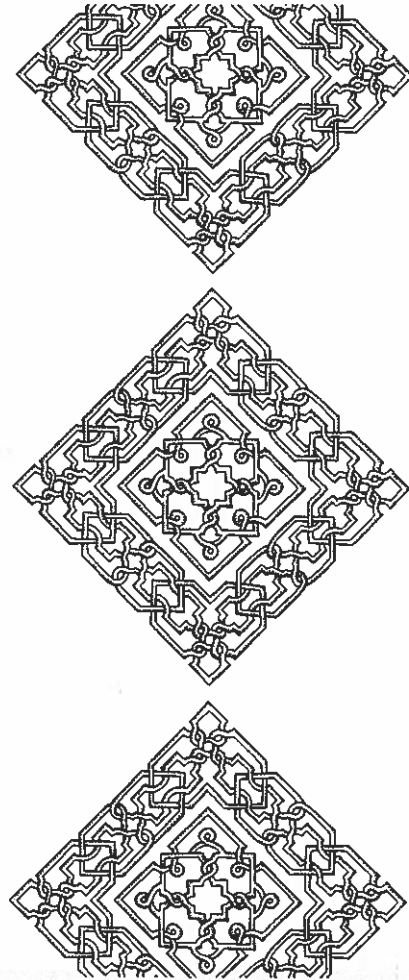


Edited by Lynette Hunter

Toward a Definition of Topos

The other contributors: Stephen Bygrave Francis Goyet
Paul Hammond Michael Leslie Paul Tynegate Piehler
Alan Roughley Ann Thompson John O. Thompson
Lamberg Wierenga



ord 'topos' means place with boundaries

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Toward A Definition of Topos

Approaches to Analogical Reasoning

Edited by

LYNETTE HUNTER

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4. The phrase 'rhetorical scenery' appears in the *Scribbledehobble* workbook. See *Scribbledehobble: The Ur-Workbook for Finnegans Wake*, ed. T.E. Connolly (Chicago, 1961). Heath discusses the phrase and its significance for the 'shattering of the context' by Joyce's writing. See 'Ambiviolences', p. 41.
5. On *mimesis* as a textual machine responsible for 'all the clichés of criticism', see Jacques Derrida, *Dissemination*, tr. Barbara Johnson (Chicago, 1981), pp. 186-7, note 14.
6. 'Ambiviolences', p. 38.
7. Jacques Derrida, *Positions* (Les Editions de Minuit, 1972), p. 58: 'le texte dit «littéraire»'.
8. Richard Ellmann, *James Joyce*, new and revised edn. (Oxford, 1983), p. 362.
9. *James Joyce*, pp. 519 and 528.
10. André Topik, 'Intertextuality in "Ulysses"', *Post-structuralist Joyce*, pp. 103-4.
11. Margaret Solomon, *External Geometer* (Carbondale, 1969), p. 9.
12. In 'The Semantics of Metaphor' Eco traces the *Wake's* metaphoric identification of itself as a 'meanderthalitale'. See *The Role of the Reader: Explorations in the Semiotics of Texts* (Bloomington, 1979), pp. 67-89.
13. These signifiers are set to work throughout Derrida's texts. They form the focal point for the extensive investigation of textual machinery in *Dissemination*. See especially 'The Double Session', pp. 172-286 and 'Dissemination', pp. 287-366.
14. Referring to the 'constitutive erasure of the proper name in ... arche-writing, within, that is, the play of difference', Derrida suggests that the production of the proper name is its obliteration. *Of Grammatology*, trans. G.C. Spivak (Baltimore and London, 1976), p. 109.
15. See *Eternal Geometer*, Chapters 1-3, and Bernard Benstock, *Joyce-Again's Wake: An Analysis of Finnegans Wake* (Seattle, 1965), pp. 9, 64, 277.
16. Philippe Sollers, Joyce & Co., *In the Wake of the Wake*, ed. D. Hayman and E. Anderson (Madison, 1978), pp. 113-14.
17. J.S. Atherton, *The Books at the Wake: A Study of Literary Allusions in Finnegans Wake* (London, 1959; rpt. New York, 1974), pp. 235-6.

