ideal or imaginary adult world. By the time he is fifteen, he has “witnessed” more violence than most soldiers or gunmen experience in a lifetime. And he has “participated in” all this imagery, “empathically reenacting” it. Thus initiated, he might well think of “growing up” (that is, of “transformation”) in such excessive terms. His awareness of himself as a developing person requires a vocabulary—and the images of brutality and violence provide such a vocabulary, with a simple recipe for the perfecting or empowering of the self by the punishing and slaying of troublesome motives as though they were wholly external. One can surely expect such imagery to have sinister effects, particularly in view of the fact that the excessive naturalism of modern photographic art presents the violence, as nearly as possible, without formal devices that bring out the purely artistic or fictive nature of such art. There is no difference, in photographic style, between the filming of a murder mystery and the filming of a “documentary.” Nor should we forget the possible bad effect of the many devices whereby such brutality is made “virtuous,” through dramatic pretexts that justify it in terms of retaliation and righteous indignation.

Our objections arise when certain kinds of speculation (often of psychoanalytic cast) unwittingly exemplify these same sinister trends. By itself stressing the primacy of vengeance and slaughter as motives (and looking upon friendly or ethical motives purely as a kind of benign fiction for harnessing these more nearly “essential” impulses), such thought is really more like the forerunner of modern militarism than its critic. And often the analysts will show such zeal, in behalf of “killing” as the essential motive, that they will seek many ingenious ways of showing that a work was motivated by the desire to slay some parental figure who suffered no such fate at all, in the imagery of the plot as interpreted on its face. They apparently assume that to show “unconscious” parridial implications in a motive is by the same token to establish parricide as the motive. Where a play is explicitly about parricide, one might feel some justification in complaining if we would see behind it merely the choice of a parental symbol to represent some motivation not intrinsically parridial at all, but using parental identifications as “imagined accidents” that personify it. But whatever may be the objections in such cases, they would not apply at all in cases where there is no explicit imagery of parricide, and one must by exegesis hunt out parricide as motive. Why, one may then ask, must an imagery of parricide be taken as essential, as primary, as the true designation of the ultimate motive? And we, of course, would similarly ask: why must any imagery of killing, even when explicit, be taken as ultimate, rather than as an “opportunist” terminology for specifying or localizing a principle of motivation “prior” to any imagery, either scenic or personal?

That is, we can recognize that our anecdote is in the order of killing, of personal enmity, of factional strife, of inventive, polemic, eristic, logomachy, all of them aspects of rhetoric that we are repeatedly and drastically encountering, since rhetoric is par excellence the region of the Scramble, of insult and injury, bickering, squabbling, malice and the lie, cloaked malice and the subsidized lie. Yet while admitting that the genius of our opening anecdote has malign inclinations, we can, without forcing, find benign elements there too. And we should find these; for rhetoric also includes resources of appeal ranging from sacrificial, evangelical love, through the kinds of persuasion figuring in sexual love, to sheer “neutral” communication (communication being the area where love has become so generalized, desexualized, “technologized,” that only close critical or philosophic scrutiny can discern the vestiges of the original motive).

Identification

We considered, among those “uses” to which Samson Agonistes was put, the poet’s identification with a blind giant who slew himself in slaying enemies of the Lord; and we saw identification between Puritans and Israelites, Royalists and Philistines, identification allowing for a ritualistic kind of historiography in which the poet could, by allusion to a Biblical story, “substantially” foretell the triumph of his vanquished faction. Then we came upon a more complicated kind of identification: here the poet presents a motive in an essentially magnified or perfected form, in some way tragically purified or transcended; the imagery of death reduces the motive to ultimate terms, dramatic equivalent for an “entelechial” pattern of thought whereby a thing’s nature would be classed according to the fruition, maturing, or ideal fulfillment, proper to its kind.

