



Paradiastole as Distinction-Making

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The ancient figure of speech paradiastole has been narrowly understood in recent scholarship, especially since Quentin Skinner’s seminal studies of its early modern reception,¹ as a kind of relativizing rhetorical redescription: that is, it serves either to disparage a virtue by relabelling it as a vice (e.g. clemency as overindulgence) or to excuse vices by reframing them as virtues (e.g. prodigality as liberality). In classical and late antique sources, however, as well as in a substantial number of early modern works on rhetoric, paradiastole is defined not as redescription but as distinction-making. When St Paul, for instance, tells the Corinthians that ‘the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, “He catches the wise in their craftiness”’,² he is using paradiastole in its classical sense. With the quotation from Job (5:13), he draws a paradiastolic distinction between a virtue and the vice that resembles it, between a wise person and a crafty one, *sapiens* and *astutus* – in the vocabulary shared by classical rhetoric and the New Testament. This historical understanding of paradiastole, apart from correcting the biased definition of the figure in the *Oxford English Dictionary*, demonstrates that the rhetorical technique does not necessarily imply moral relativism and scepticism but rather has been employed to disentangle moral confusion and establish certitude. This paper calls into question the misrepresentation of the figure in current scholarship, recovers

¹ For a succinct introduction, see Q. Skinner, ‘Paradiastole: Redescribing the Vices as Virtues’, in *Renaissance Figures of Speech*, ed. S. Adamson et al., Cambridge, 2007, pp. 149–66; for a comprehensive survey, see id., *Reason and Rhetoric in the Philosophy of Hobbes*, Cambridge, 1996, pp. 138–80 (‘The Technique of Redescription’); for its relation to conceptual change, see id., ‘Rhetoric and Conceptual Change’, *Finnish Yearbook of Political Thought*, 3.1, 1999, pp. 60–73. Other treatments by Skinner include: ‘Thomas Hobbes: Rhetoric and the Construction of Morality’, *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 76, 1991, pp. 1–61; *Visions of Politics, II: Renaissance Virtues*, Cambridge, 2004, pp. 264–85 (‘Moral Ambiguity and the Renaissance Art of Eloquence’); *Visions of Politics, III: Hobbes and Civil Science*, Cambridge, 2004, pp. 87–141 (‘Hobbes on Rhetoric and the Construction of Morality’); *From Humanism to Hobbes: Studies in Rhetoric and Politics*, Cambridge, 2018, pp. 89–117 (‘Rhetorical Redescription and Its Uses in Shakespeare’).

² II Corinthians 3:19. All biblical quotations are from *The New Oxford Annotated Bible*, 4th ed., ed. M. D. Coogan, Oxford, 2010.

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the traditional understanding of paradiastole as *distinctio* and exemplifies the significance of the revised approach to the figure for literary criticism by rethinking the poetic deployment of paradiastolic rhetoric by Prudentius, John Milton and Thomas Wyatt.

Skinner's interest in paradiastole derives mostly from his work on two early modern political thinkers: Niccolò Machiavelli and Thomas Hobbes. In *Machiavelli* (1981), Skinner analyses how the notorious Florentine challenges the conventional conceptions of two classical princely virtues: first, liberality is 'the name not of a virtue but of a vice', because generous rulers will have to put an excessive burden on their subjects to pay for the display of liberality and thus become hateful to them; second, it is a misunderstanding of the virtue of clemency to allow evils to continue until punishment becomes inevitable in cases of murder or plunder, resulting in worse cruelty than clemency has spared.³ Skinner does not yet discuss here Machiavelli's analysis of these virtues in terms of redescription, as he does in the revised edition of the book (2019), which makes it clear that liberality could be 'nothing better than *suntuosità* or princely extravagance' and that lenient policies could be 'condemned for exhibiting *troppa pietà*, the vice of over-indulgence'.⁴ Still, Skinner does not introduce the rhetorical term paradiastole, though elsewhere he had already argued for its 'crucial role' and 'sensational use' in *The Prince* – for example, in 'Hobbes on Rhetoric and the Construction of Morality' (2004).⁵

In this essay, Skinner argues that 'Hobbes's concern to establish a science of virtue' needs to be considered against the background of the development of the *ars rhetorica* in England since the 1550s, including 'a number of techniques for persuading an audience that any normative question can always be debated *in utramque partem*, on either side of the case' – particularly the technique of paradiastole, which could cast doubt on the moral character of any given action by means of redescription and thus indicates 'the shifting and ambiguous character of virtue and vice'.⁶ The significance of this rhetorical figure for early modern political thought, which Skinner demonstrates eloquently, is that it provides an easy method to justify political expediency and embodies the unsettling power of rhetoric that complements Pyrrhonism as a major source of early modern scepticism.⁷ Skinner's influential argument is, however, based on an inadequate understanding of the rhetorical figure, which this paper seeks to redress.

An essential part of Skinner's work on paradiastole is the survey of its history, including its use by Greco-Roman authors, its definitions in classical and late antique works on rhetoric and its recovery in the Renaissance. This historical survey accomplishes three things: first, it explains how paradiastolic redescription was understood philosophically (according to Skinner, it was based on the Aristotelian

³ Q. Skinner, *Machiavelli*, New York, 1981, pp. 45–6.

⁴ Q. Skinner, *Machiavelli: A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford, 2019, pp. 43–4.

⁵ Skinner, *Visions of Politics*, III (n. 1 above), pp. 107–9.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 89.

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 87–8.

doctrine of the mean and the related idea that vice and virtue are neighbours);⁸ second, it investigates the purposes that paradiastole serves (the two main functions, according to Skinner, are disparaging virtue and excusing vice);⁹ third, it shows how the list of examples of paradiastole was transmitted from classical rhetoricians and received in the early modern period.¹⁰

The Middle Ages and the Christian tradition were mostly missing from Skinner's account and remained little explored until the publication of Nicolette Zeeman's expansive chapter on the medieval history of paradiastole and its development in pastoral, devotional and allegorical texts.¹¹ The wealth of medieval Latin and vernacular material suggests new ways to think about the rhetorical figure, which in the Middle Ages became 'part of a wide-ranging body of psychological and ethical thought about the subtler manifestations of hypocrisy and self-deception'.¹² The significance of paradiastole in early modern religious texts has received little critical attention with the exception of David Parry's case studies in his book on Puritan practical divinity.¹³ Both Zeeman and Parry engage with examples of paradiastole that involve subtle moral distinctions but, despite the abundance of material at their command, they still follow Skinner in understanding paradiastole as a kind of sophisticated re-description that belongs to the Aristotelian moral tradition.