9

From Cliché to Archetype

LYNETTE HUNTER

Topics, commonplaces and clichés each provide a way of establishing the common grounds for agreement about experience necessary to persuasion or reasoning, if it is to be perceived as valid. They each argue on the grounds of analogy, claiming that nothing is self-evident; they each concern themselves with social context, recognising that persuasion has much to do with the positions of the rhetor or speaker or writer and the addressee; and they each are historically bound, constructed by current ideologies and material circumstances. Yet as devices for valid reasoning they are usually undervalued and often distorted through careless decontextualising, removal from the social and historical that leaves their argument by analogy open to trivial interpretation.

Persuasive grounds which are neither rational nor analytical do not find validity in *a priori* conditions; they derive their strength from social contexts, and are often based on a general agreement, a consensus about their validity. But this consensus frequently elides into corporate stasis where it can come to mirror the excesses of *a priori* rational analytics. The question then arises: how does one maintain the relevance of social context so that the grounds do not become outdated bases for closing off questions and/or discussions about contemporary life?

Marshall McLuhan and Wilfred Watson, in *From Cliché to Archetype*, concern themselves with what happens to some of these non-analytical grounds for reasoning. In their discussion of cliché and archetype, McLuhan and Watson examine a number of modes which potentially maintain the social context in modern writing: they suggest jokes, parody, allegory, paradox and other strategies. Their discussion is pertinent today, yet needs to be seen within the long-standing concern with these issues in the history of rhetoric in the form of the treatment of topos. It raises a

number of points about the way in which different media use devices and adapt them to their own purposes, and particularly about the way that different historical conditions find similar devices more or less appropriate to their concerns.

McLuhan and Watson take as their remit post-Renaissance literature, concentrating on the twentieth century, and it is singular that it is during the Renaissance that topos is formally rejected as a valid mode of reasoning. However, as we shall explore, topos is essential for all non-rational and non-analytical argument, and its activity found other specific modes for working that have come to define many patterns of post-Renaissance genre. This essay will concern itself with the question of why topos was rejected during the Renaissance; where it then found outlets, among others in commonplace and cliché; and with what McLuhan and Watson have to say about the implications of the structure and the effect of the non-rational, non-analytical mode of cliché, implications which bear directly on its literary history. The broader directions of the discussion move toward comments on the historical specificity of the use of literary devices, as well as on the fundamental problem with the contemporary rhetorical argumentation which infuses so many Western institutions: the intimate ground shared by consensual and corporate agreement.

1. RHETORIC AND TOPICAL REASONING

Argument from opinion, as opposed to 'from fact' or 'a priori', has often been given short shrift in terms of validity throughout the history of Western logic and dialectics. The problem with it is usually perceived to be that the argument must first persuade you to agree with its opinions or grounds, and only then proceed to elaborate on the implications, or judgements, or assessments and so on. Plato distinguishes between argument from plausible opinion and argument from probable opinion.¹ The plausible is based upon unexamined grounds and the probable upon grounds which have been discussed and sorted through. Aristotle ignores the former but expands the methodology of the latter, particularly in the argument that rhetoric and dialectic are indissolubly connected. Dialectics is 'reasoning from generally accepted opinions',² yet this is only valid if these opinions are first shown to be acceptable to 'all or to the majority or to the wise' (p. 275). Distinguished from argument by induction, which is demonstrat-

ive and 'proceeds from premises which are true' (p. 273), dialectical argument is 'through reasoning', in other words 'predicated by' the grounds implicated in its opinions.

The persuasive devices available to dialectics so that it may attempt to convince of the validity of the predicated grounds, are the topics. Now the topics are also devices central to rhetoric because they outline the means of persuasion to opinion: hence the interdependence of dialectics and rhetoric. The topics consist of categories: essence, quantity, quality, relation, place, time, position, state, activity and passivity; and of structures: commonplace about the predictions of accident, rules for the comparative evaluation of two or more predicates, and commonplaces about predictions of genus, of property and of definition. These topics of structure not only underwrite dialectics but also rational analytics.

