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Reviewed work(s):

Source: *Modern Philology*, Vol. 79, No. 1 (Aug., 1981), pp. 1-15

Published by: [The University of Chicago Press](#)

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# Oration and Method in Sidney's *Apology*: A Contemporary's Account<sup>1</sup>

John Webster

The suggestion that Sir Philip Sidney structured his *Apology for Poetry* as a seven-part judicial oration was first argued in Kenneth O. Myrick's 1935 study, *Sir Philip Sidney as a Literary Craftsman*. Though qualifications have been suggested since, Myrick's claim still remains basically unchallenged.<sup>2</sup> In brief, Myrick argues that Sidney in the *Apology* follows very closely the theory and practice of classical oratory, producing a "defense" organized in imitation of what Myrick takes to be the standard pattern of a judicial oration. His analysis is based on two premises: first, that one can in fact divide Sidney's piece into parts which correspond to the Tudor understanding of Quintilian's *Institutio oratoria* and Cicero's *De inventione*; and second, that the imitation of such a pattern would have been the obvious course for any Renaissance writer. "No man in the Renaissance could avoid either the classical theories or the classical precepts of oratory," Myrick writes; these two strands of theory and practice "formed, together, a single dominating influence in the education of an Elizabethan gentleman" (p. 52). More than a theory about Sidney's *Apology*, Myrick's argument is also a theory about what constitutes artful order in sixteenth-century prose.

Yet if Myrick's view has been central to modern readings of Sidney, the earliest description of the *Apology*'s structure, an account by Sidney's secretary, Sir William Temple, written within some three to five years of the *Apology* itself, shows a substantially different understanding of its organization.<sup>3</sup> Temple does not talk of the piece as an oration at all; rather he describes it as a treatise made up principally of two interdependent sections. For Temple, the *Apology*'s primary motive is to defend poetry by explaining its nature, and thus he describes the work entirely as it develops from that single expository purpose. Temple's analysis is not just different from Myrick's, however; it also entails basic questions about

1/Research for this paper was supported in part by the Graduate School Research Fund of the University of Washington.

2/Kenneth O. Myrick, *Sir Philip Sidney as a Literary Craftsman* (Cambridge, Mass., 1935), pp. 46–83. Myrick's analysis provides the basis for structural parsings in at least two recent editions of the *Apology*; see Lewis Soens, ed., *Sir Philip Sidney's Defense of Poesy* (Lincoln, Nebr., 1970), and Katherine Duncan-Jones and Jan van Dorsten, *Miscellaneous Prose of Sir Philip Sidney* (Oxford, 1973), pp. 59–121. O. B. Hardison, in "The Two Voices of Sidney's *Apology for Poetry*," *English Literary Renaissance* 1 (1972): 83–99, revises Myrick's divisions and argues that the confirmation has a tripartite structure based on a scheme "devised by Alexandrian critics" (p. 92). But Hardison's is a revision of Myrick; he maintains the argument for a seven-part oration form.

3/Temple's "*Analysis tractationis de Poesti contextae a nobilissimo viro Philippe Sidneio equite aurato*" has never been printed; the sole manuscript is in the possession of the Viscount de L'Isle at Penshurst Place. Lord de L'Isle has very kindly permitted me to quote from Temple's text. All translations are my own. Temple's manuscript is listed in the Historical Manuscripts Commission's *De L'Isle and Dudley* (1925), 1:304, no. 1095, and is available on microfilm through the British Manuscript Project. The BMP checklist reference is J375, no. 1095, Camb. 785/2–6. Because Temple's manuscript has no pagination of any sort, I have numbered his pages here continuously 1–66, beginning with the first page of the analysis proper. The only work to have been published on the "Analysis" is J. P. Thorne's "A Ramistical Commentary on Sidney's 'An Apologie for Poetrie,'" *Modern Philology* 54 (1957): 158–64, where Thorne's interest centers on Temple's disagreements with Sidney. George Hallam, "Sidney's Supposed Ramism," *Renaissance Papers, 1963* (Southeastern Renaissance Conference, Columbia, S.C., 1963), pp. 11–20, comments on Temple, but without having read Temple except in Thorne's précis.

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each of Myrick's premises, and particularly the second, that the oration is in fact the single dominating model for any artful discourse in the Elizabethan period. While it is true that 1580 had not yet seen the proliferation of prose forms that would appear in the early seventeenth century, still there existed a substantial body of theory which served as an important forerunner to these late prose forms, and especially to the essay. The Renaissance rubric for this theory was "Method," and though it is a topic most developed in logic texts, by the late Tudor period Method has entered rhetoric as well, where it provides a distinct alternative to traditional oratorical structures.<sup>4</sup>

What is particularly interesting in Temple's commentary on the *Apology* is that in his view Sidney's work is based on the assumptions of this newer conception of discourse. In this paper I want first to outline Temple's claims for Sidney and then to survey the historical context of his analysis in order to explain what Temple would have thought the force of his arguments to be. Finally, I will return to the differences between Temple and Sidney's modern readers over the criteria by which the *Apology* should be judged. For the rise of Method reflects major changes in the assumptions that govern prose discourse, and to the extent these assumptions hold for Sidney, his work ought to be valued as much for its modifications of oratorical conventions as it presently is for its adherence to them.

