*, and a variety of others which deal in estates satire, such as Robert Greene's *Quip for an Upstart Courtier*. For a discussion of class in Elizabethan dialogue literature see my "'Dialoguewise': Discovering Alterity in Elizabethan Dialogues," in *Other Voices, Other Views: Expanding the Canon in English Renaissance Studies*, ed. Helen Ostavich, Graham Roebuck, and Mary Silcox (U of Delaware
of the divisions in this study stand for any absolute classification; the argument is rather that they retain a utility as a provisional classification of the subject matter which can be an aid to thinking about dialogues and dialogue-production at a particular historical moment, before and through the rise of printing. Four hundred years after Sigonio many difficulties remain which obstruct a clear understanding of the mos dialogorum; yet delightfulness and intrinsic value, if not the mere proliferation of these works, requires of us that we try to clear away some of the obstructions, and manage early English dialogues into intelligibility and greater renown. This will lead to our own enhanced understanding of this period of dialogue production—enabling us to see Redcrosse Knight’s debate with Despair, Falstaff’s "catechism," or Donne’s "dialogue of one" against a dialogic "horizon of expectations"—as well as allowing us to engage the larger abstract concept of dialogue which is so intriguing today.

P, forthcoming).
Chapter 1

Introduction: Context, Theory, Method

I. The state of scholarship on Medieval and Renaissance English dialogues

As we enter upon a survey of English dialogues, then, we must grasp clearly and estimate rightly the significance of the work of earlier times. We must realize that with Plato the dialogue is a true literary form,...that with Cicero dialogue is but a convenient and pleasant method,...that with Lucian, too, it is...a method of which the end is satire....We shall then...think of the ideal dialogue as a conversation that develops thought through the action and reaction upon one another of definitely and dramatically characterized personalities....And we shall agree with Wyclif that its appeal is based on the fact that "locutio ad personam multis plus complacet quam locutio generalis," which is perhaps only a different statement of the fact that the many-sidedness of abstract truth needs the interpretation that concrete personality can give it.¹

Elizabeth Merrill's 1911 groundbreaking survey of the English dialogue from the Middle Ages through the nineteenth century remains the best introduction to an unduly neglected topic. Founding the origins of English dialogue in the classical tradition of Plato, Lucian, and especially Cicero, the combined concision (at 131 pages) and breathtaking range of the work (from Alfred's translation of Boethius to Walter Savage Landor's Conversations) nonetheless necessitated passing over much material and dealing somewhat superficially

with the rest. Lacking both bibliography and footnotes for the myriad of primary works it cites, and smoothing out unruly titles to accommodate modern conceptions of titular form, this work actually presents a number of frustrations for the later student of English dialogue.

Since she published *The Dialogue in English Literature* just two other monographs, a few chapters in general studies, a handful of Ph.D. dissertations, and a small number of scholarly articles specifically on early English dialogue literature have appeared. Seventy-five years after Merrill, K.J. Wilson's insightful *Incomplete Fictions: The Formation of English Renaissance Dialogue* "inquires to what extent early Tudor dialogue may be conceived as a projection of the classical model into the era of the Renaissance," focusing on the 1520s and 1530s as "a high point in the development of English prose dialogue...".\(^1\) First locating dialogue in relation to Aristotle's theory of fiction and Cicero's rhetorical modifications, Wilson then contextualizes Tudor dialogue within the humanist program of educational reform before going on to three author-based case studies: Elyot, Ascham and More. Wilson is set to explore the increasing consciousness of mental processes and the inward experience of an art which encompasses ideas and responses. His central thesis is that the Tudor dialogue evolved into a mode for the imitation of the interior world of thought and emotion; that

\(^1\) Wilson xi-xii; ix.
ideas could be disputed without making a commitment to them through the tentativeness of a fictive mask. This is what forms the "incomplete fiction": a fiction which is not yet fully detached from the mental processes of the author.¹

Although Wilson delimits the dialogue far differently from Merrill (the virtue of his study being in the close examination of a few dialogues instead of the broad sweep of survey), both works share the common assumption that a study of dialogue begins with classical exemplars and with the classical precepts of literature; and like other scholars, Wilson places dialogue writing in a context of institutional educational practices. But whereas I see in the latter great utility for explicating dialogues, I see the former--identifying the origins of dialogue writing in the classical triumvirate of Plato, Cicero and Lucian--as posing particular problems for an exposition of these English works.

The problem of constructing an originary moment is that it controls the ensuing discussion, whether knowingly or unknowingly; such discussion tends to become overly evaluative, prescriptive instead of descriptive. Plato, Cicero, and the humanist favourite Lucian, make sense as models for the learned works of educated humanists when they consciously wrote in this tradition. Two recent monographs on Italian Renaissance dialogue trace the rise and decline of Ciceronian influence on and imitation by the humanist writers

¹ Wilson 179-180.
of that country where many practitioners of dialogue explicitly invoke the classical tradition. In the study of Continental Renaissance dialogues the question often seems to be, is it Platonic or Ciceronian, or perhaps Lucanian?

But the vast majority of dialogues in English in the period make little specific reference to the big three classical dialogists, and the relevance of their work to the English form must be approached with critical caution. As B.V. Crawford writes in his 1918 doctoral dissertation "The Non-Dramatic Dialogue in English Prose before 1750,"

[...]

By choosing to found English dialogues on classical models scholars end up in difficult circumstances: forced to apologize for crudity or lack of art, or to dismiss the vast

---

1 David Marsh, The Quattrocento Dialogue: Classical Tradition and Humanist Innovation (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1980), and Virginia Cox cited above. It is somewhat surprising that both Marsh on the quattrocento and Cox on the cinquecento see Ciceronian dialogue as "declining" in their chosen century: Marsh sees a decline towards the vernacular; Cox sees a decline towards Ramist rhetoric and Cartesian logic without taking notice of the preceding "decline" described by Marsh. While indicative of the isolated nature of dialogue scholarship, part of the problem may be implicit in seeking trajectories for literary histories. Cox might also have answered Snyder's assertion that in Italy Cicero was the most influential model for the fifteenth century, and Plato for the sixteenth (Snyder 6; 43).

5 Crawford 43.
bulk of dialogues in this period as "anti-genre" or simply not meriting attention at all. Two examples of this kind of scholarly dismissal may indicate what is at stake. Although Wilson states that the dialogues handled in his book form "a personal rather than representative choice"; and although the study shows awareness of and insightful detail into the pedagogical nature of dialogue, nonetheless he dismisses "the vast bulk of dialogues,...[which] seem to bear a wearying load of facts and uninspired arguments like slaves of Morpheus." He goes on to assert that "a few dialogues merit our sustained attention."

Roger Deakins, in his seminal article "The Tudor Prose Dialogue: Genre and Anti-Genre," by restricting "genre" to contemporary theorizing about dialogue (that is to Carlo Sigonio's *De dialogo liber* (1561) whose intention was wholly classicizing and who did not even mention a single contemporary Italian dialogue writer), is thus led to assert, "Of the two hundred and thirty-odd Tudor dialogues extant, only five come close to fulfilling the requirements for dialogue decorum outlined by Sigonio." The "anti-genre" work, he states, "deliberately sets out to flout all the theoretical rules," violating "decorum and verisimilitude."

---

6 Wilson xii; 20.


8 Deakins, "Genre and Anti-Genre" 10.

9 Deakins, "Genre and Anti-Genre" 21.
But Deakins, eager to tie up the loose ends of this literary baggy monster, like Wilson, has excessively constrained his own inquiry by taxing English dialogues with classical precepts; especially when it remains to be demonstrated whether and how widely Sigonio, or even Plato and Cicero for that matter, were known to English literate culture. This is not to mention the obvious as stated by Crawford: "The dialogue, as Plato wrote it, was a difficult form..."; an opinion also proffered by C.S. Baldwin: "Platonic dialogue must be easy to read; it is by no means easy to write....".

It will be my contention that English dialogues are not violating so-called "rules" but tapping into native and European traditions of dialogue writing which were transmitted and practiced throughout the Middle Ages and into the Renaissance; as Crawford asserts:

For the fact must be reiterated lest it be forgotten that the English dialogue is in the broadest sense a native growth,—not self-generated, springing up spontaneously in an English soil,—but, planted by foreign hands, watered by foreign streams of influence, hastening to

10 After identifying interlocutor roles in Tudor prose dialogues as either Master-Pupil or Objector-Answerer, Deakins claims that "there is no dialogue in which the relationships between the main speakers cannot be resolved into these four functions" (10). Since other scholars have offered three and four classes of interlocutor relationships in dialogue it is clear that formalist classification is not governed by overwhelming consensus, as I discuss below pp. 11-19.

11 Crawford 28.

adapt itself to the most astonishing climatic variations.\textsuperscript{13}

Elsewhere Crawford criticizes Merrill for exaggerating the Ciceronian flavour of English dialogues, pointing instead to indebtedness to the Church Fathers "from whom any traces of the Ciceronian method which appear might quite as easily have been derived."\textsuperscript{14} Scholars who deny medieval influences on sixteenth-century dialogues risk circular arguments, foregone conclusions, and, ultimately, rejection of the very material they purportedly set out to investigate. It is unfortunately the particular blind spot of "Renaissancists" to reject continuity between the preceding age and their own object of inquiry; a prejudice adopted \textit{holus bolus} from the humanist spokesmen who too often are taken literally at their word in polemics about scholasticism. It is, however, far from my intention to dismiss classical exemplars completely from the discussion here, since, to take Merrill's words, if we can grasp them clearly and estimate them rightly they will help us to understand later dialogue. But one must not exercise classical authors as either a standard of evaluative measurement or of exclusion if many English dialogues deserving of critical interest are ever to be brought to light. If we are to practice evaluative criticism we must be aware of what it is we are valuing.

\textsuperscript{13} Crawford 57.

\textsuperscript{14} Crawford 12.
Pre-established evaluative norms have hampered critical discussion of English dialogue in at least three other ways: first, a poetics which attempts to see dialogues as primarily representative of character and setting, more successful as these approach "realism"; second, the generic classification of dialogue as proto-drama or alternately as a sub-species of dramatic form, most successful if it "dramatizes" the situation delineated. Both of these, as with a posited originary classicism, apply to dialogue literature a measure which is not necessarily commensurate with its purpose or goals; that is, such statements leave undemonstrated whether dialogues seek primarily to attain "realistic representation" or "dramatic effect," two concepts often used loosely and ambiguously and seldom defined. Thomas L. Reed, Jr.'s Middle English Debate Poetry and the Aesthetics of Irresolution, while offering an important thesis and often cogent analysis, falls into a trap of equating "realism" with representations of a lower physical order (farting is realistic, thinking about God is not). Reed's work is nonetheless important for arguing persuasively for a more open view of medieval aesthetics through one of its typical literary forms, as irresolution of debate poems is, it seems, especially English. John Day, too, offers realistic representation of conversation as a standard of dialogue writing.

The third limitation often invoked for dialogue is that it must be prose. For the English situation this again
preemptively dismisses related material because of verse form, yet the whole question of the divide between poetry and prose in the period remains to be discussed. What frequently happens in modern studies of dialogue is that critics feel called upon to offer generalizations about the form based on too few examples, thus forcing complex material into an intellectually and aesthetically pleasing--but too simplistic--mould.

Dialogues have many incarnations, they can be both open-ended and closed-minded, they can present a collaborative searching after the truth or an authoritative declaration of it, they can invite the reader to continue the sceptical method of investigation or attempt to manipulate that same reader into submitting to persuasive control. Although many critical conclusions say something significant about dialogues, overgeneralizing about the form is destined to lead to confusion: examples can be adduced which controvert abstract statements about what dialogues are. Therefore, what is now needed is to pay more attention to the particular, to the individual dialogue and how it inflects within the traditions available.

Dialogue bibliographies

I have already mentioned B.V. Crawford's 1918 dissertation but not its importance to dialogue studies. Crawford's is the first of three Harvard theses of this century which compiled bibliographies of early English dialogues; the other two are by Roger Lee Deakins, "The Tudor
Dialogue as a Literary Form" (1964), and John Terhune Day, "Elizabethan Prose Dialogues" (1977). Deakins itemizes 243 dialogues between 1503 and 1603—both poetry and prose—providing a brief description as well as bibliographic references, and documenting non-extant works via the Stationers' Register, along with those which have survived. Day restricts his work to the Elizabethan era and to prose only; he provides full title-page transcriptions for the 113 dialogues printed between 1558 and 1603, adding some nineteen to Deakins's list for the same period. And while Crawford was writing without the aid of Pollard and Redgrave's Short Title Catalogue, and without the microfilms of early printed texts, his wide range into the eighteenth century, plus the graph he provides tracing dialogue production across the years, make it a very useful contribution to the field.\(^\text{15}\) It cannot be emphasized enough that without these three bibliographies, together with Francis Lee Utley's on Middle English dialogues, the present study would have been extremely difficult if not impossible.\(^\text{16}\) These bibliographies provide the basis for any

\(^\text{15}\) Looking ahead to the seventeenth century, it is notable that dialogue works increase significantly between 1604 and 1660 with 411 prose exemplars identified by Crawford.

\(^\text{16}\) Before I knew of their existence I set myself to combing the New Cambridge Bibliography of English Literature, vol. 1, 600-1600, ed. George Watson (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1974) which yielded over two hundred works but was a very haphazard process for locating texts since short titles often omit the word dialogue, if it indeed was ever present at all. As a result of what I missed I disagree with Crawford that there is a "tendency of dialogues to reveal in their titles both form and subject matter" (ii).
discussion of early dialogues. Each of these, however, contains many inaccuracies and both the medieval and Renaissance periods are long overdue for an exhaustive and reliable published bibliography of dialogue literature to enable further study of the field.

Dialogue classifications

Much ground work of a formalist nature has been done on dialogues in general and each scholar seems to have his or her own system of classification, usually on the basis of the relative positioning of the interlocutors. It is at once problematic and indicative of the state of scholarship on dialogue that there is no consensus in terminology, nor even response to the many other ways of ordering: because of the isolated and sporadic nature of the study of dialogue scholars do not speak to each other's ideas and work. For the record, and since the purpose of this thesis is synthetic as well as analytic, it might be useful to arrange this material in one place in roughly chronological order. Charles H. Herford, in his *Studies in the Literary Relations of England and Germany in the Sixteenth Century* (1886), differentiates for the Middle Ages 1) the didactic treatise, 2) the debate, and 3) the polemical dialogue, the latter characterizing most sixteenth-century works. Merrill (1911) divides her chapters according to 1) polemical dialogue, 2) expository dialogue,

---

17 Herford 22-24.
and 3) philosophical dialogue. B.V. Crawford (1918) finds that 
"by the year 1600 popular favor had definitely fixed upon two 
types of dialogues," 1) polemical, and 2) expository.¹⁸

Stephen Gilman (1956) has coined two useful terms which do 
find their way into the literature on the subject: 1) vertical 
dialogue, between an authority figure and a naive persona, 
characteristic of dialogue in the Middle Ages (e.g. Boethius), 
versus 2) horizontal dialogue, between two interlocutors of 
equal standing, as adapted by Petrarch from Seneca's De 
remediis fortuitorum and taken up by Rojas in his dialogue 
novel La Celestina.¹⁵ C. Perelman (1963) following Aristotle 
classes 1) eristic dialogues, a contest whose aim is to 
prevail over an adversary and convince a judge, 2) critical 
dialogues, where a thesis is tested against others which have 
been granted, and 3) dialectical or philosophical dialogues 
which are a genuine search for truth from propositions that 
are not necessarily admitted, and where interlocutors 
endeavour to agree on what they consider true, aiming to 
convince (not merely beat) an adversary.²⁰ Deakins (1964)

¹⁸ Crawford 74.

¹⁵ Stephen Gilman, The Art of "La Celestina" (Madison: U 

²⁰ Charles Perelman, "The Dialectical Method and the Part 
Played by the Interlocutor in Dialogue," The Idea of Justice 
and the Problem of Argument (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 
1963) 164-65. In the De Sophisticis Elenchis Aristotle 
actually sets out four classes of argument in dialogue form: 
didactic, dialectical, examination-arguments (also called 
peirastic), and contentious arguments (sophistical elenchi) 
(165a2). In Incomplete Fictions Wilson provides a discussion
distinguishes three types of dialogues before the Tudor period, 1) the Question and Answer (also called Master-Pupil dialogue or catechism), 2) the Objection-Answer dialogue (also called disputation), and 3) the contention which is a contest for supremacy;\textsuperscript{21} but for the Tudor period, as restated in his 1980 article, he classes only four speaker functions in the following two pairs: 1) Master-Pupil, 2) Objector-Answerer,\textsuperscript{22} as well as holding the division 1) genre (according to Sigonio), and 2) anti-genre (in the tradition of Lucian and Erasmus). John Day (1977) sees Elizabethan prose dialogues as either 1) narrative/philosophical, being continuous like prose fiction with a narrator, or 2) dramatic, without a narrator and printed with speaker prefixes, the latter tending to be didactic or specifically instructive.\textsuperscript{23} K.J. Wilson also follows Aristotle in separating 1) eristic dialogue, as in the questions and answers of scholastic debate or religious controversy, from 2) peirastic dialogue which is experimental, tentative, and speculative. It is the latter which dominated in the Renaissance because it was more rhetorically effective.\textsuperscript{24} Historian Peter Burke (1989) identifies four main types for the Renaissance as positions on a spectrum: 1)

\textsuperscript{21} Deakins, "Literary Form" 25.
\textsuperscript{22} Deakins, "Genre and Anti-Genre" 9-10.
\textsuperscript{23} Day 6-7.
\textsuperscript{24} Wilson, Incomplete Fictions 49.
the catechism or student-teacher dialogue, 2) the drama type in Lucianic or Erasmian style where the situation is just as important as the speeches, 3) the disputation, where "different points of view are expressed but one speaker is allowed to win, more or less subtly," and 4) the conversation, where "it is impossible to identify the author with any point of view, the meaning develops out of the interaction between the different characters, and the dialogue comes to an end rather than a conclusion." 25 In his book on Middle English debate poetry Reed classes works according to their endings, whether they are 1) resolved or 2) unresolved; it is the irresolution which is the focal point of his monograph. Donald Gilman in a 1991 paper on Sigonio distinguishes according to that theorist a classification somewhat counterintuitive for the modern reader: 1) the open style as the interchange between a teacher and student, in which the discipulus asks questions and the magister responds fully and accurately; and 2) the closed style with its emphasis on disputation which may in fact obscure the truth. 26 Jean-Claude Carron (1991) proposes the more usual view when he sets up 1) humanist dialogue which questions and seduces, exhibiting a tolerant approach to the Other, against 2) scholastic dialogue which

25 Burke 3-4.

merely expounds and demonstrates. Finally Virginia Cox (1992) separates 1) documentary dialogues which use historical and contemporary figures in the manner of Cicero, from 2) fictional dialogues in the manner of Lucian which use a characterizing name relying on what Moustapha Kemal Benouis calls "symbolisme onomastique"; or 3) a mixture of the two.

Of those who distinguish dialogues on the basis of the Platonic, Ciceronian, and Lucianic, differences in interpretation and significance occur (as can already be seen in the above synopsis, where, for example, Lucian is considered as "dramatic," "fictional," and "anti-genre"). Thus C.S. Baldwin (1959) differentiates 1) the Platonic conversation, used mostly for setting, from 2) the Ciceronian debate. C.J.R. Armstrong sees Ciceronian dialogue as humane, dialectical, and open; where no one speaker is privileged like Socrates in Platonic dialogue. Marsh, noting that Platonic dialogue is dramatic because Plato never

---


28 Cox 10.

29 Baldwin 43.

appears in his own works, cites the "singular concentration of argument and inquiry" in early Socratic dialogues. Cicero's dialogues, on the other hand, "provided an eloquent model for the rhetorical method of presenting arguments on both sides of a question, in utramque partem disserere"; they reflect "the practical orientation of Roman culture," whereas the Greek treatises are concerned with abstractions. Cox, however, notes a "sociological" difference between the two classical dialogists: Cicero, as the model approved by Sigonio, used speakers from the elite, "statesmen and dignitaries, with little leisure at their disposal, and the time and place of the conversation... consonant with their ethos." Socrates' indecorous behaviour, "wandering aimlessly up riverbanks, discoursing of love with a beardless youth," or engaging in discussion with the likes of Meno's slave, Cox asserts, is indicative of more than a structural variation; indeed, the two differ as "stylizations of quite different forms of social interaction." The ancients also had a classification system for

---

31 Marsh 6.

32 Marsh 2; 3. This comes near to saying, Plato's dialogues are dialectical, Cicero's rhetorical.

33 Cox 16-17. See my discussion of Cicero's avowed indebtedness to Aristotle's dialogue-style in Chapter 4 below pp. 200-201. Some scholars say that Cicero's dialogues are all worked out in advance, presenting expository speeches dominated by one speaker, and that Platonic dialogues unfold oral dialectical method, with its distrust of writing and rhetoric.
dialogues as reported by Diogenes Laertius: "Now of the Platonic dialogue there are two kinds marked of old; the expositive and the inquisitive." His divisions are perhaps best rendered schematically:

I. Expositive
   1. theoretical
      i. physical
      ii. logical
   2. practical
      i. ethical
      ii. political

II. Inquisitive
   1. gymnasticos "after the manner of a fight (with gloves)"
      i. maieutic
      ii. tentative
   2. agonisticos "after that [a fight] (with fists)"
      i. detective
      ii. eversive.

Diogenes Laertius also gives examples from the Platonic corpus for each of these. There are other classificatory schemes in circulation he reports: "It does not however lie hid from us that some assert that dialogues differ in another manner." This is the mimetic or poetic division into 1) dramatic, 2) narrative, and 3) mixed. He clearly has less interest in classifiers who use this scheme, since "such persons have designated the difference in dialogues by a name rather after the manner of tragic writers, than of philosophers."\(^{35}\) These distinctions will be taken up again in the discussion of genre


\(^{35}\) Diogenes Laertius, "Life of Plato" 201 [50]. This is notably another tribute to the hybridity of the genre, lying between philosophy and literature.
in Part III of this chapter (53-83).

Thus runs an outline of the results of formalist method. I have offered these classification schemes at some length in order to demonstrate that what is not called for at this juncture in dialogue studies is yet another taxonomy of the works (especially one purporting to be exhaustive); in other words, to show why I will be focusing on a separation of the strands of dialogue along a different axis--that of subject matter and association with dialectic or rhetoric. Each of the above systems presents useful insights for approaching dialogue literature; yet there is overlap, repetition, and contradiction, as well as widely divergent ideas about what constitutes the formal indicator. What the proliferation of classification also demonstrates, I think, is the rich diversity of the material itself which resists any reduction to neat and tidy categories. Perhaps it is time to admit defeat or partial defeat on this front, and to open another line of inquiry. The state of scholarship on dialogues has produced useful heuristic concepts for the student of these intriguing hybrid forms of literature, but due to the isolated nature of scholarly discussion, lack of consensus persists and the same terrain is visited and revisited with little progress. A move out of the formalist camp may take us to a new level of understanding, beyond the impasse of classification. That is the hope and aim of this dissertation. To get there we must not to be restricted by any a priori
system: be it one that includes and excludes works on the basis of classical imitation or native tradition, verse or prose format, canonical or uncanonical status, dramatic or narrative approach, realistic or allegorical method, documentary or fictive setting, literary or non-literary classification. But before moving on to the main topic of dialogues in their historical milieu, my own theoretical assumptions and methodology must be submitted to scrutiny in the light of current thinking on both literary history and genre.
II. **Historical method and the theory of literary history**

...the governing context of all literary investigations must ultimately be an historical one. Literature is a human product, a humane art. It cannot be carried on (created), understood (studied), or appreciated (experienced) outside of its definitive human context. The general science governing that human context is socio-historical.  

_Nichts erneuert so wie Vergessenheit._

In current usage the term literary history means both a comprehensive narrative history of a national literature as well as any study of an individual period, genre, author, work, school or movement in its historical setting; it is used interchangeably with the terms historical criticism, historicism, and historical approach to literature. Often the premisses and assumptions of an historical approach lie buried in the analysis. To quote a recent guide to literary theory:

Historical theory and criticism embraces not only the theory and practice of literary historiographical representation but also other types of criticism that, often without acknowledgment, presuppose a historical ground or adopt historical methods in an ad hoc fashion. Very frequently, what is called literary criticism, particularly as it was institutionalized in the nineteenth century and even up to the late twentieth

---


37 "Nothing renews like forgetting." Walter Benjamin, "Literaturgeschichte und Literaturwissenschaft," (1931), *Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. Hella Tiedemann-Bartels, vol. 3 (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1972) 287; translation mine. This article has been used to argue both Benjamin's "anti-historicism" (by Terry Eagleton) as well as for a historicist reading via the commonly excised comment that literature should become an "organon" of history (290).
century, is based on historical principles. Since we have now entered an "age of theory" it is no longer acceptable to ignore critical presuppositions, processes, and personal positioning in relation to the material under consideration. Yet despite some sophisticated attempts at disciplinary rigour there is a persistence of self-critical remarks and frequent observations that historical criticism is "under-theorized," and of the sense that it is inadequately represented by a body of theoretical writings. Opinions range from the dogmatic to the dismissive. Fredric Jameson contends that only a genuine philosophy of history can escape antiquarianism, and that that philosophy is Marxism which alone "offers a philosophically coherent and ideologically compelling resolution to the dilemma of historicism"--a dilemma evoked as the "ideological double bind, between antiquarianism and modernizing 'relevance' or projection...". On the other hand there are those who feel that rather than theorizing literary history what is needed is a practical methodology and a body of specific studies. Jerome McGann states that a thoroughly elaborated methodology for a practical socio-historical hermeneutics is much needed...In addition, a


historical hermeneutics is much needed... In addition, a
great deal of work remains to be done on the tactics of
an historical criticism.... More useful [than theory],
perhaps, would be the accumulation of a large body of
practical studies in criticism carried out from various
sociological and historical points of vantage.

The history of literary history

I suggest that there are two key problems obstructing the
theorizing of literary history today: one is historical, the
other philosophical. First, the history of literary history
itself hinders the enterprise of theorization. Why is
historical criticism invisible in current "canons of theory"?
And what is it in the word "history" that has currently given
such offence? Literary history is in disfavour partially
because of the perception that it must ever revert to the
large sweep of the nineteenth-century grand recit—the method
of constructing national and nationalistic surveys of "great
works" to underpin mythologies of cultural superiority.
Although most academic criticism is classified by national
literatures as a way of organizing the field—as in university
departments to this day—continuous or general literary
histories are seen as particularly susceptible to ideological
distortion.

In other ways too "German nineteenth-century classics

---


41 Marilyn Butler, "Against Tradition: The Case for a
Particularized Historical Method," Historical Studies and
Literary Criticism, ed. J.J. McGann (Madison: U of Wisconsin
continue to cast a long shadow over current debate."\textsuperscript{42} The legacy of nineteenth-century literary historiography is discernible in a persistent positivism originating in Ranke's "wie es eigentlich gewesen";\textsuperscript{43} the reduction of Lanson's comprehensive program to the study of sources and influences;\textsuperscript{44} and an "old historicist" dependence on history as a stable background or world view against which to play the ambiguities of literary texts.\textsuperscript{45} Bequeathed to the literary history of today is a mixed bag containing the Hegelian Zeitgeist and the dialectical progression to the modern; Schlegel's organicist principle as a Romantic ideal of totality; narratives of national consciousness with a strong teleological drive such as described by Gervinus or Lanson's "literary life of the nation"; attempts at a "scientific" literary history such as Taine's deterministic externals race, moment and milieu, or Brunetière's Darwinian theory of the evolution of genres; and a general reliance on facts, causality, and stable contexts.\textsuperscript{46} Thus as French critic

\textsuperscript{42} Butler 27.

\textsuperscript{43} "How it really was," itself a step forward from reliance on chronicles.


\textsuperscript{46} Russo 383-85.
Antoine Compagnon asks, can a literary history today even be conceived which is neither teleological nor apologetic, evolutionist nor devolutionist, determinist nor relativist, dialectical nor genetic, neither of progress nor of decadence? Awareness of these pitfalls hamper serious theorizers of the field and leave them in the weak and conflicted position of asserting that literary history is both "necessary and impossible." In addition, the theorizing of literary history is made more difficult, and more urgent, as those who attempt it are well aware, by the cumulation of antihistoricist attacks of the twentieth century: from "modernism's purist erasure of history" to the New Critical dismissal of historical scholarship as per se hostile to evaluation, relativistic, and dependent on fallacies of background and biography. Carolyn Porter gives a biting account of earlier twentieth-century American antihistoricism, focusing on New Criticism which "installed an ahistorical ideology of the autonomous text at the center of literary studies in the United States." This

---


48 This or a similar position is taken by Compagnon, as well as Schmidt, Patterson and Rusch (below 25-26; and 31-32).


ideology, she points out, indirectly "served the interests of a nation now well-positioned to reaffirm...its long-held belief that America's mission was to bring an end to history." Porter argues that "the formalist proscriptions of various 'fallacies'...served to sever text from context, sanctioning a view of the poem as verbal icon...". And Lee Patterson describes an ahistoricism in traditional humanist criticism of this century: in privileging the category of the individual through great writers of the past (the canon), who simultaneously articulate the values of their time and yet rise above them, "[t]he humanist's critical purchase upon past historical periods is grounded in an unchanging human nature, a transcendental subjectivity...".

Structuralist and poststructuralist semiotic, psychoanalytic, anthropological, linguistic, and archetypal approaches also reject historical embeddedness to focus on

---


52 Lee Patterson, Negotiating the Past: The Historical Understanding of Medieval Literature (Madison: U of Wisconsin P, 1987) 33; or what C.S. Lewis called "a preposterous picture of the author as that abstraction, a pure individual, bound to no time nor place, or even obeying in the fourteenth century the aesthetics of the twentieth." "What Chaucer Really Did to Il Filostrato," in Chaucer Criticism: Troilus and Criseyde and the Minor Poems, ed. R.J. Schoeck and Jerome Taylor (Notre Dame, Ind.: U of Notre Dame P, 1961) 17.
larger or "deeper" patterns in literature.\(^{33}\) And as David Simpson has argued, "the influential critics of the late 1960s have made it very hard indeed to find a place for history...".\(^{31}\) The proponent of American deconstruction, Paul de Man, "set about closing all the doors that might have led out into the world of referentiality...".\(^{33}\) What Patterson calls the "cultural imperative of modernity" is defined in de Man's own words as "a desire to wipe out whatever came earlier, in the hope of reaching at last a point that could be called a true present...".\(^{36}\) Simpson, Patterson and Porter rightly suspect Postmodernism's "return to history" with being merely gestural, continuing, or at least consorting with, Modernist antihistoricism (including the school of New Historicism which will be dealt with below pp. 33-41). Thus the history of literary history presents certain serious obstacles to the theorizer while also providing incitement and urgency to her or his task. One thing is clear: the imperative that practitioners of literary history educate themselves in historiography and the history of their field.

\(^{33}\) For a good discussion of these schools from the standpoint of a historian see Gabrielle Spiegel.


\(^{35}\) Simpson 729.

\(^{36}\) Patterson, "Margin" 88.
Epistemology of "the referent"

The second obstacle to theorizing literary history today is philosophical in nature. This is an epistemological problem often indicated by the perception that historical method is incurably polluted by its own subjectivity of which it is unconscious or hopelessly doomed by its "nostalgia for the referent." These charges seem especially prone to stifle theorizing of literary history in an age of skepticism vigilant in practicing Paul Ricoeur's "hermeneutics of suspicion." The idea that any historicism seeks to establish an objective field of inquiry somehow cut off from temporality, including the investigator's own, and disregarding the "incommensurability of temporality and history," is a widely held assumption and part of what is found so offensive in the word "history." The Derridian dictum, "il n'y a pas de hors texte" [there is nothing outside the text] has come to be a watchword for the impossibility of historical endeavour; because those who use it disallow any access to the non-present the only realm of such a "history" is the textual. But the charge of positing an objective referent can be seen as one of the many "strawman" arguments used to discredit historicism; in historian Gabrielle Spiegel's words:

No historian, even of positivist stripe, would argue that history is present to us in any but textual form. But whether the "always already" textualized character of historical data, its inevitably mediated state as made up of language, necessarily means that it is "made up," foreclosing access to any past other than that we
interpretively impose on texts, remains, one hopes, an open issue. The problem, of course, is not whether there is a past "out there,"...but how we reach it and what procedures permit us to do so in ways that respect its integrity.\(^{37}\)

There are several responses which can be made to the philosophical problem of "the referent." First, there is the question of the consistency of the detractor's epistemological view. Those who insist that the past is unknowable must in all honesty likewise hold that any abstraction is unknowable; after all, one cannot be selective about a radically skeptical epistemology. Such a position would make historical inquiry just as (in)valid as any other kind, and therefore nullify any serious damage in this claim for the historicist theoretical project. Theorizers of literary history, thus, need to reconsider how strictly they must bow to charges of epistemological naivety. In fact, there is often a reversal of logical inconsistency in that literary historical concepts are smuggled into discussions which purport to be clear of them: any reference to "the novel" or "1802" or "Modernism" reverts to literary historical categories, it seems to me, because it invokes a historical understanding of those abstract concepts.

But unfortunately many literary critics, both historical and antihistorical, have little knowledge of philosophical discourse and the huge body of material on epistemology. There

---

\(^{37}\) Spiegel 76. Spiegel gives a useful summary of recent critical theory's anti- or ahistoricism. See also Jameson on the so-called textualizing of history.
are in existence alternative persuasive theories of knowledge which we could employ instead of reverting to a skeptical radical subjectivity, the impossibility of knowing any Other, including the alterity of the past (I offer a possible alternative below pp. 45-52). Yet despite a lack of background in philosophy literary theorists depend on modern philosophers, many of whom are incompatible with historical theorization. A key question here is why literary theorists doing historical criticism turn to philosophers instead of historians for intellectual guidance and pronouncements on "history"? For we must consider the repercussions of asking philosophy for help with history.

Philosophy in Western culture is not simply a disinterested field of abstract thinking, it is itself traditionally both ahistoricist and antihistoricist. The position of present day philosophy, especially the Anglo-American analytic version, is laid out succinctly by Ian Hacking in response to an invitation to write on philosophy and New Historicism for New Literary History. Hacking baldly states "for the record, the obvious fact that most philosophy written in English is not much affected by consciousness of or by connections with the past"; rather it is "achronic," has

---

36 A question asked by Franco Moretti during the discussion period at the conference, "Literary History: Foundations and Futures," 26-28 June 1995, King's College, Cambridge. Moretti's tentative answer, however, that philosophy is concerned with moral issues as is literature, does not go far enough in analyzing this phenomenon or its crippling effects.
"little use for history," and can even be regarded as "the very antithesis of historical sensibility...".\textsuperscript{59} He characterizes the kind of interestedness philosophers have in the past not as historical consciousness but as a model of the pitfalls to be avoided, the material to be directly analyzed or refuted, the knowledge of direct concern to be accessed, or the tools for discovering "the human condition."\textsuperscript{60} Hacking himself actually makes a plea for historicist searching after origins in his own field of philosophy; in the empiricist and positivist tradition of Locke, Comte, Kuhn and Foucault philosophy is exhorted to "take a look." This constructivist approach to what Foucault calls "the history of the present" does not dismiss "facts," but redefines them since "only the unthought world doesn't come in facts. The factization of the world is a human activity."\textsuperscript{61} As Hacking says, philosophy need not be antihistoricist; yet because it is in its current state, and because it may be exerting undue influence on literary theory, historical theorizing in the field of literature could well be short circuited or handicapped from the start.

\textsuperscript{59} Ian Hacking, "Two Kinds of 'New Historicism' for Philosophers," NLH 21.2 (1990): 344; 346; 344; 343. To the possible charge that it is rather French philosophy directly which has so affected critical theory I would point out that the continental tradition is naturalized when adopted by Anglo-Americans, sometimes distorting the original thinking seriously out of shape.

\textsuperscript{60} Hacking 346-48.

\textsuperscript{61} Hacking 356.
An article by Gebhard Rusch, "The Theory of History, Literary History and Historiography," brings the historical and philosophical problems together and analyzes them in an insightful way. The history of literary history is crucial to any theoretical discussion for pointing up the longevity of the problems which plague both historicist thinking and antihistoricist detractions. These problems are not new. Rusch states that "the theoretical reflection in this field has not yet surpassed the level of discussions in the 18th and 19th century"; and contends that the problematic relationship of literary history to general history now "just comes fashionably dressed up; the problems have not been solved but newly formulated within the frameworks of those concepts, models, theories, and goals which appear to be acceptable, plausible and promising today." Some problems of literary history have been continuously regarded as insurmountable: the problems of selectivity, valuation, canonization, periodization, and genre; as well as the epistemological problems of perspectivity and relativity, and the question of subjectivity in historiography which Rusch identifies as early as eighteenth-century discussions on the topic. Rusch's short survey "deepens the impression that literary historiography has again arranged but not critically examined its inventory

---

of problems. Detractions of historical criticism often come back to historicism's purported naive belief in the recoverability of an "objective" past untainted by a subjective view. But as Rusch points out, the problem of subjectivity is one that has been addressed by historiography periodically at least since Johann M. Chladenius (in 1752) stated the inevitability of a specific Sehepunkt or viewpoint for every historical analysis; and Rusch traces this through the theoretical positions on history by such historians as R.G. Collingwood, L.J. Goldstein, and W.H. Mommsen.

Like many others, Rusch sees turning this persistent problem into a precondition as the most logical answer: "at least one part of the solution of (literary) historiographical problems is to stop regarding them as problems to which there must be a solution within the conceptional frame in which they exist as such." According to what I will argue below is a scholarly consensus, subjectivity as a precondition of any

---

53 Rusch 260. It is astonishing when one goes looking for the origins of the present discussion how much ground has been gone over before, for example in the field of history proper concerning their nouvelle histoire (see Peter Burke, "Overture: the New History, its Past and its Future," in New Perspectives on Historical Writing, ed. Peter Burke (University Park: Pennsylvania State UP, 1992) 1-23. This takes the wind out of the Postmodern sails of those who claim credit for destabilizing history and historical studies. Jameson also comments that the old dilemmas of historicism do not go away (18); and Fernand Braudel says that "the historian can never get away from the question of time in history." "History and the Social Sciences: The Longue Durée," in On History, trans. Sarah Matthews (Chicago: U of C Press, 1980) 47.

54 Rusch 261.
historical study seems to be a thread leading the way out of this continual epistemological maze. The name the method is most often given is "dialectical": moving back and forth between the present and the past in an ongoing series of conjectures, hypotheses, and adjustments (and not to be confused with Hegelian or Marxist dialectics which inscribe the past teleologically progressing towards an already determined future). 65

New Historicism?

There is in fact another component of the philosophical and historical impediments to theorizing literary history. This is the problem posed by the school of New Historicism. The presence of this major identifiable school, with identifiable master-critics, and a more or less identifiable set of practices (if not a clear theory) seems to have stymied the North American critical discussion on literary history. 66

65 I discuss such a "dialectical literary history" below pp. 41-45. Consider in the mean time Braudel's remark that "research is a question of endlessly proceeding from the social reality to the model, and then back again, and so on, in a series of readjustments and patiently renewed trips" (45).

66 Unlike European scholars who are getting on with the business of what Hacking calls "taking a look," an approach whose main features consist in examining the history of the discipline, including critiques of major figures of the past and their programs (e.g. Brunetière, Lanson, Benjamin); filling in the field by examining such concepts as genre and period and not just the vague construct "history"; joint or interdisciplinary approaches which engage historians of the book or apply theories from other disciplines; and most importantly, proposing and backing actual theory and method
New Historicism tends to block critical discussion of literary history by drawing a lot of fire--critics attack this school as representative of all historicisms, or conversely defend it. This is regrettable because it is extremely doubtful whether this school is historicist at all. Although ten years ago New Historicism could be cautiously applauded for foregrounding the subjectivity of man, text and historical investigator, and for replacing a mimetic view of literature with a constructive one, re-assessments have cast a lot of doubt upon the historicity of its practices, and on the still untheorized premisses under which it operates. Wedded to the Derridian dictum "il n'y a pas de hors-texte," New Historicists have performed the conversion of history into text. Their "dazzling" analyses have taken from Foucault an interest in power and authority, especially the containment-of-subversion paradigm, and disallow any form of historical for doing literary history. See the essays in L'histoire littéraire aujourd'hui and the special issue of Poetics 14 (1985) edited by Siegfried J. Schmidt and representing "new approaches to literary historiography and to the writing of literary histories in the Federal Republic of Germany and in the Netherlands" (195). In the U.S. historicism is used reductively to mean New Historicism especially, in attacks (see Modern Language Quarterly 54.1 [1993], and David Perkins, Is Literary History Possible? [Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1992]); in Britain historicism means Marxism: see Tony Pinkney, "Historicism," The Year's Work in Critical and Cultural Theory, ed. Stephen Regan, vol. 1, 1991 (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994). Confusion of the species for the genus is a major obstacle to furthering any discussion. Two Anglo-Americans who are exceptions and take the trouble to present a method are McGann and Butler.

individual agency. They also adopt the notion of "discursive practices" which elevates works of language to the most important form of cultural production. Although they collapse the distinction between text and context they maintain traditional genre designations, and more critically, traditional period designations: Renaissance New Historicists are still heavily invested in Burckhardtian divisions between medieval and Renaissance, something of prime importance to my project here. Since they have not theorized genre, period, or the pressing issue of the canon, their political and ideological positioning is vague, and their claim to serious historical endeavour dubious, they do not provide an adequate theoretical model for the interests of the present study.

The problem of New Historicism's purported political position—which we can think of more generally as the self-aware subject position of the historical investigator—is something which troubles those seeking to retheorize historical studies as social criticism. Howard Felperin in juxtaposing American New Historicism and British cultural materialism finds that the former "is not genuinely historical or seriously political either." Felperin detects a nostalgia for presence in Stephen Greenblatt's work: a desire to enter the past and "speak with the dead" (as Greenblatt famously declares in the opening of one of his programmatic essays). For it is no historicism at all which refrains from foregrounding the position of the present: "In approaching
Elizabethan culture as if it were a self-contained system of circulating energies cut off from his own cultural system, Greenblatt's cultural poetics relinquishes its potential for an historical understanding that might exert political influence upon the present."\(^6^8\) Whether one agrees with the political desire to change the present or not, what this notes is that the self-awareness of the historical contingency of the investigator him- or herself first hailed by Jean Howard as a hallmark of New Historicism seems to have vanished out of sight. Felperin defines a genuinely political historicism as one which "inscribes the present as well as the past; it is not only diachronic, but at the very least dialogic, if not actually dialectical."\(^6^9\) This, as I will be arguing, is the theory of literary history most strongly endorsed today, even if the consensus, as well as the term "dialectical literary history" has not gained full realization among scholars.

Carolyn Porter provides another insightful critique of the "historicism" and " politicization" of this "new" school. Noting that "[w]hat most clearly legitimizes [New Historicism's] claim to being a literary historicism is that it addresses nonliterary, marginal, and often quite esoteric documents as well as canonical texts," she comments that "what new historicists then do with such documents can sometimes be


\(^6^9\) Felperin 156.
Porter argues that the application of New Critical formalist types of reading literary texts to historical documents easily reenacts effacement and appropriation of the social and historical realm that produced them. In other words, collapsing the boundaries between text and context does not historicize the literary, but aestheticizes the historical, treating the social text as a literary one—amenable to analyses of instability, paradox, ambiguity and tension—and ruling out any cultural or social field of opposition or agency. Porter presents a different way of reading Foucault's "genealogy" which instead of levelling all voices to one, brings dominant and resistant voices onto the same plane for analysis; collapsing boundaries here leads to the detection of disruptions, distortions, and inflections in the discursive field.

Lee Patterson is perhaps the most articulate critic of Renaissance New Historicism's "extremely dubious claims" and "lack of interest in the realm they purport to privilege: history."71 This is because, as a medievalist, Patterson is intensely aware of their position as detrimental to and utterly out of step with the reassessments now underway in

---

70 Porter 258. I am grateful to Geoffrey Booth for pointing out to me that at the centre of most New Historicism analyses lies a Shakespeare play or Spenser poem; in other words, an exemplar of canonical high culture. New Historicism's usage of marginal texts is not to focus attention on those neglected forms per se.

71 Patterson, "Margin" 96; 98.
medieval studies; there is for him an urgency because of the conservatism of this new school, operating "largely according to a traditional historiographical scheme that not only sets the Renaissance over against the Middle Ages but understands the opposition in terms originally established by nineteenth-century liberal philology." But it is not only the long shadow of the nineteenth century once more: there are twentieth-century Modernist claims on medieval culture as well.

According to the modernist "Renaissancist" scheme, the Renaissance is the period or

the point at which the modern world begins: humanism, nationalism, the proliferation of competing value systems, the secure grasp of a historical consciousness, aesthetic production as an end in itself, the conception of the natural world as a site of scientific investigation and colonial exploitation, the secularization of politics, the idea of the state, and, perhaps above all, the emergence of the idea of the individual..."

