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Attic Prose: Lipsius, Montaigne, Bacon

Montaigne

THE FOUNDER OF LIBERTINE STYLE

There is a striking similarity between the moral experience of Montaigne at the time of his retirement and that through which Lipsius passed more gradually in arriving at the ultimate form of his thought. He too was touched with the melancholy of the late Renaissance. His confessed aim in his retirement was to study it and come to terms with it; and the method of his study in the first phase of his philosophical development was purely Stoic. The essays which we can prove to have been written during the first five or six years after his retirement are as like in tone and spirit to the Stoical treatises of Lipsius as the writings of two authors working independently are ever likely to be. The essay on Solitude, for instance, is a kind of companion-piece or complement to Lipsius' dialogue on *Constancy*.

Rhetorically, too, Montaigne effected his escape from humanistic orthodoxy through the Stoic doorway; and he asserted his freedom with more boldness and promptitude, perhaps actually became conscious of it at an earlier date, than Lipsius. He is in no doubt, even in the earliest of his Essays, about his distaste for Cicero's style; and

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indeed is the only Anti-Ciceronian who dares to express his independence with perfect frankness. "Fie upon that eloquence," he says, when speaking of Cicero, "that makes us in love with itself, and not with the thing." The very beauty of Cicero's language, the faultlessness of his oratorical rhythm, is the defect he finds in him, just as Erasmus had found him too perfect. "He will sometimes," he admits, "confound his numbers; but it is seldom." "As for me, I like a cadence that falleth shorter, cut like Iambics."¹ He may make his opposition more particular and varied in his later writings; he cannot make it more clear and positive than it is in the period between 1572 and 1576.

But he has not yet attained the characteristic independence of his matured opinions. Like Lipsius', his opposition to Cicero's sole authority is that of a school. The terms of his polemic are all Stoic terms; the books that he reads, he says, in words that are almost identical with a later phrase of Lipsius, are only those that will make him "more wise and sufficient, not more worthy or eloquent";² and the authors who have won away his admiration from "the master of those who speak" are also those in whom he has studied the Stoic philosophy which meets his moral need at this time: Seneca and, in a less degree, Lucan. The "soldatesque" style of Cæsar, it is true, also commands his special admiration; for what is it but the language of a great Stoic in action; but he is after all a writer, that is to say, a rhetorician, and as a model for his own imitation Seneca alone could serve his turn. Upon this model, in fact, his style was formed in his early writing, and the general character it took at that time was never radically changed, as he himself observed, even though his theory of style and his tastes passed through more than one phase of development in succeeding years. Pasquier described him as *un autre Sénèque de notre langue*, Père Garasse as *un Sénèque en désordre*; and the careful analysis of his style by many modern critics has but confirmed these judgments of an earlier day. His style, says Sainte-Beuve, is "a tissue of metaphors," and, as regards the other conspicuous trait of a Senecan style, Etienne Pasquier has truly said of his book that it is "un vrai séminaire de belles et notables sentences."

If Montaigne had advanced no further in the development of his moral and rhetorical theory than the stage he had reached in 1576 he would not have become the pioneer in a new phase of modern thought. His talent, his inimitable skill would of course have made

his writings more familiar to the world than those of Muret and Lipsius; but he would have occupied a place similar to theirs and about equal to it in the history of the rationalist movement of the age.

Doubtless his freedom from the obligations of a professional consistency was a cause that his influence was not bounded by these limitations; some would prefer to say that it was merely an effect of the native superiority of genius to any circumstances whatever; and perhaps the truest statement of all would be that his preference of an unrelated freedom to the embarrassments of a defined career was in and of itself the decisive manifestation of his genius, including all the rest as its natural consequence. At all events, he passed beyond the limits of the "new kind of learning," even at the time when Muret and Lipsius were still seeking its exact academic formulæ and definitions. By the time his first volume appeared, in 1580, he had already renounced systematic stoicism—though he never moved out of the zone of intellectual and literary interests into which his stoic study had introduced him—and had found his way to the main highway of modern thought, which leads directly from Petrarch and Erasmus to the liberal skepticism of the eighteenth century. He had discovered that the progress of rationalism meant much more than a change of orthodoxies, meant nothing less in fact than the full exercise of curiosity and the free play of individual differences.³

A change of literary tastes kept pace with this philosophic development. Students of Montaigne's *Essais* have discovered that the publication of Amyot's translations of Plutarch's works, and particularly of *Les Œuvres Morales et Meslees* in 1572, had a decisive effect in this respect upon all his later work. The full meaning of the extraordinary delight he always took thenceforth in the reading of this work cannot be discussed here: we need only observe that it was quite as much an effect as a cause of the progress that was going on in his literary opinions. In an addition to his last volume, in the edition of 1588, he said that of all the authors he knew Plutarch was the one who "best mingled art with nature,"⁴ and the phrase exactly describes the literary ideal toward which he was tending throughout his career. He was always in quest of the natural man in himself, the free individual self who should be the ultimate judge of the opinions of all the sects and schools; and as the natural complement of this philosophic enquiry he was always feeling his way at the same time toward a theory of style which should allow the

greatest possible scope to the expression of differences of individual character, or, in other words, the greatest possible naturalness of style that is consistent with the artificial limits necessarily imposed upon all literary composition. We can observe through all the stages of his development a steady approximation to such a theory; but in the latest editions of his *Essais* he has worked out its formulæ with surprising definiteness, and has become, both as teacher and model, the initiator of a particular tendency within the general bounds of the Anti-Ciceronian movement which is destined to have even greater consequences in literary history than the Stoic model of style described by Lipsius. To this tendency we are justified in giving the name "Libertine"—though the term is new in *literary* criticism—because it not only indicates the connection between the kind of prose-style which it produces and the philosophy to which it is related, but also exactly describes the character of this prose-style itself.