### I

The title Temple uses for Sidney's *Apology* is "A Treatise on Poetry," or simply, "On Poetry" ("tractatio de Poesi"; "De Poesi"), and as this locution implies, it is as a kind of overview of the art that he understands it. His "Analysis" is specifically a logical one, and thus the largest part of his sixty-six pages is spent tracing the course of Sidney's treatise point by point, giving for each of Sidney's arguments its explicit logical form. One purpose in this is to isolate those arguments Temple thinks are weak, or even wrong, and whenever he reaches such a spot, he inserts his own remarks to explain his disagreements. But most of Temple's work is simply "analysis," in which the aim is first to demonstrate that each of Sidney's arguments has an internally coherent structure, and second, to characterize the nature of each argument and to show that all of them have specific and describable relations to each other and to the large-scale structure of the *Apology* as a whole. Because modern criticism tends to take the value of structural coherence for granted, we may not feel as keenly as Temple the need to show that close and detailed analysis can in fact be done. I will discuss this issue more fully later in this paper, but for the moment, it is enough to say that for Temple, coherence of this order, in which an exposition follows a logic of explanation and

<sup>4</sup>The locus classicus for discussion of Method, especially as it relates to Ramus, is Father Walter J. Ong's *Ramus, Method, and the Decay of Dialogue* (Cambridge, Mass., 1958). My arguments in Section II concerning the growing importance of written, as opposed to oral, conventions of discourse obviously owe much to Ong's insights. More recent writers on Method include Neal W. Gilbert, *Renaissance Concepts of Method* (New York, 1960); and Lisa Jardine, *Francis Bacon: Discovery and the Art of Discourse* (Cambridge, 1974), esp. pp. 1-65. See also William F. Edwards's helpful article on possible Italian connections, "Niccolò Leonicensi and the Origins of Humanist Discussions of Method," in *Philosophy and Humanism: Renaissance Essays in Honor of Paul Oskar Kristeller*, ed. Edward P. Mahoney (New York, 1976), pp. 283-305.

development that is both internally consistent and, at the same time, well integrated into the work's large-scale structure, is still to be remarked upon and valued highly.

In addition to showing Sidney's mastery of expository technique, however, the fact that Temple's "Analysis" centers on the *Apology's* logical structure makes a larger point as well. For the scope of logic here is much wider than a concern for symbolic language or valid inference. Renaissance logic (or dialectic—the terms were used interchangeably) defines itself as "the art of reasoning," or "the rule of reason," and its role is to bring discipline and art to bear on humanity's ordinary powers of thought and thereby to strengthen those rational powers so that nature can be more truly understood. As Thomas Wilson writes in *The Rule of Reason, Conteyning the Art of Logick* (1553), "Manne, by nature hath a sparke of knowlege, and by the secrete woorking of God, iudgeth after a sorte, and discerneth good from euil. Before the fal of Adam, this knowlege was perfeicte, but through offence, darkenesse folowed, and the bright light was taken awaie. Wisemen therefore, consideryng the weakenesse of mannes witte, and the blindnesse also, wherein we are all drowned: inuented this Arte, to helpe us the rather, by a natural order, to finde out the trueth."<sup>5</sup> In contrast to more modern writers, the humanists did not doubt that the order of nature and the order of the human mind were basically the same and that through the refined good sense of one should be revealed the divine good order of the other; and logic, as the art that perfects ordinary thought, was understood to be the human mind's essential link between itself and truth. By demonstrating, then, that the arguments of Sidney's *Apology* are logically coherent, Temple also confirms to his mind the work's adherence to the natural order of truth and thus gives the work his highest praise.

Concern for order is everywhere in Temple's "Analysis," then, but in the last section of his work Temple supplements his microscopic commentary with four pages of remarks on the *Apology's* "Method," its large-scale structural strategies. I want to describe these remarks with some care, since they represent Temple's best effort to describe his understanding of Sidney's organizational intent.

Temple begins his section on Method with praise: "Just as you are most acute in thinking out arguments, and most precise in the judgment of axiom and syllogism, so you are no less careful in methodical organization . . ." (p. 62). Temple describes the *Apology's* overall structure as having two main parts, a "confirmation" in which the true nature of poetry is set out, and a "refutation"

<sup>5</sup>Thomas Wilson, *The Rule of Reason, Conteyning the Art of Logick*, ed. Richard S. Sprague (Northridge, Calif., 1972), pp. 8–9. Wilson, unlike Temple, was not a Ramist, but this is one issue on which traditionalists and reformers agreed. Thus the Ramist Abraham Fraunce, in "Of the nature and use of Logike," writes what could be a gloss for Wilson: "Art ought to imitate nature, in so much that nothing should bee put downe in artificial logike, which hath not some resemblance or similitude of that paterne and foundation of all true Logike, which eyther God hath drawn or nature layed downe in mans mynde" (in Sister Mary McCormick, ed., "A Critical Edition of Abraham Fraunce's 'The Sheapheardes Logike' and 'Twoe General Discourses'" [diss., St. Louis University, 1968], p. 176). Francis Bacon is the first English writer to challenge this naive philosophy directly: "It is a false assertion that the sense of man is the measure of things. . . . The human understanding is like a false mirror, which, receiving rays irregularly, distorts and discolors the nature of things by mingling its own nature with it" (*Novum organum*, Aphorism 41, in *The Works of Francis Bacon*, ed. James Spedding, Robert Leslie Ellis, and Douglas Denon Heath [London, 1858], 4:54).