The present study challenges this understanding of paradiastole and its theoretical explanation in current scholarship. First, it will recover the classical and late antique conception of paradiastole as *distinctio*; second, it will introduce the theory of the unity of virtues as the philosophical premise based on which paradiastolic distinctions were often made. The paper will then conclude with literary critical re-examinations of paradiastolic rhetoric in Prudentius's *Psychomachia*, John Milton's *Paradise Lost* and Thomas Wyatt's 'Myne Owne John Poyntz', analysed by Zeeman, Parry and Skinner, respectively, in their studies of the rhetorical figure,¹⁴ with a view to demonstrating that distinction and re-description are equally important aspects of the same rhetorical form and should not be considered in isolation.

⁸ See also G. Kowalski, 'Studia Rhetorica II: Ad Figurae ΠΑΡΑΔΙΑΣΤΟΛΗΣ Historiam', *Eos*, 31, 1928, pp. 169–80, which Skinner cites, e.g. in *Visions of Politics*, III (n. 1 above), p. 91 n. 21.

⁹ See, e.g. Skinner, *Visions of Politics*, II (n. 1 above), pp. 274–9.

¹⁰ See, e.g. Skinner, 'Paradiastole' (n. 1 above), pp. 150–54.

¹¹ N. Zeeman, *The Arts of Disruption: Allegory and Piers Plowman*, Oxford, 2020, pp. 37–74 ('The Hypocritical Figure'), which mainly draws on R. Newhauser, *Sin: Essays on the Moral Tradition in the Western Middle Ages*, Aldershot, 2007, pp. 1–26 ('On Ambiguity in Moral Theology: When the Vices Masquerade as Virtues').

¹² Zeeman, *Arts of Disruption* (n. 11 above), p. 38.

¹³ See D. Parry, *The Rhetoric of Conversion in English Puritan Writing from Perkins to Milton*, London, 2022, as well as his shorter and earlier discussion in *The Hermeneutics of Hell: Visions and Representations of the Devil in World Literature*, ed. G. Thuswaldner and D. Russ, New York, 2017, pp. 47–71 ('As an Angel of Light: Satanic Rhetoric in Early Modern Literature and Theology').

¹⁴ Zeeman, *Arts of Disruption* (n. 11 above), pp. 55–7; Parry, *Rhetoric of Conversion* (n. 13 above), pp. 225–42; Skinner, *Reason and Rhetoric* (n. 1 above), p. 159. Paradiastole in Milton's *Paradise Lost* is also discussed in A. P. Cassidy, 'Paradiastole, Lost and Regained', *Milton Studies*, 64.1, 2022, pp. 23–50. For a selective list of recent studies of paradiastole in late medieval and early modern literature and theology, see Cassidy, p. 148 n. 13.

The History of Paradiastole

The history of paradiastole is richer and more complex than current scholarship has acknowledged. A convenient point of departure is the *Oxford English Dictionary*, where ‘paradiastole’ is defined as ‘[a] figure of speech in which a favourable turn is given to something unfavourable by the use of an expression that conveys only part of the truth: euphemism effected by the substitution of a positive synonym for a negative word or phrase’.¹⁵ Although this agrees with most of the definitions cited from early modern English sources, the 1706 expanded edition of *Philips’s New World of Words*, also cited under the entry, defines paradiastole as ‘a Figure which disjoyns things that seem to have one Import, and shew how much they differ’, which seems to describe an entirely different rhetorical technique. However, unorthodox it may seem from the Anglophone perspective of the *OED*, this definition will not appear unusual to those who consult a Latin lexicon. In Lewis & Short, for instance, ‘paradiastole’ is likewise defined as ‘a figure of speech, in which two different but similar things are put together and distinguished’.¹⁶ How do we account for the difference between the two ways of defining the rhetorical figure?

The definition of paradiastole in Lewis & Short is based on the classical and late antique definitions that have survived in Latin. The earliest among them, cited first in the dictionary, is from Publius Rutilius Lupus’s *De figuris sententiarum et elocutionis*, an abridgement dating from the early first-century AD of a work on rhetorical figures by Gorgias (fl. 44 BC):¹⁷

Hoc schema duas aut plures res, quae videntur unam vim habere, disiungit et quantum distent docet, suam cuique propriam sententiam subiungendo. Hyperidis: Nam cum ceterorum opinionem fallere conaris, tu tete frustraris. Non enim probas te pro astuto sapientem †intelligi†,¹⁸ pro confidente fortem, pro inliberali diligentem rei familiaris, pro malivolo severum. Nullum est enim vitium, quo virtutis laude gloriari possis. Hoc idem schema solet illustrius fieri, cum ratio proposito subiungitur. Id est huius modi: Quapropter noli te saepius parcum appellare, cum sis avarus. Nam qui parcus est, utitur eo quod satis est; tu contra propter avaritiam, quo plus habes, magis eges. Ita non tam diligentiae fructus quam inopiae miseria sequitur.

[This schema (paradiastole) separates two or more things that seem to have the same sense and shows how far they differ by joining to each its own meaning.

¹⁵ ‘Paradiastole’, in *Oxford English Dictionary*, Oxford, 2023, at <https://www.oed.com/>, accessed 10 Jan 2024.

¹⁶ ‘Paradiastole’, in *A Latin Dictionary*, ed. C. T. Lewis and C. Short, Oxford, 1879.

¹⁷ ‘Gorgias (2)’, in *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, 4th ed., ed. S. Hornblower et al., Oxford, 2012.

¹⁸ ‘Intelligi’ is the reading of all manuscripts. Brooks adopts ‘intelligenti’, proposed by Ruhnken, which does not seem to make much sense. Halm brackets ‘intelligi’. Madvig introduces ‘debere’ (‘You demonstrate that you should be understood ...’). Burt omits the word and prints ‘appelles’ instead, probably influenced by Quintilian’s quotation of the phrase. Skinner, ‘Paradiastole’ (n. 1 above), p. 150, loosely translates the sentence as: ‘You are not able to show that you should be understood as wise rather than crafty ...’ I have left out ‘intelligi’ in my translation.

Hyperides: ‘For when you attempt to deceive the opinion of others, you thwart yourself. For you don’t win approval for yourself as a wise person for craftiness, as a brave person for recklessness, as a person careful in family matters for stinginess, as a severe person for ill-will. For there is no vice of which you can boast with the praise of virtue.’ The same schema usually becomes more impressive when an argument is added to the point, as in the following way: ‘so do not so often call yourself frugal, when you are greedy. For the frugal person makes use of what is sufficient, but you on the contrary, because of greed, are the more in need, the more you have. Thus what follows is not so much the fruit of thrift as the misery of destitution.’]¹⁹

Each entry in Rutilius’s treatise includes the definition of a rhetorical figure and examples from Greek orators and sometimes himself. He first defines paradiastole as a figure of speech that demonstrates the difference between apparently similar things and then illustrates its use with the quotation from Hyperides, which distinguishes between four pairs of vice and virtue that could be easily confused. This quotation, as well as Rutilius’s other example, which challenges an opponent who tries to redescribe avarice as thrift, shows how the figure could be used to attack and criticize and thus also implies its potential use by the opposing party for exoneration. By separating apparently similar vices and virtues, this rhetorical figure creates a distinction that could serve two opposite purposes: the attacker makes the distinction to claim that the opponent is guilty of a vice, while the defender draws on the same distinction to argue that the vice is, in fact, a virtue. Hyperides distinguishes between wisdom and craftiness to argue that his opponent is crafty rather than wise; the opponent could use or is using the same distinction to assert the opposite: I am not crafty but wise.

