Francis Bacon and composition

Scott David Minard

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Francis Bacon and Composition

A Thesis
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State University,
San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts
in
English Composition

by
Scott David Minard
June 1987
Francis Bacon and Composition

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Approved by:

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Abstract

To illuminate the relevance Francis Bacon has to modern composition, three perspectives are taken: (1) an assessment of important criticism of Bacon's prose style, leading to a preferred method of (2) analyzing a prose passage from Bacon and (3) a discussion of Bacon's self-conscious thoughts on composition and related matters. A comparison of Baconian criticism argues that Brian Vicker's stylistic analysis renders out important qualities in Bacon's prose which Stanley Fish's reader-response method cannot. Fish's method is applied only to Bacon's Essays and slights traditional mechanisms of rhetoric important in the Renaissance and today. Analysis of a passage from Bacon via Vicker's method demonstrates that Bacon's prose can be visionary and dialectical, contrary to Fish's thesis. Bacon's self-conscious thoughts are relevant to composition in terms of organization, style, invention, and concrete language. Bacon suggests that knowledge be presented in the manner in which it was discovered. Bacon's natural induction is closely related to rhetorical design and supplies a need indicated by Mina Shaughnessy and Harvey Wiener. Bacon's psychology of the image is relevant to both writer and audience appeal. Commonplace books suggest that classroom writer's journals should be linguistically pragmatic instead of psychologically therapeutic.
Acknowledgement

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Introduction

The Renaissance marked the rebirth of art, literature, and learning in the western world and also marked the transition from a theological preoccupation with ancients to secular interests. In "The Textbook Tradition in Natural Philosophy," P. Reif examines twenty popular school textbooks in use in England between 1600 and 1650. She concludes that the natural philosophy in those texts was second hand, derived from other texts rather than from a direct investigation and analysis of sense experience. The manualists were "quite enslaved by the written word" (31). Francis Bacon identified the source of this weakness; it stemmed from the learning of the schoolmen:

This kind of degenerate learning did chiefly reign amongst the schoolmen: who having sharp and strong wits, and abundance of leisure, and small variety of reading, but their wits being shut up in the cells of a few authors (chiefly Aristotle their dictator) as their persons were shut up in the cells of monasteries and colleges, and knowing little history, either of nature or time, did out of no great quantity of matter and infinite agitation of wit spin out unto us those laborious webs of learning which are extant in their books. (Bacon 31-32)

In The Advancement of Learning, Bacon contends that man could and should turn away from an investigation of God's Word and turn instead toward God's Works, i.e., Nature. While an investigation of nature could not promise the discovery of ultimate, religious truth, Bacon contended it could "induce and enforce the acknowledgement of God" (104). If God created the world, then the world must be orderly; man could not be wrong to contemplate God's order.

But what kind of order was envisioned? If man were to contemplate a mysterious Nature, he could not go about it in a mysterious manner very practically. True, there were alchemists and astrologers, but their reputations were dubious. The most reliable
methods Renaissance man had at his disposal were the methods of rhetoric. Indeed, scientific method rose out of rhetorical methods, not logic (Kern 236), and our Renaissance representative's, Francis Bacon's, "...method may fairly be called...the rhetoric of [God's] works [my emphasis]" (Wiley 67). According to Stephen H. Daniel, for Bacon "the analogy between spoken or written language and the language of nature is what is meant by reason..."(223). "The elements of nature, like those of language, are tied to one another through imagery, analogy, imaginative variation, and even metaphorical contradictions of logical orders and structures" (Daniel 233-234).

However much a turning toward nature with methodical intent aided the growth of science, Bacon's implicit faith in a world functioning linguistically is essentially a poetic outlook, whatever his intent. This poetic consciousness had all the earnestness and unquestioned acceptance as a faith in God. Language, for Bacon, was the basis of all intelligible thought about the world, the tool of conception. Understandably, Francis Bacon is now known less for his contributions to science and more for his contributions to English prose. "The disparity between the meagre, confused and inaccurate contents of his scientific programme and its overwhelming effect can only be explained by his mastery of style" (Vickers 5). Further, Bacon can be thought of as a communication theorist rather than as a philosopher. "We can say with no exaggeration that communication is the primary and most difficult question Bacon treats as a philosopher" (Stephens 2). Further, Bacon categorized rhetoric, along with all knowledge, according to his understanding of the human faculties: reason, imagination, memory, and will. Because he did so, his communication concerns might well be thought of as "psycholinguistic" as Marc Cogan ably argues in "Rhetoric and Action in Francis Bacon." Bacon's location in time, neither ancient nor modern, but at a cross roads in the development of language, his reputation as a writer, his rejection of the "degenerate Learning" of his time, and his psycholinguistic interests suggest that he can offer relevant insights into the problems of composition.
First, I will review what I feel to be important criticism of Bacon’s prose style. Morris W. Croll formulates some fundamental questions confronting critics of Bacon. Some of Croll’s observations are still relevant and have defined and clarified the directions critics can take. But Brian Vickers supplies the best approach to Bacon’s writing so far. Vickers writes about Bacon’s style from a formalistic perspective, maintaining the technical apparatus of that criticism, yet he remains generous toward other critical approaches. Finally, I want to discuss Stanley Fish’s reader–response to Bacon’s Essays. Fish’s discussion is limited to the Essays, and his reader–response method of analysis slights the traditional mechanisms of composition and rhetoric (syntactical symmetry, partitio, parison, isocolon, etc.) which, because they were Renaissance concerns, seem to be necessary in adequate discussions of that period’s prose.

My second task in this study of Bacon will be to analyze a passage from the Advancement of Learning in a manner after Vickers. I will demonstrate Vickers’ usefulness in describing the qualities of Bacon’s writing. Vickers’ methods, because of their thoroughness, reveal the beauty of Bacon’s unqualified genius. This analysis will show that Bacon does achieve a visionary dialectic, contrary to Fish’s thesis which characterizes Bacon’s prose as "merely self–regulating" and not self–consuming.

Finally, I will discuss Bacon’s relevance to modern composition in terms of organization, concrete language, and commonplace books. Under the heading of organization, Bacon suggests, in anticipation of Coleridge, organic form, i.e. inductive displays in prose mirroring discoveries as they occur in the mind. This in turn suggests as many methods of organization as there will be inventions. Under the heading of concrete language, I will discuss Bacon’s emblematic concerns, i.e. how his concerns with eidetic imagery lead to metaphorical language. Finally, I will discuss Bacon’s use of commonplace books and his advice concerning them. These three areas will all be related to contemporary concerns in composition.
Criticism

Seminal theoretical work in Baconian criticism began with Morris W. Croll in "Attic Prose: Lipsius, Montaigne, Bacon" and "The Baroque Style in Prose," two essays dating from 1923 and 1929 respectively. Croll's view is that Renaissance England, in the years between 1550 and 1650, experienced an unique situation in the history of the English language. At the beginning of this time segment,

The chief artistic use of the vernacular...had been to express the surviving medievalism of the culture of that age.... On the other hand, whatever was really new and forward-looking in the Renaissance found its prose-expression in the ancient tongue [Latin].... One hundred years after that date [1550] the progress of modernism had reversed these relations in most respects. The usual language of serious criticism, and even of philosophy, had become English, French, or Italian.... Between the two termini [1550 and 1650]...there was a most interesting period in which two languages, the ancient and the vernacular, were present in the minds of most well-educated people in relations of almost exact balance and equality, and there were no real differences whatever between the uses of the one and the other. ("Attic Prose" 6-7)

This period of clash, when the thought and style of ancient Latin was being replaced by modern languages closer to the common man, is not unlike the clash between our classical composition theorists who espouse traditional rhetorical techniques in a technological age. Croll's loose description is generally accepted by critics, even if, within the essay, he gives no evidence. Indeed, how could an essay carry the extensive evidence such statements would require? Nevertheless, assuming this description of Renaissance reality, Croll goes on to describe a "literary movement" which reacted against or threatened the reality of language replacement.
According to Croll, Ciceronian purism tended to keep the two styles, Latin and vernacular, separate from each other and therefore led to an "Anti-Ciceronian" movement which insisted that prose style be adapted to different men in different times. Croll explains the difficulties in Cicero's style:

The Ciceronian style cannot be reproduced in English.... The ligatures of its comprehensive period are not found in the syntax of an uninflected tongue; and the artifices necessary to supply their function must produce either fantastic distortion or insufferable bombast. ("Attic Prose" 10)

