"Speake That I May See Thee"
Figures of Rhetoric in Shakespeare’s Comedies

by

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A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
Graduate Centre for Study of Drama
University of Toronto

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0-612-41547-3
I dedicate this thesis
to my beloved parents, 
Mac and Elinor Freeman, 
in whose ears
I have always been eloquent, 
in whose arms
I have always been home.
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Doctor of Philosophy, 1997
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Dissertation Abstract

The purpose of my study is to look at Shakespeare’s thirteen comedies through the lost lens of classical rhetoric: a lens that brings certain elements of the plays into sharp focus and allows us to share the perspective of Shakespeare’s rhetorically trained audience members. The plays chosen for study include the thirteen comedies written between 1590 and 1604. In addition to examining the use of rhetorical figures within each comedy, I consider the changes in Shakespeare’s use of rhetorical figures during the period when he was concentrating on comic form.

The introduction addresses some of the problems inherent in rhetorical nomenclature, in figure classification, and in distinguishing between "artificial" and "natural" rhetoric. Chapter 1 examines three groups of figures that appear in every play, performing a wide range of tonal, descriptive, and characterizing tasks. The second chapter is a case study of the figure epithet: examining how Shakespeare used this device in each comedy gives a sense both of the dramatic usefulness of the device and of Shakespeare’s rhetorical development during the fourteen years in which he was writing comedy. Chapter 3 focuses on one group of rhetorical devices, the vices of language, and examines the ways these devices serve to characterize certain Shakespearean clowns. The salient rhetorical traits of three specific comedies are studied in chapter 4, including the contrasting styles of rhetoric in Shrew, the use of anagogic metaphor in Dream, and the meaning of the titular proverb in All’s Well. Only one play is examined in detail. Chapter 5 consists of a rhetorical case study of The Merchant of Venice: it considers both the rhetorical patterns within the play and the ways in which those patterns reveal the shift in Shakespeare’s rhetoric between his early and his late comedies. The final chapter explores the benefits of rhetorical training to twentieth-century Shakespearean actors. Since rhetorical self-consciousness has direct implications for performance, I believe the study of rhetoric is of interest not only to students and teachers of language, but also to theatre historians, directors, and actors.
Acknowledgements

Jill Levenson is the sort of supervisor every graduate student hopes to find. Sagacious, diligent, and compassionate, Jill has provided me with invaluable guidance on my thesis journey. I am grateful for her clear vision, for her sense of humour, and for her tireless efforts on my behalf. I am also indebted to the other two members of my thesis committee, Alexander Leggatt and John Astington, for their detailed and thought-provoking comments. For help in overcoming the seemingly insurmountable barriers of Greek, and of new computer software, I am grateful for the patient and skilled assistance of Jeff Creighton and Cecil Hahn. I also wish to thank all my friends and family members for their unwavering, affectionate support.
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Preface

First the scholler shal learne the precepts concerning the divers sorts of arguments in the first part of Logike, (for that without them Rhetorike cannot be well understood) then shall followe the tropes and figures in the first part of Rhetorike, wherein he shall employ the sixth part of his studie, and all the rest in learning and handling good authors. . . . he shall observe not only every trope, every figure, aswell of words as of sentences; but also the Rhetorical pronounciation and gesture fit for every word, sentence, and affection.¹

As the above words from William Kempe’s Education (1588) suggest, rhetorical training was a fundamental component of the Elizabethan grammar-school curriculum.² Students spent countless hours learning, identifying, and using a wide range of rhetorical devices, and it was not only schoolchildren in sixteenth-century England who were encouraged to study rhetorical figures: in the second half of the century, English-speaking adults were the target audience of a series of English rhetoric manuals. Until 1550, the study of rhetoric had been limited to those who could read Latin or Greek. Between 1550 and 1600, however, more than fifteen books on the figures of rhetoric were published in English; several of these books went through seven or eight editions, and thus a larger percentage of England’s population gained access to, and formed opinions of, this specialized study of language. Among literate Elizabethans, familiarity with the figures of rhetoric was considered part of a basic education, and yet many of these highly valued figures are completely unrecognizable to most twentieth-century readers.

The purpose of this study is to look at Shakespeare’s thirteen comedies through the lost lens of classical rhetoric: a lens that brings certain elements of the plays into sharp focus and allows us to share the perspective of Shakespeare’s rhetorically trained audience members. Any twentieth-century study of rhetoric must begin by acknowledging that the word “rhetoric” means many things to many people. For
the purposes of this study, I use the word “rhetoric” to mean the system of classical rhetoric as it was studied, taught, and developed by Renaissance rhetoricians in England. While I have based my reading on the rhetoric manuals most likely to have been known by Shakespeare and his contemporaries, I make no attempt to identify the sources of Shakespeare’s rhetorical knowledge. My focus in this study is on what Shakespeare did with his rhetorical skill, not on how he acquired it. I am in full agreement with the conclusion reached by T.W. Baldwin in William Shakespere’s Small Latine and Lesse Greeke. At the end of a lengthy section on the various possible sources of Shakespeare’s rhetorical knowledge, Baldwin writes:

Shakespere had consciously at least a schoolboy grasp on the technicalities of rhetoric as presented in grammar school. That he had such a grasp is, I believe, evident, whether he attained it in grammar school or out, in Latin or in Chinese. The language is not important, nor the place, nor the other circumstances; the grasp is important.

(II:238)

The plays chosen for study here include the thirteen comedies written between 1590 and 1604. I focus on comedies instead of plays of another genre for several reasons: the comedies include characters from a wide range of social and educational backgrounds with a correspondingly wide range of rhetorical training, and these plays also contain many scenes of metarhetorical foolery in which characters indulge in rhetorical play for its own pleasurable sake. Furthermore, most of the comedies reflect Shakespeare’s rhetorical development as a young playwright, for they were written in the early part of his career. Rhetorical fashions were changing in England as the sixteenth century drew to a close. Changing attitudes towards rhetoric are evident both in the late sixteenth-century style manuals and in the literature of the period, and thus, in addition to examining the use of rhetorical figures within each comedy, I consider the changes in Shakespeare’s use of the figures of rhetoric during the period when he was concentrating on comic form.
In the attempt to explore a range of Shakespeare's rhetorical skill, I have divided this study into seven distinct sections. The introduction addresses some of the problems inherent in rhetorical nomenclature, in figure classification, and in distinguishing between "artifical" and "natural" rhetoric. The first chapter examines three groups of figures that appear in every play, performing a wide range of tonal, descriptive, and characterizing tasks. Chapter 2 is a case study of the figure epithet: examining how Shakespeare used this device in each comedy gives a sense both of the dramatic usefulness of the device and of Shakespeare's rhetorical development during the fourteen years in which he was writing comedy. Chapter 3 focuses on one group of rhetorical devices, the vices of language, and examines the ways these devices serve to characterize certain Shakespearean clowns. The salient rhetorical traits of three specific comedies are studied in chapter 4, including the contrasting styles of rhetoric in Shrew, the use of anagogic metaphor in Dream, and the meaning of the titular proverb in All's Well. My intention in chapter 4 is not to provide a comprehensive rhetorical examination of any of these plays, but rather to acknowledge specific rhetorical traits in each, and to demonstrate the wide range of functions that rhetoric performs in different plays. Only one play will be examined in detail. Chapter 5 consists of a rhetorical case study of The Merchant of Venice: it considers both the rhetorical patterns within the play and the ways in which those patterns reveal the shift in Shakespeare's rhetoric between his early and his late comedies. The final chapter explores the benefits of rhetorical training to twentieth-century Shakespearean actors. I believe a knowledge of rhetoric can assist actors as they attempt to develop the metarhetorical consciousness of the Shakespearean characters whose lives they seek to enter, and I am particularly interested in the integral connection between rhetorical figures and the inherent structures of characters' thoughts. Since rhetorical self-consciousness has direct implications for
performance, I believe the study of rhetoric is of interest not only to students and teachers of language, but also to theatre historians, directors, and actors.

Elizabethan students learned the figures of rhetoric in three stages that can be summarized as follows: “first learn the figures, secondly identify them in whatever you read, thirdly use them yourself” (Baldwin I: 81). The structure of my study of Shakespeare’s rhetoric roughly approximates this tripartite pedagogical method: the early sections introduce a range of rhetorical precepts; the middle chapters identify figures in Shakespeare’s work and reveal the potent effects of these devices in the hands of a master; and the final chapter, addressed to theatre practitioners, encourages us to use rhetorical figures ourselves. As we progress through these three stages of rhetorical inquiry, we take the journey that the young William Shakespeare and his classmates took as they searched for rhetorical figures in the works of their favourite authors, and, in taking this journey, we experience for ourselves the joys of going on a rhetorical treasure hunt.

Notes


2 As Brian Vickers notes, "The principle of learning the figures is solemnly recorded in a host of school statutes–St Paul’s, Ipswich, Eton, Canterbury (Marlowe’s school), Bury St Edmunds, Aldenham and many more" Classical Rhetoric in English Poetry (London: MacMillan and Co. Ltd., 1970) 49.
For information on the likely sources of Shakespeare's rhetorical knowledge, see the section of T.W.Baldwin's work entitled "The Rhetorical Training of Shakespeare" (II: 69-238). Using Baldwin's research, and the research of other scholars including Brian Vickers and Sister Miriam Joseph, I have based my definition of "rhetoric" on the rhetoric books that were influential in sixteenth-century England. These books include the following: Aristotle's *Rhetoric* (c.335 BC), the anonymous *Rhetorica ad Herennium* (c.85 BC), Cicero's *De Oratore, Orator, De Inventione, Topica, De Partitione, Brutus*, and *De Optimo Genere Oratorum* (c. 85-55 BC), Quintilian's *Institutio Oratoria* (c.85 AD), Erasmus's *De Copia* (c.1514), Talaeus's *Rhetorica* (c.1544), Richard Sherry's *A Treatise of Schemes and Tropes* (1550), Thomas Wilson's *The Art of Rhetoric* (1553), Richard Rainolde's *A Booke Called the Foundation of Rhetorike* (1563), Henry Peacham's *The Garden of Eloquence* (1577 and 1593 editions), Dudley Fenner's *The Artes of Logike and Rhetorike* (1584), Abraham Fraunce's *The Arcadian Rhetorike* (1588), George Puttenham's *The Arte of English Poesie* (1589), Angel Day's *The English Secretorie* (1592), and John Hoskin's *Directions for Speech and Style* (1599). One of the most influential Latin works, Susenbrotus's *Epitome*, has never been translated into English, and thus, regretfully, I know it only as it has been adapted by the English writers listed above.
Introduction

Every scene of every play in the Shakespearean canon contains rhetorical figures of one sort or another. In studying Shakespeare's extensive use of these numerous and versatile devices, it might seem logical to begin by naming, classifying and counting the figures Shakespeare uses in a given scene in order to use the collected data as a starting point from which to consider the role of rhetorical figures within a specific scene or play. In attempting to name, classify and count the figures, however, we immediately encounter obstacles which present us with the difficulties inherent in a statistical approach to rhetorical study. Sixteenth-century rhetoricians differ in their methods of naming and categorizing the figures and in the number of rhetorical devices they identify. The variations among rhetoricians may initially seem to be frustrating complications which make it difficult to get a clear understanding of Tudor attitudes towards rhetoric, but as we examine these variations, we begin to realize that they are an essential ingredient of the very attitudes we are trying to comprehend.

Both classical and Renaissance rhetorical study provide students with a list of precepts designed to guide them as they speak and write. Although the precise items on this list may vary from one rhetoric manual to another, the process of consciously and frequently examining language remains the same whatever names or categories the list happens to contain. In treating the figures, rhetoricians often acknowledge that the names and classifications they are using are different from those chosen by other rhetoricians, and these differences are accepted as part of an ongoing process through which language training and use become increasingly effective. The study of rhetoric encourages a self-conscious use of language, and this self-consciousness is evident not only in works such as poems and sermons but also in the rhetorical manuals themselves.
Before examining the metarhetorical activities of various Shakespearean characters as they consciously examine their own rhetoric and the rhetoric of those around them, it is helpful to address directly some of the potential obstacles to rhetorical inquiry. This chapter includes discussions of rhetorical nomenclature, of figure classification, and of the difficulties inherent in distinguishing between conscious, or "artificial", and unconscious, or "natural", uses of figurative language. The examination of these issues is designed both to clarify terminology and to invite us to enter a rhetorical frame of mind.

Nomenclature

The attitudes of rhetoricians towards different systems of naming, numbering, and classifying the figures of rhetoric reveal certain attitudes towards language that are essential to an understanding of both classical and Renaissance rhetorical usage. Most figures of rhetoric identified in sixteenth-century style manuals have several names. The complexities of rhetorical nomenclature can be explained, in part, by the longevity of rhetorical study: by the sixteenth century, rhetoric had been studied in several languages over a period of more than two thousand years. Greek rhetoricians in the fifth century B.C. were the first to identify and name figures of rhetoric (Brutus 49). Greek names of the figures were transliterated or translated by Roman rhetoricians with the result that writers such as Cicero and Quintilian, whose work had profound influence on the study of rhetoric in sixteenth-century England, regularly acknowledged both Greek and Latin names for the figures they described. Following the lead of Roman rhetoricians, most writers of style manuals in Renaissance England recognized both Greek and Latin names for figures and often translated or transliterated these terms in order to produce English equivalents.
In some cases, the linguistic development of a term is relatively straightforward. The word “metaphor”, for example, is the result of transliteration. The original Greek term was transliterated into the Roman alphabet to form the word “metaphora” which, in turn, was transliterated into English to form “metaphor”. “Metaphora”, which means “transference”, was translated into Latin as “translatio”, and although some rhetoricians use the Latin name, the term “metaphor” has been widely preferred with the result that there has been little variation in the naming of this particular trope. The word “rhetoric” is also the result of the transliteration of a Greek word. Although the term “rhetoric” has been widely adopted, the transliteration of this term has resulted in a wide range of English spellings. In Middle English the standard spelling was “rethorike”, but this spelling was replaced in the sixteenth century by “rhetoric”, which is a more accurate transliteration of the original Greek term (Pepper xxvi).

Variant spelling is only one of the obstacles we encounter as we learn how to refer to specific figures. Many figures have several completely different names. By examining the process by which even a single device is named, we can begin to recognize certain attitudes which are fundamental to an understanding of the ways rhetorical terms have been developed and used. Such a process is evident in the naming of the figure asyndeton. Asyndeton is a figure of speech in which words, clauses, or phrases are joined without any conjunctions. (A glossary of all rhetorical terms used in this study is provided on pages 257-63.) The term is the result of the transliteration of the original Greek term from the Greek to the Roman alphabet. Sonnino, who lists this figure under the name dissolutio, notes that this device “is also known as continuatio, celeritas, inconjunctum, dialyton, articulus (not to be confused with brachylogia) and membrum (not to be confused with colon)” (Sonnino 78). Some of these terms describe the way the figure is formed, such as asyndeton (“not connected”), which is loosely translated into Latin as dissolutio
("separation"), while others describe the effect the device is designed to achieve, such as continuatio ("unbroken continuance") and celeritas ("quickness"). Puttenham provides an English name for each of the figures according to the figure's effect. He refers to asyndeton as "the Loose language" because it joins words or clauses "in a manner defective because it wants good band or coupling" (Puttenham 175). Neither Puttenham's term nor any other English term has found its way into common usage, and thus in referring to this device today, most writers use the name asyndeton.

The process of naming asyndeton is similar to that seen in the development of names for many other figures, and this process reveals at least three tendencies that are evident in most books on rhetoric. First, rhetoricians are inclined to be very casual about using a range of terms to describe an individual device. Second, students and teachers of rhetoric have a self-professed interest in the creative potential of language and seem to enjoy inventing ever more precise names for the devices they describe. Third, Roman and Renaissance rhetoricians combine a reverence for ancient terminology with a desire to provide terms in their own vernacular. Each of these tendencies warrants special attention in light of the present study.

While some writers are careful to name almost every device they describe, others take what might initially seem to be a haphazard approach to nomenclature. It is very common, especially in the works of Cicero and Quintilian, to read descriptions of devices without any names assigned. In the dialogue that constitutes Cicero's De Oratore (55 BC), for example, Crassus lists a variety of stylistic devices that can be used to make speech more forceful, and he concludes the list by explaining: "these more or less are the figures—and possibly there may be even more also like them." Cotta replies: "I notice that you have poured them out without giving definitions or examples, in the belief that we are familiar with them" (III.liii.208). Crassus explains
that he does, indeed, assume that his auditors are familiar with these common devices. Even in works designed as introductions to the study of rhetoric, however, the names of devices are regarded as much less important than the devices themselves.

It is Quintilian who best explains why rhetoricians should not be overly concerned with disputes about names. Whether explaining an individual device, or a category of devices, he consistently urges his readers to focus on the effects of the devices rather than on the devices' names. After alluding to the controversy as to whether hyperbaton and irony should be classified as tropes or as figures, he suggests that by any other name, a rose would smell as sweet:

\[
\ldots \text{it makes no difference by which name either is called, so long as its stylistic value is apparent, since the meaning of things is not altered by a change of name. For just as men remain the same, even though they adopt a new name, so these artifices will produce exactly the same effect, whether they are styled tropes or figures, since their values lie not in their names, but in their effect. \ldots It is best therefore in dealing with these topics to adopt the generally accepted terms and to understand the actual thing, by whatever name it is called.}
\]

(IX.i.8-9)

In naming and classifying the figures of rhetoric, many writers in later centuries have followed Quintilian's advice. The writers of style manuals in sixteenth-century England found themselves in a situation not unlike that of their Roman predecessors. Just as Cicero and others had translated terms from the established and revered Greek language into a still unstable Latin, so writers such as Wilson found themselves translating Latin terms into a still unstable English. Each author and translator had to make his own decisions regarding which terms were most generally accepted, and each decision in turn affected the familiarity of specific terms in later generations.

Twentieth-century rhetoricians have inherited a variety of names for most rhetorical figures, and, like the rhetoricians before them, each author tends to make
decisions regarding nomenclature based on either the familiarity of figures or the intended function of his or her study. In Shakespeare's Use of the Arts of Language (1947), for example, Sister Miriam Joseph names and defines over two hundred rhetorical figures, and she illustrates these figures with Shakespearean examples. Following a format similar to that of many sixteenth-century rhetoric manuals, Joseph introduces her readers to a wide range of rhetorical devices and then demonstrates the effectiveness of these devices in the hands of a master. Although she acknowledges that certain figures have more than one name, such as isocolon which is also called compar or parison (297), or epanodos which is also called traductio or ploce (85), she never makes it clear that most figures have several names. She refers to some figures by their Greek names and to others by their Latin or English names. She does not explain how she came to choose the particular names she chooses, but it would seem she is following Quintilian's advice; she selects the most familiar name for each rhetorical device and focuses her attention on the device's effect.

In A Handbook to Sixteenth-Century Rhetoric (1968), Lee A. Sonnino makes a different decision regarding nomenclature. Since the purpose of his study is to provide a manual for the study of sixteenth-century rhetoric, he acknowledges all of the names of each of the devices he lists. He deals with these devices in alphabetical order, and in the attempt to provide a somewhat consistent system of naming, he usually, though not always, lists the devices under one of their Latin names. The difficulties inherent in consistent naming become apparent when familiar devices are listed under unfamiliar names. The devices which we would call irony, allegory, and metaphor, in Anglicized versions of the Greek terms "ironia", "allegoria", and "metaphora", Sonnino lists under their Latin names, which are "illusio", "inversio", and "translatio" respectively. Listing all devices under their Greek names would prove equally problematic, for then devices such as definition, proverb, and
alliteration, which took their English names from the Latin words "definitio", "proverbium", and "alliteratio", would have to be listed under the unfamiliar Greek terms "orismos", "parimia", and "parimion". In providing a reference book for the study of sixteenth-century rhetoric, Sonnino recognizes the inconsistencies inherent in rhetorical nomenclature; he addresses these problems by identifying the various names of each device, by choosing as consistent a system as possible, and by providing a Greek, a Latin, and a Descriptive Index of the tropes and schemes in order to facilitate cross-referencing. Like the writers of the classical and Renaissance style manuals whose work he is documenting, Sonnino bases his choices on the specific needs of his readers.

To twentieth-century students of classical rhetoric, the complexities of rhetorical nomenclature may seem an insurmountable obstacle to study not only because facility in both Greek and Latin is now rare but also because, at first view, classical rhetoric may seem to be a rigid system of linguistic shoulds and should-nots. Such a first impression, however, reveals as much about current approaches to language-training as it does about the approaches of classical rhetoricians. As twentieth-century readers, we have grown up in an age of dictionaries and printing presses. We not only hear words spoken but also see them printed, and part of our language-training involves recognizing correct and incorrect spelling. In sixteenth-century England, of course, the English language was in considerable flux. Spellings were variable and vocabulary was growing rapidly. Rhetorical training encouraged linguistic creativity, and this creativity accounts, in part, for the linguistic richness of rhetorical societies.

Students of rhetoric in sixteenth-century England were encouraged to invent new words to denote concepts for which there were not yet English words or to improve upon the accuracy or the elegance of existing expressions. In De Copia (c.1512), Erasmus teaches that three kinds of new words are acceptable: those that
are new coinage, those that are used in a new way, or those that are invented by compounding (316). Clearly Erasmus is training boys to write in Latin rather than in English, but both earlier and later rhetoricians, regardless of language or period, encourage the development of new terms. With regard to creating new Latin words, Erasmus writes that students “should sometimes be venturesome, especially in verse and in translating from the Greek” (338), and he goes on to state that “much of the wealth of the Latin language lies in created forms of this sort” (339).

Erasmus’s view on the desirability of creating words is not new. Such creativity is explicitly encouraged by classical rhetoricians. In De Oratore, for example, the character of Crassus reports that in translating from Greek into Latin he coins new words (I.xxxiv.155). In order to transmit adequately the sophistication of utterance present in the original Greek, he finds it is sometimes necessary to invent a word. Later Crassus explains that in embellishing his style, an orator can contribute to vocabulary in three ways: through “rare words, new coinages, and words used metaphorically” (121). Many Roman rhetoricians were in favour of inventing new words not only because new words could make specific ideas clearer but also because such invention pleased their patriotic desire to develop and enrich the Latin language. Such patriotism is again evident in sixteenth-century England when rhetoricians encourage the development of their English vernacular.

The boldness in creating new words seen in the work of both classical and Renaissance rhetoricians has a direct bearing on the variety of names given to each rhetorical figure. The rhetoricians who are studying and using the figures are positively encouraged to try their hands at providing slightly more accurate names. Puttenham invents an English name for each of the terms he describes, and he takes pride in the new names he devises. Chapter IX of The Arte of English Poesie (1589) is entitled “How the Greeks first, and afterward the Latines, invented new names for every figure, which this Author is also enforced to doo in his vulgar” (156). He
claims that the names he has invented "go as neare as may be to their originals, or els serve better to the purpose of the figure then the very original" (157), and goes on to explain that he has made a series of decisions based on the specific needs of his intended readers. He is writing "for the learning of Ladies and young Gentlewomen, or idle Courtiers, desirous to become skilful in their owne mother tongue" (158). These readers do not read Greek or Latin, and since they have spent little or no time in school, he chooses to avoid "tedious doctrines and scholary methodes of discipline" in favour of "a new and strange modell of this arte, fitter to please the Court then the schoole" (159).

Although Puttenham invented his own name for each figure, and even created a new system for classifying the figures, some might argue that his boldest innovation was his decision to write in English. He was not the first to write an English rhetoric manual. By 1589, when The Arte of English Poesie was written, seven books on rhetoric had been published in English.\(^1\) In juxtaposition with the countless editions of classical books on rhetoric available in sixteenth-century England, however, and with the numerous rhetoric manuals written in Latin during this period, the English treatises on rhetoric were relatively few in number and small in influence. As Baldwin writes, in the "Latin texts is the main stream; the English rhetorics are only the eddies" (Baldwin II:175).

The aim of the writers of the English treatises was not to provide new training but rather to provide old training to a new group of readers. There is nothing innovative in the rhetorical systems described in these treatises. As Joseph explains, the English rhetorics form part of a continuum of traditional rhetorical training:

\[\text{It is only in their choice of illustrations, and often not even in that, that the works of the Tudor rhetoricians and logicians can claim any originality or independence; their sources were principally Latin works of the Renaissance scholars, Erasmus, Agricola, Melanchthon, Ramus, Talaeus, Mosellanus, Susenbrotus, used singly or in combination and derived in their turn from}\]
earlier works reaching back through Quintilian, Cicero, and the Ad Herennium ultimately to Aristotle and Gorgias.

(Joseph 16)

Although the English rhetorics provide no new rhetorical concepts, they are significant not only because they increase the accessibility of rhetorical training but also because they represent a patriotic movement to increase the respectability of the English language.

Until the publication of English rhetoric manuals, the study of rhetoric was limited to those who could read Greek or Latin: a group including those who had the opportunity to go to grammar school and those whose parents could afford to hire private tutors. While English books on rhetoric were of no use to the countless citizens who were illiterate, these books considerably broadened the range of people studying and using rhetoric, and, as a later chapter will demonstrate, this new breadth is evident in the range of Shakespearean characters who flaunt their newly found rhetorical skill.

There was considerable opposition to English style manuals, for not all people were in favour of making rhetorical training more available; to some, the elitism of such training was part of its appeal. In his introduction to The Artes of Logike and Rethorike (1584), Fenner addresses the elitism inherent in preventing people from getting training which would be of use both to the students themselves and to society at large. He argues with his potential detractors, and claims the arts of logic and of rhetoric should be available to all:

...seeing the end was with their gaine the commoditie of all, let them not still keep in this corner to make [training in these arts] rare and excessively dear, least the people curse them: especially nowe that the famine of provision to discern of so many strifes and subtilities, to understand and judge of so many Treatises as are written both to hurt and benefit the world . . . doeth daily crie and call for it.

(146)
Fenner points out that he has classical precedent for writing in his vernacular, for Plato, Aristotle, Cicero, and Quintilian do the same. Furthermore, just as Cicero borrows some words from the Greeks, as the Greeks themselves had done from the Egyptians and Hebrews, so Fenner intends to borrow, when necessary, from the Romans (145).

Fenner values rhetorical study not only because it is of great practical use in his own society, but also because it is based on classical authority. He is not alone in this opinion. Indeed, the notion that training in the classics prepared students for active and virtuous service in the commonwealth was one of the basic tenets of the humanistic education of which rhetoric was a part. Some of the complexities of rhetorical nomenclature can be explained by the fact that rhetoricians tend to emphasize simultaneously both reverence for ancient wisdom and contemporary application of that wisdom. Rhetorical devices are often given both an old and a new name. New English names, such as those which Puttenham tries to popularize, are necessary in order to make rhetorical training accessible to students who are unfamiliar with Greek and Latin; old names, on the other hand, are necessary in order to invest new English words with the respectability associated with ancient authority. Even Cicero and Quintilian call on ancient authority to support their Latin writings on rhetoric. They give rhetorical devices Latin names for the benefit of their Roman students, but they often supplement their descriptions of devices with reference to the Greek names given to these devices by the esteemed rhetoricians of an earlier age.

The desire both to acknowledge ancient sources and to make ancient teaching accessible to modern readers resulted in a variety of approaches to the naming of the figures of rhetoric in Shakespeare’s time. To the rhetorical novice today, the variations in nomenclature may be confusing and distracting, but one should not be intimidated by them. In order to communicate with others about any particular
figure of rhetoric, we must first agree on what name to use, but that is only the beginning of the discussion, for it is not a figure’s name but its potential power which is the source of its fascination.

**Figure Classification**

In explaining why eloquence is so hard to acquire, Cicero states that there are five stages of rhetorical composition including invention, disposition, elocution, memory, and delivery, and that “each one is in its own right a great art” (Brutus 37). Elocution, which consists of putting ideas into effective words, is the stage that includes a consideration of the figures of rhetoric. Training in elocution often involves an examination of the differences in high, middle, and low styles, and of stylistic features such as decorum, clarity, and purity of utterance. In most style manuals, however, the section on elocution is heavily, if not entirely, dominated by an examination of the figures of rhetoric. The number of figures identified varies greatly from one manual to the next. Some manuals treat fewer than forty figures while others examine more than two hundred. There is considerable variety both in the number of rhetorical devices identified and in the systems used to categorize these devices. Some rhetoricians classify the figures according to the way certain figures, or groups of figures, are created, while others divide rhetorical devices by the effects those devices are designed to achieve. Examining some of the most familiar systems used to classify rhetorical devices helps us both to clarify terminology and to understand the range of functions which the figures were believed to perform.
The term “the figures of rhetoric” can be confusing, for some rhetoricians use this term to mean a genus of rhetorical devices which has tropes and schemes as its species, while others use the words “the figures of rhetoric” to refer only to the schemes. “Figures” and “schemes” are often used as synonyms, and thus, although it is not necessary to distinguish between figures and schemes, it is useful to understand the difference between figures and tropes.

Of all methods used to categorize stylistic devices, the most common is to divide the devices into tropes and figures. It seems the distinction between tropes and figures was first made in the Augustan age (Ad Herennium xiii). This distinction is acknowledged by Cicero, examined in detail by Quintilian, and adopted, with varying degrees of precision, by almost all sixteenth-century rhetoricians. The clearest explanation I have read of the difference between a figure/scheme and a trope is Brian Vickers’s description in Classical Rhetoric in English Poetry (1970). Vickers writes:

A trope (or “turn”) involves a change or transference of meaning and works on the conceptual level; a figure essentially works on the physical level of the shape or structure of language, and involves the disposition of words in a certain way. A trope affects the meaning of words; a figure only affects their placing or repetition. (The distinction between trope and figure is analogous to that in music between harmony and rhythm: a trope is like harmony, it exists vertically on various planes, while a figure is like rhythm, it exists horizontally, on one plane only.) . . . All tropes demand our recognition that ideas have been brought together on the conceptual or imaginative plane in a new and creative way, and the tropes have been the most popular and best understood of the rhetorical devices in all literature.

(86)

There are many fewer tropes than there are figures. Of the eighty devices defined by Wilson in The Arte of Rhetorique (1553), for example, thirteen are tropes and sixty-seven are figures. In the 1593 edition of The Garden of Eloquence, Peacham examines approximately 165 devices of which eighteen are tropes and the rest are figures. Although the figures are more numerous, the tropes are better
known. Of the eighteen tropes listed by Peacham, at least ten are recognizable to many twentieth-century readers. The ten most familiar tropes include metaphor, onomatopoeia, synecdoche, metonymy, allegory, enigma, proverb (paroemia), hyperbole, irony, and sarcasm. These devices are much more familiar to us than the remaining eight tropes listed by Peacham which include catachresis, antonomasia, metalepsis, antiphrasis, asteismus, charientismus, mysterismus, and diasirmus. Although a few of the figures of rhetoric are recognizable to twentieth-century readers, such as zeugma, apostrophe, and erotema (a rhetorical question), most figures are no longer known by name. The figures are still used as often as they were in previous centuries, but they are not identified as often.

Most classical and Renaissance rhetoricians divide the tropes into two groups: tropes of words and tropes of sentences. As the name implies, a trope of words, such as metaphor or synecdoche, achieves its effect through a single word. Tropes of sentences, such as allegory or hyperbole, require one or more sentences to achieve their effect. The figures are also divided into figures of words and of sentences, but this is only one of many divisions used to classify figures.

As mentioned above, figure classification is more varied and more detailed than trope classification. (Appendix 1 provides a chart of the various categories of figures examined in this chapter.) Figures are divided and subdivided into category pairs such as grammatical and rhetorical, figures of words and of sentences, and figures of diction and of thought. The names of these categories vary from one manual to the next, but certain fundamental figure divisions are observed by most rhetoricians. It is Quintilian who most clearly describes the distinction among various types of figures. He devotes over one hundred pages of his *Institutio Oratoria* (c.85 AD) to a detailed discussion of more than one hundred tropes and schemes. For the purposes of the present study, the *Institutio Oratoria* is of interest not only because it was widely read in sixteenth-century England but also because Quintilian's figure
divisions help us, as they helped sixteenth-century rhetoricians, to understand the fundamental differences among various types of figures.

As Quintilian explains, the majority of rhetoricians agree that there are two types of figures:

... namely, figures of thought, that is of the mind, feeling or conceptions, since all these terms are used, and figures of speech, that is of words, diction, expression, language or style: the name by which they are known varies, but mere terminology is a matter of indifference.

(IX. i. 17)

As Sonnino points out, the distinction between figures of speech and figures of thought is not absolute, for variation in syntax inevitably has an influence on what the words express (Sonnino 12). In one rhetoric manual after another, however, the distinction between figures of thought and figures of speech is acknowledged, even while the writers note that figure classifications must, of necessity, be regarded as fluid. Classical and Renaissance rhetoricians alike acknowledge the interconnection of various types of figures while, at the same time, they subdivide the figures in order to draw attention to the differences among various types of rhetorical devices.

Quintilian continues his categorization of figures by explaining that the figures of speech can be further divided into two main classes: grammatical figures involve "the form of language," while rhetorical figures influence "the arrangement of words" (IX. iii. 2). Grammatical figures are usually subdivided into orthographical and syntactical figures. The orthographical schemes provide a set of practical tools for writers of verse, for they allow writers to change the form of individual words for the purposes of maintaining rhyme or metre. These schemes include devices such as the lengthening or shortening of a syllable or the exchange of one letter in a word for another. Although the orthographical figures receive considerably less attention in sixteenth-century style manuals than any of the other groups of figures, at least six of these figures are mentioned by most Tudor rhetoricians. These six
include prosthesis, epenthesis, and paragoge (the addition of a syllable at the beginning, middle, or end of a word respectively) and aphaeresis, syncope, and apocope (the omission of a syllable at the beginning, middle, or end of a word respectively).

Since these six figures of addition and omission prove enormously useful to writers of verse, they are everywhere evident in the work of Shakespeare and his contemporaries. By using forms such as “bethump” for “thump,” or “’gainst” for “against,” writers adapt their words to fit specific lines of iambic pentameter, but the functions of the orthographical figures are not limited to mere syllable counting. Another function of these figures can be seen by comparing the 1598 and 1616 editions of Ben Jonson’s Every Man in His Humour. One of the notable differences between these two texts is the frequent use of the figures of omission in the 1616 edition (Jonson li). By regularly omitting syllables, Jonson quickens the speech of the characters in this city comedy, and in doing so he reproduces the fast-paced dialect that often characterizes city dwellers.

Perhaps the most interesting use of the orthographical figures, from our perspective as twentieth-century readers, is that these figures have contributed to the creation of countless English words. Many of the English words that Shakespeare is credited with inventing were created by his figurative use of a word that already existed. The O.E.D. cites Shakespeare as the first writer to use words such as “accurst” and “besmirch,” to choose only a couple of examples, and both of these words are created by using the figure prosthesis: Shakespeare adds a syllable to the beginning of an already accepted word. In these examples, he changes the length of a word without changing its part of speech. He frequently uses figures of addition or omission in conjunction with anthimeria (a figure in which one part of speech is substituted for another); this combination of figures results in the creation of many English words which are now so familiar to us that we no longer recognize
them as examples of figurative language. The words “advantaged” and “bulky,” for example, were first created through the use of the figure paragoge: a syllable was added to the end of familiar words, and thus new words were formed that differ from the originals in their lengths and in their parts of speech.

In describing the two types of grammatical figures, Puttenham distinguishes between orthographical and syntactical figures when he writes:

> As your single words may be many waiies transfigured to make the meetre or verse more tunable and melodious, so also may your whole and entire clauses be in such sort contrived by the order of their construction as the eare may receive a certaine recreation. . .

(163)

He explains that the syntactical figures, or the schemes of construction, work by defect, surplus, disorder or exchange (163). He does not actually list any figures in this section that work by surplus. Among the figures he describes as working by defect are eclipsis (the omission of a word that can easily be understood in context), and zeugma (the use of one word, usually a verb, to serve a series of clauses). Two of the figures that work by disorder are parenthesis (the interruption of a sentence by interposing words), and hysteron proteron (a disorder of time whereby that which happens first is mentioned second). Figures that work by exchange include enallage (the deliberate use of one case, person, gender, number, tense, or mood for another), and hypallage (which perverts the sense by shifting the application of words).

Enallage, like some of the other grammatical figures, is less common in English than in Latin or Greek because the form of the language does not allow for the same sorts of variation. The limited application in English of some of the grammatical figures is one of the reasons these figures receive less attention from sixteenth-century rhetoricians than figures of other types. A more significant reason for the
low profile of these devices is that they were regarded as less powerful, and therefore less important, than the rhetorical figures.

The rhetorical schemes are more difficult to summarize than the grammatical schemes, for they are more diverse and much more numerous; while Tudor rhetoricians treat an average of approximately eighteen grammatical schemes, the average number of rhetorical schemes treated in each manual is closer to sixty.³ Peacham provides the most comprehensive Tudor examination of the rhetorical schemes: in the 1593 edition of The Garden of Eloquence, he examines 147 of these devices. The specific functions of various figures of rhetoric will be examined in detail in later chapters, but before embarking on such an examination, it is helpful to have a sense of the differences between various types of rhetorical figures.

The rhetorical schemes are divided into figures of diction and of thought; just as grammatical figures are regarded as less powerful than rhetorical figures, so the figures of diction are viewed as less potent than the figures of thought. Cicero clearly explains the difference between these two groups in De Oratore when he writes “that the figure suggested by the words disappears if one alters the words, but that of the thoughts remains whatever words one chooses to employ” (III.liii.200). A brief example can be provided by Richard III’s famous words: “A horse! a horse!, my kingdom for a horse!” (R3, 5.4.7). This line contains an example of the figure of repetition known as diacope (the repetition of a word with one or more between, usually in exclamation). It also contains a figure of thought known as optatio (an ardent wish or prayer). If the words of Richard’s ardent wish were changed, the figure of diction would disappear (and so, perhaps, would the line’s memorability), but the figure of thought would remain. Since ideas must be clothed in words, it is common for a figure of thought to contain one or more figures of diction.

Like tropes, the figures of diction are divided into figures of words and of sentences, and some rhetoricians subdivide these two categories; Peacham, for
example, lists four types of figures of words and eight kinds of figures of sentences. Each rhetorician tries to provide a slightly clearer or more detailed system for categorizing the figures with the result that countless figure-groupings are suggested. In order to avoid the mind-numbing details of Tudor figure classification, I propose to draw your attention only to those groups of figures which seem particularly relevant to a study of Shakespeare's drama.

The figures of repetition are used regularly by Shakespeare, though, as we shall see later, they are more common in his early plays than in the late ones. These figures are among the easiest rhetorical devices to identify, for they involve the repetition of a sound, a word, or a group of words. Among the most common of these devices are alliteration, anaphora (beginning a series of clauses with the same word), and epistrophe (ending a series of clauses with the same word). Another group of figures seen frequently in Shakespeare's comedies is the figures of ambiguity: a group which consists of a variety of types of word play or puns.

The figures of repetition and of ambiguity are figures of diction. Commonly cited categories for figures of thought include, among others, figures of division, of amplification, and of description. A category included in the Ramist rhetorics of Fraunce and Fenner that is not identified by other Tudor rhetoricians is the differentiation between figures spoken by one person alone and those spoken in conversation. These categories are useful as we embark on a study of drama, for, as we shall see in later chapters, the rhetorical devices employed by Shakespeare's characters in monologue are sometimes different than those demonstrated in dialogue.

Several twentieth-century rhetoricians have suggested methods of classifying the figures, and the method presented by Sister Miriam Joseph is particularly helpful as we consider the roles played by figurative language in drama. Joseph notes that sixteenth-century rhetoricians can be roughly divided into three groups: the
traditionals, the figurists, and the Ramists (13-14). While there are obvious differences among these three groups, there are also fundamental similarities, and Joseph demonstrates these similarities by dividing her examination of the figures into four groups based on "the aesthetic aspects of grammar" and "the three-fold means of persuasion basic in Aristotle's Rhetoric, namely, logos, pathos, and ethos" (34). Under the heading of "Grammar" she treats the schemes of words and of construction, the vices of language, and the figures of repetition. Under "Logos", she considers the tropes and the figures related to "logical topics . . . logical forms . . . and the devices of disputation" (36). Devices listed under the heading of "Pathos" include "the figures of affection and vehemence," and those listed under "Ethos" include "the figures revealing courtesy, gratitude, commendation, [and] forgiveness of injury" (36). She notes that traditionalists, figurists, and Ramists alike consider figures which fall into these four categories, and that the figures relating to logic are "by far the most numerous and the most important group" (36). Joseph's categories prove useful as we examine Shakespeare's rhetoric, for, as we shall see, our impressions of certain characters can be heavily influenced by the sorts of figures which those characters favour.

A final group of devices that warrants our attention is the vices of language. Although the vices do not fall into any of the categories previously mentioned, they are most closely associated with the grammatical figures. As Joseph explains, "while a deliberate deviation from the grammatical norm for the sake of some desired aesthetic effect is a figure, the ignorant violation of grammatical rules is a vice" (64). Tudor rhetoricians recognize between ten and twenty-two vices, and Shakespeare makes great comic use of these linguistic errors which every Elizabethan schoolboy was taught to avoid.

It is sometimes difficult to determine whether a device is a figure or a vice. While the ignorant misuse of cases, genders, or tenses is the vice known as
solecismus, for example, the deliberate use of one case or tense for another is regarded as the figure enallage (Joseph 61). It is not only vices and figures that can cross categories. Rhetoricians frequently debate the appropriate categorization of several of the figures with the result that some figures, such as antithesis, are treated by some rhetoricians as figures of thought and by others as figures of diction. Even within the work of a single rhetorician there can be great variation in methods of categorizing the figures. In the 1577 edition of The Garden of Eloquence, for example, Peacham includes fourteen orthographical and forty-two syntactical figures, but in the 1593 edition he changes these groupings: he omits all of the orthographical and some of the syntactical figures and treats the remaining syntactical figures under the heading of rhetorical schemes.

The willingness of Tudor rhetoricians to omit a group of figures, or to move figures from one category to another, may lead us to question the relevance of categories that can so easily be rearranged, but this very willingness forms an essential component of sixteenth-century attitudes towards rhetoric. Tudor rhetoricians did not see themselves as the recipients of a rigid, classical system of language training but as participants in a process of rhetorical development. As they sought better ways to name, define, and classify rhetorical devices, they encouraged a self-conscious approach to language usage. The metalinguistic activity apparent in much of the drama of the period is the direct result of the ways in which dramatists, and their actors and audience members, were encouraged to play consciously with language.

If we attempt to count the figures of different types used by Shakespeare, we immediately encounter problems with classification and with nomenclature. Since Tudor rhetoricians recognized anywhere between twenty-five and 184 rhetorical devices (Joseph 35), any statistical rhetorical survey would have to begin with an arbitrary choice as to which rhetoric manual would serve as a guide. Counting the
figures, even within a single manual, is sometimes difficult. In *The Arte of English Poesie*, for example, Puttenham lists approximately 107 rhetorical devices, but the count is approximate because there is room for differing interpretations. He describes several grammatical figures without naming them, and he lists as separate figures three species of zeugma: these are only two of several kinds of choices made by rhetoricians which complicate the task of counting rhetorical devices. The exact number of figures listed by Puttenham, or by any rhetorician, is not important; what matters is understanding why the exact number of figures listed is not important.

There is no one, complete, static, "correct" list of figure names or of figure classifications. Renaissance rhetoricians, like their classical predecessors, are engaged in a dynamic process of language exploration and creation. Differences of opinion often serve to clarify ambiguous concepts, and thus such differences are acknowledged and examined with curiosity. Rhetorical controversies are abundant in the sixteenth century, and they embrace both specific issues, such as which name to apply to a specific device, and general issues, such as the educational reforms encouraged by Ramus. These controversies form part of an ongoing interest in linguistic development. In examining the figures of rhetoric in Shakespeare's comedies, I do not intend "to count them out to the reader like coins, but to pay them by weight, as it were" (*De Optimo* 365). Individual figures are of specific interest when characters refer to those figures by name, but, in general, this study will focus on large patterns of figure usage while keeping in mind certain widely held Renaissance attitudes towards rhetoric.
Artificial and Natural Rhetoric

Before embarking on a study of Shakespeare's rhetoric, we must consider whether Shakespeare used rhetoric on purpose: in other words, we must digress for a moment to confront directly the messy issue of authorial intent. In twentieth-century scholarship, questions of Shakespeare's authorial intent are clearly contentious, not only because our knowledge of his life and education is imperfect but also because of deeper ideological concerns about the value of examining art through the lens of biography. It may be impossible to assess accurately the intent of a writer or speaker, and this very impossibility is endlessly fascinating to rhetoricians. The intent of a speaker, whether benevolent or malicious, influences credibility, and credibility, in turn, determines rhetorical efficacy. The ethos of a speaker is the sine qua non of rhetorical excellence, and thus training in rhetoric includes a frequent emphasis on the need to evaluate a speaker's, or writer's intent. I mention speakers as well as writers here not only because the earliest rhetoricians train orators, but also because Shakespeare, the dramatist, writes for speakers.

In a study of rhetoric in drama, questions of authorial intent exist in two separate spheres. We may ask whether Shakespeare uses figures consciously, or we may ask whether his characters are aware of the figures they speak. I believe the answer to both of these questions is "sometimes", and this response is not so vague as it seems. Sometimes Shakespeare calls a figure by name, and in those cases, it is obvious that both writer and speaker are aware of the figure employed. In other cases, he provides a detailed description of a device without naming it, and thus demonstrates that both writer and speaker understand a certain rhetorical strategy even if they do not name it. In most cases, however, no explicit attention is drawn to the figures used, and thus we are left to decide for ourselves whether or not a figure is consciously employed. In many scenes, the characters themselves evaluate each
other's figures as they try to determine whether they are being manipulated through rhetorical art. In order to address the issue of authorial intent, and to illuminate Shakespeare's characters' wide range of responses to the rhetoric they speak and hear, it is necessary to acknowledge certain aspects of the complex relationship between art and nature as this relationship is understood by rhetoricians.

An apparent paradox in attitudes towards rhetoric is that, although rhetorical skill is highly admired, most rhetoricians argue that rhetorical art is at its most admirable when it is so "natural" that it is not recognized as art (Quintilian I.xi.3). The relationship between art and nature is frequently debated in Renaissance England, of course, as it is in classical Greece and Rome. While almost all rhetoricians address the desirability of achieving natural-seeming art, some writers, including Quintilian and Puttenham, devote entire chapters of their rhetorical treatises to an examination of the relationship between rhetorical art and nature. Three aspects of the interconnection of art and nature as perceived by Renaissance rhetoricians warrant particular attention in the context of the current study; these three aspects relate to the origins of rhetoric, the characteristics of an ideal orator, and the relative merits of "artificial" and "natural" rhetoric.

In his preface to Talaeus's Rhetorica, Ramus writes that Talaeus's rhetorical precepts "had not been collected from the workshops of rhetors but had been noted down in the meeting places of eloquent men" (Hoskins xxv). This statement reflects the widely held classical and Renaissance belief that rhetorical art was founded on nature. Students of rhetoric were taught that the earliest rhetoricians listened attentively to the linguistic patterns of the most eloquent speakers, identified these patterns, named them, and taught them to young speakers who enhanced their natural eloquence through the guidance of art. As Cicero explains, "certain persons have noted and collected the doings of men who were naturally eloquent: thus eloquence is not the offspring of the art, but the art of eloquence..." (De Oratore
I.xxxii.145). Puttenham later refers to the reciprocal relationship between art and nature when he writes of the figures:

... all your figures Poeticall or Rhetoricall, are but observations of strange speeches, and such as without any arte at all we should use, and commonly do, even by very nature without discipline. ... nature her selfe suggesteth the figure in this or that forme: but arte aydeth the judgement of his use and application.

(298)

According to classical rhetoricians, since art is based on nature, all people, whether educated or uneducated, have an innate sense of what is appropriate in rhetorical art. Cicero asserts that "everybody is able to discriminate between what is right and what is wrong in matters of art and proportion by a sort of subconscious instinct, without having any theory of art or proportion of their own" (De Oratore III.1.195). This instinct responds to many types of art, including pictures and statues, but Cicero claims the instinct is particularly active in judging the rhythms and the pronunciations of words:

... because these are rooted deep in the general sensibility, and nature has decreed that nobody shall be entirely devoid of these faculties. And consequently everybody is influenced not only by skilful arrangement of words but also by rhythms and pronunciations.

(De Oratore III.1.195-96)

Clearly lack of formal training in rhetoric has not prevented countless twentieth-century audience members from appreciating Shakespeare’s words, and we may assume that the members of an Elizabethan audience, both literate and illiterate, would have instinctively sensed the appropriateness of many of Shakespeare’s rhetorical choices. In addition to responding to Shakespeare’s words on an instinctive level, however, the Elizabethan audience members who had studied rhetoric could enjoy a metarhetorical appreciation of a Shakespearean play; they could enjoy both the effect of Shakespeare’s rhetorical devices and the pleasure of being able to identify those devices.
The ability to recognize the figures used by other speakers is one of the explicitly acknowledged benefits of rhetorical training. Quintilian comments on the self-congratulatory response of audience members who find themselves able to identify the rhetorical tricks of others. He writes: “the hearer takes pleasure in detecting the speaker’s concealed meaning, applauds his own penetration and regards another man’s eloquence as a compliment to himself” (IX.ii.78). In Aristotle’s Rhetoric (c.355 BC), Aristotle suggests that “the essence of the enjoyment of wit is the recognition that it involves in the hearer” (235). If this is so, then considering aspects of rhetorical recognition may be of particular relevance to a study of comedy, for an audience member’s sense of enjoyment is heightened not only by his/her sense of superiority over the characters who find themselves in a comic mess, but also by his/her recognition of the rhetorical devices that help to shape the silliness.

The fact that audience members recognize rhetorical strength or weakness, either instinctively or through a knowledge of rhetoric, does not of necessity mean that these same audience members would make good speakers. Cicero notes that “it is remarkable how little difference there is between the expert and the plain man as critics, though there is a great gap between them as performers” (De Oratore III.1.197). In De Oratore, his treatise on the making of an orator, Cicero spends a great deal of time considering whether it is natural talent, knowledge of rhetorical art, or regular practice of rhetorical skills that most benefits an orator. Like other rhetoricians, he concludes that all three of these components are necessary for the ideal orator. A speaker’s natural ability is “the chief contributor to the virtue of oratory” (De Oratore I.xxxv.113), but, regardless of ability, all people can improve their speaking through the knowledge and practice of rhetorical art.

Several Renaissance rhetoricians consider the roles of nature, art, and practice in the development of an orator. In De Copia, a book written as a textbook for schoolboys at St. Paul’s Grammar School, Erasmus explains to his young readers
that, with practice, art becomes second nature (606). It would hardly be surprising to find that for Elizabethan schoolboys, who were required to participate in a variety of rhetorical drills from a very early age, certain rhetorical processes gradually became subconscious.

Wilson also examines the relative importance of nature, art, and practice in an orator’s development. He explains that “though many by nature without art have proved worthy men, yet is art a surer guide than nature” (49). He later illustrates this point with an anecdote of a learned man who was asked “what was such a figure and such a trope in rhetoric?” The man replied: “I cannot tell, . . . but I am assured if you look in the book of mine orations, you shall not fail but find them” (186). Wilson uses this story to demonstrate that all speakers, no matter how great their natural ability, can benefit from rhetorical training. He comments on the learned man’s response with the words:

... though he knew not the name of such and such figures, yet the nature of them was so familiar to his knowledge that he had the use of them wh ensever he had need. . . . yet it were folly that all should follow his way which want so good a wit. And I think even he himself should not have lost by it either, if he had seen that in a glass which he often used to do without knowledge. Man is forgetful, and there is none so wise but counsel may do him good.

(186)

Wilson’s words remind us that the figures of rhetoric are used with varying degrees of self-consciousness: while one speaker might consciously choose a specific figure in order to achieve a certain effect, another speaker might use the same figure, without knowing the figure exists, simply because that rhetorical device accurately expresses the emotion upon which it was originally based. Even a single speaker might use rhetorical figures with varying degrees of self-consciousness, for some situations provoke spontaneous responses while others encourage careful rhetorical
planning. All of these degrees of rhetorical self-consciousness can be readily and frequently found in Shakespeare’s plays.

According to the rhetoricians, noticeably artificial rhetoric is sometimes admirable, while at other times it is reprehensible. Puttenham attempts to explain the situations in which it is more commendable to follow art or to follow nature by describing four different relationships between the two. He suggests art can be used as “an aid to nature, and a furtherer of her actions to good effect”, as seen when a good gardener assists nature by weeding, watering, and fertilizing his plants (302). A second situation exists when “art’s not only an aid to nature in all her actions, but an alterer of them, and in some sort a surmounter of her skill” (303); just as physicians are praised for using their art to lengthen people’s lives, or gardeners are admired for breeding unnaturally large vegetables, so poets may be revered for artificial language which seems to improve upon nature. In the third case cited by Puttenham, “arte is neither an aider nor a surmounter, but only a bare imitator of all nature’s works, following and counterfeiting her actions and effects” (304). In arts such as painting and carving, for example, artists may attempt to imitate nature as precisely as possible. In a fourth case, art is “contrary to nature, producing effects neither like to hers, nor by participation with her operations, nor by imitation of her patterns” (304). Dancers and lute players are only two of the types of artists named by Puttenham who gain reputation by their art, and in their cases artifice is admired because it is “learned only through discipline” (305).

The art of rhetoric can be used in any of the four ways listed by Puttenham, and the degree to which “artificial” or “natural” rhetoric is preferred depends largely on the circumstances, the trustworthiness of the speaker, and the fashions of the day. Decorum is emphasized by almost all rhetoricians; the level of style chosen for any speech must suit the dignity of the audience and the nature of the subject. In circumstances that warrant the “high” or “great” style of rhetoric, a certain degree of
artifice is not only accepted, it is expected, for formal situations require formal language.

As mentioned previously, the trustworthiness of the speaker is considered by some to be the *sine qua non* of an orator's excellence. Both classical and Renaissance rhetoricians emphasize that an ideal orator must be eloquent, wise, and ethical. A speaker who possesses only one or two of these three traits may lose the respect or the trust of his audience. Rhetorical affectation without wisdom is nothing but "an empty and ridiculous swirl of verbiage" (*De Oratore* I.v.17), as is evident in the ramblings of someone like Polonius. Rhetorical skill unhampered by ethical concerns results in the dangerous machinations of someone like Shakespeare's Richard III. Whether or not a speaker's art is admired depends largely on whether or not the speaker's nature is admirable: the rhetorical art of a trusted speaker may be admired as evidence of consummate skill while the very same art, used by a speaker whose character is suspect, may be reviled as clear proof of falsehood. Shakespeare's characters make use of both "artificial" and "natural" rhetoric, and it is not always possible for us, or for his other characters, to tell one from the other; indeed, our impressions of a character's rhetoric may shift as our knowledge of the character grows.

The degree to which "artificial" rhetoric is admired depends partly on rhetorical fashions in any given period. Classical and Renaissance rhetoricians alike comment on the changes in fashion occurring in their own times. In Book IV of his *Institutio Oratoria*, Quintilian explains both the reasons why orators were originally encouraged to hide their art and the movement away from that tendency in the speeches of his contemporaries. He writes:

... men have a natural prejudice in favour of those who are struggling against difficulties, and a scrupulous judge is always specially ready to listen to an advocate whom he does not suspect to have designs on his integrity.
Hence arose the tendency of ancient orators to pretend to conceal their eloquence, a practice exceedingly unlike the ostentation of our own times. (IV.i.9)

He later explains that the "admirable canon" of avoiding "all display of art," a skill which "in itself requires consummate art," has been impaired in his own day by judges who "demand the most finished and elaborate speeches, [and] think themselves insulted, unless the orator shows signs of having exercised the utmost diligence in the preparation of his speech" (IV.1.57). Quintilian is critical of what he perceives as a trend towards "artifical" rhetoric in the courts of his day. In early Tudor England, certain forms of "artificial" rhetoric were in vogue, as attested by the popularity of works such as Lyly's *Euphues*, but, as the sixteenth century draws to a close, fashions shift towards more "natural" rhetoric. When describing Lyly's rhetoric in *Euphues*, Hoskins comments on "the dotage of the time" on certain small rhetorical ornaments, but he goes on to note that "Lyly himself hath outlived this style and breaks well from it" (16). As we shall see in chapter 5 of the present study, a rhetorical comparison of Shakespeare's early and late comedies reveals a movement away from "artificial" rhetoric towards a more subtle and "natural" use of the figures.

A final aspect of the relationship between rhetorical art and nature which warrants attention in light of the present study is the claim, made most clearly by Cicero and Quintilian, that a skilful use of rhetorical art, designed to sway the feelings of the audience, can also arouse the natural feelings of the speaker himself. Several of the rhetorical figures were originally based on the natural expression of a strong emotion. It is possible that the delivery of these figures may engender in the speaker the very feelings that the figure is intended to arouse in the audience. Cicero explains that his own feelings have often been aroused through the delivery of figures. He claims it is no "mighty miracle" that speakers can be roused to feel a
variety of strong emotions "and that too about other people's business." He explains:

... the power of those reflections and commonplaces, discussed and handled in a speech, is great enough to dispense with all make-believe and trickery: for the very quality of the diction, employed to stir the feelings of others, stirs the speaker himself even more deeply than any of his hearers.

(De Oratore II.xlvi.191)

Quintilian admits: "I have frequently been so much moved while speaking, that I have not merely been wrought upon to tears, but have turned pale and shown all the symptoms of genuine grief" (VI.ii.1). If it is true that certain rhetorical skills enable a speaker to experience physiologically the emotions expressed in a speech, then these skills could be of great use to actors.

The relationship between rhetorical art and nature is clearly complex. When Shakespeare calls a figure by name, or draws specific attention to a character's figurative language, we can assume that he makes these rhetorical choices consciously. It seems Shakespeare uses the figures of rhetoric both consciously and unconsciously, and it is not always possible to tell one from the other. More fruitful than the ultimately unanswerable questions of authorial intent are questions of the intents of various characters as they try to assess as "natural" or "artificial" the rhetoric they hear, and as they consciously, or unconsciously, use certain figures of rhetoric themselves.

