A Short History of Writing Instruction

From Ancient Greece to Contemporary America

Third Edition

Edited by
James J. Murphy

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group
NEW YORK AND LONDON

Chapter 4

Writing Instruction in Late Medieval Europe

Martin Camargo and Marjorie Curry Woods

Key Concepts

Arts of composition • The medieval and modern classroom • *Facilitas, proprietas, auctoritas* • Teaching a foreign language • Arts of poetry and prose • *Poetria nova* • *Tria sunt* • Medieval students' exercises • Variation • Transposition • Expansion and abbreviation • Initiation • Proverbs and Exempla • Derivation • Impersonation • Contestation • Contemporary applications • Medieval and modern writing exercises.

The material to be moulded, like the moulding of wax, is at first hard to the touch. If intense concentration enkindle native ability, the material is soon made pliant by the mind's fire, and submits to the hand in whatever way it requires, malleable to any form.

Geoffrey of Vinsauf

Setting the Stage

Between the late eleventh and the early thirteenth centuries, far-reaching changes took place in the way that knowledge was organized and expressed in Western Europe. In the history of writing instruction, this so-called Renaissance of the Twelfth Century is known especially for producing new varieties of textbooks that summarized and rationalized teaching practices that had been evolving for centuries. By the early thirteenth century, at least three distinct genres of medieval composition textbook had developed, and all three continued to be used by teachers throughout Western Europe for the remainder of the Middle Ages.[1] Two of these genres offered instruction in specific, culturally significant

1 The origins and development of these three varieties of textbook are a central concern of James J. Murphy's *Rhetoric in the Middle Ages: A History of Rhetorical Theory from Saint Augustine to the Renaissance* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1974; rpt. Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2001). Byzantine tradition is still mostly unexplored, but see Robert Browning, "Teachers," in *The Byzantines*, ed. Guglielmo Cavallo, trans. Thomas Dunlap, Teresa Lavender Fagan, and Charles Lambert (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997) 95–116; Vessela Valiavitcharska, "Figure, Argument, and Performance in the Byzantine Classroom," *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 41.1 (2011) 19–40; and the works cited in these essays. Of related interest is Federica Ciccolella, *Donati graeci: Learning Greek in the Renaissance*, Columbia Studies in the Classical Tradition 32 (Leiden: Brill, 2008).

forms of discourse: the *artes dictandi* (arts of composing) distilled the rules for composing letters and quasi-epistolary documents, and the *artes praedicandi* (arts of preaching), those for sermons, especially the variety known as "university sermons." The third genre of textbook is not tied to any particular variety of text. These are often called *artes poetriae* (arts of poetry) or *artes versificandi* (arts of versifying) but are in fact "arts of poetry and prose" that teach the fundamental rules for composing all types of texts, including rules that concern the features of letters and sermons that are not restricted to those forms.[2]

The arts of poetry and prose are the clearest window into medieval writing pedagogy for several reasons. Because they provide general instruction, they foreground the basic principles that underlie all composition. In the more specialized textbooks, these basic principles are understood to apply but need not be spelled out explicitly, since the person studying letter writing or sermon writing can be assumed to have already received training in general composition. Because the arts of poetry and prose are addressed to elementary students—including grammar-school boys—and their teachers, they also devote more space to classroom exercises than the treatises on composing letters and sermons typically do. Again, there is evidence that the teachers of the more specialized courses used some of the same exercises in their instruction, but the arts of poetry and prose describe a broader spectrum of such exercises in greater detail and thus provide the further benefit of suggesting how the full ensemble of composition exercises might have been organized into a coherent curriculum. Especially when supplemented by examples of school compositions, whether those of actual students or illustrative models prepared by their teachers, descriptions of writing exercises are more effective than lists of definitions and rules in bringing the medieval writing classroom to life and recapturing the goals of the activities that structured it.

Examples of medieval exercises are rare, not because students did not compose, but because there was no cheap yet relatively permanent method of recording their compositions. We have no medieval trash heaps of papyrus like those in Egypt that have furnished us with evidence of late antique school exercises,[3] and paper did not become widely available in Western Europe until the later Middle Ages. Then we do find it used by students, but primarily for taking down their own copies of standard school texts and teachers' commentaries (a practice that lasted well into the early modern period in some areas of Europe).[4] Students did have access to wax tablets as aids in composing, but these leave no permanent record, and writing a text on parchment was a complex and time-consuming practice demanding special skills and resources.[5] Yet these constraints and

2 The term is Douglas Kelly's; see *The Arts of Poetry and Prose*, Typologie des sources du moyen âge occidental 59 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1991).

3 For what these remnants reveal, see the works of Raffaella Cribiore and also Jeffrey Walker's study, *The Genuine Teachers of This Art: Rhetorical Education in Antiquity* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2011).

4 Dilwyn Knox, "Order, Reason and Oratory: Rhetoric in Protestant Latin Schools," in Peter Mack, ed., *Renaissance Rhetoric* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994), p. 67.

5 See Christopher de Hamel, *Scribes and Illuminators* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), for a detailed and delightful description of the physical demands of all aspects of preparing and using parchment and paper, quills and inks, and brushes and paints.

seeming limitations may offer a fruitful parallel to the changing circumstances of contemporary writing instruction in our own classrooms.

The cost of writing materials and the complex technology of medieval textual production meant that composition was often carried out in one's head and delivered orally. Thus, despite the distinction between oral and written culture made much of by many medievalists, most composition practices, even in Latin by students studying to be *litterati*, were highly oral in character.[6] There were students at different levels in the same classroom—a situation that can occur in modern universities as well, especially in first-year courses, because of disparities in student backgrounds and prior education. Medieval teachers thought of their task as training students' creative muscles to take on any kind of composition assignment, and they focused on exercises that could work no matter what level of student was being taught. Similar kinds of exercises (rewriting, moving from prose to verse, expanding or contracting) were used to teach prose as well as poetry, and letters as well as narratives.

Goals

As a framework for our discussion of the different kinds of composition exercises used by medieval teachers during this period, let us first consider the goals that they wanted to achieve by assigning them. When they reflected on the shape of their instruction, medieval writing teachers favored the number three. For example, one of the treatises highlighted later in this chapter, the anonymous *Tria sunt*, opens like one of its most important sources by declaring that a composition teacher is concerned with the three parts of any formal text, the beginning, the middle (or continuation), and the end.[7] Many other such triads can be found in the textbooks, some of them borrowed from prestigious authorities,[8] others tailor-made by a particular teacher.[9] If we were to reduce to three broad categories the qualities that medieval teachers strove to instill in the writing of their students, we might label those categories with the Latin terms *facilitas, proprietas*, and *auctoritas*. These three concepts are usefully distinct, even though an individual composition exercise might apply more than one of them at once, as we will see below.

6 See the famous description of the teaching methods and exercises of Bernard of Chartres (partially quoted below): *Ioannis Saresberiensis Metalogicon*, ed. J. B. Hall, Corpus Christianorum: Continuatio Mediaevalis 98 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1991), pp. 51–55 (1.24); trans. Daniel D. McGarry, *The* Metalogicon *of John of Salisbury: A Twelfth-Century Defense of the Verbal and Logical Arts of the Trivium* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1962), pp. 65–71.

7 Geoffrey of Vinsauf, *Documentum de modo et arte dictandi et versificandi*, ed. Edmond Faral, *Les arts poétiques du XIIe et du XIIIe siècle. Recherches et documents sur la technique littéraire du moyen âge* (Paris, Honoré Champion, 1924; rpt. 1962), pp. 265–320, at p. 265. Cf. also Matthew of Vendôme's *Ars versificatoria*, which begins by discussing how to begin and ends by discussing how to end. See *Mathei Vindocinensis Opera*, vol. 3: *Ars versificatoria*, ed. Franco Munari, Storia e Letteratura: Racolti di studi e testi, 171 (Rome: Storia e Letteratura, 1988), pp. 43–55 and 217–21.

8 E.g., the qualities of accomplished style: *elegantia* (taste), *compositio* (artistic composition), and *dignitas* (distinction): *Rhetorica ad Herennium* IV.xii.17–xiii.18.

9 E.g., Gervase of Melkley's classification of the methods for producing eloquent discourse as *idemptitas* (identity), *similitudo* (similarity), and *contrarietas* (opposition): *Gervais von Melkley: Ars Poetica*, ed. Hans-Jürgen Gräbener, Forschungen zur romanischen Philologie 17 (Münster: Aschendorff, 1965) p. 6.8–9.

Facilitas, the ability to compose artful discourse easily, was acquired above all through practicing techniques that generate *copia* (abundance). Even though the latter term has come to be associated especially with Erasmus because his textbook *De copia* (first edition 1512) was so incredibly popular, its application to rhetoric already was well established in classical antiquity.[10] In medieval schools great emphasis was placed on exercises that developed a student's ability to say the same thing in a multitude of ways. The epigraph at the beginning of this chapter evokes the almost physical nature of this manipulating and reshaping of language that is at the basis of medieval composition training. The many exercises devised to impart skill in variation of expression include techniques that focus on small units of discourse, such as a phrase or sentence, a single line of verse, or even individual words. Exercises in amplification and **abbreviation** also belong to this category, as do exercises that require an entire text to be rewritten in alternative forms. No medieval (or modern) student who mastered such techniques would ever face writer's block.

Proprietas, in the sense of suitability or decorum, was an essential feature of effective writing in a stratified, hierarchical society. Medieval students were trained to adjust their style and argumentative strategies according to Ciceronian rhetorical categories called attributes and circumstances, especially the kinds and rank of persons or characters involved and the nature of the subject matter treated. The medieval *doctor universalis*, Alan of Lille, summarizes the attributes of persons according to Cicero as follows: "name, nature, way of life, and fortune (who displays changeable faces), habit, feeling, deceitful counsel, interest, accident, speech, [and] accomplishment."[11] Exercises in praising and blaming, physical and moral description, use of proper epithets, and differentiated levels of style (high, middle, low) were among the most common means of inculcating skill in writerly decorum.[12] Similar exercises are a focus of modern creative writing texts, and the medieval versions are also a useful tool for analyzing pre-modern literature from a then-contemporary point of view.

Auctoritas (authority) is both a means and an end in medieval compositions. An effective writer or speaker had to command a broad spectrum of materials—ranging from traditional proverbs and anecdotes (*exempla*) to scholarly treatises, from classical poetry to the Bible and patristic commentary on it—and a full array of techniques with which to treat them. This knowledge was applied and refined in exercises in which authoritative texts were manipulated or recast, selected and marshaled as means of proof, or employed as catalysts for generating new texts. A text that made effective use of such "authorities" would achieve "authority" of its own.[13]

10 *Copia* is a classical term whose meaning with regard to language was "The ability to express oneself well and fully . . ." (*OLD*, sv. *copia* 6 [rhet.]). During the Middle Ages, the term had both its "original meaning of abundance, plentiful supply" as well as the specific meaning of 'copy' from 1274 onwards . . ." (Mariken Teeuwen, *The Vocabulary of Intellectual Life in the Middle Ages* [Turnhout: Brepols, 2003], p. 198). For a discussion of the renaissance meanings of *copia* and the importance of Erasmus's treatment of it, see Don Paul Abbott's chapter following this one.