For New Historicist critics, as for anyone naively and ideologically enmeshed in Renaissance culture, the Middle Ages is "the otherness by which Renaissance modernity is to be defined"; it need never be examined because the Renaissance is both point of origin and "the new beginning behind which one need not go...". Patterson critiques Stephen Greenblatt's admission in Renaissance Self-Fashioning that subjectivity,

---

72 Patterson, Negotiating 68.
73 Patterson, "Margin" 92.
74 Patterson, "Margin" 99.
the sense of individual selfhood, did not spring up from nowhere when 1499 became 1500, as a suppression rather than a recognition of historicity. In fact, Patterson goes on,

these critics are not interested in historical change at all. What they want to establish is the modernity of their enterprise, the claim that in their chosen texts they descry the present condition in its initial, essential form. And to that end the Middle Ages serves as premodernity, the other that must be rejected for the modern self to be and know itself. That medieval texts do not figure in these discussions is precisely the point.\textsuperscript{75}

Thus traditional assumptions of periodization tenaciously persist despite claims to "newness"; period is perhaps the most ignored part of any recent reassessment of literary history. Yet twenty-five years ago K.B. McFarlane suggested that we repeat to ourselves and to our nonmedievalist colleagues that the truth that the Renaissance is a dividing line between medieval and modern is an unscientific anachronism and should be discarded forthwith.\textsuperscript{76}

Peter Haidu corroborates and complicates Patterson's analysis as part of a residual modernist view of the Middle Ages which remains despite transformations within medieval studies:

Not only does whatever is meant by the phrase [Middle Ages], or by its adjectival form medieval, designate the modernist's self-defining other, in a binary functioning well known today, it also designates that part of desire renounced and denied. The "Middle Ages"--not the "reality" of the historical period but the modernist's

\textsuperscript{75} Patterson, "Margin" 99.

\textsuperscript{76} Quoted by Patterson, Margin 93. See also Curtius cited in Preface n. 12 herein.
projection in a collective Imaginary—is that most intimate part of selfhood sacrificed on the altar of a social rationality supporting everything we might characterize as modernity—from aesthetics to politics and economics....The nostalgia today for organically institutionalized logocentrism...serves to define a contrario the supposed openness, the indeterminacy, the gratulatory self-admiration of modern fragmentation, alienation, and historical adventuresomeness. The "Middle Ages" are to the modernist...that ideologeme of a cultural other that allows the construction of its countericon, the heroic academic as free, democratic, and unhappily alienated modernist.

Haidu describes the prejudicial view of medieval culture as denoting something that never existed: a time of perfect homogeneity, a society of unified values, of shared commonality, hierarchical, with confidence in totalizing justice and revealed truth. Every medievalist is aware of the stereotyping of the period, and there are still many changes to come in righting the field (since Patterson is also arguing for those in medieval studies to free themselves from the constraints of an outdated ideology); but the question why New Historicism didn't happen in medieval studies may be answered by the radical specificity of what purports to be a general approach: what was needed to form this school was precisely the construct of "early modern" culture, and the ingrained institutional norms of periodicity. Consider as well, that in a field like medieval studies, with so many historically trained eyes watching, it is hard to play fast


78 Haidu 221.
and loose with historical method or the content of the past.

"Dialectical" literary history

If we take historicism to be

the theory that social and cultural phenomena are
historically determined and that each period in history
has its own values that are not directly applicable to
other epochs...[that] issues find their place, importance
and definition in a specific cultural milieu,\(^7\)

where for "issues" we might substitute literary texts and the
issues they raise, and concur that literature itself "is a
historical category," with its boundaries, definitions, and
purposes changing over time,\(^8\) then historicism alone offers
the only alternative to intentional or unintentional
projection of the present onto the past. Historicism is the
only social criticism, as is frequently stated, because it
allows for the interpenetration of text and social context at
a particular moment in time.\(^9\) Social history further allows
for the mutual impingement of text and context: the work is
neither purely mimetic of its culture, nor purely
constructivist of it. The problem with the presentist
positions of formalist or (post)structuralist discourse is
that the works of the past which they seek to analyze can be

\(^7\) Hacking 344-45.

\(^8\) Patterson, Negotiating 74.

\(^9\) And because historicism is interested in
particularity, as is also often stated, it is difficult to
reduce it to a single theoretical statement; this
irreducibility maintains what Jameson calls the uneasy
struggle for priority between models and history (13).
only partially understood precisely because we come to our own understanding through that very past (Foucault's "history of the present"). To avoid presentism we must try "to think beyond ourselves, to discover something more in the past than a monolithic notion of otherness or an equally undifferentiated projection of sameness;...then our image of the present is also refigured." This is what underwrites true historical criticism, Foucault's call to "depresentify."  

Consensus on a dialectical theory of literary history, then, would go something like this: it involves a reconstruction of the past, or a reconstitution, which is also known as the (re)constructivist approach to history. It calls for both the description of the past and a rewriting of the written, and depends upon the Lockean imperative of

---

82 Simpson 746-47.
86 Rusch 259-61, and passim; Hacking 356; 360.
87 Foucault, Archaeology 140.
"taking a look." The object is to try to recover the intrinsic quality of the past through understanding its distinctness or particularity by means of conjecture and the creative use of the human imagination. This is schematically termed dialogical or more frequently dialectical theory of historical inquiry.

---

88 Hacking 354-56.
90 Butler 44; Ginzburg 106, 112.
91 Simpson 743; Ginzburg passim.
92 Gumbrecht 477: "Methods of interpretation are the creative use of human imagination, guided by instances of confirmation and correction given from without" (emphasis in original). Cf. W. David Shaw: "... the effort of imagination and the challenge for sympathy required by every profound encounter with the past" ("Elegy and Theory: Is Historical and Critical Knowledge Possible?," MLQ 55:1 [1994]: 16); and Russo 385-86: Dilthey's Geistesgeschichte entails "a hermeneutical recapturing, or 're-experiencing,' of the past that requires not only intellect but imagination and empathy."
93 Felperin 156; and McGann: "Historical method is for me strictly a form of comparative study. From that vantage, a historical criticism does not imagine that its object is to recover some lost original text or meaning. Such goals lie within neither its province nor its power. Normative goals of these kinds are hypothesized, as one commonly sees in the case of editing and textual studies. Norms are constructed, however, only to set in motion the special critical dynamic peculiar to every historical procedure: the method of comparative analysis. The basic form of historical method is not positivist--positivism is one of its Kantian 'moments'--it is dialogical" ("Literature, Meaning, and the Discontinuity of Fact," MLQ 54.1 [1993]: 166).
94 Simpson 743; McGann, "Introduction," The Beauty of Inflections 5, and "Introduction: A Point of Reference" 16; Charles Altieri, "Can We Be Historical Ever? Some Hopes for a Dialectical Model of Historical Self-Consciousness," MLQ 54.1
According to what I identify as the consensus on this theory two things are certain: the inclusion of a multiplicity of pasts and the acceptance of the (pre)condition of subjectivity. First, what is sought by (literary) historians is not a single, univocal field, but rather a "plurifoldd" history, heterogeneous, multiple with multiple thresholds and many "horizons of expectation." This

(1993): 42; Uhlig 488 and passim as "palingenesis"; Weimann 44; Felperin 156. Although the term dialectical is used frequently to describe a responsible historical approach there is actually little if any awareness of how widespread its use is. Critics perhaps think they are using it independently of their peers, or suggesting something new. This implicit consensus needs to be made explicit in order for literary history to be able to lift up its head and participate in current discussions of critical theory.


Butler 45; Foucault, Archaeology 34.

McGann, "Discontinuity of Fact" 167: "Texts, for example, like the readings of the texts, are invariably multiple. When criticism constructs a 'textual history' or a 'reception history,' the differential of the here and now is forced to confront a host of earlier, analogous differentials. The dialogue of history is endless both between the present and the past and within the present and the past." (Emphasis in original.)

Foucault, Archaeology 189.

constellation of multiple relations, is a whole orchestra of histories or ultimately the total of all possible histories. As a puzzle its lack of finality and living openness (Foucault) allow us precisely to preserve the imprecisions, or what is alive in the past. Such a subject of inquiry requires that we combine methods and employ multiple working hypotheses.

A Prospective Epistemology for Literary History

A grounding for these "several pasts" and their multiple working hypotheses, can, I suggest, be found in the Western philosophical tradition. In his Philosophical Explanations, Robert Nozick argues against any kind of philosophical reductionism: one adequate explanation is not necessarily the explanation. The alternative to reductionism is maintaining "the basketful" of alternative explanatory

100 Braudel 34; Ginzburg 104; Foucault 103.
101 Braudel 30; 34.
102 Gumbrecht, "Fragment" 478.
103 Shaw 12.
105 R.S. Crane quoted by Robert Marsh, "Historical Interpretation and the History of Criticism," in Literary Criticism and Historical Understanding, ed. Phillip Damon (New York: Columbia UP, 1967) 4. Note 2 says that Crane derived this principle from an article on geology.
106 Foucault, Archaeology 5.
views; a multiple perspective means that different theories get a portion of the truth. What Nozick does not realize is that this philosophic tradition advocating multiple explanatory views has an origin in ancient Greek philosophy. Pleonachos tropos, defined as the method of several different explanations, or the method of plural explanation, or the method of manifold causes, was put forward by the Hellenistic philosopher Epicurus as part of his natural philosophy. I propose that historical method make use of this non-reductive, pluralistic concept. In the letter to Pythocles quoted by Diogenes Laertius (X.83-116)--one of the few surviving writings of Epicurus--the Hellenistic philosopher discusses the "pleonachic trope" (X.87), and counsels that physics should not be done "by following groundless postulates and stipulations, but in the manner called for by the phenomena," that is, clarified by the method of several different explanations which means accepting what is plausibly said about them. To hold to a single theory is to display

111 Epicurus, 16.
a falling into opinion (doxa) and mythology. The admonition to follow the pleonachic trope is repeated several times and in different ways in the epistle: the reader is exhorted to consider methods "which are consistent with each other, and that it is not impossible that some of them may occur together." Applied sciences such as medicine know that this "method of several different explanations" must often be employed. For example, in determining "the" cause of death of an aged person an autopsy may reveal several different mortal malignancies or disease processes, any one of which is sufficient to cause loss of life: how then can a pathologist isolate a single cause? The answer is that it is impossible to know whether the large tumor of the bowel or the blood clot in the thigh was the mortal blow, or indeed if such an attempted answer has any relevance. Therefore, in following the pleonachic trope historicism need not apologize for its "collage" of interpretations, or that it is in some

---

112 Fernand Braudel says something similar with regard to the constellation of history when he says that the only error is to choose one to the exclusion of all others (34). Another common defense of historical studies, and perhaps even the recuperation of the usually dismissed "antiquarianism," is that preserving the past means preserving the possibilities that the past contains for some future intellectual pursuit, or some future answer to questions that elude us today.

113 Epicurus 18.

114 I am indebted for this example to Dr. D. Deitch.
ways governed by "chance";\textsuperscript{115} by using the method of several different explanations literary history can assert a coherent theoretical and methodological basis.\textsuperscript{116}

Having attempted to account for the multiple knowledges of the past I will now offer a philosophical underpinning for the condition of subjectivity which does not lead to the aporia of radical skepticism. Here I borrow the epistemology of Cambridge professor of philosophy Jane Heal and other philosophers of mind, who support something known as "simulationism."\textsuperscript{117} In "simulationism" each of us is said to be able to "simulate" the thought processes of someone else in order to "know their mind," to understand and even to forecast possible courses of action another person will take. Simulationism has to do with the content of mental states in virtue of which they represent the world. This approach

\textsuperscript{115} These two terms were used with an apologetic tone of resignation by Antoine Compagnon at the conference "Literary History: Foundations and Futures," 26-28 June 1995, King's College, Cambridge.

\textsuperscript{116} The confluence of methodology of medicine and history may at first seem unique, yet historian Carlo Ginzburg has used the medical model to develop a persuasive genealogy for historical undertaking (see "Clues").

\textsuperscript{117} My familiarity with this philosophy is based upon hearing Jane Heal lecture in Toronto in 1995 ("Knowing Other Minds: Putting Yourself in Other Peoples' Shoes," University of Toronto, 5 October 1995). The description of simulationism derives from her discussion at that time. While she completely neglects the historicist ramifications of her theory I think they are considerable. Heal has recently published a version of this paper as "Simulation, theory, and content," in Theories of theories of mind, ed. Peter Carruthers and Peter K. Smith (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996) 75-89.
stresses the content of those states, as opposed to what Heal calls the "theory" theory which advocates that the human mind develops abstract, formal strategies for discovering knowledge. The fact that we can think about situations which are hypothetical as well as those which are the case is central to our lives: for critical reflection, as well as for art and imagination. Indeed, Heal says, we use the same intellectual capacities to do both. In the deployment of our ability to think about possible situations we perform "relevance sieving," using the judging faculty to search and sort, carried out within a field of "epistemic holism" where knowledge of a particular thing is embedded in a wider, even sometimes seemingly irrelevant, context.

"Simulationism" is directly applicable, I suggest, to historicist theorizing, so that instead of being reduced by a radical subjectivity to "making up" the past, the historical critic engages in "relevance sieving" which places limits on the choice of contexts and interpretations.118 Through

118 Heal's bolstering of context goes a long way to refute the intense criticism context-seeking has come in for in literary studies. Take Perkins's remarks for example: "The procedure is necessarily reductive. As we juxtapose our selected bit of context with the text, the wide spectrum of possible explanations dwindles to whatever our piece of context can support. Yet we try to make the piece of context support as much as possible and so fall into strained ingenuity and implausibility. The same logic imposes itself, of course, when we make contextual interpretations of texts. Historical contextualism tends to suppress critical intelligence." David Perkins, Chapter 6, "The Explanation of Literary Change: Historical Contextualism," Is Literary Theory Possible? (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1992) 128. The idea should be to preserve the basketful--to allow for many
endeavouring to become familiar with the widest possible assortment of historical and literary content the critic is able to perform in a field of "epistemic holism."¹¹⁹ Heal's epistemology affords a philosophical support to historical inquiry which deserves wider currency among literary historians; if we are to turn to philosophy for help with history let us at least choose a theory with good chances of compatibility.

In sum then, the theory of a dialectical historicist criticism would depend upon simulationism to hypothesize the content of the past in a field of multiple histories; in literary history this would most often mean through experiences gained from written works or texts, but might incorporate information from other fields of history which accumulate non-text based experiences.¹²⁰ Simulationism means not only a different approach to each problem (thus simulating as opposed to constructing a "theory" theory of the mind, different interpretations, what I am calling the "pleonachic trope"--and not expect one to do it definitively. What Perkins is criticizing can happen with his privileged field of influence and genre studies as well.

¹¹⁹ We must accept that such endeavour is taxing. This is what Hacking calls philosophy as hard work (362); or Foucault cites as the "danger" or "risks" of doing research, the lack of guarantee for the scholar's task (Archaeology 38-39). The result of such "frightening implications," Simpson cautions, mean that "if we are to try to become historians we are going to have to do more research and publish less" (747).

¹²⁰ Several scholars point out that material remains of the past--monuments, artefacts, tools, coins, visual art, etc.--are available to us extratextually.
where a "theory" theory of history is also problematic because the content of the past is a collection or series of particularities), but that a number of possible explanations (pleonachos tropos) may be adduced. And even after the process of "relevance sieving" they may be retained if, as Epicurus states, there is no reason for discarding them. "Relevance sieving" is a counter-argument to charges of relativism; however, it does not take place only in the mind of the historical critic, but, as many (literary) historians confirm, is verified by the testing of hypotheses externally in a community of scholarship.\[121\]

The present study, then, rests upon these assumptions: that there is a body of material identifiable as dialogues embedded in a historical past which can be accessed by many different methods, including formalist classification, detection of classical influence and imitation, educational and linguistic context, within specified milieux and mentalités. Within the field of educational and discursive practices the domains of rhetoric and dialectic can be isolated as of particular relevance to the hybrid literary form of dialogue. Since various modern scholars return to these radicals of analysis independently, and contemporary

\[121\] Braudel uses a charming image to illustrate the testing of ideas: "I have sometimes compared models to ships. What interests me, once the boat is built, is to put it in the water to see if it will float, and then to make it ascend and descend the waters of time, at my will. The significant moment is when it can keep afloat no longer, and sinks..." (45).
Renaissance theoreticians pointed them out, some relevance sieving can be deemed to have taken place; although this must of course continue. Our current designs on "dialogue" as an attractive abstraction have influenced the subjective precondition of this study--as an acknowledged spur to interest in the field ("the history of the present") and as a conscious effort to "depresentify" historical materials. To reconstitute the meaning of dialogue literature both multiplicity and subjectivity must be upheld. This gives some account of a literary historical basis as one of the two theoretical pillars upon which the present study depends. The other theoretical support is to be found in the assignment of genre status to dialogue; I therefore now turn to a discussion of genre theory.
III. The genre of dialogue

There is evidence that understanding the genre of dialogue could be of crucial importance in the sixteenth century. Kevin Dunn has suggested that Luther, at the Diet of 1521 to interrogate him on his works, made a "generic" miscalculation between trial and disputation. Dunn argues that Luther anticipated not the form of a trial, with its naked display of authority, but of a disputation, like the Leipzig debate with Eck two years before in which the individual tenets of his teaching were subjected to argument and counterargument. In fact, throughout the hearing, Luther attempts to subvert the question of recantation (since he has already confessed to the crime), to turn the inquisition into a debate in which he will accept any argument based on Scripture or "reason."[122]

Further, Counter-Reformation reactions to dialogue make a case for its isolation as a recognizable and even potentially dangerous genre. This is attested to by the motivating situations of three of the four cinquecento Italian theorists of dialogue discussed by Jon Snyder:

Only Sigonio wrote his treatise while holding a university chair; Castelvetro composed his work while in exile, a fugitive with a death sentence hanging over his head at home; Speroni produced his theory out of a face-to-face confrontation with the Roman Inquisition; Tasso completed his text in the solitude of his prison chamber in Ferrara.[123]

[122] The relationship between dialogue and disputation will be investigated in the next chapter pp. 112-133.


In two of these cases, those of Speroni and Tasso, each of their treatises on dialogue stands in relation to the author's own dialogue production, although that relation might be one of apologia, denial or suppression.¹²⁵ In 1574 Sperone Speroni's dialogues were charged with being subversive. These were works composed under the very different climate of the 1520s, '30s and '40s. Even after revising his works they were still placed on the Index.¹²⁶ His Apologia dei Dialoghi betrays fears that dialogues are easily misread. The purpose of his theory then "is to fend off any attempts to do interpretive violence to his own dialogues, and dialogue in general, by refuting in advance all readings that fail to acknowledge dialogue's special literary status," thus making a knowledge of the poetics of dialogue "a fundamental precondition for the interpretation of any dialogue."¹²⁷ Speroni's main defense is that dialogues do not merely transmit the opinion of the writer, but rather they call everything into question through "the fiction of the author's absence from, and neutrality in, the scene of the conversation."¹²⁸ I would conjecture that this very absence

¹²⁵ Castelvetro laboured to deny dialogue a place in a system of genre following Aristotle's Poetics, playing on the defects and therefore the subversive qualities of a form which controverts established norms and transgresses boundaries of decorum (Snyder 137-45).

¹²⁶ Snyder 88, 90.

¹²⁷ Snyder 95-96.

¹²⁸ Snyder 114.
is what worried the Inquisitors as well, since dialogues can raise multiple issues which are never completely resolved (the Socratic aporia), and that it may be impossible to pin down the opinions offered to any particular "author's mouthpiece" (a point to which I shall return in Chapter 4, pp. 198-207) making it difficult to know whom to accuse of what. Perhaps this explains why the Apologia was not published until after Speroni's death in 1588.129

Torquato Tasso's Discorso dell'arte del dialogo (1585) fits dialogue into Aristotelian poetics by defining it as an imitation not of action but of discourse. According to Snyder, Tasso focuses on dialogue as a locus of doubt which becomes simply a condition of its discursive operation. As the province of the dialectician, dialogue treats of every kind of knowledge that admits questions.130 But again it is just this kind of doubting and questioning that would be highly suspect to political and religious authorities. In any case, I submit that the nature of these defences of the dialogue are indications of recognizable conventions of a genre, regardless of whether or not that genre fits into an established, overall

129 Snyder 90.

130 Snyder 159-62. On the connection between dialogue and dialectic see Chapter 3, pp. 142-45; both Sigonio and Speroni emphasized this aspect as well. Tasso's text is now available in an English translation in Tasso's Dialogues: A Selection, with "The Discourse on the Art of the Dialogue", trans. with an introduction and notes by Carnes Lord and Dain A. Trafton (Berkeley: U of California Press, 1982) 15-41. Snyder, however, notes at least one place where Lord and Trafton omit a line (Snyder 262 n.63).
system of poetics;\textsuperscript{131} and recognizable not only to those who wrote dialogues and sought to justify them as literary, but by opposing and hostile forces who sensed generic danger.\textsuperscript{132} The cases of Luther and Speroni especially emphasize how crucial the need for a proper interpretation of dialogue could be.

But what is genre and what is dialogue? Is dialogue a genre? It may be easier to define genre in the Italian \textit{cinquecento} where the dissemination of Aristotle's \textit{Poetics}...
made it mandatory to address the issue within that frame of reference; it may also be easier to define dialogue, again as did Italian theorists of the Renaissance, by looking solely at Plato or Cicero. The issue of genre is of intense importance for dialogue studies today, since without affording dialogues legitimate literary status of their own they will continue to be misread, misinterpreted, wrongly evaluated, and thus neglected. Assimilated to some better known genre like drama, they will continue to be seen as defective, a kind of pre-Romantic "closet drama" which (paradoxically) lacks "dramatic" interest. This approach underwrites wholesale dismissal of all but a few exemplars, and the reading of those few for elements peripheral to their art (setting, characterization, "realistic" language of conversation, narrative, plot, resolution). After establishing a working definition of genre via a discussion of current genre theory, I will attempt to lay to rest the primary misconception of dialogue as a subspecies of drama, which has been hindering study of English dialogue.

---


134 Alternatively, dialogues may be misread as treatises or essays, where one interlocutor is identified as the "author's mouthpiece," enabling a reading and interpretation which does away with precisely what is dialogue about the work. A third common persistent misdirection is the isolation of dialogues as prose works only; this also arbitrarily nullifies works which add to a total understanding.
Current theory of genre

As with current theoretical discussions of dialogue and literary history, "[o]ur modern and conflicting ideas of genre" lack the concerted effort and concentrated attention of a community of scholars. Attempts to explain genre are often made in isolation, without reference to competing or conflicting views. If there "has never been a literature without genres," neither for its creation (since no poet raises his voice in an environment devoid of poetic models), nor for its criticism (as it is impossible to describe a text without posing the problem of its inscription in a series), why have the variety of theories of genre failed to counteract the current state of genre criticism's disrepute? The answer is that the "problem" of


136 Which results is such phenomena as the proliferation of terms with different meanings attached. See the discussion of "mode" pp. 75-83.


139 According to Mathieu-Castellani: "il est impossible de décrire un texte sans poser le problème de son inscription dans une 'serie'..." (32). The concept of "series" is, to my mind, especially fruitful to discussions of genre.

140 According to Ralph Cohen, responding to Fredric Jameson's statement in The Political Unconscious that genre criticism is discredited by modern literary theory and practice, "[t]here are at least three reasons for this. First,
genre is similar to the "problem" of literary history, that is, there is a perceived problem which obscures the relatively high degree of scholarly consensus.

The perceived problem, posited today by postmodern thinkers, is an outdated and outmoded view of genre theory often adduced as a foil to foster their own critique. Derrida in "The Law of Genre" is a prime exponent of this approach. After an opening sentence repeated for effect ("Genres are not to be mixed. I will not mix genres."), Derrida demonstrates that there are two possible readings of this phrase, neither of which is certain from the quote alone. However he goes on to develop the second more fully, that this

the very notion that texts compose classes has been questioned. Secondly, the assumption that members of a genre share a common trait or traits has been questioned, and thirdly, the function of a genre as an interpretative guide has been questioned." "History and Genre," NLH 17 (1986): 203.

Jacques Derrida, "The Law of Genre," trans. Avital Ronell, Critical Inquiry 7.1 (1980): 55-81. When Derrida questions "the presuppositions for the legitimacy" (62) of Gerard Genette's argument on genre he is himself partaking of a standard philosophical genre which Ian Hacking calls "undoing": "There are two ways in which to criticize a proposal, doctrine, or dogma. One is to argue that it is false. Another is to argue that it is not even a candidate for truth or falsehood. Call the former denial, the latter undoing" (349). Part of the thrill of Derrida's approach is the attempt to turn every literary problem into a philosophical one: his critique of the genre "genre" here is rather like Aristotle's critique of the Platonic Idea by positing the problematic of the Idea of the Idea; it is what I would call a meta-meta move. On the pitfalls of having philosophy as a partner in literary history see the preceding section of this chapter, 27-33. Platonic dialogues especially suffer by being read strictly analytically by philosophers who ignore the sometimes not-so-subtle literary and rhetorical elements.
statement resounds "the elliptical but all the more authoritarian summons to a law of a 'do' or 'do not' which, as everyone knows, occupies the concept or constitutes the value of genre." Derrida needs genre as normative (that is prescriptive), based on purity and telos (that is essentialist), and rooted in evaluative language (that is hierarchizing, devoted to class membership), in order to claim to posit mixing by accident, transgression or mistake.

Derrida points to the paradox of "participation without belonging," that not all members of a generic class will share a common trait; and further, that the use of genre is not always conscious. But some of these purportedly self-congratulatory affronts to genre are empty fabrications; others (the latter two, for example) are in fact fairly orthodox statements often made by critics. Lurking in the

142 Derrida 56.
143 Derrida 57.
144 One answer to the problem of "participation without belonging" has been found in Wittgenstein's theory of family resemblance; see Alastair Fowler, Kinds of Literature: An Introduction to the Theory of Genres and Modes (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1982) 41 ff.; and David Fishelov's reassessment in "Genre theory and family resemblance-- revisited," Poetics 20 (1991): 123-38. Fishelov asserts that despite disagreement over particular genres, disputes "are ultimately confined to some distinguishable area of human experience and artistic structure," and that "most readers and critics do share some basic assumptions" about specific genres (127). In other words, there is a lot that can be defined before resorting to Derrida's paradox or Wittgenstein's family resemblance. From another angle, Foucault provides an interesting comment on postmodern logic which (like the Scholastic sorites or "the heap" paradox, too often conflates the innumerable with the infinite: "The field of discursive
postmodern denial of genre, Ralph Cohen remarks, "is the fear that boundaries are conservative, that to admit that bounds or limits are inevitable is to submit to them. But...there need be no such confinement."\textsuperscript{145} And as Tzvetan Todorov makes clear, there must be genres to transgress.\textsuperscript{146} I posit, for example, that if parody is the \textit{sine qua non} of postmodern writing it ought to be noted that it is completely dependent on events...is a grouping that is always finite and limited at any moment to the linguistic sequences that have been formulated; they may be innumerable, they may, in sheer size, exceed the capacities of recording, memory, or reading: nevertheless they form a finite grouping" (Archaeology 27). This notion of innumerability seems particularly apt for a discussion of genre.

\textsuperscript{145} Ralph Cohen, "Do Postmodern Genres Exist?", in Postmodern Genres, ed. Marjorie Perloff (Norman: U of Oklahoma Press, 1988) 17. I would go further than Cohen and contest that the reification of abstract "transgression" forms part of the "large claims" of postmodernism. For example, in her introduction to the same volume Perloff claims violation, disruption, dislocation, decentering, contradiction, confrontation, multiplicity, indeterminacy, problematizing earlier forms, transgression and contamination as the particular possession of postmodern texts (7-8); whereas, I would argue, these are part and parcel of genre manipulation and are often present in generic reworkings of the past, such as Ovid's use of epic, or Donne's use of lyric. Such reification of abstract textual "transgression" also trivializes real transgression by attempting to substitute for it.

\textsuperscript{146} "The fact that a work 'disobeys' its genre does not make the latter nonexistent; it is tempting to say that quite the contrary is true. And for a twofold reason. First, because transgression, in order to exist as such, requires a law that will, of course, be transgressed. One could go further: the norm becomes visible--lives--only by its transgressions....But there is more. Not only does the work, for all its being an exception, necessarily presuppose a rule; but this work also, as soon as it is recognized in its exceptional status, becomes in its turn, thanks to successful sales and critical attention, a rule" (160). This is a viable definition of genre as a "series" which I will discuss further below.
upon genre conventions.

**Genera mixta**

First, to deal with the content of Derrida's statement, far from forbidding mixing, genre should be seen as always having allowed it generously, even relied upon it, as is stressed by those who have addressed the subject recently: "The basis for a genre theory of mixed forms or shared generic features is as old as Aristotle's comparison of tragedy and epic." Purity is not a criterion for Plato, and the late fourth-century Platonist Diomedes (who first uses the term *genera*) includes a *genus commune* (mixed) as well as *genus imitativum* (dramatic) and *genus ennarativum* (narrative). In fact, "any genre can always contain several genres." A literary genre positively depends upon the play between its generic categories, and new generic conceptions are produced through *bricolage*, or a generic dialectic. Thus, most works oscillate between (at least) two genres, and must be analyzed in more than one generic way; this is their "multiple cognitive status." For Marxist Fredric Jameson "form"

---

147 Cohen, "Do Postmodern," 12.


150 Miner, "On the Genesis" 344.
apprehended as content reveals discontinuous and heterogeneous processes within the text.\textsuperscript{151} For traditional critic Alastair Fowler there is a "generic repertoire," a whole range of potential points of resemblance that a genre may exhibit; and works most often result from their mixture, producing generic hybrids.\textsuperscript{152} Mikhail Bakhtin sees mixing genres as intrinsic to their nature, since this allows for their mutations and recombinations, reformulation and re-accentuation, being flexible, plastic and free. Literary genres are in fact "ultra-composite."\textsuperscript{153} In view of this consensus we can now rewrite Derrida's "law" as "Genres must be mixed. I will mix genres."

\textit{Genera historica}

Another refutation of Derrida's essentializing abstraction is the constant reference in the criticism to the historical situatedness of genre. Derrida is of course correct

\begin{thebibliography}{11}
\bibitem{151} Jameson 99.
\bibitem{152} Fowler 55, 119, 183.
\bibitem{153} M.M. Bakhtin, "The Problem of Speech Genres," \textit{Speech Genres and Other Late Essays}, trans. Vern W. McGee, ed. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: U of Texas P, 1986) 66, 87, 78, 98. Bakhtin can also answer Derrida's problem of the two possible interpretations of the statement: the sentence is not a real linguistic unit, since the sentence, like the word, has no author (a pure abstraction nowhere existing) (73, 83, 85, 88). Only the utterance, fundamentally dialogic, is individual and can be counted as a "speech genre." Thus the context of a real utterance, circumscribed by the intervention of an (imagined) interlocutor, would solve this linguistic conundrum. As Cohen says of Derrida: "He creates a Herculean dilemma where none exists" ("History and Genre" 206).
\end{thebibliography}
about genre's "purity" as a once-held notion, notably in the classicizing eighteenth and universalizing nineteenth centuries, which opposed certain unchanging aesthetic or natural forms in genre to the flux and process in literary history.\textsuperscript{154} Though it may initially strike some as peculiar to see genre as a historicist concern, genre has been cited as the point of intersection of general poetics and literary history,\textsuperscript{155} as "coextensive" with the history of poetics.\textsuperscript{156} Genre concepts are said to arise, change and decline for historical reasons;\textsuperscript{157} or, conversely, that a final generic position cannot be defined in terms that exclude all historicity.\textsuperscript{158} Recent studies are said to have shifted the traditional debate away from the normative (ante rem) and the classificatory (post rem) to the point of view of genre as

\textsuperscript{154} For a short overview see Natascha Würzbach who distinguishes classifiers (aesthetic ahistoricists), universalizers (including structuralists like Frye), and diachronic/teleological theorists who omit simultaneity and mutual influence ("An Approach to a Context-Oriented Genre Theory in Application to the History of the Ballad: Traditional Ballad--Street Ballad--Literary Ballad," \textit{Poetics} 12 [1983]: 36-37). For a longer historical discussion see Genette. Both Genette and Guillén (see note 156 below) advocate getting rid of universals. Miner remarks on the term "literature" as becoming restricted to meaning "pure" literary examples over the last two centuries, "and then in our own time, to an ever-widening category" ("On the Genesis" 343).

\textsuperscript{155} Todorov 164.


\textsuperscript{157} Cohen, "History & Genre" 204.

\textsuperscript{158} Genette 68-69.
"l'inscription historique des textes dans une continuité, de leur insertion dans une série." The reality of a genre is found to be its actual communicative interaction in a historical context, since genre is historically conditioned, not universally valid. Jameson's working hypothesis is a modal approach to genre by means of a radical historicization in which the so-called essence, spirit, or world-view in question is revealed to be an ideologeme, that is, a historical determinate conceptual complex. For Fowler, "kind" means the "historical genre," best regarded as types (a single instance) not classes (an array).

There are two other points stressed in current articulations of genre theory. One is the insistence that genre is not just physical form (or mode either, as I will discuss below pp. 73-83), but a combination of form, subject and style. Rather than a modulating spectrum of difference on the same basis of distinction, some genres are defined more by one element, others by another: there is no smooth taxonomic system with all the slots occupied, although the desire to

---

159 Mathieu-Castellani 17-18.
160 Würzbach 35.
161 Beebee 270.
162 Jameson 115.
163 Fowler 55, 37.
systematize was strong in the last century.\textsuperscript{164} The other point is the social, cultural, ideological, and audience focus of genre, sometimes called its rhetorical force. The overlap between the literary and the rhetorical is a difficult and highly complex phenomenon. Suffice it here to say that genre's function both as an institution and through institutionalization, as a vehicle for ideology as well as for communication in culture (including reception and reader response), has received considerable attention in the scholarly discussion of the last twenty years.

My definition of genre, then, would stress these four things: 1) a mixing of genre characteristics in all genre;\textsuperscript{165} 2) historical embeddedness; 3) a combination of form, subject, and style; 4) a social, cultural, and ideological function often localized in its rhetorical relationship to audience. The problem of, as Derrida puts it, "participating without belonging," that not all exemplars exhibit perhaps even a single trait in common, I find usefully answered by the concept of "series," as employed by Mathieu-Castellani above, and perhaps most famously by Foucault in The Archaeology of

\textsuperscript{164} See Genette on the "false windows" added to systematize and harmonize Aristotle's and Plato's theories.

\textsuperscript{165} I sometimes think of genre in terms of the physics of pre-Socratic philosopher Anaxagoras, who denies that pure stuffs exist, but that every stuff always contains a portion or share of every other stuff; as Simplicius says in his commentary, "all things being present in all and each being characterized by what predominates." Jonathan Barnes, ed. and trans., Early Greek Philosophy (London: Penguin Books, 1987) 226-27.
Knowledge. Although it is true that the word genre is related to gender, engender and generation, I do not feel the "etymological imperative" as something strong enough to confine us to genealogical terminology, suited to those who employ Wittgenstein's theory of "family resemblance" and "filiation" to define the generic string of subjects. "Series" is a looser conception, implying neither the controlling nature of an origin or prototype, nor the telos of final form. And rather than Mathieu-Castellani's "inscription in a series," I would opt for "inflection in a series" as a way of describing the relationship of successive instances of a genre, since "inflection" conveys a sense of altering, literally bending, and individualizing the particular literary form, while nonetheless continuing to reveal its relationship to the preceding members of the genre.166

Is dialogue a genre?

In the first section of this chapter I suggested that

166 The use of "inflection" is not original but I have been unable to locate the originator of this useful term. Although Jerome McGann has written a book called The Beauty of Inflections, he does not explicitly utilize the term in his work. Wlad Godzich, in a personal communication, has indicated to me that the term derived from the Bakhtin circle, but the exact locale has eluded my research thus far. Foucault talks about "inflexions" of a curve. Also, I use "form" here in a larger sense, not referring strictly to a fixed physical arrangement of language, as opposed to content, but rather to the literary thing itself—the kind, species, type, variety. To my mind, "genre" and "series" are interchangeable when referring to the diachronic string of works; and "genre" and "form" interchangeable when referring to individual inflections in that string.
rather than resorting to "anti-genre," a generic view of English dialogues can be based upon a native tradition of works, an indigenous style of dialogue composition. I would like to underline the fact that the exclusion of dialogues from generic principles relies upon a specious notion of genre itself. Even though genre was not in the Middle Ages and Renaissance, nor is it today, solely regarded prescriptively as a set of rules to be followed,\textsuperscript{167} scholars of dialogue often feel they must apologize for the hybridity of these works by denying them generic status. T.F. Mayer notes that the debate over Renaissance English dialogue presently turns on the question of whether or not the form constituted a genre...Those who believe it does have recently begun the arduous search for common features amongst the mountains of English specimens.\textsuperscript{168} Mayer goes on to cite Deakins who proposes that English dialogues are "anti-genre" because the majority fail to follow a set of rules, resulting in only five acceptable "genre" dialogues for the sixteenth century,\textsuperscript{165} and continues by


\textsuperscript{168} Mayer 64.

\textsuperscript{165} Fowler gives no origin for the concept of "anti-genre" he employs which posits, for example, picaresque as "antigeneric" to romance (216, 251). Deakins ("Genre and Anti-Genre") fathers "anti-genre" dialogues on Agricola's \textit{De inventione dialectica} and Erasmus's \textit{Colloquies} (19). Colie ascribes paired genres or counter-genre to Guillén (33) while
citing Gilkey, stating that the "larger formal elements came from 'the tradition of dialogue literature,' which still did not constitute a genre. Few writers paid any attention to genre rules." Finally Mayer adds K.J. Wilson's "latest contribution" to the scholarly debate who "emphatically concludes that humanist dialogue did not form a genre," but rather a "mode."

As a historian Mayer is to be excused for missing the problems in such a construction of genre, a field for the literary historian, and certainly commended for looking into this dimension of dialogue. But the literary scholars should not come off so lightly. The initial problem with Deakins's argument is that it is doubtful that Sigonio, whose rules are in question, was known in England, especially among the non-professional, non-humanist writers who engaged the dialogue form: for unlike Continental forms, English dialogues were often "popular" rather than "elitist" in their literary appeal. Second, Sigonio was not even writing from contemporary Italian models, and neatly ignored his compatriots' rich production of dialogues; this draws attention to the recurrent

also noting a sixteenth-century notion of counter-genericism in Scaliger (28). This is an idea which requires refinement and more consistent usage if it is to be helpful.


171 Mayer 64.

172 Mayer 64.
problem of the gap between theory and practice. As for Gilkey, his statement begs the question, what is it that constitutes a genre except that very "tradition of literature" dismissed so readily? The series itself, and the new inflections in it, instantiate the life of a genre—there may be long pauses, genres may indeed die out, or be totally absorbed by other genres—but they may equally be resuscitated whenever writers choose to adopt the form and make it their own.

The problems with Wilson's rejection of genre are most troubling because they obscure the issue. First, Wilson states with regard to Aristotle that dialogues comprise no genre because they are not fully mimetic. This is a false assessment both of Aristotle and of genre; it attempts to promote poetic dignity (or in this case lack of dignity) by upholding the supposedly classical dogma of mimesis. But

173 According to Mathieu-Castellani, the notion of genre "apparaît à la Renaissance une réflexion moins systématique, marquée par le décalage entre pratique et théorie des genres" (18). See also Miner, "On the Genesis"; Imbrie; and Genette for the historical "gap" or "décalage."

174 This is like what Miner calls a literary system: "a discrete and continuous literary history of 'occurrences,'...literary creations in temporal series," as well as "a sequence of examples of literary knowledge or what may be generally termed poems." "On the Genesis" 341-42.

175 "The term incomplete fiction may be used to sum up the position of dialogue inside the Aristotelian scheme. Because it is but intermittently mimetic...dialogue intermittently resembles drama....With reference to Aristotle it is evident that dialogues comprise no genre" (Wilson 20).

176 Genette 28 and his critique of the notion there.
genre does not mean solely works which engage in mimesis as fiction-making, imitation or representation of action even in the Western tradition; as Earl Miner notes, in Chapter 9 of the Poetics Aristotle accounts for literature as either fictional or historical, but the historical possibility has gradually been lost from mimetic theory in the vernacular, distorting and exaggerating the importance of fiction.\(^{177}\)

Since the Poetics is primarily a theory not only of drama, but more specifically of tragedy, poised as a reversal of Plato's critique of drama and privileging of narrative in Republic III, it is understandable that it foregrounds mimesis as particularly applicable;\(^{178}\) but Aristotle allows for non-mimetic, less mimetic, or "otherwise" mimetic literary genres, even mentioning dialogues and mimes, and noting that there is


\(^{178}\) That it is to say the least "odd" to take the dramatic as a standard for all literature is something underlined by Miner. As he says, in world cultures "drama is typically (always?) the last kind of literature to achieve separation," that is from religious and social rituals, and music and dance, so that "it usually emerges only after narrative and lyric" ("On the Genesis," 344). It is of perhaps considerable relevance for the present discussion that "[s]ecular drama revived during the Renaissance in a context of flourishing narrative and lyric along with the recovery of ancient literature," (346) for "the triadic conception of genre has no justification from Western critical tradition before the Renaissance, or in English criticism before Milton and Dryden" (348).
no name for this form.\textsuperscript{179} He also includes, after plot and character, the principle of "thought" as part of mimesis in tragedy; the discussion of this ability to express what is fitting (1450b) or argue something (1450a) he relegates to the Rhetoric.\textsuperscript{180} Aristotle himself opens the door for Renaissance expansions of "imitation" such as Tasso's definition of dialogue as the imitation of discourse. Thus dramatic mimesis, or to use the current English term "representation," is not truly the strict literary and generic standard it has come to

\begin{quote}
\textsuperscript{179} "The art that uses only speech [i.e., not in combination with music or dance], with or without meters, whether combining the meters with one another or using only one kind of meter, turns out to be nameless up to now; for we have no common name for the mimes of Sophron and Xenarchus and for the Socratic dialogues, nor for any imitation by means of trimeters or elegiacs or some other such meter that one might use" (Aristotle, Poetics, in Aristotle: Selected Works, trans. H.G. Apostle and L.P. Gerson [Indianapolis: Hackett, 1983] 1447b). He here shades off into the argument that meter does not determine whether one is "a poet," as in the case of Empedocles and Homer, thus owning that more than strict form designates mimesis. On the connection between mimes, early comedy, and Plato's dialogues see Diogenes Laertius' "Life of Plato." A significant scene in the Symposium places Socrates (dialogue) between tragedy and comedy; and Lucian recounts how he crossed comedy with dialogue in "To One Who Said You are a Prometheus in Words" (Lucian, vol. VI, ed. and trans. K. Kilburn, LCL [London: Heinemann, 1959] 5). See also Lucian's remarks on blending dialogue and oratory in "The Double Indictment" (Lucian, vol. III, trans. A.M. Harmon, LCL [London: Heinemann, 1960]).

\textsuperscript{180} "Concerning thought, let its discussion in the Rhetoric be assumed here, for this topic is more proper to that inquiry. Anything which involves thought in a tragedy should be rendered by speech; and the parts rendered by speech are (a) arguing and refuting, (b) rendering the feelings, such as pity, fear, anger, and the like, and also (c) making matters more important or less important or unimportant" (Poetics 1456a-b; emphasis in original).
\end{quote}
be for some in the later tradition.\textsuperscript{181}

Moreover, Wilson's use of "mode," far from simplifying the discussion, further complicates it by substituting a term with an even vaguer set of meanings. Wilson seems to have something looser than genre in mind, but perhaps unwittingly this unrigorous terminology—an example of what Derrida rightly calls the "terminological luxury" and "taxonomic exuberance" of genre\textsuperscript{182}—brings with it a whole set of problems: for "mode" is used differently by different scholars. I will briefly outline two of them. Genette, in a radical discussion of the Poetics and its problematic historical mis-reception, defines mode according to Aristotle and Plato as "situations of enunciating," which are not the same as "forms."\textsuperscript{183} Thus the three "modes" are: enunciation reserved for the poet, alternating enunciation, and

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{181} Miner ("On the Genesis") notes that the Poetics' term "drama" could be appropriated to other ends. As "[w]hen drama ceased to be practiced in the early Middle Ages, the various classical conceptions of tragedy and comedy were lost. To Dante, the Aeneid was a tragedy because of its stark ending, whereas his great poem was a comedy because of its glorious close" (346), an example of critical "misprision" later embraced by Northrop Frye; and again "[i]n the absence of theatre, 'drama' meant prose fiction to Byzantine critics, and at the same time it meant the philosophical dialogue in the West" (353). Unfortunately, Miner gives no references for evidence of this startling privileging of dialogue. Perhaps rather than dialogue being derivative from drama, we need to consider that the converse might be true, that drama found fertile ground in the Renaissance precisely because it had been manured by centuries of dialogue.
\item \textsuperscript{182} Derrida 59.
\item \textsuperscript{183} Genette 12.
\end{itemize}
enunciation reserved for the characters (how these modes came
to be transformed into the three "genres" lyric, epic, and
drama, is the topic of his masterful study). As Genette says,
there is an "essential difference of status between genres and
modes: genres are properly literary categories, whereas modes
are categories that belong to linguistics, or (more exactly)
to what we now call pragmatics." On the other hand,
Alastair Fowler does not follow the distinction from the
Poetics and Plato, but sees mode as "a selection or
abstraction from kind," by which he means any historical
genre. Modes may be colour or mood, in Fowler's system, and
"any kind might be extended as a mode" (pastoral, satire),
although three have dominated recent literary theory (comic,
tragic, romance). Thus as the kinds (genres) are the noun
form (epic, epigram), the modes tend to be adjectival;
"[b]ut," as he hastens to add, this is "a little
complicated." The qualification ("a little complicated")
betrays a serious problem in Fowler's use of "mode," lest we

---

184 Genette 64. I would add, and will discuss below, that
mode is a rhetorical category. Genette is aware of the
terminological confusion as he notes that Northrop Frye calls
modes what we ordinarily call genres, and genres what he would
call modes (70), which seems to put Frye into the post-
Romantic tradition of misreading the Poetics.