Whether or not Shakespeare used any individual figure intentionally is far less important than the fact that his works are full of rhetorical devices. Rhetorically trained Elizabethan audience members would have recognized many of Shakespeare's figures, and this recognition would have enhanced their
understanding both of the characters who deliver the figures and of the author who imagined them. As Ben Jonson wrote when translating the words of Vives:

Language most shewes a man: speake that I may see thee. It springs out of the most retired, and inmost parts of us, and is the image of the Parent of it, the mind. No glasse renders a mans forme, or likenesse, so true as his speech.9

Notes

1 The earliest rhetoric manuals in English are listed here in order of publication: Leonard Cox's *The Arte or Crafte of Rhethoryke* (c.1530); Richard Sherry's *A Treatise of Schemes and Tropes* (1550); Thomas Wilson's *The Arte of Rhetorique* (1553); Richard Rainolde's *A Booke Called the Foundacion of Rhetorike* (1563); Henry Peacham's *The Garden of Eloquence* (1577); Dudley Fenny's *The Artes of Logike and Rhetorike* (1584); and Abraham Fraunce's *The Arcadian Rhetorike* (1588). Some of these books were revised and reprinted, including those by Sherry, Wilson and Peacham. Angel Day's *The English Secretorie* was first printed in 1586, but a section on tropes, figures, and schemes was added before the book was reprinted in 1592 (Joseph 14).

2 Unless otherwise indicated, all bracketed figure definitions in this study are from Sister Miriam Joseph's *Shakespeare's Use of the Arts of Language* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1947). Of all the figure definitions I have read, I have found Joseph's to be the clearest and the most concise.

3 The *O.E.D.* credits Shakespeare with the first use of "advantaged". The first citing of "bulky" in the *O.E.D.* is T. Brown's use of the word in 1687, but Shakespeare used the term in 1H4, 5.1.2.

4 For information on the number of devices listed by each Tudor rhetorician under each category, see Joseph 35.

5 Peacham's terms are somewhat confusing here, for, like Fraunce, he refers to the figures of thought as "figures of sentences", while most rhetoricians use the name "figures of sentences" to refer to a subset of the figures of diction.

6 For more information on Tudor figure classification, see Sonnino 244-247, Joseph 293ff., and Taylor 135-143.

7 Peacham's "Figures of Consultation" consist of types of questions for use in conversation, but the naming of this category is the closest Peacham comes to acknowledging the difference between figures used in monologue and in dialogue.


Chapter One: Supporting Characters

As Brian Vickers explains in Classical Rhetoric in English Poetry, rhetorical figures are frequently maligned by twentieth-century scholars as "dry formulae", or as superfluous garnishes that beautify language without influencing meaning (Vickers 88-93). Through his analysis of classical rhetoric, Vickers states that, like Rosemund Tuve, he has reached the conclusion that "the figures have a literary function" (93). My study of Shakespeare's rhetorical figures has led me to the same conclusion. Some of Shakespeare's figures are undeniably beautiful, but to regard his figures only as ornaments is to trivialize their importance as constructive elements.

When examining the figures in any of Shakespeare's plays, it becomes apparent that some figures appear only at moments of heightened emotion while others are unobtrusively present in almost every scene. These unobtrusive figures perform a range of dramatic functions: they influence meter and pace of utterance, they help to place an action in time and space, and they shape our sense of the characters we see on stage. Like the supporting actors in a play, these functional figures are vital to the drama even though they get less attention than the star performers.

Rhetorical figures operate in ways we may not immediately associate with figurative language. When Shakespeare uses a rhyming couplet to provide a sense of closure at the end of a speech or scene, for example, he is using a rhetorical device known as homoioteleuton. In a theatre with no curtains and no lights, homoioteleuton is one way to signal the end of an exchange, and it is a signal Shakespeare uses frequently. Similarly, as mentioned in the introduction, Shakespeare regularly uses the orthographical figures of addition and omission to aid him in the crafting of his verse. These figures, which include prosthesis,
epenthesis, paragoge, aphaeresis, syncope, and apocope, allow an author to add or to subtract a syllable at the beginning, middle, or end of a word. Such flexibility with word length is a great help in the forging of iambic pentameter. The figures of addition and omission appear even more frequently than end rhyme, for in any given scene there may be numerous instances when "weep" becomes "beweep" (prosthesis), "against" becomes "'gainst" (aphaeresis), or "even" becomes "e'en" (syncope), as syllables are added or removed according to the dictates of a ten-syllable line.2

End rhyme and the orthographical figures help Shakespeare to structure scenes and lines of verse respectively, and they are only two of the many sorts of inconspicuous figures that appear in almost every scene of every play. The purpose of this chapter is to draw attention to figures that regularly perform certain functions. Clearly all figures have some sort of function, or they would not be used, but the figures to be examined here include only those that appear so frequently in Shakespeare's plays that their usefulness cannot be denied. The functions of three sorts of figures will be considered, and they include, in increasing order of complexity: the figures of diction as they influence pace and rhythm; the figures of description used to establish dramatic context; and a group of figures that regularly serves to establish character. The use of figures to perform the functions listed here is so widespread in Shakespeare's work that examples could be given from virtually any scene of any play. In an attempt to avoid the confusion that comes with jumping too quickly from one play to another, I shall choose examples of individual figures as they function in individual plays. The focus of this chapter, however, is not on the particular relevance of rhetoric to specific plays, for that will be the focus of chapters 4 and 5, but on certain figures that regularly assist Shakespeare in his work as a playwright. By examining figures used in every comedy, we are also able
to see the evolution of Shakespeare's rhetorical skill as his use of specific devices becomes increasingly sophisticated.

The first category listed above is Shakespeare's use of the figures of diction to affect the rhythm and pace of utterance. These figures influence syntax through a variety of methods of repetition, omission, inversion, and balance. Ranging from figures of repetition such as anaphora (beginning a series of clauses with the same word) and epizeuxis (the repetition of words with none in between), to schemes of construction including zeugma (one verb serving a number of clauses) and asyndeton (the omission of conjunctions between clauses), the figures of diction influence rhythm in all of Shakespeare's scenes. They are frequently used in combination with one another, and thus it is sometimes difficult to isolate the effect of any individual figure.

One figure that is rarely used alone, for example, is anaphora. Like other figures including a series of clauses, such as epistrophe (ending a series of clauses with the same word) or symploce (the combination of anaphora and epistrophe), anaphora is often used when listing, and lists are often examples of the figure congeries (which heaps together words of different meanings). If such a list omits or adds conjunctions between items, it can also contain the figure asyndeton or polysyndeton (the use of a conjunction between each clause), and if the items are of exactly the same length and construction then isocolon is also in evidence. By comparing the effects of anaphora when used in combination with various other figures, we can quickly get a sense of the diversity of tones which even a single figure can assist in creating. Examples of anaphora abound in the comedies, but, for simplicity's sake, all examples here will be taken from A Midsummer Night's Dream.

Seven examples of anaphora can be found in the first scene alone. The intent in this chapter is not to provide a comprehensive list of the uses of anaphora in the play, but to examine the range of different rhythmic and tonal effects created by this
When Theseus promises to wed Hippolyta “with pomp, with triumph, and with revelling” (1.1.19), for example, his use of anaphora, combined with phrases of equal length and construction (isocolon) and auxesis (which arranges items in a sequence of increasing force), helps to create a sense of his anticipation of the coming event. Only a few lines later, Egeus makes his complaint known to Theseus in a speech that includes two examples of anaphora and several of the other figures of repetition. These figures are easy to hear for they assault the ear with their presence, and they help to create Egeus’s scolding tone, as is evident in the following short excerpt:

Thou, thou, Lysander, thou hast given her rhymes, (diacope)
And interchanged love tokens with my child.
Thou hast by moonlight at her window sung (anaphora)
With feigning voice verses of feigning love,
And stolen the impression of her fantasy
With bracelets of thy hair, rings, gauds, conceits, (brachylogia)
Knacks, trifles, nosegays, sweetmeats . . . (congeries)
(1.1.27-34)

This entire speech could be taken as an example of the figure mempsis (a complaint against injuries and a craving for redress), but the jabbing, finger-pointing tone of Egeus’s accusations comes from his use of the figures of repetition.

Hermia uses anaphora three times in the first scene, and each use catches her in a different emotional state. Picking up on Theseus’s analogy of the rose distilled, which “Grows, lives, and dies in single blessedness”, Hermia stubbornly refuses to obey her father’s will, saying: “So will I grow, so live, so die, my lord” (1.1.79), before consenting to marry Demetrius. When she and Lysander are left alone, she expresses the depth of her dismay in a series of exclamations which combine anaphora, antithesis, isocolon, and ecphrōnesis (exclamation): “O cross!—too high to be enthralled to low. . . . O spite!—too old to be engaged to young. . . . O hell!—to choose love by another’s eyes” (1.1.140). Greatly comforted by Lysander’s
suggestion that they elope, Hermia uses anaphora once again, this time in combination with the heaping figure (congeries), and euche (a vow or oath to keep a promise), as she promises to meet Lysander in the woods in words that emphasize her fervent faithfulness in love:

    I swear to thee by Cupid’s strongest bow,
    By his best arrow with the golden head,
    By the simplicity of Venus’ doves,
    By that which knitteth souls and prospers loves,
    And by that fire which burned the Carthage queen
    When the false Trojan under sail was seen;
    By all the vows that ever men have broke . . .

(1.1.169-175)

Some of Hermia’s choices of oaths here may be paradoxical, but, as she piles oath on oath in the rhythm provided by anaphora, she leaves little doubt of her joyful acceptance of Lysander’s suggestion.

Ironically, much later, when things have gone so wrong in the woods, Lysander will ridicule Hermia by using some of the very figures with which she expressed devotion. While Hermia combines anaphora, congeries, and euche, Lysander combines anaphora, congeries, and meiosis (which belittles, often through a trope of one word): “Get you gone, you dwarf,/ You *minimus* of hind’ring knot-grass made,/ You bead, you acorn” (3.2.327-329). He has earlier used anaphora and auxesis to profess his love for Helena to whom he refers as, “My love, my life, my soul, fair Helena” (3.2.246). Whether employed to express love or hate, by one character or another, Shakespeare’s frequent use of anaphora helps to create a tone of adolescent urgency in the lovers’ protestations, and, by echoing Hermia’s syntactic structures in Lysander’s speeches, Shakespeare gives an interchangeable quality to the language of the lovers which is in keeping with the interchangeable quality of the lovers themselves.

Nowhere is the rhythmic effect of anaphora more noticeable than in the speech of the fairies. Indeed, the airy speed of the fairies’ utterances is often achieved
through specific combinations of figures. The opening speech of the First Fairy, for example, runs trippingly off the tongue as a result of its combined and repeated use of anaphora, asyndeton, isocolon, alliteration, and homoioteleuton:

Over hill, over dale,
    Thorough bush, thorough briar,
Over park, over pale,
    Thorough flood, thorough fire . . . .

(2.1.2-5)

In a speech that provides a perfect example of the range of rhythmic effects of various figures of diction, the dramatist plays with the pace of Puck’s words as Puck plays with the terrified rude mechanicals:

I’ll follow you, I’ll lead you about a round,
    Through bog, through bush, through brake, through briar.
Sometime a horse I’ll be, sometime a hound,
    A hog, a headless bear, sometime a fire,
And neigh, and bark, and grunt, and roar, and burn,
    Like horse, hound, hog, bear, fire, at every turn.

(3.1.101-106)

This speech includes several instances of anaphora, alliteration, isocolon, congeries, and asyndeton. These are the figures that establish the fast pace of the speech, but Shakespeare plays with that pace by using zeugma in omitting the verb in line 103, and by replacing asyndeton first with polysyndeton (the addition of conjunctions) and then with brachylogia (which differs from asyndeton in that it omits conjunctions between words rather than between clauses). The polysyndeton of “And neigh, and bark, and grunt, and roar, and burn” helps to give a sense of length to the list of terrors that the mechanicals must face, while the brachylogia of “Like horse, hound, hog, bear, fire, at every turn” captures the lightning speed with which their oppressor shifts his location. The word “like” at the beginning of this list suggests that the list includes a series of similes, but, in scenes featuring supernatural characters such as fairies, the distinction between figurative language
and descriptions of reality is sometimes blurry. The rhetorical traits of this blurry distinction shall be further examined in chapter 4.

The omission of conjunctions between clauses (asyndeton) or between words (brachylogia) tends to increase the pace of a speech, while the addition of conjunctions between each of the items in a list (polysyndeton) tends to slow the pace down. If polysyndeton is carried on through many clauses, then the repetition of conjunctions tends to draw attention to itself. Two extended examples of the figure in *Merry Wives* demonstrate the range of tones that can be created with polysyndeton. The first example is taken from a song. It should be noted that most of the songs in the comedies achieve their rhythmic effect, in part, through the combination of several figures of diction. One of the fairies’ songs ends as follows:

Pinch him, fairies, mutually,
Pinch him for his villainy.
Pinch him, and burn him, and turn him about,
Till candles and starlight and moonshine be out.

(5.5.98-101)

This song by children dressed as fairies is somewhat different in tone from the speeches delivered by the “real” fairies in *Dream*. The above excerpt begins with anaphora and isocolon, but the rhythm changes in the last two lines, where the use of polysyndeton creates an anapestic meter and adds to the nursery-rhyme cadences at the close of the song. There is a lightness to these lines which is opposite in effect to the heaviness created by the use of polysyndeton later in the same scene. After Falstaff’s villainies have been exposed, Ford, Evans, Page, and Mistress Page claim it is absurd to suppose the two women would ever have taken delight in Falstaff’s company. They pummel him with a series of insults in the form of similes, and the rhythm of their lines comes from anaphora and polysyndeton:

Ford: What, a hodge-pudding? A bag of flax?
Mistress Page: A puffed man?
Page: Old, cold, withered, and of intolerable entrails?
Ford: And one that is as slanderous as Satan?
Page: And as poor as Job?
Ford: And as wicked as his wife?
Evans: And given to fornications, and to taverns, and sack, and wine, and metheglins, and to drinkings, and swearings and starings, pribbles and prabbles?
Falstaff: Well, I am your theme. You have the start of me. I am dejected. I am not able to answer the Welsh flannel. Ignorance itself is a plummet o’er me. Use me as you will.

(5.5.151-163)

Strictly speaking, only Evans uses polysyndeton in this exchange, for only his line includes a series of conjunctions. Since drama is by nature interactive, however, characters can build on the statements made by others and thereby create a figure in dialogue that does not exist in any single speech. In the above exchange, for example, the characters jointly create the figure polysyndeton: they clearly enjoy adding to the ever-growing list of Falstaff’s faults, and thus they pick up on the structure of each other’s insults. In Evans’ enthusiasm for this rhetorical game, he gets carried away with polysyndeton and continues to list Falstaff’s offences even after he has run out of things to add. He resorts to repetition and rhyme and gibberish in order to keep the list growing. In Falstaff’s response to the above series of insults, he acknowledges he is the butt of the characters’ rhetorical joke, but not without noting the characteristic linguistic ineptitude of Evans. Falstaff’s rhetorical skill is evident even as he admits defeat.

Whether or not characters are conscious of the figures they use or hear, there can be no doubt that in many scenes characters consciously or unconsciously adopt the figures used by others, as demonstrated in the relay-polysyndeton of the passage cited above. Countless examples of the same phenomenon could be given, especially from the early comedies which tend to make heavy use of the figures of repetition. In Comedy of Errors, for example, Antipholus of Syracuse attempts to comfort his alarmed servant by responding in rhetorical kind to Dromio’s series of questions:
Dromio S: Do you know me sir? Am I Dromio? Am I your man? Am I myself?
Antipholus S: Thou art Dromio, thou art my man, thou art thyself.
Dromio S: I am an ass, I am a woman’s man, and besides myself.
Antipholus S: What woman’s man? and how besides thyself?
Dromio S: Marry, sir, besides myself I am due to a woman, one that claims me, one that haunts me, one that will have me.

(3.2.72-78)

This passage fluctuates between figures of self-doubt, such as aporia (a doubting or deliberating with oneself), and figures that attempt to give a structure to chaos, such as anaphora, isocolon, and asyndeton. Antipholus reassures Dromio by stating a list of seemingly undeniable facts, but the facts he lists are cast into doubt by recent circumstances, and thus he is left with his own list of questions. The figures of diction in this dialogue help both to express and to control Dromio’s growing panic: a panic that erupts in his use of auxesis as he anticipates the terrors that await him at the hands of the woman who “claims . . . haunts . . . [and] will have” him.

The adoption of each other’s figures is extreme in this passage for it continues through several lines. Much more common is the echoing of a figure in a single-lined response, as heard in Dromio of Syracuse’s sarcastic mimicry of his twin’s calling of the servants:

Dromio E.: Maud, Bridget, Marian, Cicely, Gillian, Ginn!
Dromio S.: Mome, malthorse, capon, coxcomb, idiot, patch . . . .

(3.1.31-32)

By mixing brachylogia with meiosis here, Dromio of Syracuse ridicules his brother by imitating the rhythms of his speech. Such rhetorical echoing is not mentioned in the rhetoric manuals for they treat oration as monologue. In dramatic dialogue, however, one of the noteworthy rhetorical skills of certain speakers is the ability to respond immediately to the rhetoric of others. In later chapters, we shall examine the skills of some of the Shakespearean characters who are particularly good at this sort of rhetorical improvisation. At this point, however, the focus is on the ways in
which the figures of diction regularly assist characters in their extemporaneous responses to others.

One of the most widely used figures of response is isocolon. Characters frequently pick up the length and structure of sentences they hear, and the tone created by such imitation can be pensive, courteous, emphatic, or even sarcastic. The variation in tone depends not just on the character speaking, but also on the other figures with which isocolon is used. A few examples from Shrew demonstrate the range of effects that can be achieved through characters’ conscious imitation of the structure of the sentences they hear.

In the Induction scene, the Lord instructs his attendants to heap upon the unsuspecting Sly offers of bountiful service. In the metarhetorical foolery that follows, the servingmen frequently pick up on the rhythms in each other’s lines in their improvised attempts to create a tone of great formality. “Will’t please your lordship drink a cup of sack?” asks the First Servingman, and the Second Servingman echoes, “Will’t please your honour taste of these conserves?” (Induction 2, 1-2) A few lines later, in mock concern for Sly, the Second Servingman once again imitates a line of one of his cohorts:

Third Servingman: O, this it is that makes your lady mourn.
Second Servingman: O, this it is that makes your servants droop.
(Induction 2, 24-25)

Imitating the statements of his colleagues assists the Second Servingman in two ways: it allows him to maintain the tone of obsequious servitude created by his fellows, and it also functions as an improvisational tool providing him with a structure for his extemporaneous remarks. In his use of anaphora and isocolon, the Second Servingman demonstrates that he is dependent, rhetorically speaking, on his colleagues. In a later scene, however, isocolon is used by another servant as a means of asserting his independence.
Grumio frequently mocks the statements of others by mimicking them. His favourite target of mockery is Gremio. He often insults Gremio in sarcastic asides, and these asides have a predictable structure, as is evident in the following example:

Gremio: O this learning, what a thing it is!
Grumio: (aside) O this woodcock, what an ass it is!
(1.2.157-158)

Only a few lines later, Grumio uses the same rhetorical strategy in his response to Gremio’s comments on the fair Bianca:

Gremio: Beloved of me, and that my deeds shall prove.
Grumio: (aside) And that his bags shall prove.
(1.2.172-173)

By repeating Gremio’s words with an added bawdy pun on the word “bags”, Grumio effectively turns Gremio’s statements into examples of the figures syllepsis (in which an unrepeated word has two different meanings simultaneously), isocolon, and symplece. His repetitions have a very different tone from those of the Second Servingman, and this tone comes from his sarcasm, a trope known to rhetoricians as sarcasmus.

Petruchio also uses isocolon with an unexpected twist, but he has the confidence to speak it aloud. When he meets Katherina, he attempts to assert his supremacy through a series of rhetorical strategies. Katherina insults him, but he is quick to respond in kind:

Katherina: Asses are made to bear, and so are you.
Petruchio: Women are made to bear, and so are you.
(2.1.200-201)

Petruchio’s response includes isocolon, epistrophe, and astheismus (a figure of reply in which the answerer catches a certain word and throws it back to the first speaker with an unexpected twist). Katherina and Petruchio often repeat each other’s words as they vie for verbal supremacy. In this play about taming, the figures of repetition are frequently evident as instruments of both defiance and obedience. The shift
from one to the other is best seen in act 4, scene 5, in which Katherina finally decides to abide by the idiosyncratic rules of Petruchio’s rhetorical game. On the way to Baptista’s house, Petruchio tests Katherina’s obedience by saying, “I say it is the moon that shines so bright”, to which she responds with a defiant use of sympleco: “I know it is the sun that shines so bright” (4.5.4-5). Only a few lines later, however, she realizes that such defiance will not serve her own turn, and thus she shifts her rhetorical strategy and uses the same figure to express obedience:

Petruchio: I say it is the moon.
Katherina: I know it is the moon.

(4.5.16-17)

At the end of the play, Vincentio and Lucentio summarize their views on obedience and disobedience in a couplet which provides an example of isocolon used with epiphonema (an epigrammatic summary):

Vincentio: ’Tis a good hearing when children are toward.
Lucentio: But a harsh hearing when women are froward.

(5.2.182-183)

As is evident in the examples given above, characters frequently and consciously imitate each other’s syntactic structures, and in doing so they create figures in their dialogue that do not exist in their individual lines. This form of rhetorical improvisation is uniquely dramatic. Politicians and lawyers are required to respond to the comments of others, but their responses usually take the form of prepared orations delivered as monologues. Only in dialogue can a speaker develop and use the skill of immediate response. Many of Shakespeare’s characters have a metarhetorical awareness that is evident not only in what they say but also in the ways in which they respond to what they hear. One of the dramatic functions of the figures of diction, therefore, is to flag the metarhetorical sensibilities of characters as those characters consciously imitate the rhetorical patterns of their cohorts.
In the examples given above, we have heard the figures of diction used to create tones ranging from obedience to defiance to sarcasm. These figures are also frequently used to create a sense of urgency or panic. In Shrew, for example, Vincentio’s mounting alarm at finding his son missing is expressed through numerous figures of repetition: “What am I, sir? Nay, what are you, sir? O immortal gods! O fine villain! A silken doublet, a velvet hose, a scarlet cloak, and a captain hat! O, I am undone, I am undone” (5.1.57-60). A few lines later he exclaims, “O, my son, my son!” (5.1.79-80). Throughout this scene, as in these speeches, his exclamations take their form from anaphora, asyndeton, and epizeuxis. His rhythms are unwittingly adopted by Baptista (“You mistake, sir, you mistake, sir” 5.1.70) and by the Pedant (“Away, away” 5.1.73) as the chaos of the scene increases. Vincentio’s tongue-tied panic is well expressed through the figures of repetition, but only a few lines later these same figures will help to establish a renewed sense of control when Lucentio appears and former hierarchies of power are restored:

Lucentio: (kneeling) Pardon, sweet father.
Vincentio: Lives my sweet son? (ploce)
Bianca: Pardon, dear father. (symploce)
Baptista: How hast thou offended? Where is Lucentio?
Lucentio: Here’s Lucentio, (epistrophe)
Right son to the right Vincentio, (ploce, homoioteleuton)
That have by marriage made thy daughter mine, (alliteration)
While counterfeit supposes bleared thine eyne. (homoioiteleuton)

(5.1.101-106)

This dialogue also includes several examples of epithet, but it is the figures of repetition that emphasize the restoration of order.7

The rhythmic effect of the figures of diction is best seen in isolation in All’s Well. In Act 4 scene 1, several soldiers terrorize the kidnapped Paroles in a nonsensical language they have invented for the occasion. Even in their gibberish, the effects of epizeuxis, diacope, and epanalepsis are apparent:
First Lord: Throca movousus, cargo, cargo, cargo.
Soldiers: Cargo, cargo, cargo, villianda par corbo, cargo.
Paroles: O, ransom, ransom! Do not hide mine eyes.
First Soldier: Boskos thromuldo boskos.

(4.1.66-69)

In this dialogue, the figures of diction perform two of the functions previously discussed: they create a sense of urgency, and they assist characters with their rhetorical improvisation. Like the servingmen in the Induction scene of Shrew, the soldiers in this scene are playing a metarhetorical game, and they sometimes find it easier to repeat words than to create a stream of new words in their invented language. In this scene, Shakespeare uses the figures of repetition only for their rhythmic and tonal effects, for the words he is repeating have no meaning.

Shakespeare’s metarhetorical awareness of the rhythmic effects of certain figures is also evident in his parody of these effects in As You Like It. At several points in the play, he draws attention to certain strategies of rhetorical repetition by using them excessively. Orlando’s extremely bad poetry, for example, is regularly ridiculed for its heavy use of end rhyme. Jacques mocks the soothing epizeuxis of Amiens’s “Come hither, come hither, come hither” by adding a verse to Amiens’s song that includes the repetition of a meaningless word: “Ducdame, ducdame, ducdame” (2.6.50). When asked what this “ducdame” means, his mockery becomes explicit as he explains to the gathered circle of rapt listeners: “Tis a Greek invocation to call fools into a circle” (2.3.55).

The most extended parody of the rhythms of repetition is found near the end of the play as Silvius, Phoebe, Orlando, and Rosalind profess their love. This passage is the longest example of rhetorical mimicry in all of Shakespeare’s comedies. For twenty-two lines, the characters engage in relay-anaphora and isocolon as they repeat each other’s syntax in their professions of love. The series of sentences “And so am I for Phoebe./ And I for Ganymede./ And I for Rosalind./ And I for no
woman” (5.2.80-84) is exactly repeated three times, and the repetitive chanting ends with the following exchange:

        Phoebe: (to Rosalind) If this be so, why blame you me to love you?  
        Silvius: (to Phoebe) If this be so, why blame you me to love you?  
        Orlando: If this be so, why blame you me to love you?  
        Rosalind: Why do you speak too, “Why blame you me to love you?”  
        Orlando: To her that is not here nor doth not hear.  
        Rosalind: Pray you, no more of this, ‘tis like the howling of Irish wolves against the moon.  
        (5.2.98-105)

Caught in a rhetorical trance, Orlando imitates the questions of the others even though he is under the impression that his love is not present. Rosalind draws attention to his rhetorical inertia by asking to whom he is speaking, and she ends the long series of repetitions by mocking it. Ironically, in the same speech in which she ridicules the rhythms of heavy repetition, she uses symplece, one of the most heavy-handed of the repetitive devices, to reiterate her series of promises:

   Rosalind: . . . Tomorrow meet me all together. (To Phoebe) I will marry you if ever I marry woman, and I’ll be married tomorrow. (To Orlando) I will satisfy you if ever I satisfy man, and you shall be married tomorrow. (To Silvius) I will content you if what pleases you contents you, and you shall be married tomorrow. (To Orlando) As you love Rosalind, meet. (To Silvius) As you love Phoebe, meet. And as I love no woman, I’ll meet.  
   (5.2.107-114)

Like the repetition quoted above from act 5 scene 1 of Shrew, the extensive use of repetition in this scene first indicates the characters’ loss of control and then helps to establish the return to order.

   The notion that figures of diction can be used to create a range of tones is far from new, for the tonal versatility of the figures is emphasized in both classical and Renaissance rhetoric manuals. In Peacham’s 1593 edition of The Garden of Eloquence, for example, he describes the uses of epizeuxis in terms that acknowledge the tonal range of this figure: “in respect of pleasant affections, it may be compared to the quaver in music, in respect of sorrow, to a double sigh of the
heart, in respect of anger, to a double stab with a weapon's point” (48). A few pages later, when writing of isocolon (which he calls compar), he explains that isocolon is one of the most artificial rhetorical devices, for it “is most straightly tied to a number and proportion”. He cautions against its use in grave or serious causes, “for then it may bewray affectation, which in gravitie is disliked” (59); he goes on to explain that isocolon is “more agreeable for pleasant matters than grave causes, and more fit for Commedies than Tragedies” (59).

Certainly the uses of isocolon cited above are well suited to comedy. Indeed, the humour of the quoted scenes comes, in part, from the very sort of affectation that Peacham mentions. There is often a metarhetorical awareness in the characters’ appropriation of each other’s speech patterns. Characters self-consciously imitate others for a variety of reasons: to demonstrate obedience or defiance, to excite or to soothe, to flatter or to insult. There can be little doubt that Shakespeare understood the various rhythmic and tonal effects of the figures of diction, either consciously or unconsciously, for his characters understand them. As characters self-consciously imitate the language they hear, they encourage us as audience members to share their metarhetorical sensibility.

The figures of diction assist Shakespeare in creating a range of tonal and rhythmic effects. Similarly, the figures of description aid the dramatist as he introduces characters or sets dramatic actions in time and space. Comparing the use of descriptive figures in the early and late comedies allows us to see both the diverse functions of these figures and the increasing sophistication of Shakespeare’s rhetorical skill.

Unlike the orthographical figures, or the figures of repetition, the descriptive figures do not lend themselves to easy classification. Although classical, Renaissance, and twentieth-century rhetoricians have acknowledged the descriptive functions of many figures, the methods of classifying these devices have varied
widely. Peacham lists eighteen figures of description in the 1593 edition of his book, but Sister Miriam Joseph lists only ten. She introduces her list with the following explanation:

Hypotyposis, or enargia, was the generic name given to figures of lively description or counterfeit representation, indispensable to creating the illusion of reality essential to drama. The Elizabethans recognized many species, each with its own name signifying that is was a description of persons, manners, gestures, speech, events, places, or times, either real or imaginary.

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The ten figures of description listed by Joseph include: prosopographia (the lively description of a person); prosopopoeia, which we would call personification (the attribution of human qualities to dumb or inanimate creatures); characterismus (the description of body or mind); ethopoeia (the description of natural propensities, manners and affections, such as seeking to win favour by flattery); mimesis (the imitation of gesture, pronunciation, utterance); dialogismus (the framing of speech suitable to the person speaking); pragmatographia (the vivid description of an action or event); chronographia (the description of times); topographia (the description of places); and topothesia (the description of imaginary places) (126-130). To this list I would add two other frequently used descriptive figures: anamnesis (a recital of matters past, most often of woes or injuries) and encomium (high praise and commendation of a person or thing by extolling the inherent qualities or adjuncts).

Although Shakespeare uses all of the descriptive figures listed by Joseph, he uses some of them much more often than others. Clearly dialogismus is evident in all of his plays (Joseph 128), and he regularly uses personification. Of the figures listed above, the others that he uses most often are pragmatographia, and the two figures of character description which are hard to distinguish from one another, prosopographia and characterismus.
The descriptive figures draw attention to themselves because they tend to be very long. It is not unusual to find a thirty- or forty-line description of a person or event. The expository functions of such descriptions are commonly noted. It is easier to report a battle than to stage it, and thus battles, like other action-packed events, are often described rather than shown. Similarly, the fastest way to fill in the antecedent action of a play is to provide a brief description of relevant past events in an expository speech near the beginning of the play. We need only think of the Chorus's early speeches in Henry V to realize the dramatic usefulness of pragmatographia. When examining Shakespeare's use of descriptive figures in the comedies, however, two things become quickly apparent: he uses these devices to fulfil more than just expository functions, and as he matures as a playwright, his use of these devices becomes much more sophisticated.

In order to examine Shakespeare's evolving use of these devices, it will be necessary to refer to several of the plays. A good place to begin is with Comedy of Errors, for in this early comedy he uses the figures of description in more traditional ways than in any of the later plays. Copying both the style and story-line of a Roman comedy, he uses rhetorical devices similar to those found in The Menaechmi. Nowhere in all of his work is the expository function of the descriptive figures more evident than in the first scene of Comedy of Errors. The Duke repeatedly urges Egeon to explain how he came to be in Ephesus, and Egeon responds with a story which takes one hundred and four lines to tell. His anamnesis, or recital of past woes, is far longer than any other example of the figure to be found in the comedies. It provides the antecedent action of the play through the mouth of one character. Other standard uses of description are seen in the final scene of the play. Through a series of lengthy examples of pragmatographia, Adriana (5.1.136-160), the Messenger (168-177), and Antipholus of Ephesus (214-254) explain to the Duke their versions of the day's events. Their uses of this device combine the two most
common functions of pragmatographia: to give information about past events, and to render unnecessary the complicated staging of events such as rushing from house to house, burning the beard of the Doctor, and being bound and thrown in jail. Through anamnesis, the Abbess resolves the events of the play by confirming that she is the long-lost Emilia (5.1.355-361).

In no other play does Shakespeare use the figures of description in such purely expository ways. Even in Two Gentlemen he is already experimenting with variations of these devices. Launce’s description of the heartlessness of his dog, for example, combines pragmatographia with comic mimesis as he acts out the event of his departure using his shoes to play the roles of absent loved ones (2.3.1-27). He seems to tell this story for its expository value, but, as audience members, we value the story itself far less than the entertainment derived from hearing Launce’s unique rendition of events. Later in the play, Proteus uses pragmatographia while describing to Valentine Silvia’s grief at hearing of Valentine’s banishment (3.1.221-235). Proteus’s detailed account of events provides a good example of the vividness of description associated with the descriptive figures:

A sea of melting pearl, which some call tears;
Those at her father’s churlish feet she tendered,
With them, upon her knees, her humble self,
Wringing her hands, whose whiteness so became them
As if but now they waxed pale for woe.
But neither bended knees, pure hands held up,
Sad sighs, deep groans, nor silver-shedding tears
Could penetrate her uncompassionate sire.

(3.1.223-230)

Unlike the pragmatographia found in Comedy of Errors, this speech does more than just relay events; it reinforces the duplicity of Proteus. Attracted even to the image of Silvia’s grief, he is able to provide a detailed description to his supposed friend of intense pain which Proteus himself has helped to cause. Similarly, the pragmatographia of the disguised Julia’s description of playing a lamentable part in
a Pentecost pageant is of dramatic value not as exposition but as a means of evoking Silvia’s sympathy for the present/absent Julia (4.4.149-163).

In addition to using pragmatographia to provide antecedent action, entertainment value, or dramatic irony, as seen in the various examples given above, Shakespeare also employs this device to heighten our anticipation of events that have yet to occur. With only one or two exceptions, such as Proteus’s decision to reveal Valentine’s plans of elopement (2.6.33-41), all instances of pragmatographia in both Comedy of Errors and Two Gentlemen describe events which have already taken place. In Shrew, however, we see Shakespeare experimenting with different time-frames in his use of descriptive figures. He describes not only events that have already occurred, but also those currently taking place, and those that are yet to come. The dramatic function of the description varies with each time-frame.

Three uses of pragmatographia to describe events that have just taken place include Hortensio’s story of being hit over the head with a lute by the petulant Katherina (2.1.147-158), Gremio’s account of Petruchio’s behaviour in church during the wedding (3.2.156-179), and Grumio’s description of Petruchio and Katherina’s muddy trip home (4.1.58-74). Reporting these events rather than showing them provides rich story-telling opportunities for those who tell the tales, and removes the need to provide numerous lutes, a beaten priest, and muddy horses in the staging of such active scenes. Unlike descriptions of events that happened many years ago, however, these descriptions serve to prepare for a coming scene by explaining something that has just taken place. During Hortensio’s complaint, we are allowed to focus on Petruchio’s response to Katherina’s reported behaviour rather than on the behaviour itself. We watch to see if he will change his mind about wooing Kate. Our anticipation of their first meeting is heightened by knowing he is aware of Katherina’s temper, just as our curiosity about Petruchio’s outrageous behaviour is piqued by Gremio’s description of Petruchio’s complete lack of control in the
church. Grumio’s account of the trip home mixes pragmaticographia with paralipsis (a figure which, while pretending to pass over a matter, tells it most effectively). Annoyed with Curtis for interrupting him, Grumio implies that he will not tell the events which he is in the midst of describing:

Tell thou the tale. But hadst thou not crossed me, thou shouldst have heard how her horse fell, and she under her horse; thou shouldst have heard in how miry a place, how she was bemoiled, how he left her with the horse upon her, how he beat me because her horse stumbled, how she waded through the dirt to pluck him off me: . . . with many things of worthy memory, which now shall die in oblivion, and thou return unexperienced to thy grave.

(4.1.63-74)

As previously mentioned, the figures of description tend to be very long. Even with several of the middle lines omitted, Grumio has lots he wants to tell. His description prepares the servants and the audience for the bedraggled entrance of Petruchio and Katherina, and Grumio’s feigned reluctance to tell the story helps to establish his position in the power hierarchy of the play: he lords it over the younger servants, both physically and rhetorically, just as Petruchio lords it over him.

While Hortensio, Gremio, and Grumio tell of events that have recently taken place, Biondello and Curtis tell of events that are in the midst of happening. In a lengthy example of the figure known as teichoscopia (which consists of a character onstage describing, to the audience or to another character, an event going on offshore), Biondello gives a detailed account of Petruchio’s shocking wedding clothes as Petruchio makes his way toward the assembled wedding guests (3.2.43-68). Biondello takes great pleasure in describing Petruchio’s garb, but his detailed description has the effect of drawing to our attention Petruchio’s concerted effort to be thoroughly disrespectful. Later, the thoroughness of Petruchio’s baiting of Katherina is reported by Curtis, who provides the details of the newlyweds’ offshore behaviour while Petruchio is in Katherina’s chamber “making a sermon of continency to her” (4.1.170-174). Petruchio’s behaviour is clearly planned in
advance, as he explains in a pragmatographia of future events (4.1.184-196). As he shares with the audience the details of his plans to deprive Katherina of sleep, he reveals his strategic attempt “to kill a wife with kindness” (4.1.195).

Even in the earliest comedies, there is considerable evidence of Shakespeare’s experimentation with the figures of description. Although he continues to use these figures, he rarely uses them in the later plays for purely expository reasons, and the figures get considerably shorter as he finds other more dramatically interesting ways to relate antecedent action. When he does use lengthy figures of description in the later comedies, it is for aesthetic rather than pragmatic reasons. In Measure, for example, Pompey mixes pragmatographia with tautologia in his lengthy prologue to the awaited description of what happened to Mistress Elbow. In The Artistry of Shakespeare’s Prose, Brian Vickers refers to Pompey’s description as

\[
\ldots \text{a masterly example of garrulousness in a rich tradition: the basic failing, moving off the point to establish irrelevant circumstantial detail, is one used for Mistress Quickly, and the technique of being constantly interrupted recalls the deflation of Pandarus. But there are some new ideas, \ldots and great theatrical confidence by Shakespeare in daring to prolong the joke for over a hundred lines.}
\]

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Unlike the long descriptions of events in the early plays, Pompey’s pragmatographia has nothing to do with exposition. As Vickers explains, part of the humour of the scene is that the story of what actually happened to Elbow’s wife is never told (317). Angelo tires of Pompey’s seemingly endless story, and leaves the room before hearing the case against Pompey, thereby allowing Pompey to avoid Angelo’s judgement. Through Pompey’s lengthy pragmatographia, we learn more about Pompey’s skills as an artful dodger than we learn of the events he is claiming to describe.

In many of the later comedies, Shakespeare uses figures of description to outline future events as a means of heightening our anticipation of scenes to come. In Much
Ado, for example, we await Claudio’s fierce rejection of Hero at the altar because Borachio has already described exactly what Claudio plans to do (3.3.151-161). Similarly, in All’s Well, we anticipate Paroles’s response to being kidnapped because the Second Lord has accurately predicted Paroles’s utter cowardice (3.6.22-33).

Some anticipated events take place only in the minds of the speakers, and thus the figures of description often reveal characters’ fantasies. In Twelfth Night, for example, Malvolio reveals the self-love of which Maria has accused him as he imagines his future power and privilege. In a detailed description of more than twenty lines, he combines pragmatographia with a mimesis of his own imagined self as he muses on his future life as Olivia’s husband:

Having been three months married to her, sitting in my state—... Calling my officers about me, in my branched velvet gown, having come from a day-bed where I have left Olivia sleeping... And then to have the humour of state and—after a demure travel of regard, telling them I know my place, as I would they should do theirs—to ask for my kinsman Toby.

(2.5.41-52)

Like most figures of description, Malvolio’s pragmatographia is both lengthy and detailed. The section quoted above forms less than half of his reverie. He savours every detail of his imagined power over Sir Toby, and it is the length and detail of Malvolio’s description that give these lines figurative status and set them apart from brief references to future events.

A much more serious description of an imagined future event occurs in Measure when Claudio describes to Isabella his fears of the tortures to come after death:

Ay, but to die, and go we know not where,
To lie in cold obstruction, and to rot,
This sensible warm motion to become
A kneaded clod; and the delighted spirit
To bathe in fiery floods or to reside
In thrilling region of thick-ribbed ice,
To be imprisoned in the viewless winds
And blown with restless violence round about
The pendent world, or to be worse than worst
Of those that lawless and incertain thought
Imagine howling—'tis too horrible.

(3.1.121-131)

This speech is similar to Hamlet’s “To be or not to be” soliloquy, in that the speaker combines pragmatographia with topothesia (the description of an imagined place) as he relates his fears of the events to be endured beyond the bourn from which no traveller returns. Unlike fantastical descriptions offered for their own sakes, such as Mercutio’s Queen Mab speech in Romeo and Juliet, the pragmatographia of both Malvolio and Claudio are directly relevant to the dramatic action at hand: Malvolio’s fantasies reveal the extent of his vulnerability to Maria’s carefully crafted trap for him, and Claudio’s fear of death fuels the urgency of his plea for Isabella’s help. Unlike the dialogue-arresting length of Shakespeare’s earliest experiments with pragmatographia, as found in Egeon’s seemingly endless explanation of events past, the descriptive passages in later plays, such as the speeches of Malvolio and Claudio cited above, fit seamlessly into the scenes in which they occur.

Some of Shakespeare’s most interesting uses of pragmatographia in the later comedies involve more than one character. In Twelfth Night, for example, the identities of Sebastian and Viola are confirmed by the fact that they share the same childhood memories; Viola begins a description of her father’s death in a pragmatographia that Sebastian quickly interrupts in immediate recognition of his sister’s words (5.1.236-242). In Much Ado two sets of characters have great fun as they jointly create a memory of events which never took place. In a scene including pragmatographia, mimesis, encomium, and characterismus, Claudio, Leonato, and Don Pedro invent a series of events for the benefit of the eavesdropping Benedick (2.3.131-207). As they relate detailed stories of Beatrice’s supposed confessions of love, they praise Beatrice and criticize Benedick in their attempt to bring the two together. Hero and Ursula use a similar strategy in the baiting of Beatrice. Instructing Ursula on the persuasive powers of encomium, Hero says, “When I do
name [Benedick], let it be they part/ To praise him more than ever man did merit” (3.1.18-19). While Beatrice eavesdrops, they alternate between encomium and characterismus as they combine praise for Benedick with a series of lengthy descriptions of Beatrice's proud and scornful nature (3.1.44-99). In response to these criticisms, Beatrice resolves to change her ways, and thus the descriptions achieve their intended effect: “Stand I condemned for pride and scorn so much?/ Contempt farewell; and maiden pride, adieu” (3.1.108-109).

From exposition to entertainment, and from foreshadowing to fantasizing, the figures of description clearly perform a wide range of dramatic functions, and that range increases as Shakespeare matures as a playwright. Another group of dramatically useful figures includes various sorts of oaths, and thus we come to the last of the three categories of functional figures to be examined in this chapter.

A group of rhetorical figures that might be loosely categorized as oaths helps to shape our sense of the characters we see on stage. This group includes four figures: orcos (an oath affirming that one speaks the truth), euche (a vow to keep a promise), eustathia (a pledge of constancy), and asphalia (the offer of surety for another). In a study of Shakespeare's rhetorical figures, oaths warrant specific attention not only because they provide so much information about the characters speaking, but also because, of all types of rhetorical figures, they are the ones to which characters most frequently make metarhetorical references. Clearly a character's trustworthiness is influenced by whether or not he or she keeps promises, but character traits are also revealed by other aspects of oath-taking. It is often useful to consider to whom an oath is spoken, the intended goal of taking the oath, by what a speaker chooses to swear, and whether or not the listener puts any faith in the speaker's oath.

Shakespeare's characters often take oaths, and they pay a great deal of attention to the oaths taken by themselves and by others. As they carefully evaluate the oaths they speak and hear, they draw attention to their own metarhetorical awareness, and
this awareness can serve to increase or to undermine their own credibility as speakers. In taking an oath, a speaker promises in specific words either that an honest truth is being spoken, or that specific deeds will be done. The rhetorical efficacy of an oath depends entirely on the ethos of the speaker: a simple promise made by a respected speaker can offer reassurance, while an eloquent oath spoken by someone regarded as untrustworthy serves only to increase a listener’s distrust.

Shakespeare’s use of the figures that constitute oaths is so frequent that only a very limited study of those devices is possible here. The use of oaths in the comedies will be considered with particular attention to three specific questions. When taking an oath, by what do specific characters swear? What sorts of characters most often make and break oaths? How are oaths received by other characters?

Even before we know whether or not a speaker will keep his oath, we learn important information about certain characters from the wording of their oaths. While many use the generic oath “by my troth”, others swear by something they regard as precious or sacred. For actors, in particular, a careful attention to their characters’ oaths is fruitful, for the oaths taken by Shakespeare’s characters often reveal what the speakers hold most dear. While examples of character-revealing oaths could be offered from almost any of the comedies, space permits examples from only a few.

Even if we temporarily put aside Proteus’s sophistry, to which we shall return later, we find that several characters in Two Gentlemen reveal certain aspects of themselves through oaths. Julia swears by her modesty (1.2.41), Speed by his honesty (2.5.1), and the Duke “by the honour of [his] ancestry” (5.4.135). The Host swears “by my halidom” (4.2.128), and as Kurt Schlueter explains, this is a conventional oath which was “originally a reference to the relics on which oaths were sworn”. When Proteus attempts to seduce Silvia with music, she chides him for his falseness and swears “by this pale queen of night” (4.2.93) that she despises
him for his wrongful suit. In swearing by Diana, the goddess of chastity, Silvia emphasizes that Proteus's attempts at seduction are destined to fail.11

Graziano in Merchant also swears “by yonder moon” (5.1.142) that he gave his wife’s ring to a judge’s clerk and not to a lover, but, in swearing by the changeable moon in this situation, he merely emphasizes his unreliability. When Romeo swears “by yonder blessed moon”, Juliet urges him to take a different oath in a conversation that demonstrates the explicit attention Shakespeare’s characters often give to each other’s oaths:

Juliet: O swear not by the moon, th’inconstant moon, That monthly changes in her circled orb, Lest that thy love prove likewise variable. Romeo: What shall I swear by? Juliet: Do not swear at all. Or if thou wilt, swear by thy gracious self, Which is the god of my idolatry, And I’ll believe thee.

(2.2.109-115)

Romeo is true to his word, but, in giving away Nerissa’s ring, Graziano has already proved untrustworthy. Bassiano, who is equally culpable, attempts to comfort Portia with an oath which she rejects as unreliable:

Bassiano: . . . I swear to thee, even by thine own fair eyes, Wherein I see myself-- Portia: Mark you but that! In both my eyes he doubly sees himself, In each eye one. Swear by your double self, And there’s an oath of credit. Bassanio: Nay, but hear me. Pardon this fault, and by my soul I swear I never more will break an oath with thee.

(5.1.242-248)

For Portia and Nerissa, the entire conversation about the rings is a metarhetorical exercise designed to draw their husbands’ attention to the importance of keeping their oaths. They know, of course, exactly to whom the men have given the rings, as they demonstrate by producing the rings once the lesson on oath-keeping is
complete. Shylock needs no such lesson. He swears "by Jacob's staff" (2.5.36), and later explains he has "sworn an oath that [he] will have his bond" (3.3.5). He makes it clear just how serious he is about claiming his pound of flesh when he says: "by our holy Sabbath I have sworn/ To have the due and forfeit of my bond" (4.1.35).

In All's Well, the gracious Helen swears "by grace itself" (1.3.220). As Lafeu recommends Helen to the King, he swears "by [his] faith and honour" (2.1.78) that this young woman is worth hearing, and his credit is good enough with the King to get Helen an audience. In bargaining with the King, Helen pledges her constancy through eustathia, saying: "If I break time, or flinch in property/ Of what I spoke, unpitied let me die,/ And well deserved" (2.1.185-187). The King promises to keep his side of the agreement and swears by the two things he holds most dear: "[his] sceptre and [his] hopes of heaven" (2.1.190).

It must be noted that Helen, Lafeu, and the King are honourable: they swear by things they value and they intend to keep their oaths. In the cases of Paroles and Bertram, however, the wording of oaths must be regarded with suspicion for, as other characters note, these two men cannot be relied upon to be true to their word. Paroles swears "by the hand of a soldier" (3.6.72) to undertake the recovery of the drum, but everyone, including Paroles, knows that he lacks the nerve to confront the enemy. Bertram heaps promises on Diana in his attempts to seduce her, but her mother has prepared her for such a barrage. In a speech that makes explicit the vital connection between the wording and the worth of an oath, Diana explains to Bertram the worthlessness of his supposed vows:

'Tis not the many oaths that makes the truth,  
But the plain single vow that is vowed true.  
What is not holy, that we swear not by,  
But take the high'st to witness. Then pray you tell me,  
If I should swear by Jove's great attributes  
I loved you dearly, would you believe my oaths  
When I did love you ill? This has no holding,  
To swear by him whom I protest to love
That I will work against him. Therefore your oaths
Are words, and poor conditions but unsealed,
At least in my opinion.

(4.2.21-31)

As Diana explains, there should be a direct connection between what a speaker values and what he chooses to swear by.12

While oaths are not restricted in their use to particular types of people, there are two groups of characters in the Shakespearean canon who are notorious for oath-taking: soldiers and lovers. To be more accurate, soldiers are famous for taking oaths and lovers for breaking them. These two stereotypes are made explicit in AYLI. In explaining the seven ages of man, Jaques describes not only the physical characteristics of each age, but also the rhetorical characteristics. The lover is described as "Sighing like a furnace, with a woeful ballad/ Made to his mistress' eyebrow", while those at the next stage, the soldiers, are known for being "Full of strange oaths, and bearded like the pard" (2.7.148-150). Several scenes later, Touchstone provides more information on the stereotype of the poetic lover as he explains to Audrey that "the truest poetry is the most feigning, and lovers are given to poetry; and what they swear in poetry it may be said, as lovers, they do feign" (3.3.16-18). AYLI contains many references to the falseness of lovers' vows, and to these references we shall shortly return.

The notion that soldiers are "full of strange oaths" may well have taken its origin from military handbooks in which the sometimes odd oaths of soldiers are solemnly described. In Sir William Segar's Honor Military and Civil (1602), for example, he explains that "to exact an oath of Souldiers was ever thought necessary, not onely for the Commonweale, but also for the Souldier himselfe".13 In his description of ancient oath-taking practices, Segar states that Roman soldiers were expected to adopt certain physical postures while swearing. He goes on to explain:
The Souldiers of that time did sweare by the gods... Either else they were to sweare by the winde, & the sword: because the one was cause of life, th’other of death, for such was the Scythian use; Or else by Jupiter, Mars, and Pallas; or sometimes by elevating a Scepter which Princes in old time accustomed. But the Christians doe sweare in forme according to the pleasure of the Prince, the Generall or Chieftaine: but in matter the oath of Christians is to sweare by the Deitie, As by God, or by his holy Euangelists, &c..

(7)

Such a description perpetuates the notion that soldiers are required to take strange and ritualistic oaths. While a ban on religious oaths prevented Elizabethan dramatists from using certain sorts of oaths in their plays, other sorts of oaths flourished. Indeed, the ban itself may have encouraged the fashion for coining strange oaths that is parodied in several of the plays of the period, including Ben Jonson’s Everyman in his Humour, in which the character of Bobadill is notorious for his absurd oaths.14

True to Jaques’s description, the soldiers in Shakespeare’s comedies are often characterized by both their beards and their strange oaths. In Troilus and Cressida, the venerable old soldier Nestor swears “by this white beard” (4.5.208) and “by great Mars, the captain of us all” (4.5.198), while Hector swears “by the forge that stithied Mars his helm” (4.5.254). Later Hector comes perilously close to offending Menelaus when he says:

... By Mars his gauntlet, thanks!  
Mock not that I affect th’untraded oath;  
Your quondam wife swears still by Venus’ glove.  
She’s well, but bade me not commend her to you.  
        (4.5.177-180)

The oaths of Nestor and Hector are strange without being particularly funny. Some of the soldiers we meet in the comedies, however, are comic braggarts or would-be tough guys whose oaths are more ridiculous. Armado swears “by the North Pole” (LLL, 5.2.682), while Nim swears “by welkin and her stars” (MWW, 1.3.86). The Third Outlaw in Two Gentlemen swears not only by his beard (4.1.10) but also “by
the bare scalp of Robin Hood’s fat friar” (4.1.36). Whatever the speaker chooses to swear by, the point of these oaths is to make the speakers sound like formidable adversaries. Sir Toby explains the value of ferocious oaths to Sir Andrew as he prepares Sir Andrew for his encounter with Cesario:

Sir Toby: So soon as ever thou seest him, draw, and as thou draw’st, swear horrible, for it comes to pass oft that a terrible oath, with a swaggering accent sharply twanged off, gives manhood more approbation than ever proof itself would have earned him. Away.
Sir Andrew: Nay, let me alone for swearing.

(TN, 3.4.171-177)

The most laughable of Shakespeare’s oath-taking soldiers is Paroles, who is notorious among his fellows for taking oaths he will not keep. As mentioned above, he swears “by the hand of a soldier” that he will retrieve the lost drum, but only two lines later he undermines his own oath, saying: “I know not what the success will be, my lord, but the attempt I vow” (3.6.81). Unaware that he is being overheard, he later chides himself for having taken the oath:

What the devil should move me to undertake the recovery of this drum, being not ignorant of the impossibility and knowing I had no such purpose? . . . Tongue, I must put you into a butter-woman’s mouth, and buy myself another of Bajazet’s mute if you prattle me into these perils.

(4.1.35-44)

The entire drum-recovery exploit is, of course, designed by Paroles’s fellows precisely to show Bertram that Paroles is “a most notable coward, an infinite and endless liar, [and] an hourly promise-breaker” (3.6.9-10). The goal of cross-examining the blindfolded Paroles is to find out how quickly he will break all oaths of the army and of friendship. The Second Lord predicts Paroles will offer to betray Bertram by delivering “all the intelligence in his power against [him], and that with the divine forfeit of his soul upon oath” (3.6.30-31). This is, of course, exactly what Paroles does. As soon as the interrogation commences, he offers to confess everything he knows “without constraint” (4.3.123). He begins by betraying his
army in telling the number and condition of their troops. The First Soldier's question of "how many horse the Duke is strong" results in the following exchange:

Paroles: Five or six thousand, but very weak and unserviceable. The troops are all scattered and the commanders very poor rogues, upon my reputation and credit, and as I hope to live. First Soldier: Shall I set down your answer so? Paroles: Do. I'll take the sacrament on't, how and which way you will. Bertram: (aside) All's one to him. What a past-saving slave is this! (4.3.133-141)

This exchange is the most glowing example of comic oath-breaking genius in the Shakespearean canon. The whole point of the strange oaths exacted of soldiers is to ensure that they will not betray their army's secrets to the enemy, and yet Paroles betrays his fellows completely even before any pressure has been exerted. In swearing "upon [his] reputation and credit", he offers an oath of no more worth than when Touchstone swears on his honour, or Celia and Rosalind swear on their beards, for, as Touchstone explains, "if you swear by that that is not, you are not forsworn" (AYLI,1.2.71). The utter faithlessness of Paroles is best shown, however, in his willingness to take the sacrament "how and which way you will". Shakespeare's audience members, who lived in an age of tense religious controversy between Catholics and Protestants, may well have found this statement as shocking as Bertram does. The way in which the sacrament is perceived and taken is clearly one of the issues that divides Catholics and Protestants, and for Paroles to offer to take the sacrament in any way indicates that he lacks the faith necessary for such an action. His offer to take the sacrament as an expedient act without faith is nothing short of blasphemy, as Bertram acknowledges in calling Paroles a "past-saving slave".

Paroles is unusual among Shakespeare's oath-breakers in that he is a soldier rather than a lover. While soldiers may take odd oaths, they usually keep their words: it is lovers who are infamously for breaking their oaths. The comedies are full
of lovers who regularly take and break oaths. In fact, most of the numerous explicit references to oaths in these plays are to the trustworthiness of lovers' oaths. These references fall, almost without exception, into two gender-specific groups. Men regularly invent hyperbolic oaths, which they will not keep, in order to seduce women; women, knowing that men's oaths may be empty words, carefully evaluate the oaths they hear. Diana learns this fact of life in All's Well. Her mother warns her to be wary of the words of men in lust: "Beware of them, Diana. Their promises, enticements, oaths, tokens, and all these engines of lust are not the things they go under. Many a maid hath been seduced by them" (3.5.18-21). Later, having withstood the onslaught of Bertram's oaths, Diana reflects in soliloquy on the accuracy of her mother's prediction:

My mother told me just how he would woo,
As if she sat in's heart. She says all men
Have the like oaths . . . He has sworn to marry me
When his wife's dead. Therefore I'll lie with him
When I am buried. . . .
Only, in this disguise I think't no sin
To cozen him that would unjustly win.

(4.2.69-76)

Finding women difficult to court, men invent seductive oaths; knowing that men are inventive, women sometimes play tricks of their own to avoid being tricked, and thus they become even harder to court. And the circle of seduction goes round.

It is not only Bertram whose engines of lust mass-produce empty oaths. Many of the men in Shakespeare's comedies place their confidence in the seductive power of oaths. The changeable Proteus admits he has offered Julia "twenty thousand soul-confirming oaths" (TG.2.6.16), but when it proves inconvenient to keep his word, he rationalizes his deceit by concluding that "Unheedful vows may heedfully be broken" (2.6.11). The oxymoron "unheedful vows" suggests that Proteus has not given much thought to what it means to take a vow. In Dream, Lysander urges
Helena to believe his desperate pleas in words that serve only to provoke her to anger:

Lysander: . . . Look when I vow, I weep; and vows so born
In their nativity all truth appears.
How can these things in me seem scorn to you,
Bearing the badge of faith to prove them true?
Helena: . . . These vows are Hermia’s. Will you give her o’er?
Weigh oath with oath, and you will nothing weigh.
Your vows to her and me put in two scales
Will even weigh, and both as light as tales.
Lysander: I had no judgement when to her I swore.
Helena: Nor none, in my mind, now you give her o’er.