As seen from this point of view, then, an imagery of slaying (slaying of either the self or another) is to be considered merely as a special
case of identification in general. Or otherwise put; the imagery of slaying is a special case of transformation, and transformation involves the ideas and imagery of identification. That is: the killing of something is the changing of it, and the statement of the thing's nature before and after the change is an identifying of it.

Perhaps the quickest way to make clear what we are doing here is to show what difference it makes. Noting that tragic poets identify motives in terms of killing, one might deduce that "they are essentially killers." Or one might deduce that "they are essentially identifiers." Terms for identification in general are wider in scope than terms for killing. We are proposing that our rhetoric be reduced to this term of wider scope, with the term of narrower scope being treated as a species of it. We begin with an anecdote of killing, because invective, eristic, polemic, and logomachy are so pronounced an aspect of rhetoric. But we use a dialectical device (the shift to a higher level of generalization) that enables us to transcend the narrower implications of this imagery, even while keeping them clearly in view. We need never deny the presence of strife, enmity, faction as a characteristic motive of rhetorical expression. We need not close our eyes to their almost tyrannous ubiquity in human relations; we can be on the alert always to see how such temptations to strife are implicit in the institutions that condition human relationships; yet we can at the same time always look beyond this order, to the principle of identification in general, a terministic choice justified by the fact that the identifications in the order of love are also characteristic of rhetorical expression. We may as well be frank about it, since our frankness, if it doesn't convince, will at least serve another important purpose of this work: it will reveal a strategic resource of terminology. Being frank, then:

Because of our choice, we can treat "war" as a "special case of peace" —not as a primary motive in itself, not as essentially real, but purely as a derivative condition, a perversion.

**Identification and "Consubstantiality"**

A is not identical with his colleague, B. But insofar as their interests are joined, A is identified with B. Or he may identify himself with B even when their interests are not joined, if he assumes that they are, or is persuaded to believe so.

Here are ambiguities of substance. In being identified with B, A is "substantially one" with a person other than himself. Yet at the same time he remains unique, an individual locus of motives. Thus he is both joined and separate, at once a distinct substance and con-substantial with another.

While consubstantial with its parents, with the "firsts" from which it is derived, the offspring is nonetheless apart from them. In this sense, there is nothing abstruse in the statement that the offspring both is and is not one with its parentage. Similarly, two persons may be identified in terms of some principle they share in common, an "identification" that does not deny their distinctness.

To identify A with B is to make A "consubstantial" with B. Accordingly, since our Grammar of Motives was constructed about "substance" as key term, the related rhetoric selects its nearest equivalent in the areas of persuasion and dissuasion, communication and polemic. And our third volume, Symbolic of Motives, should be built about identity as titular or ancestral term, the "first" to which all other terms could be reduced and from which they could then be derived or generated, as from a common spirit. The thing's identity would here be its uniqueness as an entity in itself and by itself, a demarcated unit having its own particular structure.

However, "substance" is an abstruse philosophic term, beset by a long history of quandaries and puzzles. It names so paradoxical a function in men's systematic terminologies, that thinkers finally tried to abolish it altogether—and in recent years they have often persuaded themselves that they really did abolish it from their terminologies of motives. They abolished the term, but it is doubtful whether they can ever abolish the function of that term, or even whether they should want to. A doctrine of consubstantiality, either explicit or implicit, may be necessary to any way of life. For substance, in the old philosophies, was an act; and a way of life is an acting-together; and in acting together, men have common sensations, concepts, images, ideas, attitudes that make them consubstantial.

The Grammar dealt with the universal paradoxes of substance. It considered resources of placement and definition common to all thought. The Symbolic should deal with unique individuals, each its own peculiarly constructed act, or form. These unique "constitutions" being capable of treatment in isolation, the Symbolic should
consider them primarily in their capacity as singulars, each a separate universe of discourse (though there are also respects in which they are consubstantial with others of their kind, since they can be classed with other unique individuals as joint participants in common principles, possessors of the same or similar properties).

