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THE CLASSROOM AS COURTROOM: CICERO'S ATTRIBUTES OF PERSONS AND THE INTERPRETATION OF CLASSICAL LITERARY CHARACTERS IN THE RENAISSANCE

Although its roots were in the Roman legal tradition, the teaching of rhetoric during the late Middle Ages and early Renaissance was closely intertwined with the teaching of poetry, especially to students at pre-university levels. The division between rhetoric and poetics was blurred: treatises that were intended to teach verse composition were applied to the composition of prose letters(1), and commentaries on rhetorical treatises like the pseudo-Ciceronian *Rhetorica ad Herennium* were probably also used to teach verse composition(2). Both Cicero's *De inventione* and the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* have survived in more than 600 manuscripts(3), a staggeringly large number indicative of production for classroom use. In a recent collection of essays on *The Rhetoric of Cicero in Its Medieval and Early Renaissance Commentary Tradition*, John O. Ward talks about the «universal distribution» of the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* and *De inventione*(4), and Ruth Taylor-Briggs emphasizes their ubiquity in medieval and Renaissance culture(5). Gian Carlo Alessio states categorically: «For all ... practitioners of medieval communication theory down to the advent of humanism, the principal sources for classical

(1) M. C. Woods, *Using the Poetria nova to Teach Dictamen in Italy and Central Europe*, in L. Calboli Montefusco (ed.), *Papers on Rhetoric V. Proceedings of the Conference 'Cicero, Dictamen, Poetria', Bologna, 10-11 Maggio 2002*, Roma 2003, 261-279. See also Woods, *Classroom Commentaries: Teaching the Poetria nova across Medieval and Renaissance Europe*, forthcoming from The Ohio State University Press.

(2) M. Camargo, *Latin Composition Textbooks and Ad Herennium Glossing: The Missing Link?*, in V. Cox - J. O. Ward (eds.), *The Rhetoric of Cicero in Its Medieval and Early Renaissance Commentary Tradition*, Leiden 2006, 267-288, at 276, but see also 280.

(3) R. Taylor-Briggs, *Reading Between the Lines: The Textual History and Manuscript Transmission of Cicero's Rhetorical Works*, in Cox-Ward, *The Rhetoric of Cicero* cit., 77-108, at 77 and 97.

(4) J. O. Ward, *Ciceronian Rhetoric in Treatise, Scholion, and Commentary*, Turnhout 1995, 255.

(5) Taylor-Briggs, *op. cit.*

rhetorical doctrine were the *De inventione* and the *Rhetorica ad Herennium*» (6).

These two texts were admirably suited to classroom practice because of the straightforwardness of their doctrine and the schematic presentation of compositional techniques (7). Medieval and Renaissance teachers drew on both the pseudo-Ciceronian *Rhetorica ad Herennium* as well as Cicero's *De inventione* for their rhetorical doctrine, but *De inventione*, called *Rhetorica prima*, was considered the more basic of the two. It is the focus of this essay, which considers aspects of the application of its doctrine to literary ends in the fifteenth-century Italian classroom and suggests ways that the analysis of literary characters in classical texts may have been influenced by courtroom strategies advocated by Cicero in this early work.

There were more overtly literary sources of instruction on which teachers could draw to help students study and evoke literary characters in their own writing. Horace's famous advice in the *Ars poetica*, another classical text widely taught in the later periods, tells the student (Hor. *Ars* 114-116) (8),

> *intererit multum divusne loquatur an heros,*
> *maturusne senex an adhuc florente iuventa*
> *fervidus, et matrona potens an sedula nutrix*
> *mercatorne vagus cultorne virentis agelli,*
> *Colchus an Assyrius, Thebis nutritus an Argis.*

> «It will make a lot of difference whether the speaker is a god or a hero, an old man of ripe years or a hot youth, an influential matron or a hard-working nurse, a traveling merchant or the tiller of a green farm, a Colchian or an Assyrian, one nurtured at Thebes or at Argos».

For Horace, specificity of character type is particularly important and should reinforce audience expectations. Although he does not provide

(6) G. C. Alessio, *The Rhetorical Juvenilia of Cicero and the artes dictaminis*, in Cox-Ward, *The Rhetoric of Cicero* cit., 335-364, at 335.