(3.2.122-135)

Clearly, Lysander is under the influence when he speaks these words, but fairy juice or no fairy juice, his behaviour is identical to behaviour demonstrated by a sober Demetrius, who “hailed down oaths” to Helena until Hermia appeared and suddenly, like magic, “he dissolved, and showers of oaths did melt” (1.1.243-245).

Both Troilus and Cressida recognize that lovers often make oaths they do not keep, but the two of them have different interpretations as to why this is so. They reveal their views in a discussion on “the monstruosity in love”:

Troilus: . . . when we vow to weep seas, live in fire, eat rocks, tame tigers; thinking it harder for our mistress to devise imposition enough than for us to undergo any difficulty imposed. This is the monstruosity in love, lady—that the will is infinite and the execution confined; that the desire is boundless and the act a slave to limit.
Cressida: They say all lovers swear more performance than they are able, and yet reserve an ability that they never perform; vowing more than the perfection of ten, and discharging less than the tenth part of one. They that have the voice of lions and the act of hares, are they not monsters?
Troilus: Are there such? Such are not we. Praise us as we are tasted, allow us as we prove. . . .

(3.2.72-85)

Troilus and Cressida differ in their views of the degree to which a lover is in control of his/her choices, and their views characterize the distinct behaviour of each in love. Touchstone provides a much more mundane explanation for the loss of
control that leads to broken vows. Even as he walks with Audrey to the altar, he knows their fidelity will be short-lived. He comes, like "the rest of the country copulatives, to swear, and to foreswear, according as marriage binds and blood breaks" (AYLI, 5.4.53-56).

There are many possible reasons for breaking oaths of love, and the characters in Shakespeare’s comedies spend a great deal of time considering these reasons. The significance of lovers’ untrustworthy oaths in these plays goes beyond any specific instance of broken oaths, and even beyond the convolutions that broken vows can produce in the ensuing action of any given play: the attention paid to the untrustworthy vows of lovers in Shakespeare’s comedies is so widespread as to be a genre-defining trait. Twelve of the thirteen comedies contain discussions about the reliability of lovers’ oaths. Only Shrew contains no reference to the oaths of love, but as Brian Cox noted after playing the part of Petruchio at the Royal Shakespeare Theatre in 1988, “The Taming of the Shrew is not a play about love; it is a play about marriage”.15 As Cox explained, in countries that take arranged marriages as the norm, courting arrangements often take the form of financial transactions between the parents of the couple to be wed, and this is the form of the courting arrangements in Shrew. If the parents are satisfied that a good match has been made, then the marriage can proceed. Ideally, a married couple will grow to love each other, but, while love between a pair on their wedding day is desirable, it is not required or even expected. In cultures in which arranged marriages are common, marriage often leads to love instead of the other way around. Baptista seems to regard marriage as a step toward love, as he implies in telling Tranio and Gremio, “he of both/ That can assure my daughter greatest dower/ Shall have my Bianca’s love” (2.1.344-346). Throughout this play the promises to be kept are financial, and thus it is not surprising that the deceitful oaths offered are also financial. In order to outbid Gremio, Tranio, posing as Lucentio, promises a large dowry which will later
be guaranteed by the Pedant posing as Vincentio. Lucentio and Petruchio do not bother with oaths of love: such oaths are not necessary in a market where women are traded as commodities.

With the single exception of Shrew, all the plays contain discussions about the reliability of lovers’ oaths. Clearly the depth of concern about oaths, and the necessity of that concern, varies considerably: Orlando’s trustworthiness is questioned simply because he is late; Cesario is accused of breaking the marriage vows made by Sebastian; and Falstaff is unsuccessful in his attempts to help the merry wives break their marriage vows. In plays such as Two Gentlemen, LLL, Measure, All’s Well, and Troilus and Cressida, however, the unreliability of lovers’ oaths is central to the action. Regardless of the length of the discussions devoted to explicit evaluations of lovers’ oaths, in these plays about the trials and tribulations of love, concerns about fidelity are never far away.

As mentioned earlier, many men in Shakespeare’s comedies make oaths they do not keep, and many women, aware they may be victimized by men’s false vows, explicitly evaluate the oaths they hear. Several of the women are accused of being false, but the accusations are usually unfounded: with the single exception of Cressida, all of the women in Shakespeare’s comedies keep their oaths of love. Although Cressida cannot control her father’s willingness to trade her, in giving Diomede’s the sleeve bestowed on her as a pledge of Troilus’s love, she chooses to betray her faith to her erstwhile lover. Just as there is a difference in the seriousness with which the male and female characters take their oaths, so too there is an undeniable double standard at work in the responses to the broken vows of these two groups. When men such as Proteus or Bertram break their oaths, they are very naughty boys who must learn not to behave so badly; when women such as Cressida or even the maligned but innocent Hero are accused of breaking oaths, they are regarded as whores who deserve to die. Outside of the protective confines of
comic structure, this double standard is even more alarmingly apparent. The lives of Hermione and Imogen are endangered when their husbands falsely believe them guilty of broken oaths, and Desdemona, of course, pays the ultimate price for her husband’s insecurity.

The oaths in Shakespeare’s plays are rhetorical devices which perform several different functions. The wording of oaths often reveals what a speaker holds dear, and whether or not a speaker keeps his word tells something of his trustworthiness. The numerous metarhetorical references to oaths do more, however, than just assess the reliability of specific characters. As male and female characters explicitly evaluate each other’s behaviour under oath, they reveal certain assumptions about what does and does not constitute acceptable behaviour, and, in doing so, they expose some of the underlying values of the fictional societies in which they live.

The three groups of figures examined in this chapter appear countless times in every one of Shakespeare’s plays. Although they are among the most common figures, these workaday devices rarely receive the attention accorded to the more ostentatiously ornamental figures. When the figures of rhetoric are regarded as merely ornamental frills, which has too often been the case, their vital importance as constructive elements is overlooked. Rhetorical figures are tools: tools that helped Shakespeare to do his daily work as a playwright. One of the tools he found most useful in establishing character is the figure epithet, and his extensive use of epithets is the subject of the next chapter.
Notes

1 For a discussion of the confusion between homoioteleuton and homoioptoton, see Lanham 83-84.

2 Although the figures of addition and omission are rarely noticed, in LLL Shakespeare explicitly draws attention to the figure paragoge (the addition of a syllable at the end of a word). As Joseph points out, in Holofernes's extemporaneous epitaph on the death of a deer, Shakespeare parodies both alliteration and paragoge by stretching them to a ridiculous length (52):

I will something affect the letter, for it argues facility.
The preyful Princess pierc'd and prick'd a pretty pleasing pricket;
Some say a sore; but not a sore till now made sore with shooting.
The dogs did yell; put 'L' to sore, then sorel jumps from thicket,
Or pricket sore, or else sorel; the people fall a-hooting.
If sore be sore, then 'L' to sore makes fifty sores o' sorel:
Of one sore I an hundred make by adding but one more 'L'.
(4.2.55-61)
By putting this passage, which also parodies antanaclasis, in the mouth of the pedant Holofernes, Shakespeare pokes fun at pedantic rhetorical display. Although he never calls paragoge by name, this passage leaves no doubt that Shakespeare was familiar with the device.

3 Isocolon is usually taken to mean "Phrases of equal length and corresponding structure" (Lanham 93). Some rhetoricians list isocolon and parison as two separate figures while others use the terms isocolon, parison, and compar to mean the same thing.

4 All rhetoricians acknowledge that the frequent repetition of a word is a figure, but there is inconsistency in the naming of this device. Puttenham calls it place while others call it epanodos or traductio. Peacham calls the repetition of a common word diaphora and reserves the name place for the repetition of a proper name.

5 See Peter Holland's note for 1.1.170 in his recent Oxford edition of Dream.

6 Other examples that demonstrate the range of tones created through polysyndeton are uttered by Petruchio and Rosaline. In Shrew, Petruchio flaunts his disregard for Katherna's hunger through a description of the clothes to be worn at Baptista's revels. His purposely frivolous tone comes from a combination of polysyndeton, congeries, anaphora, and homoioteleuton. He says they will

... revel it as bravely as the best.
With silken coats and caps, and golden rings,
With ruffs and cuffs, and farthingales, and things;
With scarfs and fans, and double change of bravery,
With amber bracelets, beads, and all this knavery.
(4.3.54-58)
In LLL, Rosaline uses polysyndeton and congeries in the lengthy list of teasing tortures she plans for Biron:

O that I knew he were but in by th'week!
How I would make him fawn, and beg, and seek,
And wait the season, and observe the times,
And spend his prodigal wits in bootless rhymes,
And shape his service wholly to my hests,
And make him proud to make me proud that jests!
(5.2.61-66)

7 Three other interesting examples of figures of repetition used to exert or maintain control appear in speeches of Benedick, Malvolio, and Isabella. Benedick's pride goeth before his fall as he assures himself he is safe from love just before he falls in it. His confidence is expressed through isocolon, epimone, and antimetabole: "... One woman is fair, yet I am well. Another is wise, yet I am well. Another virtuous, yet I am well. But till all graces be in one woman, one woman shall not come in my grace" (MA, 2.3.27-30). In Twelfth Night, Viola wrests power from the stubborn Malvolio through the use of symploce and epimone. Her insistence, reflected in her figures of repetition, is relayed by Malvolio:

Madam, yon young fellow swears he will speak with you. I told him you were sick—he takes on him to understand so much, and therefore comes to speak with you. I told him you were asleep—he seems to have a foreknowledge of that too, and therefore comes to speak with you. What is to be said to him, lady? He's fortified against any denial.
(TN, 1.5.133-138)

When asking the Duke for justice at the end of Measure, Isabella uses anadiplosis and aestimus as she picks up Angelo's use of the word "strange" and throws it back at him with unexpected force. The outrage she is straining to control is clearly reflected in rhetorical questions that jab with their symploce and break the established bounds of isocolon:

Angelo: ... she will speak most bitterly and strange.
Isabella: Most strange, but yet most truly will I speak.
That Angelo's foresworn, is it not strange?
That Angelo's a murderer, is't not strange?
That Angelo is an adulterous thief,
An hypocrite, a virgin-violator,
Is it not strange and strange?
(MM, 5.1.38-43)

8 Keir Elam refers both to the common view that descriptive figures are chiefly used to replace scenery and to the reaction against that view when he writes:

It is difficult . . . to agree with that critical tradition . . . which sees the aspiration of language to metaphorical visuality as an attempted substitution for the equivalent stage vehicles. A.M. Nagler, emphasizing the richness of mimetic scenic means in the Elizabethan theatre, justly objects to so naive an assessment of Shakespearean description: 'One of the many widespread myths about the Elizabethan theatre is that the dramatists of the time made up for the lack of illusionistic elements by more of less poetic description from the mouths of their characters. Poetry, by this theory, becomes a substitute for scenery'(1958:32).
(64)

Poetry sometimes does, conveniently, substitute for scenery, but clearly that is not the only function of descriptive passages. As Elam explains, in the highly rhetorical society of Elizabethan England, a speaker's skill in detailed description was valued for its own sake. Elam writes: "... for the Elizabethans the 'pictorial' use of words constituted a well-defined rhetorical game much recommended for its efficacy as locutionary coup upon the ear and the mind's eye. And it is as such, i.e. as a mode of 'graphic' virtuosity, that the verbal icon is normally presented in the comedies". See, Keir Elam, Shakespeare's Universe of Discourse: Language Games in the Comedies (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1984) 60-64.

See Kurt Schlueter's note to 4.2.128 in his New Cambridge edition of *Two Gentlemen*.

In response to Diana's opinion that Bertram's oaths are worthless, Bertram waxes eloquent in a speech that includes the claim that his "integrity ne'er knew the crafts/ That you do charge men with" to which Diana says: "I see that men make rope's in such a scarre,/ That we'll forsake ourselves. Give me that ring" (4.2.33-34). The terms "make rope's" and "scarre" have proven such a challenge for editors that Gary Taylor wrote an article to list the terms' possible meanings. He does not suggest the meaning that makes most sense to me, and thus I boldly add my own suggestion to the already large pile. I wonder if the term rope's could be a shortened version of rope-tricks: a term used by Grumio which seems to refer to rhetorical figures. Regarding Petruchio's imminent meeting with Kate, Grumio says to Hortensio: "an he begin once, he'll rail in his rope tricks. I'll tell you what, sir, an she stand him but a little, he will throw a figure in her face, and so disfigure her with it, that she shall have no more eyes to see withal than a cat" (TS, 1.2.110-114). The term "ropery" is used in a similar way in *Romeo and Juliet*. After withstanding Mercutio's merciless puns, the Nurse asks Romeo, "... what saucy merchant was this, that was so full of his ropery?" to which Romeo replies: "A gentleman, Nurse, that loves to hear himself talk, and will speak more in a minute than he will stand to in a month" (2.4.142-146). I believe Diana's words refer to the tendency her mother has warned her of: the tendency of men to resort to the rhetoric of empty oaths in order to seduce women. While I cannot offer a solution to the mystery of the word "scarre", I would suggest that "make rope's" means "use rhetorical devices". Since she has been warned that men's oaths of love can be unreliable, she ends her observation with a request for tangible proof of love promised: "Give me that ring". For more information on the various interpretations of this line, see: Gary Taylor, "Textual Double Knots: 'make rope's in such a scarre';* Shakespeare: Text, Subtext, and Context*, ed. Ronald Dotterer (Selinsgrove: Susquehanna University Press, 1989)163-185.


See George Hibbard’s note to 5.2.683 in his Oxford edition of *LLL*.

These comments were made during a talk given by Brian Cox at Warwick University in 1988.
Chapter Two: Evolving Epithets

Epitheton, or epithet, is defined by Joseph as a figure which “attributes to a person or thing a quality by way of addition” (124). In other words, it is an adjective. As Peacham explains, an epithet can come before or after the substantive to which it belongs, and one or more epithets can be joined to the same word (147). Joseph cites several examples of Shakespeare’s epithets including Prospero’s reference to Ariel as “my dainty Ariel” (Tempest, 5.1.95), Horatio’s description of the ghost’s beard as “A sable silver’d” (Hamlet, 1.2.242), and one of the explicit references to epithets in LLL (1.2.14). Joseph pays particular attention to Shakespeare’s use of compound epithets, as “pity-pleading eyes” or “woe-wearied tongue”, for, as Joseph explains, Shakespeare uses compound epithets “more copiously and with greater freedom than his fellow dramatists” (124).

My particular interest here is in another subset of epithets, used even more frequently by Shakespeare than compound epithets, and those are adjectives directly connected to characters’ proper names. Puttenham’s definition of epithets highlights those attached to proper names and draws attention to the difference between epithet and antonomasia:

Epitheton . . . [consists of] giving every person or thing besides his proper name a qualitie by way of addition whether it be of good or of bad . . . as to say: Fierce Achilles, wise Nestor, wilie Ulysses . . . But if we speake thus not expressing her proper name Elizabeth, videl: The English Diana, the great Britton mayde. Then it is not by Epitheton . . . but by Antonomasia, or Periphrasis.

(176)

To the difference between epithet, antonomasia, and the figure epergesis, we shall return later.
My interest in Shakespeare's use of epithets in conjunction with proper names is threefold. First, these devices are loaded with dramatically useful information. When we hear characters refer to each other as "fair Hermia", "jealous Oberon", or "proud Titania", we receive little parcels of information about the current state of characters' attitudes toward one another. These attitudes frequently undergo radical shifts throughout the course of a play, and such shifts are captured in characters' changing epithets. In most cases, epithets help to establish character in a direct way, but at times, as we shall see, inappropriate epithets are used either in ignorance or with specific ulterior motives. Inappropriate epithets give us as much information about the speaker as they do about the character being described. One noteworthy example of this phenomenon comes in Othello: the countless references to "honest Iago" give us less information about Iago himself than they give about the vulnerably duped state of those who have come to trust him. Whether used casually, in jest, with irony, or in ignorance, epithets provide a barometer by which we can measure characters' changing attitudes towards each other.

Second, character epithets are of interest by force of the sheer volume of them in Shakespeare's work. It is impossible to examine the rhetorical figures in certain plays without acknowledging the omnipresence of character epithets. In the attempt to communicate clearly the extent of Shakespeare's reliance on this type of epithet, I have resorted to counting. Mere figure counting is clearly of rather dubious value both tactically and strategically. As a specific tactic, it is hampered in its accuracy by the varying lengths and editions of Shakespeare's plays and by the varying definitions of certain figures. As a general strategy, figure-counting offers only the most banal sort of data: a list of numbers which, like any statistic, is meaningless without a context. In the case of character epithets alone, however, I offer a figure count from each of the comedies. The sheer number of these epithets, which ranges from under ten in some plays to over one hundred in others, forces us to take note of
this device and draws our attention from merely quantitative concerns to an awareness of the qualitative differences between the epithet use in different plays. Technically speaking, all adjectives are epithets, but the epithet counts provided here include only one subset of epithets: those directly attached to the proper name of one of the characters in the plays. This subset of epithets will be referred to as "character epithets". It does not include either epithets attached to titles, such as "most noble lord", which will be referred to as "courtesy epithets", or epithets attached to common nouns, such as "sweet sister", which will be referred to as "common epithets"; the epithet counts that follow include only the adjectives linked directly with characters’ names. This particular sort of epithet has been singled out for attention not only because of its frequency but also because of the importance in drama of this device which so directly assists in characterization.

The third source of interest in epithet study is in the opportunity it provides for charting one aspect of Shakespeare’s rhetorical development. It is regularly, though sometimes vaguely, asserted that Shakespeare’s rhetorical style becomes less stiff and more subtle as he matures. Some scholars, such as F.P. Wilson, suggest that Shakespeare’s mature style is characterized by a decreased use of rhetorical figures. As we chart the use of a few specific figures throughout the thirteen comedies, however, we gain a more precise appreciation of the ways in which Shakespeare’s use of the figures changes. The difference between the figure use in early and late comedies is not so much a difference of quantity, as we shall see, as a difference of quality: Shakespeare becomes noticeably more inventive and daring with certain rhetorical devices as he masters them. We have already seen the rhetorical development evident in his use of pragmatographia, and this development is even easier to see in his use of character epithets because so many of these devices appear in each play. As we examine the character epithets in each comedy, we gain a sense
both of the dramatic usefulness of this figure and of the increasing complexity of Shakespeare's rhetorical experiments.

The first thing revealed by a figure count is that Shakespeare's use of character epithets varies enormously with each of the early plays: Comedy of Errors includes only six character epithets, while Two Gentlemen contains forty-three, and Shrew contains sixty-seven. By comparing the character epithets in these three early comedies, we begin to get a sense of Shakespeare's growing enthusiasm for this device in the early stage of his career: an enthusiasm which will change its shape in later years.

The character epithets in Comedy of Errors are less interesting than those found in any of the other comedies. There are so few of them that they can easily be listed as a benchmark for future reference. At the beginning of the play we meet "Hapless Egeon", and somewhat later we meet "good Signior Angelo" and "good Dr. Pinch". In the final scene, after recounting the story of their lost spouses, Emilia and "old Egeon" assure each other that they are "the same Egeon" and "the same Emilia". With the exception of the last two, these epithets are so commonplace and lack-lustre that it does not really matter who speaks these words or exactly when they are spoken.

The highlight of the epithet use in Comedy of Errors comes in the final scene with a series of pleas to the Duke in a form which I shall call "courtesy epithets". I distinguish between character and courtesy epithets not because these subsets are recognized as separate by rhetoricians, but because they are used in distinct ways by Shakespeare. In a study such as this, therefore, some sort of differentiation is necessary. The devices I call courtesy epithets are those which are widely adopted in a society for general and respectful use with a titled person whose proper name is not used. As characters plead for the Duke's attention in the final scene, for example, they address him in various respectful ways which they did not invent for
the occasion. They call him "most gracious Duke", "most sacred Duke", "sweet prince", "most mighty Duke", "great Duke", and "Renowned Duke". There are more courtesy epithets in the final scene of this play than there are character epithets in the whole work. Technically speaking, courtesy and character epithets are one and the same device, but courtesy epithets are much less interesting in drama than are their counterparts. They lack the characterizing energy of character epithets, for they tell us nothing about the speaker except that he has some knowledge of verbal decorum and nothing about the person addressed except that he has a position of titled power. That said, if courtesy epithets are used with irony, defiance, or open mockery, as we shall see them used in some of the later plays, then they lose their empty predictability and become charged with dramatic energy.

As we have already seen, the expository use of pragmatographia in Comedy of Errors is the most standard and least remarkable use of that figure in Shakespeare's comic canon. The same might be said for the epithets in the play. Courtesy epithets, which are regularly cited in sixteenth-century rhetoric manuals as examples of decorous epithet use, are standard devices designed to show respect. They dominate the epithet use in this play, for it seems that Shakespeare has not yet awakened to the dramatic potential of character epithets. It might be argued that the first stirrings of that awakening began when he was writing the final scene of Comedy of Errors. Throughout the play he has used a very few common epithets, such as "good sister", no courtesy epithets, and only three character epithets. Half of the character epithets in the play appear in the final scene, as do all of the courtesy epithets. Once he has discovered the usefulness of these devices, he uses them regularly; all of the other comedies contain more epithets than Comedy of Errors.

While Comedy of Errors is generally treated as the first of the comedies, the exact order of the other comedies is, in several cases, clearly far from certain. The intent here is not to base any argument about Shakespeare's development on the
precise order of the plays, for that order is not fully known, but to chart his use of epithets through a series of three- or four-year periods in his comedy writing. As we become aware of the patterns in his epithet use in early, middle, and late comedies, we shall see his enthusiasm for epithets rise sharply, wane somewhat, and become reshaped only to rise sharply again in one of the latest comedies. Whether the most noteworthy experimentation occurs in the second, third, or fourth comedy is of less interest than the nature of the experimentation itself. In considering the progression in Shakespeare's use of epithets, I have loosely categorized the comedies into three groups: early, middle, and late. In this chapter, I deal with the plays in a roughly chronological order, but when the dates of two or more plays overlap, as is the case with Two Gentlemen and Shrew, and also with some of the middle comedies, I have chosen an order which must, of necessity, be regarded as fluid.

Whether Two Gentlemen or Shrew came second, there is no doubt that Shakespeare's use of epithets increases dramatically in his early years: both of these plays include many more epithets than Comedy of Errors. In addition to the numerous common epithets found in every play, Two Gentlemen includes more than forty character epithets, and these epithets serve to reveal the nature of the relationships between various pairs of characters. The friendship of the two gentlemen, for example, is evident in the names they call each other. Proteus calls his friend "sweet Valentine" (1.1.10), while Valentine addresses Proteus with many fond epithets, including "my loving Proteus" (1.1.1), "dear Proteus" (2.4.93), and "gentle Proteus" (2.4.129). With the hyperbole expected of lovers, Proteus and Valentine call their respective loves "heavenly Julia" (1.3.50) and "sacred Silvia" (3.1.211). The plot of this play is told, in miniature, in the changing epithets of the two gentlemen alone. After being betrayed by Proteus, Valentine is referred to by the Duke as "worthless Valentine" (3.2.10), and he calls himself "hapless Valentine" (3.1.259) and "banished Valentine" (5.4.120). Proteus, on the other hand, changes
from “good Proteus” (2.4.177) to “poor Proteus” (4.4.82) and finally to “false Proteus” (5.4.35), “false perjured Proteus” (5.4.39).

In some instances, epithets are used ironically, as seen in the juxtaposition of the sixth and seventh scenes of act 2. Act 2 scene 6 consists entirely of Proteus’s forty-three lines of sophistic rhetoric in which he convinces himself that constancy to himself requires inconstancy to all those who have trusted him. At the beginning of the next scene, only seven lines after Proteus’s lengthy soliloquy of betrayal, unsuspecting Julia enthusiastically plans a trip which she calls “A journey to my loving Proteus” (2.7.7). Another ironic epithet appears just after Valentine has been banished when Proteus addresses him as “Friend Valentine” (3.1.204) and seems to offer comfort in spite of the fact that false Proteus is to blame for Valentine’s predicament.

The most interesting epithet use in the play occurs in Julia’s response to Proteus’s letter. After tearing the letter in feigned anger, she searches for epithets in the fragments:

Look, here is writ “kind Julia”. Unkind Julia!  
As in revenge of thy ingratitude,  
I throw thy name against the bruising stones,  
Trampling contemptuously on thy disdain.  
And here is writ “Love-wounded Proteus”.  
Poor wounded name, my bosom as a bed  
Shall lodge thee till thy wound be thoroughly healed;  
And thus I search it with a sovereign kiss.  
But twice or thrice was “Proteus” written down—  
Be calm, good wind, blow not a word away  
Till I have found each letter in the letter,  
Except mine own name. . . .  
Lo, here in one line is his name twice writ:  
“Poor, forlorn Proteus, passionate Proteus,  
To the sweet Julia”. That I’ll tear away—  
And yet I will not, sith so prettily  
He couples it to his complaining names.  
Thus will I fold them one upon another;  
Now kiss, embrace, contend, do what you will.  

(1.2.106-127)
I earlier apologized for counting epithets, but Julia feels no such qualms; she avidly searches for, and counts, Proteus’s epithets, as if each one were precious proof of his love. Her response to his words mixes the figurative and the literal. The epithets in the letter do more than just describe Proteus’s and Julia’s feelings for themselves and for each other: through Julia’s sentimental personification of them, the epithets themselves enter into a relationship with each other. They embrace when together and are pained when separated: just like the people they describe, they want to be kissed and comforted. The paper on which they are written becomes the site of the love they describe and Proteus’s written name becomes a surrogate for Proteus himself.

Julia might well be accused here of a tendency “To worship shadows and adore false shapes” (4.2.123), though these are Silvia’s words to Proteus. Just as Julia adopts Proteus’s epithets as a site for the expression of frustrated love, so Proteus offers “to make true love” to Silvia’s picture (4.2.118). There is a disjunction between the image of true love and the expression of it in the play just as there is a disjunction between Proteus’s professions of ideal friendship to Valentine and his less than friendly behaviour. The characters in Two Gentlemen live in a world of socially constructed ideals. In Proteus’s attempts to fashion himself according to received notions of the perfect friend, the ideal lover, or the true gentlemen, he regularly fails. The gaps between intentions and realities, and between words and deeds, are frequently explicitly examined in this play by characters who both use and reject the mechanisms of sophistry. The chameleon-like epithets in the play provide one rhetorical hint of the sophistry at work here.

In the early 1590s, Shakespeare consciously explored the dramatic power of various rhetorical devices, including that of epithets. With the exception of Comedy of Errors, all of the early comedies, in whatever order they are placed, include self-conscious rhetorical experiments. Each of the early plays, and one or two of the later
ones, is sufficiently distinctive in its epithet use to warrant individual attention in the current survey, but several of the middle and late comedies, which tend to use epithets in limited or predictable ways, will be examined only briefly.

The experimenting with epithets found in *Two Gentlemen* is even more evident in *Shrew*. Indeed, it was the bountiful epithet use in *Shrew* that first drew my attention to the versatility of this particular device. Shakespeare's epithet use seems to explode in this play, and the explosion is felt in all directions. There are almost seventy character epithets in the play, many are multiple epithets, and that number does not include common epithets or the epithets assigned to places rather than people. The epithets in *Shrew* gain our attention not only because there are so many of them but also because the characters are highly aware of them. In this play about the search for suitable spouses, the attributes of potential partners are of great importance, and both desirable and undesirable traits are captured in epithets such as "fair", "wealthy", "old" or "shrewish".

We first encounter a preoccupation with reputation in Lucentio's opening speech in his references to the cities on his Grand Tour. He comes from "Pisa renowned for grave citizens" (a description given at 1.1.10 and exactly repeated at 4.2.95), and he wishes to see "fair Padua, nursery of arts" and "fruitful Lombardy, / The pleasant garden of great Italy" (1.1.2-4). These descriptions combine epithets with epertgesis (which interrupts by interposing words in apposition as an added interpretation). Epithets, epertgesis, and antonomasia are similar in effect, for they can all be used to associate a specific trait with a specific name. In the establishing of reputation it makes little difference, for example, whether Bianca is called "fair Bianca" (1.2.163, epithet), "Bianca, fair and virtuous" (2.1.90, epertgesis), or "Minerva" (1.1.84, antonomasia); she is clearly introduced as the more desirable mate than "curst Katherina" (1.2.179, epithet), "Katherina Minola, / Renowned in Padua for her scolding tongue" (1.2.99, epertgesis), or "this fiend of hell" (1.1.88, antonomasia). As
illustrated by the examples given above, there are two forms of the trope antonomasia: the first substitutes a proper name for a quality associated with it, and the second substitutes a descriptive phrase for a proper name. Shakespeare regularly uses epithets, epergesis, and both types of antonomasia as characterizing tools. In most of the later comedies the number of epithets declines in favour of an increased use of antonomasia, but in *Shrew*, epithets outnumber examples of antonomasia by approximately ten to one.

As implied above, the diverse reputations of Baptista’s two daughters are established, in part, through the diverse epithets assigned to them. In the first act alone, Bianca is seven times given epithets such as “good”, “sweet”, or “fair”, while Katherina’s reputation is summed up in an exchange between Hortensio and Grumio:

Hortensio: ... none shall have access unto Bianca
Till Katherine the curst have got a husband.
Grumio: “Katherine the curst”,
A title for a maid, of all titles the worst.

(1.2.126-129)

It is not only the marriageable daughters who are regularly characterized by epithets. We also meet “good Hortensio” (1.2.36), “old Baptist” (1.2.131), and “old Signor Gremio” (2.1.370).

The explosion of epithet use in this play is evident both in the number of epithets and in the frequency of multiple epithets. Shakespeare pushes the limits of this figure by combining it with congeries in order to form lists of characters’ attributes. Petruchio comes to Padua in search of “[His] best beloved and approved friend,/ Hortensio” (1.2.3-4), and Hortensio refers to Petruchio and Grumio with various multiple epithets including “My old friend Grumio, and my good friend Petruchio” (1.2.21-22), and “Your ancient, trusty, pleasant servant Grumio” (1.2.46).

Throughout the play we encounter an unprecedented number of multiple epithets.
Tranio, for example, characterizes his master's rivals in love by listing them as "the greybeard Gremio./ The narrow prying father Minola", and "The quaint musician, amorous Litio" (3.2.144-146).

More important than the profusion of epithets, their application to places, or the frequency of multiple epithets, however, is the centrality of epithets to the action of the play. Katherina has a bad reputation, and Petruchio takes it upon himself to change it. He intends to re-create her in an image of his own choosing, and he begins his refashioning of Katherina by changing both her epithets and her proper name. Before meeting her, he describes her in words that blatantly disregard everything he has heard of her, and her father's eloquent silence in response clearly communicates his belief that Petruchio is uninformed:

Petruchio: And you, good sir. Pray have you not a daughter
Called Katherina, fair and virtuous?
Baptista: I have a daughter, sir, called Katherina.
(2.1.42-43)

Only a few minutes later, Tranio comes to Baptista as a suitor to "Bianca, fair and virtuous", and everyone seems to agree that such an eperguson is suitable for the sugary sweet Bianca. Before meeting Katherina, Petruchio decides he will marry this rich woman: he decides that she, like the sun, will be whatever he chooses her to be. In their first encounter, he blatantly ignores the name she claims is hers, and frankly tells her what he and others think of her:

Petruchio: . . . Good morrow, Kate—for that's your name, I hear.
Katherina: Well have you heard, but something hard of hearing:
They call me Katherine that do talk of me.
Petruchio: You lie, in faith, for you are called plain Kate,
And bonny Kate, and sometimes Kate the curst.
But Kate the prettiest Kate in Christendom,
Kate of Kate Hall, my super-dainty Kate,
For dainties are all Kates, and therefore, Kate,
Take this of me, Kate of my consolation:
Hearing thy mildness praised in every town,
Thy virtues spoke of, and thy beauty sounded,
Yet not so deeply as to thee belongs,
Myself am moved to woo thee for my wife.

(2.1.181-193)

The sheer number of epithets in this speech forces us to attend to them, but their importance cannot be measured by mere counting. Petruchio has never met Katherina before, and yet, here, in their first encounter, he bombards her with images of her reputed self. Clearly he is intending some of his words to be ironic, or else he is just plain lying, for he has not heard her mildness praised in every town, and the virtues of which he has heard are not personal but financial. He is very blunt in his speech, but if he had wanted to be completely honest, he would have addressed Katherina as “eldest daughter of a wealthy father”, “rich Kate”, and therefore “marriageable Kate”. In a society preoccupied with both wealth and reputation, Petruchio has heard enough about Katherina’s merits to agree to wed her before he has met her; it is not her beauty that initially seduces him but the bounty of her father’s bank account.

Petruchio agrees to marry a wealthy shrew, but he has no intention of living with one. Even before the marriage has taken place, he tells Katherina that he plans to domesticate her. As he alludes to the coming taming process, he explains that he will change her reputation. His mission, as he describes it to Katherina, is to change her epithet:

Thou must be married to no man but me.
For I am he am born to tame you, Kate,
And bring you from a wild Kate to a Kate
Conformable as other household Kates.

(2.1.274-277)

Throughout the play, he describes her with epithets that do not yet apply. On leaving the church after their unorthodox wedding ceremony, for example, he thanks the guests who have come to see him give himself “To this most patient,
sweet, and virtuous wife” (3.2.194). After the wedding he regularly refers to her with epithets such as “my bonny Kate”, “sweet Kate”, or “good sweet Kate”.

In performance, the disjunction between Petruchio’s epithets for Kate and Kate’s behaviour creates an irony which can be played in a wide variety of ways. If he calls her “sweet Kate” while she is flailing about restrained by his servants, for example, then such an epithet can work as a form of emotional abuse whereby Petruchio cruelly imposes his own version of reality on a woman whose desperation he refuses to acknowledge. The same epithet used in the context of stubbornly surly behaviour by Kate, however, can work as a loving invitation to Kate to laugh at her own petulance: to break free of her bad reputation and become someone who can be loved for more than her father’s money. In the Royal Shakespeare Company’s production of Shrew in 1988, for example, Fiona Shaw’s Kate grew from a frustrated, unhappy Kate in the first act to a Kate who learned how best to thrive given the restraints of her society. Through her battles with Brian Cox’s Petruchio, she gradually realized the paradox that, by submitting to certain realities of the heavily patriarchal society in which she lived, she could increase her own freedom and contentment. The disparity between her behaviour and Petruchio’s epithets in this production became a kind of game in which both players understood the rules.3

As direct indications of one character’s opinion of another, epithets provide rich dramatic opportunities for irony, flattery, and deceit. Shakespeare takes increasing advantage of such opportunities with the result that the epithet use in some of the comedies is frequently suasive rather than descriptive. The most extreme example of suasive epithets is found in Troilus and Cressida, in which, as we shall see, flattering or insulting epithets are strategically used as a call to arms, but the earliest experimenting with epithets as tools of persuasion occurs in Shrew as Petruchio attempts to make Katherina “good” and “sweet” by rejecting the epithets everyone else has used for her and inviting her to see herself in a new light. In The Motives of
Eloquence, Richard Lanham makes an observation that is directly relevant both to the Induction scene in Shrew and to Petruchio’s rhetorical strategy. While examining humanist rhetoric, Lanham writes:

We touch here the center of a nominalist view of rhetoric, a new definition of persuasion. One thinks of it as changing the opponent’s mind. This is hard to do; this is the philosopher’s way. Far easier—here sophist and Madison Avenue are one—to change his self. . . . Offer the patient another frame. Cast him in another play.4

By recasting the drunken Sly as a wealthy nobleman, the Lord provides Sly with the opportunity to discover noble behaviour within himself. Sly’s acceptance of his new role is marked by his shift from prose to verse (Oliver 62). The Lord’s scheme is designed to provide an evening’s entertainment, but, in recasting Katherina, Petruchio’s intentions have long-term implications. Instead of trying to convince Katherina of the social benefits of better behaviour, Petruchio recasts her as good, sweet, and marriageable Kate, and allows her to experience the benefits of such a role. Whether Petruchio’s strategy makes him a benevolent educator or an abusive tyrant varies with each production, and with each audience member’s opinion.5

The extensive experimentation with epithets found in Shrew is also evident in LLL, albeit in different forms. The play contains more than forty character epithets, but only half of those are connected to the names of the characters who appear in the dramatis personae of the play, while the other half are attached to the names of the historical heroes who appear during the performance of “The Nine Worthies”. While there are fewer epithets than in Shrew, there are considerably more uses of antonomasia. Our attention is drawn to these two figures not only because they are so numerous, but also because the characters frequently, and sometimes explicitly, cite these devices as evidence of the rhetorical skill and fashion of certain speakers.

As is commonly noted, LLL is the most metalinguistic of all of Shakespeare’s comedies, and thus it is hardly surprising that there are more explicit references to
epithets here than in any of the other plays. Indeed, epithets are called by name on four different occasions in the play as characters explicitly evaluate the epithet choices of their companions. Two of the lessons on epithet use are directed at Moth, for it seems the young Moth, clever as he is, is still regarded by some as a schoolboy in need of rhetorical training. When he calls Armado “my tough senor” in response to being called “my tender juvenal”, Armado asks him to explain his choice:

Armado: Why “tough senor”? Why “tough senor”?
Moth: Why “tender juvenal”? Why “tender juvenal”?
Armado: I spoke it, tender juvenal, as a congruent epitheton appertaining to thy young days, which we may nominate tender.
Moth: And I, tough senor, as an appertinent title to your old time, which we may name tough.
Armado: Pretty and apt.

(1.2.11-18)

Later on, as Moth haltingly delivers his prepared speech to the assembled women, he forgets his lines, and once again gets an epithet lesson, this time from Boyet:

Moth: “Once to behold with your sun-beamed eyes—
With your sun-beamed eyes”—
Boyet: They will not answer to that epithet,
You were best call it “daughter-beamed eyes”.

(5.2.169-172)

The other two explicit references to epithets are made by Nathaniel in praise of Holofernes’s rhetorical showmanship. After Holofernes’s lengthy description of a deer, Nathaniel praises both the pedant’s diction and his skill in copia: “Truly, Master Holofernes, the epithets are sweetly varied, like a scholar at the least” (4.2.8-9). When Holofernes later refers to Armado as “peregrinate”, Nathaniel praises his skill again, saying “A most singular and choice epithet” (5.1.15). In the rhetorical society of this play, rhetoric is simultaneously used and judged, and thus the epithets, like many of the other figures, are used with unprecedented self-consciousness.
As has already been seen in the earlier plays, Shakespeare uses character epithets as one means of giving specific information about the characters on stage. Unlike the lack-lustre references to "old Egeon" or "good Dr. Pinch" found in Comedy of Errors, however, the character epithets in LLL spark with dramatic energy due, in part, to the pride the characters take in their rhetorical skill. Four of the characters whose noteworthy traits are captured in epithets are "Matchless Navarre" (2.1.7), "Most dull Dull, honest Dull" (5.1.142), "pert Biron" (5.2.272), and "honey-tongued Boyet" (5.2.334). With the very sort of "three-piled hyperbole" which Biron will claim to renounce (5.2.407), the lovers describe the objects of their love as "sweet Maria, empress of my love" (4.3.54), "most divine Kate!" (4.3.81), and "the heavenly Rosaline" (4.3.218).

The character epithets used throughout the play are less notable, however, than those found in the final act during the performance of "The Nine Worthies". In the play within the play we meet "Great Hercules", "brave Hector", and "the armipotent Mars", but most of the epithets are reserved for Costard's great Pompey the Great. After some initial confusion as to whether he is "Pompey surnamed the Big" or "surnamed the Great" (5.2.545), he introduces himself and gives the Princess her cue to thank him. She obliges by giving him "Great thanks, great Pompey" (5.2.551), and the metatheatrical foolery is allowed to continue. The most self-conscious use of epithets occurs later in the scene as three of the spectators play at topping each other in their hyperbolic enthusiasm for Costard's clever retort to Armado's threat:

Dumaine: Most rare Pompey!
Boyet: Renowned Pompey!
Biron: Greater than "Great"! Great, great, great Pompey!
Pompey the Huge!

(5.2.672-675)
More numerous than the character epithets in LLL are the compound epithets. There are approximately forty compound epithets in the play, which is a significantly higher number than that found in any of the other comedies. A few of these epithets are also character epithets, such as “honey-tongued Boyet”, but most describe nouns that warrant special attention, including a “too hard-a-keeping oath” (1.1.65), “high-born words” (1.1.171), “smooth-faced wooers” (5.2.810), and a “world-without-end bargain” (5.2.777). The last two of these are unusual in that they are spoken by the women. Almost all of the compound epithets are spoken by the verbose courtiers or by the would-be rhetorically fashionable Armado. Indeed, many of Armado’s verbal excesses take the form of compound epithets and antonomasia used with hyperbole. Ironically, the rhetorical traits found in the language of the much-mocked Armado are very similar to those found at certain times in the lines of the supposedly clever Biron.

The first rhetorical parallel between Armado and Biron is established even before Armado appears on stage. The King describes Armado as a man concerned with rhetorical fashions and in love with the sound of his own voice. Biron’s response reveals that he shares these traits. The King describes Armado as

King: . . . A man in all the world’s new fashion planted,
That hath a mint of phrases in his brain,
One who the music of his own vain tongue
Doth ravish like enchanting harmony,
A man of compliments . . .
Biron: Armado is a most illustrious wight,
A man of fire-new words, fashion’s own knight.

(1.1.163-177)

Both of the references to fashion here are connected to rhetorical fashions. Armado has his own mint of collected phrases ready for rhetorical use, and he has a fondness for newly coined words. Biron ridicules Armado, calling him “a man of fire-new words”, but, as Hibbard notes, “‘fire-new’ is itself an example of the phenomenon it describes”.7
Throughout the play, Armado is rhetorically characterized by his love of copia and hyperbole, and two of his favourite devices are compound epithets and antonomasias. His love of antonomasia is seen in his outrageously formal salutation to the King, whom he addresses as “Great deputy, the welkin’s vicegerent, and sole dominator of Navarre, my soul’s earth’s god, and body’s fostering patron” (1.1.215-217). His antonomasia and copia are made the butt of a theatrical joke later in the scene, for the “strange inkhorn terms” he uses to replace Costard’s name are so impenetrable and numerous that Costard is not sure whether or not he is being discussed:

King: (reading Armado’s letter)“... There I did see that low-spirited swain, that base minnow of thy mirth”--
Costard: Me?
King: “that unlettered small-knowing soul”--
Costard: Me?
King: “that shallow vessel”--
Costard: Still me"
King: “which, as I remember, hight Costard”--
Costard: O, me!

(1.1.241-249)

Armado’s profuse use of antonomasia continues as he accuses Costard of consorting “with a child of our grandmother Eve, a female, or, for thy more sweet understanding, a woman” (1.1.254-255). His characteristically heavy use of antonomasia and compound epithets appears again in the letter he writes to Jacquenetta in which he addresses her by saying: “More fairer than fair, beautiful than beauteous, truer than truth itself, have commiseration on thy heroical vassal” (4.1.62-64). This letter prompts the Princess to imitate Armado’s style by using antonomasia herself: “What plume of feathers is he that indicted this letter?/ What vane? What weathercock?” (4.1.93-94) Her chosen phrases capture well both Armado’s fondness for fashion—a fashion that must refer to words rather than to clothes since she has read his letter but not seen him—and the fact that fashion changes as quickly as the wind.
The only other character who ever uses antonomasia in such profusion is Biron in his copious description of Cupid. The verbal excesses of his speech are, in this particular case, very similar to those of Armado:

... This wimpled, whining, purblind, wayward boy,
This Signor Junior, giant dwarf, Dan Cupid,
Regent of love rhymes, lord of folded arms,
Th' anointed sovereign of sighs and groans,
Liege of all loiterers and malcontents,
Dread prince of plackets, king of codpieces,
Sole imperator and great general
Of trotting paritors—O my little heart!—
And I to be the corporal of his field...

(3.1.172-180)

The rhetorical parallels between Biron and Armado are more than just coincidence; they draw our attention to the difference between words spoken to increase a speaker's reputation and those spoken to increase a listener's understanding. Biron and Armado frequently speak in order to reap the admiration of their listeners. The great rhetorician Longinus once complimented Demosthenes "for sublime speeches that 'dumbfound the audience' and draw 'our attention ... from the reasoning to the enthralling effect of the imagination'". While lacking Demosthenes' wisdom, Armado and Biron seem to aspire to a rhetorical style which favours impressiveness over clarity. In doing so, they exemplify a rhetorical style that this play ridicules through parody. Clearly Biron has more rhetorical self-knowledge than Armado, but as William Carroll notes: "We can never be sure when Berowne is merely Byronic, aware of his own shortcomings and self-contradictions, and when he actually believes in the folly he is committing. The tension in his character becomes the audience's". In LLL, the most rhetorically self-conscious of the plays, Shakespeare explores certain rhetorical fashions in order to criticize them.

A Midsummer Night's Dream is one of the last of the comedies of the 1590s to make heavy use of epithets. There are more than sixty character epithets in the play, but they lack the inventiveness of the epithets in Shrew or LLL. Some of the most
interesting epithets are found at characters' initial entrances: when we first meet "scornful Lysander", "fair Hermia", "jealous Oberon", and "proud Titania", the character epithets give us immediate information about the ways in which these characters are viewed by others. On Helena's first entrance, Hermia greets her saying, "God speed, fair Helena. Whither away?", but Helena rejects this choice of epithet, for she lacks the benefits she believes should accompany such a description: "Call you me fair? That 'fair' again unsay./ Demetrius loves your fair--O happy fair!" (1.1.180-182).

Helena is preoccupied with the traits that would make her desirable to the mate of her choice. Dream, like Shrew, includes an elaborate hunt for spouses, and the predominant epithet patterns in each play reveal the nature of the characters' preoccupations with partnering. In Shrew, as we have seen, the suitors are largely concerned with the wealth, the beauty, and the behaviour of potential mates, and most of the epithets reflect one of these three concerns. The fair, wealthy, shrewish Katherina is the mating challenge around whom the action of the play revolves. In Dream, however, the lovers' essential preoccupation is not with wealth, beauty, or behaviour but with ownership. Many of the epithets are possessive pronouns.

The central conflicts of the play are based on the overlapping claims of ownership evident in the frequent appropriation of possessive epithets. The conflict in the first scene, for example, arises when Egeus explains to Theseus that one of his animate possessions, described by him as "my daughter Hermia", has refused to acknowledge his ownership of her. Lysander also calls her "my Hermia" (1.1.224), as does Demetrius. Hermia acknowledges and returns Lysander's claim, calling him "my good Lysander" (1.1.169). In the second act, Demetrius goes to the woods in search of "my Hermia" (2.1.193), and rejected Helena follows him suffering from an extreme shortage of possessive epithets. The lovers' epithets change quickly, of course, with each drop of magic juice. Suddenly "my Hermia" becomes "thy
Hermia” (3.2.169), and the unclaimed Helena is claimed by Lysander as “My love, my life, my soul, fair Helena” (3.2.246).

It is not only in the lovers’ scenes that possessive epithets abound. With the single exception of the rude mechanicals, all character groups in the play are concerned with issues of ownership. Egeus’s belief that daughters belong to their fathers is evident again when he finds his daughter and “Old Nedar’s Helena” asleep with Lysander and Demetrius (4.1.129). Jealous Oberon regularly refers to his assistant as “my gentle Puck”, and he is not content while Titania has ownership of the changeling child he wants. While under the influence of the flower’s spell, Titania tenderly calls the transformed Bottom “my sweet love” (4.1.27), but her claim to him, like several of the claims of ownership in the play, has a nasty edge, for through it he loses all freedom. On their first meeting she denies his wish to go home, saying, “Out of this wood do not desire to go./ Thou shalt remain here whether thou wilt or no” (3.1.143-144).

While possessive epithets are misplaced, chaos reigns. The return to order, in the worlds of both fairies and human beings, is signalled by mutual acknowledgements of attachment. Oberon awakens Titania by saying: “Now, my Titania, wake you, my sweet queen”, to which she replies: “My Oberon, what visions have I seen” (4.1.74-75). Theseus refers to his enforced fiancee as “my Hippolyta” (1.1.122) and “my love” (4.1.105), but she does not return the compliment of calling him “my Theseus” until the discords of previous days are past and they are celebrating the concord signified by their wedding feast (5.1.1). As Puck has explained, in order for all to be well in this world of possessive epithets, each man must have his mare again.

One other noteworthy trait of the epithets in Dream is the prevalence of the epithet “good” in the language of the rude mechanicals. Bottom regularly addresses his friend and director as “good Peter Quince”, and his fondness for this simple
epithet is amply evident in his comically courteous greetings of the fairies. In his heart-felt attempt to be friendly and respectful, he frequently uses the epithet “good” as he addresses the fairies as “good Master Cobweb” or “good Master Peaseblossom” (3.1.173-186) and provides the “good monsieur”, Master Cobweb, with a series of instructions regarding the fetching of honey (4.1.10-16). Bottom’s fondness for this particular epithet adds to his own big-hearted charm, but its significance to the current study lies in the fact that it ties him, rhetorically speaking, to a range of characters in other plays. “Good” is used by Shakespeare as a kind of rustic epithet favoured by characters of the middle and lower classes. It dominates the epithet use of certain characters and often tells us more about the rhetorical simplicity of the speaker than it does about the moral virtue of the person described.

Like Bottom, the simple-minded Lancelot Gobbo in Merchant uses the epithet “good”. In his first soliloquy, he makes the typically internal process of aporia (a doubting or deliberating with oneself) a dialogue between his conscience and his inner fiend. The fiend tries to seduce him in an auxesis severely curtailed by a limited vocabulary: “‘Gobbo, Lancelot Gobbo, good Lancelot’, or ‘good Gobbo,’ or ‘good Lancelot Gobbo, use your legs, take the start, run away’.” His conscience responds by resorting to another epithet favoured by rustic speakers: “‘No; take heed, honest Lancelot; take heed, honest Gobbo,’ or, as aforesaid, ‘honest Lancelot Gobbo’” (2.1.3-8). The epithets “good” and “honest” are used later by Solanio as he tells of Antonio’s bad fortune, but the would-be eloquent Solanio draws attention to the inadequacy of his epithets by feigning rhetorical humility: “... it is true, without any slips of prolixity or crossing the plain highway of talk, that the good Antonio, the honest Antonio—O that I had a title good enough to keep his name company” (3.1.12-14). Solanio seems to regard his mock excuse as a rhetorical flourish which emphasizes his eloquence, but his rambling periergia (superfluity resulting from overlabour to seem fine and eloquent, especially in a slight matter) and his use of the
simple epithets "good" and "honest" link him rhetorically with Lancelot. As will be further discussed in chapter 5, Solanio is one of several social climbers in the play who aspire to a rhetorical facility they do not possess.

The epithet use in Merchant is different from that of the plays already discussed, and it is a style of epithet use shared by all of the remaining comedies with the notable exception of Troilus and Cressida. This style is characterized by a sharp decrease in the number of epithets, less inventiveness in epithet choice, and an increased reliance on stock epithets such as "good", "fair", and "sweet". There are a few potent exceptions in every play, of course, but in general the epithets in the later comedies lack the range and the dramatic energy of those in the earlier plays. In Merchant, for example, there are only thirty-four character epithets, and more than a third of those are the epithet "good". In most of the middle and late comedies, epithets seem to fade in dramatic significance, in favour of other means of characterization, only to surface again as a rhetorical force to be reckoned with in Troilus and Cressida.

More interesting, often, than the epithets themselves in the later comedies, is the hypocrisy they sometimes reveal in the speaker. Shakespeare increasingly uses epithets ironically; characters employ epithets they do not believe to be true in order to achieve a specific goal. When epithets are used suavely rather than descriptively, they vary according to who is within earshot. In Merchant, for example, Shylock is called "good Shylock" when Antonio is asking to be released from prison (3.3.4), and yet earlier he has been called "rich Jew" (2.2.118), "faithless Jew" (2.4.37), and even, through antonomasia, "the devil" (1.3.94). Shylock is aware of the Christians' hypocrisy and confronts them with it: "You call me misbeliever, cut-throat, dog... Well then, it now appears you need my help... What should I say to you?" (1.3.108-117).
Some of the patterns in the epithet use in *Merchant* are even more in evidence in *Merry Wives*. There are thirty-seven character epithets in the play and over half of them are the epithet “good”. Indeed, with one or two exceptions, such as the title “fat Falstaff”, all of the character epithets in *Merry Wives* consist of one of the following five stock epithets: “good”, “sweet”, “fair”, “gentle”, and “honest”. These words are frequently combined with the titles of Master or Mistress to give us “good Mistress Page” and “honest Master Page”, but such titles are so bland as to have no characterizing power. Unlike the inventive and diverse character epithets found in earlier plays, these stock epithets are similar to the courtesy epithets mentioned above in that they are socially sanctioned greetings widely used as a form of respect.

The only passage in *Merry Wives* in which we find epithets used with the same vigour as in the earlier plays is in act 2 scene 2, when Falstaff repeatedly insults Ford with a series of common epithets. The fun of the epithets here, of course, is the result of dramatic irony, for Falstaff does not realize while talking to “Master Brook” that he is in fact talking to Ford himself. In the space of a single page of dialogue, he heaps upon Ford a series of insulting names including “jealous rascally knave”, “poor cuckoldly knave”, “jealous wittolly knave”, “cuckoldly rogue”, and “mechanical salt-butter rogue” (2.2.251-263). Each of these insults provides rich opportunity for performance fun as Ford tries not to reveal his identity while controlling his rising indignation. As soon as Falstaff exits, Ford’s outrage explodes in a soliloquy. It seems he is as bothered by Falstaff’s epithets as he is by the thought of his wife’s infidelity:

... My bed shall be abused, my coffers ransacked, my reputation gnawn at; and I shall not only receive this villainous wrong, but stand under the adoption of abominable terms, and by him that does me this wrong. Terms! Names! Amaimon sounds well; Lucifer, well; Barbason, well; yet they are devils’ additions, the names of fiends. But cuckold! Wittol! Cuckold! The devil himself hath not such a name.

(2.2.276-283)
Ford’s lengthy speech of outrage concludes with two bursts of epizeuxis, which again reveal Ford’s preoccupation with the names he has been called: “Fie, fie, fie! Cuckold, cuckold, cuckold!” (2.2.294-295). Even after Ford learns that his wife has been faithful, he is unable to rest until he has returned the insult to Falstaff, and it is an insult of epithets rather than of deeds. As Falstaff is caught wearing the horns of Herne the Hunter, Ford mocks him in words that have the unmistakable ring of a schoolboys’ name-calling spat: “Now, sir, who’s a cuckold now? Master Brook, Falstaff’s a knave, a cuckoldly knave. Here are his horns, Master Brook” (5.5.108-109).

More innovative than the epithets in the play are the frequent uses of antonomasia. Indeed, one of the changes in style that becomes apparent when examining the comedies, in even roughly chronological order, is that Shakespeare becomes less dependent on character epithets as a means of providing salient character traits as he explores other characterizing figures. Both the number and the intensity of epithets decrease in the comedies of the late 1590s, and decrease even further in those of the early 1600s, always excepting Troilus and Cressida. As epithets decrease in importance, there is a corresponding increase in Shakespeare’s use of a range of other characterizing devices, including antonomasia, epergesis, and emphasis (a figure which gives prominence to a quality or trait by conceiving it as constituting the very substance in which it inheres).10

In Merry Wives, while there are very few interesting epithets, there are almost twenty innovative instances of antonomasia. After reading Falstaff’s love letter, for example, Mistress Page asks: “What a Herod of Jewry is this!” (2.1.19). Falstaff later refers to the garrulous Mistress Quickly as “my good she Mercury” (2.1.75). While asking Caius of the outcome of the fight between him and Sir Hugh Evans, the Host bombards Caius with a series of questions which differ only in choice of antonomasia:
Host: ... Is he dead, my Ethiopian? Is he dead, my Francisco? Ha, bully? What says my Aesculaplus, my Galen, my heart of elder, ha? Is he dead, bully stale? Is he dead? Caïus: By gar, he is de coward jack priest of de world. He is not show his face.
Host: Thou art a Castalion King Urinal Hector of Greece, my boy!

(2.3.25-31)

More outrageous even than the Host in his choice of antonomasia is Pistol, a verbal swaggerer who is similar to the bombastic Armado in his frequent use of antonomasia. Indeed, Pistol rarely calls anyone by name. In his mouth, Evans becomes "thou mountain foreigner" (1.1.145), Nim becomes "the Mars of malcontents" (1.3.96), Bardolph is renounced as a "base Hungarian wight" (1.3.20), and Falstaff as a "base Phrygian Turk" (1.3.84). While both Armado and Pistol fill the sails of their bombast with antonomasia, Armado uses this figure as a form of flattery, as when he mixes this device with hyperbole to address Jaquenetta as "More fairer than fair, beautiful than beauteous, truer than truth itself" (LLL 4.1.62-63), whereas Pistol often uses antonomasia as a form of abuse, as when he combines it with meiosis (which belittles, often through a trope of one word) and challenges Slender, saying "Froth and scum, thou liest!" (1.1.148).

The pattern of epithet use in Much Ado is very similar to that found in Merry Wives. Of the thirty-four character epithets in Much Ado, over half consist of the epithets "good", "fair", or "sweet". Once again the use of antonomasia is more inventive than that of epithets, but in this play we also find numerous examples of epergesis and of emphasis. Beatrice and Benedick, in particular, use these figures with considerable gusto. Benedick captures specific aspects of Beatrice's reputation through the figure emphasis by calling her "my dear Lady Disdain" (1.1.114) and "my Lady Tongue" (2.1.272), while she dismisses men in general, claiming that a man is nothing more than "a piece of valiant dust ... a clod of wayward marl" (2.1.61). More significant to the action of the play than the numerous specific
instances of name calling, however, is Benedick’s confident assertion that there is a certain appositive phrase that will never be linked to his name. Calling himself “the sensible Benedick”, he offers himself as a target of mockery if ever he should accept the title, “Benedick, the married man” (1.1.257). When the Prince later teases him, using this very epergesis (5.4.99), Benedick renounces his previous concern with reputation in favour of his new-found happiness.

