RHETORIC, LITERATURE, AND THE DISSOCIATION OF INVENTION

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Currently there is a strong sense within the English profession that the disciplines which occupy most of our working time exist in an antagonistic relation to one another. As Jim Corder puts it, "not everyone believes there is a sufficient connection between rhetoric and literary study to justify bringing the two terms together around the conjunction 'and.'"[1] If Corder is correct—and my impressions of heated discussion I've heard and overheard at recent professional meetings suggest that he is—the survival of the institutionalized study of both arts may be endangered.

As disciplines which are central to humanistic study, literature and rhetoric occupy a tenuous place in American education, since, as Florence Howe suggests, the humanities are seen by many Americans as "allegedly peripheral to a technological world." The humanities, on this view, are "useful only for 'self-improvement,' not essential to people's work, lives, and futures." And, Howe adds, we in the English profession "would be fools to deny that we have contributed to this view of the humanities by allowing, indeed encouraging, the separation of the teaching of literacy from the study of literature."[2] In short, the public, along with school administrators and professional guardians of the language, can, and do, blame the profession's emphasis on literature (that is, on "frills") for Americans' perceived illiteracy.

Of course the profession has begun to pay more attention to the teaching of composition than it formerly did, perhaps as a gesture towards our awareness of the practical bent of American culture, or, to put it more cynically, because instruction in writing is what

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students want. Literary study may become confined more and more to a small group of private schools, as literature teachers in state colleges and universities are forced to abandon their specialties in order to teach the courses for which there is heavy student demand—technical, practical, and creative writing.[3] And yet, because teachers of literature are being called on to teach courses for which they were not prepared, and because of the relative newness of the profession's commitment to composition as a coherent discipline, there still remains an appalling lack of awareness among English teachers that composition has a parent discipline which enjoys a long history as the center of humanistic study. Ignorance of the history and theory of rhetoric is as rife among teachers of composition as it is among literary specialists, a situation which fosters the impression among teachers, students, administrators and taxpayers that composition is a technique that exists in an intellectual vacuum. Writing is taught as though it were a skill which can be mastered by rote practice with a few handy formulae for structuring discourse, or, more recently, by mastery of a set of composing habits which can be counted on to produce viable discourse for any occasion.

Thus we find the profession divided not only along curricular lines, but poised, perhaps, on the brink of disintegration. While teachers of literature encounter diminishing demands for courses in their specialties, ill-prepared teachers of writing will teach that complex art as though it were a technology to be mastered in the same fashion that one masters skiing or cooking, and may find themselves as a consequence more at home in skill-oriented disciplines than in the colleges or departments that house humanistic study. Thus it seems that there is currently more urgent reason than ever to re-evaluate the relation of the disciplines that have, historically, sustained the academic field called "English," in order to determine a common ground from which we can defend ourselves against these possibilities.

Let me assert, for argument's sake, that the antagonism which exists between students of rhetoric and literature derives at least in part from a misunderstanding based on the disciplines' differing approaches to the act of writing. Rhetoricians take account of the procedural aspects of writing and speaking; that is, they are interested in theories of composing as well as in the products of that act. Thus classical rhetoricians named and studied the art of invention, the means whereby the rhetorical artist finds and shapes her material; and contemporary rhetoricians interest themselves in devising models of

the composing process as this occurs in both professional and student writers. Literary scholars, on the other hand, tend to ignore the process by which works of art get composed. Students of literature prefer to define the objects of their study as discrete, static, authoritative texts which may profitably be studied apart from consideration of the environment in which they come to be or are received. Susan Miller sees this distinction between the disciplines as one which governs two respective approaches to texts: in composition, the "text is assumed to be a realized possibility, one of many possibilities, not a privileged or 'special' work of art, whose authority is a given condition of its analysis. For composition, alternatives to this text are always in question, not automatically beyond speculation."[4]

