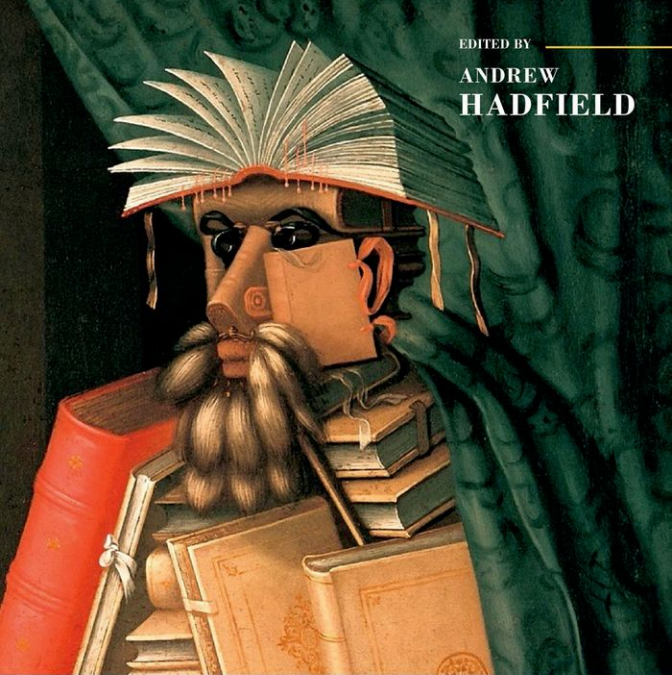


EDITED BY

ANDREW
HADFIELD



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ENGLISH
PROSE 1500–1640

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For Mary Yarnold,
a great reader of prose

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ODNB *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*

OED *Oxford English Dictionary*

LIST OF CONTRIBUTORS

Gavin Alexander is University Senior Lecturer in the Faculty of English, University of Cambridge, and a Fellow of Christ's College. His recent publications include *Writing After Sidney: The Literary Response to Sir Philip Sidney, 1586–1640* (Oxford University Press, 2006); *Sidney's 'The Defence of Poesy' and Selected Renaissance Literary Criticism* (Penguin Classics, 2004); *Renaissance Figures of Speech* (Cambridge University Press, 2007), co-edited with Sylvia Adamson and Katrin Ettenhuber; and numerous articles and book chapters on literary and musicological topics. An edition of *The Model of Poesy* by William Scott, a manuscript treatise on poetics from c.1600, is forthcoming from Cambridge University Press.

Rudolph P. Almasy is Professor of English at West Virginia University. His scholarly interest is sixteenth-century English religious polemical literature, and he has published on William Tyndale, John Bale, Anne Askew, John Knox, and Richard Hooker, as well as Phillip Sidney and William Shakespeare. At WVU, he has also served as Dean of the Eberly College of Arts and Sciences, as well as Dean of the Davis College of Agriculture, Natural Resources, and Design. His current scholarly project focuses on Knox's exilic writings. He is an active member of the Society for Reformation Research.

Robert Appelbaum received his Ph.D. from the University of California, Berkeley, and is currently Professor of English Literature at Uppsala University, Sweden. His publications include *Literature and Utopian Politics in Seventeenth-Century England* (Cambridge University Press, 2002), *Aguecheek's Beef, Belch's Hiccup and Other Gastronomic Interjections: Literature, Culture and Food Among the Early Moderns* (University of Chicago Press, 2006), and *Dishing It Out: In Search of the Restaurant Experience* (Reaktion, 2011). A Leverhulme and AHRC Fellow, his most recent research focuses on terrorism and the literary imagination.

Gillian Austen did her research at Lincoln College, Oxford, and is currently a Visiting Fellow in the Department of English, University of Bristol. Her book *George Gascoigne* (Studies in Renaissance Literature, 24; D. S. Brewer, 2008) is the first on Gascoigne to discuss all of his work, including his illustrations. She has published several articles on Gascoigne, as well as other early Elizabethan authors, including Turberville and Whetstone. She convened three small-scale international conferences at Lincoln College, Oxford, under the title The Gascoigne Seminar, and is currently preparing a fully annotated *Gascoigne Bibliography* and editing the collection *New Essays on George Gascoigne*, both for AMS Press in New York.

Thomas Betteridge is Professor of Theatre at Brunel University. He has published numerous pieces on English Reformation drama, literature, and history. His books include *Tudor Histories of the English Reformations* (Ashgate, 1999), *Literature and Politics in the English Reformation* (Manchester University Press, 2004), and *Shakespearean Fantasy and Politics* (University of Hertfordshire Press, 2005). His monograph on Sir Thomas More will be published in 2013 by the University of Notre Dame Press. He is also co-editor, with Greg Walker, of *The Oxford Handbook of Tudor Drama* (Oxford University Press, 2012).

Joseph L. Black is Professor in the Department of English at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. He has published on various aspects of Renaissance literature, pamphlet warfare, and book history, and his books include *The Martin Marprelate Tracts* (Cambridge University Press, 2008) and co-edited collections and anthologies: *Private Libraries of Renaissance England*, vol. 7 (MRTS, 2009), *The Broadview Anthology of British Literature*, vol. 2: *The Renaissance and Early Seventeenth Century* (Broadview, 2006), and *The Broadview Anthology of Seventeenth-Century English Verse and Prose* (Broadview, 2000). He is currently co-editing *The Library of the Sidney Family of Penshurst Place* and further volumes in the Private Libraries of Renaissance England series.

Gordon Braden is Linden Kent Memorial Professor of English at the University of Virginia. He is author of *Renaissance Tragedy and the Senecan Tradition* (Yale University Press, 1985), *Petrarchan Love and the Continental Renaissance* (Yale University Press, 1999), and (with William Kerrigan) *The Idea of the Renaissance* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), and (with Robert Cummings and Stuart Gillespie) editor of the second volume (1550–1660) of *The Oxford History of Literary Translation in English* (Oxford University Press, 2010).

Dermot Cavanagh teaches literature at the University of Edinburgh. He is the author of *Language and Politics in the Sixteenth-Century History Play* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2003) and co-editor (with Stuart-Hampton Reeves and Stephen Longstaffe) of *Shakespeare's Histories and Counter Histories* (Manchester University Press, 2006). He is currently editing *King John* for the third edition of the Norton Shakespeare.

Danielle Clarke is Professor of English Renaissance Language and Literature at University College Dublin, and has published widely on early modern women's writing, as well as gender, sexuality, and language in the Renaissance. Her most recent book is *Teaching the Early Modern Period*, edited with Derval Conroy (Palgrave Macmillan), and she is currently working on a book-length project on the negotiation and form, genre, and language in women's poetry of the Renaissance.

Nandini Das is Professor of Renaissance Literature at the School of English, University of Liverpool. She has written on a range of subjects, from Renaissance prose fiction and cross-cultural encounters, to the development of early eighteenth-century Orientalism. Her recent publications include *Robert Greene's Planetomachia* (Ashgate, 2007) and *Renaissance Romance: The Transformation of English Prose Fiction, 1570–1620* (Ashgate,

2011), along with essays on Richard Hakluyt and early modern travel. Das is volume editor of 'Elizabethan Levant Trade and South Asia' in the forthcoming complete edition of Richard Hakluyt's *The Principal Navigations, Voyages, Traffiques and Discoveries of the English Nation (1598–1600)*, ed. Daniel Carey and Claire Jowitt (Oxford University Press) and is currently working on a project on Renaissance travel and cultural memory.

Caroline Erskine has recently co-edited, with Roger Mason, a volume on *George Buchanan: Political Thought in Early Modern Europe and the Atlantic World* (Ashgate, 2012), and is also co-editor of *Scotland: The Making and Unmaking of the Nation, c.1100–1707* (Dundee University Press, 2007). Her interests lie primarily in political traditions and historical narratives of resistance as an aspect of the Scottish Reformation, and the transmission and reception of these through to the seventeenth century. Her current research focuses on John Knox's *History of the Reformation* and George Buchanan's *Rerum Scoticarum Historia* as particularly important repositories of this line of thought.

Thomas S. Freeman was Research Officer for the British Academy John Foxe Project. He is currently a Research Fellow with the Faculty of Divinity at Cambridge University and a Visiting Lecturer at the University of Essex. He is the co-author (with Elizabeth Evenden) of *Religion and the Book in Early Modern England: The Making of Foxe's 'Book of Martyrs'* (Cambridge University Press, 2011) and the co-editor of four books on early modern British history.

Angus Gowland is Reader in Intellectual History at University College London. He is the author of *The Worlds of Renaissance Melancholy: Robert Burton in Context* (Cambridge University Press, 2006), and of articles on the early modern understanding of melancholy.

Andrew Hadfield is Professor of English at the University of Sussex, Visiting Professor at the University of Granada, and Founding Director of the Centre for Early Modern Studies at Sussex. He is the author of a number of works on early modern literature, including *Shakespeare and Republicanism* (Cambridge University Press, 2005; paperback, 2008); *Literature, Travel and Colonialism in the English Renaissance, 1540–1625* (Oxford University Press, 1998; paperback, 2007); *Spenser's Irish Experience: Wilde Fruyt and Salvage Soyl* (Oxford University Press, 1997); and *Literature, Politics and National Identity: Reformation to Renaissance* (Cambridge University Press, 1994). He has also edited, with Matthew Dimmock, *Religions of the Book: Co-existence and Conflict, 1400–1660* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2008); with Raymond Gillespie, *The Oxford History of the Irish Book, Vol. III: The Irish Book in English, 1550–1800* (Oxford University Press, 2006); and with Paul Hammond, *Shakespeare and Renaissance Europe* (Cengage, Arden Critical Companions, 2004); and *Literature and Censorship in Renaissance England* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2001). He was editor of *Renaissance Studies* (2006–11) and is a regular reviewer for *The Times Literary Supplement*.

Kevin Killeen is Lecturer in Renaissance Literature at the University of York. He is the author of *Biblical Scholarship, Science and Politics in Early Modern England: Thomas Browne and the Thorny Place of Knowledge* (Ashgate, 2009) and the co-editor of *Biblical Exegesis and the Emergence of Science in the Early Modern Era* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2007). He has published on early modern science, intellectual history, and the uses of the Bible in early modern England.

Mary Ellen Lamb is Professor of English at Southern Illinois University, Carbondale. She is the author of *The Popular Culture of Shakespeare, Spenser, and Jonson* (Routledge, 2006), and co-editor of *Staging Early Modern Romance: Prose Fiction, Dramatic Romance, and Shakespeare* (Routledge, 2009) and *Oral Traditions and Gender in Early Modern Literary Texts* (Ashgate, 2008). She has published essays in such journals as *English Literary Renaissance*, *Shakespeare Quarterly*, *Shakespeare Survey*, *Criticism*, and *Review of English Studies*. She is the editor of the *Sidney Journal* and serves on the editorial board of *English Literary Renaissance*. Her abridgement of *The Countess of Montgomery's Urania* (2011), with modernized spelling, is now available from the Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies.

Peter McCullough is Fellow and Tutor in English at Lincoln College and Professor of English at Oxford University. He specializes in the religious and literary history of early modern England. In addition to articles on Andrewes, Donne, Milton, Shakespeare, and the London book trade, he is author of *Sermons at Court: Politics and Religion in Elizabethan and Jacobean Preaching* (Cambridge University Press, 1996), editor of *Lancelot Andrewes: Selected Sermons and Lectures* (Oxford University Press, 2005) and *The Oxford Handbook of the Early Modern Sermon* (Oxford University Press, 2011, with Hugh Adlington and Emma Rhatigan), and General Editor of *The Oxford Edition of the Sermons of John Donne*. He is also Lay Canon of St Paul's Cathedral, with Chapter portfolio for cathedral history and its interpretation.

Nicholas McDowell is Professor of English at the University of Exeter. His visiting positions have included Membership of the Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton (2009). He is the author of *The English Radical Imagination: Culture, Religion, and Revolution, 1630–1660* (Oxford University Press, 2003) and *Poetry and Allegiance in the English Civil Wars: Marvell and the Cause of Wit* (Oxford University Press, 2008). He is the co-editor of *The Oxford Handbook of Milton* (Oxford University Press, 2009; paperback, 2011) and *The Oxford Complete Works of John Milton. Volume VI: Vernacular Regicide and Republican Tracts* (Oxford University Press, 2013), for which he has edited *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates*, *Articles of Peace Made and Concluded with the Irish Rebels*, and *Eikonoklastes*. He is currently writing an intellectual biography of Milton for Princeton University Press and editing *The Oxford Handbook of English Prose, 1640–1714*. In 2007 he was awarded a Philip Leverhulme Prize by the Leverhulme Trust.

Peter Mack is Director of the Warburg Institute, Professor of the History of the Classical Tradition, University of London, and Professor of English, University of Warwick. His books include *Renaissance Argument: Valla and Agricola in the Traditions of Rhetoric and Dialectic* (Brill, 1993), *Elizabethan Rhetoric: Theory and Practice* (Cambridge University Press, 2002), *Reading and Rhetoric in Montaigne and Shakespeare* (Bloomsbury, 2010), and *A History of Renaissance Rhetoric, 1380–1620* (Oxford University Press, 2011).

R. W. Maslen is Senior Lecturer in English Literature at the University of Glasgow. He has published books on early modern prose fiction and Shakespeare's comedies, edited Sidney's *Apology for Poetry* and Middleton and Dekker's *News from Gravesend*, and written many essays on Renaissance literature and drama. He is also interested in fantastic fiction of the twentieth century.

P. G. Maxwell-Stuart is Reader in Mediaeval and Early Modern History at the University of St Andrews. He specializes in the field of the occult sciences and his recent publications include *Astrology: From Ancient Babylon to the Present* (Amberley Publications, 2010) and *Witch Beliefs and Witch Trials in the Middle Ages* (Continuum, 2010). He has just finished a book on poltergeists and is working on a study of the Evil Eye.

Susannah Brietz Monta is John Cardinal O'Hara, C.S.C. and Glynn Family Honors Associate Professor of English and Editor of *Religion and Literature* at the University of Notre Dame. Her book, *Martyrdom and Literature in Early Modern England* (Cambridge University Press, 2005; paperback, 2009), won the Book of the Year award from the MLA-affiliated Conference on Christianity and Literature. With Margaret W. Ferguson, she edited *Teaching Early Modern English Prose* (MLA, 2010), and is preparing an edition of Anthony Copley's *A Fig for Fortune* (1596), the first published response to Edmund Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, for Manchester University Press. Her current project examines the devotional and aesthetic uses of repetition in early modern prayer, poetry, and rhetoric. Her published articles focus on history plays, early modern women writers and patronesses, martyrology, hagiography, devotional poetry and prose, and providential narratives.

Helen Moore is Fellow and Tutor in English at Corpus Christi College, Oxford, and CUF lecturer in the Faculty of English, University of Oxford. She works at the interface of early modern English and continental literary cultures, and has published on romance, drama, translation, and reception. Most recently she has co-edited *Classical Literary Careers and their Reception* (Cambridge University Press, 2010) and *Manifold Greatness: The Making of the King James Bible* (Bodleian Library Publishing, 2011).

Ian Munro is Associate Professor of Drama at the University of California, Irvine. He is author of *The Figure of the Crowd in Early Modern London: The City and Its Double* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2005) and editor of 'A womans answer is neuer to seke': *Early Modern Jestbooks, 1526–1635* (Ashgate, 2007), part of the 'Early Modern Englishwoman' facsimile series. He is currently working on a project about early modern wit and jesting.

Catherine Nicholson is Assistant Professor of English Literature at Yale University. She teaches and writes about sixteenth-century literature and literary criticism, especially the intersection of classical rhetorical theory and experiments in vernacular style. She has published essays on Spenser, Shakespeare, and Marlowe, and her book, *Uncommon Tongues: Eloquence and Eccentricity in the English Renaissance*, is forthcoming from the University of Pennsylvania Press.

Anne Lake Prescott is Helen Goodhart Altschul Professor of English Emerita at Barnard College, Columbia University. A former president of the Sixteenth Century Society and of the Spenser Society, she is the incoming president of the John Donne Society. The author of *French Poets and the English Renaissance* (Yale University Press, 1978) and *Imagining Rabelais in Renaissance England* (Yale University Press, 1998), she is editing (with Andrew Hadfield) the new *Norton Critical Edition of Spenser*. She and Betty Travitsky co-edited an Ashgate series of texts by early modern Englishwomen. Two recent essays won prizes: “‘Formes of Joy and Art’: Donne, David, and the Power of Music” (*John Donne Journal*, 2006) and ‘Mary Sidney’s Ruins of Rome’ (*Sidney Journal*, 2006). Her most recent essays include two on Thomas More and one on the English Sidneys and the French Chéron siblings as interpreters of the psalms (in *Psalms in the Early Modern World*, ed. Linda Austern et al., Ashgate, 2011). Forthcoming essays include two on Saul in the Renaissance and another on David and upward mobility for *Renaissance Quarterly*, as well as work on Ronsard, jest books (for the *Oxford Guide to Tudor Prose*), Du Bellay and Shakespeare’s sonnets, and early modern polemics’ contribution to the creation of public space.

Claire Preston is Professor of Early Modern Literature at the University of Birmingham. She has published widely on early modern topics (including the literary-scientific, word and image studies, and Renaissance rhetoric) and on American Gilded Age fiction (including Edith Wharton, Theodore Dreiser, and William Dean Howells). Her recent work includes essays on Spenser and the visual arts, seventeenth-century scientific correspondence, the Renaissance reception of classical scientific and speculative writing, and the poetics of early modern drainage; her recent books include *Thomas Browne and the Writing of Early-Modern Science* (Cambridge University Press, 2005), *Bee* (Reaktion, 2006), and (with Reid Barbour), *Sir Thomas Browne: The World Proposed* (Oxford University Press, 2008). She is completing a study of literature and scientific investigation in the long seventeenth century, and is general editor of the Oxford complete works of Sir Thomas Browne (8 volumes, forthcoming 2015–18), a project for which she currently holds major AHRC funding. She is the recipient of the British Academy’s Rose Mary Crawshay Prize, a Guggenheim Foundation Fellowship, and a British Academy Research Development Award.

Joad Raymond is Professor of Renaissance Studies at Queen Mary, University of London. In addition to articles on early modern literature, politics, and print culture, he is the author of *The Invention of the Newspaper* (Oxford University Press, 1996), *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering in Early Modern Britain* (Cambridge University Press, 2003), and *Milton’s Angels: The Early Modern Imagination* (Oxford University Press, 2010), and editor of *The Oxford History of Popular Print Culture*, vol. 1: *Cheap Print in Britain and Ireland to 1660*

(Oxford University Press, 2011). He is currently editing Milton's Latin defences for the Oxford *Complete Works of John Milton* and directing an international collaborative project on news networks in early modern Europe.

Neil Rhodes is Professor of English Literature and Cultural History at the University of St Andrews. He is co-General Editor, with Andrew Hadfield, of the MHRA Tudor and Stuart Translations. His publications include, with Chris Jones, *Sound Effects: The Oral/Aural Dimensions of Literature in English*, a special issue of *Oral Tradition* (2009), and *Shakespeare and the Origins of English* (Oxford University Press, 2004).

Jennifer Richards is Professor of Early Modern Literature and Culture at Newcastle University. She is the author of *Rhetoric and Courtliness in Early Modern England* (Cambridge University Press, 2003), and *Rhetoric: The New Critical Idiom* (Routledge, 2007) as well as essays on sixteenth-century literature and culture in *Criticism*, *Renaissance Quarterly*, *Huntington Library Quarterly*, and *The Journal of the History of Ideas*. She has edited several collections of essays, including *Early Modern Civil Discourses* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), and most recently, with Fred Schurink, *The Textuality and Materiality of Reading* (a special issue of *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 2010). With Professor Andrew Hadfield she is editing the works of Thomas Nashe for a new edition to be published by Oxford University Press in 2015 and she is writing a new monograph, *Useful Books: Literature and Health in Early Modern England*.

Catherine Richardson is Reader in Renaissance Studies at the University of Kent. Her research focuses on the material experience of daily life in early modern England—on the way material and textual cultures relate to one another; on things and the stories people tell about them. She writes about the household and its furniture and furnishing and about the social, moral, and personal significance of clothing. She is the author of *Domestic Life and Domestic Tragedy: The Material Life of the Household* (Manchester University Press, 2006) and *Shakespeare and Material Culture* (Oxford University Press, 2011), as well as the editor of *Clothing Culture, 1350–1650* (Ashgate, 2004) and, with Tara Hamling, *Everyday Objects: Medieval and Early Modern Material Culture and its Meanings* (Ashgate, 2010).

Paul Salzman is Professor of English Literature at La Trobe University, Melbourne, Australia. He has published widely in the area of early modern prose fiction, women's writing, and literary history. Recent books include *Reading Early Modern Women's Writing* (Oxford University Press, 2006), and he has also just completed an online edition of Mary Wroth's poetry <<http://wroth.latrobe.edu.au/>>. He is currently writing a book on literature and politics in the 1620s.