(7) The rediscovery of Cicero's more mature works such as *De oratore* (which had been known to some extent but was rarely cited or used during the Middle Ages) was an important event in the history of rhetoric – and one that has encouraged scholars to pay less attention to *De inventione*, which is treated dismissively in the later work. But both the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* and *De inventione* continued to be copied throughout the fifteenth century. See, for example, Ward, *Ciceronian Rhetoric* cit., 227, 230, 232, 234, 236. For knowledge of *De oratore* in the twelfth century and its limitations as a textbook, see K. M. Fredborg, *Ciceronian Rhetoric and the Schools*, in *Learning Institutionalized: Teaching in the Medieval University*, ed. John Van Engen, Notre Dame 2000, 21-31, at 22.

(8) English translation of Horace's *Ars poetica* from D. A. Russell and M. Winterbottom, *Ancient Literary Criticism: The Principal Texts in New Translations*, Oxford 1972, 279-291. Latin text from *Horace on Poetry; The 'Ars poetica,'* ed. C. O. Brink, Cambridge 1971.

information about how to accomplish this, he does address characterization in several other places as well(9). He deliberately avoids schematic representation of character, however(10).

Geoffrey of Vinsauf (fl. 1200) wrote a very popular rhetorical treatise that medieval and early Renaissance teachers saw as a successor to Horace's *Ars poetica*, or *Poetria* as it was called during the Middle Ages. Commentators called Geoffrey's work the *Poetria nova* and sometimes taught these two *Poetrias* together(11). Geoffrey combined doctrine from the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* (called the *Rhetorica nova*) with Horace's verse form and some of his advice in a new textbook that offered both instruction and examples. The *Poetria nova* includes a short list of attributes, or circumstances, to keep in mind when composing a narrative, which he emphasizes by repeating them. Three of these are relevant to describing a character (*Poetria nova* 1843-1847)(12):

> *Si mentio namque sit orta*
> *Forte rei, sexus, aetatis, conditionis,*
> *Eventus, si forte loci vel temporis: haec est*
> *Debita proprietas, quam vult res, sexus, aetas,*
> *Conditio, eventus, tempus, locus.*
>
> «If mention has perhaps arisen of an object, sex, age, condition, event, place, or time, it is regard for its distinctive quality that the object, sex, age, condition, event, time, or place claims as its due».

Geoffrey's categories comprise those for 'objects' (including characters) and those for actions. If one is describing a character, then one considers sex, age, and condition; if one is describing an event or action, then one considers the attributes of time and place(13).

Cicero's detailed list and discussions of the aspects of persons in *De inventione* stand in stark contrast to the spareness of Horace and

(9) Horace introduces the idea of character type (among other literary considerations) earlier, where he speaks of the *vices operumque colores* (*ars* 86); he treats characterization later at 156-177 and 312-317, and he discusses handling plot as well. See also Fredborg, *op. cit.*, 31. For the attributes of actions, see below n. 14.

(10) Medieval commentators on Horace introduced a more schematic framework that echoes some of Cicero's attributes of persons discussed later in this essay; for example, the gloss on line 114 in the so-called '*Materia*' commentary in K. Friis-Jensen, *The Ars poetica in Twelfth-Century France. The Horace of Matthew of Vendome, Geoffrey of Vinsauf, and John of Garland*, «Cahiers de l'Institut du Moyen-Age grec et latin» 60, 1990, 319-388, at 352.

(11) See Woods, *Classroom Commentaries* cit.

(12) English translation from *The Poetria nova of Geoffrey of Vinsauf*: M. F. Nims, Toronto 1967; Latin text edited in E. Faral, *Les arts poétiques du XIIe et du XIIIe siècle. Recherches et documents sur la technique littéraire du moyen âge*, Paris, 1924 (rpt. Paris, 1962).

(13) Geoffrey discusses specific character types in earlier parts of his work, *e.g.*, the timid man at 306 ff. and the lazy man at 1366 ff.

Geoffrey's treatments (14). He lists (1, 34) eleven attributes or characteristics to consider when shaping an audience's reaction to a person (15): [1] name, [2] nature [with several subheadings], [3] manner of life, [4] fortune, [5] habit, [6] feeling, [7] interests, [8] purposes, [9] achievements, [10] accidents, [11] speeches made (*nomen, naturam, victum, fortunam, habitum, affectionem, studia, consilia, facta, casus, orationes*) (16). Cicero then describes each (§§ 35-36):