The freedom of Montaigne's literary opinions was partly due, as we have already observed, to his deliberate choice of a career free from official responsibilities: he became a "man writing for men." But it was also due in large measure to the fact that he was the first of the Anti-Ciceronian leaders to use a vernacular language in his writings; and this is so great a point of difference that it cannot be passed over in a discussion of seventeenth century prose-style.

LATIN AND THE VERNACULAR TONGUES 1575-1625

The last quarter of the sixteenth century was the period when the literary claims and pretensions of Latin and the modern languages were most evenly balanced, when it was easiest to pass from one to the other without a change of subject-matter or style. Before that time there had been a fairly clear, though by no means a deliberate, differentiation of their uses. The chief artistic use of the vernacular in the sixteenth century had been to express the surviving medievalism of the culture of that age. It was the language, for instance, of what had been perhaps the most general medium of medieval literary expression, the sermon; it was the language of a multitude of romantically-retold tales of both antiquities, in which the fading ideals and customs of chivalry were adapted to an age of courtiers; it was the language of courtly ceremonial and show; it was the medium in which the medieval book of etiquette and universal instruction enjoyed a brief revival. It reflected, in brief, the customs of a courtly

life which had not been modified in its essential features by the intellectual effort of the Renaissance. On the other hand, whatever was really new and forward-looking in the Renaissance found its prose-expression in the ancient tongue. Some humanists, it is true, foresaw the modern uses of their mother-languages: Bembo, Du Bellay, Ascham, for instance. Yet their writings are not representative of the usual vernacular prose of their time; and there is little distortion in the statement that in 1550 all serious, modern thought was expressed in Latin, all that was traditional, or merely popular, in its character tended to find its way into vernacular prose.

One hundred years after that date the progress of modernism had reversed these relations in most respects. The usual language of serious criticism, and even of philosophy, had become English, French, or Italian; and, what is more important, the *subject* of literary criticism had become chiefly the vernacular languages and their usages; Latin was already the language of a dead literature, whose chief value was to enrich the native styles with romantic allusion, heroic images, and far-echoing rhythms.

In these observations there is of course nothing new, and the purpose of reviving them here is to call attention to a fact which scholarship has not yet clearly enough taken account of, that between the two *termini* that have just been mentioned there was a most interesting period in which the two languages, or the two kinds of languages, the ancient and the vernacular, were present in the minds of most well-educated people in relations of almost exact balance and equality, and there were no real differences whatever between the uses of the one and the other. This period, which extended over about two generations, one before the turn of the century, one after, was the hinge on which the great change turned, a quiet revolution, effected unconsciously in the main, it would seem, and participated in by many who would have regretted it if they had known what they were doing, but of vastly more importance than most of the changes which have been the subject of literary controversy. This period should be more carefully studied by literary historians with reference to the history of the modern languages than it has yet been; and there are the two comments on it which are directly suggested by the study of "Attic" prose.⁵

The first has to do with the effect of the equalization of the languages upon the vernacular literatures, and is to the effect that out of this passing state of equilibrium emerged a standard form of

literary prose in every modern language, upon which all later forms are founded and out of which they have developed without radical or revolutionary change.

Italian, English and French prose of the preceding periods has various merits which antiquarians love to point out for the reproof or exhortation of writers of the present day. But none of it is quite *standard* prose. Some of it is too popular and crude and violent. Some of it is too highly wrought and fantastically mannered. And a third kind,—the smallest class,—though pure and correct, is too poverty-stricken, thin, and limited in its expressive resources. The explanation of this fact of course is that, as we have just observed, men of ideas reserved all the serious, progressive, and modern uses of their intellects for expression in Latin; they felt that the spoken languages had not been sufficiently conventionalized to carry the definite meanings and logical processes of continued exposition. It was good for *concrete* uses alone. And as long as this sort of differentiation continued in force there could not be a standard prose-style in either Latin or the various vernaculars, for a standard form of prose is determined by the *general* thought of the age which it expresses, its collective wisdom and experience; it is neither remotely and professionally intellectual, on the one hand, nor a simple record of facts and sensations, on the other; its function is rather to relate the varied phenomena of the external life of each period to its dominant ideas and the general philosophic trend of its mind. It is clear that no such style could make its appearance in an age when the intellect spoke one language, the senses another.

On the other hand, when these two languages had become virtually interchangeable in the minds of a great many writers, as they were, for example, in the minds of Montaigne and Bacon, when one and the other came with equal ease and idiomatic freedom from their pens, it made little difference in fact which one they used, for each would have some of the characteristic quality of the other. A writer in Latin would show the colloquial and concrete qualities of his speech in his own language; a writer in French or English would derive from his Latin the rhetorical firmness, the exact use of abstraction, the logical process which the learned language imposes.

This is the phenomenon that we observe in fact in the period of Montaigne and Bacon. These are the first writers in the vernacular languages who employ a style which renders the process of thought and portrays the picturesque actuality of life with equal effect and

constantly relates the one to the other; and it is in this sense that we may justify the statement that the Anti-Ciceronian leaders—Montaigne, Charron, and Pasquier in France, Bacon, Hall, Jonson, Wotton in England—are the actual founders of modern prose-style in their respective languages. In the works of these authors, and in none of those that precede them, we can find a style in the popular language which is at once firm, uniform, and level enough to be called a style and also adaptable enough to adjust itself to the changing life of the modern world—a style which may grow and change in later generations without losing its recognizable features.