The disinterest of literary scholars in poetic invention is grounded in nineteenth-century developments in literary theory, of course; that period's de-emphasis on invention in literary study (to which I will turn near the end of my argument) coincided with a similar disinterest in rhetorical invention during the same period. Historians of rhetoric have recounted the reasons for the loss of attention to rhetorical invention in the early modern period in some detail.[5] What is less well understood is that when Romantic critics abandoned the theory of poetic invention which had had currency since the classical era—I refer to *mimesis,* the art of imitation—their failure to offer a viable substitute may have had negative ramifications for the study of literature, and may have helped to bring about the state of affairs I outlined earlier. I will try to substantiate this conclusion by describing the classical theory of poetic invention at some length, partly in order to demonstrate how, on one model, at least, rhetoric and literature may draw theoretical and practical support from one another, and partly to show the shape that a theory of poetic invention might take.

II

Classical thinkers accounted for the creation of art in this way: the artist locates and studies some aspect of the world which is then literally re-presented in whatever medium the artist has chosen—paint, marble, or language. That is, the artist attempts to construct a replica of the thing itself which copies or at least resembles its original. Miming no doubt has preliterary origins in ritual or sympathetic

imitation of symbolically important persons, although Democritus says it originated in imitation of nature; singing, for instance, is done in imitation of birds.[6] While the theory plainly has a readier application to the visual arts than to poetry, it was nonetheless often used as an account of how works of poetic art get composed, as Aristotle's *Poetics* makes clear.

It is Aristotle's teacher, however, who manages to be at once the most influential classical expositor of mimetic theory at the same time as he uses it to condemn art. Plato claims that works of art are mimetic at a third remove, that is, they imitate objects which in turn are imitations of true reality, the Ideas. And, according to Plato, since art only imitates it has no substance or subject of its own; artists simply pretend to be informed on the matters they address, whether these be flute-playing, charioteering, or medicine. They have no knowledge of their own. Too, since the arts can only copy the appearance of things, they are deceptive.

> Then the mimetic art is far removed from truth, and this, it seems, is the reason why it can produce everything, because it touches or lays hold of only a small part of the object and that a phantom.
> (*Republic*, X, 598c)

In this the arts are the more dangerous the more accurately they seem to ape reality. Thus painters can depict bunches of grapes which will entice birds to peck futilely at the surface on which they are painted; skilled poets can represent the gods engaging in less than godly behavior and be believed by children; rhetoricians can make the worse seem the better case and be believed by just about everybody.

The thrust of this list of Platonic objections to art is to deprive it of its autonomy, reducing it to the status of a shadow or servant of the Real. On Plato's model, works of art are to be judged by standards which are external to its motivation or the creative processes that bring it about. The Platonic theory of art asks of it the questions that are appropriate to metaphysics: how true is it? What is its relation to being? Any metaphysical theory must posit a transcendental standard of some sort against which instances of the theory can be measured. As art historian Erwin Panofsky puts it, a metaphysical theory must presuppose a "'thing in itself,' with which the intellectual notion—be it mere reproduction or independent creation—can correspond;" however "the necessary correspondence between that which is 'given' and the cognition of it" must be guaranteed, and the

guarantee must have an ontological status that is prior to both.[7] In Plato's philosophy the guarantor is, of course, the Idea, a standard to which all human endeavor aspires.

Plato's goal seems to be to confine the world to abstract, universal forms, thus willingly sacrificing its individuality and uniqueness (Panofsky, 4). In the case of art, however, the Platonic model is often inappropriate: it is as though we shed the carver of Kachina dolls to look to the theorems of geometry as inspiration for the creation of his icons. Art defies the imposition of abstract standards in its celebration of originality and multiplicity; and this is especially true of the work of rhetorical artistry, which is intimately tied to the occasion of its utterance.