Consequently, many Renaissance writers modeled their prose on Seneca instead. Seneca's brief, resolved, and analytic sentence constructions allowed them more closely to approach everyday language and the real movements of their own thoughts. But Croll suggests that Bacon, because he was a rationalist, was drawn, in his movement away from Cicero, to Tacitus, a more difficult and profound writer than Seneca. For further evidence, Croll cites Bacon's praise of Tacitus, remarks of Bacon's personal secretary, and the frequency with which Bacon draws upon Tacitus. Croll does not, unfortunately, give any close comparison of Bacon's and Tacitus' style to justify his thesis. Bacon's Tacitean style ends up exemplifying one of three Renaissance prose styles--Lipsius's stoic style and Montaigne's libertine style being the others. All three prose styles, in addition, have a "baroque" tendency (which Croll does not examine until he writes "The Baroque Style in Prose"). What Croll is arguing for in "Attic Prose" is a unified approach by critics toward Renaissance prose:

...it is upon the lines laid down in this classification that the further study of seventeenth-century prose-style must be conducted. What is now necessary is a thorough survey of Stoic prose, libertine prose, and Tacitean prose separately, each treated with reference to its philosophical theory, its preferred models in antiquity and modern times, its relation to the culture of the age, and its rhetorical forms. ("Attic Prose" 24)
This call for a unified approach is important, for it sets up a paradigm that critics would respond to for many years.

In 1928, for instance, Jacob Zeitlin's "The Development of Bacon's Essays and Montaigne" argues that Bacon was not influenced by Montaigne and thereby explodes the myth that Montaigne was one of Bacon's "preferred models" in modern times. Not until 1968, with the appearance of Adolph's The Rise of Modern Prose Style, is Croll's contention that Tacitus was Bacon's model seriously disputed. Adolph argues from a close reading that Tacitus' "dark, oppressive atmosphere" is altogether different from Bacon's "straightforward statements of fact" (30). Further,

Unlike Tacitus, Bacon is stingy with adjectives and adverbs. He has no use at all for the weakening "rather," "somewhat," and "often." Firmness and certainty also emerge in Bacon's preference for the straightforward "is" and "are." ...where Tacitus' metaphors open outward suggestively and dramatically, for Bacon they generally clarify, illustrate and restrict. (31)

Even though influence hunting does not enjoy the popularity it once did, Croll is correct in assuming that the ancients influenced not just the thoughts but the prose styles of Renaissance writers as well.

In answer to critics who contended he was too difficult and abstract in "Attic Prose," Croll wrote "The Baroque Style in Prose," wherein he is more specific with pragmatic suggestions:

There are of course several elements of prose technique: diction, or the choice of words; the choice of figures; the principle of balance or rhythm; the form of the period, or sentence; and in a full description of baroque prose all of these elements would have to be considered. The last-mentioned of them--the form of the period--is, however, the most important and the determinant of the others; and this alone is to be the subject of discussion in the following pages. (28)
Croll evidently had in mind a close analysis of prose style, however little he himself does of it. He discusses prose style in terms of two characteristics: the "curt style" and the "loose style." Bacon is an example of Croll's "loose style," wherein the co-ordinating conjunctions "disjoin the members they join as widely as possible" and absolute-participle constructions commit themselves the least, resolving difficulties that arise in the progress of spontaneous and unpremeditated periods ("Baroque Style" 40). Upon these two observations, Croll generalizes:

The associations of the loose style...are all with the more sceptical phases of seventeenth-century thought—with what was then usually called "Libertinism"; and it appears characteristically in writers who are professed opponents of determined and rigorous philosophic attitudes. It is the style of Bacon and of Montaigne..., of La Mothe le Vayer, and of Sir Thomas Browne. It appears always in the letters of Donne; it appears in Pascal's Pensées... ("Baroque Style" 41).

Croll is generally sound in his close observations, yet such statements, based on generalizations about a whole century's thought, on references to the unexamined styles of five authors, do not sit comfortably. But Croll does begin to define specific characteristics within individual writers' works, and Formalist critics follow this practice.

In 1951, George Williamson wrote The Senecan Amble and developed Croll's thesis with a closer reading than Croll himself did. As Brian Vickers points out in Francis Bacon and Renaissance Prose (1968), "The categories as formulated by Croll were relatively loose, but Williamson tries to apply them in detail, thus producing extremely contorted attempts to distinguish between so-called 'schools'..."(13). If the notion of schools and movements in the development of prose style is impractical, Croll, inadvertently, defined a task that confronts the Renaissance scholar of prose style: much more close attention will have to be given to individual writers before any legitimate generalizations about the period can be made.
Brian Vickers does give Bacon's writings, especially the *Advancement of Learning*, close attention and derives more legitimate generalizations. He approaches Bacon from a stylistic base and is kind enough to explain his "functional view of stylistics":

My own working definition, which does not claim to be exclusive, would assume that a writer's style is an individual selection from the language available at the time (either in the widest sense or in the more limited form of "literary" language); that his choice is made either subconsciously, so showing some habitual tendencies which may be significant, or consciously, that is according to a variety of principles which will depend at one level on his attitude to his reader and at the other on his concepts of the proper nature of (and the connections between) form, meaning and language in the developing work of art. I think that our analysis of style should go far beyond its commonly accepted aim, that merely initial stage of determining the individualising characteristics of a writer, and should consider the relation between the style of a particular passage and, loosely speaking, the argument or overall intention of the whole work, and indeed its degree of excellence. This is a functional view of stylistics, and above all a literary one... (6).

Vickers is not so bold as Croll; he does not suggest a single direction for future critics to pursue. Vickers displays a generous relativism toward other critical approaches, intent upon making a legitimate contribution in a single area of knowledge. He recognizes the legitimacy of influence hunting but qualifies it with the suggestion that a writer's linguistic choices may be unconscious as well as conscious. Rigid arguments like Croll's *Tacitus* thesis are complicated by a necessity for psychological discernments. His thesis seems to ask, to what extent did Bacon consciously model his prose on *Tacitus*? Here, Vickers is loose and generous toward the tradition of Baconian criticism. However,
Vickers' intent is not simply to classify Bacon's style, as Croll then Williamson do, but to derive, from a comparison of style to the work's overall argument, a value judgment.

Looking a little closer at Vickers' argument, the notion of unconscious and conscious stylistic traits remains a problem in literary value judgments. Vickers' own stance regarding the relation between the two needs clarification. Arguing that Baconian criticism can gain much "by considering the development of particular aspects of style as seen in preceding and contemporary theory and practice" (14), Vickers claims to have discovered "...a common enough phenomenon, that Bacon's stylistic practice is certainly based on his theories but far exceeds them in range and subtlety" (15). This suggests that Bacon was not entirely conscious, not entirely aware in a critical sense, of his stylistic virtues. It is likely that many of Bacon's stylistic traits were intuitive or unconscious, i.e., were the commonly accepted and unquestioned practices of his literary milieu. At least Bacon does not mention many of his own traits in his theories (theories collected from different sources and patched together by scholars), so any clear distinction between what could be considered conscious or unconscious on Bacon's part is conjectural. Vickers says later, "...I find no evidence in his style which either contradicts his thought and attitudes, or points to aspects of which he was himself unaware" (18). Vickers seems to be at odds with himself: Bacon's stylistic practice exceeds his theory in range and subtlety, yet there is no evidence that Bacon was unaware of such subtleties. The issue may be important. To what extent is Bacon a self-conscious artist? Which elements of Bacon's writings have intentional "aesthetic status"? Which are simply unconscious accidents? How will Vickers be able to deliver a value judgment on Bacon's artistry without answering these questions? Vickers does not answer directly:

Granted that the style critic will not use his analysis to construct hypotheses about his writer's psychology, how is he justified in neglecting a work's whole 'content' to focus on its 'form'? This is a question which has much exercised students of style: it seems to me that some temporary separation is
unavoidable but that the critic should always be trying to see how one informs
the other. (19)

How well a stylistic maneuver relates to its surrounding context is a criterion for literary
value judgments—clearly a Formalist position. If Vickers uses Bacon's own theoretical
utterances to bolster his thesis, his obligation is still to the text and not to conjectures
about an author's intents and self-conscious awarenesses—apt recognition of the
intentional fallacy. Form is one aspect which colors and is colored by the work's
meaning, its content, but the meaning should be understood from the perspective of the
period in which it was written.