The second comment to be made in this connection is that the character of the Anti-Ciceronian movement in prose-style—whether we consider its fundamental principles or the models it proposed for imitation—was eminently favorable to the process of leveling and approximation, the virtual blending, in fact, of Latin and vernacular style that was going on during this period. Ciceronian purism had tended to keep the two kinds of speech apart from one another. Not that the Ciceronians had been unfavorable to the study of prose-style in the vernacular. Bembo and Ascham, on the contrary, had studied the subject carefully. But their purism in Latin style begot a corresponding temper in their treatment of the native languages, and they mistakenly attempted to shut up Italian, French and English within the inadequate limits of the literary vocabulary which they had acquired at the beginning of the sixteenth century. Misled by the lack of a proper historical sense which was characteristic of their school, they pretended that the vernacular tongues had already attained their full maturity and were ready to be standardized in grammars, dictionaries, and rhetorics. The central idea of the Anti-Ciceronian movement, on the other hand, was that style should be adapted to the differences of men and times. The great modern principle of unending change and development was implicit in its rhetorical theory; and many of its leaders expressed their new-found joy in freedom by indulging in strange caprices of vocabulary. English and French are suddenly deformed by a riot of freakish Latinisms on the one hand, and expanded at the same time by new and piquant discoveries in the expressiveness of colloquial speech. The Latin of humanist and scholar of course loses its remoteness by the same process, and begins to bristle with strange words picked up from Plautus, or Greek, or medieval Latin, or the living languages.

To discuss the interesting results in the style of seventeenth-

century prose that followed this general prevalence of the hedge-breaking custom would require a separate essay, perhaps a volume. We must proceed here merely to point out that there was a more specific way in which Anti-Ciceronianism aided the process of leveling and the transference of the qualities of Latin prose to the various vernaculars, namely, through the character of its preferred Latin models. The Ciceronian style cannot be reproduced in English, or indeed in any modern language. The ligatures of its comprehensive period are not found in the syntax of an uninflected tongue; and the artifices necessary to supply their function must produce either fantastic distortion or insufferable bombast. This is true after all the experiments of four centuries in quest of formal beauty. Certainly in the sixteenth century no modern speech had developed an art of prose adequate to the imitation of so difficult a model, and the best that any of them could do was to reproduce the oratorical style of medieval Latin, in which only the ornaments and the simpler elements of the form of the Ciceronian pattern are employed for the purpose of formal beauty. That these could indeed be transferred with some success into vernacular forms of style had been proved in Spain and England, and even in Italy and France; but it was evident that none of the varieties of *estilo culto* developed by this process was adequate to serve as a vehicle for the advancing thought of the new age or to portray the actualities of any real world. No oratorical prose, indeed, whether based on the pure Ciceronian, or on the derived medieval, pattern, could serve for this purpose. As long as these were the preferred models a normal form of French or English prose could not appear.

But Seneca is easy. There is nothing in his syntax that could prove a bar to the expression of the ideas of a keen-minded critic of the end of the sixteenth century concerning the moral experience of his times or himself; on the contrary, the brevity of his constructions, the resolved and analytic character of his sentences, would provide such a writer with a mold exactly adapted to the character of his mind and the state of his language. Tacitus, of course, is harder reading; but the kind of difficulty that he offers would prove to be no more than a welcome stimulus and challenge to the trained wits of rationalists like Lipsius, Bacon, Malvezzi, Gracian, and Balzac. In brief, ancient Anti-Ciceronianism worked in a *resolved* style, and the perfect success with which its manner was transferred to French, Italian, Spanish, and English style during the early seven-

teenth century is proof of its fitness to serve as the model on which a standard modern prose could be formed.

Finally, it is to be observed that the equilibrium between the languages determines the sources from which the student of the Anti-Ciceronian movement must draw his knowledge of contemporary opinion. He must learn to disregard linguistic boundary-lines. He must use the Latin discussions of contemporary and ancient Latin style, discussions in Latin of contemporary vernacular style—and these are frequent until the middle of the seventeenth century—and of course, more and more as time goes on, discussions of vernacular tendencies in the vernacular; and he must learn that all of these are of equal value. It has already been seen that the beginnings of the movement were in humanistic Latin prose, in the works of Erasmus, Muret, Lipsius; and naturally the theory and criticism of it are found in the same place. But it is somewhat surprising to discover that a whole generation after the balances have tipped in favor of the literary use of the vernacular, criticism of vernacular tendencies in prose-style continues to appear in Latin. Descartes, for instance, writes to Balzac in Latin an illuminating letter concerning the French style of the time, and Bacon was certainly thinking of English, French, and Italian style in the paragraph concerning recent prose which he added to his Latin translation of the *Advancement of Learning* in 1622. The student must learn, in short, that as far as style is concerned there was no difference in the mind of this period between Latin prose, on the one hand, and English, French, Italian, or Spanish, on the other: Lipsius writes to Montaigne of his style, after reading his first volume of *Essais*, in similar terms to those he had used in writing at an earlier date to Muret of his new manner of writing.⁶

Nor are these facts valuable only as indicating a method of study. They are of first-rate importance in the history of the movement itself as showing that in the minds of most of its leaders it was in the classical and not in the popular tradition. On this point there can be no question. Even when the custom of writing prose in the native languages had become very common, as it did during the decades 1590-1610, most of those who fell in with the new tendency felt that they were following in the train of Politian, Erasmus, and Muret, and ultimately of Seneca and Tacitus. They thought of their vernacular style as having come over to them from the Latin of the humanists or as directly derived from the Latin style of antiquity;

and they seem usually to have been unaware of any relation, either of opposition or evolution, with the vernacular prose of the preceding age.