11 *Anticlaudianus* 3.216–18, qtd. in *TS* 12.2.

12 Cf. Martin Camargo, "Latin Composition Textbooks and *Ad Herennium* Glossing: the Missing Link?" in Virginia Cox and John O. Ward, eds., *The Rhetoric of Cicero in Its Medieval and Early Renaissance Commentary Tradition* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), pp. 267–88, at pp. 277–80.

13 See also the discussion of *auctoritas* and related terms in Teeuwen, *Vocabulary*, 222–23.

Medieval composition teachers consistently had their students create *copia* by working with—imitating, modifying, adapting—existing texts, often canonical texts fraught with *auctoritas*, much like the academic texts with which contemporary composition teachers confront their own students and with which those students will have to engage in their academic writing. The *facilitas* that students acquired by manipulating the words of others, in the process making them their own, enabled them to join privileged speech communities and eventually to make their own contributions to shaping the discourse that defined those communities.

For medieval composition students, especially in the early stages of their training, ideas followed words rather than summoning them. Those medieval students were learning to compose in Latin. Even for students whose native language was one of the Latin-based Romance vernaculars, Latin, especially the learned Latin they had to master in school, was a highly artificial language whose proper use was carefully coded to create the desired level and kind of *proprietas*.[14] For students in England or Germany, Latin was a completely foreign language. At first glance this fact would seem to mark an important distinction between medieval and modern writing instruction, but in the end it actually points to a similarity. At least at the university level, modern students learning to master the codes and conventions of academic English often feel as if they are grappling with a foreign language. The techniques developed to impart skill in the medieval language of learning, including practice in speaking as well as writing that language, may well prove effective in producing mastery of our own language(s) of learning.

Texts and Exercises

In the rest of this chapter we attempt to give a synoptic view of writing instruction from the thirteenth through the fifteenth centuries, with a special emphasis on medieval classroom exercises that can be used effectively by contemporary teachers. We draw on the whole spectrum of the surviving evidence, but we make special use of three sources. Two of these are medieval writing textbooks, both composed in England, one dating from the very beginning and the other from near the end of the period encompassed by this chapter. The first two appendices at the end outline the techniques and exercises taken from these two related *artes poetriae* or arts of poetry and prose. The third source is a rich collection of materials for writing instruction compiled in England near the beginning of the period in question.

1. Poetria nova

The exercises in the most popular medieval rhetorical treatise, the *Poetria nova* of Geoffrey of Vinsauf (written ca. 1200–1215), are listed in Appendix A.[15] This work survives in over two hundred manuscripts and was taught all over Europe

14 See Dante, *De vulgari eloquentia*.

15 We have used the translation of the *Poetria nova* of Geoffrey of Vinsauf by Margaret F. Nims, revised by Martin Camargo (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 2010). The Latin text is edited by Faral, *Les arts poétiques*, pp. 197–262.

for several centuries.[16] It weaves together verse precepts and verse examples in a text of more than two thousand Latin hexameters that continued to be recognized as a significant poem long after it stopped being used in the schools. The *Poetria nova* is organized along aesthetic and rhetorical as well as pedagogical lines: it was analyzed in classrooms as both a rhetorical treatise and a rhetorical argument in verse. As the *accessus* or academic introduction to the *Early Commentary* on the *Poetria nova* puts it,

> [T]he book principally consists of the five parts of rhetoric. . . . These are the parts: Invention, Arrangement, Style, Memory, and Delivery. . . . The instrument of this art is the discourse, which has six parts, namely the Introduction, the Narration, the Division or Distribution, the Proof, the Rebuttal or Refutation, and the Conclusion. And these parts of a discourse are the parts of invention . . . .
>
> (*EC*, *accessus* 3–5, 17–18)[17]

The Early Commentator's emphasis on invention in all parts of the *Poetria nova* reinforces the generative aspect of medieval writing instruction. This text was especially important for showing an author performing what he taught. Geoffrey uses all of the resources of verse composition, including fanciful descriptions of techniques that encode them as well (e.g., metaphorical descriptions of metaphor), to create a memorable text in and of itself. One of the most notable aspects of this text was the inclusion of long, virtuoso set pieces, such as the series of apostrophes on the death of Richard Lionheart, which Geoffrey probably composed earlier, and whose popularity may have been the inspiration for the composition of the *Poetria nova*.[18] He also includes passages that appear to question authority and that offer parodies or other reworkings of known stories that made the *Poetria nova*'s poetry, as well as its precepts, memorable. Teachers used it as a book of composition doctrine combined with rhetorical examples all by a single author and arranged in a specific sequence for particular effects. They admired Geoffrey as a writer.

2. Tria sunt

Our second source, the late fourteenth-century *Tria sunt*, is a much later work with a more specific geographical significance; it is preserved in more than a dozen English manuscripts of the fifteenth century, when it was the chief composition textbook employed in the schools of Oxford.[19] But rather than a text that performs what it teaches, like the *Poetria nova*, the *Tria sunt* is structured

16 See Marjorie Curry Woods, *Classroom Commentaries: Teaching the* Poetria nova *across Medieval and Renaissance Europe* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2010).

17 *An Early Commentary on the* Poetria nova *of Geoffrey of Vinsauf*, ed. [and trans.] Marjorie Curry Woods (New York: Garland Publishing, 1985); hereafter *EC*.

18 See Martin Camargo, "From *Liber versuum* to *Poetria nova*: The Evolution of Geoffrey of Vinsauf's Masterpiece," *Journal of Medieval Latin* 21 (in press).

19 See Martin Camargo, "*Tria sunt*: The Long and the Short of Geoffrey of Vinsauf's *Documentum de modo et arte dictandi et versificandi*," *Speculum* 74 (1999): 935–55. One of its main sources is another work by Geoffrey of Vinsauf, the *Documentum de modo et arte dictandi et versificandi*, and for a long time it was considered Geoffrey's own revision of that work.

more like a practical syllabus for a late-medieval composition course. It is an eclectic combination of prose instruction with examples in both verse and prose drawn from a broad range of the classical and medieval authors that were taught in the classroom. Its author-compiler brings together instruction and examples from several of the earlier arts of poetry (including the *Poetria nova*), as well as quoting and commenting on advice and providing exercises based on one of the major classical sourcebooks of those works, the Roman poet Horace's *Ars poetica*. The author of the *Tria sunt* summarizes its contents at the work's end.

> In this book is contained virtually everything useful that Horace provides in his *Ars poetica*. And it contains the sixteen chapters that follow:
>
> > The first chapter is about natural and artificial beginnings and the eight methods for artificial beginnings. The second is about the continuation of the subject matter and transitional expressions. The third is about the eight ways of generating and lengthening the subject matter and about the technique for composing letters. The fourth is about the seven ways of shortening the subject matter and about how to decide which verbal ornaments to use in adorning a given subject matter. The fifth is about the ten kinds of "transumption" (metaphoric language), by means of which one produces "ornamented difficulty" and reveals the weightiness of what one has written. The sixth is about matters that concern all verbal ornamentation and about the words that provide the best ornamentation. The seventh is about "ornamented facility" (non-metaphorical figures) and about "determination" (qualifying one word with another), which is the principal seasoning of style, and about the colors of words and thoughts. The eighth is about the functional categories into which all of the colors can be sorted and about how the "figures" correspond to the "colors." The ninth is about the art of discovering ornamented words that enable one to beautify every uncouth expression with "fresh flowers." The tenth is about developing an original subject matter. The eleventh is about developing a familiar subject matter. The twelfth is about the attributes of persons and actions, by means of which one provides the characteristic details that are suited to a particular subject matter. The thirteenth is about the "poetic" and the "modern" styles and their characteristics. The fourteenth is about the six chief faults to be avoided in any kind of composition. The fifteenth is about the genres of discourse and the varieties of poetic compositions. The sixteenth and last is about conclusions and how they should be produced. (*TS* 16.9)[20]

These subjects are arranged in a "natural" order for teaching composition, very different from the "artificial" or "artistic" medieval arrangement of the *Poetria nova* according to the parts of rhetoric and the parts of a rhetorical discourse.[21] The author moves through the parts of a composition step by step (beginning, transition to body, body of text, and conclusion), treating each in detail and with examples taken from a variety of sources, including the *Poetria nova*. There is coverage of a number of other aspects of composition also ignored by the author of the *Poetria nova*, such as letter writing, original and familiar subject matter, the attributes of persons and actions, and the levels and categories of styles. The author of the *Tria sunt* provides a comprehensive, step-by-step approach to composition, bringing in the best writers on the subject that are known to him. This kind of composition manual creates trust in the author's expertise and comprehensive knowledge. It makes composition a straightforward matter that is teachable and learnable.

Yet the basic set of exercises is the same in each, as Appendices A and B listing these exercises make clear (with the sections identified by letter to make comparison between them easier). Each text encourages the *copia* that produces *facilitas* by emphasizing the ways to create and vary compositions (ranging from a single word to a whole narrative, but in the opposite order in the *Poetria nova*), *proprietas* by addressing characters of various types and social stations, and *auctoritas* either by reworking known stories in the *Poetria nova* or by citing a range of authors in *Tria sunt*. Both texts include a wide range of rhetorical examples, and they are shaped around a rhetorical core based on the Ciceronian tradition. Thus, taken together, the *Poetria nova* and the *Tria sunt* reveal both what remains constant in composition teaching during this period as well as the various ways in which such instruction could be deployed.

3. *Hunterian Manuscript V.8.14*

Our third featured source provides additional context for the use of such textbooks in medieval schools, as well as a rich assortment of the verse compositions that would have resulted from the exercises assigned by medieval writing teachers. The early thirteenth-century English manuscript Glasgow University Library, MS. Hunterian V.8.14 (formerly 511), is a major source for our knowledge of medieval composition practices.[22] This famous collection of rhetorical poetry also contains all the arts of poetry and prose written up to this point: Matthew of Vendôme's *Ars versificatoria*, Geoffrey of Vinsauf's early *Summa de coloribus rhetoricis* and his *Documentum de modo et arte dictandi et versificandi*, as well as his popular *Poetria nova*, and Gervase of Melkley's *De arte versificatoria et modo dictandi*. In addition to the exercises within these treatises, the manuscript contains a number of separate poems that we take to be student compositions,[23] some of which may be verse exercises composed by the authors of the *artes poetriae* when they themselves were students.

20 Martin Camargo has published a number of articles on the *Tria sunt* and is editing and translating it for the Dumbarton Oaks Medieval Library, a new series published by Harvard University Press. An excerpt from his translation has appeared in "*Tria sunt* (after 1256, before 1400)," in *Medieval Grammar and Rhetoric: Language Arts and Literary Theory, CE 300–1475*, ed. Rita Copeland and Ineke Sluiter (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 670–81.

21 On artificial order in the *Poetria nova* itself, see *EC* 1588.4–12; discussed also in Woods, *Classroom Commentaries*, pp. 85–87.

22 For studies of this manuscript see Edmond Faral, "Le manuscrit 511 du 'Hunterian Museum' de Glasgow," *Studi medievali*, n.s. 9 (1936): 18–119; and Bruce Harbert, ed., *A Thirteenth-Century Anthology of Rhetorical Poems: Glasgow MS. Hunterian V.8.14* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1975). Numbers preceded by # in the notes below refer to item numbers in Harbert's edition.