> 1. The first attribute, 'name' (*nomen*), is straightforward.
>
> 2. The second, 'nature' (*natura*), is divided into divine or mortal; within mortal, whether beast or human; and with respect to humans, «first as to sex, whether male or female, and as to race, place of birth, family, and age». Under this category «we take into consideration such advantages and disadvantages as are given to mind and body by nature» as well (*eae autem partim divino, partim mortali in genere versantur. Mortalium autem pars in hominum, pars in bestiarum genere numerantur. Atque hominum genus et in sexu consideratur, virile an muliebre sit, et in natione, patria, cognatione, aetate ... Praeterea commoda et incommoda considerantur ab natura data animo aut corpori ...*) (17).
>
> 3. Manner of life (*victus*) comprises «with whom he was reared, in what tradition and under whose direction, what teachers he had in the liberal arts, what instructors in the art of living, with whom he associates on terms of friendship, in what occupation, trade or profession he is engaged, how he manages his private fortune, and what is the character of his home life» (*In victu considerare oportet, apud quem et quo more et cuius arbitratu sit educatus, quos habuerit artium liberalium magistros, quos vivendi praeceptores, quibus amicis utatur, quo in negotio, questu,*

(14) But see above, nn. 9 and 13. The author of another *ars poetriae*, Matthew of Vendôme, did treat the attributes of persons (and actions), drawing heavily on *De inventione*; J. J. Gronbeck-Tedesco, *An Application of Medieval Rhetorical Invention to Dramatic Composition: Matthew of Vendôme's Ars versificatoria and Milo*, «Theatre Journal» 32, 1980, 235-247. The manuscript distribution of Matthew's work was much more limited than that of the *Poetria nova*, however: Camargo, *op. cit.* See also Fredborg, *op. cit.*, 21, 29, and 31. In the present essay only the attributes of persons and their relationship to characterization are treated, but Cicero's discussions of the attributes of actions are also extremely important. See L. Calboli Montefusco, *Die adtributa personis und die adtributa negotiis als loci der Argumentation*, in Th. Schirren - G. Ueding (eds.), *Topik und Rhetorik, Ein interdisziplinäres Symposium*, Tübingen 2000, 37-50. R. Copeland discusses some of Cicero's attributes of actions in *The Ciceronian Rhetorical Tradition and Medieval Literary Theory*, in Cox-Ward, *The Rhetoric of Cicero* cit., 239-265.

(15) The English translation quoted is that of H. M. Hubbell in Cicero, *De inventione, De optimo genere oratorum, Topica*, Cambridge, Mass. 1949 (rpt. 1968); the Latin text of *De inventione* that of E. Stroebel, Leipzig 1915. I have kept the Latin terms *habitus* and *studium* below since the English translations «habit» and «interest» are somewhat misleading.

(16) In a fifteenth-century manuscript of *De inventione* in the Biblioteca Laurenziana in Florence, ms. Fiesole 185 (consulted on microfilm at the Biblioteca Nazionale in Rome), almost the only comments in the manuscript are a list of these attributes added later in the margin of fol. 415v.

(17) Geoffrey of Vinsauf's three attributes of 'objects' are all subheadings under Cicero's second category.

artificio sit occupatus, quo modo rem familiarem administret, qua consuetudine domestica).

4. Fortune (*fortuna*) concerns «whether the person is a slave or free, rich or poor, a private citizen or an official with authority» – and if the latter, how the position was acquired; the nature of his fame and what sort of children he has; and finally, «if the inquiry is about one no longer alive, weight must also be given to the nature of his death» (*servus sit an liber, pecuniosus an tenuis, privatus an cum potestate: si cum potestate, iure an iniuria; felix, clarus an contra; quales liberos habeat. Ac si de non vivo quaeretur, etiam quali morte sit affectus erit considerandum*).

5. In contrast to the natural qualities considered under the second category, *habitus* refers to those characteristics acquired «by careful training and practice» (*studio et industria partam*).

6. Next is the dominant feeling or emotion (*affectio*) expressed by the character, such as «joy, desire, fear, annoyance, illness, weakness» (*ut laetitia, cupiditas, metus, molestia, morbus, debilitas*).

7. The attribute of *studium* refers to «unremitting activity ardently devoted to some subject and accompanied by intense pleasure, for example, interest in philosophy, poetry, geometry, literature» (*animi assidua et vehementer ad aliquam rem applicat magna cum voluptate occupatio, ut philosophiae, poëticae, geometricae, litterarum*).

8. Purpose (*consilium*) refers to a «deliberate plan for doing or not doing something» (*aliquid faciendi aut non faciendi excogitata ratio*).