Alexander Samson is a Lecturer in Golden Age Literature at University College London. His research interests include the early colonial history of the Americas, Anglo-Spanish intercultural relations, and early modern English and Spanish drama. His recent publications include edited volumes on *The Spanish Match: Prince Charles's Journey to Madrid, 1623* (Ashgate, 2006), with Jonathan Thacker, *A Companion to Lope de Vega* (Tamesis, 2008) and *Gardens and Horticulture in Early Modern Europe*, a special issue

of *Renaissance Studies* (2011), as well as articles on the marriage of Philip II and Mary Tudor, historiography and royal chroniclers in sixteenth-century Spain, English travel writers, firearms, maps, John Fletcher and Cervantes, and female Golden Age dramatists. His book *Mary Tudor and the Habsburg Marriage: England and Spain 1553–1557* and an edition of Lope de Vega's *Lo fingido verdadero*, with Manchester University Press, are forthcoming. He runs the Golden Age and Renaissance Research Seminar and is co-director of UCL's Centre for Early Modern Exchanges.

Jason Scott-Warren is a Senior Lecturer in the Faculty of English, University of Cambridge, and a Fellow of Gonville and Caius College. He is the author of *Sir John Harington and the Book as Gift* (Oxford University Press, 2001), *Early Modern English Literature* (Polity Press, 2005), and numerous studies of early modern textual circulation and cultural history. In 2009 he co-founded the Cambridge Centre for Material Texts <<http://www.english.cam.ac.uk/cmt/>>, of which he is currently the Director.

Cathy Shrank is Professor of Tudor and Renaissance Literature at the University of Sheffield. Her publications include *Writing the Nation in Reformation England, 1530–1580* (Oxford University Press, 2004, 2006) and essays and articles on various sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century topics, including language reform, civility, travel writing, cheap print, and mid-sixteenth-century sonnets. She is the co-editor, with Mike Pincombe, of the *Oxford Handbook of Tudor Literature, 1485–1603* (Oxford University Press, 2009). Current projects include a monograph about non-dramatic dialogues and, with Raphael Lyne, an edition of Shakespeare's poems for Longman Annotated English Poets.

Adam Smyth is a Senior Lecturer in English Literature at Birkbeck College, University of London, specializing in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century literature and culture. His latest book is *Autobiography in Early Modern England* (Cambridge University Press, 2010). He has also published *Profit and Delight: Printed Miscellanies in England, 1640–82* (Wayne State University Press, 2004) and edited *A Pleasing Sinne: Drink and Conviviality in Seventeenth-Century England* (Boydell and Brewer, 2004), in addition to writing many articles on the literature and history of early modern England. He is currently working on a book on the ways in which early modern readers cut up, burnt, recycled, and variously remade their books.

Alan Stewart is Professor of English and Comparative Literature at Columbia University, and International Director of the Centre for Editing Lives and Letters in London. He is the author of *Close Readers: Humanism and Sodomy in Early Modern England* (Princeton University Press, 1997); *Hostage to Fortune: The Troubled Life of Francis Bacon* (with Lisa Jardine, Victor Gollancz, 1998); *Philip Sidney: A Double Life* (Chatto & Windus, 2000); *The Cradle King: A Life of James VI and I* (Chatto & Windus, 2003); *Letterwriting in Shakespeare's England* (with Heather Wolfe, Folger Shakespeare Library, 2004); and *Shakespeare's Letters* (Oxford University Press, 2008). Recent publications include his edition of Bacon's early writings from 1584–1596 for the Oxford Francis Bacon (Oxford University Press, 2012) and the three-volume *Encyclopedia of English Renaissance*

Literature, co-general edited with Garrett Sullivan (Blackwell, 2012). He is currently working on a new project entitled *French Shakespeare*.

Daniel Swift is Senior Lecturer for English at the New College of the Humanities, London. He is the author of *Bomber County* (Hamish Hamilton) and *Shakespeare's Common Prayers* (Oxford University Press).

Bart van Es is Fellow and Lecturer in English at St Catherine's College, University of Oxford. He is the author of *Spenser's Forms of History* (Oxford University Press, 2002) and *A Critical Companion to Spenser Studies* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2006). In addition to his work on Spenser he has published articles on Shakespeare, Daniel, Drayton, Renaissance historiography, and pastoral poetry. Essays by him appear in various Oxford Handbooks, including that on *Holinshed's Chronicles*. He is also the author of the chapter on Classical history and biography in the forthcoming *Oxford History of Classical Reception in English Literature*. His book on Renaissance drama, *Shakespeare in Company*, was published by Oxford University Press in 2013.

Katharine Wilson has taught at Newcastle University and the University of Oxford. She is the author of *Fictions of Authorship in Late Elizabethan Narratives: Euphues in Arcadia* (Oxford University Press, 2006). She has written essays on early modern fiction, especially the works of Lyly and Greene, and has contributed to *Writing Robert Greene*, edited by Kirk Melnikoff and Edward Gieskes (Ashgate, 2008), and *The Oxford Handbook of Tudor Literature, 1485–1603*, edited by Mike Pincombe and Cathy Shrank (Oxford University Press, 2009).

H. R. Woudhuysen is Rector of Lincoln College, Oxford. He has edited *The Penguin Book of Renaissance Verse, 1509–1659* (Penguin, 1992) with David Norbrook and has published a study of *Sir Philip Sidney and the Circulation of Manuscripts, 1558–1640* (Oxford University Press, 1996). One of the General Editors of the Arden Shakespeare Third Series, he edited *Love's Labour's Lost* (1998) and, with Katherine Duncan-Jones, *Shakespeare's Poems* (2007) for the series. In 2010, *The Oxford Companion to the Book* was published, for which he and Michael F. Suarez, SJ, acted as General Editors. He has been closely involved in the Catalogue of English Literary Manuscripts, 1450–1700, a project which has created a freely accessible online record of surviving manuscript sources for over 230 major British authors, including Gabriel Harvey.

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INTRODUCTION

ANDREW HADFIELD

THIS handbook is designed to fill an obvious need: the lack of a comprehensive guide to early modern prose. The volume consists of thirty-nine substantial essays, providing a reader with a guide to the varieties of early modern prose, from the reign of the first Tudor, Henry VII, to just before the Civil War, a crucial period of about 150 years. In 1485, printing had only just been introduced to the British Isles, and most material circulated in manuscript form. Many types of non-fictional narrative, such as history, were produced in verse as well as prose and reached a limited audience of the literate. Virtually all literature of high status was written in verse. By 1640 far more people could read and were eager to participate in the public sphere of print, whether as readers or writers, consumers and/or producers, and prose had become the most established medium of written communication. Moreover, an explosion in the production of printed texts, as pamphlets from every quarter and from every possible point of view, written by a wider spectrum of English society than ever before, changed the nature of public culture for ever. Prose was now the dominant form of the written word, as it has been ever since. Literary forms such as the novel, which developed out of the varieties of prose fiction and romance produced in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and the newspaper were about to transform the habits and horizons of a nation of newly educated readers, methods of communication for a new, vastly expanded public sphere. Both forms had a common origin in the news books and journalism that was also proliferating as the printing press became ever more technologically sophisticated and adept at producing text quickly and easily.

This handbook cannot claim to be comprehensive, despite its obvious bulk. There is simply far too much material to cover adequately and decisions have been taken to make this work as representative as possible. Furthermore, prose can be envisaged in two overlapping ways. First, and more obviously, as the bulk of material produced in prose, defined by the *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED) as ‘Language in the form in which it is typically written (or spoken), usually characterized as having no deliberate metrical structure (in contrast with *verse* or *poetry*)’; second, as the ways in which non-metrical language can be and was employed in the period. An approach to the first definition would look at historical narrative, legal material, conduct manuals, theological tracts, literature, and so on; and an approach to the second, the style and form of prose produced, explaining what defined its character

and made it distinctive. The writers in this volume have all attempted the challenging task of including comment on each aspect of the material under discussion in their essays so that the handbook contains a balance of an explanation of the varieties of prose writing and an analysis of its various forms, styles, and possibilities.

The essays cover an extraordinary range of material, from the most sophisticated and intricate sermons by the finest theological minds of the age (John Donne and Richard Hooker), analysed in Peter McCullough's essay, to domestic manuals detailing household tasks, the very stuff of life, explored in Catherine Richardson's; from rhetorical treatises designed to produce the highest artistic forms (Catherine Nicholson) to tracts on witchcraft (P. G. Maxwell-Stuart), intended to reveal the true extent of a problem and so to protect individuals from harm; and from the most personal devotions to public acts of collective responsibility. Indeed, what invariably emerges from the study of these diverse forms of writing is the wealth of connections between types, styles, and modes of thought and writing. The functional and the ornamental are often not as far apart as might be assumed. As Alan Stewart points out in his essay on letter-writing, letters might look like intimate and private communication between two individuals, but are almost always highly crafted works that were designed in terms of well-established models and reached a wider audience than we often realize. And, as R. W. Maslen argues in his essay on the career of Robert Greene, the first professional writer in England who transformed our understanding of the possibilities of prose writing, what looks like something new and different was often written with an acute understanding of the culture from which it emerged. Greene's prose can seem anarchic and to bear little relation to the moral treatises that were in general circulation, but that is because the moral of his tales is that real life teaches us lessons that qualify and transform what we think we will learn in books. Prose was ordered, regimented, and carefully designed, but was never easy to control. Moreover, the relationship between theory and practice was often complicated and confusing. In large part this was due to the ways in which ideas were transmitted and stored. People wrote out notable pieces of wisdom and startling expression in their commonplace books, and Jennifer Richards shows us that these intellectual practices and habits of mind link the prose of such apparently diverse figures as the mid-Tudor intellectual, William Baldwin, and the author of *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, Robert Burton. Choice phrases and maxims were extracted from major works and then recycled either as the central part of an argument, or as useful supporting evidence.

The volume also reveals a series of struggles between different types and forms of writing. On the one hand, we have the proliferation of prose romance in its various guises, as the essays of Helen Moore, Neil Rhodes, Gavin Alexander, and Mary Ellen Lamb demonstrate, a form of writing that always threatened to get out of hand, travelling beyond established boundaries of sense and taste and 'dilating' outwards away from its narrative core into new and sometimes bizarre areas. It is easy for us to undervalue, or even to dismiss romance as a vulgar and debased literary form, but it was taken seriously and undertaken by some of the most incisive writers in early modern England, and served to define the scope and nature of women's writing. On the other hand, there is the heavily didactic and ordered prose of John Foxe's *Acts and Monuments of the Christian*

Church, its repetitive structures working to produce an apparently inescapable series of conclusions, as Thomas S. Freeman and Susannah Brietz Monta's essay reveals; or the equally controlling cadences of John Knox and George Buchanan, made visible in Caroline Erskine's analysis. Yet even—or perhaps especially—in religious debate chaos threatens to overwhelm order, as readers of Joseph L. Black's essay on the Marprelate Controversy and Kevin Killeen's on the translations of the Bible will soon realize. The need to explain and define the truth and to banish evil and falsehood invariably produced complex and messy texts. Put another way, the conflicting demands of accurate brevity and expansive copiousness pull writers of prose in opposite directions, a contrast that will be obvious to readers of Paul Salzman's essay on the variety of essay forms in the early modern period, from Bacon's brief and controlled interventions to the sustained and wandering explorations of Sir William Cornwallis, a writer very much in the mould of the significantly more prolix Michel de Montaigne.

Any survey of prose has to include more types and forms than any other category of writing used to quantify and explain the variety of writing in the early modern period. Essays in this handbook deal with apparent ephemera such as news pamphlets and news books (Joad Raymond), and cheap and popular print forms such as jest books (Anne Lake Prescott and Ian Munro), to the eloquent expansiveness of Richard Hooker's *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity* (Rudolph Almasy), Robert Burton's brilliant, highly individual exploration of contemporary culture, *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (Angus Gowland), and the sustained meditations of Thomas Browne (Kevin Killeen). Following Peter Burke's insight, we need to acknowledge that although high culture was designed to reach a restricted audience, popular culture was everyone's culture and was consumed by monarchs as well as the general public. Queen Elizabeth, like most aristocrats, had a robust and vulgar sense of humour and enjoyed the bawdy nature of jest books, with their emphasis on bodily functions. Equally, what might be imagined as a clear-cut contrast between the ordered and precise and the anarchic and transgressive, proves to be anything but, as Claire Preston's essay on the scientific prose of Francis Bacon, Thomas Browne, and Robert Boyle demonstrates. Jacques Derrida and Tzvetan Todorov pointed out some time ago that genres are inescapably in discourse. They have markers that persuade the reader to consume them in a particular way while always containing traces of other forms of writing, residues that cannot be eliminated from our understanding of how such texts work and how they were read. Nandini Das's essay on Richard Hakluyt the younger, the most famous armchair traveller in early modern England, shows how there was an extensive interaction between travel writing and prose fiction, each type of writing borrowing style and content from the other so that voyage narratives were often imagined in terms of chivalric romance and heroic tales narrated as mercantile quests for survival and profit, as much as glory and honour.

A major part of the handbook explores the literary prose of the period. Again, this reveals the close links between apparently diverse forms of writing. Tom Betteridge and Gillian Austen show how both William Baldwin, author of the first sustained prose fiction in English, *Beware the Cat*, and George Gascoigne, among the most prolific, brilliant, and

underrated of Elizabethan writers, looked back to Chaucer in order to determine how they should write English prose, conscious of their place within a distinctly English tradition of writing. Gascoigne could never leave his intellectual coordinates to one side and his true report of the devastation of Antwerp 'reveals a considerable amount of rhetorical structuring and formal organisation'. Even when experimenting in what might appear to us to be a literary vacuum, writers such as John Lyly (Katharine Wilson) and Thomas Nashe (Jason Scott-Warren) were acutely aware of their intellectual heritage. In turn, Lyly's distinctive contribution to English prose style, the heavily balanced rhetorical parallels known as 'Euphuism' from his most important prose work, had a major impact on the development of English prose in the next two centuries, even after his initial dominance had been challenged by writers eager to break free from his spell. Nashe's contribution was not confined to *The Unfortunate Traveller* and his prose works, which often remained as single editions after his work was censored in 1599, defined a very different mode of writing, one based on startling juxtapositions, capable of joining the 'disgusting and miraculous'. The complicated and often tortuous attempt to think through the eloquence that could be achieved in prose, simultaneously demonstrating an acute understanding of literary traditions and the desire to break free and establish new forms of writing, characterizes the career of Gabriel Harvey, in many ways a typical figure, as well as an important innovator (Henry Woudhuysen). Harvey is all too often remembered as Nashe's victim in their pamphlet war, but there is far more to Harvey's prose than this exchange indicates, and Harvey was often as innovative as Nashe, especially in his manuscript *Letter-Book*.

There is also a significant concentration on English translation in this volume, a vital part of the works produced in prose and one of the most widely consulted, but all too often omitted from serious analyses of early modern writing. This omission has seriously limited our understanding of the culture of the early modern period. Gordon Braden's essay provides us with a snapshot of the types of prose translation through a series of paradigmatic examples and judiciously selected quotations, while Peter Mack concentrates on probably the most famous prose translation in Renaissance England, John Florio's brilliant attempt to capture the style and spirit of the *Essays* of Michel de Montaigne. Neil Rhodes explores the significance of the bawdy, irreverent, but often politically astute and challenging Italian tales which helped to define a culture for the English, which was simultaneously ennobling, disgusting, and threatening, while Alexander Samson analyses the most significant element of Spanish culture that reached these shores. *Lazarillo de Tormes* was translated in 1576 and helped to define an English understanding of Spanish literature and culture as concerned with the struggle to overcome the cruel and hostile forces that besieged the peasant in an authoritarian society. Such a world encouraged sly cunning and militated against moral probity, at least until the good fortune of the 'pícaro' ran out. It is easy to see how such a work had a major impact on the course of English fiction, notably Thomas Nashe's *The Unfortunate Traveller*, published just over a decade later, as well as the earthy style of prose and drama. At the opposite end of the scale was Thomas More's *Utopia*, translated into English by Ralph Robinson in 1551. Robert Appelbaum's essay charts the variety and complexity of the Utopian tradition in English, one that embraced both political and scientific

experiment, looked towards a better future, satirized the present, and produced a distressing vision as often as a hopeful one.

Prose defined and established the character of English life and thought. Probably the most influential book produced in this period, having even more impact than the Bible, was the Book of Common Prayer, first produced under the aegis of Thomas Cranmer in 1549, and then undergoing significant changes in the next 120 years. As Daniel Swift demonstrates, we owe more than our understanding of the liturgy and forms of religious ceremony to Cranmer's project. It also gave us a vast number of everyday phrases which have characterized the nature of colloquial English to the present day, even though most native speakers are unaware of the origins of the phrases they use. Other essays show how this common language was used by a vast array of ordinary people, in diaries (Adam Smyth) and the various forms of life writing (Danielle Clarke). Again, we find that what looks as if it is an intimate, private form of writing that opens a window into the author's soul is in fact carefully crafted and structured. As Adam Smyth suggests, diaries, like that of Lady Margaret Hoby, were 'less a path to inwardness, and more a log-book of actions across several spheres', most closely related to one of the most popular forms of print culture, the almanac. Life writing as a category did not exist in this period and we have to construct a category from miscellaneous writings after the event, one reason why so many inexperienced readers are surprised at the lack of biography and autobiography, as well as materials for constructing a life that survive from the sixteenth and, to a lesser extent, the seventeenth century. What emerges is an interesting difference between the life writings of men and women, the latter willing to 'exploit the fluidity of the discourses of the self in order to fashion subjectivities strongly rooted in the private world, whilst reflecting on and affecting the public one' (Danielle Clarke).

Prose had a major role in exhorting, persuading, and forcing people to act, from the proclamations, treatises, and political arguments discussed in Nicholas McDowell's essay, to nuanced discussions and staged dialogues on major issues analysed in Cathy Shrank's, a seriously under-explored genre that enabled writers to carry on debates that had often started in conversation, the staple form of education in a period in which communication was still predominantly oral. After all, 'political argument and change are registered and initiated in prose' (Nicholas McDowell). Of course, a number of genres and modes of writing can accommodate widely divergent purposes, styles, and methods, as Bart Van Es's essay on history writing demonstrates, showing the differences between the inclusive, apparently non-evaluative nature of the chronicle and the controlled, focused direction of the historical narratives produced by a Bacon or a Daniel. In his equally wide-ranging essay, Dermot Cavanagh follows the course of the sixteenth century through three major satirists: Erasmus in his *Praise of Folly*, a Menippean satire designed to expose and correct vice; Stephen Gosson's rather more vigorous polemic against the theatres, *The School of Abuse*; and Thomas Nashe's disorienting and disturbing polemical fiction, *The Unfortunate Traveller*, in which 'the narrator learns the full extent of the theatrical imposture that passes for reality in the world around him and that sustains the appearance of reality'.

The significance of prose has at last been re-recognized after a long hiatus when it was only sparingly taught in schools and universities. Major new editions of the works of Sir Francis Bacon, Robert Burton, Sir Thomas Browne, and Richard Hakluyt are well underway; there has been a great deal of serious work on sermons, especially Lancelot Andrewes and John Donne; there is renewed interest in Lady Mary Wroth, Sir Philip Sidney, William Baldwin, and Raphael Holinshed; as well as major new works on types and forms of writing, notably letters, jest books, popular romance, and print culture. The danger is not that this handbook will fail to find an audience but that the amount of work may leave it in need of revision and updating in the near future.

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PART I

TRANSLATION,
EDUCATION,
AND LITERARY
CRITICISM

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CHAPTER 1

ENGLISHING ELOQUENCE: SIXTEENTH-CENTURY ARTS OF RHETORIC AND POETICS

CATHERINE NICHOLSON

1.1 INELOQUENT ENGLAND

IN 1531, when Sir Thomas Elyot surveys England's linguistic landscape, he discerns in its contours only 'a maner, a shadowe, or figure of the auncient rhetorike'. That shadow or figure inheres in the law school ritual of 'motes' or moot courts, mock trials at which students debated 'some doubtfull controversie' before a court of their faculty and peers. As Elyot notes in *The Boke named the Governour*, the moot courts required students to generate a set of plausible arguments, arrange them persuasively for a judge or jury, and present them in a public setting, and so they trained young lawyers in the rudiments of invention, disposition, and memory, the first three parts of the classical art of rhetoric. But according to Elyot, the moot courts did not, and could not, revive the whole of the ancient art: because 'the tonge wherin it is spoken is barberouse, and the sterynge of affections of the mynde in this realme was neuer used, there lacketh Eloquution and Pronunciation, the two principall partes of rhetorike'.¹ In other words, it isn't simply the English language to which eloquence is foreign, it is England itself, identified here as a realm where persuasion—the stirring of the affections through language—was never used.