Plato, it appears, is trying to find an ordered and intelligible means of explaining the world in order to gain a measure of control over it. To assume the existence of a transcendental standard is also to assume hierarchies of value, hierarchies of ascending planes according to which worldly manifestations can be assessed by the degree to which they approach the standard posited as absolute value. That Plato has in mind something like the hierarchizing of the phenomenonal world according to its various appeals to the ranking of mental faculties is made apparent in *Republic,* X, 603ab:

> But further, that which puts its trust in measurement and reckoning must be the best part of the soul?
> Surely.
> Then that which opposes it must belong to the inferior elements of the soul.
> Necessarily.
> This, then, was what I wished to have agreed upon when I said that poetry, and in general the mimetic art, produces a product that is far removed from truth in the accomplishment of its task, and associates with the part in us that is remote from intelligence and is its companion and friend for no sound and true purpose.

Art, given its appeal to the senses or at best to the imaging faculty of the mind, is an inferior expression of the human representation of reality, opposed to that elicited by reason.

Jacques Derrida rationalizes the Platonic objection to art in this way: humans are unable to tolerate the loss of an originary reality against which to understand their place in the world. If, indeed, images of the real are to be accorded a status similar or equal to that of their source, confusion and dislocation result: "The reflection, the

image, the double, splits what is doubles. The origin of the speculation becomes a difference. What can look at itself is not one; and the law of the addition of the origin to its representation, of the thing to its image, is that one plus one makes at least three." Derrida writes further to acknowledge such a plurality is of necessity to abandon concepts of originary reality: "The historical usurpation and theoretical oddity that install the image within the rights of reality are determined as the *forgetting* of a simple origin."[8] We need hierarchical standards of measurement in order to assure ourselves that the world has a single, definable origin and an end that is capable of being anticipated. That artists can make images of the world reminds us, on the other hand, that addition, supplementation, fragmentation, and differentiation are possible, that the world, in sum, may not be the simple sphere we would like it to be.

Whether or not Aristotle set out to reclaim *mimesis* as a viable theory of art, his *Poetics* certainly opens that possibility. Aristotle begins his treatise on poetry by proposing to treat of the "art in itself." He then distinguishes the poetic and musical arts from other disciplines on the basis of their common ground as "modes of imitation." Aristotle's procedure here parallels that he uses in *Rhetoric,* where he begins by acknowledging the similarity of rhetoric and dialectic as arts of inquiry. I assume from this that Aristotle has opened both treatises in his habitual manner: that is, he defines the species under study by naming differences that distinguish it from other members of the same class. Rhetoric and dialectic differ from geometry in that they are probable rather than certain arts of investigation; poetry and music differ from rhetoric and dialectic in that they are modes of imitation. The crucial terms here are "arts" and "modes;" Aristotle is concerned in both treatises with *techne,* with making or bringing into being. In other words, the treatises deal with rhetorical and poetic composing. The Aristotlean move is to announce at the outset that he writes here not about essences but about processes.

Aristotle's second innovation in *Poetics* is to focus poetic *mimesis* on human nature, specifically on human action. The test of mimetic skill is not historical accuracy but instead the poet's adeptness at mimicking probable human behavior: "it is not the function of the poet to relate what has happened, but what may happen—what is possible according to the law of probability or necessity" *(Poetics,* X, 1451ab). Aristotle's notion of probability in this section of *Poetics* has more than a little in common with his discussion of the same feature in *Rhetoric:* he uses the concept of probability in both treatises to justify the aspiration of both poetry and rhetoric to the making of generally valid statements *(Rhetoric,* I, 1357b). It is, in fact, just the claim of probability to encompass a more universal or general truth than does history that enables later critics to confine discourse theory within metaphysics once again.[9] Sidney and Jonson, for example, justify poetry on the grounds that it is feigned history, from which men may gain moral instruction because it portrays not what is, but what ought to be. (Plato would be chagrined indeed to learn that his student's change in the focus of *mimesis* would later be used to validate the making of fiction.)