The only very important exception to this general rule is to be found in the critical utterances of Montaigne and of certain writers, like Pasquier, for instance, who were directly influenced by him. Montaigne was well read in the vernacular literature of the sixteenth century and even of an earlier period; and he was too humane a critic of life to pass by the true mirrors of his age without studying his own features in them too, even though his grand enthusiasms are all for certain of the ancients. His criticisms, it is true, are too few and inexplicit to be satisfying; but they tend to show that he regarded the ornate prose and poetry of the past age with something of the same contempt that he felt for Bembo and other Ciceronianizing Latinists. We wish that he had been more definite in telling us why he scorned Guevara's famous *Golden Book*;⁷ but we may be reasonably certain that the poverty of their content and the richness of their stylistic ornament were equal causes of his distaste. We should like to be certain too that he is thinking of the Spanish prosaists and the style of Guevara and Mexia when he speaks of "l'affectation et la recherche des fantastiques élévations espagnoles et petrarchistes";⁸ for the association of Petrarchanism in verse and the *estilo culto* of Guevara and Lyly in prose as two similar manifestations of the medieval love of rhetoric would be exactly what we should expect in an Anti-Ciceronian and rationalist like Montaigne. But the passage as a whole does not permit us to say with *certainty* that he was thinking of Spanish *prose*, and we must be content to know that he did actually dislike both these kinds of vernacular writing. The *franche navïeté* of Froissart was, on the other hand, wholly to his taste, and if he seems not to understand the real importance of Rabelais he at least enjoyed him.⁹

Bacon

BACON AND TACITUS

There is only one other author of nearly equal importance with Lipsius and Montaigne in the history of the establishment of the Attic tradition—Francis Bacon. He was not quite the first professed Anti-Ciceronian in England. Thomas Nashe and Gabriel Harvey

undertook a vigorous attack during the nineties against both Ciceronian Latin and the ornate vernacular style of Lyly and his school, each of them seeking an escape from formalism through the method of extravagance and licentious freedom of style; and there are interesting similarities between their efforts and those of some Continental "libertines" of the same period. But neither of these writers had philosophy or authority enough to lead his age, and their attack on tradition was soon lost sight of in the great success of Bacon's more imposing offensive movement.

As a historian, Bacon offers useful aid to the student of prose-style. In a passage in the *Advancement of Learning* (most of which was probably written some years before its publication in 1605), he has sketched the history of the Ciceronian cult and described the causes that produced it. He is perhaps following a faulty sketch in one of Muret's orations (delivered at Rome in 1575, in introducing a course in Juvenal): but his account is so much more complete and correct that it may be considered the first attempt to place the Renaissance in historical perspective.—Should we add that his success is a sign that the Renaissance has already passed or is passing? Perhaps so—Ciceronianism is his illustration of that distemper of learning "when words are valued more than matter"; its origin, he finds, was in the excessive zeal of the scholars of the sixteenth century for an exact knowledge of the words of antiquity, and he attributes this in turn—acutely enough but not altogether correctly—to the controversial needs created by the Reformation, and the search for authority among the Fathers of the Church. He quotes a joke from Erasmus' *Ciceronianus*, names as leading Ciceronians since Erasmus' time Ascham and Car, the Protestant German humanist Sturm, and the "Portugal bishop Osorius" (the latest exemplar of the pure cult), describes their style with his usual analytic skill, and closes with the striking statement, which perhaps is due to hints in Erasmus' dialogue, that if he should have to choose between the "weight" of the scholastic philosophers and the "copie" of the rhetorical humanists he would take the former.

The words of this passage are probably familiar to most literary scholars; but this is not true of the supplement to it which Bacon added when his work was translated into Latin and published as *De Augmentis Scientiarum* in 1622. The new passage provides a fairly exact measure of the amount of water that has run under the bridge in three or four decades of literary history, and has an

additional interest as an illustration of a new kind of curiosity, in the men of this generation, which enables them to turn upon themselves and recognize their own changes of taste and temper. Their perception of historical perspectives has made them more observant of change and progress in their own world; a new intelligence is emerging from the methods of skeptical inquiry taught by Petrarch, Erasmus, and Montaigne. In translation, Bacon's words are as follows:

"Somewhat sounder is another form of style,—yet neither is it innocent of some vain shows,—which is likely to follow in time upon this copious and luxuriant oratorical manner. It consists wholly in this: that the words be sharp and pointed; sentences concised; a style in short that may be called 'turned' rather than fused. Whence it happens that everything dealt with by this kind of art seems rather ingenious than lofty. *Such a style is found in Seneca very freely used, in Tacitus and the younger Pliny more moderately; and it is beginning to suit the ears of our age as never before.* And indeed it is pleasant to subtle and low-ranging minds (for by means of it they conciliate the honor due to letters); however better-trained judgments disapprove it; and it may be looked upon as a distemper of learning, in as far as it is accompanied by a taste for mere words and their concinnity."

This passage tells admirably what the Anti-Ciceronian movement is, and how it arose. It describes the form of the new style, and provides a motive for its rapid diffusion at the beginning of the seventeenth century. Not only this, however; it also establishes the parallel between this contemporary Anti-Ciceronianism and that of the first century, both in the character of its style and in its relation to the oratorical prose of the preceding century. The only point we miss is that Bacon does not clearly say that the new tendency is due to actual imitation of the ancients; and this defect is easily accounted for by Bacon's unwillingness to admit the effective survival of the principle of imitation and authority either in himself or his age; it is of a piece with the unfortunate, and sometimes mean, reticence he displays concerning his own great obligations to intellectual masters of the ancient and modern worlds.