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in which possible objections to this true nature are answered. In addition, the opening section on Pugliano's horsemanship Temple calls a "preface," and the closing page and a half, an "epilogue." The confirmation begins for Temple with the line "And first truly, to all them that, professing learning, inveigh against poetry," and contains all that Myrick's oration theory describes as the narration, proposition, division, and confirmation. The refutation begins with the phrase "But because we have ears as well as tongues," and contains both what Myrick calls the reprehension and the sections on English poetry and language that Myrick labels digression.<sup>6</sup>

Temple spends little time describing the preface or the epilogue, since for him these sections have little connection to the argument proper. His comment on the preface, however, is important because of the way Temple explains Sidney's claim to be writing "a pitiful defense of poor Poetry." For where we are likely to take "defense" as a term with oratorical or forensic connotation, Temple explains it simply as Sidney's declaration of his treatise's most general aim or purpose: "At the beginning, you set the chief goal and as it were the definition of your treatise when you say you will undertake a defense of poetry. Next you set up the treatise. In this you have followed the law of method. For the subject to be treated is prior to and more general than the treatise itself" (p. 62). I shall shortly be explaining what Temple means by "prior to and more general";<sup>7</sup> what is important here is to see that for Temple it is perfectly consistent to think that poetry can be defended through a methodical "treatise," a logical explication of poetry's true nature. For Sidney to have described the *Apology* as a defense, then, is—at least from Temple's point of view—in no way an automatic invocation of the conventions of Ciceronian oratory. Instead it is to have declared his purpose openly in order that his exposition can be as logically comprehensible and as clearly motivated as possible.<sup>8</sup>

Having established that the *Apology* is a treatise whose general aim is the defense of poetry, Temple then explains why Sidney treats the true nature of poetry before he treats the calumnies against it. "What can be more correct?" Temple asks. "The true nature of something is prior to everything that can be objected to that truth. For if a calumny or a lie is raised against the truth of something, then it is necessary that the true nature of the thing exist. But if a thing should be true, it does not follow that some sort of calumny exists" (p. 62). Here as elsewhere, Temple's remarks demonstrate his interest in establishing that Sidney's organizational rationale proceeds directly from a full understanding of the subject's own nature and not from a formal model. At no point does Temple

<sup>6</sup>Myrick, pp. 53–54.

<sup>7</sup>See below, Section II.

<sup>8</sup>Abraham Fraunce, in *The Lawiers Logick, exemplifying the praecepts of Logike by the practise of the common Lawe* (London, 1588), p. 114r., describes the difference between an oration and a methodical discourse as follows: "Orators, as referring all to perswasion and victory, omit orderly distributions; obscure things purposely; amplifie; digresse; flatter; insinuate; alter; change; and turne all vpside down, placing the best arguments first and last: leauing the woorst, in the middle of their speech altogether, the one to helpe the other; that with forcible things in the beginning, the auditors may be woone; and with as good in the ending, haue their minde and memory wholly occupied." Oratorical structures, then, differ from Methodical discourses by subordinating clarity and perspicuity to the needs of persuasion and victory. See also Ramus's extended discussion of this "prudential," as opposed to "natural," Method in his *Dialectique* (1555), ed. Michel Dassonville (Geneva, 1964), pp. 150–55.

appeal to imitation of literary or oratorical form; even when his description of Sidney's order parallels some aspect of classical oratory, Temple does not use this correspondence to bolster his praise of Sidney's art.

With the order of Sidney's two main parts rationalized, Temple then describes more closely the internal structure of each of these two parts. In keeping with his conviction that the treatise is primarily "On Poetry," Temple pays considerably more attention to the confirmation than he does to the refutation, since a confirmation gives most room for exposition. Temple suggests that Sidney's intention in the confirmation is to survey the whole of his subject, starting with its most general characteristics, then moving to those which are more specific. Thus as an opening step, Sidney first deals with three general adjuncts of poetry—its antiquity, its common dispersion through all societies, and its character as revealed through etymology—and he then gives a general definition: "Poetry therefore, is an art of imitation. . . ." With poetry defined in general terms, Sidney then moves, in Temple's view, to the next most general level of description, a distribution of the whole into its principal parts, the divine, the philosophical, and the feigned. This division leads to consideration of issues relating to these parts—poetry's effects, its proper form, its value as compared with philosophy and history. Then, as the last stage of the confirmation, Temple sees Sidney moving to a still more specific level of discussion as he distributes poetry into its particular kinds, the eight genres of pastoral, comedy, tragedy, and so on.

Finally, with the confirmation described, Temple concludes his description of Sidney's Method with some brief remarks on the refutation, noting that Sidney treats complaints about poetry's effects before he treats those about its properties. Though in the body of his analysis Temple deals with this section as fully as he does the confirmation, here he seems to feel that there is no particular organizational difficulty. One simply lists possible "calumnies," answering each as one goes.

Throughout these remarks, but especially in his description of the confirmation, it is clear how fully expository Temple wants to think the *Apology* is. In his view, Sidney has surveyed the whole of his subject, from its most general principles to its specific embodiments. There are, Temple suggests, occasional errors in Sidney's procedure, but even when Temple objects, his criticisms always presuppose Sidney's basic concurrence with the expository ideal. His first objection, for example, is to Sidney's treating poetry's general adjuncts before giving a formal definition of poetry as imitation. "The definition of poetry is to be put before the explanation of adjuncts," Temple writes, "for a subject is prior to and more general than its adjuncts" (p. 63). In Sidney's order, "the understanding of adjuncts will be more difficult than if it is first well-established and understood just what that thing could be to which the adjuncts belong" (p. 63). Throughout his "Analysis," Temple is absolutely confident that Sidney's intent is only to be clear and complete, and consequently his criticisms are all aimed at helping Sidney find the structure that will best reflect what Temple sees as the internal logic of Sidney's subject.

## II

What can be said of the differences between Temple's view of the *Apology* and that of Sidney's modern commentators? In one respect the whole matter may seem no more than a question of emphasis. Our own conceptions of expository structure are far enough removed from the forms of either oratory or Method for the difference between two parts and seven to seem unimportant. But when one looks more closely at the context out of which Temple's remarks develop, several issues with importance beyond the surface formalities of the *Apology* begin to emerge. For this is not just a disagreement about form. Underlying each of these schemes are unspoken but still necessary assumptions about the content and purpose of discourse that had been developing since the early sixteenth century, and without the changes in these assumptions that the development of Method reflects, newer prose forms like the essay would have been very much more difficult to create. Bacon's essays, as Lisa Jardine's recent study of Bacon and Method has shown, depend very much on earlier Method theory;<sup>9</sup> what is important here is that Temple claims that Sidney, too, was writing with the aims of Method in mind. To understand the critical position that Temple's "Analysis" represents, we must first see how Method reflects changed perceptions in the late sixteenth century about the ends and means of discourse.