Elyot's critique of English legal discourse highlights a more pervasive dilemma for sixteenth-century vernacular writers. The eloquence enshrined in ancient Greek and Latin oratory was revered as the epitome of linguistic achievement: as Roger Ascham

¹ Thomas Elyot, *The Boke named the Governour* (1531), repr. and ed. R. C. Alston (Menston: Scholar Press, 1970), fos. 56^r–57^v.

writes in *The Scholemaster* (1570), ‘in the rudest contrie, and most barbarous mother language, many be found [that] can speake verie wiselie, but in the Greeke and Latin tong, the two onelie learned tonges, we finde always wisdom and eloquence, good matter and good vtterance, neuer or seldom asunder.’² But the gap between these tongues and English was vast, perhaps insuperably so: as Ascham bluntly observed in 1545, ‘in the Englysh tonge contrary, euery thinge in a maner so meanly, bothe for the matter and handelynge, that no man can do worse.’³ Given this extreme disparity, eloquence itself could seem a hopelessly alien quality, even a threat to the integrity of what Thomas Nashe dubs ‘our homely Iland tongue.’⁴ Thus, in 1578, when Richard Harrison takes stock of the linguistic refinements of the past several decades, he describes English as a tongue simultaneously ‘perfect[ed]’ by the efforts of ‘sundry learned and excellent writers’ and ‘corrupted with external terms of eloquence.’⁵

How to craft an English language that is eloquent without ceasing, in the process, to be English: this is the challenge taken up by many poets, playwrights, and prose writers of what we now call the English Renaissance, but it is a challenge that is confronted most directly in the pages of vernacular treatises on rhetoric and poetics, practical guides to the domestication of a theoretical discourse identified powerfully and often exclusively with what was written and spoken elsewhere. As Elyot’s comments in *The Governour* suggest, early Tudor England laid claim to only a very partial remnant of that ancient discourse. Indeed, the sole printed vernacular text on rhetoric, Leonard Cox’s *Art or Crafte of Rhetoryke* (c.1524–30), begins with the author’s explanation that he has taken a deliberately truncated approach to the material in his Latin source texts, devoting the bulk of his attention to invention, some to disposition and arrangement, and none at all to elocution and pronunciation. Those who have read Cicero or Quintilian will, he acknowledges, perceive that ‘many thynges be left out of this treatyse that ought to be spoken of’—but not, he insists, in an English handbook. For his intended audience, defined by its linguistic incompetence, he writes for ‘yonge beginners’ and ‘suche as haue by negligence or els fals persuasions’ failed to ‘attayne any meane knowlege of the Latin tongue’—what Ascham calls ‘good utterance’ is no plausible object.⁶ In the decades following the publication of *The Booke named the Governour*, however, an increasing number of English authors challenged this assumption: in texts that attempt to translate the precepts of classical rhetoric and poetics into principles meaningful for a vernacular audience, they represent eloquence as a refinement rather than a repudiation or transcendence of Englishness.

In this regard, it is Thomas Wilson rather than Leonard Cox who deserves the title of the first English rhetorician. Cox may write the first English art of rhetoric, but Wilson’s

² Roger Ascham, *The Scholemaster* (1570) (repr. Menston: Scolar Press, 1967), 46.

³ Roger Ascham, *Toxophilus: The Schole of Shoting* (1545), in *English Works*, ed. William Aldis Wright (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1904), xiv.

⁴ Thomas Nashe, *Have With You to Saffron Walden* (London: John Danter, 1596), sig. M2^v.

⁵ William Harrison, ‘The Description and Historie of England’, in Raphael Holinshed, *The first and second volume of Chronicles* (London, 1587; 2nd edn.), 14.

⁶ Leonard Cox, *The Arte or Crafte of Rhetoryke* (London, 1532), sig. [F6]^r.

Arte of Rhetorique (1553, 1560) is the first art of *English* rhetoric: a treatise that takes for granted its interest and value as an analysis of vernacular norms and practices. Where Cox envisions an audience of schoolboys or poor Latinists, Wilson's treatise addresses itself on its title page to 'all suche as are studious of Eloquence'. 'Boldly... may I aduventure, and without feare step forth to offer that... which for the dignitie is so excellent, and for the use so necessarie', Wilson proclaims in his Prologue to the revised and expanded edition of 1560.⁷ This boldness has much to do with Wilson's ability to imagine a mutually enriching relationship between eloquence and Englishness. Cox expects that an educated readership will greet his English rhetoric as 'a thyng that is very rude and skant worthe the lokynge on' and reassures himself with the thought that his partial accounting of the art 'shall be sufficyent for an introduction to yonge beginners, for whome all onely this booke is made' (sigs. F6^v–F7^r). Wilson, by contrast, courts an educated readership, prefacing the first edition of his *Arte* with Latin poems by university men. He dedicates both editions to his patron John Dudley, the Earl of Warwick, whose 'earnest... wish' that he 'might one day see the precepts of Rhetorique set forth... in English' Wilson attributes not to his defects as a Latinist, but to the 'speciall desire and Affection' he 'beare[s] to Eloquence'. Indeed, for Wilson, Dudley's Englishness is a rhetorical asset: he anticipates a time when the 'perfect experience, of manifolde and weightie matters of the Commonweale, shall haue encreased the Eloquence, which alreadie doth naturally flowe' in Dudley to such an extent that his own *Arte* will be 'set... to Schoole' in Dudley's home, 'that it may learn Rhetorique of... daylie talke'.⁸

This fancy, that eloquence might be schooled by an English nobleman's 'daylie talke', upends Thomas Elyot's conception of England as a realm where persuasion was never used, and it offers a radical challenge to Roger Ascham's conviction that the 'trewe Paterne of Eloquence' must be sought not in 'plaine naturall English', but in 'the unspotted proprietie of the Latin tong... at the hiest pitch of all perfittness'—that is, 'not in common taulke, but in priuate bookes' (*The Scholemaster*, 146). Like Elyot and Ascham (whose friend and peer he was), Wilson identified with the cause of English humanism, but in *The Arte of Rhetorique*, he is at pains to expose what he sees as the unintended cost of that movement's lack of faith and interest in the mother tongue: a slavish devotion to Latin and Greek that has prevented English from fulfilling its own potential for eloquence.

Indeed, the chief objects of concern in Wilson's *Arte* are not the unlearned, ineloquent English, but those among them who have forsaken common talk for the pleasures of

⁷ Thomas Wilson, *The Arte of Rhetorique* (London: Richard Grafton, 1553; 1560); expanded 1560 edition reprinted as *Wilson's Arte of Rhetorique*, ed. G. H. Mair (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1909), sigs. Aii^v–Aiii^r.

⁸ Gabriel Harvey echoes this wish when discussing the success of Wilson's *Rhetorique* in the latter half of the sixteenth century: a handwritten note on the final page of his copy of Quintilian observes that the *Rhetorique* had become the 'daily bread of our common pleaders and discoursers' (quoted in Peter E. Medine, *Thomas Wilson* [Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1986], 55)—whether Harvey, no proletarian in matters of eloquence, meant this as a compliment is uncertain, but both the dailiness of use and the commonness of the users would have pleased Wilson himself.

private books and foreign travel: modish young men so enamoured of foreign literature that they mistake foreignness itself for a linguistic virtue, 'seek[ing] so far for outlandish English, that they forget altogether their mothers language'. Orphaned and alienated by their own affectations, they 'will say, they speake in their mother tongue', but, Wilson remarks, 'if some of their mothers were aliue, they were not able to tell what they say'. Having forsaken their mother country and mother tongue, these 'farre jorneid gentlemen at their returne home, like as thei loue to goe in forraine apparell, so thei will powder their talke with oversea language'. Actual foreign loan-words are merely the most obvious marks of rhetorical error: worse still are the 'farre fetcht colours of Antiquitie', the pseudo-archaisms and pretentious classicisms that force the speaker to transgress the bounds of community (162).

Wilson's sense of the vernacular thus depends on the same equation of geography and language that, for Elyot, condemns England to rhetorical mediocrity: he too treats English as an insular tongue, remote from Latin, Greek, and the modern Romance languages. But Wilson draws a strikingly different conclusion from that equation; for him, English is not the rude speech of a rude country, but the uncorrupted tongue of a nation whose insularity and remoteness have preserved it from moral degradation, political coercion, and 'oversea language'. Its peculiar geography is not the impediment to England's literary ambition, but the condition necessary for its fulfilment, the guarantee of its linguistic purity. As Wolfgang Müller observes, 'Compared to contemporary rhetoric books'—like Richard Sherry's *Treatise of Schemes and Tropes* (1553), which opens with an extended defence of its author's reliance on Greek and Latin terms of art—'Wilson seems to have deliberately made his book look as English as may be', even as he continues to draw on classical and continental models.⁹ Not only does he eschew Greek, Latin, and French terminology wherever possible, he populates his treatise with vividly drawn characters from English life: the effete Italianate courtier, the country bumpkin, the pretentious Lincolnshire clergyman. Often these are figures of fun, but they also represent Wilson's conviction that vernacular eloquence is the stuff of daily talk.

Instead of fretting over England's infelicitous isolation or the distinctions between its speech and the language of classical authors, then, Wilson worries about preserving that isolation and honouring those distinctions, forestalling the needless contamination of English by alien influences.¹⁰ But in his determination to rise to the challenge set by Thomas Elyot, Wilson ends up promoting an ideal of vernacularity whose boundaries

⁹ Wolfgang G. Müller, 'Directions for English: Thomas Wilson's *Art of Rhetoric*, George Puttenham's *Art of English Poesy*, and the Search for Vernacular Eloquence', in Mike Pincombe and Cathy Shrank, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Tudor Literature, 1485–1603* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 311.

¹⁰ We might compare this insistence on eloquence's native provenance with Wilson's treatment of logic in his 1551 treatise, *The Rule of Reason*, the preface to which confesses that the 'fruit' of logic is 'a strange kind (soche as no Englishe ground hath before this tyme, and in this sort by any tillage brought forth)' and that 'it maie perhaps in the firste tastyng, proue somewhat rough and harsh in the mouthe, because of the straungenesse' (sig. A2^v). *The Arte of Rhetorique* contains no such disclaimers.

are necessarily more fluid. In the final section of his *Arte*, he identifies elocution as ‘that part of *Rhetorique*, the which aboue all other is most beautifull’: in its absence reason ‘walk[s] . . . both bare and naked’. And elocution depends not simply on plainness and commonness of diction, but on ‘delitefull translations, that our speech may seeme as bright and precious, as a rich stone is faire and orient’, on ‘beautifying of the tongue with borrowed wordes’, and on ‘change of sentence or speech with much varietie’: such rhetorical values are not easily distinguished from the vices of Wilson’s far-journeyed gentlemen with their oversea language. His *Arte* therefore marks an important turn in the vernacularization of rhetoric, but it also exposes the contradictory visions of Englishness that underwrite the new vernacular rhetorics. Treatises like Wilson’s testify to the changes wrought upon a classical ideal of eloquence when it is identified with England’s daily talk, but they also testify to the changes wrought upon sixteenth-century ideals of Englishness as they assimilate an alien theory of eloquence.

1.2 WORDS IN THEIR PLACE

Wilson’s desire to challenge the exclusively foreign provenance of eloquence is not simply an expression of nationalist fervour. More importantly, his effort to promote a thoroughly English art of eloquence derives from the conviction that any approach to rhetoric that privileges unfamiliar language over ordinary speech violates the essence of the art. ‘I know them that thinke *Rhetorique* to stande wholie vpon darke wordes, and hee that can catche an ynke horne terme by the taile, him they coumpt to be a fine Englisheman, and a good *Rhetorician*’, he writes, but such affectation is ‘foly’, for it fails to accomplish the most fundamental purpose of speech. ‘Doeth wit rest in straunge wordes’, Wilson demands, ‘or els standeth it in wholesome matter, and apt declaring of a mans minde? Doe wee not speake because we would haue other to vnderstande vs, or is not the tongue giuen for this ende, that one might know what an other meaneth’ (163–4)?

In his emphasis on shared understanding, Wilson is not so far from his predecessor Cox, who argues that rhetoric teaches men to speak ‘in suche maner as maye be moste sensible and accepte to their audience’ and justifies his own vulgarization of rhetoric on the principle that ‘euery goode thyng, . . . the more commune that it is the better it is’ (sigs. A.ii^v, A.iii^r). But for Cox, commonness is all English has to recommend it—eloquence he regards as the sole property of the classical tongues. For Wilson, commonness is at the heart of ‘an Orators profession’, which is fulfilled when he ‘speake[s] only of all such matters, as may largely be expounded . . . for all men to heare them’ (1). The wanton misuse of foreign terms and ‘darke wordes’ is thus not simply a stylistic or even political concern: to Wilson’s mind, it alienates eloquence from its primary orientation towards understanding and community.

Wilson begins his *Arte* with a fable designed to illustrate this point, a fable adapted from the myth recounted by Cicero at the beginning of *his* first treatment of the art of

rhetoric, *De Inventione*.¹¹ The myth credits eloquence with the creation of meaningful bonds between men and the places they inhabit. Before eloquence was known or used, Cicero writes, men were like beasts in their relation to the earth: they ‘wandered at large [*vagabantur*]’ and ‘were scattered [*dispersos*] in the fields and hidden in sylvan retreats’. This vagabond existence persisted until one man (traditionally identified with the poet and musician Orpheus), by the force of his words, ‘assembled and gathered them in a single place [*compulit unum in locum et congregavit*]’.¹² From this original gathering place, Cicero writes, sprang civilization: homes, cities, nations, and empires founded on the banishment of error, of wandering and unreason. Later accounts of rhetoric often featured versions of the same myth, reiterating the role of eloquence in the foundation of human communities. In the *Institutio Oratoriae* Quintilian writes, ‘I cannot imagine how the founders of cities would have made a homeless multitude [*vaga illa multitudo*] come together to form a people, had they not moved [*commota*] them by their skillful speech.’¹³ This formulation contrasts the vagrancy of the homeless multitude with the purposeful solidarity of a people ‘moved’ by eloquence. Rhetoric counteracts man’s natural tendency to *err* with the attractive power of words and ideas.¹⁴

For Wilson, reading this myth through the lens of Protestant Christianity, the errant proclivity of man is not only a sign of savagery, but a mark of sin. Aligning the founding myth of eloquence with biblical history, he makes a case for rhetoric as an instrument of salvation. After Adam’s fall, he writes, the ‘eloquence first giuen by God’ was lost, and the immediate consequence was the demise of human community: ‘all things waxed sauage, the earth vntilled, societie neglected’. Lacking a productive relation to the land, or to each other, men ‘grased vpon the ground’ and ‘roomed’ like wild beasts. They ‘liued brutishly in open feeldes, hauing neither house to shroude them in, nor attire to clothe their backs.’¹⁵ Thus far, Wilson’s narrative recapitulates the Old Testament history of mankind’s fall, whereby Adam and Eve are cast out of the garden, Cain becomes, in the words of the 1560 Geneva Bible, ‘a vagabond and a runnagate in the earth’ (Gen. 4:12), Noah’s sons are ‘deuided in their lands, euery one after his tongue; [and] after their fami-

¹¹ Wayne Rebhorn provides a lengthy consideration of classical and Renaissance accounts of the origins of rhetoric, paying particular attention to the distinctive political ideologies that inflect versions of the foundational myth offered in republican and monarchic societies. See *The Emperor of Men’s Minds: Literature and the Renaissance Discourse of Rhetoric* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995), 23–9. Neil Rhodes likewise reflects on Renaissance ideas of eloquence in the first chapter of *The Power of Eloquence and English Renaissance Literature* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1992).

¹² Marcus Tullius Cicero, *De Inventione*, trans. H. M. Hubbell (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1949), 5–7.

¹³ Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria*, 4 vols., trans. Donald Russell (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), 1:373.

¹⁴ Cicero’s *De Officiis* highlights the significance of this communal function of rhetoric. In the words of Grimald’s 1556 English translation, ‘[O]nlesse the felowshippe of mankinde, dothe meete with the knowledge of thinges: it may seeme a very bare, and alonewandering knowledge: and likewise greatnesse of corage, severed from common felowshippe, and neybourhod of men, muste needes bee a certain savagenesse, and beastly crueltie’ (1.157, 109).

¹⁵ Wilson, *Rhetorique*, sig. [A6]^v.

lies, in their nations' (Gen. 10:5), and, at last, at Babel, God resolves to 'confound the language of all the earth... [and] scatter them vpon all the earth' (Gen. 11:9).¹⁶ This state of alienation and confusion persists, according to Wilson, until God's 'faithfull and elect... called [men] together by vtterance of speech', persuading them 'to live together in fellowship of life' and 'to maintain Cities'. By no 'other meanes', he asserts, could men have been brought to submit to the authority of God and his ministers. Man's natural vagrancy and errancy would lead him to seek to move to a higher station, he writes, 'were [he] not persuaded, that it behoueth [him] to liue in his owne vocation: and not to seeke any higher rounge' (sig. [A7]^{r-v}).

Eloquence creates community, but it also maintains, according to degree, the natural boundaries between peoples, classes, nations, and all other entities otherwise vulnerable to motion, error, and change. Wilson's stylistic, syntactic, and formal prescriptions are thus repeatedly cast in geographical terms, as warnings against departure from the space of common knowledge and shared understanding. Orators are urged to avoid 'straunge woordes, as thou wouldest take hede and eschue greate Rockes in the Sea', and to guard against 'roving without reason' from the plain statement of their arguments (2-3, 87). 'Would not a man thinke him mad, that hauing an earnest errande from London to Dover, would take it the next way to ride first into Northfolke, next into Essex, and last into Kent?' Wilson asks. So much the greater, he argues, is the folly of those who treat rhetoric as an art of evasion and circumlocution. He offers the cautionary example of an Anglican preacher who, intending to speak 'of the generall resurrection', instead 'hath made a large matter of our blessed Ladie, praying her to bee so gentle, so curteous, and so kinde, that it were better a thousand fold, to make sute to her alone, then to Christ her sonne'. Such rhetoric is, Wilson argues, 'both vngodly, and nothing at all to the purpose'; like the savage men of the pre-rhetorical world, it 'roomes'. The pun on 'Rome' and 'roaming', which the text's orthography invites, emphasizes the conflation of linguistic, moral, and geographic errancy: rhetorical laxity, like the pursuit of strange words, leads to heresy. '[A]ssuredly', Wilson concludes, 'many an vnlearned and witlesse man, hath straid in his talke much farther a great deale, yea truly as farre as hence to Roome gates' (87-8).

Wilson's *Rhetorique* thus paves the way for a new approach to the vernacular, one founded on the virtues of familiarity, proximity, and even insularity. In the latter half of the sixteenth century, a number of writers follow Wilson in arguing that England's national integrity—the security of its place in the world—demanded that English be put on equal footing with all other tongues. They adopt both his confidence in the mother tongue and his conviction that insularity makes an ideal landscape for eloquence. One of the most radical attempts to challenge the hegemony of the classical tongues is Ralph Lever's 1573 vernacular art of logic. Pointedly titled *The Arte of Reason, rightly termed Witcraft*, Lever's treatise excludes as many Latinate words as possible, replacing even

¹⁶ *The Geneva Bible: A Facsimile of the 1560 Edition*, with an introduction by Lloyd E. Berry (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1969), fos. 2^v, 5^r, 5^v.

familiar terms—like ‘logic’ itself—with invented Anglo-Saxon equivalents like ‘witcraft’. ‘We who devise understandable terms, compounded of true and ancient English words’, Lever explains, ‘do rather maintain and continue the antiquitie of our mother tongue.’ By contrast, he argues, ‘they, that with inckhorne termes soe chaunge and corrupt the same, mak[e] a mingle mangle of their natiue speech, . . . not observing the propertie thereof.’¹⁷ That English has an ‘antiquitie’ and ‘propertie’ of its own is precisely what Thomas Elyot does not allow when, in *The Boke named the Governour*, he attributes England’s rhetorical limitations to its ‘infilicitie of tyme and countray’ (fol. 18^r): if English can claim for itself a place worth having, both in history and on the globe, then its alienation from the classical world no longer matters. Indeed, Latin, Greek, and their modern heirs may be regarded not as remote ideals, but as unwanted interlopers, trespassers on the vernacular’s rightful territory.

This is precisely the position taken by Samuel Daniel in his *Apologie for Ryme* (1603), which likens the importation of foreign words into English to an influx of undesirable immigrants. ‘[W]e alwayes bewray our selues to be bothe vnkinde and vnnaturall to our owne natiue language, in disguising or forging strange or vnusuell wordes, as if it were to make our verse seeme another kind of speech out of the course of our vsuall practice, displacing our wordes’, Daniel declares. The boundaries of English, he implies, are no less fixed than those of England itself and ought to be guarded with as much zeal: the vernacular constitutes a finite territory, in which the presence of foreigners necessarily threatens to ‘displace’ the native inhabitants. ‘I wonder at the strange presumption of some men’, he writes, ‘that dare so audaciously aduenture to introduce any whatsoeuer *forraine* wordes, be they neuer so *strange*, and of themselues, as it were, without a Parliament, without any consent or allowance, establish them as Free-denizens in our language.’¹⁸

In reality, the borders of the English language could not be sealed any more than the borders of England itself: both the country and its vernacular were heavily dependent on foreign imports. Even the word ‘denizen’, which Daniel uses to scold those who presumptuously introduce foreign terms into English, is a legal term borrowed from Norman French¹⁹—a remnant of William the Conqueror’s invasion of England. The presence of such words was a constant reminder of the permeability of England’s geographic borders, its heritage of repeated conquest by foreign nations.²⁰ But however ignominious this history might be, it had made English into a much richer and more diverse tongue than it otherwise might have been. Certainly Thomas Wilson recognizes this fact—unlike Lever, he is no Anglo-Saxon purist. Wilson allows that, when foreign terms are required ‘to set forth our meaning in the English tongue, either for lacke of

¹⁷ Ralph Lever, *The Arte of Reason, rightly termed Witcraft* (London: H. Bynneman, 1573), sig. [*7]^r.