In actual practice, this means taking up an historical perspective which allows
much interpretative leeway: "...for example, Renaissance rhetoricians taught that the
same rhetorical figure could be applied to a variety of emotional moods" (Vickers 24).
Perhaps I exaggerate in reading this to mean that, for Vickers, different particular stylistic
deVICES can effectively enhance any given context. This extreme position is ameliorated
somewhat by an a priori assumption of value: "...the critic may have started from these
value judgments, for he will only be undertaking stylistic analysis if he is convinced that
the work concerned is either aesthetically valuable in itself, or of historical significance"
(9). Nevertheless, if a stylistic critic has enough imagination, he should be able to argue
that a stylistic device and context mutually enhance one another in any arbitrary situation.

Hence, Vickers recognizes the necessity for "artistry" in the critical process, an
artistry tempered by experience and good judgment:

...two distinguished modern students of style describe...abilities needed by a
successful practitioner: 'it requires a combination of artistic gifts and
scholarly qualities'..., such unscientific attributes as 'talent, experience, and
faith'.... (Vickers 12)

In a seeming attempt to avoid the "intentional fallacy," Vickers first draws upon Bacon's
self-conscious utterances and then assumes a Renaissance view of stylistic devices in
order to harmonize creatively meaning-content with stylistic structure. The burden of responsibility rests finally upon the critic's tempered, "artistic" abilities, not the text, and the focus has seemingly shifted to problems of the reader and the "affective fallacy."

In *Self-Consuming Artifacts*, Stanley E. Fish dismisses the problem of the "affective fallacy":

'The Affective Fallacy [Fish quoting Wimsatt and Beardsley] is a confusion between the poem and its results (what it is and what it does).... It begins by trying to derive the standards of criticism from the psychological effects of the poem and ends in impressionism and relativism. The outcome...is that the poem itself as an object of specifically critical judgment tends to disappear (*The Verbal Icon*, Kentucky, 1954, p. 21).' I would reply that this is precisely what happens when we read—the work as an object tends to disappear—and that any method of analysis which ignores the affective reality of the reading experience cuts itself off from the source of literary power and meaning. (4)

Coming from a Formalistic background, I am dubious of Fish. He seems to say: "Since any appraisal is the responsibility of my own good judgment, why not idolize the process of my judging instead of kowtowing to some Platonic, ideal conception of texts"? This reaction is honest, for despite tentative phenomenological and psychological justification, the "ideal reader" is bound to be as problematic as the ideal text. The relativism implicit in an "ideal reader" is tempered by Fish's notion of community:

It is only if there is a shared basis of agreement at once guiding interpretation and providing a mechanism for deciding between interpretations that a total and debilitating relativism can be avoided. (*Is There a Text in This Class?* 317)

What I have been arguing is that meanings come already calculated, not because of norms embedded in the language but because language is always
perceived, from the very first, within a structure of norms. That structure, however, is not abstract and independent but social... (318)

In other words, while relativism is a position one can entertain, it is not a position one can occupy. No one can be a relativist, because no one can achieve the distance from his own beliefs and assumptions which would result in their being no more authoritative for him than the beliefs and assumptions held by others, or, for that matter, the beliefs and assumptions he himself used to hold. (319)

Apparently, Fish would displace the relativism between readers to a relativism between communities. If an individual is imbued with communal assumptions, the danger of relativism is absent. If communities are relative, then the danger of communism is absent? Fish seems to seek justification for his critical stance in social psychology, an altogether different discipline. Books, not social psychology, are the one constant in literary criticism. The insistence that an ideal text exists seems to me a reassuring indication of conviction on any critic's part and that he or she is guaranteeing the reader that his or her remarks are carefully considered. But to return, while Fish continues to refine his general thesis, I will have to deal with what he says specifically about Francis Bacon.

In *Self-Consuming Artifacts* is a chapter entitled "Georgics of the Mind: The Experience of Bacon's *Essays*." This chapter is an enlargement of an essay by the same title which appeared a year earlier in Fish's *Seventeenth Century Prose: Modern Essays in Criticism*. The later chapter is three times larger than the original essay. Most of this growth is attributable to close reader-response reading of Bacon's "Of Adversity," "Of Goodness and Goodness of Nature," "Of Ambition," "Of Suitors," "Of Cunning," and "Of Friendship." Fish's tenacious, patient renderings are admirable, but his thesis is essentially the same as it was in the earlier essay, as it was when developed solely on the basis of "Of Love":

12
Bacon's style...looks both outward (in its movement toward logical form) to the objective reality he would ultimately describe, and inward (as a kind of caution) to the mind which is attempting the description; thus the sense of incompleteness and unresolved complication within a logical and discursive scaffolding.... (279)

In this outward-inward conflict between content and form, Fish finds unity via Bacon's scientific concerns: "There is, I think, another kind of consistency to the essays, a consistency of experience, which in turn is a reflection of what might be called an 'impelling plan'" (Prose 262). Here, a Formalist would charge that Fish's affective assumptions lead to the "intentional fallacy"—whatever his affective concerns are. To conjecture from a "sense of incompleteness," i.e., from no explicit evidence one way or the other, that Bacon had a deliberate, "impelling plan" seems a remote possibility.

If Bacon had a deliberate plan, the implication is that the plan preceded the product. Fish goes to the Novum Organum for Bacon's description and prescription of scientific experiment (Self-Consuming 149). But the Novum Organum was being written at the same time the Essays were being revised. In 1597, the Essays were published in their earliest form, were revised to be published in 1612, and again revised for publication in 1625. The Novum Organum was probably begun in 1608 but not published until 1620. I would suggest that Bacon's theories, as patched together from the Novum Organum and his various other works, probably represent stray thoughts arising as much from the Essays' composition as informing that composing process. If E. N. S. Thompson's The Seventeenth-Century English Essay is correct in its characterization of the Renaissance essay form, then one might well assume the Essays were an experimental medium for Bacon. I agree with the more common-sense views of P. B. Burke and W. G. Crane that the Essays' final form is probably due to elaboration from commonplaces. This seems more plausible than Fish's inward-outward, Janus-
faced unity theory. Having said this, it is only fair that we listen to Fish answer Brian Vickers on this issue:

Vickers has remarked on Bacon's 'willingness,' in the later essays, 'to jettison a neat structure (223),' but he attributes this to a concern for objective truth.... It seems to me, however, that Bacon's disrupting of patterns is reader-rather than information-oriented. It would have been entirely within his literary resources to have built symmetrical structures large enough to accommodate 'new quotations or historical examples.' That he did not choose to do so is, I think, evidence of a more critical attitude toward such structures than Vickers would allow. (Self-Consuming 121)

Again, Fish conjectures Bacon's critical self-consciousness on the basis of omission.

If the Janus-unity thesis owes more to Fish's ingenuity than to anything in Bacon, this thesis is only part of another, larger thesis when "Georgics of the Mind" is reworked, enlarged, and inserted into Self-Consuming Artifacts. Fish's larger thesis in Artifacts suggests that seventeenth-century prose is either dialectical or discursive in nature. Discursive prose is considered to be ordinary and rational. Dialectical prose is anti-rational and self-consuming because it is used up and abandoned in its attempt to make better persons rather than improve upon its own art form. Dialectical prose points toward vision, to "the way of the good, the way of the inner light, the way of faith" (Self-Consuming 3-4). Implicitly, dialectical prose is better than discursive prose, because the dialectical favors Fish's notion that the reader, not the text, is all important. Hence,

...while the dialogues of Plato and Donne are self-consuming, Bacon's Essays are merely self-regulating; his words may be, as he terms them, seeds,... but they will flower in other words rather than in a vision.... For all their provisionality the Essays are finally objects; they are not used up in the reading...they reflect quite accurately the partial (not irrelevant) understanding
of the mind that fashioned them and of the minds that read them. (Self-
Consuming 154)

Such a dichotomy into self-consuming or self-regulating appears to be as artificial and
generalizing as Croll's division of styles into "curt" and "loose."