As the sixteenth century opens, theories of disposition or arrangement, the standard terms for what we could call organization, are indeed dominated by Ciceronian oratory. Descriptions of how one is to compose regularly include and emphasize the Ciceronian division of oratory into three kinds, the demonstrative, the deliberative, and the judicial, and they then propose for each of these a particularly appropriate variation of the six- or seven-part oration form. Leonard Cox, for example, in *The Arte or Crafte of Rhetoryke*, written about 1530, but in large part a translation of Melancthon's *Institutiones rhetoricae* of 1521, makes it clear that while an oration can make use of six more or less standard parts, different conditions will require different parts.<sup>10</sup> Thus a demonstrative oration in praise of a deed often needs but four parts (preamble, proposition, confirmation, conclusion), a deliberative oration will usually have five (adding a confutation), and a judicial oration will generally have all six, plus a bipartite "division" as well.

Yet as Ciceronian as this may seem, there are also important differences between humanist and classical theory. First, while Cicero (and Quintilian as well) does indeed define three kinds of oratory, he also observes that there are many topics that are not amenable to oratorical treatment, and because he generally treats only oratory, it is clear that he did not himself intend his works to be a

9/Jardine, 227–48. See also Stanley Fish's study of Method in Bacon's essays in *Self-consuming Artifacts: The Experience of Seventeenth-Century Literature* (Berkeley, 1972), pp. 78–155. Extending and modifying Fish, see John Webster, "'The Method of a Poete': An Inquiry into Tudor Conceptions of Poetic Sequence," *English Literary Renaissance* 11 (1981): 22–43.

10/Leonard Cox, *The Arte or Crafte of Rhetoryke*, ed. Frederick Ives Carpenter (Chicago, 1899); demonstrative orations are described on pp. 49–66. Cox, translating Melancthon, also includes a short section describing the "logical cause," or "disputacion"; it is this discussion that Melancthon expands as "Method" in 1542 (see n. 17 below). Thomas Wilson, in *The Art of Rhetorique*, ed. G. H. Mair (Oxford, 1909), is more traditional in describing just the three Ciceronian causes.

single, dominating force for the shaping of all discourse.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, both Cicero and Quintilian show for the most part a very flexible and practical idea of oratorical precept. In describing the number and kind of parts to an oration, for example, Cicero's advice varies from treatise to treatise. In *De oratore*, Cicero lists five parts, plus a digression; in *De inventione*, he lists six, plus digression; and in *De partitione oratoria*, he lists only four, with no digression.<sup>12</sup> Here as elsewhere, the focus is on what will work best in particular situations, and thus while general precepts are given, few are insisted upon.

In humanist redactions of Cicero, however, much of the flexibility and practical sophistication of the originals is lost. One reason Cicero was singled out for imitation in the first place was the belief that in him was to be found the perfect synthesis of the active and contemplative virtues. It was as an active philosopher, a complete man, that he was valued, and because it was through oratory that Cicero accomplished this synthesis, his rhetorical works, like the *De inventione* and the *De oratore*, became the major cornerstones of the composition curriculum.<sup>13</sup> Further, humanists were also teachers—some would say preeminently so—and the need to teach young boys the essentials of Ciceronian discourse encouraged a relatively simple, unambiguous, and uniform understanding of what Cicero's theories actually were. All this tended to make early humanist teaching of composition both occasion and audience oriented, as all oratory must be, and highly formulaic as well. As Method develops, it is these two characteristics in particular that the theory struggles to address. Both these issues require some explanation; I will take each in turn.

In Cicero and Quintilian, oratorical theory is most developed in a forensic context, but even in its demonstrative and deliberative forms, because it is audience and issue oriented, its aim is to bring about a certain state of mind, to convince, to persuade, to console, to raise to admiration, to move to a particular action or set of actions. Yet there are other ends of discourse, and the one that becomes increasingly important in humanist writings of the century is simple exposition. One can, of course, accommodate this purpose by adapting oratorical schemes for expository ends, but there is a certain conceptual problem in doing so. If one's purpose is not to persuade, but to be clear, not just to produce one's best arguments and to answer well an opponent's case, but to survey all aspects of a subject and to arrange them in such a way that the relations of any one part of a subject to its other parts are clear, coherent, and available, then the most effective organizational mode will not be one which depends on pros and cons, on creating a state of mind in one's audience, or a disposition to a certain action. Rather, one's structure will be designed to produce a certain perspicuity of presentation by which all one knows can be set out, or unfolded, with maximum

11/See Cicero *De oratore* 2.15.64 ff., in *Cicero*, trans. E. W. Sutton and H. Rackham (Cambridge, Mass., 1942), vol. 3; this is M. Antonius speaking. When this issue arises in book 1, Crassus's response does tend to assimilate all topics to oratory, but only over the objections of Scaevola and Antonius (see 1.8–21.30–95).

12/Cicero *De oratore* 2.19.79–81; *De inventione*, trans. H. M. Hubbell, *Cicero* (Cambridge, Mass., 1949), 2:1.14.19; 1.51.97; *De partitione oratoria*, trans. H. Rackham, *Cicero* (Cambridge, Mass., 1942), 4:8–17.27–60.