185 Fowler 56.


187 Fowler 111.

188 Fowler 106.
end up with "heroic epic." In fact, adjectival "mode" lacks the clear explanatory value and simplifying rigour of Genette's historically verified linguistic definition, even though Fowler sets out to clarify the term, also rejecting Frye's extended use of mimetic "mode." But adjectival mode can proliferate into too many various incarnations, entering a grey area of obscurity. Genette's definition of mode as "the situation of enunciating" is more persuasive, especially in its historical weight, and more useful for critical discussion, helping as it does to distinguish the "mode" from the "genre," as I will now attempt for dialogue as a prerequisite to distinguishing dialogue from its overbearing generic relative, drama.

The mode "dialogismus" vs. the genre dialogue

Dialogismus, sermocinatio, ratiocinatio, conformatio, prosopopoeia, and dialoga are the names given by the manuals of rhetorical training to a figure of thought or ornament which is what I am here calling the "mode" of dialogue. In these descriptions of the particular figure the Aristotelian notion of the "situation of enunciating" is central, and this is the same "situation of enunciating" as for drama, since the author (poet for Aristotle, orator for the rhetorical manuals) is attributing speech to someone else. This shared mode of

---

189 Fowler 107.
190 Fowler 106.
dialogue is the only true overlap between dialogue and drama as both are made up almost totally of speaking voices other than the author. Of course as a mode dialogismus may be used as a figure in works which are not largely composed in that way: by the orator to enliven his speech, in narratives, in lyrics, and so on--indeed this is the case that the manuals address. But it is of consummate importance to understand that although dialogues (and dramatic works) are composed almost entirely in the mode dialogismus, the converse does not hold true--that is, not all works written in this mode are dialogues or dramas--for it takes more than "mode" to define "genre." Thus novels may be written from this "situation of enunciating," for example the sixteenth-century Spanish La Celestina, or by alternating oratorical type speeches, such as structure much of Sidney's Old Arcadia or Lyly's Euphues, although the mixing of modes is more common in epic and novel

---

151 Indeed, so strong is the notion of "impersonation" in works composed in this mode that should a character with the same name as the author appear (Marcus in the Tusculan Disputations, Morus in Utopia, Smithus in De recte pronunciacione of Thomas Smith) he is often taken to be a literal incarnation of the author, like projections of the personae in the lyric poetry of Catullus or Donne. Such lyric is, like dialogue, particularly plagued by the imprecise use of the epithet "dramatic." For a lucid discussion of the limitations of the term because of the comprehensive tie between the reader and the poet see Patricia Garland Pinka, This Dialogue of One: The "Songs and Sonnets" of John Donne (University of Alabama Press, 1982) Chapter 1. Pinka notes that dramatic substitutes for phrases like "emotional" or "forcefully effective," and really implies a confrontation and intensity of personal experience in the poems (1).
which combine direct speech with narrative.\textsuperscript{192}

The manuals of rhetoric and poetics foreground the issue of decorum in handling dialogismus: the object is to fit the words and style to the speaker. As Pseudo-Cicero's Rhetorica ad Herennium says, sermocinatio "consists in assigning to some person language which as set forth conforms with his character...".\textsuperscript{193} George Puttenham anglicizes and poeticizes the figure "dialogismus, or the right reasoner" in his The Arte of English Poesie. In "The Third Book. Of Ornament," Puttenham defines it thus:

We are sometimes occasioned in our tale to report some speech from another mans mouth, as what a king said to his priuy counsell or subiect, a captaine to his souldier, a souldier to his captaine, a man to a woman, and contrariwise: in which report we must alwaies geue to euery person his fit and naturall, and that which best becommeth him. For that speech becommeth a king which doth not a carter, and a young man that doeth not an old: and so in euery sort and degree. Virgil speaking in the person of Eneas, Turnus and many other great Princes, and sometimes of meener men, ye shall see what decencie euer of their speeches holdeth with the qualitie, degree and yeares of the speaker. To which examples I will for this time referre you.

So if by way of fiction we will seem to speake in another mans person,...[t]his manner of speech is by the figure Dialogismus, or the right reasoner.\textsuperscript{194}

\textsuperscript{192} Epic has become for us "pure" narrative but Aristotle and Plato cited it as mixed.

\textsuperscript{193} "Sermocinatio est cum alicui personae sermo adtributur et is exponitur cum ratione dignitatis...." Cicero, Ad C. Herennium de ratione dicendi, trans. Harry Caplan, LCL (London: Heinemann, 1954) IV.liii.65.

\textsuperscript{194} George Puttenham, The Arte of English Poesie (1589), ed. E. Arber (London: Alexander Murray & Son, 1869) 242-43. (What I omit here are the examples of King Henry V and King Edward III. It may be of interest that Puttenham was the nephew of Thomas Elyot.) Like the Ad Herennium, Puttenham
Here we see combined the ideas of the mode as a device within a larger narrative ("our tale"), a reliance on mimesis ("by way of fiction"), and the emphasis on decorum—the "decencie" of properly fitting matter to speaker.

Even though there is a shared mode between drama and dialogue, for the genres a quite different "decorum" obtains. In his 1964 dissertation, Roger Deakins is perhaps the only scholar to attempt to disentangle the two forms, stressing the false standard that is easily misapplied to dialogues:

The reader tends to think of a dialogue as an impossibly tedious play. He exclaims with pleasure at finding "dramatic" qualities in dialogues, as though these were virtues of which the dialogue writers were seldom capable. But dialogues that are truly non-dramatic ought to be continuously so, even at their best moments. The problem is to arrive at a definition of "non-dramatic" free of pejorative overtones.

The ascendency of drama, not only in the sixteenth century (which forms half of the focus of the present work), but in English literature per se because of the presence of Shakespeare as the canon, and in Western literature because of separates this figure from prosopopoeia (p. 246), which Quintillian runs together, "since we cannot imagine a speech without we also imagine a person to utter it" (Cf. The Institutio Oratoria of Quintilian, trans. H.E. Butler [London: Heinemann, 1933] IX.ii.32).

Deakins, "The Tudor Dialogue as a Literary Form," 6. Preceding this he states that "[a] dialogue is not simply a matter without a narrative or a play without a plot. It has a 'plot' of its own, and a unity more profound than that found in a mere conversational analysis of a topic" (6). Deakins is responding to definitions of dialogue offered by Elizabeth Merrill, and Rudolph Hirzel in his classic study Der Dialog: Ein Literarhistorischer Versuch, 2 vols. (Leipzig: S. Hirzel, 1895).
the originary place of Aristotle's Poetics (see Miner), has encumbered perhaps all "non-dramatic" works, to take Deakins's point, but especially the dialogue as its closest cousin. "Dramatic" is far too often the epithet which is unrigorously applied to dialogues leading to confusion of the two genres. If we here for the moment take up Alastair Fowler's idea of mode as the adjectival then a "dramatic dialogue" would have to imply precisely dialogue's generic distance from drama or we are left with a pleonasm like "heroic epic." But it is more than mere redundancy which is implied by the adjectival usage of mode in "dramatic" dialogue, or whatever we choose to call this kind of appellation, since no one would offer as critical comment the phrases "novelistic" novel, "poetic" poem, or "epigrammatic" epigram; indeed, what this helps to show is that to call dialogues "dramatic" is really to place them at a distance from that eponymous genre, not to meld them as one.

There are at least two more immediate formal distinctions to be drawn between dialogue and drama. First of all, we can establish that there is a corpus of texts which were called dialogues; the use of the word "dialogue" is common in the titles of such works produced in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. For those who look askance at titling as an "authorial statement" of genre, since scribes, printers,
and compositors are supposed to have had their own ways with textual materials in the period, I would point to the sheer numbers of texts which advertized themselves as dialogues. Too often these indications have been snipped off to make them fit modern short-title expectations, since early printed works have titles that could run to fifteen or twenty lines.\footnote{197 Even long-titles will not tell us in advance every case of a work written "dialoguewise," which is why those who compile bibliographies of dialogues must actually see the work in question; besides the textual evidence of alternating speakers, often running titles, half-titles, or preliminary materials give the dialogue nature of the work away, if it has escaped recognition on the title page. Clearly, dialogue was a recognizable and "marketable" term for early book production.} Even if the actual use of the word dialogue in the title was not authorial, those who produced books must have regarded it as having value among readers. For reconstructing the "horizons of expectation" of a literary text's reception Mathieu-Castellani sees title as indicative of genre: "Le genre est en effet l'un des éléments--sans doute le plus important--que composent le 'pacte' passé entre destinateur et destinataire: le titre lui-même est déjà un indice générique, une pré-orientation de lecture."\footnote{198 Mathieu-Castellani 29.} It is more than likely that authors accepted the signification of "dialogue," whereas dramatic works are indicated by the words play, pageant,
interlude, tragedy, or even history. 199

Another formal way of distinguishing the two genres is by size: while dramatic presentations usually conform to the average length of a contemporary audience attention span, barring such parodies as "The Five-Minute Hamlet" or the continuous playing of a tetralogy (which would probably be divided by intervals anyway), dialogues on the other hand may be very short (three couplets or eight printed pages), or very long (whole manuscript books or over 800 printed pages). For dialogues are written to be read, not to be performed, even though they may be recited or portioned out to speakers. Frye corroborates such a distinction, even privileges it, in his "Theory of Genres":

The basis of generic distinctions in literature appears to be the radical of presentation. Words may be acted in front of a spectator; they may be spoken in front of a listener; they may be sung or chanted; or they may be written for a reader.... The basis of generic criticism in any case is rhetorical, in the sense that the genre is determined by the conditions established between the poet and his public.... One may print a lyric or read a novel aloud, but such incidental changes are not enough in themselves to alter the genre. 200

---

199 It is true that some early Tudor works have both "interlude" and "dialogue" in the title, and perhaps these were meant to be both. But they depend upon what Northrop Frye calls different "radicals of presentation" (Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays [Princeton, N.J.: Princeton UP, 1957] 246-47). See further this page. Interludes can often be detected in direct address to the audience: breaking through the dramatic "suspension of disbelief" by referring to the audience, the hall, or the play itself.

200 Frye 246-47. Despite such sensitivity at the abstract level, Frye seems to lose "dialogue" under the much less practiced genre "anatomy," or the archaic "Menippean satire" (310), even though he himself acknowledges that works are
Of course there are other substantive ways dialogue and drama differ. Dialogue is not interested in everyday details which help a plot along, it is not interested in entrances and exits, nor with the development ("linearity") of narrative or character; as Deakins states, "[i]n a dialogue, the relationship between the speakers is usually static, with the relationship set up at the beginning maintained throughout...In such dialogues the attitudes, diction, and sentiments of each speaker reflect his constant awareness of the relation implied in their names." The focus in dialogue is on the progression of ideas in the exchange between two or more interlocutors, whether the second interlocutor offers one-word affirmations as in many master-pupil dialogues, or dialectically poised harangues: it is the presence of the interlocutor in the text which is the characteristic mark of dialogue. The position of the neglected because categories are unrecognized (312).


It is a misconception that the prefix "dia" means two, and that "dialogue" thus means a conversation between two. This is false (but productive, giving rise to "trialogues" and even "quadrilogues"): the Greek "dia" means "through," as in "diachronic," thus it is "through-the-logos," through conversation, reasoning, language, etc., that dialogue takes its etymology. On the origin of the word see Hirzel, Snyder.

As opposed to other non-fiction prose genres. For an illuminating discussion see Ann Imbrie whose analysis of the intimacy and mundane detail of the epistle help to distinguish that genre from dialogue, which the ancient Demetrius had linked stylistically to it (Demetrius, On Style, in Aristotle, The Poetics, "Longinus" On the Sublime, Demetrius On Style, trans. W. Rhys Roberts, LCL [London: Heinemann, 1927] IV.223--
interlocutors and their role in performing the complex communicative aspect of dialogues will be explored in the ensuing discussion with reference to specific cases. Dialogue, as a *genus mixtus*, may not draw in other modes as does epic and novel, but it does attract, indeed becomes a focus for, the poeticization of extra-poetic discursive structures—*it is in some instances strongly identified with dialectic, in others with rhetoric*. It is to a discussion of this matrix of the language arts most closely related to and in dialogue that the discussion now turns, and to the embeddedness of dialogue’s logic and artifice in the educational institutions of early and pre-modern Europe.

---

224, 227). Imbrie’s definition of the essay, as the imitation of an individual mind and its processes, or the collective (Montaigne or Bacon), shows that combination with form is necessary—*i.e.* the presence of the interlocutor—to distinguish these two genres, essay from dialogue.
Chapter 2

From "Donet" to Disputation:

Reginald Pecock and Educational Practice in the Middle Ages and Renaissance

I. Primary forms of literacy: the "donet" and dialogue

Dialogue has always maintained a close association with the teaching process, both inside the classroom and outside it. From quizzing to the Socratic method, from the debate team to the doctoral defence, dialogic exchanges between pupil and instructor, between competing students, or between graduand and graduates today are indicative of residual dialogic structures inherited from the scholastic institutions of the past. In addition to long-standing schoolroom practices structured as dialogue, many written dialogue texts themselves are to be found in the book-lists of grammar schools in medieval and Renaissance Europe; dialogues also formed a definite presence on university curricula. As the reification of both oral question and answer procedure and the omnipresent form of disputation, written dialogues contributed to an orally-styled pedagogical approach based on interchange, alternation, and opposition of voices, what K.J. Wilson has called "the primacy of resistance as a method of learning."

---

1 K.J. Wilson, "The Continuity of Post-Classical Dialogue," Cithara 21 (1981): 38. Wilson is referring to the history of disputation, but goes on to say that "this essential intellectual conflict...cannot be confined within any single formal academic structure. Literary art may
Dialogue school texts maintained the focus of education on the voiced exchanges of instructional practice.

Outside the classroom, dialogues imitate and reinforce the formal, institutional, and authoritarian setting of learning while also providing an informal, alternative, and self-generated process of education. But even in reading the simplest of these, a straight master-pupil dialogue, the recreated schoolroom question-and-answer session situates the reader in a complex relationship to both interlocutors, a distancing measured not only in its remove from the master's rod. The taste early and pre-modern readers and writers had for question-and-answer dialogues seems to be equally matched by a modern distaste for these most humble exemplars of the form. Terms such as "didactic" and "pedagogical" often signal modern disclaimers for avoiding treatment of catechisms, grammars, encyclopedias, and various other dialogue works which seem to make no attempt to simulate conversation or even debate, merely positioning the pupil as straight-man or prompter to the master's discourse. But these simpler works merit our attention--indeed a close study will contribute significantly to an understanding of role-playing and question and answer which residually underlie dialogues of a more sophisticated nature; they also help illuminate the reader's own complex relation to the text. One such work is the Donet

---

preserve in ideal form what in practice of the real world has become an arid formalism." I discuss Wilson's article further below, pp. 127-29.
by Reginald Pecock.

**Pecock's educational program**

Reginald Pecock was a fifteenth-century bishop whose educational writings were directed to a lay-public in an attempt to defuse popular sympathy for Lollard ideas. Of his presumed forty compositions only six substantial works "survived the suppression and burning of his writings after his conviction for heresy in 1457"; nonetheless "Pecock still ranks as the most prolific vernacular author of his century...". Pecock's works are closely knit together, each containing many cross-references to the others which handle similar material in a more or less sophisticated manner, or fill in matter which has been omitted, as his many directions to the reader make clear. Four of the extant educational works are devised along a kind of scale of difficulty, starting with

---

2 Two useful biographies of Pecock are V.H.H. Green's *Bishop Reginald Pecock: A Study in Ecclesiastical History and Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1945), and Joseph F. Patrouch, Jr.'s *Reginald Pecock* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1970). Other works will be cited in the discussion below.

3 Janel Mueller, *The Native Tongue and the Word: Developments In English Prose Style 1380-1580* (Chicago: U of C Press, 1984) 138. The great historical irony of Pecock's trial and condemnation for heresy is that he believed he was advocating the orthodox doctrine of the church. Mueller cites Patrouch's convincing argument that although Pecock "alienated the ecclesiastical hierarchy and orthodox laity by conceding as a precondition of argument with the Lollards that the Church might err in determining matters of faith, but that, on the other hand, he no less affronted the Lollards by insisting that the Church was to be obeyed, right or wrong" (Mueller 139 n. 36; cf. Patrouch 33-34, 84-88).
the Poore Mennis Myrrour (ca. 1443-49) and progressing through the Donet (ca. 1443-49) and the Folewer to the Donet (1453-54) to the Reule of Cristen Religioun (1443). As E.V. Hitchcock has posited, "The four books together were projected by Pecock as a thorough system of morality, suitable for people of every stage of society and every degree of intelligence." This universal appeal is explicitly stated, for even though he wrote the Donet "to be of litil quantite that welniʒ ech poor persoon maye bi sum meene gete coost to haue it as his owne," the simplified Myrrour is an "extract or outdrawʒt" of the Donet, for "the moor eese of the personne poorist...in witt...". The more advanced Folewer is intended for those for whom the Donet does not suffice, although to so symple men and wymmen of witt that thei neuer schulen mowe leerne this present book, and to children, and to othire symple men and wymmen vnto tyme thei wynne into hiʒer and grettir leernyng, the seid "donet" may suffice as for a donet, without this present book.... Pecock allows for many stages of educational development in his prospective audience, even for women and children to be

4 Dates taken from Mueller, 138-39. Pecock used the "open notebook" system of composition, and is always referring to his other works.

5 E.V. Hitchcock, "Introduction," The Donet with The Poore Mennis Myrrour by Reginald Pecock, O.S. 156 (London: EETS, 1921) xxii.

6 Reginald Pecock, "Prologue" to The Poore Mennis Myrrour, in The Donet, 226:3a. Abbreviations have been silently expanded and thorn replaced with "th."

made literate in Christian reason.

Of these four works all but the last are "in foorme of a
dialog bitwix the sone asking and the fadir answering...".⁸

The questions posed by the initiate son and the discursive
answers provided by the authoritative father are part of a
conscious effort on Pecock's part to bring the instructional
method of the schools to a readership newly able to read but
as yet "illiterate"--if the definition of literacy is
competence to participate in literate culture, whether written
or spoken. This is made clear in a work called the Repressor
where Pecock laments the lack of a vernacular logic text which
would achieve nothing less than the total reformation of
society:

What properites and condiciouns ben requirid to an
argument, that he be ful and formal and good, is tauȝt in
logik bi ful faire and sure reulis, and may not be tauȝt
of me here in this present book. But wolde God it were
leerned of al the comon peple in her modiris langage, for
thanne thei schulden therbi be putt fro myche ruydnes and
boistosenes which thei han now in resonyng; and thanne
thei schulden soone knowe and perceue whanne a skile and
an argument bindith and whanne he not byndith, that is to
seie, whanne he conclusith and proueth his conclusioun
and whanne he not so dooth; and thanne thei schulden kepe
hem sylf the better fro falling into errouris, and thei
myȝten the sooner come out of errouris bi heering of
argumentis maad to hem, if thei into eny errouris weren
falle;...And miche good wolde come forth if a schort
compendiose logik were deuyisd for al the comoun peple in
her modiris langage; and certis to men of court, leernyng
the Kingis lawe of Ynglond in these daies, thilk now seid
schort compendiose logik were ful preciose. Into whos
making, if God wolde graunte leue and leyser, y purpose

---

⁸ Pecock, Donet 2:6-7. Note that Pecock's Book of Faith
is also written as a dialogue between father and son.
Having been educated at Oriel College, Oxford, in the early fifteenth century, where he was later made a fellow and where he encountered Wycliffe's views, and having fulfilled the post of headmaster at Whittington's school in London, Pecock was thoroughly familiar with both elementary and higher education. I will return to Pecock's interest in logic, which as Janel Mueller demonstrates is inscribed in the very language of his prose (as well as, I will argue, in the dialogue technique of the Donet); here I only wish to underline that Pecock seeks in his writings to inculcate a technique of literacy--of managing knowledge--as much as he wishes to advocate proper doctrine.

Pecock's concern with teaching each reader according to his or her ability, as well as providing guidance through a program of study, is clearly stated in the prologue to the Donet. Whereas the Reule (his most difficult and only non-dialogue text in this sequence) also treats the seven matters "moost necessary to eche cristen lyuer to be knowun," they are "so tariyngli tretid" that many readers might "be peyned in

---

5 Reginald Pecock, The Repressor of Over Much Blaming of the Clergy, ed. C. Babington (Rolls Series, 1860) vol. I, p.9 (part I, chapter ii); this passage is often cited in the scholarship.

10 "He attended the university at a critical time, since events there and especially in his own college of Oriel must have had a pronounced influence on the future development of his thought and must to a certain extent explain his later antipathy to Lollardy" (Green 10).
longyng," and after labouring over their study might "not esili reporte and remembre the vij maters of the book..." (Donet 1:5-16). The Reule omits some "thingis which were necessarye to be knowun afore into the same bokis reding and leerning..." (Donet 2:3-4). In describing his most sophisticated book, Pecock implies what the present book will hope to accomplish: to deliver the material in a more immediate fashion, one which will be easy to retain, to retrieve from the memory, and to put into circulation;\footnote{It is worth noting that Pecock seeks a wide circulation for his texts in order to create what Brian Stock would call a "textual community." I am using this term in a more restricted way than Stock. See his The Implications of Literacy: Written Language and Models of Interpretation in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton UP, 1983), Part II, "Textual Communities," esp. 88-92.} and that he will start from a fundamental level to provide a more complete discussion of the matter, expanding the material so as not to skip over any part. The Donet also serves as a "schort compendiose reporte," a kind of epitome or handy reference after the reader has been through the program of study culminating in the Reule (Donet 2:12). The prologue further indicates that reading the text is not to be labourious: instead, the sign of successful reading will be learning it well enough to put it "easily into report." Thus reading is learning--literacy means "conning" the text.

Pecock's stated purpose is perhaps most amazing as an example of pre-print belief in the power of the text to inform and educate, and even change the political opinions of a lay
audience of widely varying degrees of learning; and it illustrates how the textual audience for printed works was already developed by the time the new technology got under way. As H.S. Bennett has remarked, "by the time that Caxton set up his press at Westminster in 1476 there had been created this new body of readers to whom authors found they could increasingly turn for appreciative support."

Furthermore, Bennett characterizes all fifteenth-century literature as "a literature vital to the education of a newly created public...[and which] tried to meet the varied needs of that public...". The desires of this reading public partially drove the production of educational works: "[t]o a public newly aware of its powers and anxious to consolidate its position, literature of an informative nature was an obvious need." Although Bennett isolates Pecock as "a lonely phenomenon" and not of great importance to the development of English prose style, the prolific bishop's output clearly fits into the context of educational works which Bennett sees as characterizing the era before and through the advent of

13 Bennett, Chaucer 120.
14 Bennett, Chaucer 120.
15 Bennett, Chaucer 192.
printing.\textsuperscript{16}

In the absence of a popular work dedicated to teaching the use of logic, whose lack (as I have noted) Pecock laments, the educational dialogue books are partially designed to fill this gap--to teach anyone how to think, especially those without the benefit of grammar-school or university education. Pecock, whose greatest controversy was initially sparked by stating in a public sermon that bishops need not be resident in their parishes, nor need they preach to their flocks, sees the book, I would argue, as a more personal replacement of divine guidance, providing a key to the presence of the all-powerful "doom of resoun" derived from God himself. It is not that Pecock reveres the authority of the written word, quite the reverse: as Mueller has clearly shown, Pecock was an anti-Scripturalist. Nonetheless he uses the figure of the book to help define what he does see as the universal true authority. In the prologue to the Folewer Pecock authorizes himself by "the largist book of autorite that euer god made, which is the doom of resoun, and also bi the grettist doctour that is a this side god him silf, which is resoun" (Folewer 9:39-10:3). In the Repressor, as E.F. Jacob notes, "Pecock argues that the moral law is not founded on the Old or New Testament, but is written 'in the book of lawe of kinde written in mennis soulis with finger of God as it was so grounded and written before

\textsuperscript{16} On the continued and increased use of dialogues for educational purposes in the Elizabethan period see Deitch, "'Dialoguewise.'"
the daies of Abraham and of Jewis'."\textsuperscript{17} For whether written in Holy Scripture or not, any point from the law of nature is "more verrili writen in the book of mannis soule than in the outward book of parchemyn or of velyn...".\textsuperscript{18} Pecock's works, therefore, are designed to provide guidance and a method for reading the book of the soul, the book of reason; the "self-help" or self-instructional element of such a spiritual program is evident in the very construction of these educational works.

**Pecock's "Donet" and dialogue grammars**

The title "donet" fits Pecock's purpose admirably and connects the work to a network of educational tracts in dialogue form. For simplicity, ease of understanding, appeal to memory, and compendiousness, the question-and-answer Latin grammar book of Donatus, known as the *Ars minor* and in Middle English as the "donet" or "donat," forms a highly effective model for Pecock's own primer of Christian thought. The connection is made explicit in the prologue:

\begin{quote}
And sithen it is so, that this book berith him silf toward the hool ful kunnyng of goddis lawe, even as the commoun donet in latyn berith him silf toward the hool.
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{17} E.F. Jacob, "Reynold Pecock, Bishop of Chichester," in *Essays in Later Medieval History* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1968) 28.

\textsuperscript{18} Reginald Pecock, *Repressor*, vol. I, p. 25 (part I, chapter v). It seems that Pecock has adapted the traditional medieval idea of two God-given books--the bible and the "book of nature"--to his purpose. See Curtius, Chapter 16, "The Book as Symbol," especially 310-26.
Although originally limited to the Latin primer, by Pecock's day the term "donet" did indeed imply any elementary educational text. As Brian Merrilees remarks in the context of Anglo-Norman "donaits" used to teach French as a second language in medieval England, "The name of Donatus was synonymous with elementary grammar instruction"; the title "donait" defines the text's intention, source and form, as well as invoking the authority of a master grammarian. The Donait implies a grammar primer, intended for beginners or quasi-beginners and presented in question and answer form, as was the Ars minor. We should add that Donait also can imply any elementary grammar not necessarily deriving from Donatus.15

While Chapters 3 and 4 of the present study will explore the relations between dialogue and the other two parts of the trivium, dialectic and rhetoric, it is worthwhile here to examine the connection between dialogue and the humblest of the language arts, grammar, which was also the primary subject of the eponymous grammar school. In all three of the artes sermocinales of the university curriculum, as well as from his earliest contact with institutional learning, student and

school-boy alike were constantly required to read dialogue
texts, which in turn, and along with the pedagogic method of
testing through disputation at virtually every level of
schooling, structured literacy dialogically. By writing in
dialogue form Pecock is popularizing and universalizing this
common method of literacy as what we might retrospectively
call the first "open university" or "correspondence course"
for late medieval lay readers.

The Ars Minor of Aelius Donatus was in continuous use in
Western Europe from the fourth century A.D. (Donatus was
school master to Jerome) to the sixteenth century. A short
treatise of eleven printed pages in modern edition, Donatus's
grammar follows a bare-bones form of question-and-answer which
omits attribution of character or even names to the speaking
voices:

Partes orationis quot sunt? Octo. Quae? Nomen pronomen
verbum adverbium participium coniunctio praeposito
interiectio.

DE NOMINE.
Nomen quid est? Pars orationis cum casu corpus aut rem
proprie communiterve significans. Nomini quot accidunt?
Sex. Quae? Qualitas comparatio genus numerus figura
casus. Qualitas nominum in quo est? Bipertita est: aut
enim unius nomen est et proprium dicitur, aut multorum et
appellativum.

[How many parts of speech are there? Eight. What are
they? Noun, pronoun, verb, adverb, participle,
conjunction, preposition and interjection.

NOUNS
What is a noun? The part of speech with a case properly
or commonly signifying a body or a thing. Into how many
divisions do nouns fall? Six. What are they? Quality,
comparison, gender, number, form and case. In what do we
see the quality of nouns? The quality is two-fold: for
either the noun is of an individual and is called a
proper noun, or it is of many things and is called a
The text was subject to some slight modifications and alterations over its one thousand years of use (an impressive duration even given the intense conservatism of educational institutions), and in fifteenth-century England was subject to numerous translations. David Thomson's work in editing these translations, as well as providing a catalogue of Middle English grammatical texts, contributes significantly to our understanding of Latin language instruction in the period. English translations of the Accedence, as it was also known, come into wide usage in the period when Pecock composes his Donet. An example of a Middle English translation runs as follows:

How mony partys of spech byn ther? VIII. Qwech viij? Nown, pronowne, verbe, aduerbe, participul, coniunccion, preposicion, interieccion. How mony byn declynet and how mony byn vndeclynet? III byn declynet and iiiij byn vndeclynet....

How knos thu a nowne? For all that I may fele, here or se that berys the name of a thyng, the name (therof) ys a nowne. How mony maners of nownus byn ther? II. Wych ij? A nowne substantiue and a nowne adiectiue.  

The manuscripts which contain the Middle English "donets"


22 Thomson, An Edition, 1 (Aberystwyth, N.L.W., MS Peniarth 356B, fols. 54v ff). Thorn has been replaced with "th."
quite clearly constitute a teaching program in themselves. Devised by schoolmasters and containing any number of educational works, these grammatical manuscripts combine new material which "makes up a reasonably comprehensive course" with traditional treatises like the Doctrinale of Alexander de Villa Dei (a verse grammar), the Catholicon of John of Genoa, and the Latin Ars Minor itself.23 Cross references may direct readers to other parts of the manuscript, a practice not unlike Pecock's endeavour to guide the reader to his other works, although as in most medieval books these references are marginal and not incorporated in the text.24

In a general account of the provenance and history of the manuscripts in the Descriptive Catalogue, Thomson notes the decentralization of education, evidenced in the increasing

---

23 Thomson, Catalogue, 24, 33, 35. The manuscripts also contain: vocabulary lists (one has a partial copy of the first English-Latin dictionary the Promotorium Parvulorum); latinitates or practice translation sentences like the later vulgaria; elementary reading texts such as the Disticha Catonis and the dialogue Ecloga Theodoli which were used in schools right through the Middle Ages and into the sixteenth century (27-28); texts on versification, quantity, and other aspects of composition; proverbs (which Thomson interestingly connects to the style of schoolmaster poets Lydgate and Dunbar [30]); as well as religious and liturgical items. Merrilees's analysis of grammar manuscripts in Anglo-Norman also reveals that the Donatus material "constituted the first element of an ordered and orderly curriculum of language learning," with a division between grammar texts and reading texts as part of a program of study in the manuscripts he examines ("Donatus" 275). He notes similarities between his material and Thomson's records for England ("Donatus" 277).

24 See Thomson's headnote to Accedence Text D, Cambridge, Trinity College, MS. 0.5.4, fols. 4v-6v., in Thomson, An Edition 32.
number of school foundations at this time, and the shortage of qualified grammar masters as being central to the wide dissemination and variety of grammatical material in Middle English. The earliest surviving manuscripts (late fourteenth to early fifteenth century) have an Oxford provenance; another group reflects the teaching in a provincial school; while the main body of manuscripts is connected with some of the most important institutions of the time (Winchester, Eton, St. Anthony's, St. Alban's, Exeter). As Thomson says, "It was the adoption of the English treatises by such schools as these which largely ensured their survival as a central feature of the tradition of grammar teaching, and the self-conscious concern of the schools for teaching methods and curricula also ensured the continuing adaptation of the texts."\footnote{25} In addition to these secular schools, four manuscripts have monastic rather than secular links, and two are the work of parish priests. However, the Middle English "donet" was not solely the possession of gentry and clergy: one manuscript reflects the activity of a herald in London, written for the prosperous merchant community from which the aldermen and mayor were drawn.\footnote{26} Thus Thomson provides another reminder of the cross section of the population to which the study of grammar would apply: "Elementary grammar was the common

\footnote{25} Thomson, \textit{Catalogue} 19.

\footnote{26} Thomson, \textit{Catalogue} 21. Note also that MS \textit{CUL} was made for the merchant class of East Anglia.
starting point of religious, lawyer and academic, and the English treatises quickly proved themselves useful for all three classes."\(^{27}\)

Other manuscripts in this tradition were written as late as the sixteenth century before the texts were standardized by print and official decree. For comparison to his manuscript texts Thomson offers an extract of the first printed "donet" which is very close to the Middle English versions: "How many partis of reason ben there? Eyght. Whiche viij? Nowne, Pronowne, verbe, aduerbe, participle,coniunction, preposition and interiection."\(^{28}\) Such a brief outline of Thomson's work can give only a glimpse of the extent to which grammar teaching was under review, both with regard to method, language of instruction, and target audience, in the fifteenth century. Pecock's work therefore belongs to this period in which the "donet" was vernacularized and expanded in its institutional capacity; the new writings on grammar provide a context for Pecock's _Donet_ which points to the currency of the term and the model it engages.

Questions and answers in educational dialogues

In his discussion of Anglo-Norman "donets" Brian Merrilees suggests that the "interrogative style was perhaps

\(^{27}\) Thomson, _Catalogue_ 14-15.

\(^{28}\) Bodl. Lib. Douce D. 238(2)Ai(r); _STC_ 2nd ed. 23153.4. Thomson, _An Edition_, xiii.
the key to Donatus' success and the formulaic questions, e.g. "Nomen quid est?...Nomini quot accidunt? etc.'", became almost motifs of the tradition, their form often taken over into other works."25 The object of the method of the Ars Minor is for the pupil to be able to provide the answers to the master's prompting questions, once he has learned and memorized the material. The questions are therefore not asked from a position of ignorance or for information in any literal sense (although the primary reason for the text and its ultimate objective is to inculcate grammatical structures in the learner); but rather as a guide and a test of the boy's memory and understanding, as well as a mnemonic device. Memory is an important component of the interrogative approach and requires more attention than I can give it here. It would seem that questions help us to remember; as Peter Mack suggests in reference to educational dialogues in the sixteenth century, "Perhaps we should study the question and answer memory as an alternative to the more elaborate system of visual memory."30

25 Merrilees, "Donatus" 274. In a footnote he offers the "well-known example" of the text beginning, "Dominus que pars? Nomen," ("What part of speech is "Lord"? A noun") found in a number of versions and manuscripts. This text is clearly a link to the parodies I discuss below pp. 107-108.

30 Peter Mack, "The Dialogue in English Education of the Sixteenth Century," in Le Dialogue au temps de la renaissance, ed. M.T. Jones-Davies (Paris: Jean Touzot, 1984) 192. Mack gives an excellent overview of the dialogues used in the grammar school curriculum, as well as substantiating the connection between dialogue and the activity of teaching and learning. He is offering an interesting alternative to the visual memory training described by Frances Yates, The Art of Memory (Chicago: Chicago UP, 1966); and more recently by Mary
Mack's highly suggestive "question and answer memory" is clearly alluded to by Pecock in his emphasis on learning the text well enough to be able to put it into circulation.

In reading Donatus's dialogue text one of course reads both parts, rehearsing in the mind the master's demands and the scholar's replies; the reader thus contains or encompasses both sides of the interlocution. Though unmarked in any way, the roles of questioner and answerer--perhaps somewhat surprisingly--are enough to communicate the authoritative and submissive place of each respectively. In other words, the mere nature of the questions and their answers, without names let alone characterization or setting, provide a good sense of what might be called, in the tradition of Foucault, the "power/knowledge" dynamic of the dialogue: the recreation of a disciplinary procedure\(^1\) in which the position of domination is retained by the questioning voice. I think it is possible but difficult to sustain a reading of the *Ars minor* as if the scholar were asking and the master answering. This is mostly because of the controlling nature of the questioner position:

this voice decides what to ask next, when to subdivide, and when to move on to a new topic. Further, the questions are short and drill-like, while the answers mostly present lists in compliance. And even though the questioner offers no information as evidence of a position of superior knowledge, this is strongly implied by the rhetorical or hypothetical nature of the questions themselves which seem aimed to test rather than to elicit a reply which would provide the questioner with something he lacks.

It is important to note at this bare-bones level of educational dialogue that questions and answers do not represent ignorance and knowledge simplistically. The sequence of questions controlling the flow communicates authoritativeness; furthermore, this controlling nature of the questioner cannot be thoroughly dismissed even when, in dialogue encyclopedias or other master-pupil exchanges, the roles of the speakers are more developed and quite obviously reversed; in fact, most questioning scholars in dialogue are precocious learners.

The catechism is another one of the most rudimentary types of dialogue based on question and answer. Here the questions are very definitely voiced from a position of doctrinal authority in order to test the catechumen on his religious knowledge. The catechism was closely associated

---

with the "donet" since together they comprised the two primary books for education. Further, Watson suggests a connection between catechism and disputation:

It has not been sufficiently emphasised that the catechetical method is, after all, only another form of the disputation so prevalent in the Middle Ages, though in religious catechisms the questions and answers do not correspond to oppugnor and defendant, but are constructed with a view to clear exposition of the particular tenets to be taught. 3

Use of the catechism changed in the sixteenth century. 31 As Watson reports,

In 1527, Colet included a Cathechyzon in his Coleti Editio or Accidence, and in 1547 Erasmus's Catechism had been ordered to be in the possession of every boy in Winchester College. The Warden or deputy was every Sunday and holyday to read some portion of it proving every article by scripture and "to exercise the scholars at such time therein."

31 century practice. Although he reports that as used by the early Church the questions were often asked by the learner and answered by the catechist, that "[f]orms of catechetical instruction were given by St. Augustine and St. Cyril," and that Christopher Wase sees their origin in the teachings of Child Jesus in the Temple (on which more below pp. 110-11), I would argue that catechism by the late Middle Ages seems quite clearly to be a formal initiation of the young into Christian doctrine, and thus no longer a probing of Church teachings or excuse for apologetics as in the dialogues of the early Fathers.

31 Watson 70. Peter Mack also discusses the relation between schoolroom practice and texts such as the catechism and other dialogues in "The Dialogue in English Education."


31 Watson 72. "Exercise" in the scholastic context is often a synonym for disputation; I will discuss grammar disputations below pp. 125-30.
Although we can assume that the catechism, like the "donet," was available in medieval manuscript culture in a variety of versions, during the Tudor period there were efforts to standardize the form. The Authorized Catechism of 1552 was titled a "playne instruction, contevynynge the summe of Christian learning" under the King's authority "for all Scholemaisters to teache," and was published with articles "for to roote out the discord of opinions, and stablish the agrement of trew religion...". In William Shakspere's Petty School, William Baldwin sees the standardization of the catechism and primer as a Reformation as opposed to a Renaissance phenomenon:

The texts for petty school, being mostly religious and being in English, were aimed at uniformity in religion rather than uniformity in petty school. In fact, the fundamental movement was for uniformity in religion, a uniform system of teaching in petty school being merely incidental to the general movement, and so extending not far beyond the minimum necessities of this uniformity.

Craig R. Thompson cites Calvin's English catechism, along with that of Dean Nowell, as the two principally used in Elizabethan and Jacobean schools. Calvin's is entitled, The Cathechisme, or maner to teache Children the Christian Religion...wherein the minister demaundeth the Question, and the Childe maketh Aunswere (1580), and its opening runs as follows:

36 Watson 73.

The Minister.
What is the principall and chiefest ende of mans life?
The Childe.
To know God.
M. What moueth thee to saie so?
C. Because he hath created vs, and placed vs in this worlde, to set forthe his glorie in vs, and it is good reason, that we employ our whole life to his glory, seynge he is the beginning and fountain thereof.
M. What is then the chifest felicitie of man?
C. Euen the selfsame, I meane to knowe God, & to haue his glory shewed forthe in vs.
M. Why doest thou call this, mannes chief felicitie?
C. Because that without it, our condition or state were more miserable, then the state of brute beastes.
M. Hereby then we maie euidently se, that there can no suche miserie come vnto manne, as not to liue in the knowledge of God.
C. That is most certaine.38

The catechism, like the grammatical "donet" dialogues, establishes a power dynamic that elides the initial learning which must have taken place: that is, in order to learn to be the answerer the child must initially be the questioner.39

That questions are fundamentally a part of the learning process is made explicit if we look back at one of the earliest printed grammatical texts, the Long Parvula quoted by Thomson. In this text the pupil asks himself in order to come to an understanding of the grammar:

What shalt thou do whan thou hast an Engliysshe to make in Latyn? I shall rehearse myn Englysshe ones, twyes or thryes, and loke out my pryncypal, and aske the questyon

38 Reproduced as an appendix to Craig R. Thompson, Schools in Tudor England (Washington, D.C.: The Folger Shakespeare Library, 1958) A.ii.r. Abbreviations have been silently expanded and long "s" normalized.

39 I do not mean to imply that children would spontaneously ask any of these questions, merely that they would have to be placed in the role of--or engage in the act of--questioning prior to learning the answers.
"who or what;" and the worde that answereth the questyon shall be the nominatyf case to the verbe, excepte it be a verbe impersonall, as in this example: "The mayster techeth scolers." "Techeth" is the verbe. Who techeth? The mayster techeth. This worde "mayster" answereth to the questyon here, and therfore it shall be the nominatyf case, and the worde that cometh after the verbe shall be the accusatyf case comynly, as Magister docet me.  

In the questioning process of catechisms the authority of the questioner is more obviously made manifest, not only in the name provided to the interlocutor, but in the probing of the questions which seem aimed at the test and not at the transference of knowledge from answerer to questioner. Thus the most elementary dialogues founded upon short exchanges raise complications to the standard view of questioner as a position of weakness, ignorance, submission, and answerer as a position of power, knowledge, dominance.

But despite the vertical relationship of these "donets" and catechetical dialogues a simple inversion of the structure does not adequately explain the power/knowledge dynamic: for the answerer does communicate information and display knowledge, especially for the first readings, which cannot be

---

40 Thomson, An Edition, xiii-xiv (Bodl. Lib. Arch. A.e 37 (1) Ai(v) = STC, 2nd ed. 23164. I take it that everything after the first question is to be voiced by the pupil who exemplifies internalization of the educational process which must also take place upon initial reading of instructional dialogues. The Middle English Informacio texts cited by Thomson, to which genus this printed work belongs, omit the expanded demonstration of the methodology of questioning used by the scholar: "[W]hat schalt thow doo whan thow hast an Englysch to make yn Latyn? I schall reherse myne Englyshe onys, ij or iiij, and loke owt my principal verb and loke whether [he] betoken 'to do' or 'to suffer' or 'to be'..." (Informacio Text X, Oxford Bodleian Library, MS Hatton 58, fols. 46(r)-54(v), Thomson, An Edition 111).
discounted even if the label "child" is applied. Take for example the final two statements presented in the catechism above which are not question and answer: the tentative conclusion and confirmation almost imply role reversals—for is it the child's place to provide assurance or confirmation?

Another attestation to the complexities of questions and answers, as well as to the literary appeal of catechisms and "donets," are the many parodies of the form. Under the strictures of Reformation print culture we perhaps cannot expect to find parodical catechistic dialogues in the medieval Joca monachorum tradition such as the "Nummus-katechismus":


41 What part [of speech] is money? A preposition. Why? Because of its connection with skill it is put before all parts of speech. What case does money serve? None. Why? Because time (tense), case and knowledge serve it. What is the quality of money? Infinite. (Translation mine.) Paul Lehman reproduces this and two other such texts in Die Parodie im Mittelalter (Stuttgart: Anton Hiersemann, 1963) 190-198, which he calls "catechisms" but rather explicitly parody the Ars Minor of Donatus, or probably another derivative elementary treatise whose title and incipit read "Dominus: que pars?" (Thomson Catalogue 24, 118; Merrilees, "Donatus" 274 n.8). Lehman also provides a "Mönchskateschismus": Monachus que pars est? Nomen invidum, dolosum, superbum. Quare? Quia caritas Sathane diffusa est in cordibus eorum...."; and a "Bauernkatechismus": Rusticus que pars est? Nomen. Quale nomen? Judaicum. Quare? Quia ineptus et turpis ut Judæus....." [What part of speech is monk? The nouns (his name is) envious, deceitful, proud. Why? Because the love of the devil flows in his heart...; What part of speech is peasant? A noun. What noun? A Jew. Why? Because he is as stupid and disgusting as a Jew.... (Translation mine.)]
Remarkably these parodies, because the form rather than the content is being satirized, must be read as real questions with unpredictable, unknown answers; here our scholar is quite the smart alec.