And in fact, notwithstanding the apparent cool detachment of his

criticism, Bacon knows very well that he is here describing his own style. He has left sufficient evidence in his own utterances of the truth of his secretary's statement that Tacitus, Cæsar, and Seneca were his favorite authors, and that the order of his preference was that in which these three names are here mentioned. Nor have the critics required the aid of such statements; the resemblance of Bacon's style to that of his masters has often been observed by them. The praise he bestows on Seneca's style, says one of them, *ad ipsum Verulamium haud immerito detorqueri possit*. He was attracted to Seneca and Tacitus, this writer continues, by kinship of talent; and it was in the assiduous reading of these authors that he cultivated his taste for a style of acute and condensed brevity, ornamented, at the same time, with the riches of rhetoric and an almost poetic splendor of words.¹⁰

How are we to account then for the derogatory, or at least balancing, tone of the passage we have just quoted? Properly interpreted, it may serve as an aid to a more exact description of Bacon's tastes and the character of his literary influence than has yet been attempted, or to a correction of some misconceptions concerning them. It has been the custom to place Seneca first among Bacon's models and favorites, but this is an error. When his words are carefully examined, it is apparent that what he says in discommendation of the style "freely used" by Seneca is all directed toward "vain shows" and verbal ornament, the same fault of undue love of concinnity, in short, which was a cause of the revolt against Cicero's form of rhetoric. This is somewhat puzzling, especially in view of the fact that Seneca himself had made current among Anti-Ciceronian critics the phrases they habitually used to express their contempt for the sensuous beauty of the balanced Ciceronian phrase: *non ornamentum virile concinnitas*, and so forth. But the reader of Seneca can reconcile the contradiction. For that very literary and rhetorical essayist customarily framed his *antitheses* and *argutiae* in a balanced form, different indeed from that of the copious oratorical style, but yet capable of becoming almost as transparently artificial. At its best an excellent literary form for the insinuation of subtle shades of thought and fine distinctions, at its worst it is indeed no more than "mere words and their concinnity." And it must be added that Bacon has in mind the imitators of Seneca more than Seneca himself: almost certainly Lipsius' Latinity; probably the English style of Bishop Hall's *Epistles* and other moral writings; perhaps also the

Senecan manner of a number of English essayists who had written since his own first volume of 1597. All these writers had shown how easily the imitation of Seneca could descend to verbal ingenuity or mere pun on occasions when the idea was not worthy of the artifice bestowed upon it.

The faults of Tacitus and his imitators were clear enough to seventeenth-century critics; but they did not run in this direction. Obscurity, enigma, contortion are not qualities of style that comport with concinnity and the study of the abstract charm of words. Evidently Bacon is drawing a vertical line of distinction down through the area of Anti-Ciceronianism in addition to the other transverse line that divides it as a whole from the Ciceronian types of prose; and when this is observed and confirmed by a reference to the qualities of his own style, his literary comments and judgments throughout his works become more consistent. It becomes clear that he has not expressed anywhere a positive approval of Seneca's subject-matter or style, though he refers to his letters as a model for the new essay-form and cites his father as skilful in antitheses. But on the contrary he has directly praised Tacitus in a private letter to Sir Fulke Greville, as "the first of historians," and again, in the *Temporis Partus Masculus*, with the characteristic emphasis of his laconic style: "Many like the moral doctrines of Aristotle and Plato; but of Tacitus it may be said that he utters the very morals of life itself."¹¹ The former of these passages is worthy of a careful consideration.¹² He says that history is of most use for those who wish to know only humanity, and continues: "For poets, I can commend none, being resolved to be ever a stranger to them. Of orators, if I must choose any, it shall be Demosthenes, both for the argument he handles, and for that his eloquence is more proper for a statesman than Cicero's. Of all stories, I think Tacitus simply the best; Livy very good; Thucydides above any of the writers of Greek matters." In every respect this is a characteristic Anti-Ciceronian utterance: in its rejection of poetry from useful studies, in its preference of Tacitus to Livy (along with which goes a liking for Thucydides), and in its contemptuous treatment of oratory, partly veiled by the exaltation of Demosthenes above Cicero. Finally, it is to be noted that the extraordinary enthusiasm of the writer for history—which virtually means politics when connected with the influence of Tacitus—associates him with a particular phase of the Anti-Ciceronian complex which had already declared itself in the programs of Muret and

Lipsius. It is true that at about the same time that Bacon was writing these words he must also have been writing the passage in an early section of the *Advancement of Learning* in which he speaks without qualification of Cicero as the first, or second, of orators, Livy as the first of historians, Virgil and Varro as first in their kinds of all those known to men. But the apparent conflict only gives us the opportunity to note a fact that every student of one subject must take account of: that the Anti-Ciceronian critics, even the boldest of them, always keep an Augustan and Ciceronian orthodoxy in reserve; and even Montaigne will admit that if an abstract literary excellence, independent of the practical and moral uses of the works in which it is displayed, be the basis of one's judgment, the Augustan age and the ages that resemble it are on a higher plane than any others. It is sometimes necessary to surprise them in the more confidential tone of letters and casual notes in order to discover the full range of their heterodoxy.

In Bacon's case, the frequency of his quotation from Tacitus may be accepted as evidence of his preference of that author to all others; for an acquaintance with Tacitus was not in that age to be taken for granted; nor was the citation of his difficult phrases a literary convention, as was that of the Senecan "sentences." On the contrary, it was the mark of an individual taste or a peculiar initiation. Bacon's influence, like his own prose-style, can best be explained in terms of his admiration and imitation of Tacitus; and the point has had to be elaborated at some length for the reason that it has a special bearing upon the development of seventeenth-century English style. The other models of Anti-Ciceronian prose were already known to Englishmen: Hall and the letter-writers were familiarizing them with the Senecan manner of Lipsius, and the intimate whimsical vein of Montaigne was beginning to be domesticated in their own prose. From these sources they could learn most of what Anti-Ciceronianism had to teach concerning the expression of acute wit by ingenious rhetoric. But the desire for wit and ingenuity was only one phase of seventeenth-century taste. Combined with it was a desire for ceremonious dignity, an ideal of deliberate and grave demeanor, which was partly, no doubt, an inheritance from the courtly past, but was modified and indeed largely created by the profound moral experience which the new age was undergoing. A prose-style that should adequately express this age must contrive, therefore, to mingle elements that in any other period would appear oddly contrasted.