Fish performs his close reading of Bacon, demonstrating reader response,
showing one basic reaction to the movements of various passages: a paradoxical and
contradictory (and Formalism's favorite, ironic?) tension is evident in and between
Bacon's forms and data. One word leads to the next, one word hues the next, casting
back lights on what has already passed only to fragment against Bacon's stark structures.
Fish says, in his conclusion to "Literature in the Reader," that this reading process is "a
language-sensitizing device, and as the 'ing' in sensitizing implies, its operation is long
term and never ending (never coming to the point)." I find it odd that the characterization
of Bacon's Essays and reader-response are so similar, especially when Fish contends
that the Essays "are merely self-regulating," discursive, and not self-consuming or
dialectical. Yet this reading process, where a reader is animated by the temporal
movement of words, is not what Bacon's prose demands, nor is it, if it matters, what
Bacon explicitly suggests. Consider Bacon's remarks concerning, say, aphorisms, a
favorite stylistic device:

...aphorisms, representing a knowledge broken, do invite men to inquire
further; whereas methods, carrying the show of a total, do secure men, as if
they were at furthest. (Bacon 164)

Here, Bacon seems to intend a prose style that would lead to Fish's self-consuming,
rather than self-regulating criteria, that is, to a style that would abandon itself. Bacon's
prose requires pauses, conceptual shifts which direct the reader back upon his own
resources to find answers to such disparities as Fish finds between form and content.
That is, Bacon's prose in the Essays points away from itself to the reader's own
perceptions of the world. Therefore, is it not, in Fish's own terms, abandoned, used up,
self-consumed and not "merely self-regulating"? Self-consuming versus self-regulating seems a fuzzy distinction.

For instance take Fish's example, "Of Love," in the earlier version of "Georgics of the Mind." Fish uses only part of Bacon's essay in his demonstration, uses the first sentence he cites (which is not the first sentence in the essay) as the starting point from which the reader begins his responses. "Everything about the first [cited] sentence serves to inspire confidence..." (254), so Fish begins his dramatization and ends it with:

By the time the reader reaches the actual statement [the last period Fish has cited], its status is so unclear that the question of record--whether or not great men and mad lovers constitute mutually exclusive classes--is only further muddled.... What are we to make of this confusion? (255)

To begin with, Fish might have dealt with more of the essay, quoting, say, up to the more conclusive aphorism, "That it is impossible to love, and to be wise." At this point, one would find Bacon's argument generalized, resolved more adequately, and greater harmony between content and form. Given the importance Bacon places on the aphorism as a style that distils "some good quantity of observation," an importance Fish himself takes pains to point out (Prose 259-260), one wonders why Fish did not include the aphorism in his discussion on "Of Love." Second, it seems that Fish's limitation is due to his own reading process, a process which attempts to impose a linear drama or film-sequence temporality upon the printed page, and, in doing so, levels and squeezes the relations between words into an equality that is blind to conceptual shifts which are largely independent of prose movement. As the Deconstructionist Gregory L. Ulmer says, "...logocentrism simply names the era of alphabetic writing that replaced oral civilization and that is given way, in turn, to an electronic era, in which we are beginning to think filmically" (48). While a deconstructionist would offer multiple interpretations and thereby avoid some problems with an "ideal reader," Fish derives a singular perspective of conflict between content and form in a linear reading. What Bacon's prose demands is
that the reader pause, lay the text aside, ponder his own thoughts, and move to another conceptual level apart from the video drama of prose flow. Again,

...aphorisms, representing a knowledge broken, do invite men to inquire further; whereas methods, carrying the show of a total, do secure men, as if they were at furthest. (Bacon 164)

Bacon's prose deals in concepts at least as much as in dramas, and its requirements are different. They are Renaissance requirements. I am surprised that Fish does not judge Bacon's Essays to have the distinction of being self-consumptive.

Where Fish finds that Bacon was critically self-conscious not having built symmetrical structures large enough to accommodate his data, I would say Fish was not critically aware having built his own, for the distinction Fish makes between self-consuming and self-regulating prose is more useful as an organizing motif. Anne Righter's statement, though dismissed by Fish, is still true:

...the 1625 edition [of the Essays] is not a tidy knitting together of various ideas which interested Bacon; it is an accumulation of disparate pieces as difficult to generalize about, or to connect internally, as Donne's Songs and Sonets, and it is to be read in a not dissimilar fashion. ('Francis Bacon" 26)

These, I think, are the facts of the Essays. Fish is at his best when engaged in the process of responding closely to the text. With his method, one might well probe a problem defined by Farrington in Francis Bacon: Philosopher of Industrial Science. In reference to De Augmentis, Farrington says that Bacon

...gives us a necessary clue to the interpretation of his works when he says that he prefers, out of respect for antiquity, to stick to the traditional vocabulary, but that we must expect the words to bear new meanings which will be clear from context. (164)

Such problems might well be investigated fruitfully using Fish's method of closely rendering the play of words.
I realize that, in contrast to Vickers' larger emphasis upon The Advancement of Learning, Fish deals explicitly only with the Essays. Fish's theories of reader response are still in the process of being formulated, and I have intended only to deal with Baconian criticism. So, I admit a distinct preference for Brian Vickers' work because it builds upon and extends critical traditions stemming from Morris W. Croll. Unlike Fish, Vickers' is not hesitant to use such terms as parison, isocolon, antimetabole, paromoion, homoiooteleuton, anaphora, and epistrophe. He lays out in diagrammatic fashion Bacon's periods so that their syntactical symmetries can be seen as my next section demonstrates. Because Vickers accepts the Renaissance notion that a single stylistic device can be used to enhance a variety of moods, I find his stance amenable to Deconstructionist views. On the other hand, Fish's temporal, linear dramatization of Bacon's prose is blind to conceptual shifts and makes the mistake of imposing a dubious, Janus-faced unity on a collection of disparate, and perhaps experimental, essays. However thought provoking Fish's view may be, however useful it might prove to be in problems of diction, I hope my next section demonstrates that Vickers' perspective and methods are altogether more useful and promising—a solid step forward.
Analysis

A Peccant Humor

The first of these is the extreme affecting of two extremeties; the one Antiquity, the other Novelty: wherein it seemeth the children of time do take after the nature and malice of the father [1]. For as he devoureth his children, so one of them seeketh to devour and suppress the other; while antiquity envieth there should be new additions, and novelty cannot be content to add but it must deface [2]. Surely the advice of the prophet is the true direction in this matter, State super vias antiquas, et videte quaenam sit via recta et bona, et ambulate in ca: [stand ye in the old ways, and see which is the good way, and walk therein] [3]. Antiquity deserveth that reverence, that men should make a stand thereupon, and discover what is the best way; but when the discovery is well taken, then to make progression [4]. And to speak truly, Antiquitas saeculi juventus mundi [5]. These times are ancient times, when the world is ancient, and not those which we account ancient ordine retrogrado, by a computation backwards from ourselves [6].

In this passage from Of the Advancement of Learning, under the Victor Harris' heading in English Prose, 1600–1660, "The Peccant Humours," Bacon uses a variety of rhetorical devices to reinforce and enhance his argument. The basic argument of this passage says that the validity of any new claim does not depend upon the corruption and suppression of either past or present views, but rather, progress is made after a careful, respectful consideration of the past. Bacon's argument may be roughly divided into three parts. The first is negative, condemning the "two extremities" of the first Peccant Humour. The second gives positive advice, "Stand ye in the old ways...." And the last concludes with a paradoxical extension of this advice, "These are ancient times...."
Among the rhetorical devices Bacon uses in his delivery are *partitio*, metaphor, syntactical symmetry, repetition, and aphorism.

To begin, Bacon uses *partitio* to divide his Humour into two extremes: Antiquity and Novelty. The opening seems objective enough, but on closer inspection, a definite stance can be noted. The repetition of "extreme" and "extremitie" is extreme, implying that extreme-ness is not only of the affectation, but also characteristic of the "extremitie" themselves. Though we cannot be absolutely certain of Renaissance pronunciation, the italicized long "e" rhyme seems to originate in "these" and may, perhaps, be carried over into "Antiquity" and "Novelty." To the modern ear, this is surely an "affecting" of rhetoric. The extravagant inner rhyme of this opening is suggestive of tediousness, of a whiny child deprived of some vain trifle by a more sensible authority, by Bacon. While Bacon's tone remains objective, employing a formal use of partitio, his rhetoric generally indicates condemnation.