¹⁸ Samuel Daniel, *The Defence of Ryme* (London: Edward Blount, 1603), sig. H7^r.

¹⁹ See OED s.v. ‘denizen’, OED <<http://www.oed.com>> accessed 18 March 2013.

²⁰ As Richard Foster Jones observes, ‘five times strangers had invaded England, and each time had changed the language’ (*The Triumph of the English Language* [Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 1953], 5).

store, or els because we would enrich the language: it is well doen to vse them, provided that 'all other are agreed to followe the same waie'. Such words, 'being vsed in their place', should cause no one to be 'suspected for affectation', he writes, as long as they are 'apt and meete . . . to set out the matter' (165). Here, as always in Wilson's *Arte*, the concern is with place: that words be accommodated to the place in which they are written or spoken, and that they do not displace more familiar and proper terms.

Keeping words 'in their place' was not simply a matter of policing the incursion of foreign terms into English; it was also a matter of managing the vernacular's worrisome *internal* heterogeneity. To call English an 'island tongue' was to ignore the many differences of dialect that divided one region from another.²¹ This internal heterogeneity represented a serious obstacle to claims for vernacular eloquence: England was understood to be full of places that engendered corrupt or barbarous versions of the mother tongue. George Puttenham's *Arte of English Poesie* (1589) precisely enumerates these places in an effort to pinpoint the site of true eloquence. The best speech in any language, Puttenham writes, is not that which is spoken 'in the marches or frontiers, or in port townes, where straungers haunt for traffike sake, or yet in Vniuersities where Schollers vse much peeuish affectation of wordes out of the primatiue languages, or finally, in any vplandish village or corner of a Realme, where there is no resort but of poore rusticall or vnciuill people', rather, it is strictly that dialect that is used 'in the kings Court, or in the good townes and Cities within the land'. This dictum bars 'any speech vsed beyond the riuier of Trent', which, although it may reflect more of the pure 'English Saxon' is 'not so Courtly nor so currant as our Southerne English'. According to Puttenham, proper English corresponds to exact geographic coordinates: it is found 'in London and the shires lying about London within lx. myles, and not much aboue'.²²

Puttenham's strict mapping of acceptable vernacular usage echoes in another form Wilson's warnings against 'roaming' language, but Puttenham—writing for an audience of courtiers—disregards Wilson's sense of the contextual nature of propriety. For Puttenham, the English of the court is inherently preferable to that spoken elsewhere—the burden of barbarous marginality is simply shifted to England's own periphery, while the privileged centre of learned speech is transferred from Rome to London. Wilson, by contrast, regards courtly speech as proper only to the court; spoken outside of that setting, it is as ludicrous as any other foreign usage. The distinction is crucial, for it highlights the central feature of Wilson's whole theory of vernacular eloquence: the notion that eloquence is a local rather than a universal quality.

Given his urgent desire to protect English from the strange speech of other nations, we might expect Wilson to share Puttenham's anxiety about the internal peculiarities of

²¹ This internal difference of language is the subject of Paula Blank's *Broken English: Dialects and the Politics of Language in Renaissance Writings* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), which examines the role of dialects in various efforts to standardize vernacular usage and to represent English identity in literary form.

²² George Puttenham, *The Arte of English Poesie*. In *English Reprints*, vol. 4 (New York: AMS Press, 1966), 156–7.

the mother tongue. In fact, however, Wilson regards the variation of speech within England's borders as an obstacle to eloquence only when the rhetorical proprieties of one social or geographic context come into conflict with those of another. He repeatedly tells stories of low-born men from the provinces whose upper-class pretensions lead them into comic rhetorical errors—the 'ignorant fellowe' who calls a flock of sheep 'an audience' or the yokel who refers to a house as a 'phrase of building'. But Wilson makes clear that such abuses of language occur not because the vernacular itself needs reform, but because speakers fail to consider what is proper to a given context: they 'vs[e] words out of place'. The solution, he argues, is to map the vernacular with as much care for internal divisions as for external boundaries: '[W]e must make a difference of English, and say some is learned English, and other some is rude English, or the one is court talke, the other is countrey speech', he advises, 'or els we must of necessity banish all such *Rhetorique*, and vse altogether one maner of language' (164, 166).

The inability to draw such distinctions deprives rhetoric of its most basic stylistic and persuasive virtues, those of familiarity and clarity. Unless speakers abide by the law of proximity, avoiding that which is strange or far-fetched, they cannot hope to win the assent of their audience. Those who would 'acquaint themselues with the best kind of speech', Wilson writes, 'must seeke from time to time such wordes as are commonly receiued, . . . what wordes we best vnderstande, and knowe what they meane: the same should soonest be spoken' (165). Wilson's respect for the local permutations of style and usage within England's borders thus derives, as do all his precepts, from the conviction that eloquence is a communal art. Men, he writes in his 'Preface', should learn how to speak by following 'their neighbours deuise' (sig. [A7]^v). Such an assertion is a profound departure from the view that England could only learn eloquence from strangers: Wilson's *Rhetorique* not only frees English rhetoric from its thralldom to Latin and Greek, it roots the art of persuasion in the most intimate and familiar of relationships, asserting that 'the best kind of speech' is that which is literally closest to hand.

1.3 FAIR AND ORIENT FIGURES

His emphasis on the locally particular character of linguistic decorum allows Thomas Wilson to stake England's claim to a native art of eloquence, but it leaves readers of *The Arte of Rhetorique* with an unresolved paradox. As the epitome of rhetorical decorum, eloquence ought to be the form of speech most in accord with local custom and circumstance, but the definition of eloquence depends on the perception of its *difference* from ordinary or common speech. As Wilson allows, familiarity may be the basis of persuasive power, but the best orator does not blend into the crowd: 'among all other, I thinke him most worthie fame', he writes, 'that is among the reasonable of al most reasonable, and among the wittie, of all most wittie, and among the eloquent, of all most eloquent: him thinke I among all men, not onely to be taken for a singuler man, but rather to be coumpted for halfe a God' (sig. A7^v). The singularity and near divinity of the eloquent

man—his reputation or fame as an orator—derives not from his speaking commonly, but extraordinarily. True eloquence not only justifies departures from common usage; it demands them.

Even as Wilson founds his vernacular *Arte* on an identification of eloquence with proximity to common use, then, that proximity does not dissolve into identity: the persuasive force of rhetoric depends as much on singularity as it does on familiarity. Thus, Wilson turns in the final section of his *Arte* to 'exornation', the practice by which '[w]hen wee haue learned apte wordes, and vsuall phrases to set foorth our meaning, and can orderly place them...wee may boldly commende and beautifie our talke'. 'Apt' and 'usual' terms set in 'orderly' places may be the standard for which the novice orator strives, but boldness and beauty are the marks at which the truly expert speaker aims—even if they necessitate violations of aptness, order, and use. That boldness and beauty may require such violations is plain from Wilson's account of exornation, which he defines as 'a gorgeous beautifying of the tongue with borrowed wordes, and change of sentence or speech with much varietie', so that 'our speech may seeme as bright and precious, as a rich stone is faire and orient' (169). This last simile highlights a shift in Wilson's sense of the relationship between eloquence and familiarity. What, after all, could be more distant and alien, more 'far-fetched', than the gem-rich Orient evoked by Wilson's comparison? The contrast to his earlier prohibitions on strange words grows more marked as Wilson's discussion of exornation proceeds: ornament, he writes, is most often achieved by figures of speech, which are 'used after some newe or straunge wise, much vnlike to that which men commonly vse to speake'. Without such new and strange figures, Wilson claims, 'not one can attaine to be coumpted an Oratour, though his learning otherwise be neuer so great' (170). Among the most skilled speakers, he observes, '[m]en coumpt it a point of witte, to passe ouer such words as are at hand, and to vse such as are farre fetcht and translated'—by such diversions from common use, he concludes, '[a]n Oration is wounderfully enriched' (171–2).

This is a striking reversal of the relationship hitherto presumed to exist between place and eloquence: now rhetoric leads away, to the alien and exotic, rather than sustaining the common and usual. The shift points to a tension within the project of vernacular rhetoric. That is, for those who seek to establish guidelines for the eloquent use of English, it is essential either to close the gap between English and Latin or to propose alternative, vernacular standards for rhetorical propriety. However, such efforts at uniformity and standardization must give way to the imperative to distinguish rhetorical speech from its mundane counterparts. Eloquence cannot be so closely tied to common usage that it disappears altogether. Thus, even as Puttenham insists that proper diction must correspond to that of London, he too encourages vernacular authors in the use of 'the rich Orient coulours' of 'figures and figurative speech' if they hope to attain eloquence (143).

In treatises like Wilson's and Puttenham's—often heralded as markers of burgeoning national pride and linguistic self-confidence—Elyot's perception of rhetoric (and, especially, of style) as an essentially exotic commodity is not so much dispelled as displaced onto a territory internal to the supposedly homely mother tongue: as eloquence

is redefined on English terms, the shadows and figures of the native linguistic landscape assume an increasing prominence and value. Here it is worth turning back to a handbook I earlier contrasted to Wilson's *Arte* in its self-conscious reliance on classical terminology. The title page of Richard Sherry's 1550 *Treatise of Schemes and Tropes*, the first vernacular guide to what Elyot dubbed the 'principall partes of rhetorike', advertises it as an aid 'for the better vnderstanding of good authors', and those who picked it up probably assumed that the authors in question were classical writers: here was a handbook to help schoolboys recognize a Ciceronian *paraphrasis* or a Virgilian *metalepsis*. Sherry's preface initially reinforces the assumption that his object is the demystification of a foreign discourse. He apologizes for the fact that his title must sound 'all straunge unto our Englyshe eares', causing 'some men at the fyrst syghte to marvayle what the matter of it should meane', and urges readers to consider that 'use maketh straunge thinges familier'. With time, he suggests, alien terms like 'scheme' and 'trope' may become as common 'as if they had bene of oure owne natie broode'.²³

But as Sherry soon reveals, the strangeness his treatise seeks to make familiar is less a property of Latin and Greek than it is of English itself. 'It is not vnknown that oure language for the barbarousnes and lacke of eloquence hathe bene complayned of', he writes,

and yet not trewely, for anye defaut in the tounge it selfe, but rather for slackenes of our countrimen, whiche haue alwayes set lyght by searchyng out the elegance and proper speaches that be ful many in it: as plainly doth appere not only by the most excellent monumentes of our auncient forewriters, Gower, Chawcer and Lydgate, but also by the famous workes of many other later: inespéciall of y^e ryght worshipful knyght syr Thomas Eliot, . . . [who] as it were generallye searchinge oute the cople of oure language in all kynde of wordes and phrases, [and] after that setting abrode goodlye monumentes of hys wytte, lernynge and industrie, aswell in historycall knowledge, as of eyther the Philosophies, hathe herebi declared the plentyfulnes of our mother tounge. (sigs. A2^v–[A3]^r)

The 'good authors' of the title page thus include not simply Cicero and Virgil, but Elyot, Thomas Wyatt, and the 'manye other . . . yet lyuyng' (sig. [A3]^v) whose very familiarity—whose Englishness—has obscured the 'cople' or riches of their speech.

In truth, it is hard to imagine any reader consulting the litany of arcane tropes and figures that ensues and finding Elyot's prose or Wyatt's verse easier to read as a consequence: the aim is not clarification, but complication. We—and, presumably, sixteenth-century readers—do not need Sherry's definition of the figure he calls 'Metaphora' or 'translacion'—'a worde translated from the thyng that it properly signifieth, vnto another whych may agre with it by a similitude' (sig. C4^v)—to understand what Elyot means when he describes moot court exercises as the 'shadow or figure' of an ancient rhetoric, but the label and the definition call our attention to the artfulness of the phrase, its capacity to suggest the way time has attenuated and flattened a once substantive art.

²³ Richard Sherry, *A Treatise of Schemes and Tropes* (London, 1550), sigs. A1^v–A2^r.

When Sherry promises his readers ‘better understanding’ of authors like Elyot, he offers them a mode of access to their mother tongue that is also a process of alienation from it: the domestication of classical rhetoric brings with it a deliberate and profitable estrangement from the mother tongue.

Indeed, Sherry’s *Treatise* extends to English readers the possibility that the strangeness of eloquence might be its chief asset for the vernacular: although he worries that some readers will scan the title of his book, ‘marvayle’ and cast it aside as ‘some newe fangle’, he imagines ‘other[s], whiche moued with the noueltye thereof, wyll thynke it worthe to be looked vpon, and se what is contained therin’ (sig. A2^r). In appropriating wonder as a productive response to the foreign terminology of style—schemes and tropes, metaphors, zeugmas, and antistrophes—Sherry doesn’t simply make good on an inevitable feature of his rhetorical project, the need to reckon with Greek and Latin terms of art and odd linguistic technicalities, he also recovers for the vernacular a central, and often problematic, feature of what Elyot calls ‘the ancient rhetoric’: the counter-intuitive premium it placed on the orator’s ability to impress his audience with the unlikelihood of his expressions. For as much as classical rhetoricians urged their pupils to conform their speech to the experiences and expectations of their audience—the orator, writes Quintilian, must discern ‘those things about which there is general agreement, . . . if not throughout the whole world, at any rate in the nation or state where the case is being pleaded’²⁴—they also remained sensitive to the particular power of language that alters or departs from ordinary usage. ‘To deviate [from prevailing (*kyrios*) usage] makes language seem more elevated; for people feel in the same way in regard to *lexis* as they do in regard to strangers compared with citizens’, writes Aristotle in Book Three of the *Art of Rhetoric*. ‘As a result, one should make the language unfamiliar, for people are admirers of what is far off, and what is marvellous is sweet.’²⁵ The sixteenth-century Englishing of classical rhetoric thus recapitulates a debate that structures the very foundation of classical theories of eloquence: does persuasion inhere in the fashioning of an argument that comes closest to what an audience will recognize as the truth of their own experience, or does it operate most powerfully in those rhetorical shadows and figures that entice us with their strangeness?

Within vernacular treatises on rhetoric and poetics, this ancient uncertainty produces a conspicuous metaphorical volatility: the geographic language of distance and foreignness that is used so often to stigmatize bad rhetoric or affected speech is therefore equally available to positive representations of vernacular eloquence. Metaphor itself, as all of these writers well knew, means ‘to carry across’—as Puttenham says, it might be dubbed ‘the figure of *transport*’, since it entails ‘a kind of wresting of a single word from his own right signification, to another not so naturall’ (148). That less ‘naturall’ signification might imply a transgression of decorum—Jonson warns readers that ‘*Metaphors* farfet

²⁴ Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria*, ed. and trans. H. E. Butler (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1966), 5.10.11–13; vol. 2, 209.

²⁵ Aristotle, *On Rhetoric: A Theory of Civic Discourse*, ed. and trans. George A. Kennedy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 3.2.2–3; 221.

hinder to be understood' and that a speaker should take care not to 'fetcheth his translations from a wrong place' (95)—but it also opens language up to exotic delights and strange riches. Thomas Nashe might mock Gabriel Harvey for speaking English like a stranger and insist that true Englishmen are 'the plainest dealing souls that ever God put life in',²⁶ but even plain dealing souls are not immune to the allure of the distant and rare. Indeed, it just this allure that draws writers to the study of rhetoric, as Nashe himself allows: perfecting the art of speech, he jokingly observes, entails a perpetual hunt for 'a more Indian metaphor'.²⁷ As a character in Nashe's *The Unfortunate Traveller* (1594) remarks, far-flung travels and exotic adventures may have corrupted Ulysses's morals, but they refined his skill as an orator: '*Non formosus erat, sed erat facundus Ulysses*; Ulysses, the long traveler, was not amiable but eloquent' (343).

Not just rhetorical excess, then, but rhetoric itself continued to be associated with travel and exoticism, even by those early modern English authors who took it upon themselves to counter Elyot's notion of eloquence as definitively un-English. In part, this association reflected the persistence of the belief that the vernacular as it was commonly spoken was inadequate as a vehicle for eloquence—the 'homely Iland tongue' might be too narrowly provincial after all—but it also reflects a belief that eloquence demands liberal bounds: the rusticity of the vernacular might as well be blamed on lack of industry and daring as on any necessary restrictions. This, according to George Puttenham, was the function of all figurative language: 'As figures be the instruments of ornament in euery language, so be they also in a sorte abuses or rather trespasses in speech, because they passe the ordinarie limits of common vtterance', becoming a 'manner of forraine and coloured talke' (159–60). Ultimately, Puttenham suggests, the effect of rhetoric on an audience is not to confirm their sense of place in the world, but to provide the illusion of leaving it: figures of speech, he writes, 'carieth [the listener's] opinion this way and that, whither soeuer the heart by impression of the eare shalbe most affectionately bent and directed', 'drawing [the minde] from plainnesse and simplicitie to a certain doublenesse' (159–60). This 'doublenesse', the 'inuersion of sense by transport', serves as yet another response to the relationship understood to exist between English language and England's place. Here neither the vernacular nor the foreign are shunned, since figuration allows for the coexistence of the two in a single discourse: 'euery language' has the capacity to become a 'manner of forraine . . . talke'.

In other words, every language is capable of poetry: Puttenham's treatise begins with the assertion that eloquence is bred only by the influence of poets upon a language. Poetry, he writes

is . . . a maner of vtterance more eloquent and rhethoricall then the ordinarie prose which we vse in our daily talke, because it is decked and set out with all maner of fresh colours and figures . . . The vtterance in prose is not of so great efficacie, because . . . it is dayly vsed, and by that occasion the eare is ouergluttet with it. (9)

²⁶ Thomas Nashe, *The Unfortunate Traveller*, in *The Unfortunate Traveller and Other Works*, ed. J. B. Steane (New York: Penguin Books, 1973), 342.

²⁷ Nashe, *The Unfortunate Traveller*, 293.

Whereas Wilson cautioned orators against adopting the extravagant style of the poet, Puttenham offers poetry as the ideal model for rhetorical excellence: 'the Poets were...from the beginning the best perswaders, and their eloquence the first Rhethoricke of the world' (9). The division between poetry and 'ordinarie prose' thus becomes another boundary to be trespassed in the pursuit of eloquence.²⁸ Indeed, as Paula Blank argues, 'words usually characterized as examples of Renaissance "poetic diction"' may be 'better understood as dialects of early modern English'. Blank cites Alexander Gill's Latin history of the English language, *Logonomia Anglica* (1619), which places the 'Poetic' alongside 'the general, the Northern, the Southern, the Eastern, [and] the Western' as one of the 'major dialects'. 'Along with regional languages implicitly defined, geographically and socially, by their relation to the "general" language (i.e., an elite variety of London English)', Blank writes, we might consider "'Poetic" language as a province of the vernacular'.²⁹

For most rhetorical and poetic theorists, however, the place of poetry in relation to the ordinary vernacular is represented not by reference to internal regions, but to more exotic locales: Nashe's 'Indian metaphor', Wilson's 'faire and orient' speech, or Puttenham's 'Orient colours'. In the case of poetry, foreignness derives not from the words themselves (although these may be foreign in origin), but primarily from what Chapman calls the 'beyond sea manner of writing'. How is it that poetic language accomplishes this estrangement of the vernacular from itself? George Gascoigne offers one explanation in 'Certayne Notes of Instruction Concerning the Making of Verse', an essay appended to his 1575 anthology *The Posies*. Gascoigne begins the essay by urging his fellow vernacular poets *not* to regard poetic diction as alienated from ordinary speech, encouraging them rather to hew to 'playne Englishe' in the composition of their verses.³⁰ Take care, he writes, that 'you wreste no woorde from his natural and vsuall sounde' and, when possible, choose simple words, for 'the more monosyllables that you vse, the truer Englishman you shall seeme'.³¹ Gascoigne particularly urges vernacular poets to 'eschew straunge words, or *obsoleta et inusitata*', and to 'use your verse after theenglishhe phrase, and not after the maner of other languages' (52–3).

Nevertheless, it is by no means obvious to Gascoigne that poetic language always can or should adhere to the boundaries of 'playne Englishe'. Indeed, he quickly qualifies his own ruling, allowing that archaisms and other 'unnatural' words are sometimes permitted to verse by 'poetic licence':

²⁸ For a discussion of the 'generic intertextuality' enacted by Puttenham's conflation of poetry and eloquence, see Heinrich F. Plett, *Rhetoric and Renaissance Culture* (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2004), 151–2, 162–73.

²⁹ Blank, *Broken English*, 3.

³⁰ George Gascoigne, 'Certayne Notes of Instruction Concerning the Making of Verse or Ryme in English', in *Ancient Critical Essays Upon English Poets and Poesy*, ed. Joseph Haslewood (London: Robert Triphook, 1815), vol. 2, 53.

³¹ Gascoigne, 'Certayne Notes of Instruction', 50–1.