The rhetorical phenomenon involves conflicting claims from opposite sides. Without any context, one can hardly determine which side is making a correct distinction and which side seeks to lie. Paradiastole concerns not just a vice and a virtue but the flexible conception of a vice, the fluid idea about a virtue and a certain action or quality that resembles both. The judgement on its moral character hinges on the rhetorical and moral judgement of the speaker and the audience. This is why Rutilius adds that paradiastole ‘usually becomes more impressive, when an argument (*ratio*) is added to the point’, for the *ratio*, as part of the rhetoric, inclines the audience to take the speaker’s stance.

Understanding that paradiastole depends both on the distinction between apparently similar things and on the moral argument that justifies the distinction clarifies a common confusion over the figure in recent scholarship. Quintilian discusses paradiastole in *Institutio oratoria* IX.iii.65:

Huic diuersam uolunt esse distinctionem, cui dant nomen παραδιαστολήν, qua similia discernuntur: ‘cum te pro astuto sapientem appelles, pro confidente fortem, pro inliberali diligentem’.

¹⁹ P. Rutilius Lupus, *De figuris sententiarum et elocutionis*, ed. E. Brooks, Leiden, 1970, p. 8; translation, with modifications, from Skinner, ‘Paradiastole’ (n. 1 above), p. 150.

[Regarded as the opposite of this [i.e., Connection (*coniunctio*)] is Distinction, to which they give the name Paradiastole, by which similar ideas are distinguished: ‘When you call yourself wise instead of cunning, brave instead of over-confident, careful instead of mean.’]²⁰

Because in this definition ‘Quintilian takes over Rutilius’s illustrations’ but ‘reverses their direction in every case’, Skinner claims that here Quintilian ‘modifies Rutilius’s account in one fundamental respect’: while Rutilius thinks of paradiastole as a figure for denigration and accusation, Quintilian considers it a rhetorical device we use to defend someone from the accusation of vice.²¹ In fact, however, this does not constitute a ‘revision’, ‘misunderstanding’ or ‘fundamental’ modification of paradiastole by Quintilian,²² who clearly agrees with Rutilius in understanding paradiastole as rhetorical distinction. This is evident from his summary of Rutilius’s definition as ‘similia discernuntur’, as well as from his Latin translation of the Greek term (from *para-* ‘alongside’ and *diastole* ‘separation, distinction’) as *distinctio*. The apparent difference is only that Rutilius uses as examples cases of paradiastole that frustrate the opponent’s claim to virtue (‘you don’t win approval for yourself as a wise person for craftiness’), while Quintilian’s examples serve to defend oneself from the accusation of vice (‘call yourself wise instead of cunning’). The rhetorical form of a figure, however, is not to be confused with the uses to which it can be put. Disparagement (‘you are crafty, not wise’) and exoneration (‘I am not crafty but wise’) are two functions of the same figure that is essentially distinction-making (distinction between wisdom and craftiness). What defines paradiastole is not the functions that it serves but the rhetorical phenomenon itself – that is, distinction-making, which is open to many different uses. Paradiastole is neither defined as a means of attack in Rutilius nor specified as a tool for self-defence in Quintilian. It misses the point, therefore, to speak of the revision of the figure in terms of its function. It is also hard to conceive why Quintilian would narrow his definition to one use of paradiastole when he is perfectly aware that it serves the opposite function just as well.

On the other hand, the rhetorical operation of a figure is not isolated from the contexts of its operation. The moral context of paradiastolic rhetoric is of central importance for Quintilian. What interests him, as a famous advocate of the need for high moral standards in oratorical education,²³ is not so much whether the orator uses *distinctio* to criticize or exonerate as whether the criticism or exoneration is morally justified. The deliberate confusion of vice and virtue through redescription would not count as paradiastole in his sense at all. In Book III, he warns the ideal orator against the sophistic redescription of vice as virtue and vice versa:

²⁰ All Latin quotations from Quintilian, *Institutionis oratoriae libri duodecim*, ed. M. Winterbottom, Oxford, 1970; all translations from Quintilian, *The Orator’s Education*, transl. and ed. D. A. Russell, Cambridge, 2001.

²¹ Skinner, ‘Paradiastole’ (n. 1 above), p. 151.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ A classic study of this topic is M. Winterbottom, ‘Quintilian and the *Vir Bonus*’, *The Journal of Roman Studies*, 54.1–2, 1964, pp. 90–97.

Idem (Aristoteles) praecipit illud quoque ... quia sit quaedam uirtutibus ac uitis uicinitas, utendum proxima deriuatione uerborum, ut pro temerario fortem, prodigo liberalem, auaro parcum uocemus: quae eadem etiam contra ualent. Quod quidem orator, id est uir bonus, numquam faciet, nisi forte communi utilitate ducetur.

[Aristotle makes another point ..., namely that, as virtues and vices are, in a way, next door to each other, we should be prepared to replace words by their nearest neighbours, calling a foolhardy man brave, a prodigal generous, a miser thrifty. The procedure also works the other way. It is true that the real orator, the good man, will never do this, unless led into it by the public interest.]²⁴

Skinner, who understands paradiastole as redescription, thinks of this passage as Quintilian's warning against the danger of the rhetorical figure.²⁵ Since, however, Quintilian defines paradiastole not as redescription but as distinction, the deceptive confusion of vice and virtue here should be understood as a different figure of speech, the opposite of distinction. Heinrich Lausberg categorizes the figure above as an 'onomasiological variant of *conciliatio*' (συνοικεῖωσις, Latinized as *synoikeiosis*), which the opposing party resists by means of *distinctio*.²⁶ Rutilius describes *synoikeiosis* as a schema that 'teaches [us] to bind different things together and oppose the common opinion by means of an argument' ('hoc schema docet diuersas res coniungere et communi opinioni cum ratione aduersari'),²⁷ which contrasts with his definition of paradiastole, cited earlier, as a figure that 'separates two or more things that seem to have the same sense'. Quintilian himself likewise regards *synoikeiosis*, which he also calls *coniunctio*, as the 'opposite' ('diuersam') of paradiastole or *distinctio*.²⁸ For him, the relativizing confusion of vice and virtue warned against in the quotation above is most likely not paradiastole but the opposite of paradiastole.