Bacon finishes out this first period with an aphoristic metaphor, elaborating the established division with domestic images. "Antiquity" becomes "the father." "The children of time" replace "Novelty." The sudden absence of the tedious "e" rhyme is a relief. "Seemeth," the possible exception, is a vague, weak verb, but its apparent participation in the rhyme gives it more power. What "seemeth" true rarely is. Therefore, the aphoristic "the children of time do take after the nature and malice of the father," freed from tedious rhyme, insinuates the opposite; i.e., it is less extreme when children learn from their fathers' mistakes. Further, this introduction of domestic, idyllic images is disrupted by "malice." "...This dropping of a discordant acid idea into a smooth creamy context..." as Brian Vickers suggests, indicates "...an attitude running at a lower (and opposed) level to the tone..." (126). This first period, then, begins objectively with the clear cutting *partitio* but quickly plunges into subjective associations that point away from the literal. The clear but empty relation between Antiquity and Novelty becomes a complex family relationship. To say that children inherit bad traits
from their father while rhetorically suggesting the opposite sets up a thematic problem that needs to be resolved. Bacon appeals to the reader's imagination with metaphor and leads with unanswered questions.

In the second period of Bacon's passage, the metaphorical father-children drama is elaborated with syntactical symmetry. The schematic displays of symmetrical clauses are Vickers:

| For as he | devoureth        | his children,          | A |
| so one of them | seeketh         | and supress the other; | B |
| to        | devour          | new additions,        | C |
| while Antiquity | envieth        | but it must deface.  | D |
| there should be | cannot be content to add |             | E |
| and Novelty |

Generally, the progress of the previous period is inverted. Instead of moving from the *partitio* distinction to metaphor, the progression here is from father and children in the first main clause to Antiquity and Novelty in the second. But within each main clause, the *partitio* order of ancient father followed by novel children is retained and emphasized by *homoioateleuton*: "new additions" in line E echoes the corresponding clause part, "his children," in line A. If "ion" did not rhyme with "en" in 17th century England, this effect can still be appreciated by the modern reader. As opposed to the aphoristic end of the first period, clause length expands with *isocolon* of syllables between lines B-C and D-E. *Paromoion* of "e" and "eth" rhymes prevails throughout the verbs and verbal constructions. In lines A and C there is a *parison* effect between "devoureth" and the verbal construction, "to devour." The parison effect is repeated in lines E and F with "should be" and "cannot be." The double "u" and "s" sound combinations in "suppress the other" (line C) are repeated in "but it must deface" (line G). Again, we can appreciate the "u"/"o" rhyme, but it may have sounded differently to the Renaissance ear. Line G achieves enormous power by the shortening of "additions" (line E) to the abrupt, introductory "add" (line F), by replacing the conjunction "and" (line C) with "but," and by continuing the hard alliteration of "b," "t," "d" (established in line F) with an "s-c"
hiss. Clearly the rhetoric of this second period is powerful and ingenious, but to what end?

The symmetry of the second period adds little information not given in the first. The first period says that father and children have a common malicious nature. The second simply adds that the children use each other as they were used by the father. Does this distinction deserve to be so elaborate, so odious? If the father–child metaphor is an allusion to the founding of Rome, the myth of Romulus and Remus, then the weight of Bacon's complex rhetoric is more in order. James Stephens describes Bacon's use of fable and myth:

Bacon's philosophical works...are carefully integrated, mutually dependent arguments for the new science, arguments which often hinge on the author's success in constructing out of old fables and parables a new myth for the modern age. The new myth, which Bacon takes more seriously than its ancient analogues, serves primarily as a concrete, sensuous impression, as a vehicle for the practical ideals of science. (Stephens 111-127)

The Oxford Companion to Classical Literature gives a thorough but brief account of this Romulus–Remus myth:

Amulius...ousted Numitor the rightful king, and made Numitor's daughter, Rhea Silvia, a Vestal Virgin..., thereby preventing her from marrying. But she became by Mars mother of twin children, Romulus and Remus. Amulius made away with the mother and threw the children into the Tiber. They were washed ashore and suckled by a she-wolf [the sacred animal of Mars].... They...overthrew Amulius, and restored Numitor. They then decided to found a new settlement where they had been washed ashore. An omen by the flight of birds decided that Romulus should be king of it. Romulus proceeded to build his city..., and Remus showed his contempt for it by jumping over
the newly built wall. He was thereupon killed by Romulus or one of his companions.... (366)

Bacon's diction points to this myth. The *Oxford English Dictionary* says that the obsolete *devoureth* means "...to make away with, waste, destroy (substance, property or *fig.* its owners)." Whether Bacon intuitively or consciously thought Amulius to be the father of Romulus and Remus is a question, but Amulius is male, elder to the boys, and asserts the control of a patriarch over the whole family. Further, Mars could be construed as the warrior aspect of Amulius' psyche. Approached from the standpoint of modern meaning, *devoureth* surely evokes a wolflike, Marslike image. The motive for Amulius' treatment of the heirs is alluded to with "envieth." Citing this passage from Bacon, the *O.E.D.* defines "envieth" as obsolete, meaning "...to grudge that (something should take place)." This "something" suggests "new additions," the ascension of the heirs. Finally, Remus "must deface" his brother's city by jumping the wall. The parallels between Bacon's metaphor and the myth are substantial. If the allusion is granted, the effect is remarkable. By recreating the story with minor distortions, Bacon demonstrates his argument: learn from the past, from its failings and achievements. The founding of the Roman Empire was such an achievement.

Together with his first two periods, the rhetoric of Bacon's third continues to demonstrate his argument. To use *partitio* is to take some good from the past. The use of *partition* extends back to Cicero and Quintilian, if not Plato (Vickers 30-37), but

He [Bacon] avoided its potential weaknesses--rigidity, mechanical symmetry -exploited and even improved on its known virtues both in practice and in theory, constantly embodying its form and function in organic imagery.

(Vickers 59)

Bacon "...characteristically turns the formal technique of division into an occasion for witty analogy..." (Vickers 50). In the second period, the metaphorical allusion demonstrates implicitly the *sententia* or maxim that follows:
Surely the advice of the prophet is the true direction in this matter, *State super vias antiquas, et videte quaecum sit via recta et bona, et ambulate in ea:* [stand ye in the old ways, and see which is the good way, and walk therein].

The implicit is made explicit. By quoting the ancient Latin, Bacon stands, without doubt, "in the old ways," demonstrating his argument once again. Though sententious, this third period fulfills the functions Vickers attributes to Bacon's use of aphorism:

...the aphorism does have a valuable function in many individual contexts--indeed its role here is often to clinch an argument, either as the summing up of a particular sequence, or by providing an appeal to general experience, and so its force can only be appreciated by quoting the whole context (Vickers 90).

Embodying explicitly in a positive declaration what was implicit in the first two periods, "stand ye in the old ways" is aphoristic. So, Bacon has moved from sterile, empty partitio to imaginative, complex metaphor to an aphoristic moral that is commonly instructive.

Bacon's fourth period draws out the sententious third period. Though it carries a flavor of aphorism, the fourth period displays complete symmetry, when transcribed in a manner after Vickers:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Antiquity</th>
<th>that men should make a stand thereupon.</th>
<th>B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>that reverence, the best way;</td>
<td>C</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>that reverence, the best way;</td>
<td>D</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antiquity</td>
<td>that reverence, is well taken, progression.</td>
<td>E</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Paroimion*, established in line A with "antiquity" and "that," is completed with "that" and "stand" in line B and carries over into line C with "and." *Paroimion* is repeated in lines D and E with "when" and "then." In line C, the structure "discovery is" is repeated in line D. This effect of *parison* also occurs in lines B and E with "make." The near rhymes of "en" and "on" at the end of the clauses give the effect of *homoioiteleuton*, at least to the modern reader. Consisting of eleven syllables, lines A and D exhibit *isocolon*. Lines B and C repeat this effect with nine syllables. The symmetry is clear.
Also in period four, Bacon's metaphor is seen "to make progression." The opposition between Antiquity and Novelty, father and children, achieves dialectical synthesis. The children have grown into men and face not their father, but Antiquity. As the myth of Romulus and Remus materializes, so it vanishes in this rhetorical dialectic:

That Bacon thought in images is demonstrated by the subtle and almost casual use of them in the Advancement, where they are mingled, expanded, and sometimes introduced only to be dropped. Like hieroglyphs or emblems, word pictures in the Advancement communicate their secret meanings to the interested and attentive reader...who participates imaginatively in the author's struggle to recruit others for the task of reform. (Stephens 156)

Bacon illuminates the reader's subconscious by retelling implicitly a myth in the dialectical advancement of learning. This progress reaches its paradoxical climax in the fifth period: "...And to speak truly, Antiquitas saeculli juvenis mundi...." Roughly translated, the Latin says antiquity's generation was the youth of the world. Novelty is not only mature but older than Antiquity! Vickers' remarks on aphorism may again be applied to sententia, for this fifth period "...depends to a great degree on its context and on its power to act as a sudden flash of illumination..." (Vickers 91). This paradoxical vision is light years away from the empty clarity of the partitio structure which opens the passage. If the partition structure is logical and linear, the paradox is circular and almost like a haiku in its effect. Only with difficulty can the reader ferret around the paradox in linguistic terms. The reader's natural impulse is to rise to a visual plane where the contradictions dwell with one another more comfortably. Bacon plants a subtle seed, and when it sprouts, the effect is startling, yet natural.