23 See Harbert's Introduction, especially p. 4.

At first glance, these verse exercises may look like a hodgepodge of forms and (cross-)purposes:

1. a letter in elegiac verse from a student to his mother bewailing (*heu!*) his financial situation and complaining that his friends are leaving him because of his lack of funds. This exercise may possibly be an early example of a common later exercise in which a letter in prose is recast in verse (sometimes more than one type of verse). Prose letters asking parents for money were a staple of medieval letter-writing collections taught along with the *artes dictandi*.[24]

2. Two versions of a poem in praise of King Henry II and his victory over a rebellion led by (among others) his wife Eleanor of Aquitaine and three of their sons; the second poem is an amplification of the first.[25]

3. Two verse fables, one long ("The Clerks and the Farmer") and one short ("The Snake, the Man, and the Wolf"), rewritten from prose fables in *Disciplina clericalis* by Petrus Alphonsus.[26] The author of the *Tria sunt* distinguishes among three genres of discourse (dramatic, hermeneutic, and didactic [*TS* 15.1]), and teachers may have assigned exercises in transposing material from one to the other, resulting in a composition like the first of these fables, which converts "hermeneutic" discourse into "dramatic" discourse. The second is copied among the character delineations that follow.

4. A number of character delineations, mainly from classical mythology and probably based on Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, of Paris; Io, Tiresias, Jupiter, Asterie, Arachne, and Myrrha grouped together; and two of Niobe.[27] The longer of the two Niobe poems, forty-two lines long, uses twenty-one of the thirty-five figures of words.[28] The first three distichs, or couplets, demonstrate the first three figures: *repetitio*, repetition of the first words of successive phrases or clauses; *conversio*, repetition of the last words of successive phrases or clauses; and *complexio*, repetition of the first and last words of successive phrases or clauses:

> **How** stupid, **how** insane, **how** wicked it is to vex the gods, you teach by your cry, O Daughter of Tantalus.
>
> You are in heart **swollen**, in speech **swollen**, in deed **swollen** as you prepare to surpass Latona's progeny with your own.
>
> **Why** do you do **this? Why** do you affect **this? Why** do you believe that you can profit in **this?**[29]

24 Harbert #2; Harbert attributes this poem to Matthew of Vendôme (p. 9). Matthew produced a collection of verse epistles, many on standard school topics such as this one, and he retains in the *Ars versificatoria* some of his own student compositions. On the subjects of student letters, see Charles Homer Haskins' landmark study, *The Renaissance of the Twelfth Century* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1927), pp. 144–46.

25 Harbert #11–13; Harbert edits these as three separate poems, rather than one long and one short one, and attributes them to Geoffrey of Vinsauf (p. 18); see also Martin Camargo, "Geoffrey of Vinsauf's Memorial Verses" (forthcoming).

26 Harbert #14 and 17.

27 Harbert #6, 15–16, 18–21, 24–25.

28 Faral, "Le manuscrit 511," pp. 34–36.

29 Unpublished translation by Cheryl Eve Salisbury and Wilma Wierega quoted with permission (emphasis ours).

The companion piece to this poem, only three distichs long, emphasizes in abbreviated form the emotional and dramatic aspects of Niobe's self-absorption:

> Famous Niobe—prolific, powerful, generous—scatters wealth, rejoices in offspring, recounts her ancestors.
>
> With her husband a king, with her face a dowry, with her stock from the gods, she holds herself better than her people because of her offspring, and she swells with pride.
>
> Her husband Amphion begins to swell just like the progenitor of his ancestors on the genealogical tree—she the granddaughter, he the son of Jove.[30]

Although both poems are relatively short, as is appropriate for student composition assignments, Edmond Faral notes that they are complementary in length as well as focus and treatment. They constitute a set pair of examples of school exercises in amplification and abbreviation, with appropriately different techniques and approaches.[31]

The second verse fable and all the character delineations except the shorter Niobe poem are composed of four elegiac distichs (each composed of a hexameter verse followed by a pentameter verse) in which, as with modern couplets, the sense is completed at the end of each two-line element. Several distichs may have been a common format for a composition assignment, especially one retelling a known narrative or focusing on a known character. The popularity of the distich for such exercises may well have to do with the widespread use of the so-called *Distichs of Cato* as an elementary textbook in medieval schools. Such exercises are another means of adapting fabulous material, as well as imitating *auctoritates* (canonical texts and authors) and practicing the use of the attributes, or *proprietates*, of characterization (elaborated in some detail in *TS* 11 and 12).

5. Two epitaphs, one for a man named *Clarus* (also an adjective meaning "famous") based on a text by the twelfth-century poet Peter Riga, and one for a hunter.[32] Epitaphs, too, seem to have been a popular exercise, with potential for both abbreviation and amplification. Geoffrey of Vinsauf is supposed to have composed the highly compressed (one distich) epitaph that was inscribed on Henry II's tomb at Fontevraud ("The tomb is enough for one for whom the whole world had not been enough: / a small thing is vast for one for whom the vast was small"),[33] and his sixty-three-line lament for Richard I, included in the *Poetria nova* (lines 368–430) as an example of amplification by means of apostrophe, was the most famous contemporary epitaph for Henry's son and heir.[34]

30 Unpublished translation by Asa Gopal of Harbert 25.1–6, quoted with permission.

31 Faral, "Le manuscript 511," p. 36.

32 Harbert #27–28, 34.

33 The text and attribution are from Geoffrey of Vinsauf's English contemporary and fellow composition teacher Gervase of Melkley. See *Gervais von Melkley: Ars Poetica*, ed. Gräbener, p. 171.19–21.

34 See Camargo, "Memorial Verses."

6. Descriptions, one of the Greek army setting out for Troy and one of a fertile valley, possibly exercises in amplification.[35] Although Homer's *Iliad* was not available in Latin translation during the Middle Ages in the west, there were a number of school texts and other works that presented some of the same material.[36] The story was well known, as we can see from the discussion of the story of Troy as a "common topic" of composition in the *Tria sunt*:

> In developing a common subject matter let us be careful to observe the five methods that Horace assigns us in his *Poetics*. For Horace says that it is more praiseworthy and more artful to treat common subject matter in one's own way than to treat original subject matter. For it is more difficult and more artful to rehearse becomingly the war of Ilium, that is, of Troy, than a new subject matter that has not been heard by everybody. . . . But though it be difficult to treat a common subject matter well, it is nonetheless possible . . . if we observe the five methods.
>
> The first method is that we do not pause where others make a pause, but where they make a pause we move on. And we should understand this pause as having to do with digressions, descriptions or such like, since in a common subject matter, if they digress to something or describe something in such a way that they create a pause in the subject matter, we should not pause in the same place but briefly pass over that place in the subject matter.
>
> (*TS* 11.1–2)[37]

Despite the seeming randomness of the student exercises in the Hunterian manuscript, they display the students' growing knowledge of *facilitas*, *proprietas*, and *auctoritas*. With regard to developing *facilitas* through *copia*, the students are learning to say the same thing in different ways or with different degrees of elaboration and to translate from one form into another (exercises 1, 2, 3, and 4); with regard to *proprietas*, the students have learned how to evoke status, character, and accomplishment, often with the specific aim of praise or blame (2, 4, and 5); and in terms of *auctoritas*, they have learned to command a knowledge of canonical texts and to use this knowledge effectively in new ways (3, 4, 5, 6). Most of the exercises, like those described in the arts of poetry and prose also found in the manuscript, involve presenting the same or similar material in different lengths of treatment. These are usually recastings of a known source, often a text read in school but originally written for adults.[38] Such exercises are particularly applicable to modern courses in which academic content plays a significant part in the syllabus.

35 Harbert #22–23.

36 See A. G. Rigg, *History of Anglo-Latin Literature, 1066–1422* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992; rpt. 1996), especially pp. 99–102; Kathryn L. McKinley, "The Medieval Homer: The *Ilias Latina*," *Allegorica* 19 (1998): 3–61; and, of course, Book 2 of the *Aeneid*.

37 For the other four methods see Appendix B (K).

38 Even the texts that were most often used to teach reading and formed the most basic part of the curriculum were not composed as school texts: the Psalms, biblical excerpts comprising Books of Hours, Cato's *Distichs*, the *Eclogue of Theodulus*, *Peniteas Cito*, etc.

Medieval and Modern Instruction

In the remainder of the chapter we outline the kinds of instruction used most widely, giving special attention to those exercises that can be reproduced easily and productively in the modern classroom.[39] They offer cumulative training in rhetorical skills, and all but the first are extant in versions of increasing complexity. The first one is the easiest to adapt, and the last, while it takes up much more classroom time and energy, has become increasingly recognized as an effective teaching tool in the academy. Exercises 1 through 3 focus the student's attention on working with a given verbal unit provided by the teacher, whether a word, a sentence, or a narrative; exercises 4 through 7 use structures or formats provided by the instructor to teach the student how to create new kinds of texts, some very lengthy and elaborate, that produce specific desired effects.

1. Variation: Words, Words, Words

Very small-scale, elementary exercises, such as "conversions" from one part of speech or one case to another and metaphorical substitutions of a phrase for a single word, allowed medieval students to focus on the smallest variations and details of expression. For modern students as well, these exercises offer a chance to concentrate on words or even parts of words rather than big ideas or structures. This practice generates a sense of competence and (later) the cumulative importance of detail in verbal artistry.

At the most basic level, any text is a collection of words, and each of those words can be modified to change the effect of the text as a whole. Most medieval teachers identify certain types of words as more productive of such variations than others, and many of them devote considerable space to techniques for expanding a student's mastery of such words. In the second chapter of his *Ars versificatoria* (before ca. 1175), Matthew of Vendôme provides long lists of adjectives and verbs that can be used to elegant effect in lines of verse, as he illustrates for each one.[40] Likewise, Geoffrey of Vinsauf, in his earliest textbook, the *Summa de coloribus rhetoricis*, offers his own list of verbs that are especially suitable for metaphoric use and then, for each verb in his list, demonstrates that use in three brief metrical examples.[41] It is likely that both Matthew and Geoffrey had their students use the same words to compose their own examples in verse (and perhaps also in prose) and in the process expand their vocabulary and thus their ability to say the same thing in a number of different ways.

Many of the words these teachers recommend are derived from Greek roots or are exotic in other ways, and students often are encouraged, on the authority of Horace's *Ars poetica* (lines 46–72), to expand their vocabulary still further by

39 See also Alex Mueller, "The Medieval Writing Workshop," especially the section on "Medieval Pedagogy in the Postmodern Classroom," available at http://www.teamsmedieval.org/ofc/F08/writing.php (accessed November 10, 2011).

40 *Ars versificatoria*, ed. Munari, pp. 139–59. The best English translation of this treatise is by Aubrey E. Galyon: Matthew of Vendôme, *The Art of Versification* (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1980); the relevant passage is on pp. 66–84.