Aristotle's third important move in *Poetics* is to release poetry from external criteria of judgement. The phrase with which he opens the treatise—"art in itself"—seems to be a warning that readers are not to expect metaphysical speculation. In other words, the author of *Poetics*—and by extension of *Rhetoric*—assumes that arts are autonomous self-defining endeavors, that they may be classified and divided into parts like any other area of human activity. If I am correct in these comparisons, it follows that *mimesis* is to poetry what enthymeme, example, and maxim are to rhetoric; that is, *mimesis* governs the composing process of poets in the same way that the construction of enthymemes guides the rhetorician who looks for the available means of persuasion. That Aristotle saw the imitative relation as a process is indicated by a passage in *Metaphysics,* where he remarks that "the things that come to be are generated: some by nature, others, by art" (1032a). In fact, Harvey Goldstein argues persuasively that in the Aristotlean treatises on nature the word *"mimesis"* is always used in reference to the processes by which nature works: "The significant terms involved in the imitation doctrine are purposive making, organic shaping, informing appropriate matter for an end which is identifiable with the form . . . *mimesis* means that the method or process of art imitates the method or process of nature.[10] Aristotle explicitly rejects the Platonic notion that transcendental ideas are necessary to the creative process, writing that "it is evident, therefore, that there is no need of setting up an idea as an exemplar. . . . An agent or producer is adequate to account for the production and for the embodiment of the form in the matter" *(Metaphysics,* 1034a). The artist is the moving force who, like nature, liberates from a medium the potentiality inherent in it.

Thus Aristotle adroitly finesses the impact of the Platonic

charges against mimetic art. Art imitates nature, yes, but it does so procedurally rather than essentially. The critic does not ask about the truth of the work; instead she must judge the worth of a composition according to principles that are germane to the art in question. The principles that interest Aristotle in *Poetics* and *Rhetoric* are the processes through which discourse is made: these are *logos,* the construction of appropriate arguments (plot in poetry, proofs in rhetoric); *ethos,* construction of appropriate characters (the quality of the agents in poetry, of the speaker in rhetoric); and *pathos,* construction of devices that will secure the requisite effects *(catharsis* in poetry, persuasion in rhetoric). Aristotle generates these principles by examining the work of those who have been judged to be successful practitioners of the arts at hand, on the assumption that "it is possible to investigate the cause of their success; such an investigation, we shall all admit, performs the function of an art" *(Rhetoric,* I, 1354a).

The concept of *mimesis* was enlarged in the later classical period to include imitation not only of human action in the phenomenonal world but of the work of revered authors as well. The work of any master of words came to be regarded as part of a common heritage which was to be mined for its nuggets of traditional wisdom. The point, to paraphrase Isocrates, was not to say something new, but to treat a conventional subject better than anyone else had done.[11] This is not to say that the theory of imitation encouraged slavish copying; far from it. The artisan was to strive to perfect the presentation of an old theme through adding, changing, or omitting.

That great teacher, Quintilian, recommends that aspiring orators engage in intensive imitation in the hope that such activities will enhance the growth of whatever natural talent they bring to their work. He is, however, aware of the limitations of *mimesis:* "The greatest qualities of the orator are beyond all imitation, by which I mean, talent, invention, force, facility and all the qualities which are independent of art" *(Institutes,* X, 2, xi). Not all can hope to become Cicero: "whatever is like another object, must necessarily be inferior to the object of its imitation, just as the shadow is inferior to the substance." While Quintilian's language is reminiscent of Plato's, an important change has been rung on the Platonic theory of imitation in that the imitative ideal here is the work of a great rhetorical artist, rather than reality. Too, Quintilian is aware of the ease with which imitation can descend to the merely technical: "the models we select for imitation have a genuine and natural force, whereas all imitation

is artificial and moulded to a purpose which was not that of the original. This is the reason why declamations have less life and vigour than actual speeches." Nonetheless, imitation of the work of great authors formed the backbone of rhetorical education throughout the late Empire and early Middle Ages.