For Quintilian and other ancient authorities, paradiastole is not sophistic redescription. Instead, it is specifically and consistently defined as *distinction-making* in works on rhetoric before the Renaissance. We have seen its definitions by Rutilius and Quintilian. The next ancient definition that has survived is from the anonymous fourth-century *Carmen de figuris vel schematibus*, which also describes paradiastole as 'distinguish[ing] one thing from another' ('subdistinctio fit, cum rem distinguimus ab re').²⁹ The pseudo-Rufinian treatise *De schematis lexeos*, probably from

²⁴ Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria*, III.vii.25.

²⁵ Skinner, *Reason and Rhetoric* (n. 1 above), p. 179.

²⁶ H. Lausberg, *Handbook of Literary Rhetoric: A Foundation for Literary Study*, transl. M. T. Bliss et al., Leiden etc., 1998, § 783 and §§ 804–5. This view is also adopted in Quintilian, *Institutionis oratoriae liber IX: introduzione, testo, traduzione, e commento*, ed. A. Cavarzere and L. Cristante, II, Hildesheim, 2019, p. 631.

²⁷ Rutilius, *De figuris* (n. 19 above), p. 34. Translation mine.

²⁸ Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria*, IX.iii.64, cited above.

²⁹ *Carmen de figuris vel schematibus*, ed. R. M. D'Angelo, Hildesheim, 2001, p. 64 (Παραδιαστολή, 115–17). Translation mine.

the same century, likewise describes the figure as ‘when similar things are distinguished by giving the opposites in contrast’ (‘Παραδιαστολή est, cum similes res discernuntur contrariis redditis’).³⁰ Isidore of Seville offers a comparable definition in his encyclopedic *Etymologiae* (early seventh century): ‘Paradiastole is whenever we distinguish what we say by explanation’ (‘Paradiastole est, quotiens id, quod dicimus, interpretatione discernimus’).³¹

It is not until the early modern revival of classical rhetoric that we start to see definitions of paradiastole as redescription, specifically redescription for the purpose of exoneration and excuse. Skinner has correctly described this early modern understanding of paradiastole in his survey of the history of the figure, though without realizing that it was a new development which only came about in the Renaissance. Antonio Mancinelli’s *Carmen de figuris*, ‘the earliest Renaissance text in which the figure is defined and illustrated’,³² was most likely responsible for bringing about the new conception of the figure through a significant omission in its definition: ‘Paradiastole, according to the authority of Quintilian in Book IX, happens when you call yourself wise rather than crafty, or courageous rather than reckless’ (‘Paradiastole fit teste Fabio libro nono quum te pro astuto sapientem appellas: pro confidente fortem’).³³ This seems to be the first instance in the history of paradiastole where it is not defined as distinction-making but described as rhetorical self-excuse through redescription. Although Mancinelli cites Quintilian as his source, the latter’s definition (‘[the figure] by which similar ideas are distinguished’) is left out, while the Hyperidean illustrations that Quintilian took over from Rutilius have become the focus. This entails an essentially different way of understanding how paradiastole works: what matters is no longer discernment and distinction-making but the potentially deceptive manipulation of our conception of neighbouring vices and virtues through redescription.

Mancinelli influenced another source for this new understanding of the figure. This is the rhetorical treatise *Epitome troporum ac schematum* (Zurich, 1554) by Johann Susenbrotus, who acknowledges his debt to Mancinelli towards the end of his definition of paradiastole. For Susenbrotus, ‘paradiastole occurs when we palliate our own or another’s faults by some well-mannered explanation’ (‘Paradiastole παραδιαστολή, est cum ciuili interpretatione nostris aut aliorum uitijs assentando blandimur’).³⁴ This definition is more explicit about the exonerative function of the figure. The major English rhetoricians of the sixteenth century, following Mancinelli

³⁰ *Rhetores Latini minores*, ed. K. Halm, Leipzig, 1863, p. 53. Translation mine. Cf. Skinner, ‘Thomas Hobbes’ (n. 1 above), p. 6.

³¹ Isidore of Seville, *Etymologiarum sive originum libri XX*, ed. W. M. Lindsay, I, Oxford, 1911, p. 98. Translation mine.

³² Skinner, ‘Paradiastole’ (n. 1 above), p. 151.

³³ Antonio Mancinelli, *Carmen de figuris, de poetica virtute, vitae carmen*, Venice, 1493, sig. H1^r; transl., with modifications, Skinner, *Reason and Rhetoric*, p. 152 (n. 1 above) and Skinner, ‘Paradiastole’ (n. 1 above), p. 151.

³⁴ J. Brennan, ‘The *Epitome Troporum ac Schematum* of Joannes Susenbrotus: Text, Translation and Commentary’, PhD diss., University of Illinois, 1953, pp. 45–6; transl., with modifications, Brennan.

and Susenbrotus, also define paradiastole as a device for exoneration.³⁵ Henry Peacham, for instance, paraphrases Susenbrotus: ‘it is when by a mannerly interpretation, we doe excuse our own vices, or other mens whom we doe defend, by calling them vertues’.³⁶ On such early modern English sources depends the definition of paradiastole in the *OED*, which answers the question raised at the beginning of this investigation: the *OED* and Lewis & Short define paradiastole in different ways because the *OED* is based on early modern English definitions influenced by Mancinelli’s revised understanding of the figure, while Lewis & Short relies on ancient rhetorical texts that conceive of paradiastole as *distinction-making*. In the early modern period and especially in English usage, paradiastole did acquire the meaning that the *OED* identifies, but it is a new development that derives from a misrepresentation of the classical sources. Nevertheless, the classical understanding of paradiastole did not disappear in the Renaissance. Some early modern texts still described the figure as *distinctio* rather than redescription.³⁷

Paradiastole and the Unity of Virtues

To recover the ancient conception of paradiastole as *distinctio* is much more than a matter of names. I have earlier noted that, although the rhetorical form of a figure is not to be confused with the functions that it could serve, the operation of a figure is never divorced from the contexts of its operation. Paradiastolic distinction and redescription involve essentially the same rhetorical phenomenon but have completely different moral implications. *Distinctio* suggests a concern with correct description – instead of sophistic redescription – and the possibility of valid distinction, grounded in a kind of reasonable moral certainty. Historically, this rhetorical figure, by no means presupposing moral relativism and scepticism, has been employed to establish such certitude.