The *Rhetoric* deals with the possibilities of classification in its *partisan* aspects; it considers the ways in which individuals are at odds with one another, or become identified with groups more or less at odds with one another.

Why “at odds,” you may ask, when the titular term is “identification”? Because, to begin with “identification” is, by the same token, though roundabout, to confront the implications of *division*. And so, in the end, men are brought to that most tragically ironic of all divisions, or conflicts, wherein millions of cooperative acts go into the preparation for one single destructive act. We refer to that ultimate *disease of cooperation*: *war*. (You will understand war much better if you think of it, not simply as strife come to a head, but rather as a disease, or perversion of communion. Modern war characteristically requires a myriad of constructive acts for each destructive one; before each culminating blast there must be a vast network of interlocking operations, directed communally.)

Identification is affirmed with earnestness precisely because there is division. Identification is compensatory to division. If men were not apart from one another, there would be no need for the rhetorician to proclaim their unity. If men were wholly and truly of one substance, absolute communication would be of man’s very essence. It would not be an ideal, as it now is, partly embodied in material conditions and partly frustrated by these same conditions; rather, it would be as natural, spontaneous, and total as with those ideal prototypes of communication, the theologian’s angels, or “messengers.”

The *Grammar* was at peace insofar as it contemplated the paradoxes common to all men, the universal resources of verbal placement. The *Symbolic* should be at peace, in that the individual substances, or entities, or constituted acts are there considered in their uniqueness, hence outside the realm of conflict. For individual universes, as such, do not compete. Each merely is, being its own self-sufficient realm of discourse. And the *Symbolic* thus considers each thing as a set of inter-related terms all conspiring to round out their identity as participants in a common substance of meaning. An individual does in actuality compete with other individuals. But within the rules of *Symbolic*, the individual is treated merely as a self-subsistent unit proclaiming its peculiar nature. It is “at peace,” in that its terms *cooperate* in modifying one another. But insofar as the individual is involved in conflict with other individuals or groups, the study of this same individual would fall under the head of *Rhetoric*. Or considered rhetorically, the victim of a neurotic conflict is torn by parliamentary wrangling; he is heckled like Hitler within. (Hitler is said to have confronted a constant wrangle in his private deliberations, after having imposed upon his people a flat choice between conformity and silence.) Rhetorically, the neurotic’s every attempt to legislate for his own conduct is disorganized by rival factions within his own dissociated self. Yet, considered Symbolically, the same victim is technically “at peace,” in the sense that his identity is like a unified, mutually adjusted set of terms. For even antagonistic terms, confronting each other as parry and thrust, can be said to “cooperate” in the building of an over-all form.

The *Rhetoric* must lead us through the Scramble of the Market Place, the flurries and flare-ups of the Human Barnyard, the Give and Take, the wavering line of pressure and counterpressure, the Logomachy, the onus of ownership, the Wars of Nerves, the War. It too has its peaceful moments: at times its endless competition can add up to the transcending of itself. In ways of its own, it can move from the factional to the universal. But its ideal culminations are more often beset by strife as the condition of their organized expression, or material embodiment. Their very universality becomes transformed into a partisan weapon. For one need not scrutinize the concept of “identification” very sharply to see, implied in it at every turn, its ironic counterpart: division. *Rhetoric* is concerned with the state of Babel after the Fall. Its contribution to a “sociology of knowledge” must often carry us far into the lugubrious regions of malice and the lie.