9. actions, 10. accidents, and 11. speeches (*facta, casus, orationes*): Cicero groups these last three together because they «will be considered under three tenses of the verb», past, present, and future(18): «what (the character) did, what happened to him, what he said; or what he is doing, what is happening to him, what he is saying; or what he is going to do, what is going to happen to him, what language he is going to use» (*tribus ex temporibus considerabuntur: quid fecerit, quid ipsi acciderit, quid dixerit; aut quid faciat, quid ipsi accidat, quid dicat; aut quid facturus sit, quid ipse causarum sit, qua sit usurus oratione*).

Although reading through Cicero's descriptions of the attributes of persons may bring to mind specific literary characters(19), the examples provided by Cicero in *De inventione* are either generic or focused on specific kinds of arguments that would be effective in the courtroom. There is evidence of a tradition, however, of illustrating them with elegant,

(18) The ethopoeia, or speech in the voice of a character from literature and the eleventh composition in the ancient sequence of rhetorical exercises known as *progymnasmata*, was to follow a three-fold division «into the three times – present, past and future»: Aphthonius, *Progymnasmata*, translated by M. Heath in *http://www.leeds.ac.uk/classics/resources/rhetoric/prog-aph.htm*. See also other sources in n. 32.

(19) The first considerations under 'manner of life' («with whom reared, in what tradition and under whose direction») characterize the childhood of Achilles as evoked by Statius in the first part of the *Achilleid*. This section comprises the first book of five into which the work was divided in the Middle Ages; P. Clogan (ed.), *The Medieval 'Achilleid' of Statius. Edited with Introduction, Variant Readings, and Glosses*, Leiden 1968.

often literary examples, as in the commentary on *De inventione* by Thierry of Chartres, who cites Virgil, Ovid, Statius, and Lucan among others (20).

Such illustrations of the attributes of persons are not limited to medieval teaching or to commentaries on *De inventione*, however. We find a list of Cicero's attributes illustrated by this type of quotation in an early Renaissance Italian commentary on Geoffrey of Vinsauf's *Poetria nova*. This mid-fifteenth-century manuscript, Pistoia, Archivio Capitolare del Duomo, ms. C. 143, also contains a portion of Dante's *Paradiso* (21). At the point where the analysis of attributes occurs, the scribe has abandoned the commentary that he has been copying (it is finished later by another scribe). Instead he inserts a comparison of the strengths and weaknesses of several available treatises on composition and recommends using the best parts of each. He suggests, for example, supplementing Horace and Quintilian with Geoffrey of Vinsauf on the Theory of Determinations (*Poetria nova* 1761-1841), by means of which students are taught to ornament or refine ('determine') one word by juxtaposing it with another (fol. 30v). Then he recommends that Cicero's *De inventione* be used in addition to Horace and Geoffrey for the attributes of persons and actions. He lists and defines the attributes and provides examples of each (fols. 31v-32v). Some of the examples that he provides for the attributes of persons are as follows (22):

> 1. name: «As in, 'He is truly a Prudentius since he does everything well and prudently'. Theologians often use this kind of argument» (23) (*ut 'Vere hic est Prudentius quia bene facit omnia et prudenter.' Huiusmodi argumento utuntur sepe theologi*) (24).
>
> 2. nature:
>
> a) sex: «Whence Virgil: 'Push off, then, without delay. / A woman is a fickle and changeable thing'» (*Unde Virgilius* [*Aen.* 4, 569 f.]*: Eia age, rumpe moras. varium et mutabile semper / femina*) (25).
>
> b) race: «I fear the Greeks bearing gifts» (*Timeo Danaos et dona ferentes* [Verg. *Aen.* 2, 49]).

(20) Thierry of Chartres, *The Latin Rhetorical Commentaries*, ed. K. M. Fredborg, Toronto 1988, 132.

(21) It is one of only two manuscripts of the *Poetria nova* that also contain a vernacular text.

(22) I have numbered the attributes for modern readers; a tree-diagram would have been more useful and typical for medieval and Renaissance students; see, for example, O. Weijers, *Le maniement du savoir. Pratiques intellectuelles à l'époque des premières universités (XIIIe-XIVe siècles)*, Turnhout 1996.

(23) The commentator goes on to quote Augustine on the name of Jesus, and some of the other attributes are also provided with more examples than are quoted here.

(24) Manuscript orthography has been retained with the exception of 'u' and 'v'.