While the epithets in Much Ado are generally less entertaining than the other characterizing figures, there is a group of character epithets that warrants examination: those assigned to the much maligned Hero. Early in the play, she is regularly referred to as “fair Hero”, “sweet Hero”, or “gentle Hero”. A woman of unsullied reputation, she catches the eye of the equally stainless Claudio. In an act of malicious destruction, Don John ruins Hero’s reputation in order to devastate his brother’s favourite: a young man whom he sarcastically describes as “the most exquisite Claudio” (1.3.48). Don John begins his destruction by the simple act of changing Hero’s epithet. The preoccupations with ownership which were so evident in Dream are condensed in a single line of Don John’s dialogue as he casually destroys Claudio’s peace of mind:

Don John: . . . the lady is disloyal.
Claudio: Who, Hero?
Don John: Even she--Leonato’s Hero, your Hero, every man’s Hero.
Claudio: Disloyal?
Don John: The word is too good to paint out her wickedness; I could say she were worse. Think you of a worse title, and I will fit her to it.

(3.2.98-105)

The notion that he will fit her to the title rather than the title to her is revealing, for he does have to re-create her, by recasting her as Margaret, in order to make his chosen epithets fit.
The damage done to Hero’s reputation is described as damage done to her name. As he renounces her, Claudio asks her to “answer truly to [her] name”, to which Hero responds:

Hero: Is it not Hero? Who can blot that name
With any just reproach?
Claudio: Marry, that can Hero.
Hero itself can blot out Hero’s virtue.

(4.1.79-83)

In order for her reputation to be rightfully restored, Hero must undergo a pseudo death. She is a woman whose good name has been killed. Although she has experienced no physical abuse, she is “Done to death by slanderous tongues” (5.3.3). When she “dies”, the false epithets with which she has been burdened die with her. Leonato insists that Claudio publicly clear Hero’s name, for only through an open profession of her innocence can she be brought back to life. When she is revealed in the final scene, everyone speaks of her as though she were a different person from the one who died in shame:

Claudio: Another Hero!
Hero: Nothing certainer.
One Hero died defiled, but I do live,
And surely as I live, I am a maid.
Don Pedro: The former Hero, Hero that is dead!
Leonato: She died, my lord, but whiles her slander lived.

(5.4.62-66)

Like Egeus, who was prepared to see his daughter die if she failed to live up to his expectations of her, Leonato regards a slandered daughter as a dead daughter. The epithets “good” and “fair”, which seem so innocuous at the beginning of the play, are in fact the life-blood of Hero’s name: without them she loses the place of privilege granted to her by the powerful men who judge her and claim to own her. In the society of this play, it is the men who have the power to defend or to destroy honour. Beatrice is certain that “sweet Hero” has been wronged, slandered, and undone, but she knows she has no power to redeem her abused cousin. She is left
with the frustrated wish that she were a man, or that she had "any friend would be a man", so that her cousin's good name would not go undefended (4.1.318).

A very similar frustration is expressed by Paulina in The Winter's Tale. Shakespeare's most defiant use of the typically bland epithet "good" is found in Paulina's defence of the wrongly accused Hermione. Leontes rejects Camillo's reference to "the good queen's entreaty", saying, "At the queen's be't: 'good' should be pertinent,/ But so it is, it is not" (1.2.220-221). Later, Paulina defiantly tells Leontes just what she thinks of such an omission:

Paulina: ... I come
From your good queen.
Leontes: Good queen!
Paulina: Good queen, my lord, good queen: I say good queen,
And would by combat make her good, so were I
A man, the worst about you. . . The good queen
(For she is good) hath brought you forth a daughter
(2.3.57-65)

In many of the plays, most notably Shrew, Much Ado, Troilus and Cressida, Winter's Tale, and Othello, men have the power to invest women with epithets, and the epithets they choose have a huge impact on the fortunes of the women who are socially defined by them.

In As You Like It, the image of Rosalind that Orlando has created and the character of Rosalind herself come into comic conflict as the two lovers help each other to become the lovers they want each other to be. Dressed as Ganymede, Rosalind teaches Orlando how to please her; as a student, Orlando reveals his impressions of his imagined Rosalind. He claims "my Rosalind is virtuous", to which she responds, almost unmasking herself, "And I am your Rosalind" (4.1.57-58). Her disguise as Ganymede allows her to participate in a delectable mating game: she can wield the courtship power usually reserved for the men in her society, but at the same time she can play the part of Orlando's supposedly submissive Rosalind. Savouring the possessive pronouns that connect her to him, she regularly
refers to herself as “your Rosalind” and asks “What would you say to me now an I were your very, very Rosalind?” (4.1.64-65) He dutifully follows her instructions and addresses her as “dear Rosalind” and even “my fair Rosalind”, but when she expresses the view that no man could die of love, Orlando objects to her performance of herself, saying, “I would not have my right Rosalind of this mind”. His right Rosalind clearly is of this mind, but, disliking any disagreement between them, she changes her tone and responds: “I will be your Rosalind in a more coming-on disposition” (4.1.99-102). The issues of possession so often encountered in the comedies are clearly evident again in the possessive pronouns found in this play, but here those pronouns are charged with dramatic irony as a result of Rosalind’s disguise.

In terms of epithet use, As You Like It shares traits of both the early and the middle comedies: it contains almost fifty character epithets and more than half of those are the stock epithets “good”, “sweet”, or “gentle”. In addition to the epithets directly attached to characters’ names, which include the possessive epithets quoted above, there are also many others attached to common nouns such as “dear master”, “good old man”, “poor cousin”, and “worthy fool”. While most epithets in the play are stock epithets, there are several instances of more inventive descriptions. In meeting “the melancholy Jaques” (2.1.26), “the roynish clown” (2.2.8), “the sinewy Charles” (2.2.14), and the “most wicked Sir Oliver” (5.1.5), for example, we are reminded of the versatility of the character epithets found in some of the earliest comedies. We also encounter the other characterizing devices which are seen with increasing frequency in the later comedies. Jaques and Orlando make sarcastic use of emphasis, for example, when they greet each other as “good Signor Love” and “good Monsieur Melancholy” (3.2.282-283), and Adam reveals the root of his loyalty to Orlando in describing him, through antonomasia, as “you memory/ Of old Sir Rowland” (2.3.2-3).
In *Twelfth Night*, the examples of antonomasia are numerous and inventive. Malvolio is variously described as a "niggardly rascally sheep-biter" (2.5.4-5), "Jezebel" (2.5.38), and a "trout that must be caught with tickling" (2.5.19-20). Sir Toby is particularly fond of antonomasia, as is evident in his series of inventive pet names for Maria, to whom he refers as "Penthesilea" (2.3.165), "my metal of India" (2.5.11), "my noble gull-catcher" (2.5.176), "the youngest wren of nine" (3.2.62), and "thou most excellent devil of wit" (2.5.195). The uses of antonomasia in *Twelfth Night* are far more entertaining than the character epithets in the play. Indeed, with the exception of the character epithets in *Comedy of Errors*, those found in *Twelfth Night* are the least interesting in the comic canon. There are twenty-six of these devices in the play, but seventeen of them are the epithet "good", and several of the remaining nine are other stock epithets such as "sweet" or "fair". In addition to the character epithets there are several of the courtesy epithets, such as "noble lord" and "most sweet lady", that tend to appear in plays containing characters from a range of social classes.

The three remaining comedies use epithets so differently from one another that no helpful generalizations can be made. The striking differences in epithet use are evident even in the number of character epithets found in each of these plays: *All’s Well* contains only eight character epithets, *Measure* has thirty-seven, and *Troilus and Cressida* contains a staggering one hundred and seven. Shakespeare’s experimentation with this device continues throughout these plays, and although the numbers of epithets are generally lower than in the earliest comedies, the epithets are, perhaps, even more striking in the later comedies. Antonomasia, epergesis, and emphasis appear with greater frequency in the late comedies than in the early ones, and these devices, in addition to character epithets, continue to exert a strong influence on our impressions of the characters we meet in these plays. The most striking features of the epithet use in *All’s Well* and *Measure* will be
considered briefly, and this chapter will close with an examination of Shakespeare’s unprecedently heavy epithet use in *Troilus and Cressida*.

Although *All’s Well* contains only eight character epithets, these epithets combine with several common and compound epithets to emphasize the importance of reputation in the play. As mentioned earlier, the men in Shakespeare’s plays often have the power to invest women with socially defining epithets, and here Bertram and the King disagree about Helen’s worth. Calling her “my preserver” (2.3.48) and “Fair maid” (2.3.53), the King grants Helen her choice of husband. She chooses Bertram, and the King commands “young Bertram” (2.3.106) to take her as his wife. When Bertram objects on the grounds that she is merely “a poor physician’s daughter”, the King makes explicit his power to invest her with worth. He says:

’Tis only title thou disdain’st in her, the which
    I can build up. . . . If she be
All that is virtuous—save what thou dislik’st,
    “A poor physician’s daughter”—thou dislik’st
Of virtue for the name. But do not so.
    . . . Good alone
Is good, without a name! Vileness is so.
The property by what it is should go,
Not by the title. She is young, wise, fair;
In these to nature she’s immediate heir,
And these breed honour. . . . What should be said?
If thou canst like this creature as a maid,
    I can create the rest. Virtue and she
Is her own dower; honour and wealth from me.

(2.3.118-145)

The liberal-minded King may seem to be saying that titles are not important, but in fact he is perpetuating their importance by emphasizing his power to increase Helen’s worth through building up her title.

Obviously Bertram is not swayed by the King’s words, and his appalling behaviour toward Helen in the ensuing action creates problems for actors, directors, and audience members alike. He is a horribly cruel man whom we are asked to
embrace as a romantic hero. In order for the comic resolution to work, we must be glad to see him and Helen united in the final scene. One possible stage solution for the problem of Bertram’s nastiness can be found in the casting hints provided in his epithets. Throughout the play he is defined in terms of his extreme youth. He is twice called “young Bertram” (1.2.18 and 2.3.106), and he is bitterly resentful of being kept home from the wars. He explains to Paroles the reasons he has been given for his exclusion, saying: “I am commanded here, and kept a coil with: / ‘Too young’, and ‘the next year’, and ‘tis too early’” (2.1.27-18). The Countess, disgusted with her son’s behaviour, calls him “Proud, scornful boy” (2.3.152) and “rash and unbridled boy” (3.2.28). She believes Helen “deserves a lord / That twenty such rude boys might tend upon” (3.2.80-81). If Bertram is cast as a “rude boy”, then we may hold out some hope that, with maturity, he will fulfil the promise that the usually wise Helen sees in him. Since Bertram’s part is a sizable one, however, it is often given to an actor who is old enough to have attained some status in his profession. A Bertram who is too old to use youth as an excuse for bad behaviour may end up seeming merely horrid, while the Helen who loves him seems a pathetic woman blinded by love.

A similar casting hint is offered in the character epithets for Claudio in Much Ado. Like Bertram, Claudio is a supposedly romantic hero whose behaviour is abysmal, and, also like Bertram, he is more than once described as “young”. It may be that Claudio’s actions can be made a little more palatable to audience members by casting an extremely young actor in this part. If Claudio is old enough to be experienced in the ways of the world, then his quick belief that Don Pedro is wooing for himself seems paranoid, and his public humiliation of Hero seems sadistic. If he is barely post-pubescent, however, then his rashness may seem to result from the hormonal raging of an inexperienced boy made stupid by his first brush with love. If he and Bertram are out-of-control boys who make almost fatal mistakes, then we
may be able to find it in our hearts to forgive them, but if those same almost fatal mistakes are made by controlling, fully-grown men, then we are left to fear for the futures of the worthy women who love them.

In Measure we are given no epithet hints as to how Angelo might be made less abhorrent. He is variously described through epithets and epergesis as "well-seeming Angelo" (3.1.224), "Lord Angelo, a man whose blood/ Is very snow broth" (1.4.57-58), "this outward-sainted deputy" (3.1.90), "this pernicious caitiff deputy" (5.1.98), and "cruel Angelo" (5.1.206). He is exposed as the hypocrite he is, and the challenge presented to Isabella, and to us, is to forgive him in spite of his past actions.

The epithet use in Measure serves well as a review of the patterns of epithet use in the earlier comedies. Of the thirty-seven character epithets in the play, more than ten are the stock adjective "good", but the others reveal certain significant character traits. The character epithets typically appear near a character's initial entrance or at a moment of heightened emotion. Early in the play, for example, we hear of "gentle Isabella" (1.4.7), her "unhappy brother Claudio" (1.4.20), and his betrothed, "the groaning Juliet" (2.2.17). Somewhat later we are introduced to "dejected Mariana" (3.1.265), and we also hear repeated wishes that "the absent Duke" (3.1.383) would return. When Isabella receives news that her brother has been beheaded in spite of Angelo’s promise to the contrary, her grief explodes in a series of epithets that concisely summarize her complex reactions to the news: "Unhappy Claudio, wretched Isabel,/ Injurious world, most damned Angelo!" (4.3.119-120). Like the character epithets so frequently found in plays such as Shrew or LLL, each of these epithets provides concise, specific information about the character to whose name it is attached.

In addition to the character epithets in the play, there are also many other characterizing figures. Compound epithets, such as "new-married man" (5.1.401)
and “well-defended honour” (5.1.403), are sprinkled throughout the text, and courtesy epithets abound in the final scene as Mariana addresses the Duke as “my most gracious lord”, “gentle my liege”, and “most bounteous sir” in her pleas for Angelo’s life (5.1.418-445). Antonomasia and epergesis are less common in this play than in most of the other middle or late comedies, but emphasis is used frequently, as in Pompey’s survey of the prisoners whom he characterizes with names such as “Young master Rash”, “one master Caper”, “young Dizzy”, “young Master Deep-vow” and “young Drop-heir that killed lusty Pudding” (4.3.4-18).

There is nothing particularly remarkable about Shakespeare’s use of epithets in Measure, but the same cannot be said for the epithets in Troilus and Cressida. Although Troilus and Cressida is not the latest of the comedies, I have reserved it for last in this chapter because its epithet use is so extraordinary. In addition to the one hundred and seven character epithets already mentioned, the play contains more than twenty compound epithets, over forty uses of antonomasia, and over forty examples of meiosis (which belittles, often through a trope of one word). In short, the characters in Troilus and Cressida are obsessed with reputation: its transience, its permanence, and the means through which it can be won and lost.

The reputations of the characters in this play were established long before the play began. Elizabethan audience members who had heard stories of the Trojan War in any form would have heard of Achilles, Hector, and Agamemnon, and these names, like all of the other names in the story, may well have had specific epithets attached. In the earliest version of the legend of the Trojan War, Homer’s The Iliad, each of the character’s names is regularly linked with one of a few epithets assigned to that particular character. Clearly The Iliad is not Shakespeare’s direct source for Troilus and Cressida. Indeed, as Baldwin explains, there is very little evidence to suggest that Shakespeare could read Greek. As we study Shakespeare’s epithets in Troilus and Cressida, however, it is necessary to digress briefly in order to consider
Homer's epithets are so pervasive that the epithets themselves have been absorbed and transmitted as part of the legend of the Trojan War.

In Homer's epic, a character's epithets do not vary in intent but in meter, for, in the oral tradition from which The Iliad arose, epithets of varying lengths were used as improvisational tools to complete a dactylic hexameter line with the required number of syllables. Homeric's epithets change with the demands of each case, and with their placement in the line of verse, but when metrically feasible the same epithets are used over and over again. In the nominative case alone, for example, Achilles is referred to as "godlike Achilles" (dios Achilleus) thirty-four times, as "swift-footed Achilles" (podas okus Achilleus) thirty-one times, and as "swift-footed godlike Achilles" (podarkes dios Achilleus) twenty-one times. Patronymics are also common in The Iliad, and thus we often encounter such descriptions as "Hector, son of Priam" (Hektora Priamiden). Homer repeats the same character epithets so many times that the epithets become lodged in the memory of anyone who has read or heard Homer's story.

The Iliad was one of the main works used for the study of Greek in Elizabethan England (Baldwin II: 626), but even those who read no Greek may have heard of "swift Achilles", of "wise Ulysses", or of "honey-tongued Nestor". One obvious source of Homer's epithets in English is George Chapman's translation of The Iliad. The first seven books of Chapman's translation were published in 1598, and in translating Homer, Chapman retains the many epithets found in the original. Homer's epithets were also accessible to Elizabethans in other forms. In the list of famous people at the back of Thomas Cooper's Thesaurus Linguae Romanae et Britannicae, for example, Cooper sometimes describes famous characters in terms of the epithets assigned by Homer. Most relevant to this study is the fact that in some Elizabethan rhetoric manuals, which were usually written by rhetoricians familiar
with Homer’s Greek, Homeric epithets are given to illustrate the figure epithet. When Puttenham illustrates the figure epitheton with the titles “Fierce Achilles, wise Nestor, [and] wilie Ulysses”, he is not inventing his examples: he is using epithets with which many of his readers would have been familiar (176).

One possible explanation for the profusion of epithets in Shakespeare’s Troilus and Cressida is that the play tells the story of legendary characters whose names are traditionally associated with certain epithets. As he writes of Agamemnon, Achilles, and Hector, Shakespeare follows long oral and written traditions in gracing the names of these famous personages with appropriate epithets. Unlike the static epithets originally assigned to these characters by Homer, however, Shakespeare’s epithets in Troilus and Cressida are extremely unstable. An epithet assigned to a specific character can change from one day to the next, or even within the course of the same conversation, depending on who is within earshot. The fluctuations in character descriptions depend largely on whether epithets are being used descriptively or suasively. Descriptive epithets are generally used for characters whose reputation is not in dispute. Hector, for example, is regarded by everyone as a man of great integrity who is also an admirable soldier. Regardless of who is speaking of him, or who is listening, he is always spoken of in flattering terms. His name is attached to epithets more than twenty times in the play. His most common epithets are “brave Hector” and “great Hector”, but many of the other adjectives attached to his name, including “gallant” (1.3.318), “valorous” (3.3.270), “valiant” (4.5.153), and “mighty” (5.8.14), are also indications of his prowess in battle. Epithets emphasize both his extraordinary skill as a soldier and his reputation as a loved and respected man. Early in the play he is described, through epergusis, as “Hector, whose patience/ Is as a virtue fixed” (1.2.4-5). Cassandra speaks of him with the love of a sister calling him “sweet Hector” (5.3.25) and “dear Hector” (5.3.80). Ulysses acknowledges both his personal and his public merits in addressing
him as "most gentle and most valiant Hector" (4.5.227). While his epithets may vary in length, they do not vary much in intent: his good reputation is more stable than that of his fellows.

While the flattering epithets used in reference to Hector are descriptive, those employed in addressing Agamemnon are often suasive, for Agamemnon's position of power makes him a target of hyperbolic attempts to win his favour. His standard epithet is "great Agamemnon", but in several instances he is described in more glowing terms. Showing the respect expected of a messenger, Aeneas combines antonomasia and epithets to ask: "Which is that god in office, guiding men?/ Which is the high and mighty Agamemnon?" (1.3.228-229). Even more hyperbolic is Ulysses's formal request for Agamemnon's permission to speak. As he prepares to give Agamemnon advice, he is politic in his use of a figure known as parrhesia (by which one is humbly respectful or, if necessity demands, courageously outspoken in addressing those whom he ought to reverence or fear on a matter which concerns them). He shows his supposed respect through a combination of antonomasia, synecdoche, and auxesis as he asks for Agamemnon's attention:

... Agamemnon,
Thou great commander, nerves and bone of Greece,
Heart of our numbers, soul and only spirit,
In whom the tempers and the minds of all
Should be shut up, hear what Ulysses speaks....
(1.3.54-58)

Just as Antony demonstrates political acumen in calling Brutus "an honourable man" even while destroying Brutus's reputation (JC, 3.2.75-109), so Ulysses reveals his characteristic shrewdness in addressing Agamemnon as a great commander even while criticizing Agamemnon's complete lack of control over Achilles.

Ulysses chooses to address Agamemnon respectfully and he is, in turn, treated with respect. Achilles, on the other hand, simultaneously reveals his knowledge of the rhetoric of courtesy and his disrespect for such rhetoric. On hearing of Ajax's
advancement, Achilles gives instructions to Patroclus which include seemingly flattering epithets heavy with sarcasm:

To him, Patroclus. Tell him I humbly desire the valiant Ajax to invite the most valorous Hector to come unarmed to my tent, and to procure safe-conduct for his person of the magnanimous and most illustrious six-or-seven-times-honoured captain-general of the Grecian army, Agamemnon, et cetera. Do this.

(3.3.269-274)

Nothing reveals Achilles’ contempt for the people he is describing more succinctly than his “et cetera”; the epithets he has assigned are mere shells of a learned courtesy empty of meaning. In his mouth, epithets of courtesy become instruments of insult.

Achilles’ sarcasm is clearly fueled by Ajax’s promotion: a promotion designed by Ulysses for the specific purpose of provoking Achilles. No one is more eloquent in sarcasm than Ulysses, and as he explains the problem of Achilles’ mounting arrogance, he sarcastically describes him using epithets, emphasis, and antonomasia. He calls him “large” (1.3.161), “rank” (1.3.314), and “kingdomed” Achilles (2.3.169), and claims that “god Achilles” (1.3.168) takes great delight in watching Patroclus mimic the Greek commanders, at which sport “Sir Valour dies [and] cries ‘O, enough, Patroclus” (1.3.175). Achilles is sick with self-love, and on that vice in him will Ulysses’ plan work. Ulysses explains his plan to Nestor in terms that reveal his contempt for both Achilles and Ajax:

... let blockish Ajax draw
The sort to fight with Hector; among ourselves
Give him allowance for the better man;
For that will physic the great Myrmidon,
Who broils in loud applause, and make him fall
His crest that prouder than blue Iris bends.
If the dull brainless Ajax come safe off,
We’ll dress him up in voices. . . . But, hit or miss,
Our project’s life this shape of sense assumes:
Ajax employed plucks down Achilles’ plumes.

(1.3.370-381)
While talking to Nestor, Ulysses can use the descriptive character epithets he believes to be accurate, but, within hearing of Achilles or Ajax, Ulysses uses character epithets as instruments of persuasion in his attempts to "physic" Achilles and thereby rouse him to action. Nestor and Ulysses call Ajax "dull Ajax", "dull brainless Ajax", and later "snail-paced Ajax" (5.5.18), but they "dress him up in voices" when it suits their purposes to do so. In act 2 scene 3, the Greek leaders purposely inflate Ajax's opinion of himself through a series of flattering verbal tactics including changing his epithets. In this scene he becomes "noble Ajax" (2.3.143), "sinewy Ajax" (2.3.238), and "Lord Ajax" (2.3.247). Ulysses alludes to Achilles' reputation without perpetuating it by saying that "As amply titled as Achilles is" (2.3.187), Ajax, whom he describes as "this thrice-worthy and right valiant lord" (2.3.184), should not lower himself by going to speak to Achilles. Clearly the flattering tactics work on brainless Ajax, and by the end of the scene, he is inflated by the hot air of his own praises.

As was previously mentioned, men often have the power to define women through the epithets they assign to them, and here we see that men can also be defined by those in power. Before Ajax has encountered Hector, his reputation changes simply because the Greek commanders choose to change it. Through words, if not deeds, he becomes great. Achilles, on the other hand, undergoes a change in identity through a loss of his accustomed epithets of praise. As the Greek leaders walk by him without the words or gestures of the obsequious greetings that help him to define himself, Achilles is left to question his current identity: "Know they not Achilles?... What, am I poor of late?" (3.3.70-75). The wily Ulysses, coming last in the line, purposely puts Achilles at his ease by addressing him with a flattering antonomasia of the sort to which Achilles is accustomed. Ulysses calls him "great Thetis' son" (3.3.95), and allows him to lower his defences, only to undermine further Achilles' confidence in his erstwhile reputation for greatness. As Achilles
and Ulysses discuss the relationship between the possession of a trait and the enjoyment of that trait, Ulysses claims to paraphrase the book he is reading when he asserts,

That no man is the lord of anything,
Though in and of him there be much consisting,
Till he communicate his parts to others;
Nor doth he of himself know them for aught
Till he behold them formed in th’applause
Where they’re extended . . .

(3.3.115-120)

This discussion of the relationship between reputation and essence is similar to the discussion already cited from All’s Well in which the King explains Helen’s essential merits to Bertram. These two discussions come to different conclusions, however, as to the fundamental source of epithets. The King argues that if a person is good or honourable, as Helen is, then these traits exist in their owner whether or not they are recognized by others. Ulysses, on the other hand, suggests that identity is an unstable commodity that can be given or taken as observers see fit. Achilles has assumed that he will be regarded as the superlative soldier he is even when he is in repose, but Ulysses informs him that reputation can be maintained only by continuing the actions that first established it.

Ulysses’s tactic works. Achilles is moved to action out of concern for his reputation, and he is far from alone: the entire Trojan War is based on a fight to protect the reputations of Helen, Menelaus, Paris, and the countrymen and -women whose reputations these three characters personify. In Shakespeare’s version of the story, the commanders on both sides of the fight have serious doubts about the merits of their cause, but the more people who die fighting, the more damaging it is to everyone’s reputation to admit that the battle might not be an honourable one. The reason for the war is concisely explained in the play’s Prologue: “The ravished Helen, Menelaus’ queen,/ With wanton Paris sleeps—and that’s the quarrel”
(Prologue. 9-10). The epithets and epergusis in this sentence are of central importance to the entire war. In Helen’s case, the personal is political. If Helen belongs to Menelaus, and if she has been ravished by a wanton Paris, then codes of honour, both personal and political, require the return of Helen to her husband. But if the case is one of adultery instead of rape, if “willing Helen” with “her beloved Paris” sleeps, then those who have fought for her honour find themselves in a very precarious position indeed, for then, as Thersites bluntly puts it, “All the argument is a whore and a cuckold—a good quarrel to draw emulous factions and bleed to death upon” (2.3.68-70).

The instability of the character epithets in Troilus and Cressida is one of the rhetorical means by which the divided loyalties of certain characters are revealed. As we have already seen, epithets, epergusis, and antonomasia can be used to flatter or to insult a person being described. When used with hyperbole, these devices are effective tools for the crafting of panegyrics. The play is full of hyperbolic descriptions as characters try to motivate each other through flattery. In juxtaposition with the flattering use of character epithets, however, is the undercutting of these epithets through parody or meiosis: an undercutting which serves to emphasize the fabricated nature of reputation.

The most strident parody of epithet use in the play is found in Pandarus’s obsequious meeting with Helen when he asks her to make an excuse for Troilus’s absence at supper. The parody takes the form of an absurdly repetitious use of the epithets “fair” and “sweet”. Pandarus greets Paris and Helen as follows:

   Pandarus: Fair be to you, my lord, and to all this fair company! Fair desires, in all fair measure, fairly guide them! Especially to you, fair Queen, fair thoughts be your fair pillow!
   Helen: Dear lord, you are full of fair words.

   (3.1.41-45)
He proceeds to call Helen "sweet Queen" fifteen times in the course of the conversation, and his cloying and transparent flattery prompts Helen to call him "honey-sweet lord" (3.1.62), and to warn him that making "a sweet lady sad is a sour offence" (3.1.69).

In a very different style of parody, Thersites rails at the world in terms that make a mockery of good reputation. Described as "rank Thersites" (1.3.72), and as "a slave whose gall coins slanders like a mint" (1.3.192), Thersites spews forth venomous insults in the forms of epithets, antonomasia, cacosyntheton (the vice of foul speech), and meiosis. As he denounces those around him in the vilest of terms, he voices the fears of sullied reputation that form the subtext of other scenes. It is no coincidence that his two main insult-hurling bouts are with two of the characters most preoccupied with issues of reputation: Ajax and Achilles. In act 2, scene 1, Thersites and Ajax try to outdo each other in nastiness. Ajax calls Thersites "dog", "bitch-wolf's son", "toadstool", and "whoreson cur", while Thersites calls him "mongrel beef-witted lord", "scurvy-valiant ass", "thou thing of no bowels", and "the loathsomest scab in Greece" (2.1.5-51). In act 5, scene 1, Thersites engages in another antimasque of honour, this time with the supposedly noble Achilles. The tone of their exchange is set in the first few lines:


Ajax and Achilles vie for honour in their camp, but in the exchanges cited above they show the filthy underbelly of their preoccupation with reputation. If others seem smaller, then they will seem greater, and thus they indulge in name-calling in an attempt to assert their own supremacy. Ironically, they are dishonoured by the
very means through which they seek honour, and in this they are not unlike other soldiers who find themselves caught in the Trojan War: soldiers who have killed for a cause which may prove to be unjust.

As mentioned above, the Trojan War was sparked by an event which is both personal and political. By combining Caxton's story of war with Chaucer's story of two lovers, Shakespeare creates a structure for his play that allows for numerous comparisons between the public and the private realms. Questions of honour and betrayal arise both on the battlefield and in the bedroom as Shakespeare juxtaposes the story of Hector's challenge with that of Troilus and Cressida's love. In Shakespeare's telling of these two stories, each one contains both a public and a private dimension. The private love of Troilus and Cressida is disrupted when, in the public realm, Cressida is offered to the Greeks as one of the spoils of war. Hector's challenge is a purely political one in Homer's version of the story, but in Shakespeare's retelling, which seems to be based on Caxton's version, Hector chooses a private issue as the basis for his public challenge: he asserts that "He hath a lady, wiser, fairer, truer,/ Than ever Greek did compass in his arms" (1.3.272).

In examining the epithets of Hector, Agamemnon, Ajax, and Achilles, we have focused on epithets that reflect the gaining and losing of public reputations, but the most powerful epithet in the play is spoken in the private realm as Troilus reluctantly dubs Cressida with the title that will forever stick to her name. Throughout the play, she is regularly referred to as "fair Cressida" or "sweet Cressida", and on two occasions she enters into lengthy discussions with Troilus as to the effect that infidelity would have on her name. As if aware that they are in the process of dubbing themselves as the historically famous lovers they will become, Troilus claims his name will come to signify the very essence of truthfulness, while Cressida says if she fails to be true to him, let generations to come say, as a way of sticking "to the heart of falsehood,/ 'As false as Cressid'" (3.2.185-186). She later
unwittingly curses the good fortune of her name by praying, “O you gods divine!/ Make Cressid’s name the very crown of falsehood,/ If ever she leave Troilus!” (4.2.97-99). For all the discussion of her name, in this play teeming with character epithets, the dreaded and climactic epithet, “false Cressid”, is uttered only once. In the final act, Troilus is forced to admit that the woman he once called “my Cressid” (3.2.109) is now “Diomed’s Cressid” (5.2.135), and in a howl of pain he cries, “O Cressid! O false Cressid! False, false, false!” (5.2.175). In citing this line, Joseph notes that “epizeuxis, with diacope, expresses the bitter disillusionment of Troilus” (88), but the epizeuxis and diacope are merely the foils to the blade: it is the character epithet that is the dagger through the heart.

In *Troilus and Cressida*, Shakespeare creates characters who are simultaneously legendary figures and his own unique creations, and whose reputations are simultaneously fixed and fragile. While we watch the play, we see these famous characters become themselves as they strive to attain, or to avoid attaining, the epithets that will be attached to their names forever: we see the forging of historic reputations on the grandest of scales.

Notes


2 In order to give a sense of the range of Shakespeare’s epithet use, I cite many epithets in this chapter. Since a plethora of citations can be distracting, and since several of the epithets are repeated in each play, act, scene, and line numbers will be provided only when the location or speaker of the epithet is of specific relevance to the epithet’s impact.

3 For more information on various RSC portrayals of Katherina, as described by the women who portrayed them, see Carol Rutter, *Clamorous Voices: Shakespeare’s Women Today*, ed. Faith Evans (London: The Women’s Press, 1988) 1-25.


6 The rhetoric in LLL has received more scholarly attention than the rhetoric in any of the other plays, and for that reason I have chosen not to examine many of the obvious metarhetorical elements in the play: elements that receive extensive analyses in several works, including William C. Carroll’s The Great Feast of Language in Love’s Labour’s Lost (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976); Keir Elam’s Shakespeare’s Universe of Discourse: Language Games in the Comedies (Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 1984); and Brian Vickers’ The Artistry of Shakespeare’s Prose (London: Methuen & Co Ltd., 1968).

7 See George Hibbard’s note to 1.1.177 in his Oxford edition of LLL.


9 Carroll 70. Carroll provides an extensive examination of the rhetoric of both Biron and Armado. He notes several points at which Biron indulges in rhetorical excesses in ways very similar to Armado’s excesses. Carroll notes that at the beginning of the sonnet-reading scene, ”Berowne’s speech is beginning to take on the stilted and affected quality of Armado’s”, and Carroll later examines this rhetorical parallelism further:

"Berowne’s sonnet to Rosaline, read at 4.2.104-17, is swollen with the same hyperbolic diction and forced comparisons as those of the other infatuated noblemen, who have also been listening to Armado. An inflated parody of the courtly lovers generally, but especially of Berowne, Armado is a foppish instance of what they are all becoming under the influence of what they call ‘love’"(70).

10 Emphasis, also called significatio, is a complex term with more than one meaning. For further information on the various meanings ascribed to the term emphasis, see Lanham 138-40.

11 Shakespeare’s main source for Troilus and Cressida is Caxton’s English translation of Raoul Lefèvre’s Recuyell of the Historyes of Troye. Other sources include Chapman’s translation of The Iliad (of which the first seven books were published in 1598), Lydgate’s Troye Booke, Ovid’s Metamorphoses, and Chaucer’s Troilus and Criseyde. Ovid uses epithets regularly, and Lydgate has a few favourite epithets, such as ”worthy Hector”, but, with the exception of Caxton’s translation, the other sources mentioned here use epithets only rarely. For more information on Shakespeare’s sources for Troilus and Cressida, see the introduction to Kenneth Muir’s Oxford edition of the play (12).

12 Baldwin II: 660-61.

13 I am indebted to Jeff Creighton, who helped me to understand the nature of Homeric epithets and who also helped me to find, and to transliterate, the Greek epithets listed in this chapter. For more information on Homeric epithets, see The Making of Homeric Verse: The Collected Papers of Milman Parry, ed. Adam Parry (Oxford: Clarendon Press) 1971. The first chapter of this book is devoted to a study of ”The Traditional Epithet in Homer”. Parry provides tables of noun-epithet formulae in the genitive and nominative cases, and these tables make certain features of Homeric epithets immediately evident.
In addition to demonstrating the repetitive nature of Homer's epithets, Achilles' titles combine character-specific descriptions with generic epithets, and this combination is common in Homer. "Swift-footed" is an epithet reserved for Achilles alone, just as "glancing-helmed" (koruthaiolos) is Hector's signature epithet. "Godlike", on the other hand, is used to describe not only Hector and Achilles, but numerous other characters as well. According to Parry's statistics (84), when counting epithets in all of the cases, Homer refers to "godlike Achilles" fifty-five times and to "godlike Ulysses" ninety-eight times.

Homer, *Homer’s Iliad*, transl. George Chapman, 2nd ed. (London: George Routledge and Sons, 1886). In Chapman's translation, we read in English of "helm-graced Hector" (98), of "wise Ulysses" (57), and of "Achilles, the swift-foot, godlike son of Thetis" (12).

One of the characters described by Cooper in Homeric terms is "honey-tongued Nestor", of whom Cooper writes: "... he was so eloquent, that Homer affirmeth his talke proceeded from him sweeter then any honye". This description appears in the "Dictionarivm Hystoricum & Poeticum proprietocorum" at the back of Thomas Cooper's *Thesaurus Linguarum Romanarum et Britannicarum* (1565) (Menston: The Scolar Press Limited 1969).

Homer's epithets are notorious for being static: once he assigns an adjective to a character's name, he continues to use that epithet even in circumstances in which it may seem inappropriate. One example of a character's signature epithet being used in spite of its complete inappropriateness in the circumstances is when "Aphrodite the sweetly laughing" explains that she has been stabbed (*The Iliad* v. 375-377).

As Bullough and others have argued, Shakespeare's portrayal of Ajax as dull and brainless may well have been influenced by the presentation of Ajax in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (xiii.1-441). For more information on the sources of Shakespeare's portrayal of Ajax, see the introduction to Kenneth Muir's edition of *Troilus and Cressida* 18, and Bullough, *Narrative and Dramatic Sources*, 6: 88.

According to Joseph, the figure meiosis belittles, often through the trope of one word, and it may range in tone from bitter scorn to light derision (151), while the vice tapinosis is the use of a base word to diminish the dignity of a person or thing (67). These two devices are sometimes hard to distinguish from one another, but I believe the essential difference between them is one of intent. Through meiosis, a speaker consciously insults, while tapinosis is a speech error used in ignorance. With this distinction in mind, I have chosen to call Thersites' intentional insults meiosis rather than tapinosis.

See the introduction to Kenneth Muir's edition of *Troilus and Cressida* 16.
Chapter Three: Verbal Slapstick

In a study of Shakespeare’s comic rhetoric, one group of devices warrants special attention: the vices of language. The rhetorical figures examined in chapters 1 and 2 sporadically appear in all genres, and in the language of many different characters. The vices by their very nature, however, are found only in the lines of certain sorts of speakers. Indeed, more than any of the tropes or schemes, the vices tend to become associated with specific individuals. Joseph notes that several Shakespearean characters have a characteristic vice, and the association of certain vices with certain comic characters is so striking as to warrant special attention here.

As mentioned in the introduction, Tudor rhetoricians identify between ten and twenty-two vices. Each of these vices consists of some sort of linguistic error. Some vices are based on specific grammatical errors, such as solecismus (the ignorant misuse of cases, genders, tenses) or amphibology (ambiguity of grammatical structure, often occasioned by mispunctuation), but most vices involve more general errors in a speaker’s judgement, such as cacemphaton (the vice of foul speech) or heterogenium (the vice of answering something utterly irrelevant to what is asked). Many of the vices share the fault of longwindedness, and numerous comic Shakespearean characters are guilty of these vices of verbosity.

In A Handlist of Rhetorical Terms, Richard A. Lanham refers to the various vices of long-windedness as “the ‘Polonian figures,’ after their great Shakespearean practitioner, Polonius” (97). Lanham notes that these figures, which are sometimes hard to distinguish from one another, can be loosely categorized into two groups: “one group of terms seems to cluster around ‘needless repetition,’ and another around what we might today call ‘overwriting,’ an overelaborated style” (97). In the first group he places macrologia, perissologia, pleonasmus, and tautologia, and in
the “overwriting” group he includes Asianism, bomphiologia, periergia, poicillogia, and perhaps homiologia. It is not always possible to distinguish between these two groups, however, for bad speakers, in their attempts to be eloquent, often resort to ineffective repetition. As an illustration of macrologia, Lanham cites Polonius’s ironically lengthy description of the merits of brevity:

My liege and madam, to expostulate
What majesty should be, what duty is,
Why day is day, night night, and time is time,
Were nothing but to waste night, day, and time.
Therefore, since brevity is the soul of wit,
And tediousness the limbs and outward flourishes,
I will be brief. Your noble son is mad.
Mad call I it, for to define true madness,
What is’t but to be nothing else but mad?
But let that go.

(\textit{Hamlet}, 2.2.86-94)

Lanham notes that in this speech, which he refers to as “the very locus classicus of longwindedness,” Polonius is guilty of both needless repetition and overwriting. In these ten lines we find numerous vices including macrologia (long-winded speech), pleonasmus (the needless telling of what is already understood), tautologia (the vain repetition of the same idea), and periergia (overlabour to seem fine and eloquent, especially in a slight matter).

As Joseph explains, Shakespeare makes extensive use of the vices of language “to achieve satiric humour and to create ludicrous characters and comic incidents, especially from low life” (78). One comic incident created through the use of the vice amphibology, for example, is Quince’s inept reading of the Prologue to “Pyramus and Thisbe” (\textit{MND}.5.1.108-117). The humour in his reading arises not from the words of the Prologue but from the ambiguity occasioned by his mispunctuation. Quince’s vice is atypical here, both for him and for Shakespeare, in that Quince is guilty of this vice only in this particular instance. In most cases, a character who uses a specific vice uses it many times.
Joseph devotes an entire section of *Shakespeare's Use of the Arts of Language* to an examination of the vices in Shakespeare's works (64-78). While Joseph's work has been an invaluable guide to my own study, the goals of our studies are very different. Joseph's book is similar in methodology to the sixteenth-century style manuals from which she draws much of her material. She identifies and defines over two hundred figures, tropes, and vices, and she illustrates each of these devices with a series of Shakespearean examples. In doing so, she simultaneously teaches the devices and demonstrates Shakespeare's considerable rhetorical knowledge and skill. Only rarely, and briefly, does she consider the effects of Shakespeare's rhetoric within the context of a specific scene or play. Her goal, in part, is to demonstrate that Shakespeare used rhetoric extensively; my goal is to consider what he did with it. Any consideration of rhetorical figures in a given scene or play must begin with an identification of those devices. I do not, however, regard figure identification as an end in itself. Rather, I consider it a very specific means to the end of developing a better understanding of certain characters, scenes, and plays.

Although figure identification is not an end in itself, in certain circumstances, the effects of Shakespeare's rhetoric are so obvious as to render close scrutiny redundant. Nowhere is the connection between figure identification and comic effect so direct as in Shakespeare's use of specific vices of language to characterize certain speakers. In some cases, a particular vice is so integral to a character that it helps to shape our general impression of who that person is. We need hardly look for specific examples of cacemphaton, for example, to know that Thersites and Lucio frequently offend their listeners through this vice of foul speech. Similarly, our sense that Falstaff is a notorious braggart is strong even before we note that his speeches are peppered with the vice bomphiologia.

In this chapter we will examine the characteristic vices of certain speakers within the context of the plays in which those speakers appear. The vices chosen for
consideration here come from four comedies that contain frequent and diverse illustrations of vice usage: LLL, Merry Wives, Dream, and Much Ado. The chapter will close with a consideration of the difficulties inherent in identifying the vices in certain situations.

Several characters in LLL are notably vain about their rhetorical ability, and it is no coincidence that the three characters who are most proud of their eloquence are often guilty of certain vices of linguistic excess. Don Armado, Biron, and Holofernes regard themselves as eloquent orators and gifted writers who are qualified to criticize the rhetoric of others, but the language of all three of these speakers contains certain characteristic errors.

Don Armado is a braggart, and he seems especially proud of his ability to speak eloquently. He is frequently guilty of the vice periergia (overlabour to seem fine and eloquent, especially in a slight matter), as when he asks to speak to the King with the words, “Anointed, I implore so much expense of thy royal sweet breath as will utter a brace of words” (LLL 5.2.519-20), or when he speaks to the Princess, saying “Sweet royalty, bestow on me the sense of hearing” (5.2.654). The vice of periergia is particularly noticeable in Armado’s letters, which are read and ridiculed in his absence (1.1.216-265, and 4.1.60-85). As mentioned in chapter 2, Armado’s speech is characterized by a heavy use of compound epithets, antonomasia, and hyperbole. It is these devices, when combined with his love of copia, that frequently form the basis of his periergia, and Biron is also sometimes guilty of the excessive use of these figures (3.1.167-198).

In Armado’s attempts to be eloquent, he often coins new words, and thus in addition to his use of periergia he is also guilty of affected diction, a form of the vice cacozelia. Biron is also guilty of this vice, as evident in his coining of a new term in calling Armado “A man of fire-new words” (1.1.178). As an example of cacozelia,
Joseph cites an exchange between Armado and Holofernes in which Holofernes praises Armado’s diction:

Armado: Sir, it is the King’s most sweet pleasure and affection to congratulate the Princess at her pavilion in the posteriors of this day, which the rude multitude call the afternoon.

Holofernes: The posterior of the day, most generous sir, is liable, congruent, and measurable for the afternoon. The word is well culled, choice, sweet, and apt, I do assure you, sir, I do assure.

(5.1.77-84)

Although Holofernes praises Armado’s diction here, earlier in the same scene, while speaking to Nathaniel, Holofernes accuses Armado of being guilty not only of periergia but also of barbarismus (a mispronunciation of words which most often marks a foreigner). Even as he accuses Armado of barbarismus, he reveals his own characteristic vice which is soraismus (the mingling of sundry languages ignorantly or affectedly):

Holofernes: He draweth out the thread of his verbosity finer than the staple of his argument. I abhor such fanatical phantasimes, such insociable and point-device companions, such rackers of orthography, as to speak ‘dout’, sine ‘b’, when he should say ‘doubt’; ‘dut’, when he should pronounce ‘debt’-’d,e,b,t,’ not ‘d,e,t’. He clepeth a calf ‘cauf’; half ‘hauf’; neighbour vocatur ‘nebour’, ‘neigh’ abbreviated ‘ne’. This is abominable, which he would call ‘abominable’. It insinuateth me of insanire. Ne intelligis, domine? To make frantic, lunatic.

Nathaniel: Laus Deo, bone intelligo.
Holofernes Bone? ‘Bone’ for ‘bene’! Priscian a little scratched; ‘twill serve.

(5.1.16-28)

The pedantic Holofernes cannot resist correcting Nathaniel’s vice of solecismus, which we would now call by its English name of solecism. It is ironic that the rhetorically-affected Holofernes and Biron should criticize verbal affectation in others, for these two speakers are often guilty of the vices they condemn.

Throughout LLL, Shakespeare parodies certain forms of rhetorical excess, and thus it is not surprising that the vices of verbosity appear regularly in this play.
Some characters' vices are so noticeable that they provoke comments from others. As noted above, Holofemes comments on the linguistic errors of Armado and Nathaniel. In *Two Gentlemen*, Speed makes an even more direct reference to Launce's characteristic vice of mistaking one word for another (a form of the vice cacozelia) when he says: "Well, your old vice still: mistake the word" (*TGV*, 3.1.275).

In several of Shakespeare's comedies, the linguistic vices become a topic of conversation, and, in these cases, audience members are encouraged to share the metarhetorical awareness of the people on stage.

One such situation arises in *Dream*. The amphibologia in Quince's reading of the Prologue to "Pyramus and Thisbe" provokes a series of comments from the on-stage audience members:

Theseus: This fellow doth not stand upon points.
Lysander: He hath rid his prologue like a rough colt: he knows not the stop. A good moral, my lord: it is not enough to speak, but to speak true.
Hippolyta: Indeed, he hath played on this prologue like a child on a recorder: a sound, but not in government.
Theseus: His speech was like a tangled chain: nothing impaired, but all disordered. Who is next?

(*MND*, 5.1.118-125)

Throughout the performance of "Pyramus and Thisbe," the on-stage audience members, particularly Demetrius, Lysander, and Theseus, frequently and explicitly draw attention to the lack of rhetorical skill both in the script's author and in its performers, even as they flaunt their own ready skill in copia. Their enjoyment of the play seems heightened by their own sense of rhetorical superiority, and rhetorically trained Elizabethan audience members may well have shared this particular sense of enjoyment. The vices of language are particularly well-suited to developing a sense of superiority in the audience, for they consist of obvious linguistic errors. While these errors are apparent even to untrained ears, the ability
of rhetorically knowledgeable audience members to recognize and name each error increases their sense of separateness from the comic characters at whom they laugh.

Theseus, Demetrius, and Lysander comment not only on vices in the rude mechanicals’ language but also on the figures. In one instance, for example, Demetrius makes an explicit reference to the figure partitio (which divides a whole into its parts). When Snout explains that the loam, roughcast, and stone he wears are designed to signify a wall, he unwittingly uses the figure partitio in describing a wall by listing its parts. Theseus responds to Snout’s speech by saying: “Would you desire lime and hair to speak better?” to which Demetrius cleverly replies with a pun: “It is the wittiest partition that ever I heard discourse, my lord” (5.1.165). By using the word “partition” to mean both wall and partitio simultaneously, Demetrius uses a pun known as syllepsis (the use of a word having simultaneously two different meanings, although it is not repeated). It seems that it is not only the rude mechanicals who are pleased to have the audience of the Duke; Demetrius and Lysander are also glad to have his ear. Just as they were rivals in love, so here, in a gentler vein, they are rhetorical rivals as they flaunt their rhetorical skill in an attempt to court the Duke’s favour.

Shakespearean characters frequently comment explicitly on each others’ rhetoric, and the sophistication of the comments depends entirely on the training of the speakers. Demetrius and Lysander succeed in demonstrating some skill in rhetoric, as does the pedantic Holofernes, but some would-be rhetoricians succeed only in revealing their own ignorance as they attempt to criticize the language of others. Nowhere is rhetorical lack of self-knowledge more evident than in Merry Wives.

The vices of language appear with more diversity in Merry Wives than in any of Shakespeare’s other comedies, and they are also commented on more frequently. Several of the characters in this play regularly use certain vices: Justice Shallow frequently uses homoiologia; both Dr. Caius and Sir Hugh Evans are characterized by
their use of solecisms and barbarismus; Falstaff uses bomphiologia; Mistress Quickly uses several of the vices of long-windedness, and her speeches often contain solecisms; and Master Slender is often guilty of cacoelia. More rhetorically volatile than any of the other characters is Pistol, who has a bizarre style all his own. As Joseph explains, there is a “strange bombastic rhythm” in Pistol’s language which comes, in part, from his combining of the vices of cacoelia, bomphiologia, and cacosyntheton (foul speech or objectionable word order, 73). Nim seems to create a vice of his own through his fondness for the word “humour.” He uses this word thirteen times in one scene alone (1.3), and thus we might say he is guilty of homologia, but we might also accuse him of ignorant and affected diction (cacoelia), for, in all his uses of the word “humour”, it is never clear that he actually understands what the word means.

The linguistic errors made by characters in Merry Wives frequently provoke explicit criticism from other characters. After listening to a speech in which Nim repeats the word “humour” four times, for example, Page says in an aside: “The humour of it, quoth ‘a! Here’s a fellow frights English out of his wits” (2.1.127-8). Ironically, it is often the rhetorically inept characters who are most critical of the language of others. Commenting on the pleonasmus in Pistol’s line “He hears with ears,” Evans responds in an indignant aside which contains his own characteristic vices of solecisms and barbarismus: “The tevil and his tam! What phrase is this? ‘He hears with ears’? Why, it is affectations” (1.1.134-136). A little later in the same scene, he comments on Slender’s cacoelia, but in this case he speaks his critique aloud:

   Slender: I will marry her, sir, at your request; but if there be no great love in the beginning, yet heaven may decrease it upon better acquaintance, when we are married and have more occasion to know one another. I hope upon familiarity will grow more contempt. But if you say “marry her”, I will marry her; that I am freely dissolved, and dissolutely.
Evans: It is a fery discretion answer, save the fall is in the 'ord “dissolutely”. The 'ort is, according to our meaning, “resolutely”. His meaning is good. (MWW,1.1.223-234)

Slender’s speech is full of entertaining examples of cacozelia. In commenting on only one of Slender’s errors, in language which is itself full of errors, Evans merely draws attention to his own ineptitude.

Evans’s concern for proper language appears most extensively when he gives young William a Latin lesson (4.1.16-77). Joseph refers to this lesson as “Shakespeare’s most delightful and lively reference to grammar,” and she notes that the lesson “abounds in unmistakable echoes of Lily’s Latin grammar, so familiar to Elizabethans” (45). Throughout the scene, Mistress Quickly reveals her utter ignorance of Latin by regularly mistaking Latin words for English words that sound similar. Once again it is left to Evans to correct someone else’s mistakes, and once again his criticism is full of his own characteristic vices. He exclaims: “'Oman, art thou lunatics? Hast thou no understandings for thy cases, and the numbers of the genders? Thou art as foolish a Christian creatures as I would desires” (4.1.63-65).

Just as Evans criticizes others for their verbal errors, so his errors are often criticized. In the attempt to prevent Evans and Caius from fighting, the Host orders that their weapons be taken away, saying: “Disarm them, and let them question. Let them keep their limbs whole, and hack our English” (3.1.71-72). The commonplace that words can be powerful weapons is used here as the base of a joke at the expense of Evans and Caius, whose English teems with solecisms and barbarismus. In their mouths, English becomes a weapon used against itself. In the final scene of the play, Evans’s abuse of English is drawn to our attention again by the explicit comments of Ford and Falstaff. When Evans says to Ford, “leave you your jealousies,” Ford responds by joking about Evans’s solecism saying: “I will never mistrust my wife again till thou art able to woo her in good English” (5.5.131-134). Only two lines later, Falstaff comments on Evans’s barbarismus. Ridiculing Evans’s pronunciation
of the words "cheese" and "butter," Falstaff exclaims: "'Seese' and 'putter'? Have I lived to stand at the taunt of one that makes fritters of English? This is enough to be the decay of lust and late walking through the realm" (5.5.142-145).

**Merry Wives** is the only one of Shakespeare's comedies set in England. It has a patriotic flavour more often associated with Shakespeare's history plays than with his comedies, and this flavour comes, in part, from characters' responses to abuses of the English language. Instead of regarding verbal vices merely as signs of a speaker's ineptitude, which is the standard response to vices in other plays, the characters in this robustly English comedy often describe vices as insults to their mother tongue. Even Sir Hugh Evans, the Welshman whose vices are the butt of so many jokes, repeatedly expresses his concern for the compromised dignity of the English language. The comic characters in this play may be low on the social ladder; they may be tricked easily and made to look like fools. But when all plans have failed, when all dignity seems lost, they can still find within themselves an unwavering source of pride: they are on English soil, and the language of the realm must be defended even by those who are cast down.

A similar sort of rustic dignity is found in two other groups of comic characters who frequently use the vices of language: the rude mechanicals in **Dream**, and the members of Dogberry's watch in **Much Ado**. The characters in these two groups have even less rhetorical training than the characters who regularly use vices in **Merry Wives**. The rude mechanicals are described to Theseus as "Hard-handed men that work in Athens here,/ Which never laboured in their minds till now" ([MND] 5.1.72-73), and only two members of Dogberry's watch are able to read and write. Dogberry himself seems to have no need of "such vanity" ([MA],3.3.21). Both of these groups make heavy use of the vices.

Bottom's tendency to mistake one word for another is a form of the vice cacozelia, which we would now call malapropism ([Joseph 75]). This vice is evident
in his first line, in which he urges Quince to call the actors "generally, man by man, according to the scrip" (MND 1.2.2). It also appears in many later lines, such as when he promises to "aggravate" his voice (1.2.73), when he suggests they will rehearse "most obscenely and courageously" in the woods (1.2.96), and when he compares the smell of Thisbe's breath to "the flowers of odious savours sweet" (3.1.77).

Although vices appear intermittently in all of the rude mechanicals' scenes, they appear most often during the performance of "Pyramus and Thisbe." Among the most memorable vices found in this scene are the amphibologia in Quince's Prologue, the acyon in Bottom's question, "O wherefore, nature, didst thou lions frame, / Since lion vile hath here deflowered my dear" (5.1.285-6), and the aschematiston, or unskilful use of figures, in the description of the romantic hero, Pyramus, as a man with "lily lips," a "cherry nose," "yellow cowslip cheeks," and eyes as "green as leeks" (5.1.324-329).

Much of the verbal humour in this scene comes not from vices per se but from comically inept uses of other figures. Bottom gives no indication that he knows any of the figures by name, but, regardless of his lack of rhetorical training, he has his own sense of what constitutes dignified language. He recites a "lofty" verse to his colleagues in a style which he describes as "Ercles' vein, a tyrant's vein," and explains that "A lover is more condoling" (1.2.35). He warns: "If I [play Pyramus], let the audience look to their eyes. I will move storms. I will condole, in some measure" (1.2.22-23). In attempting to move storms while playing Pyramus, he relies heavily on certain figures for dramatic effect, but he abuses, or overuses, these figures in ways which make their effects comic rather than tragic.

Before examining Bottom's rhetoric in "Pyramus and Thisbe", it is necessary to digress for a moment to consider who, within the fictional world of the play, is the author of Bottom's rhetoric as Pyramus. It is not always possible to distinguish
between lines written by the supposed playwright of “Pyramus and Thisbe” and memorized by Bottom, and lines improvised or embellished by Bottom himself. Clearly the rude mechanicals are given scripts to memorize, and they go to the woods to rehearse, but their rehearsal, at which some of the performers do not yet know their lines, is quickly interrupted and never resumed. Furthermore, some speeches are added to the original script to accommodate the new characters of Moon and Wall. In Bottom’s series of attempts to audition for every part (1.2), in his friendly chats with Moon and Wall, and in his courteous coaching of Theseus, Bottom reveals his impulsive and improvisational nature, and his nature may well have an influence on his attitude towards the sanctity of Pyramus’s scripted lines.

Audience members at a performance of Dream hear the actor playing Bottom deliver lines written by Shakespeare, but the actors and directors who jointly present the rude mechanicals’ play must make more detailed choices for themselves regarding the extent to which the rude mechanicals feel under-rehearsed in appearing before the Duke. In this metatheatrical scene, the actors who play the characters of the rude mechanicals must decide how their characters feel about being actors: Does Flute, for example, feel confident that he now knows all his lines? Does he feel self-conscious in his costume? Can he count on his fellow actors to know their lines? The answers to these questions help to shape performance choices. One set of performance choices available to directors and actors of this scene is based on the assumption that the rude mechanicals have had rehearsals we do not see, that the characters playing the roles of actors know their lines, and that Bottom is bombastically delivering lines he has carefully memorized: lines that his fellow performers can accurately anticipate as they await their own memorized cues. Another possible scenario, however, is that the mechanicals, who put in their bid to perform for the Duke before Bottom disappeared, find themselves in a position of feeling desperately under-rehearsed. In this scenario, the performers’ nervousness
at being in front of the Duke is compounded by their sense that they are not exactly sure what to say or when to enter or exit, and Bottom the improviser, with his save-the-day mentality, can embellish Pyramus’s words with his own rhetorical flourishes and assist his nervous companions with extemporaneous chats. I prefer the second scenario, for I believe it affords richer performance choices, and thus, in analysing Bottom’s rhetoric, I have made the assumption that in his performance as Pyramus, Bottom is sometimes embellishing his memorized lines in a style which he admires as lofty.

His opening speech as Pyramus includes two of Bottom’s favourite figures, anaphora and apostrophe:

O grim-looked night, O night with hue so black,
O night which ever art when day is not;
O night, O night, alack, alack, alack. . .