41 Edmond Faral does not print the full text of this (by far the longest) part of the treatise, but he does list the verbs whose use Geoffrey recommends and illustrates: *Les arts poétiques*, p. 325.

coining new words.[42] Matthew of Vendôme organized his lists of adjectives by endings and Geoffrey of Vinsauf arranged his list of verbs in alphabetical order. In the *Parisiana Poetria* (ca. 1220; revised 1231–1235), John of Garland made it still easier for his students to memorize and use new vocabulary by placing parallel terms classified by level of style (high, middle, and low) into the three compartments of a circular diagram that he called Virgil's Wheel.[43] His schema would have been especially helpful for substitution exercises that required an entire text to be transposed rather than a single word to be replaced.

Many of the exercises that single out an individual word that is to be replaced by its equivalent involve amplification as well as substitution. Periphrasis or circumlocution is a good example. In fact, since a circumlocution that takes the form of a roundabout phrase is always longer than the simple word that it "talks around," the *Poetria nova* and, following it, the *Tria sunt* classify periphrasis among the eight methods of amplification (*PN* 226–40; *TS* 3.A.3–6). Because periphrasis is a form of substitution, however, the *Tria sunt* also treats it as one of the five "lighter" varieties of transumption, or metaphorical discourse (*TS* 5.31–35).[44] When describing strategies for generating circumlocutions in the classroom, the author of the *Tria sunt* emphasizes two distinct functions of periphrastic substitution: either to render what is brief and colorless more vivid through expansion or to render what is prolix more concise and concentrated through abbreviation. In still another context, the author of the *Tria sunt* values periphrasis for its ability to veil unpleasant topics (euphemism), an important aspect of *proprietas* in the sense of decorum (*TS* 9.3). Given the many different purposes that periphrasis serves, no wonder the anonymous teacher believes that "This color is the best for teaching boys" (*TS* 5.32).

"Conversion" in its simplest form, where the same word is retained but its form and its function in a sentence are changed, is a surprisingly practical exercise that arises today in writing applications, letters of recommendation, or any other kind of text in which a request is made or a course of action is advocated. How to write extended discourse asking for money or a job in which every sentence contains a reference to oneself but does not begin with "I" is a skill not to be sneezed at. Geoffrey of Vinsauf's treatment of this exercise in the *Poetria nova* (lines 1588–1760) was excerpted, imitated, and augmented by later teachers with a frequency that testifies to its pedagogical usefulness.

His first example illustrates the basic technique. The verb "I am grieving" (*doleo*) is converted into the noun "grief" (*dolor*), which is then converted in turn through each of its grammatical cases:

> Precept may be clarified here by example; take the following brief theme: ***I am grieving*** *over this matter.* Now apply the principle just established: *From this fountain* ***grief*** [*dolor*: nominative case] *flows over me. Hence the root* (or *the seed,* or *the fount,* or *the source*) ***of grief*** [*doloris*: genitive case] *rises within me. This affair is matter and cause* ***for grief*** [*dolori*: dative case]. *It sows* (or *gives birth to, or piles up*) ***grief*** [*dolorem*: accusative case]. ***O tormenting grief*** [*dolor anxie*: vocative case], *you rage against me with cruel wounds. My mind, as it were, lies prostrate, injured and ill* ***with grief*** [*dolore*: ablative case].
>
> (*PN* 1622–29)[45]

Each of the seven sentences in the example says the same thing as the others, literally, but does so with a subtly different emphasis and connotation. What is more, as the options added to most of the sentences indicate, in practice there is no limit to the number of substitutions one can employ in a given sentence. As Geoffrey goes on to observe, the technique of conversion allows one to generate multiple sequences like the one above by replacing the original verb with other verbs of related meaning—such as "I sigh" (*suspiro*), "I complain" (*queror*), "I groan" (*gemo*), and "I weep" (*lacrimor*)—and then converting each to a noun that can be run through all of its cases. The more this process of grammatical substitution elaborates on and extrapolates from the literal original, the more it shades into the semantic substitution of metaphor (*PN* 1633–46). By repeating such techniques of substitution, whether applied to a single word or to multiple words in the same sentence, one quickly generates abundance and variety (*copia*). In its characteristic and complementary forms of grammatical *conversio* and metaphorical *transumptio*, the principle of synonymy or substitution was fundamental to medieval training in writerly *facilitas*.

Exercises in transumption or metaphorical discourse occupy major sections of both the *Poetria nova* and *Tria sunt*, where their ten varieties are grouped under the heading "Difficult Ornament" (*PN* 765–1093; *TS* 5.1–54). The amount of space devoted to them is due not only to their importance but also to the fact that such exercises are chiefly based on imitation of examples, which are provided in abundance and often at some length. The same is true of the figures classified under "Easy Ornament," namely the thirty-five non-metaphorical figures of words, which achieve their effect chiefly through sound rather than sense, and the nineteen figures of thought, which structure somewhat larger units of discourse than the figures of words (*PN* 1094–1587; *TS* 7.29–96). Because the *Poetria nova* is itself a poem, the illustrative examples that constitute most of the contents of these sections were composed by Geoffrey of Vinsauf, whereas those in the corresponding sections of *Tria sunt* were gathered from a wide range of sources, both ancient and medieval, both in prose and in verse. A second difference is that Geoffrey illustrated the "easy" figures of words and the figures of thought with two virtuoso poems in the *Poetria nova* (lines 1098–1217 and 1280–1527), in each of which he treats a unified topic while employing all of the respective figures in the strict sequence in which they are treated in the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* (also a popular text during the Middle Ages).[46] By contrast, the author of the *Tria sunt* alternated discussion and brief

42 See especially Gervase of Melkley, ed. Gräbener, pp. 90–104, and *Tria sunt* 5.10–21.

43 John of Garland, *Parisiana poetria*, ed. and trans. Traugott Lawler, pp. 36/37–40/41. The connection with Virgil is through his three major poetic works, each of which was thought to illustrate a different level of style: the *Aeneid* (high), the *Georgics* (middle), and the *Eclogues* (low).

44 Geoffrey of Vinsauf says that he will treat ten varieties of transumption (*PN* 959) but actually treats only nine; periphrasis is the one he omits, perhaps because he treated it earlier under amplification.

45 Trans. Nims, p. 66, with one small change in wording and parenthetical additions to explain the grammatical variation.

46 As Ruth Taylor-Briggs notes, "The popularity of the *Ad Herennium* from the ninth century onwards is well attested by the survival of well over six hundred manuscripts" ("Reading Between the Lines: The Textual History and Manuscript Transmission of Cicero's Rhetorical Works," in Cox and Ward, p. 77).

illustrations of each figure in turn, in the same way that he and Geoffrey had treated the "difficult" figures. These materials were meant to help students identify the figures in any texts they might read, as well as to incorporate them in their own writing. Anyone who has read medieval texts in the original manuscripts will recognize the effects of such instruction in the marginal glosses that so frequently appear whenever an author employs a recognizable figure.

The "figures in their order" poems in the *Poetria nova* probably constitute an exercise that actually was used in the schools (see section 5, below), although this would have been a more advanced and perhaps for that reason less widely employed exercise than those that focused on producing individual figures through imitation of briefer models culled from authoritative sources. At some point students would have had to move from these smaller-scale exercises to compose larger-scale texts in which they would be expected to apply the techniques of figural ornamentation that they had mastered, but in less mechanical ways than in the sequential compositions of Geoffrey and others. In his *Metalogicon* (1159), John of Salisbury described a master teacher's use of what were probably small-scale, elementary exercises in imitating the figures similar to those facilitated by the *Poetria nova* and *Tria sunt*:

> [Bernard of Chartres] would also explain the poets and orators who were to serve as models for the boys in their introductory exercises in imitating prose and poetry. Pointing out how the diction of the authors was so skillfully connected, and what they had to say was so elegantly concluded, he would admonish his students to follow their example. And if, to embellish his work, someone had sewed on a patch of cloth filched from an external source, Bernard, on discovering this, would rebuke him for his plagiary, but would generally refrain from punishing him. After he had reproved the student, if an unsuitable theme had invited this, he would, with modest indulgence, bid the boy to rise to real imitation of the [classical authors], and would bring about that he who had imitated his predecessors would come to be deserving of imitation by his successors.[47]

As this account suggests, these pedagogical methods always carried the risk that students would struggle to make the transition from imitation to integration as they applied what they learned to their own compositions. With proper guidance and sufficient practice, however, such exercises empowered students not only to compose Latin verse and prose with ease but also to vary their discourse stylistically as the subject and the occasion demanded.

2. *Transposition: Playing with What You've Got*

In transposition exercises we are dealing with full-text variation. At the sentence level, this approach can overlap with the preceding variation exercises, in that

47 *Metalogicon*, ed. Hall, p. 53 (I.24.76–85); trans. McGarry, pp. 68–69. For a comparison of Bernard's exercises with those in the commentaries on the *Poetria nova* see Marjorie Curry Woods, "Some Techniques of Teaching Rhetorical Poetics in the Schools of Medieval Europe," in *Learning from the Histories of Rhetoric: Essays in Honor of Winifred Bryan Horner*, ed. Theresa Enos (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1993), pp. 91–113.

changing the grammatical form of a key word can necessitate a full-scale change in the structure of the sentence (e.g., "The boy's face is white" becomes "Whiteness suffuses the boy's face"). Exercises in which material is reworked in another form could range from small-scale recastings such as translating individual sentences from the vernacular into Latin or vice versa (the texts to be translated were called *vulgaria* or *latinitates*)[48] to larger-scale exercises such as writing the same text as a letter in prose, a quantitative poem, and a rhythmical poem. Nicholas Orme cites the 1309 statutes of the grammar school at St. Albans, which specified that anyone wishing to rise to the status of senior scholar ("bachelor") "had to take a proverb from the master and compose verses, model letters, and a *rithmus* (species of verse) on the subject, as well as carrying on a disputation in the school."[49]

Once the means of transformation is chosen, it is applied to the entire source text uniformly. The proportions of the source text are retained more or less intact, but the format is altered throughout in any of a number of different ways. Recasting a narrative as a dialogue is illustrated by the Hunterian student poem based on Petrus Alphonsus, for example, which also involves prose into verse. In addition, medieval students might be assigned to rewrite the same text in different levels of style. Peter of Blois illustrates this exercise in his letter-writing treatise the *Libellus de arte dictandi rhetorice* (1181–1185). After he has discussed the five parts of a letter individually, he offers a brief letter, in which a student writes home from Paris asking his mother to send money, to illustrate how the parts work in conjunction. Peter calls this first model letter "naked and shapeless" (*nudam et informem*), by which he means that it is in the "low style" (*humilis stilus*). He then provides a second letter on the same subject, written "more carefully and and ornately" (*caucius et ornacius*), as befits the "middle style" (*stilus mediocris*). Although one could use the highest style, with its "more carefully chosen and less commonly employed vocabulary" (*magis exquisitis et minus vsitatis sermonibus*), Peter notes that it would be inappropriate in a letter of request from a student to his mother. Instead, he chooses to illustrate high style with a letter of request from the Bishop of Sens to the King of France.[50] As is often the case, here an exercise in *facilitas* also provides instruction in *proprietas*.

48 Martin Camargo, "If You Can't Join Them, Beat Them; or, When Grammar Met Business Writing (in Fifteenth-Century Oxford)," in *Letter-Writing Manuals and Instruction from Antiquity to the Present*, ed. Carol Poster and Linda C. Mitchell (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2007), pp. 67–87, at p. 68.