Therefore the topical categories and structures validate demonstrative and philosophical argument, the contentious modes of sophistic and aporistic argument, as well as dialectics. But Aristotle also insists on the topics of practice: one must not only choose grounds and validate them through topical category and structure, but also consider the rhetor and audience interaction in the topics of person and act (p. 675). It is this interaction that makes dialectics different from philosophical (demonstrative), sophistic and aporistic argument, for unlike them dialectical argument is firmly based in social conditions. And it should be noted that Plato uses the term 'philosophical' in a manner similar to Aristotle's 'dialectics'. For Plato the demonstrative is not the philosophical.³

While the *Topica* discusses topics in terms of dialectical argument, focusing on the validation of a method of inquiry, Aristotle's *Rhetorica* discusses the topics in terms of social argument, focusing on the validation of the rhetor or proposition or audience, rather than the method. The separation opens the door to a separation between form and content that Plato suggests is distorting, and underlines the fundamental difference between the two discussions of reasoning: that Plato insists that all argument without examined opinion is only plausible not probable, and therefore not acceptable as valid. Aristotle's separation also opens the door to the possibility of reasoning non-dialectically, which is why for him the philosopher is demonstrative and not concerned with the topics of person and act, thereby

evading the social. This evasion of the social changes the means by which the topics are validated, because it decontextualises them.

2. TOPICAL REASONING TO THE RENAISSANCE

The differences that emerge between these readings of two careful discussions of argument and reasoning, enact the history of the topics. They are at times to do solely with category and/or structure as they are in mathematics today,⁴ where their significance is neither probable nor analogous but fixed within a determined system: The analogue-makers of artificial intelligence restrict themselves entirely to the structures of predication in the topics. At times the topics have been reduced simply to questions of person and act, as they were in schools of eloquence or as they often are in the construction of political personality. This reduction to *ethos*, *pathos* and *res*, and denial of argument, leaves no place for questions of reasonable validity. But the topics have also yielded a productive combination of the two discussions in Ciceronian rhetoric,⁵ versions of humanism,⁶ the new argumentation,⁷ and in recent critical discussions of Marxism and radical feminism some of which combinations display a rare and profound belief in the impossibility of separating the two, and a concomitant difficulty in finding a vocabulary for speaking about the resultant holistic materiality. Many aspects impinge on the relationship of the different topics, and that relationship is constrained by changing perceptions of the actual world and how we know it, attitudes toward relations of power and social construction, ideology, epistemology, technology.

Argument by topic provides reasoning by analogy, within social context and historical materiality. Traditionally it appeals to belief, sometimes to passion and emotion, but never to intellectual gameplaying by proof. It is dependent for its full range on a combination of the categories and structures with the topics of person and act, and one of the earliest rhetoricians to achieve this cohesion most fully in written form is Cicero. Michael Leff has written extensively on Cicero's combination of the topics as though they are elements in an autonomous system,⁸ and goes on to examine Boethius' albeit more subtle use of Ciceronian topics which still concentrates on the categories and structures. Boethius places the structures at the top of a hierarchy followed by the

categories, both of which are regarded as dialectical topics, and places the concrete instances of both, the rhetorical topics, even lower in the hierarchy.⁹ Leff concludes that

no consideration is given to the possibility that the special circumstances impinging on the rhetorical act might require special forms of inference, that they might demand a logic of social inference generally similar to but specifically different from the propositional logic of dialectic. (p. 41)

The difference between Cicero and Boethius in their treatment of the topics is restated by M. Cogan in another way. He notes that for Cicero the topics or commonplaces are 'the seats (*sedes*) of arguments; and an argument is what creates conviction in a doubtful matter. The sense given *sedes* is primarily spatial';¹⁰ later he notes that it is also 'architectural'. In contrast, for Boethius the topical commonplaces are no longer architectural residences but the '*foundations* of arguments' (p. 176). Cogan goes on to say that

Arguments no longer 'come out of commonplaces by being suggested by their application to particular subjects; they now 'come out of commonplaces by depending on them for their validity. (p. 178)

Leff elaborates on the Boethian attitude to the commonplaces by discussing the topical principles or categories as 'self-evident',¹¹ and the topical differences or structures as 'groupings' or relations. The result is that the function of the topics to argue by analogy has disappeared because the social context from which the analogies may have been drawn has been rejected. The role of rhetorical invention is no longer accepted as valid logic or ordering in serious dialectical disputation.