(MND.5.1.168-70)

He begins this apostrophe to night with the dramatic rhythms provided by anaphora, but he quickly runs out of things to say. Enamoured with a form that sounds to him like eloquence, he is propelled by a kind of rhetorical inertia beyond the bounds of content. He does not know what to say to night, and thus he shifts, albeit unknowingly, from anaphora to epizeuxis. Just two lines later he begins another apostrophe, this time to the wall, and here he relies on both anaphora and epistrophe. When these two figures are used in combination, they become the figure known as symploce. Bottom uses symploce here as a stylistically lofty filler which aids him in his improvisation by giving him some time to figure out what he is going to say next:

And thou, O wall, O sweet, O lovely wall,
That stand’st between her father’s ground and mine,
Thou wall, O wall, O sweet and lovely wall,
Show me thy chink, to blink through with mine eyne.
Thanks, courteous wall. Jove shield thee well for this.

(5.1.172-76)
This passage includes the vice of pleonasmus (the needless telling of what is already understood) in the superfluous explanation that he will blink with his eye, but the silliness of this vice is eclipsed by the on-stage reality that Bottom is delivering this would-be lofty apostrophe to his good buddy, Snout, who is dressed to look like a wall. His thank you to the wall provides a personal touch which is perfectly in keeping with Bottom’s good-natured character. He later delivers an apostrophe to the moon in the form of a casual chat with his friend Starveling:

Sweet moon, I thank thee for thy sunny beams.
I thank thee, moon, for shining now so bright;
For by thy gracious, golden glittering gleams
I trust to take of truest Thisbe sight.

(5.1.266-69)

The cacozelia of calling the moon’s beams “sunny” adds to the humour of this passage, but this vice is less noticeable here than another of Bottom’s rhetorical characteristics: his love of alliteration. He frequently makes alliterative lists, and once he gets going, “he knows not the stop.” The inertia of his alliteration is similar to that found in his use of anaphora. The combined inertia of these two figures is evident in his statement that Thisbe was “the fairest dame/ That lived, that loved, that liked, that looked with cheer” (5.1.287-88).

The humour in the rude mechanicals’ performance of “Pyramus and Thisbe” comes from a combination of verbal and physical forms of comedy. The opportunities for broad, slapstick humour are numerous in this scene as burly men don ridiculous costumes, hit each other’s “stones”, woo through someone’s fingers, and chase each other around the stage. These physical shenanigans are accompanied by language that might well be called verbal slapstick. Slapstick humour is usually associated with knocks on the head and pies in the face: activities resulting from errors made by people who are ignorant or clumsy. By bumping words up against each other in awkward and ridiculous ways, the rude mechanicals,
and all other vice-wielding characters, demonstrate that, rhetorically speaking, they are both clumsy and accident prone. Whether language errors are made through the vices or through the inept use of figures, these errors help to create the tone of broad comedy found at one end of the spectrum of Shakespeare's comic genius. The verbal slapstick of Bottom or Dogberry is as far removed from the sophisticated banter of Beatrice and Benedick as witty repartee is from farting.4

None of Shakespeare’s characters is more verbally accident prone than Dogberry. There is less physical humour in his scenes than in Bottom’s scenes, but the verbal slapstick abounds.5 Dogberry is prolific in his use of the vices of language. He is frequently guilty of the vice cacozeleia (the ignorant misapplication of high-sounding words), as when he tells his men to “be vitigant” (3.3.93), or when he informs Leonato that his watch has “comprehended two aspicious persons” (3.5.49). Joseph notes that, while Dogberry seems to excel all other Shakespearean characters in the use of cacozeleia, it is acyron (the use of a word repugnant or contrary to what is meant) which provides “the clue to the peculiar humor in Dogberry” (77). Among the numerous examples of this vice in his lines are his question to the watch as to who is “the most desartless man to be constable” (3.3.9), his conclusion that Seacoal is “the most senseless and fit” man for the job (3.3.22), and his exclamation that Borachio “wilt be condemn’d into everlasting redemption” for his part in dishonouring Hero (4.2.58). Like Bottom’s language errors, however, Dogberry’s errors are not limited to certain characteristic vices. Some of his funniest mistakes occur when he ineptly uses figures in an effort to present serious information in a dignified way.

Two such errors appear in the fifth act when Dogberry explains to Don Pedro why he has arrested two of Don Pedro’s men:

Don Pedro: Officers, what offence have these men done?
Dogberry: Marry, sir, they have committed false report. Moreover, they have spoken untruths; secondarily they are slanders; sixth and lastly they
have belied a lady; thirdly they have verified unjust things and, to conclude, they are lying knaves.

Don Pedro: First I ask thee what they have done; thirdly I ask thee what’s their offence; sixth and lastly why they are committed and, to conclude, what you lay to their charge.

Claudio: Rightly reasoned and in his own division. And by my troth there’s one meaning well suited.

(MA.5.1.209-220)

In this dialogue, Dogberry misuses two figures of division which include partitio (also known as merismus) and eutrepismus (a figure of division which numbers and orders the parts under consideration). As Joseph explains, a comparison between Dogberry’s misuse of these figures and Peacham’s warnings against such abuse “reveals a resemblance so arresting that it argues Shakespeare’s familiarity with the 1593 edition of The Garden of Eloquence” (113). In warning against the misuse of partitio, Peacham writes:

Also a grosse absurditie is committed when a partition is made by Synonymies, which he did, that divided his Oration into these foure partes: Why? wherefore, for what cause, and to what end, this is called the division, or partition without a difference.

(The Garden of Eloquence, 124)

In his caution against the abuse of eutrepismus, Peacham states that, when using this figure, a speaker must not be forgetful, as the speaker who “promised to expound the twelve articles of the Creed, and after could remember but nine” (130). As Joseph points out, “Dogberry’s misuse of these two figures in precisely the ways against which Peacham warned is emphasized by Pedro’s mocking echo and by Claudio’s comment on the two errors in division” (114).

Joseph might have gone on to say that this passage is not the only one in which there is a parallel between Peacham’s warnings and Dogberry’s mistakes. In an earlier speech, Dogberry fails to heed two other specific warnings of Peacham. In act 4 scene 2, the offending figures are epistrophe and auxesis (a figure, also known as incrementum, which advances from less to greater by arranging words or clauses in
a sequence of increasing force). Conrad repeatedly calls Dogberry an ass, to which Dogberry responds with indignation, saying:

Dost thou not suspect my place? Dost thou not suspect my years? O that he were here to write me down an ass! But masters, remember that I am an ass. Though it be not written down, yet forget not that I am an ass. No, thou villain, thou art full of piety, as shall be proved upon thee by good witness. I am a wise fellow, and which is more, an officer; and which is more, a householder; and which is more, as pretty a piece of flesh as any is in Messina; and one that knows the law, go to; and a rich fellow enough, go to; and a fellow that hath had losses; and one that hath two gowns, and everything handsome about him.—Bring him away. O that I had been writ down an ass!

(4.2.73-86)

This speech is a prime example of the inept use of certain figures. After the cacozelia of mistaking “suspect” for “respect,” Dogberry attempts to emphasize the magnitude of Conrad’s insult through the use of epistrophe. As he repeats the claim that he is an ass, he commits a rhetorical error that Peacham warns against. In Peacham’s discussion of anaphora, which he calls epanaphora, he explains that, when repeating a word, “the word ought not to be repeated too oft, as some do use it, in a most wearisome Tautalogie.” Furthermore, he warns, “heede ought to be taken, that the word which is least worthie or most weake, be not taken to make the repetition, for that were very absurd” (42). Although these warnings are given for anaphora, they apply equally well to epistrophe. Dogberry is unaware of such warnings, and his use of epistrophe is certainly “very absurd”, for it only serves to ensure that everyone will regard him as an ass. A little later in the speech, he uses a figure known as epimone (the repetition of the same point in the same words, somewhat in the manner of a refrain). His repetition of the words “and which is more” implies that he is using the figure auxesis, and yet he begins by claiming to be wise and builds to the grand climax that he is “a pretty piece of flesh”. In Peacham’s caution against the abuse of auxesis, which he calls incrementum, he warns speakers to order the items carefully, “that the stronger may follow the weaker... otherwise
the signification shall not increase . . . but become a Congeries which respecteth not the increase of matter but multitude of words” (169). Dogberry seems to prefer multitude to matter, and when epimone can propel his list no further, he resorts to polysyndeton. He continues to list his merits in random order with a rhetorical inertia reminiscent of Bottom’s use of alliteration.

The combination of fierce pride in his work and linguistic ineptitude which we find in Dogberry is also found, with a striking degree of similarity, in a description of an officer written by Thomas Wilson in The Art of Rhetoric (1560). Shortly after the now-famous section on “strange inkhorn terms,” Wilson explains the importance of clarity:

Doth wit rest in strange words, or else standeth it in wholesome matter and apt declaring of a man’s mind? Do we not speak because we would have others to understand us, or is not the tongue given for this end, that one might know what another meaneth?

(190)

As an illustration of someone who abuses language by speaking in an incomprehensible way, Wilson describes a man whose occupation, current circumstances, and characteristic vices of cacozelia and acyron are so exactly like Dogberry’s that it is impossible to read the passage without thinking of him:

Another good fellow in the country, being an officer and mayor of a town and desirous to speak like a fine learned man, having just occasion to rebuke a runagate fellow, said after this wise in a great heat. “Thou ingram and vacation knave, if I take thee anymore within the circumcision of my damnation, I will so corrupt thee that all vacation knaves shall take ilsample by thee.”

(190)

We can hear echoes of Wilson’s words in Dogberry’s instructions to his men to “comprehend all vagrom men” (3.3.25), in his exclamation that Borachio will be “condemned into everlasting redemption” (5.1.56), and in Don Pedro’s comment that “This learned constable is too cunning to be understood” (5.1.223). It is not the purpose of this study to attempt to prove the specific sources of Shakespeare’s
rhetorical knowledge, but, in the face of such striking parallels as those mentioned above, it is tempting to wonder whether he was familiar with the works of Wilson and Peacham.

Dogberry is illiterate, and thus he is obviously unaware of the figures he is using, but, as all rhetoricians emphasize, the figures were originally based on the natural utterances of gifted speakers. All speakers use figures, whether they are conscious of these patterns or not, and closely examining a speaker’s figures allows us to gain a deeper understanding of the workings of that speaker’s mind. At times, it seems that Dogberry’s mind is not working particularly well, but even though he cannot read or write, he has some opinions as to how these things should be done. When questioning Conrad and Borachio, for example, he gives instructions to the Sexton in which he describes the figure catacosmesis (the ordering of words from greatest to least in dignity) without actually naming the device (Joseph 152). He says: “Write down that they hope they serve God. And write ‘God’ first, for God defend but God should go before such villains” (4.2.18-20). As we shall see in a later chapter, Shakespeare’s characters frequently call the figures by name, but even more frequently they describe the devices themselves without naming them, as Dogberry does here. As previously mentioned, Quintilian notes that it is more important to be able to recognize a figure and to understand its effect than it is to be able to name it: many of Shakespeare’s characters demonstrate that they possess this level of rhetorical skill. The members of the society presented in Much Ado clearly value linguistic skill highly, as did the members of Shakespeare’s own society, and even those who are illiterate may aspire to eloquence. Like Bottom, Dogberry aspires to a degree of eloquence that he does not possess, and much of the humour of his scenes comes from his utter failure to live up to his own rhetorical standards.

The vices are among the most immediately noticeable of all rhetorical devices. Even with such obvious devices as these, however, certain problems of identification
can arise. This chapter will close with an examination of two distinct problems which are specific to the identification of vices. The first involves editors’ and actors’ handling of the vices, and the second involves the ways in which the abilities of a speaker can sometimes blur the distinction between a vice and a figure.

Certain vices, such as solecismus and barbarismus, frequently present problems for editors. Because of the nature of the errors involved in these particular vices, it is sometimes difficult to determine their origin. A solecism, for example, may be purposely included by Shakespeare to achieve some specific effect, or it may be Shakespeare’s own error, or it may be the error of a copyist. When the source of linguistic mistakes is not clear, editors must decide for themselves whether or not to retain those mistakes. In his edition of LLL, for example, G.R. Hibbard corrects the errors in Holofernes’s Latin on the basis of the assumption “that those errors are far more likely to be compositional than the result of ignorance on their speaker’s part” (151). In the case of mistakes made by the foolish Constable Dull, however, Hibbard makes a different choice. In act 4 scene 2, for example, after hearing Holofernes refer to Dictynna, Dull asks, “What is Dictima?” Hibbard explains that “the Q spelling is retained here because the mistake could well be Dull’s rather than the compositor’s” (153). He removes some of the vices in Holofernes’s Latin, retains those found in the speeches of Dull, and goes so far as to add vices, following the editorial choices of Theobald, when such vices seem appropriate. With reference to Nathaniel’s statement, “Laus Deo, bone intelligo,” for example, Hibbard explains:

Q and F read “bene” for “bone”, giving a sentence that is impeccable Latin. The ingenious Theobald changed “bene”, which is correct, into “bone”, which is a solecism, in order to provide a justification for Holofernes’s reproof. (181)

The instances in which editors choose to add or omit solecisms are far too numerous to mention, and such is also the case with additions and omissions of barbarismus. One example of the sort of editorial licence taken with this vice must
suffice. In illustrating the combined vices of barbarismus and solecisrnus, Joseph

cites a speech of Caius in *Merry Wives*: “I pray you bear vitness dat me have stay six
or seven, two tree hours for him, and he is no-come” (2.3.36). This is the way the

speech appears in G.L. Kittredge’s edition of Shakespeare’s *Complete Works*. In

T.W. Craik’s edition of the play, however, the first two of the four examples of

barbarismus in this line have been removed, and thus the line reads: “I pray you

bear witneçs that me have stay six or seven, two, tree hours for him, and he is no

come.” The juxtaposition of these two versions of the same speech demonstrates the

problems inherent in trying to count the exact number of vices used by any one

character: the number may vary considerably from edition to edition. As mentioned

in the introduction, the point of this study is not to count rhetorical devices out “like

coins, but to pay them by weight, as it were” (*De Optimo* 365). If an individual

instance of barbarismus is added or omitted here and there in Caius’s speech, it

makes no difference to our overall impression of the character, for, regardless of

specific editorial choices, in most editions of the play, Caius’s lines contain over fifty

examples of mispronunciation.

With regard to the vice barbarismus, the choice of individual editors is less

important than the choice of individual actors. Unlike a vice such as acyron, which

depends on a single word for its effect, barbarismus can influence all of a character’s

utterances. In playing someone whose characteristic vice is barbarismus, such as

Caius or Evans, different actors make different choices in the degree to which they

emphasize this trait. Conversely, an actor may choose to adopt the characteristic

vice of barbarismus, even when portraying a character whose lines are free of this

vice, by speaking in a comically extravagant accent. More than any other group of

rhetorical devices, the vices are frequently added or omitted by both editors and

actors. When considering certain vices, therefore, we should remember that the

vices included by an author may not be static.
A second problem peculiar to the vices is that these errors of language are sometimes rhetorical strengths, just as the use of figures can be rhetorical weaknesses, depending on the abilities of a speaker. The apparent paradox of this statement is evident in various definitions of the vices. Puttenham explains in The Arte of English Poesie: “by ignorance of the maker a good figure may become a vice, and by his good discretion, a vicious speach go for a vertue in the Poetical science” (249). We have already seen the good figures eutrepismus and epistrophe become vices in the mouth of Dogberry, but some of Shakespeare’s best speakers are able to do just the opposite: they turn the vices into effective rhetorical weapons. One such speaker is Petruchio in Shrew.

Petruchio is a skilful rhetorician, and, as we shall see in chapter 4, much of his taming of Katherina is accomplished by rhetorical means. In his first soliloquy, he shares with us one of his rhetorical strategies. Although he does not name the device, he makes it clear that he intends to use the vice of heterogenium, or answering something utterly irrelevant to what has been asked, to his own advantage. In preparation for his first meeting with Katherina, he carefully rehearses his responses:

Say that she rail, why then I’l tell her plain
She sings as sweetly as a nightingale.
Say that she frown, I’ll say she looks as clear
As morning roses newly washed with dew.
Say she be mute and will not speak a word,
Then I’ll commend her volubility
And say she uttereth piercing eloquence.
If she do bid me pack, I’ll give her thanks,
As though she bid me stay by her a week.
If she deny to wed, I’l crave the day
When I shall ask the banns, and when be married.
But here she comes, and now, Petruchio, speak.

(TS, 2.1.169-80)

As the last two words of this passage indicate, Petruchio intends to play offence in his rhetorical game with Kate. One of his game-plans is to use heterogenium. This
vice is usually an indication of a speaker’s absent-mindedness. In *Romeo and Juliet*, for example, Juliet comments on the heterogenium in the response of her rambling Nurse: “How oddly thou repliest. / ‘Your love says, like an honest gentleman,/ “Where is your mother?’” (2.5.60-62). There is nothing absent-minded about Petruchio’s use of this device. In his mouth, heterogenium becomes an effective rhetorical strategy for controlling Kate: he renders her mute by pretending to be deaf to whatever she says. Later in the play, Kate’s extreme frustration at not being heard explodes in her eloquent plea for Petruchio’s attention. Once again, he effectively silences her through heterogenium:

Katherina: Why sir, I trust I may have leave to speak, And speak I will. I am no child, no babe; Your betters have endured me say my mind, And if you cannot, best you stop your ears. My tongue will tell the anger of my heart, Or else my heart concealing it will break, And rather than it shall, I will be free Even to the uttermost, as I please, in words. Petruchio: Why, thou say’st true, it is a paltry cap. A custard-coffin, a bauble, a silken pie: I love thee well in that thou lik’st it not. Katherina: Love me or love me not, I like the cap, And it I will have, or I will have none. Petruchio: Thy gown? Why, ay. Come tailor, let us see’t. (4.3.74-86)

Petruchio makes a mockery of the verbal freedom Katherina claims. His verbal responses to her words are as completely inappropriate as the clothing he wears to their wedding; by destabilizing her expectations, both physically and verbally, he keeps her off balance and thus maintains control.

Petruchio’s use of vices is clearly skilful, while Dogberry’s use of figures is clearly inept. In some cases, however, the distinction between rhetorical skill and ineptitude may be harder to make. Some characters, such as Polonius, combine rhetorical strengths and weaknesses. Although Polonius appears in a tragedy, he shares several of the verbal traits of Shakespeare’s clowns. Guilty of many of the
vices of long-windedness, he rambles on with the same sort of rhetorical inertia found in the speeches of Bottom and Dogberry. One significant difference between the rhetoric of Polonius and that of Bottom and Dogberry, however, is that Polonius is conscious of the verbal choices he is making. He has received considerable rhetorical training, and he often explicitly comments on the rhetorical devices he is using even as he uses them badly. One of his metarhetorical comments appears shortly after his lengthy speech, quoted above, on the merits of brevity. Gertrude responds to this speech by saying, “More matter with less art,” to which Polonius replies with unconscious irony:

Madam, I swear I use no art at all.  
That he is mad ‘tis true; ‘tis true ‘tis pity;  
And pity ‘tis ‘tis true. A foolish figure—  
But farewell it, for I will use no art.  

(Hamlet, 2.2.96-99)

Although Polonius is very self-conscious in his use of rhetoric, he is also one of Shakespeare’s most inept would-be rhetoricians. He explicitly draws attention to his own rhetoric in the passage above, and, in doing so, he encourages others to evaluate his skill. He expects admiration, but what he most often receives, both from Hamlet and from audience members, is ridicule. His use of rhetoric in the speech cited above is so self-conscious, and so bad, that it allows us to consider the range of interpretations that different audience members may bring to a given passage.

In the lines above, Polonius uses the figures anaphora, anadiplosis (the repetition of the last word of one clause or sentence at the beginning of the next), and antimetabole (a figure akin to logical conversion in that it repeats words in converse order). It seems to be the third of these three figures of repetition that provokes Polonius’s comment, “A foolish figure,” but antimetabole enjoyed great popularity at the time the play was written. In explicitly mentioning his use of this figure only
to dismiss it as foolish, Polonius may be employing the figure of thought known as
paralipsis (which, while pretending to pass over a matter, tells it most effectively) in
an attempt to draw attention to his rhetorical skill without seeming vain.

Polonius’s speech is mentioned here because it provides a perfect example of the
difficulties inherent in distinguishing between the figures of rhetoric and the vices of
language in certain circumstances. The figures of repetition mentioned above are
easy to see, and even easier to hear, for repetition is designed to draw attention to
itself. I have chosen to refer to the figure which begins a series of clauses with the
same word as anaphora, because that is the term most frequently associated with
this device, but whether I call it by the name anaphora, or by one of its other names,
such as epanaphora, iteratio, or repetitio, the device itself is unmistakable. If
Polonius’s excessive use of the figures of repetition seems tedious or foolish rather
than artistic, however, then we may want to argue that in the passage above the
figures of repetition lose their intended power and become the vice tautologia: the
vice that Peacham named as a possible result of excessive repetition. We may also
argue that the vice aschematiston is evident in Polonius’s words. Lanham provides
two definitions for this vice: the absence of ornamental or figured language, a vice
which Joseph states has not been observed in Shakespeare’s work (304), and the
unskilful use of figures.6

Polonius’s speech can hardly be described as lacking in figurative language, but
if we define aschematiston as the unskilful use of figures, then this vice may well be
regarded as characteristic of Polonius. Indeed, this vice is evident in the profusion
of figures he uses in the remainder of the speech. After claiming that he will use no
art, he proves true to his word by inartistically spewing forth rhetorical figures:

  Mad let us grant him then. And now remains (metabasis)
  That we find out the cause of this effect,
  Or rather say the cause of this defect, (correctio)
For this effect defective comes by cause. (paronomasia, polyptoton, antimetabole)

Thus it remains; and the remainder thus: (polyptoton, antimetabole, tautologia)

Perpend, (cacozelia)
I have a daughter—have while she is mine— (epexegesis)
Who in her duty and obedience, mark,
Hath given me this. Now gather and surmise. (periergia)
(Reads) “To the celestial and my soul’s idol, the most beautified Ophelia”— That’s an ill phrase, a vile phrase, “beautifed” is a vile phrase. (antonomasia, epithet, epistrophe)

(Hamlet, 2.2.100-111)

In this speech, Polonius focuses on elocution at the expense of invention. With unwarranted rhetorical self-confidence, he moves consciously from one figure of diction to another, without giving much thought to the content of his words. He concludes by criticizing Hamlet’s choice of epithet, and in doing so he reveals his characteristic preoccupation with style.

While the figures of repetition in Polonius’s speech are fairly clear, the figures of thought are, by their very nature, more open to diverse interpretation. In line 106 above, for example, I have labelled Polonius’s interjection as an example of epexegesis (adding words or phrases to further clarify or specify a statement already made, Lanham 67). The same words could also be called an example of the figure parenthesis (which interrupts a sentence by interposing words). Differences of opinion in figure identification should not be avoided as awkward: they are an essential component of the rhetorical method of inquiry. Unlike the closed system of logic, rhetoric is an open system which deals with probabilities rather than with facts. A disagreement regarding the name of a figure does not render the attempt to name that figure meaningless; rather, the debate that ensues from such disagreement allows us to clarify our understanding of certain linguistic patterns, and different figure names provide us with a lexicon for the discussion of our differing opinions.
Throughout this study, there are many occasions for debate in the naming of certain figures. Instead of shying away from such debate, we should embrace it as a valuable tool for rhetorical inquiry.

Notes

1 For list of comic characters who are rhetorically characterized by the frequent use of specific vices, see Joseph 64-77.

2 Joseph notes this pun (113), as does Patricia Parker in her essay entitled "Anagogic Metaphor: Breaking Down the Wall of Partition," Centre and Labyrinth: Essays in Honour of Northrop Frye, ed. Eleanor Cook, Chaviva Hosek, Jay Macpherson, Patricia Parker, and Julian Patrick (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1983) 41. Parker argues that "the specifically rhetorical meaning of 'partition' which Demetrius puns on . . . comes from the part of Cicero's Topics where a discussion of physical 'walls' is juxtaposed with a definition of oratorical 'partition,' the dividing of a discourse, like a body, into its parts or members."

3 Ironically, the term syllepsis itself has two meanings. Joseph lists it as one of the four types of puns which were highly regarded in Renaissance rhetoric (165), but she also defines syllepsis as a figure which "differs from zeugma in that a verb, expressed but once, lacks grammatical congruence with at least one subject with which it is understood" (58). Throughout this study, I will use the term in the first of these two senses.

4 I apologize for breaching thesis decorum by including the word "fart", but I have chosen to keep this word because it is the most perfect example I know of verbal slapstick. Say the word "fart" in a room of children, and you will quickly discover that the word itself is a kind of slapstick joke.

5 In Kenneth Branagh's film of Much Ado, Michael Keaton played Dogberry. He imported physical slapstick into the scene at the expense of the verbal slapstick so richly present in the lines. Many of Dogberry's words were barely audible in the general chaos of Keaton's physical antics. In portraying Dogberry as a man wearing filthy clothes, and with his face smeared with dirt, Keaton ignored one of Dogberry's essential characteristics: he is a man who takes great pride in his work. By removing this sense of pride, Keaton lost the tension which exists between Dogberry's intense desire to present himself as a dignified constable and his complete lack of ability to speak in a dignified way. Much of Dogberry's unique charm lies in his utter lack of rhetorical self-knowledge, and I believe that Keaton failed to realize this charm by playing Dogberry as a man who is monochromatically inept. A much more successful Dogberry was played by John Woodvine in the production of Much Ado at the Royal Shakespeare Theatre in 1976. This production was set in British India, and, as Richard David explains, part of the humour of Woodvine's Dogberry came from his intense, but misplaced, pride in his speaking ability: "Dogberry's 'point' is that he is inordinately proud of his language, but always gets his idioms wrong; the very formula on which is based the Kiplingesque comic babu. The Indian servant of the same tradition is noted for the literalness with which he interprets his instructions and for his gravity." For more information on Woodvine's Dogberry, see Richard David, Shakespeare in the Theatre (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978) 215-20.

6 Lanham regards Joseph's comment as "the only humorous aside" in Joseph's work (24), but since Joseph refers only to the first of these two definitions of aschematistion, it seems that Joseph did not intend her comment to be humorous.
Chapter Four: A Range of Rhetorical Effects

In previous chapters I have focused on certain figures, or groups of figures, as they function in a range of plays, in the attempt to demonstrate the versatility and dramatic usefulness of certain devices. At this point, however, I intend to shift the focus from individual figures to individual plays. While studying the rhetoric in each of the comedies, I became aware of rhetorical traits of crucial importance to certain plays, and it is some of those traits I offer for consideration here. All of the comedies have many interesting rhetorical characteristics, but space clearly prohibits a comprehensive examination of rhetoric in all thirteen of the comedies. In the attempt to provide both breadth and depth in the analysis of Shakespeare’s comic rhetoric, I will try to offer first one and then the other.

This chapter examines striking rhetorical features of three specific plays: the contrasting styles of rhetoric in *Shrew*; the use of anagogic metaphor in *Dream*; and the meaning of the titular proverb in *All’s Well*. Since these traits happen to differ widely in type, they serve not only to enhance our understanding of the plays in which they appear but also to demonstrate the range of rhetorical effects found in Shakespeare’s comedies. Chapter 5 consists of a detailed study of the rhetoric in *The Merchant of Venice*; it considers both the rhetorical patterns within the play and the ways in which those patterns reflect changes in rhetorical fashions that were occurring when the play was written. The luxury of an entire chapter on a single play will allow for more depth than is possible here as we move directly from the salient rhetorical features of one play to those of the next.
The Taming of the Shrew

The Taming of the Shrew is sometimes regarded as one of Shakespeare's early plays which lack the rhetorical sophistication of his later work. The play contains only ninety-two images by Caroline Spurgeon's count, which is an exceptionally low number (Spurgeon 361), and in the words of J.W. Mackail, this play "has no high quality as literature, and but a few touches of Shakespeare's magic or of his verbal and rhetorical felicity." In his introduction to the recent Oxford edition, Oliver is critical of MacKail's judgement, claiming "Mackail shows a very limited concept of 'verbal felicity' and is almost certainly wrong about the absence of good 'rhetoric'" in the play. He claims that "if one looks for 'rhetorical felicity', that is easily found" (63), and as examples he offers Petruchio's speech beginning "Think you a little din can daunt mine ears? . . ." (1.2.195-206), Gremio's account of his riches (2.1.348-64), and Sly's response to the Third Servingman, in which he says:

I am Christophero Sly, call not me "honour" nor "lordship". I ne'er drank sack in my life; and if you give me any conserves, give me conserves of beef. Ne'er ask me what raiment I'll wear, for I have no more doublets than backs, no more stockings than legs, nor no more shoes than feet--nay, sometime more feet than shoes, or such shoes as my toes look through the overleather. (Induction 2.5-11).

Of Sly's speech, Oliver writes that it is a "sufficient reminder that there are verbal virtues other than the romantic or the rhetorical: directness, for instance, ready intelligibility, lifelikeness, sprightliness, and vigour--and all these abound in Shrew" (Shrew intro 64).

The comments quoted here reveal more about twentieth-century attitudes towards rhetoric than they do about the rhetoric in Shrew. The word "rhetoric" means many things to many people, and it seems that each of the scholars cited above defines "rhetoric" more narrowly than Elizabethan students of rhetoric would have done. Mackail's use of the term is somewhat of a mystery in that he
distinguishes between "verbal and rhetorical felicity", but he seems to be using "rhetoric" to mean beautiful or poetic language. Ironically, in claiming that Mackail is wrong about the absence of good rhetoric, Oliver seems to accept Mackail's limited definition of the term, and to choose examples as limited in their rhetorical scope as those implied by Mackail. In demonstrating the presence of good rhetoric in Shrew, Oliver chooses speeches of a particular rhetorical style: a style characterized by ornamentation through copious imagery and a heavy use of the figures of repetition. In separating these examples of "rhetorical felicity" from the verbal virtues of "directness, . . . ready intelligibility, lifelikeness, sprightliness, and vigour", Oliver makes a distinction that would have made little sense to Elizabethan students of rhetoric, for these very virtues are repeatedly mentioned in rhetoric manuals as the direct results of rhetorical skill. The distinction between direct language and ornamental language is not a matter of the absence or presence of rhetoric: it is a distinction between two separate, but respected, rhetorical styles, and both of these styles are relevant to a study of the rhetoric in Shrew.

Spurgeon's counting of images in the play might also have seemed somewhat arbitrary to Elizabethan students of rhetoric. In Elizabethan grammar schools, figure identification was a common and valued exercise designed to increase students' facility with rhetorical figures, but in counting only comparative devices such as metaphors, similes, and allegories, Spurgeon examines only five or six of the approximately two hundred rhetorical devices identified by Elizabethan rhetoricians. Certainly Spurgeon's work gives us useful information, but it is a limited sort of information: like the epithet counts of chapter 2, Spurgeon's tabulations are very narrow in their focus. According to Spurgeon's count, Shrew has the third lowest image count of all Shakespeare's plays (with only The Comedy of Errors and Julius Caesar having fewer images) (Spurgeon 361), but, as seen in chapter 2, Shrew has the second highest number of character epithets in the
comedies. Spurgeon’s numbers mislead us if they cause us to conclude that Shrew contains fewer rhetorical devices than other plays, for the play abounds with rhetorical figures. Indeed, Petruchio is one of Shakespeare’s most skilful rhetoricians, but the style of rhetoric favoured by him is not the style measured by Spurgeon or Oliver or Mackail. In Shrew we see two very different styles of rhetoric at work, and these styles are frequently identified and assessed by both classical and Renaissance rhetoricians.

In examining Petruchio’s rhetoric, it is helpful for us to understand two stylistic categories that are regularly studied as part of a student’s training in elocutio. In describing the skills required of an orator, Cicero explains that “there are two distinct types of good oratory . . . one simple and concise, the other elevated and abundant” (Brutus 173). These two schools of oratory are called the Attic and the Asiatic, and much attention in ancient style manuals is given to the relative merits of each. Quintilian explains the history of these two schools of rhetoric:

The distinction between the Attic and the Asiatic schools takes us back to antiquity. The former were regarded as concise and healthy, the latter as empty and inflated: the former were remarkable for the absence of all superfluity, while the latter were deficient alike in taste and restraint . . . the difference between the two styles is attributable to the character both of the orators and the audiences whom they addressed: the Athenians, with their polish and refinement, refused to tolerate emptiness and redundancy, while the Asiatics, being naturally given to bombast and ostentation, were puffed up with a passion for a more vainglorious style of eloquence.

(XII.x.16-17)

Both Cicero and Quintilian note that there can be no perfect style of oratory, for the style used must fit the cause at hand and the temperaments of both speakers and audience members. While they acknowledge the value of both schools of oratory, Cicero and Quintilian each has his own preferred style. Cicero, famous for his Asiatic abundance, writes: “while naturally that is the better which is more brilliant and impressive, yet everything which falls under the category of the good, and is supreme in its kind wins a just praise” (Brutus 173). Quintilian, on the other hand,
states: “no one . . . should have any hesitation in pronouncing Attic oratory to be by far the best” (XII.x.20).

The differences between Attic and Asiatic styles are sometimes characterized as pragmatic in nature. Attic speakers value the efficacy of plain speaking, while Asiatic speakers believe in the persuasive power of aesthetic appeal. This difference in emphasis is reflected in respective references to rhetorical devices either as tools or weapons, or as colours or ornaments. Both schools clearly acknowledge the power of both clarity of expression and aesthetic appeal, but the Attic seems to emphasize the former while the Asiatic emphasizes the latter.

Within the two schools of rhetoric, there is another stylistic division described by Quintilian as follows:

There is another threefold division, whereby, it is held, we may differentiate three styles of speaking, all of them correct. The first is termed the plain . . . the second grand and forcible . . . and the third either intermediate or florid. . . . The first would seem best adapted for instructing, the second for moving, and the third . . . for charming, or, as others would have it, conciliating the audience; for instruction the quality most needed is acumen, for conciliation gentleness, and for stirring the emotions force.

(XII.x.58-59)

He goes on to explain that by mixing these styles, or using them in varying degrees, an orator can “discover almost countless species of styles”, and that the best orator “will use all styles, as circumstances may demand, and the choice will be determined not only by the case as a whole, but by the demands of the different portions of the case” (XII.x.67-69).

Petruchio’s rhetorical skill demonstrates the very versatility that Quintilian describes. Petruchio shifts from one rhetorical style to another, as circumstances demand, and other characters frequently comment on his bold rhetorical choices. We might broadly categorize the men in Shrew according to their preferred schools of rhetoric: Petruchio, Grumio and Tranio come from the Attic school of plain speakers, while Lucentio and Gremio seem to value the elevated and abundant style
of the Asiatic school. We might go on to note that the most skilful rhetoricians in this group, namely Petruchio and Tranio, are also the most stylistically versatile. Both of these men change their styles completely when it serves their purposes to do so.

The difference between the Attic and the Asiatic speakers in Shrew is hinted at in the first exchange between Lucentio and Tranio. In the self-conscious language of the would-be eloquent student, Lucentio asks for Tranio's assistance in planning the studies to be included in his Grand Tour. Tranio responds in a speech that matches Lucentio's in its rhetorical self-consciousness, but he urges Lucentio to release his studies from the realm of academe to make them a part of his life. "Balk logic with acquaintance that you have,/ And practise rhetoric in your common talk" (1.1.34-35). Certainly Tranio follows this advice, as later seen in his apt guidance of the smitten Lucentio. After Baptista and his daughters have left the stage, Lucentio waxes eloquent in the abundant Asiatic style that characterizes the stereotypic lover:

O Tranio, till I found it to be true,
I never thought it possible or likely.
But see, while idly I stood looking on,
I found the effect of love in idleness,
And now in plainness do confess to thee,
That art to me as secret and as dear
As Anna to the Queen of Carthage was,
Tranio, I burn, I pine, I perish, Tranio,
If I achieve not this young modest girl.
Counsel me, Tranio, for I know thou canst;
Assist me, Tranio, for I know thou wilt.

(exclamatio) (martyria)
(polyptoton)
(parenthesis) (exemplum)
(epanalepsis, anaphora, asyndeton, isocolon)
(apocarteresis) (isocolon)

(1.1.145-155)

In the midst of this figure-encrusted speech, Lucentio's claim to confess "in plainness" may seem ironic in the extreme, but this claim to rhetorical plainness is, in itself, a common rhetorical device. Tranio responds to his master's Asiatic exuberance with Attic conciseness: "Master, you looked so longly on the maid,/ Perhaps you marked not what's the pith of all" (1.1.162-163). After repeated
attempts to stir Lucentio “from his trance”, Tranio urges pragmatism: “I pray, awake, sir. If you love the maid,/ Bend thoughts and wits to achieve her” (1.1.174-176).

In filling his love talk with classical allusions, and in going to Bianca disguised as a tutor, Lucentio courts both figuratively and literally “by the book”. He is a stereotypic lover who woos with flattering words as he tries to win the “mistress of [his] heart” (4.2.10). Gremio admires Lucentio’s rhetorical training, and, without knowing he is assisting a rival, he hires Lucentio as a tutor to woo Bianca on his behalf. Lucentio assures his patron that he will woo “with more successful words/ Than you, unless you were a scholar, sir” (1.2.155-156), and his assurance provokes the following comments:

Gremio: O this learning, what a thing it is!
Grumio: (aside) O this woodcock, what an ass it is!
(1.2.157-158)

These comments reveal, in microcosm, their speakers’ beliefs about the value of certain rhetorical styles. Life with Petruchio has taught Grumio the value of a quick-witted and direct style of speech, while Gremio believes in the courting power of classical training and an abundant rhetorical style. When Tranio, disguised in both the clothes and the rhetoric of his master, states his intention to woo Bianca, Gremio fears for his own hopes, saying “this gentleman will out-talk us all”, while the pragmatic Petruchio responds by asking: “Hortensio, to what end are all these words?” (1.2.245-247). Gremio reveals his unspoken assumptions about the value of an abundant rhetorical style in courtship—regardless of whether the courting is of a daughter or of her father—when he criticizes Petruchio’s attempts to win Katherina, saying: “You are too blunt, go to it orderly” (2.1.45). Petruchio’s response demonstrates that he knows exactly what rhetorical style Gremio has in mind. He says, “You wrong me, Signor Gremio, give me leave...” (2.1.46), and he embarks on a formal speech of introduction of the very sort offered by the other suitors.
Although Petruchio is stylistically versatile, he prefers to be direct, and his return to the blunt business of courting provokes another piece of unsolicited courting advice from Gremio:

Gremio: ... Bacare! You are marvellous forward.
Petruchio: O pardon me, Signor Gremio. I would fain be doing.
Gremio: I doubt it not, sir, but you will curse your wooing.
(2.1.72-74)

As Grumio has already said, Petruchio "tells you flatly what his mind is" (1.2.76). He knows Petruchio better than anyone, and, until Petruchio meets Kate, Grumio has been a regular target for his master's rhetorical darts. Both directly and indirectly, Grumio reveals a great deal about the specific rhetorical challenges of life with Petruchio, and in doing so he allows alert audience members to anticipate Petruchio's treatment of Katherina. When Grumio enters, his rhetorical fists are raised, as it were. It seems he has been rhetorically bullied by a bored Petruchio, for he is quick to defend himself verbally. His wariness is evident in his first words:

Petruchio: ... Here, sirrah Grumio, knock, I say.
Grumio: Knock, sir? Whom should I knock? Is there any man has rebused your worship?
Petruchio: Villain, I say, knock me here soundly.
Grumio: Knock you here, sir? Why, sir, what am I, sir, that I should knock you here, sir?
(1.2.5-10)

Always at the verbal ready, Grumio has been taught to expect rhetorical tricks from Petruchio. His quick retorts continue throughout the scene in the form of numerous sarcastic asides; he has learned to deliver his verbal punches whenever he has the chance. It is typical of the stock character of the clever servant to be verbally quick, of course, but Grumio's rhetoric has a decidedly defensive quality, and before the end of his first scene, he reveals the reason for his defensiveness. When Hortensio warns Petruchio that Katherina is known for her scolding tongue, Grumio explains
that such scolding will be futile, for Petruchio is a rhetorical bully who will not be put down:

O' my word, an she knew him as well as I do, she would think scolding would do little good upon him. She may perhaps call him half a score knaves or so: why, that's nothing; an he begin once, he'll rail in his rope tricks. I'll tell you what, sir, an she stand him but a little, he will throw a figure in her face, and so disfigure her with it, that she shall have no more eyes to see withal than a cat. You know him not, sir.

(1.2.107-114)

Petruchio uses rhetoric, or "trope tricks", referred to by Grumio as "rope tricks", as a weapon, and his stockpile of ammunition consists of the figures of rhetoric. According to Grumio, Petruchio uses rhetorical figures consciously both to maim and to disarm his opponents, and Petruchio's penchant for aggressive, figural offence is clearly evident in his first meeting with Katherina.

Katherina has a reputation, both physically and verbally, as a formidable opponent. Baptista warns Petruchio to be "armed for some unhappy words" (2.1.138), for courting Katherina may prove to be less like love than like war. Petruchio, the bully, and Katherina, the shrew, are both accustomed to winning their rhetorical jousting matches, and they prove to be tough competition for each other. Before they meet, Petruchio plans his rhetorical strategy for combat. As mentioned in the previous chapter, he plans to use the vice of heterogenium, for by being deaf to whatever Katherina says, and answering irrelevantly, he will effectively render her mute (2.1.168-180). It seems Katherina is also a rhetorical strategist, or so Hortensio believes, who claims that she assaulted him "with twenty such vile terms,/ As had she studied to misuse [him] so" (2.1.157-158), but she is given no opportunity to prepare for Petruchio's ambush.

Petruchio's first tactic, as mentioned in chapter 2, is to change both Katherina's name and her epithet. In a speech of ten lines, he bombards her with the epithets of his choice, and he ends his speech to this unknown woman with his characteristic
bluntness: “Myself am moved to woo thee for my wife” (2.1.184-193). She picks up
his word “moved”, and in three lines of speech which include all four of the
punning figures, she unceremoniously dumps the word back in his lap, and thus
begins the rhetorical contest between them. The four punning figures are
antanaclasis (which in repeating a word shifts from one of its meanings to another);
paronomasia (which differs from antanaclasis in that the words repeated are nearly
but not precisely alike in sound); syllepsis (the use of a word having simultaneously
two different meanings, although it is not repeated); and asteismus (a figure of reply
in which the answerer catches a certain word and throws it back to the first speaker
with an unexpected twist, an unlooked-for meaning). In Katherina’s initial speech of
response to Petruchio’s blunt marriage proposal, she manages to include all four of
these figures:

“Moved”, in good time! Let him that moved you hither (antanaclasis)
Remove you hence. I knew you at the first (paronomasia)
You were a movable. (syllepsis, asteismus)

(2.1.194-196)

The encounter between Petruchio and Katherina is cited by Keir Elam as an example
of a device known as the “flyting”. Elam lists the characteristics of this device as
follows:

Margaret Galway rightly describes [the flyting] as “the oldest of all laughter-
provoking devices in native English drama”. The decisive characteristics of
the flyting—sustained vituperation, direct statement on the part of the man,
sarcastic insinuation on the part of the woman, etc.—are themselves merely
secondary illocutionary rules, but the overriding and implicit convention,
that which makes the contest a worthy spectacle, is that the insults should be
wittily and inventively varied. It is this witty inventiveness, and not the
vilification as such, that is on show.

(Discourse 9)

Elam might have added that, in terms of rhetorical figures, the flyting is
characterized by a heavy use of the four types of puns mentioned above. Asteismus
is especially in evidence in the flyting of Katherina and Petruchio (2.1.194-279), as it
is in that of Benedick and Beatrice in *Much Ado* (1.1.109-140), and in the numerous flytings found in *LLL* (2.1.90-112), (2.1.113-126), (2.1.178-190), (5.2.203-229), (5.2.230-247), (5.2.242-255), and (5.2.239-388).

The flyting of Katherina and Petruchio is much longer than those found in other plays. Perhaps the main reason for its length, at least from Petruchio’s point of view, is that he is unable to get the better of Kate, rhetorically speaking, and he will not leave until he has somehow arranged for their marriage to take place. Part of the way through their meeting, he radically changes his rhetorical strategy, and he does so because he is losing the match. Katherina is, quite simply, better than Petruchio at the quickly paced thrust and parry of stichomythia, and thus he has to return to his rhetorical arsenal for a different sort of weapon. When Katherina wearies of the match and begins to exit, Petruchio prevents her, saying “... In sooth, you scape not so” (2.1.239), and in the attempt to keep her in the room, he begins to woo her in the style of the stereotypic, poetic lover. In a lengthy speech oozing with copia, flattering similes, figures of repetition, and classical exempla, he sounds, just for a moment, like the Asiatic Lucentio. Even Katherina notices the abrupt shift in his rhetorical style, and when she mocks his rhetorical abundance, and attempts to return to the style at which she excels, he fights unfairly by using a weapon she does not have:

Petruchio: Did ever Dian so become a grove  
As Kate this chamber with her princely gait?  
O be thou Dian, and let her be Kate,  
And then let Kate be chaste and Dian sportful.  
Katherina: Where did you study all this goodly speech?  
Petruchio: It is extempore, from my mother wit.  
Katherina: A witty mother, witless else her son.  
Petruchio: Am I not wise?  
Katherina: Yes, keep you warm.  
Petruchio: Marry, so I mean, sweet Katherine, in thy bed.  
And therefore, setting all this chat aside,  
Thus in plain terms: your father hath consented  
That you shall be my wife; your dowry ‘greed on;
And will you, nill you, I will marry you.

(2.1.257-270)

It is here that Katherina begins to see that her “lances are but straws” (5.2.173). Her rhetorical arsenal, impressive as it is, is without ammunition, for she has no financial power. At times she and Petruchio use the same rhetorical strategies, but the effects of their strategies differ because their genders are different, and thus their social circumstances are different. They are both the hot-headed, intelligent, eldest child of wealthy fathers (and of absent mothers), but they are expected to behave in ways suitable to their gender. When she abuses Hortensio with twenty “vile terms”, she disfigures him with figures in the same way that Petruchio is reputed to disfigure his opponents. In fact, both Katherina and Petruchio favour the same figure of abuse.

The “vile terms” aimed at Hortensio, such as “rascal, fiddler,/ And twangling Jack” (2.1.156-157), are examples of the figure meiosis. In the early scenes of the play, Katherina uses meiosis frequently, as when she threatens “To comb [Hortensio’s] noodle with a three-legged stool” (1.1.64), when she calls Bianca “minion” (2.1.13), or when she refers to Petruchio as a “crab” (2.1.231) or as a “mad-brain rudesby” (3.2.10). Each of these three targets responds differently to Katherina’s abuse. Hortensio leaves the room in defeat, and perpetuates Katherina’s bad reputation by warning others of her temper (2.1.147-158). Bianca tries to calm her sister (2.1.1-7) through a figure known as philaphronesis (by which one seeks to mitigate by gentle speech and humble submission the anger of an adversary whose might is too great to be overcome). Petruchio, on the other hand, mimics Katherina’s fondness for meiosis through an excessive use of the same device.

Although Petruchio has used meiosis only once or twice in the first half of the play, when he arrives at his house with his new bride, his jarring and repetitive use
of meiosis helps him to establish himself as master of “the taming-school” (4.2.54). He calls his servants a series of insulting names including “peasant swain, . . . whoreson malt-horse drudge” (4.1.115), “whoreson, beetle-headed, flap-eared knave” (4.1.142), “heedless jolt-heads and unmannered slaves” (4.1.154). He uses meiosis sixteen times in this scene alone, and his excessive abuse of those around him prompts Katherina, somewhat ironically, to respond with philophronesis: the very figure used by Bianca to respond to Katherina’s excessive abuse. Katherina tries to calm her husband, saying “Patience, I pray you, ‘twas a fault unwilling” (4.1.141), and “I pray you, husband, be not so disquiet” (4.1.156). Imitating Katherina’s excessive use of meiosis is one of the specific rhetorical means by which Petruchio “kills her in her own humour” (4.1.168). When Katherina is faced with a verbal tyranny of precisely the sort she has exercised, her frequent use of meiosis disappears: after coming to Petruchio’s house, she uses meiosis only once more, and that is in addressing Bianca and the Widow as “froward and unable worms” (5.2.169). Kate’s fondness for insult-hurling, combined with her willingness to use physical force, gains her a reputation as a cursed shrew, while this same combination of characteristics in Petruchio earns him the reputation, in this world of double standards, as a powerful man.

Katherina’s infamous speech of submission in the final scene is markedly different, both in content and in rhetorical style, from anything else she has spoken. It seems she has learned, from her rhetorically versatile husband, to shift her rhetorical style when it suits her purposes to do so. She and Petruchio both favour a blunt, Attic style of speech, but they both deliver and respond to an abundant style when social circumstances require it. Petruchio breaks from his Attic conciseness to perform a range of persuasive tasks that seem to require an abundant style, as when he assures the other suitors of his intent to woo Kate (1.2.195-206); when he formally introduces himself to Baptista (2.1.46-60); when he woos Katherina in the poetic style
of the stereotypic lover (2.1.241-255); and when he waxes eloquent on the virtues of simple living (4.3.166-180). In her lengthy speech on the wifely duties of submission, Katherina simultaneously acknowledges her weakness and reveals a new-found strength. She has learned to speak in the style expected of her, and every audience member must decide for her/himself whether Katherina’s mastery of this socially sanctioned style is the death-knell of her own voice or the newest and sharpest weapon in her rhetorical arsenal.

Quintilian describes the value of versatility to an orator in an analogy which compares speaking to sword-fighting:

... the task of the skilful swordsman is to give the impression that his design is quite other than it actually is, even so the oratory in which there is no guile fights by sheer weight and impetus alone; on the other hand, the fighter who feints and varies his assault is able to attack flank or back as he will, to lure his opponent’s weapons from their guard and to outwit him by a slight inclination of the body.

(IX.1.20)

The comparison of words to weapons is a commonplace in rhetoric manuals, and this comparison appears many times in Shrew. Both Katherina and Petruchio demonstrate the versatility that Quintilian describes. When Katherina pleases her husband through her rhetorically sophisticated speech of submission, it may be that she is acknowledging her “proper” position as a loyal subject to her lord. It may also be, however, that by delivering the speech Petruchio wants to hear, she is luring her opponent’s weapons from their guard in order to outwit him by an inclination of her slight body.
A Midsummer Night's Dream

Strange things happen to figurative language when it is spoken by supernatural beings. Metaphor, or translatio, is a common trope defined as a word "transferred from one thing to another . . . a means of presenting our subject as if before the eyes of the audience" (Ad Herennium IV: 45). But if the thing before our eyes really changes—if a man, for instance, actually becomes an ass—then language once figurative suddenly, and shockingly, becomes literal. Throughout Dream, the distinction between figurative and literal language frequently disappears as the two blend in a form Northrop Frye might describe as anagogic metaphor. After examining some of the rhetorical means by which Shakespeare creates the dream world of this play, including anagogic metaphor, hyperbole, and various figures of description, we shall consider ways in which Frye's distinction between "descriptive metaphor" and "anagogic metaphor" might be applied to Elizabethan concerns about the inherent danger of the actor's profession.

In his Anatomy of Criticism, Northrop Frye describes five types of metaphor, and the fifth of these is anagogic metaphor. As Frye explains, in an anagogic metaphor, the two things compared are not merely like each other, they are each other:

In the anagogic aspect of meaning, the radical form of metaphor, "A is B," comes into its own. Here we are dealing with poetry in its totality, in which the formula "A is B" may be hypothetically applied to anything, for there is no metaphor, not even "black is white," which a reader has any right to quarrel with in advance. The literary universe, therefore, is a universe in which everything is potentially identical with everything else.

(124)

The fairy kingdom in Dream is characterized by the very fluidity of identity that Frye describes. In the middle of the night, in the woody fairy realm, all sorts of
transformations are possible: a man's head can turn into a donkey's head; Helena can become as lovely as Hermia in the love-blind eyes of Lysander and Demetrius; and the fairies can become whatever they wish to become. Indeed, Puck is famous for his mischievous transformations. Shortly after the initial entrance of Puck and the First Fairy, Puck proudly admits that he is Robin Goodfellow, "that merry wanderer of the night" (2.1.42) who entertains Oberon with his quick and witty transformations. He is able to neigh "in likeness of a filly foal", or to change his physical body to become "a roasted crab" or "a three-foot stool" (2.1.46-52). He uses his transfigurational abilities to perform boyish pranks, while Oberon takes "the shape of Corin" (2.1.66) for the more grown-up purpose of seducing Phillida. When Puck stumbles upon the rude mechanicals' rehearsal, he plans to take the form of "an actor" if he sees cause (3.1.75), and he later terrorizes the mechanicals by transforming himself into "horse, hound, hog, bear, fire, at every turn" (3.1.106). His transformational sport continues in the next scene, as he exhausts Lysander and Demetrius by assuming the voice first of one, and then of the other (3.2.401-425).

Although we hear of the fairies' many transformations, we never actually see any of the fairies change their shapes. When Puck claims that he can take the form of a roasted crab or a stool, we are left to imagine that he is able to embody the similes he describes. While we see the fairies' magic juice transform the perspectives of both Lysander and Demetrius, the only physical transformation we witness is the transformation of Bottom's head from his own head to that of an ass. The most obvious examples of anagogic metaphor in the play are spoken in response to Bottom's metamorphoses. As Quince runs away in fear, he says "Bless thee, Bottom, bless thee. Thou art translated", to which Bottom responds: "I see their knavery. This is to make an ass of me, to fright me if they could . . ." (3.1.113-115). Unaware of his physical change, Bottom uses the word "ass" in its figurative sense, but the literal accuracy of this anagogic metaphor always earns a laugh in performance. In
describing Bottom as “translated”, Quince unwittingly emphasizes the elision of boundaries between the figurative and the literal, for “translatio” is the Latin word for metaphor: in being translated, Bottom has become a metaphor.7

The terms “ass” and “translated” appear with double meanings again later, as Puck gleefully tells Oberon of the clever trick he has played on the rude mechanicals and on Titania:

I led them on in this distracted fear,
   And left sweet Pyramus translated there;
When in that moment, so it came to pass,
   Titania waked and straightway loved an ass.
   (3.2.31-34)

Unlike Bottom, who is unaware of the double meaning of his words, Puck is fully capable of enjoying the double entendre of the joke he has created. One of the differences between fairies and mortals in this play is that the fairies, with their facility for transformation, are able to appreciate the interplay between the figurative and the literal.

The blurry distinction between figurative and literal descriptions is found not only in the anagogic metaphors in the play, but also in other rhetorical devices. When Oberon instructs Puck to go through the woods “swifter than the wind” in order to find Helena, Puck promises to go “Swifter than arrow from the Tartar’s bow” (3.2.94-101). On first view, such descriptions seem to be examples of hyperbole, but when Puck returns with Helena only a moment after he has made his promise, we realize that he was not exaggerating through hyperbole: he was merely describing his reality. It seems he really can travel faster than the wind. Throughout the play we are told the fairies can fly “round about the earth/ In forty minutes” (2.1.175), and that they “the globe can compass soon,/ Swifter than the wand’ring moon” (4.1.96-97). One of the rhetorical means by which Shakespeare invests the
fairies with supernatural power is by presenting them as characters who embody hyperbolic speed.

The distinction between the "real" and the "imaginary" is also blended in various figures of description. When Oberon describes the flowery bower of the Queen of Fairies (2.1.249-256), the description sounds like topothesia (a description of an imaginary place), but is actually topographia (a description of an actual place), or so it seems when Titania's bower appears on stage only a few moments later. Through pragmatographia, Oberon tells Puck of the flower pierced by Cupid's arrow (2.1.155-168). When Helena refers to the blindness of "winged Cupid" (1.1.235), she is speaking figuratively, but Oberon has literally seen Cupid, as he proves by telling Puck where to find Cupid's love-shot flower. Earlier, when Titania and Oberon are fighting, she tells him that the winds are sucking up fogs by way of revenge for being ignored, and that the moon has grown "pale in her anger" (2.1.88-104). In any other play, such statements would be taken for prosopopoeia (personification), but in reality-bending fairyland, the rulers accept responsibility for having angered their allies, the elements, and thereby changed the seasons.

One need not be a fairy, of course, in order to have a conversation with the moon: one can also be an actor. Theseus notes that "The lunatic, the lover, and the poet/ Are of imagination all compact" (5.1.7-8), and he might have added fairies and actors to his list. The rude mechanicals transform themselves, albeit in a parodied form, as it suits their theatrical purposes to do so. Through the magic of theatre, they become the moon, a wall, a lion, a woman, and a romantic hero. Theatrical magic also invests them with hyperbolic speed: while enacting "Pyramus and Thisbe", they move instantly from the wall dividing the lovers' land to Ninus's tomb, and in doing so, they present fictional places as though they were real. The mechanicals, who have themselves been victimized by the potential terrors of anagogic metaphor, understand that distinctions between art and nature are
sometimes hard to draw. In tender-hearted concern for the ladies in the audience, Snug sticks his face out of the neck of his lion's costume so the ladies will not mistake him for a real lion (3.1.32-42).

In juxtaposing "real" and "theatrical" transformations in this play about magic, theatre, and dreams, Shakespeare allows us to consider the nature of transformation itself. When Puck takes the form of a roasted crab in order to make someone spill her drink, it is a funny prank, but when Bottom's own head explodes into a donkey's head, his friends run in terror. The difference between fun and fear in these transformations depends on whether or not the witnesses understand what is happening, and on the degree to which the transformed person (or fairy) is in control of his changes; this control, in turn, is based on the ability of the transformed character both to apprehend the relationship between his original and his transformed state, and to change himself back to his original form. This difference between funny and fearful transformations, reflected in Frye's different sorts of metaphors, is relevant to Elizabethan concerns about the dangers inherent in acting.

