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[<< Back](#)**Author:** Wilson, Thomas, 1525?-1581. 17736**Title:** The arte of rhetorique for the vse of all suche as are studious of eloquence, sette forth in English, by Thomas Wilson.**Date:** 1553**Bibliographic name / number:** STC (2nd ed.) / 25799**No. of pages:** [6], 117, [5] leaves**Copy from:** Henry E. Huntington Library and Art Gallery**Reel position:** STC / 553:09

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The Arte of Rhetorique, for the vse of all suche as are stu|dious of Eloquence, sette forth in English, by THOMAS Wilson.

Anno Domini.

M.D.LIII.

Mense Ianuarij.

GVALTERVS HAD|DONVS D. IVRIS CIVILIS, ET OXO|niens[...]**s Collegij Magdalenensis Praese[...].**

[...] soror, est affata sororem:

Quem d[...]dicit nuper, sermo Britannus erat.

[...] tacuit, magno percussae dolore:

Nam nondum nostro nouerat ore loqu[...].

Audijt haec, [...], Vu[...]lsonus forte, magister

Qui fuerat, nostros addiderat{que} sonos:

[...] mutam, uerbis solatus am[...]cis

Se[...]ocat, & rogitat num esse Britanna uel[...]t.

though thei neuer knewe them, or els neuer would vse them. And therefore a certain learned man, & of muche excellencie, beeyng asked what was suche a figure, and suche a trope in Rhetorique: I cannot tell (¶quod he) but I am assured, if you loke in the boke of myne oracio~s, you shall not faile but finde them. So that though he knewe not the name of suche and suche figures, yet the nature of the~ was so familiar to his knowlege, that he had thuse of them, when soeuer he had nede. Nowe though this man could well thus doo, beyng of suche notable vnderstandyng, yet it were foly that all should folowe his waie, whiche want so good a wit. And I thinke euen he himself, should not haue lost by it nei|ther, if he had seen that in aglasse, whiche he often vsed to do without knowlege. Man is forgetfull, and there is none so wise, but counsaill maie dooe hym good. Yea, he shall dooe muche better, that knoweth what arte other me[...] haue vsed, what inuencion thei haue folowed, what order thei haue kept, and how thei haue best doen in euery part. If he like not theirs, he may vse his awne, and yet none dooeth so euill (I thynke) but some good maie be got by hym. The wise therefore wil not refuse to heare: and the ignoraunt for want, had nede to seke a will.

¶Thende of the .ii. b[...]ke.

¶The third boke.

¶Of apte chusyng and framynge of wordes and sentences together, called Elocucion.

And now we are come to that parte of Rhetorique, the whiche aboue al other is most beautifull, wherby not onely wordes are ap[...]ly vsed, but also sentences are in right order fra|med. For whereas Inuencion, helpeth to finde matter, and Disposicion serueth to place argumentes: Elo|cucion getteth wordes to set furthe inuencion, & with suche beautie commendeth the matter, that reason semeth to bee clad in purple, walkyng afore, bothe bare and naked. Ther|fore Tullie saieth well, to finde out reason, & aptly to frame it, is the part of a wise man, but to commende it by wordes, and with gorgious talke to tell our conceipte, that is onely propre to an Orator. Many are wise, but fewe haue the gift to set furthe their wisdom. Many can tell their mynde in Englishe, but fewe can vse mete termes, and apt order: suche as all men should haue, and wise men will vse: suche as ne|des must be had, when matters should be vttered. Now then what is he, at whom all men wonder, and stande in a mase, at the viewe of his wit? Whose doynge are best esteemed? who~ do we moste reuerence, and compt halfe a God among men? [**Note:** Eloquent men moste esteemed.] Euen suche a one assuredly, that can plainly, distinctly, ple~|tifully, and aptly vtter bothe wordes and matter, and in his talke can vse suche conposicion, that he maie appere to kepe an vniformitie, and (as I might saie) a number in the vtte|ring of his sente~ce. Now an eloque~t man beyng smally lear|ned, can do muche more good in perswading, by shift of wor|des, and mete placynge of matter: then a greate learned clerke shalbe able with great store of learnyng, wantyng wordes to set furth his meanyng. Wherefore I muche maruaile that so many seke the only knowlege of thynges, without any mynd to commende or set furthe their entend[...]ment: seyng none ca~ knowe either what thei are, or what thei haue, without the gift of vtterance. Yea, bryng the~ to speake their mynde, and [...]nter in talke with suche as are said to be learned, & you shal finde in the~ suche la[...]e of vtterance, that if you iudge them 86 by their tongue, and expressyng of their mynde: you must ne|des saie thei haue no learnyng. Wherin me thinkes thei do, like some riche snudges, that hauyng great wealth, go with their hose out at heeles, their shoes out at toes, and their co|tes out at bothe elbowes. For who can tell, if suche men are worth a grote, when their apparel is so homely, and al their behauior so base? I can