Parody is the mark of weary formalism and widespread familiarity; such parody lives on in the Renaissance, for example, in comic scenes in Shakespeare, such as Falstaff's "catechism" in 1 Henry IV:

Can honour set to a leg? No. Or an arm? No. Or take away the grief of a wound? No. Honour hath no skill in surgery then? No. What is honour? A word. What is in that word honour? What is that honour? Air—a trim reckoning! Who hath it? He that died a Wednesday. Doth he feel it? No. Doth he hear it? No. 'Tis insensible then? Yea, to the dead. But will it not live with the living? No. Why? Detraction will not suffer it. Therefore I'll none of it. Honour is a mere scutcheon—and so ends my catechism.

(V.i.131-140)

The grammar repetition in The Merry Wives of Windsor, prompted by Mistress Page's request to Master Evans to ask her son "some questions in his accidence," is also parodic:

Evans. William, how many numbers is in nouns?
Will. Two....
Evans. What is "fair," William?
Will. Pulcher....
Evans. ...What is "lapis," William?
Will. A stone.
Evans. And what is "a stone," William?
Will. A pebble.
Evans. No, it is "lapis": I pray you, remember in your prain.
Will. Lapis.
Evans. That is a good William. What is he, William, that does lend articles?
Will. Articles are borrowed of the pronoun, and be thus declined, Singulariter, nominativo, hic, haec, hoc.
Evans. Nominativo, hig, hag, hog; pray you, mark: genitivo, hujus. Well, what is your accusative case?
Will. Accusativo, hinc.
Evans. I pray you, have your remembrance, child;
accusativo, hung, hang, hog. (IV.i.13-43)\textsuperscript{12}

These parodies destabilize the authority of questions and the compliance of answers and so foreground those very qualities of the power differential in the grammar school primers. They contribute to the point being emphasized here: that posing questions and providing answers is not as simple as it may seem at first.

Some confusion is caused in dialogue studies by using terms like "catechism" when the roles are quite obviously reversed, that is when the pupil is asking the master for information as a way of structuring encyclopedias or compendia. Examples of straight master-pupil dialogues include popular texts in Latin such as the Margarita Philosophica which deals with the whole academic curriculum, and Heinrich Suso's Horologium Sapientia which deals with the devotional structure of the spiritual life. In Middle English there is the dialogue of the Maister of Oxenford and his Clerk (with its Old English antecedents the prose dialogues Solomon and Saturn and Adrian and Ritheus) which deals with biblical lore and arcana. Another popular tradition is that of the Elucidarium which treats Christian doctrine. Sydrac and Boctus is one of the largest medieval encyclopedias in dialogue form running to over one thousand questions in some manuscripts. The latter was a particularly popular dialogue which, like

\textsuperscript{12} This scene is discussed by T.W. Baldwin, William Shakspere's Small Latine and Lesse Greek, vol. 1, 561-66. I have omitted Mistress Quickly's interjections.
the Elucidarium, was made available in early printed editions.  

A deliberate inversion of the encyclopedic master-pupil dialogue is the Middle English Ypotis, which derives, as so many of these works, from a source which gave rise to exemplars in many European languages. In this case the tradition can be traced back to the Altercatio Hadriani Augusti et Epicteti Philosophi probably of the third century A.D. (Epictetus is corrupted to Ypotis) and poses the emperor Hadrian's questions against the answers of the child Ypotis. This true inversion of master-pupil dialogue (as opposed to the catechisms and "donets" which only seem like inversions) places the "wise child" in the position of authority, which here derives ultimately from the child Jesus teaching in the Temple as is represented by another Middle English dialogue, A disputison bi-twene childe Jesu and Maistres of the Lawe of Jewes.  

---

13 See Utley's bibliography, Section 3 "Catechisms on Science and Biblical Lore," 736-745. Clearly I find Utley's term an unhappy choice.

14 The classic study of this text is L.W. Daly and W. Suchier, eds., Altercatio Hadriani Augusti et Epicteti Philosophi (Urbana: U of Illinois P, 1939) which contains a discussion of question-and-answer dialogues in general. See also W. Suchier, L'Enfant sage (Dresden: Max Niemeyer, 1910).

15 This text is now readily available in John Conlee, ed., Middle English Debate Poetry: A Critical Anthology (East Lansing, Mich.: Colleagues Press, 1991) 167-77. Conlee's edition also makes other Middle English dialogues accessible in one text, including body and soul dialogues, alliterative debates (Winner and Waster, Death and Life, and The Parliament of the Three Ages), bird debates, and pastourelles; as well as
Whether as was suggested by Wase (cited by Foster Watson in note n. 32 above), the catechisms can claim any connection to this source of youthful wisdom seems doubtful. First, as has been discussed, the nature of answering is quite different in the true catechism (where the material has been learned for repetition) than in the "wise child" dialogues where the young answerer really is dispensing doctrine for the benefit of adult questioners. If the "wise child" texts draw attention to the unusual situation of youth instructing age this merely underlines the miraculous nature of the discourse, unlike the discipline applied to the child in the catechism or "donet." Prodigies who escape their essential nature are rare: the wisdom of the child Jesus, like the virginity of his mother, is not a widely disseminated phenomenon although it may serve as an unattainable model. The answers provided in all of the master-pupil dialogues are spoken from the authoritative position of knowledge in order to provide proper teaching and stimulate the transference of learning, often drawing attention to the arcane nature of the material, while the answers the catechumen submits to the catechist function as a repetition and testing of knowledge which is overseen and directed by the questioner. Nonetheless, each of these dialogue forms, the grammatical "donet," the doctrinal

what he calls "Didactic and Satiric Disputations" which include some interesting and peculiar exemplars.

The best known wise child in Middle English is the Pearl maiden.
catechism (and their parodies), the master-pupil dialogue, and
the inverted master-pupil dialogue, serve to highlight the
shifting ground of question-and-answer as well as the intense
identification of dialogue and educational practices. 47

"ffadir" and "sone" in "Donet" and disputation

Each utterance in Pecock's work is prefaced by the name
of the other speaker, the son always beginning with "ffadir"
and the father always starting with "sone." By ascribing names
of address to each of his two interlocutors Pecock prevents
any ambiguity of role playing which might have been felt to
reside in the grammatical "donets" (i.e. are these information
seeking questions or testing questions?). But because he is
anxious to teach his readers how to use their own "doom of
resoun" the two positions are not strictly those of authority
and compliance: in fact, Pecock complicates the role of the
son and his questioning in order to develop traits of

47 One more educational dialogue with a long tradition
deserves mention here, not because it uses questions and
answers but because it was so intensively utilized in humanist
pedagogy of the sixteenth century. The colloquy, with widely
used editions by authors such as Erasmus, Vives, Corderius,
and Castellion, was, like collections of vulgaria and the
staging of plays, part of an effort to teach boys proficiency
in spoken Latin. See Foster Watson on colloquies; on Latin
study in general see Walter Ong's "Latin Language Study as a
Renaissance Puberty Rite"; on vulgaria see Wilson, Incomplete
Fictions 57, 62; editions of such texts are available from
EETS, and A Fifteenth Century School Book From a Manuscript in
the British Museum (MS. Arundel 249), ed. William Nelson
(Oxford: Clarendon P, 1956). Other more specialized uses of
dialogue in education would include the legal "moots"
practiced at the Inns of Court.
reasoning which his unlearned reader, for whom the son is representative, ought to acquire. In doing so he constructs an interlocutor who combines characteristics of ingenuousness and sophistication. The son is sufficiently naive to ask the stupid question, but also displays his quick wit for learning. These traits are not isolated to Pecock's "sone," indeed most dialogue questioners display some such compound of ignorance, even seeming stupidity, and intelligence. 48

An examination of the son's questions in the Donet will help bear this out, for he is meant to develop in skill as he moves through the program in preparation for his own reading of the Reule of Christen Religioun which he anticipates towards the end of part one:

Gramercy, fadir, for this so woundirful discryuing god,

48 An interlocutor's stupidity contributes a feeling of superiority to the reader who may be astute enough to anticipate the answer. This sometimes backfires in dialogue, however, especially if Socrates is a participant, since it may lull the reader into a false sense of security which will be stripped away when a seemingly foolish question becomes the impetus for a serious disquisition, or the focus of a thorny philosophical problem. I have derived some of these and other insights into placing the reader in dialogue from the informative lecture given by Livio Rossetti, "Some Communicative Strategies in Plato's Dialogues," University of Toronto, 16 September 1990. The problem of the interlocutor-reader relationship is examined in another light by Geoffrey Rockwell, "A Unity of Voices: A Definition of Philosophical Dialogue," Ph.D. diss. University of Toronto, 1995. Rockwell argues that, for Socratic dialogue, we should not confuse the two positions of reader and interlocutor: the reader is an eavesdropper but does not go down in embarrassment with the interlocutor when he is humiliated in the elenchus (93). Rockwell suspects that "Socrates often sacrificed the interlocutor for the sake of the audience, not the other way around" (where audience may be a group of listeners in the text as well as the reader) (95).
bi so reuerend a stile. with this knowing of god y holde me content at this tyme, into the tyme y be worthi to stie vp into the now seide book, "the reule of cristen religioun." (Donet 86:8-11)

In asking simple questions the son enables the father to discourse on many topics. Conversely, the asking of questions entails control of the flow. This is what I mean by a compound of ignorance and intelligence. The series or string of questions indicates that the questioner knows where to divide and subdivide the material, something which seemed to indicate the authority figure in the Donatus tradition of unattributed interlocutors in the grammatical dialogues. Thus the son sometimes further pursues a line of questioning by picking up part of the father's answer. For example, in the very opening of the dialogue having been told that man is made up of a reasonable soul and fleshly body he asks, "ffadir, what is a resonable soule?" (Donet 8:22). Conversely, he may direct the discussion by breaking off a line of inquiry and picking up a strand which has been left hanging; for example, when he has been told that the souls of beasts die when they die he changes the topic by asking for a definition of the five outward bodily wits, which had been mentioned previously

---

The son is here also a practitioner of scholastic method. As William T. Costello remarks, questions are linked to the framework of scholasticism, and "the act of subdividing implies the showing of relationships, or of systematizing." Furthermore, the quaestio is a prominent feature: "[t]he casting of the proposition into question form was not mere posing; the dialectician is always attacking a problem." The Scholastic Curriculum at Early Seventeenth-Century Cambridge (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1958) 11.
by the father as contributing to the make-up of the soul (Donet 9:10-12). Sometimes the pattern of questioning followed shows the son's ignorance, as when he asks, "ffadir, in what place of a mannys body ben sett resoun and fre wil?" (Donet 13:23-24), since as part of the soul they are "ouer al, thoru3 al mannys body" (Donet 13:27), whereas asking the location of the five inward wits had previously been rewarded as an intelligent question with a disquisition on their locations in "a mannys heed" (Donet, 11:11). These simple factual questions help subdivide the material and form an interlocking network with the discursive answers given by the father.

The son also asks hypothetical questions from common knowledge, or "third party arguments" as when he begins by saying "ffadir, y haue herd summe seie..." (14:28), or "ffadir, here a man my3t wondre vpon 3oure disposing of tablis..." (24:36-37), or "ffadir, peraurenture to manye men it wole seeme...." (45:1). The son demonstrates his ability as a Scripturalist, for example, when he points out that "crist, as it wole seme, was contentid with ij tablis" (against the father's four) citing Matthew 22 (25:5-6). The son is thus able to voice the kind of objections Pecock could expect from those of Lollard sympathies and exactly the type of reasoning that he is eager to refute. Furthermore, the son is able to catch and so highlight the differences between the system of thought presented here by the father and common thinking; for example, when he points out that the father has put vices in
the same table as the virtues "and how men wolen allowe soure theryn clepyng, y wote not" (43:22-23). Thus the son is not only a blank slate waiting to be written upon, he also voices the position of the opposing political camp in order that their arguments may be dealt with convincingly. He also demonstrates the kinds of questions the reader/learner should adopt in developing his or her own "doom of resoun."

With the question "[F]Adir, what is a man?" the son opens the first part of the *Donet* (8:19), identifying the work as an encyclopedic master-pupil dialogue where questions are directed to elicit factual responses, and distinguishing it from both the *Ars Minor*, its translations, and catechisms where the child or pupil is called to repetition in a test of knowledge. But the master-pupil arrangement of his interlocutors does not mean that Pecock has misused the term "donet" even though I distinguished these two forms of instructional dialogues above. First, Pecock states quite clearly that he sees his donet as a key or grounding to higher learning, just as Donatus's grammar is the grounding for more advanced study of that subject. Also "donet" by this time could mean any text employing the interrogative method. Second, in the above discussion while stressing the final goal of such instructional dialogues as the student's rehearsal of the material at hand I pointed to the textual difficulty of the stage of learning elided by the grammars and catechisms—the initial reading and memory work they must entail, as well
as the permanent position of the reader outside the text. Any private or silent reading places the reader at least partially in the role of authority, as spelled out in the example of the Long Parvula cited above, where the scholar asks himself to elicit the proper response, almost a kind of interrogative mise en abyme.

Some such complexities are well illustrated by a short exchange from Cicero's De Partitio Oratoria, an elementary rhetorical text constructed as a dialogue between Cicero and his son, or rather Cicero and his father. In fact, the interlocutors refer to each other as "mi pater" and "mi Cicero" even though helpful modern editors like to prefix their speeches with "Cicero Senior" and "Cicero Junior," or for the Latin "Cicero Pater" and "Cicero Filius." The supposed occasion of the dialogue is the impending departure of the great orator's son to study at Athens. Like the later grammar by Donatus, the dialogue proceeds with short questions and answers, giving way to longer disquisitions by father Cicero. But the roles here are the reverse of what I argued

---


51 For example, "C.F. Quot in partes distribuenda est omnis doctrina dicendi? C.P. In tres. C.F. Cedo quas?" [C.J. Into how many parts ought the theory of rhetoric as a whole to be divided? C.S. Three. C.J. Pray tell me what they are?] Cicero, De Partitio Oratoria, trans. Rackham, i.3.
obtained in the Ars Minor, since the subordinate son asks and the authoritative father answers, as in master-pupil dialogues. The dialogue starts off with a request by the son for instruction on rhetoric in Latin just as it had been given to him previously by his father in Greek. The father agrees and the following exchange takes place:

Cicero Filius. Visne igitur, ut tu me Graece soles ordine interrogare, sic ego te vicissim eisdem de rebus Latine interrogem?

Cicero Pater. Sane, si placet. Sic enim et ego te meminisse intellegam quae accepisti et tu ordine audies quae requires.

[Cicero Junior. Well then, are you agreeable to my adopting your method, and putting to you a series of questions in Latin about the same subjects as you examine me upon in Greek?

Cicero Senior. By all means if you like, as that procedure will enable me to see that you have remembered your previous lesson, and you will be able to obtain information on the points you raise seriatim.]

Unpacking this short prefatory exchange reveals a number of important implications about question and answer dialogues. The son is empowered to ask the questions because he is following a procedure previously established, we are to understand, by the father ("ut tu me Graece soles ordine interrogare...".). In answering the questions, Cicero Senior will not only impart information which the son requests, he will also be able to test his son's memory and capacity for using the father's method ("Sic enim et ego te meminisse

---

52 Cicero, De Partitio Oratoria, ed. and trans. H. Rackham, i.2.
intellegam quae acceptisti..."). Thus the questioner plays two parts, seeker of knowledge as well as examinee; the father imparts knowledge but also examines his son's ability.

That the title Donet is apt to Pecock's work is borne out, thirdly, by establishing the context of institutional disputations. With regard to the positioning and nomenclature of the interlocutors in Pecock's dialogue it is remarkable to note that university disputations sometimes cast participants in the role of "father" (and less frequently but by implication "son"). Recourse to this historical context is not required in order to make sense of the names given to the speakers in the dialogue, since it seems perfectly natural in a patriarchal culture that a parent concern himself about his offspring's pedagogical process. In Christian culture there are intimations of the priesthood and spiritual fathers, as well as God the father, the font of any testing authority. Nonetheless, it is interesting that university disputations made use of the parental relationship from the Middle Ages through the seventeenth century.

At medieval Oxford the final and highly ceremonial disputations of the university student's career constituted the "Inception" to the Master of Arts degree (so called because this disputation was to be the first under the requirement to teach stipulated by the rank conferred, hence "inception" or "commencement"). There were two parts to this procedure. The Inceptor went through his vesperiae, a "solemn
disputation on the eve of the great day itself,"\textsuperscript{53} at the parochial church of St. Mildred, or the conventual church of the Augustinian friars.\textsuperscript{54} The "Father" had a non-adversarial role in the procedures: "The exercise consisted of a disputation between the inceptor and some Masters of Arts, on certain questions propounded in Latin verse by the presiding Master, who was generally styled the Father."\textsuperscript{55} In fact, the "Father" was an advocate of the incepting master, and was to make a speech extolling the disputant's merits;\textsuperscript{56} as Lyte remarks, "To the inceptor himself the most pleasing part of the vesperies was the oration in which the Father publicly commended his virtue and learning."\textsuperscript{57} The next day after the celebration of mass the ceremony continued at St. Mary's Church, wherein "[f]irst the Father stepping forward delivered a book into the hands of the inceptor, placed a cap--the emblem of magisterial authority--on his head, and greeted him with the kiss of peace." Thereafter the inceptor disputed on two questions from Aristotle and finally "determined the


\textsuperscript{54} H.C. Maxwell Lyte, \textit{A History of the University of Oxford From the Earliest Times to the Year 1530} (London: Macmillan & Co., 1886) 213.

\textsuperscript{55} Lyte 213.

\textsuperscript{56} Mallett 189.

\textsuperscript{57} Lyte 214.
question" with a single argument.58 This historical evidence is mostly inferred from university statutes; however, the manuscript record of a disputation from the early seventeenth century preserved in the Bodleian library provides evidence that the "father of the Acte" was still an important participant and, at that time anyway, more involved in the procedures as supreme authority during the ceremony, actively directing questions to the inceptor for response during the vespers.59

William T. Costello has reviewed in detail the manuscript evidence pertaining to university disputations at England's other university. Just as at Oxford, Costello notes here the elaborate ceremonial surrounding the disputations held on the eve of Commencement Day and on the day itself, in which "'Fathers' (patrons of the defendant, who customarily gave preliminary treatments of the question)" gave speeches on their pupil's behalf.60 In all of these disputations the student is designated as responding to the question, making him in English the "Answerer."61 Costello quotes a manuscript

58 Lyte 214-15.


60 Costello, 15, 17. Costello gives the best detailed description of the disputation procedure.

61 Costello 17.
account now in the Cambridge college library of Gonville and Caius which describes the "preliminary skirmishing" between Father and Son whose purpose is "to put the answerer at ease and heighten the anticipation of the battle to follow": when the answerer has delivered his brief introductory oration,

"...the Father doth usually confute it, but very briefly: & then hee disputeth upon his sonne, who after he hath repeated his first syllogisme, doth endeavor to answer the objections the father used against it." 62

At Cambridge in the Elizabethan-Stuart period there was also an undergraduate ordeal—the final disputation ceremony for the Bachelor of Arts degree. After having undergone an examination of his learning in the arts school where the proctors and the regent masters of arts posed questions to test his learning, the candidate was admitted to the status of "questionist" (someone who addresses the question) and took part in a final ceremony. 63 Curtis describes this disputation as appearing "in the schools to answer a question, this time one put by the officer of his college called 'the father' who


63 Mark H. Curtis, Oxford and Cambridge in Transition 1558-1642: An Essay on Changing Relations between the English Universities and English Society (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1959) 90. It is interesting to note that at the earlier stage the examinee is referred to as "questionist," while later in his post-graduate exercises he is "respondent" or "answerer." Of course questionist is not the same as questioner. Space does not permit a more detailed discussion of the large issue of the "quaestio" and the use of questions in academical culture in the Middle Ages and Renaissance which would be pertinent here. I refer the reader to Brian Lawn, The Rise and Decline of the Scholastic "Quaestio Disputata" (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1993).
had charge of the studies of undergraduates."^{64} Curtis cites a contemporary account of the ceremony by Matthew Stokys:

"...the Father being placed in the responsals seat and his children standing over against him in order,...the bedell shall...say: Reverende Pater, licebit tibi incipere, sedere et cooperiri si placet. That done, the Father shall enter his commendations of his children, and propounding of his question unto them, which the eldest shall first answer, and the rest orderly...."^{65}

Costello also mentions undergraduate examinations on Aristotle's Prior and Posterior Analytics at Cambridge known as priorums and posteriorums, and evidently borrowed from the exercises in logic at the University of Paris.^{66} One beadle's manuscript account identifies the Father more clearly with testing questions; as Costello explains:

According to Bedell Buck's Book, the Father, usually one of the senior proctors, herded his questionists into the schools on a day appointed between admission and the following Ash Wednesday. The Father made a speech, at the end of which he asked of each questionist three or four perfunctory questions in logic.^{67}

Even though the specific role of the Father in disputation ceremonies may have varied through the period—from presiding authority to advocate for the pupil to

---

^{64} Curtis 90.


^{66} Costello 34.

^{67} It is interesting to consider his following assertion that the perfunctoriness of these formal examinations was due to an excess rather than a defect of learning, because the seventeenth-century student was so thoroughly drilled in logic. Costello 34.
participant in the disputation, from patron to master to
college official—the commonly known designation of these
ceremonial personages especially at the most public of all the
scholastic exercises, in addition to the similarities between
real-life debating and their literary recreations, links
institutional Fathers and Sons to their dialogue counterparts.
Thus Pecock's choice of interlocutors "fadir" and "sone,"
perhaps unexpectedly, connects the dialogue to the
contemporary practice of disputation.

The "Donet," disputation, and syllogistic argument

Pecock was an academic man who had a tremendous respect
for the intellect;68 his early years at the university of
Oxford were the "paramount, perhaps even the predominant
influence in his life and work."69 This was not only, as
Green states, because he first came into contact with Lollard
ideas there amidst the controversies and disputes of the early
fifteenth century,70 but also because the scholastic
institutional mentalité left its unmistakable stamp on Pecock,
including a preference for disputation in resolving
differences of opinion and making judgments. For example, E.F.
Jacob states that at Pecock's first trial for heresy in 1457
he challenged the proceedings themselves (judgment by a

68 Green 16.
69 Green 10.
70 Green 13.
council of twenty-four assessors both seculars and religious). "Pecock," Jacob says, "objected to the assessors, asking to be judged not by these doctors but by his peers: not by bishops...but by his equals in scholastic disputation."71

Pecock was not afraid to dispute, to entertain and engage the opposing view (which is what made him so threatening to arbitrary authority); he believed that "doom of resoun" was always in accordance with the true teachings of the Church.

The dialogues attest to this in their very form, but the Repressor spells it out. Here he finds the third error of the lay party to be closed-mindedness--that those who have discovered some truth in Scriptures,

he or sche...bowe away her heering, her reeding, and her vndirstonding fro al resonyng and fro al arguyng or prouyng which eny clerk can or wole or mai make bi eny maner euydence of resoun or of Scripture, and namelich of resoun into the contrarie.... (Repressor p. 7, part I, chapter i)

Reasoning by contrary is the mark of dialectic, the dominant subject of the trivium in the fifteenth century as it had been since Abelard's Sic et Non stimulated the rise of this speculative art; and dialectic was practiced in disputational exercises, from the sophisters required debates in parviso after their first two years of university study, to the public quodlibetal disputations of stellar scholastic scholars.

Although the study of grammar along with the study of rhetoric, had, from the twelfth century, been subordinated to

71 Jacob 17.
the study of dialectic or logic, it was not severed from the higher reaches of the curriculum; on the contrary, as preparatory work grammar began the process of education towards the ultimate ends of language use in the institution—the disputation. Because of the continuum between elementary grammar and university arts course grammar, and between dialogue primer and scholastic disputation, Pecock's Donet can be contextualized within the field of instructional grammars, and so within the field of grammar itself, and hence to grammatical disquisitions. In his seminal study of the university arts course in the Middle Ages L.J. Paetow writes:

...the influence of scholasticism...gradually transformed grammar into a speculative study. Instead of referring to examples from the best Latin literature to explain a doubtful point, the grammarians now preferred to solve the matter by the rules of logic.

On the shift from medieval scholastic to Renaissance humanist practices see the important article by Terrence Heath, "Logical Grammar, Grammatical Logic, and Humanism in Three German Universities," SiR 18 (1971): 9-64. Heath cogently argues that when grammar teaching was changed by the humanists from complementary training in logic—with strong ties to speculative physical and metaphysical issues—to reading and imitation of the best Latin poets and prose writers it undermined the whole scholastic arts curriculum including disputation. Students were no longer prepared in grammatical studies for the method and terminology of scholastic logic and philosophy; for the analysis of language into terms, propositions, and arguments. The words which suited the logicians and theologians were not found in poets and orators.

L.J. Paetow, The Arts Course at Medieval Universities with Special Reference to Grammar and Rhetoric, diss. U of Pennsylvania (Champaign: U of Illinois, 1910) 35. That logic and not authority was privileged is evident from a gloss Paetow cites here which dismisses Priscian for relying solely on the authority of the ancient grammarians. He should not teach, the glossator says, "'because those only should teach
Paetow notes that grammar disputations were sometimes held at medieval universities, and this is substantiated by other accounts of university statutes which prescribed grammar disputations for Friday, logic being the subject disputed Monday through Thursday. Thus grammar came to be in the domain of dialectic.

K.J. Wilson provides a succinct examination of the issue of dialogues, dialogue grammars, and disputation in an important article "The Continuity of Post-Classical Dialogue." Wilson points to the long, unbroken tradition of dialogue grammars starting with the epitome of Greek grammar by Dionysius Thrax, and notes that while not literary these who give reasons for what they say." The rise of dialectic thus challenges the commonplace characterization of medieval culture as reverencing authority above all.

Lyte 208. This tradition continued in somewhat modified form at Elizabethan Oxford: "Disputations were to be in logic except on Fridays, when 'Morall, Rhetoricke or Grammer' was to be debated. The wording of this reference to the Friday exercises is significant as the medieval statutes had allocated grammar only to this day, especially requiring exercises on the speculative grammar of the modistae. Humanistic influence seems here to have modified slightly the character of the determination exercises." J.M. Fletcher, "The Faculty of Arts," in The History of the University of Oxford, Vol. III "The Collegiate University," ed. James McConica (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1986) 183.

Paetow 53. Duns Scotus (c.1300) wrote a "grammatica speculativa" (Paetow 36), as did Anselm whose De grammatico is a dialogue which opens with the Discipulus asking for certainty on the issue of whether grammar is a substance and quality (as part of the Aristotelian scheme) (Anselm, Opera Omnia, vol. I, ed. F.S. Schmitt [Seccovii, 1938] 141-68).

Wilson, "Post-Classical" 24. The Techne grammatike was not originally in question-and-answer but was reduced to this form early (24-25). Dionysius Thrax lived in the second
works nevertheless "touch literary history closely, for they 
comprise the early reading of many an author.""\textsuperscript{77} Under the 
various incarnations of Donatus's grammar are listed: a 
revision by the Venerable Bede; Alcuin's question-and-answer 
didascalica based on the \textit{Ars Minor}; Paulus Diaconus's 
question-and-answer commentary on Donatus; and even a 
moralized form of the text, the \textit{Donat moralisé}.\textsuperscript{78} As Wilson 
convincingly argues, "Grammar was propaedeutic; and its 
vehicle, dialogue, provided preliminary instruction in method, 
i.e., dialectic or logic, which would be studied in its own 
right later."\textsuperscript{79} Because grammar long occupied the first 
position of the arts curriculum, elementary dialogue grammars 
"gave rise to a large body of dialogue literature" in the 
 colloquies, from Ælfric through Erasmus, and ensured their 
continued popularity. These early textbooks reinforced grammar 
instruction and Latin language usage; the easy dialogues that 
were themselves elementary dialectic, "became fully elaborated 
in the student's university training in scholastic 
century B.C.

\textsuperscript{77} Wilson, "Post-Classical" 26.

\textsuperscript{78} Wilson, "Post-Classical" 26. "Just as Ovid and Virgil 
were moralized to make them fit for Christian consumption in 
the Middle Ages, so Donatus' Latin grammar was moralized for 
the same purpose. In one version of the moralized Donatus the 
commentator explains that the various cases in the declension 
of nouns correspond to the various stages in the declension of 
the soul from God" (Mallet, I, 434 ff., cited by Wilson 26 n. 
25).

\textsuperscript{79} Wilson, "Post-Classical" 29. This argument is given a 
full discussion by Terrance Heath (see above n. 72).
Disputation. Disputation was not restricted to the technical mastery of exercises in the schools, however, since "[t]raining in academic disputation paved the way to public disputation in adult life: civil and ecclesiastical trials, parliamentary and other public debates, and the teaching of young scholars." Not to mention invasively informing the fundamental learned processes of thought and speculation, and of literacy, which I would formulate in the following way: (to misappropriate a phrase from Jacques Lacan) in the Middle Ages and Renaissance the conscious mind was structured like a dialogue. The dynamic between disputation and dialogue was continuous and ongoing; it may be fruitless if not impossible to try to pinpoint which was prior in a causal way in any given situation. Dialogue was the "child of the trivium" to any university scholar: "Whether his attention was directed to grammar, dialectic, or rhetoric, the student encountered dialogue in a variety of forms." The speculative scholastic method in turn influenced those dialogue works.

---

80 Wilson, "Post-Classical" 30.
81 Wilson, "Post-Classical" 37.
82 Mikhail Bakhtin of course founds his theory of the dialogic on residual dialogue structures, but does not examine the dialogic matrix in this period, choosing instead, when he does talk about dialogue texts, to focus on Plato and Lucian. He locates the dialogic since the eighteenth century in the novel. See his "Epic and Novel: Toward a Methodology for the Study of the Novel," in The Dialogic Imagination, 3-40, esp. 22-24.
83 Wilson, "Post-Classical" 30.
The Scholastic method of logical reasoning by syllogism became the hallmark of Pecock's own style. I have already noted how Pecock decried the general lack of logical competence of his lay audience; the direct result of this felt lack was his attempt to compensate through an emphasis, directly and indirectly, on logical training in all his works. Prior to his call for a "schort compendious logik" in the introduction to the Repressor (cited above), Pecock attempts to fill a small part of this gap by explaining how a syllogism works, in order that the reader ("he or sche") will better understand his writing:

An argument if he be ful and foormal, which is clepid a sillogisme, is mad of twey proposicions druyng out of hem and bi strengthe of hem the thridde proposicioun.... And ech such argument is of this kinde, that if the bothe premissis ben trewe, the conclusioun concluidid out and bi hem is also trewe.... Wherefore certis if eny man can be sikir for eny tyme that these ij. premissyis be trewe, he mai be sikir that the conclusioun is trewe; thou3 alle the aungelis in heuen wolden seie and holde that thilk conclusioun were not trewe. (Repressor p.8, part I, chapter ii)

In his dialogue The Book of Faith Pecock expands this optimistic belief in the syllogism as a component of true faith by having the "sone" rehearse the following to the "fadir's" approval, thus teaching syllogistic method in the dialogue itself:

---

84 Pecock's remarkable belief that woman too can understand and perform logical computation is rare if not practically unknown in the period; even the humanists denied dialectic education to women. On women and logic see Joan Gibson, "Educating For Silence: Renaissance Women and the Language Arts," Hypatia 4.1 (1989): 9-27.
Fadir, se han seid before in this present book, that our natural resoun with his sillogising hath so greet interesse in mater of feith, that without dome of our natural resoun, and without a sillogisme, wel reulid and necessarilí concluding, and provyng this or that to be trowid as feith, we mowe not have of this, or of that witnessid bi God, or bi a sureli trewe creature, eny feith. Also, in the first party of the Represser, and in the first parti of Just apprising Holí Scripture, se han seid that resoun, which is a sillogisme wel reulid aftir the craft tau3t in logik, and havyng ii premyssis, openli trewe and to be grauntid, is so stronge and so mysti in al kindis of maters, that thou3 al the aungels of hevene wolden seie that his conclusioun were not trewe, sitt we schulde leeve the aungels seiyng, and we schulden truste more to the proof of thilk sillogisme, than to the contrarie seiyng of alle the aungels in hevene, for that alle Goddis creaturis musten nedis obeie to doom of resoun, and such a sillogisme is not ellis than doom of resoun.

Sone, al this y seid, and al this ech wel avisid man muste nedis seie....

Importantly, the son goes on to actually demonstrate he has learned this logical method by providing an example of syllogistic reasoning based on the above material. As representative in the text of the initiate reader, the son's example of the precocious ability to learn this fundamental grounding of Pecock's educational program provides further

---

85 Reginald Pecock, Book of Faith, ed. J.L. Morison (Glasgow: James Maclehose and Sons, 1909) 174-75. This often cited passage is another example of Pecock's cross-referencing. For detailed analyses of Pecock's philosophical and religious thought see E.F. Jacob, "Reynold Pecock, Bishop of Chichester," the biographies by Patrouch and Green, and Everett H. Emerson, "Reginald Pecock: Christian Rationalist," Speculum 31.2 (1956): 235-242. Pecock's reliance on syllogism and rational faith opened the door to seriously questioning the authority of the Church, despite his recantation and disclaimers to the contrary; this led to the displeasure of ecclesiastical authorities in his own time and his enshrinement as a Protestant martyr (e.g. in Foxe's Book of Martyrs) and proto-Reformer in the next century. It is thanks to this appeal that his remaining works were preserved.
instruction in reading and "conning" the dialogue works.

That logical method and literary style are tightly knit together has been emphasized by several scholars. Joseph F. Patrouch asserts that "Pecock's matter and his style were admirably suited to each other,"\(^{86}\) that from a stylistic viewpoint, "the syllogism is the ordering force of what is new in Pecock's use of the English language," giving his sentences coherence, movement and order. The syllogistic arguments add "a little more to the system of knowledge which he is erecting."\(^{87}\) Janel Mueller takes this one step further. Upon a closer linguistic analysis, she characterizes the very prose style as syllogistic. Mueller notes that Pecock exercised his readers continually in the art with every passage of argument that he wrote in English. What is more, he incorporated the progression from major premise to minor premise to conclusion—or the inverse—into the very structure of his sentences, so that the mainstay of Pecock's vernacular prose is not merely syllogistic argument but, in fact, an equally syllogistic style.\(^{88}\)

The "clausal order" of Pecock's prose style "enchains the logical progression"; the compendiousness of his sentence unit being "the by-product of its development as a container for an entire three-step proof."\(^{89}\)

It must be underlined that university disputations

\(^{86}\) Patrouch 55.

\(^{87}\) Patrouch 58-59, and as Costello notes, system-building is a characteristic of Scholasticism.

\(^{88}\) Mueller 143.

\(^{89}\) Mueller 143-44.
proceeded by means of participants alternately advancing syllogisms. Similarly, Pecock's syllogisms and syllogistic style are inserted into the dialogue form in four of his surviving works just as syllogisms make up the smaller components of disputation exercises. In another way the reasoning by syllogism on the smaller linguistic level of sentence unit in Pecock parallels the reasoning by dialogue of the larger structure, as well as reproducing a scholastic institutional setting. Logical method is not only knit into his style but into the literary form as well. For the very back-and-forth interlocution of son and father are what move the work forward through the numerous questions, detractions, suppositions, suggestions, demonstrations, confirmations, affirmations, and repetitions. The Donet and other dialogues accurately communicate the method Pecock wished to disseminate, making the practical technique of the schools available to a wide lay-audience. His works epitomize, at a pivotal moment in Western culture--on the eve of the printing revolution--dialogue's long-standing conjunction with educational practices, replicating and reinventing various institutional processes from the quaestio to disputation, from catechism and "donet" to the more sophisticated arts of the trivium, dialectic and rhetoric, to which this study now turns.
PART II: CASE STUDIES

Chapter 3
Dialectic and Dialogues of Dying, Death and Self-Comfort:
Hoccleve and More

"Dialectica est ars artium et scientia scientiarum ad omnium methodorum principia viam habens." Thus the standard textbook for the introductory study of dialectic in the Middle Ages and up to the sixteenth century, Peter of Spain's *Summulae logicales*, presented, in its initial sentence, dialectic as the most important part of the trivium, holding the key to all intellectual inquiry.¹ Dialectic is the Aristotelian "art" or *technê*, a method for producing or generating truth; it is also the Aristotelian "science" or *epistêmê*, the body of pure knowledge existing of necessity (and "ungenerable") which can be taught and learned (either by

induction or syllogism). Rather than independent, discrete fields, techne and episteme are dynamically or reciprocally linked. This is explicit in Isidore of Seville's definition of scientia as a body of knowledge the mastery of which leads to a method; here scientia leads to ars with its emphasis on performance based upon certain principles or rules.

Dialectic, though strictly speaking classified as one of the ars sermocinales, is situated in this dynamic exchange between the method for producing knowledge and the established truths which are both its object and regulation. Dialogue, too, following the pattern established by its close relation to dialectic (which will be discussed below pp. 142-45), occupies a similar position between conveying a body of thought and simulating a method for arriving at one.

In the fifteenth century Rudolph Agricola redefined the language art of dialectic in his De inventione dialectica (completed in 1479) as "the art of discoursing with


\[3\] "...by a science, Isidore means a body of knowledge through the mastery of which a student is enabled to evolve a method; and by an art he means either a performance based on artistic principles and rules, or one of the seven liberal arts (cf. Etymol. I.1-2; II.1). At times, however, his use of the terms is somewhat loose." Dorothy V. Cerino, trans., Isidore of Seville, "The Etymologies, II.1-15: Concerning Rhetoric," Readings in Medieval Rhetoric, ed. J.M. Miller, M.H. Prosser, and T.W. Benson (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1973) 80 n.5.
probability on any subject, insofar as the nature of the subject is capable of creating conviction.\footnote{Peter Mack, in his book\textit{ Renaissance Argument}, notes that "probabiliter" is a key word for dialectic based on Aristotle's differentiation of the field from logic which is concerned with demonstrable truths;\footnote{But Mack argues that Agricola's usage of "probabiliter" should here be translated as "convincingly."} but Mack argues that Agricola's usage of "probabiliter" should here be translated as "convincingly."} Agricola's emphasis on persuasion, the more usual purview of rhetoric, raises the question--important for the present study--of the distinction between dialectic and the third part

\footnote{Trans. Ong, \textit{Ramus} 101. "\textit{Dialectica [est] ars probabiliter de qualibet re proposita disserendi prout cuiusque natura capax esse fidei poterit.}" (Quoted Ong, \textit{Ramus} 337 n.30).}

\footnote{In the Middle Ages and Renaissance the Aristotelian distinction between logic and dialectic was lost and the terms were for the most part interchangeable.}

\footnote{Peter Mack, \textit{Renaissance Argument: Valla and Agricola in the Traditions of Rhetoric and Dialectic} (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1993) 171 ff. Agricola specifies this in the DID 192: "For us the probabile will be what can be said suitably and fittingly (\textit{apte consentaneeque}) about the subject proposed" (trans. Mack, \textit{Renaissance Argument} 170). Agricola's usage of probabile also sounds like Quintilian's remarks on "probabile" as a kind of decorum in rhetoric: "Igitur ante omnia ne speremus ornatam orationem fore, quae probabilis non erit" (We must not expect any speech to be ornate that is not, in the first place, acceptable"). \textit{Probabilis} in oratory is the opposite (\textit{contraria}) of ornament; a speech (\textit{oratio}) must first be probabilis. Quintilian is citing Cicero, \textit{De Partitione Oratoria} vi.19: "Probabile autem Cicero id genus dicit, quod non nimis est comptum"; ",,...[sed verbas] aptas opinionibus hominum ac moribus." (An acceptable style is defined by Cicero as one which is not over-elegant; and the orator's words should have a weight or serious cast, "or at any rate adapted to the opinions and character of mankind.") Quintilian, \textit{Institutio Oratoria}, ed. and trans. H.E. Butler, LCL (London: Heinemann, 1958) VIII.iii.42-43.}
of the trivium. There was a blurring of the lines of separation between these two subjects especially after the humanist incursions of the fifteenth century that put rhetoric in the ascendent. As Mack states:

Dialectic starts from the disputation and rhetoric from the oration, but both are easily extended to other forms. Rhetoric ought always to be concerned with an audience, and dialectic should aim at establishing knowledge....Both subjects share and fight over two chief concerns: persuasion, and training in the use of language...there is a common territory, and boundaries shift.

Some of this common territory would include a concern with argument, especially invention and judgment, and arguing with probability or plausibility, or—as Agricola puts it—for the purposes of creating belief. Both of these artes sermo-cinales make use of the varied traditions of the topica.⁷ Even though rhetoric and dialectic were often defined in opposition,⁸ this nonetheless gave rise to an interconnectedness: for if dialecticians claimed teaching as their domain, rhetoricians retorted that teaching cannot be accomplished without moving and pleasing.

Another example of overlap is the concept of arguing different sides of an issue; here the confusion stemmed from the differing stances of authorities of antiquity. In the

⁷ Mack, Renaissance Argument 6-7.

⁸ See Mack, Renaissance Argument, for a comprehensive discussion of the various traditions of the topics from Aristotle, Cicero, and Boethius to Agricola (Chapter 7, "Agricola's Topics.")

⁹ Mack, Renaissance Argument 7.
Topica Aristotle states that his treatise on dialectical reasoning will be useful because "the ability to raise searching difficulties on both sides of a subject will make us detect more easily the truth and error about the several points that arise."\(^{10}\) He advises that one should select and arrange pro and con arguments side by side to be on guard against contrary statements, but also because "the power of discerning and holding in one view the results of either of two hypotheses is no mean instrument" in "contributing to knowledge and to philosophic wisdom...".\(^{11}\) On the other hand, Cicero frequently claimed arguing in utramque partem as the province of rhetoric and thus consciously assimilated dialectical method to rhetorical ends on the basis of Academic scepticism.\(^{12}\) For example, in the De Oratore he has Crassus state that orators must argue every question on both sides ("disputandumque de omni re in contrarias partes"), and bring


11 Aristotle, Topica, VIII.14 (163b).

out on every topic whatever points can be deemed plausible ("probabiliter"). In fact, anyone who can speak "in Aristotelian fashion" on both sides of every subject "would be the one and only true and perfect orator." Appropriating Aristotelian dialectic to rhetorical ends, Cicero, who was consciously following the model of the peripatetic philosopher in his composition of dialogues (as he reveals in his letters), provides an important link between the literary genre of dialogue and the arts of dialectic and rhetoric.

Despite the shared terrain of rhetoric and dialectic there are still many ways in which the two fields oppose or complement each other. Traditionally, dialectic is concerned with teaching, rhetoric with persuading, moving and pleasing; then again, dialectic is concerned with the seeking of

---


14 Cicero, De Oratore III.xxI.80.

15 "Quae autem his temporibus scripsi, [Aristoteleion] morem habent, in quo sermo ita inducitur ceterorum, ut penes ipsum sit principatus." ("But in a modern work, I follow Aristotle's practice: the conversation of the others is so put forward as to leave him the principal part.") Cicero, Letters to Atticus, trans. by E.O. Winstedt, vol. 3, LCL (London: Heinemann, 1918) XIII.xix. I discuss this more fully in Chapter 4, pp. 200-201. See also Cicero's letter to Lentulus: "scripsi igitur Aristoteleio more, quemadmodum quidem volui, tres libros in disputatioine ac dialogo De Oratore...." ("...I have written, I say, on the model of Aristotle--at least that is how I wanted to do it--three books in the form of a discussion and dialogue, entitled The Orator...."). Cicero, Letters to his Friends, ed. and trans. W. Glynn Williams, vol. 1, LCL (London: Heinemann, 1958) I.ix.23. I am indebted for these references to Philip Levine, "Cicero and the Literary Dialogue," The Classical Journal (53) 1957: 146-51.
universal or general truths, while rhetoric concerns itself with the specific, situational, and context-bound; dialectic is theoretical, thus deploying technical terms, where rhetoric is practical, making its appeal through simple language; and whereas dialectic is a method of inquiry, reliant on precision, rigour, and exactitude, rhetoric is a method of composition, defined by eloquence, style, and embellishment. Dialectic is of course also synonymous with the question and answer method of reasoning and with disputation and debate genres; rhetoric with its emphasis on public oration is most often associated with forensic pleading before a judge, with moving to action, and with \textit{ethos}.\footnote{In an eighth-century dialogue between Alcuin and Charlemagne, Alcuin reiterates the ancient division of rhetoric into three kinds using biblical examples for each: 1) demonstrative (epideictic), praise and blame, 2) deliberative, relating to persuasion and dissuasion, and 3) judicial (forensic), relating to accusation and defense: "Nam in iudiciis saepius quid aequum sit quaeritur, in demonstratione quid honestum sit intellegitur, in deliberatione quid honestum et utile sit consideratur" ("For in judicial oratory what is just is more often inquired into; in demonstrative oratory, what is honorable; and in deliberative oratory, what is honorable and expedient"). Quoted and translated in The Rhetoric of Alcuin and Charlemagne, trans. with an Introduction, the Latin text, and notes by Wilbur Samuel Howell (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1941) 73. There are many manuscripts of this dialogue, and it was published a number of times in the Renaissance, often with Alcuin's \textit{Dialectic} which is also a dialogue.}

Dialogues reflect the concerns of both dialectic and rhetoric, and these concerns are intertwined in any given example. However, particular dialogue works can be seen as privileging a relation to one or the other of the two language
arts, particularly, I submit, when division is made on the basis of the difference between reasoning in order to teach (dialectic) and reasoning in order to persuade (rhetoric). For example, Middle English debate poetry, with its deployment of Aristotelian topical logic, and "aesthetics of irresolution," fits more easily on the dialectical side of the equation; while sixteenth-century humanist dialogues conceived with particular political or social aims in mind are more suitably positioned in relation to rhetoric. To some extent, such isolation does violence to the individual works, which partake of the structures of both fields; however, I believe it is useful to impose such a separation. In this chapter I will discuss two dialogues which more especially give rise to issues around the dialectical use of language focused on the subject of death. I will compare two representative dialogues, one from the last century of the Middle Ages, Hoccleve's Lerne to Dye, and one from the first century of the English Renaissance, More's Dialogue of Comfort. Such a methodology can only be suggestive and productive of some of the ways in which dialogue literature was occupied in this period of transition with the most

---


18 I refer to the monograph by Thomas Reed, Jr., and his revisionist thesis that Middle English debate poetry consistently returns to the open-ended, aporetic conclusion as a way of inferring a new (for us) kind of medieval aesthetic.
important language art, dialectic.