49 Nicholas Orme, *Mediaeval Schools: From Roman Britain to Renaissance England* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2006), p. 152. See also Martin Camargo, ed., *Medieval Rhetorics of Prose Composition: Five English* Artes Dictandi *and Their Tradition* (Binghamton NY: Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies, 1995), pp. 29–30.

50 Camargo, ed., *Medieval Rhetorics*, pp. 57–58. Cf. Chaucer's Host, who admonishes the Clerk of Oxford:

> Youre termes, youre colours, and youre figures,
> Keepe hem in stoor til so be ye endite
> Heigh style, as whan that men to kynges write.
> (*Canterbury Tales*, IV.16–18)

3. *Expansion and Abbreviation: Picking a Path*

This exercise requires a core text that is elaborated or compressed by means of specific applied techniques. The images that medieval teachers and rhetoricians used to describe this process are vivid and imply an almost physical wrestling with material that is at first obdurate but yields to training and craft. The epigraph at the beginning of this chapter comes from Geoffrey of Vinsauf's introduction to his discussion of amplification and abbreviation in the *Poetria nova*. The sentence that immediately follows sums up this attitude: "The hand of the mind controls [the material], either to amplify or curtail."

Amplification comes first, perhaps because it can be practiced on a unit as small as one word or as large as an already substantial text. The *Poetria nova* and *Tria sunt* recommend the same set of eight techniques for expanding an existing text (*PN* 219–689; *TS* 3.A.1–30). These include four that operate on a relatively small scale and belong to or resemble the figures of words—*interpretatio* (repeating the same thing several times in different words), *circumlocutio* (periphrasis: talking around a subject), *apostrophatio* (addressing an absent person or thing), and *locus oppositorum* (coupling a statement with the negation of its opposite: "I speak; I am not silent"). Another three are larger-scale strategies that are more like the figures of thought: comparison, *prosopopoeia* (speaking in character), and description. Indeed, any of these could form the basis of an independent text, as can be seen in several of the school poems from Hunterian MS. V.8.14. The remaining technique, digression, can take many forms (including comparison or description) but cannot exist independently of a larger narrative that it interrupts.

The *Tria sunt* also includes elaborate versions of amplification exercises that start with a single word rather than a full text. In the most radical version (*TS* 3.A.32–42), one begins by deriving a beginning, middle, and end from a verb, such as *lego* ("I read"), by making the "person" of the verb ("I") the beginning, the "matter" of the verb ("reading") the middle, and a time or place "external" to the verb the end. This produces an embryonic composition in the form of a bland core sentence: "I read in such a place," which can then be amplified by adding one of the eight artificial beginnings taught in the first chapter of *Tria sunt*: either by elaborating the middle or the end, or by employing a proverb or an exemplum related to the beginning, the middle, or the end. For example, an artificial beginning that elaborates the ending of the core sentence is "This place contains a double opportunity for study, being, on the one hand, pleasing in its beauty and, on the other hand, far removed from the noise of people." An artificial beginning with a proverb related to the beginning is "He whose spirit pants for the summit of supreme advancement longs with his whole being for the fruit and the abundance of readings." The artificial beginning provides a framework for the rest of the text, which the student begins to develop using the techniques of transition and continuation taught in the second chapter of *Tria sunt*.

A second exercise also begins with a subject matter that is encapsulated in a single verb, then opens the composition with a relevant proverb that has a specified grammatical form, and then derives the middle and end of the composition from two components of the initial proverb (*TS* 3.A.43–47). The example given is a composition on the subject matter "I teach" (*doceo*). The opening proverb should have two verbs, as in "Whoever *knows* ought to *teach*." The first of these

verbs provides the nucleus of the middle or statement of facts (as in a letter), while the second provides the nucleus of the conclusion, producing a complete, if minimal "composition": "Whoever knows ought to teach. I know. Therefore I teach." Each element of this nuclear composition may then be elaborated as necessary. Thus, one can elaborate the statement of facts by adding "arguments" and evidence in support of them:

> I know because for some time now I have sought knowledge diligently among the experts. Truly among the experts because I have been among the Parisians, where knowledge of the trivium flourishes; among the Toledans, where knowledge of the quadrivium flourishes; among the Salernitans, where knowledge of medicine flourishes; and among the Bolognese, where knowledge of the laws and the decretals flourishes.

Finally, each part can be further elaborated stylistically, including the opening proverb:

> The one into whose mind the streams of knowledge have flowed should not refuse a drink to those who thirst but rather should disperse those streams broadly and distribute those waters even unto the highways and byways.

By such means, any student can develop a simple topic into as substantial a text as is desired.[51] With their well-articulated rules for generating a new text, these exercises could be included among the derivation exercises discussed in section 5, below (as we have done with one of them applied to letter writing), as easily as among the amplification exercises, where the author of *Tria sunt* put them.

Methods of amplification followed specific patterns and techniques, but we can think of them as opening up channels of invention so that the student was never at a loss for words. This kind of amplification exercise, like Geoffrey's example of conversion, above, works well as a group oral exercise in our own classes, in which every student, going in order around the room, contributes the next stage. Through such exercises one learns that one can always continue speaking or writing. Amplification is in all senses a primary skill.

Abbreviation, in contrast, appears to have been considered more difficult, perhaps because of necessity it involves working with longer and more complex texts. Geoffrey of Vinsauf employs the most violent of his images in his introduction to the techniques of abbreviation:

> Transfer the iron of the material, refined in the fire of the understanding, to the anvil of the study. Let the hammer of the intellect make it pliable; let repeated blows of that hammer fashion from the unformed mass the most suitable words.
>
> (*PN* 723–26)

51 It is not surprising that the word to be amplified in the exercises just described is a verb, for in Latin verbs also contain their subjects and hence comprise a complete statement. Verbs are thus, in general, a major focus of exercises in which a word is elaborated into a longer text. Verb morphology in Modern English carries less information, but one simply begins with a phrase rather than a single word.

The process of condensing is a powerful psychological experience. Rather than generating text, as with amplification exercises, abbreviations encapsulate texts, rendering them memorable and retrievable. Thus, assignments in abbreviation are particularly useful as a method of reviewing works read in the classroom, and one of the best ways for modern students to recall and retain the texts that they have read is to compose and share abbreviations of them as a review exercise.

Medieval exercises in abbreviation focused on the memorable, often horrible stories for which medieval pedagogy is becoming more widely known, as in Geoffrey of Vinsauf's version of the Snow Child, referred to in a commentary on the text as "that long story":[52]

> Her husband abroad improving his fortunes, an adulterous wife bears a child. On his return after a long delay, she pretends it begotten of snow. Deceit is mutual. Slyly he waits. He whisks off, sells, and—reporting to the mother a like ridiculous tale—pretends the child melted by sun.
>
> (*PN* 713–17)

Writers of modern synopses of operas, ballets, and dramas might benefit from deploying the crafted medieval approach (see Geoffrey's methods of abbreviation in Appendix A).[53]

What is counterintuitive about medieval instruction in abbreviation is the focus on nouns: "Do not be concerned about verbs; rather, write down with the pen of the mind only the nouns; the whole force of a theme resides in the nouns" (*PN* 719–22). A commentator on Geoffrey's story of the Snow Child describes it as "An example of a shorter composition exercise in which the five basic elements are touched on, namely man, woman, boy, snow, sun."[54]

Next we move into a different order of activity, since we are no longer building on a specific source text. The following techniques are used to produce a "new" text, albeit one that may contain quite a bit of preformed matter.

4. *Initiation: Beginnings, Middles, and Ends*

For medieval writers no less than for modern writers, getting started was the hardest part of the composing process. The difficulty was compounded by the heavy weight carried by the first few sentences of a composition, which not only announced a text's topic but also grounded its argument in authority (*auctoritas*) and established the hierarchical relationship between its author and the intended audience (*proprietas*). These multiple functions of beginnings are especially obvious in texts such as sermons, which begin with a "theme"—a short passage

52 "Istam longam fabulam" (Munich, Universitätsbibliothek, 4° 814, fol. 86v).

53 One of the most widely used medieval textbooks, the *Ecloge of Theodulus*, provided many examples of narrative abbreviation. It is comprised of matched pairs of quatrains narrating stories from the Hebrew Bible and the classical tradition that match up, often from an abstract or visual point of view. For a discussion of one matched set of abbreviations and their surprising content, see *SH2*, pp. 128–29.

54 "Exemplum breuioris tematis in quo tanguntur illa quinque principalia, scilicet vir, femina, puer, nix, sol" (Cambridge, Trinity College, R.14.22, fol. 17r); see also Woods, *Classroom Commentaries*, pp. 72–73.

from the Bible—that is subdivided and elaborated in the body of the sermon, and letters, which begin with strictly hierarchized formulas of greeting, usually followed by an authoritative statement, such as a proverb, an exemplum, or a quotation from scripture, that anticipates and underwrites the line of argument that will follow.

To prepare their students for the more stringent demands of letters and sermons, medieval teachers of general composition assigned exercises that focus on the beginnings of stories drawn from classroom texts. Robert Glendinning has suggested that specific composition assignments geared to the beginning of a story like that of Pyramus and Thisbe may have been classroom exercises in and of themselves; there is support for his argument in a gloss identifying the first two lines of one of Geoffrey of Vinsauf's examples of digression, which refer to lovers with one heart in two bodies, as a reference to that young couple, although the rest of Geoffrey's narrative does not follow their story.[55] Similarly, the surviving medieval student compositions on Niobe focus on her excessive pride in her fertility at the beginning of the story, rather than on her tears at the end that are the focus of the late antique exercise.[56] The student alters the proportions of his source by elaborating the emotional dimension of the opening topic while ignoring the ending. In the same way, one of the Dido lyrics in the *Carmina burana* stops when Dido and Aeneas get together in the cave, turning the tragedy of Virgil's Book 4 of the *Aeneid* into a happily-ever-after romance:

> And so in the union of them both
> the joyful heaven beamed:
> for on the joys of love
> they smile, and everything lay clarified.[57]

Other exercises emphasized a technical approach to devising a beginning to a story, such as Geoffrey of Vinsauf's eight varieties of **artificial order**, illustrated with the story of Minos, Nisus, and their children (*PN* 102–202). Here the variation involves a larger unit of text, usually at least a sentence. The first sentence of a work would be the logical place to start with this type of exercise, and that is indeed where the *Poetria nova* and the *Tria sunt* do begin (see Appendices A.A and B.A).

Exercises of this sort differ from those that generate a new text from a small kernel of text, whether a proverb or even a single word, which were discussed above. They are, in fact, exercises in textual interpretation as well as composition, and they demonstrate the ways in which the same text can express a range of different meanings. Geoffrey of Vinsauf's exercise, which is also found in *Tria*

55 Robert Glendinning, "Pyramus and Thisbe in the Medieval Classroom," *Speculum* 61 (1986): 60; see also Woods, *Classroom Commentaries*, p. 65.

56 Harbert summarizes her story as follows: "Niobe, wife of Tantalus, was proud that she had more children than Latona, mother of Apollo and Diana. Apollo and Diana punished her by killing all her children and turning her to stone" (p. 30).