call the~ by none other name, but slo|uens, that maie haue good geare, and nether ca~, nor yet will ones weare it clenly. [**Note:** Barbarous clerkes, no bet+ter then sloue~s.] What is a good thyng to a manne, if he neither knowe thuse of it, nor yet (though he knowe it) is a|ble at all to vse it? If we thinke it comelinesse, and honestie to set furthe the body with handsome apparell, and thynke theim worthie to haue money, that bothe can and will vse it accordyngly: I cannot otherwise se, but that this part deser|ueth praise, whiche standeth wholly in set[...]yng furthe the matter by apte wordes and sentences together, & beautifieth the ton|gue with greate chaunge of colours, and varietie of figures.

¶Foure partes belongyng to Elocucion.

- j. Plainnesse.
- ij. Aptenesse.
- iij. Composicion.
- iiij. Exornacion.

EMong al other lessons, this should first be learned, y^t we neuer affect any strau~ge y[...]kehorne termes, but so speake as is commonly receiued: neither sekyng to be ouer fi[...]e, nor yet liuyng ouer carelesse, vsyng our speache as most men do, & ordryng our wittes, as the fewest haue doen. [**Note:** Plaines what it is.] Some seke so farre for outla~dishe Englishe, that thei forget altogether their mothers la~guage. And I dare swere this, if some of their mothers were aliue, thei were not able to tell, what thei say, & yet these fine Englishe clerkes, will saie thei speake in their mother tongue, if a ma~ should charge the~ for cou~terfeityng the kynges English. Some farre iorneid ien|tleme~ at their returne home, like as thei loue to go in forrein apparell, so thei wil poulder their talke w^t ouersea la~guage. He that cometh lately out of France, wil talke Fre~che En|glish, & neuer blushe at the matter. Another choppes in with Angleso Italiano: the lawyer wil store his stomach with the pratyng of Pedlers. The Auditour in makyng his accompt and rekenyng, cometh in with sise sould, and cater de[...]ere, for vi. s iij.d. The fiue Courtier wil talke nothyng but Chau|cer. The misticall wise menne, and Poeticall Clerkes, will speake nothyng but quaint prouerbes, and blynd allegories, delityng muche in their awne darkenesse, especially, when none can tell what thei dooe saie. The vnlearned or foolishe phantasticall, that smelles but of learnyng (suche felowes as haue seen learned men in their daies) will so latine their tongues, that the simple cannot but wonder at their talke, and thynke surely thei speake by seme Reuelacion. I knowe them that thynke Rhetorique, to stande wholly vpon darke woordes, and he that can [...]atche an ynke horne terme by the taile, hym thei compt to bee a fiue Englishe man, and a good Rhetotician And the rather to set out this folie, I will adde here suche a letter, as Willyam Sommer himself, could not make a better for that purpose. Some will thinke & swere it to, that there was neuer any suche thyng writte~, well I wil not f[...]rce any man to beleue it, but I will saie thus muche, and abide by it to, the like haue been made heretofore, and praised aboue the Moo[...]e.