A primary reason for this shift having occurred may lie in the different purposes pursued by the two rhetoricians. Cicero was a public orator deeply committed to civic life. The role of his rhetoric and the aims of its persuasion must have been rather different from those of a Christian courtier attending court in the decline of the Roman Empire.¹² A different education, political environment, social structure, would necessitate a complete rethinking of the topics of person and act to maintain their relevance to the construction of a rhetor within a different

historical material/different historical needs. Boethius does address some of these needs, yet just as with his *Consolation of Philosophy*, he remains deeply divided about the importance of immediate social context as opposed to divine determinism.¹³ The wavering over this in the *De topicis differentiis* allows for the social and temporal context to be neglected and lost in later rhetorical studies deriving from Boethius,¹⁴ making a nonsense of analogical examples, and leaving only their abstractions, the apparently more eternal operations of disembodied categories and structures. Hence the consolidation of theory which omits person and act throughout the Middle Ages,¹⁵ ultimately forming the basis for the success of the syllogistic inferential logic of certainty at the heart of scholastic argument. The concentration of many later rhetoricians on Boethius' *De topicis differentiis* continues the removal of the topics from immediate social environment, and denies the need for the openly rhetorical topoi of person and act. There can be no rousing of passions and emotions, no direct context-bound persuasion. Therefore the rhetorical loci develop into static lists, fixed emblems, and become detached from actual context; the categories become essential and the structures all defer to syllogism. The implication is that the abstract categories and structures are on their way to providing proof by habitual acceptance, but significantly and simultaneously, the loci are being demoted to 'mere ornament'.

The late Middle Ages brought attempts to reinstitute the breadth and activity of the topics when the early humanists tried to restore their context-bound mode. Lorenzo Valla's *Elegantiae* is organised topologically,¹⁶ and Nancy Streuver notes that Valla, the new humanist, criticises the 'errors' of scholasticism as 'reifications, concealed or self-deceived figurative uses, tautologies, and false attributions of transitivity or intransitivity . . .' (pp. 192-3). In these 'lexical faults' Valla perceives ethical instability, reiterating the Platonic argument that unexamined grounds are far from being a guarantee of certainty, but are simply plausible, not good enough as a basis for moral argument. Streuver claims that Valla reinstitutes a social context, an interaction of rhetor and audience, through his use of the topics. She says:

a *topos* is an armatorium of flexible, responsive debating tactics, a series of argumentative wrestling holds; just so, the

Elegantiae represents a list of lexical manoeuvres, initiatives derived from historical discursive events, a repertoire that the reader as author may draw from at will in responses to specific discursive demands. (p. 195)

And, as we shall see, this attention to specific event necessarily raises questions of genre because genre theory comes to describe the literary relations between rhetors and audiences within social and historical contexts. The Renaissance concern with genre indicates a new awareness not only of the changing social and political environment, but also, by the end of the fifteenth century, the new medium of print.¹⁷

Lisa Jardine presents the case for Valla in terms of the 'shock or revelation' that the recent discoveries in Latin and Greek literature would have brought to someone schooled in medieval scholasticism. She suggests that Valla's *Dialecticae disputationes* was an attempt to reintroduce the valid modes of reasoning that had been excluded from scholastic logic, but which were plainly present in classical writers. Cicero's 'Academic' scepticism of the conceptual certainty with which some philosophers approached the gulf between appearance and reality, which led them to believe they could discover certain truth,¹⁸ led him to develop the topics of Aristotle in the light of Plato's methodological requirement that one moves to a decision between alternatives, to a probable ground as a basis for action (pp. 150-1 and 158). Just so Valla sees 'the road to knowledge . . . [as] fraught with uncertainty' (p. 148), hence the need for a valid logic which incorporates 'forms which do not (or do not readily) reduce to syllogistic form' (p. 159). Valla distinguishes between 'arguments whose conclusions are entirely implicit in their premises (syllogisms) and other forms of argument in which the link between starting point and conclusion is not of this form (epichiremes)' (p. 160). In doing so, and in developing the topics as non-syllogistic logic, based on the probable rather than the certain, Valla is creating not a shift to rhetoric as an 'easy' 'soft-option' (p. 164) mode of argument, but restoring the analogical reasoning of context to dialectic. As Leff notes, Valla places 'more emphasis on the social and political effects of language than on propositional consistency'.¹⁹ However, by the early seventeenth century the topics have not only again lost their place as the primary contextualising device, but have also been redefined as static and completely rejected by a wide range of discourses.