*The Identifying Nature of Property*

Metaphysically, a thing is identified by its *properties*. In the realm of *Rhetoric*, such identification is frequently by property in the most
II

TRADITIONAL PRINCIPLES OF RHETORIC

**Persuasion**

"Speech designed to persuade" (*dicere ad persuadendum accommodate*): this is the basic definition for rhetoric (and its synonym, "eloquence," ) given in Cicero’s dialogue *De Oratore*. Crassus, who is spokesman for Cicero himself, cites it as something taken for granted, as the first thing the student of rhetoric is taught. Three hundred years before him, Aristotle’s *Art of Rhetoric* had similarly named "persuasion" as the essence and end of rhetoric, which he defined as "the faculty of discovering the persuasive means available in a given case." Likewise, in a lost treatise, Aristotle’s great competitor, Isocrates, called rhetoric "the craftsman of persuasion" (*peithous demiourgos*). Thus, at this level of generalization, even rivals could agree, though as De Quincey has remarked, "persuasion" itself can be differently interpreted.

Somewhat more than a century after Cicero, Quintilian, in his *Institutio Oratoria* changed the stress, choosing to define rhetoric as the "science of speaking well" (*bene dicendi scientia*). But his system is clearly directed towards one particular kind of persuasion: the education of the Roman gentleman. Thus, in a chapter where he cites about two dozen definitions (two-thirds of which refer to "persuasion" as the essence of rhetoric), though he finally chooses a definition of his own which omits reference to persuasion, he has kept the function of the term. For he equates the perfect orator with the good man, and says that the good man should be exceptional in both eloquence and moral attributes. Rhetoric, he says, is both "useful" and a "virtue." Hence his notion of "speaking well" implies the moralistically hortatory, not just pragmatic skill at the service of any cause.

Add now the first great Christian rhetoric, the fourth book of St.

*He used the word “science” loosely. This definition is in Book II, Chapter XV. At the beginning of Book III he says he has shown rhetoric to be an “art.”*
Augustine's *De Doctrina Christiana* (written near the beginning of the fifth century) and you have ample material, in these four great peaks stretched across 750 years, to observe the major principles derivable from the notion of rhetoric as persuasion, as inducement to action, *ad agendum*, in the phrase of Augustine, who elsewhere, in the same book, states that a man is persuaded if

he likes what you promise, fears what you say is imminent, hates what you censure, embraces what you commend, regrets whatever you built up as regrettable, rejoices at what you say is cause for rejoicing, sympathizes with those whose wretchedness your words bring before his very eyes, shuns those whom you admonish him to shun... and in whatever other ways your high eloquence can affect the minds of your hearers, bringing them not merely to know what should be done, but to do what they know should be done.

Yet often we could with more accuracy speak of persuasion "to attitude," rather than persuasion to out-and-out action. Persuasion involves choice, will; it is directed to a man only insofar as he is *free*. This is good to remember, in these days of dictatorship and near-dictatorship. Only insofar as men are potentially free, must the spellbinder seek to persuade them. Insofar as they *must* do something, rhetoric is unnecessary, its work being done by the nature of things, though often these necessities are not of a natural origin, but come from necessities imposed by man-made conditions, as with the kind of *peithananke* (or "compulsion under the guise of persuasion") that sometimes flows from the nature of the "free market."

Insofar as a choice of *action* is restricted, rhetoric seeks rather to have a formative effect upon *attitude* (as a criminal condemned to death might by priestly rhetoric be brought to an attitude of repentance and resignation). Thus, in Cicero and Augustine there is a shift between the words "move" (*movere*) and "bend" (*flexere*) to name the ultimate function of rhetoric. This shift corresponds to a distinction between act and attitude (attitude being an incipient act, a leaning or inclination). Thus the notion of persuasion to *attitude* would permit the application of rhetorical terms to purely *poetic* structures; the study of lyrical devices might be classed under the head of rhetoric, when these devices are considered for their power to induce or communicate states of mind to readers, even though the kinds of ascent evoked have no overt, practical outcome.

All told, traditionally there is the range of rhetoric from an "Art of
Since order of Institutio Oratoria, Book V, Chapter X. But it is, ironically, the word which, in Greek ecclesiastical literature, came to designate the highest order of Christian knowledge, "faith" or "belief" as contrasted with "reason." While the active form of peitho means "to persuade," its middle and passive forms mean "to obey."