13/G. K. Hunter, *John Lyly* (London, 1962), chap. 1, has an excellent discussion of the Ciceronian ideal in Tudor education.



clarity. "Perspicuity" is an important word here, for it stresses Method's aim to be able to explain anything and to do so completely and without the selectivity that considerations of audience and of occasion require.<sup>14</sup>

The word for this increasingly important aim of discourse was often simply "*docere*"—"teaching"; and the place the relevant theoretical issues were most fully set out was under the heading "Method" in the dialectic manuals. The change in outlook was not instantaneous, nor is it clear that the major writers on this subject knew just what the issues were with which they were dealing.<sup>15</sup> Still, as Lisa Jardine comments, by the mid-sixteenth century, "as far as theory was concerned, the principles of composition were . . . taught first and foremost from the 'new look' dialectic handbook. . . . And whether or not a student's particular training incorporated a discussion of 'method' (which would depend to some extent on the interests of the tutor who directed his study), this instruction focused on the ability to put together extended arguments on a specified theme, and to lay out a body of material on a given topic in a coherent and orderly way."<sup>16</sup>

In one of the earliest treatments of Method in a rhetoric, Philip Melancthon in his *Elementa rhetorices* (1542) defines the distinction between oratorical and methodical discourse in this way:

Ordinarily, there are three kinds of rhetorical causes: the demonstrative, in which praise and vituperation are contained; the deliberative, which deals with persuading and dissuading; and the judicial, which treats legal controversies. I think that a *didascalical* kind should be added, which also pertains to dialectic; nevertheless, where certain kinds of matters are dealt with, it is not to be passed over, especially since at this time, for example, it has great use in churches, where persuasive speeches are not so much to be given as more often men are to be taught about religious precepts through the use of dialectics, so that they can understand such things fully.<sup>17</sup>

Melancthon terms this "*didascalical* kind" the "Method of teaching" ("*methodus . . . docendi*"), and its purpose is to distinguish between discourse aimed at full understanding and discourse aimed at persuasion. But for the history of disposition, what is important is that this difference in purpose is directly reflected in organizational strategy. Thus if one is to treat something by Melancthon's Method, one does not begin with an exordium designed to please or to establish authority with an audience, nor does one's text then follow with arguments selected to make the strongest case or a refutation to head off possible objections. Such structural devices are designed to produce audience effects which are irrelevant

14/Cf. Melancthon's definition of logic: "*Dialectica est ars seu via, recte, ordine, et perspicue docendi . . .*" (*Erotemata Dialectices* [1580], in *Corpus Reformatorium*, ed. Carolus Gottlieb Bretschneider [Halis Saxonum, 1846], 13:513).

15/At least until late in the sixteenth century, reform of exposition was often tangled up in parallel reforms in the methods of scientific demonstration. This is a major thesis of both Gilbert's book and Jardine's. See esp. Gilbert's introduction, in which he explains the problem and introduces the terms "artistic method" and "scientific method" to differentiate these two efforts. Jardine uses an analogous set of terms, "art of discourse" and "art of discovery."

16/Jardine, pp. 12–13.

17/Melancthon, p. 421. This "kind" was introduced to Melancthon's system as early as 1521; that he thought it still innovative is clear from his 1542 phrase: "*Vulgo tria numerant genera causarum.*" Writers on Method have been somewhat literal minded in treating the beginnings of Method. Ong says Method first appears in Melancthon in the 1547 dialectic "as an adventitious, revisionist phenomenon" (*Ramus, Method, and the Decay of Dialogue*, p. 236). But if the emphasis on the modish word "method" is adventitious, the subject itself is not.

to teaching. Instead, Melancthon would have us begin a teaching discourse with a general definition of the topic and then follow with progressively more specific information about the subject's parts and adjuncts. In this early version Melancthon lists five questions to direct this exposition; what a thing is (the definition); what are its parts or species; what are its causes; what are its effects; what are its relations and oppositions.<sup>18</sup> In later versions this list grows to ten topics, but the focus on a methodical display, derived from the subject's own inherent nature and without regard to persuasion, remains the same.

Yet though this new "kind" introduces a markedly different ordering principle into the humanist rhetorical tradition, it does not entirely solve the other problem of early humanist rhetorics, the tendency toward formulaic structure. I described earlier the general forms prescribed by humanists for each of the three standard kinds of oratory, but beyond this, these texts outline for each of the oration's parts an internal structure as well. Thus if your task is to create a demonstrative oration in praise of someone, Thomas Wilson's *Art of Rhetorique*, by far the most complete and urbane of the early English rhetorics, distills for you the appropriate steps for both finding and arranging your material.<sup>19</sup> As far as parts go, the structure is simple: entrance, narration, confutation, if necessary, and conclusion. But the real problem here is the internal structure of each part and not which parts to select. Thus for a narration in a demonstrative oration, Wilson urges a complex threefold structure: "To observe things: Before [his] life. In his life. After his death." Then, each of these general headings is also subdivided. "Before a man's life, are considered these places. The Realme. The Sheire. The towne. The Parentes. The auncesters." Following this first section, the second section, "In his life," has three main subparts, "the giftes of good things of the mynde, the body, and of fortune." Each of these is to be treated separately, but of them, gifts of the mind are most important, and these should be set out by working through the six "places" of birth and infancy, childhood, "the striplyng age," adulthood, old age, and death. Finally, under the last general heading, "After his death," Wilson tells us to consider "his Tombe, his Cote of armour set vp, and all such honours as are used in Funerallles."