Situated at the centre of the process both of reintroducing social context to valid reasoning and of its loss, is Agricola's massive achievement of restoring probable argument by analogy through the topics. But the achievement was double-edged. That he did so was a vindication of the task of the old rhetoric, but the manner in which it was done, by incorporating probable argument into dialectics, left rhetoric with little function but embellishment. Grafton and Jardine describe the other face of Agricola's achievement thus:

The 'method' of Agricolan dialectic is largely organisational – it organises conveniently entirely traditional material on the *topos* . . . an ingenious set of readily transmitted routines for classifying the accumulation of matter for debating or declaiming (composing poetry or fiction) by 'commonplaces'. It produced a passionate commitment . . . to the view that these routines provide a pathway to truth, rather than a rhetorical technique.²⁰

It has been argued elsewhere that Agricola's understanding of the commonplace is rather more flexible than this account might suggest, for the 'lieu commun' can take on the role of the major term in a syllogism. In its activity as an intermediary between 'lecture et écriture', Agricola is presented as seeking the persuasive intention, the rhetoric, of the writer which renders the text into a syllogism or series of syllogisms. From either account, one result was that dialectics shifted in emphasis from disputation to inquiry.²¹ It has been suggested that the signal procedure in humanist education was to replace medieval logic and grammar with humanist rhetoric and grammar²² which became the new dialectic. Through the process, rhetoric itself is left merely with the topics of person and act and no argument to substantiate them; yet the topics of category and structure, now incorporated into dialectic, lose contact with the social and with a communicative function.

There is considerable academic debate on the issues surrounding the topics and their role within rhetoric, dialectic and humanist education at this time. Many accounts focus on the work of Peter Ramus. For whatever ideological reasons,²³ he develops a system of education which firmly separates rhetoric from logic and dialectics, apparently taking Agricola and Erasmus as authorities for doing so.²⁴ While Ramus moves the abstract categories

and structures of the topics to dialectics following Agricola, his rhetoric still retains the *loci* or examples of the topics of category, and those of person and act.²⁵ These topical *loci* or restricted commonplaces become the only claim that rhetoric has to valid reasoning, even though rhetoric is still the, albeit enervated and very limited, site for cultural specificity and social context.

The early humanist attempts at reintroducing the topics as analogies, as social and historical modes of reasoning, break upon the activities of Agricola and Ramus which subsume the topics into dialectics, and scatter out into a multitude of fields. The process can be viewed as the result of long-standing scholastic competition, claiming ascendancy for either rhetoric or dialectic but unwilling to place each on an equal footing with the other. This competition generated the dialectic of disputation in a static logical theory, as well as the ethically privileged rhetoric of the early humanists, and the reformed dialectics of Agricola: all can be read as attempts at unification and singleness that distort and twist, breaking, scattering bits willy-nilly, leaving gaps.