Like any sound critical theory, *mimesis* supplies a criterion for judging the value of works of art: these are good insofar as they accurately reproduce whatever is being imitated. *Mimesis* as critical theory also has the advantage of providing a rationale for literary invention. Classical artists were not thought to fabricate their material in our sense of "making" as creating wholly anew. Rather, the maker was said to invent—literally to "come upon" in Latin, to "find out" in Greek (*heurein*)—the material for his work, whether through a study of human nature or in the received canon of authors deemed worthy of imitation. The theory of *mimesis* thus accounts in part for the pedagogical strategies employed by ancient teachers of rhetoric, who insisted that their students not only read and interpret the great masters, but that they engage in ceaseless paraphrase and translation of those artists and works thought to be most worthwhile. The ubiquitous analogy made in classical literature between the artist and the bee clarifies the working of the inventive process that is *mimesis,* and serves also to illustrate its psychological affinity with rhetorical invention: "the artist first ranges widely to gain imaginative possession of his store, then laboriously reshapes it in accordance with the promptings of his genius, and finally gives it to the world quite transformed" (Fishe, 44). Rhetoricians will of course recognize in this account of literary invention the progress through *inventio, dispositio,* and *elocutio* that is made by the rhetorician as he prepares his discourse. The ancients' educational system must have fostered a communal awareness among the educated classes of an extensive canon of approved authors, works, and genres on which writers and speakers drew when the need to compose discourse arose. Indeed, the canon may have strengthened a sense of the mutual interests of rhetoric and poetic; Aristotle's examples of maxims in *Rhetoric,* for instance, are drawn chiefly from the literary works of Homer and Euripides.

Thus, if classical writers distinguish between rhetoric and poetic, it is on the ground that literature is a mimetic art. However, the two discursive arts share many linguistic resources, not the least of which are common inventional stores. Rhetoric may call upon *mimesis* when it utilizes the example as a means of persuasion, while the poet

who wishes to mime a speech will borrow from the principles of rhetoric.[12]

The Aristotlean theory of composition is an unstable compound, however successful it is as an escape from the strictures of Platonic metaphysics. *Mimesis techne* can degenerate into one or the other of its components, that is, into the idealism of Platonic *mimesis* or into the formalism that is interest in composition for its own sake. It assumes the former cast in Plotinus, whose treatment of the concept of intellectual beauty differs from Plato's theory of Ideas only insofar as Plotinus permits artists to be in touch with the ideal. On the Plotinian model the composer's idea can even surpass reality itself in beauty.[13] On the other hand, while Aristotle's concept of artistic imitation absorbs the metaphysical dimension of *mimesis* by translating imitation into a formal principle, its very enthronement of composition as an autonomous field makes possible the valorization of mere technique; that is, creativity can come to be associated with compliance with sets of conventional rules for forming discourse. The art theory of the Second Sophistic is notorious among historians of rhetoric because of the sterility that resulted from the period's reliance on extreme formalism, which produced, according to C. S. Baldwin, a tendency toward more "decoration and virtuosity."[14] Both the ideal and the formal versions of *mimesis techne* have been espoused during the literary history of the West; and it is to their modem manifestations that I wish to turn now.

III

Mimesis continued to be a viable theory of poetic invention through the Renaissance and beyond, into the eighteenth century.[15] But *mimesis,* at least overtly, went the way of most things classical with the advent of Romantic criticism. As early as 1759, Edward Young writes in his "Conjectures on Original Composition" that originals are fairer than imitations, which "are of quicker growth, but fainter bloom" (Adams, 339). The emphasis on originality, and on the poet's genius—which soon became a staple of Romantic criticism—seems also to have placed the poetic process beyond the scope of analysis. Poetry is "the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings," as though craft is not essential to the production of art. Where Wordsworth has an opportunity to discuss the composing process in his preface to