Petrarch’s moral treatise *De remediis utriusque fortunae*, a collection of ‘remedies’ for ill fortune and the dangers that attend good fortune in the form of short dialogues between personified abstract attributes (Reason, Joy, Hope, etc.), offers us a representative example of paradiastolic distinction:

Spes. Eternam uitam spero.

Ratio. Ea est uirtutum consanguinitas atque connexio, sicut a philosophis disputatum est, ut necesse sit eum qui unam habet omnes habere uirtutes, cui illud est consequens una uirtutum carentem cunctis carere uirtutibus. Quod si de mortalibus uerum est, quid de theologicis opinemur? Itaque si spem habes,

³⁵ See, e.g. Skinner, ‘Paradiastole’ (n. 1 above), pp. 151–2.

³⁶ Henry Peacham, *The Garden of Eloquence*, London, 1577, s. v. ‘paradiastole’.

³⁷ Apart from the definition cited earlier from *Philips’s New World of Words*, see, e.g. John Calvin, *Commentary on Seneca’s De clementia*, ed. F. L. Battles and A. M. Hugo, Leiden, 1969, p. 214 (87), where he cites Rutilius’s definition, and Luis de Granada, *Ecclesiasticae rhetoricae siue de ratione concionandi libri sex*, Lisbon, 1576, p. 220 (‘simillima discernuntur’).

caritatem simul habeas oportet ac fidem; si qua harum desit, non iam spes illa, sed presumptio inconsulta est.

[*Hope*. I hope for the euerlastyng lyfe.

Reason. Suche is the consanguinitie and lynkyng together of vertues, as the Philosophers doo dispute, that who so hath one vertue, must needes haue all: whereof it foloweth, that who so wanteth one vertue, wanteth all: whiche yf it be true in the morall vertues, what may we iudge of the Theologicall? And therefore yf thou haue hope, thou must needes also haue fayth and charitie. But yf one of these be wantyng, it is no longer hope, but rashe presumption.]³⁸

This dialogue, the last of the remedies for good fortune (I.122), warns of the perils that accompany the hope for eternal life. In the quotation above, the persona of Reason draws the distinction between genuine ‘hope’ (*spes*) and ‘rashe presumption’ (*presumptio inconsulta*), which deceptively resembles hope. This distinction is based on the traditional Christian opposition of hope to both despair and presumption,³⁹ or rather the conception of hope as the mean between its two corresponding vices or extremes of insufficiency and excess. In recent scholarship, the Aristotelian doctrine of the mean, as well as the related idea that vice and virtue are neighbours, has been put forward as the theoretical explanation of paradiastolic rhetoric.⁴⁰ The theory, however, only explains how paradiastolic *redescription* is possible but does not give instructions on how to make a paradiastolic *distinction* (or where to locate the mean), for which we can turn to the Petrarchan quotation above. It shows us the moral theory that has often served as the basis for making paradiastolic distinctions.

In this passage, the persona of Reason both distinguishes, and teaches us how to distinguish, between a theological virtue and its neighbouring vice. Reason’s method is to resort to the theory of the unity of virtues (‘uirtutum consanguinitas atque conexio’): whoever has one virtue has all virtues, so whoever lacks one virtue lacks all virtues; therefore, in the absence of faith and charity, what seems to be hope is not genuine hope but rather the neighbouring vice of presumption. This approach to the discernment of disguised vice develops from a medieval and ultimately classical tradition in moral philosophy.⁴¹ For example, in a passage that appears unrelated to paradiastole from the *Morals on the Book of Job*, Gregory the Great, who features prominently in Zeeman’s study of paradiastole in the Middle Ages, explains how the absence of other virtues undermines the credibility of a seeming virtue:

³⁸ Petrarch, *De remediis utriusque fortune*, I, Grenoble, 2002, p. 526; all Latin quotations are from this edition. Petrarch, *Phisicke against fortune, aswell prosperous, as aduerse*, transl. T. Twyne, London, 1579, pp. 151–2; all translations from this edition because its diction better reflects the original word choice. See also *Petrarch’s Remedies for Fortune Fair and Foul*, transl. C. H. Rawski, I, Bloomington, 1991, p. 323.

³⁹ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, Part II, Section 2, Questions 20 (Despair) and 21 (Presumption).

⁴⁰ See, e.g. Skinner, *Reason and Rhetoric* (n. 1 above), pp. 153–61; Zeeman, *Arts of Disruption* (n. 11 above), pp. 40–41.

⁴¹ See, e.g. Plato, *Laches*, 199de, and especially *Protagoras*, 329d, which, however, do not foreground the figure of paradiastole.

Hoc autem primum sciendum est, quia quisquis uirtute aliqua pollere creditur, tunc ueraciter pollet, cum uitiiis ex alia parte non subiacet. Nam si ex alio uitiiis subditur, nec hoc est solidum, ubi stare putabatur. Unaquaqueque enim uirtus tanto minor est, quanto desunt ceterae.

[It is of the first importance to know, however, that anyone who is thought to be strong in some virtue is then really strong when he is not subject to bad habits in another sector. If he is subject to bad habits in some other context, then that which seems to be strength in him is not really so, for every virtue by itself is so much the weaker when unaccompanied by others.]⁴²

An apparent virtue becomes of less worth in the absence of other virtues because those who profess this virtue are vulnerable to evils in other quarters and hence in general. To borrow Gregory's own example, those who seem chaste but lack humility are subject to the evils of arrogance; their chastity is no longer chaste, for, departing from the love of God, they commit fornication with themselves. Here, the evil that comes from the lack of humility frustrates the claim to virtue 'in another sector'. Likewise, the humility of the pitiless is merely the show of humility; and mercifulness at the cost of justice only means injustice to one's self. The same is true of the cardinal virtues: 'Prudence can never be true if it is not also just, temperate, and courageous ... courage is incomplete without prudence, temperance, and justice ...' ('nec prudentia uera est, quae iusta, temperans et fortis non est ... nec fortitudo integra quae prudens, temperans et iusta non est ...') – the latter example is similar to the redescription of fortitude as 'recklessness'.⁴³ Gregory provides us with an analysis of the *uirtutum connectio* as a potential philosophical basis for paradiastolic distinction; however, he does not fully spell out the implied connection between paradiastole and the unity of virtues, as does Augustine, an important source for Gregory, in an epistle to Jerome.

Augustine wrote to discuss with Jerome the following verse from the Epistle of James: 'For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become accountable for all of it'.⁴⁴ As the subject concerns the unity of the law, Augustine introduces the interconnection of vices and the inseparability of virtues as closely relevant topics, the latter of which he illustrates with the unity of the four primary virtues,⁴⁵ as well as the example of Catiline. This infamous conspirator was known to have 'seemed to his followers and to himself to be endowed with great courage':

sed haec fortitudo prudens non erat, mala enim pro bonis eligebat, temperans non erat, corruptelis enim turpissimis foedabatur, iusta non erat, nam con-

⁴² Gregory the Great, *Moralia in Iob*, ed. M. Adriaen, II, Turnhout, 1979, pp. 1092–3 (XXII.i.2); all Latin quotations from this edition. Translation, with modifications, from Gregory the Great, *Moral Reflections on the Book of Job*, transl. B. Kerns, IV, Collegeville, 2017, pp. 321–2; all translations from this edition.