In describing "ordinary descriptive meaning" in metaphor, Frye writes:

In the metaphor two things are identified while each retains its own form. Thus if we say "the hero was a lion" we identify the hero with the lion, while at the same time both the hero and the lion are identified as themselves. (123)

As already mentioned, however, in anagogic metaphor, "A is B" (Frye 124). Frye's distinction between "descriptive metaphors" and "anagogic metaphors" might also be applied to the various possible relationships between an actor and his/her character. On first view, it might seem that acting is an anagogic art, for an actor becomes, or embodies, the character s/he plays. Both an audience's enjoyment of a play and actors' safety, however, depend on avoiding "anagogic acting" in favour of "descriptive acting". As audience members we identify an actor with his part in order to enter into the imaginative world of a play, but if we believe that an actor is
really suffering the fate of the character he portrays, then we lose the distance necessary to enjoy tragedy. Bottom understands that audience members cannot enjoy a play unless they understand the distinction between what we might call descriptive and anagogic acting:

... Write me a prologue, and let the prologue seem to say we will do no harm with our swords, and that Pyramus is not killed indeed; and for the more better assurance, tell them that I, Pyramus, am not Pyramus, but Bottom the weaver. This will put them out of fear.

(3.1.15-20)

It is not only audience members who suffer if distinctions between actor and character are not maintained. Actors depend on each other to avoid the loss of control that comes with anagogic acting. In his Apology for Actors (1612), Thomas Heywood describes the intensity of passions experienced by an actor during a performance, and in doing so he unwittingly demonstrates the dangers of anagogic acting. Attempting to dignify plays, in a way which Jonas Barish describes as "spectacularly inept" (Barish 119), Heywood tells of Julius Caesar's legendary experience on the stage. When Caesar played the role of Hercules Furens, writes Heywood, he was:

... so extremely carried away with the violence of his practised fury, and by the perfect shape of the madness of Hercules, to which he had fashioned all his active spirits, that he slew [the actor playing the servant] dead at his foot, and after swoong him ten: quarter: (as the Poet sayes) about his head.

(Heywood E3v)

Caesar is reported to have lost control while onstage, but some of the Renaissance concerns about the dangers inherent in acting relate to an actor's loss of control when offstage. One such concern is articulated by Thomas Wright in his The Passions of the Minde (1601). Wright explains that physicians regard the passions as a potential cause of physical sickness:

... there is no passion very vehement, but that it altereth extremly some of the four humours of the body; & all Physitians commonly agree that among
divers . . . causes of diseases, one, and not the least, is the excess of some inordinate passion.

(Wright 6)

To those, like Wright, who believe that excessive passion can cause sickness, actors, who daily arouse in themselves the passions of their characters, must seem to take a rather casual approach to their own health. Stage plays are sometimes criticized in the Renaissance for infecting audience members with unhealthy passions, and the passions which can "infest" playgoers can have an even more potent effect on actors. Five decades after Wright’s comments on the potentially harmful effects of passions, Edmund Gayton, a physician and the author of Pleasant Notes upon Don Quixot (1654), notes that acting can be harmful to the health. He claims that “… some passions counterfeited long, whether of griefe or joy, have so alter’d the personaters, that players themselves (who are most usually in such employments) have been forc’d to fly to Physick”. Theatrical transformations are only entertaining if both audience and actor alike believe that the actor has the ability, as Puck does, to stop acting any part whenever he chooses to do so, without having sustained any harm from his transformations.

Some of the transformations described in Dream are harmless fun, such as Puck’s portrayals of a roasted crab or a stool, but others may make us uncomfortable. While it is comically convenient to see the young lovers paired at the end of the play, for example, we may find it odd that Demetrius is destined to live forever in a drugged state. Similarly, although Bottom’s transformation is hugely entertaining on one level, on another level, the concept of a man being transformed to a beast and mated with a member of another species is deeply disturbing. In Max Reinhardt’s 1935 film of Dream, James Cagney’s Bottom catches a glimpse of his transformed head in the surface of a pond, and, for one horrifying moment, Bottom’s transformation stops being funny. Anagogic metaphors can be simultaneously fascinating and frightening. As Frye explains, anagogic or
"apocalyptic" art emancipates the imaginative mind, and "it is of the essence of imaginative culture that it transcends the limits both of the naturally possible and of the morally acceptable" (127).

According to the rude mechanicals, one way to avoid causing offence in a play is to write a prologue. They do not want to present anything that could be regarded as morally unacceptable, and thus they provide instructions for their audience on how to interpret "Pyramus and Thisbe". If everyone realizes that the mechanicals are just actors, and that their story is just a play, then no one will be alarmed by what they are about to see. Another method of avoiding offence is to hold the audience members responsible for their own experiences in the theatre. In a metatheatrical framing technique similar to the mechanicals' prologue, Puck delivers an epilogue in which he provides interpretive advice to the audience:

If we shadows have offended,
Think but this, and all is mended:
That you have but slumbered here,
While these visions did appear;
And this weak and idle theme,
No more yielding but a dream, . . .

(5.1.414-419)

The audience members' responsibility for interpreting this play is emphasized not only in the epilogue but also in the metonymy of the play's title. Metonymy is a complicated trope, which Peacham defines as "a change of name used four ways": cause for effect, effect for cause, subject for adjunct, and adjunct for subject (19). When describing the use of subject for adjunct, Peacham explains that a container can represent the things contained, and as examples he lists "happy day", "wicked world", and "the night's dream corrected by the morning's view" (19). In the metonymy of the play's title, we find the most significant anagogic metaphor in the play: Shakespeare's Dream is a play, but, according to Puck, the play is a dream. In Puck's world of blended realities, "A is B". Frye's comments on the anagogic phase
of literature, while not written with Dream in mind, are perfectly suited to the interplay of poetry, magic, and dreams that characterize Shakespeare’s play:

In the anagogic phase, literature imitates the total dream of man, and so imitates the thought of a human mind which is at the circumference and not at the center of its reality. . . . When we pass into anagogy, nature becomes, not the container, but the thing contained . . . .

(119)

All’s Well That Ends Well

The title of All’s Well That Ends Well is based on a proverb (a rhetorical figure also known as paroemia), but the apparent simplicity of the titular proverb is problematic in light of the events of the play. The ending of this play does not provide the easy comfort typical of comic resolution. We may leave a production of All’s Well wondering whether, in fact, all has ended well, for we have just seen a woman trick into marriage, and into bed, the promiscuous liar who is the target of her unwanted affection. The disjunction between the play’s complexity and the title’s simplicity has caused many scholars to comment on the various possible meanings of the play’s titular proverb. 10

Keir Elam addresses the meaning of the play’s title, when he writes:

The all too evident shallowness of “all’s well that ends well” . . . immediately suggests ironic distance from the text. . . . [The] “polygenetic” and popular character of the proverb might be taken as equivalent with the easily contentable obtuseness of public morality, were it not for the fact that in the comedy itself the proposition is repeated twice by the female protagonist in circumstances that indicate a serious and indeed solemn application. But in both instances, it might be noted, Helena has an eye to securing in time the comic ending she has been preparing through the machinations of the bed-trick and the rest. . . . In this light, the object of the titular irony becomes, instead, the desperate appropriate-end-securing machinery of the plot, pre-announced as a piece of bottom-heavy machinery designed to save the conventional framework of the genre at all costs.

(Discourse 87)
In her recent edition of *All's Well*, Susan Snyder also addresses the problems inherent in the play's title:

The play, it seems, should be easy to interpret: the title proverb shows how to view the action and directs us to look especially at the ending for its significance. But what does the proverb mean? . . . The primary meaning seems to be . . . something like "As long as our efforts end in success, it will be worth all we have had to endure." But the proverb can also carry a message more Machiavellian, that the desirable end justifies the questionable means used to achieve it. . . . The parallel proverb also cited by Helen ("still the fine's the crown": Tilley E116, the end crowns, or tries, or proves, all) is open to the same ambiguity: everything about the process, including its moral rightness or wrongness, is to be judged by the presumably good outcome.

(All's Well 49)

Snyder notes that all of the key words in the title are ambiguous. We cannot be certain what exactly is meant by "all", by "well", or by "ends": not "all" of the play's problematic interactions are comfortably resolved; the Clown twice draws attention to the ambiguity of the word "well" (1.3.16 and 2.4.2-13); and the happiness at the "end" of the play is conditional in the extreme. While it is not uncommon for Shakespeare to "put off to a post-play future full explanations of events", Snyder writes, in the case of this play, Shakespeare "defers beyond the boundaries of the stage action what would seem to be the very foundations of any happy ending—full understanding and rapprochement between principals and full validation by authorities" (All's Well 50-51). She later notes:

. . . the divergence between the neat formula-title *All's Well That Ends Well* and the play's actual wayward characters and tentative, flawed conclusion is for some critics so striking as to thematize the inadequacy of comedy as a genre—or of art itself—to make sense of life's messiness.

(All's Well 53)

I have quoted Snyder and Elam at some length here to give a sense of critical responses to the play's title. I would like to propose another possible meaning for the titular proverb, and it is a meaning which is both related to and different from the meanings set forth by Snyder and Elam. I believe that the "end" referred to in
the title is not the end of the play but Judgement Day, and that the consequent meaning of the titular proverb is something like this: “All is not well until a good life has been fully lived, and a person has died and gone to heaven”. This interpretation is supported by the play’s structure, the recurrence of certain rhetorical figures, the unusual roles of the old characters in this comedy, the placement of the play in the Shakespearean canon, and the numerous mentions in the text of the titular proverb itself.

In previous chapters, and even in the earlier parts of this chapter, I have focused almost entirely on rhetorical devices, but these devices do not work in isolation: they serve to support Shakespeare’s other dramatic choices. When exploring All’s Well, I intend to widen my focus considerably to include both rhetorical and non-rhetorical elements of the play. In considering the meaning of the play’s titular proverb as that meaning is supported by non-rhetorical means, such as plot structure, character demographics, and even Shakespeare’s dramatic choices in other plays contemporary with All’s Well, I hope to demonstrate the integral nature of Shakespeare’s use of rhetorical figures. These devices are not ornaments: they are woven into the very fabric of Shakespeare’s work.

To begin our examination of the play’s titular proverb, let us consider the unusual structure of All’s Well: a structure that has contributed to its classification as a problem comedy rather than as a romantic comedy. As a genre, romantic comedy is partially characterized by happy endings. Characters attempt to achieve unions that will allow them “to live happily ever after”, and in many romantic comedies, including Dream, AYLI, and Much Ado, the state of “happily ever after” begins with fifth-act weddings. Prior to act 5, comic lovers typically spend a good deal of energy trying to overcome the obstacles to their union. Once the barriers are overcome, their weddings can take place, and the plays they inhabit can end with a tidy sense of closure. In All’s Well, however, the tripartite structure of separation,
bewilderment, and resolution typical of the love affairs of romantic comedy is complete before the end of the second act: the bulk of the play occurs after the wedding that was supposed to secure the lovers’ bliss. Both in form and in content, All’s Well explores Helen’s and Bertam’s post-wedding realm, and, in doing so, the play takes us beyond the scope of most romantic comedies.

Unlike history plays, which evoke memories of days gone by, romantic comedies tend to emphasize events in the present and in the immediate future. The events of Dream, to choose one example, take only a few days to unfold, and the preoccupations of the lovers are contained by those few days; indeed, most of the play’s action takes place in a single night. The lovers wonder what will happen in the next hour, or what just happened in the last hour. The range of their preoccupation extends only as far as their weddings; they give no thought whatsoever to life beyond their wedding night. In All’s Well, however, the characters are preoccupied both with times past and with times to come to an extent that is atypical of comedy.

The preoccupation with past and future found in All’s Well is clearly evident in the frequent appearance of four rhetorical figures in the play: eulogia, optatio, diatyposis, and encomium. The figure eulogia (which pronounces a blessing) appears many times in this play, and yet this figure is only rarely, if ever, found in Shakespeare’s other comedies, with the single exception of Measure for Measure. Like eulogia, optatio (an ardent wish or prayer) and diatyposis (a figure whereby one commends to another certain profitable rules and precepts) frequently reveal concern for a loved one’s safety. Indeed, it was the numerous instances of these three figures, and especially of eulogia, that first drew my attention to the characters’ preoccupations with each other’s future well-being in this play. The fourth figure offered for consideration here is encomium (high praise and commendation of a person or thing by extolling the inherent qualities or adjuncts). Unlike the three
figures mentioned above, figures which are concerned with future events, encomium draws our attention to times gone by through glowing descriptions of characters now dead. All four of these devices appear regularly in All’s Well, and they reveal the characters’ thoughts about times beyond the parameters of the play’s action.

In some cases it is hard to distinguish between eulogia and optatio, for sometimes characters ardently pray for blessings on their loved ones. There are approximately fourteen instances of eulogia and ten examples of optatio in the play. Whatever name we choose to employ for these figures, the characters’ concern for each other is unmistakable. Some of the instances of eulogia in All’s Well are very short. On Bertram’s initial departure, for example, the Countess expresses her hope that heaven will bless him (1.1.75), and when Helen goes to offer her cure to the King, the Countess promises to “stay at home/ and pray God’s blessing into [Helen’s] attempt” (1.3.254-255). Helen hopes the Third Lord will find “Blessing upon [his] vows” (2.3.92) if ever he should marry, and when Helen chooses Bertram to be her husband, the King offers his blessing on the union, saying, “Good fortune and the favour of the King/ Smile upon this contract . . .” (2.3.178-179).

In some instances, the figure eulogia may seem little more than a courteous form of address, such as when Paroles greets Helen with the words “Bless you, my fortunate lady” (2.4.14). In other cases, however, we can hear in optatio or eulogia a speaker’s urgent concern for the well-being of a loved one. When Helen realizes that Bertram has gone to war to avoid her, for example, she combines optatio with an apostrophe to bullets in an eloquent prayer for Bertram’s safety:

            . . . O you leaden messengers
            That ride upon the violent speed of fire,
            Fly with false aim, cleave the still-piercing air
            That sings with piercing; do not touch my lord.

            (3.2.108-111)
Her heart-felt concern for Bertram’s safety is expressed again in the letter she writes to the Countess, in which she urges the Countess to “Bless [Bertram] at home in peace, whilst I from far/ His name with zealous fervour sanctify” (3.4.10-11).

Distraught by Bertram’s behaviour, the Countess expresses her concern that her son will not be blessed without Helen’s prayers. She fears that all will not end well for Bertram’s soul:

What angel shall
Bless this unworthy husband? He cannot thrive
Unless her prayers, whom heaven delights to hear
And loves to grant, reprieve him from the wrath
Of greatest justice.

(3.4.25-29)

Like eulogia and optatio, diatyposis expresses a character’s concern for things to come. Paroles offers Helen some advice, albeit in his own self-serving style, when he urges her to lose her virginity as quickly as possible (1.1.125-134); act 2 begins with the concluding words of the King’s diatyposis delivered to the departing lords (2.1.1-17); and Mariana advises Diana on the seductive powers of men (3.5.18-28).

The most formal instance of diatyposis in the play is the Countess’s advice to her departing son. As Bertram prepares to attend the King, the Countess speaks to him in words that combine eulogia and diatyposis, and both of these figures help her to express her ardent hope that all will end well for Bertram:

Be thou blessed, Bertram, and succeed thy father
In manners as in shape. Thy blood and virtue
Contend for empire in thee, and thy goodness
Share with thy birthright. Love all, trust a few,
Do wrong to none. Be able for thine enemy
Rather in power than in use; and keep thy friend
Under thy own life’s key. Be checked for silence,
But never taxed for speech. What heaven more will,
That thee may furnish and my prayers pluck down,
Fall on thy head.

(1.1.61-70)
Diagnosis is most often, but not always, found in the words of old speakers who are passing their wisdom on to young listeners. As the King advises his lords, as Mariana instructs Diana, and as the Countess advises her son, we hear the tender concern of these speakers for the well-being of the inexperienced listeners whom they counsel.

Characters such as the Countess and the King hope that all will end well for the young people in their care. They try to assist their wards through prayer, and through offering advice, and they also provide illustrations of admirable behaviour through stories of respected people whose virtuous lives ended well. Their stories sometimes take the form of the figure encomium, such as when the Countess briefly describes Helen’s father (1.1.18-24) or, in a more extended example of encomium, when the King praises Bertram’s father (1.2.26-48). At the end of his speech, the King expresses his belief that the young people of his day need role models like Bertram’s father:

    Such a man
    Might be a copy to these younger times,
    Which followed well would demonstrate them now
    But goers backward.

1.2.45-48

The King notes that Bertram looks like his father, and he wishes Bertram well, saying “Thy father’s moral parts/ Mayst thou inherit too!” (1.2.21-22).

The most eloquent example of encomium in the play is Lafeu’s description of Helen, whom he believes to be dead. Lafeu explains the great wrong that Bertram has done to himself in rejecting Helen, and the King acknowledges Lafeu’s encomium:

    Lafeu: . . . He lost a wife
    Whose beauty did astonish the survey
    Of richest eyes; whose words all ears took captive;
    Whose dear perfection hearts that scorned to serve
    Humbly called mistress.
King: Praising what is lost
       Makes the remembrance dear. . .

       (5.3.15-20)

The examples of encomium in All's Well are usually found in the lines of one of
the elderly characters in the play: characters whose minds are full of memories of
loved ones now dead, and of golden days gone by. An unusually high percentage of
the characters in All's Well are members of the older generation, and the kindness,
forgiveness, and wisdom demonstrated by these characters set them apart from their
counterparts in other comedies. In many New Comedies, old characters are
caricatured as somewhat rigid, selfish, or silly people who must be outwitted in
order for young characters to achieve their goals. Several of Shakespeare's comedies
contain elderly "blocking characters" who must be overcome. In Shrew, for
example, Gremio, Baptista, and Vincentio are tricked by clever young lovers.
Grumio describes such trickery as a victory of the young generation over the old
when he says: "Here's no knavery; see, to beguile the old folks, how the young folks
lay their heads together!" (1.2.136-137). In Dream, rigid Egeus must be defeated, and
in Merchant, Jessica escapes the severity of Shylock's rules.

In All's Well, however, the old characters try to assist the young by giving them
advice, and by furnishing them with a range of opportunities for social
advancement. Both the number of old characters in this play and the empathy of
these characters for the younger characters are atypical of comedy. As Susan Snyder
notes, Shakespeare chooses to increase the emphasis on the older generation in this
play by adding several old characters to the story who do not appear in the play's
source. The Countess, her Steward, her Clown, the King, Lafeu, the Duke, and the
Widow have all lived for a long time, and the experiences of their long lives have
made them wise, flexible, and compassionate. Through their words and their deeds,
they provide ever-present proof that all is not well until a good life has been fully
lived and death can be faced without fear.
The King, the Countess, and the Clown all mention their own approaching deaths; it seems they have all taken the time to reflect on what it means to “end well”. While Helen and Bertram are preoccupied with people’s worth as established at birth, the members of the older generation believe worth cannot be truly determined until death. Helen is ashamed to admit her love for Bertram because she is “from humble, he from honoured name” (1.3.156); Bertram is unwilling to take her as a wife because she is “A poor physician’s daughter” (2.3.116). They have been taught to value beginnings: the King and the Countess have learned to value endings. The Countess condemns her son for “the misprizing of a maid too virtuous/ For the contempt of empire” (3.2.31-32); like the King, she believes that honour is earned rather than inherited. In the attempt to teach young Bertram about the source of honour, the King explains that epitaphs should reflect the honour achieved by the end of someone’s life rather than that automatically bestowed by birthright:

That is honour’s scorn
Which challenges itself as honour’s born
And is not like the sire. Honours thrive
When rather from our acts we them derive
Than our foregoers. The mere word’s a slave,
Debauched on every tomb, on every grave
A lying trophy; and as oft is dumb
Where dust and damned oblivion is the tomb
Of honoured bones indeed.

(2.3.134-142)

Ironically, the King learns of the unpredictable sources of honour, at least in part, from Helen: an unknown woman of humble birth who cures his disease when his wise doctors cannot. Shortly before lecturing Bertram on the importance of basing worth on merit rather than on social status, the King himself needs similar counsel from Helen in order to be persuaded that an inexperienced young woman might be able to help a king. In attempting to persuade the King to try her father’s medicine, Helen touches on issues which are directly related to the proverb in the play’s title.
In short, she explains that sometimes things may seem to begin poorly but they end well, and that it is ends rather than beginnings that matter:

- He that of greatest works is finisher  
  Oft does them by the weakest minister.  
  So holy writ in babes hath judgement shown  
  When judges have been babes. Great floods have flown  
  From simple sources, and great seas have dried  
  When miracles have by the greatest been denied.  
  Oft expectation fails, and most oft there  
  Where most it promises; and oft it hits  
  Where hope is coldest and despair most fits.  

(2.1.134-142)

Although the King is old, he is not too old to learn new things, and the importance of life-long learning is stressed throughout the play. Ending well seems to require the ability to face life’s challenges as they come, to admit what we do not know, to be open to help, and to learn from our mistakes. The world of this play is a compassionate one in which learning, forgiveness, and reconciliation are possible. The play is full of second chances. If the King had listened only to his doctors, he would have died, but his willingness to be open to Helen’s offer of help allows him to move toward a later, and better, ending. Paroles is thoroughly ridiculed, but Lafeu provides him with the clothes and the compassion necessary for a new beginning. After her supposed death, Helen returns to offer her love to Bertram for a second time. She offers to forgive Bertram’s bad behaviour, and he offers to forgive her manipulative bed-trick. Through their willingness to forgive, they give themselves, and each other, a second chance at marriage.

Throughout the play the characters discover they cannot predict endings, and that they must, therefore, always remain open to learning. The Clown learns this lesson in a light-hearted exchange with the Countess, in which he boldly claims that he has “an answer will serve all men” (2.2.13). He asserts that, without even knowing the content of the question, he has a single ready answer that can effectively end any conversation. The Countess quickly proves him wrong, leaving
the Clown to conclude: "I see things may serve long, but not serve ever" (2.2.56). Even the ends of conversations cannot be predicted, let alone the ends of lives.

By beating the Clown at his own rhetorical game, the Countess achieves a victory that is unique in Shakespeare's plays. Shakespeare's jesters are typically the best rhetoricians in the plays in which they appear. The Countess's Clown is a paid entertainer, and, in the Shakespearean canon, that role puts him in the distinguished company of such skilled rhetoricians as Feste, Touchstone, and Lear's Fool. Rhetorical skill is part of a jester's job description, and one of the duties of court clowns is to keep their patrons in good rhetorical shape by jousting with them. The jesters always win their rhetorical matches, with the exception of the match in act 2 scene 2 of *All's Well* in which the Countess defeats the Clown. The Countess's victory emphasizes, yet again, that no one can predict how things will end—not even clever clowns—and that old and young, trained and untrained alike, must remain open to life-long learning.

The same message is presented in a much more philosophical vein after the King has been cured, when wise old Lafeu remarks on the importance of humbly admitting that there is much we do not know:

They say miracles are past, and we have our philosophical persons to make modern and familiar things supernatural and causeless. Hence is it that we make trifles of terrors, ensconcing ourselves into seeming knowledge when we should submit ourselves to an unknown fear.

(2.3.1-6)

In this speech, Lafeu comments on the limits of human knowledge. The reason we cannot truly say all has ended well until Judgement Day, according to the beliefs of the characters in this play, is that no person is completely in control of his/her life or death. Ending well requires a combination of human effort and divine grace.
The necessity of combining human endeavour with divine aid is emphasized by several different characters. Helen decides to do what she can to win Bertram because she believes the words she speaks in soliloquy:

Our remedies oft in ourselves do lie
Which we ascribe to heaven. The fated sky
Gives us free scope, only doth backward pull
Our slow designs when we ourselves are dull.

(1.1.218-221)

Later, however, she seems to contradict her statement that we are in charge of our own destinies, when she urges the King to try her father's remedy. She claims the medicine she brings is divine aid offered through the finest product of her father's gift for healing:

Inspired merit so by breath is barred.
It is not so with him that all things knows
As 'tis with us that square our guess by shows.
But most it is presumption in us when
The help of heaven we count the act of men.
Dear sir, to my endeavours give consent.
Of heaven, not me, make an experiment.

(2.1.146-152)

Helen's argument is so persuasive that the King is left with the impression that through her "some blessed spirit doth speak" (2.1.173). After the King's recovery, Lafeu notes that the "Very hand of heaven" (2.3.31) is evident in Helen's cure, and he makes this comment while reading a work entitled "A Showing of a Heavenly Effect in an Earthly Actor" (2.3.23). Helen later greets the waiting lords with the words: "Heaven hath through me restored the King to health" (2.3.65).

The combination of human effort and divine grace necessary to end well is implicit in the four rhetorical figures previously mentioned. Prayers and requests for blessings, expressed through optatio and eulogia respectively, are based on the hope that God will offer divine aid. Diatyposis, on the other hand, emphasizes a listener's responsibility to act in a wise and considered fashion, while encomium
demonstrates that admirable human effort will be rewarded with praise. In simultaneously giving Bertram advice and asking God to bless her son, the Countess acknowledges both human and divine contributions to happy endings (1.1.61-70).

When describing the range of possible interpretations of the titular proverb in All’s Well That Ends Well, Susan Snyder suggests that part of the confusion as to the proverb’s meaning arises from the fact that the proverb appears with “increasing tentativeness” at various points in the play. She asks: “... do we take the maxim at face value ... or do the repetitions and variations ... serve to raise a question rather than forestall it?” (All’s Well 49). As mentioned above, I believe the titular proverb means “All is not well until a good life has been fully lived, and a person has died and gone to heaven”. This interpretation is in keeping with the numerous repetitions of the proverb in the play, and it is also strongly suggested by the Clown’s quibbles on what it means to be “well”:

Helen: My mother greets me kindly. Is she well?
Clown: She is not well, but yet she has her health. She’s very merry, but yet she is not well. But, thanks be given, she’s very well, and wants nothing i’th’world. But yet she is not well.
Helen: If she be very well, what does she ail that she’s not very well?
Clown: Truly, she’s very well indeed, but for two things.
Helen: What two things?
Clown: One, that she’s not in heaven, whither God send her quickly. The other, that she’s in earth, from whence God send her quickly.
(2.4.1-13)

Later in the play, Helen twice repeats the titular proverb. While journeying with Diana and the Widow to meet the King, she encourages them with the words: “All’s well that ends well; still the fine’s the crown./ Whate’er the course, the end is the renown” (4.4.35-36). When they discover the King has already moved from Marseilles, Helen once again urges her travelling companions to look toward the future with hope: “All’s well that ends well yet,/ Though time seem so adverse, and means unfit” (5.1.25-6). Helen’s repetitions of the proverb seem to point toward the meeting of the King, which comes, of course, at the end of the play. It is these
repetitions that cause Elam to dismiss the proverb as "the desperate appropriate-end-securing machinery of the plot . . . designed to save the conventional framework of the genre at all costs" (87), but such a description blatantly ignores the unconventional nature of this "problem comedy", and makes no sense whatsoever of the King's two tentative uses of the proverb.

At the very end of the play, after the King has offered to let Diana choose her husband, he says: "All yet seems well, and if it end so meet,/ The bitter past, more welcome is the sweet" (5.3.333-334). The tentative quality of the King's remark is in keeping both with the notion that ending well requires the ability to accept, with humility, that we always have more to learn, and with the belief that we do not have complete control over our own fates. At the end of the play, Helen and Bertram have achieved a tentative connection, Diana has been offered the potentially wonderful opportunity to choose a husband, and the King's health is, for the time being, good. "All yet seems well", and with continued human effort, and the grace of God, these characters may live well enough to die well.

The final reference to the play's titular proverb comes in the epilogue, but before examining that reference, I would like to take a moment to consider the placement of All's Well in the Shakespearean canon, and the possible significance of that placement to our understanding of the play's epilogue. In describing the difficulties inherent in dating All's Well, G.K. Hunter notes that one approach to the problem of dating the play is "through an attempt to relate this play to other plays of Shakespeare's in terms of themes, characters, [and] handling". He concludes that "the two plays to which All's Well seems most closely related are Hamlet and Measure for Measure" (xxiii):

The resemblances with Hamlet are restricted, and concentrated in act 1. Both plays begin with sorrow for fathers, with the departure of a young man for Paris and training in gentility: indeed Laertes is in many ways a parallel figure to Bertram. . . . Measure for Measure and All's Well are obvious twins.
The affinities they share might, of course, be due to nothing more than the chance similarity of their sources; but it is not probable that plot, characterization, themes, vocabulary, even the tangles, perplexities, and perversities of treatment should be shared, unless the mind and technique of the author were still at the same stage. (xxiii-xxiv)

To Hunter’s list of similarities, I would add that Hamlet, Measure for Measure, and All’s Well are among the most explicitly Christian of Shakespeare’s plays. Hamlet includes a ghost who comes from Purgatory to seek Hamlet’s aid; two of the main characters in Measure for Measure are a woman who wants to be a nun and a man disguised as a friar; and All’s Well is full of prayers and requests for God’s blessings. In each of these plays, Christian beliefs are repeatedly and explicitly expressed by the main characters.

Furthermore, each of these plays includes characters who are seriously preoccupied with life after death: it is a preoccupation that extends the characters’ concerns beyond the standard genre boundaries of both comedy and tragedy, and changes their notions of what it means to “end well”. Many comedies end with a wedding, and many tragedies end with a death. In Measure for Measure, Hamlet, and All’s Well, however, important weddings or deaths happen early in the play, or even before the play begins, and much of the ensuing action is based on characters’ responses to these events. In Measure, for example, Claudio and Julietta consummate their love before they are legally married, (and before the play begins) and they are harshly judged for their actions. Mariana consummates her union with her betrothed Angelo, just as, in All’s Well, Helen consummates her marriage to Bertram, but neither of these bed-tricks provides the joyful resolution typical of comic weddings, for the husbands are, of course, unaware that they are sleeping with their wives. The religious, legal, and sexual union of marriage, which forms the hoped-for end of many comedies, is ignominiously bypassed in All’s Well and Measure by characters whose attentions are focused on other ends. Sexual union is
regarded by some of the characters in these two plays not as an end in itself, but as merely one of the means by which one may earn the end either of life in heaven or of life in hell.

The preoccupation with life after death in Hamlet is clearly evident throughout the play. The Ghost of Hamlet's father appears from Purgatory to say that although he lived well, he did not die well, and all will not end well for him until his foul and unnatural murder has been avenged. Whether from heaven or from hell, the Ghost's very existence demonstrates that all does not end with death. In his essay entitled, "Hamlet: The Prince or the Poem", C.S. Lewis examines the preoccupation with life after death in Hamlet. After considering the attitudes towards death of tragic figures including Macbeth, Brutus, Othello, Lear, Romeo, and Antony, Lewis writes:

For all these, as for their author while he writes and the audience while they watch, death is the end: it is almost the frame of the picture. They think of dying: no one thinks, in these plays, of being dead. In Hamlet we are kept thinking about it all the time, whether in terms of the soul's destiny or of the body's. Purgatory, Hell, Heaven, the wounded name, the rights—or wrongs—of Ophelia's burial, and the staying-power of a tanner's corpse: and beyond this, beyond all Christian and all Pagan maps of the hereafter, comes a curious groping and tapping of thoughts, about "what dreams may come". It is this that gives to the whole play its quality of darkness and misgiving.12

When speaking to Claudius about the location of Polonius's body, Hamlet insults Claudius by disrespectfully comparing kings to beggars. He explains that, after death, kings and beggars are equal in that they both become food for worms: "Your fat king and your lean beggar is but variable service—two dishes, but to one table. That's the end" (4.3.23-25). (Of course he knows that that is not the end, for his father has returned from the underworld to tell him so.) Hamlet's comparison of kings and beggars after death brings us back, albeit after a lengthy digression, to a consideration of the epilogue of All's Well.
After the final lines of All’s Well, the actor who plays the King delivers an epilogue which may well remind us of Hamlet’s comparison of kings and beggars after death. The actor who has been invested with kingship through the power of theatre loses his royal status when the play is over, and he greets the audience with the following words:

The King’s a beggar, now the play is done.
All is well ended if this suit be won,
That you express content; which we will pay
With strife to please you, day exceeding day.
Ours be your patience, then, and yours our parts:
Your gentle hands lend us, and take our hearts.
(Epilogue)

We have already seen that several of the characters in All’s Well believe that ending well requires a combination of human endeavour and divine grace; characters such as Helen, the Countess and the King endeavour to do their best in the face of life’s challenges, and they pray for God’s blessings. All will end well for them when they have lived good lives, died without fear, and gone to heaven. In the epilogue, Shakespeare gives a metatheatrical twist to the proverb we have heard so often throughout the play. The actors have endeavoured to play their parts well, and when the lives of their characters end with the play’s final curtain, the actors face the moment of theatrical judgement, and humbly bow to us as they ask for our blessing. As audience members, it is in our power to determine whether all will end well for them; through the theatrical convention of applause, we become the dispensers of grace. Shakespeare pays us the ultimate compliment, by casting us in the role of God.
Notes


2 Shrew, ed. Oliver 58.

3 For another analysis of Petruchio’s rhetoric, see Wayne A. Rebhorn, “Petruchio’s ‘Rope Tricks’: The Taming of the Shrew and the Renaissance Discourse of Rhetoric,” Modern Philology 92.3 (February 1995): 294-327. Rebhorn and I approach Petruchio’s rhetoric very differently. He analyzes the play “not as a repetition of figures and structures, [which is what I do] but as a representation, a modeling, of a rhetorical interaction, as it was imagined by Renaissance rhetoricians” (296). He cites many rhetoricians, including several continental Europeans of the sixteenth century, and the “rhetorical interaction” he seeks to demonstrate is explained by him as follows:

“all the notions suggested by the “rope tricks” passage relate to defining aspects, to key concepts, metaphors, and images, of rhetoric as conceived in the Renaissance. In fact, all point to a conception which makes rhetoric a matter of power, control, and coercion, turning the rhetor into a decidedly masculine figure who is represented as a ruler, a civilizer, and also, more disturbingly, a rapist” (295).

He cites several references to the orator’s ability to force listeners “even against their will” (299) to follow the orator’s opinions, and he concludes: “In short, according to the Renaissance discourse of rhetoric, when the orator operates upon his auditor, the action involved is, in one sense or another, rape” (308).

While Rebhorn and I reach similar conclusions about Katherine’s use of rhetoric in the final scene, I fundamentally disagree with parts of his argument. First of all, he never acknowledges that Katherine uses exactly the same rhetorical strategies with Bianca that Petruchio uses with Katherine, and thus, according to Rebhorn’s argument, Katherine is a rapist too. Second, Petruchio does not “court Katherine” as Rebhorn implies; he courts Baptista. By the time Petruchio and Kate meet, their marriage has already been arranged. Third, while I am convinced by Rebhorn’s point that Petruchio as a specific individual can be presented as a sort of rapist—a characterization in keeping with some portrayals of Petruchio on stage—I am vehemently opposed to the idea that, in the Renaissance discourse of rhetoric, the relationship of orator and auditor was perceived as that of rapist and victim. To my mind, Rebhorn is guilty of a major oversight in neglecting to mention the word “ethos”. The “ethos”, or ethical character of a speaker, is repeatedly emphasized by rhetoricians as the most important ingredient of an orator’s appeal: a speaker who fails to demonstrate good knowledge of his material, good moral character, and good will toward his audience—the three requisites of ethos, according to Aristotle—will fail to have power over his audience.

In my readings of classical and Renaissance rhetoric manuals, I have been struck by the love and respect that listeners feel for their favourite orators (an affection reflected in epithets like "dear Tully"). Peacham writes that an orator “is in a manner the emperor of men’s minds & affections, and next to the omnipotent God in the power of persuasion” (Rebhorn 302). Rebhorn, who takes the title of his recent book from Peacham’s words, argues that “Petruchio presents himself as a swaggering version of just such an emperor of men’s minds”, but Rebhorn neglects to mention anything about “affections”. He writes that “rape is often directly present in the discourse in one of its key notions—ravishment” (305), but I would interpret the listener’s “ravishment” differently. In keeping with Rebhorn’s sexual analogy, I would suggest that in the Renaissance discourse of rhetoric, the orator is often perceived not as a rapist but as a lover, and the listener’s ravishment is experienced not as rape
but as orgasmic ecstasy: the auditor's loss of control comes through intense pleasure rather than intense pain.

4 The commonplace of comparing words to weapons is especially noticeable in the final scene of the play as the men joust for rhetorical supremacy:

Baptista: O, O, Petruchio! Tranio hits you now.
Lucentio: I thank thee for that gird, good Tranio.
Hortensio: Confess, confess, hath he not hit you here?
Petruchio: A has a little galled me, I confess;
And as the jest did glance away from me,
'Tis ten to one it maimed you two outright.
(5.2.57-62)

5 The notion that Dream contains anagogic metaphor is not new: Patricia Parker chooses the play as one of the works for consideration in her essay entitled "Anagogic Metaphor: Breaking Down the Wall of Partition". She explains that her study

... has a dual purpose; First, to suggest the tension between anagogic metaphor and a structuring which proceeds by partition, by division into separate parts. Second, to examine in detail three texts in which a specifically rhetorical "partition" combines with an echo of Ephesians' "partition wall".

Her examination of Dream focuses on "the deferral (or, in Elizabethan usage, 'dilation') of ending [which] entails the preservation of 'partition'," and she concentrates on partition as it affects the lives of the rude mechanicals and the Athenians. She argues that the final anagogic removal of partition walls is deferred until the end of the play when the couples become "one flesh" through marriage. Ironically, while Parker examines "anagogic metaphor's potential outrage to reason and property" as this outrage applies to Wuthering Heights, she does not acknowledge that this same potential for outrage exists in the fairy kingdom in Dream. She hardly mentions the fairy world, but, to my mind, the most interesting uses of anagogic metaphor in the play are found in the elision of boundaries between the world of mortals and the fairy kingdom: between waking thoughts and dreams. She emphasizes that partitions in the play defer the union of anagogic metaphor, while I believe Shakespeare's use of anagogic metaphor throughout the play functions as a means of obliterating assumed partitions between dreams and realities, between fairies and mortals, and between art and nature.

6 The five types of metaphor described by Frye are summarized in the Glossary of Anatomy of Criticism where he defines metaphor as follows:

A relation between two symbols, which may be simple juxtaposition (literal metaphor), a rhetorical statement of likeness or similarity (descriptive metaphor), an analogy of proportion among four terms (formal metaphor), an identity of an individual with its class (concrete universal or archetypal metaphor), or statement of hypothetical identity (anagogic metaphor). (366)

7 Parker also notes the rhetorical significance of Bottom's translation (44).

8 The anonymous author of A Refutation of the "Apology for Actors" (1615), a writer known only as "I.G.", describes one of the dangers of attending plays when he states: "plays ... infect the spirit, and replenish it with unchaste, whoorish, cozening, deceitfull, wanton, and mischievous passions" (39). The passions aroused at the plays do not end with the final act, he claims, for when playgoers are on their way home, "then begin they to repeate the lascivious acts and speeches they have heard, and

9 As quoted in Waldo F. McNeir, "Gayton on Elizabethan Acting," PMLA 56 (1941): 582.


11 Susan Snyder describes Shakespeare's choice to emphasize the older generation as follows:

The Countess of Roussillon and Lafeu are his creations (as is the Clown, whose association with Bertram's father links him with the older generation); the King, and to a lesser degree the Widow of Florence, are expanded and particularized from their prototypes in Boccaccio's story; even the dead father, the old Count of Roussillon and the fabled Gerard de Narbonne, are present by frequent recollection in Shakespeare's play as they are not in the source. (All's Well 3-4)

Chapter Five: "Fair Terms and a Villain's Mind"

Like many plays of the 1590s, The Merchant of Venice uses language in highly self-conscious ways: this play does not just include effective language, it is about the effect of language. In both plot and subplot we are given concrete proof of the binding and releasing powers of words. Portia's suitors fail or succeed on the basis of their ability to interpret the inscriptions on the three caskets; Antonio's life is put in jeopardy, and later saved, by the precise words in the bond. Characters from every social group in this play use language self-consciously: they choose their words with care and explicitly evaluate the language of others. Their preoccupation with language often manifests itself in the use or misuse of rhetorical figures. Figures appear in every scene of Merchant, and although some may have been used unconsciously, a close examination of the distinctive patterns of speech used by Launcelot Gobbo, the courtiers, Shylock, and Portia reveals that, in many cases, Shakespeare's use of the figures is very conscious indeed. All of the characters use rhetorical figures, with varying degrees of subtlety, and even to the untrained ear, it is immediately apparent that Portia and Shylock possess a skill which the others lack. These two characters are masters of the art of rhetoric, and when they confront each other, it is in the ultimate arena for rhetorical jousting: the courtroom.

In watching or reading the courtroom scene, it is tempting to sit back and admire the rhetorical skill of two well-matched adversaries, but there is ample warning in the events, and in the language, of the play not to be lulled into complacency by superficial beauty. Language can be beautiful, but it can also be dangerous. Bassanio notes that "The world is still deceived with ornament" (3.2.74), and as we consider the use of rhetoric in this play, we begin to realize, as the rhetorically
trained Elizabethans must have done, that it is not only visual ornaments that can be misleading but also the ornaments of speech.

Many of the characters in the play simultaneously love and distrust rhetoric: they use rhetorical figures even while they explicitly express their beliefs that rhetorical skill can be abused. The potential abuses of rhetoric noted by the characters in Merchant are of two types. If a speaker separates rhetoric from reason (logos), then he may well be ridiculed for producing what Cicero calls “an empty and ridiculous swirl of verbiage” (De Oratore I.v.17). If a speaker separates rhetoric from good will for the listener (ethos), however, then he may be shunned as someone who is not to be trusted. Launcelot, Solanio, Salerio, and Graziano are accused of the first of these two types of rhetorical abuse, while Shylock and Bassanio accuse each other of the second. The characters in Merchant often explicitly express their opinions on each other’s rhetorical skills, and, as we shall see, the opinions expressed in the play are similar to those found in the rhetoric manuals of the 1590s.

The focus of this chapter gradually broadens. It begins with an examination of the characteristic rhetorical patterns of certain characters with particular attention to patterns in the figures used by Shylock and Portia. Specific rhetorical strategies give way to larger ones, as we consider the forensic strategy used by Portia to defeat Shylock in court. Once we have become familiar with some of the rhetorical patterns in Merchant, we shall go outside the play in order to consider the ways in which the rhetorical trends in Merchant reflect the changing rhetorical fashions in England at the end of the sixteenth century.

The first character whose language we shall examine is Launcelot Gobbo. Like several of Shakespeare’s other clowns, Launcelot uses words in both clever and foolish ways. He is rhetorically characterized by puns and vices of language. In his banter with Lorenzo in act 3 scene 5, he plays on the words Moor/more, and
Lorenzo, with the metarhetorical sensibility found in many of the characters in *Merchant*, draws attention to Launcelot's paronomasia, saying: "How every fool can play upon the word! I think the best grace of wit will shortly turn into silence, and discourse grow commendable in none only but parrots" (3.5. 40-42). In the lines that follow, Launcelot uses syllepsis. His puns on the words "prepare" and "cover" cause Lorenzo to make an explicit comment on the potentially dangerous tendency of would-be wits to attend to the ornaments of speech instead of to its substance:

> O dear discretion, how his words are suited!  
> The fool hath planted in his memory  
> An army of good words, and I do know  
> A many fools that stand in better place,  
> Garnished like him, that for a tricksy word  
> Defy the matter.  

(3.5.60-65)

Launcelot frequently attempts to sound wiser than he actually is, and, in doing so, he often goes beyond the limits of acceptable usage. The abundant examples of Launcelot's ignorance provide much of the humour of his scenes. More numerous than the figures in his speeches are the vices of language. He is often guilty of cacozelia as he uses the wrong word to express his meaning, such as when he confuses "defect" for "effect" (2.2.137), "exhibit" for "prohibit" (2.3.10), or "reproach" for "approach" (2.5.20). Similar to cacozelia is acyron: the vice of using a word opposite and utterly repugnant to the intended meaning. This vice is evident when Launcelot advises Jessica to "be o' good cheer, for truly I think you are damned" (3.5.5).

As mentioned in chapter 3, many of the vices of language involve the error of using too many words to say little with the result that things are repeated "inanely, dilutedly, tediously, or garrulously" (Joseph 68). Vices of this type appear in hilarious profusion when Launcelot and his father attempt to ask Bassanio for
employment. As the scene progresses, we are forced to pay attention to the style of
the language, for style threatens to overtake sense:

Bass: Gramercy. Wouldst thou aught with me?
Gob: Here’s my son sir, a poor boy--
Launc: Not a poor boy, sir, but the rich Jew’s man that would, sir, as my
father shall specify--
Gob: He hath a great infection sir, (as one would say) to serve--
Launc: Indeed, the short and the long is, I serve the Jew, and have a desire, as
my father shall specify--
Gob: His master and he, saving your worship’s reverence, are scarce cater-
cousins--
Launc: To be brief, the very truth is that the Jew, having done me wrong,
doth cause me, as my father—being, I hope, an old man—shall frutify unto
you--
Gob: I have here a dish of doves that I would bestow upon your worship,
and my suit is--
Launc: In very brief, the suit is impertinent to myself, as your worship shall
know by this honest old man; and though I say it, though old man, yet (poor
man) my father.
Bass: One speak for both. What would you?
Launc: Serve you, sir.
Gob: That is the very defect of the matter, sir.

(2.2.115-136)

The comic effects of this scene are apparent even to those who have no training in
rhetoric, but educated Elizabethans would have been aware that this exchange
includes several identifiable vices: homiologia (tedious and inane repetition),
perissologia (the addition of a superfluous clause which adds nothing to the
meaning), periergia (the overlabour to seem fine and eloquent, especially in a slight
matter), heterogenium (the vice of answering something utterly irrelevant to what is
asked), and pleonasmus (redundancy).

Launcelot is blatantly guilty of separating rhetoric and reason, but he is not the
only character in the play who errs in this way. In an exchange very similar to the
one quoted above, Solanio and Salerio become increasingly verbose. They very
nearly lose sight of the substance of their conversation behind what Brian Vickers
describes as “a balloon of affectation”?:
Sol: Now, what news on the Rialto?
Sal: Why, yet it lives there uncheck'd, that Antonio hath a ship of rich lading wrack'd on the narrow seas—the Goodwins I think they call the place—a very dangerous flat and fatal, where the carcasses of many a tall ship lie buried, as they say, if my gossip Report be an honest woman of her word.
Sol: I would she were as lying a gossip in that as ever knapp'd, anger or made her neighbours believe she wept for the death of a third husband. But it is true, without any slips of prolixity or crossing the plain highway of talk, that the good Antonio, the honest Antonio—O that I had a title good enough to keep his name company—
Sal: Come, the full stop.
Sol: Ha! what sayest thou? Why, the end is, he hath lost a ship.

(3.1.1-16)

A little rhetorical learning can be a tedious thing: Solanio and Salerio fancy themselves skilled in copia, but they lack the judgement necessary to speak well. They love the taste of rhetoric in their mouths, and thus they continue speaking even when they have nothing to say. Both of these characters are guilty of several of the vices of long-windedness, as are the Prince of Morocco and the Prince of Arragon. The two princes might also be accused of the vice bomphiologia. The character who most frequently indulges in the vices of language is Graziano. Bassanio describes Graziano's swirling verbiage when he says:

Graziano speaks an infinite deal of nothing, more than any man in all Venice. His reasons are as two grains of wheat hid in two bushels of chaff: you shall seek all day ere you find them, and when you have them, they are not worth the search.

(1.1.114-118)

The numerous vices add to the humour in Merchant, but they provide more than mere comic relief; they draw our attention to issues of central importance to the play. In scene after scene, Shakespeare presents characters who aspire to a degree of verbal dexterity they do not possess. Rhetorical skill is valued in the society of this play, just as it was valued in Elizabethan England. Characters from every social sphere attempt to decorate their speech with the ornaments of rhetoric, and this
decoration, when improperly applied, leads to a disjunction of style and substance. Such a disjunction can be very funny, but it can also be very dangerous. Like beautiful objects, beautiful language can be deceptive.

Bassanio acknowledges the similarity between the deceptive powers of visual and verbal ornaments as he attempts to solve the riddle of the three caskets. He lists examples of dangerous, superficial beauty, and the first examples to come to his mind involve verbal rather than visual ornamentation:

So may the outward shows be least themselves.
The world is still deceived with ornament.
In law, what plea so tainted and corrupt
But, being seasoned with a gracious voice,
Obscures the show of evil? In religion,
What damned error but some sober brow
Will bless it and approve it with a text,
Hiding the grossness with fair ornament?
. . . ornament is but the guiled shore
To a most dangerous sea, . . . in a word,
The seeming truth which cunning times put on
To entrap the wisest.

(3.2.73-101)

The wisest are not likely to be entrapped by clowns like Launcelot or would-be wits like Graziano. These characters’ attempts to use the tools of rhetoric effectively usually end in failure; they separate rhetoric from logos, and thus their language may be tedious or humorous, but it is not dangerous. A skilled rhetorician who lacks good will towards his listeners, however, can be very dangerous indeed, and no one in this play is more dangerous than Shylock.

Scholars and actors alike have commented on the unusual rhythms of Shylock’s language. Brian Vickers, who regards Shylock’s prose as “the great innovation of this play”, notes that the language of Shylock is characterized by repetition, parallelism, and the extreme brevity of each phrase, “a sort of Tacitean or Senecan brevity suggesting a miserliness with words, a sharp, cutting language of statement
which resents spending any more than it needs” (Artistry 82). Both David Suchet and Patrick Stewart note the strange rhythm of Shylock’s speech, but when playing the role of Shylock under the direction of John Barton, these two actors dealt with that rhythm in different ways. David Suchet gave Shylock a slight accent. He explains: “I didn’t place this accent in any particular area. I just wanted to make it foreign because his language was somehow foreign. I felt that was important”.3 Patrick Stewart chose to deal with Shylock’s foreignness differently. He explains:

Shylock is living in an alien culture. I think that for an outsider to survive there it’s necessary for him to assimilate himself into that culture. I therefore gave him an accent which was more cultured, more refined and more native than the natives. And much more so than the aristocrats in the play. You see, I think that what is truly strange and exotic in Shylock is his foreignness. And this lies in his language, not in how he appears. No one in The Merchant of Venice speaks like Shylock, not even his fellow Jew, Tubal. (Barton 178)

When examining the rhetorical figures in Shylock’s language, it becomes immediately apparent that the strange rhythms of his speech are the direct result of his heavy use of the figures of repetition. These figures, which provide a variety of methods for repeating words, phrases, or syntactical patterns, are easy to hear, for they assault the ear with their presence. Shylock uses these figures much more often than any other character in Shakespeare’s comic canon. They dominate his speech from the moment he appears on stage. An alert Elizabethan audience member would have heard no fewer than ten such figures in Shylock’s first scene alone.

We first meet Shylock in act 1 scene 3, and our initial impression is that he weighs his words as carefully as Marlowe’s Barabas weighs his gold. He responds to Bassanio’s statements by repeating them:

Shy: Three thousand ducats. Well.
Bass: Ay, sir, for three months.
Shy: For three months. Well.
Bass: For the which, as I told you, Antonio shall be bound.
Shy: Antonio shall become bound. Well. (1.3.1-5)

Shylock's use of epistrophe in these lines makes his thought process audible; we hear him considering Bassanio's proposal. Only a few lines later he uses epizeuxis followed by distinction (a figure whereby the ambiguity of words is taken away) when he says: "Ho, no, no, no, no. My meaning in saying he is a good man is to have you understand me that he is sufficient" (1.3.15-17). His observation that "ships are but boards, sailors but men. There be land rats and water rats, water thieves and land thieves—I mean pirates" (1.3.21-23) combines the use of isocolon with a variation of antimetabole in the inversion of the words "land" and "water". The pun on "rats" is an example of paronomasia. The forceful symmetry of the claim, "I will buy with you, sell with you, talk with you, walk with you... but I will not eat with you, drink with you, nor pray with you" (1.3.33-35) results from his combination of congeries, isocolon, and epistrophe.

It is not necessary to identify all the figures Shylock uses in order to demonstrate his considerable rhetorical skill. Antonio and Bassanio notice this skill immediately, and it makes them nervous. Eloquence is a powerful weapon, and, as detractors of rhetoric all the way back to Plato have frequently warned, such a weapon can be dangerous in the hands of someone untrustworthy (Vickers, Classical 19). Shylock is clearly a skilled rhetorician, but Antonio and Bassanio are not at all convinced of his virtue. Bassanio says, "I like not fair terms, and a villain's mind" (1.3.176), and the word "terms" here could apply to either the terms of the bond or to the fair language which Shylock wields. Antonio remarks on the difference between the appearance and the reality of virtuous speech when he says:

Mark you this, Bassanio,
The devil can cite Scripture for his purpose.
An evil soul producing holy witness
Is like a villain with a smiling cheek,
A goodly apple rotten at the heart.
O, what a goodly outside falsehood hath!
(1.3.94-99)

Shylock’s rhetorical style draws attention to itself. Throughout the play, he continues to make heavy use of the figures of repetition. These figures characterize his speech and mark his progression, and thus they warrant attention. He often uses epistrophe to give force to his statements, as when he says, “Who bids thee call? I do not bid thee call” (2.5.8), or “I’ll have my bond. Speak not against my bond” (3.3.4). As his desire for revenge increases, so does the frequency of his repetition. By the third act, he is regularly using the figure epanalepsis in lines such as, “Fourscore ducats at a sitting! Fourscore ducats!” (3.1.104), or “I am very glad of it. I’ll plague him, I’ll torture him. I am glad of it” (3.1.109-110). When epanalepsis is not forceful enough to convey his feelings, he resorts to an even more extreme pattern of repetition with the figure epizeuxis. This figure dominates his response to the news of Antonio’s bad fortune:

Tub: Yes, other men have ill luck too. Antonio, as I heard in Genoa—
Tub: Hath an argosy cast away, coming from Tripolis.
Shy: I thank God, I thank God. Is it true, is it true?
Tub: I spoke with some of the sailors that escaped the wreck.
Shy: I thank thee, good Tubal. Good news, good news! Ha, ha!
(3.1.92-100)

The increasing pace of Shylock’s repetition is seen at its most ominous in act 3 scene 3. The scene begins with the following exchange between Shylock and Antonio:

Shy: Gaoler, look to him. Tell not me of mercy.
This is the fool that lent out money gratis.
Gaoler, look to him.
Ant:            Hear me yet, good Shylock.
Shy: I’ll have my bond. Speak not against my bond.
I have sworn an oath that I will have my bond.
Thou called’st me dog before thou hadst a cause,
But since I am a dog, beware my fangs . . . .

Ant: I pray thee, hear me speak.
Shy: I'll have my bond; I will not hear thee speak.
I'll have my bond; and therefore speak no more . . .
I'll have no speaking; I will have my bond.

(3.3.1-17)

Shylock begins this scene by using epanalepsis as he starts and ends his instructions with the command, “Gaoler, look to him”. In his next line he moves to epistrophe as he finishes a series of clauses with the same word. As the dialogue heats up, he shifts to an even more extreme figure of repetition: epimone (the repetition of the same point in the same words, somewhat in the manner of a refrain). As he repeats the words “I’ll have my bond, . . . I’ll have my bond”, his speech takes on the rhythms of a savage tribal chant. He has become so intent on revenge that he no longer listens to those who try to change his mind. Solanio acknowledges Shylock’s wilful deafness, calling him “the most impenetrable cur/ That ever kept with men” (3.3.18-19).

Shylock is a figure of fear in the play, but he is also a figure of fun (Vickers, Prose 88). His frequent repetitions are threatening, for they emphasize the rigidity of his position, but in some situations they expose him to ridicule. His characteristic verbal patterns are easy to imitate; Solanio enjoys mocking him by imitating his frequent use of exclamation (Vickers, Defence 338):

... the dog Jew did utter in the streets:
“My daughter! O my ducats! O my daughter!
Fled with a Christian! O my Christian ducats!
Justice! The law! My ducats and my daughter!”
(2.8.15-18)

It is not only Solanio and Salerio who mock Shylock. We are told that “all the boys in Venice follow him,/ Crying, ‘His stones, his daughter, and his ducats!’” (2.8.23-24). In the courtroom, Graziano has great fun at Shylock’s expense as he repeatedly imitates Shylock’s “O learned judge! O upright judge!”.
The use of the figures of repetition is the most immediately apparent, though not the most impressive, of Shylock’s rhetorical skills. On several occasions he demonstrates considerable ability in what might be called rhetorical improvisation. Characters make a point, and he rearranges the point to serve his own purpose, as he does in his first scene with Bassanio:

Shy: . . . I think I may take his bond.
Bass: Be assured you may.
Shy: I will be assured I may, and that I may be assured, I will bethink me.

(1.3.26-29)

Shylock turns this exchange into an extended form of the figure antimetabole. By repeating the words “think” and “assured” in converse order, he effectively ignores Bassanio’s assurance and takes the conversation back to its starting-point, which is his acknowledgement that he will think about Antonio’s offer. His skill at rhetorical improvisation is also evident in his heated exchange with Solanio and Salerio regarding Jessica’s flight. In this scene he uses astutismus:

Sol: And Shylock for his own part knew the bird was fledge; and then it is the complexion of them all to leave the dam.
Shy: She is damned for it.

(3.1.27-30)

Shylock is not only a good speaker; he is a good listener. He can turn the comments of others to his own advantage, and this skill, which is frequently demonstrated in the courtroom scene, makes him a forceful adversary. Before examining the rhetorical pyrotechnics of the courtroom scene, there is one more speech of Shylock’s which must be considered: his famous defence of the Jews (3.1.50-69).

This speech is among the most tightly structured in the play, and its structure comes largely from the heavy use of rhetorical figures. Early in the speech he combines isocolon, antithesis, asyndeton, and congeries when he states that Antonio has “laughed at my losses, mocked at my gains, scorned my nation, thwarted my
bargains, cooled my friends, heated mine enemies”. He concludes this driving list using the figure hypophora, as he asks a question and answers it himself: “And what’s his reason? I am a Jew”. This unadorned statement stands out because it does not fit into the surrounding symmetries (Vickers, Prose 84). As he begins his list of rhetorical questions, he increases his pace by dropping asyndeton in favour of brachylogia (the omission of conjunctions between words). He asks: “Hath not a Jew eyes? Hath not a Jew hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions?” To maintain this hectic pace would be to risk seeming pathetic or even comic, but Shylock takes no such risk. With a masterful stroke of control, he begins to lengthen his phrases. He continues to use isocolon and anaphora, but his phrases get threateningly longer, and he adds the double-barrelled repetition of symploce. He shifts from “fed with the same food, hurt with the same weapons….” to “If you prick us, do we not bleed? If you tickle us, do we not laugh?” to “If a Jew wrong a Christian, what is his humility? Revenge! If a Christian wrong a Jew, what should his sufferance be by Christian example? Why, revenge!” Each phrase gets slightly longer as he moves towards his target in an almost predatory way. The heavy symmetries in this speech are not just rhetorical ornaments: they capture the essence of Shylock’s point of view. If Christians wrong Jews, then Jews will wrong Christians; the laws of symmetry require it. An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, these are the symmetries associated with Old Testament justice.