The development of Bacon's argument is completed with the denouement of the sixth period, clarifying the preceding paradoxical sententia. The repetition of words and rhyme give this last period a flavor of symmetry, but on the whole it is aphoristic and immediate. By using "we," Bacon addresses and involves his audience personally in the
present. "We" are no longer "men" or "children" in opposition to Antiquity, but "we" are the Antiquity of the present and implicitly the youth of the future. The old Latin, "ordine retrogrado," is no longer interjected, but is an intrinsic part of the sentence. The extremes of Bacon's divisions are brought harmoniously together.

Overall, this passage from Bacon shows a rich and ingenious construction. Its auditory effects approach those of poetry. Its metaphorical motif is dynamic: starting with a domestic situation, progressing to the founding of a state, and ending with the world. Time, too, follows a progression: from the past into the immediate present with suggestions toward the future. The effect is somewhat like the bird omen of Romulus, taking flight in an expansion through space and time. The closeness of one's arm chair widens to the timeless horizon. Indeed, the myth of Romulus and Remus is a hovering luminescence that gains a potent relevance from Bacon's interrelations of times past, present, and future; but in turn, the myth visually illuminates his argument and prepares the careful reader for the sudden, paradoxical, and visionary insight: we are ancient, and ancients are young. This is Bacon's conceit, but it is well in line, for the rhetorical structure is as methodical as any mason could hope for. Each sentence elaborates upon the one preceding and secures a rhetorical foundation for the period that is to follow. If the reader feels uncomfortable with what seems a subtle scheming, Stanley Fish's observation about dialectic (but not about Bacon's "discursive" Essays) is relevant: dialectic is meant to be disturbing (Self-Consuming 1). Bacon's rhetoric does more than convey distilled knowledge. It demonstrates and enhances the idea under discussion; it recreates the idea in its original complexity; and it stimulates the reader toward further independent thought.
Baconian Thoughts

The foregoing section attempted to demonstrate what actually can appear in Bacon's prose. Perhaps such a demonstration is as far as one may legitimately go. Yet, Bacon was to a certain degree a self-conscious writer, and his utterances can be instructive when compared to modern comments on composition. Of the writing of his age, Bacon has this timeless criticism to make:

For as knowledges are now delivered, there is a kind of contract of error between the deliverer and the receiver. For he that delivereth knowledge, desireth to deliver it in such form as may be best believed, and not as may be best examined; and he that receiveth knowledge, desireth rather present satisfaction, than expectant inquiry; and so rather not to doubt, than not to err: glory making the author not to lay open his weakness, and sloth making the disciple not to know his strength. (Advancement 162)

Our era of electronic media creates a predigested prose that is, more often than not, a substitute for independent thought. Printed matter, on the other hand, does not rush away but remains to be lingered over. Above, Bacon expresses a wish to be examined and not accepted blindly, making the most of an essential asset of written prose. His purpose has often been summed up rather tersely: "...the duty and office of rhetoric is to apply reason to imagination for the better moving of the will" (Advancement 168). Reason and imagination play important roles in Bacon's thought. Where they impinge upon composition's concerns can be instructive to both students and teachers.

Bacon does not address the task of composition directly, because writing was evidently synonymous with thinking in his mind. His theories must be pieced together from various of his works, as K. R. Wallace has done. Again then, the Renaissance world before modern science developed was often understood in linguistic terms.
Rhetoric was the tool of conception, the method of reason. Entities in the real world, if they were thought of at all, arranged themselves in terms of language, not in scientific terms. Indeed, scholars tracing the beginnings of scientific method find rhetoric, not logic, to be at the foundation of science. In this context, Bacon's "new" induction, the essence of reason, is often lauded as a first appearance of scientific method, but his induction is also relevant to his rhetorical method:

There is another term than "inductive," however, which would seem to designate Bacon's scheme of truth-seeking more accurately and to be perhaps, even now, capable of rehabilitation, and that is the word "rhetorical." (Wiley 66)

Bacon's notions of rhetorical method are inextricably bound up in his "new" induction, which on a first perusal seems to apply only to a science he himself never practiced.

Lisa Jardine gives a good description of Bacon's inductive process:

The inductive method which Bacon proposes as his own method of discovery is supposed to be a natural method. It corresponds stage by stage to the process of perception of natural phenomena. Primitive perceptions are recorded, sifted and tabulated under their most evident groups, and then an eliminatory induction is carried out. These three stages in the 'interpretation of nature' supposedly correspond to the natural functions of the senses, memory and reason.... (70-71)

A "natural method" that attempts to correspond to the "natural functions" of the human mind is not a method based on Platonic, ideal forms. Yet, Bacon's natural induction was not the opposite of logical deduction; rather, it was a means of correcting the faults of deduction. He objected to the use of the purely logical syllogism in discovery because the syllogism's middle terms were derived from a priori principles:

...the induction which the logicians speak of...whereby the principles of sciences may be pretended to be invented, and so the middle propositions by
derivation from the principles; their form of induction, I say, is utterly vicious and incompetent.... (Advancement 144)

As Stephens suggests, Bacon condemned formal patterns of thought and presentation because they encourage the mind to jump wrongly to pleasing generalizations (58). More specifically:

That particulars are infinite, and the higher generalities give no sufficient direction: and that the pith of all sciences, which maketh the artsman differ from the inexpert, is in the middle propositions, which in every particular knowledge are taken from tradition and experience. (Bacon, Advancement 142)3

But where does rhetoric come in? Without an acquaintance with the Advancement of Learning and its criticism, this last passage does not give any overt indication that anything but a primitive science is implied. Therefore, some elaboration of Bacon's terms is helpful: (1) "every particular knowledge" included rhetoric; (2) "tradition" is the "...tradition of knowledge over from hand to hand..." (Advancement 8), i.e., "the whole enterprise of expressing or transferring our knowledge to others in speech, in writing, in exposition, or in controversy" (Howell 369); and (3) "experience" is essentially the same thing as history (Fussner 256). The applicability of Bacon's inductive method ranges over many arts, indeed, "all sciences." It could be described as an orderly habit of mind.

H. S. Wiener, in The Writing Room, has recognized the value of eliminatory induction:

...a student must not only generate sufficient details to support a description, but he must then also choose details wisely and prune those that are not relevant. (69)

Working inductively, have students record as many images as they can.... Then, looking over the list, a student can generalize from it and can afterwards return to the images, crossing out those excluded by the generalization. (72)
These prescriptive hints are good as far as they go, but a simple generalization on the basis of details is less than Bacon's notion. Reason and judgment enter into the process; it is not simply a matter of cooking up a platitude vague enough to cover all the details one gathers. The process should be felt throughout a composition:

The appearance of reason could also be plainly seen in the [Bacon's] 'method' of discourse. Method referred to the disposition, arrangement, structure, organization, and order of the proposition and statements of discourse....(Wallace, Nature 118)

A generalization, a thesis statement, if it is to be of any substance, needs to have a resonance that can be sensed throughout a composition. Bacon's natural induction, looking upon a world functioning like language, apprehends analogies, images, imaginative variations, and metaphorical contradictions of logical orders (Daniel 224) and is, therefore, as much an attitude, outlook, or habit of mind as a method. The details selected for the inductive process would have linguistic characteristics to begin with. Then, when the induction's eliminatory generalization is performed, those details would further be bound together linguistically, lending an essential, intuitive richness to the generalizing process, a richness that can only be described as rhetorical. Wiener recognizes the value of some sort of induction, but noting Bacon, that process would be enhanced with reasoned, rhetorical judgments and would not be a simple generalization from gathered details. In an age that relies on video images to enhance, qualify, order, and unify a written script, the once powerful organizing influence of rhetoric in a Renaissance sense is diluted. If there are formal rules in the presentation of images, they are not taught as the rules of rhetoric once were. If the television cannot be un–invented, perhaps new habits of mind are possible.