Dialectic and dialogue

*Doubt is not a pleasant condition, but certainty is an absurd one.*

Ever since Plato created a dialogue genre informed by Socratic question and answer dialectic and dialogue have been explicitly linked. Similarly, dialogue and dialectic are "naturally connected," according to Chaim Perelman, in the tradition originating with Aristotelian dialectic dominated by induction (as opposed to the syllogistic method employed in disputation). According to Perelman,

> [t]he deductive method may be the best when setting forth the results of a science whose outlines are already settled, but in order to discover, as well as to test, the outlines of a developing science, the method of dialectical proofs should be used. Since it is a question of considering various possible formulations of principles and of weighing carefully their advantages and inconveniences, this investigation must perforce adopt the form of a dialogue containing questions and replies, objections and rejoinders, whether this be undertaken by several persons or be confined within the limits of a private deliberation. The dialectic method, inasmuch as it is heuristic and critical, thus stands quite naturally connected with thought in the form of a dialogue.

---

19 Voltaire, Letter to Frederick the Great, 6 April 1767.

20 On Plato as the father of dialogue see Diogenes Laertius, "Life of Plato."

The careful weighing of possible approaches to a subject which dialectically informs one's thought is schematized in dialogue and embodied in the interlocutors who do not necessarily take up antithetical positions, although they offer questions and replies, objections and rejoinders. Such an awareness of a "universal association" of dialogue and dialectic existed in ancient letters according to C.J.R. Armstrong, who cites Quintilian's *Institutio Oratoria* V.xiv.27-28 as an example, and this association was recapitulated by Italian Renaissance theorists of dialogue. Sigonio asserts that because "the ancients maintained that dialogues should be composed of questions and answers" they "thus come under the competence of dialectic, which is charged with finding the arguments whereby we confirm or refute anything." Speroni and Tasso concur; for the latter the very definition of dialogue is the

argue with, we should argue with ourselves" (163b). See also Armstrong below.


23 Quoted by Armstrong 37.
imitation of a dialectical disputation. But these theorists do not rule out deductive reasoning and syllogistic as components of dialectic and dialogue. As for Sigonio, for Tasso dialogue is the province of the dialectician, who explores a given proposition for a probable opinion in the form of a syllogism; questioning is his major activity.

Doubt is a precondition of the discursive operation of dialectic and dialogue, and, I would argue, it was so for the Renaissance dialogist as much as for the medieval scholastic dialectician. Peter Abelard's Sic et Non, which brought Aristotelian dialectical method into the twelfth century, was explicitly positioned in response to doubt under the dictum: by doubting we come to inquire and by inquiring we come to understand. In the sixteenth century, "truth-seeking" is a marked area of convergence for writers on

---

24 Armstrong 38; sometimes translated as "the imitation of reasoning." See also Snyder on dialectic in Italian Renaissance theories of dialogue. An English translation of Tasso's treatise is available in Tasso's Dialogues: A Selection with the "Discourse on the Art of the Dialogue," trans. with an introduction and notes by Carnes Lord and Dain A. Trafton (Berkeley: U of California P, 1982). Speroni and Sigonio's treatises have not yet been translated into English.

25 Snyder 159.

26 Snyder 159; as he goes on to say, when something is doubted a question of truth is introduced.

dialectic and writers of dialogues; doubt is the crucial stance to be adopted in the pursuit of knowledge. Through dialectic, dialogue becomes the literature of doubt, addressing subjects which are, as in the case of the subject of death, at the very limits of rational intellect; dialogue works describe a body of received wisdom while at the same time stimulating a method for arriving at knowledge. Both aspects, knowledge and practice, comprise that which is to be learned from the dialectically informed dialogues on death.

I. Hoccleve's "How to Lerne to Dye": dialogue, death, self-comfort

From death to the art of dying

...one can only come to terms with death by pressing forward, opening the door and looking all around its room.

The present chapter will look at how, within a context of dialectic, dialogue literature attempts to give us a view of "death's room." Over the last six-hundred years little scientific advancement has been made with regard to this subject: it seems that on the topic of life after death, the jury is still out. Death is that which perplexingly does not

28 Armstrong 40.
25 Jardine, "Lorenzo Valla" 266.
30 Frances Partridge, Other People, quoted in the TLS 23 July 1993.
allow of experience at all. As invoked by Chaucer at the beginning of *The Legend of Good Women*, death becomes the ultimate test of authority versus experience:

> A thousand tymes have I herd men telle
> That ther ys joy in hevene and peyne in helle,
> And I acorde wel that it ys so;
> But, natheles, yet wot I wel also
> That ther nys noon dwellyng in this contree
> That eyther hath in hevene or helle ybe,
> Ne may of hit noon other weyes witen
> But as he hath herd seyd or founde it writen;
> For by assay ther may no man it preve.  

For thousands of years—from the *Phaedo* to Heidegger's "Sein zum Tode"—the philosophic tradition in the West has attempted to assimilate death within a rationalist order of thought repeatedly maintaining the commonplace that philosophy is learning to die. But no other issue—not even the existence of God—demonstrates such resistance to integration. Like Keats's Grecian urn, death "dost tease us out of thought," literally as well as figuratively, since thinking about death taxes the very limits of human ratiocination. As Chaucer so succinctly phrases it, we may only know death from what is written or said, from some other person's prior intellection, or revelation, and not by cognition: "For by assay ther may no man it preve." In the twentieth century philosophers have attempted to get beyond the unknown of death simply as a country which can never be explored; the result, nonetheless,

---

is a reiteration of death's resilience in the face of rational effort:

The unknown of death, which is not given straight off as nothingness but is correlative to an experience of the impossibility of nothingness, signifies not that death is a region from which no one has returned and consequently remains unknown as a matter of fact; the unknown of death signifies that the very relationship with death cannot take place in the light, that the subject is in relationship with what does not come from itself. We could say it is in relationship with mystery. 32

Emmanuel Levinas's "mystery" is a concept which, I surmise, would have been wholly acceptable to earlier thinkers as that which remains "out of mind" even while the rational intellect peers into "death's room." And while Levinas's statement is phrased with more philosophic precision than Chaucer's, it remains a reformulation of the problem rather than a new answer.

Rather than defining what death is or what happens after death (such as Plato's Phaedo, or Cicero's Tusculan Disputations which eclectically gathers together Stoic and Epicurean thinking on the subject), native English dialogues of death focus on learning how to die. But in privileging the practice of dying in the ars moriendi tradition the scientia of death is not overlooked. A considerable body of written knowledge on death had accumulated by the fifteenth century, a century infamous for its obsession with morbidity as a result of the "waning" or disintegration of the so-called medieval

synthesis. Dialogues of the body and soul tradition, for example, seem to rely simply on the difference between the joys of heaven and the pains of hell while focusing on corporeal decomposition. However, the answers provided by the Christian religion could not contain the continued preoccupation with death; this intimates that doctrine alone failed to satisfy what the rational soul required. The scientia of death could be approached via a dialectical method, but in English dialogues this invariably reverts to the uses of death--the impossibility of speaking about death becomes the possibility of thinking about life: *ars moriendi* becomes *ars vivendi*.

---

33 I am referring to Johann Huizinga's *The Waning of the Middle Ages* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1954). Since I will be challenging this characterization I will proleptically assert that it was also in many ways the height of Scholasticism, especially in England with its strong tradition of what Italian humanists called the "barbari Britanici dialectici," Ockham, Scotus, Buridan, Burley, etc.

34 This is not new: the Middle English *Pearl* is a dialogue which reveals an attempt to rationally comprehend the figurative language of Christian doctrine on death.

35 See Nancy Lee Beaty, *The Craft of Dying: A Study in the Literary Tradition of the "Ars Moriendi" in England* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1970). Beaty defines the early exemplars of the *ars moriendi* in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries as relying on simplistic attitudes towards dying, although they are not the "rattling of bones" versions of the dance of death or body and soul dialogues. But while more practical, they still depend on simple answers provided by doctrine, and therefore are not as probing as the dialogues on death by Hoccleve and More.
The spiritual education of the self in "Lerne to Dye"

Hoccleve's *Lerne to Dye* is a master-pupil dialogue between Sapientia and Discipulus. Like Pecock's *Donet*, the education of the questioner is what is at stake in the dialogue, and of course the reader as an extension of the disciple position. Thus the dialogue is dialectical in privileging logical reasoning in order to teach. But in

---

36 The work is a "translation" of Book II Chapter 2 of Henry of Suso's *Horologium Sapientiae*, "De scientia utilissima homini mortali, quae est scire mori." It is taken from the expanded Latin version of an originally German tract written in 1334, one of the most popular devotional works of the late Middle Ages, according to B.P. Kurtz. Kurtz also compiled a statistical tabulation of Hoccleve's poetic text against the Latin prose original, but this methodology does not really tell us much about Hoccleve's usage of his source. See B.P. Kurtz, "The Source of Occeleve's Lerne to Dye," *MLN* 38 (1923): 337-40; "The Prose of Occeleve's Lerne to Dye," *MLN* 39 (1924): 56-57; and "The Relation of Occeleve's Lerne to Dye to its Source," *PMLA* 40 (1925): 252-75. Although clearly problematic, the relation of Hoccleve's work to his source will have to remain unexamined here. I proceed from the assumption that even a straight translation involves choices and selection on the part of the translator and his or her intervention in the text (see below Chapter 4, pp. 211-13). Hoccleve's is, pace Kurtz, not a slavish reproduction, especially since he has rendered Latin prose into English verse and in many places expanded his original. As the central part of Hoccleve's *Series*, a collection of texts including his *Complaint* and *Dialogue with a Friend* (both dialogues, and both having received some critical attention), and two tales from the *Gesta Romanorum*, *Lerne to Dye* is otherwise virtually uncommented on in print. It is perhaps its perceived close relation to the Suso which repels scholarly interest; perhaps its seemingly obvious content. For example, in an instructive article on Hoccleve's *Series*, classifying Hoccleve's work as social/political poetry via its codicological contextualization, David Lorenzo Boyd dismisses *Lerne to Dye* as merely using the fear of death and the promise of spiritual reward to control social behaviour ("Reading Through the Regiment of Princes: Hoccleve's *Series* and Lydgate's Dance of Death In Yale Beinecke MS 493," *Fifteenth-Century Studies* 20 (1993): 22).
Hoccleve's *ars moriendi* it is not only a question of literacy, of learning the logical methods of disputational and syllogistic reasoning; rather the disciple here must undergo a spiritual education in confronting his inner self.\(^3\) This takes place in the dialogue-within-the-dialogue, in the disciple's interlocution with the Image of Death, an image which is the mirror of his very soul--a literal manifestation of Perelman's dialectic "within the limits of private deliberation," or Aristotle's "argue with yourself," explicitly embodied within one man's soul. *Lerne to Dye* is thus much more concerned with outlining a dialogic process of self-education where the *Donet* sought to make the tools of literacy--of ratiocination--universally available. Importantly, however, in Hoccleve's work this process is a rational process of intellection as opposed to a fideistic acceptance or reliance on revelation; the techniques for learning to die open the mind's eye to a true vision of the self.

---

\(^3\) This could be seen in the context of the "autobiographical" *Complaint* and *Dialogue with a Friend*, the two dialogue works which precede *Lerne to Dye* in the *Series*. George Rigg has discussed the *Complaint* as belonging to the genre of *consolatio*, particularly deriving from the *Synonyma* of Isidore of Seville, which "may have influenced [Hoccleve's] conception of the pattern of suffering, purgation, and divine justice." "Hoccleve's *Complaint* and Isidore of Seville," *Speculum* 45 (1970): 570. Such contextualization lends more of an overarching structure to the dialogues of the *Series* than has hitherto been noted. On the autobiographical element in Hoccleve's works see Stephan Kohl, "More than Virtues and Vices: Self-Analysis in Hoccleve's 'Autobiographies,'" *Fifteenth-Century Studies* 14 (1988): 115-127.
The outer frame of the work presents Discipulus in
dialogue with Sapientia. His desire for the "tresor of wisdam"
in the opening invocation is based on the Aristotelian dictum
that "alle men naturelly desyre/To konne...". But the
disciple explicitly seeks a "knowlechynge" of "[s]otil
matires right profownde & greete," of hidden knowledge, and
comes to Sapientia since he "of al science berst the keye"
(12). One might expect a set up here for an anti-
intellectual rebuke on the order of "knowledge can never
replace apocalyptic revelation," and at first reading it may
seem that this is what we get. Sapientia replies that he will
teach his "lore" which shall bring eternal life, beginning
with the "dreede of god" (19-20); and later in stanzas 11 and
12 he exhorts the disciple to forsake sin and learn his
doctrine which is more "profyte" than the books of
philosophers (78-80). Other moments in the poem seem to
suggest an anti-rationalist bias as well; for example, the
Image of the dying man has heard a "vois horrible of deeth"

---

38 Thomas Hoccleve, *Lerne to Dye* in *Hoccleve's Works: The
Minor Poems*, ed. Frederick J. Furnivall and I. Gollancz, EETS
E.S. 61, 73 (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1892) 1.8; 1.1. Thorn has been
replaced by "th" and abbreviations silently expanded. All
further references will be to line number and cited in the
text.

39 Sapientia must be male because of the close
association with the second person of the Trinity, as in
11.25-26 where Discipulus is admonished to "sacramentally /
Receyue me..."; or in the end frame where he is told: "My
passioun putte eeke twixt my doom & thee" (832). On the
slipperiness of the gender of Sapientia see E. Ruth Harvey,
which says that "reson" cannot deliver him "out of dethes duress" (129-33).

The first and most important item in the roster Sapientia will teach his disciple is how to learn to die (23). Although he desires to know and learn the curriculum Sapientia presents, Discipulus submits the following Aristotelian rejoinder to his magister: how can knowledge of dying help since death is a privation: "What may profyte the lore of dyynge, Syn deeth noon hauynge is but a pruyynge?" (34-35). Death thus appears at first glance to be epistemologically intractable. The unknowability of death is echoed in the lament uttered by the Image of Death using a series of metaphors for the passing of life. As a shadow, a running messenger, a ship whose wake is "nat fownden...whan past is shee," a bird the course of whose flight cannot be seen by man, or "an arwe shot out of a bowe," "man may nat knowe/Where that is paste," and the goods accumulated in life are transitory leaving no discernable trace: they are not treasure laid up in heaven (197-214). By implication these figures show that there is no knowing or seeing the ending of life: the arrival of the messenger, the anchoring of the ship, the landing place of the bird, the target of the arrow are all equally obscure. sapientia's response to the impossibility

These metaphors are striking for their similarity to the Anglo-Saxon image of life as a bird flying through a longhouse, and for their marked difference from the Stoic and Epicurean imagery of death with its consolatory emphasis: death as a harbour or haven, death as arrival home.
of knowing death seems to sidestep the epistemological problem, emphasizing instead the art of learning to die: "Ther is noon art that man can specifie/So profitable...." (40-41; he uses the word "art" three times in the stanza). But, as I will argue, the method of dying well provides the only grasp to be had on the telos of life in the existential absence represented by death. The opening of the work, therefore, in highlighting both scientia and ars, establishes concerns with transmitting received knowledge as well as inculcating a method of learning to die, both of which contribute to the larger dialectical context of the dialogue.

Moving inside the frame, Lerne to Dye largely consists of an interlocution between Discipulus and "the liknesse and figure/Of a man dyynge" (85-86) who is his "ensaumple" and "mirour" (295). Talking with the Image of Death literally transfers the dialogue inward, as the disciple "[i]n him self put the figure & liknesse" of the man unprepared to die (90). Thus the continuum or dynamic between externalized dialogue and internalized dialectical thought processes which Perelman identified is underlined; but the connection between thought and dialogue is not a one-way street, rather each informs and imitates the other.

The excogitation of the Image is the first stage in the mental exercise assigned by Sapientia to his student, and takes the form of four dialogic exchanges. The initial lament
of the Image reveals a predilection for psalmic language\(^{41}\) which continues to colour his discourse. Discipulus, regarding this complaint as "folie" (149), answers him shortly with some of the standard doctrines about death. He reminds the Image that death's judgment is eternal and comes to all equally; death the leveller has no mercy for young or old, high or low, rich or poor (155-64). The disciple's feeling of intellectual and spiritual superiority is clear at this point: the Image has "but smal lerned," he says sniffily (152), does he think he alone should be spared at the moment of death (167)?

In response the Image charges the disciple with being "a heuy confortour" (170) who does not understand him, for it is not the judgment of death which torments him but his being "vndisposid" (179-81). What the Image bewails is not only his past sinful ways, but also his blindness as a sinner: lacking both "fforsighte" of that which "shal folwe aftir this lyf present" (176-78) and the "sonne of intellect" which would have cured him of his wickedness (192). The imagery of blindness and sight is a unifying strand in the work, one way in which the art of dying is ultimately assimilated into the rationalist tradition of thought. Like death itself, blindness is not an absolute antithesis but a privation. Importantly, it

\(^{41}\) Consider the Image's opening speech:
   Environd han me, dethes waymentynges, 
   Sorwes of helle han conpaced me; 
   Allas, eternel god! .o. kyng of kynges, 
   Wher-to was y born in this world to be...(99-102).
is sinners who are blind (244), who stand in their own light (440), and whose worldliness blinds the heart (587); learning
to die provides insight governed by reason (282-87), it is
"the blisse that shal neuere blynne" (462). The transmission
of such foresight is underlined in several direct addresses to
the youthful audience, so that the work aspires to be
propaedeutic for the reader who can--through prudentia--see
ahead, as opposed to those who close the eyes of the mind,
refusing to learn the meaning of death.ii The disciple must
learn this discipline or counsel (314-15) which the Image
never took into his "hertes lokir" (313); but first the
disciple's dependence on pat answers to the problem of dying
must be broken down.

In his second speech Discipulus advises the dying man
simply to be repentant and ask for God's mercy: "God haastith
nat the gilt of man to wreke,/But curteisly abydith
repentance" (330-31). But in his emotional turmoil under
"dethes angwisshes" the dying man is unable to think (341-43),
his "wit" is past and his mind cannot cast any thought other
than escaping death (347-49). This underlines the need for
cogitation before the onset of death's throes. Because he has

ii On Prudence as vision see M.J.B. Allen, "Plato's Third
Eye," in Plato's Third Eye: Studies in Marsilio Ficino's
Metaphysics and its Sources (Aldershot, Hampshire: Variorum,
1995). Allen's ideas have been expanded and applied to Middle
English literature in exciting ways by David Williams,
"Intentio, Praetentio, Attentio: Intentionality and Criseyde's
Third Eye," Canadian Society of Medievalists, Memorial
University, St. John's Newfoundland, 5 June 1997.
too long delayed repentance and "correccion" (366), the dying man (who is but 30 years old [378]), has worked against his own self (402-03), has not cared properly for his own being: "I tooke noon heede to my self aright" (410). From this we can infer that the renunciation of worldly desires in obedience to the dominant ideology of Christianity is not in this case a renunciation of self, a refusal of self, or a break with identity, as Michel Foucault discusses it; quite the reverse, self is lost through lack of spiritual care, not its application. The way of constructing true subjectivity, which provides "a piler...or post" to the soul (381), is gained by transferring knowledge about learning to die inward, which is what the disciple must learn through askesis, the next stage in the method of mental exercise. 44


44 Although the word "ascetic" takes its derivation from askesis, in the Stoic tradition it "means not renunciation but the progressive consideration of self, or mastery over oneself, obtained not through the renunciation of reality but through the acquisition and assimilation of truth." (Foucault, "Technologies of the Self" 35). See also his History of Sexuality, vol. 2, "The Use of Pleasure," trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage Books, 1990). Liddell and Scott support such meanings: askesis can be an exercise, practice, or training, specifically of a philosophical or religious sect; asketis is a) one who practices any art or trade, or b) a hermit or monk. For revisions of Foucault's deployment of Hellenistic philosophy and notions of the self see Charles Taylor, Sources of the Self: The Making of Modern Identity (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1989), and Martha Nussbaum, The Therapy of Desire: Theory and Practice in Hellenistic Ethics (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton UP, 1994).
The spiritual dialectic which is enacted over the course of the dialogue with the Image of Death is as much a breaking down of simple understanding as a Socratic elenchus is a breaking down of the interlocutor's doxa. In his third reply the disciple demonstrates a new attitude of compassion and readiness for the constructive work of learning the art of dying signalled by the use of the key image of sight. Informed by humility and now omitting to provide any pre-formulated advice, Discipulus instead seeks instruction from his interlocutor:

"ffreend," quod the disciple "y see wel ynow Thy torment and thy greuous passioun, Of which myn herte hath greet conpassioun;

"And by almighty god I thee conjure That thow me yeue reed how me to gye, Lest that heere-aftir y, par auenture, In-to lyke peril haaste may and hye, Of vndisposid sodein deeth and drye The wo which y considere that thee vexith, wherthurgh myn herte sore agrysid wexith." (467-76)

Having brought the disciple to this stage of readiness it might seem that the dialogic method could be abandoned for the more urgent psychological exercise whose inculcation leads to the true praeparatio ad mortem: for Discipulus is exhorted to impress upon his heart the words and image of the dying man, and to think upon him daily. This non-dialogic exercise of frequent calling to mind enlists the faculty of memory in the aid of a rationalist approach to death. In the final frame

\[\text{It can be seen as emotive or affective as well, since it is the dire state of the Image which should, within the memory exercise, appeal to the disciple's ethical self, just}\]
the disciple has come to knowledge: although he calls on Sapientia in doubt and perplexity at last his "myndes yen that cloos were and shit" are open (821), which Sapientia commends as "greet wit" (824). Just as he must cogitate daily on the dying man in the prescribed mental exercise—the dying man who is the "mirror" of his own self and his own death—so too he must think on Sapientia's (i.e. Christ's) passion (832) as a form of *askesis* in the tradition of that affective form of piety which was to blossom in the fifteenth century.\(^\text{16}\) In the dialogue this remains a process of intellection, however, of consciously calling up the affective images, and thus is the opposite of those "blynde" folk who "close & shitte the yen of hir mynde" (872), as Wisdom says endorsing his disciple's words. Such is the method of "self-comfort" that comes of learning to die. The final simile of the merchant standing in port watching his shipload of goods safely sail away forms a pendant to the imagery of psalmic helplessness in the face of mutability and transitoriness previously uttered by the Image. The merchant's "confort/Of him self" (913-14) comes from

---

as meditation on the crucifixion is an appeal for an emotive response in identification and compassion for the suffering Christ. For a discussion of the innovation of this image in the High Middle Ages see Collin Morris, *The Discovery of the Individual 1050-1200* (Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1987; first published 1972); it seems that previously the crucified Christ had been portrayed unemotionally, as the unsuffering conqueror of the cross.

\(^\text{16}\) Seen for example in the rise of the Devotio Moderna and their major text the *Imitatio Christi*; and the flourishing of the guild of Corpus Christi and its plays.
seeing the wake of the ship (his life), of knowing where it has been, and the purpose of its destination, even if the final haven cannot be beheld. Unlike the earlier imagery, the perspective here reveals the vestigia, the trace; comfort comes of the ordering of the soul which allows relinquishment so that "it may han the lyf that haath noon eende" (917).

**Dialogue as method**

Hoccleve's dialogue may seem to suggest that dialogue represents a dialectical method to be abandoned in favour of meditation, shadowing the movement of one of the greatest and most widely known dialogue works of the Middle Ages, Boethius's thematically related *De Consolatione Philosophiae*. Seth Lerer outlines how the dialogue of the *De Consolatione* "chronicles the growth of a debater coming to terms with the limits of his own language and method in the attempt to articulate philosophical truths."\(^{47}\) The stages the prisoner passes through enact a gradus of study, "from silence, through vacuous oratory, through limited dialectic, to philosophical demonstration, and finally to the silence" again, when the prisoner disappears in Book 5 and Philosophy merely lectures, indicating full acceptance of her authority.\(^{48}\) Identifying the prisoner as a model for the reader, Lerer argues that this

---


\(^{48}\) Lerer 9, 8.
silence finally merges the dialogic interlocutor in the text with the audience outside it. Boethius therefore "makes method his theme"; "[t]he 'right way' for Philosophy and her pupil is thus a methodological one, as she is to educate him in the proper order of argument, and as his development from one mode of discourse to another charts a way of truth." Citing Stanley Fish, Lerer sees the "dialectical chronicle of reader response" as successively employing "levels of argument only to kick them away in the pursuit of truth."

The dismissal of the dialogic method at the end of Lerer to Dye would seem to be as acute as its abandonment in the De Consolatione. But if we accept Bakhtin's theory that all reading is fully dialogic in itself, even if the words are sounded inside the head, the reduction to silent reading is simply not enough to mute dialogue into the blank rapture, or the acceptance of authority as the highest rung on the ladder to truth, as Lerer argues for Boethius; for this we would need the invocation of a mystical attitude of total passivity. But

45 Lerer 8, 9.
50 Lerer 11.
51 Lerer 8.
52 Lerer 12.
in fact, meditation itself, as the mental exercise advocated in the final stages of Hoccleve's *ars moriendi*, has dialogic origins as well, deriving etymologically from the term *melete* in Greek rhetoric, as Foucault points out. *Melete* consisted of "the work one undertook in order to prepare a discourse or an improvisation by thinking over useful terms and arguments...anticipat[ing] the real situation through dialogue in your thoughts...memorizing responses and reactivating those memories by placing oneself in a situation where one can imagine how one would react." The early Christian *exagoreusis*, the analytical and continual verbalization of thoughts in obedience to someone else (the master, the abbot, the confessor), in the service of a permanent contemplation of God, also preserves the dialogic quality of thoughts expressed even if there is no answer; and again according to Bakhtin, still and always posited toward an other in anticipation of a response whether it comes or not. While both Boethius's and Hoccleve's dialogues clearly present the education of the interlocutor as a progress through the text, I would revise Lerer's emphasis on the actual abandonment of dialogue to an ideal of such an abandonment to be projected far into the future when true self-mastery has been achieved. The dialogue method (and I agree that in dialogue the "method is the theme") is a discipline to be inculcated in the reader,

---

54 Foucault, "Technologies of the Self" 36.
and retained, transposing itself into a lasting technique of 
ratiocination--outside the text but inside the self. As a 
Foucauldian "technique of the self," the dialogue on death 
impacted a learned practice to the reader's mind, just as 
dialogue in educational texts from "donets" to university 
disputations structured the literate mind dialectically. 

The idea of a ladder to be kicked away is a powerful 
image for the efficacy of the passus of argument through which 
dialogue can guide the reader. But Lerer seems not to be aware 
of the origins of the image, as a rationalization for the 
eclectic and negative way of philosophizing of the school of 
skepsis, as employed for example by Sextus Empiricus in 
Against the Logicians: "Just as it is not impossible for the 
man who has ascended to a high place by a ladder to overturn 
the ladder with his foot after his ascent, so also it is not 
unlikely that the Skeptic after he has arrived at the 
demonstration of his thesis by means of the argument proving 
the nonexistence of proof, as it were by a stepladder, should 
then abolish this very argument."56 The process by which the 
disciple and reader come to know themselves, and to know how 
to know themselves, is not assimilable to this methodology of 
skepticism. Indeed, C.J.R. Armstrong has argued that dialogues 
do not belong to the tradition of skepsis, but rather to the 

much different tradition of dialectical probabilism. The approximation of scientia, attempting to gain ground but always falling short, shows dialogues as epitomizing a medieval and Renaissance commonplace of the cosmic position of human mental faculty, which, though allied to the angelical order operates differently: for whereas angels understand intuitively, human beings must suffer "the painful use of discursive reason." The methodology inculcated by dialogic writing on death can no more be abandoned than men and women can be transfigured into angelic beings; indeed, it is only at that time--after death--that there will be any perfect knowledge of the mystery. Unlike the highly emotive, monologic outpourings of the mystical tradition, dialogues do not follow a trajectory toward rapt passivity even when they end rhapsodically. This is because they eschew the fideistic, anti-rationalist bias of spiritual writing: no matter what flights they attempt toward the unknown, one foot always remains firmly planted in the dialectical milieu of discursive

---

57 Armstrong 45.

58 E.M.W. Tillyard, *The Elizabethan World Picture* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1967). Although such totalizing pictures of the "world view" of any age are supremely out of favour at the present time, I think Tillyard here hits on an important idea which might be renamed in Foucauldian terms a part of the pre- and early modern episteme.

59 Even here the psalmic, imploring tone of some mystical writings can hardly be called "monologic" at all, since the interlocutor's (God's) presence is the immediate point of reference, and in the Bakhtinian sense the source of any implied answer. Compare Augustine's *Confessions*.
II. **Thomas More's "Dialogue of Comfort": a gymnastic dialogue of the self**

**Placing Thomas More: between medieval and humanist**

\[ Neque enim quaero intelligere ut credam, sed credo ut intelligam. \]^60\]

The *ars moriendi* is a medieval genre originating in the fifteenth century; thus this late literary development provides a definite framework for the period under consideration in this study, a continuity linking the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. According to Nancy Lee Beaty, the "art of dying" was born in the dissolution of the medieval synthesis--the "waning" of the medieval period--and grew to flourish in the sixteenth century in various humanist and Protestant forms, before finally flowering in Jeremy Taylor's exquisite production.\(^{61}\) Hoccleve's *Lerne to Dye*, although a reworking of Suso's earlier text, stands at the beginning of the English tradition of the *ars moriendi*; More's *Dialogue of Comfort Against Tribulation* is a work of about one

\[^{60}\] "For I do not seek to understand so that I may believe; but I believe so that I may understand." Anselm, *St. Anselm's Prosologion*, trans. M.J. Charlesworth (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1965) I.100.

\[^{61}\] See Beaty, "Preface." Beaty's study sets up this kind of teleological trajectory culminating in the discussion of Taylor. The *ars moriendi* is not always in dialogue form, although many exemplars of both centuries do cast the preparation for dying well as dialogue.
hundred years later firmly within the same tradition. Set on the eve of the Turkish invasion of Christian Hungary, More's interlocutors, the elder Antony and the younger Vincent, endeavour to prepare themselves for the most violent testing of the faith and the attendant fears which accompany imminent death. As in Hoccleve's dialogue, More engages techniques of self-mastery through mental exercises to aid in this *praeparatio ad mortem*; like Hoccleve too, it is the education of the younger man, Vincent, and through him the whole Christian community under siege, which is at stake. The focus on reasoning in order to teach identifies the dialogue not only in the master-disciple form, but also places it within the context of dialectic as established in this study. And as in *Lerne to Dye*, the *Dialogue of Comfort* unites belief and ratiocination: as K.J. Wilson says, there is an element of faith in the intellectual process of More's dialogue.\(^{62}\)

Critical discussions of More's last dialogue vacillate between identifying the work as medieval or humanist with regard to both form and content. Thus Anne M. O'Donnell, while typically identifying dialogue as a favourite humanist genre deriving from classical and patristic sources, and placing the *Dialogue of Comfort* specifically in a line of descent from Cicero's *Tusculan Disputations* and Gregory the Great's dialogues, nonetheless concedes that "More derives his spiritual teaching from patristic and medieval theology as

\(^{62}\) Wilson, *Incomplete Fictions*, 149.
well as from independent reflection." In contrast, for Maureen Purcell, "More's Dialogue is as theological as its medieval precedents--the many dialogues and debates represented by their authors, such as Ramon Lull, as taking place between clerics and either Jews or Arabs, or between confessors and their penitents, between spiritual directors and those whom they directed." She cites the Tower dialogue as "instinct with the 'mind of the Middle Ages', expressing a firm conviction of the continuity of Christian spirituality...". Rainer Pineas takes an opposing view: despite centuries of dialogue apologies defending the church in the tradition of Augustine's *Contra Academicos*, "it was not until the Reformation that the form became a popular medium of controversy," in which one's opponent is made to condemn himself by his own words. But More "widened the scope of the Renaissance dialogue" by discussing issues rather than simply ridiculing opponents' beliefs.

---


65 Rainer Pineas, "Thomas More's Use of the Dialogue Form as a Weapon of Religious Controversy," *Studies in the Renaissance* 7 (1960): 193; 194, 206. It is not, I think, contradictory to the essence of Pineas's statement--which he applies to the earlier *Dialogue Concerning Heresies*--to extend it here to More's last dialogue, marking it as an innovative Reformation text as well.
offers the definition of literary dialogue as conversation reported and stylized by a writer, situates More's dialogues in his personal life and his valorization of oral communication: not only did More take the time to converse daily with his whole household, but, as he wrote to Antonio Bonvisi, in his expectation of heaven there "no porter shall keep us from talking together."\(^{66}\) Marc'hadour, however, suggests that this is a new development in accordance with the proper style for a Christian man of letters--style mirroring "a whole way of thinking, living and being"--set out by Erasmus's use of the medium of dialogue.\(^{67}\) Thus we have critics invoking the "typical humanist" form of dialogue, the medieval dialogue, as well as the new Reformation dialogue and the new Erasmian dialogue or dialogue from life in order to explain the major current of More's *ars moriendi*.

It is obvious from the preceding that criticism of this English dialogue--as with More's other dialogue works--often reverts to identifying classical or patristic sources and analogues. K.J. Wilson sees in More's dialogues the "generous sympathy typical of Platonic dialogue" according to the seventh epistle of Plato, where it is described as "benevolent disputation"; but he also invokes Ciceronian oratory behind the structuring of the *Dialogue of Comfort*, and points out


\(^{67}\) Marc'hadour 31.
that Socrates, Cicero, and Boethius used the dialogue in situations of personal disgrace and danger. Many critics also cite the "dramatic" quality of the dialogue, explicitly or implicitly referring not only to the presumed unity of dialogue and drama, but also to More's specific interest in the latter. But the identification of the work as humanist or medieval cannot, as O'Donnell would have it, be decided strictly on the basis of its form. It is true that the Italian humanists of the quattrocento practiced dialogue extensively, as did their intellectual descendents in the cinquecento; but dialogues were composed throughout the Middle Ages, and in the incunabula period of printing numerous exemplars of medieval dialogue tracts issued from the presses of Europe. The form can be held as a key to the historical classification of the dialogue only if we can settle for more

68 Wilson, Incomplete Fictions 151.

69 "A Dialogue of Comfort is humanist chiefly because of its dialogue form, a literary mode created by Plato." She cites Plato's Epistle 7 with its definition of dialogue as "benevolent disputation by the use of question and answer without jealousy" (344B). She then places More's dialogue in the alternative Aristotelian tradition, which, instead of Platonic imitation of "the mental process of searching for the truth," represents the conversion of a disciple to the truth that the master presents (173). In this tradition, epitomized by Cicero's dialogues, a leading speaker takes a larger more continuous role. Aside from Plato's Republic, she lists More's interest in and translation of Lucian, Cicero's Tusculan Disputations, Boethius's Consolation of Philosophy, and Petrarch's Secretum as analogous works (174).

70 An on-line search of ISTC yielded 274 matches for "dialogue," and this is only in the incunabula period. I am indebted to Martin Davis of the British Library for his assistance with this search in June 1995.
descriptive indicators than "medieval" or "humanist." As Marc'hadour notes in what seems like an extrapolation of Pineas's point about "Reformation" use of dialogue: "Times of mutation are times of probing and of querying. Hundreds of dialogue titles could be listed for the years 1525 to 1530."\(^7\) I would emphasize that the availability of print is what fanned the flames of controversial dialogues, allowing an immediacy of response and a guaranteed audience which simply did not exist prior to the dissemination of this technology.

C. and A.C. Condren offer another more descriptive way of classifying More's Dialogue specifically within the chosen dual-century period of the present study. As opposed to Huizinga's "waning" of the Middle Ages in the fifteenth century alone, Condren and Condren notice "a sense of the decadent and a depressing foreboding that permeates much of the writing of the late 15th and early 16th centuries, which has improperly surprised some historians blinded by such labels as 'the renaissance', and 'rise of the modern state', 'the age of discovery'. But this sense of decline, not of the middle ages, of course, but of Christendom, was well founded, Christendom seemed to be fragmenting and to be externally threatened; no longer the world, it was struggling to maintain

\(^7\) Marc'hadour 30. The problem for the student of dialogues is that such a phantom list remains a desideratum.
its place within the world."\(^{72}\)

It may at first glance seem odd that the Condrens critique the ideologically charged terms "medieval" and "Renaissance" in a context connecting More to Socrates, who is after all the hero of classical philosophy, where we might expect triumphalism about the rebirth of classical culture. But this only seems at cross purposes if one is wedded to the absolute division in intellectual terms of the Middle Ages from the succeeding period which would associate Socrates solely with the latter. It has often been demonstrated that there were Renaissance scholastics, Aristotelians, and dogmatists as well as medieval humanists, Platonists, and subversives, yet the standard simplistic schema separating the periods one from the other continues to be extremely influential. I am arguing that if the labels have become masks rather than useful tools they should be replaced with more specific, descriptive categories. To credit the rise of the printing press or the fragmentation of Christianity with impacting on literary works has, to my mind, more explanatory power than overdetermined period indicators. It is not enough to say "humanist" or "medieval" without saying more precisely what is meant by such terms. More has been called the last medieval man and the first English humanist; but as is evident by the variety of approaches in which critics of the Dialogue

of Comfort engage, we may have to entertain the possibility that he was both. Of course it is not enough simply to leave it at that: the analysis of the Dialogue of Comfort here should afford a finer distinction not necessarily of what is medieval and what is humanist about the text, but in the first place and specifically how the text is similar and different from Hoccleve's *ars moriendi*.

**Death and the construction of the ethical self in More and Hoccleve**

The comparison of More's situation in the Tower when composing his dialogue and the last days of Socrates which is the focus of the Condrens' article, draws attention to a major difference between *Lerne to Dye* and the Dialogue of Comfort. The Condrens state that for Socrates "[t]he political arena was not the only, or necessarily the most suitable, stage on which man should exhibit his virtues"; furthermore death constituted for both Socrates and More a type of sustained social criticism. The authors thus suggest that for both men "the hour of our death" is an important index of a human being's virtuous behaviour, his ethical existence, and a public statement issued to the surrounding community. For

---

73 Condren and Condren 113; 114.

74 On the public nature of dying in earlier cultures see Philippe Aries, *The Hour of Our Death*, trans. Helen Weaver (NY: Knopf, 1981). The Stoics derived an important tenet about dying well from the model of Socrates' death which contributed to their notions about the sage's freedom to choose and the
Hoccleve's disciple, the moment of death is an important stage on which to display his virtues but it is personal and private regarding the care of his own soul. But More's own personal situation inheres in his dialogue's setting, delineated with careful specificity as many critics note. Thus Walter M. Gordon seems to be distinguishing More's dialogue from more pedestrian examples of the *ars moriendi* when he says that "[i]ts dramatic setting and characterization remove it from the run-of-the-mill stock of spiritual primers whose efforts to reduce the weight of the soul's unruly desires unfold in a vacuum. By creating characters and placing them in a land threatened by disaster, More instills a note of urgency into the discussion." The situational orientation of the *Dialogue of Comfort* distinguishes it from Hoccleve's dialogue which, despite its context in the *Series* with its personal exposure in the *Dialogue with a Friend*, is highly abstracted even to the degree of personification allegory; More's gains what I would call a different kind of urgency from the concrete Hungarian location, the impending "fragmenting of Christianity" about to be exercised on warm, living human  

allowability of suicide.

It is true that the Image of Death serves as a negative model for proper conduct at the hour of death directed towards the preparation of youth, but it lacks the dimensions of specificity and social criticism which obtain in More's dialogue.

bodies. More's also gains urgency from the "highly personal" situating of the work; in asking the question "comfort for whom?" Purcell draws attention not only to More's implication in his own text, but also to the effects of that implication on his audience, his circle of family and friends. Purcell goes so far as to suggest that the "correspondences" of the fiction (Hungary as England and Islam as Protestantism) trivialize a prime consideration with reassuring "his family that he had arrived at his decision to resist even as far as death, slowly, and only after considerable conflict of mind and heart." She finds this "a grim comfort" indeed for his audience, since "[w]hat they were treated to was the raw spectacle of More wrestling with his conscience and striving to reassemble his ideas and beliefs in an entirely new pattern." It is to this "soul-searching calisthenic" which I now turn.

More's gymnastic dialogue

What I call the "gymnastic" tenor of the dialogue takes Wilson's notion of an "interior" quality to the work a little farther. As Wilson succinctly puts it, through contemplation and meditation the dialogue presents the reader with "no place

---

77 Purcell 91.
78 Purcell 99.
79 Purcell 101.
80 Gordon 360.
to look but in." Wilson's concept of Tudor dialogue as an "incomplete fiction" which has not yet detached itself fully from the writer's mind is good as far as it goes. But in the Dialogue of Comfort we need to adduce another model besides "the generous sympathy" of Platonic "benevolent disputation" which recreates the "primary Socratic situation" of older man and young friend. The "interior" quality is emphatically constructed in relation to the presence of an "exterior" pressure: the barbarians are at the gate, as the reader is continually reminded. The Turks poised to overrun Hungary force the situation of identity formation, making the much noted urgency of the dialogue an urgency to "know thyself" now before it is too late. Thus I also disagree with Wilson that the inner dialogue of spiritual meditation in More's case is distinct from the dialectical conversation Socrates calls thought (dianoia). As I hope to show, the Dialogue of Comfort engages the same model of dialectical "exercises of the self" as Hoccleve's dialogue, but in a more adversarial, contestive manner befitting the occasion ever present before the reader's eyes.

Wilson does detect a similarity between More's work and medieval allegory which unwinds inner conflicts of one self,

---

81 Wilson, Incomplete Fictions 145-46.
82 Wilson, Incomplete Fictions 140 and n. 4; 139.
83 Wilson, Incomplete Fictions 152.
referring perhaps to the genre of psychomachia. \footnote{84} Faculty psychology as a source of conflict is indeed common throughout the Middle Ages, and Gordon associates More's "wrestling match" with the \textit{topos} of the \textit{miles Christi}. I would suggest that the \textit{athletes dei} might be a more apt figure in this case. More importantly, dialogue genre itself provides models of the fragmented self in conflict, from Augustine to the popular tradition of body and soul dialogues. The genre of Platonic dialogue provides another logical locus for identifying dialogue and dialectic of the self, especially if we do accept \textit{dianoia} as its true object. Diogenes Laertius, one of the first to codify ancient theories of dialogue, \footnote{85} reports a division of dialogue into the theoretical and the inquisitive, the latter again divided into two kinds: "one is after the manner of a fight (with gloves), and the other after that (with fists); and to the former belongs that which is maieutic and tentative; but to the latter that which is detective and eversive." \footnote{86} The inquisitive dialogue exists thus in two forms, the \textit{gymnastikos} and the \textit{agonistikos}. I suggest that the comfort gained through More's dialogue comes only through "gymnastic" grappling of the autonomous interlocutors with the subject--a gentleman's bout with gloves but a contestive

\footnote{84} Wilson, \textit{Incomplete Fictions} 152.

\footnote{85} For a schematic rendering see above Chapter 1, p. 17.

\footnote{86} Diogenes Laertius, "The Life of Plato" 200 [par. 48]. See the schematic outline of Laertius's types of dialogues in Chapter 1 above.
struggle just the same. Comfort comes from reading through the projection of the battle in More's soul; and as a technique of the self it is to be absorbed by the reader.

**Dialectic and suicide in Book II: aporetic reasoning in dialogue**

One central moment in the text which emphasizes the dialectical in a number of ways is the discussion of suicide. Just as Hoccleve's dialogue had to side-step the epistemological problem of defining the *scientia* of death, since it is a privation in the Aristotelian sense, offering an *ars vivendi* in techniques of learning to die, so More's *Dialogue of Comfort* contains an epistemological "hole," an *aporia* which points up the limitations of dialogue and dialectical reasoning. This *aporia* enters not only with regard to *episteme* but also with regard to the *ars* itself, for it occurs in a section in which a kind of "role playing" self-consciously mirrors the art of dialogue. Two chapters in Book II are dedicated to the problem of suicide: chapter 15 entitled "A nother kynd of the nightes feare, a nother daughter of pusillanimite, that is to wyt that horrible temptacion by which some folke are temptid to kyll & destroy them selfe," and chapter 16 entitled "Of hym that were movid to kyll him selfe by Illucion of the devill, which he rekeneth
for a revelacion." Discussion of the suicide section to date has focused on the question of whether More could have been contemplating his own suicide, and whether this section forms an integral part of the work as a whole. With regard to the first question I would say that if More did not contemplate suicide before he wrote this section, he certainly had to contemplate it while he was writing it: for dialogue is not only an "incomplete fiction" reflecting some process already mapped out in the author's mind, but the very method itself leads by way of dialectic to reasoning about issues preconceived or not. As far as the second question, I don't think that an aporia in any way dissolves the unity of a dialogue work, quite the reverse as this is often the object of Socratic dialogue. In any case it should be noted that many scholars have complained about the lack of logical structure of the work, seemingly unaware of Aristotle's advice never to order your arguments in an obvious way in dialectic. Dialogue, too, automatically accounts for the absence of strict logical sequencing—the point being not that this is humanistic as opposed to scholastic thought—openended eloquence as opposed to plodding syllogistic—but that dialogue whether practiced


by humanists or scholastics provides the flexibility of form the treatise or *summa* does not.