57 "Troie post excidium," *The Love Songs of the Carmina Burana*, trans. E. D. Blodgett and Roy Arthur Swanson (New York: Garland Publishing, 1987), p. 114.

sunt, requires at least two levels of preliminary analysis of the base text before the act of (re)composition can begin. First, the narrative must be divided into three parts—the beginning, the middle, and the end—and then a meaning or what we might call a "moral" must be assigned to each part. These two acts of interpretation are, of course, reciprocal. In any chronologically structured narrative (what Geoffrey calls a narrative in "natural order") the boundaries between the parts could be drawn at different points, so the imposed meanings will dictate to a large extent the placement of the divisions. In the *Poetria nova* and *Tria sunt* the "beginning" is centered on King Minos of Crete, whose power and prosperity illustrate the gifts of Fortune; the "middle" is the murder of Minos's son Androgeus by his schoolmates at Athens, an example of envy; and the "end" is the abandonment of Scylla by Minos, which shows that those who betray others (as she had done to her father King Nisus of Athens) are themselves betrayed in turn.

Having thus analyzed the structural and thematic components of the text, the student is then asked to choose among nine options when rewriting it. One can retain the natural order, of course, and alter the text's meaning by strategic use of techniques such as amplification and abbreviation. More "fertile" (*PN* 102) options are the eight varieties of artificial order: beginning the story at the end, with the betrayal of Scylla; or at the middle, with the murder of Androgeus; or with a proverb on Fortune, envy, or the betrayer betrayed; or with an exemplum (here meaning an illustrative image or brief anecdote) pertaining to the meaning of the beginning, middle, or end of the narrative. Although the *Tria sunt* (and some copies of the *Poetria nova*) goes on to illustrate how one transitions from the various artificial beginnings to the body (or middle) of the new composition, neither the *Poetria nova* nor *Tria sunt* provides a complete example of such a composition. Presumably, the choice of beginning would have dictated the shape of that composition, which would amount to a reinterpretation rather than a simple retelling of the original story.

The treatises on letter writing often include collections of model letters which do illustrate how the kinds of beginnings practiced in the exercises just described are elaborated into full texts, albeit texts that are not adaptations of preexisting narratives. The parts of a letter and the sequence in which they occur are major concerns of such treatises, and it is common for them to devote special attention to alternatives for the opening two parts (*salutatio* and *exordium*). In that the *exordium* contains the authority or proof on which a letter's argument is based, such exercises could be aligned with the exercises on openings that are featured in the arts of poetry and prose.[58] In other words, both sets of exercises show how the choice of opening determines the meaning of the whole text. However, the teachers of letter writing (*dictatores*) appear to have used these sample beginnings differently, probably asking their students to choose a proverb or other authoritative text and use it to generate a letter on a specified topic, and so their exercises

58 In his *Formula moderni et usitati dictaminis* (Oxford, ca. 1390), Thomas Merke derives nine varieties of epistolary *exordium* from Geoffrey of Vinsauf's eight types of artificial order. Camargo, ed., *Medieval Rhetorics*, pp. 126–29.

on beginnings pertain more to text generation than to text variation and reinterpretation.[59]

The final part or conclusion of the composition gets similar treatment in several arts of poetry and prose (including the *Tria sunt* but not the *Poetria nova*) and to some extent in the *artes dictandi*. Thus, besides the focus on how to vary the all-important beginning of a composition, there is also a more general technique focused on the variation of one or more parts of a composition. Here again, the division of a text into three parts is fundamental. Even though the parts of a letter are most commonly identified as five—the greeting (*salutatio*), the introduction (*exordium*), the statement of facts (*narratio*), the request (*petitio*), and the closing (*conclusio*)—the first two and especially the last two have a tendency to aggregate, resulting in an underlying three-part structure that is often made explicit in the textbooks.[60] Since the structure of sermons also was built on triads, it may be that the more elementary instruction again reflected the demands of more advanced composition in its emphasis on beginnings, middles, and ends.

Such an approach could pay dividends in our own contemporary classrooms, and the specific techniques of varying the beginnings of compositions could be extended to reinterpretations of non-narrative texts. Exercises that require students to use "artificial order," however defined, to recast a given text compel them to reinterpret that text and in the process to experience the ways in which a variety of authoritative interpretations of the same text can be generated. Such exercises would have obvious value for teaching literary analysis and might be adaptable to teaching other varieties of textual analysis, as well. By changing the place from which a text starts and then rewriting it, in other words, a student can occupy simultaneously the positions of author and interpreter and thus engage actively and directly with the rhetorical production of meaning, evidence, and authority.[61]

5. *Derivation: Filling in the Blanks*

In these exercises, the student is given a structural framework within which to create his or her own text. These are important for the prose traditions of *ars dictaminis* (parts of a letter) and the *ars praedicandi* (parts of a sermon). One verse exercise produces connected discourse (rather than separate examples) using all the figures of words in the canonical order from the pseudo-Ciceronian *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, where they are presented individually and in prose. This exercise is extant in several versions, including a full virtuoso display using thirty-five figures of words, found in the *Poetria nova* (lines 1098–1217) and elsewhere,[62] and

59 For some examples, see Martin Camargo, "The Pedagogy of the *Dictatores*," in *Papers on Rhetoric V*: Atti del Convegno Internazionale "*Dictamen, Poetria* and Cicero: Coherence and Diversification," Bologna, 10–11 May 2002, ed. Lucia Calboli Montefusco (Rome: Herder, 2003), pp. 65–94, at pp. 78–86.

60 In his *Summa dictaminis* (1228–1229), probably the single most influential textbook on letter writing in the Middle Ages, Guido Faba treats the *salutatio* as separate from the letter proper, whose three "integral" parts he identifies as the *exordium, narratio*, and *petitio*. "Guidonis Fabe *Summa dictaminis*," ed. Augusto Gaudenzi, *Il Propugnatore*, n.s. 3 (1890), pt. 1: 287–338, pt. 2: 345–93, at p. 297.

61 Cf. Rita Copeland on translation as interpretation in *Rhetoric, Hermeneutics, and Translation in the Middle Ages: Academic Traditions and Vernacular Texts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

62 See Camargo, "Latin Composition Textbooks," in Cox and Ward, pp. 272–73.

the partial version in the longer Niobe poem, the first three figures of which are quoted above. There is also evidence that some teachers may have assigned just the first few figures, perhaps only six.[63]

Among the most common types of derivation exercises are those that combine a text form with techniques that overlap with the exercises mentioned above under amplification and/or initiation. A good example is an exercise used in letter-writing instruction, in which the student was asked to produce a complete, brief letter by starting from a proverb or some other "authority." Presumably, the teacher would have specified the topic of the letter, perhaps allowing the student to choose the initial proverb from one of those collections of proverbs that frequently accompany medieval treatises on letter writing. The teacher could complicate the exercise further by assigning two students to write a letter and its response, either assigning each the proverb to be used as the generative kernel for his respective text or giving them greater freedom to devise their argumentative strategies by making their own choice of proverb.

In one of its exercises for generating letters, the *Tria sunt* adapts the more general exercise discussed above in which a single verb is expanded into a complete composition. In this version a proverb or exemplum containing two verbs serves as the letter's *exordium*, the first verb of the *exordium* provides the nucleus for the *narratio*, and the second verb of the *exordium* provides the nucleus for the *petitio* and *conclusio*. All that remains to complete the letter is to supply the greeting (*salutatio*), which many teachers did not consider an integral part of the letter.[64]

6. *Impersonation:* Ethopoeia

Here is an obvious place where the *progymnasmata* overlap with medieval exercises, as students are invited to adopt another's voice and project themselves into alternative states. The goal of *proprietas*, here appropriateness of language and action to a specific character, is fostered by study of the "attributes" discussed in detail in the *Tria sunt*, but only mentioned in the *Poetria nova*. Carol Dana Lanham argues in the chapter preceding this one that in antiquity and the early Middle Ages, before the development of the *ars dictaminis*, exercises in *ethopoeia* were the basis of instruction in letter writing.[65] There are two classical versions of *ethopoeia*: the pathetic, in which the student writes a speech in the voice of a literary character in an emotional situation; and the ethical, which explores a character type rather than an individual.[66] We find both of these in medieval rhetorical treatises, although the second, rather than a first-person speech, is an address

63 For evidence of assigning a composition using the first six figures of words in the commentary on the *Poetria nova* by Reiner von Cappel, see Woods, *Classroom Commentaries*, pp. 76–79.

64 The *salutatio* was sometimes written on the outside of a letter, after it had been folded and sealed, as the author of the *Tria sunt* observes (*TS* 3.B.3).

65 See her chapter in this volume, (Chapter 3).

66 The *progymnasmata* are listed and summarized in James J. Murphy's chapter earlier in this volume (Chapter 2). For the complete texts in translation, see George A. Kennedy, *Progymnasmata: Greek Textbooks of Prose Composition and Rhetoric* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003); also Malcolm Heath's translation of Aphthonius's *Progymnasmata* online at http://www.rhetcomp.gsu.edu/~gpullman/2150/Aphthonius%20Progymnasmata.htm (accessed November 14, 2011).

to—or sometimes a dialogue with—a particular kind of character. Geoffrey of Vinsauf, for example, has a series of apostrophes to specific character types, such as someone too presumptuous or too timid, in which he paints vivid pictures of the typical behavior of someone of that type and tells him how to shape up (*PN* 277–366). Laments, particularly of female characters, are a staple of late antique *ethopoeia* exercises (Niobe is the speaker in one of Aphthonius's examples[67]), and there is growing evidence of a continuation of this practice during the Middle Ages.[68] Geoffrey, however, provides laments spoken by inanimate objects such as the cross, a castle, and, perhaps most memorably, a worn-out tablecloth:

> I was once the pride of the table, while my youth was in its first flower and my face knew no blemish. But since I am old, and my visage is marred, I do not wish to appear. I withdraw from you, table; farewell!
>
> (*PN* 509–13)

We hope that it was performed in the classroom.

7. *Contestation: War with Words*

This is not really a separate category, but rather a way of showcasing other kinds of exercises in which paired and opposing approaches are presented. Its most sophisticated, extreme, and famous medieval form was the university *disputatio*, or debate.[69] But, just as the ancient *progymnasmata* provided practice in rhetorical techniques useful for more advanced oratorical compositions, a number of medieval exercises use "debate," broadly understood, as a structuring principle, as in collections of paired model letters, which suggests that this was an important category for the *dictatores*. In *Medieval Latin Poems of Male Love and Friendship*, Thomas Stehling translates a pair of letters from a *summa dictaminis* in which a man tries to seduce a boy using classical references, which the boy rebuffs with biblical references.[70] In another extant pair of epistolary declamations (letters meant to be performed) in the *Regina sedens Rhetorica*, two sisters debate what the modern editor calls "a young woman's right to choose a husband with sex appeal." The first sister notes that "the female kind . . . craves a respectable and attractive man just as matter craves form" and begs her sister "to secure me an absence from the paternal presence . . . as womankind is accustomed to remove a thorn from another's foot," while the other sister responds, "it is my special advice that, having wiped away all the inconstancies of lust whatsoever, you strive to obey in accordance with the deliberation and decision of our father and without stain of conscience take as your husband the one whom paternal

67 See Heath's translation of Aphthonius, "11. Characterisation."

68 See Marjorie Curry Woods, "Weeping for Dido: Epilogue on a Premodern Rhetorical Exercise in the Postmodern Classroom," in *Latin Grammar and Rhetoric: From Classical Theory to Medieval Practice*, ed. Carol Dana Lanham (London: Continuum, 2002): 284–94; and "Rhetoric, Gender, and the Literary Arts: Classical Speeches in the Schoolroom," *New Medieval Literatures* 11 (2009): 113–32.