Clearly Shylock follows the law of Moses rather than Old Testament law, but both of these teachings are frequently, and narrowly, associated with rigid legalism. Here we run into some dangerous stereotypes. Jews were not allowed to practise their faith openly in Elizabethan England, and thus although there may have been some Jews living in London in the 1590s, Elizabethan playgoers’ knowledge of them was based on what they had heard and not on what they had seen. One of the things they would have heard was that Jews were “the people of the law”.
Elizabethan preachers used the absentee Jews as examples of legalism and rigidity in an effort to impress upon Christians the importance of "Christian virtues" such as mercy and forgiveness. Shakespeare was clearly aware of the stereotype of the rigid Jew, for he made use of it in Merchant. Shylock is a Jewish usurer who, when pressured, stiffens with legalism. He has some of the characteristics of the stereotypical Jew, but we must never forget that Shakespeare presents this stereotype in the context of a play that constantly reminds us of the danger of mistaking appearance for reality. There is more to Shylock than meets the eye, and to this point we shall return.

If Shylock speaks for law in the play, then Portia speaks for mercy. Shylock’s actions and use of rhetoric are characterized by rigidity, whereas Portia’s are characterized by flexibility. Her skill with the figures of rhetoric is not as showy as Shylock’s skill, and in the minds of the Elizabethans, who were beginning to favour a less stiff use of rhetoric, Portia’s unobtrusive use of figures must have been one of her rhetorical strengths. Shylock often uses figures of repetition, whereas Portia seems to favour the figures of thought.

As mentioned earlier, the classification of rhetorical devices is complex, but the four most common categories—tropes, figures of words, figures of thought, and the vices of language—appear in most ancient and Renaissance style manuals. Many manuals contain value judgements about the relative merits of these different sorts of devices. Such judgements change at the speed of fashion, but the pedagogical practice of dividing rhetorical devices into groups, and assigning certain strengths to each group, encourages readers to categorize the devices they read and hear. Abraham Fraunce is only one of the Renaissance rhetoricians who encourages such categorization. In The Arcadian Rhetorike (1588), Fraunce devotes separate sections to tropes, figures of words, and figures of thought, and he introduces the last of
these sections by stating his opinion that the figures of thought (which he calls "figures of sentences") are the most persuasive of all rhetorical devices:

.... now follow the figures in Sentences, which in the whole sentence expres some motion of the minde. These are more forcible & apt to perswade, than those of words, which be rather pleasant and fit to delight. Generallie, as in tropes there is a certaine grace, in figures of words a kinde of delicacie, so in these of sentences, appeareth force and majestie.5

Rhetorically trained Elizabethan audience members, who had spent countless hours in school learning to identify and evaluate rhetorical devices, may well have noticed that the talkative courtiers are often guilty of the vices of language, rigid Shylock expresses himself through the figures of repetition, and persuasive Portia has a facility for the figures of thought.

Before examining some of the numerous figures of thought in Portia's language, it is worth noting that when she uses the figures of repetition, which she does only rarely, she employs them for the very same reason that Shylock does: to impress upon her listeners the rigidity of certain rules that she regards as inflexible. She uses isocolon and antithesis as she reveals her intention to obey her father's wishes: "If I live to be as old as Sibylla, I will die as chaste as Diana unless I be obtained by the manner of my father's will" (1.2.103-105). She also combines these figures earlier when she says: "I may neither choose who I would, nor refuse who I dislike, so is the will of a living daughter curbed by the will of a dead father" (1.2.22-24). In this statement she also uses a figure of thought known as metalepsis (a figure which attributes a present effect to a remote cause). She uses figures of repetition again in act 5 as she chides Bassanio for taking their marriage vows too lightly. She combines antanaclasis, epistrophe, and distinction when she says: "Let me give light, but let me not be light;/ For a light wife doth make a heavy husband" (5.1.129-130). Her
most memorable use of epistrophe is employed in response to Bassanio’s use of the same figure:

Bass: Sweet Portia,  
If you did know to whom I gave the ring,  
If you did know for whom I gave the ring,  
And would conceive for what I gave the ring,  
And how unwillingly I left the ring  
When naught would be accepted but the ring,  
You would abate the strength of your displeasure. 
Port: If you had known the virtue of the ring,  
Or half her worthiness that gave the ring,  
Or your own honour to contain the ring,  
You would not then have parted with the ring.  
(5.1.192-202) 

By stretching this figure to such a ridiculous length, Portia ensures that Bassanio will never forget the rigidity of her position on this issue. She is serious here, for she means what she says, but she is also playful, for she knows that no real harm has been done.

She also uses figures in a playful way when she describes her suitors. Her comic use of figures simultaneously reveals her playful character and demonstrates her rhetorical flexibility. In her description of the Duke of Saxony’s nephew, for example, she plays on the audience’s expectation of antithesis. Instead of balancing a good characteristic with a bad, she lists two of the nephew’s negative traits (Vickers, Prose 80). She claims she likes him “Very vilely in the morning when he is sober, and most vilely in the afternoon when he is drunk” (1.2.83-84). She continues this description by using a variation of antimetabole as she states: “When he is best, he is little worse than a man, and when he is worst, he is little better than a beast” (1.2.85-86). Portia is under no pressure to perform in this scene. Even in repose, however, she uses figures with dexterity. Long before she enters the courtroom, it is obvious that this woman has considerable rhetorical skill.
As mentioned earlier, the figures Portia uses most often are figures of thought, otherwise known as figures of sentences. Whatever name they are given, it is easy to see that they are different in type from the figures of repetition so often used by Shylock. Although her figures are more subtle than Shylock’s, Portia enjoys metarhetorical activity, and thus she often draws attention to the rhetorical choices made by herself or others. Her attention to rhetorical skill is immediately noticeable. As early as her second line, she praises the sententia and delivery of Nerissa, saying: “Good sentences and well pronounced” (1.2.10). Only a few lines later she repeatedly employs characterismus (the description of the body or mind) as she describes her numerous suitors (Joseph 127). Here again we see her enjoyment of metarhetorical activity as she begins her list of descriptions by explicitly preparing Nerissa for the repeated use of characterismus to follow: “I pray thee overname them; and as thou namest them, I will describe them and, according to my description, level at my affection” (1.2.35-37).

One of the first figures used by Portia is inter se pugnatia (which points out discrepancy between theory and practice): “If to do were as easy as to know what were good to do, chapels had been churches and poor men’s cottages princes’ places.” (1.2.12-14). In later scenes she uses numerous other figures of thought, including antisagoge (which joins to a precept a promise of reward and to its violation, punishment) when she explains to the Prince of Arragon the consequences of his choice (2.9.4-8); enumeratio (which divides a subject into its adjuncts, a cause into its effects, an antecedent into its consequences) when she says to Bassanio, “Beshrew your eyes,/ They have o’erlook’d me and divided me./ One half of me is yours, the other half yours” (3.2.14-16); and paeanismus when expressing her exuberance of joy at Bassanio’s choice of the leaden casket (Joseph 114):

O love, be moderate! Allay thy ecstasy,
In measure rain thy joy, scant this excess!
I feel too much thy blessing. Make it less,
For fear I surfeit.

(3.2.111-114)

She expresses the degrees of her happiness by using auxesis when she describes herself as an unschooled girl who is:

Happy in this, she is not yet so old
But she may learn; happier than this,
She is not bred so dull but she can learn;
Happiest of all is that her gentle spirit
Commits itself to yours to be directed,
As from her lord, her governor, her king.

(3.2.160-165)

Elizabethan rhetoricians encouraged the use of rhetorical figures in the belief that “by using them writers could best express feeling, could express it most naturally”. While some figures were valued as ornaments, others were regarded as formulae designed to reproduce the characteristics of human utterance in a variety of emotional states. Portia’s speech may sound less formal than Shylock’s, but it abounds with the formal figures of rhetoric. Since the skilful use of figures reproduces the characteristics of natural speech, it is not always possible to distinguish between the conscious and unconscious use of these devices. The degree to which Portia and Shylock are conscious of the figures they employ varies with each performer who plays the roles. Whether or not the figures are used consciously, however, the fact remains that there are distinctive rhetorical patterns in the speech of these two characters. These rhetorical patterns are seen at their most extreme in the courtroom scene.

During the courtroom scene, we see several of the rhetorical devices that Portia and Shylock have used before. Shylock’s skill at rhetorical improvisation is evident when he uses a variation of antithmetabole in order to twist the meaning of Bassanio’s words:
Bass: Do all men kill the things they do not love?
Shy: Hates any man the thing he would not kill?

(4.1.65-66)

A few lines later, he picks up both the rhythm and the figure in the Duke’s words, and by using isocolon and erotema, Shylock throws a question back at the Duke, thereby diminishing the power of the Duke’s intended point:

Duke: How shalt thou hope for mercy, rend’ring none?
Shy: What judgement shall I dread, doing no wrong?

(4.1.87-88)

In his repeated demands for justice, Shylock uses commoratio (a figure whereby one seeks to win an argument by continually coming back to one’s strongest point) (Joseph 220) supported by figures of repetition including anaphora, epistrophe, epanalepsis, symplece, and diacope. His repetition is seen at its most extreme in his use of epimone: a figure which aptly expresses his greedy approval of Portia’s willingness to award a pound of Antonio’s flesh. It is this figure, in combination with symplece, that Graziano imitates when he mocks Shylock with the repeated refrain: “O upright judge!/ Mark, Jew. O learned judge!” (4.1.310).

Shylock continues to use figures of repetition in the courtroom scene, and Portia continues to use figures of thought. She frequently urges Shylock to consider the merits of mercy, and in doing so she, like Shylock, uses commoratio. When it becomes apparent that he will not be swayed, she beats him at his own game by using concessio (a figure whereby the speaker grants a point which hurts the adversary to whom it is granted) (Joseph 216). One can hardly imagine a more potent example of concessio than Portia’s granting of Shylock’s bond. He rigidly insists on having his bond, and she more rigidly insists on giving it to him. She alludes to her coming use of concessio when she states: “... as thou urgest justice, be
assured,/ Thou shalt have justice, more than thou desir'st" (4.1.312-313). She later
mirrors Shylock’s complete inflexibility when she warns:

Shed thou no blood, nor cut thou less nor more
But just a pound of flesh. If thou tak'st more
Or less than a just pound, be it but so much
As makes it light or heavy in the substance
Or the division of the twentieth part
Of one poor scruple—nay, if the scale do turn
But in the estimation of a hair,
Thou diest, and all thy goods are confiscate.
(4.1.321-328)

Rhetoric is an instrument of persuasion, and as such, it has always been
regarded as an essential tool for an advocate.8 In the courtroom, Shylock and Portia
are given the opportunity to put their rhetorical skills to specific use, and these skills
go far beyond their facility with the figures. Fairly early in the scene, both characters
deliver formal speeches. As Milton Boone Kennedy demonstrates, Shylock’s
opening speech to the court (4.1.34-61) follows the exact structure of a forensic, or
judicial, oration.9 Although Portia’s speech on the quality of mercy does not follow
this pattern, it leaves little doubt in the minds of the audience as to Portia’s oratorical
skill. Indeed, the Elizabethan audience members who had attended grammar school
may well have recognized in Portia’s forensic strategy the exact structure
recommended by Cicero for the assumptive branch of a qualitative case.10

In De Inventione, a book familiar to Elizabethan schoolchildren, Cicero offers
specific instructions as to how to prepare various sorts of deliberative,
demonstrative, and forensic orations. He begins his section on forensic rhetoric by
explaining that all legal controversies involve one of four types of issues: a question
about a fact (a conjectural issue), about a definition (a definitional issue), about the
nature of an act (a qualitative issue), or about legal processes (a translatative issue).11
These unfamiliar, but extremely important, terms are relevant to Portia’s opening
lines in the courtroom scene, and thus they warrant some explanation.
When dealing with a case based on a conjectural issue, advocates focus on evidence. The case is resolved when the following questions are answered: Did the defendant commit the crime of which s/he is accused? When? How? Why? A case based on a definitional issue begins with the answers to these questions already known. If prosecution and defence agree on the facts of a murder case, for example, then the advocates’ job may be to define the crime, and the case will be resolved when it is determined whether the defendant has committed an act of premeditated murder, of manslaughter, or of self-defence. When there is “both agreement as to what has been done and certainty as to how the act should be defined, but there is a question nevertheless about how important [an act] is or of what kind, or in general about its quality” (De Inventione 25), then the issue at hand is a qualitative one. In such a case, advocates address themselves not to facts or definitions, but to questions about “the import, the nature and the essence of the occurrence” (De Inventione 225) as they persuade the jury to consider the appropriate roles of mercy and justice in the qualitative case under investigation. The fourth kind of issue listed above, a translatative issue, involves questions of legal procedure.

These four issues form the starting-point of most forensic strategies taught in ancient and Renaissance rhetoric manuals. An advocate must always begin a case by determining the type of issue at hand, and Portia does just that. Through a series of direct questions, she confirms the details she has already been given about Antonio’s case. Through questions such as “Which is the merchant here, and which the Jew? . . . (To Antonio) You stand within his danger, do you not?” and “Do you confess the bond?” (4.1.170-178), she quickly ascertains that, in this case, neither facts nor definitions are under dispute, and thus she concludes: “Then must the Jew be merciful” (4.1.179). When she explains to Shylock that “The quality of mercy is not strained,” she is not picking her key terms out of thin air; she is explaining that questions of mercy and justice must be addressed in this qualitative case. Cicero
provides a series of complicated subdivisions for qualitative cases, and these subdivisions have a direct bearing on Portia’s forensic strategy:

... this issue, which we call the qualitative issue, seems to us to have two subdivisions; equitable and legal. The equitable is that in which there is a question about the nature of justice and right or the reasonableness of reward and punishment. The legal is that in which we examine what the law is according to the custom of the community and according to justice. The equitable is itself divided in two parts, the absolute and the assumptive. The absolute is that which contains in itself the question of right and wrong done. The assumptive is that which of itself provides no basis for a counterplea, but seeks some defence from extraneous circumstances. It has four divisions, concessio (confession and avoidance), remotio criminis (shifting the charge), relatio criminis (retort of the accusation), and comparatio (comparison). Confession and avoidance is used when the accused does not defend the deed but asks for pardon. This is divided into two parts: purgatio and deprecatio. It is purgatio when the deed is acknowledged but intent is denied; it has three parts, ignorance, accident, necessity. Deprecatio is used when the defendant acknowledges that he has given offence and has done so intentionally, and still asks to be forgiven; this can very rarely occur.

(De Inventione 31)

In exact accordance with Cicero’s series of complicated subdivisions, Portia determines that she is dealing with the assumptive branch of an equitable issue, which means she will need to seek “some defence from extraneous circumstances”. To work backwards through this labyrinth of subdivisions, Portia’s strategy is as follows. She argues that Antonio did not intend to forfeit his bond but did so because of his ship’s accident at sea (purgatio). In this way, she attempts both to confess and to avoid Antonio’s fault (concessio) through a defence from extraneous circumstances (assumptive branch). Since Antonio should not be blamed for something beyond his control, she urges Shylock to consider the nature of justice and of mercy in this qualitative case.12

With a more merciful opponent, such a strategy might have worked. When it fails, Portia turns to advice Cicero provides for just such an occasion. When dealing with a written document, and with an opponent “who is upholding the letter of the
law," Cicero writes: "the speaker who opposes the letter will profit greatly by converting something in the written document to his own case or by showing that it contains some ambiguity. . . . this is the method of reasoning from analogy" (De Inventione 311). As mentioned above, in stating that Shylock can take flesh but no blood, Portia confesses and avoids the power of the bond through the figure concessio: a figure that shares its name with the first subdivision of the assumptive branch. Once Portia has defeated Shylock on the question of the "nature of justice and right" by indicating that he has no right to shed Antonio's blood, she shifts from the equitable to the legal division of this qualitative case in order to "examine what the law is according to the custom of the community and according to justice": she states that the legal custom in Venice is to confiscate the goods of foreigners who attempt to murder Venetian citizens.

It may seem far-fetched to suggest that an Elizabethan audience member would draw a connection between Portia's strategy and Cicero's teaching, but the rhetorical resonances in the theatre must have been strong. Elizabethan schoolboys were taught to be alert to the use of figures, and they practised their rhetoric through declamatory exercises in the forms of various sorts of progymnasmata including judicial cases (causae, controversiae). The story of a Jew seeking a pound of flesh as payment provides exactly the sort of material suitable for such a rhetorical exercise, as indicated by its inclusion as Declamation 95 in Silvayn's collection of declamations entitled The Orator (1596). While watching Portia's courtroom strategy, an Elizabethan audience member would have seen on stage a boy actor, of approximately the same age as a schoolboy, playing the part of a woman who is pretending to be an advocate. Portia's forensic rhetoric, like her gown, is part of her courtroom costume. As the boy actor playing Portia flaunted his/her rhetorical skill in a fictional court, Elizabethan audience members who had attended grammar
school may well have been reminded of their own victories and defeats in the rhetorical escapades of their youth.

The arts of language, when properly used, are designed “to sway the mind to truth and stir the will to right action”. The truth, in this case, is that Shylock is a villain. He is a villain not because he is rigid, or because he is a Jew, but because he wants to kill Antonio. There is no doubt that he is treated abysmally by the Christians, but, as John Russell Brown notes, “whether his suffering forces him to be a villain, or whether his villainy causes him to suffer, Shakespeare is not concerned to say”. The fact remains that Shylock tries to use the binding powers of the law to put Antonio to death. This attempt, and his consequent defeat, may well have brought to the minds of Bible-reading Elizabethans the words of 2 Corinthians 4: 5-6, where it is written: “our sufficiency is from God, who has qualified us to be ministers of a new covenant, not in a written code but in the Spirit; for the written code kills, but the Spirit gives life”.

Shylock attempts to use the written code of the law to kill Antonio, but within that same code, Portia is able to find the means to save Antonio’s life. In employing his considerable rhetorical skill in the service of revenge, Shylock makes only two of the three requisite appeals to his audience. He appeals to their reason (logos) and to their feelings (pathos), but he does not appeal to their confidence in his character as a man of good will (ethos). Portia makes all three of these appeals, and thus, though she uses “clever legalism to bring about the triumph of love and mercy”, it seems we are to accept that the end justifies the means. Portia’s victory over Shylock is complete. She takes away his lands, his goods, his home, and on pain of death, even his faith. By the end of the scene, she has deprived him even of language. As John Barton explains, when Shylock makes his final exit, this “man of teeming words [has] virtually nothing to say” (179).
On first view, it might seem that Shylock is pure villain and Portia pure heroine, but some of the most potent speeches in the play occur when the characters break out of these narrow categories. Shylock's defence of the Jews is a justification for revenge, but one can hardly imagine a more eloquent plea for compassion than is delivered in the earlier parts of that speech. This monologue makes it clear both that Shylock knows the value of compassion and that the Christians have not treated him compassionately. In an earlier scene, Shylock extends an offer of friendship. We cannot know if it is a heartfelt offer, for it is immediately rejected by the smugly self-righteous Christians. Portia seems above reproach, but she deceives the court when she goes there in disguise. In doing so, she reminds us, just as the caskets' inscriptions have done, that "All that glisters is not gold," and all that is eloquent is not truth. Shakespeare constantly reminds us that we should not be too quick to believe the things we see and hear. As Bassanio's success with the caskets and Portia's success in the courtroom clearly demonstrate, "it is in the triumph of the second interpretation over the first that the meaning of love becomes known".17

The rigidity of Shylock's cry for justice and the flexibility of Portia's quest for mercy are evident not only in the disparate ends they wish to achieve but also in the rhetorical means they use to achieve those ends. Their distinct rhetorical styles, and the metarhetorical sensibilities of the courtiers in the play, reflect certain changes that were occurring in attitudes towards rhetoric at the time the play was written. In the late sixteenth century, there was a movement away from "stiff formalism" in favour of a more flexible use of rhetoric. In the words of F. P. Wilson, a new style appeared in the 1590s which was characterized by "a loosening of rhythm, a closer approximation to the diction of common life that is not incompatible with magnificence, a rejection of copiousness and elaborate word-schemes".18

I do not completely agree with Wilson's description of the new style. Certainly the vogue for copia has diminished by the 1590s, but Wilson's words mislead us if
they cause us to believe that figures of rhetoric cease to be fashionable as the sixteenth century draws to a close. The new style of the 1590s does not reject elaborate word-schemes as much as it favours different kinds of elaborate word-schemes. Portia is very much a woman of the 1590s, and although the rhythms of her speech may seem closer to "the diction of common life" than the repetitive rhythms of Shylock’s speech, her speech is, in fact, more rhetorically sophisticated than his is. The figures of thought take longer to learn than the figures of words, not only because there are more of them but because they are, by nature, more subtle. As Shakespeare matures as a dramatist, he tends to use fewer figures of words and more figures of thought, and this trend reflects the shifting attitudes towards rhetoric evident not only in other literature of the period, but also in the publishing history of specific rhetoric manuals, and in the explicit comments of certain rhetoricians. While this is not the place for a broad survey of the rhetorical trends of the 1590s, even a few specific examples of shifts in rhetorical fashions help us to be aware of attitudes towards rhetoric held by some of Shakespeare’s audience members.

The dated “copiousness and elaborate word-schemes” of which Wilson writes are typified by the style of Lyly’s Euphues: a work rhetorically characterized by abundant copia and countless figures of repetition. Lyly’s work clearly enjoyed great popularity when it was first published in 1578, but by the 1590s its style already seemed dated. In Directions for Speech and Style (1599), John Hoskins comments on specific features of Lyly’s rhetoric, and he goes on to describe the short life-span of rhetorical fashions. Writing of Lyly’s love of paronomasia, Hoskins states:

In those days Lyly, the author of Euphues, seeing the dotage of the time upon this small ornament, invented varieties of it; for he disposed the agnominations in as many fashions as repetitions are distinguished. By the author’s rhetoric, sometimes the first word and the middle harped one upon
another, sometimes the first and last, sometimes in several sentences, sometimes in one; and this with a measure, compar, a change of contention, or contraries, and a device of a similitude, in those days made a gallant show. But Lyly himself hath outlived this style and breaks well from it.20

Although Hoskins’s work was not published during his lifetime, his numerous, explicit comments on the state of rhetorical fashions in 1599 provide valuable information not only about the speed at which rhetorical fashions were changing but also about the metarhetorical sensibilities of the age in which he wrote. He states that once a figure is adopted by the general public, it loses currency among learned speakers and is quickly replaced by a fashion for another device. While still writing of paronomasia, he notes:

> See to what preferment a figure may aspire if it once get in credit in a world that hath not much true rhetoric! That was the cause that Sir Philip Sidney would not have his style be much beholding to this kind of garnish. And of a truth, if the time gives itself too much to any one flourish, it makes it a toy and bars a learned man’s writings from it, lest it seem to come more of the general humor than the private judgment.

(16)

According to Hoskins, while paronomasia (a figure of words) was considered dated by 1599, sententia (a figure of thought) was very much in vogue. His comments on sententia describe a connection between rhetorical fashions and courtly inclinations:

> Sententia, if it be well used, is a figure—if ill and too much, it is a style; whereof none that writes humorously or factiously nowadays can be clear. For now there are such schisms of eloquence that it is enough for any ten years that all the bravest wits do imitate some one figure which a critic hath taught some great personage. So it may be within this 200 years we shall go through the whole body of rhetoric. It is true that we study according to the predominancy of courtly inclinations: whilst mathematics were in requests, all our similitudes came from lines, circles, and angles; whilst moral philosophy is now a while spoken of, it is rudeness not to be sententious. And for my part, I’ll make one. I have used and outworn six several styles since I was first Fellow of New College, and am yet able to bear the fashion of [the] writing company. Let our age, therefore, only speak morally, and let the next age live morally. (38-39)
Hoskins’s work was written only a few years after Merchant, and the specific fashions described by Hoskins are evident in Shakespeare’s play. Nerissa earns a compliment for her skilful, and fashionable, use of sententia (1.2.10). The upwardly-mobile courtiers, Solanio, Salerio, and Graziano, aim to be rhetorically fashionable, but miss the mark, by indulging in copia of the sort that went out of fashion with Euphues.

As previously mentioned, characters in Merchant frequently comment on two types of rhetorical abuse: Graziano is famous for speech that lacks substance, while Shylock is infamous for speech that lacks good will. These two types of abuse are repeatedly warned against in Peacham’s revised version of The Garden of Eloquence (1593). The first edition of Peacham’s book was published in 1577, and one of the most significant differences between the first and second edition is that in the 1593 edition he adds a section on “the use” and “the caution” to his explanation of each figure. These additions provide very specific information about the ways in which specific rhetorical figures were being used and abused at the time the book was written. Peacham’s “cautions” repeatedly warn against certain types of errors, and the two errors he mentions most often are those which cast doubt upon the intelligence or the virtue of the speaker. He often notes the faults that “betoken an ignorance in the speaker” (72) or diminish the credit of “the virtuous Orator” (176), and the Elizabethans who read his book may well have noted some of these faults in the characters in Merchant, just as the characters themselves note these faults in each other.

Shifts in rhetorical fashions are evident in changing attitudes both towards specific figures and towards general rhetorical styles. Showy rhetoric characterized by copia and demonstrating a speaker’s dexterity with the figures of words seems to lose popularity towards the end of the sixteenth century in favour of a plainer style that finds its power in the intelligence and virtue of the speaker. This shift of style is
evident in plays other than Merchant. We have already seen plain-speaking PetruChio leave his copious comrades in the rhetorical dust, as it were. In a similar way, the women in LLL urge the men to renounce their elaborate, but empty, copia in favour of a plainer form of utterance that seeks not to impress but to communicate. In several of Shakespeare’s comedies we see different styles of rhetoric come into conflict, and this conflict is clearly evident in Merchant. Written in the mid-1590s, the play includes aspects of both an old and a new style: Shylock speaks with the stiffness and rhetorical showmanship often found in Shakespeare’s earlier plays, while Portia employs rhetorical figures in the more subtle and “natural” ways which characterize the language of the mature plays. In the courtroom scene of Merchant we see not only the victory of Portia over Shylock, but also the victory of rhetorical versatility over stiff formalism.

Notes

1 Aristotle recognized intelligence, virtue, and good will towards the audience as the three components that influence an audience’s perception of a speaker’s ethos (Aristotle, Rhetoric 29).


4 It should be noted that epimone, like all the other figures, is extremely versatile. In this scene it emphasizes Shylock’s inflexibility, but Lorenzo and Jessica use epimone with a totally different result. As they talk of music, the refrain “In such a night . . . in such a night . . .” adds to the musicality of their language (5.1.1-20).


9 For an outline of Shylock's speech as it relates to a forensic oration, see Milton Boone Kennedy, *The Oration in Shakespeare* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1942) 113.


11 Cicero, *De Inventione*, trans. H.M. Hubbell (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1949) 31. Cicero did not invent these categories: the four issues are described, in varying degrees of detail, in virtually every rhetoric manual that contains a section on forensic rhetoric. For representative examples of descriptions of these four types of issues, see: *Ad Herennium* I.x.18-27; Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria*, III.vi.1-104; and Thomas Wilson *The Art of Rhetoric*,120-32. T. W. Baldwin notes similarities between Shylock's case and "the principles of the second type of legal causes as outlined in *Ad Herennium*," but the similarities are not nearly so specific as those between Shylock's case and the aspects of a qualitative case given in *De Inventione*. T.W. Baldwin, *William Shakespeare's Small Latine & Lesse Greece* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1944) II: 81.

12 Cicero demonstrates the use of a plea of accident as part of an argument based on concessio with a case very similar to Antonio's. He explains that "chance will be brought into the plea of avoidance when it is shown that the defendant's intention was thwarted by some act of Fortune" (263), and as an example he tells of a man who broke a contract to deliver animals because of a sudden storm which prevented him from taking the animals to their intended destination. Of this case, Cicero writes:

Although every one knew that [the contractor's] efforts had been thwarted by the sudden rise of the river, nevertheless some citizens put him on trial for his life... The point for the judge's decision is: "Granted that the contractor acted contrary to law in this case in which his efforts were thwarted by the sudden rise of the river, does he deserve punishment?" (263-65)


17 Coolidge 254.
18 Wilson 25, 28.

19 The "dotage of [Lyly's] time" (Hoskins 16) upon skill in copia was based, in part, on the huge popularity of Erasmus's *De duplici copia verborum ac rerum commentariorum duo*. Published for the first time in 1512, Erasmus's book went through more than 150 editions in the sixteenth century. It was adopted as a textbook in grammar schools and universities in the early part of the century, and, in an abridged version, it was published with Mosellanus's popular textbook on rhetoric. In the introduction to her translation of Erasmus's work, Betty Knott describes the heavy influence of Erasmus's *De copia* in the first three-quarters of the sixteenth century,

... in both arousing and ministering to a particular stylistic ideal, which was manifested not only in Latin but in the vernacular literature of the time. Towards the end of that century there was a change of taste. In England at any rate men began to suspect the grand style as meretricious and deceptive, and looked about for a plainer Latin model. Rather surprisingly some chose Tacitus, though this choice was in part a deliberate challenge to the prevailing cult of Ciceronianism and the rich or abundant style. (283)


21 In the introduction to his edition of the 1593 edition of Peacham's book, William G. Crane comments on the rhetorical trends reflected by Peacham's editorial choices:

Peacham's omission in 1593 of the grammatical schemes he included in 1577 ... and his addition of many figures based on appeal to the emotions may be taken as indications of a shift which had taken place in rhetoric in England between 1577 and 1593. Within these years the style of Lyly's *Euphues* had risen to immense popularity and had then begun to suffer a reaction ... At the same time that the second edition of *The Garden of Eloquence* is evidence of the sustained interest of the Elizabethans in figures, it is also an indication of the protest that had arisen over the abuse of some of these stylistic devices. Henry Peacham, *The Garden of Eloquence* (Gainesville: Scholars' Facsimiles & Reprints, 1954) 23.

In examining Peacham's cautions, I have come to the conclusion that they might be loosely categorized into four groups. He sometimes warns against aesthetic infringements, such as the use of too many repetitions or of unpleasant sounds, which can be a fault of figures such as anaphora (41), symbole (43), or epizeuxis (47). A second group of warnings emphasizes the importance of avoiding obscurity. Obscurity may be the result, warns Peacham, of the faulty use of figures such as periphrasis (148), digressio (154), similitude (158), and emphasis (178). While aesthetic infringements and obscurity should be avoided, most of Peacham's cautions emphasize the importance of avoiding any ignorant or unethical use of figures. An ignorant speaker might reveal his stupidity, according to Peacham, through the faulty use of many specific figures including thomasmus (72), aporia (109), partitio (124), eutrepismus (129) epitheton (146), dirimens copulatio (171), and correctio (172). The numerous figures noted by Peacham to be particularly vulnerable to unethical use include martyria (85), apomnemonesis (87), antirrhesis (88), diatyposis (92), antisagoge (93), philophonesis (98), and apoplanesis (117).
Chapter 6: "Splendid and Necessary Rhetoric": Rhetorical Training for Actors

Introduction

Elizabethan schoolchildren learned rhetorical figures in three stages: "the order was first to learn precepts, then to employ them as a tool of analysis in reading, and finally to use them as a guide in composition" (Joseph 8). As mentioned in the introduction, my study of Shakespeare's use of rhetorical figures roughly follows the tripartite structure of Elizabethan rhetoric lessons. The early chapters introduced a range of rhetorical precepts through an examination of the names, classifications, and functions of various figures. In the middle chapters, rhetorical figures were used as tools of analysis to enrich our understanding both of the figures themselves, and of specific Shakespearean characters or plays. I would like to conclude this study of Shakespeare's figures by considering how we, in the twentieth century, can benefit from using rhetorical training in our own utterances.

Clearly writers and speakers of all kinds employ rhetorical figures whether or not they are aware they are doing so. Cicely Berry remarks on the metarhetorical sensibilities of politicians when she writes:

It is interesting to note that a good political speaker has a skill with the same structures of speech that we find in dramatic verse, only he happens to use prose. He is aware of the emotive power of rhythm, of the patterns of sound and their repetition, and of the building up of the form of a speech—all based on the old figures in rhetoric. All this he uses to reinforce his argument for his own purposes of manipulation and persuasion. (49)

Like politicians, advertisers seek to catch our ears and hold our minds through a range of clever trope tricks. While rhetorical training is useful to all speakers and all
listeners, for the purpose of this chapter I intend to examine the usefulness of rhetorical training to one very select group of people: twentieth-century Shakespearean actors.

Any study of rhetorical training for actors must begin by explicitly acknowledging the understandable distrust that many twentieth-century actors may have of such training. The words “rhetorical acting” conjure visions of a dated and highly artificial style of bombastic delivery. Bertram Joseph writes, “‘Rhetorical delivery’ suggests something too formal, something too stereotyped to allow of the deep and truthful characterization which Shakespeare demands.”¹ As Bertram Joseph later notes, however, “... the art of the orator in the Renaissance was anything but formal and stereotyped; on the contrary, it was a lively and truthful art designed to portray real emotion truthfully” (84).

In my study of Shakespeare’s rhetoric, I have become convinced that rhetorical clues help us to understand some of Shakespeare’s characters from the inside out. Attention to rhetorical figures can be a useful step in an actor’s process, for such attention leads to a precise awareness of a character’s thoughts and feelings. The “rhetorical style” that actors shun is associated with the superficiality of playing a grand arch of generalized emotion. Ironically, the actors who are most likely to resort to playing generalized emotion are not those who understand their characters’ rhetoric, but those who do not. In Playing Shakespeare, John Barton writes:

Shakespeare’s text is full of hidden hints to the actors. When an actor becomes aware of them he will find that Shakespeare himself starts to direct him. I believe that is what happened among his Elizabethan actors, and that they did instinctively what we do consciously and intellectually.

(13)

As we shall see later in this chapter, many of the “hidden hints” Barton examines are rhetorical figures, and these hints may not have seemed particularly “hidden” to Elizabethan actors. Elizabethan schoolboys began learning the figures of rhetoric
when they were only nine or ten years old, and any actors who had attended grammar school would have had extensive rhetorical training long before they entered their profession. Clearly, we can no longer take such training for granted, and thus we must do "consciously and intellectually" what many Elizabethan actors were able to do "instinctively".

In the initial stages of rhetorical training, actors may feel distrustful of the seemingly academic process of analyzing their characters' language, but rhetorical analysis should not be regarded as an end in itself. Like an actor's conscious work on iambic pentameter, or on breath control, attention to rhetorical figures in Shakespeare's lines provides an actor with specific information about the way certain characters think and feel. As an actor explores his character's speech rhythms, breath patterns, and thought structures, he moves closer to his goal of experiencing an absolute empathy with his character: an empathy so complete that he can speak his character's words as though they were his own. Like all the rigorous work of the rehearsal hall, an actor's rhetorical analysis of his lines involves a paradox: detailed work is done with the goal of making that work invisible in a "natural" and seemingly spontaneous performance. In both rhetoric and acting it is often the case that "... art is perfect when it seems to be nature".

I am far from the first, of course, to suggest the possible usefulness of rhetorical training for actors. As Cicely Berry notes when explaining the differences between American and British actor training, rhetoric used to be a major component of British training:

What the American Group Theatre brought was a whole new outlook, and an extremely important one, for the quality of acting that came out of it was rich. It certainly had an influence here, for it made us question the long tradition of acting based on verbal skills and rhetoric to the exclusion often of an inner reality—acting which was often unrooted, and perhaps shallow.

(The Actor and his Text 42)
Commenting on the American version of Stanislavsky’s System, known as “Method acting”⁴, Berry writes: “The physical and sensory skills of the actor were developed wonderfully, but the verbal skills were neglected sometimes to a perverse degree” (42). I believe that rhetorical skills are still being “neglected sometimes to a perverse degree”. Just as it is important to question a tradition “based on verbal skills and rhetoric to the exclusion often of an inner reality”, so too it is wise to question a system based on inner reality to the exclusion of verbal skills and rhetoric. Cecily Berry, and others, are helping actors to connect inner reality and verbal skills, and I believe that rhetoric has a part to play in helping actors to experience this connection. I am not encouraging a swing of the pendulum back to old-school training; rather, I am suggesting that integrated training, including psychological, physical, vocal, and rhetorical work, is the best preparation for the demands made on actors by Shakespeare’s texts. Even a little rhetorical training will help actors to realize that Shakespeare’s plays are full of “splendid and necessary rhetoric”.⁵

This chapter moves from the specific to the general as the following three issues are considered: the need for actors to understand Shakespeare’s explicitly named rhetorical terms; the benefits of rhetorical training for actors portraying particular Shakespearean characters; and the desirability of a basic knowledge of classical rhetoric for all actors who speak Shakespeare’s words. The rhetorical strategies offered here are intended not as rules, but as tools that provide practical assistance to actors who wish to make Shakespeare’s words their own. I offer these strategies in the same spirit that John Barton expresses in Playing Shakespeare:

There are few absolute rules about playing Shakespeare but many possibilities. We don’t offer ourselves as high priests but as explorers or detectives. We want to test and to question. Particularly we want to show how Shakespeare’s own text can help to solve the seeming problems in that text.

(7)
PART I: Shakespeare’s Explicitly Named Rhetorical Terms

One of the reasons Shakespearean actors need some rhetorical training is that actors must know what their characters know, and many of Shakespeare’s characters know a great deal about rhetoric. The persuasive power of speakers such as Mark Antony, Henry V, and Richard III comes, at least in part, from their conscious, and adroit, use of rhetorical figures. Many of Shakespeare’s greatest orators appear in the tragedies or the history plays, but even in the comedies there are countless examples of characters who take conscious pleasure in their rhetorical skill. At times, the metarhetorical sensibility of a character is evident in the explicit naming of rhetorical figures. Since actors cannot effectively speak words they do not understand, an actor’s work may include looking up the definitions of rhetorical terms that are no longer a standard part of his or her twentieth-century vernacular.

As previously mentioned, an actor playing Demetrius needs to know the figure partition in order to comprehend the clever play on words in the statement that Wall is “The wittiest partition that ever [he] heard discourse” (Dream 5.1.165). Similarly, actors who play Boyet, Nathaniel, or Armado in LLL must understand the meaning of the term epitheton, for each one explicitly evaluates the epithet use of other characters. In understanding the meaning of partition or epitheton, an actor does more than just extend his vocabulary: he gains insight into the character who chooses to speak such words. Demetrius, Boyet, Nathaniel, and Armado are only a few of Shakespeare’s characters who take active pride in their own rhetorical sophistication. Whether or not we feel their pride is warranted, such characters name figures as one of several ways of flaunting their rhetorical knowledge: a knowledge they expect their listeners to admire.
The instances of explicit figure naming in Shakespeare’s plays are not so rare as we might think. More than twenty rhetorical figures are regularly called by name in the comedies alone. Several of the figures and tropes named by Shakespeare are familiar to twentieth-century readers; terms such as “proverb”, “metaphor”, “simile”, “enigma”, “paradox”, “hyperbole”, and “maxim” are widely understood. Other rhetorical terms, however, may require the help of a dictionary. Actors may misunderstand the use of terms such as “translated”, “copy”, “sententious”, “dilemma”, “invention”, or “distinction” unless they are aware of the rhetorical significance of these terms. (Some examples of Shakespeare’s explicit naming of rhetorical devices are provided in Appendix 2.)

More common in Shakespeare’s plays than the actual naming of a device is the description of one. Many Shakespearean characters reveal their knowledge of specific figures indirectly: they comment on the effects of specific rhetorical devices without actually calling the devices by name. In Two Gentlemen, for example, Silvia takes note of Valentine’s tongue-tied aposiopesis, saying “A pretty period! Well, I guess the sequel” (2.1.101), and Speed, in an aside, comments on Silvia’s anaphora: “And yet you will; and yet another ‘yet’” (2.1.105). Later Proteus comments on Valentine’s hyperbole, saying “Why, Val, what braggartism is this?” (2.4.157). Love’s Labour’s Lost is full of both direct and indirect references to rhetorical figures. A few examples include Rosaline’s attention to Biron’s erotema ("How needless was it then/ To ask the question!" [2.1.115]); Holofernes’s preface to his alliterative display ("I will something affect the letter, for it argues facility" [4.2.54]); Moth’s comment on the soraismus of Armado and Holofernes ("They have been at a great feast of languages and stolen the scraps" [5.1.35-36]); and the Princess’s response to the extended antanaclasis of Rosaline and Katherine ("Well bandied both, a set of wit well played" [5.2.29]). In each of the above examples, an actor’s understanding of a line can be sharpened by an awareness of the figure being
described. (Shakespeare’s indirect references to the figures are too numerous to mention here, but a list of other examples is provided in Appendix 2.)

Some of the references to rhetorical figures bear striking resemblance to descriptions of certain figures given in sixteenth-century rhetoric manuals. The Princess’s allusion to antanaclasis as a tennis match, for example, may have reminded some Elizabethan audience members of George Puttenham’s description of that device. He renamed antanaclasis “the Rebound” because a word being bounced back and forth with different meanings is similar to “the tennis-ball which being smitten with the racket rebounds back again” (Puttenham 207). In Acting Shakespeare, Bertram Joseph notes the striking connection between Puttenham’s description of antanaclasis, and the effect of that figure in the repeated use of the word “mock” in Henry V’s famous response to the gift of the tennis balls. Bertram Joseph urges actors playing Henry V to be aware of Puttenham’s description, for if an actor clearly understands Henry’s rhetorical technique, then this understanding benefits both audience and actor:

... while educated members of [an Elizabethan] audience would have an appreciation of technicalities somewhere in their response to a performance, it would not be anything like dominant. And those in the audience who could neither name the figures, nor hear them as such, would still respond to the actor’s expression through them of the character’s emotion and purpose. . . for the passage to have its maximum effect, whoever speaks it ought to be identified with the character, sharing Henry’s objective, . . . The superficial details of poetic technique reveal fundamental truths of character, helping the actor to achieve his objective.

(5-6)

Bertram Joseph’s words are applicable not only to actors playing Henry V, but to all actors who play rhetorically sophisticated characters. In the comedies, we find many striking examples of characters whose thoughts are shaped, in part, by an awareness of rhetorical devices. An oft-cited example of metarhetorical sensibility is Rosalind’s use of the figure gradatio, or climax, in As You Like It. In The Art of Rhetoric, Wilson writes that when a speaker uses climax, it is “as though one should
go up a pair of stairs and not leave till he come at the top. Or thus: Gradation is when a sentence is dissevered by degrees, so that the word which endeth the sentence going before doth begin the next” (228). Puttenham explains that this figure “may aswell be called the clymbing figure, for Clymax is as much to say as a ladder” (208). As Sister Miriam Joseph notes, in describing the courtship of Celia and Oliver, “Rosalind refers to the figure almost in terms of its definition” (180):

... Your brother and my sister no sooner met but they looked; no sooner looked but they loved; no sooner loved but they sighed; no sooner sighed but they asked one another the reason; no sooner knew the reason but they sought the remedy; and in these degrees have they made a pair of stairs to marriage, which they will climb incontinent, or else be incontinent before marriage.

(5.2.31-38)

Rosalind consciously plays with the figure climax as she describes Celia’s breathless climb to the marriage bed, and any actress who wants to think as Rosalind thinks must know what she knows.

**PART II: Shakespeare’s Professional Wordsmiths**

In many cases, a character’s rhetorical awareness extends far beyond the existence of individual figures. The characters in Shakespeare’s comedies who demonstrate extensive rhetorical self-consciousness are too numerous to examine in detail here, and thus this study will consider only four of Shakespeare’s self-conscious rhetoricians: Portia, Touchstone, Feste, and Viola (in her role as Cesario). As judge, court fools, and court eunuch, respectively, these characters are regarded as professional wordsmiths by the other characters on stage, and actors who seek to play them face specific rhetorical challenges.
We have already seen that in the courtroom scene of *Merchant*, Portia demonstrates considerable skill in forensic rhetoric. For the actress playing Portia, however, the benefits of understanding Cicero’s strategy go far beyond familiarity with specific terms. Portia’s objective in the courtroom scene is clarified for the actress who carefully considers the effect of rhetorical knowledge on Portia’s decision to go to court. Some actresses play the courtroom scene as an exercise in anxiety for Portia as she does her best to think of a way to save Antonio’s life. For actresses who take this tack, Portia’s objective seems to be something like this: she goes to court with the earnest hope that she will be able to save Antonio’s life by urging Shylock to be merciful. The job of convincing Shylock to change his mind proves much more difficult than she had anticipated. She very nearly fails to save the day, but at the last possible moment she suddenly thinks of a way to prevent Antonio’s murder. Such an objective suggests breathtaking self-centredness on Portia’s part; it implies she goes to court without a firm plan, and takes a man’s life in her hands, simply because she wants to be close to her darling Bassanio. Furthermore, it suggests that the moment Portia figures out a way to gain control over Shylock, she uses her control to crush Shylock, thereby demonstrating the complete lack of mercy of which she accuses him.8

I would argue that Portia’s actions in court are based not on anxiety but on complete confidence in her knowledge of Cicero’s forensic strategy. Whether she knows the strategy from past schooling, or whether she learns it from her cousin, is less important than the fact that she goes to court only because she is absolutely certain she can save Antonio. Sinead Cusack, who played the role of Portia in the Royal Shakespeare Company’s production of *Merchant* in 1981, believes that Portia has a specific plan in mind when she steps into court. Although Cusack does not mention Cicero, she does explain the clarity of purpose that comes with Portia’s confidence in her legal knowledge.9 Cusack writes:
I decided that when I entered the courtroom I knew exactly how to save Antonio; my cousin had shown me that loophole in the law which would save him from his bond. A lot of people ask why then does Portia put everyone through all that misery and why does she play cat-and-mouse with Shylock. The reason is that she doesn't go into the courtroom to save Antonio (that's easy) but to save Shylock, to redeem him—she is passionate to do that. She gives him opportunity after opportunity to relent and to exercise his humanity. She proposes mercy and charity but he still craves the law. She offers him thrice his money but he sticks to his oath. It is only when he shows himself totally ruthless and intractable (refusing even to allow a surgeon to stand by) that she offers him more justice than he desires.¹⁰

Portia offers Shylock the very sort of mercy that she urges him to demonstrate. She is not begging him for mercy but allowing him to be merciful: she has no need to beg because she has discovered a "loophole in the law" that guarantees her victory. It is a loophole described by many rhetoricians and given extensive attention by Cicero. Actresses wishing to play Portia will find, as Portia herself does, that knowledge of Cicero's strategy provides the confidence that comes with certainty.

Portia demonstrates the rhetorical skill expected of someone wearing a judge's robe. Touchstone's motley coat, on the other hand, promises rhetorical expertise of a very different sort. Touchstone is more sophisticated in his rhetorical knowledge than any of the other characters in As You Like It. Indeed, he is one of the most verbally challenging of Shakespeare's comic characters, for he is skilled in both rhetoric and logic. Celia and Rosalind tease him about "the great heap of [his] knowledge" (1.2.64), and Touchstone is always able and willing to flaunt his linguistic abilities when called upon to do so. In his parody of anamnesis (2.4.43-52), his rhetorical testing of Corin (3.2.49-81), his imitation of Orlando's bad poetry (3.2.96-110), his coining of new terms (3.2.155-157), his rhetorical domination of William (5.1.16-56), and his apt explanation of "the quarrel on the seventh cause" (5.4.64-98), he reveals his mastery of the arts of language.
In some of the cases listed here, his words seem to come directly from specific manuals of logic or rhetoric. In his meeting with William, for example, Touchstone says: “...it is a figure in rhetoric that drink, being poured out of a cup into a glass, by filling the one doth empty the other. For all your writers do consent that ipse is he. Now you are not ipse, for I am he” (5.1.40-43). Baldwin identifies the source of Touchstone’s comment when he writes:

Touchstone’s rhetorical enthymeme is of Cicero’s sixth dialectical mode.
Ipse is not both this Touchstone and that William: but it is this Touchstone, not therefore that William. So the same drink cannot be in both the cup and the glass at the same time. As much as goes into the cup cannot remain in the glass. ... Unless this statement can be found in the contemporary rhetorics elsewhere, then Touchstone’s figure of rhetoric comes directly from the Topica of Cicero.

Baldwin also demonstrates the influences of Aristotle and Quintilian in Touchstone’s words (II: 116-20).

It is not only critics who have marvelled at Touchstone’s rhetorical ability: several of the other characters in the play comment on the clown’s skill. Jaques praises Touchstone for railing “on Lady Fortune in good terms,/ In good set terms” (2.7.16-17), and admits his delight at meeting a fellow whose brain “hath strange places crammed/ With observation” (2.7.40-41). Duke Senior notes that Touchstone is “very swift and sententious” (5.4.61), and later suggests Touchstone’s motley functions as a kind of Trojan horse preventing listeners from protecting themselves from his jibes: “He uses his folly like a stalking-horse, and under the presentation of that he shoots his wit” (5.4.101-102).

Touchstone himself comments on the loneliness implicit in being the wittiest person at court. Just as Jaques’s rare sensibility makes him susceptible to melancholy, so Touchstone’s unmatched skill in rhetoric and logic may leave him feeling isolated. In several scenes he is asked to explain his jokes or to interpret his meanings, and while Touchstone usually revels in his verbal supremacy, there are
times when it is a burden to him. He explains: “When a man’s verses cannot be understood, nor a man’s good wit seconded with the forward child, understanding, it strikes a man more dead than a great reckoning in a little room” (3.3.9-12).

It is not enough for an actor playing Touchstone to understand the meaning of single rhetorical terms such as "places" or "sententious"; Touchstone is a paid entertainer, and his words are his wares. His metarhetorical awareness is evident in almost all his scenes. He is a better rhetorician than anyone else in his circle, and he knows it. Others engage him in rhetorical jousting matches for their own pleasure and practice, but they expect him to win, and he always does. For the actor playing Touchstone, as for Touchstone himself, rhetorical skill is part of the job description.

Like Touchstone, Feste and Viola (in her role as Cesario) are court entertainers who are paid, in part, for their way with words. In preparing the roles of Feste or Viola, actors can benefit from considering the skills required of jesters and eunuchs. Viola contemplates the work of court fools when she responds to Feste, saying:

This fellow is wise enough to play the fool,
And to do that well craves a kind of wit.
He must observe their mood on whom he jests,
The quality of persons, and the time,
And like the haggard, check at every feather
That comes before his eye. This is a practice
As full of labour as a wise man’s art,
For folly that he wisely shows is fit,
But wise men, folly fall’n, quite taint their wit.

(3.1.59-67)

Several of the skills Viola lists are rhetorical skills: students of rhetoric learn that aspiring rhetoricians must develop a quick and able invention, must pay attention to the specific audience being addressed, and must observe the rules of decorum on all occasions. Feste has mastered these skills and more. In addition to his frequent displays of rhetorical skill, he also demonstrates knowledge of logic (1.5.38-67) and of grammar (5.1.10-20). Viola’s comment that a court fool must "check at every feather/ That comes before his eye" is a wonderful description of Feste’s
metalinguistic sensibility. Always at the rhetorical ready, he picks up words that others let drop, juggles them for his listeners' entertainment, and then gives the words back to the speaker with a twinkle in his eye and an open palm.

Rhetorical showmanship is part of his job, and when he performs well, he gets paid. Indeed, the direct connection between rhetorical skill and payment is more obvious in this play than in Shakespeare's other plays containing jesters. Touchstone and Lear's Fool obviously make their living as court fools, but they seem to be on a salary, for they never ask for a coin. Feste, on the other hand, seems to have two jobs: he is Olivia's fool, but he also moonlights as a freelance clown who gets paid by the joke or the song (2.3.30; 2.4.66; 3.1.42; 4.1.18; and 5.1.31). He is a free-spirited rhetorical entrepreneur who performs for money at the drop of a word.

In preparing to play Feste, an actor can benefit not only from learning the specific rhetorical figures Feste uses, but also from understanding—as Feste does—that he must live up to the rhetorical expectations placed upon him in his role as fool. In scene after scene he is required to earn his keep, and he does this by singing, by joking, and by acting as a rhetorical jousting partner for those who seek to hone their skills. In act 1 scene 3, Maria easily defeats Sir Andrew in a match of wits, but two scenes later she meets her rhetorical superior in Feste. She says Olivia will hang him for his long absence, and Feste responds to this threat with the tennis-ball rebound of antanaclasis, as he sends the word "hang" back to Maria with a spin: "Let her hang me. He that is well hanged in this world needs to fear no colours" (1.5.5). "Make that good", says Maria, and thus, in a single line, Feste establishes himself as a rhetoric tutor. He later praises his capable student for her clever use of asteismus, saying "Apt, in good faith, very apt" (1.5.24), but Maria's rhetorical tennis lesson comes to an end when Olivia enters.

Feste knows he must regain Olivia's favour, and he does so through a self-conscious display of the sleight-of-mind for which he was hired:
Feste: . . . Good madonna, give me leave to prove you a fool.
Olivia: Can you do it?
Feste: Dexteriously, good madonna.
Olivia: Make your proof.

(1.5.53-56)

He makes his proof through a “simple syllogism”: It is foolish to mourn for those in heaven; Olivia is mourning for her brother in heaven; therefore, Olivia is a fool. It is obvious that Feste uses this device consciously, for he refers to syllogism by name (1.5.45).

“For want of other idleness” (1.5.59), Olivia agrees to listen to the fool, and later, out of a mixture of boredom and curiosity, she agrees to listen to another saucy speaker. Dressed as Cesario, Viola wins an audience with Olivia by defeating Malvolio in a rhetorical jousting match at Olivia’s gate. She is “fortified against any denial” that Malvolio has wit enough to make (1.5.138), and thus Olivia admits this clever messenger. Like fools, eunuchs require rhetorical skill, but while fools excel in word games, eunuchs may be called upon for eloquence of another sort. In deciding to apply for a job as Orsino’s eunuch, Viola is convinced she has the skills required for the job. She describes those skills to the Captain, saying:

... I’ll serve this duke.
    Thou shalt present me as an eunuch to him.
    It may be worth thy pains, for I can sing,
    And speak to him in many sorts of music
    That will allow me very worth his service.

(1.2.52-56)

In this speech, Viola distinguishes between singing and speaking “in many sorts of music”, thus distinguishing between the musical and the rhetorical parts of a eunuch’s job. Orsino expects Cesario to do more than sing: he hopes his eunuch will be an eloquent emissary able to awaken love in Olivia, and Cesario proves far more successful than Orsino intended. She arrives at Olivia’s court prepared to speak “many sorts of music” on her lord’s behalf, and she starts by delivering a
memorized, epideictic oration in praise of Olivia. "Most radiant, exquisite, and unmatchable beauty" (1.5.162), she begins, but she never finishes because Olivia prefers Cesario's improvisation to the cadences of Orsino's old tune. The power of Cesario's eloquence is noted by several characters in the play: Orsino relies on his messenger's powers of persuasion; Olivia allows this curious messenger first into her home and then into her heart; and Sir Andrew notes, and yearns to emulate, the eloquence of a speaker whose vocabulary includes such fashionable words as "'Odeurs', 'pregnant', and 'vouchsafed'" (3.1.88-89).

Feste and Viola are both skilful rhetoricians. They have only one extended conversation in the play, and it is about the reliability of words. Early in their conversation, Feste, who claims he is "not [Olivia's] fool, but her corrupter of words" (3.1.35-36), displays his verbal wares through a clever use of the figure antimetabole. Viola responds by using antimetabole herself. It is this exchange that sparks their discussion of rhetorical display:

Feste: ... I do live by the church for I do live at my house, and my house doth stand by the church.
Viola: So thou mayst say the king lies by a beggar if a beggar dwell near him, or the church stands by thy tabor if thy tabor stand by the church.
Feste: You have said, sir. To see this age! A sentence is but a chev'rel glove to a good wit, how quickly the wrong side may be turned outward.
Viola: Nay, that's certain. They that dally with words may quickly make them wanton.

(3.1.5-15)

Feste's suggestion that fondness for antimetabole is characteristic of "this age" is reinforced in John Hoskins's Directions for Speech and Style (1599): a rhetoric manual written at approximately the same time as Twelfth Night. As previously mentioned, Hoskins's manual was not published during his lifetime, but his comments on the rhetorical fashions of his age offer some helpful perspectives for twentieth-century Shakespearean actors. After defining antimetabole, Hoskins warns against the overuse of this fashionable figure when he writes:
notwithstanding that this is a sharp and witty figure and shows out of the same words a pithy distinction of meaning, very convenient for schoolmen, yet Mr. P. did wrong to tire this poor figure by using it thirty times in one sermon. For use this, or any other point, unseasonably, it is as ridiculous as it was in the fustian oration: horse-mill, mill-horse, etc.. But let discretion be the greatest and general figure of figures.

(15)

Through Feste, Shakespeare notes the same late sixteenth-century fashion for antimetabole that Hoskins acknowledges, but Hoskins’s words draw our attention to issues of more significance than any single figure. While sitting at a sermon, Hoskins is able to hear, identify, and evaluate the rhetoric of a speaker who fails to keep audience attention. His rhetorical training shapes his perceptions even when his mouth is shut, and this is worth remembering when playing a character known for speaking ability. Skilful rhetoricians do more than just speak well: they hear well. Rhetorical training, which requires students to be alert to the figures they read and hear, facilitates an active awareness of the structures of language used by others. Skilled speakers like Feste, Touchstone, or Shylock, demonstrate their rhetorical sophistication not only by what they say but also by the speed with which they can turn the words of others to their own advantage. Shylock’s skill at rhetorical improvisation, mentioned in the last chapter, is made possible by his keen ear. Actors who play rhetorically adept characters must aim to listen with the same precision with which they speak.