Therefore even as I have advised you to place all wordes in their naturall or most common and usuall pronounciation, so would I wishe you to frame all sentences in their mother phrase and proper Idioma, and yet sometimes (as I have sayd before) the contraries may be borne, but that is rather where rime enforceth, or *per licentiam Poeticam*, than it is otherwise lawfull or commendable. (53)

But Gascoigne's own language at this moment ironically and rather playfully enacts the permeability of that supposedly lawful and commendable boundary between 'the englishe phrase' and 'the maner of other languages', even in prose: 'straunge words' is glossed with the Latin '*obsoleta et inusitata*', 'the mother phrase' is elaborated—gratuitously—by the Greek 'Idioma', and '*per licentiam Poeticam*' substitutes for the perfectly serviceable vernacular equivalent. Recourse to language outside of the common usage, it seems, is not simply a freedom allowed to English verse: prose stylists too may find themselves straying into foreign tongues, either where the paucity of the vernacular 'enforceth' such transgressions or simply where the whim of the author makes them desirable.

As Gascoigne unfolds his theory of '*licentiam poeticam*', he further multiplies the qualifications to his own rule against 'straunge words'. 'This poetically licence', he writes, is 'a shrewde fellow', which 'covereth many faults in a verse'. Poetic licence, he observes, has the procrustean ability to 'maketh words longer, shorter, of mo syllables, of fewer, newer, older, truer, falsier, and to conclude it turkeneth all things at pleasure' (53–4). Here, again, Gascoigne's own language partakes of the licence he describes: 'turkeneth', according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, is emphatically a 'newer' word in 1575, perhaps even Gascoigne's own coinage. The twofold connotation of the word preserves a sense of Gascoigne's ambivalence about poetic licence: on the one hand 'to turken' (or, to use an earlier, related form of the word, 'to turkesse') means either 'to transform or alter for the worse; to wrest, twist, distort, pervert' or—much less negatively—'to alter the form or appearance of; to change, modify, refashion (not necessarily for the worse)'.³² Which definition applies to the 'turkening' of that shrewd fellow, poetic licence, is uncertain in Gascoigne's account. Are the alterations wrought in the common language by poetic usage 'perversions' of that language, or are they simply acts of 'refashioning' and 'modification'? Is poetic licence an invitation to poetic licentiousness?

There is, of course, another ambiguity residing in Gascoigne's uncommon turn of phrase: its etymological relation to early modern England's pre-eminent figure for *global* difference and licentious excess: the Turk. According to the *OED*, while 'turken' and 'turkesse' are understood by some as versions of the French 'torquer' or the Latin 'torquere', meaning 'to twist', this etymology presents 'difficulties both of form and sense'. An alternative derivation is suggested 'from Turk and Turkeys, [or] Turkish', since, as the *OED* observes, 'they were often associated with these words'. A survey of the citations provided in the *OED* suggests that these two etymologies converged in the early seventeenth century, when 'turken', 'turkesse', and 'turkize' were used to describe the transformation or conversion of sacred language or objects or individuals from Christian truth

³² *OED*, s.v. 'turkesse', *OED* <<http://www.oed.com>> accessed 18 March 2013.

to Islamic error. In *Purchas His Pilgrimage* (1613), for instance, Samuel Purchas describes how ‘the Turkes, when they turkeised it [St Sophia], threw downe the Altars, [and] turned the Bells into great Ordinance’, while a citation from 1648 deplores ‘those . . . which are so audacious as to turcase the revealed, and sealed Standard of our salvation . . . to the misshapen models of their intoxicated phansies’. Gascoigne’s use of ‘turkeneth’ does not explicitly invoke the presence of Islam, but his witty coinage does invite readers to locate his discussion of poetic licence within a larger conversation about the boundary between the native and the foreign, the natural and the unnatural, the lawful and the unlawful. The link between the foreign and the poetic, Gascoigne suggests, inheres in the (dangerously) transformative power of each.

Insofar as it signifies a potentially illicit ‘turning’ of language, ‘turken’ is also a synonym for ‘trope’, the operation by which words, as Puttenham says, ‘haue their sense and understanding altered and figured . . . by transport, abuse, crosse-naming, new-naming, change of name’ (189). For all his anxieties about the English spoken outside of London, Puttenham does not regard this tendency to wander from the proper idiom as a defect of tropological language; on the contrary, he understands the appeal of figuration to reside precisely in its ability to ‘delight and allure as well the mynde as the eare of the hearers with a certain noueltie and strange maner of conueyance, disguising it no little from the ordinary and accustomed’ (147). Such conveyance forces both language and listeners from their common uses: when speech is ornamented with ‘figures rhethoricall’, Puttenham writes, it possesses, in addition to the ‘ordinarie vertues’ of ‘sententiousnes, and copious amplification’, an ‘instrument of conueyance for . . . carrying or transporting [meaning] farther off or nearer’ and for making the mind of the listener ‘yielding and flexible’, susceptible to persuasion in any direction (207). Figuration invests language with the power to transport listeners, while remaining within the confines of the mother tongue. And in texts like Puttenham’s *Art*, Gascoigne’s *Notes*, and even Wilson’s emphatically domestic *Rhetorique*, eloquence finds a place within the vernacular that is as far-fetched and extravagant as it is English.

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CHAPTER 2

ALL TALK AND NO ACTION? EARLY MODERN POLITICAL DIALOGUE

CATHY SHRANK

There was then to be hearde pleasaunte communication and merye conceytes, and in every mannes countenance a manne might perceive peyncted a lovyng jocoundenesse. So thys house truelye might be called the verye mansion place of Myrth and Joye. And I beleave it was never so tasted in other place, what maner a thyng the sweete conversatyon that is occasyoned of an amyable and lovyng companye, as it was once there.¹

THE opening of Baldassare Castiglione's *Il Cortegiano* (1528) paints an idyllic—and nostalgic—picture of the court of Urbino in the first decade of the sixteenth century. As he endeavours to recapture a community, now lost, Castiglione focuses above all on conversation: the text in which Castiglione memorializes the former court is a dialogue (that is, in the form of a reported conversation); and the society described is one which expresses itself, and is manifested through, the manner and variety of its verbal communication: the 'disputations', 'jestings', 'talke & debating of matters', which brought 'wonderous great pleasure on all sydes' (A4^v).

This essay examines sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century dialogue, one of the commonest literary forms in the period, thinking about why so many writers chose to convey opinions or explore ideas in works laid out as conversations, and—having selected that form—the uses to which they put it. Whilst sixteenth-century English writers were less prone to theorizing dialogue than their Italian counterparts, the form was

¹ Thomas Hoby, trans., *The Boke of the Courtier* (1561), sig. A3^v.

as prominent in England as elsewhere in early modern Europe.² Roger Deakins estimates that there are ‘some two hundred and thirty’ sixteenth-century English prose dialogues extant in print;³ to this figure we need to add dialogues in manuscript, in Latin, and (although this area is beyond the remit of this volume) in verse. The pervasiveness of the form is also apparent in the sheer gamut of topics discussed ‘dialogue-wise’: subjects stretch from worshipping saints to the proper behaviour of women; from music to the art of warfare.⁴ Dialogue (like conversation in Castiglione’s *Urbino*) comes in many guises: descriptors on printed title pages range from the neutral ‘colloquy’ or ‘discourse’ to the more formal ‘debate’ and ‘dispute’. The conversations depicted vary in the number of speakers, and the relative authority of the interlocutors. In discussions between two speakers (the most usual formulation) one frequently plays the ‘straw-man’, feeding lines for the superior speaker to refute, or acting the *ignoramus*, asking for clarification on specific issues or instruction in particular skill-sets (such as physic or fishing).⁵ Alternatively, these two-handed conversations might offer views for and against a position, or allow speakers to endorse each other’s opinion, emphasizing a shared outlook.⁶

There is, in other words, enormous diversity within early modern dialogue: in subject, tone, structure, style, and intent. What holds together this heterogeneous body of writing is the way it sets itself up as conversation.⁷ Nonetheless, after an initial scene-setting, many dialogues abandon that conversational mode: turn-taking falls away and dominant characters hold sway, uninterrupted for pages on end. However, it is not simply that conversation recurrently makes way for oration (a more formal but still speech-based genre); dialogues are often based more firmly in literary than spoken practices. Take the opening sentence of Book 2 of *Utopia* (in Ralph Robinson’s 1551 translation):

The Ilande of Utopia, conteyneth in breadthe in the myddell part of it (for there it is brodest) CC. miles. Whiche bredthe continueth through the moste parte of the lande. Savyng that by lytle and lytle it commeth in, and waxeth narrower towards

² Key cinquecento Italian theories of dialogue are: Carlo Signonio, *De dialogo liber* (1561); Lodovico Castelvetro, *Poetica d’Aristotele* (1567); Sperone Speroni, *Apologia dei Dialoghi* (1574); and Torquato Tasso, *Discorso dell’arte del dialogo* (1585). See Jon R. Snyder, *Writing the Scene of Speaking: Theories of Dialogue in the Late Italian Renaissance* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1989). The lack of explicit theorizing by English writers may explain why the English dialogue tradition has attracted less critical attention than its Italian counterpart.

³ Roger Deakins, ‘The Tudor Prose Dialogue: Genre and Anti-Genre’, *Studies in English Literature*, 20 (1980): 5–23 (9).

⁴ Thomas More, *A dialoge of syr Thomas More, knyght* (1529); Walter Lynne, *A Watch-word for wilfull women* (1581); Robert Barret, *The Theorike and practike of moderne warres* (1598); Thomas Morley, *A plaine and easie introduction to practicall musicke* (1597).

⁵ William Bullein, *The governement of healthe* (1558); [William Samuel?], [*The arte of angling*] (1577).

⁶ John Coke, *The debate betwene the heraldes of Englande and Fraunce* (1550); [William Roy?], *A proper dialoge betwene a gentillman and an husbandman* (?1529).

⁷ For an attempt to recover early modern spoken interaction using a corpus of didactic dialogues, personal correspondence, trial proceedings, and plays, see Jonathan Culpeper and Merja Kytö, *Early Modern English Dialogues: Spoken Interaction as Writing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

both the endes. Whiche fetchynge about a circuite or compasse of .v c. myles, do fassion the hole Ilande lyke to the newe mone.⁸

There is little about this passage that indicates orality: there is no colloquial language, non-standard grammar, direct addresses to interlocutors, discourse markers (such as 'well'), or politeness formulae. Admittedly, textual scholarship on *Utopia* suggests that Book 2 was composed first, and afterwards transformed into a dialogue by the addition of Book 1 and the final coda.⁹ Nevertheless, this example reminds us that the genesis of many of these texts—not just *Utopia*—is a written one and their later metamorphosis into an apparently more oral form is often only partial and incomplete. Thomas Smith's dialogue on spelling reform, *De recta et emendata anglicae scriptione* (1568), captures this process of transition: its preamble establishes a scenario in which a manuscript treatise, written twenty years previously, is read out and discussed with the interlocutor, transforming a handwritten artefact into a 'conversation' even as the work moves into print. Like *Utopia*, Smith's *De recta* is in Latin, an additional reminder of the bookishness of such enterprises. Scholars like Smith and More would have been able to communicate orally in Latin quite comfortably, but—even for them—it is not the language of everyday conversation; Robinson's translation of *Utopia* is even further removed from an oral world, not least because of his 'smale lerning', for which he apologizes in the 1556 edition (sig. A3^v).

The orality of many dialogues is thus, to some extent, a veneer. Some writers do attempt to capture individual voices, but it is debatable as to what degree this endeavour to individuate character is truly oral. William Baldwin's *Beware the Cat* is an instructive example (composed in 1552, printed in 1570). G.B.'s (Guilelmus Baldwinus's) dedicatory epistle playfully boasts of the verisimilitude of the work, declaring that he has 'so neerly used bothe the order and woords of him that spake them, which is not the least vertue of a reporter, that [he] doubt[s] not but that he and Master willot shal in the reading think they hear Master Streamer speak, and he him self in the like action, shal dout whether he speaketh or readeth'.¹⁰ Streamer's resulting verbal style is indeed distinctive, as his opening lines illustrate:

Being lodged (as I thank him I have ben often), at a frends house of mine, which more rowmish within then garish without, standing at Saint Martins lane end, and hangeth partly uppon the towne wall that is called Aldersgate, either of one Aldrich, or els of Elders, that is to say, auncient men of the Cittie which among them builded it, as Bishops did Bishopsgate, or els of eldern trees, whiche perchaunce as they doo in the gardins now there about. So while the common there was vacant: grew

⁸ Thomas More, *A fruteful, and pleasaunt worke of the beste state of a publyque weale, and of the newe yle called Utopia*, trans. Ralph Robinson (1551), sig. G5^r. The first sentence is the first full grammatical unit, rather than the unit marked by Robinson's punctuation.

⁹ J. H. Hexter, *More's Utopia: The Biography of an Idea* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1952).

¹⁰ William Baldwin, [*A marvelous hystory intitulede, beware the cat*] (1584), sig. A3^r; quotations are from the 1584 edition because the 1570 edition is incomplete.

abundantly in the same place where the gate was after builded, and called therof Eldern gate, as Mooregate took the name of the feeld without it, which hath bene a very Moore. Or els because it is the most auncient gate of the Cittie, was therof in respect of the other, as Newgate called the eldergate [...] (sig. A5^v)

Streamer's musings on Aldersgate continue past this point; yet, for all their garrulity and pedantry, are Streamer's digressions really speech-like? Rather, they function as a learned joke, gently mocking the antiquarian sport of uncovering historical origins through etymological speculation, and help characterize Streamer as a narrator who is unable to distinguish between what is, and is not, significant, a failing which undermines his authority in the subsequent account. Moreover, as G.B. attempts to ventriloquize Streamer's verbal tics, we must remember that the conversation recorded is entirely and quite obviously imagined—a fantasy in which magic and medicine allow Streamer to understand the language of cats with the aid of pastilles (manufactured, in part, from cat turd) and some furry ear muffs: a pair of cats' ears, scalded of hair and fried in 'good' olive oil (we are assured of the quality). Of course Streamer will be unable to tell whether he is reading or speaking, because he is a fiction: both he and his speech only exist on paper, only exist to be read.

Baldwin's *Beware the Cat* might be an extreme example of the distance between prose dialogue and speech, but it is not an example that I have scoured the corpus to find. It is particularly striking that a dialogue which seemingly pays such careful (and rare) attention to voice should also be, on closer examination, so far removed from orality. There is, in other words, a gulf between the potential of the medium and the performance of it. This gap is not due to authorial incompetence. Anyone who has read Baldwin's works can testify to his artful self-consciousness; similarly writers like More or Thomas Smith. This begs the question which occupies the rest of this essay: if writers of dialogues are not necessarily or primarily concerned with replicating speech, why choose a medium that pretends (at least superficially) to do so?

In part, the answer lies with educational practices, such as the medieval use of catechism—question and answer—for religious instruction and teaching points of law,¹¹ and the increasing dominance of humanist education from the early decades of the sixteenth century. Humanist education raised schoolboys to admire and emulate writers of dialogues, such as Cicero; and, as we will see from examples in the body of this essay (which habitually address specific issues), English dialogue is much more akin to what C. S. Baldwin identifies as a Ciceronian 'exposition of something already determined' than to a Platonic 'quest' for enlightenment.¹² Following the advice of Cicero and other

¹¹ See, for example, *A dialogue between a doctor and his disciple, in which several passages of Holy Scripture are illustrated, and various points of Christian doctrine and practice explained*, BL Add MS 14,537 (7th–8th century); *Dialogue between Rogerius and Jurisprudentia on tit. xiv of lib. i of the Codex*, BL MS Royal 11.B.XIV (13th century).

¹² C. S. Baldwin, *Renaissance Literary Theory and Practice: Classicism in the Rhetoric and Poetic of Italy, France and England, 1400–1600*, ed. Donald L. Clark (New York: Columbia University Press, 1939), 43.

classical authorities, humanist education also trained students to argue *in utramque partem* (for and against) to explore issues and refine rhetorical skills, equipping and conditioning pupils to argue from different positions, an important facility for dialogue writing.

Yet the appeal of dialogue has to rest in more than its Ciceronian associations or status as a long-established mode of instruction. Plenty of other classical forms were adopted by the vernacular cultures of early modern Europe, but none with quite the same enthusiasm, variety, or quantity as dialogue.¹³ What, then, is the attraction of this form? This essay addresses that question by focusing on political dialogues: dialogues which mull over a particular problem of state, or which (more abstractly) endeavour to analyse the best form of government. This subgroup has been chosen for the test case because of the iconic status given to oral communication in early modern political thought and culture. Focusing on one type also allows us to consider how the form adapted to the pressure of differing political circumstances, in particular the shift between the Elizabethan and Jacobean regimes.

It was a humanist commonplace, underpinning educational aims and practices, that eloquence (the art of persuasion) was an essential factor in the creation and maintenance of civil societies; this notion invested huge significance in the effective use of language. The Henrician humanist and statesman, Thomas Elyot, epitomizes this outlook, writing in 1531 that:

noble autours do affirme/that in the firste infancie of the worlde/men wandring like beastes in woddes and on mountains/regarding neither the religion due unto god/nor the office pertaining unto man/ordred all thing by bodily strength: yntill Mercurius (as Plato supposeth) or some other man holpen by sapience & eloquence/by some apt or propre oration assembled them togeder/& perswaded to them/what commodite was in mutual conversation & honest maners.¹⁴

Versions of this passage crop up again and again in the pages of sixteenth-century works of a humanist bent. Society, in other words, is built, and reliant, on language. In 1531, 'conversation' had not yet acquired its dominant modern meaning of 'talking with' (for which the first citation in the *Oxford English Dictionary* is Philip Sidney's *Arcadia*, c.1580). Rather, derived from the late Latin *conversare* (to dwell), the word at this point was more likely to mean 'The action of living or having one's being in a place or among persons', 'The action of consorting or having dealings with others; living together; commerce, intercourse, society, intimacy'.¹⁵ Nonetheless, the fact that within no more than fifty years the word had evolved—so that co-habitation became synonymous with verbal communication—indicates its perceived importance as the critical factor which enables the founding and proper functioning of society; an earlier model for these overlapping senses was also provided by the word 'common' (to talk, share, associate, or eat

¹³ See Baldwin, *Renaissance Literary Theory*, 42–3.

¹⁴ Thomas Elyot, *The Boke named the Governour* (1531), fol. 48^r.

¹⁵ 'conversation, *n.*', senses 1, 2, *OED* <<http://dictionary.oed.com>> accessed 18 March 2013.

together), multiple meanings which Thomas Starkey puts at the core of his *Dialogue between Pole and Lupset*, composed in the early 1530s, in which Lupset wishes to ‘commyn & talke’ with Pole to convince him to ‘commyn such gyftys as be to [him] gyven’ ‘to the profyte of other’.¹⁶

Talking, being a social being: these concepts are closely intertwined. As George Pettie writes in *The civile conversation of M. Steeven Guazzo* (1581), which he was translating contemporaneously with Sidney’s composition of *Arcadia*: ‘the tongue serveth us to teache, to demaunde, to conferre, to trafficke, to counsaile, to correct, to dispute, to judge, and to expresse the affection of our heart: meanes whereby men come to love one another, and to linke themselves together’.¹⁷ Here the twin meanings of ‘conversation’—as dwelling among, and verbal interaction with, other people—are closely aligned: talking with others is exactly what the doctor, Annibal, understands by living with and alongside them; and it is through talking that Annibal manages to cure the melancholic outsider, ‘Maister Guazzo’ (the author’s brother), and draw him back into society. Conversation (discussion) enables Guazzo’s brother to be conversant (live) with others. In short, in *The civile conversation*, dialogue is efficacious in the extreme: the very process of talking achieves something, rehabilitating and reintegrating Guazzo, transforming him from an inactive person, of no use to the wider community, into a fully functioning member of society. Guazzo thinks that he is simply being told about the benefits of conversation, but he is actually experiencing them at the same time. In this case, talking is doing.

That same confidence in the effectiveness of dialogue can be found in a more obscure and politically targeted example: a manuscript dialogue featuring Historagaphus and Politicus, excerpted and translated from a French source, *Le Reveille-Matin des Francois, et de Leur Voisines* (‘The wake-up call for the French and their neighbours’), printed in Geneva in 1574 with a false Edinburgh imprint, and probably written by the Huguenot refugee Nicholas Barnaud. The English extract focuses on the problem of Mary Queen of Scots, then captive in the north of England. The two interlocutors do not disagree that Mary poses a severe threat; both concur that her accession would cause ‘the sudayn and fearfull destruction both of state and of religion’.¹⁸ Where they differ is in their mode of argumentation. At the outset Politicus’s speech is emotive; as he castigates Mary as ‘this furie’, ‘this fatall Medea’, ‘this deadlie & mischevous Clytemnestra’ (fos. 341^v–342^r), he recycles the type of gendered abuse underpinning much of the anti-Marian propaganda (found, for example, in ballads produced by the Scottish printer, Robert Lekpreuik, in the late 1560s).¹⁹ To induce Politicus to abandon such insults and to adopt a more robust line of reasoning, based on legal and historical precedent, Historagaphus instigates an

¹⁶ Thomas Starkey, *A Dialogue between Pole and Lupset*, ed. T. F. Mayer, *Camden Fourth Series*, 37 (1989), 1.