⁴³ Gregory, *Moralia*, XXII.i.2.

⁴⁴ James 2:10.

⁴⁵ St Augustine, *The Works ...*, ed. J. E. Rotelle et al., II.3, Charlottesville, 2001, p. 98 (Letter 167). For the Latin text, see St Augustine, *Epistulae*, ed. A. Goldbacher, III, Vienna, 1904, pp. 592–3.

tra patriam coniurauerat, et ideo nec fortitudo erat, sed duritia sibi, ut stultos falleret, nomen fortitudinis inponebat. Nam si fortitudo esset, non uirtium sed uirtus esset; si autem uirtus esset, a ceteris uirtutibus tamquam inseparabilibus comitibus numquam relinqueretur.

[But this courage was not prudent, for it chose evil instead of good; it was not temperate, for it was defiled by the most shameful corruption; it was not just, for it conspired against the fatherland; and hence it was not courage either, but hardness gave itself the name ‘courage’ to mislead the foolish. For, if it were courage, it would not be a vice but a virtue. But if it were a virtue, it would never be abandoned by the other virtues, which are like its inseparable companions.]⁴⁶

Augustine presents a case study of paradiastolic distinction conducted according to the theory of *uirtutum connectio*. He comes to the conclusion that Catiline’s courage is not a virtue but the vice of ‘hardness’ (*duritia*) by showing that he lacks prudence, justice and temperance and thus unmasks the hypocritical redescription meant to ‘deceive fools’. The lack of other virtues helps to establish a moral presupposition on which to examine the nature of a morally ambiguous action or quality. In this way, the unity of virtues could serve as the philosophical premise for the paradiastolic distinction between a genuine virtue and a disguised vice.

What Augustine does in his analysis of Catiline’s ‘courage’ is find out if Catiline is courageous in a virtuous way: his apparent virtue is dismissed as ‘hardness’, not because his endurance of ‘cold, thirst, hunger’ is cowardly, but because he was not courageous prudently, temperately, justly. The underlying logic suggests that paradiastolic distinction here depends on the necessity of differentiating what is done from how it is done, of telling the difference between the deed and the manner, or, to borrow Petrarch’s grammatical metaphor, between the ‘verbs and nouns’ and the ‘adverbs’:

Spes. Uitam spero eternam.

Ratio. Rem bonam, immo optimam speras; illud uide, ut quod bonum agis, agas bene. Sunt et qui bona male agant, nec minus infallibilis extimator qui qualiter quam quid fiat aspicit nec minus aduerbia quam qui uerba librat ac nomina.

[*Hope.* I hope for the lyfe euerlastyng.

Reason. Thou hopest for a good, or rather a most excellent thyng: and therefore see thou, that that good whiche thou dooest, thou doo it well. There be some that doo good thynges euyll, and he is no lesse an vpryght deemer of thynges, that consydereth as well howe, as what shall be and is doone, and dooeth as well weygh the Aduerbes, as the Nownes, and Verbes.]⁴⁷

⁴⁶ St Augustine, *Works* (n. 45 above), p. 99; Augustine, *Epistulae* (n. 45 above), pp. 594–5.

⁴⁷ Petrarch, *Phisicke* (n. 38 above), p. 151; Petrarch, *De remediis* (n. 38 above), p. 526.

This passage, which follows the earlier quotation from Petrarch, brings out the essential distinction between the object and the manner, implied in Augustine's (and Gregory's) discussion of the unity of virtues. The grammatical metaphor is succinctly expressed in a proverb that was widespread in the later Middle Ages and the Renaissance: 'Deus est remunerator non nominum sed adverbiorum', which survives in English as: 'God is better pleased with adverbs than with nouns'.⁴⁸ It means that God does not reward the good that is done but what is done in a good way, which involves the distinction between what things happen (*quae fiunt*) and how they happen (*quo animo fiunt*). In Augustinian terms, this grammatical metaphor addresses the difference between action and will, between the hand (*manus*) and the heart (*cor*), between *bonum* and *bene*, *malum* and *male*.⁴⁹

Paradiastolic rhetoric, according to the persona of Reason, hinges on such a distinction. Those who act with ill-will could claim to be doing good by redescribing the evil with a good *noun*, but the unity of virtues allows us to examine the *adverbs* that attend an apparent good deed or quality: those who are *faithlessly* full of hope are merely presumptuous; and the endurance of the infamous Catiline, who is *unjustly* courageous, is more accurately described as insensitivity. At least in the Christian tradition, the unity of virtues could serve and has often served as the philosophical premise for making moral distinctions through the use of the rhetorical figure paradiastole, which helps to unmask the *adverb* of the *noun* (or *verb*) to show whether someone who claims a virtue is *virtuous virtuously*.

Paradiastole in Prudentius, Milton and Wyatt

To conceive of paradiastole as the technique of distinction-making, rather than redescription, invites us to examine the use of paradiastolic rhetoric in literary works from a different perspective. For example, in her study of paradiastole in the medieval Christian tradition, Zeeman analyses what she terms the 'hypocritical personification' in the battle between Reason and Avarice in the *Psychomachia* of Prudentius (454–628), where Avarice 'changes to the noble bearing' of Thrift and achieves temporary success over the battle line of virtues.⁵⁰ Zeeman points out that the paradiastolic transformation here is a partial metamorphosis that creates a structural contradiction between 'the vice's unchanged grammatical and personified "nature" and its newly adopted look and implied alternative name'.⁵¹ Such a hypocritical

⁴⁸ W. G. Smith, *The Oxford Dictionary of English Proverbs*, ed. F. P. Wilson, Oxford, 1970, p. 310.

⁴⁹ L. Campi, 'God is the Rewarder not of Nouns but of Adverbs: Hunting Abelardian Ghosts', *Documenti e studi sulla tradizione filosofica medievale*, 29, 2018, pp. 155–90, 172, 175.

⁵⁰ Prudentius, *Psychomachia*, p. 169, l. 552: 'inque habitum sese transformat honestum'. All Latin quotations from Prudentius, *Carmina*, ed. M. P. Cunningham, Turnhout, 1966, pp. 149–81; all translations from Prudentius, ed. and transl. H. J. Thomson (Loeb Classical Library), I, Cambridge MA, 1949, pp. 274–343. This episode has received much critical analysis: see esp. R. Newhauser, *The Early History of Greed: The Sin of Avarice in Early Medieval Thought and Literature*, Cambridge, 2000, pp. 82–4, which includes a bibliographical note on critical scholarship on this episode.