Another useful lesson provided by Hoskins’s comment on antimetabole is in his warning to “let discretion be the greatest and general figure of figures.” Mr. P.’s repeated use of antimetabole demonstrates rhetorical enthusiasm but no judgement, and the relationship between exuberant rhetorical exploration and good judgement is worth considering in the context of actor training. Rehearsal halls, like classrooms, are places where exploration should be encouraged. As actors explore their characters’ language, they may, temporarily, exaggerate certain features of the
words they speak. Rhetoricians encourage such exaggeration as an important part of any training process. In *De Copia*, for example, Erasmus defends his recommendation that students should sometimes indulge in extravagant copia, saying:

[I am] not prescribing how one should write and speak, but am pointing out what to do for training where, as everyone knows, all things ought to be exaggerated. . . . Superfluities will wear away with age and judgement but you cannot by any method cure meagerness and poverty.  

(I. IV)

In a passage strikingly similar to the one quoted above, Kristin Linklater encourages actors to indulge in the very sort of exaggeration described by Erasmus. In *Freeing Shakespeare's Voice* (1992), she notes that when actors become aware of certain features of their characters' words, they may initially be tempted to overplay those features. After proposing a series of exercises designed to help actors explore "sensory, sensual, emotional and physical responses to vowels and consonants" (13), she playfully encourages indulgence. She writes:

If you now return to the Chorus from *Henry V* at the beginning of this chapter, you will almost inevitably overindulge and overdo the vowels and consonants. I recommend this. With a luxurious disregard for good acting or good taste let yourself wallow in the sounds of the following Choruses from the same play. . . . It is good to go to extremes in order to establish brain-body connections. The restraining touch of logic can safely be banished for the time being and will easily reestablish itself when the need for "normal" communication arises.

(26)

Like attention to vowels and consonants, attention to rhetorical figures may initially make us self-conscious, clumsy, or exaggerated in our use of figures. Such exaggeration should be welcomed as a sign of learning, for in mastering any skill, awkwardness precedes grace. That said, however, we should not make the mistake, made by Hoskins's Mr. P., of confusing the indulgence encouraged in training with the judgement required for use. Rehearsal-hall rhetorical exercises allow actors to explore a range of rhetorical structures freely, but as the exploratory period of
rehearsals comes to an end, actors must follow their own judgement as to how best to apply their rhetorical knowledge in performance. A significant danger in teaching rhetoric is that rhetorical devices can be taught, while the judgement necessary to use them well cannot. Quintilian explains his approach to this problem as follows:

... personally I regard [judgement] as so inextricably blent with and involved in every portion of this work, that its influence extends even to single sentences or words, and it is no more possible to teach it than it is to instruct the powers of taste and smell. Consequently, all I can do is now and hereafter to show what should be done or avoided in each particular case, with a view thereby to guide the judgement.

(VI.v.1)

Quintilian and Hoskins note an orator's need for judgement in applying rhetorical knowledge, and, as Hamlet explains, actors need judgement too. In terms very similar to Hoskins’s, Hamlet advises the players: “... let your own discretion be your tutor. Suit the action to the word, the word to the action, with this special observance, that you o’erstep not the modesty of nature. For anything so o’erdone is from the purpose of playing. ...” (3.2.16-20).

PART III: The Benefits of Basic Rhetorical Training for all Shakespearean Actors

As we shift from considering the metarhetorical components of Shakespeare’s plays to considering basic rhetorical training for all Shakespearean actors, I am acutely aware of the wisdom of Quintilian’s words on the centrality of good judgement in rhetorical study. The rhetorical demands of each Shakespearean character, and of each scene, are different, and while I believe a metarhetorical awareness is essential for the portrayal of certain characters, I also recognize that
rhetoric, wrongly applied, can be an impediment to an actor’s process. The potential advantages and disadvantages of emphasizing a character’s rhetoric are best demonstrated by specific examples.

As previously mentioned, actors playing Portia, Touchstone, Feste, and Viola can benefit from a self-conscious exploration of their characters’ rhetoric. Of the numerous characters whose rhetoric I might have examined, I chose these four because they have something in common: they are conscious of the role that rhetoric plays in their lives. Portia enters the courtroom having brushed up on her knowledge of Cicero; Touchstone and Feste accept the rhetorical responsibilities that come with their jobs; and Viola chooses to disguise herself in the clothes and the speech of a eunuch. In *The Actor and his Text* (1987), Cicely Berry explains that when an actor is working on a role, “he needs to know his voice both subjectively and objectively at the same time”: in other words, he “needs to discover and experience feelings while he is speaking, while at the same time he must know what effect his voice is having” (17). We might say that Portia, Touchstone, Feste, and Viola know their rhetoric both subjectively and objectively. They are aware of the effect of their rhetorical choices on others even while they experience the feelings that come with making those choices.

When playing characters who have both objective and subjective knowledge of their own rhetoric, actors will find that rhetorical training increases their ability to share their character’s perspective. When playing a character who does not experience his/her rhetoric objectively, however, a heavy emphasis on rhetorical figures may actually impede an actor’s work. As an extreme example of this phenomenon, let us consider the actor who must deliver King Lear’s agonized response to Cordelia’s death: “Howl, howl, howl!” (5.3.256). To tell an actor playing Lear that these words are an example of the figure epizeuxis is so unhelpful as to be almost ridiculous. Lear’s experience of these words is not intellectual but visceral; in
the vernacular of the rehearsal room, Lear experiences these words not in his head but much lower in his body. A director or vocal coach who is guiding an actor playing Lear may benefit from recognizing epizeuxis—in ways which will be examined a bit later in this chapter—but the actor himself must avoid escaping into his head when faced with the raw power of Lear's words. Patsy Rodenburg's comments on the brutal language of Greek tragedy also apply to Lear's outcry: "When the language is so raw and potentially dangerous to speak, it is easy to 'comment' on the word and avoid its power rather than confront and experience it head-on; sentimentalising the feeling rather than connecting to it" (241). When judging the usefulness of rhetorical self-consciousness in the preparation of any role, it is wise for an actor to begin by considering whether the character him/herself has an objective knowledge of his/her own rhetoric.

Many vocal coaches are already providing actors with some training in rhetoric, as is evident in the work of four writers who have each worked extensively with actors in the Royal Shakespeare Company: John Barton's Playing Shakespeare (1984), Cicely Berry’s The Actor and his Text (1987), Kristin Linklater’s Freeing Shakespeare's Voice (1992), Patsy Rodenburg’s The Need for Words (1993) all include work on rhetoric. The rhetorical training of actors is a sufficiently large topic to warrant its own separate investigation. For the purposes of the present study, however, I will limit myself to suggesting a few possible additions to the rhetorical training of actors outlined by the writers listed above. I make these suggestions fully aware that they may be useful to some actors and not to others. Ultimately, each actor must learn the strategies that work best for him/her. As Barton explains:

The test [in the rehearsal room] is not whether a given statement is objectively true but whether it helps, stimulates and releases an actor at a particular rehearsal. If it does so, then the advice is useful. If it does not, however true it may be, it has no practical use in that particular context. (3)
In supplementing the rhetorical training offered by the four writers mentioned above, my first suggestion is that actors be made aware of the general outlines of the rhetorical component in the Elizabethan grammar-school curriculum. The word “rhetoric” has a terrible reputation now. It is generally taken to mean language that is empty or false: the very sort of language actors must avoid. If we are to help actors embrace the rhetoric their characters embrace, we must begin by rediscovering the Elizabethan notion of rhetoric’s usefulness and accessibility. As mentioned earlier, Shakespeare and his schoolmates spent one-sixth of their time in upper grammar school studying the figures of rhetoric. These devices were not reserved for study by privileged academics; they were the stuff of schoolyard taunts. For the Elizabethan schoolboy, “the categories of the figures were, like the multiplication-tables, a part of his foundation”.

I am not suggesting that twentieth-century actors be subjected to the rigorous rhetorical drills of Elizabethan classrooms, but even being aware that such drills were daily occurrences in the lives of Elizabethan schoolchildren helps actors to realize that Shakespeare, his actors, his audience members, and even, in some cases, his characters, took some degree of familiarity with rhetorical figures for granted. Indeed, in late sixteenth-century England, there was an undeniable fashion for figure identification. Students spent several hours each week identifying figures in great literature. Rhetoric manuals illustrated figures with examples from admired contemporary works such as Sidney’s Arcadia. Can we really believe that, in a metarhetorical society like Elizabethan London, no one in the theatre noticed Shakespeare’s heart-stopping rhetorical skill? Is it not possible that some audience members attended the theatre, at least in part, with a conscious desire to hear some of the best rhetoric of their time delivered by actors who were able to do it justice in performance?
Obviously, students no longer learn rhetoric as part of a basic, elementary school education, and the prospect of facing rhetorical training in the midst of an already demanding rehearsal schedule is understandably daunting to many actors. The prospect becomes less intimidating, however, if we help actors to realize that they are already using many rhetorical devices daily. My second suggestion, therefore, is to make actors aware that many of the tools they are currently using in rehearsal are part of a larger system of training known to Shakespeare and his fellow actors as classical rhetoric. The need for such awareness can be illustrated by the structure of some of the books listed above.

In The Need for Words, for example, Rodenburg includes sections on "Imagery", "Sounding Words", "Antithesis", "Wit, Puns, and Wordplay", and "Repetition"; later, in a section entitled "The Way Words Work", she provides a list of twelve figures of speech.16 While she does note that antithesis and puns are figures, she does not seem to be aware that many of the devices she has been exploring throughout the book are figures of rhetoric which were studied in a systematic way for hundreds of years. She never draws a connection, for example, between "Repetition" and figures of speech. By dealing with the speaking demands of "Imagery", "Sounding Words", "Antithesis", and "Repetition" in separate sections, she is illustrating ways to approach the delivery of tropes, figures of words, figures of thought, and figures of repetition respectively, and yet she never indicates any awareness that these categories exist.

Actors can easily be taught to recognize various categories of rhetorical devices, and they should be taught to do so because each group of devices presents speakers with different sorts of vocal demands. As we introduce various types of rhetorical devices in the rehearsal room, we might, for example, let actors know that the imagistic content of tropes sometimes requires speakers to see the images they describe as they speak them. Figures of words frequently explore the quality of a
sound. Figures of thought are often very long, and require the speaker to develop
the shape of an idea through many lines. Figures of repetition sometimes repeat a
word in exactly the same key and sometimes vary the key in order to shift the
meaning of the repeated word. Once actors understand these basic concepts, they
will be able to design a “rhetorical workout” for themselves that will help to prepare
them for the demands of Shakespeare’s texts.

Like Rodenburg, Kristin Linklater deals with a series of rhetorical figures,
without naming them as such, before embarking on a chapter entitled “Figures of
Speech”. At the beginning of this chapter, she forcefully describes both the danger,
and the value, of rhetorical study for actors. She writes:

I have worked with actors who could spot and name figures of speech in
Shakespeare’s text that I have never heard of, and yet be incapable of
applying their knowledge to their craft. By that I mean that the erudition
shed no light on the rendition... For today’s actor, it is the practice of
rhetorical forms that will clarify his or her performance, not the mere study
of them... although the term “figures of speech” sounds dry and academic,
we are perfectly familiar with them and use them automatically in our
everyday speaking. Becoming aware of figures of speech allows us to notice
the moments when Shakespeare uses them for a particular effect, whether
consciously or with the unconscious brilliance of natural genius. If you let
them affect you sensorily, they perform one or all of the following services: 1)
lead you to discoveries about the character you are playing; 2) create the
emotional tone of a scene; 3) do half your acting for you.

(79)

I agree with much of what Linklater has to say, but I believe that she does actors
a disservice in her chapter on figures. Clearly, for today’s actors, as for Elizabethan
actors, practice of rhetoric must accompany its study. An actor who can list figure
names but lacks the ability to apply his knowledge clearly needs a great deal more
practice experiencing the figures in action. One of the goals of rhetorical practice is
to let the devices “affect you sensorily”, as Linklater says, and, if actors can do this
then they will realize just how useful rhetorical study can be. Ironically, although
Linklater recognizes the value of figures to actors, she begins her chapter by
admitting that she is not able to identify many of the figures herself. Indeed, her chapter entitled "Figures of Speech" examines only six devices: alliteration, assonance, onomatopoeia, antithesis, puns, and "the ladder". The figure she describes as "the ladder" seems to be climax, but the examples she offers of this device are actually examples of climax, auxesis, isocolon, and epimone. She introduces "the ladder", the sixth rhetorical figure she has named, as "the final figure of rhetorical speech that the actor must be aware of and respond to" (95).

While I realize that actors have neither the need nor the inclination to memorize two hundred rhetorical devices, I believe they should be provided with a framework into which to fit their rhetorical knowledge as it develops. To imply that actors need to know only six rhetorical figures to navigate Shakespeare's work is simply misleading. As actors learn the general outline of Elizabethan rhetorical training, they will realize that Elizabethans spent a great deal of time learning many devices which fit into a few fairly easily identifiable categories. These categories will start to make sense to actors when actors realize they are already using several devices from each group. The category called "tropes", for example, includes familiar devices like metaphor, simile, and irony. "Figures of repetition" include alliteration, certain kinds of puns, and climax. Well-known devices, such as proverbs, definitions, and various sorts of oaths, are categorized as "Figures of thought". Once actors have a feeling for different sorts of figures, they will be able to expand their awareness of rhetoric as opportunities and individual temperaments allow. Furthermore, they may be tempted to invent a few new categories of figures, such as "Figures of Reply" or "Figures that Influence Breathing Patterns".

An actor's knowledge of familiar devices can easily be supplemented by a gradual introduction to the figures Shakespeare uses often. Devices like epithets, oaths, antimetabole, and isocolon quickly come to mind as figures favoured by Shakespeare but ignored in modern acting training. I believe actors would find
these devices every bit as useful as the devices they are already being taught. Indeed, actors regularly describe rhetorical patterns for which they have no names.

Barton’s Playing Shakespeare consists of a series of transcribed workshops in which Barton and actors discuss various approaches to Shakespearean texts. As actors describe their work on specific passages, I am often aware that they are reaching for a rhetorical term that they want but do not have.

One example of this phenomenon occurs after Michael Pennington delivers part of Richard II’s soliloquy in Pemfret Castle (Richard II, 5.5.1-14). He delivers this speech in the context of a lengthy discussion on the importance of antithesis in Shakespeare’s work. Barton lays heavy emphasis on antithesis; indeed, he goes so far as to say, “If I were to offer one single bit of advice to an actor new to Shakespeare’s text, I suspect that the most useful thing I could say would be, ‘Look for the antitheses and play them’” (55). After delivering part of Richard’s soliloquy, Pennington responds to the speech, saying:

... there seem to be two separate techniques being used. Richard’s opening proposition is based on a kind of antithesis. ... The first strong intention of the speech comes with “Yet I’ll hammer it out” and then something different happens. There seems to be an accumulation of ideas which involves picking out one word from the end of a line and setting it against a word at the beginning of the next, “My brain I’ll prove the female to my soul, / My soul the father” ... So for the actor scanning the text for clues, the verse and the antithesis suggest an accumulating energy and a forward movement. (56)

The technique to which Pennington is responding is the figure anadiplosis (the repetition of the last word of one clause or sentence at the beginning of the next): a device which Pennington describes almost in terms of its definition. The see-saw of Richard’s thoughts, captured in the antithesis of his opening proposition, comes to ground with a thump on the line “Yet I’ll hammer it out”. As Richard gets off the see-saw, figuratively speaking, and starts walking forward, the energy of his forward movement is expressed through anadiplosis.
My point in considering Pennington’s words is to note that he is describing a significant structural feature of Richard’s words for which he has no name. He is unable to name anadiplosis simply because it does not happen to be one of the few rhetorical devices still taught in twentieth-century classrooms. The word “anadiplosis” is no more difficult than “alliteration” or “hyperbole”; it is only less familiar to modern readers. John Barton, aware that some actors may be wary of seemingly “academic” words, is very cautious when naming figures—even while explaining how useful they are. When David Suchet asks Barton to “start by saying something about elision”, Barton implicitly apologizes for having to use such an off-putting word: “Elision sounds a learned word but basically it’s to do with our actual habits of speech. It’s not something grammatical or abstract” (38-39). Later he introduces his old friend, antithesis, with a similar sort of apology: “‘Antithesis’ is in a way a bad word for something very practical. It sounds obscure and learned” (55).

No one in a rehearsal would think of apologizing for using words like “irony”, “metaphor”, or “onomatopoeia”. These words are not “obscure and learned”; we have known them since we were children. If we had learned words like “antithesis” and “anadiplosis” in school, as Shakespeare did, then we would be free to use such useful terms much more casually.

Like antithesis, anadiplosis is a figure of diction: its syntactic pattern reflects a specific structure in the thought being expressed. Barton’s workshop on antithesis could fruitfully be extended to include an exploration of some of the other figures of diction. While familiarity with figure names provides a sort of shorthand that is convenient in rehearsal, an actor’s awareness of names is much less important than his or her awareness of the concepts that those names denote. As previously mentioned, Quintilian urges his readers to concentrate on what rhetorical devices do rather than on what they are called, for “their values lie not in their names, but in their effect. . . . It is best therefore in dealing with these topics to adopt the generally
accepted terms and to understand the actual thing, by whatever name it is called” (IX.i.9).

One way to emphasize the function of figures is to make figures physical by speaking them while moving in a way that supports or counteracts the inherent movement of the figure. Barton, Berry, Rodenburg, and Linklater all provide exercises to make certain figures physical, although they never actually say that is what they are doing, and to my mind the physicalization of figures is one of the best ways to provide actors with immediately accessible rhetorical assistance. The physicalization of figures is best described by examples. Some of the exercises that physicalize specific figures include the following: throwing or hitting a ball between speakers while talking (antanaclasis); tug-of-war (antithesis); standing or moving in an opposite mood to that of the words being spoken (irony); climbing stairs (climax); and kicking an object on key words (emphasis). Through these exercises, actors can begin to allow the figures to “affect [them] sensorily”: the exercises help actors to get out of their heads to explore the physicality of rhetoric.18

I would like to suggest one more method of physicalizing figures, and it relates to the changes in a speaker’s breathing pattern that occur when certain figures are spoken. The possible inter-connectedness of breathing, feeling, thinking, and rhetorical figures is, perhaps, the most exciting indication of rhetoric’s usefulness to actors, but it is also the most difficult to describe. There is an intimate connection between breathing and feeling, but the “truth” of this connection cannot be proven by logical means: it is experienced in the body rather than known in the head. The best written description of the breath/thought/feeling connection I have found is in Cicely Berry’s The Actor and his Text. She writes:

We have to see the breath not simply as the means by which we make good sound and communicate information; but rather we have to see it as the physical life of the thought, so that we conceive the breath and the thought as one. . . . The further we go in getting this integration of breath and thought--
and by thought I mean the utterance of a character charged with whatever feelings he may have—we begin to experience how the thought itself is moving, and the quality of the thought becomes active. . . how we breathe is how we think; or rather, in acting terms, how the character breathes is how the character thinks. . . when we find this integration of thought and breath, when they are rooted down one with the other, the voice takes on a quite different and surprising energy, and the speaking becomes effortless. For, and this is what is important, we have made the thought our own physically through the breath, and so we do not have to press out our emotional and intellectual intentions on top of the text. We actually think differently because we are open to the thought in this way. . . When the breath works for you in this way, it takes the words down to a physical level, deeper than the intellect. . . (26-27)

Through my work on rhetoric, I have come to believe that there is a connection between the structures inherent in certain rhetorical figures and the “physical life of the thoughts” that those figures express. The “truth” of this connection is experienced physically, and thus I know of no way to demonstrate my point except through a specific personal example.

When I was studying acting at The London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art, I performed the role of Constance from King John in my Text Analysis class. My teacher, Pamela Bernard, urged me to begin my preparation of Constance’s final scene by finding the points at which Constance breathes. She noted that those points would sometimes, though not always, coincide with punctuation marks, and she reminded me not to rely on punctuation marks as a guide, for they vary enormously from one edition to the next.19 Initially, I found the exercise puzzling; I was not really sure when Constance would breathe, and I did not know what to look for. Although I have used this approach to texts many times since, I remember my first attempts in Pamela’s class because the effects of her suggested approach were so startling. With Pamela’s help, I found the rhythms of Constance’s breathing, and in doing so, I found “the physical life of Constance’s thoughts”. I now see that what I
had discovered were the structures of breath embedded in some of Constance’s rhetorical figures.

Constance’s final scene is clearly too long to consider in detail here, and thus I will offer only two pieces of it as examples of the phenomenon I am trying to describe. I copy these excerpts with no punctuation, but with possible breathing places marked. A single mark (/) denotes a shallow breath. A double mark (//) denotes a point by which the lungs should feel completely empty: a place at which a deep breath is needed. Overcome with grief at the loss of her son, Constance says to King Philip:

I am not mad (/) I would to heaven I were
For then ‘tis like I should forget myself (/)
O if I could what grief should I forget (//)
Preach some philosophy to make me mad
And thou shalt be canoniz’d Cardinal
For being not mad but sensible of grief
My reasonable part produces reason
How I may be deliver’d of these woes
And teaches me to kill or hang myself (//)
(3.4.48-56)

In order to expel all air in a single line (as in, “O if I could what grief should I forget”), the words must be almost pushed out of the mouth with the force that is appropriate for an exclamation. The breath pattern of this example of exclamatio is different, however, from the pattern in the lines that follow. All six of the lines between “Preach some philosophy . . .” and “. . . kill or hang myself” are an example of the figure hirmus (a periodic sentence in which the sense is suspended until the end). I delivered these six lines at stage volume with no pause for breath, and by the time I spoke of killing or hanging myself, that is pretty much what I felt like doing. There is a visceral sense of urgency that comes from speaking to the very limit of one’s breathing capacity, and that urgency is what Constance is feeling when she delivers those words. Later in the scene, just before she leaves to commit suicide,
she experiences her grief differently. Her last three lines are an extended example of
anaphora, and I print them here with possible breathing places marked:

O Lord (/ /) my boy (/ /) my Arthur (/ /) my fair son (/ /)
My life (/ /) my joy (/ /) my food (/ /) my all the world (/ /)
My widow-comfort (/ /) and my sorrow’s cure.
(3.4.103-105)

When all breath is expelled on each section of the anaphora, the breath pattern is
that of sobbing, and it is experienced not as a “rhetorical” concept of sorrow but as
the heaving of pain.

In hindsight, I realize that Pamela could see structures in Constance’s language
to which I was then blind. Whether she knew the names for the figures involved or
not makes absolutely no difference: she recognized the structures and that is what
matters. An acting coach must decide what sorts of help an actor needs in a specific
scene. Sometimes explicit reference to figures will be helpful; sometimes it will not.
Part of a skilled coach’s gift is to know the difference. I noted earlier that it would be
unhelpful to speak of epizeuxis to an actor playing Lear, but a coach who recognizes
the connection between epizeuxis and breathing and howling might guide an actor
to use all the air he has on each separate utterance of the word: “Howl (/ /) howl
(/ /) howl (/ /)”. The examples I have provided here are extreme, for both
Constance and Lear are in anguish. In less tragic scenes, the relationship between
breath patterns and certain figures are bound to be more subtle. I do not know how
numerous these relationships are: that research must be done in a rehearsal room
rather than a library.

My own personal discovery of the connection between figures and feelings is far
from new: the nature of the discovery makes it feel like a private one, but many
others have experienced, and tried to describe, this connection. While reading the
works of rhetoricians, I often hear intimations of the breath/feeling/figure
connection I have been describing. Rhetoric manuals are full of statements about the
direct connection between figures and emotions; indeed, the emotional impact of figures—on speaker and listeners alike—is one of the reasons their use is encouraged. In Classical Rhetoric in English Poetry (1970), Brian Vickers surveys ancient and Renaissance perceptions of the relationship between emotions and rhetorical figures, and his observations are helpful as we consider rhetorical training for actors.20 Vickers writes: “it will be my contention that all rhetorical figures are in fact ‘modes of expression of feeling in language’” (95). Certainly this contention is supported by many of the rhetoricians he examines. As Vickers explains, Cicero demonstrates the emotional impact of figures in his orations, but he does not devote much space in his rhetoric manuals to explaining the nature of this impact. Quintilian and Longinus, on the other hand, devote a great deal of attention to the connection between figures and emotions. When writing of “the intensity of [Longinus’s] perception that the rhetorical figures are channels of emotional expression”, Vickers states:

Longinus makes afresh the discovery that the schemes and tropes are basically stylizations or records of man’s natural emotional behaviour as expressed in language, which when properly applied form the best stylistic means of re-creating the details of human emotion in literature. In those words of E.H. Gombrich that form an epigraph to [Longinus’s On The Sublime], “In classical writings on rhetoric we have perhaps the most careful analysis of any expressive medium ever undertaken”.

(105)

Later, when summarizing the attention paid by Renaissance rhetoricians to the emotional content of figures, Vickers writes:

The Renaissance idea of the functional organic nature of rhetoric is formulated most clearly by Puttenham, but is fully operative in Peacham and Hoskins. Given that both classical rhetoricians and the leading contemporary theorists affirmed the imaginative power of rhetoric, it is hardly likely that an educated Elizabethan would have regarded the figures as “dry formulae”. It must be agreed that the English Renaissance developed a remarkably perceptive and organic theory of style and of the emotional-psychological function of the figures, one which in my view improves even on that of Longinus and Quintilian. If theirs was “the most careful analysis of
any expressive medium ever undertaken”, this was even more sensitive to its literary value, and to its importance for the practising poet.

(115)

For practising poet and practising actor alike, the emotional-psychological function of rhetorical figures is well worth exploring.

Conclusion

Actors may be suspicious of the word “rhetoric”, but as they begin to recognize the usefulness of rhetorical training, I believe they will be eager to acquire the knowledge that served Shakespeare and his fellow actors so well. The difficulty of rhetorical training is manageable as long as the desire for it is strong. With his characteristic eloquence, Quintilian explains:

... the difficulty of acquiring [the requisites of eloquence] may deter some from the study and make them despair before they attempt it. But let such [ladies and] gentlemen, in the first place, examine the vast extent of the human understanding, and what vast power there is in a willing mind. (XII.xi.9-10)

The biggest impediment to twentieth-century actors’ ability to learn rhetoric is not difficulty of study, but distrust born of fear: fear of “an over-educated response to words” (Berry 22). Fearing that an intellectual approach to a text will inhibit an actor’s instincts, acting coaches may tell actors: “Stop thinking. Get beyond the words. It’s not the words that count, it’s the behavior” (Linklater 6). Trained in a system that tends to treat intellect and instinct as binary opposites, “Method actors” may be wary of approaches to acting that privilege text over subtext.

Like the word “rhetoric”, the word “poetry” is shunned in rehearsals by actors who do not want to think too much about words as words. “Poetic. Dread word
indeed," says John Barton (22), and actors who fear the words "poetry" and "rhetoric" may also fear the word "Shakespeare". Rodenburg notes that many of the people she works with "say that they cannot speak Shakespeare. They claim they are not educated enough, worthy enough or 'intelligent' enough" (44). Barton addresses the significance of actors' fear of Shakespeare when he writes:

More at ease: that is the crux. . . I am sure that the greatest obstacle an actor has to overcome with Shakespeare's verse is simply fear. Fear that it is all too difficult and that he can never master it. This fear seems to me quite natural and understandable. Yet, as is the way with fear, it often leads to an actor becoming hostile or defensive. And so he rationalizes his fear by saying that if he worries about the verse he will become unreal and unspontaneous. He perhaps points to other actors who do care about the verse and says, "Look how unreal they are". The answer probably is that they are not unreal because of the verse but because they have fallen into the trap of playing qualities rather than intentions. Or maybe they are not very good actors. . . So how can that fear be eased? In rehearsal it is often too late. (104)

Barton's words are as applicable to actors' attitudes toward rhetoric as they are to attitudes toward verse. Ironically, even as Barton encourages actors to overcome their fear, and to trust Shakespeare's language, he perpetuates a fear of the very language training that Shakespeare trusted. Instead of urging actors to have fun in their rhetorical explorations—to play with the tongue-twisting names of rhetorical figures, and use them or not as inclined—he shies away from rhetorical words and thereby reinforces the notion that such words should be feared. Words like "elision" and "antithesis" are described as "learned" and therefore "bad" (Barton 39,55). In being told to avoid "sounding rhetorical" (Berry 27), actors learn to interpret "rhetorical" as another "bad" word. Earlier in this chapter, I stated my belief that the best preparation for Shakespearean actors is training that integrates physical, psychological, vocal, and rhetorical work. Barton, Berry, Linklater, and Rodenburg are providing this sort of training, but, ironically, the rhetorical components of their teachings are often "hidden" in subtext. In the twentieth century, people have
become so “word-shy” (Rodenburg 15) that frightening words like “rhetoric” must be avoided even by voice teachers.

I suspect that children and experienced actors may be more receptive to rhetorical training than young actors. Children “seize [words] with gusto”, as Rodenburg says (10). They are naturally playful with language, experiment without judging, and adopt or ignore words as it pleases them to do so. Experienced actors, who have the confidence necessary to experiment, also have the judgement to know how best to use rhetoric when working on specific characters. Whenever actors are given the chance to begin rhetorical training, they should embrace that chance, for familiarity helps to conquer fear, and fear—not rhetoric—is what restrains creativity. Shakespeare had no fear of rhetoric. Indeed, he was an intrepid rhetorician, and actors who wish to speak his words must somehow come to terms with this fact, for a Shakespearean actor afraid of rhetoric, like an acrobat afraid of heights, will find himself ill-equipped for the job.

I would like to close with an invitation. I invite all of us who work with Shakespeare’s words—whether we work with them as scholars, teachers, students, actors, or directors—to reconsider our response to the word “rhetoric”. In the twentieth century, we have learned to regard “rhetoric” as a bad word, but, in the sixteenth century, “rhetoric” was a much-loved word indeed. Rhetorical training was admired and sought after not just by academics but by poets, lawyers, teachers, preachers, and diplomats: in short, rhetorical training was sought by every sort of professional wordsmith. The time has come to reclaim rhetoric, and perhaps a good place to start is with the words of Susenbrotus. Susenbrotus’s Epitome is a systematic presentation of 132 tropes and schemes. It was the standard textbook used in Elizabethan grammar-school classrooms to introduce children to rhetorical figures, and it is one of the books most likely to have introduced the young William Shakespeare to these devices. In his Preface to the Epitome, dated March 5, 1541,
Susenbrotus describes the great promise of rhetorical study as he invites his young readers to embark on their study with enthusiasm. I leave you with his words, dedicated to sixteenth-century schoolchildren and to us, his too-long “absent pupils”:

It is the duty of a good preceptor, o youth desirous of letters, that in interpreting authors he pursue not only the etymology and the simple syntax of the words... but also that he... fully point out the artifices both grammatical and rhetorical which contribute not a little to the understanding correctly authors both profane and sacred, so that thence they may be able the more easily to understand the mind of the author who is being read. For whosoever pass over, neglect, and contemn these artifices—I refer to tropes and schemes which must especially be pointed out while expounding... these act exactly like those who fight after the fashion of the Andabatae and in the same way attempt to teach one to hit some mark with closed eyes. I, indeed, that I might guard against this, while reading (lecturing) have pointed out as with the finger the ornaments of this kind of language to you and my other former pupils to the very best of my abilities... so that the sense of that which was being read might be the more certainly and without obscurity perceived by you, and at the same time you might have formulas for writing and speaking which could be imitated in habitual use. ... This Epitome therefore accept with that mind which I have dedicated it to you as well as also to absent pupils, that is with a joyful, candid and benevolent [one]. Receive it, as they say, with outstretched hands, read it, reread it, and inscribe it in your mind, then put to the use of writing and speaking, since besides (as I have frequently taught you) without meditation and use, every art is void of all utility whatever. Which if you do, without doubt the doors of the Muses will be opened for you.
Notes

1 Bertram Joseph, *Acting Shakespeare*, 83-4. References to "Joseph" in this study are always to Sister Miriam Joseph. When referring to the work of Bertram Joseph, his name is given in full.


4 Berry describes Method acting as follows:

   I would like to look back for a moment at the forties and fifties when styles of acting changed quitely radically. In the US it was the new realism of the writing of Williams, Miller and Oedts, among others, which started the movement of change. This coincided with a new impulse and style of acting which grew out of the Group Theatre, with great directors and teachers such as Berghof, Kazan, and Clurman; and from this movement came the strong film actors Brando and Malden and so on. The acting style, as we all know, was labelled Method acting, and this was the American version of Stanislawsky's acting philosophy. The accent was on finding a character, and they developed very thorough techniques to explore the physical and psychological make-up of a character—the objectives, motivation, sense memory—everything which contributed to an intensified life within the fourth wall. So in a sense, to be verbally explicit was the least important consideration. (42)

5 The words "splendid and necessary rhetoric" come from Trevor Nunn's preface to John Barton's *Playing Shakespeare*. While writing of the experience of co-directing Henry V with Barton, Nunn provides a perfect example of the seemingly "natural" performance that can result from good rhetorical guidance in rehearsal:

   I had always thought of Henry V as a role full of splendid and necessary rhetoric. Under John's direction the mighty "set speech" we know as Crispin's Day, for example, became the spontaneous, almost desperately improvised attempt by a young leader to hold the morale of his men together... and instead of there being any sense that the actor was delivering a previously written text, Ian Holm, as Henry, thought and discovered those words out of the situation and of his character. Every clue of where to breathe, what to stress, when to run on, what to throw away was there in the text, if only like John you knew what to look for. But the poetry was not an end in itself. The words became necessary. It wasn't verse speaking. It was acting. (ii)

6 When Henry V is insulted by the Dauphin's gift of tennis balls, Henry responds with a frightening use of antanaclasis:

   ... tell the pleasant prince this mock of his
   Hath turn'd his balls to gun-stones; and his soul
Shall stand sore charged for the wasteful vengeance
That shall fly with them: for many a thousand widows
Shall this his mock mock out of their dear husbands;
Mock mothers from their sons, mock castles down . . .

(Henry V, 1.2.281-286)

In writing of the antanaclasis of the word "mock" in this passage, Bertram Joseph notes, "each repetition of the word, when given with meaning, comes as a fresh blow, not unlike the sound of a tennis-ball when it is struck" (Acting Shakespeare 4).

7 Some of the other characters whose metarhetorical awareness warrants extensive actor attention include the following: Speed and Proteus in Two Gentlemen; Petruchio, Tranio, and Katherina in Shrew; Jaques in As You Like It; Beatrice and Benedict in Much Ado; Ulysses in Troilus and Cressida; Helen in All's Well; Isabella in Measure for Measure; and virtually anyone who sets foot on stage in Love's Labour's Lost.

8 In his article entitled "The Letter of the Law (III.iii-v:IV.i)," The Merchant of Venice: Critical Essays, ed. Thomas Wheeler (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1991) 79-101, A.D. Moody argues that Portia plans to destroy Shylock completely and that she extends that trial in order "to lull Shylock into a false trust in the law . . . to the end not simply of saving Antonio, but of putting Shylock at the mercy of his enemies. There is nowhere any hint of Mercy" (84). Such conduct, as Moody points out, makes Portia as guilty as Shylock is of "mercenary vengefulness".

9 In his article entitled "The Problem of Shylock," The Merchant of Venice: Critical Essays, ed. Thomas Wheeler (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1991) 293-313, Bill Overton disagrees with Cusack's reading of Portia's motives in this scene, for he claims "such a reading is inconsistent both with the terms of Portia's speech, in which mercy is absolute and unconditional, and with her refusal to intercede at the end" (307). I disagree with Overton's assessment. In a qualitative case, such as Antonio's, questions are raised regarding the relationship between mercy and justice as a means of determining the nature of justice in each case. Portia does not contradict herself here: from the beginning to the end of the scene, she seeks justice for both parties. The job of seeking justice in a qualitative case includes raising questions about the quality of mercy.


11 In a recent article, Keir Elam provides a detailed analysis of the significance of Viola's "as an eunuch" speech: a speech which Elam regards as "the particular site of [a] meeting or clash between different kinds of historicity". See, Keir Elam, "The Fertile Eunuch: Twelfth Night, Early Modern Intercourse, and the Fruits of Castration." Shakespeare Quarterly 47.1 (1996): 1-36.

12 John Barton notes that, when working on Richard II, "it was necessary to bring out points about the verse all the time. Mainly because the characters in the play are consciously using rhetoric as characters" (45).

13 Baldwin II: 1.

14 Puttenham bxxv.

15 Many Elizabethans' first exposure to plays came through the plays performed at school for the explicit purpose of providing students with "training in rhetorical delivery", and thus an unspoken connection between theatrical and rhetorical training may also have been taken for granted. For more information on plays as exercises in rhetorical delivery for Elizabethan schoolchildren, see Bertram Joseph, Elizabethan Acting (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1951) 8-14.
16 The figures mentioned by Rodenburg include: alliteration, anacoluthon (a sudden change in direction in the middle of a speech), antithesis, assonance, circumlocution (a wordy, roundabout way of saying something quite simple), climax ('when we speak heightened language the words ascend step by step towards a climax or payoff'. [It should be noted that the figure she is describing here is not actually climax, but auxesis]), consonance, echoism (when words consciously 'echo' specific sounds for the listener), emphasis, euphony (sounding good - we make harmony with words when we stress the long vowels and semi-vowels glides), onomatopoeia, and puns (160-70).

17 When anadiplosis is continued through more than two clauses, it is known as the figure climax.

18 In addition to these exercises that draw attention to the physical shape of the words, Berry provides a wonderful range of exercises which she introduces as follows: "most of the exercises are to do with putting your concentration on something outside yourself, which then frees your own responses, out of which you discover what you are after" (140).

19 Acting coaches have different methods of helping actors to find a character's breath patterns. Some suggest following punctuation marks in certain editions. Neil Freeman, for example, encourages actors to work with the punctuation found in the First Folio edition of Shakespeare's plays. (For more information, see Neil Freeman, Shakespeare's First Texts Vancouver: Folio Scripts, 1994.) I believe that an alertness to rhetorical figures helps us to find the structures inherent in the text without recourse to punctuation.

20 Vickers devotes a chapter of Classical Rhetoric in English Poetry to "The Functions of Rhetorical Figures", and one third of this chapter is subtitled "The Theory of Rhetorical Figures: Psychology and Emotion" (93-121).

21 I must confess to an inconsistency here. Throughout this study, all references to Quintilian's Institutio Oratoria are to H.E. Butler's translation. In this instance alone, I quote from W. Guthrie's translation because I am so fond of the phrase "what vast power there is in a willing mind" (452). Butler's translation of this line, for consistency's sake, is as follows: "how great are the powers of the mind of man and how astonishing its capacity for carrying its desires into execution".

22 For more information on the relative merits of emphasizing text or subtext in the work of specific playwrights, see Rodenburg, 210-54. I am indebted to Laurin Mann and Anna Migliarisi for their help in recognizing the opposition of intellect and instinct in early Method training: an opposition that is less emphasized by current teachers of the Method, who tend to recognize the need for some specific work on text.

23 In the attempt to make the practical concept denoted by the word "antithesis" accessible to modern actors, Barton suggests it might be better to talk of "setting the word against the word" (55). Here we see at work the phenomenon I described in the introduction: each generation of rhetoricians (or speech teachers) is tempted to rename the figures in their readers' vernacular in order to make these useful devices accessible to a new generation of speakers.

24 As Baldwin notes, Susenbrotus's Epitome is mentioned in the statutes and treatises of the latter half of the century. My single greatest disappointment in preparing this thesis, was that I was unable to find a copy of Susenbrotus's work. I am familiar with the figures he taught because several of the English rhetoricians copy him extensively, but his Epitome has never been translated in full, and thus I know his work only through his adapters. For more information on the importance of Susenbrotus's work, see Baldwin (II: 138-75).

25 As quoted in, and translated by, Baldwin, II: 139-40.
Glossary of Rhetorical Terms

This glossary contains references to the devices used in this study. It contains brief definitions for ease of access. Terms are listed in alphabetical order according to the name used for the device in this study. For easily accessed longer definitions of the devices, in a list which also refers to the various names of each device, see Richard Lanham’s A Handlist of Rhetorical Terms, 2nd ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991). Unless otherwise indicated, all definitions listed in this glossary have come directly from Sister Miriam Joseph’s Shakespeare’s Use of the Arts of Language (New York: Columbia UP, 1947). She, in turn, took many of her definitions directly from Peacham or Puttenham. The names of familiar figures and tropes (such as alliteration and metaphor) are listed here to indicate their figurative status, but no definitions have been provided for these well known devices.

acyron - (vice) the use of a word repugnant or contrary to what is meant

alliteration

amphibology - (vice) ambiguity of grammatical structure, often occasioned by mispunctuation

anadiplosis - the repetition of the last word of one clause or sentence at the beginning of the next

anamnesis - a recital of matters past, most often of woes or injuries

anaphora - beginning a series of clauses with the same word

antanaclasis - (pun) a repeating words shifts from one of its meanings to another

anthimeria - one part of speech is substituted for another

antimetabole - akin to logical conversion in that it repeats words in converse order

antisagoge - joins to a precept a promise of reward and to its violation, punishment

antithesis - sets contraries in opposition to give greater perspicuity by contrast

antonomasia - has two forms: the first substitutes a proper name for a quality associated with it, and the second substitutes a descriptive phrase for a proper name

apphaeresis - omitting a syllable at the beginning of a word

apocope - omitting a syllable at the end of a word
aporia - a doubting or deliberating with oneself

apostrophe - a turning of speech from the persons previously addressed to another, sometimes to a thing or an abstraction personified

aschematistion - This term can apply either to the absence of figurative language or to the unskilful use of figures.

asphalia - the offer of surety for another

asteismus - (pun) a figure of reply in which the answerer catches a certain word and throws it back to the first speaker with an unexpected twist

asynedeton - the omission of conjunctions between clauses or phrases

auxesis - arranges items in a sequence of increasing force

barbarismus - (vice) mispronunciation of words

bomphiologia - (vice) bombastic speech

brachylogia - the omission of conjunctions between words

cacosyntheton - (vice) This term is used to mean both foul speech and objectionable word order.

cacozelia - (vice) This term is used to mean both affected diction and the ignorant misapplication of high-sounding words (malapropism)

catacosmesis - the ordering of words from greatest to least in dignity

characterismus - the description of body or mind

chronographia - the description of times

commoration - whereby one seeks to win an argument by continually coming back to one's strongest point

concessio - whereby the speaker grants a point which hurts the adversary to whom it is granted

congeries - which heaps together words of different meanings
correctio - also known as epanorthosis - the correction of a word or phrase used previously (Lanham)

diacope - the repetition of a word with one or more between, usually in exclamation (The vehement quality of this figure makes it more like epizeuxis than like ploce.)

dialogismus - the framing of speech suitable to the person speaking

distinction - a figure whereby the ambiguity of words is taken away

eclipse - the omission of a word that can be easily understood in context

echphonesis - exclamation

emphasis - gives prominence to a quality or trait by conceiving it as constituting the very substance in which it inheres. Also known as signification, emphasis is a complex term with more than one meaning. For more information of the various meanings ascribed to the term emphasis, see Lanham 138-140.

enallage - the deliberate use of one case, person, gender, number, tense, or mood for another

encomium - high praise and commendation of a person or thing by extolling the inherent qualities or adjuncts

enthymeme - an abridged syllogism. Renaissance rhetoricians defined the figure enthymeme as a reason given to things contrary, thus limiting it to a particular kind of enthymeme, whereas the logicians conceived the term more broadly. For more information on the various meanings ascribed to the term enthymeme, see Joseph 178-79, and Lanham 65-6.

enumeratio - divides a subject into its adjuncts, a cause into its effects, an antecedent into its consequences

epanalepsis - the repetition at the end of a clause or sentence of the word with which it begins

epenthesis - adding a syllable in the middle of a word

epergesis - interrupts by interposing words in apposition as an added interpretation

epexegesis - adding words or phrases to further clarify or specify a statement already made (Lanham)
epimone - the repetition of the same point in the same words, somewhat in the manner of a refrain

epiphonema - an epigrammatic summary which gathers into a pithy, sententious utterance what has preceded

epistrophe - ending a series of clauses with the same word

epithet - attributes to a person or thing a quality by way of addition

epizeuxis - the repetition of words with none in between

erotema - a rhetorical question

ethopoeia - the description of natural propensities, manners and affections, such as seeking to win favour by flattery

euche - a vow or oath to keep a promise

eustathia - a pledge of constancy

eutrepismus - a figure of division which numbers and orders the parts under consideration

heterogenium - the vice of answering something utterly irrelevant to what is asked

homiologia - (a vice) tedious and inane repetition

homoioteleuton - like endings. For a discussion of the confusion between homoioteleuton and homoiophtoton, see Lanham 83-84.

hypallage - perverts the sense by shifting the application of words

hyperbole - to exaggerate the greatness or the smallness of things by an excessive similitude

hypophora - asking questions and immediately answering them (Lanham)

hypotyposis, or enargia - the generic name given to figures of lively description or counterfeit representation

hysteron proteron - a disorder of time whereby that which happens first is mentioned second

irony
inter se pugnatia - points out discrepancy between theory and practice

isocolon - the use of phrases of approximately equal length and corresponding structure. (Lanham 93). Some rhetoricians list isocolon and parison as two separate figures while others use the terms isocolon, parison, and compar to mean the same thing.

meiosis - belittles, often through a trope of one word

mempsis - a complaint against injuries and a craving for redress

metabasis - a figure of transition, telling what has been said and what is to follow

metalepsis - attributes a present effect to a remote cause

metaphor

metonomy - "a change of name used four ways" (Peacham 19): cause for effect, effect for cause, subject for adjunct, adjunct for subject. For more information on this complicated trope, see Lanham 102.

mimesis - the imitation of gesture, pronunciation, utterance

optatio - an ardent wish or prayer

orcos - an oath affirming that one speaks the truth

oxymoron - (known to Renaissance rhetoricians as synoeciosis) - a composition of contraries, stimulates attention by the seeming incompatibility of the terms it unites

paeanismus - expresses an exuberance of joy

paragoge - adding a syllable at the end of a word

paralipsis - a figure which, while pretending to pass over a matter, tells it most effectively

paronomasia - (pun) differs from antanaclasis in that the words repeated are nearly but not precisely alike in sound

partitio - divides a whole into its parts

perissologia, or macrologia - (vice) the addition of a superfluous clause which adds nothing to the meaning
parelcon - (vice) the addition of a superfluous word

parenthesis - the interruption of a sentence by interposing words

parrhesia - by which one is humbly respectful or, if necessity demands, courageously outspoken in addressing those whom one ought to reverence or fear on a matter which concerns them

periergia - (vice) a vice not so much of superfluity of words as of overlabour to seem fine and eloquent, especially in a slight matter

pleonasmus - (vice) the needless telling of what is already understood

ploce - "the speedie iteration of one word with some little intermission" (Puttenham). All rhetoricians acknowledge that the frequent repetition of a word is a figure, but there is inconsistency in the naming of this device. Puttenham calls it ploce while others call it epanodos or traductio. Peacham calls the repetition of a common word diaphora and reserves the name ploce for the repetition of a proper name.

polyptoton - the repetition of words derived from the same root

polysyndeton - the use of a conjunction between each clause or phrase

pragmatographia - the vivid description of an action or event

prosopographia - the lively description of a person

prosopopoëia - the attribution of human qualities to dumb or inanimate creatures (personification)

prosthenesis - adding a syllable at the beginning of a word

sarcasmus - an open mock

simile

solecismus - (vice) the ignorant misuse of cases, genders, or tenses

soraismus - (vice) the mingling of sundry languages ignorantly or affectedly

sylepsis - This term has two distinct meanings. As a form of pun, it is the use of a word having simultaneously two different meanings, although it is not repeated. The same term is also used, however, to refer to a grammatical figure in which a
verb, expressed but once, lacks grammatical congruence with at least one subject with which it is understood.

symploce - the combination of anaphora and epistrophe

syncope - omitting a syllable in the middle of a word

synecdoche - a trope which heightens meaning by substituting genus for species, species for genus, part for whole, whole for part

tapinosis - (vice) the use of a base word which diminishes the dignity of a person or thing

tautologia - (vice) vain repetition of the same idea

teichoscopia - which consists of a character onstage describing, to the audience or to another character, an event going on onstage. For further information on teichoscopia, see Patrice Pavis, Dictionnaire du théâtre: termes et concepts de l’analyse théâtrale, Editions sociales, Paris, 2nd edition, 1987, P.383.

topographia - the description of places

topothesia - the description of imaginary places

zeugma - one verb serving a number of clauses
APPENDIX I
The figure classifications mentioned in the Introduction are listed here with representative examples of each category of devices given in brackets. The number of each type of device treated in Peacham's The Garden of Eloquence (1593) is also in brackets. Although Peacham lists grammatical figures in the 1577 edition of his book, in the 1593 edition, he omits grammatical figures and greatly increases his emphasis on rhetorical figures. He lists eight types of figures of thought, only three of which are listed here. The others include Figures of Moderation, of Consultation, of Permission, of Distribution, and of Collection.
Appendix 2

Part I

This list of explicit references to figure names or other rhetorical terms in Shakespeare’s comedies is intended to be representative rather than complete. The figures that are named most frequently, such as proverb, rhyme (homoiooteleuton) and oath in particular, appear much more often in the plays than in this list.

**Comedy of Errors** - proverb 3.1.51; fable 4.4.67; copy 5.1.56.

**Two Gents** - figure 21130; parable 2.5.33; vice 3.1.275; proverb 3.1.292.

**Shrew** - rhetoric 1.1.35; rope tricks 1.2.109; figure 1.2.110; simile 5.2.54.

**Dream** - oath 1.1.243; riddles 2.2.59; translated 3.2.32; partition 5.1.165.

**LLL** - oath 1.1.19; epitheton 1.2.13; example (exemplum) 1.2.111; digression (digressio) 1.2.111; rhetoric 2.1.228; rhetoric 3.1.60; oath 4.3.247; enigma 3.1.68; comparison (analogy) 4.1.78; epithet 4.2.8; allusion 4.2.41; figures 4.2.65; invention 4.2.124; imitari 4.2.124; rhetoric 4.3.58; rhetoric 4.3.236; paradox 4.3.251; epithet 5.1.15; figure 5.1.58; fable 5.1.5; epithet 5.2.171; hyperbole 5.2.407; figures 5.2.408.

**Merchant** - sentences (sententia) 1.2.10; proverb 2.2.143; proverb 2.5.54.

**Merry Wives** - riddles 1.1.180; proverb 3.1.96; proverb 3.5.138; dilemma 4.5.78; oath 4.1.225.

**Much Ado** - orthography 2.3.18; oath 2.3.25; proverb 5.1.219; division 5.1.219; invention 5.1.267; rhyme 5.2.36; epithet 5.2.65; enigmatical 5.4.27.

**As You Like It** - oath 1.2.19; simile 2.1.45; wise saws (maxims) 2.7.150; instance 3.2.49; rhyme 3.2.92; oath 4.1.171; invention 4.3.29; figure in rhetoric 5.1.40; sententious 5.4.61.

**Twelfth Night** - metaphor 1.3.67; syllogism 1.5.45; example 2.5.36; riddle 2.5.104; hyperbolical 4.2.26.

**Troilus and Cressida** - maxim 1.2.278; hyperbole 1.3.160; paradox 1.3.183; comparison 1.3.193; pun 2.1.38; distinction 3.2.25; oath 3.2.39; simile 3.2.166.

**All’s Well** - riddle 1.3.217; dilemma 3.6.75; distinction 4.5.27; metaphor 5.2.12; equivocal 5.3.250; riddle 5.3.303.

**Measure for Measure** - decorum 1.3.31; invention 2.4.3; oath 3.1.216; riddle 3.1.484.
Part II

The following list provides examples of some of the indirect, but precise, references to figures or to other rhetorical terms made by Shakespeare’s comic characters. In some cases, the characters are describing their own use of a figure, but, in most cases, they are commenting on a figure they have just heard in another character’s words. The figure acknowledged in each case is listed in brackets. Like the list above, this list is intended to be representative rather than complete.

The Comedy of Errors - “Stop in your wind, sir” (to Dromio’s climax) 1.2.53; self-conscious logical disputation 2.2.75-100.

Two Gentlemen - “his complaining names” (epithet) 1.2.125; “A pretty period” (aposiopesis) 2.1.101; “A fine volley of words, gentlemen, and quickly shot off” (asteismus) 2.4.30; “Why, Val, what braggartism is this?” (hyperbole) 2.4.157.

Shrew - “A title for a maid, of all titles the worst” (epithet) 1.2.128; Petruchio’s plan to use heterogenium with Kate 2.1.169-189; “That feeds’t me with the very name of meat” (ploce) 4.3.32; [these quick-witted folk] “butt together well” (asteismus) 5.2.39.

Dream - “‘Merry’ and ‘tragical’? ‘Tedious’ and ‘brief’?—/ That is, hot ice and wondrous strange black snow.” (oxymoron) 5.1.58-60; “This fellow doth not stand upon points” (amphibologia) 5.1.118; “Not so my lord, for his valour cannot carry his discretion, and the fox carries the goose” (Demetrius and Theseus discuss the aptness of their analogy) 230-242.

LLL - This play includes many indirect references to figures, and many metarhetorical conversations. Since these conversations are too long and too numerous to list here, I summarize them instead of quoting them in full, and I make no attempt to list them all. Here are a few representative examples: Biron mimics the isocolon and rhyme of the others 1.1.97; the Princess makes her distrust of rhetoric clear 2.1.13-19; the women comment on the men’s rhetorical skill 2.1.49-76; the Princess comments on the others’ encomnium 2.1.78-79; Rosaline chides Biron for asking a rhetorical question 2.1.115; Armado and Moth play one of their many metarhetorical games 3.1.36-37; Moth and Armado’s conversation takes the form of a rhetoric lesson 3.1.78-95; a metarhetorical jousting match between Boyet and the women 4.1.107-138; “I will something affect the letter, for it argues facility” (alliteration) 4.2.54; Biron’s soliloquy is aporia formally structured as a debate 4.3.1-119; “They have been at a great feast of languages and stolen the scraps” (soraismus) 5.1.35-36; “Well bandied both, a set of wit well played” (antanaclasis) 5.2.29; a description of mimesis as Boyet tells of Moth’s training in delivery 5.2.98-102; “Speak to be understood”—the Princess’s rhetorical motto 5.2.294; “Well said, old mocker (reference to asteismus) 5.2.543; “Well followed: Judas was hanged on an elder” (asteismus) 5.2.599; Throughout Holofernes’ performance in “The Nine
Worthies” the men taunt him with metarhetorical jibes (5.2.581-622) which are much more aggressive than those found in the courtiers’ metarhetorical responses to “Pyramus and Thisbe” in Dream.

Merchant - “. . . as thou namest them, I will describe them” (characterismus) 1.2.35-36; the honest Antonio—O that I had a title good enough to keep his name company” (epithet) 3.1.13-14; “How every fool can play upon the word” (paronomasia) 3.5.40; “Till thou canst rail the seal from off my bond/ Thou but offend’st thy lungs to speak so loud”. This is Shylock’s response to Graziano’s argumentum ad hominem-an informal (or material) fallacy which disparages the character of the speaker, instead of attacking his arguments. 4.1.138-141.

Merry Wives - “What phrase is this? ‘He hears with ears’?” (pleonasmus) 1.1.35-36; “the fall is in the ‘ord ‘dissolutely’” (cacoelia) 1.1.232-33; “Terms! Names!” (epithet) 2.2.280; a whole scene based on Lily’s Latin grammar 4.1.13-78; ‘. . . woo her in good English” (solecism) 5.5.133; “‘Seese and ‘putter’” (barbarismus) 5.5.141.

Much Ado - “You are a rare parrot-teacher” (asteismus) 1.1.135; “he was wont to speak plain. . . now is he turned orthography. His words are a very fantastical banquet” (one of several references in the play to the effect of love on a speaker’s rhetorical style) 2.3.18-22; “For a hawk, a horse, or a husband?” / “For the letter that begins them all—‘h’” (alliteration) 3.4.51-52; “Thou hast frightened the word out of his right sense, so forcible is thy wit” (asteismus) 5.2.55-56.

As You Like It - “But turning these jests out of service, let us talk in good earnest” (reference to previous fun with puns) 1.3.24-25; “. . . had they marked him/ In parcels as I did” (partitio) 3.5.125-126; “. . . and in these degrees have they made a pair of stairs to marriage” (climax) 5.2.35-37.

Twelfth Night - “Apt, in good faith, very apt” (asteismus) 1.5.24; “I will on with my speech in your praise” (encomium) 1.5.181; “A sentence is but a chev’rel glove to a good wit, how quickly the wrong side may be turned outward” (antimetabole) 3.1.11-15; “with some excellent jests, fire-new from the mint, you should have banged the youth into dumbness” (references to the rhetorical fashion for coining new words) 3.2.20; “We’ll whisper o’er a couplet or two of most sage saws” (maxim) 3.4.369; “More than I love these eyes, more than my life,/ More by all mores than e’er I shall love wife (a comment on her own anaphora) 5.1.131-132.

Troilus and Cressida - “Breaks scurril jests,/ And with ridiculous and awkward action,/ Which, slanderer, he ‘imitation’ calls,/ He pageants us (cacosyntheton and mimesis) 1.3.147-150; As amply titled as Achilles is...” (epithet) 2.3.187; Hector notes it is impossible to use a figure of division 4.5.120-138.

All’s Well - “It must be a very plausive invention” 4.1.27; “Thou hast spoken all already” (the King’s response to Paroles’s paralipsis) 5.3.266.
Measure - “She hath a prosperous art/ When she will play with reason and discourse,/ And well she can persuade” (a description of Isabella’s rhetorical skill) 1.2.182-184; “Do you hear how he misplaces?” (one of several references to vices found at 2.1.50, 2.1.71, and 2.1.85); “What sayst thou to this tune, matter, and method?” (As N.W. Bawcutt states, in the note for this line, “these three terms can all have a rhetorical significance: ‘tune’ is the style or ‘tone’ of a discourse, ‘matter’ its subject-matter, and ‘method’ its order or disposition. Lucio’s sentence would thus mean ‘What do you reply to my way of putting it?’”) 3.1.315.
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