Lyrical Ballads, he prefers instead to comment on the emotional state of the poet's mind rather than on the means by which he creates his work (Adams, 441). Cardinal Newman's early essay on poetry (1829) exemplifies as well the Romantic distaste for imagining that mere craft enters into the making of poetry. Geoffrey Tillotson summarizes Newman's attitude as follows: "the poet is inspired like an Old Testament prophet and may write the inspired poem down. He is inspired with his poem complete, and, as far as the poem is concerned, inspired once for all. . . . Newman would have countered Dryden's remark about rhymes aiding composition by saying 'So much less poetical the thought.'"[16] Thus it is no accident, despite Professor Lowes' exhaustive retracing of the road to Xanadu, that most people remember rather Coleridge's version of the composition of "Kubla Khan" as frenziedly written down on his awakening from a drug-induced dream.

To say, however, that overt interest in literary invention in general and in *mimesis* in particular vanished with Romantic literary theory is emphatically not to say that metaphysical claims for poetry were abandoned as well. On the contrary: most apologists for Romantic theory held that poetry, as a reflection of the poet's mind or soul, was the repository of highest truth. For Wordsworth, the object of poetry is "truth, not individual and local, but general, and operative;" for Shelley a poem "is the very image of life expressed in its eternal truth;" for John Stuart Mill, "poetry, when it is really such, is truth. . . . The truth of poetry is to paint the human soul."[17]

And once it is granted that literary discourse is a repository of truth, the inevitable hierarchizing noticed by Derrida begins: literary discourse is superior to other sorts of discourse, since, in Romantic theory, literature is produced by that special being, the poet, who is "endowed with more lively sensibility, more enthusiasm and tenderness, who has a greater knowledge of human nature, and a more comprehensive soul;" the poet is a man whose nature is more susceptible to feeling than that of common men (Wordsworth in Adams, 437; Mill in Sharpless, 33-34). And in a supremely ironic development, given the classical distinction between artistic idealism and formalism, the valorization of literary discourse is argued by the New Critics of our own century on the grounds that literature achieves the status of truth through its formal perfection. Frank Lentricchia, to whom I am indebted for this insight, argues that the New Criticism has as its goal "a theory that language in the aesthetic mode overcomes the

arbitrariness of ordinary discourse by achieving ontological participation," by achieving, in other words, metaphysical status.[18]

The New Critical argument has a clear manifestation in the work of Northrop Frye. Frye opens the second chapter of his *Anatomy of Criticism* by writing that "whenever we read anything, we find our attention moving in two directions at once. One direction is outward, or centrifugal, in which we keep going outside our reading, from the individual words to the things they mean, or, in practice, to our memory of the conventional association between them. The other direction is inward or centripetal, in which we try to develop from the words a sense of the larger verbal pattern they make."[19] Frye goes on to write that the verbal units which refer us outward are representative of some external frame of reference, while these same units, referring us inward, are connective. Where the first mode of understanding is primary in a discourse, its value is assessed according to the accuracy with which the verbal structure represents phenomena or ideas; where the second mode is primary, value is placed upon the pattern of the words "as a structure of interconnected motifs . . . wherever we have an autonomous verbal structure of this kind (that is, the centripetal kind), we have literature. Wherever this autonomous structure is lacking, we have language, words used instrumentally to help human consciousness do or understand something else" (74). In other words, whenever we read a discourse in which the primary interest lies in its form, its pattern, or its self-referentiality, we have literature; whenever the interest of the discourse spills outward toward the world of phenomena and away from itself, we have everything else, that is, rhetoric, "words used instrumentally." This is apparently what W. K. Wimsatt has in mind when he writes that "poetry succeeds because all or most of what is said or implied is relevant; what is irrelevant has been excluded, like lumps from pudding and bugs from machinery. In this respect poetry differs from practical messages, which are successful if and only if we correctly infer the intention."[20] I cannot resist pointing out that for New Critics, nonliterary language plagues us just as lumps, bugs, and instruments do.