69 Teeuwen discusses nine kinds of *disputatio* and a number of related concepts in *Vocabulary*, pp. 256–59.

70 Thomas Stehling, trans., *Medieval Latin Poems of Male Love and Friendship* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1984) nos. 88 and 89 and notes on pp. 156–57. Stehling comments, "Though they are in prose, the two letters are of sufficient interest to merit inclusion [in a collection of poems]" (p. 157).

kindness desires."[71] This basic oppositional technique is reflected in many kinds of exercises that produce pairs or even longer sequences of texts responding to other texts.[72] Thinking in opposites is a fundamental category for medieval teachers and manifests in all kinds of places. In Peter of Blois' *Libellus*, the author first describes seven methods for consoling a bereaved person—and then follows with seven methods for making such a person feel worse.[73] A more practical kind of opposition, that between praise and blame, is foregrounded in many paired medieval composition exercises.[74]

Conclusion

One of the most important aspects of medieval composition exercises is their flexibility. They can be adjusted and re-focused to reflect what the teacher wants to emphasize in the assigned readings and which skills the teacher wants the students to concentrate on during the composition process.[75] Thus, these exercises are well suited to the modern informal classroom with its emphasis on discussion and student input. The second edition of the *Short History* contained two lists of medieval exercises that had been tried successfully in two different kinds of classes: one on the history of rhetoric and one on medieval literature in translation; these are reproduced here in the first two parts of Appendix C.

Some modern teachers, however, might want to experiment with just one or two of the exercises at first to see how they work. For an exercise at the beginning of a course, we suggest a one-sentence imitation or amplification. If the experiment comes near the end of the term, a sequence of abbreviations (each

71 Martin Camargo, "Epistolary Declamation: Performing Model Letters in Medieval English Classrooms," in *Studies in the Cultural History of Letter Writing*, ed. Susan Green (San Marino: Huntington Library Press, 2011).

72 One of the methods of amplification discussed above, *locus oppositorum*, is a very small-scale version of this kind of exercise, in which something is said and then amplified by means of also negating its opposite in the same sentence (e.g., "The weather is hot and in no way is the temperature cold"). Although this example is not the kind of writing that we would necessarily want to find in student productions today, the exercise itself is a useful one in learning different ways to approach the same topic.

73 Camargo, ed., *Medieval Rhetorics*, pp. 69–71. For example, the third method of consolation, pointing out that the distress experienced is fleeting or of short duration, can be converted into a cause of despair thus: "This evil is lasting, nor can it be ended by any remedy." In fairness, Peter does point out that the arguments of consolation belong to the "useful and the good," while those of despair belong to their opposite.

74 Character sketches were an obvious occasion for praise and blame. Besides the examples from the Hunterian manuscript, see Matthew of Vendôme, *Ars versificatoria* I.50–59.

75 For example, the fourteenth-century statutes at Oxford for grammar-school masters gave the same requirements for instruction in both verse and letterwriting:

> Every two weeks, the grammar teachers "are required to assign (*dare*) **verses and letters** composed with proper words that are neither bombastic nor a yard long (*non ampullosis aut sexquipedalibus*), and with trim, graceful clauses, with metaphors that are clear and, as much as possible, full of wisdom; **which verses and which letters** the recipients [of the assignments from said teachers] should write down on parchment on the next feast day, or sooner, and then on the next day, when they come to school, they should recite them to their master from memory and submit them in written form.
>
> Strickland Gibson, ed., *Statuta antiqua universitatis oxoniensis*, qtd. in Camargo, "If You Can't Join Them," p. 68 (emphasis ours)

limited to a quatrain, a sentence, or even just a series of nouns) as a review of all of the works read in class. In the middle, when there is time to share the composition with peer reviewers and/or to rewrite it, then we suggest one of the longer sustained exercises, in which the students follow a specific structure, are given clear instructions or examples for each step, and draw on material read in the class. Each of these exercises, if the results can be shared even partially in class, has proven beneficial not just for the students' writing, but also for class discussion afterward.[76]

For all of these exercises, the more articulated the assignment the better. For many years Woods has assigned the exercise using all of the figures of words in the canonical order.[77] The rigid structure provides a framework for students to be creative in the individual steps, and the specific requirements force students to spend more time on details than traditional assignments allow. In each exercise the students have to study intensely and in detail the "base" or "shared" text (we avoid the term "original" here) upon which the exercise is based, but the students are also encouraged to make radical changes in that version.

The insights of medieval composition pedagogy are only beginning to be explored, and we encourage our readers to try the exercises here, to experiment with them, and to write about the results. One of the most successful ways we have found to teach initiation in its most absolute form, for example, is to read aloud, or better yet have read aloud by the student, the first sentence of every student's paper: a memorable sentence teaches itself. But it is the more extreme exercises—not just the figures in order but others like the amplification of one word into a whole paragraph—that have the strongest pedagogical effect. As teachers, our first reaction to reading about them may be, "But I don't want my students to write like that!" The results are so strange—dare we say it—so medieval. Here, as with almost every aspect of medieval pedagogy that we are familiar with, the performed experience is completely different from reading about it. The connections among play, performance, and verbal experimentation were well known to medieval teachers. A surprising result of a performance of the sisters' letters mentioned above turned out to be "how well the mannered language of the letters worked in oral performance . . . [T]he very artificiality of the language made it easier to adopt a persona and afforded many opportunities for dramatically heightened delivery."[78] One of the most difficult goals of modern teachers is to help students find a version of academic language that they can respond to and see as a form of personal articulation not possible in a more informal mode. This kind of exercise can be an important step in that direction. We might think of medieval exercises as functioning like modern invention and brainstorming exercises from the opposite point of view: as practice in hyper-articulation that gives students not just access to but control of a new form of expression. Try it.

76 The implications of these and similar exercises are discussed in two articles by Woods: "Weeping for Dido"; and "You May Have Changed My Life," Special Issue on Experimental Literary Education, ed. Jeffrey C. Robinson, *English Language Notes* 47.1 (2009): 159–65.

77 For the added advantages of asking students to write their own academic introductions to this exercise, see Woods, "Weeping for Dido," p. 290.

78 Camargo, "Epistolary Declamation."

Appendix A
Composition exercises and examples in Geoffrey of Vinsauf's *Poetria nova*, ca. 1200–1215.

A. Nine ways to begin a story based on the narrative of King Minos (see Initiation exercise above):

1. beginning according to natural order. 2. beginning at the end. 3. a beginning taken from the middle. 4. with a proverb from the beginning. 5. with a proverb from the middle. 6. with a proverb from the end. 7. with an exemplum from the beginning. 8. with an exemplum from the middle. 9. with an exemplum from the end.

B. Amplification: eight ways of expanding a subject (the first three are described in definitions that also exemplify them):

1. Repetition. 2. Circumlocution 3. Comparison 4. Apostrophe: lament for the death of King Richard Lionheart, expressed in a series of apostrophes to England, the day Richard died (Friday), the murderer (he was shot with an arrow that had been fired by one of Richard's own men and retrieved by the enemy from where it had stuck in the wall), Death, Nature, and God. 5. Personification, with examples of *ethopoeia* discussed above. 6. Digression: example of the story of separated lovers (identified as Pyramus and Thisbe in one manuscript) interrupted by digression on springtime as sexual union of masculine air with feminine earth. 7. Description (with examples of a naked woman; a dressed woman; a dressed table, and the feast for which it has been set). 8. A Double Statement: positive and negative versions of saying the same thing.

C. Abbreviation: very abbreviated summary of seven ways to condense a text, illustrated by successively shorter versions of the story of the Snow Child, the shortest ones using nouns almost exclusively:

1. Emphasis 2. Parataxis 3. Ablative absolute 4. Understanding one thing in another (implication) 5. Asyndeton 6. Avoidance of repetition 7. Meaning of many clauses contained in one.

D. Ornamentation in general: how a "rough" expression of a noble sentiment can be made elegant through the "clothing" of verbal ornament, described metaphorically.

E. Difficult Ornament: the Tropes:

1. Nine kinds of Transumption (kinds of metaphoric language), e.g., from the human to the non-human.

2. Six other tropes (957): metonymy (five kinds, e.g., the abstract for the concrete, cause for effect); hyperbole; periphrasis; synecdoche (two kinds: part for the whole and whole for the part); catachresis (deliberate misuse of a word for artistic effect); and hyperbaton (unusual word order).

F. Easy Ornament: patterns of words and thoughts, also called schemes:

1. The "figures in order" using, in a specific word order taken from the *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, thirty-five figures of words in connected discourse on a single subject or narrative (here based on the Bible).

2. The nineteen figures of thought (statements following set patterns of thought or approaches). These rhetorical colors are exemplified in a set piece on the responsibilities of the pope.

G. Six kinds of Emphasis (understatement, hyperbole, ambiguity, consequence, aposiopesis [implication], and analogy) with an example of an anecdote about Alexander the Great) [not in Appendix B].

H. The Theory of Conversion: four ways of altering a word for impact or to avoid repetition, such as using a noun in different cases. One example of converting uninflected words is a little dialogue between a teacher and student on needing more time to compose.

I. The Theory of Determination (qualifying one word by adding another), with examples of a badly set table; a description of Nero at table; a description of a dying body; and a comparison of the styles of Sidonius and Seneca.

[Items J. through P. in the outline of the *Tria sunt* below are not treated in the *Poetria nova*, except for a few lines on the circumstances and on the language suitable for the comic style (Appendix B, J.1. and O.1 below).]

Appendix B

A. Nine ways to begin a story, illustrated in prose and in verse:

1. beginning according to natural order. 2. beginning at the end. 3. a beginning taken from the middle. 4. with a proverb from the beginning. 5. with a proverb from the middle. 6. with a proverb from the end. 7. with an exemplum from the beginning. 8. with an exemplum from the middle. 9. with an exemplum from the end.

A., cont. How to manage a transition to the main narrative from each of the nine ways to begin, illustrated in prose and in verse.

B. Amplification (i): eight ways of expanding a subject matter, most of them copiously illustrated:

1. Interpretation (saying the same thing in different ways): examples from *Poetria nova, Complaint of Nature*, and other poems. 2. Circumlocution: examples from *Aeneid, Complaint of Nature*, and other poems and prose texts. 3. Comparison: examples from *Complaint of Nature, Architrenius*, poem praising the Bishop of Lincoln (also found in Hunterian MS. V.8.14), and the *Libellus de arte dictandi rhetorice* of Peter of Blois. 4. Apostrophe: examples from *Poetria nova, Aeneid*, Bernard Silvester's *Parricide, Metamorphoses*, and Lawrence of Durham's *Hypognosticon*. 5. Prosopopoeia: examples from *Poetria nova* and *Metamorphoses*.