It must be at once ingenious and lofty, intense yet also profound, acute, realistic, revealing, but at the same time somewhat grave and mysterious. It must have in short that curious sublimity which is felt in the painting of El Greco, in the sermons and letters of Donne, and in certain sculptures of Bernini.

Seneca—its favorite author—might suggest the ideal manner; but he was too superficial, too familiar, to furnish a complete model of it. Lucan's nodosity and rhetorical pomp served better as a guide to the poets; and Tacitus, if he had not been too difficult (and indeed too novel, for he had not been widely read in the sixteenth century) would have been the usual exemplar of English prose-style. Bacon's great service to English prose was that he naturalized a style in which ingenious obscurity and acute significance are the appropriate garb of the mysteries of empire; and by means of his example the Tacitean strain became familiar to many English writers who were not sufficiently trained in Tacitus himself to imitate his style directly.¹³

SCIENCE AND SEVENTEENTH CENTURY PROSE

Besides domesticating the style of Tacitus in English prose, Bacon aided in various technical ways which cannot be described here in the formulation of a new rhetorical program.¹⁴ But of course his greatest service to the prose movement of his time was not directly and expressly a literary one. It is to be found in his contributions to the great intellectual movement of which Anti-Ciceronianism is but the rhetorical and literary expression.

The progress of rationalism during the sixteenth century had been rapid, and it had been increasingly so as the century drew to an end. But the complete triumph which it was to obtain was still adjourned by a partial lack of coöperation among its leaders in the various fields of intellectual endeavor. Many of them were specialists, of course, who failed to understand as clearly as the defenders of orthodoxy in the universities and courts did how closely their various subjects were related to one another in the general interests of progress. Cujas and Alciati, for instance, were jurists; Ramus' studies ranged widely, but he impressed himself on his age as a logician; Montaigne was a moralist pure and simple; and though Muret and Lipsius were both fully aware of the revolutionary implications in their methods of study, they were daunted by the formidable front of orthodoxy. Intellectually free, they were involved in practical

relations with the powers of conservatism which compelled them to protect themselves by disingenuous compromises and a shocking Machiavellianism. Of course their hesitations and concealments were only the usual marks of all movements of radicalism and innovation; a forward tendency never presents as solid a front as the established system that it is bound to conflict with, because its aims are partly concealed in the future, and no one can tell how the various elements that coöperate in it will relate and adjust themselves in the final settlement. But reformers had more than the usual reasons for fear and vacillation in the sixteenth century because the orthodoxies of all kinds, religious, political, intellectual, and literary, were more than usually aware at that time of the community of their interests and more effectively united in self-defense. What was needed at the end of the century was such an appraisal of the situation as would give an equal consciousness of their common aims, an equal clearness of purpose, to the champions of the more progressive and positive modes of thought.

This was the most important part of the task undertaken by Bacon in the *Advancement of Learning* and the *Novum Organum*. It is now generally recognized that the materials of which these works were made were most of them old and familiar; many of them had even been worked up by his predecessors into almost the form in which Bacon used them. Aristotelianism, medieval scholasticism, Barthollism, Platonism, Ciceronianism, Euphuism, and whatever other shadowy phantoms of reality had haunted the Renaissance, had already been severally exposed to the criticism of reason. But Bacon gathered them all together within the limits of a single survey, and covered them all over with one narrow *hic jacet*. After that they were as pallid and ridiculous as ghosts astray in the open daylight, they could no longer frighten any one.

But that was not all that he did for the new rationalism. He put the vigorous new natural sciences of his age at the center of all his projects for the progress of knowledge. The program of education announced by Muret and elaborated by Lipsius included only the two branches of moral philosophy (the *sapientia*, or private morality, of the ancient Stoics and Peripatetics, and the *prudentia*, or worldly wisdom, which they studied in Tacitus, Machiavelli, and other ancient and modern politicians), with the rhetoric appropriate to them. The effect of Bacon's writings was to put natural science in a definite place in this program,—not the first place, it is true, because the

century that began with Montaigne and ended with La Bruyère and Halifax was above all else the century of moral philosophy,—but yet in a recognized position of authority, from which it could exercise a constant influence upon the moral researches of the age by clarifying, illustrating, defining their method of procedure. This modification had such important literary effects that it must not be passed over here with a mere mention.

The method introduced by Lipsius and Montaigne in the study of the moral situation of their time was in fact the method of science. It does not appear that these philosophers thought of it in that way, or were in any profound way affected by the scientific studies that preceded Bacon's work: their intellectual houses were without windows, or had very narrow ones. But they were compelled by the impulse of their positivistic purposes to adopt the same method of experiment and induction in their own subjects that has since produced such astounding results in natural science. These philosophers were in revolt, not only against the medieval forms of thought, as they are often said to have been, but also against the aims of the Renaissance itself as they had chiefly displayed themselves hitherto. For the effort of their own century had been devoted, exactly like that of the more remote past, chiefly to the rearing of conspicuous philosophic constructions which had no foundations in immediate observation or experience. "Men have despised," said Bacon, "to be conservant in ordinary and common matters . . . ; but contrariwise they have compounded sciences chiefly of a certain resplendent or lustrous matter, chosen either to give glory to the subtlety of disputations or to the eloquence of discourses."¹⁵ They themselves took the humbler task of searching these glorious Houses of Pride to their sandy foundations. Nor did they pretend to raise other constructions in their stead, except only such modest shelters as would serve their immediate moral needs. To be conversant in ordinary and common matters was their only boast. To distinguish the facts of moral experience with critical and inquiring eyes, to record their observations with the acuteness and exactness of the new literary style they had devised for this purpose, this was an intellectual exercise well adapted to their subtle wits; and it was a task moreover that afforded them the thrill of novel adventure. In short, the intellectual program of the seventeenth century was the scientific work of moral observation and delineation; and Montaigne's avowal of his purpose to portray for the first time exactly what the thing is that goes by the name

of a man is echoed at the other end of the century with only a slight difference of tone, in La Bruyère's truly scientific program, "the description of man."