¹⁷ George Pettie, trans., *The civile conversation of M. Steeven Guazzo* (1581), fol. 12^r.

¹⁸ British Library MS Stowe 159, fol. 341^r.

¹⁹ Cathy Shrank, ‘“This fatall Medea”, “this Clytemnestra”: Reading and the Detection of Mary Queen of Scots’, *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 73 (2010): 523–41.

argument *in utramque partem*, where he ‘as an Attorney to the Quene of Scottes will alledge every thinge that maie maintaine her innocencie or wipe awaye the crymes that are laide gainst her’; Politicus ‘on the contrarie parte shall playe the accuser, that with like trustiness shall showe everye thinge which apperteyneth to the ouerthrowing of her wickednes and the saftie of the nacion’ (fol. 343^r). As with Annibal in Guazzo’s *Civile conversation*, the exchange with Historagaphus cures Politicus, purging him of his inflammatory rhetoric: in the French version, Historagaphus ultimately declares himself ‘most satisfied’ with his interlocutor’s now ‘grave and prudent speech’ (the English extract ends just before this point).²⁰

That Politicus instructs Historagaphus to relay ‘the cheifest pointes of our disputations’ to ‘the peeres which you knowe’ (fol. 351^r) is further indication of why dialogue had such ideological import. The dominant conception of the English polity in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries was that it was a ‘mixed’ constitution, whereby England was not purely a monarchy, but had ancient checks and balances—such as parliament and council—circumscribing the power of its sovereign and compensating for any shortcomings. As Thomas Smith wrote in 1549 in *A Discourse of the Commonweal*, ‘that kinde of reasoning seems to me best for boulding out of the truth, which is used by waye of Dialogues or colloquyes, where reasons were made too and froe, as well for the matter intended as against it.’²¹ Or, as the author Thomas Norton put it during Elizabeth’s reign: ‘where manie men be, there must be manie myndes, and in consultations convenient it is to have contrary opinions, contrary reasonings and contradiccions, thereby the rather to wrest out the best.’²² Yet, despite the onus put on debate and discussion (and the institutions of council and parliament where such debates should occur, to the benefit of the commonweal), what we recurrently find in English dialogues is not that happy marriage between talk and action seen in Pettie’s translation of Guazzo or the Barnaud extract; instead, what we encounter is a sense of impasse, of words having little effect, a concern which can be traced to one of the first, and certainly the most important, political dialogues written by an Englishman: More’s *Utopia* (1516).

Although originally composed in Latin, *Utopia* overshadows the later vernacular tradition. Over and over, Tudor writers pay homage to More’s *Utopia*, through allusions or parody—be it the vision of Ireland as ‘another *Eutopia*’ in Thomas Smith’s *A Letter sent by I.B. Gent.* (1572), or William Bullein’s depiction in *A Dialogue against the Fever Pestilence* (1564) of the through-the-looking-glass land of Taerg Nattirb (Great Britain) and its capital, Nodnol, ‘the best reformed Cittie of this worlde’, an account placed in the

²⁰ ‘Je suis tant satisfait en ton discourse, grave & prudent’, [Nicholas Barnaud], *Le Reveille-Matin des Francois, et de Leur Voisines* (1574), 49.

²¹ Printed and ascribed to William Stafford in 1581 as *A compendious or briefe examination of certayne ordinary complaints of divers of our country men in these our dayes*, sig. A2^r. The work is also attributed to John Hales. For evidence of Smith’s authorship, see Mary Dewar, ‘The Authorship of the “Discourse of the Commonweal”’, *Economic History Review*, 2nd series, 19 (1966): 388–400.

²² T. E. Hartley, ed., *Proceedings in the Parliaments of Elizabeth I, 1558–1581* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1981), 241.

mouth of Mendax (liar), a debased version of More's Hythloday, a teller of nonsense.²³ Even as they invoke *Utopia*, both these texts illustrate the tendency of many sixteenth-century political dialogues to be reactive, stimulated by a particular issue or set of circumstances.²⁴ Bullein's neverland is viewed through the prism of religious reformation and is almost entirely concerned with shaming readers into amending their ways. Smith's pamphlet, which amends 'no-place' (Utopia) to an attainable and desirable 'good place' (Eutopia), ripe for colonization, was printed as a means of recruiting volunteers for his projected plan to settle the Ards Peninsula.²⁵ Appended to the dialogue is 'The offer and order given forthe by Sir Thomas Smyth Knighte, and Thomas Smyth his sonne, unto suche as be willing to accompanie the sayd Thomas Smyth the sonne, in his voyage for the inhabiting some partes of the North of Irelande' (sig. G3^v); interested readers are further directed to view originals of the relevant documents, including letters patent, at Anthony Kitson's shop 'at the signe of the Sun' in St Paul's Churchyard, where the *Letter* is itself on sale (sig. H2^r).

The form and title of Smith's *Letter* also highlight a recurrent feature of many English dialogues: their existence within an epistolary framework, an often liminal space in which the dialogue blurs with the 'real' world. This facet owes much (again) to the influence of More's *Utopia*, where the prefatory epistle addresses the work to Peter Giles, one of the interlocutors of the text that follows, and requests his help with supplying some of the alleged lacunae in Hythloday's discourse. However, these epistolary frameworks are additional indication of the way in which these dialogic texts frequently highlight their own hybridity, as they gesture towards writing that sits on the boundaries of the oral: letter-writing in this period is habitually described as 'a mutual conversation between absent friends', a conversation which, like dialogue, is an artificial and literary one.²⁶

If More's *Utopia* inspires some of the persistent motifs of subsequent English dialogues—such as epistolarity and metafiction—then it also sets up some of the key philosophical problems that reverberate throughout political dialogues of the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries: namely, the effectiveness or not of communication and the problem of resolution. At the core of Book 1 of *Utopia* is the debate of counsel, about whether or not learned men should accept the role of royal counsellor and the degree to

²³ William Bullein, [*A dialogue both pleasant and piety-full, against the fever pestilence*] (1564), fol. 83^v. Note that this section does not appear in the other 1564 edition (STC2 4036.5); the edition cited here is STC2 4036.

²⁴ This impetus begins early in the English tradition and is certainly underway by the 1530s: witness texts like John Rastell's *New boke of Purgatory* (1530). For a persuasive reading of Thomas Elyot's *Pasquil the Playn* and Giles Du Wes's *Introductorie for to lerne to pronounce and speke Frenche trewly* as dialogues about the Henrician Reformation, see Greg Walker, 'Dialogue, Resistance and Accommodation: Conservative Literary Responses to the Henrician Reformation', in N. Scott Amos, Andrew Pettegree, and Henk van Nieuw, eds., *The Education of a Christian Society* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999), 89–111.

²⁵ [Thomas Smith], *A letter sent by I.B. Gentleman* (1572), sig. E1^r.

²⁶ Desiderius Erasmus, *De conscribendis epistolis*, ed. and trans. Charles Fantazzi, *Collected Works of Erasmus* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985), vol. XXV, 20.

which, having done so, they should be prepared to compromise their ideals. Whereas Hythloday refuses to sully his hands with politics, for Morus, there is a time and place for offering advice, and holding back to preserve one's ideals is, potentially, much more damaging to the commonweal. Morus argues for 'an other philosophye more cyvyle, whyche knoweth as ye wolde saye her owne stage'; he admits that 'evell opynyons and noughty persuasions can not be utterly and quyte plucked owte of their hartes', but insists that 'if you can not even as you wold remedye vyces, whiche use and custome hath confirmed: yet for this cause yow must not leave and forsake the commonwealth'. Instead, 'you must with a crafty wile & a subtell trayne studye and endevoure your selfe asmuch as in yow lyethe to handle the matter wyttelye and handsomelye for the purpose and that whyche yowe can not turne to good, so to ordre it that it be not very badde' (sig. F5^r). This crucial (and still pertinent) debate never reaches a conclusion: Hythloday asserts that it is pointless participating unless you have a polity receptive to rational reform and the discussion segues into a description of what Hythloday regards as the perfect state. No one has changed their minds; they have simply changed topic.

That sense of incompleteness is also present at the end of the dialogue. Morus, the self-professed champion of compromise—the man who believes in fitting his words to audience and occasion—wants to challenge Hythloday about some of the Utopian customs he has lauded. However,

bicause I knew that he was wery of talkinge, and was not sure whether he coulede abide that any thing shoulde be said againste hys minde: speciallye bicause I remembred that he had reprehended this fault in other which be, aferd least they shoulde seme not to be wise enough, onles they could find some fault in other mens inventions: therfore I praising both their institutions and his communication, toke him by the hand and led him into supper: saying that we wold chuse an other time to way and examine the same matters, and to talke with him more at lardge therin. (sig. S3^v)

More as author signals the self-censorship (and even sycophancy?) practised by his alter-ego, as Morus tells Hythloday what he wants to hear, curtailing debate, partly through consideration for others, partly to save face.

Dialogue, though, is a form with two audiences: one figured within the text; one external to it. If we think back to the *Historagaphus/Politicus* piece, the choice of dialogue had additional efficacy, in that (to readers) it creates the impression that Mary has only been condemned after a fair hearing. In More's *Utopia*, debate might have collapsed within the work, but the questions left hanging as to which Utopian policies Morus would wish implemented in England can be seen as a prompt to further discussion, beyond the confines of the text. In some ways, the breakdown of dialogue within the text is necessary precisely to encourage conversation back in the 'real' world, conversation that will (ideally) lead to self-reflection and, perhaps, even action. Nonetheless, even as it does so, the work raises questions about the effectiveness of such debates, by featuring a protagonist (Hythloday) who is impervious to the arguments of others and who crows them into silence, and an interlocutor (Morus) who proves reluctant to rock the boat.

Certainly, it is the shutting down of dialogue that attracts Baldwin's attention in *Beware the Cat*, which can be read as an early response to the first English translation, printed the previous year in 1551.²⁷ Sixteenth-century readers would have been oblivious to the retrospective evolution of More's text into dialogue, and Streamer's verbosity and hostility to interruption produces a more exaggerated rendering of the way in which Hythloday's extended oration in Book 2 stifles dialogue. Streamer instructs his audience:

If that I thought you could be content to hear me, and without any interruption til I have doon to mark what I say: I would tel you such a story of one peece of myne own experimenting, as should bothe make you wunder and put you out of dout concerning this matter, but this I promise you a fore if I doo tel it, that assoon as any man curiously interrupteth mee: I wil leave of & not speak one woord more. (sig. A5^r)

That Baldwin's fiction critiques Hythloday's attitude to dialogue indicates the significance invested in the ethos of conversation (which Hythloday is perceived to have breached). The conversations staged in *Beware the Cat* reveal little, beyond adulterous alliances and the widespread existence of superstitious practices. Their very triviality exposes a complacent society which has failed to root out the Catholic faith and in which a divine-like Streamer is not leading his flock as he ought, but frittering away his knowledge. The political bite of Baldwin's dialogue lies in its inconsequentiality; however, transpose its examination of the fault-lines in the dialogic process to more straightforwardly 'serious' works, then dialogue becomes a tool for interrogating assumptions about the power of eloquence and the mechanisms of debate and decision-taking which lie, as we have seen, at the heart of Tudor conceptions of successful governance. As Virginia Cox suggests, 'when any age adopts on a wide scale a form which so explicitly "stages" the act of communication, it is because that act has, for some reason, come to be perceived as problematic'.²⁸

Failed persuasion haunts English dialogues, including those of More's immediate successors, Thomas Elyot and Thomas Starkey, whose works replay the dilemma of counsel: namely, how a good man should serve his monarch in a corrupt and corrupting system. Starkey's *Pole*, for example, sounds remarkably like More's Hythloday, as Lupset (like Morus and Giles) urges him to employ his learning and experience for his compatriots' benefit:

I have much & many tymys marveyld, reasonyng with my self, why you mastur pole aftur so many yerys spent in quyet studys of letturys & lernyng, & aftur such experience of the manerys of man, taken in dyvers partyss beyond the see, have not before thys settylyd your selfe [...] applyd your mynd to the handelyng of the materys of the common wele. (1)

²⁷ Robert Maslen, 'William Baldwin and the Tudor Imagination', in Mike Pincombe and Cathy Shrank, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Tudor Literature, 1485–1603* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 291–306 (299–300, 305 n).

²⁸ Virginia Cox, *The Renaissance Dialogue: Literary Dialogue in its Social and Political Contexts, Castiglione to Galileo* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 10.

At the end of the dialogue, we find Lupset still trying to convince his companion: his final speech insists that where 'sluggysch myndys lyve in cornarys & content themselfys with pryvate lyfe', 'veray nobul hartys ever desyre to governe & rule, to the commyn wele of the hole multytude' (143). Lupset's disappointment within the dialogue is underscored by Starkey's own seeming failure to reach a sympathetic readership. As T. F. Mayer argues, Starkey's initial target was his patron, Reginald Pole; by presenting a vision of what Pole could be, Starkey hoped to convince him to enter royal service.²⁹ Yet the fictional Pole proves no more tractable than the real-life Pole, who by the mid-1530s had become one of the highest profile opponents of Henry VIII's religious policy. At this point, Starkey appears to have redirected the text to Henry VIII, presumably hoping to find there a receptive audience for his analysis of the English commonweal and the problems it faced. He no more succeeded in that aim than he did in persuading Pole to sign up to the royal meal-ticket: the work exists in one copy, which bears no evidence (such as marginalia) of reading, besides Starkey's own emendations; nor are there any known allusions to Starkey's work and the often radical ideas it expounds (including the concept of an elective monarchy). Lupset's efforts at persuasion, Starkey's dialogue: both fall on deaf ears.

The limitations of counsel are similarly written in to the fabric of Elyot's *Pasquil the Playn* (1533), which reworks More's debate of counsel in a three-way conversation between the flattering Gnatho, the taciturn Harpocrates, who represents complicit silence (that is, standing by and letting bad things happen), and the bluntly spoken Pasquil, who refuses to compromise and adapt his language to suit the audience and occasion. The debate breaks into two parts: the first examines what is meant by opportune speech; the second explores the related topic of when a servant should break silence and warn his master of danger. Neither discussion is conclusive; none of the interlocutors alters their opinion one jot and the situation at the end of the dialogue is exactly the same as it was at the outset. Pasquil, despite his undoubted integrity, has not learned the value of tact and continues to be excluded from the circles of power (all his virtues thus going to waste); Gnatho and Harpocrates return to court, their consciences untouched by Pasquil's forthright arguments, confident that flattery and complicit silence are the way to preferment, as their success at court confirms.

Whilst such deadlock is a recurrent feature of early modern English dialogue (found, for example, in Elyot's other 1533 dialogue, *Of the knowledge which maketh a wise man*), it is far from a uniquely English motif. *A pleasant dialogue betweene the cap and the head* (1564) is an anonymous translation of Antoine Geuffroy's French version of Pandolfo Collenuccio's Italian *Dialogo tra la beretta e la testa* (1497). It is a satirical piece, critiquing worldly vanities and examining what constitutes true nobility. Curiously, the head is denied the faculty of reason with which it is habitually endowed; instead the cap is granted moral authority and the role of instructing the head. Like Elyot's Pasquil, the acerbic cap fails to reform his interlocutor; and, like Pasquil excluded from court, the

²⁹ T. F. Mayer, *Thomas Starkey and the Commonweal: Humanist Politics and the Religion of Henry VIII* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 105.

cap's possibility of future influence is also shown to be negligible. Although the head acknowledges that the cap has 'spoken reason', its arguments are 'contrarye to the common opinion'.³⁰ Unwilling to risk being 'counted fantastical' (sig. B5^r), the head ends the dialogue deciding to purchase a new, less troublesome hat, which will allow him 'to frame [him] selfe according to the tyme and the company' (sig. B6^v). The principles of compromise and tact debated in *Utopia* and *Pasquil* are here evoked not to try to oil the political machine and make things in a bad world a little better, but in order to justify the head's desire to blend in. There is, in other words, a debasement of a quality—decorum—that can be a political virtue, as Elyot himself indicates, writing in *The Governor* that 'thre thinges be required in the oration of a man havynge autoritie; that it be compendious/sententious/& delectable: havynge also respecte to the tyme whan/the place where/ and the persones to whom it is spoken' (sig. O2^v).

As with *Utopia*, these instances of unsuccessful persuasion can be seen as anti-models: recalcitrant interlocutors are figured to provoke right-minded readers to further debate or even action (including self-correction) by depicting patterns of erroneous behaviour to eschew. Nonetheless, as we move through the century, it is possible to detect an increased cynicism about the ability of dialogue to change people's minds. Thomas Wilson's *Discourse upon Usury* is a pertinent example. Printed in 1572, after fruitless attempts in parliament to strengthen laws against usury, Wilson's text acknowledges its own futility. The characters within it are only converted from usury by a miracle, a sudden *volte-face* which the author immediately undercuts as he lays bare the artifice on which the work is founded:

An easie matter it is, to tell a tale, or to make a tale of any man, or any matter eyther to or fro. [...] I have concluded of these men, as I woulde it were [...] and so al things after much talke are lapped up as you see. [...] What yf I sayde, that these merchauntes and lawyers, notwithstanding their solempne vowes, will not be so good, as they say they seme to have made promyse upon this last agreement? I thinke yf I layd a good round wager upon this matter [...] there be thousands in England, that woulde bee my halfe.³¹

Examples of this sense of stalemate abound, and yet some comfort can be found in the manner in which conversations are conducted. T.F.'s *Newes from the North* (1578), for instance, features an impasse between Piers Plowman (displaced from his agrarian lifestyle and bankrupted by the expense of the lawsuits he has foolishly pursued) and the innkeeper, Sim Certain, as they argue about whether the law and its officers are benevolent or malevolent. The debate never reaches a conclusion and fragments into a tale-telling competition, but the metropolitan author finds inspiration in the civility with which the company has handled the disagreement: if there is any solution to the exponential increase in litigation experienced in later Elizabethan England, then it is in the sort of neighbourly civility witnessed in Sim's Yorkshire hostelry.

³⁰ *A pleasaunt dialogue or disputation betweene the cap, and the head* (1564), sigs. B6^r, B5^r.

³¹ Thomas Wilson, *A discourse uppon usurye* (1572), sig. 2D4^r.

Dialogues might not reach a conclusion, that is, but it matters that issues are discussed and it matters how they are discussed. Under Elizabeth, dialogue accorded with the ethos of those at the centre of power, not least Elizabeth's chief minister, the Cambridge-educated William Cecil, whose own papers witness his tendency to think through issues dialogically, drawing up tables *pro* and *contra*. This was a generation of statesmen, including Smith and Wilson, who cut their political teeth during the reigns of two queens (Mary and Elizabeth) and an under-age boy (Edward VI). Dialogue represents on paper the sort of discussion and advice-giving that they regarded as essential to the proper functioning of a realm governed by women or children, whose rule (as Smith put it in 1565) is tolerable only because it is 'by common intendment understood, that such personages never doe lacke the counsell of such grave and discreete men as be able to supplie all other defecte'.³² Certainly, many of the political dialogues of the 1570s and 1580s—those reacting to specific issues, be it the problem of Mary Queen of Scots, or the threat of the Spanish—show signs of Cecil's sponsorship and even authorship: Christopher Warner attributes to Cecil *A Packe of Spanish Lyes* (1588), in which propositions and their rebuttals are laid out in two columns, like Cecil's private memoranda.³³ Dialogue thus endorses both the policies of those at the heart of government and the ideology of counsel and debate to which they adhered. Further to that, by composing dialogues addressing affairs of state (often on topics which Elizabeth had declared off limits, such as foreign policy, her marriage, and Mary Queen of Scots) these writers-cum-statesmen represented as normative such debate and discussion.

The final part of this essay considers what happens to this dialogic culture once an adult male sovereign, James I, ascended to the throne, by examining Walter Raleigh's *Dialogue betweene a Counsellor of State and a Justice of the Peace*, written in the wake of the Addled Parliament of 1614, which was held during Raleigh's long incarceration in the Tower of London. There Raleigh would have had some opportunity to interact with his fellow prisoner John Hoskins, whose attack in the House of Commons on royal financial policy had provided the excuse for James's dissolution of parliament.³⁴ Raleigh's dialogue features a Justice of the Peace and a royal counsellor; the JP dominates, arguing that James should not be afraid of summoning parliament (an institution in which Raleigh sat as MP, three times during Elizabeth's reign). The dialogue was widely circulated in manuscript during Raleigh's lifetime and was printed posthumously, entitled *The Prerogative of Parliaments*, in 1628, 1640 and—as part of Raleigh's *Remains*—in 1661 and 1669 (all key dates in the history of relations between parliament and monarch). Much of the work is devoted to a reign-by-reign account of parliamentary taxation, a selective version of constitutional history in which parliament does not curb, but

³² Thomas Smith, *De Republica Anglorum*, printed as *The common-welth of England* (1589), 28.

³³ John D. Staines, *The Tragic Histories of Mary Queen of Scots, 1560–1690* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), 27–39; Christopher Warner, 'Thomas More's *Utopia* and the Problem of Writing a Literary History of English Renaissance Dialogue', in Dorothea Heitsch and Jean-François Vallée, eds., *Printed Voices: The Renaissance Culture of Dialogue* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), 63–76 (69).