Ponderyng expe~dyng, and reuolutyng with my self your ingent affabilitee, and ingenious capacitee, for mundane af|fares: I cannot but celebrate and extolle your magnificall dexteritee, aboue all other. For how could you haue adepted suche illustrate prerogatiue, and dominicall superioritee, if the fecunditee of your ingenie had not been so fertile, & wou~+derfull prenaunt. [**Note:** An ynkehorne letter.] Now therfore beeyng accersited, to suche splendent renoume, & dignitee splendidous: I doubt not but you will adiuuate suche poore adnichilate orphanes, as whi|lome ware co~disciples with you, and of antique familiaritie in Lincolne shire. Emong whom I beeyng a Scholasticall panion, [...]btesiate your sublimitee to extoll myne infirmittee. There is a sacerdotall dignitee in my natiue countrey, con|tiguat to me, where I now contemplate: whiche your wor|shipfull benignitee, could sone impetrate for me, if it would like you to extend your scedules, and collaude me in them to the right honorable lorde Chauncellor, or rather Archigra~|macian 87 of Englande. You knowe my literature, you knowe the pastorall promocion, I obtestate your clemencie, to inui|gilate thus mu[...]he for me, accordyng to my confidence, and as you know my condigne merites, for suche a compendious li|uyng. But now I relinquishe to fatigate your intelligence with any more friuolous verbotie, and therefore he that ru|les the climates be euermore your beauteux, your fortresse, and your bulwarke. Amen.

What wise man readyng this letter, will not take him for a very Caulfe, that made it in good earnest, & thought by his ynkepot termes, to get a good personage. Doeth wit reste in straunge wordes, or els standeth it in wholsome matter, and apt declaryng of a mannes mynd? Do we not speake, because we would haue other to vnderstande vs, or is not the tongue geue~ for this ende, that one might know what another mea|neth? And what vnlearned man can tell, what half this let|ter signifieth? Therefore, either we must make a difference of Englishe, and saie some is learned Englishe, and oth[...]r some is rude Englishe, or the one is courte talke, the other is cou~|tre speache, or els we must of necessitee, banishe al suche af|fected Rhetorique, and vse altogether one maner of la~guage. When I was in Cambrige, and student in the kynges Col|lege, there came a man out of the toune, with a pinte of wine in a pottle pot, to welcome the prouost of that house, that la|tely came from the courte. And because he would bestow his present like a clerke, dwellyng among the schoolers: he made humbly his thre curtesies, and said in this maner. Ch[...] good [...]uen my good lorde, and well might your lordship vare: Un|derstandyng that your lordship was come, & knowyng that you are a worshipfull Pilate, and kepes a bominable house: I thought it my duetie to come incantuantee, & bryng you a pottell a wine, the whiche I beseche your lordship take in good worthe. Here the simple man beyng desirous to amend[...] his mothers tongue, shewed hymself not to bee the wisest manne, that euer spake with tongue.

Another good felowe in the cou~tre, beyng an officer, and Maiour of a toune, and desirous to speake like a fine learned man, hauyng iust occasion to rebuke a runnegate felow, said after this wise in a greate heate. Thou yngram and vacaci|on knaue, if I take thee any more within the circumcison of my dampnacion: I will so corrupte thee, that all vacacion knaues shall take ilsampl by thee. **[Note: Roper[...]pe ch[...]yng.]**

Another standyng in muche nede of money, and desirous to haue some helpe at a ientlemanns hand, made his complaint in this wise. I praie you sir be so good vnto me, as forbeare this halfe yeres rent. For so helpe me God and halidome, we are so taken on with contrary Bishoppes, with reuiues, and with subsidies to the kyng, that al our money is cleane gone. These wordes he spake for contribucion, relief, and subsidie. And thus we see that poore simple men are muche troubled, and talke oftentimes, thei knowe not what, for lacke of wit and want to Latine & Frenche, wherof many of our strau~ge woordes full often are deriued. Those therefore that will eschue this foly, and acquaint themselves with the best kynd of speache, muste seke fro~ tyme to tyme, suche wordes as are commonly receiued, and suche as properly maie expresse in plain maner, the whole conceipte of their mynde. And looke what woordes wee best vnderstande, and knowe what thei meane: thesame should sonest be spoken, and firste applied to the vtteraunce of our purpose.