Introducing the topic of suicide as the worst fear, Antony notes that he has counselled suicides himself and thus has experience of the kind of temptation they face (122-23); something which seems to align Antony with More himself who also had counselled suicides.\(^9\) Initially those who are tempted to suicide for reasons other than tribulation are distinguished from those whose suicide is caused by tribulation, the latter being the only ones within the purview of their discussion; but Vincent fails to understand the distinction (123:25-124:14) giving rise to a digression to illustrate the difference. The *exempla* pertaining to suicides who fall outside tribulation, merry tales like the other "proofs" offered by way of anecdote in Book II, have been said to entail a "macabre vertigo,"\(^9\) as they narrativize beheading and hanging in a way most gruesome considering More's own impending end. Besides the gallows-humour, the reader here sees the prisoner confronting death through fictions which force the mind to focus on sheer selfishness and stupidity as motives of self-sacrifice. For example, the fiendish wife who goads her husband into killing her to get

---

\(^9\) See Green. On whether Antony is More see Marc'hadour who says that More is not in the dialogue; and others, with whom I agree, who say he is both interlocutors. For more on the latter position see below Chapter 4, pp. 205-207.

\(^9\) Gordon 361.
revenge upon him; and the proud widow who pays ten ducats to have herself decapitated so that she might be found a martyr.

While Vincent's role is defined in chapter 15 as *discipulus* with a need for explanation, in chapter 16 he takes on a more dialectical position. Vincent's object is not to thwart Antony's arguments, but to learn "what counsayle shuld a man give" (131:17-18) to one that is contemplating suicide. In this role he voices "third party arguments"\(^1\) that such a suicide would use in response, a technique which differs from transferring inward the Image of Death as in Hoccleve's dialogue. Here, instead, the technique emphasizes dialogue as the literature of doubt, endeavouring—in Agricola's formulation—to create belief, but also, as Aristotle said, to hold two views in the mind at the same time.

In the digression in chapter 16 the example of self-annihilation falls under "spiritual pride": the devil's temptation of a monk reported in the *Collations* of Cassian. Here the problem is one of knowing true revelation from false, knowing when God has called a man to his end as opposed to the devil's illusion of such a call. Despite repeated attempts to

---

\(^1\) Day, "Elizabethan Prose Dialogues," rightly laments the "absence of a common critical vocabulary" for discussing dialogue works (56), and suggests some rhetorical terms which are highly useful and deserve greater currency: objections (hypothetical situations vs. those based on observation); questions (clarifying vs. follow-up); statements (assimilation statements vs. advancing statements); as well as "reverse question and answer technique" (103); "rehearsing third party arguments" (135); and the "synthesizing role" of the interlocutor (142).
supply an adequate answer to this epistemological problem, and thus the proper counsel for a suicide, Antony is quite unable to come up with a method or set of principles for distinguishing true revelation from false. In genuine earnestness Vincent keeps pressure on his uncle to show him effectual reasons (135:9-17) for counselling and converting a suicide, asking by what reason true visions may be known from illusions (136:24-26), and how to persuade a man who has sure knowledge of his own mind in such a case (137:13-14). Antony must concede that God may cast into a man's mind "such an inward light of understanding, that he can not faile but be sure therof," and yet undermines this statement by saying the devil may make a man think himself as sure. Thus far then, the epistemological problem of judging true revelations from false is unresolved.

At this point, however, *aporia* gives rise to a kind of Socratic *elenchus*. This is a reversal of the usual order in Socratic dialogue, where the *elenchus*, the breaking down of the interlocutor's inadequately formed opinions, leads to the final suspension of judgement or *aporia*. When Vincent

---

Kent Moors provides some instructive comments on *elenchus* as it epitomizes dialogue: "The 'questioning' nature of Socratic inquiry constitutes an integral element of the dialogues. Through this elenchus, the capabilities of interlocutors are tested. Elenchus is both protreptic (from the standpoint of preparing one for philosophy) and didactic (in the sense of informing about common opinion). It is propaedeutic to the pursuit of truth because one must first be aware of the limited vision provided by opinion.... The essential objective of elenchus is not a disputatious one, rather, elenchus strives to reveal a contradiction in the
accepts the analogy of the difference between waking and sleeping as explanation of true and false revelation, Antony perversely moves against his young cousin's assent. Changing the subject, Antony asks Vincent how he can prove that he is now awake, which draws first commonsensical responses and then the confession that this is an embarrassing exposure: "Goddes lord vnclle / you go now merely to worke with me" (138:25). Vincent also intimates that the limits of dialectical discussion have been reached: "this I know well inough, that I am a wake now / & so do you to / though I can not fynd the wordes / by which I may with reason force you to confess it" (139:13-15). Although Antony accepts this, as Socrates never would, the discussion goes into a kind of relapse, reverting back to the same epistemological problem. This seems to indicate that no way out of the aporia has been found, and neither has the elenchus silenced the objecting interlocutor.\(^\text{93}\) Antony invokes Augustine's (also opinion under investigation. Socrates usually accomplishes this objective by demonstrating that the original opinion implies certain corollary propositions. When these further propositions are accepted, Socrates elicits an agreement on one of them which, upon examination, is shown to be inconsistent with the originally held opinion. The interlocutor is then in the position of either revising his original opinion or rejecting it altogether. This aspect of elenchus is a self-imposed restriction on the part of the participants themselves. Such a structuring of argument is possible only in dialogue." Kent F. Moors, "Plato's Use of Dialogue," Classical World 72 (1978): 80-81, emphasis mine. \(^\text{93}\) Another elenchus occurs in Book III, where Antony tries to lead Vincent to see that every man alive is in "prison." When Vincent refuses to accept this, although he cannot find words to refute Anthony (262:10-18), he is
unsatisfying) discussion of suicide in Book I of *De Civitate Dei* and his dissociation of the 11,000 virgin martyrs from all other women who should wisely not slay themselves in the face of rape (for they have only sinned if they enjoy it). Vincent, after playing the role of the suicide by rehearsing "third party arguments" eventually gives up but with no real sense of conviction, saying, "In this poyn
t vncl I can go no fether" (145:21); the dialogue then progresses to suicides caused by despair which fall legitimately within the purview of their discussion of tribulation.

In chapter 16, therefore, Vincent's standing in for a holy or unholy suicide foregrounds the method of dialogue, introducing the voice of the "other" as a force to be confronted. But whereas in Hoccleve's *ars moriendi* the dialogue leads to spiritual regeneration after a stripping away of false securities, More's *aporia* is allowed to remain intact at the centre of the work, showing the gymnastic dialogic exercise of the self unresolved as "the raw spectacle of More wrestling with his conscience...,"\(^4\) the "soul-searching calisthenic."

Some scholars see More's work not as "concerned with a

\(^4\) Purcell 101.

\(^5\) Gordon 360.
search for truth, but with the imparting of instruction, "96 and therefore not as scientia but as ars. While I have been arguing for a context which supports the ars moriendi of More's text in dialogic exercises of the self, the topic of revelation seems to me the key to any knowledge of death. Could the aporia in More's dialogue be pointing to this very fact as well? For the truth is we can never "look around death's room" since we can never use sense experience which structures our epistemological relationship to the world to investigate that which is outside sentience.97 The only scientia of death ever to be known must come, as Chaucer indicates in the quotation at the beginning of this chapter (p. 146), from some kind of revelation. But by leaving open the problem of the validity of revelation, More radically questions knowledge of death based on such "experience." Perhaps ultimately for More a skepticism of the Pyrrhonist kind is entailed in the unknowing of revelation: since we cannot know if a revelation is true--if the command to suicide is

96 Elton cited by Purcell 100.

97 The Epicureans and Cynics had much to say on the topic of the lack of sense experience after death. Consider, for example, the rhetorical force of the anecdote reported by Cicero in the Tusculan Disputations about Diogenes the Cynic, who "required that he should be flung out unburied. Upon which his friends said: 'To the birds and wild beasts?' 'Certainly not,' said he, 'but you must put a stick near me to drive them away with.' 'How can you, for you will be without consciousness?' they replied. 'What harm, then, can the mangling of wild beasts do me if I am without consciousness?'" (Cicero, Tusculan Disputations, ed. and trans. J.E. King, LCL [London: Heinemann, 1945] I.xliii.104).
from God or the devil—it is better to do nothing. Whether More contemplated suicide before he wrote this section or not it provides an amazing testimony to the techniques of the self, the mental "gymnastics" in which he was willing to engage in writing this Dialogue of Comfort.

**Faith and reason in Book III**

In Book III More moves back to the method of dying well, suspending the epistemological issue for the only practicalities which can provide comfort to the soul. Here the "gymnastic" form of the dialogue as a method to be inculcated in the reader is underlined more emphatically and explicitly. Moving towards the reconciliation of reason and faith—a synthesis also stressed by Hoccleve's fifteenth-century dialogue—the whole discussion of the last book is about confronting death through exercises of the self, and, as Purcell puts it, "[i]n part the comfort of the Dialogue is to be found in More's own sense of relief at dangers explored and considered at their worst." These dangers are transferred spatially to the inner self demanding an enactment of internalization. As Gordon remarks for the suicide section, the interlocutors "engage themselves in a soul-searching calisthenic" (360), in which "the conflict of the personae is directed inward" (362).

Antony makes this transference of the praeparatio inward

---

98 Purcell 93.
explicit at the end of the preface to Book III: that every Christian "remembre & consider" the violent end that may come, "& every man & every woman both, appoynt with goddes helpe in their own mynd beforehand / what thyng they intend to do yf the very worst fall" (195:27-31). In a dialectical move, Vincent immediately raises the possible objection that, as he has heard a very good man say,

it were greate folye & very perilouse to, that a man shuld thinke vpon any such thyng, for fere of dowble perell that may folow theruppon / for either shall he be likely to answere hym selyfe to that case put by hym selyfe, that he will rather suffre any paynfull deth than forsake his fayth, & by that bold appoyntment shuld he fall in the fawte of saynt Peter / that of ouersight made a proud promise & sone had a fowle fall / or els were he likely to thynke, that rather than abyde the payne / he wold forsake god in dede / & by that mynd shuld sinne dedly thorow his own folye where as he nedeth not / as he that shall peradventure neuer come in the perell to be put therunto. And that therfor it were most wisedome, neuer to thinke vpon any such maner case. (196:8-19)

Not only does Antony demolish this logic of a "closing of the mind," he takes Vincent through the motions of an active dialogic exercise of desensitization focused on the mind, since "thaffeccions of menys myndes toward theincrease or decreace of dreade, maketh mich of the matter" (281:23-24), and the use of the imagination and reason to ponder the subject brings the result that such fears are not so much to be dreaded as they seem at first sight (205:7-17). It is emphatically "thexamynacion of our own mynd" which affords comfort (247:23-24); if the persecution comes then by this meditation we shall be better strengthened and confirmed, and
"mich the more likely for to stand in dede" (249:6-7).

Antony sets up an explicit dialectical exercise when he asks Vincent to rehearse "the grifes & the paynes that you thinke in this tribulacion possible to fall vnto you / and I shall agaynst ech of them, give you counsayle, & reherse you such occasion of comfort and consolacion, as my pore wit & lernyng can call vnto mynd" (202:13-16). Vincent's fears fall into two parts: dread of the loss of "goods," and dread of bodily pain. First, after some discussion of the value of goods, in which Antony among other things sees the Turkish persecution as a way of "trying" Christian subjects (a "towch stone" showing the "faynid fro the trew myndid"[226:27-28]), the elder interlocutor invites his nephew to take up the role of a wealthy lord in this situation, constructing a dialogue within the dialogue:

...this wold I fayne aske one of them / And I pray you Cosyn take you his person vppon you / & in this case answere for hym / what lettith you...your lordship that you be not gladly content without any deliberacion at all / in this kynd of persecucion / rather than to leve your fayth / to let go all that euer you haue at ones. (229:1-9)

In taking up the role Vincent reveals the limitations of all argument in utramque partem: "... albeit I can not be very sure of a nother mans mynd / nor what a nother man wold say / yet as far as myn own mynd can coniecture / I shall answere in his person what I wene wold be his let" (229:13-16).

Unlike Hoccleve's seamless transition to inward dialogue, in changing to someone else's view More's interlocutors draw
attention to the very difficulty of dialectical reasoning. Yet this inset dialogue also foregrounds the technique of self-examination—the process of imagination and reason which will be propounded by Antony most urgently in what follows. The efficacy of the role playing is made clear when Vincent, after exercising this role, is no longer able to support any other defense, and professes that he will never forsake the faith:

And what other thing any of them that wold not for this be content / haue for to alledge in reason for the defence of their folye / that can I not ymagyne / nor list in this mater to play their part no lenger / but I pray god give me the grace to play the contrary parte in dede. (237:21-25)

As the representative of the reader in the text Vincent demonstrates how playing out the dialectic of question and response in the mind leads to a healthy conviction of the truth. This situation indicates that the reader too must take up the double role of master and disciple. Such a mandate for reader response inheres in dialogue from the catechism and grammatical works, as will be recalled from the previous chapter, informing not only a dialogue like Pecock's Donet, but more complex exemplars including the Dialogue of Comfort. Just as the author is neither one nor the other interlocutor alone, so the reader, though usually assumed to be strongly identified with the weaker interlocutor, is to impress the dialectical method on his or her mind in order to retain both roles of magister and discipulus.

Chapter 17 begins the discussion "[o]f bodely payne / and that a man hath no cause to take discomfort in persecution,
though he fele hym selwe in an horroure at the thinkyng vppon bodely Payne /" (244:22-24). From this point through almost to the end of the work Antony is determined to inculcate in his young interlocutor--and through him the Christian community at large--the dire necessity of exercising the self towards a unity of faith and reason; furthermore, comfort against tribulation lies in this very thing. In response to Vincent's request for comfort on the topic of shameful or painful death at the end of chapter 22, Antony answers that they

that will consider the mater well / reason growndid vpon the foundacion of fayth, shall shew them very great substancial causes, for which the drede of those grevous qualities that they see shal come with deth / shame I meane & payne also, shall not so sore abassh them, as sinfully to dreve them therfro.(288:11-16)⁹⁹

When they move on from shameful to painful death reference to the union of faith and reason is repeated, programmatically, as it were, framing the discussion again. Thus at the beginning of chapter 24 Vincent registers his assent to the arguments of the preceding section on shameful death, noting that "any man that hath reason" would be satisfied with Antony's exposition, and gestures to the efficacy of exercises of the self since "a man may with wisedome so master it / that it shall nothyng move hym at all" (292). But, Vincent also objects that "all the wisedome in

⁹⁹ Antony goes on to say that any "faythfull wise man" will not dread death when his reason and faith together make him perceive that it is glorious to die for the faith of Christ (288:21-25), reiterating this unity of thinking and emoting which forms the main thrust of both Hoccleve's and More's ars moriendi.
this world, can neuer so maister Payne, but that Payne wilbe paynefull spight of all the wit in this world/" (292). While Antony concedes it is true that reason cannot change the nature of pain (292),

reason may make a reasonable man,...vpon good causes eyther of gaynyng some kynd of great profitt / or avoodyng of some greate losse / or eschewyng therby the suffryng of far greater Payne / not to shryng therrefro & refuse yet to his more hurt & harm / but for his far greater avantage & commoditie, content & glad to sustayne yt / And this doth reason [alone] in many cases, where it hath mich lesse help to take hold of, than it hath in this mater of fayth.... (293:4-12)

Antony makes an explicit connection between reason and faith in the next paragraph when he summarizes his argument thus:

Now than ye reason alone be sufficient to move a man to take payne for the gaynyng of some wordly rest or pleasure, & for the avoodyng of a nother payne through peradventure more / yet endurable but for a short season / [why] shold not reason growndid vpon the sure fowndacion of fayth, & holpen also forward with ayd of goddes grace...why shuld not than reason I say thus fortherid with fayth & grace, be mych more able, first to engendre in vs such an effeccion / and after by long & depe meditacion therof, so to contynew that affeccion, that it shall tourne into an habituall fast & depe rotid purpose.... (293:24-294:9)

Reason thus has a prominent role to play in the preparatio ad mortem, joined to faith, but practiced as an ars through active meditation; it will become a habit of mind, and not a method to be abandoned or kicked away.100 Furthermore, if we

100 Meditatio being originally derived from the Greek melete, as Foucault points out, the rhetorical-dialogical exercises in preparation of public argumentation, but in Christian tradition transferred inward as structuring of the self. Foucault says that the Greeks characterized two poles of exercises of the self, on the one hand melete and on the other gymnasia. "While meditatio is an imaginary experience that trains thought, gymnasia is training in a real situation, even
desire grace "god is at such reasonyng alway present & very redy to give yt," Antony says,

And therfor Cosyn let vs neuer drede / but that yf we will apply our myndes to the gatheryng of comfort & corage agaynst such persecucions, & here reason, & let it synke into our hart...god shall so well worke therwith / that we shall fele strength therin. (296:19-25)

As in Hoccleve, it is the application of the mind in the use of self-mastery through exercises such as those represented in the dialectical exchanges in the dialogue which transferred inward are to be absorbed by the reader. This practice is the method resulting from the body of knowledge being disseminated: dialectical knowledge is dialectical art. The gain to be made, the art and the science which is to be learned is this: death can only be approached in a clear-sighted preparation for our own end and the strength obtained through mental exercise displayed in "gymnastic" dialogues such as More's Dialogue of Comfort. The mental exercise of imagining one's possible course of action in extremis is a key component of learning to die well. Thus the end of all the dialectical discussion of these two dialogues is this techne of self-mastery to be practiced both now and up to the hour of our death. We never can see much of "death's room," but we can prepare ourselves to enter it.

if it's been artificially induced" ("Technologies of the Self" 36-37). I suggest that Hoccleve's dialogue participates in the technique of meditatio while More's derives from that of gymnasia.
Chapter 4

Rhetoric and the Dialogue of Political Persuasion:

Chartier and Spenser

Rhetoric and politics in the Middle Ages and Renaissance

According to Aristotle, "Rhetoric is the counterpart of dialectic";¹ both disciplines are open in the same way to all people to know and to participate in since they do not come under any specific science: "for to a certain extent all men try to examine the views of others and maintain their own, and to defend their own position but attack that of others."² As J.J. Murphy states, "Aristotle's rhetorical and logical works...display a consistently philosophical approach to the problems of communication. Moreover, his logical works show an equal regard for the interconnection of rhetoric and logic, particularly in the area of inventio."³ That both arts are


³ James J. Murphy, Rhetoric in the Middle Ages: A History of Rhetorical Theory from Saint Augustine to the Renaissance (Berkeley: U of California P, 1974) 7. For the reception of Aristotle's Rhetoric in the Middle Ages, whose direct influence is difficult to assess despite a thirteenth-century translation of William of Moerbeke, see Murphy 90 ff. It seems the Arab commentators were more successful in reintroducing the work into the main stream of Western life (91); and the work is not mentioned in English university statutes until 1431 (Oxford) (95).
concerned with invention or finding arguments is supported by a statement towards the end of Book 1 of the *Rhetoric*:

> It is evident, then, that rhetoric, like dialectic, is not limited to things under one definite genus, that it is useful, and that its function is not to persuade but to apprehend the available means of persuasion which one can use in each case, just as all other arts do. (1355b)

One legacy of confusion arising from the concern of both dialectic and rhetoric with *inventio* is the double tradition of the topics, instruction in the "places" or *loci* as a method for finding arguments, which Aristotle categorized under dialectic but Cicero allotted to rhetoric.† Aristotle is consistent, though, in his logical works as in his *Rhetoric* to differentiate rhetoric from dialectic on the basis of the kinds of arguments which belong to each field: while dialectical reasoning is either inductive or syllogistic, rhetorical reasoning uses the example (a kind of induction), or the enthymeme (a kind of syllogism).‡ Aristotle's enthymeme, which is based upon probable instead of necessary premisses, again gives rise to confusion, however, since he distinguishes dialectic from demonstrative logic by the very

---

† For the varied tradition of the topics see Mack, *Renaissance Argument*, Chapter 7, "Agricola's Topics," esp. 130-38. As Murphy says of Aristotle's *Topica*, it "deals primarily with the dialectical syllogism, but its rhetorical application is found in its treatment of the *topoi* or commonplaces from which arguments may be derived" (Murphy, *Rhetoric* 5). And although Cicero's *Topica* claims to be an interpretation of Aristotle's, "The frequent references to speaking problems make it clear, however, that the book is essentially a treatise on rhetorical *inventio* rather than a book on logic like Aristotle's *Topics*" (Murphy, *Rhetoric* 15).

‡ *Posterior Analytics* 71a, *Rhetoric* 1356b.
same notion of probability versus necessity. Nonetheless, as Murphy says, "For Aristotle rhetoric is the counterpart of dialectic, operating, like dialectic in the realm of nondemonstrative or nonapodeictic proofs."\(^6\)

Part of the reason Aristotle wants to maintain the link between these two disciplines as arts is a refutation of the Sophists who claimed rhetoric as a kind of political science; for Aristotle rhetoric was not "as his contemporary Isocrates would have it, a branch of politics."\(^7\) This is made explicit in Book 1 of the Rhetoric where Aristotle concedes it is only in its inquiry into character that rhetoric can be called "political," but insists that it is merely masquerading in the guise of political science (1356a). Again, Cicero and the Roman rhetorical tradition were to overturn this verdict: at Rome all the major rhetorical treatises follow the fundamental teaching of Isocrates to the effect that rhetoric is a part of political science. All make efficiency--that is, the procuring of results--the main criterion of good speech....All are practical rather than philosophical, and thus in both detail and concept they represent a departure from the Peripatetic tradition represented most fully by Aristotle.\(^8\)

It is this Roman tradition of rhetoric which governs the present chapter; rhetoric is reasoning in order to persuade,

\(^6\) Murphy, Rhetoric 7.

\(^7\) Murphy, Rhetoric 7.

\(^8\) Murphy, Rhetoric 8-9.
and more specifically, to persuade to action. More locally, this chapter seeks to connect rhetoric to politics and political science: for the concern here is with dialogues which offer political advice to the prince. The rhetoric invoked here is also linked to the probability of the Ciceronian tradition—derived from Academic skepticism—incribed in arguing in utramque partem.

Before turning to the two dialogue cases studies we must first consider what constituted "political science" in the Middle Ages and Renaissance. Janet Coleman provides an excellent exposition of academic political discourse and its continuation and application outside the university in the period; it is useful to take a few pages to summarize her discussion. Two fundamental points are of striking applicability to the present study: first, that the field of politics was approached in the same manner up until the seventeenth century (when an autonomous political discourse developed outside the university), thus forming a continuity through the later Middle Ages and Renaissance; and second, that the central location of teaching on political issues was embedded in the language arts of the trivium: grammar,

---

9 Of course you have to have already apprehended "the possible means of persuasion" (Aristotle, Rhetoric 1355b) to effect persuasion.

10 Whereas Aristotle's Topica asserted arguing pro and contra as the province of dialectic, Cicero frequently claimed the ability to discourse on both sides of an issue for rhetoric.
dialectic, and rhetoric. Coleman underlines the continuity between the way politics was dominated in the medieval university by (preparation for) the study of moral philosophy and theology, and in the humanist schools by rhetorical and ethical discourse:

In the humanist schools as in medieval universities, the discussion of the organization of human communities and of behavior considered appropriate within communities of men alongside analyses of moral right, or virtue, and of personal responsibility for one's acts, be they the acts of ruler or ruled, were still tied to ancient authoritative discourses.

Thus from the twelfth century onwards, in the study of Latin grammar as in the study of Aristotle's rhetorical and logical treatises

medieval and renaissance students absorbed theories about the relation between human thinking and language. They absorbed explicit (and sometimes conflicting) theories concerning the relation between reason and emotion and

---


12 Coleman 181. Moral philosophy and theology were the ends toward which all other study was propaedeutic in the medieval curriculum. Without denying Coleman's claim, discontinuity must also be accounted for in the transition from the medieval to Renaissance university. As Terrence Heath has argued, when the preparatory fields of the trivium were altered this affected the later study of philosophy in the same rigorous scholastic manner because the students simply did not have the terminist or methodological background. This humanist "simplification" of education had repercussions ultimately altering the curriculum of study and what students were capable of studying. (See Terrence Heath above Chapter 2 n. 72). Ramus's "logic" and "method" also championed a simplification which had wide-ranging effects, on which see Ong, Ramus, Method and the Decay of Dialogue; on both the humanists' influence and Ramus see Gilbert, Renaissance Concepts of Method, esp. Chapters 3, 4, and 5.
between persuasive speech and collective action, and they learned how to distinguish between virtuous and vicious behavior and between legitimate governance and its opposite.¹¹

Humanist schools provided "a very similar education, but in truncated form, to that received by students in the later medieval university arts course programs" (182); and despite changes in methods of textual analysis and reinterpretation of the classical tradition, the humanists inherited the same ways of speaking about "the ethical" and "the political" which were transmitted in the university arts course (182).

Coleman underlines the considerable sophistication of advanced university students and the high positions they held in medieval bureaucracies--enjoying "lucrative employment within the established orders of church, government service, or one of the organized professions" (193). Furthermore, "[t]heir skills were meant to be utilitarian, not least in the production of propaganda on behalf of papal, imperial, or royal and civic patrons and their respective ideologies" (193). Thus a third important emphasis of Coleman's study is her discussion of the practical applicability of political discourse as it developed in the university, and the way "academic discourse traveled outside the arts course curriculum and was transformed to suit political conditions" (184).

According to Aristotle, rather than a demonstrative

¹¹ Coleman 182; emphasis in original.
science, politics is practical philosophy (prudence), which Coleman calls a kind of thinking or state of mind. But importantly it is one that involved deliberating for the collective good (198), where the individual's acts are related to those of the collectivity (199).

Coleman argues that there was astonishing "[i]ntellectual scholastic freedom of debate" in the Middle Ages (184), whose "argumentative format" fostered numerous perspectives and variety in the convictions held "to answer questions convincingly and authoritatively from an ever-expanding agenda of practical moral and political issues" (188). The agendas included those encountered in advising legislators (201) and powerful patrons (183) in church and state. Sometimes the freedom of debate led to tracts that were outspoken and indeed dangerous (184). The method of the scholastic quaestio laid out authorities on both sides of a problem (188), and Coleman is quite right in describing this as arguing a posteriori (although she does not use this particular term), since authorities were used by the disputants "to justify their own already held convictions" (183; cf. 188).14

14 It is important to remember that what I would call a posteriori reasoning inheres in the rhetorical stance found in dialogues. Dialogues are the written product of a single controlling mind. But while I believe them to partake of a posteriori reasoning, I also believe that the process forces an author to participate in the rhetorical imperative (my term) which Michael Bybee formulates as the challenge to justify what we believe or to change what we believe if we cannot justify it ("Logic in Rhetoric--And Vice Versa," Philosophy and Rhetoric 26.3 [1993]: 186).
Coleman's discussion of medieval and Renaissance "political science" forms an important context for the examination of dialogues of advice and political criticism foregrounding as it does the central place of the university language arts course, especially rhetoric. The use of the Ciceronian treatises in education would enforce a connection between politics and rhetoric, emphasizing the practical and pragmatic nature of such political reasoning.\(^{15}\)

**Dialogue and the "author's mouthpiece"**

In order to understand the political reasoning of dialogues, however, it is necessary to be clear about the methodology of interlocution which governs them. It is dismaying how often in the discussion of dialogues critics and scholars refer to one of the interlocutors as directly presenting the authorial point of view, as the author's "spokesman" or "mouthpiece." Often this is derived or traced from a distinction between Platonic and Ciceronian dialogue, where the former is characterized as an open searching after truth and the latter as dominated by a leading speaker who makes long expository speeches. But it has been occasionally

---

\(^{15}\) On the Ciceronian tradition in the Middle Ages, see John O. Ward, *Ciceronian Rhetoric in Treatise, Scholion, and Commentary* (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 1995); and his dissertation, "Artificiosa eloquentia in the Middle Ages: the study of Cicero's *De inventione*, the *Ad herennium*, and Quintilian's *De institutione oratoria*, from the early Middle Ages to the thirteenth century, with special reference to the schools of Northern France," diss. U of Toronto, 1972.
noted that not all Platonic or indeed Socratic dialogues partake of undirected, unstructured, and communal searching after truth—obvious examples are The Republic and Laws where the interlocutor is reduced to one word answers—if indeed any of them do. More importantly, it has also been noted that the Ciceronian dialogue between social and intellectual equals, with the different positions portioned out to several men of authority, is a more equitable kind of discourse than Socrates's ironic confounding of Sophists or Athenian youths. A balanced formulation of the distinction between the two classical models as received in the Italian Renaissance which divides them on the basis of the mental processes involved is Francesco Tateo's view summarized by Olga Zorzi Pugliese:

16 As Jon Snyder succinctly puts it, dialogue is "a textual strategy for embodying dialectical discovery in discourse" (23). One reason why I don't like the term "documentary dialogue" to refer to those, like many of Cicero's and Italian Renaissance exemplars which employ historical figures as interlocutors, is that this seems to imply the dialogue is unproblematically "recording" a real-life conversation. Dialogues endeavour (sometimes) to partake of the atmosphere of real-life conversation; however they remain in most important ways constructed literary texts.

17 See Rockwell on the audience as eavesdroppers in the text and their relationship to the reader in Platonic dialogue, as opposed to the interlocutor who is sacrificed by Socrates in the embarrassment of the elenchus. Consider also Sigonio's notion which strikes the modern as counter-intuitive that "open" dialogues are those like master-pupil whereas "closed" ones are between equals, hence eristic, hence dedicated not to truth but to winning the competition. On this point see Donald Gilman, "The Reconstruction of a Genre: Carolus Sigonius and the Theorization of Renaissance Dialogue," 354.
Whereas the Socratic dialogue employs a dialectical mode of argumentation that presents thought in the process of being formed, the even more influential Ciceronian exemplar alternates rhetorically organized speeches that express set opinions so that they may be weighed against each other in the text.\(^{18}\)

The claim that Cicero's dialogues privilege a magisterial position is, however, partially explained by reference to one of Cicero's own disclosures about dialogue writing. In a letter to Atticus Cicero discusses the choice between using the personae of those who are still alive versus those who belong to an earlier era as interlocutors in his dialogues. In a work set in modern times, he says, he follows Aristotle's practice of putting the conversation forward in such a way as to leave himself the principal part ("Quae autem his temporibus scripsi, [Aristoteleion] morem habent, in quo sermo ita inducitur ceterorum, ut penes ipsum sit principatus").\(^{19}\)

What has been overlooked in the citation of this passage is the introductory qualifier: a work set in these times ("his temporibus")--for Cicero is making a distinction between two different usages of interlocution in his own works. In the first kind, where the interlocutors are persons from earlier times, he says that he keeps silent, as in the De Oratore which purports to take place when he was only a child. Furthermore, even in his commending Atticus on suggesting


\(^{19}\) Cicero, Letters to Atticus, XIII.19.
Varro as one of the interlocutors for the (revised) Academica he mentions that this introduces a part "which prevents me from seeming to give my own cause the superiority" ("...easque partes, ut non sim consecutus, ut superior mea causa videatur"). Thus the Ciceronian dialogue should read as if a free discussion in utramque partem despite authorial "presence" in the form of an interlocutor with the author's name, or disclosure of authorial partiality for one or other point of view.

The notion of a single authorial view is especially detrimental to the reading of dialogues and must be negated even in the face of authorial claims to the contrary. The

---

The second edition of the work had Cicero and Varro as the sole interlocutors, with the former representing the Middle and New Academy, and the latter the Old Academy. See Cicero's dedicatory remarks to Varro in the Academica, trans. H. Rackham, LCL (London: William Heinemann, 1933).

It must be said that Cicero's comments on his own dialogue writing vary considerably and that no single one can be taken as a final authority. He also changed his opinions from dialogue to dialogue reserving for himself as dialogue writer the rhetor's perogative of arguing in utramque partem. If anything, even should a "Marcus" appear in the text we must approach the work with an open mind about how the interlocution plays out the competing views. The construction of this authority in the text is just as much if not more complex than the master-pupil method of discourse, discussed in in Chapter 2. We are as readers always entering a textual world in which "Morus" represents only the persona of More (to take the example of Utopia); just as the lyric or novelistic "I" is understood to represent only a persona and not in any simplistic way the author: how many scholars today would say that Hamlet is Shakespeare's spokesman?

We may have recourse here to the "intentional fallacy." Conversely, readers must beware authorial disclaimers regarding their absence. Note for example the prefatory comments of Jane Jacobs in her recent dialogue
absence of the author in these works "is not an attribute of
dialogue so much as its definition."²³ Dialogue hides the
author behind the words of the interlocutors; it is a kind of
poesis because it employs imitation in the construction of its
teachings.²⁴ Thus, "[d]ialogue distills and dissects points
of view; dialogue compares and contrasts. It does not simply
present."²⁵

Systems of Survival: A Dialogue on the Moral Foundations of
form I have chosen for my exposition is dialogue, primarily
because this device suits the subject matter, as one of my
characters says. So within the limits of my skill, this is the
last you will hear of an author's voice" (xii-xiii). This
fallacious construct of the absent author is apparent upon
reading the narrative and descriptive links in the text which
influence how we read the characters; Jacobs's dialogue often
verges on the novelistic. However, Jacobs must be applauded
for her effort and for being cognizant of the need to marry
method and message. She has consciously chosen dialogue for
its potential for many-sided argument; as she goes on to say:
"...expository dialogue usually employs a know-it-all who
instructs fledglings, disciples, or stooges. My characters,
instead, are equals, struggling together to make moral sense
of working life.

"This choice is not a whimsy. I am convinced we need
continual but informal democratic explorations on the part of
people who must thread their ways through governmental,
business, or volunteer and grass-roots policies, or must
wrestle with the moral conflicts and ethical puzzles that
sprout up unbidden in all manner of occupations. Former
Marxist societies, as they seek to reconstitute themselves,
desperately need to clarify right and wrong in business and
politics. But so do we. I hope that what my characters work
out will help provide useful and suggestive guidelines"
(xiii).

²³ Snyder 27.

²⁴ Moors, 92; cf. Tasso's view of dialogue as an
imitation of disputation. Both Moors and Snyder are referring
to Plato specifically but I think these concepts have a wider
application for dialogue in general.

²⁵ Moors, 93.
The secreting of the author was sometimes the result of societal pressures exerted on writers and their resistance to these pressures. The case of Italian Renaissance dialogue-authors offers examples of such situations at one historical time and place, but their practice and experience with dialogue may be seen as indicative of the general dangers involved in dialogue writing. David Marsh notes with regard to the quattrocento that humanists used the indirect presentation of the dialogue form, but diverged intentionally from the Ciceronian model, "to create ambiguities, such as discrepancies between historical figures and their literary portrayal, unorthodox interpretations of traditional authorities, and elusively shifting modes of argument which demonstrate both the range of rhetorical inquiry and the instability of traditional criteria" (14-15). As Marsh goes on to say, "The purpose of such ambiguities is often to protect the author or his circle of friends: as late as Galileo's day, the threat of ecclesiastical authority recommended the dialogue form for treating potentially dangerous topics" (15). These "hidden polemics" reflect the exploitation of the dialogue form "to avoid recriminations and reprisals from contemporary authorities" (15). The tensions caused by such

---

26 The Italian Renaissance is a useful example not as a model or source for the situation in England in any direct sense, but because the wealth of dialogue writing and theorizing, plus the documentation of events, provides us with an unusually complete picture compared with other periods and cultures.
polemics meant that the endings with their "synthetic compromise" are "harmonious conclusions [which] satisfy a literary sense of resolution, and they also reflect the practical motive of the author's prudence: accused of dangerous or heretical teachings, the dialogue writer could point to the ostensible orthodoxy of his conclusion" (15). Such comments are salutary, for they remind us that we must not simply read the endings of dialogues as a short-cut to the "true" bias of the authorial point of view.

The problem with the strategy of authorial concealment is that it did not always work: authorities were aware of the ambiguous nature of dialogues, purveying both orthodox and heterodox views even if they were "contained," and therefore came to distrust and suspect them, sometimes prohibiting their composition. As for the author's position, he could not always control the disappearing act, and might be arraigned for any opinion offered in the dialogue as evidence of his own. The case of Sperone Speroni in the cinquecento is revealing of the growing intolerance of authority to dialogue, and the increasing complexity and danger of the authorial position through his or her absence from the scene of dialogue.

Jon Snyder describes Speroni as a champion of the vernacular and an orator in the employ of the aristocracy. His

---

27 I refer to the Foucauldian "containment-of-subversion paradigm" frequently utilized by Renaissance New Historici.
dialogues written in the more tolerant climate of the early cinquecento were popular enough to be translated into French. But in 1574 the dialogues were accused of being subversive and he was summoned to defend himself before the Master of the Sacred Palace, composing afterwards his *Apologia dei Dialoghi*, one of the most important Renaissance theories of dialogue. Although he revised his dialogues for the censors they were still placed on the Index of proscribed books (87-90). As Snyder puts it, Speroni was writing against the threat of material violence (the flames of the book burnings) as well as hermeneutical violence (the fear of misreading) (95). Like Plato in the *Phaedrus*, Speroni fears willful misreading, thus his "purpose is to fend off any attempts to do interpretive violence to his own dialogues, and dialogue in general, by refuting in advance all readings that fail to acknowledge dialogue's special literary status" (95). Knowledge of the poetics of dialogue was a "fundamental precondition for the interpretation of any dialogue" (96).

For Speroni, Snyder argues, there is an organicity to dialogue, one cannot cut out part or take each word as the author's opinion (106); rather, because of the (fiction) of the author's absence, "authorial intention and intervention are impossible for the reader to discover" (107). This fiction of the author's uninvolve ment is "a strategy of resistance to the pressure for control over the transgressive voices of the text" (110). Therefore what is discovered in dialogue cannot
be the opinion of the writer, whose true position is always suspended between that of the interlocutors (113).

Pugliese corroborates and emphasizes the "suspended" quality of the authorial position in her discussion of Speroni's *Apologia*. The presence of "multiple interlocutors expounding different views," making it difficult to identify any one as the authorial spokesman, underlines an analogy between dialogue and labyrinth, the "oblique mode of expression" which "avoid[s] straightforward linear exposition..." (57). For Speroni, dialogue is "the mode of doubt," in which the author adopts the role of fellow learner (condiscépolo) not that of authoritative master (sapiente or maestro), he refrains from passing judgment or giving a final judgment (sentenzia finale) in the dispute and, suppressing his own single voice, puts diverse ideas in the mouths of the multiple interlocutors (62-63). Thus the writer "stands impartially between the two adversarial parties" (63).28

---

28 It is interesting to compare here two more comments which help to tease out the complexities of the author in dialogue. The author may be audience or adversary as well. Armstrong in discussing the irresolution of Cicero's dialogues points out that "[t]he decision in the matter under discussion...is left to someone outside the discussion itself: to you and me, the readers, to Brutus to whom the dialogue has been sent as to a judge ('iudex') who will adjudicate ('diudicaberis') in the debate" (43). But his note to this statement is highly revealing: "It always remains an open possibility that a writer of dialectical dialogue in a Ciceronian sense is offering it to himself as judge..." (50 n. 42). There is another role for the author, that of being his own adversary, as in Aristotle's advice in the *Topica*: "If we cannot find anyone else to argue with, we should argue with ourselves" (163b).
To summarize then this somewhat lengthy contextualization of dialogues of advice to the prince by Chartier and Spenser: they should be seen in a milieu which saw rhetoric as inherently linked to politics (in the large medieval and Renaissance notion of the word), of arguing in *utramque partem* (following both Cicero and the dominant method of the schools), and using reasoning in order to persuade to action. Linked to the second facet of rhetoric here outlined, is the position of the author (the Aristotelian *ethos*) as absented from the dialogue: another way of seeing this is to say that rather than being absent, the author is present but suspended in every interlocutor who participates. Such authorial presence has more heuristic value for judging dialogues of advice.

I. Chartier, dialogue, and the rhetoric of political advice

Alain Chartier (c.1385-1433), the early fifteenth-century French poet, rhetorician and *prosateur*, and Edmund Spenser, the late sixteenth-century English poet share a number of literary and personal traits. Both were hailed as men of learning and eloquence in their lifetimes and afterwards, both were secretaries in service to the great, and both were passionately and actively involved in the public life of their respective nations. Spenser's status with regard to these three points is well known in English studies. Milton's valorization, "our sage and serious poet Spenser," may stand for posthumous regard while the publishing success of the
Faerie Queene attests to the admiration of his contemporaries. Spenser's bureaucratic career has recently been the object of scholarly attention;¹⁹ his nationalist and nationalistic concerns have been widely discussed.³⁰ But about Alain Chartier--understandably--much less is known in the field of English. Yet the English translation of his three dialogues in the second half of the fifteenth century and their preservation in manuscript testify to the importance of his work in England.³¹ Arguments supporting the study of


³⁰ From expositions citing him as a propagandist for the English imperial regime in the tradition of Marx's "Elizabeth's arse-kissing poet" (e.g. New Historicism), to those which place his work as highly critical of the Elizabethan establishment and its political/religious policy (e.g. Annabel Patterson). Marx's other opinion of Spenser is unfortunately less well known. Since Frederick Engels expresses indebtedness to Spenser and others as the "newer writings" which provide "a welcome and indispensable supplement" to the poor original sources for his *History of Ireland*, it is more than likely that Marx himself consulted Spenser for his "Outline of a Report on the Irish Question." (See *Ireland and the Irish Question: A Collection of Writings* by Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, ed. R. Dixon, trans. Angela Clifford et al [New York: International Publishers, 1972.]) Engels is especially interested in Spenser's description of the Protestant clergy.

³¹ The three dialogues are: 1) the Quadrilogue Invectif, 2) the Traité de l'Espérance (both utilizing the medieval devices of dream vision and allegorical interlocution, the latter modelled on the De Consolatione of Boethius), and 3) A Famylver Dyaloge of the Freende and the Felaw to be discussed here. The three dialogues "reflect Chartier's preoccupation with the 'myserable calamyte of ffrance,' and were often copied together," in the original French and, for Freende and Felaw Latin; one of the English MS preserves this compilation. J.C. Laidlaw, "English Translations of Alain Chartier," *MLR* 56 (1961): 223. It is also of note that Caxton translated and printed his Curial; and that Robert Dudley, the Earl of
translation as a valuable adjunct to the study of national literatures will be offered below (211-13); first I want to focus on the authorial conditions under which Chartier's dialogue works were composed as they are similar to Spenser's, for with translation we must be concerned with both the moment of genesis and the moment of palingenesis, of inception and reception, of formation and reformation.

Hailed as the French Seneca and adopted by the sixteenth-century Rhétoriqueurs, Chartier's eloquence was deployed in service to the prince in speeches presented on diplomatic missions, public letters to the University of Paris and to the French nobility propagandizing French nationalism, and numerous letters written privately for his employers. According to Hoffman, it was particularly in his prose writings that Chartier made his most significant contribution to literary development in France, borrowing the "long periods

Leicester, owned an English translation of the Traité de l'Espérance (MS Rawlinson A 338) while Spenser was in his service, making it part of the library accessible to the poet. See M.S. and G.H. Blayney, "The Faerie Queene and an English Version of Chartier's Traité de l'Espérance," SP 50.2 (1958): 154-63. Despite this lead I will refrain from performing any source-type analysis here, although it is worth considering how reading Chartier might have influenced Spenser's political thought.

32 As secretary to the Dauphin and future Charles VII, Chartier was directly in service to a prince, unlike Spenser whose position in the employment of the Earl of Leicester or Lord Gray was one or more removes from the source of power.

33 For Chartier's oeuvre and records of his activities on behalf of the French royal house see E.J. Hoffman, Alain Chartier: His Work and Reputation (1942; Geneva: Slatkine reprints, 1975).
of Cicero, [and] the development of argument by antithesis, in the manner of Seneca...". Moreover, he was instrumental in linking an earlier period of literary activity with later successors: "Il joue le rôle important de trait d'union," Regula Meyerberg notes, "il poursuit l'essor humaniste dans un autre registre, en introduisant l'éloquence dans la prose littéraire française et en conférant ainsi à la langue vulgaire la dignité qui lui avait encore manqué." Meyerberg places rhetoric in this period squarely in the field of social and political involvement:

La renaissance de l'éloquence et de la rhétorique sous Charles VI continue sous Charles VII en s'élargissant de plus en plus dans la seconde moitié du siècle. Sans exagérer, on peut dire que l'homo loquens est remis au centre de l'intérêt non seulement de la théorie rhétorique mais de toute la société, puisque la vraie éloquence, celle qui respecte le lieu, le temps et les convenances formelles du beau, est la manifestation suprême de la sagesse. L'idéal du sage éloquent hante les esprits, la parole écrite et parlée s'en empreint.