³⁴ Wilfred Prest, 'Hoskins, John (1566–1638)', www.oxforddnb.com.

enables, monarchical power. Despite this undeniably dry topic and the work's reputation for tedium (it is dismissed as 'often quite boring' by Mark Nicholls and Penry Williams), it is nonetheless deserving of study for the light it can shed on both early modern political culture and the role of dialogue within that.³⁵

Like many of its sixteenth-century counterparts, Raleigh's dialogue addresses a very particular political issue; yet as it does so, it belongs to, and expresses, a rather different political context, in which the very form that Raleigh adopts assumes an oppositional resonance. Raleigh does not write a monologic treatise defending parliament: he styles it as a dialogue, which—by including a JP—extends the debate beyond the organ of the royal council; as such, the form of the work enacts the conception of wider political participation which its support for parliament also epitomizes. That Raleigh's dialogue so obviously attacks the institution of the royal council is, moreover, a measure of just how far we are from the Cecillite dialogues of Elizabeth's reign, which lauded and endorsed the role of counsel/council. The abbreviated forms of the JP's title used through much of the dialogue (JUSTICE/JUST) imbue him with some of the virtue of that abstract, unimpeachable principle, in contrast to the counsellor, whose virtue is much less absolute or assured. Raleigh's dialogue thus erodes the integrity of the counsellor (and with him, all of James's council). Early on, for instance, the Justice hints that the counsellor and his peers resemble 'the late Duke of Alva', 'who was ever opposite to all resolutions in business of importance; for if the things enterprized succeeded wel, the advice never came into question: If ill [. . .] he then made his advantage by remembring his count[ra]ry counsell.³⁶ These suspicions are proven true towards the end of the dialogue, where the counsellor reveals that he does follow Alva's line, and is more concerned with covering his back than profiting the commonweal. Although the Justice has by now produced a convincing argument for summoning parliament, the counsellor prevaricates, admitting that 'notwithstanding wee dare not advise the king to call a parliament, for if it should succeed ill, we that advise, should fall into the kings disgrace' (62). This moral and political cowardice is then compounded by the counsellor's revelation, once again, that benefiting the commonweal takes secondary importance to the council's endeavours to protect its own status: 'you may well assure your selfe, that wee will never allow of any invention how profitable so ever, unlesse it proceed, or seeme to proceed from our selves' (63).

In its anxieties about the integrity of royal counsellors and in its sense of defeatism, Raleigh's dialogue shares much common ground with a work like Elyot's *Pasquil the Playn*. Like Pasquil, Elyot's honest but problematically outspoken interlocutor, the Justice is left impotent on the margins of power. As the counsellor pointedly reminds him, 'you [. . .] have no interest in [i.e. claim upon]³⁷ the kings favour, nor perchance in his opinion' (64). He then proceeds to attempt to frighten the Justice into silence: 'Howsoever his Majesty may neglect your informations, you may be sure that others

³⁵ Mark Nicholls and Penry Williams, 'Raleigh, Sir Walter (1554–1618)', www.oxforddnb.com.

³⁶ Walter Raleigh, *The prerogative of parliaments in England* (1628), 2.

³⁷ 'interest, *n.*', sense 1, *OED* <<http://dictionary.oed.com>> accessed 18 March 2013.

(at whom you point) wil not neglect their revenges [...]. Remember Cardinall Wolsey, who lost all men for the Kings service, and when their malice (whom hee grieved) had out-lived the Kings affection, you know what became of him as well as I.' The Justice does not bow to the threat, but his final words are hardly a resounding assertion of purpose: 'Neither riches, nor honour, nor thanks [do I seek], but *I* only seeke to satisfie his Majestie (which *I* would have bin glad to have done in matters of more importance) *that I have liv'd, and will die an honest man*' (65). The desire to serve the king is expressed in an unrealized past tense ('*I* would have bin glad'). This parenthetical, conditional comment also disrupts the sentence, a disjunction in which the matter which the Justice wishes to communicate to his sovereign ('to satisfie' him of) has shifted from policy (what we would expect) to a statement of personal ethics (italicized in all the printed texts): '*that I have liv'd, and will die an honest man*', a juxtaposition of past and future tenses which squeezes out the possibility for present action. In every printed edition, the Justice's last words are followed by Raleigh's self-epitaph ('Even such is time'), which compounds the sense that this finale does indeed represent the end of any ambitions that the Justice might have had of influencing policy; he is left with nothing but the hope of making a good death.

In choosing to convey their ideas and opinions in a dialogue, early modern writers selected a form that had ideological resonances; it was a form which gestured towards the debate and verbal interaction that they believed should lie at the heart of successful governance and a healthy society: for many dialogues, the very solution lies in talking, be it curing Guazzo's brother in *The civile conversation*, or healing a fractious society in T.F.'s *Newes from the North*, which finds hope for a polity riven with legal disputes in the type of 'charitable' discourse achieved in an idealized Yorkshire inn. Nonetheless, despite the ideological freight placed on discussion as the best means of deciding policy, these texts frequently highlight their potential failure to convince or engage their projected audience. Repeatedly, these dialogues reach deadlock, or stutter into silence. They self-consciously stage failed communication: the interlocutor who cannot contribute to Thomas Smith's *Communicacion of the Quenes Highnes Mariage* (c.1561) because he has a profound stammer; and the usurious merchant in Wilson's *Discourse uppon Usurye* who falls asleep and misses most of the arguments aimed at his reformation.³⁸ Recurrently, there is a sense in which these texts are paper-Pasquils, railing from the margins, like Raleigh, imprisoned in the Tower of London, writing Pasquil-like from a position of no influence, and transformed in print into a martyr for the parliamentary cause. In such cases, failure—it seems—speaks louder than words. If, as we saw earlier, civil society rests on persuasive language, then a lurking awareness that language does not always persuade is a scab itching to be picked. It is this scab that early modern political dialogues worry at.

³⁸ Smith's *Communicacion* only exists in manuscript; BL Add MS 4,149, BL Add MS 48,047. For fuller discussions of dialogues by Wilson and Smith, see Cathy Shrank, *Writing the Reformation, 1530–1580* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 155–65, 205–18; and Phil Withington, "'For This is True or els I Do Lye': Thomas Smith, William Bullein, and Mid-Tudor Dialogue", in Pincombe and Shrank, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Tudor Literature*, 455–72.

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CHAPTER 3

COMMONPLACING AND PROSE WRITING: WILLIAM BALDWIN AND ROBERT BURTON

JENNIFER RICHARDS

‘[E]VERYBODY used them.’¹ So claimed Walter J. Ong, thinking of Renaissance commonplace books: collections of quotations ‘culled from authors held to be authoritative’ and organized under headings to facilitate their retrieval.² Their ubiquity will be clear to anyone who has trawled through the manuscript collections of research libraries. Some readers stored information in different ‘collecting’ books. Lady Margaret Hoby kept a commonplace book and a pocket notebook or ‘table book’; she also recorded notes in her ‘testament’ or Bible.³ Ready-made print collections of sayings were popular too.

The reason for their ubiquity is not hard to guess. Like electronic databases today, these books were useful; they helped Renaissance readers to cope with ‘information overload’.⁴ Large, scholarly commonplace books like the one compiled by the lawyer Julius Caesar, with its marginal instructions of ‘vide’ or ‘see’ and accompanying page numbers, seem to anticipate the ‘relational database that works as...hypertext’.⁵

Thanks to Mike Pincombe, Fred Schurink, and colleagues at the International Society for the History of Rhetoric, Bologna, 2011, for advice and guidance.

¹ Walter J. Ong, SJ, *Rhetoric, Romance, and Technology: Studies in the Interaction of Expression and Culture* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1971), 60.

² Ann Moss, *Printed Commonplace-Books and the Structuring of Renaissance Thought* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), v.

³ Lady Margaret Hoby, *The Private Life of an Elizabethan Lady: The Diary of Lady Margaret Hoby 1599–1605*, ed. Joanna Moody (Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 1998), xxxviii, xl.

⁴ Ann Blair, ‘Reading Strategies for Coping with Information Overload ca. 1500–1700’, *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 64.1 (2003): 11–28.

⁵ William H. Sherman, *Used Books: Marking Readers in Renaissance England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 148.

However, they also undoubtedly helped men and some women to find something to say, especially in written compositions; they are also, then, literary tools.

The origins of the commonplace book lie in the classroom. Desiderius Erasmus's print publications of 1512, his educational writings *De ratione studii* and *De copia*, represent 'something of a watershed' in the history of the commonplace book, Ann Moss argues, because they shift 'the emphasis from reading and memorizing' sayings, the purpose of medieval *florilegia*, 'to production'.⁶ Commonplacing is the method Erasmus advocates to develop an abundant style (*copia*) on any topic in Latin, and his *De copia* is little more than a 'phrase-book', 'a resource for the expressive variation of any proposition'.⁷ One hundred years later, the provincial schoolmaster John Brinsley advises in *Ludus Literarius* (1612) that schoolboys should not only keep a commonplace book to manage their reading, but also use Latin print collections so they have ready to hand 'the matter of the best Authors'. These books give readers a store of 'the choicest sayings of the very wisest of all ages' that they might plunder when composing 'themes' or preparing for disputation just 'as it is in Divinity, Law, Physick, and whatsoever Artes'.⁸

These methods carry over to English literary composition too, especially of prose.⁹ If we want to understand English Renaissance prose and its most distinctive feature, its '[e]pisodic, loosely serial organization', Ong suggests, then we need to take note not only of its authors and genres, but also of this, its most basic building block: the commonplace.¹⁰ 'It is easy to imagine how such a method [as commonplacing]', writes Sherman, 'might lie behind a text such as Sir Philip Sidney's *Apology for Poetry*' (c.1579). It 'would almost be possible', he proposes, 'to work in reverse and reconstruct entries in a commonplace book that Sidney no doubt created and used as preparation for his writing'.¹¹ The assumption is that Sidney wrote *Apology for Poetry* with his commonplace book to hand, writing to headings, lifting out suitable excerpts for inclusion. The same

⁶ Moss, *Printed Commonplace-Books*, 102–3.

⁷ Moss, *Printed Commonplace-Books*, 107. See Desiderius Erasmus, *Collected Works of Erasmus: Literary and Educational Writings 2, De Copia/De Ratione Studii*, trans. Betty I. Knott, ed. Craig R. Thomson (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1978), 638, 644. On the collection of sayings in sixteenth-century educational writings in England see Mary Thomas Crane, *Framing Authority: Sayings, Self, and Society in Sixteenth-Century England* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), esp. chap. 3.

⁸ John Brinsley, *Ludus Literarius: or, The Grammar Schoole* (London, 1612), sig. 2B2^v.

⁹ Ong argues that the 'doctrine' of the places, though 'applied to poetry, too... was developed mostly for prose use', *Rhetoric, Romance, and Technology*, 35. See also Peter Mack, *Elizabethan Rhetoric: Theory and Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 135–75. On the relationship between commonplacing and drama see: Paul Hammond, 'The Play of Quotation and Commonplace in *King Lear*', in Lynette Hunter, ed., *Toward a Definition of Topos: Approaches to Analogical Reasoning* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1991), 78–129; Peter Mack, 'Rhetoric, Ethics, and Reading in the Renaissance', *Renaissance Studies*, 19 (2005): 1–21; Neil Rhodes, *Shakespeare and the Origins of English* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

¹⁰ Ong, *Rhetoric, Romance, and Technology*, 38–41.

¹¹ Sherman, *Used Books*, 131.

assumption applies to other writers whose works appear little more than 'strategically assembled' sayings on different topics.¹² 'Disingenuous as ever,' Michel de Montaigne may deny keeping notebooks, Moss writes, but his book of *Essais* is 'that most uncommon of commonplace-books'. Montaigne, she argues, transcribes quotations from his reading directly into them.¹³

This chapter takes up this very topic, arguing that the 'commonplace' is as foundational to the practice of early modern prose fiction as literary devices with a more familiar resonance: such as point of view, unreliable narrators, and heteroglossia. However, it is not the commonplace as 'building block' that interests me so much as its creative use to make the reader *think*, and thus what this tells us about the composition and reception of literary prose.¹⁴

We have come, with Moss, to value the commonplace as authoritative quotation, but as Terence Cave argued previously, Erasmus's *De copia* actually offers not 'static collections of materials' but 'a dynamic method' to achieve a copious style that is 'rooted in generative principles'; it encourages the transformation of sayings.¹⁵ It is this use that interests me, and in particular how Latin *sententiae* are transformed in plain English. Thus, I take as my starting point not the ubiquitous and revered school text *De copia*, but William Baldwin's rushed, flawed, but very popular *A Treatise of Morall Phylosophie, contaynyng the sayinges of the wyse* (1547).¹⁶ Flawed this work may be, but the liberties Baldwin takes with the ancient wise sayings he claims to have collected make this work an important contribution to our understanding of this rhetorical habit. Baldwin has no reverence for unmodernized antiquity; he freely adapted and reworked Greek sayings which he derived second- or even third-hand, often from English sources.¹⁷ Baldwin does this both to give advice that is prosaic and indeed rather ordinary, but also to make the reader think about what is really wise.

More broadly, I will suggest, it is the loose citation and free adaptation of sayings 'from authors held to be authoritative' in English that paves the way for some of the most experimental and challenging prose writing, including by Baldwin himself. Thus, I am making a case for the importance of *vernacular* commonplacing. As Baldwin and my

¹² Ong, *Rhetoric, Romance, and Technology*, 77–8.

¹³ Moss, *Printed Commonplace-Books*, 213.

¹⁴ On this see especially Mack, 'Rhetoric, Ethics, and Reading', 17–18, 1.

¹⁵ Terence Cave, *The Cornucopian Text: Problems of Writing in the French Renaissance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979, repr. 2002), 11.

¹⁶ William Baldwin, *A Treatise of Morall Phylosophie, contaynyng the sayinges of the wyse* (London, 1547). All citations are to this edition unless otherwise stated. This book was first printed in 1547. Thereafter there were twenty-four editions by 1610, including Thomas Palfreyman's pirated edition. *Morall Phylosophie* was undoubtedly one of the most successful vernacular printed books in sixteenth-century England.

¹⁷ On some of Baldwin's possible sources, Thomas Elyot's *The Boke named the Governour* and Antonio de Guevara's *The Golden Boke*, see Mack, *Elizabethan Rhetoric*, 165. See also the introduction to Baldwin, *A Treatise of Morall Philosophie by William Baldwin. Enlarged by Thomas Palfreyman. A Facsimile Reproduction of the Edition of 1620*, ed. Robert Hood Bowers (Gainesville, FL: Scholars Facsimiles and Reprints, 1967); Curt C. Bühler, 'A Survival from the Middle Ages: William Baldwin's Use of the *Dictes and Sayings*', *Speculum*, 23 (1948): 76–80; and D. T. Starnes, 'Sir Thomas Elyot and the "Sayings of the Philosophers"', *Texas University Studies in English*, 13 (1933): 5–35 (13–17).

second collector, discussed later in this chapter, the seventeenth-century divine, Robert Burton, understood, digesting the wise sayings of the ancients in plain English makes them ‘ours’ at the same time that it creates healthy citizens. It gives them a healthy dose of scepticism.

3.1 COMMONPLACES ENGLISHED: WILLIAM BALDWIN

The ‘Ethicke’ part of philosophy, writes William Baldwin, is ‘the knowlege of preceptes of al honest maners, whiche reson acknowledgeth to belong and appertayne to mans nature’ and which are ‘necessary for the comly governance of mannes lyfe’. In his *A Treatise of Morall Phylosophie*, Baldwin gathers and provides English translations of selected precepts from a range of ancient philosophers, including Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, and Plutarch, organizing them according to the three ways in which he says this subject is usually taught: first, by counsels, laws, and precepts; secondly, by proverbs and adages; and thirdly, by parables, examples, and semblables (or analogies) (A3^{r-v}; A5^v–A6^r).

Nonetheless, despite Baldwin’s ambition to share ancient wisdom with his compatriots and despite the popularity of this book, *Morall Phylosophie* may seem an unpromising starting point, not least because it is in ‘English’. When Erasmus describes the benefits of commonplacing in *De copia* he is imagining a reader who aspires to speak Latin fluently, not ‘his’ native tongue. Moreover, as Ann Moss observes, most extant manuscript and print commonplace books collect ‘Latin quotations’ from authors who are ‘regarded as exemplary in terms of linguistic usage and stylistic niceties’.¹⁸ In this respect, Baldwin’s *Morall Phylosophie* is one of the poor relations. The material in books like this one was ‘often of much coarser stuff than the quality quotations from good authors on offer in the Latin commonplace-book’; Baldwin and other vernacular compilers aim only to give ‘popular culture [...] a certain veneer’.¹⁹

Moss’s reservations are not unfounded: the sayings collected by Baldwin in *Morall Phylosophie* are made of coarser stuff, if we accept her conception of a commonplace as a ‘quality quotation’. Baldwin appears to play fast and loose with the adaptation of ancient *sententiae*; he also quite shamelessly makes some of them up. Readers may be surprised to find the following quotations attributed to Socrates in Baldwin’s second book:

Neyther flatter, nor chyde thy wyfe before straungers.
Be not proude in prosperitie, neyther dispraye in adversitie. [...] Moderate thy lustes, thy tongue, and thy belly. (L5^r)

¹⁸ Moss, *Printed Commonplace-Books*, v.

¹⁹ Moss, *Printed Commonplace-Books*, 207–8.

One would be hard-pushed to ascribe these absolutely to Socrates. After all, Socrates was not given to moral pronouncements and he left behind no written record of his teachings. Indeed, at the end of this book Baldwin pauses to acknowledge that some readers will ‘muse why I haue attributed so many sentences to Socrates, whiche they perhaps knowe to have be[en] wrytten of other men’ (M5^v). Then he offers this disarming excuse: he has followed the proverb ‘Doubtefull thynges ought to be interpreted to the best’. And then adds: ‘suche thinges as I have founde wrytten, without certaynty of any certayne authour, I have ascribed unto hym, not onelye because they be thynges meete for hym to speake, but because they be wrytten by some of his scholers, which learned them of hym’. More provocatively, Baldwin confesses that he hoped ‘the authoritie of the speaker, myght cause the matter to be more regarded’ (M5^v–6^r).

We might also be puzzled by Baldwin’s account of the usefulness of the analogies that he has drawn from Erasmus’s *Parabolae* (1514) in the fourth book of this treatise. There is no reason to explain in detail how they might be used, he explains, ‘seyng theyr owne playnesse declare theym so plainly, as no man maye do it playnlyer’. As proof he offers an example in his preface of one analogy taken from Erasmus’s letter to Pieter Gilles in *Parabolae*:

Lyke as Humlocke [hemlock] is poyson to man, so is wyne poyson to Humlocke.

What declaracion neadeth this now, to be better understood, except a man phisicallye shoulde shewe the properties of wyne and Humlockes? Nowe as for the use of this in perswasion, it may be thus applyed.

Lyke as Humlocke is poyson to man, and wyne poyson to Humlocke: So is Flattery poyson to frendship, and license to be flattered, poyson unto flattery.

Loe here the exaample that Erasmus useth, wherin is containyd great counsel, great wyt, and great learnyng. Fyrste it teacheth that Humlocke is poyson, & mortall whan it is myngled with wyne . . . Then counsayleth he to beware of flatterye, and in shewyng what maketh flattery deadly poyson, he teacheth a remedy howe to avoyde flattery. For yf we regard not a flatterer, nor geve hym lice[n]ce to flatter us, we shall never be hurte by flatterye. (Q2^v–3^r)

Yet, this is hardly plain. To begin with, Baldwin’s suggestion that ‘license to be flattered’ is ‘poyson unto flattery’ does not make sense, unless he means that if one is open to being flattered then it is no longer ‘flattery’. But *if* this is what he means, it is contradicted a few lines later when he argues that ‘yf we regard not a flatterer, nor geve hym lice[n]ce to flatter us, we shall never be hurte by flatterye’.