Now whereas wordes be receiued, aswell Greke as La|tine, to set furthe our meanyng in thenglishe tongue, either for lacke of store, or els because wee would enriche the lan|guage: it is well doen to vse them, and no man therin can be charged for any affectacion, when all other are agreed to fo|lowe thesame waie. There is no man agreued, when he hea|reth (letters patentes) & yet patentes is latine, and signifie[...]h open to all men. The Communion is a felowship, or a com|myng together, rather Latine then Englishe: the Kynges prerogatiue, declareth his power royall aboue all other, and yet I knowe no man greued for these termes, beeyng vsed in their place, nor yet any one suspected for affectacion, when suche generall wordes are spoken. The folie is espied, when either we will vse suche wordes, as fewe men doo vse, or vse theim out of place, when another might serue muche better. Therefore to auoyde suche folie, we maie learne of that most 88 excellent Orator Tullie, who in his thirde booke, where he speaketh of a perfect Oratoure, de lareth vnder the name of Crassus, that for the choyse of wordes, foure thinges should **[Note: Foure thinges obserued, for choyse of wor|des.]** chiefly be obserued. First, that suche wordes as we vse, shuld bee proper vnto the tongue, wherein wee speake, again, that thei be plain for all men to perceiue: thirdly, that thei be apt and mete, moste properly to sette out the matter. Fourthly, that woordes translated from one significacion to another, (called of the Grecians, Tropes) bee vsed to beautifie the sentence, as precious stones are set in a ryng, to commende the golde.

¶ Aptenesse what it is.

SUche are thought apt wordes, that properly agre vn|to that thyng, whiche thei signifie, and plainly expresse

the nature of thesame. Therefore thei that haue regard of their estimacion, do warely speake, and with choyse, vtter woordes moste apte for their purpose. In weightie causes, graue woordes are thought moste nedefull, that the greatnesse of the matter, maie the rather appere in the vehem[...]ncie of their talke. **[Note: Aptnes.]** So likewise of other, like order muste be taken. Albeit some, not onely do not obserue this kynde of aptnes, but also thei fall into muche fondnesse, by vsyng woordes out of place, and appl[...]yng them to diuerse matters without all discrecion. As thus. An ignorant felowe comyng to a ientle|mannes place, **[Note: V[...]apte vsyng of apt woordes]** & seyng a greate flocke of shepe in his pastour saied to the owner of them, now by my truthe sir, here is as goodly an audie~ce of shepe, as euer I saw in al my life. Who will not take this felowe meter to talke with shepe, then to speake emong menne? Another likewise seeyng a house faire buylded, saied to his felowe thus: good lorde, what a hande|some phrase of buildyng in this? Thus are good woordes euil vsed, when thei are not well applied, and spoke~ to good pur|pose. Therefore I wishe that suche vntoward speakyng, maie geue vs a good lesson, to vse our tongue warely, that our woordes and matter maie still agree together.

¶Of Composicion.

When we haue learned vsuall and accustomed woordes to set furthe our meanyng, we ought to ioyne them together in apt order, that the eare maie delite, in hearyng the harmo|monie. I knowe some English men, that in this poynt haue suche a gift in the Englishe, as fewe in Latine haue the like and therefore, delite the wise and lerned so muche, with their pleasaunt composicion: that many reioyce, when thei maie heare suche, and thynke muche learnyng is gotte, when thei maie talke with suche. Composicion **[Note: Composicion what it is.]** therefore, is an apte ioynyng together of woordes in suche order, that neither the eare shal espie any ierre, nor yet any man shalbe dilled with ouerlong drawing out of a sentence, nor yet muche confoun|ded with myngelyng of clauses, suche as are nedelesse, beyng heaped together without reason, and vsed without number. For, by suche meanes the hearers will be forced, to forgette+full oft, what was saied first, before the sentence be halfe en|ded: or els bee blynded with confoundyng of many thynges together. Some again will bee so shorte, and in suche wise curtall their Sentences, **[Note: Faules in co~|posicion.]** that thei had nede to make a com|mentarie immediatly of their meanyng, or els the moste that heare them, shalbe forced to kepe counsaill.