Chartier's nationalistic concerns are foregrounded in all three of his dialogues; the intense identification with the plight of one's nation in the following description of the Traité could easily apply to any of these works: "Une autre particularité du Livre de l'Espérance est le fait que le sort

34 Hoffman 274.


36 Meyerberg 131. I will be returning to the role of the intellectual, or the "sage," in a later section for this is an important element of the discussion in the Freende and Felaw.
Finally, despite emphasis on Chartier's rhetoric and other "humanistic" characteristics, his work has also been noted to contain "unmistakable medieval aspects": allegory, dream-vision, debate, along with "a conscious display of erudition and syllogistic argumentation," marking it as "scholastic." Thus Chartier's dialogues are eminently transitional, containing both humanist rhetoric and scholastic debate, they are themselves "traites d'union" between medieval and Renaissance.

The present work is concerned with an English translation of Chartier and, to enlarge on the brief comments made in conjunction with Hoccleve's Lerne to Dye, I offer the following two arguments as validations of such a project. First, in studying the original works of known authors within the field of a single national literature the assumption obtains that we are engaged in discovering some kind of "national genius," the embodiment (or rather envoicement) of some generic attitude indicative of a set community's "national consciousness." Thus we endeavour to expose the general traits or nature of a single, linguistically-defined


38 Hoffman 274; 196.
culture, as much as to highlight the unique characteristics of an individual creative mind; I do not think that a study must be literary-historical to be governed by this kind of assumption. But in studying translations we discover an index of what works a cultural audience desired that were not their own productions—the translator is of course the preeminent member and representative of that audience. The demand for particular works from other cultures gives another kind of indication of national traits than do original productions, but an indication nonetheless. In a period such as fifteenth-century England, which is known for its avidity for translation into the vernacular, one cannot overlook the contribution to literary production of works "brought across" the language divide.

The second argument in favour of the study of translation is that translation is not a passive activity—as anyone who has translated well knows—and that the translator is intimately involved in (re)interpreting, appropriating, and (re)constructing the meaning of his or her chosen text. Thus there is an element of "originality" and access to the desires

of a "national consciousness" in the study of translation as much as in the study of original works, albeit in a different way. To say that for the Middle Ages and Renaissance "texts were written out of other texts" implies a continuum of text types shading off into many possible varieties from original work ex nihilo, to source, to reworking, to translation. The focus here will not be on how the English translators (re)mastered the Latin original, however; such linguistic comparison has already been performed by the editor of Chartier's dialogues in EETS. The ostensible historical motivation for the translations has also been offered by Margaret Blayney; the English translators' interest

is understandable not only because the histories of England and France during Chartier's time were inextricably bound together, but also because conditions within England itself during the second half of the fifteenth century, when the translators were at work, made Chartier's observations about the criticisms of his own country cogently applicable to the confused state of affairs in England during the Thirty Years' War.  

Thus having placed Chartier's *A Famlyyar Dyaloge of the

---

40 Margaret S. Blayney, "Notes on the Manuscripts," Fifteenth-Century English Translations of Alain Chartier's "Le Traité de l'Esperance" and "Le Quadrilogue Invectif", ed. M.S. Blayney, Vol. 1 (Oxford: EETS, 1974) xv. In the "Introduction" to her edition of Freende and Felaw, Blayney conjectures that all three works were translated by a single author, perhaps Sir John Fortescue. *A Famlyyar Dyaloge of the Friend and the Fellow: A Translation of Alain Chartier's "Dialogus Familiaris Amici et Sodalis,"* ed. M.S. Blayney (Oxford: EETS, 1989) vii; and her article, "Sir John Fortescue and Alain Chartier's 'Traité de l'Esperance,'" *MLR* 48.4 (1953): 385-90. The Dudley manuscript mentioned above is witness to the abiding interest in Chartier's works a hundred years after the translation was made. It was in the Earl's library when Spenser was in his employ thus it is possible Spenser consulted it.
Freende and the Felaw as an historical artifact I will refrain from discussing further its possible comment on the local and specific historical milieu of political event; my concern is with the dialogue's situatedness in a general historical milieu or mentalité of the language art of rhetoric, Cicero's "artificiosa eloquentia."\(^\text{41}\)

"Freende and Felaw": authority and interlocution

As with so many other dialogues, those modern scholars who have commented on Chartier's Freende and Felaw have assumed that one interlocutor, in this case the Felaw, is the author's mouthpiece. This is partially based on a "homogenizing"\(^\text{42}\) between this dialogue and the other two Chartist dialogue compositions, since a melancholy dreamer figure occupies both the Treatise of Hope and the Quadrilogue, and is designated in several manuscripts as "The Auctour." The Felaw is also of a melancholy, pessimistic disposition,

\(^{41}\) I take the phrase from John O. Ward, "Artificiosa eloquentia in the Middle Ages: The study of Cicero's De inventione, the Ad Herennium, and Quintilian's De institutione oratoria, from the early Middle Ages to the thirteenth century, with special reference to the schools of northern France." Diss. U of Toronto, 1972.

\(^{42}\) See Michel Foucault, "What is an Author?", trans. Josue V. Harari, Contemporary Literary Criticism: Literary and Cultural Studies, 2nd ed., ed. Robert Con Davis and Ronald Schleifer (New York: Longman, 1989): 262-76. In the "author function" several texts are placed under the same name indicating "that there has been established among them a relationship of homogeneity, filiation, authentication of some texts by the use of others, reciprocal explication, or concomitant utilization. The author's name serves to characterize a certain mode of being of discourse..." (267).
tending towards "honourable" suicide in the fashion of Cato,\textsuperscript{43} and refusing to be budged by the expostulations of the Freende. The cause of this slump in morale is the dreadful state of the "comon wele." The Freende, on the other hand, is of a sanguine nature; he would live joyfully (3:14) and exhorts his interlocutor and all men to do likewise (2:3). Thus the two speakers are underwritten by a humoral division between melancholy and sanguinity, neither one standing for a man whose elements are properly mixed. This in turn draws attention to the inability of ascribing either voice solely to the author. Furthermore, the proper balance between humours is foregrounded near the end of the dialogue in a simile used by the Felaw linking the peace of the "comon wele" to the human body in harmony by due proportion:

\begin{quote}
 Peece ys the helth of the comon wele and a dew havyour of the partes of the comonte togedere, and yt perdureth yn helth as the body of man whan temperaunce ys betwix the qualites and the humovrs and the armony of proporcion whyche suffycyaunce calleth iustyce are served convenyently to the compleccion. (38:18-23)
\end{quote}

Thus the contrasting humoral temperaments of the Freende and Felaw seem to imply that a blending of their positions is what would result in a balanced approach to the problems raised in the dialogue, not a privileging of one view over the other.

There are other ways in which the two interlocutors are

\textsuperscript{43} A Familiar Dialogue of the Friend and the Fellow: A Translation of Alain Chartier's "Dialogus Familiaris Amici et Sodalis, ed. M.S. Blayney (Oxford: EETS, 1989) 11:25-30. Further references will be made in the text to page and line number; thorn has been replaced by "th."
complementary rather than antithetical or locked in a struggle for supremacy. It is interesting to note that Chartier, "the French Seneca," gives the Stoic position to the Freende and a more Aristotelian position to the Felaw. In the Freende's opening consolation speech he refers to the "breef and trancytory" life invoking the Stoic themes of brevity and mutability (1:32-33). He goes on to admonish the Felaw to "rewle...thyn owne soule" like a Stoic sage, and not to succumb to passions like "the flokke and freel multytude of men" (2:16-19); and he charges his interlocutor with "inconstaunce," the opposite of the doctrine of Stoic constantia (4:7). As the dialogue progresses the Freende goes on to accuse the Felaw of being so hard set in his purpose that he will hear no man's reason other than that his "appetyte iugeth" (11:4-5), and of neglecting to take counsel as a prudent and wise man should (14:15-19), since fortune--another great Stoic theme--may change (16:5-6).

---

14 A development of this point might examine dialogues with reference to the Hegelian master-slave power structure and its revisions in, for example, Tzvetan Todorov's "Living Alone Together," NLH 27.1 (1996): 1-14. This special issue contains a number of responses to Todorov's ideas of alterity.

15 Stoicism actually accords well with the sanguine position of the Freende when one considers that Epicurean themes, such as pleasure and enjoyment of life, were transmitted through Stoicism in the period. See Louise Fothergill-Payne, "Seneca's role in popularizing Epicurus in the sixteenth century," in Atoms, pneuma and tranquillity: Epicurean and Stoic Themes in European Thought, ed. Margaret J. Osler (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1991) 115-33.

16 Consider for example Seneca's De brevitate vitae.
Conversely, in the example of Scipio taken out of Livy, the Felaw fashions himself as a devoté to anti-Stoic passions, ira and sorrow:

> How than brake owt thys most noble man wyth a fercuent angre yn oppen counseyle where the soule ought to be fre wythoute bondage of any passyoun, where manere pees and grevousnes ought to be kept and observed, but oonly forasmoche as that the offences publyke exceede the manere and mesure of mans hardynesse and yre, for they can neuer be sorowfully ynough bewepte nor egyrly ynough avenged. (7:1-8)

Although this reads at first as an anti-Stoic position in opposition to the Freende--for no matter how sacred these passions may be on behalf of the commonweal they go against apatheia--the agreement of the Freende, "Thou seyst ryght," indicates that we cannot use Stoicism simplistically to draw division between the two interlocutors. In addition, towards the end of the dialogue the Felaw seems to adopt the Stoic themes of tranquillity and fortune.

Nonetheless, in his resistance to "therapy"\(^{47}\) of his emotional state verging on despair,\(^{48}\) and in his Aristotelian ethics, the Felaw reveals his complementary status in the dialogue's interlocution. The Felaw's Aristotelianism is evident in his insistance on the following points: a "meene of

---

\(^{47}\) I refer to Martha Nussbaum's lucid discussion of Hellenistic, especially Stoic, philosophy as *The Therapy of Desire.*

\(^{48}\) This is explicitly the state of the narrator in the *Traité*, a state of "desesperance."
vertu" (3:27-28),\textsuperscript{49} an emphasis on the need to change the 
"maners of man" to reform the state (16:9; Aristotelian virtue 
as learned \textit{habitus}), the responsibility of the individual for 
the state of the commonweal in accord with the \textit{Politics}, a 
generally hard-headed disputational approach, and an abiding 
scepticism (e.g. 42).

Despite their complementarity, in certain passages the 
Felaw could be read as related to the \textit{magister} and the Freende 
to the \textit{discipulus} of the more simplified master-pupil 
dialogues, since the Felaw has several longer speeches 
decrying the degeneration of the present times. But as I have 
argued in Chapter 2, even in dialogues which are overtly 
structured as master-pupil interlocutions this relationship is 
far from a simple dumping of information; and in Chartier's 
\textit{Freende and Felaw} the roles are not nearly so clear cut as in 
Pecock's \textit{Donet}, but vary interrogation with dialectical 
argument. For here we have two interlocutors of equal status 
much as in Ciceronian dialogues, and not the disparity of age 
(as in Pecock's \textit{Donet} or More's \textit{Dialogue of Comfort}), or of 
ontological status (as in Hoccleve's \textit{Lerne to Dye}).

The \textit{Freende and Felaw} is useful for breaking down another 
common misconception regarding dialogues. Dialogues are often, 
as the epitome of humanistic discourse, contrasted with

\textsuperscript{49} A whole study needs to be done on the usage of the 
word "vertu" by both interlocutors in this text; it was 
clearly a key term with regard to politic advice before 
Machiavelli.
medieval scholastic debate where the former progress in a non-linear fashion through various twists and turns of ratiocination, while the latter are strictly and syllogistically ordered. But this is to set up a false dichotomy, since we should be comparing not humanist dialogue and scholastic *summa*, but humanist dialogue with medieval dialogue, for there too the nature of the genre ensures that the ideas presented follow a more discursive than rigorous trajectory.\footnote{Consider the early Middle English *The Owl and the Nightingale*, and see the article by J.J. Murphy on the use of Aristotle's *Topica* in the text.} Furthermore, Aristotle advised in his *Topica*, a work well known in the medieval period, never to order one's arguments in an obvious way.\footnote{In his article on the *Owl and the Nightingale* Murphy describes the eighth book of the *Topica* as a set of directions for conducting dialectical debates and disputations, including the advice "that you should advance your premises in random order, so that your opponent will not at first see how they all fit together..." (Murphy, "Rhetoric and Dialectic" 207). Yet many scholars criticize dialogues for not advancing their arguments in a linear manner.} Dialogue, unlike expository prose of treatise or *summa*, itself allows for the repetition of ideas, their transference from one interlocutor to another as thoughts are picked up and explored or discarded, and a circling back to earlier material.

Turning to the *Freende and Felaw* I want to examine the interlocutors' exchange in its multiplicity of statements, questions, and reactions. Although he seems to wallow in his melancholy, the Felaw of the dialogue is not quite as
intractable as, for example, the interlocutor in Petrarch's dialogue *De Remediis Utriusque Fortunae* who only repeats a single phrase while the other speaker advances reasons in dissuasion.\(^5^2\) Somewhat ironically in Chartier's dialogue the Felaw early on invokes the Aristotelian moral virtue of "eutropolya" (3:24), which Blayney translates as "urbanitas," or pleasantness in conversation.\(^5^3\) This is ironic because the dialogue lacks this singular quality in many places, especially in the attitude of the Felaw himself, while it is the Freende who tries to maintain a certain level of polite discussion.

The Freende begins by exhorting the Felaw to abandon his melancholic withdrawal, which at first seems personal but soon clarifies itself in the concern for the public good with the tears of a Jeremiad (5:10-12).\(^5^1\) In moving from opposition

---

\(^5^2\) For example, "I fear to die." Petrarch's compendium of moral philosophy in dialogue form was extremely popular in the Renaissance, with an English translation printed in 1579. See *Physicke Against Fortune*, with an Introduction by Benjamin G. Kohl (New York: Scholars', 1980).

\(^5^3\) The Felaw says, however, that such "eutropolya" has its times and manners with regard to both heaviness and gladness, invoking the "to everything there is a season" trope of Ecclesiastes. This notion of "season" is another figure which passes back and forth between the two interlocutors.

\(^5^4\) It is interesting to note with regard to the dialogic structures discussed in the previous chapter that the Felaw refers to "an ynwarde batayle" which rages "amonge oureself," and sarcastically remarks to one of the Freende's early promptings: "Wolde God y wer suche wyth myself as y am anest the" (2:12; 21). This draws an explicit connection between the outward situation of dialogue (text and fictional locus), and the internal, psychological dialogue of the self.
towards "shared understanding" the Freende occasionally adopts the position of questioning disciple; more obviously than in Pecock, however, the Freende also directs, acknowledges, approves, and thus controls the discourse from his position. Thus when the Felaw submits the notion of "sacred anger" to justify his emotional state, the Freende offers a furthering question: "I vnderstonde well theffecte of that seyenge, but I wulde that thou schuldest reduce the same thyng more playnly vnto my mynde" (6:6-8). After tartly remarking that there are many examples, the Felaw is finally coaxed into expanding his point using the example of Scipio mentioned above. This leads not only to understanding in the interlocutor, "Now I vndirstonde...," but also to adversative prompting, "but I knewe neuer such injuries" as would give rise to such excessive complaint as yours. This is followed by the Felaw's consdescending comments on the Freende as being both "taught and vntaught," and the Freende's repartee, "What though I knowe not, yet wulde y vnderstonde what thou knowest yn thys case" (7:21-31). At this point the Felaw offers a rather withering remark, which is registered by the Freende in his reply: "To me y wote ys an vnwysedom not for to knowe, but

---

35 I invoke here Hans-Georg Gadamer's notion of Platonic dialogue and dialectic. See Plato's Dialectical Ethics: Phenomenological Interpretations Relating to the Philebus, trans. with an Introduction by Robert M. Wallace (New Haven, Conn.: Yale UP, 1991) Part I, "Conversation and the Way We Come to Shared Understanding," 17-65. For Chartier, however, there seems to be little progress towards this final moment of closure; although there is agreement, there is also disagreement right up to the end.
to the, knowynge and questyoned, not to answer ys but dysdeyne" (8:5-7). With this rebuke the "magister" Felaw agrees to open his mind and, as he says, "take the way that thou commaundest"; the "disciple" Freende invites him to proceed (8:10, 12). What is again plain here is that the question and answer or master-pupil form, even when the question requests factual information, does not enforce a simplistic discursive hierarchy; questioning is a process more than a form and the positions taken up by the interlocutors fluctuate or alternate through varieties of domination and submission. Much more could be said about the interlocution in this dialogue as it moves towards "shared understanding," especially with regard to disputation, which is explicitly invoked (and Socrates along with it), and dialectical exchange; but let this example suffice since the concern here is rhetoric, we need only note how frequent agreement, and thus persuasion, takes place despite the confrontational aspects of much of the text. This deflation of the master-pupil set-up contributes in turn to the undermining of the so-called "author's mouthpiece" by removing any simple notion of authority from a single interlocutor.

"Freende and Felaw": The role of the intellectual and the politics of advice

As Joël Blanchard says of Chartier's Traité, so also Freende and Felaw presents the elements "pour y donner à voir
Indeed, the occasion of Freende and Felaw and to a great degree its subject is a discussion of the role of the public intellectual, of what it means to take up the vox politica. A rough trajectory of the dialogue bears this out. The Freende initially misunderstands the nature of the Felaw's melancholic state as something personal and thus proffers arguments about how the Felaw should be content with his achieved status and life "goods." However, even at this personal level, the Freende enjoins him as a Stoic sage to master this melancholic passion because he is a public individual, above the frail multitude, and thus should surmount other men in virtue (2:18). When the Freende cites Socrates as one who maintained Stoic "glad chere" in adversity (disputing until the end), the Felaw reveals via an alternative characterization of the philosopher--as one who had "a grete 3ele to the comon wele" (4:20-21)--that his own personal sorrow is politically motivated: he bears, as his interlocutor then identifies, "a secret heuynes for the domage of the comon wele" (4:26-27).

The Freende moves now more forcefully to persuade the Felaw out of his melancholic withdrawal, rejecting the Jeremiad as an acceptable position for the sage or public individual: "What profyte ys yt to the and to the comon wele

---

that thyself perysche therwyth?," he asks (11:16-17). Instead of sacrificing himself in imitation of the noble suicide of Cato, the Freende exhorts the Felaw to save himself first, "and aftyr that whan thou hast opportunite and space, than counseyle and helpe the comon wele" (12:6-8). Moreover he has a duty to give advice, since he may "exorte othyr" by his words (12:21). This recalls the figure of homo loquens postulated on the first page of the text where the Felaw was identified as excelling in "eloquence and prudence," underlining the conjunction of rhetoric and practical reason.

Ironically, even while resisting the call to offer counsel the Felaw fulfills the role of social critic since through explanation his sorrow is converted into political advice. Eventually the Felaw assents to his responsibilty as vox politica: that it is granted "to alle wyse and taught men to teche and to alle othyr to sey theyr oppynyon" (30:29-30). The Freende confirms this position by applauding the Felaw for saying what his countrymen do not want to hear: "Thou schewest ferre and wonderful thynges to oure Frenschemen and thou chiefly denyest that that they chiefly desyre" (27:7-9).

Thus in Chartier we already have a consideration of the issue that More was to address in his dialogue Utopia and Thomas Starkey in his Dialogue between Lupset and Pole, albeit within different parameters: the question, should men of wisdom take part in political life? This humanist concern in the fifteenth-century dialogue reminds us that humanism did
not arrive in England only after 1500, and indeed there is reason to believe that relevant works such as Plato's *Republic* were perused more by fifteenth-century humanists in England than those of the following century.\(^7\) The translation of this Chartist dialogue is one vehicle for the transmission into English culture of the debate concerning the *vox politica* prior to More and Starkey.

The two most important aspects of the discussion of the role of public intellectual in the dialogue as relating to politic(al) advice are the emphasis on the conjunction of personal and public, and the example the learned man gives to his nation. Both of these points prepare for the analogous discussion of rulers and counsellors who must also join private and public virtue, and whose lives must provide "ensamples" to the realm. The analogy helps allow for the otherwise dangerous project of advising the prince.

As stated by Suomela-Harma, Chartier sees the fate of the individual as inseparable from that of his country; Janet Coleman notes that practical philosophy (prudence) relates an individual's acts to those of the collectivity. In *Freende and Felaw* Chartier takes the interrelation of self and nation even further: the inward life of the individual is the life of the

commonweal--there is no ethical good without political good.\textsuperscript{58} The most succinct statement of this position comes when the Felaw disagrees with the Freende's comment that men think "whan they be wel at eese the comon wele ys not euyl at eese" (27:23-25). "But y beleue the contrary," the Felaw replies, "for whereas the comon wele ys euyl at ese ther may no man be wele at eese" (27:27-28). Indeed, no ruler may sit feasting, arrayed in purple and call himself happy if the country is in trouble, he argues.\textsuperscript{59} Secondly, just as the public intellectual's life is, like that of the Stoic sage or Socrates, an example to the frail multitude, so too those who sit in high office must be clear of vices. For, as the Felaw says,

\begin{quote}
The freel and mevable comonte lyuen by ensample and folowen the maneres and fortyn of myghty men, but they put not theyre soules, lawes and ordenaunces made by comaunderment so ryghtfully and wyth so grete reme[m]braunce as they emprynte by ensample the lyuenge of theyr governour. And therfor yf men yn estate hauynge governauce be the defoulers of ther godlyhede they schulle be corrupters of othyr mennes yntenegryte and hole conuersacion. The lest man that synneth synneth to hymself, but they whos lyuenge ought to be as ymage and ensample to othyr men, whan they synne they synne to alle men. (21:25-35)
\end{quote}

Thus, just as the Felaw comes to accept the duty and responsibility attendant on his position as public

\textsuperscript{58} There is a play on "inward battles" in the text being both contemporary civil strife as well as psychological turmoil in the self.

\textsuperscript{59} Earlier the Felaw had contradicted the Freende's statement that a man may be good to the commonweal who is privately vicious (22:10 ff.).
intellectual, so all those in power must be aware that the "more / a man taketh vppon hym yn charge of the comon wele, so moche more he oweth" (27:12-13).

This use of analogy between vox politica and vis politica is perhaps unique to Chartier in the advice literature, although there are many other strategies that this dialogue shares with the tradition of Fürstenspiegel as Judith Ferster describes it. In Fictions of Advice: The Literature and Politics of Counsel in Late Medieval England, Ferster identifies the mirrors for princes in the Secretum Secretorum tradition as mixing submission and aggression, flattery and resistance, respect and provocation. As she says, "The mirrors for princes are not only more topical than they appear to be but also more critical of the powerful than we might expect" (3). This critique takes form behind a shield of dullness, conservatism, and conflicting advice in, for example, the use of moral anecdotes, and the discussion of the role of counsellors. If the Secretum encourages rulers to solicit advice because they can pick and choose the best, the texts offer no help in the crucial matter of distinguishing the good from the bad (71).

---

60 The Secretum Secretorum, a genre like the ars moriendi and the courtesy book, particularly grew and flourished in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, lending substance to the period circumscribed in the present study.

Although Ferster does not invoke the *ars sermocinale* of rhetoric, her comment on Prudence as advisor in Chaucer's dialogue *The Tale of Melibee* reveals the temporizing or vacillating nature of the *rhetor* in the Ciceronian usage of argument *in utramque partem*: "[Prudence's] ability to quote authorities on both sides of the question keeps her from justifying her choices between them at any given moment" (96). Furthermore, Ferster sees these texts as leading to action, not only because this literature creates "a language in which to think and speak about social and political issues" (9)--"the creation and refinement of a language for political actions" (13)--but because "the mirrors for princes take many opportunities to criticize the ruler, it is a less paradoxical move from literary work to political action" (72). As she goes on to say with regard to Richard II, "It is easier to see how the literary works provide the terms in which deposition of the king can be spoken in public" (72). It is not that these texts instigate such actions, but merely open the door to such thinking and speaking. While Chartier was a faithful servant of the royal house, his dialogue partakes of some pointed critique of those in power.

The challenge or provocation side of the equation can be

---

62 Ferster quotes historian Anthony Tuck to the effect that "the medieval king was so strong, and the mechanisms for mediating disputes so inadequate, that the only aristocratic solution for disputes was to depose him" (82). Conversely Chris Given-Wilson states that "if, at a particular moment of conflict, they decided not to depose him, their only alternative was advice" (quoted in Ferster 82).
identified in several anecdotes Chartier deploys in the
dialogue, as well as outright statements on the king's
position such as the one cited above that no ruler can be
happy if the realm is in turmoil. The anecdotes on Xerxes,
Valerius and Fabius also again link the role of the public
intellectual to that of the king. In the earlier part of the
dialogue when the Freende is still trying to convince the
Felaw to abandon his lamentations and apply himself both to
recovery of his mental state and that of the country he quotes
Terence to the effect that prudent counselling is the "most
sure fyrmament for a comon wele" (14:19). The Felaw cynically
replies that "the practyke of 3erces" (14:22) has caused such
use of counsel to vanish. The king of Persia called his people
together only to make it seem as if he was not acting alone
without counsel, saying, "'Neuyrtheles remembre yow that youre
part ys rathyr to obeye than to parsuade'" (14:25-26). Because
the mirrors for princes stress the importance of taking
advice—even though they fail to instruct on distinguishing
good from bad—the absolutist, totalitarian position of Xerxes
represents an extreme negative example. Its critique of the
present ruler is scathing. How else is the princely reader to
interpret this passage other than by identifying himself as
part of the current malaise of the realm? The vox politica can
only perform his duty if the vis politica is receptive to

---

63 It also repudiates the very project of the book in
hand, Chartier's own contribution to the literature of advice.
persuasion; advice is part of the cure of present woes.

As in the mirror for princes tradition explicated by Ferster, the danger, challenge, and aggression of offering such advice to limit or discipline the king can only be put forward in a context which glances back from any perceived provocation. The following interlocution of the dialogue therefore immediately takes up the more general notion of lack of virtue and justice, spreading the blame to the civil battles of the nobility and the corruption of those men who should be leaders. Because the Felaw will move on in the dialogue to accept his position as public intellectual the danger of criticizing the king may thus be somewhat ameliorated as well.

The anecdote of Valerius exemplifies personal sacrifice for the betterment of the community. This Roman consul reduced his own household to avoid overtaxing the public (26:17-26). But while the exemplum draws attention to the concept of a ruler's personal responsibility to eschew ostentation and burdening the country financially, what it suppresses is that Valerius himself was an over thrower of kings and instrumental in establishing the Republic, whose first consul he became. Moreover, the ensuing reference to Fabius foregrounds and critiques the issue of hereditary monarchy outright. Fabius is named as one who joined together in himself glory and virtue and gained the highest office in Rome by his merits. Moreover, he prevented

---

6 See Blayney's note p. 46.
his son from being named consul after him—even though he too was elected on his merit—"lest that hys house by manyfolde encrece of offycers schulde excede othy r yn honour and rewarde to the charge of the comon wele of the cyte" (27:3-5). The interlocution takes the text in the direction of a deontology which links duty to position: "for loke how moche more / a man taketh vpon hym yn charge of the comon wele, so moche more he oweth" (27:12-13). This is a dodge back from the provoking attack on kingship, and spreads the blame to a general "ambycuous desyre of man," since "[e]ourney man desyreth gretter thynges to hymself than to othyr men" (27:15-18).

One last example shows how the dialogue incorporates direct criticism of the king into its rhetoric of advice. When the Felaw says that laws should prevent malice or establish equity, the Freende counters that equity itself is a requirement for the efficacy of law, particularly that the "vnequyte of the governour mortefyeth the lawe" (20:28-29). He goes on to explicitly place the responsibility for proper rule on the shoulders of the king:

Yt ys holsom to the peple to be vnder a ryghtwes lawe, but yt is moche more holsom to be governed by a goode and a ryghtwes kynge, for they that governe the comon wele of the goode thynges they make the best lawe and they fulfyll the auctoryte of the maker of the same lawe. (20:29-21:1)

Any disorder in the country could therefore be laid at the feet of the monarch. But the Felaw proceeds immediately to dance back from the implications of this potential challenge to the king by saying that men with power abuse the law while
the poor pay and suffer the penance (21:7-9).

While the dialogue Freende and Felaw deploys these techniques of contradiction as in the rest of the mirrcr for princes tradition--including placing blame on "evil counsellors," the nobility in general, and the degeneration of the times--the dialogue form itself provides some shield to the dangers implicit in advising the ruler. The suspension of the authorial voice between the two interlocutors--neither one standing in for the author's "mouthpiece"--diffuses and deflects the dangers of advising the prince. The rhetorical orientation of the dialogue's attempt to persuade to action is contained within this strategy culminating in the discussion of peace. The reader, whether ruler or subject, is exhorted to take responsibility for the state of the realm and to contribute to its betterment. Such practical applicability in the social sphere is unlike the more dialectical dialogues which attempt to inculcate a methodology of thinking into the reader, to be grasped and retained when the dialogue has ended. Here a call to political action reveals the different emphasis of rhetorical dialogues.

II. Reclaiming Spenser's "Vewe of the present state of Irelande" as dialogue

...it was and is well understood that, as it was put the other day (more forcibly than grammatically), Spenser "advocated, as a solution of the Irish problem, the mass murder of its inhabitants". That myth grew naturally out of the Victorian Liberal Party line, that all Irish policy before Mr
Gladstone was darkness and terror. The fact that it would not bear examination was irrelevant. It was fixed in the general mind; the unpopular Froude and the foreigner Legouis could be disregarded; and so could A View of the Present State of Ireland, for who would wish to read such a horrible book?  

The wicked policies of divers deputies & gobernours in Ireland see Spenser dialogue of Ireland.  

A thorough reception history of Spenser's Vewe has yet to be written. Yet we can see that, as Renwick indicates, and as a perusal of Appendix III of the Variorum Prose Works and an examination of the more recent postcolonial-influenced criticism confirms, the commentators of the last hundred years have ranged from embarrassment to indignation over Spenser's Vewe. This was not so in the first hundred years after the

---


67 Statements range from Spenser as social engineer: "The View is not a tract advocating 'genocide' as some would have it, but rather, cultural and linguistic destruction" (Andrew Hadfield, "Spenser's View Of The Present State of Ireland Some Notes Towards a 'Materialist' Analysis of Discourse," in Anglo-Irish and Irish Literature: Aspects of Language and Culture, ed. Birgit Bramsbäck and Martin Croghan [Uppsala: Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, 1988] 270); to Spenser as brutal imperialist: "Wretchedly cruel as colonial policy seems, to Spenser it was not repugnant..." (David J. Baker, "'Some Quirk, Some Subtle Evasion': Legal Subversion in Spenser's A View of the Present State of Ireland," Spenser Studies VI [1985]: 149.) This view of Spenser as apparatchik goes back at least to Yeats, who is quoted by Baker: "Spenser had learned to look to the State not only as the rewarder of virtue but as the maker of right and wrong, and had begun to love and hate as it bid him" (149). There are some apologiae among the critics as well, especially two articles by Sheila Cavanagh, "'Such was Irena's Countenance': Ireland in Spenser's Prose and Poetry," Texas Studies in Literature and
dialogue's composition. Although suppressed by the official machinery of the Elizabethan state, the work circulated in manuscript and was eventually printed by Ware in 1633.68 Later in the seventeenth century the work was still politically current; according to Willy Maley: "Milton's post-publication perusal of the View suggests a purposeful, pragmatic, political approach," and readers such as the Protestant cleric George Story (d. 1721) "thought Spenser the most moderate of religious reformers...." In his secular--especially military and administrative--proposals "Spenser assumes a radicalism in advance of his age"; indeed Maley

Language 28.1 (1986): 24-50 ("...Spenser never states or implies that the Irish are either subhuman or innately rebellious" [25]); and "))The fatal destiny of that land': Elizabethan Views of Ireland," in Representing Ireland: Literature and the Origins of Conflict, 1534-1660, ed. Brendan Bradshaw, Andrew Hadfield, and Willy Maley (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1993): Chapter 7, 116-31 (Spenser demonstrates "more compassion and understanding for the native inhabitants than most of the comparable treatises composed by his fellow English authors" [128]). Cavanagh rightly draws attention to the interference of "our modern sensibilities" but I would add that such sensibilities are often hypocritical considering the atrocities of this century. For a defense of the Vewe as a tactical evasion of censorship see Annabel Patterson, "The Egalitarian Giant: Representations of Justice in History/Literature," in A. Patterson, Reading between the Lines (Madison: U of Wisconsin P, 1993): 80-116.

considers Spenser's political thought advanced, and advocates that it is time that he be reconstructed as more than a mere mouthpiece of the presiding regime. 69

The present project hopes to contribute to such a revision by regarding the Vewe as dialogue of advice. Although some modern critics have noticed that the work is in dialogue form, few have studiously considered the dialogue qua dialogue; 70 and no one has placed it in the "mirror for

69 "That charge would be levelled with more justice at Milton." Willy Maley, "How Milton and some contemporaries read Spenser's View," in Representing Ireland: Literature and the Origins of Conflict, 1534-1660, ed. Brendan Bradshaw et al, 200; 201. In 1933 B.E.C. Davis compared Thomas More to Spenser with regard to the relative morality of their positions: "The defence of politic expediency by the champion of Platonic justice is not more anomalous than the persecution of heretics by the author of Utopia; in each case such inconsistency is the inevitable outcome of contemporary thought and conditions" (B.E.C. Davis, Edmund Spenser [1933] 74, quoted in Gottfried, ed., Variorum Prose Works 500). But note that Spenser is even less culpable since he did not enjoy a position of power which let him personally act upon any of his proposals, unlike More's persecution of heretics.

70 The major exception is Patricia Coughlan, "'Some secret scourge which shall by her come unto England': Ireland and Incivility in Spenser," in Spenser and Ireland: An Interdisciplinary Perspective, ed. Patricia Coughlan (Cork: Cork UP, 1989): 46-74, esp. 59-68. But Couglan, although noticing "Scholastic habit," remains wedded to hunting for classical exemplars, locating Lucian's Toxaris--which is mentioned once in the Vewe--as some kind of model text. I think her reading of the interlocutors of this dialogue as a parallel to Irenius and Eudoxus is forced; nonetheless pp. 65-68 show her sensitivity to the operation of dialogue. John Day's entry for "dialogue, prose" in the Spenser Encyclopedia dismisses any connection between the Vewe and dialogue traditions: "...Vewe has no Socratic dialectic, no Ciceronian urbanity, and no Lucianic humor shown in the classical exemplars of the form. Nor have the continental Renaissance dialogues...or German Reformation dialogues influenced Spenser's choice of form." Day places the Vewe in the context of Elizabethan instructional dialogues of a "catechistical
princes" tradition, although Machiavelli is invoked with some regularity.\footnote{Machiavelli is usually considered to have broken the mold of the tradition, but as Ferster persuasively argues, the genre was already "subverted" when Machiavelli came to write The Prince. There are few in-depth considerations of Spenser's "Machiavellianism." For a traditional source-critical comparison of this work and the Vewe see Edwin Greenlaw, "The Influence of Machiavelli on Spenser," MP 7 (1909-10): 1-16. There is also some discussion of Machiavellianism in Clark Hulse, "Spenser, Bacon, and the Myth of Power," in The Historical Renaissance: New Essays on Tudor and Stuart Literature and Culture, ed. Heather Dubrow and Richard Strier (Chicago: U of C Press, 1988): 315-46, esp. 327-31. Machiavelli and Spenser is part of the focus of a study by Richard McCabe, "The Fate of Irena: Spenser and Political Violence," in Spenser and Ireland, 109-25. I will offer yet a different usage via Ferster coupled with Victoria Kahn's notion of "Machiavellian rhetoric" below.} It is my aim here to do both. An analysis of the positioning and interaction of the interlocutors shows that neither is placed as "author's mouthpiece"; the nature of "advice" in the dialogue, and its relation to rhetoric, reveals a mixing of submission and aggression, flattery and resistance, respect and provocation which Ferster identifies with the Fürstenspiegel tradition.

The Vewe is not, as many, especially many recent critics have assumed, simply a statement of official Elizabethan method" like Ascham's Toxophilus, "[w]ith only the barest fiction of conversation, no setting, and few digressions, the two thinly characterized speakers move methodically through an agenda..." (217). I will argue against this position which, besides its dismissive tone, begs the question. Other readers have been more perceptive, including David Quinn whose entry on the Vewe in that same publication clashes noticably with Day's comments. Both Day and Quinn's entries can be found in The Spenser Encyclopedia, ed. A.C. Hamilton et al (Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1990).
imperialist policy. If it had been an adequate articulation of what Elizabeth and her advisors saw as the solution to the Irish problem, Spenser would have been rewarded for his service and the dialogue allowed to go into print. This is not the case. In fact, as Maley's suggestion of Spenser's "radicalism" implies, this document contained the views of a bourgeois colonist rather than a royal agent. And as Renwick notes, "The business of a provincial official is, to show an orderly population, good crops, and a self-supporting administration: how to procure these is the subject of the View." Modern criticism of the Vewe has been skewed by repeated and exaggerated dwelling on the only two horrific anecdotes in the text: the description of the famine-victims as "anatomies of death," and the hysterical mother drinking up

---

72 There seems to be some confusion over the use of the word "official": some take it in the more usual sense as the position sanctioned by the authority of the ruling power; but if read as pertaining to the crown's "officials," such as petty bureaucrats in the colony like Spenser, it is indeed an "official" view.

73 Some critics tie themselves in knots to avoid the obvious, especially David Baker who starts out by saying Vewe is a policy statement, and finds he must then explain Spenser's "miscalculation." Miscalculation indeed, although not because Spenser was writing what he thought Elizabeth had already formulated as "self-appointed apologist" of "overweening ambition." Noticing dialogue structures would help alleviate Baker's bafflement.

74 We need to remember that the word "radical" was not reductive to the same set of values and specific strategies as it would be now. In Maley's words, Spenser was "a rather reluctant royalist, one might even say, an opportunist monarchist" (201).

75 Renwick, "Commentary" 183.
the blood of her executed son. Although I will refrain from discussing these two moments yet again, I believe that they must be read in the entire context of the dialogue and its literary devices and not be excised and taken as epitomizing Spenser's brutal desire for vengeance or genocide. In a text of approximately 200 pages in the Variorum edition, these two paragraphs, which have no other parallels, should not be read as typifying anything; nor should they be read out of context of the dialogue. Surely no literary critic would advance a reading of Swift's *Modest Proposal* without reference to the genre of satire; so too Spenser's *Vewe* must not be read without reference to the genre of dialogue.

Irenius and Eudoxus: Interlocutors in Dialogue

Genre is identified by title and all of the manuscripts examined by Gottfried for the Variorum plus Ware's edition of 1633 contain the word dialogue in the title; the vast majority contain the interlocutors names as well, with some minor variations. I have been arguing that it is important to disabuse ourselves of the notion that one speaker in a dialogue unproblematically represents the author's opinions, yet many scholarly readers of the *Vewe* assume that Irenius is Spenser's "mouthpiece." This is based on three specious ideas:

---

76 Spenser, *View*, Variorum, ed. Gottfried, 158:3260-64; 112:1935-42. All further references to page and line number will be noted in the text.

77 See Gottfried, n. to line 1 ff of *Vewe*.
Irenius, like Spenser, is a native Englishman recently returned from Ireland; the etymology of his name is usually linked to "Irena" in *Faerie Queene* 5.1.4, hence to Erin, and thus to some kind of "true" Ireland; he is allotted longer speeches and provides more of the constructive part of the dialogue, making specific and detailed propositions. All three assumptions can and must be made more complicated to equalize the balance of authority between the interlocutors.

With regard to the first assumption, while it fits historical circumstance, and Renwick may be right to suggest a simple motive of composition (that people were asking questions and Spenser wrote answers for them), from a literary perspective we must consider More's *Utopia* as a controlling force in English dialogue literature of the century. There were many imitations or *Utopia*-influenced

---

78 I think that discussions of the Vewe suffer altogether from excessive comparison with *FQ* 5. We need more studies which refrain from mixing these two genres and their objectives in order to get away from the assumption that there is one unitary Spenser and that his views on Ireland are static, fixed, and unchanging. For a discussion of the differences in the "truth claim" of these two genres see Judith Anderson, "The Antiquities of Fairyland and Ireland," *JEGP* 86.2 (1987): 199-214.

79 In his "Commentary" Renwick states that the 1590s were a time of anxiety when another Spanish invasion of Ireland and England was daily expected. He notes that "[t]he Public Record Office and the Carew Papers at Lambeth contain dozens of memoranda, appreciations of the situation, and recommendations" (183); thus, Renwick concludes, it would have been odd had Spenser not contributed his proposal.
dialogue works. The returning traveller in More's text, Raphael Hythloday, is a figure who problematizes any purely "authoritative" stance of "first-hand" experience. He also has the longest discourse, while Morus (who in the most simple sense represents More) is a minor speaker. Thus Irenius as the returning traveller may require some measure of ironization, or at least distance from the historical Spenser.

While everyone accepts "Irenius" as derived from "Erin," they dismiss as fantastic (considering the strong medicine of his propositions) the possibility of a Greek etymology from "eirene" which means peace. I would argue that we will continue to be confused as long as we apply twentieth-century notions of pacifism which expect the eponymous speaker to be placating, concessive, and anti-war. But just as Chartier's Freende and Felaw finishes up with a long discussion of peace without advocating unilateral withdrawal from the field (on the contrary, Chartier wants a united French force to drive the English out), so Spenser's Vewe partakes of peace as public virtue but not by the laying down of arms in

---

80 For example, Philip Stubbes, Anatomy of Abuses (1583); T.N., A pleasant Dialogue betweene a Lady called Listra, and a Pilgrim (1579); Thomas Lupton, Sivqila: Too Good, to be true (1580), and its sequel.

81 Especially when in the Vewe it is clear that Irenius depends more on book-learning than experience, and that Eudoxus is not un-read on the subject of Ireland.

82 In the tradition of English dialogues of the sixteenth century, Greek names are often the names of choice, perhaps ultimately deriving from the popularity of Erasmus's colloquies.
capitulation. With regard to the fifteenth century, David Lawton explains that "[t]o preach peace is not pacifism," for "[i]t is always important to establish that the other side started the war." Furthermore, "Peace has consistently been the catch-phrase of the worst warmongers in history, as it was of Henry V...." Although the fifteenth century "offered a uniquely inauspicious set of circumstances in which to announce the preeminence of peace and patience as public values," this is precisely what public poets of the time do. In Lawton's words, "the commitment of most fifteenth-century poets to peace is less like lip-service than it is a dour passion. It is after all, the highest value of the Secreta Secretorum..." 83 It seems that there was a continuation of these values into the sixteenth century, another unlikely age for pacifism. Spenser seems to be writing the Vewe in the tradition of the Secreta; the medieval-Renaissance notion of peace thus identifies one of the interlocutors with the fifteenth-century tradition of public poets. This does not mean, conversely, that Irenius stands for war-mongering; rather he is espousing or embodying the responsible public virtue of the vox politica.

The etymology of Eudoxus is usually given as "of good repute, honoured," 84 but a more exact translation might be

84 Day, "dialogue, prose."
something like orthodox, right thinking, right belief, or right worship.\textsuperscript{85} The etymological argument, however, is only part of the characterization here. We must consider that the names of both interlocutors were used by other authors of dialogues: Irenaeus appears in a Latin dialogue by Nicholas Harpsfield of 1566; and Eudoxus in a dialogue by Roger Baynes of 1577.\textsuperscript{86} More fundamentally, both of these names refer to actual historical personages. Eudoxus of Cnidus was a philosopher and geometer of the fourth century B.C. who brought astronomical knowledge back to Greece from Egypt. He was the first Greek to construct a mathematical system to explain the motions of heavenly bodies, and his description of the constellations was very influential. Cicero calls him the greatest astronomer that ever lived, and Proclus tells us that Euclid borrowed liberally from his geometry. He was also of such high repute that he was consulted on policy issues as

\textsuperscript{85} I am indebted to Nicole Pétrin for this information.

\textsuperscript{86} Nicholas Harpsfield, "Alan Cope," in Dialogi Sex (1566); Roger Baynes, The Praise of Solitarinesse (1577), STC 1651. While not an interlocutor per se, Eudoxus is mentioned as an "off stage" character in Thomas Morely's A Plaine and Easie Introduction to Practicall Musicke (1597), STC 18133, an instructional dialogue dedicated to William Bird. As a setting for the technical exposition of music theory we have a discussion between Polymathes and Philomathes, the latter relating his forced confession of ignorance at a banquet the preceding night when he was outargued on the topic of music by one Eudoxus, and his shame at being unable to sing a part song. It seems to have been a commonplace that "philosophers" like the Eudoxus character here were hostile to music.
well as scientific ones. Clearly we have reference here to a very authoritative figure, and not some unlearned pupil.