But the corresponding Latin word, suadere, comes from the same root as "suavitate," "assuage," and "sweet." And following these leads, one may want to narrow the scope of persuasion to such meanings as "ingratiation" and "delight." Thus Augustine often uses the term in this very restricted sense, preferring words like "move" and "bend" (move, flectere) when he has the ultimate purpose of rhetorical utterance in mind. (In Sidney's statement that the end of speech is "the uttering sweetly and properly the conceits of the minde," one can discern the lineaments of "persuasion" behind "sweet utterance" when one appreciates the relation between English "sweet" and Cicero's stress upon the suavitas of oratory.)

More often, however, the ability of rhetoric to ingratiate is considered secondary, as a mere device for gaining good will, holding the attention, or deflecting the attention in preparation for more urgent purposes. Since persuasion so often implies the presence or threat of an adversary, there is the "agonistic" or competitive stress. Thus Aristotle, who looks upon rhetoric as a medium that "proves opposites," gives what amounts to a handbook on a manly art of self-defense. He describes the holds and the counter-holds, the blows and the ways of blocking them, for every means of persuasion the corresponding means of dissuasion, for every proof the disproof, for every praise the vituperation that matches it. While in general the truer and better cause has the advantage, he observes, no cause can be adequately defended without skill in the tricks of the trade. So he studies these tricks from the purely technical point of view, without reference to any one fixed position such as marks Augustine's analysis of the Christian persuasion. Even as Aristotle is teaching one man how most effectively to make people say "yes," he is teaching an opponent how to make them say just as forcefully a "no."

This "agonistic" emphasis is naturally strong in Cicero, much of whose treatise is written out of his experiences in the Senate and the law courts. It is weaker in Quintilian with his educational emphasis; yet his account of eloquence frequently relies on military and gladiatorial images. (Which reminds us that Cicero's dialogue De Oratore, is represented as taking place among several prominent public figures who have left Rome for the far suburbs during the season of the Games.)

Whatever his polemic zeal in other works, in the De Doctrina Christiana Augustine is concerned rather with the cajoling of an audience than with the routing of opponents. Despite the disrepute into which pagan rhetoric had fallen in Augustine's day, he recognized the persuasiveness implicit in its forms. And though some Christians looked upon rhetoric as by nature pagan, Augustine (himself trained in rhetoric before his conversion) held that every last embellishment should be brought to the service of God, for the glory and power of the new doctrine.

The notion of rhetoric as a means of "proving opposites" again brings us to the relation between rhetoric and dialectic. Perhaps, as a first rough approximate, we might think of the matter thus: Bring several rhetoricians together, let their speeches contribute to the maturing of one another by the give and take of question and answer, and you have the dialectic of a Platonic dialogue. But ideally the dialogue seeks to attain a higher order of truth, as the speakers, in competing with one another, cooperate towards an end transcending their individual positions. Here is the paradigm of the dialectical process for "reconciling opposites" in a "higher synthesis."

But note that, in the Platonic scheme, such dialectic enterprise starts from opinion. The Socratic "midwifery" (maieutic) was thus designed to discover truth, by beginning with opinion and subjecting it to systematic criticism. Also, the process was purely verbal; hence in Aristotle's view it would be an art, not a science, since each science has its own particular extraverbal subject matter. The Socratic method was better suited for such linguistic enterprises as the dialectical search for "ideas" of justice, truth, beauty, and so on, than for the accumulating of knowledge derived from empirical observation and laboratory experiment. Dialectic of this sort was concerned with "ideology" in the primary sense of the term: the study of ideas and of their relation to one another. But above all, note that, in its very search for "truth," it began with "opinion," and thus in a sense was grounded in opinion.
The point is worth remembering because the verbal “counterpart” of
dialectic, rhetoric, was likewise said to deal with “opinion,” though
without the systematic attempt to transcend this level.