Bacon therefore did not have to teach the method of science to the moralists of his age; for they had already learned it. But the new studies in natural history which Bacon helped to make popular were of great aid to them in their own work, because it trained them, and of course their audiences too, in the habit of exact observation, sharp definition, and clear classification which were necessary for their purpose. Bacon himself provides an excellent illustration of scientific method in the realm of moral observation; for the aphorisms, *Antitheta*, "topics," "colours of good and evil," etc., from which, as from a spinner's bottom, he says, he unwound the thread of his essays, are pieces of scientific apparatus used in a moralist's workshop. They are the notes he has taken at the moment when the experiment was on and observation was keenest and then allocated, by a rough-and-ready scheme of classification, among certain headings and sub-headings which will make them available for future reference. To enumerate the works of seventeenth-century morality that were composed by this method would be tedious: Descartes' *Meditations*, Wotton's *Aphorisms of Education*, and countless other works display the method in their form; and it is but slightly veiled by a more elaborate manner in Browne's *Religio Medici*; Pascal, La Bruyère, Temple, and Halifax all employed it.

To distinguish rhetorical from intellectual process in the writings of professed naturalists is to divide between the bark and the tree: whatever the motions of their minds, they will betray themselves in their style. But some of the results of the addition of science to the intellectual program may be traced most clearly in the history of prose-style. They are chiefly of two opposite kinds, which finally came into open conflict in the second half of the century. At first the natural sciences tended to give greater imaginative range and freedom to the new Attic prose. We may observe this phenomenon most clearly in the writings of certain professed men of science who became literary men and stylists through an interesting blending in their thought of the ideas of Bacon and Montaigne, students of medicine especially, like Sir Thomas Browne and Robert Burton or the Parisian doctor Gui Patin, who bring into new and curious relations the results of their physical explorations of man's nature and the moral speculations of their time. Essentially moralists, as

all men of their age were, they were able to add to the common stock of ideas and images a wealth of curious detail derived from their professional pursuits and their knowledge of unfamiliar facts. The courageous skepticism of the new kind of morality and the rhetorical audacity that accompanied it appealed equally to their tastes; and they contributed in their turn out of their mastery of physiological research to the effects of curiosity and novelty on which so much of the success of the new prose depended. In two writers in which we may fairly describe the union of scientific and moral interest as perfect and equal—in Sir Thomas Browne and Pascal,—we may observe at their highest development the powers of intellectual imagination which might be born of this union.

As the century advanced, however, it became apparent that science was not to remain on the side of poetry and the imagination; on the contrary, it allied itself more and more closely with the movement for clarity and common sense which was gathering strength from so many different sources. A well-known pronouncement of the Royal Society in England expressly dissociated the literary aims of that scientific body from the rhetoric of Bacon and aligned them with the new taste for a plain and clear style. At the same time, in France, the influence of Descartes was gradually making itself felt even among those who were not at all willing to accept his philosophy: imagination began to be a word of derision; Malebranche taught an almost geometrical use of reason as a corrective of its evil influence; the teachers of Port Royal found in logic the way to a Christian plainness and purity of style; and the quality that distinguishes the style of La Bruyère, and even the nobler language of Pascal, is a strictly scientific precision rather than those occasional, and as it were accidental, triumphs of revelation which are effected by an ambitious imagination or a roving fancy.

Conclusion

Muret, Lipsius, Montaigne, and Bacon, though the period of their collective activity covers three-quarters of a century, belong to a single generation in the development of Renaissance culture, the generation in which modern rationalism definitely declared itself as the doctrine of the future, and the new, the Anti-Ciceronian, form of prose-style assumed its place in the world of letters. But Muret belongs at the beginning of this generation; he is partly the pioneer,

partly the founder of its intellectual program. The three philosophers we have considered in the preceding pages lived in the full flower of its career, when its conflict with the forces of the past was virtually over. Rationalism had now won its victory, and displayed that tendency to divide into various schools or phases which always appears when a general idea mingles with the several elements of a varied intellectual life and takes different color from each of them.

In this phase of its history Attic prose divides into the three main forms, or perhaps we should call them merely tendencies toward distinct forms, which displayed themselves more conspicuously in the generation that followed, and can even be distinguished, though less clearly, in the "classical" prose which developed in a succeeding generation out of seventeenth-century Attic. Lipsius, Montaigne, and Bacon each represents one of these three forms or tendencies, and the discussion of their ideas has perhaps made clear what they are. A specific statement will serve, however, to make more definite what has already been said of them.

I. First in order of importance is a tendency due to the prevalence of Stoic philosophy. The prose in which this tendency is manifest can best be known as prose of the Stoic model. 'Senecan prose' would be more definite; but it would sometimes include too much, and on the other hand it would fail to indicate the full scope of Stoic imitation. Lipsius is as clearly the founder of this style as he is of the Neo-Stoic philosophy which usually accompanied it in the first half of the century.

II. To the student of events beyond the limits of the seventeenth century, a tendency in style associated with the skeptical or "libertine" thought of that century and especially with the influence of Montaigne, would seem worthy of the first place in order of importance. This we can only call "libertine" prose, whether we consider its philosophical implications or its rhetorical theories and form. The groundwork of this style is the Senecan pattern, which is so much more apparent in the Stoic model; but it aims at freedom, and chooses several other writers, ancient and modern, as the models by which it seeks, through the method of imitation, to escape from the method of imitation. Rabelais is the chief of these. Montaigne adds the taste for Plutarch's essays; and the form of Montaigne's own style, from 1600 onward, mingles with that of Rabelais' in almost equal proportions in the prevailing forms of libertine style in the seventeenth century.