But to return, according to Lisa Jardine, induction served not only to order the objects of knowledge, but "since the inductive method is the sole means of arriving at
sound conclusions from natural evidence, it is itself the ideal method for such presentation" (174). Bacon, himself, puts it a little more liberally:

But knowledge that is delivered as a thread to be spun on, ought to be delivered and intimated, if it were possible, in the same method wherein it was invented: and so is it possible of knowledge induced. (Advancement 162)

"Bacon's major law for a workable philosophic style is that knowledge be delivered in the same way in which it was discovered" (Stephens 8), and this, for Bacon, is the most effective means of transferring practical knowledge.

For knowledge drawn freshly and in our view out of particulars, knoweth the way best to particulars again. And it hath much greater life for practice when the discourse attendeth upon the example, than when the example attendeth upon discourse. For this is no point of order, as it seemeth at first, but of substance. (Advancement 214).

K. R. Wallace draws out the implication of examples that "attendeth upon discourse":

If, by subordinating style to invention, Bacon has not made a substantive contribution to rhetoric, at least he has done yeoman service in the cause of good writing...in times that were over-weeningly fond of stylistics. (Rhetoric 209).

Although, for the most part, Bacon characterizes a particular kind of discourse--not that of religion or poetry, but natural philosophy--the implications are clear. Rather than impose some independent, logical order upon discourse, or upon the paragraph as Alexander Bain would, Bacon's idea is that exemplary detail--not form--should determine how a composition is organized.

Further, one can imagine a future with as many acceptable organizational methods as there are inventions (Wallace, Rhetoric 62). This profound suggestion for a theory of style should be deliberate:
The rhetorician, he [Bacon] asserts, ought to look deeply into allied arts and sciences, not only to understand the working of his tropes and figures, his word-arrangements and harmonies, but also to discover new principles. (Wallace, Rhetoric 209)

In this, Bacon has more foresight than Bain or composition instructors who insist topic-support-conclusion is the only way to organize an essay. While describing basic writers who do not elaborate, Mina Shaughnessy complains:

The mind is not allowed to play upon the topic, to follow out the implications that lie within statements, or to recover the history of the idea as it developed in the writer's mind. (228)

Francis Bacon may well provide insight into Shaughnessy's complaint. If Bacon had a rhetorical habit of mind, the same cannot be said of students today. Perhaps students' minds do play upon a topic, but they do so not rhetorically or even logically. A television consciousness is more apt to be dream-like in its ordering process than habitually rhetorical. That teachers foist artificial patterns upon compositions for the sake of organization is not surprising. The method of organization Bacon suggests is much more organic and stylistically fecund than our popular method of simply filling in a predefined organizational template, whether deductive or inductive. Like logicians who artificially derived middle terms from a priori principles, highly formalized discourse, however orderly, ingratiates an artificial security in the mind, urging it too quickly to belief. When Shaughnessy suggests that rhetorical patterns of development "...are too often taken to be the sources rather than the signals of order..." (245), Bacon's intent and purpose come readily to mind. A "signal" of order implies an orderly habit of mind, but to ask that this habit of mind return to rhetorical habits may be asking too much.

Bacon's thoughts on reason and inductive method seem to have identified more than solved problems; perhaps his thoughts on imagination can lend some solutions. Again, Bacon's purpose states: "...the duty and office of rhetoric is to apply reason to
the imagination for the better moving of the will" (Advancement 168). Bacon's understanding of the imagination remains. Bacon not only intended to appeal to the reader's imagination, but to employ imagination in the creative process. In expository prose, unlike religious tracts and poetry, the imagination does not discover or create anything new but juggles primitive perceptions and memories and serves as a messenger between the senses, memory, and reason.

In its role as messenger, imagination was clearly subservient to sense, memory, and reason. It helped these faculties to communicate with each other; it worked with them without participating in creation, simply presenting the record of things past and done. (Wallace, Nature 74)

The imagination was an associative tool helping to arrange and re-arrange the objects of memory under the guidance of reason.

For Bacon, these objects of memory were images. "A thought occurred, an image followed upon it. Imagery was in this sense a re-presenting of thought" (Wallace, Nature 70). "Unlike the sense image, the image that the imagination creates for reason, or with reason, is the embodiment of thought, not sensations" (Wallace, Nature 81). With thoughts imaginatively translated into images, the mind can remember and manipulate thoughts with greater ease. "The visual device of 'Emblem,' for example, helps memory to cope with 'intellectual conceptions'" (Wallace, Nature 58). Perhaps Bacon's translation of thoughts into images can help modern students, for, as Shaughnessy perceives,

...the task of remembering and constantly returning to one's purpose in a piece of writing is difficult, particularly for the inexperienced writer. (233)

...the writer needs to in some way visualize his thoughts, to sort consciously and shift and divide his ideas in accordance with a pattern that may have been predetermined at the beginning or that may be emerging only as he advances into his subject. (Shaughnessy 250)
Clearly, visualization can help in the task of writing, and Bacon offers some depth of insight into the process. If students are immersed in video images, perhaps their visualizations could benefit from some discipline. Deliberately converting concepts into pseudo–allegorical images which are then orchestrated dramatically in the imagination could lend rhetorical order to the student composition. Our time lacks the rhetorical emphasis of the written word; it does not lack images.

If the mind finds images more facile than abstract thoughts, then images, metaphors, emblems, and word pictures are especially useful in ingratiating new knowledge; i.e., a reader is more responsive.

In particular, the metaphor is praised by Bacon as a means of communicating new material to a reluctant audience. It stimulates the imagination and shifts the reader's focus from abstractions to concrete pictures. (Stephens 25)

Visualization helps not only the writer but appeals to the reader's imagination as well. 
"...An object of sense always strikes the memory moreforcibly and is more easily impressed upon it than an object of the intellect..." (Wallace, Nature 59). The advice of teachers to use concrete language is wide-spread and unquestioned, but the rationale for it is vague. Simply saying that concrete language is more memorable helps the student, but Bacon goes even further, offering a well thought-out explanation, a psychological rationale based on his theory of the human faculties.

Although M. L. Wiley convincingly points out the striking similarities between Bacon's rhetoric and "new induction" via the concept of "imaginative or insinuative reason," (66-74) Bacon does make a distinction between invention in speech and in science. In speech, hence composition, invention is "...not properly an invention...but a remembrance or suggestion, with application..." (Advancement 147). But when the student sits down to write, where do these first thoughts, these memories, come from? K. R. Wallace says:
When it is engaged in invention, the understanding searches around in available materials and in likely 'places.' From them it abstracts and apprehends and comes up with ideas.... The sources of search lay in one's own experience and in books and literature. (Nature 114)

Since the elements of nature were tied together like the elements of language, this "experience" was "literate experience" (Daniel 224). These literate impressions were to be recorded in a commonplace book which would serve as a source for ideas later in the composing process. If Bacon says, somewhat equivocally, "The custody or retaining of knowledge is either in writing or memory..." (Advancement 156), it is because Renaissance oratory still shared a Platonic aversion to writing.

In spite of contemporary criticism against the practice of making commonplace books, Bacon maintains that, properly used, they strengthen the memory, rather than retard it. (Wallace, Rhetoric 159)

Commonplace books, supplying the "provision or preparatory store for the furniture of speech and readiness of invention" (Advancement 172), supplying "...any idea likely to recur and to prove useful in a rhetorician's life-time" (Wallace, Rhetoric 64), should contain at least two kinds of propositions: "antitheta" and "formulae":

Antitheta are theses argued pro et contra; wherein men may be more large and laborious: but (in such as are able to do it) to avoid prolixity of entry, I wish the seeds of the several arguments to be cast up into some brief and acute sentences...supplying authorities and examples by reference.... (Advancement 172)

Formulae are but decent and apt passages or conveyances of speech, which may serve indifferently for differing subjects; as of preface, conclusion, digression, transition, excusation, &c.... (172)

Supplying the antitheta and formulae were history/experience, conversations, and books generally, all good sources for ideas. Shaughnessy says, "It is important to note...that
ideas generally seem to be spawned in data—whether the data be fragments of remembered sensations or opinions of the carefully wrought texts of famous writers" (245).