Structures like this have obvious pedagogical usefulness. They are direct, they are unambiguous, and they provide an ingenious solution to the problem of students who have neither the knowledge nor the experience to develop their own material. Moreover, because this structure is prior to the act of composition itself, it is not just a means of disposing material; it is also something like a verbal shopping list with which one guides oneself in finding matter to dispose in the first place. Through these formulas, in fact, a highly detailed structure can be conned in the virtual absence of subject, and the student thus has only to flesh out the discourse by judicious use of his commonplace books.<sup>20</sup>

18/Melancthon, p. 424.

19/Wilson, *The Art of Rhetorique*, pp. 11–12.

20/As an example of a fairly sophisticated, commonplace-based oration, see John Rainolds, *Oratio in laudem artis poeticae* (ca. 1572), ed. William Ringler, trans. Walter Allen, Jr. (Princeton, N.J., 1940). Ringler's introduction is very good in describing how Rainolds uses commonplaces to fill out his highly conventional structure; see pp. 10–11; 15–19.

Further, though reading and writing were obviously important for early Tudor students, their work was still largely oral, and for oral delivery, the conventional structures of Tudor oratory provide expectational patterns which simplify considerably the tasks of speaker and hearer alike.<sup>21</sup> In nonformulaic, nonconventional organizations, disposition is a difficult and abstract process for both. Speakers must have the skill to make clear to a listener exactly how any one point in a discourse relates to what has preceded and what is to come; hearers, for their part, must be able to handle the double task of keeping track both of the small-scale logic of immediate argument and of the large-scale logic of the work's overall form. With writing, of course, these problems are minimized. Readers can read slowly, they can stop and think, they can even go back and reread; and consequently, written discourse is far less confined in its organizational strategies than is oral discourse. But until reading and writing become more central to education than they are when the century opens, the demands of the oral situation encourage, and reward, the use of formulas.

There are, then, good reasons for the topics Wilson sets out. But whatever the value of formulaic structures, their enabling conventions run counter to a fully subject-oriented discourse. On one hand the a priori list of topics sets conventional limits on the way a speaker develops what he is to say; on the other, when a speaker does stray from his list to find some other aspect of his subject to include, he will then have the problem of fitting this errant thought into the standard formulas.

The main problem with Melancthon's new genus of oratory is that it, no less than Wilson's rhetoric, lends itself to disposition by formula. Though he breaks the affective strings of persuasion, Melancthon's set list of questions is still an a priori structure, and though its topics are a good deal more abstract than those suggested for traditional oratory, they, too, can easily become a kind of exoskeleton to be fleshed out, a set of slots to be filled. And even when his slots are construed abstractly enough to allow a full survey of a subject, Melancthon's scheme still presupposes that all expositions have basically the same logical structure, that they are all to be developed through the same number and kind of questions, and that they are all to be displayed in exactly the same schematic way.

The man most anxious to reform oratory even farther than did Melancthon, and the man whose theories of Method directly underlie Temple's reading of the *Apology*, was Peter Ramus. Ramus's writings on Method began appearing in the mid-1540s, and neither his age nor our own has been clearly agreed on how to value them.<sup>22</sup> One reason for this is that Ramus claimed much more for his Method

21/Walter J. Ong gives a good background discussion of oral-written modes in Tudor literature in "Oral Residue in Tudor Prose Style," *PMLA* 80 (1965): 145-54.

22/The most important Ramist controversy in Tudor England was between Temple and the Oxford logician Everard Digby. See Gilbert, pp. 200-211; and Jardine, pp. 59-65. Modern controversies over Ramus have centered on Rosemond Tuve's *Elizabethan and Metaphysical Imagery: Renaissance Poetic and Twentieth-Century Critics* (Chicago, 1947), esp. pp. 251-381, where Tuve argues for the influence of Ramus on metaphysical poetry. Tuve is answered by Norman E. Nelson, *Peter Ramus and the Confusion of Logic, Rhetoric, and Poetry*, University of Michigan Contributions in Modern Philology, no. 2 (Ann Arbor, 1947); and A. J. Smith, "An Examination of Some Claims for Ramism," *Review of English Studies*, n.s. 7, no. 28 (1956): 348-59. Despite the heat with which this controversy raged, little was finally settled, as George Watson explains in "Ramus, Miss Tuve, and the New Petromachia," *Modern Philology* 55 (1958): 259-62.

than did other writers on the subject; in particular, Ramus thought his Method to be of use to scientific discovery as well as to discourse. But though Ramus's Method did not in fact contribute much to science, as a theory of discourse it still had importance, and in England, at least, it was as just such a theory that Ramus's main enthusiasts understood it.<sup>23</sup> Especially for Sidney's friend Temple, the great strength of Ramism is in its force for exposition and teaching. This is the ground for his defense of Ramus against the attacks of Everard Digby,<sup>24</sup> and it comes through as well in Temple's own explication of Method in his 1584 edition of Ramus's *Dialecticae libri duo*, where Temple embellishes Ramus's straightforward treatment of Method by expanding the discussion better than threefold. Temple makes no explicit changes in Ramus's general theory, but he explains more fully than does Ramus the principles of methodical organization and the reasons underlying its use. As I describe Ramist reforms of disposition, it will be from Temple's perspective.<sup>25</sup>

As a theory of discourse, there are at least three important innovations in the Ramist system that bring us closer than do earlier theories to an organizational structure derived solely from the internal requirements of the subject itself and not from either the demands of persuasion or from a priori lists of formal convention. For the first of these, where Melancthon adds Method to the three standard persuasive forms of rhetoric by borrowing a structure from logic, Ramus abandons the standard forms altogether and makes Method the central organizational mode for both rhetoric and logic alike. Instead of a rhetoric, then, in which persuasion is the dominant mode, only to be supplemented by Method when exposition is necessary, Ramus makes exposition the basic mode of all discourse and discusses traditional rhetorical strategies only as particular variations on this one central purpose.