⁵¹ Zeeman, *Arts of Disruption* (n. 11 above), p. 55.

personification, she argues, is better analysed through ‘interpreting personification as a phenomenon that occurs at the confluence of different discursive and figurative levels’, instead of adopting the ‘shell and kernel’ approach to allegory. Zeeman highlights how *Avarice* does not simply fool the *Virtues* with her deceptive appearance but disorients them – including *Ratio* her principal opponent in this battle – through her ‘double form’ (*biformis*).⁵² Just a few lines later, however, this trick fails. How it happens, which Zeeman does not deal with in her chapter, is of interest as a personified enactment of paradiastolic distinction.

The defence of Reason having proved ineffective against the attack of disguised *Avarice*, the accursed fiend now binds with gripping shackles unwary victims that willingly follow her along:

cum subito in medium frendens Operatio campum
prosilit auxilio sociis pugnamque capessit,

...

Omne onus ex umeris reiecerat, omnibus ibat
nudata induuiis multo et se fasce leuarat,
olim diuitiis grauibusque oppressa talentis
libera nunc miserando inopum quos larga benigne
fouerat effundens patrium bene prodiga census.

[But now of a sudden Good Works (*Operatio*) dashes in anger on to the midst of the battle-ground to help her comrades, and takes up the fight Every load she had cast off from her shoulders, and she moved along stripped of all coverings; of many a burden had she lightened herself, for once she had been borne down by riches and the weight of money, but now had freed herself by taking pity on the needy, whom she had cared for with kindly generosity, lavishing her patrimony with a wise prodigality.]⁵³

Beneficence, ‘destined singly’ to put an end to the battle,⁵⁴ is the only *Virtue* that the disguise of *Avarice* is unable to confuse. *Avarice* herself, to whom the sight of the ‘invincible *Virtue*’ is like a thunderbolt, instantly knows that her camouflage is of no use – the *Vice* that had made her opponents’ sight ‘uncertain’ (‘incertos’) is now ‘certain of [her] doom’ (‘certa mori’).⁵⁵ What unmasks her hypocritical trickery is the sheer contrast between her cumbersome hoard of riches and *Beneficence*’s noble bareness, glorified in the description cited above. Her ‘empty purse’, which she contemplates right before she sets on her adversary, unveils the viciousness of *Avarice*’s massive accumulation of wealth, now spoils from a corpse, all unused – gold unwrought (not melted into jewellery or coins), purses worm-eaten, coins

⁵² Prudentius, *Psychomachia* (n. 50 above), p. 170, l. 569.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, ll. 573–83.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, ll. 575–6: ‘militiae postrema gradu sed sola duello / inpositura manum ne quid iam triste super-sit’.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, ll. 572, 584–6.

rusty-green.⁵⁶ Beneficence immediately distributes them to the needy and gives a speech on the renunciation of worldly riches, in which she draws on Jesus's admonition to the rich youth (Matthew 19:21) and his teaching on God's Providence (Matthew 10:29–31).

The implication is that the accumulation of wealth, under whatever guise, is always a vice. Avarice disguises her plundering and hoarding 'under the pleasing name of care for her children' ('natorum curam dulci sub nomine');⁵⁷ but laying up a treasury, instead of using it for good works, cannot masquerade as a virtue in the contrasting presence of Beneficence in her glorious bareness. The Avarice episode concludes with a case of *distinctio* by contrast, which unmasks hypocritical re-description by questioning the deed, the noun itself, with the exemplar of the opposite virtue – of course, here in the context of the Christian paradox that spiritual power comes from worldly bareness.

The unmasking of Avarice's paradiastolic disguise suggests a potential complication of the tripartite structure of moral attributes in our analysis of paradiastole according to the Aristotelian doctrine of the mean. Instead of the opposition of a virtue (thrift) to its opposite (extravagance) and neighbouring (avarice) vices, the figure of Beneficence introduces itself as a fourth element that brings about the opposition of a vice (avarice) to its opposite (beneficence) and neighbouring (thrift) virtues. It is the replacement of extravagance by beneficence that provides the ground for the discernment of disguised Avarice. We come to see that in a moral spectrum, so to speak, the vice that is opposite to the virtuous mean can also be re-described as its own neighbouring virtue – the virtue of thrift is the opposite of extravagance, which could also masquerade as the neighbouring virtue of liberality. Therefore, instead of a tripartite structure, paradiastole could involve the interplay between two pairs of neighbouring virtues and vices – for example, liberality and extravagance, on the one side, and thrift and avarice, on the other. The *distinctio* in the Avarice episode of the *Psychomachia* depends on the opposition of two such sides – to give away (extravagance and beneficence) and to store up (greed and thrift). New Testament teachings on the paradoxical evaluation of worldly riches and poverty determine that hoarding is a vice; therefore, Avarice, though disguised as Thrift, is revealed as a vice by the action of hoarding.

The Pauline quotation with which this paper opened presents a similar case of the interaction between two pairs of moral attributes: wisdom and craftiness, on the one hand, and simplicity and folly, on the other. The Christian inversion of the value of wisdom and folly not only means that 'the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God' but also invites the characterization of worldly wisdom as 'craftiness'. Paradiastolic rhetoric is often implicated in such paradoxical reevaluation of opposites in the Christian context, as is the case with what have been identified as examples of Satanic paradiastole in John Milton's *Paradise Lost*.

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 171, ll. 598–601. See Prudentius, *Psychomachia: Einleitung, Text, Übersetzung und Kommentar*, ed. M. Frisch, Berlin, 2020, p. 344.

⁵⁷ Prudentius, *Psychomachia* (n. 50 above), p. 563.

In his article on paradiastole in Satan's temptation discourses in *Paradise Lost*, Aaron P. Cassidy argues that the rhetorical figure encourages readers to participate, with sufficient clues provided by the poet, in the discernment of the claims to virtuous intent in Satan's temptation speeches.⁵⁸ What Cassidy calls one of Satan's 'most striking examples' of paradiastole is his rhetorical characterization of his rebellion in the disputation before the war in heaven: 'The strife which thou callst evil, but we style / The strife of glory', which is in line with his redescription of submission to God as 'prostration vile' and 'servility'.⁵⁹ Both cases involve the interplay between the two opposites that are subject to ambiguous moral characterization: submission and strife. Denigrating submission as 'servility' and praising strife as 'glory', Satan rejects the Christian (paradoxical) evaluation of the one as virtuous 'obedience' and the other as outright 'evil'. The antagonism between Satan and God here takes the form of a rhetorical conflict between the two sides of paradiastolic rhetoric, between sophistic redescription and discernment, or in Quintilian's words, between *coniunctio* and *distinctio*.