Some will speake oracles, that a man cannot tell, whiche waie to take theim, some will be so fine, & so Poeticall with all, that to their semyng, there shall not stande one heire a|missee, & yet euery body els shall thinke the~ meter for a ladies chamber, then for an earnest matter, in any open assemblie.

Some wil roue so muche, and bable so farre without or|der, that a manne would thynke, thei had a greate loue, to heare themselves speake.

Some repeate one woorde so often, that if suche woordes could be eaten, and chopte in so ofte, as thei are vttered out, thei would choke the widest throte in all England. As thus. If a man knewe, what a mans life wer, no man for any ma~|nes sake, would kill any man, but one ma~ would rather help another man, considryng man is borne for man, to help ma~, & no to hate man. What man would not be choked, if he chop[...] al these men at ones into his mouth, & neuer drouke after it? Some vse ouermuche repeticio~ of some one [...]etter, as pitiful pouertie praieth for a peny, but puffed presu~pcio~, passeth not a poynt, pa~peryng his panche, w^t pestile~t pleasure, procuring 89 his passe porte to poste it to Hell pytte, there to be punished with paines perpetuall. Some will so sette their woordes that they muste be fayne to gape after euerye worde spoke~, endinge one worde with a vowell, and beginninge the next wyth an other, whyche vndoubtedlye maketh the talke to seme mooste vnpleasaunte. As thus Equirie assuredlye e|quyerie iniurye auoydeth. Some will set the carte before the horse, as thus. My mother and my father are both at home, euen as thoughe the good man of the house ware no brea|ches, or that the graye Mare were the better Horse. And what thoughe it often so happeneth (God wotte the more pitye) yet in speakeinge at the leaste, let vs kepe a natural or|der, and set the man before the woman for maners sake.

An other cominge home in haste after a long iourney, sayeth to hys manne: Come hither sir knaue, helpe me of

with my bootes and my spurres. I praye you sir geue him leaue firste to plucke of youre spurres, ere he meddle wyth your bootes, or els your man is like to haue a madde pluckinge. Who is so folyshe as to saye the counsaile and the kynge, but rather the Kinge and his counsaile, the father and the sonne, and not contrary. And so likewise in al other as they are in degree firste, euermore to set them formost.

The wise therfore talkinge of diuers worthy men together, will firste name the worthiest, and kepe a decent order in reportynge of their tale. Some ende their sentences all alike, makynge their talke rather to appeare rymed meter then to seme playne speache, the whiche as it muche delieth beyng measurablye vsed, so it muche offendeth when no meane is regarded. I hearde a preacher delityng much in thys kynd of composition, who vsed so ofte to ende his sentence with wordes like vnto that whiche wente before, that in my iudgemente, there was not a dosen sentences in hys whole sermon, but they ended all in ryme for the most part. Some not best disposed, wished the Preacher a Lute, that with his rymed sermon he myght vse some pleasaunt melodye, and so the people myghte take pleasure diuers wayes, and daunce if they liste. Certes there is a meane, & no reason to vse any one thinge at all times, seyng nothinge delieth (be it neuer so good) that is alwayes vsed.

Quintilian likeneth the coloures of Rhetorique to a man[...]'s eye sighte. And nowe (quod he) I woulde not haue all the bodye to be [...]ull of eyes, or nothinge but eyes: for the other partes shoulde wante their due place and proportion. Some ouerthwartely sette their woordes, placynge some one a myle frome his felowes, not contented with a playne and calyng composition, but seke to sette wordes they can not tell howe, and therfore one not likynge to be called and by prynces published Doctours of Phisike, woulde needes be named of Phisike Doctour, wherin appeared a wonderfull composition (as he thought) straunge vndoubtedlye, but whether wise or no, lette the learned sitte in iudgement vpon that matter.

An other. As I rose in the mornynge (quod one) I mette a carte full of stonnes emptye. Belike the manne was fastinge, when the carte was full, and yet we see that throughte straunge composition this sentence appeareth darke.

Some will tell one thinge .xx. times, nowe in, nowe out, & when a man would thinke they had almost ended, they are ready to beginne againe as freshe as euer they were. Such vayne repetitions declare both wante of witte, and lacke of learninge. Some are so homely in all their doynge, and so grosse for their inuention, that they vse altogether one maner of trade, and seke no varietie to eschewe tediousnes.