Second, instead of defining Method by a special list of questions to be canvassed or a set of special methodical topics drawn from the larger general set of topics of invention, Ramus reorganizes the logic of invention so that there is only a single set of topics that are to be used for any logical or rhetorical procedure. In place of rhetorical headings like "Before his birth," or "After his death," Ramus offers only such abstract places as cause, effect, subject, adjunct, com-

23/Few systems are adopted whole in any period; Englishmen adopting Ramus's system had very different aims, and the "Ramism" they ended up with varied considerably, depending on what purpose it was to serve. Thus Dudley Fenner, as a Puritan preacher, wants a system that is short, direct, and unambiguous so that he can teach men the art of scriptural explication, and this populist, religious aim is reflected throughout his streamlined adaptation of Ramus (*The Artes of Logike and Rethorike* [1584], in *Four Tudor Books on Education*, ed. Robert D. Pepper [Gainesville, Fla., 1966], pp. 143–80). Since Fenner has no particular concern for Method, his treatment of the entire subject takes but a page. In contrast to Fenner's Ramism is that of Gabriel Harvey. Harvey, as a classical scholar and rhetorician, wants to free rhetoric from what he thinks are superficial practices, and for him Ramism supplies the basis for a wide-ranging contemplative analysis of literature and experience. For Harvey, "the resplendent glory of Method" provides a way to focus critical attention on literature's underlying conceptual structures, the true causes of its greatness. See Gabriel Harvey, *Ciceronianus*, ed. Harold S. Wilson, University of Nebraska Studies in the Humanities, no. 4 (Lincoln, 1945). Thus, Temple is not unusual in bypassing Ramus's claims to his theory's being a true Method of scientific demonstration.

24/Commenting on Temple's debates with Digby, Jardine writes that Temple "insists on two simple points. The contexts of discovery of knowledge and teaching of knowledge should be carefully separated, and in the context of discovery induction is the sole source of knowledge" (pp. 59–60).

25/Temple's remarks are from *P. Rami dialecticae libri duo* (Cambridge, 1584), pp. 115–45.

parison by quality or by quantity, and so on. These topics may or may not all be relevant to any one problem, but Ramus makes no separate lists for specific rhetorical situations. For a Ramist rhetoric, one always begins from the same set of abstract places, no matter how the aims of different orations may vary. The time-honored distinction between demonstrative, deliberative, and judicial is thus effectively swept away.

Finally, in place of an a priori order of places to be used first for invention and then for disposition as well, Ramus's Method is expressly a posteriori.<sup>26</sup> In his system there is no necessary, or even suggested, serial relation between the sequence in which one takes up places of invention and one's final sequence of disposition. In fact, Ramus's Method is not so much an order as it is an ordering principle. Thus in this Method there is no one place, or question, that will always precede all others; the disposition of material will depend instead only upon the principle of descending generality and familiarity: whatever is more general and better known comes before whatever is less general and less well known. Very often, a discourse will begin, as it would for Melancthon, with a general definition, but not all discourses will have to begin this way. Ramus will not make his prescription so specific. All depends on what the process of invention has turned up as worthy of disposition in the first place. Only when this is known can one then decide what, in this particular case, will be the most appropriate ordering sequence.

In fact, not all the examples Ramus gives of Method seem either new or different. His description of how a grammar is to be ordered, for example, proceeds from definition to distribution to a description of parts and then on to more and more specific detail—a structure that is very much like what Melancthon's Method would produce. Still, there is here a conceptual effort to break free of conventional modes of ordering. "Method is not just applied in arts [like grammar or logic, the two most common examples] and doctrines, but in all things where we want to teach easily and clearly," and it is in these other matters that other forms are most needed.<sup>27</sup> One strength of Temple's explanation of Ramus is the stress he gives to these other matters. "All things," Temple writes, "which come under the keen insight of judgment, are either transparent and clear by nature [*perspicuae natura illustresque*], or dubious and confused [*dubiae et confusae*]. Whatever things are clear in themselves, and are made up with a certain native transparency, these, through some derived light that illuminates them, leave nothing to do. . . . But truly, when the nature of such things is a little more obscure and inverted, these other things, as they do not have it in themselves, take light from other things, by whose strength darkness vanishes, and confusion dissipates" (pp. 115–16). As Temple repeatedly explains, his most basic claim is that a me-

<sup>26</sup>In the *Dialectique* (n. 8 above), p. 147, Ramus explains the a posteriori nature of Method this way: "Suppose that all the definitions, distributions, rules of grammar are invented, and each has been truly judged, and that all these things have been written on different little markers and all turned and mixed up pell mell in some vessel, as in a game of chance. Here I ask what part of dialectic can show me how to dispose these confused precepts and reduce them to order. First, I would not need the places of invention, since all is already found. . . . I need neither first judgment by axiom, nor second judgment by syllogism. Only method, and a certain way of putting things together, is left" (my translation).

<sup>27</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 147.

thodical disposition seeks only to follow what the thought process of understanding itself actually might be. Obscure things can be understood only through what is more clear, so one's task (it seems obvious enough) is but to find those things which are by nature most clear and to use them to explain whatever is obscure. And further, since general, high-level concepts can explain more than can specific, low-level concepts, that explanation is best in which the most general, as well as the most clear, ideas are placed first.

Temple realizes that disposition by Method is an abstract task and that deciding just what is more general or better known in any particular situation may not be easy. His explanation is correspondingly tentative. He spends thirty pages describing Method, but while a few clear-cut rules emerge, his final admonition is still very much open ended: "Follow this therefore: Whatever contains the causes and subjects of other things; whatever can be understood and explained before other things are explained and understood; whatever inheres in the rest; whatever can be said from which the consequence cannot be derived by conversion; this is what is known more absolutely, what is more general" (p. 136).