Part of the problem is that Baldwin seems to have misunderstood his source. Erasmus takes this example from the essay of the moral philosopher Plutarch, ‘How to Tell a Flatterer from a Friend’, to illustrate a rather different point in his letter to Pieter Gilles, that the analogies on show in *Parabolae* are ‘precious stones’ drawn ‘from the inner treasure-house of the Muses’; the point in using them is to win ‘double praise’.²⁰ In Plutarch’s essay, the wine–hemlock analogy is used to explain a particular conundrum,

²⁰ Erasmus, *Parallels/Parabolae sive similia*, trans. R. A. B. Mynors. In *Collected Works of Erasmus*, ed. Craig R. Thompson (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1978), 131.

that *parrhesia*, bold or frank speech, ostensibly the opposite of flattery, can in fact be used to flatter. Flatterers, Plutarch recognizes, ‘also use a certain kind of plain and free speech [*parrhesian*]’.²¹ (The example he gives is Antony’s admonishment by his friends for his hard-hearted treatment of his smitten mistress, Cleopatra. As Plutarch observes, this chiding was in fact pleasing to Antony; it confirmed Cleopatra’s love for him and so served further to debauch him.) Erasmus explains this analogy thus: flattery is likened to a poison, hemlock; frank speech is likened to its antidote, wine; *but* the dangerous blending of wine and hemlock is likened to the deadliest of all poisons, i.e. flattery dressed up as frank speech. Here is Erasmus’s account of it in a modern translation:

Hemlock is poisonous to man, and wine neutralises hemlock; but if you put an admixture of wine into your hemlock, you make its venom much more immediate and quite beyond treatment, because the force and energy of the wine carries the effect of the poison more rapidly to the vital centres. Now merely to know such a rare fact in nature is surely both elegant and interesting as information. Suppose then one were to adapt this by saying that adulation poisons friendship instantly, and that what neutralises that poison is the habit of speaking one’s mind, which Greek calls *parrhesia*, outspokenness. Now, if you first contaminate this freedom of speech and put a touch of it into your adulation, so that you are flattering your friend most insidiously while you most give the impression of perfect frankness, the damage is by now incurable.²²

Baldwin seems to be struggling to understand a crucial sentence in Erasmus’s original text: ‘verum ei rursum veneno venenum esse libertatem admonendi, quam Graeci vocant *παρρησία*’ (‘what neutralises that poison is the habit of speaking one’s mind, which Greek calls *parrhesia*, outspokenness’).²³ He mistranslates *libertatem admonendi*, literally the liberty of admonishing (a gerund)—that is, *parrhesia* in Greek; *licentia* in Latin—as ‘license to be flattered’ (a gerundive) and in so doing, he appears to miss the main point of Erasmus’s analogy *and* of Plutarch’s essay, that flattery can be poisonous *and* difficult to detect.

And yet, it is surely odd that Baldwin should make such a mess of the hemlock and wine analogy. Baldwin, who probably never went to university, was nonetheless a reasonable Latinist: he translated the anti-papal satire *Epistola de morte Pauli tertii* (‘A letter on the death of Paul III’) as *Wonderful News* (c.1552).²⁴ It is odd, moreover, that he should

²¹ Plutarch, *The Philosophie, commonlie called, the Morals*, trans. Philemon Holland (London: Dent, 1911), 43; cited in David Colclough, ‘*Parrhesia*: The Rhetoric of Free Speech in Early Modern England’, *Rhetorica*, 17 (1999): 177–212 (191).

²² Erasmus, *Parallels*, 131–4. For discussion of this analogy see Colclough, ‘*Parrhesia*’, 190–4.

²³ Erasmus, *Parabola, sive similitudines* (London, 1587), sig. A3^r.

²⁴ John N. King notes that ‘Anthony à Wood’s claim that [Baldwin] supplicated for the M.A. degree from Oxford University carries no authority’, *English Reformation Literature: The Tudor Origins of the Protestant Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), 359. For recent discussions of *Wonderful News* see Mike Pincombe, ‘Truth, Lies, and Fiction in William Baldwin’s *Wonderful News of the Death of Paul III*’, *Reformation*, 15 (2010): 3–22; also Anne Overell and Scott C. Lucas, ‘Whose Wonderful News? Italian Satire and William Baldwin’s *Wonderfull Newes of the Death of Paule the III*’, *Renaissance Studies*, 26.2 (2012): 180–96.

try to conceal the difficulties he has with this analogy by emphasizing its plainness: 'seyng theyr owne playnnesse declare theym so plainly, as no man maye do it playnlyer'. Unless of course the intention is to reveal a problem: that the analogy is overly elaborate. In fact, in contrast to Plutarch and Erasmus, Baldwin offers a very simple 'remedy' for dealing with flatterers whatever shape they come in: just ignore them.

It is equally likely, of course, that Baldwin, working in Edward Whitchurch's print shop at the time that he brought this work to completion, has just been careless and hasty. Yet, even if that is true we might *still* want to ask whether his inaccuracies actually matter. Arguably, we will always suppose that Baldwin is only offering 'coarser stuff' if we assume that the purpose of the commonplace book is to offer 'quality quotations' from recognized ancient authorities that can be lifted and reused. To be sure, this is not a presumptuous assumption. For many vernacular compilers this was their purpose. As Francis Meres, the compiler of *Witt's Academy: A Treasurie of Goulden Sentences, Similes and Examples* (1598, 1634, 1636), argues in his preface: 'he that would write or speake pithily, perspicuously and persuasively must use to have at hand in readiness ... Sentences, Similitudes and Examples'.²⁵ Later editions of *Morall Philosophie*, notably Thomas Palfreyman's pirated edition (c.1555), turn it into just this kind of resource. Palfreyman expands Baldwin's four books into seven, adds more sentences of his own, mainly from the Bible, but also places the 'precepts, counsailes, parables & semblables' that he says he 'found dysplaced' in Baldwin 'in the right chapter', so that 'man wold familiarly tell a tale' of them.²⁶

However, this was not the only use of the commonplace book. Recently, the utilitarian account of commonplacing has been challenged by historians of reading whose studies of manuscript collections emphasize the 'variety of readers'. Commonplacers may be collecting quotations for reuse in their own speech or writing, some of which may be politically directed, though not all; they might also be collecting literary passages for 'recreation'; or they may do all of these things.²⁷ Baldwin, I would like to suggest, is different yet again: he urges his readers to think about so-called 'wise' sayings in order to make them wise.

The wine-hemlock analogy is only one possible piece of evidence for Baldwin's attempt to alert the reader to problems of interpretation and even then it needs to be

²⁵ Francis Meres, *Witt's Academy: A Treasurie of Goulden Sentences, Similes and Examples* (London, 1636), sig. A2^v.

²⁶ I am quoting from Thomas Palfreyman, *A Treatise of Morall Philosophy* (London, 1557), sig. A4^v. On Baldwin and Palfreyman see R. W. Maslen, 'William Baldwin and the Politics of Pseudo-Philosophy in Tudor Prose Fiction', *Studies in Philology*, 97 (2000): 29–60 (33–5). Baldwin objected to Palfreyman's reorganization of his work; see the preface to *The Tretise of Morall Philosophie ... Newly perused, and augmented by William Baldwyn* (London, 1556). For a quick summary of Palfreyman's changes across several editions see Jill Kraye's entry on Thomas Palfreyman in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (ODNB) <<http://www.oxforddnb.com>> accessed 2 August 2011.

²⁷ Heidi Brayman Hackel, *Reading Material in Early Modern England: Print, Gender, Literacy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 142–9, 175–95; Fred Schurink, 'Manuscript Commonplace Books, Literature and Reading in Early Modern England', *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 73 (2010): 453–69, esp. 453–7.

used with caution. But his concern with the thoughtful use of sayings is signalled unmistakably in the preface to *Morall Phylosophie* and once again it rests on adaptation and reinterpretation rather than exact reuse. It cannot be an accident that the first sentence of 'The Prologue to the Reader' is also adapted from Erasmus: on this occasion, an anecdote the latter drew from Plutarch's life of Pericles and cited in his *Apophthegmata* (translated by Richard Taverner in *The Garden of Wisdom* (1539)).²⁸ As Baldwin relates, Pericles persuades the governor of his ship to sail against the Peloponnesus in spite of his fear of a solar eclipse. By covering the governor's eyes with a cloak, Pericles is able to convince him that an event which appears to be an ill omen is a natural occurrence. At least, this is the point of the anecdote as told by Erasmus. However, Baldwin's use of it is different. Unlike Erasmus, Baldwin remains true to Plutarch's history by affirming that Pericles's navy *was* destroyed. Pericles dismisses 'a good admonicion sent [...] by god' and so sends his sailors to their deaths. Baldwin's example is instructive in other ways that Erasmus does not note:

In lyke maner there be manye nowe a dayes, which as Pericles despysed Astronome, despyse all other sciences: devysyng proper toyes (as he dyd) to dasshe them out of countenance, runnyng headlyng through Ignoraunce, into contempt of all good learnyng: Not only inventyng tryfelyng toyes, but also wrestyng the holy scriptures whiche they understand not to serve for their pyvish [peevis] purpose. For yf it chaunce them to be improued with any of the good sayinges of the auncient philosophers, which so playnly impugneth theyr vices, that they be unable by good reason to refell it, than on goeth the brasen face, and a cloke must be sought oute of Scrypture eyther to deface all Phylosophye, or els to blynde mens eyes withall (A4^v).

In Baldwin's hands, this anecdote becomes, firstly, a warning to those who condemn all good learning and, secondly, an admonition to those who manipulate the 'holy scriptures' to serve their turn, mainly because they feel rebuked by the advice they find in ancient moral philosophy. For Baldwin, the 'cloke' is a metaphor, not for superstition, but for the obscuring of pagan advice.

Most obviously, this observation underpins Baldwin's purpose in his treatise, which is not just to offer pagan precepts that advise on governance in the broadest sense, but to recover and defend their value against those who use scripture as a 'cloke'. He goes out of his way to emphasize that ancient moral philosophy is compatible with the Bible. In the first book he emphasizes that God is the origin of wisdom (*sophia*) and then traces, albeit quickly, the history of philosophy from the sons of Seth to Pythagoras and beyond. In the second book he begins by listing the precepts of Greek philosophers that reflect on 'God' and the 'soul', so that readers might 'understand what [they] thought' (I2^v).

But there is more too. The source that Baldwin cites for this approach is St Augustine. In book II of *De doctrina Christiana*, Baldwin notes, Augustine argues that if 'they

²⁸ I am grateful to Mike Pincombe for this example. See Richard Taverner, *The Garden of Wisdom* (London, 1539), E5^v–E6^r.

whiche be called Phylosophers, specially of Plato his secte, have spoken ought that is true, and appertinent to our faythe, we ought not onely not to feare it, but also to challenge it as our owne, from them whiche are no ryght owners therof' (A5^r). This again is an interesting adaptation. In fact, in book II of *De doctrina Christiana* Augustine identifies the Bible as the source of wisdom, not Plato and his sect, whose moral insights, he argues, derive from the early Christians. To claim otherwise is 'a quite crazy idea [*quod dementissimum est credere*]'.²⁹ But at the start of his preface Baldwin is worrying instead that scripture is used to obscure the wise advice of ancient philosophers. Then he invites the reader, *pace* Augustine, to 'challenge' the precepts of the moral philosophers 'as our owne'. For Baldwin, wisdom already belongs to us. Making wisdom 'our owne' means thinking about, adapting, and using precepts, and he shows us how. Baldwin's precepts may be made of 'coarser stuff' or, as he puts it himself, 'simply & rudely declared' rather than 'reasoned to the tryall' (A3^v). But that makes them *good*. Here is the final warning he gives the reader, again adapting Augustine's *De doctrina Christiana*:

I humblye beseche the[e] (most gentle Reader) to take in good part this simple philosophycal treatyse, & so to use it as saint Augustine hath taught us, takyng the good, and leavyng the bad, neyther reverencyng it as the gospel, neyther yet despysing it as a thing of no value. (A6^v)

What matters for Baldwin is that the counsels of *Morall Philosophie* should be used carefully and thoughtfully. Not all sayings, Baldwin implies, are equally good. One needs to sift the wheat from the chaff and it is the reader's judgement, not an authoritative original, that is the touchstone for this work's wise use.

3.2 BALDWIN'S *BEWARE THE CAT*

Baldwin's *Morall Philosophie* may disappoint scholars who have little time for vernacular impostors. Yet, many of its inaccuracies or infelicities make good sense. Most refreshing, though, is the trust Baldwin places in the reader's judgement and in relation to this his warning not to treat all sayings with reverence. We do not need to rely on Baldwin's preface to his commonplace book to see how seriously he valued the judging of supposedly wise counsel. It also structures, in a different way, the experience of reading his prose fiction too, notably *Beware the Cat* (1561; 1570; ms 1553).³⁰ *Beware the Cat* was no doubt written with the help of a commonplace book, but it is also best read, I would now like to argue, with Baldwin's directions in his treatise in mind.

²⁹ Augustine, *De Doctrina Christiana*, ed. and trans. R. P. H. Green (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), II. 107–8.

³⁰ On the reworking of some of Baldwin's advice in prose writing later in the century, notably Lyly's *Euphues*, see Mack, *Elizabethan Rhetoric*, 166–7.

This curious work, arguably ‘the first original piece of long prose fiction in English,’³¹ is a first-person narration, organized as three orations; it relates the adventures of the fictional Gregory Streamer. In the first oration, Streamer recounts how he was kept awake at night by the mewing of rooftop cats and he recalls the conversation he had the next day at the fireside with fellow lodgers. Following his complaint, Streamer explains that ‘we fell in communication of cats’ and that some in that company insisted that cats ‘had understanding’ (11). The first proof of this bizarre claim is the strange story told of Grimalkin, an Irish cat who ate a whole man (and much else), and the loyalty of a ‘kitling’ who fatally wounded her owner when she heard that he had killed Grimalkin with a dart. To prove that cats really do have reason, Streamer then concocts and consumes a magical-medical potion that will purge his ears of excess humours so he can understand cat-talk. The second and third orations explain the recipe and recall his adventures. With his ears purged, Streamer gains insight into the strange laws of cats: ‘our holy law . . . forbiddeth us females to refuse any males not exceeding the number of ten in a night’ (47). More to the point, he also gains insight into the secrets of men and women.

On this description, *Beware the Cat* will seem a long way from the more sober *Morall Phylosophie*. In fact, both works share a concern with how wisdom is used. Its title, for instance, is another ‘made-up proverb.’³² Baldwin instructs the reader in his dedicatory epistle to ‘learn to Beware the Cat’ (4), and in his moral conclusion he offers some guidance: he advises the reader to ‘mind this proverb, *Beware the Cat*; not to tie up thy cat till thou have done, but to see that neither thine own nor the Devil’s cat (which cannot be tied up) find anything therein whereof to accuse thee to thy shame’ (54–5). As John N. King explains, the ‘special meaning’ Baldwin ‘attaches to the phrase treats the cat as a figure for Protestant conscience.’³³ Quite simply, cats can see and talk about our secrets. However, this is not the only lesson this remarkable fiction teaches. It also establishes the importance of thinking about advice.

Beware the Cat is often interpreted as an anti-Catholic satire, as the world of the Catholics is revealed: the cats discover the secret lives of recusants. Even the absurd stories of this work seem to support this argument. As this text’s modern editors, William A. Ringler and Michael Flachmann suggest, the ‘general thrust’ of its ‘fictional argument’ is that ‘only a person gullible enough to believe a character as outrageous as Gregory Streamer would believe in the “unwritten verities” handed down by the “traditions” of the Church.’³⁴ Indeed, anti-Catholicism plays heavily in this fiction. Yet, it is also concerned more broadly with gullibility, including of those who believe too readily in anti-papist slurs, and in the authority of disciplines like medicine. To establish this Baldwin pays attention to the nonsensical use of proverbs and analogies.

³¹ William Baldwin, *Beware the Cat: The First English Novel*, ed. and intro. William A. Ringler, Jr. and Michael Flachmann (San Marino, CA: Huntington Library, 1988), xxi.

³² King, *English Reformation Literature*, 388.

³³ King, *English Reformation Literature*, 388.

³⁴ Baldwin, *Beware the Cat*, xxv. Robert Maslen suggests there is a close link between Baldwin’s treatise and the anonymous *Image of Idleness*, and persuasively argues that Baldwin is the likely author of the *Image*, see Maslen, ‘William Baldwin’.

This fiction is full of proverbs and sayings, supposedly wise counsel. Sometimes proverbs are cited by a character to 'prove' a particularly wild claim. One 'well-learned man and one of excellent judgment', Streamer recounts, supports the case that cats are reasonable by advising that Grimalkin was likely 'a hagat or a witch.' Many witches have taken on the likeness of a cat, he adds, offering as proof of this 'the proverb, as true as common, that a cat hath nine lives (that is to say, a witch may take on her a cat's body nine time)' (16). Yet, this proverb, like the story of Grimalkin, is no 'proof' at all; and, moreover, this interlocutor is clearly rather free in his interpretation of it.

There are many other examples which show that good judgement is lacking. During the same conversation another of the fireside companions notes that Grimalkin is esteemed in much the same way as the 'master' (i.e. queen) bee, 'at whose commandment all bees are obedient'. He then offers a second, more elaborate analogy: 'or as the Pope hath had ere this over all Christendom, in whose cause all his clergy would not only scratch and bite, but kill and burn to powder ... whomsoever they thought to think but once against him—which Pope, all things considered, devoureth more at every meal than Grimalkin did at her last supper'. Is this evidence of the work's anti-Catholic stance? This elaborate analogy is diffused by a literal-minded Streamer who argues that, on the contrary, the Pope 'eateth and weareth as little as any other man'; he then introduces yet another saying that provides a different perspective, commending the Pope's easily misunderstood virtue, his liberality:

And I have heard a very proper saying in this behalf of King Henry VII: When a servant of his told him what abundance of meat he had seen at an abbot's table, he reported him to be a great glutton; he asked if the abbot eat up all, and when he answered no, but his guests did eat the most part, 'Ah', quod the king, 'thou callest him glutton for his liberality to feed thee and such other unthankful churls.' (15)

Streamer is a distinctly unreliable narrator and he is certainly naïve enough to 'believe in the "unwritten verities" handed down by the "traditions" of the Church'. Yet, it is not clear that anti-Catholic satire is Baldwin's only purpose, for the attacks are not entirely rational either. Just like the interlocutor who offers a rather unexpected analogy—that Grimalkin is like the master bee *or* a cruel, greedy pope—so the printer, or author ('Baldwin'), provides some surprising commentary in the margins that both reveals his anti-popery with asides such as 'Railing and slander are the Papists' Scriptures' (38), but also his credulousness. For example, on the same page we find: 'No such persuasions as miracles chiefly in helping one from grief' (38). On another page the marginalium states 'Cat's grease is good for the gout' next to Streamer's clear admission that he has tricked 'Thomas': 'after I had taken some of the grease ... to make (as I made him believe) a medicine for the gout' (27).

More broadly, this fiction teaches us by bad example how important it is to be careful and alert. As these last examples suggest, one of the ways in which Baldwin does this is by sending up the kind of reader who is eager to find some useful snippet of information or wise saying from a text, regardless of its meaning or context. The fictional Streamer is introduced to us as a medical authority; he is a divine and also a translator of an Arabic medical treatise, *Cure of the Great Plague* (3). But the weird potions he creates are clearly one of the jokes of this fiction. Streamer pounds and cooks various bits of animals—hare,

fox, cat, and hedgehog (or ‘urchin’)—creating what ‘Baldwin’ calls in the margin ‘The intelligible diet’ (28). After its consumption, his nose oozes a pint of ‘such yellow, white, and tawny matters as I never saw before’ (28). He then makes pellets out of the ears and tongues of these animals and, he narrates, ‘I fried [them] in good olive oil and laid them hot to mine ears [...] and kept them thereto till nine o’ clock at night, which help exceedingly to comfort my understanding power’ (29). Aside from the ridiculous image of this learned man with pellets of disgusting gunk in his ears, we also have ‘Baldwin’s’ absurd effort to make sense of it: ‘A good medicine for aching ears’ (29). And when Streamer reheats these ‘pillows’, lays them to his ears, ties ‘a kercher about my head’, and then goes among the servants ‘with my lozenges and trochisks in a box’, the author solemnly notes: ‘Heat augmenteth the virtue of outward plasters.’ There is another response detailed in the text and we would do well to keep it in mind. A shrewd servant tastes one of Streamer’s lozenges, ‘chewed it apace, by means whereof when the fume ascended he began to spatle and spit, saying “By God’s bones, it is a cat’s turd”’ (30).

3.3 TAKING LIBERTIES: ROBERT BURTON’S *ANATOMY*

Commonplace books, I explained at the start of this chapter, quoting Ann Moss, are collections of quotations ‘culled from authors held to be authoritative’ and organized under headings to facilitate their retrieval. This now-familiar definition has shaped the way in which these collections have been valued by historians of reading and it also reinforces the conception of the purpose of humanist education as career-orientated and pragmatic. William Drake’s commonplace book, argues Kevin Sharpe, discovers a resolutely utilitarian reader and political operator. ‘All social relationships’, writes Sharpe, like the books that Drake avidly digested, ‘were pursued for gain.’³⁵ Historians like Sharpe have provided an alternative approach to those literary scholars who worried that commonplacing created, not savvy politicians, but unthinking subjects. Thomas Greene’s observation that the notebook method could not ‘produce sensitive understanding and creative imitation’ is echoed by Mary Crane: ‘English theorists in the sixteenth century wanted to believe that the commonplace book led to assimilation and understanding’, she argues, but ‘they were unable to describe how this actually worked.’³⁶

³⁵ Kevin Sharpe, *Reading Revolutions: The Politics of Reading in Early Modern England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 84–5, 99. See also Sharpe, ‘Uncommonplaces? Sir William Drake’s Reading Notes’, in Sabrina Alcorn Baron, ed., *The Reader Revealed* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 2001), 59–65.

³⁶ Thomas Greene, *The Light in Troy: Imitation and Discovery in Renaissance Poetry* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), 318, n. 1, cited in Crane, *Framing Authority*, 61. See also Fred Schurink’s study of one schoolboy’s pedestrian use of Thomas of Ireland’s *Manipulus florum* in ‘An Elizabethan Grammar School Exercise Book’, *Bodleian Library Record*, 18.2 (2003): 174–96 (182–3).