This rhetorical battle, as David Parry points out, is at the heart of some of the political polemic in which Milton's mid-century prose participated.⁶⁰ In *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates*, which urges the lawful abolition of tyrannical rulers, Milton denounces those 'bad men' who 'have been alwayes readiest with the falsifi'd names of *Loyalty*, and *Obedience*, to colour over thir base compliances'. For him, the freedom that these 'bad men' lay claim to is not true freedom, for 'none can love freedom heartilie, but good men; the rest love not freedom, but licence; which never hath more scope or more indulgence then under Tyrants'.⁶¹ Here, Milton employs *distinctio* against the 'falsified names' that his opponents use to redescribe their 'base compliances'. In the latter quotation, he not only draws the distinction between freedom and licence but also explains the moral basis of his judgement: only 'good men' can love true freedom, while the rest merely indulge themselves in licence, which he reiterates in Sonnet XII ('On the Detraction which followed upon my Writing Certain Treatises'):

That bawl for freedom in their senseless mood,
And still revolt when truth would set them free.
Licence they mean when they cry liberty;
For who loves that, must first be wise and good⁶²

and again in Michael's words in the last book of *Paradise Lost*, XII.83–5:

Since thy original lapse, true liberty
Is lost, which always with right reason dwells
Twinned, and from her hath no dividual being.

⁵⁸ Cassidy, 'Paradiastole' (n. 14 above), pp. 123, 126.

⁵⁹ John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, ed. A. Fowler, Harlow, 2007, pp. 353, 332, 348 (VI.289–90, V.782, VI.169).

⁶⁰ See Parry, *Rhetoric of Conversion* (n. 13 above), pp. 234–5.

⁶¹ John Milton, *The Complete Prose ...*, ed. D. M. Wolfe, 8 vols, New Haven, 1953–82, III, pp. 190–91.

⁶² John Milton, *The Complete Shorter Poems*, 2nd ed., ed. J. Carey, Harlow, 2007, p. 297.

True liberty stays always in the company of wisdom, reason and goodness, but licence does not. We can therefore tell liberty from licence according to the presence or absence of the other virtues. The theory of the unity of virtues underlies the paradiastolic distinctions that Milton makes in the examples above. His awareness of the danger of paradiastolic redescription did not make him a moral relativist or sceptic, for he believes that the unity of virtues can help us to see through hypocrisy and distinguish a true virtue from the vice masquerading under its name. Distinction-making is as important as redescription for analysing Milton's literary deployment of paradiastolic rhetoric.

Distinction and redescription are two aspects of the same rhetorical figure that cannot be separated from each other. Understanding this is essential for reading Sir Thomas Wyatt's discussion of paradiastole in the verse epistle to 'Myne Owne John Poyntz' (adapting Luigi Alamanni's Satire X, 'À Thommaso Sertini').⁶³ In this poem, Wyatt laments and rejects the hypocritical arts that were current at court, including the skill of paradiastolic redescription:

As dronkenes good fellowshippe to call,
 The frendly ffoo with his dowble face
 Say he is gentill and courtois therewithall;
 And say that Favell hath a goodly grace
 In eloquence, and crueltie to name
 Zele of Justice and change in tyme and place
 ...
 Say he is rude that cannot lye and fayn,
 The letcher a lover, and tirannye
 To be the right of a prynces reigne.⁶⁴

Skinner correctly notes that Wyatt's theoretical analysis of paradiastole is informed by the Aristotelian doctrine of the mean: 'To joyne the mene with eche extremitie, / With the neryst vertue to cloke always the vise'.⁶⁵ For reading the poem, however, it is more important to recognize the interplay between the two sides of paradiastolic rhetoric in this verse epistle: that is, Wyatt's poetic repudiation of hypocritical *redescription* actually relies on a strong sense of the *distinction* between apparently similar vices and virtues.

It is sophistic redescription to call 'dronkenes good fellowshippe', 'crueltie ... / Zele of justice', 'the letcher a lover' but at the same time these formulas of redescription are framed under the repudiation that dominates the poem through the repetition of 'I cannot'. This phrase apparently means that it is beyond the poet to learn the courtly way ('My wit is nought, I cannot lerne the waye'),⁶⁶ but this is only a

⁶³ Thomas Wyatt, *Collected Poems* ..., ed. K. Muir and P. Thomson, Liverpool, 1969, pp. 88–91 ('Myne Owne John Poyntz'). Cf. Skinner, *Reason and Rhetoric* (n. 1 above), p. 159; Skinner, *Visions of Politics*, II (n. 1 above), pp. 275–6; S. Brigden, *Thomas Wyatt: The Heart's Forest*, London, 2012, pp. 258–61.

⁶⁴ Wyatt, *Collected Poems* (n. 63 above), p. 90, ll. 64–75.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, ll. 60–61; Skinner, *Reason and Rhetoric* (n. 1 above), p. 159.

⁶⁶ Wyatt, *Collected Poems* (n. 63 above), p. 90, l. 57.

humble excuse. The enumeration of hypocritical redescrptions eloquently demonstrates the poet's knowledge of the courtly arts. His 'inability' must come instead from his unwillingness to give himself up to hypocrisy. He knows how to 'cloke always the vise' with 'the neryst vertue',⁶⁷ but he also emphasizes to the reader (and himself)⁶⁸ that he is fully capable of distinguishing vice from virtue. The poet knows that 'dronkenes' is not 'good fellowshippe', 'crueltie' is not 'zele of justice', 'the letcher' is not a lover. He knows both how to redescrbe and how to make distinctions. His verse meditation on sophistic redescription involves both sides of paradiastolic rhetoric. It depends on a conflict between redescription and distinction. It is a disavowal made by a courtier who, now with 'a clogg ... at my hele',⁶⁹ is determined to struggle no longer with such a conflict.

Conclusion

If we now return to Quintilian's definition of paradiastole – 'regarded as the opposite of this [i.e., Connection] is Distinction, to which they give the name Paradiastole, by which similar ideas are distinguished',⁷⁰ the reason why he introduces *coniunctio* and *distinctio* as a pair becomes clear. Quintilian understands well that paradiastolic rhetoric is twofold. Distinction and redescription, always interconnected with each other, are equally important sides of the same rhetorical phenomenon, which needs to be examined from both perspectives.

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⁶⁷ Ibid., l. 61.

⁶⁸ Bridgen, *Forest* (n. 63 above), p. 265.

⁶⁹ Wyatt, *Collected Poems* (n. 63 above), p. 90, l. 86.

⁷⁰ Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria*, IX.iii.65.