Overall, Temple's aim in describing Method is to give workable instructions for implementing the principle that a discourse should follow a logic of explanation determined by a subject's own particular requirements. Though his idea of Method is still prescriptive and his understanding of a subject's logic is still tied to the humanist topical tradition, his model is nevertheless very much freer than earlier rhetorics from limitations entailed either by the need to shape discourse to affect an audience or by the a priori formal constraints of oratorical systems of invention. It is, then, in the context of these issues that Temple reads Sidney; it is these values that are invoked when Temple takes perspicuity and methodical order as the *Apology's* great virtues.

### III

My interest in this paper has been to explain Temple's understanding of the *Apology's* structure, and to set out the historical misconceptions that beset the oration theory as it has been most widely understood. As I suggested earlier, the case for the *Apology* as oration rests on two premises. For the first of these, that the *Apology* does in fact follow a structure that Tudor rhetoric would have thought was characteristic of classical precept, beyond the fact that the *Apology*, like almost any lengthy discourse, can be parsed into seven sections, there is little that traditional oratory can explain. A part in Tudor oratory is not just one of seven; it also has internal structure as well. In the particular case of the judicial defense, Wilson sets out what are in fact three separate structures, the conjectural, the legal, and the judicial.<sup>28</sup> Of these three, the conjectural comes closest to being relevant to Sidney's "case," but had Sidney actually followed Wilson, he would also have divided his confirmation between two main places, the "will to do euil," and the "power to do euil," and for each he would have found in Wilson a list of appropriate questions to consider. But neither these, nor either of Wilson's

28/Wilson, *The Art of Rhetorique*, pp. 90-92.

other two sets of topics, has anything but the most tenuous of connections to Sidney's *Apology*.

As for the oration theory's second premise, that oratory was Sidney's single important model for prose discourse, the history of Method shows its limit. Nor should we be surprised. If the essay and similar structures do not finally emerge until the 1590s, even then they cannot simply issue forth, Minerva-like, with no earlier tradition to support them. It is not by accident that Method is a major term in Bacon's theories of prose discourse.

Historically, then, the oration theory relies on an oversimplified conception of Tudor dispositional theory. At the same time, however, Temple's reading of the *Apology* has its problems, too. Though his is a contemporary's account and though he is likely even to have discussed his "Analysis" with Sidney either before or after he wrote it, he, no less than Myrick, tends to reshape the *Apology* to fit his own requirements. For in order to characterize the *Apology* as properly methodical, Temple is forced to underplay the importance of some sections of the work and overplay the importance of others. Thus, for example, his remarks on Method give almost no attention to Sidney's comparison of poetry to moral philosophy and to history, though that section is well-nigh the rhetorical heart of the piece. Because Temple's concern is with the logical hierarchy of Sidney's arguments, he sees the entire section as but an embellishment subordinate to Sidney's discussion of poetry's effects.

And if Temple undervalues the comparison of poetry to the other arts, his need to praise Sidney for treating all parts of his subject also leads him to overvalue what are on Sidney's part mere gestures toward comprehensiveness. Thus, when Sidney divides poetry by subject into the divine, the philosophical, and the fictive, Temple seems unaware of the way this division allows Sidney to escape all but the most cursory discussion of the first two kinds to concentrate instead on the third. Though the first fifty pages of his own "Analysis" would show him the disproportionate emphasis Sidney gives his third kind, Temple's immediate interest seems only in showing that Sidney has tagged all the proper bases. And what is true of this distribution is true for the second as well, in which poetry is divided by genres. Temple is right to note that Sidney touches upon them; he may even be right in thinking that Sidney wants his brief remarks to seem like part of a full-scale exposition. But in emphasizing only the formal articulations of Sidney's structure, Temple is unable to assess the relative importance of the *Apology*'s different sections.

I will not dwell on the shortcomings of either of these two views of the *Apology*; the fact is that it will be difficult to classify the work as an example of any one structural model no matter how hard or far a critic may search for appropriate traditions. Good writers rarely write to fit someone else's guidelines, and Sidney, surely, is no exception. But what matters here is that if Temple's pigeon hole will not finally hold the *Apology*, the elements of the work that lead him to his position are still important and not to be underestimated. Though expository discourse is omnipresent and ordinary in our own age, that fact ought not keep us from imagining a time when the enabling principles of the expository essay were still unclear.

What Temple found in Ramus was an answer to a need that he and others like him felt strongly, a need for a clear idea of what a discourse unfettered by affective demands or by formulaic constraints could be like. And if the Ramist formulation seems to us as limited in many ways as the tradition it seeks to replace, we should nevertheless be sure to remember the dangers of hindsight. One reason the *Apology* seems so much more oratorical to us than it does to Temple is that we read the piece with the historical tables turned. For Temple, the oratorical was ordinary, commonplace, to be passed over, while the expositional was to be noted and praised. For him the achievement was to have moved beyond the expectable at a time when even to conceive of doing so was neither easy nor obvious. For modern readers, on the other hand, it is the oratorical elements that deserve comment and praise. Schooled as we are in exposition, accustomed as we have become to expecting that mode before all others, we cannot but be taken by the ways the *Apology* differs from our own sense of the ordinary. Nor is this altogether wrong. Whether Temple perceives it or not, the *Apology* clearly makes use of much that our age calls oratorical. But the real interest here for the history of disposition is in seeing how to appreciate Sidney's skill in creating a discourse that draws strength from both these modes while owing allegiance to neither. The great mistake would be to let any very simple idea of structure prevent our seeing the accomplishment in Sidney's having structured a work so tightly and well, when any of the explicit theories that might have helped him were still very much in flux.

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