The competitive and public ingredient in persuasion makes it par-
icularly urgent that the rhetoric work at the level of opinion. Thus,
in a situation where an appeal to prejudice might be more effective
than an appeal to reason, the rhetorician who would have his cause
prevail may need to use such means, regardless of his preferences.
Cicero says that one should answer argument with argument and emo-
tional appeal by a stirring of the opposite emotions (goading to hate
where the opponent had established good will, and countering com-
passion by incitement to envy). And Aristotle refers with approval to
Gorgias’ notion that one should counter an opponent’s jest with earnest
and his earnest with jest. To persuade under such conditions, truth
is best a secondary device. Hence, rhetoric is properly said to be
grounded in opinion. But we think that the relation between “truth”
and the kind of opinion with which rhetoric operates is often misun-
derstood. And the classical texts do not seem to bring out the point
we have in mind, namely:

The kind of opinion with which rhetoric deals, in its role of induc-
ment to action, is not opinion as contrasted with truth. There is the
invitation to look at the matter thus antithetically, once we have put
the two terms (opinion and truth) together as a dialectical pair. But
actually, many of the “opinions” upon which persuasion relies fall out-
side the test of truth in the strictly scientific, T-F, yes-or-no sense.
Thus, if a given audience has a strong opinion that a certain kind
of conduct is admirable, the orator can commend a person by using signs
that identify him with such conduct. “Opinion” in this ethical sense
clearly falls on the bias across the matter of “truth” in the strictly sci-
cific sense. Of course, a speaker may be true or false in identifying a
person by some particular sign of virtuous conduct. You may say that
a person so acted when the person did not so act—and if you succeed
in making your audience believe you, you could be said to be trafficking
in sheer opinion as contrasted with the truth. But we are here con-
cerned with motives a step farther back than such mere deception. We
are discussing the underlying ethical assumptions on which the entire
tactics of persuasion are based. Here the important factor is opinion
(opinion in the moral order of action, rather than in the “scenic” order
of truth). The rhetorician, as such, need operate only on this principle.
If, in the opinion of a given audience, a certain kind of conduct is ad-
mirable, then a speaker might persuade the audience by using ideas
and images that identify his cause with that kind of conduct.

**Identification**

“It is not hard,” says Aristotle, in his *Rhetoric*, quoting Socrates, “to
praise Athenians among Athenians.” He has been cataloguing those
traits which an audience generally considers the components of virtue.
They are justice, courage, self-control, poise or presence (magnificence,
*megaloprepia*), broad-mindedness, liberality, gentleness, prudence and
wisdom. And he has been saying: For purposes of praise or blame,
the rhetorician will assume that qualities closely resembling any of
these qualities are identical with them. For instance, to arouse dislike
for a cautious man, one should present him as cold and designing. Or
to make a simpleton lovable, play up his good nature. Or speak of
querulousness as frankness, or of arrogance as poise and dignity, or
of foolhardiness as courage, and of squandering as generosity. Also,
he says, we should consider the audience before whom we are thus
passing judgment: for it’s hard to praise Athenians when you are talk-
ing to Lacedaemonians.

Part of the quotation appears in Book I. It is quoted again, entire,
in Book III, where he has been discussing the speaker’s appeal to
friendship or compassion. And he continues: When winding up a
speech in praise of someone, we “must make the hearer believe that he
shares in the praise, either personally, or through his family or pro-
fession, or somehow.” When you are with Athenians, it’s easy to praise
Athenians, but not when you are with Lacedaemonians.