It follows from Frye's logic that in literature, adherence to truth or fact or reality is of secondary importance: as he writes, in literature "the reality-principle is subordinate to the pleasure-principle;" that is, readers take pleasure in the aesthetic reaction provoked by the structure of the literary work rather than in the lessons about life to be

derived from it (75). And yet, only a few sentences farther on, Frye can distinguish between tragedy and comedy on the grounds that "the sense of reality is far higher in tragedy than in comedy, as in comedy the logic of events normally gives way to the audience's desire for a happy ending." I can read this remark to mean that in tragedy pattern prevails, while in comedy there is leakage toward the needs of an audience, so that comedy is less literary, more rhetorical. And yet comedy is also less true, because the sense of reality is higher in tragedy, so this implies that the more carefully patterned the work, the truer (and by implication the more to be valued) it is. That Frye assumes something like this becomes apparent when he writes that literature is an "autonomous verbal structure, no longer a comment on life or reality, but *containing* life and reality in a system of verbal relationships" (122). In other words, literary art is truer (and more preferable) than life itself, because it has pattern, interconnectedness. And it is certainly to be preferred to nonliterary discourse because this "leaks" or spills into the necessity of influencing an audience in a practical way. Nonliterary genres of discourse—beginning with oratory (the "poor relation" of literature for modern critics, according to Herbert Wichelns), biography, history, the familiar essay—all assume a distinctly second-class status on the New Critical model, because they are not only self-referential.[21]

IV

I am now in a position to assert that the hierarchical allotments that most English departments currently appropriate to the relative study and teaching of literature and rhetoric is tied to our wish, unconscious though it may be, to establish for discourse study the status of a metaphysical endeavor. Literary discourse is thought by us to be different from, and superior to, other sorts of discourse. This assumption is reflected in our pedagogy in that we seldom think of asking students to compose literary discourse, as if this were somehow beyond them.[22] And in composition classes, although we sometimes expose students to literature, both we and they know that they will be expected to produce conventional discourse—most often the five-paragraph theme—that is, formulaic writing which is designed to elicit a stylized response from a reader who awards grades according to uniform departmental standards. We have, in other words, ac-

cepted the premises of aesthetic idealism for literary study but not for rhetoric or for its daughter discipline, composition. That art we have cordoned off into a formalism that is so highly conventionalized that it has become part of American folklore.

What will remedy this state of affairs? Susan Miller suggests that a balanced view of the profession can be attained only if it is possible to “modify both the hesitancy of literary scholars to acknowledge their relation to ‘public man’ and the willingness of composition researchers to smooth out variables to describe groups of writers” (224). My own suggestion is that literature and composition can most clearly be seen as compatible arts within the framework that is provided by study of the theory and history of rhetoric. But I have little faith that rhetoric—in its classical, public, sense—will come to occupy the center of training in English in the near future, given the entrenchment of literary study and the increasingly empirical bent of research in composition. Perhaps if literary scholars were to re-interest themselves in a theory of literary invention, the mutuality of the two arts would become as apparent to us as it was to classical thinkers. Such a move would at least be a beginning toward bringing about in the English profession the sensible state of affairs described by Cicero, who noted of the discursive arts that “the flow of language though running in different channels does not spring from different sources, and wherever it goes, the same supply of matter and equipment of style go with it” *(De Oratore,* III, v, 19-20).

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Notes

[1]Jim W. Corder, “Rhetoric and Literary Study: Some Lines of Inquiry,” *College Composition and Communication* (February, 1981), 13.

[2]Florence Howe, “Literature and Literacy,” *PMLA* (January, 1974), 435.

[3]J. Hillis Miller made this observation at the Wyoming Conference on Freshman and Sophomore English in July, 1983.