(25) This example is also found in Thierry's commentary on *De inventione*, *loc. cit.* I am grateful to Margareta Fredborg for providing me with a transcription of Peter Helias's commentary on *De inventione* in Cambridge, Pembroke College, ms. 85, which quotes the same example at fol. 90va.

c) place of birth: 'one nurtured at Thebes or at Argos' (*Thebis nutritus an Argis* [Hor. *ars* 118]).

d) family: «Valor falls early to Caesars» (*Cesaribus virtus contingit ante diem* [Ovid *ars* 1, 184]).

e) age: «The boy rejoices in his lightness, the old man in his weightiness; ever between the two stands youthful glory» (*Exultat levitate puer gravitate senectus / inter utrumque manens stat* [*in*]*iuvenile decus* [Maximian *Elegies* 1, 105-106]).

f) advantages and disadvantages of mind and body (what follows is a close paraphrase or *De inventione* itself): «The advantages and disadvantages of the body and mind are these and the like: strong, weak, tall, short, handsome, ugly, swift, slow, bright, dull, retentive, forgetful, affable, unmannerly, complaining, courteous, pious, well-meaning, stubborn, merciful, evil. Note however that some of these are at times more related to *habitus* [one's own industry] such as pious, impious, merciful, and evil, and the like» (*At commoda vel incommoda corporis sive animi sunt hec et hiis similia: validus, inbecillis, longus, brevis, formosus, deformis, velox, tardus, acutus, hebes, memor, obliviosus, comis, asper, querulus, officiosis, pius, benignus, pervicax, misericors, malignus. Distingue tamen quod quedam ex his quandoque ad habitum reduncuntur, ut pius, impius, misericors et malignus, et hiis similia*). Cf. *inv.* 1, 35.

3. manner of life: «as if I were to say, 'Maurus was a disciple of St. Benedict.' Lucan ... develops an argument thus: 'He was taught wickedness by Sulla and is like to outdo his teacher'» (*ut si dicam 'Maurus fuit discipulus Benedicti.' Lucanus ... sic elicit argumentum: 'Et docilis Sullam scelerum vicisse magistrum'* [Lucan *Phar.* 1, 326]).

4. fortune: «Whence Juvenal: 'Nothing is more intolerable than a wealthy woman'» (*Unde Iuvenalis* [*Sat.* 6, 460] *'Intolerabilius nichil quam femina diues'*).

5. *habitus* (training): «Whence Ovid: 'Ulysses was not comely, but he was eloquent'. 'Eloquent' pertains to *habitus*, 'comely' to nature» (*Unde Ovidius: 'Non formosus erat, sed erat facundus Ulixes'* [*ars* 2, 123]. *Facundus ad habitum, formosus pertinet ad naturam*).

6. feeling / emotion: «Whence Boethius: 'Drive away joy, drive away fear, and flee hope, lest sadness come'» (*Unde Boetius* [*cons. phil.* 1 m. 7, 25-29]*: 'Gaudia pelle / pelle timorem / spemque fugato / nec dolor assit'*).

7. *studium*: «Whence the saying, 'A boy who wants to reach the hoped-for goal in the race endures and does a lot, sweats and freezes, refrains from sex and wine'» (*Unde illud* [Hor. *ars* 413 f.]*: 'Qui studet optatum cursu contingere metam, / multa*[*m*] *tulit, fecitque puer, sudavit at alsit, / abstinuit Venere et vino'*).

8. purpose: «Whence Solomon: 'Do everything with a purpose and afterwards you will have no regrets...'» (*Unde Saloman* [cf. Ecclesiasticus 32, 24]*: 'Omnia fac cum consilio et post factum non penitebis...'*).

9. action: «Whence Lucan says of Caesar, 'Don't consider anything done if anything is left to be done'» (*Unde Lucanus* [2, 657] *ait de Cesare, 'Nil actum reputat cum quid superest agendum'*).

10. accident: «as in 'That man has in his hand a bloody sword', for through this it seems that someone was wounded by him» (*ut 'Iste habet in*

manu gladium cruentatum', per hoc enim videtur quod ab eo sit aliquis vulneratus).

11. speech: «as in 'This one always speaks humbly, that one arrogantly'» (*ut 'Hic semper humiliter, ille semper loquitur arroganter'*)(26).