Here is perhaps the simplest case of persuasion. You persuade a man
only insofar as you can talk his language by speech, gesture, tonality,
order, image, attitude, idea, identifying your ways with his. Persua-
sion by flattery is not a special case of persuasion in general. But flat-
tery can safely serve as our paradigm if we systematically widen its
meaning, to see behind it the conditions of identification or consub-
stantiality in general. And you give the “signs” of such consubstan-
tiality by deference to an audience’s “opinions.” For the orator, follow-
ing Aristotle and Cicero, will seek to display the appropriate “signs”
of character needed to earn the audience’s good will. True, the rhetorician may have to change an audience’s opinion in one respect; but he can succeed only insofar as he yields to that audience’s opinions in other respects. Some of their opinions are needed to support the fulcrum by which he would move other opinions. (Preferably he shares the fixed opinions himself since, “all other things being equal,” the identifying of himself with his audience will be more effective if it is genuine.)

The so-called “commonplaces” or “topics” in Aristotle’s Art of Rhetoric (and the corresponding loci communes in Latin manuals) are a quick survey of “opinion” in this sense. Aristotle reviews the uses, acts, things, conditions, states of mind, personal characteristics, and the like, which people consider promising or formidable, good or evil, useful or dangerous, admirable or loathsome, and so on. All these opinions or assumptions (perhaps today they would be treated under the head of “attitudes” or “values”) are catalogued as available means of persuasion. But the important thing, for our purposes, is to note that such types are derived from the principle of persuasion, in that they are but a survey of the things that people generally consider persuasive, and of methods that have persuasive effects.

Thus, Aristotle lists the kind of opinions you should draw upon if you wanted to recommend a policy or to turn people against it; the kind of motives which in people’s opinion lead to just or unjust actions; what personal traits people admire or dislike (opinions the speaker should exploit to present himself favorably and his adversary unfavorably); and what opinions can be used as means for stirring men to rage, friendliness, fear, compassion, shame, indignation, envy, rivalry, charity, and so on. Reasoning based on opinion he calls “enthymemes,” which are the rhetorical equivalent of the syllogism. And arguments from example (which is the rhetorical equivalent for induction) are likewise to be framed in accordance with his various lists of opinions. (Incidentally, those who talk of “ethical relativity” must be impressed by the “permanence” of such “places” or topics, when stated at Aristotle’s level of generalization. As ideas, they all seem no less compelling now than they ever were, though in our society a speaker might often have to individuate them in a different image than the Greeks would have chosen, if he would convey a maximum sense of actuality.)

Aristotle also considers another kind of “topic,” got by the manipulation of tactical procedures, by following certain rules of thumb for inventing, developing, or transforming an expression, by pun-logic, even by specious and sophistical arguments. The materials of opinion will be embodied in such devices, but their characterization as “topics” is got by abstracting some formal or procedural element as their distinguishing mark. Aristotle here includes such “places” as: ways of turning an adversary’s words against himself, and of transforming an argument by opposites (“if war did it, repair it by peace”). Some other terms of this sort are: recalling what an adversary advocated in one situation when recommending a policy for a new situation (“you wanted it then, you should want it now”); using definitions to advantage (Socrates using his previous mention of his daemonion as evidence that he was not an atheist); dividing up an assertion (“there were three motives for the offense; two were impossible, not even the accusers have asserted the third”); tendentious selection of results (since a cause may have both good and bad effects, one can play up whichever set favors his position); exaggeration (the accused can weaken the strength of the accusation against him by himself overstating it); the use of signs (arguing that the man is a thief because he is disreputable); and so on. Among these tactics, he calls particular attention to the use of a shift between public and private orders of motivation. In public, one praises the just and the beautiful; but in private one prefers the test of expediency; hence the orator can use whichever of these orders better suits his purposes. Here is the paradigm for the modern rhetorician’s shuttling between “idealistic” and “materialistic” motives, as when one imputes “idealistic” motives to one’s own faction and “materialistic” motives to the adversary; or the adversary can be accused of “idealistic” motives when they imply ineffectiveness and impracticability.