[4]Susan Miller, “What Does It Mean to Be Able to Write? The Question of Writing in the Discourses of Literature and Composition,” *College English* (March, 1983), 221. Miller concludes by noting that, if the profession continues to make such distinctions, it runs the risk of embracing “the levelling misuses of originally liberating human sciences.”

[5]See, for example, Vincent Bevilaqua, “Philosophical Influences on the Development of English Rhetorical Theory: 1748-1783,” *Proceedings of the Leeds Philosophical and Literary Society* (Leeds: W. S Money and Sons, Ltd., 1968), 191-215; and James A. Berlin, “The Transformation of Invention in Nineteenth Century American Rhetoric” *Southern Speech Communication Journal* (Spring. 1981), 292-304.

[6]Rene Girard, *Violence and the Sacred,* trans. Patrick Gregory (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977), makes the point about ritual imitation. See also G. F. Else, “Imitation,” in *Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics,* ed. Alex Preminger (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965), p. 378.

[7]Erwin Panofsky, *Idea: A Concept in Art Theory,* trans. Joseph J. S. Peake (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1976), p. 126.

[8]Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology,* trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), pp. 36-37.

[9]Wesley Trimpi, “The Ancient Hypothesis of Fiction: An Essay on the Origins of Literary Theory,” *Traditio* (XXVI, 1971), 59-60.

[10]Harvey D. Goldstein, *“Mimesis* and *Catharsis* Re-examined,” *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* (XXIV, 1966), 570.

[11]George Converse Fiske, *Lucilius and Horace: a Study in the Classical Theory of Imitation* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1971), p. 40.

[12]Donald Leman Clark, *Rhetoric and Poetry in the Renaissance: a Study of Rhetorical Terms in English Renaissance Literary Criticism* (New York: Russell and Russell, 1963), pp. 32-33; Roger Hornsby, “‘The Relevance of Ancient Literature: Recapitulation and Comment,” in Donald Bryant, ed., *Papers in Rhetoric and Poetic* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1965), pp. 91-92.

[13]Plotinus, “On the Intellectual Beauty,” in Hazard Adams, ed., *Critical Theory Since Plato* (New York: Harcourt Brace Janovich, 1971), p. 106.

[14]Charles Sears Baldwin, *Medieval Rhetoric and Poetic Interpreted From Representative Works* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1928), p.8.

[15]Wilbur Samuel Howell, “The Arts of Literary Criticism in Renaissance Britain: A Comprehensive View,” in his *Poetics, Rhetoric, and Logic: Studies in the Basic Disciplines of Criticism* (Cornell University Press, 1975), pp. 87-103.

[16]John Henry Newman, “Poetry, with Reference to Aristotle’s Poetics,” in *Essays Critical and Historical* (London: Longmans-Green, 1919), I, 1-26; Geoffrey Tillotson, “Newman’s Essay on Poetry: an Exposition and Comment,” in Henry Levin, ed., *Perspectives on Criticism* (New York: Russell and Russell, 1970, p. 170).

[17]Wordsworth in Adams, p. 438; Percy Bysshe Shelley, “A Defense of Poetry,” in Adams, p. 502; John Stuart Mill, “What Is Poetry?” in F. Parvin Sharpless, ed., *Essays on Poetry by John Stuart Mill* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1976), p. 8.

[18]Frank Lentricchia, *After the New Criticism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), p. 119.

[19]Northrop Frye, *Anatomy* of *Criticism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957), p. 73.

[20]William K. Wimsatt and Monroe C. Beardsley, *The Verbal Icon* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1954), pp. 4-5.

[21]Herbert Wichelns, “The Literary Criticism of Oratory,” in Robert Scott and Bernard Brock, eds., *Methods of Rhetorical Criticism* (New York: Harper and Row, 1972), p. 27.

[22]Unless, of course, they are members of that group that grows larger by the day—creative writing majors. The creative writing class is the only place in our curriculum where the poetic process is seriously studied and discussed—which may account in part for the popularity of creative writing.