These attributes were advocated as compositional techniques by Cicero and by this first scribe of the Pistoia manuscript. But they could also function as an interpretive, analytical grid as well, a way to appreciate the rhetorical adroitness of literary characters in their own speeches. Consider, for example, the beginning of Dido's first speech to Aeneas in the *Aeneid* (1, 615-618):

quis te, nate dea, per tanta pericula casus
insequitur? quae vis immanibus applicat oris?
tune ille Aeneas quem Dardanio Anchisae
alma Venus Phrygii genuit Simoentis ad undam?(27)

«Goddess-born, what misfortune has plagued you,
What force has driven you onto savage coasts?
You, then, are Aeneas, whom Venus bore to Anchises
Near the waters of the Simois river in Troy?»

In a fifteenth-century manuscript of the *Aeneid* in the Biblioteca Casanatense in Rome, these first four lines are called a *captatio benevolentiae*: «the words of Dido to Aeneas, trying to capture his good will» (*verba Didonis ad Eneam captando benivolentiam*)(28). As Dido speaks to Aeneas in these lines, she displays her knowledge of his character by using all of Cicero's initial attributes of persons as well as one from later in his list: she refers to his name, nature – both divine and mortal! – sex, race, place of birth, family, and fortune. In the following lines we also learn about Dido's family and something of her own manner of life, fortune, feelings, and emotions (*Aen.* 1, 620-630). Thus, a knowledge of Cicero's categories of attributes of persons would help students analyze Dido's speech and her rhetorical skill in addressing Aeneas here where, according to the Casanatense manuscript, she is attempting to find favor with him although technically he is the suppliant.

The depiction of Dido in Book 4 is very different from that in Book 1 of the *Aeneid*, of course, and Cicero's instructions in Book 2 of *De*

(26) Note that in the medieval examples, Cicero's instructions to treat the last three attributes of persons together in terms of past, present, and future tenses of the verb have been abandoned.

(27) Virgil, *Aeneid*, trans. S. Lombardo, Indianapolis 2005; Latin text in Vergilius, *Opera omnia*, ed. R. A. B. Mynors, Oxford 1969.

(28) Rome, Biblioteca Casanatense, ns. 685, fol. 18r.

inventione about how to use individual attributes to create both positive and negative assessments of characters would also have been helpful in classroom analysis of Dido and the different aspects of her character that are revealed in the work. For example, Cicero emphasizes the power of emotions in establishing character: «A consideration of feeling or emotion such as love [or] anger ... usually reveals an obvious inference, because the force of these emotions is known and it is easy to note what the consequence of any of them is» (*nam affectionis quidem ratio perspicuam solet prae se gerere coniecturam, ut amor, iracundia ... propterea quod et ipsorum vis intelligitur et quae res harum aliquam rem consequatur facile est cognitu...*, *inv.* 2, 30). I submit that all of book 4 of the *Aeneid* could be interpreted as an elaboration on feelings of 'love or anger', and the 'force' and 'consequence' of these emotions. The last three attributes – of actions (*facta*, also translated as 'accomplishments'), accidents, and speeches – are also particularly relevant to reinforcing a positive or negative interpretation of Dido's character: «Finally in the case of accomplishments, accidents and speeches...it will be easy to see what suspicions they offer for strengthening an inference» (*iam facta et casus et orationes, quae sunt omnia ... facile erit videre ecquid afferant ad confirmandam coniecturam suspicionis*). We find examples of each in Dido's 'accomplishments' in creating her own kingdom, the seeming 'accident' of the famous cave scene in which Dido and Aeneas become lovers (carefully orchestrated by Venus and Juno), and all of Dido's 'speeches': she is arguably the most memorable speaker in the poem.

A double approach to Dido's character, in which she is analyzed from both positive and negative points of view, was characteristic of Renaissance approaches to teaching her in the classroom. As we shall see, this approach resonates with Cicero's further instructions in *De inventione* on using the attributes to characterize a defendant from the opposing points of view of the prosecution and the defense. Let us look first, however, at how Dido's character was taught in the schools of Renaissance Venice. As Craig Kallendorf explains, for Venetian teachers of the Quattrocento, «Dido can serve as either a model of virtue or a model of vice, depending on which part of the *Aeneid* the schoolmaster is explicating»(29). Kallendorf is drawing here on Maffeo Vegio's description of the character of Dido in his treatise *On Education* (*De educatione* 2, 18), written ca. 1460, where Vegio notes that both Aeneas and Dido are presented from two points of view:

(29) C. Kallendorf, *Virgil and the Myth of Venice: Books and Readers in the Italian Renaissance*, Oxford 1999, 53.