George F. Simons, in *Keeping Your Personal Journal*, characterizes modern journals and how to keep them. According to Simons, journals can be used in a variety of contexts, but the most popular use fosters therapeutic self-discovery, i.e., personal psychology. This modern purpose is different from that of Bacon's commonplace book. If Bacon made observations on the wide world, the modern journalist usually makes observations on himself. Yet, both seek to effect change. Bacon, arguing his law suits, sought to move the will of his fellow man, and commonplace books were part of the preparation for that task. Moderns, writing to themselves about themselves, seek to change their own behavior and attitudes. Modern journals are open to multi-media influences and can become scrapbooks for drawings, tape recordings, photos, as well as caches for aphorisms and sayings. Bacon's commonplace book entertained only one medium: language; however open it might have been in terms of subject matter, its images were verbal. With these differences in mind, it is remarkable what similarities exist.

In terms of content, commonplace books and journals share the dialogue, a mode that reaches back to classical philosophy. Simons describes "The Dialogue" as a basic journal strategy, and a variant of this is an exercise he calls "Facing My Accusers":

Allowing yourself some moments of paranoia in which to make a list of things you hear people saying about you or fear they could. Write the accusations one after another down one side of a journal page. Then, when you have finished, move to the other side of the page and allow yourself a fearless gut response to each accusing statement. (135-36)

Here the concern is with personal "truth." Bacon's antitheta, arguing theses pro and con succinctly, seek to arrive at more universal truths which could be applied in public, in
courts of law. Formulae, those apt turns of phrase which can be used in a variety of contexts, are also found in the modern journal. Simons suggests collecting headlines, quotations, one liners, and pieces of wit, wisdom and foolishness from both written and oral sources (41). Doing so provides an inexhaustible store of ideas for writers, clergymen, and speakers. Of course, focusing on the known similarities between Bacon's commonplace book and the modern journal slights the actual scope of the modern journal.

But perhaps the journal in the context of the composition classroom ought to have a more specific function than "self-discovery." According to H. P. Abbott in Diary Fiction, journals are generally produced on the basis of two assumptions:

One is that the true self is necessarily the hidden self, difficult of access, requiring special tools for its excavation. The other is that the diary is just such a tool because, writing as he often does with emotional immediacy, unconstrained by a concern for an audience beyond himself, the diarist is allowed to uncover the contours of his buried self. (47)

But, Abbott goes on to point out:

Most studies of the nonfictional diary, until recently, have implicitly or explicitly endorsed the view that the "genuine" diary is really a nonliterary form in the sense that it is unpremeditated and free of artifice. But, as Robert Fothergill effectively demonstrates in his study of the English diary, the formal equivalent of spontaneity is neither a guarantee of self-knowledge nor a preventative against self-deception. (47)

Whether or not a journal can facilitate self-discovery should be a side issue in the composition classroom. After all, writing and not personal psychology is the subject at hand. A writer's journal ought to address language and the writer's interaction with it.

Ira Progoff has written many books dealing with Holistic Depth Psychology and has developed the "Intensive Journal" method as a therapeutic technique. His intent is to
foster psychological well-being through the use of a structured journal. A writer's journal addressing language would not have the same purpose, yet Progoff's notion of structuring a journal may prove useful to composition. In *At a Journal Workshop*, Progoff describes the "Intensive Journal" with its various sections and the dynamic interplay between sections. Notes jotted in one section are elaborated in more detail in another. Each section represents a different perspective on the self.

In a similar fashion, a writer's journal could be broken up into various interrelated sections, but language, not the self, would be the main concern. Mary P. Warren, in a small article entitled "A Writer's Journal," lists various purposes for a journal, among which are: (1) to build fluency; (2) to provide raw material; and (3) to develop a unique writing style. These purposes could begin to supply the purposes for the journal's sections. One section, devoted to fluency and raw material, would be a place to get warmed up. No attempt to mold language would be made; ideas in their sketchiest form would appear. A second section could be devoted to elaborating on the ideas of the first, imbuing general statements with concrete language. The journal could be this simple, or it could be more elaborate. A third section could be devoted to distilling the ideas of the first into aphorisms. A fourth section could be devoted to the generation of images out of the first's ideas. A fifth could attempt to orchestrate the images dramatically/rhetorically. The images could be personified and be made to engage in dialogues, a way to get an intuitive, rhetorical grasp on compare/contrast essays for instance. The idea is that the writer's journal should provide a systematic method for working and re-working language. The options are many, but the object is to get students to play self-consciously with language.

Richard A Lanham, in *Style: an Anti-Textbook*, describes a psychoanalytical argument of Erik Erikson: in adolescence, "a single self has not yet cohered. In this time of identity crisis, first one role is played, then another" (116). Further,
If Erikson's analysis comes close to the mark, traditional "sincerity" pedagogy should be stood on its head. The adolescent stylist should be encouraged to impersonate other people, not "be himself." He should imitate the historical styles until he can live them with ease. He will then feel, and embody, the historical "selves" they express. Every prose style allegorizes a life style. These life styles will become available to an eclectic effort to build a self of one's own. (116)

The writer's journal would be an excellent place to carry out such experiments in style. Having a purpose when keeping a journal, deliberately collecting, exercising, shaping, and re-shaping language with pragmatic intent is more nearly like Bacon's commonplace book. If some light is shed on one's own person in this pragmatic process, so much the better. Composition teachers could look forward to reading student experiments in language instead of wading through reams of personal sentiment.

However much value Bacon placed upon journals/commonplace books, his explicit statements about them may seem limited. Both P. B. Burke (23-31) and W. G. Crane (141) suggest that the revisions of Bacon's essays were examples of "methodical amplification" taken from his commonplace books. But their theory about the revisions does not go very far. Stanley Fish's Janus-faced theory about the Essays (whatever its faults) suggests how creative the use of source material can be:

This pattern--the casual proffering of one or more familiar and 'reverenced' witticisms followed by the introduction of data that calls their validity into question--is found everywhere in Bacon's Essays. (Self-Consuming 92)

Commonplace materials, in the Essays, were reordered to engender a "healthy perplexity," requiring imaginative judgment from the reader. In light of Bacon's notions of reason, imagination, and invention, one is not apt to feel constrained by keeping journals with a linguistic purpose. Perhaps teachers would be more enthusiastic about
assigning journals knowing they have a long tradition of creative utility and knowing they can be directed toward relevant ends suitable to the composition classroom.

Bacon conceived of a world functioning in linguistic, not logical, terms, and his pseudo-inductive method to correct the weakness of discovery via the syllogism has rhetorical relevance today. The inductive method had wide application in "all sciences" and holds implications for invention, organization, and style in composition. To present knowledge in the manner in which it was discovered is profoundly liberal yet instructive advice. Further, Bacon gave great thought to the imagination, restricting its function in expository prose to the juggling of remembered images, i.e., to translations of abstract thought. Images give the writer's thoughts embodiment and allow those thoughts to be handled with facility. Images appeal as well to the reader's imagination, making passages more interesting, memorable, and concrete. And finally, Bacon defends the writer's journal as a valuable tool in composition and suggests possible contents for them. Francis Bacon offers a rich landscape for the student and teacher of composition to explore. Hopefully, this landscape will continue to be a fertile area for students and teachers of composition.
Notes

1As quoted in English Prose, 1600–1660, eds. V. Harris and I Husain (New York, 1965), p. 23. This rendition is valuable for its Latin translations. My numerical intrusions are for the sake of clarity.

2The definition of some terms might be helpful here, and Brian Vickers provides a nice summary:

The most frequently used figures would seem to be: (i) parison, corresponding structure in consecutive clauses (i.e. noun matching noun, verb with verb, or even with the same word occurring in the same place in each); (ii) isocolon, where the clauses are of the same length; (iii) antimetabole, corresponding structure with inversion (i.e. instead of the a,b,c; a,b,c pattern of parison, now a,b,c; c,b,a); (iv) paromoion, where corresponding parts of consecutive clauses rhyme internally (if the rhyme is at the end of the clauses, it is known as homoiooteleuton); (v) anaphora, the same word at the start of consecutive clauses, and (vi) epistrophhe, the same word at the end. (Vickers 97)

3Recalling the analysis of the Peccant Humour, the opening partitio could well be considered a higher generality that gives no sufficient direction. Bacon's middle proposition, then, would be the metaphorical expansion of Antiquity and Novelty into father and children, i.e., the tradition of the Romulus–Remus myth.

Works Cited