6. Digression: examples from *Poetria nova*, poem praising Bishop of Lincoln, Horace's *Epistles*, *Thebaid*, Matthew of Vendôme's *Ars versificatoria*, *Complaint of Nature*, *Consolation of Philosophy*, and others. 7. Description: long example (coming of spring) from *Complaint of Nature*, shorter references to other examples. 8. Place of opposites: examples from "Sidonius," *Anticlaudianus*, and others.

B., cont. Amplification (ii): how to expand a very brief subject matter, such as a single word (using a variety of techniques, including the nine ways to begin): illustrated with the examples "I read" (*lego*) and "I teach" (*doceo*).

B., cont. Amplification (iii): letter writing as a special category of amplification that combines techniques like those described in (ii), above, with the *proprietates* or proper characteristics of persons and actions, derived from Horace's *Art of Poetry*: a letter mocking an ignoramus for his pretensions illustrates the artificial style and a letter from the imprisoned Duke Arthur of Brittany begging mercy of his uncle King John of England illustrates plain style.

C. Abbreviation (i): seven ways to condense a text, each method illustrated with short examples from medieval poets and Roman rhetoricians. The story of the Snow Child is then told in a version that illustrates all seven methods, followed by still shorter versions, as in the *PN*.

1. Emphasis. 2. Parataxis. 3. Ablative absolute. 4. Understanding one thing in another. 5. Asyndeton. 6. Avoidance of repetition. 7. Meaning of many clauses contained in one.

C., cont. Abbreviation (ii): condensing the text by focusing on its key nouns: illustrated with two extremely short versions of the Snow Child story.

D. Ornamentation in general: how a "rough" expression of a noble sentiment can be made elegant through the "clothing" of verbal ornament, with examples from *Poetria nova*, *Complaint of Nature*, *Cosmographia*, Matthew of Vendôme's *Ars versificatoria*, and others.

E. Difficult Ornament: produced by the ten types of transumption (*transumptio*) or transference (= the tropes), nine of meaning and one of order; those of meaning include four "weightier" and five "lighter" types; the first four types all involve shifts in animate/inanimate categories:

1. general techniques of transumption: exercises in how to shift a word from its "proper" meaning to a "transfered" meaning, including extensive directions on coining new words, with examples from Gervase of Melkley, Alan of Lille, and Horace.

2. weightier transumption: (a) Onomatopoeia, (b) Antonomasia, (c) Allegory, (d) Metaphor, with examples from *Poetria nova*, Gervase of Melkley, *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, and the *Libellus* of Peter of Blois, among others.

3. lighter transumption: (a) Periphrasis [said to be especially good for teaching boys], (b) Metonymy, (c) Hyperbole, (d) Synecdoche, (e) Catachresis, with many examples from a wide range of classical and medieval sources.

4. transumption of order: Hyperbaton, with subtypes Transposition and Anastrophe, citing *Rhetorica ad Herennium* and Matthew of Vendôme and illustrating with examples of medieval epistolary prose.

5. use of epithets, which can be transumptive or non-transumptive: examples from *Georgics*, *Alexandreis*, *Architrenius*, and *Poetria nova*.

E., cont. Adjectives and verbs that are especially useful for producing ornamented discourse, as illustrated in sample sentences: mainly derived from Matthew of Vendôme's *Ars versificatoria*.

F. Easy Ornament: produced by (1) Determination [I. in *PN*] and (2) Colors of words and thoughts:

1. Determination: how to embellish a word by modifying it with one or more additional words: (a) a proper noun with another noun, an adjective, or a verb; (b) an "appellative" noun, i.e., either a substantive or an adjective, with one or more verbs (including the special cases of zeugma and hypozeuxis), with one or more adjectives, with a noun in the genitive, dative, or ablative case, or with a prepositional phrase; (c) an adjective with a noun, an adjective, or a prepositional phrase; (d) a verb with an adverb, a noun or adjective functioning adverbially, or a prepositional phrase; and how to mix determinations of various sorts in elegant combinations; with examples from many sources, including Geoffrey of Vinsauf, with extensive description and illustration of the technique as an exercise.

2. Colors of words and thoughts: (a) thirty-six colors of words[79] defined and illustrated from many sources, including Geoffrey of Vinsauf's *Summa de coloribus rhetoricis*, but especially *Rhetorica ad Herennium*; (b) nineteen colors of thoughts defined and illustrated, also relying heavily on *Rhetorica ad Herennium* but supplemented by other sources, including *Poetria nova*.

[G. Kinds of Emphasis not in *TS*]

H. How to discover ornamented words through Conversion (rewriting sentences by changing a key word):

1. replacing an "indeclinable" word, such as an adverb, with a "declinable" one, either a noun or a verb.

2. converting a declinable word: (a) a substantive noun, into another noun in the same case or into a different case of the same noun; (b) a verb, into another verb or into a substantive noun; (c) an adjective, into a substantive noun; and

79 The *Rhetorica ad Herennium* (IV.xx.28) simply observes that the fifteenth figure of words (*similiter cadens*) regularly occurs together with the sixteenth (*similiter desinens*), but *Tria sunt* treats their mixture as a separate figure (*commixtum*). The *PN* appears to follow the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* more closely and therefore distinguishes 35 figures of words rather than the 36 listed in *TS*.

mixing and compounding these various types of conversion to create extended passages of elegant discourse.

[I. in Appendix A treated under F. above]

J. How to develop an original subject matter:

1. employ the seven "circumstances": (a) who? (b) what? (c) where? (d) with what means? (e) why? (f) how? (g) when?; citing *Topics* of Boethius, Horace's *Art of Poetry*, *Architrenius*, Gervase of Melkley.

2. imitate *auctoritates*, citing Horace's *Art of Poetry*, *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, *Poetria nova*.

K. How to develop a common subject matter using five methods adapted from Horace's *Art of Poetry*:

1. abbreviate where the source expands and vice versa

2. change the order of the parts

3. avoid a pompous, disproportionately long preface

4. avoid getting lost in excessive digressions

5. do not begin too far from the main point of a narrative (i.e., avoid excessive background detail).

A final counsel: observe the proper characteristics (*proprietates*) of the persons involved (also prescribed by Horace in the *Art of Poetry*).

L. Attributes of persons and actions: information directly relevant to the preceding exercise and to several of the earlier ones; draws on a wide range of sources, including Cicero's *De inventione* and several commentaries on it.

M. Levels and categories of "styles" (high, middle, low; "modern" styles: Tullian, Gregorian, Hilarian, Isidorian): information relevant to the transposing variety of exercise: e.g., rewrite a text in low style as one in high style, or one in Tullian style in Gregorian style.

N. Kinds of discourse and of narrative: also potentially relevant to exercises in transposition, such as one in which a narrative text is rewritten as a dialogue:

1. three kinds of discourse: (a) dramatic, in which only characters speak in their own voices; (b) hermeneutic or divided, in which the author speaks in his own voice throughout; and (c) didactic, in which the author engages in dialogue with a character.

2. three kinds of narrative (a category of hermeneutic discourse): (a) fable, which is neither factual nor plausible; (b) history, which is factual; and (c) argument, which is not factual but is plausible.

O. How to treat humorous subject matter:

1. use "light" and "common vocabulary"

2. employ the colors *praecisio* (cutting short) and *occupatio* (saying what you claim not to say).

P. Conclusions: created in three ways:

1. from the body of the subject matter, illustrated from Ovid's *Heroides* and a Troy poem

2. from a proverb, illustrated with a proverb that is applied to Troy

3. from an exemplum, illustrated from Horace's *Epistles*.

Also, a conclusion often is created by begging permission, as in the *Eclogues*, *Anticlaudianus*, *Architrenius*, and *Tristia*.

Finally, conclusions of letters are often indicated by certain transitional words; but a better method is to conclude with a proverb or exemplum, as illustrated in the model letters included in the discussion of letters (see the continuation of B., above).

Appendix C

A. A series of short written assignments for a history of rhetoric class, adapted from handbooks contemporary with the periods being studied. All of the student exercises should be read aloud (or better yet, performed) in class for comment and reaction.

1. Translate two paragraphs of academic prose taken from one of the class readings into dialogue form, either using characters and setting from an assigned Platonic dialogue or creating new ones.

2. Translate two pages of a Platonic dialogue into academic prose, taking as a model two paragraphs from the source used for the first "translation" assignment. Imitate as closely as possible the construction of the sentences, vocabulary, and diction of the academic piece.

3. Write your own defense of Helen of Troy.

4. Rewrite one of the reading assignments as a fable of no more than one page.

5. Summarize in one page or less one of the longer reading assignments. Summarize the same work in one sentence (see Appendices A.C and B.C).

6. Use all 35 figures of words in order from the *Poetria nova* in connected discourse based on a work read in class (see Appendices A.F.1 and B.F.2). A high-serious or comic approach works well, and this assignment also works

well as an exercise in character delineation, as with the first student exercise on Niobe in the Hunterian manuscript (no. 4).

7. Using Erasmus's exercise from *De copia* as a model, write one sentence 75–100 different ways. This works well as a group in-class oral exercise.[80]

8. Using as a model one of the Shakespearean passages brought in by each member of the class, imitate the form, structure, and diction as much as possible while creating an original context and characters.

B. For a class on medieval literature in translation, students write three papers, for each one of which the student has the choice of a modern analytical or a medieval rhetorical (creative) assignment. The three rhetorical assignments are typically the following:

1. Rewrite a passage of two or three pages of one of the assigned works in the style of one of the others (see student exercises nos. 1 and 2 from the Hunterian manuscript).

2. The figures in order exercise; see Appendix C.A.6 above.

3. Amplify in the style of Chrétien de Troyes an incident in one of the highly abbreviated texts of Marie de France; or abbreviate in the style of Marie de France one of the amplified romances by Chrétien de Troyes. This is a modern version of paired student exercises on Henry II [no. 2] and Niobe [no. 4] in the Hunterian manuscript). Or write a short abbreviation of every work read in class (see Appendix C.C.3 below).

C. Suggested assignments for any class; these can be assigned individually or as a sequence for the beginning, middle, and end of the semester:

1. Near the beginning of the course: a one-sentence imitation or amplification based on an assigned text. If possible, have the students read the results aloud in class.

2. Mid-course: a longer exercise in which the students follow the format of a very highly structured and detailed text or part of a text studied in class. We have used and recommend the "figures in order" (see Appendix C.A.6). Any composition with a specific sequence of steps or parts would also work well, such as a university sermon, an academic disputation, a letter of petition, a character delineation using the attributes of persons, etc. More than one of this kind of exercise can be assigned.

3. As a review exercise near the end of the course: an abbreviation, in only a few words, of every work read during the semester, including lyric poems (see Appendices A.C and B.C). The use of alliteration, rhyme, or another kind of verbal patterning is highly recommended.

80 See the similar but more sophisticated exercise adopted by Lawrence Green from an earlier version of *De copia* (qtd. in Woods, "You May Have Changed My Life," pp. 162–63).

Acknowledgments

The authors are grateful to Rebecca Beal, Sandy Camargo, Ian Campbell, Vessela Valiavitcharska, and Jeffrey Walker for suggestions and corrections.