Nam cum Virgilius sub Aeneae persona virum omni virtute praeditum, atque ipsum nunc in adversis, nunc in prosperis casibus, demonstrare voluerit, ita per Didonem feminas etiam, quibus vitam rationibus instituere deberent vel praemio laudis vel metu infamiae ac tristissimi demum interitus, omni illa sui poematis editione admonere studuit.

«For while Virgil in the character of Aeneas wished to show a man endowed with every virtue, now in unfavourable circumstances, now in favourable ones, so also did he take pains throughout his entire poem to admonish women through Dido about the grounds through which they ought to order their lives, either for the reward of praise or in fear of a bad reputation and finally of a wretched death.»

Vegio then combines descriptions of the good Dido and the bad Dido in a single very, very long sentence, which Kallendorf breaks up in his English translation. First, the positive side:

Quae nam enim audiens illam condendis tantae urbis moenibus intentissime vacantem, iuraque et leges populis iustissime moderantem, marito etiam extincto fidem ac pacta tori conservantem, cum summa laude sua et veneratione finitimorumque omnium timore, non eius exemplo moveatur atque ad virtutis studium magnopere incendatur;

«For who could hear of Dido while she had time to build the walls of such a great city so earnestly, while she was administering laws for her people so justly, while she was preserving the marriage covenant faithfully even though her husband was dead, earning for herself the greatest praise and respect and the fear of all her neighbours – who, I say, would not be moved by her example and greatly aroused toward zealous pursuit of virtue?»

Then – still the same sentence in Vegio – the negative side:

contra vero intelligens novi eam hospitis amore insanientem, ab extructione urbis gubernationeque populorum cessantem, lusibus tamen et conviviis indulgentem, derelictamque ab amante demum, dolentemque et affligentem sese, deperditaque omni spe, mortem etiam ultro sibi consciscentem, non animo conquassetur, non exterreatur, non contremiscatur, non pudicitiam licet austeriorem malit amplecti quam blandiorem libidinem, cum huius fructus tandem amarissimi, illius semper suavissimi habeantur[*?*]

«On the other hand, however, who could become aware of her going mad with love for a newly arrived guest, withdrawing from the construction of her city and the governing of her people, yet giving herself up to dalliance and feasting, and then finally abandoned by her lover, grieving and striking herself, and with all hope lost even inflicting death upon herself – who, I say, could become aware of all this and not be shaken to the depths of her soul, terrified and trembling, who would not prefer to embrace chastity, severe though it is, rather than the allures of lust, since the fruits of the latter are bitter in the end and the fruits of the former are always sweet[?]» (30).

(30) Quoted and translated in Kallendorf, *op. cit.*, 52 f.

Now let us analyze Vegio's double interpretation of Dido in terms of Cicero's teachings about how to depict the defendant from the positive point of view of the prosecutor and negative point of view of the counsel for the defense in the second book of *De inventione*(31). Cicero here shows how the attributes can be used to create positive and negative impressions of a character (in Cicero's case, the defendant), thus providing students with very specific instructions on how, by praise or blame, to create specific effects on the audience(32). Following are the statements from this section of *De inventione* that Vegio's dual approach to teaching Dido reflects most closely. For example, «[I]t will be the task of the prosecutor to select arguments from all this collection [of attributes] to discredit the defendant. For there can be little foundation for a motive for a crime unless such suspicion is cast on the character of the accused that it will seem not to be inconsistent with such a fault...» (*ex quibus omnibus unum in locum coactis accusatoris erit inprobatione hominis uti. nam causa facti parum firmitudinis habet, nisi animus eius qui insimulatur in eam suspicionem adducitur, uti a tali culpa non videatur abhorruisse...*, *inv.* 2, 32). Here we could adduce all of Maffeo's points in the negative part of his analysis(33).