Some burden their talke with nedelesse cople, and will seme plentifull, when they shoulde be shorte. An other is so curious and so fine of his tongue, that he can not tell in all the worlde what to speake. Euerie sentence semeth commune, and euerye worde generallye vsed, is thought to be folyshe, in his wise iudgemente. Some vse so manye interpositions bothe in their talke and in their writinge, that they make their saynges as darke as hell. Thus wha faultes be knowen, they may be auoyded: and vertue the soner may take place, when vice is forsene, and eschewed as euill.

Of Exornation.

When wee haue learned apte woordes and vsuall Phrases to sette forthe oure meanyng, and can orderlye place them without offence to the eare, so we maye boldelye commende and beautifie oure talke with diuers goodlye coloures, and delitefull translations, that oure speache maye seme as bryghte and precious, as a ryche stone is fayre and orient.

Exornation [**Note:** Exornation.] is a gorgiouse beautifyng of the tongue with borrowed wordes, and chaunge of sentence or speache, with muche varietie. Firste therfore (as Tullie saythe) an Oracion is made to seme ryghte excellent by the kinde selfe, by the colour and iuice of speache. Ther are .iiij. maner of styles or endinges, [**Note:** Thre maner of stiles or endinges.] the great or mighty kind, when we vse great wordes, or vehemente figures:

The smal kinde, when we moderate our heate by meaner wordes, and vse not the most stirring sentences:

The lowe kinde, when we vse no Metaphores, nor tran|slated wordes, nor yet vse any amplificatio~s, but go plaine|lye to worke, and speake altogethertogether in commune wordes.

Nowe in all these three kindes, the Oration is muche com|mended, and appeareth notable, when wee kepe vs styll to thatistyle, whiche wee firste professed, and vse suche wordes as seme for that kinde of writinge most conuenient.

Yea, if we minde to encrease, or diminish: to be in a heate, or to vse moderatio~: to speake pleasauntly, or speake graue|lye: to be sharpe, or to be softe: to talke lordlye, or to speake finelie: to waxe auncient, or familiar (which al are compre|hended vnder one of the other three:) we muste euer make oure wordes apte and agreable to that kinde of stile, whi|che we firste ganne to vse. For as frenche hodes do not be|come Lordes: so Parliament Robes are vnsitting for La|dies. Comelines therfore must euer be used, and all thinges obserued that are most mete for euery cause, if we loke by at+temptes to haue our desire.

There is another kind of Exornacio~ **[Note: Exorna[...]|ion [...]]** by coloures of Rhetorique.] y^t is not egua[...]|ly spar|pled throughout y^e whole oratio~, but is so disseuered & par|ted, as starres stand in the firmament, or floures in a garde~, or prety deuised antiques in a clothe of Araise.

Vvhat a fygure is?

A Figure is a certaine kinde, either of sentence, oration, or worde, vsed after some new or straunge wise, muche vnlike to that, which men communely vse to speake.

The diuision of Fygures.

There are thre kindes of figures, the one is when the nature of wordes is chaunged from one significa|tion to another called a Trope of the Grecians: The other serueth for woordes when they are not chau~ged by nature, but only altered by speaking, called of y^e[...] Grecians a Scheme: The third is when by deuersity of in|uention, a sentence is manye wayes spoken, and also mat|ters are amplified by heapyng examples, by dilatynge ar|gumentes, by comparinge of thynges together, by similitu|des, by contraries, and by diuers other like, called by Tullie Exornacion of sentences, or coloures of Rhetorique.

By all whiche Figures, euerye Oration maye be muche beautified, and without the same, not one can attaine to be counted an Oratoure, thoughe his learninge otherwise be neuer so greate.

Of the fyrste vse of Tropes.

WHen learned and wise menne gan firste to enlarge their tongue, **[Note: Tropes how they wer fyrst [...]|ounded·]** and sought with greate vtteraunce of speache to commende causes: they founde full ofte muche wante of wordes to set out their meanyng. And therfore remembryng thinges of like na|ture vnto those