3. POST-RENAISSANCE SCATTERING: SCIENCE, RELIGION, THE NOVEL AND THE PRINTED BOOK

The huge shattering of different approaches to rhetoric and dialectics was brought to a head by technological, social and economic changes which demanded a radical revision of the topics, particularly those of person and act. Emerging capitalism, class mobility, changes in education and the development of the print medium as a primary mode of communication, all needed a quite different formulation of the topics which would enable a use of analogy that was relevant to the new social context. But despite all, the dominant attitude toward the topics as static sets of quasi-proofs won out. Their apparent inflexibility contributed to their rejection by scientists seeking either empirical relevance or mathematical logic, to their rejection by a new religious spirit that distrusted their *copita* or matter and their ability to arouse the passions, and to their rejection by the later humanists who either were those withdrawing from the social pragmatics that the topics always indicated when they were fully being used, or those who were moving into a firmly non-scholastic, vernacular preoccupation with genre and a theory of poetics which was supplanting the old rhetoric.

Much more is happening that contributes to this debate, but by the incorporation in England during the 1630s of Ramist attitudes to rhetoric there is an educational underpinning for the denial of the topics as reasoning devices.²⁶ This educational underpinning is immensely influential in downgrading the topics as argumentatively valid. But reasoning by analogy, with social context, within history is necessary and the topics are replaced by many other means of creating common grounds for an audience, especially for the new book-reading audience. The humanist rejection of the topics was overtaken by the Ramist educational system which formed a basis for the 'humanities', the study of the classics as in itself a preparation for civic life, and this field generated a large body of common grounds.²⁷ One has to recognise the monolithic nature of the classical education received by virtually all members of western European society who wielded any power, entered any profession from the sixteenth to the twentieth century. It was, and until very recently has been, the basis for the education of the governing class and the state establishment of an English ideology. The humanities have provided for nearly four hundred years topics for the ideological common grounds of the state and church. In its own way a 'classical' education has generated much work on categorical modes of thought and has contributed to the elaboration of many written genres such as satire, pastoral and utopia, which delineate alternative topics of person and act.

Other common grounds emerged within the 'laws of nature' of modern science. Bacon attempted to save a role for rhetorical topoi not as valid reasoning but as illustrative and expressive.²⁸ The orderly qualities of the categories were their saving grace in the eyes of the new empiricists. However, even this restricted role was perceived as inappropriate by the Port-Royal logicians who rejected the involvement in reasoning of categorical topoi.²⁹ The rejection is partly to do with the loss of audience in the new mathematics and sciences, the move from disputation to private inquiry, as well as the growth of mathematical logic as the source of proofs. Curiously, the categorical topoi of essence, quantity, quality, time, state and so on, were in effect retained but divorced from their social context, as the phenomenal or natural 'facts' with which science dealt. Both loss of audience and the shift from topoi to fact underwrite a significant loss of the social and historical. The logical progression from hypothesis to proof to

premise, is of course chronological and temporal. But people forget this process all the more easily because of the intense closure achieved by the status of mathematical 'proof'. Scientists often go on to argue that Charles' law or Boyle's law is 'true', rather than being the new scientific topoi of category, new loci or commonplaces for argument: rhetorical inventions. They often ignore that mathematics itself is based on the topoi of structure or rhetorical *dispositiva*. Most scientists even now have a complete ignorance of person and act, and deny Aristotle's warning that scientific grounds must first be persuaded toward in dialectics.³⁰ During the seventeenth century these processes led both to the naive hopes of the Royal Society for a 'purity' of language, and to John Locke being against topoi because it was deductive and for experience because it was inductive, neither the Society nor Locke recognising that experience itself is topologically organised in the ideology of social context.

It has recently been argued that the antique loci, the traditionally civic and historical role they played, did not meet the Renaissance needs for an articulation of the 'interiority of faith and its transcendent objects'.³¹ Deborah Shuger outlines the quality of the new religious rhetoric as harsh, dense, brief, non-linear, stripped of logical connectives and abstractions, violently compressed, attaining vividness by dramatisation and tropes, with visual imagery 'assuming an almost exclusive preeminence in the sacred rhetorics of the Renaissance' (p. 277). The condition of the topics in abstract dialectic, their contemporary copious employment, and their range over many non-visual analogies, must have left their categories and structures wholly unsuitable. The 'communal inwardness' toward which this new rhetoric moved also required a very different attitude toward the topics of person and act because they were not tied to overt and civic social occasion but to a spiritual community. Despite the rootedness of the spiritual within history, none of these writers saw any purpose in recasting the topics for these new demands. Furthermore, whatever the origin, the density, brevity and obscurity of mystical inwardness created a set of spiritual common grounds which found their outlet among other places partly in the conceit, partly in the development of the baroque,³² and partly in the elaboration of the function of image and 'symbol'.³³

Of the many other modes of writing which emerged from the Renaissance, from the essay to drama to newspaper article to

household manual, one of the richest has been the novel. It developed structures and strategies parallel to the formulae of oral literature and the structural topoi of rhetoric, as well as combining the folk motif with biblical and classical topoi to produce common grounds both for the psychological and for social manners.