But then Cicero tells us how to argue in favor of the defendant – in our case, Dido(34): «The counsel for the defense, on the other hand, will

(31) Some of the same insights about character are discussed in *De oratore* 2, 341-349, but in a more general and less pedagogically useful form. It would be interesting to explore other directions in the use of antithesis in both later Roman and Renaissance portraits, *e.g.*, in the «*ritratto paradossale*», in which the contradictory elements of personality are set in relief, though without a moralizing and didactic aim. See A. La Penna, *Il ritratto 'paradossale' da Silla a Petronio*, in his *Aspetti del pensiero storico latino*, Turin 1983[2], 193-221, particularly in reference to Sallust's portrait of Lucius Catilina, which was widely imitated in the Renaissance, and *Ancora sul ritratto 'paradossale'. Aggiunte e correzioni*, ibid. 223-230. On the paradoxical (and Catilinian) features in the character sketch of Clement VII, see P. J. Osmond, *The Conspiracy of 1522 against Cardinal Giulio de' Medici: Machiavelli and 'gli esempli delli antiqui'*, in *The Pontificate of Clement VII: History, Politics, Culture*, ed. K. Gouwens and S. E. Reiss, Aldershot 2005, 55-72, at 71.

(32) Cf. the famous dictum of Aristotle, or rather his medieval commentator Averroes, «Every poem, and all poetic utterance, is either praise or blame», *laudatio* or *vituperatio*: Herman the German, *Translation of Averroes' Middle Commentary*, in A. Minnis - A. B. Scott (eds.), *Medieval Literary Theory Criticism c. 1100-c. 1375: The Commentary Tradition*, Oxford 1991[2], 289. Exercises in praise and blame were part of the *progymnasmata*: see Aphthonius, *op. cit.*, as well as G. A. Kennedy, *Progymnasmata: Greek Textbooks of Prose Composition and Rhetoric*, Atlanta 2003; and M. Kraus, *Progymnasmata; Gymnasmata*, in *Historisches Wörterbuch der Rhetorik*, ed. Gert Ueding, VII, Tübingen 2005, 159-190. Horace mentions positive and negative aspects of certain character types at *Ars* 157-177.

(33) *E.g.*, Dido stops governing and building her city while she feasts and makes love with Aeneas. And when he leaves her she kills herself.

(34) A colleague suggested that I call this essay «Judging Dido». The characters that receive double portrayals are often women; I first became interested in this approach when writing an analysis of Chaucer's characterization of Criseyde (*Chaucer the Rhetorician:*

have to show first, if he can, that the life of the accused has been upright in the highest degree. He will do this if he can point to some services well known to everyone...; [and] finally, if he can prove that the defendant has never committed any offence and has never [before] been led by passion to fail in his duty...» (*Defensor autem primum, si poterit, debebit vitam eius, qui insimulabitur, quam honestissimam demonstrare. id faciet, si ostendet aliqua eius nota et communia officia ... denique si nihil deliquisse, nulla cupiditate inpeditum ab officio recessisse*, *inv.* 2, 11). Here we may recall the Dido of Book I when the Trojans arrive: she has created a powerful kingdom and is working tirelessly to rule well, and she has remained unmarried since the death of her husband, resisting the advances of neighboring princes, as Vegio points out. And a last bit of Cicero's advice for the counsel for the defense: «[A] passage expressing resentment coupled with one of complaint can be introduced with great effect...» (*illa magna cum gravitate inducetur indignatio, iuncta conquestioni...*, *inv.* 2, 11). Surely one of the most famous passages of 'resentment coupled with one of complaint' in all of western literature is *Aeneid* 4, 305-330, what the commentator of the Casanatense manuscript calls «The words of Dido to Aeneas after the news of his departure reaches her ears» (*Verba Didonis ad Eneam postquam nouum recessus ipsius peruenit ad aures suas*)(35). It begins as follows:

> *dissimulare etiam sperasti, perfide, tantum*
> *posse nefas tacitusque mea decedere terra?*
> *nec te noster amor nec te data dextera quondam*
> *nec moritura tenet crudeli funere Dido?*
>
> «Traitor! Did you actually hope you could conceal
> This crime and sneak away without telling me?
> Does our love mean nothing to you, doesn't it matter
> That we pledged ourselves to each other?
> Do you care that Dido will die a cruel death?»

Rhetorical analysis helped both students and adult writers to recognize and to create memorable characters and their speeches. In conclusion, let us remember that a literary education based on classical texts was also useful to lawyers, for whom the importance of character

Criseyde and Her Family, «Chaucer Review» 20, 1985, 28-39). My hypothesis there is that what are perceived by modern scholars to be well-rounded characters are those that *De inventione* may have taught authors like Chaucer to approach from both positive and negative points of view.

(35) Rome, Biblioteca Casanatense, ms. 685, fol. 59r.

was often paramount in creating convincing cases for judges and juries. Legal issues informed the interpretation of literature, which in turn informed legal argument. These traditions had reciprocal, reinforcing, and profoundly lasting effects(36).

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