Irenaeus was a father of the church of the later second century A.D., sometimes called the first systematic Christian theologian. Although originally from Asia Minor, he became bishop of Lyons (and was thus an important link between east and west). He presided at two councils in which heresies were condemned, disputed publically at Rome, and wrote zealous polemics against gnosticism. We could say that from a

---


88 That Spenser was not unaware of the historical Eudoxus can be inferred not only from his authoritative position, but more immediately from a geometry metaphor used by Eudoxus right at the turn in the discussion from describing the abuses to outlining the cure. There Eudoxus notes that the government of Ireland has been badly established and carried out, "bothe at firste when it was placed evill plotted and allsoe sithens thoroughge other oversighte run more out of square to that disorder which it is now Come vnto, like as to indirecte lynes the further they are drawen out, the further they goe asunder/". This is of course an indictment of English policy which I will discuss below, something that interested Milton (see Maley). Spenser, View 146. Eudoxus as geometer dovetails nicely with Bruce Avery's discussion of the importance of cartography in the dialogue, which argues that Eudoxus's map changes the course of the work. See Bruce Avery, "Mapping the Irish Other: Spenser's A View of the Present State of Ireland, ELH 57.2 (Summer 1990): 263-279.

89 Although the usual spelling in the MSS is "Irenius," two of them do employ "Irenaeus," and the spelling is close enough (especially in an age before standardization) to warrant the connection.

90 Anthon; Oxford Classical Dictionary 766.
strict etymological point of view, the real Irenaeus' name should have been "Eudoxus" since he champions "right belief." What such an etymological fallacy reveals is that Spenser's interlocutors are closer to each other in status than is usually perceived.

A few critics have noticed that Eudoxus plays an important part in the dialogue. For Annabel Patterson, Eudoxus as "a man of good judgment...alternates between straight man, feeding Irenius the necessary questions, and independent thinker, who asserts the value of many aspects of Irish culture that Irenius means to suppress." Patricia Coughlan asserts that

Eudoxus is fashioned to provide in several respects a genuine alternative to Irenius; and it is by no means the case that the reader is successfully manipulated always to agree with the latter. Certainly Irenius is the dominant speaker, in the sense that (especially towards the end) he gets a good deal more space; nevertheless the reader has the distinct impression that Eudoxus is the one who will judge, the voice of an ultimate authority....

Even John Day, while dismissing any connection to ancient or continental dialogue traditions, admits that

Eudoxus helps Irenius' argument by asking questions, offering suggestions, and seeking clarification; he summarizes each part of Irenius' plan and finally endorses it....In the remarks of Eudoxus, Spenser anticipates potential objections and deals with them on his own terms, an especially important strategy for a counselor advocating the reformation of Ireland.

---

51 A. Patterson 99.
52 Coughlan 66 (emphasis in original).
Day may not realize how important these characteristics are, but they are no less than crucial to dialogue construction if one considers that what really defines dialogue is the presence of the interlocutor in the text (and not imitation of Plato, Cicero, or Lucian). I would like to explore further the function of Eudoxus in the text as he objects, questions, directs, furthers, agrees, praises, judges, and contributes to the dialogue-flow. On one level his rhetorical importance is an advanced development of the role of discipulus as explored in the dialogues of Pecock, Hoccleve, and More. But in his role as the person who is persuaded in the text--accomplishing the aim of rhetoric at the moment of reading--Eudoxus as an authoritative equal plays a role similar to the Freende in Chartier's dialogue; and like Chartier's Freende he is a vital part of the place of the author in the text.

**Directing and objecting: a formalist description of Eudoxus's role**

Eudoxus's contributions to the interlocution can be broken down into roughly two groups: structuring utterances and objecting utterances. The latter are easy to detect and relatively self-explanatory: to rephrase Day more positively, they help the argument move forward, and through Eudoxus readerly objections can be anticipated and dealt with in the
This role of objector I also leave aside here because it belongs more strictly to a discussion of dialectic. By focusing on structuring utterances (which are, however, not infrequently links to objections) I will be isolating the more rhetorical side of the work, since it is here that persuasion also takes place. An examination of structuring statements also reveals how many variations, reversals, or inversions are included in the dialogue.

According to one earlier scholar, the dialogue form is used with ease in the Vewe, "though there is far too much talk about the method of conducting the discussion--always a tedious ingredient in any kind of discourse." What Ward detects as "tedious" intrusions are the number of places where Eudoxus asserts his role as interlocutor in the structuring of the dialogue. Besides keeping track of the overall structure, he confirms (you have finished A), directs in sequence (now go on to B), directs a return to sequence (you have fallen off from C), or himself poses digressing questions (what about

---

94 As Frank Manley says of More's Dialogue of Comfort, so here too "[t]he argument disappears at times into the deliberate garrulity of the dialogue. At other times it is carried forward by the conversation itself in a kind of crabwise progress through objection." "Introduction," Part III, "The Argument of the Book," in The Complete Works of St. Thomas More, vol. 12, ed. Louis Martz and Frank Manley (New Haven, Conn.: Yale UP, 1976) lxxviii. This notion of "crabwise progress" is extremely useful for considering the trajectory of argument in dialogue works.

D?); he commends (you have handled E well), agrees (I see now what you mean by F), and furthers (I would like to hear more about G).

Eudoxus's utterances serve not only as a technique for moving the dialogue forward, but are of the utmost importance in foregrounding the various "turns" of the discourse. Unlike a monovocal treatise where the reader is on his or her own in identifying such steps in progression, or must rely on chapter headings, the interlocutor in the dialogue text makes the reader highly aware of the direction of argument. And rather than master/pupil roles for Irenius and Eudoxus I would suggest the more modern pairing of consultant/policy maker: where Eudoxus asks questions as one in a position of governmental power seeking expertise in a particular field.

This is also more rhetorically than dialectically oriented since in dialectical dialogues the teacher would naturally inhabit the role of ultimate authority; here it is crucial that Eudoxus's good opinion be won by persuasion, as should the reader's. This link between Eudoxus and the reader is made clear by comparing a key moment in the source text with a manuscript variant in which one copyist has actually substituted "the reader" for "Eudoxus." Irenius is discussing his method of marshalling a persuasive argument regarding the Irish past: to the use of Irish chronicles he adds his own reading, comparison of "times likenes of manners and Customes," etymologies and toponyms, information from
ceremonies, monuments, and thus

...I doe gather a likelyhode of truethe, not certainlye affirminge anye thinge but by Conferringe of times nacies languages ; monimentes and suche like I doe hunte out a probabilitye of thinges which I doe leaue vnto your Judgement to beleeeve or refuse.... (85:1212-15)

While this clearly indicates the importance of Eudoxus's judgement, a variant in the manuscript held by the Public Record Office substitutes "I doe leaue vnto the judgement of the reader to beeleeve or refuse..." (85 n.1215-1330, emphasis added). This shows the affinity between the positions of Eudoxus and the reader, positions which both require suasion. It is also noteworthy that an appeal is made here to arguments of rhetorical probability directed at the audience.

Some examples will clarify Eudoxus's role in directing the discussion and place him as a highly sophisticated questioner. The Vewe begins in medias res, and on the second page Eudoxus calls Irenius to recount, if it is not painful to him, the obstacles to good rule in Ireland. The evils, Irenius replies, are infinite, but some are more common and more "capital," and these vary according to whether they are ancient or recent. Eudoxus then directs Irenius in the overall structure of their discourse based on this statement:

Eudox. Tell them then I praye youe in the same order that youe haue now rehearsed them, ffor theare cane be no

---

56 Or rather in medias sermones, as a vast number of dialogues do despite Carlo Sigonio's insistence on a "vestibule" or description of setting. Unfortunately too many modern scholars take Sigonio's prescriptions as pointing up defects in English dialogues where to begin "abruptly" or in mid-flow of the conversation is really no defect at all.
better methode then this which the verie matter it selfe offereth, And when youe haue reckoned all the evills let vs heare your opinion for redressinge of them. (45:52-55)

And Irenius complies:

Iren. I will then accordinge to your advicement beginne to declare the evills which seeme to be mooste hurtfull to the Common weale of that Lande, And firste those which I saide weare mooste anciente and longe growen ; And they allsoe are of three kindes, the firste in the Lawes the seconde in Customes, the laste in religion/ (45:64-68)

Usually structuring commands are met with agreement and compliance, as above, and as in the movement to the second part: "Eudox: Sithe then that we haue thus reasonablie handled the inconveniences in the Lawes let vs now passe vnto your seconde parte which was as I remember of the Abuses of Customes..." (81:1125-27).

Another authoritative function Eudoxus performs is the master-like role of confirming, commending or praising Irenius:

Eudox: now trulye Irenius ye haue (me semes) verye well handled this pointe towchinge inconveniences in the Comon lawe theare, by yoe observed, and it semeth that youe haue had a mindefull regarde vnto the things that maye Concerne the good of that realme And if yee Can aswell goe thoroughge with the Statute lawes of that lande I will thinke youe haue not loste all your time theare, Therefore I praye youe now take them to youe in hande and tell vs what ye thinke to be amisse in them: (75:941-47)

He is even more magisterial in offering a reward in the following comment: "Eudox: Surelie ye haue verye well handled these two former and if youe shall aswell goe thoroughge the thirde likewise yee shall meritt a verye good meede/" (136:2608-10).

Related to these commending remarks are statements which
give evidence of the persuasion of Eudoxus. These assenting moments, which seem to increase in frequency as the dialogue advances, are highlighted by such phrases as: "Surelye ye haue shewed a great probabilitye of that which I had thoughte ympossible to haue byne proved..." (89:1285-86; cf. 109:1853-53); "...now I beginne to Conceive somwhat more of the Cause of her Continiall wretchednes then hearetofore I founde..." (145-46:2893-95); "I doe now well vnderstande youe" (159:3289); "Trewlye Iren: I ame righte gladd to be thus satisfied by youe..." (162:3393); "I like this ordinaunce verye well..." (215:4865). It must be observed that frequently these utterances are followed by the adversative "but" indicating the next move in the progression of the argument, or that there is something the argument has not yet completely taken care of, as in the last citation:

Eudox: I like this ordinaunce verye well but now that ye haue thus devided and distingushed them what other order will ye take for theire manner of lief for all this thoughe perhaps it maie kepe them from disobedience and disloyaltye yeat will it not bringe them from their Barbarisme and salvage life/ (215:4865-69)

Like Victor in the Dialogue of Comfort, and the son in Pecock's Donet, the result of Eudoxus's persuasion is that he will be able to go on to put these ideas into circulation; as he makes clear several times he can now refute certain views. The dialogue thus opens up to endless replication--Eudoxus will become an "Irenius" by succession, he will go on to persuade others, as should the reader too. Thus we see the continuance of the dialogue expanding into future settings.

It is important to revise the notion of Eudoxus as the more moderate in the dialogue. He is the first to use the word "barbarous" in reference to the Irish: "ffor all barbarous nacions are Comonlye greate observours of Ceremonyes and Supersticious rites" (50: 202-04); and is still referring to
While Eudoxus enjoys the authority of the interrogator and director of discourse, Spenser has handled the interlocution such that there is a great deal of variation of standard positions. For instance, we get Irenius bridling at the controlling role of his interlocutor in feisty comments such as: "I woulde tell youe incase youe woulde not Challenge me anone for forgettinge the matter which I had in hande... (60:495-96); and, "I was aboute to haue tolde youe my reasons thearein but that your selfe drewe me awaye with other questions" (53:308-09), hardly statements required of an "authorial mouthpiece" to a "strawman," or master to disciple. Indeed, sometimes Eudoxus encourages digression, a reversal of his role as order-keeper, as when Irenius notes, "But let vs I praye youe turne againe to our discourse of evill Customes amongst the Irish/," Eudoxus replies, "me semes all this which youe speake of concerneth the Customes of the Irishe verye materiallye..." (124:2249-52). But while in this example the digression confirms his authority in directing the argument, sometimes roles are reversed as Irenius wrests this power from him:

**Eudox:** what meanes maie theare then be to avoide this inconvenience. ffor the Case semes verie harde./

**Iren:** we are not yeat come to that pointe to devize remedies for the evills but onelye haue now to recounte them in this way as late in the dialogue as the quotation just given. There are other glimpses of his less-than-moderate stance which I will detail below. Here is another way of aligning the two interlocutors to remove the stigma of extremism from both Irenius and Spenser.
them, of the which this which I haue tolde youe is one defecte in the Comon lawe/!

Eudox: Tell vs then I praye youe further haue youe anye more of this sorte in the Common lawe. (69:752-58)

Eudoxus here regains his structuring role, but at another moment he quite voluntarily declines it altogether:

Eudox: ffollowe then your owne Course for I shall the better Contente my selfe to forbeare my desire now in hope that yee will as youe saie some other time more aboundauntlye satisfie it (82:1142-44).

At other moments Irenius refuses the line Eudoxus directes him to. For example, when he rejects a structuring utterance linking confirmation with anticipation:

Eudox. Yee haue verye Well run thoroughe suche Customes as the Irishe haue derived from the firste olde nacions which inhabited that Lande..., It now remayneth that youe take in hande the Customes of the old Englishe which are amongst the Irishe of which I do not thinke that ye shall haue muche to finde faulte with anie Consideringe that by the Englishe moste of the olde badd Irishe Customes weare abolished and more Civill fashions broughte in their steade/

Iren: youe thinke otherwise Eudox: then I doe, for the [sic] Chiefest abuses which are now in that realme are growen from the Englishe and the Englishe that weare are now muche more Lawles and Licentious then the verie wilde Irishe.... (113:1943-54)

Another example of a similar structural inversion lets Irenius again be the more moderate towards the Irish. When Eudoxus proposes that the abuse of the custom of "Cesse," in which temporarily disbanded soldiers requisition food from villagers, is "worthie of a marshall," Irenius replies, "That

95 Another kind of inversion has Irenius confirming and commending Eudoxus for getting the order right: "I see Eudox: That youe well remember our firste purpose and do rightelie Continewe the Course theareof..." (199:4411-12).
weare a harde Course Eudox. to redresse euerye abuse by a marshall..." (133:2520-22).

Thus a close look at the rhetoric of the interlocution reveals a dialogue between equals in status if not in particular expertise, and a shifting of power and positionality between the two speakers. Eudoxus is not a mere strawman or sounding board off of which Irenius can play his opinions without interruption, discipline, direction, or care for winning conviction and shared understanding. If dialogues are about following an argument discursively through multiple views then the interlocutor of the Eudoxian position is critical in ensuring that the dialogue per se comes into being. Moreover, the interlocution guarantees that dialogues such as Spenser's Vewe partake of rhetoric defined as "the challenge to justify what we believe (and to change what we believe if we find we cannot justify it) [which] makes us more human, thus more humane, and thus more moral."100

Advice to the prince and "Machiavellian rhetoric" in the "Vewe"

Spenser's dialogue is connected to the Fürstenspiegel tradition as much by its overt rhetorical design on the actions of the monarch as by its content. The text seeks to influence and admonish, it offers historical anecdotes and proverbial advice, it warns against bad counsel and presents

100 Bybee 186.
both general and specific solutions. Moreover, it can be classed under the fundamentally subversive tenet of the mirrors for princes tradition: "To rule well, the king must be ruled." For Judith Ferster, Machiavelli's *Prince* is the culmination of the tradition of the mirrors for princes which were already dedicated to both legitimating and challenging the regime:

> If I am right that both deference and criticism, both flattery of the prince and subversion of his government, are present in the medieval works, then this same combination in the *Prince* cannot be seen as subversion of the genre. The genre was already "subverted."  

According to Ferster, the ambiguity of Machiavelli's work provoked suspicion in people of all political persuasions (171). To a prince the text may read either as hostile or like a handbook for reigning; to a member of the opposition, like a handbook for destabilizing a reign (172), since the "game of exposing the tyrant and exposing the exposers can go on endlessly" (171).

Although she seems unaware of the work of Victoria Kahn, Ferster's ideas reinforce that scholar's notion of

101 Ferster 40.

102 Ferster 160. What she sees as new in this Renaissance text is "the announcement of newness" (165). Machiavelli's text is not new in saying that virtues can cause trouble for a ruler, or that certain kinds of cruelty are acceptable in the social order: it is just that these doctrines are "not buried under mounds of contradictory precepts and narratives" (162), they are not surrounded by advice that flatly contradicts them (164). It is also worth noting that, like some of the medieval mirrors, *The Prince* was part of a job application (166), just as Spenser's *Vewe* very likely was.
"Machiavellian rhetoric." Kahn sees Machiavelli as both legitimating and critiquing ideology. In a "rhetorical politics" based on argument in utramque partem, Machiavelli offered a rhetoric "not only for constituting but also for challenging the status quo"; as she goes on to say, "Renaissance rhetoric provided the tools not only of ideological manipulation but also of the critique of ideology...". I would argue that Spenser's Vewe partakes of just such deference and challenge, legitimation and critique, which, in combining the work of Ferster and Kahn, is the result of writing in the tradition of the medieval mirrors for princes under the influence of a Machiavellian "rhetorical politics."

The Vewe has been consistently misread in recent years as a legitimation of the presiding regime, privileging one side of this rhetorical equation; and while it is certainly true that Spenser's text supports the colonialist, imperialist

103 Victoria Kahn, "Coda: Rhetoric and the Critique of Ideology," Machiavellian Rhetoric: From the Counter-Reformation to Milton (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1994) 238. Another statement reiterating this notion connects it to the present: "In providing us with the means of force and fraud, and of legitimation of the status quo, such rhetoric simultaneously gives us the power to dissent" (240). Kahn is linking Renaissance rhetorical practices to present day debates as she enlarges the terms--and the relation between--rhetoric and ideology. Like Bybee quoted above (n. 14 and n. 100), she sees rhetoric not only as an instrument of force and fraud, "but also of the critical distance and reflection that is necessary for the critique of ideology" (241) --where Bybee emphasizes the critique of our own judgements and opinions instead. I believe these ideas have wide-ranging possibilities for a discussion of Spenserian rhetoric in the Vewe, of which I can only touch on a small part.
enterprise, in this final section I will concentrate on the
critique of the prince and her policies. Although I select one
passage for discussion here it is well to remember that the
text makes no attempt to conceal the fact that it is filled
with pragmatic advice--it is dedicated to persuading Elizabeth
to take particular actions.

That critique is dangerous--another feature revealed in
the medieval mirrors--is intimated by the deferential "envoy"
and the reference to "secrecy." Although other deferential
statements are scattered throughout the work, an eloquent
statement of deference at the very end of the dialogue is
untypical in its submissive apologetic tone:

[Iren:] Thus I haue Eudox: as brieflye as I coulde and as
my remembraunce woulde serue me run thoroughe the state
of that wholle Countrye bothe to let youe see what it now
is and allsoe what it maie be by good Care and amendement
not that I take vpon me to Chaunde the pollicye of so
greate a kingedome or prescribe rules to wise men as haue
the handlinge theareof but onelye to shewe youe the
evill/ which in my small experience I haue observued to
haue bene the Chiefe hinderauce of the reformacion
thereof and by waie of Conference to declare my simple
opinion for redresse theref and establishinge a good good
[sic] Course for the gouernement, which I doe not deliuer
as a perfecte plot of my owne invencion to be onelye
followed but as I haue learned and vnderstode the same by
the Consvltacons and accions of euerye wise gouernour
and Counsellour whom I haue sometymes harde treate
heareof so haue I thoughte good to set downe a
remembraunce of them for my owne good and your
satisfaccion that who so liste to overloke them
althoughte perhaps mucho wiser then they which haue thus
advized of that estate yeat at leste by Comparison hereof
maie perhaps better his owne judgement and by the lighte
of others foregoinge him maie followe after with more
easie and happelye finde a fairer waie thearevnto then
they which haue gone before/ (230:5292-5310)

Perhaps this final moment is meant to cover over any extreme
critical stance in the foregoing text. However, as in Italian quattrocento dialogues we must not trust the "synthetic compromise" of the ending as epitomizing the text; such an ending reflects the author's protective measure in a return to proper subject status more than a closure which could be used as a hermeneutical key.

Another moment which openly reveals the dangers of criticizing the prince and her counsellors is signalled about half-way through the dialogue: this is likely the passage to which Milton refers in his common-place book notation cited in the epigraph to this section (p. 233).\textsuperscript{104} The topic under immediate discussion is the corruption of English minor officials who are not only indulged by those in power, but are themselves models of corruption to whom their inferiors are but petty imitators. When Irenius has described the offenses of soldiers and captains, Eudoxus remarks:

\textbf{Eudox:} Trewlie this is a prettye mockerye and not to be permitted by the gouernours/

\textbf{Iren:} yea but how Cane the Gouernours knowe readilye what persones those weare and what the purpose of theire killinge was yea and what will youe saie if the Captaines doe iustifye this theire Course by ensample of some of theire Gouernours whoe (vnder Benedicite I do tell it to youe) do practize the like sleightes in theire gouernmentes//

\textbf{Eudox:} Is it possible take hede what youe saie Iren

\textbf{Iren:} to youe onelye Eudox: I doe tell it and that even with greate hartes griefe and inwarde trouble of minde to see her maiestie so abused by some whom they put in speciall truste of those greate affaires.... (143:2818-

\textsuperscript{104} For a full discussion see Maley.
This reveals a special technique of dialogue which allows not only the transference of information but the emotional encoding of that information. Here the reader learns that corruption is taking place, but also that to speak of it is dangerous and must be hedged about with proper professions of patriotic concern. In this section the problem of "evil counsellors" so common in the mirrors for princes tradition is invoked to divert responsibility from the monarch.

The transition from the first to the second part of the dialogue, from a description of the abuses to a disquisition on "the meanes to Cure and redresse the same" (146:2901-2), contains a third crux which has been the focus of much scholarly attention. This is the prescription that the reformation of Ireland must be effected not by laws and ordinances, but by the sword (147-48:2954-56). I propose to read this passage in the larger context of the section of the

103 At another point Irenius protests again that he is discovering these things "in privitye" to Eudoxus (197: 4371), which suggests the sense of danger surrounding these proceedings rather than the seclusion and otium of cultured discussion in Cicero or even More's Utopia. In no way should such statements be taken as simplistic assertions of who the ideal audience for the text is, i.e. that Spenser had no intention of publishing it as some critics have assumed. Mirrors for princes are often addressed to one person, the king, and yet were meant for wider audience. Here Spenser relies on the technique of dialogue again to provide the internal audience, which should not, however, mean that the external audience is exactly the same. On dialogue's relation to audience see Cox, Rockwell.

106 The other two being the horrific anecdotes described above (pp. 237-38).
dialogue in which it appears which contains a scathing
critique of English policy past and present.

Irenius signals the transition from abuses to cure, and
Eudoxus assents with the following elaboration:

[Eudox.]...for by that which I haue noted in all this
your discourse ye suppose that the wholle ordinaunce and
institucion of that realmes goverment was bothe at firste
when it was placed evill plotted and allsoe sithens
thoroughe other oversighte run more out of square to that
disorder which it is now Come vnto, like as to indirecte
lynes the further they are drawn out, the further they
goe asunder/ (146:2904-9)

The preceding discussion in the text had enough to say about
English interventions in Ireland, from William the Conqueror
to Henry VIII, to the present rule, that blame for the
mismanagement of the country is undisguisedly placed at the
feet of English monarchs. The answer given is not to tinker
with the system but to redesign it completely. The text
moves immediately away from this subversive critique to
balance the blame for the present state of affairs by invoking
Irish stubbornness: as Irenius says, "the Irishe doe
strongelye hate and abhore all reformacion and subieccion to
the Englishe..." (146:2916-17). The combination of centuries

107 This is clear from Irenius answer that "it is all in
vaine that they now strive and endevour by faire meanes and
peaceable plottes to redresse the same without firste
Removinge all those inconveniences and new framinge ; As it
weare in the forge all that is wonne out of fashion, for all
other meanes wilbe but loste labour, by patchinge vp one hole
to make manye" (146:2912-16). Gottfried's note to 11. 2910-23
provides a very similar statement on Ireland by Spenser's
friend Lodowick Bryskett written in 1581. In it he compares
Ireland's condition to an "old cloke or garment often tymes
mended and patched vp," which can now, because of a gash made
by violence, only be made a new (Gottfried 372-73).
of English misrule pitched against the intransigent Irish justifies the strong medicine which Irenius will propose; but not before Eudoxus's objections have forced the argument to take account of other means.

The "reformacion" of Ireland, Irenius argues, "muste nowe be with the strengthe of a greate power/" (147:2922-23), a criticism of the half-hearted English efforts thus far. First of all, the reformation of Ireland must become a priority, worthy of the focused attention of the prince. Eudoxus's first objection to Irenius's proposed intervention advances stringent laws and statutes with harsh punishments to amend the situation, rather than beginning anew "to alter the whole forme of the governement" (147:2927-28). Irenius concedes Eudoxus's point that "inovacion is perillous," and the dialogue contains a polemic against newfangledness which seems to come directly out of medieval thought. Forming behind this smoke-screen of conservatism, however, is the radicalism of Irenius' solution. In another dialectical deflection glancing back from critique of English governance, Irenius conveys the urgency which requires such measures: for in the realm of Ireland now "all haue theire eares vprighte waytinge when the watcheworde shall Come That they shoulde all rise generallye into Rebellion and Caste awaye the Englishe subieccion..." (147:2939-41). The solution is to reform the country first, "ffor it is vaine to prescribe lawes wheare no man carethe for kepinge them nor feareth the daunger for breakinge them..."
It is only at this point, when Eudoxus now moves to prompt "how will reform be done if not by laws?," that Irenius says, "Even by the sworde," reiterating the need to prune away the bad before the good can be planted (148:2956-60). Eudoxus makes sure it does not escape the reader's attention that this is an extreme measure. Eudoxus accuses his interlocutor of hypocrisy, since Irenius attacked him for suggesting violent means before and now prescribes the same medicine himself: "Is not the sworde the moste violent redresse that maye be vsed for anie evill/" (148:2963-64). Irenius points out the necessity of these violent means, but conversely in the same reply rejoins that in the case put forward by Eudoxus for violent measure those people "mighte otherwise be broughte perhaps to good" by his proposal here (148:2968). But is not that proposal the same, Eudoxus asks, except that he had advocated the use of the halter and Irenius the sword? Spenser is using the play of interlocution to separate and distinguish similarities. Irenius's answer is crucial, since it is here that he says by use of the sword he does not mean unleashing violence upon the whole nation, a desperate and uncharitable desire,

but by the sworde I meante the Royall power of the Prince which oughte to stretche it selfe forthe in her Chiefe strengthe to the redressinge and Cuttinge of all those evills which I before blamed, and not of the people which are evil: for evill people by good ordinaunces and government maye be made good/ but the evill that is of it selfe evill will never become good./ (148:2976-81)
The most important advice offered is that Elizabeth take her charge seriously and become involved personally in the process of reformation of Ireland.\footnote{In his commentary Renwick says that the Vewe was a political document of practical and immediate intention, and was recognized as such by the Warden of the Stationers' Register and the authorities who forbade its printing ("Commentary" 189-90).} As in the vacillating of the mirrors for princes, Irenius here seems to move back from the shock of "the sword" as tool of correction: not people but only "evills" will be destroyed.\footnote{I have recently discovered at least one other student of the Vewe who has noted the importance of the difference between the "evills" and the people who are evil--and not as Spenser's lack of skill to control the language of his dialogue. Richard Moll argues that most critics see Irenius's qualification as "an attempt to deny the logical outcome of his metaphor, [in which Spenser] loses control of his language." This is an assumption that should not be made until other possibilities have been exhausted, he argues. "In fact, Spenser is very clear as to what he means....Just as 'evil people' has an antecedent in the sentence (those who should not be cut off), so does 'the evil that is of itself evil' (the evils which should be cut off). He states that the royal power of the prince 'ought to stretch itself forth in her chief strength, to the redressing and cutting off of those evils which I before blamed, and not of the people which are evil.' The 'evils which [he] before blamed' are...'also three kinds: first in the laws, the second in the customs, and last in religion.' The first section of the tract has dealt with those evils and now, through this segue, Spenser goes on to discuss how best to cut away those evils, by means of a military campaign, so that the reformation can begin. In other words, the goal that Spenser sets is not the cutting down of people, but the cutting off of the evils that pervade Irish society." Richard Moll, "'The evil that is of itself evil' in Edmund Spenser's Ireland," paper delivered at The Legacy of the Celtic Middle Ages, University of Toronto, 25 February 1995. I am indebted to Moll for providing me with a copy of his paper.\footnote{Yet the ensuing discussion reaffirms what was spoken in the transitional phase: that certain elements must be uprooted--that is,}}
certain people, rebels, must be destroyed through garrisons of men—in order to save the general populace of the realm.\textsuperscript{110}

Discovering the truth about the advice offered here beneath the rhetorical artifice—is it really the advocacy of mass murder? or ironic and satiric overstatement to instigate immediate action?—brings us back to the dialogue form and Spenser's admirable melding of it to the advice genre where both allow for the suspension of contradictory views without being resolved or reduced to a synthesis. Understanding this rhetorical artifice in the \textit{Vewe} can help to identify Spenser's characteristic skill of purveying "many-sided truth."\textsuperscript{111} In conclusion I would like to cite the insightful comments of Kenneth Gross and suggest they could usefully be collected under the rubric of "dialogue" for future analysis.

Characterizing a certain passage of the \textit{Vewe}, Gross notes that

[i]t is telling that the verbal scheme that dominates the passage is what George Puttenham names as "aporia, or the doubtfull" (Arte of English Poesie, 234); this is a

\textsuperscript{110} Notice how Spenser lays the blame for rebellion with the aristocracy, absolving the common folk of blame. He does not absolve the Anglo-Irish, indeed, as has been noted by other critics, they come in for some of the harshest criticism of all. This theme culminates in the criticism of Thomas, Earl of Ormond; as Quinn says, Spenser was daring enough to name this distant cousin of Elizabeth's as one of the greatest offenders with regard to coyne and livery. This is an indication of just how far Spenser was willing to go in challenging the powers of the status quo.

\textsuperscript{111} An even better epithet is the concept of "Spenser's pluralistic universe," a notion I borrow from Carol Kaske, "Spenser's Pluralistic Universe: The View from the Mount of Contemplation (F.Q.I.x)," in Contemporary Thought on Edmund Spenser, ed. Richard C. Frushell and Bernard J. Vondersmith (Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 1975) 121-49.
figure that (following the lead of Alpers) I would even identify as one of Spenser's "master tropes." As the poet uses it, here and elsewhere, the figure entails the multiplication within a discourse of such a variety of alternative perspectives as to call into question, or at least to delay, any divisive choice among those alternatives; in this particular passage, the figure creates a speech that continually suspends itself between urgent concern about and admitted ignorance of the sources of the Irish crisis....

Aporia falls first of all into the province of dialogue—it is after all a prime component of Socratic method—and thus these multiple perspectives heralded by Gross (following Alpers) point to some fundamental dialogue quality of the Elizabethan poet. As far as real application in the Vewe, Gross points out that Spenser perceives the problem not as a simple need to impose an ideal order on an abstracted, Irish "disorder" but as the destructive conflict of two separate orders, each with its own severe logic, each taking a different account of violence, each codifying a different picture of morality, fidelity, scope of choice and so on.... (87)

Such a logic of two different orders also accords with the dialogue method and its suspension of different views in the retarding of the resolution to synthesis. In bringing together

---

112 Kenneth Gross, Chapter 2, "Mythmaking in Hibernia (A View of the Present State of Ireland)," in Spenserian Poetics: Idolatry, Iconoclasm, and Magic (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1985) 82-83. Gross directs the reader to Paul Alpers, The Poetry of the Faerie Queene, 36-106, and passim, and offers the following comment: "I do not think this critic ever uses the specific term aporia to characterize the steady piling up of independent images and verbal formulas which he sees as the poet's fundamental technique of description and narration, but this is what his study points to" (83 n.3).
the advisor's need to praise and threaten the queen, and the Machiavellian "rhetorical politics" of argument in *utramque partem* which happily appropriates both ideology and its subversion, Spenser astutely and successfully builds into dialogue structures that strongly reinforce and replicate the sinews and lineaments of its deepest essence. By leading us through the dissection of points of view, the objections and "crabwise" progress of the argument, by making each component part stand or fall by the justification it can be given, by focusing sharply on persuasion and judgement, and in the complex relationship of his interlocutors, Spenser proves himself a master in representing "the many-sidedness of abstract truth [which] needs the interpretation that concrete personality can give it."  

113 The interesting work of Clark Hulse should be added here, especially in his Machiavellian readings of Spenser and his notion that such works are in "subjunctive modes, spoken as if they were the official language, by those who put their recommendations in the mouth of the sovereign so that she may speak them; such advisors achieve power by denying that they have any, claiming that what they say is not theirs but the queen's. But the power of the political or poetic counselor is not thereby only a projection of the queen's power. It is predicated precisely on her belief, and that of the Elizabethan elite generally, in the power of learning; this credulity converts the humanist's ability into authority and acknowledges in him the power to do something that the prince cannot do simply by virtue of being a prince" (Hulse 328). The notion that the *Vewe* is written in the "subjunctive mode" is a fruitful one.  

114 I paraphrase Merrill, quoted as epigraph to Chapter 1 (p. 1).
Conclusion

Dialogues are a literary genre which form a useful touchstone for identifying a number of issues specific to the later medieval and early Renaissance mentalité. To obtain an understanding of that nexus of thought a scholarly approach must be deployed which allows for multiple explanations (the Epicurean "pleonachic trope"), for we find dialogues that are both open-ended and closed-minded, dialogues show both a collaborative searching after truth in the manner of Gadamer's "shared understanding," and attempts to persuade or control the outcome. In order to get beyond the impasse of classification schemes, this project has suggested a shift to comparative method, dividing dialogues along the lines of subject matter. Such an approach casts up more exact and localized similarities and differences.

A definition arising from the material in hand, rather than an abstract or classicizing model, rests on the key formal distinction: the presence of the interlocutor in the text. Early English dialogues reveal complexities in their positioning of interlocutors. Thus even in the father-son exchange in Pecock's Donet we find that the disciple figure is not wholly submissive--is not a mere receptacle for information or a clean slate to be writ upon. The posing of questions and the rehearsing of "third party arguments" (Day) injects an element of control and a link to dialectical counter-argument which inform dialogues at every level of
sophistication, even straight master-pupil dialogues. The confrontation with reasoning to be refuted also ensures a close connection with rhetorical argument *in utramque partem*—the voice of the "Other" which complicates any overall idea such as might be found in treatise or essay. And the interlocution of the dialogue follows a "crabwise" progression (Manley) rather than a linear trajectory, as questions and topics are not put in any strict order, but through the painful use of discursive reason (Tillyard) issues are revisited at different points along the way. This discursive ordering derives from the influence of dialectic as an Aristotelian debating tactic; it demonstrates the ability of dialogue to dissect points of view (Moors). The assignment of those points of view to specific speaking voices—to named characters within the text—is part of dialogue's ability to communicate the many-sidedness of the issues concerned (Merrill). Concrete personality means that dialogue enables not only the transference of information in communication, but the emotional encoding of that information as well.

The position of reader and author to the interlocutors of dialogue also reveals multiplicity in patterning. Again, even in the simplest catechism or master-pupil "donet," the reader must be both instructor and instructed. Although the pupil in the text stands more obviously as a model for the reader, and the techniques of inquiry or the interrogative method are to be inculcated as permanent equipment for intellection, at the
same time, in his or her distance as eavesdropper on the scene of speaking (Rockwell; Snyder), and in the necessity of "conning" the magister's part as well, the reader stands in multiple relation to the interlocutors.

The position of the author as absented--or rather as suspended--in the scene of interlocution is something that is of the utmost importance in reading dialogues (Marsh, Snyder, Pugliese). If this study were to have impact in only one area of dialogue studies I would choose it to be in disabusing ourselves of the notion of an "author's mouthpiece." I hope to have shown that such a concept is entirely contrary to the genre's raison d'être, and that writers and readers of early dialogues were aware of the benefits and the dangers of disputational dialogue form because of the obscurity of the authorial position. In the dialogues of Chartier and Spenser, where the interlocutors are of equal stature, it is especially crucial to note the contributing effects of the questionist as part of the authorial presence. Dialogues are hermeneutically challenging and the author's meaning is not single nor to be read from any simple examination of closure, whether resolved or unresolved.

Method itself is a critical part of what dialogue texts offer the reader (Lerer). Thus Pecock attempts to impart logical method as a technique of literacy, of learning to think and to manage knowledge, in his reader--a lay reader without the benefit of institutional education. Syllogistic
thinking is locked into the very structuring of his sentences (Mueller) to provide a lasting training in scholastic method to all readers. Hoccleve's discipulus undergoes a spiritual education of the inner self through a dialogic process of self-examination. Dialogue is thus linked to the construction of an ethical subject, a rational progression towards true self-knowledge, involving a breakdown of reliance on dogma itself; it is a discipline or "technique of the self" (Foucault) to be retained. For More dialogic method is part of the praeparatio ad mortem, a desensitizing of the mind to enable the deflation of anxieties surrounding the forced choice between apostasy and martyrdom. In this "gymnastic" dialogue the reader is brought to consider, through the intellectual process, his or her actions in extremis in order to construct a reasoned position towards death--a dialectical rationality based on faith as well as a faith based on rationality. Comfort is found ultimately in this examination of the mind, whereas for Hoccleve it is virtuous living that is gained through "care of the self."

For Chartier rhetoric as "political science" is the discovery of the interconnectedness of the inward life of the individual and the good of the commonweal--that there is no ethical good without political good. It is incumbent upon the public intellectual--the vox politica--to perform a rhetorical role by offering persuasive advice to the prince. Method thus involves a call to political action in rhetorical dialogues.
Spenser's Vewe disseminates rhetorical method defined as the challenge to justify what we believe or to change it if it cannot be justified (Bybee). It also partakes of Kahn's "Machiavellian rhetoric" with its ability to both appropriate and subvert ideology. Such a rhetoric underwrites a characteristic feature of the "mirrors for princes" tradition: what Ferster calls the conflation of deference and challenge, of legitimation and critique. Dialogue has a built-in ability to present such a rhetoric, it naturally forms a shield to some of the dangers implicit in advising the prince. Rather than a statement of Elizabeth's imperialist policy, Vewe presents a kind of radical and highly pragmatic approach to the question of Ireland; its designs include the persuasion of the reader to take action.

The literary-historical foundation of this study suggested a contextualization of dialogues within the language arts of dialectic and rhetoric, as well as a re-examination of the period constructs "medieval" and "Renaissance." It is a valid critique that the liability of such an approach is that the context overwhelms the text, as the project seemed to require historical and philosophical contextualizing at every step of the way. Nonetheless, I hope to have shown that dialectic and rhetoric have strong implications outside the finite range of the university trivium; especially with people like Pecock disseminating educational practices to a wider public. Moreover, I would argue that indeed all dialogues
perform this task. The "primacy of resistance as a method of learning" (Wilson) is prevalent in every stage of institutional learning as well as in dialogue texts. The high rate of production of dialogues thus contributes to the central thesis here: that literacy was structured dialogically in the period. Despite the caveats, historical method does allow for discussion of the mutual impingement of text and context--of both the mimetic and the constructivist approach to the material.

Finally, this project sought to re-examine the relationship between medieval and Renaissance. It is my conclusion that we need to turn away from vague indicators like "scholastic," "humanist," "medieval," "Renaissance," to more specific historical causality in discussing differences between the two periods; as well as focusing more attention on the continuities which are still often ignored. Thus to speak about the impact of printing--both in enlarging the audience for texts, the speed of response, and drastically reducing the variants possible--has a heuristic value in discussing the period; as does the specific cause of the fragmenting of Christendom (Condren and Condren); or the removal of disputational and speculative techniques from the lower reaches of the curriculum (Heath). The continuities may surprise us as well: Coleman presents the case for a continuity in the university curriculum of what we would now call "political science," the discourse on human communities,
collective action and ethical behaviour as embedded in the language arts of the trivium. The continuity of dialectic challenges the commonplace that medieval culture revered authority above all—since the dialectician's questioning opens many issues for examination; it also shows that Renaissance culture owed more to the preceding period than has often been acknowledged. As historical critics we must also ever be watchful against large trajectories of "rise" and "fall": more attention to local effects would show that, as in the case of Plato in Renaissance England, things do not move in a straight line towards the Enlightenment. 115

The question of whether dialogue presents a posteriori reasoning or whether we are presented with the mind in the process of thinking (dianoia) is one that I feel has not been adequately addressed here. It is clear that the method of constructing dialogue forces a consideration of issues through the use of discursive reason (as in the case of More's consideration of suicide); such a reasoning can often take a course of its own. Conversely, with an eye to persuading the reader, dialogues are effective in anticipating and deflating oppositional views by addressing and defeating those views in the text. Perhaps this is the combined logic and artifice of dialogue.

115 On Plato in England see Weiss, Jaynes; as well as my article "Affiliating Spenser's Platonic Bastard: Dialogue, Argument and Authorship in the Axiochus and Faerie Queene 1.9."


Abbreviations

CWE Collected Works of Erasmus
EETS Early English Text Society
ELH English Literary History
ELR English Literary Renaissance
JEGP Journal of English and Germanic Philology
JHI Journal of the History of Ideas
LCL Loeb Classical Library
MLN Modern Language Notes
MLQ Modern Language Quarterly
MLR Modern Language Review
MP Modern Philology
N&Q Notes and Queries
NLH New Literary History
PMLA Publications of the Modern Language Association
SEL Studies in English Literature
SiR Studies in the Renaissance
SP Studies in Philology

Bibliography I: Primary Works


180-217.


Lehman, Paul, ed. *Die Parodie im Mittelalter.* Stuttgart: Anton
Hiersemann, 1963.


James Maclehose and Sons, 1909.


Starkey, Thomas. A Dialogue between Pole and Lupset. Ed. T.F.


Bibliography II: Secondary Works


-------. "The Eclipse of Medieval Logic." *The Cambridge History*


Baldwin, C.S. "Imitation of Prose Forms, Ciceronianism, Rhetorics." Renaissance Literary Theory and Practice: Classicism in the Rhetoric and Poetic of Italy, France,


Braudel, Fernand. "History and the Social Sciences: The Longue


Carron, Jean-Claude. "The Persuasive Seduction: Dialogue in


------. "The Tudor Prose Dialogue: Genre and Anti-Genre."
Deitch, Judith. "'Dialoguewise': Discovering Alterity in
   Elizabethan Dialogues." Other Voices, Other Views: 
   Expanding the Canon in English Renaissance Studies. Ed.
   Helen Ostovich, Graham Roebuck, and Mary Silcox. U of 
------. Rev. of A proper dvaloge betwene a Gentillman and an
DeMolen, Richard L. "Childhood and the Sacraments in the
   Sixteenth Century." Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte 66
Dickinson, Goldsworthy Loews. "Dialogue as a Literary Form."
   Essays by Divers Hands. Transactions of the Royal Society
   of Literature of the U.K. Ed. Sir Henry Imbert-Terry. New 
"Disputations in the Collège de Sorbonne, 1344 A.D."
   University Records and Life in the Middle Ages. Ed. Lynne
Dunn, Kevin. Pretexts of Authority: The Rhetoric of Authorship


Goldberg, Jonathan. "The Politics of Renaissance Literature:


Guillén, Claudio. Literature as System: Essays Toward the


Kahn, Victoria. Machiavellian Rhetoric: From the Counter-

------. Rhetoric, Prudence and Skepticism in the Renaissance.

Kaske, Carol. "Spenser's Pluralistic Universe: The View from
   the Mount of Contemplation (F.Q. I.x)." Contemporary
   Thought on Edmund Spenser. Ed. R.C. Frushell and B.J.

Kennedy, William J. Rhetorical Norms in Renaissance

Kenny, Anthony and Jan Pinborg. "Medieval Philosophical
   Literature." The Cambridge History of Later Medieval
   Philosophy. Ed. Norman Kretzman, Anthony Kenny, and Jan

Kohl, Stephan. "More than Virtues and Vices: Self-Analysis in
   Hoccleve's 'Autobiographies.'" Fifteenth-Century Studies

Kurtz, B.P. "The Prose of Occleve's Lerne to Dye." MLN 39
   (1924): 56-57.

------. "The Relation of Occleve's Lerne to Dye to its

------. "The Source of Occleve's Lerne to Dye." MLN 38

   Dialogue in Early Modern France, 1547-1630, Art and
   Catholic University of America P, 1993.


Marsh, David. *The Quattrocento Dialogue: Classical Tradition*


Miner, Earl. "On the Genesis and Development of Literary

------. "Some Issues of Literary 'Species, or Distinct Kind.'"


------. *Rhetoric in the Middle Ages: A History of Rhetorical...*


------. Ramus, Method and the Decay of Dialogue: From the Art of Discourse to the Art of Reason. Cambridge, Mass.:


863-72.


Rigg, A.G. "Hocclevet's Complaint and Isidore of Seville."


Ward, John O. "Artificiosa eloquentia in the Middle Ages: The study of Cicero's De inventione, the Ad Herennium, and Quintilian's De institutione oratoria, from the early Middle Ages to the thirteenth century, with special reference to the schools of northern France." Diss. U of Toronto, 1972.