But all of these non-determinist, non self-evident bases for reasoning have, in a world after the Port-Royal logicians and the hopes of the Royal Society, a rather different role. They are not only hierarchically less important than dialectic, now called logic, but inadmissible as valid reasoning. This has far-reaching implications for their development. The 'humanities' still suffer today from accusations of being at best 'soft sciences' with no numeration, and find themselves increasingly forced to justify themselves in terms of 'proof' and 'truth', having lost much of the practice of arguing from social context and historical materiality. A consistent pattern in their attempts to justify themselves has been the tendency for each of them to claim authority for their common grounds, whether spiritual, ideological, psychological or social, by shifting the basis of their presence from actively agreed upon grounds to patterns with a *priori* status: an all-encompassing God, unexamined 'natural' ideology, or corporate self-evidence.

The Renaissance attempts to resolve the problem, in other words the techniques, strategies and genres that were devised to deal with the contextual, need to be set against the emerging media of theatre and print. Since this essay deals primarily with devices of analogous reasoning in writing, I will restrict the following comments to the changing world of the printed book: its increased audience, the shift in cognitive skills that print asks for from a manuscript- or oral-based culture,³⁴ and the practicalities of communication in the print medium which radically redefine the community of scribe and script into that of writer, printer, reader and the book. The audience for printed books is not the small community whose primary mode was scholastic disputation, but an enlarging group, from differing social and educational backgrounds.³⁵ Paradoxically, the increasingly private manner of reading a book means an audience of 'one' and many at the same time. Plato dealt with the factor of large audiences by insisting on face to face communication, ensuring that each speaker set the reasoning or persuasion toward a specific and present audience, asking for interaction and participation.³⁶ But

'face to face' does not guarantee this active involvement, and the medium of writing foregrounds the problem rather more sharply. With print, the problem is exacerbated and the Renaissance response seems partly to have been a development of theory for written genres which would place and position both writer and reader, in other words, develop new topoi for person and act in written genres. For example, there is the extensive concern with what may be considered one of the most sophisticated structural attributes of the novel: the narrator. But genres in themselves do not ensure consensus, indeed they often capitalise on the success of certain patterns by repeating the technical and strategic formula of kinds of writing which have already been accepted and incorporated.

There were also special cognitive problems with the medium of print and its effect on the structure of writing, most obviously and importantly for questions of consensus and corporate reasoning in terms of repetition and cohesion. Repetition in oral and manuscript work was a device for conveying authority, but primarily allowing for variation of theme and interpretation.³⁷ Writing itself is not averse to repetition, but the uniformity and relative stability of the print medium allows for the development of a rational analytical model for writing, where the whole point is that you do not repeat or go back to persuade again to common grounds, but simply check back through preceding papers for the proofs for earlier premises. When repetition does occur it has to be exact because it can always be checked, and it attains validity only if it 'matches' what came before.

A sense for the stylistic implications of this technological change can be gained from a brief look at the development of indexes. The topical commentaries in the margins of medieval manuscript gave rise in the growing authority of the text to intercalated headings, often by topic.³⁸ When the printed book appears, with dependable repeated layout, so too do indexes which cite the topics in a list at start or end of book; and eventually, with the introduction of page-numbering, indexes cite topic against page number. The topical commentary has turned into fixed category, yet the need for more relevant and immediate commentary resurfaces into marginalian comments and the keeping of commonplace books. Repetition within writing has to find other strategies than, say, lists of items for variation. If it does not, then the self-evident status of its argument becomes too clear