Though the translation of one’s wishes into terms of an audience’s opinions would clearly be an instance of identification, this last list of purely formal devices for rhetorical invention takes us farther afield. However, it seems to be a fact that, the more urgent the oratory, the greater the profusion and vitality of the formal devices. So they must be functional, and not mere “embellishments.” And processes of “identification” would seem to figure here, as follows:

Longinus refers to that kind of elation wherein the audience feels as
though it were not merely receiving, but were itself creatively participating in the poet’s or speaker’s assertion. Could we not say that, in such cases, the audience is exalted by the assertion because it has the feel of collaborating in the assertion?

At least, we know that many purely formal patterns can readily awaken an attitude of collaborative expectancy in us. For instance, imagine a passage built about a set of oppositions (“we do this, but they on the other hand do that; we stay here, but they go there; we look up, but they look down,” etc.). Once you grasp the trend of the form, it invites participation regardless of the subject matter. Formally, you will find yourself swinging along with the succession of antitheses, even though you may not agree with the proposition that is being presented in this form. Or it may even be an opponent’s proposition which you resent—yet for the duration of the statement itself you might “help him out” to the extent of yielding to the formal development, surrendering to its symmetry as such. Of course, the more violent your original resistance to the proposition, the weaker will be your degree of “surrender” by “collaborating” with the form. But in cases where a decision is still to be reached, a yielding to the form prepares for assent to the matter identified with it. Thus, you are drawn to the form, not in your capacity as a partisan, but because of some “universal” appeal in it. And this attitude of assent may then be transferred to the matter which happens to be associated with the form.

Or think thus of another strongly formal device like climax (gradation). The editor of Demetrius’ On Style, in the Loeb edition, cites this example from As You Like It, where even the name of the figure appears in the figure:

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

Here the form requires no assent to a moot issue. But recall a gradatio of political import, much in the news during the “Berlin crisis” of 1948: “Who controls Berlin, controls Germany; who controls Germany controls Europe; who controls Europe controls the world.” As a proposition, it may or may not be true. And even if it is true, unless people are thoroughly imperialistic, they may not want to control the world. But regardless of these doubts about it as a proposition, by the time you arrive at the second of its three stages, you feel how it is destined to develop—and on the level of purely formal assent you would collaborate to round out its symmetry by spontaneously willing its completion and perfection as an utterance. Add, now, the psychosis of nationalism, and assent on the formal level invites assent to the proposition as doctrine.

Demetrius also cites an example from Aeschines: “Against yourself you call; against the laws you call; against the entire democracy you call.” (We have tinkered with the translation somewhat, to bring out the purely linguistic structure as greatly as possible, including an element that Demetrius does not discuss, the swelling effect at the third stage. In the original the three stages comprise six, seven, and ten syllables respectively.) To illustrate the effect, Demetrius gives the same idea without the cumulative form, thus: “Against yourself and the laws and the democracy you call.” In this version it lacks the three formal elements he is discussing: repetition of the same word at the beginning of each clause (epanaphora), sameness of sound at the close of each clause (homoeoteleuton), and absence of conjunctions (asyndeton). Hence there is no pronouncedly formal feature to which one might give assent. (As a noncontroversial instance of cumulative form we recall a sentence cited approvingly in one of Flaubert’s letters: “They proceeded some on foot, some on horse, some on the backs of elephants.” Here the gradation of the visual imagery reinforces the effect of the syllabic elongation.)

Of the many “tropes” and “figures” discussed in the eighth and ninth books of Quintilian’s Institutio Oratoria, the invitation to purely formal assent (regardless of content) is much greater in some cases than others. It is not our purpose here to analyze the lot in detail. We need but say enough to establish the principle, and to indicate why the expressing of a proposition in one or another of these rhetorical forms would involve “identification,” first by inducing the auditor to participate in the form, as a “universal” locus of appeal, and next by trying to include a partisan statement within this same pale of assent.

Other Variants of the Rhetorical Motive

When making his claims for the universality of rhetoric (in the first book of the De Oratore) Cicero begins at a somewhat mythic stage