III. Next to these in the favor of the age was the prose of "politicians" and students of "prudential wisdom": Bacon, Malvezzi, Gracian, Grotius, and a host of others, who get their rhetorical and often their political ideas chiefly from Tacitus.

To these three major forms must be added a tendency which cannot be separated from any of them, but manifests itself everywhere as the peculiar mark of the genius of the seventeenth century, a tendency observable in writers as normal as Bacon, Browne, and Balzac, but apparent in its full efflorescence in the letters of Donne, the essays of Gracian and Malvezzi and many of their fellow countrymen, the histories of Pierre Mathieu, and many similar works. For this tendency there is unfortunately no convenient name in English. "Metaphysical" is even a less happy term to describe the kinds of prose in which it appears than the related kinds of poetry; and there seems to be no possibility of making a practicable adjective or noun in English from the continental terms *concettismo*, etc. It may be known as the "prose of imaginative conceit" in order that we may keep in line with the terms of current criticism. But I am tempted to make the bold innovation of calling it "the baroque style" in prose; for no other term will so exactly describe its characteristic qualities.

In the three forms enumerated above (with due regard to the *concettistic* tendency in each of them) may be ranged all the Attic prose of the century from 1575 to 1675, and that is to say all its characteristic prose, except the writings of one or two great individualists who escape the influence of their time; and it is upon the lines laid down in this classification that the further study of seventeenth-century prose-style must be conducted. What is now necessary is a thorough survey of Stoic prose, libertine prose, and Tacitean prose separately, each treated with reference to its philosophical theory, its preferred models in antiquity and modern times, its relation to the culture of the age, and its rhetorical forms. Only the outlines of such a survey can be suggested, of course, in the study of individual authors,—even of such representative and influential leaders as Muret, Lipsius, Montaigne, and Bacon.

NOTES

1. I, 40 (*Consideration sur Ciceron*).
2. *Ibid.*
3. The change of Montaigne from Stoicism to Libertinism is well treated in Strowski's work on him and also in his *De Montaigne a Pascal*, vol. I. Professor Villey's *Les Sources et l'Évolution des Essais* provides the exact details necessary.
4. III, 6 (*Des Coches*), near the beginning.
5. Many interesting points concerning the relation of the vernacular languages and Latin in the sixteenth century are brought out by Clément in his work on Henri Estienne (Paris, 1899), pp. 197-304 and elsewhere.
6. Lipsius to Montaigne, 1589, *Epp. Misc. Cent. I* (first published in 1590). See also the correspondence between Mlle. de Gournay and Lipsius of the same year, in which the lady writes in French, the *savant* in Latin; yet the style is of the same mould. Concerning this correspondence see Bonnefon, *Montaigne et ses Amis*, II, 334-352.
7. I, 48 (*Des Destries*).
8. II, 10 (*Des Livres*).
9. See Villey, *Les Sources et l'Évolution*, I, 204.
10. See P. Jacquinet, *Francisci Baconi de re litteraria judicia*, Paris, 1863, pp. 98 ff.
11. *Aristotelis et Platonis moralia plerique admirant; sed Tacitus magis vivas morum observationes spirat*. Spedding ed. (1870), III, 538.
12. I accept Spedding's suggested attribution of this letter to the hand of Bacon, though it was sent in the name of Essex. It seems to me impossible that Essex should have been so familiar with the new trend of thought and studies in the nineties as the writer shows himself to be.
13. On the "sublimity" of Tacitus, see an interesting passage in La Mothe le Vayer, *Jugemens sur Historiens, Works* (1685), III, 208: "Son genre d'écrire grave (etc.)."
14. To avoid repetition I have omitted several points concerning Bacon's rhetorical theory which are more or less developed in the essay on "Muret and Attic Prose" mentioned above. Most important of these perhaps is Bacon's constant dependence upon Aristotle's *Rhetoric*—often a peculiar sign of Anti-Ciceronian intention. There is need of a thorough and complete study of Bacon's rhetorical teachings.
15. *Adv. of Learning*, II (*Works*, Spedding ed., 1870, III, 418).

MORRIS W. CROLL



The Baroque Style in Prose

I. Introduction

In the latter years of the sixteenth century a change declared itself in the purposes and forms of the arts of Western Europe for which it is hard to find a satisfactory name. One would like to describe it, because of some interesting parallels with a later movement, as the first modern manifestation of the Romantic Spirit; and it did, in fact, arise out of a revolt against the classicism of the high Renaissance. But the terms "romantic" and "classical" are both perplexing and unphilosophical; and their use should not be extended. It would be much clearer and more exact to describe the change in question as a radical effort to adapt traditional modes and forms of expression to the uses of a self-conscious modernism; and the style that it produced was actually called in several of the arts—notably in architecture and prose-writing—the "modern" or "new" style. But the term that most conveniently describes it is "baroque." This term, which was at first used only in architecture, has lately been extended to cover the facts that present themselves at the same time in sculpture and in painting; and it may now properly be used to describe, or

From Kemp Malone and Martin B. Ruud, editors, *Studies in English Philology in Honor of Frederick Klaeber* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press), pp. 427-456. Copyright 1929 by the University of Minnesota.

at least to name, the characteristic modes of expression in all the arts during a certain period—the period, that is, between the high Renaissance and the eighteenth century; a period that begins in the last quarter of the sixteenth century, reaches a culmination at about 1630, and thenceforward gradually modifies its character under new influences.

Expressiveness rather than formal beauty was the pretension of the new movement, as it is of every movement that calls itself modern. It disdained complacency, suavity, copiousness, emptiness, ease, and in avoiding these qualities sometimes obtained effects of contortion or obscurity, which it was not always willing to regard as faults. It preferred the forms that express the energy and labor of minds seeking the truth, not without dust and heat, to the forms that express a contented sense of the enjoyment and possession of it. In a single word, the motions of souls, not their states of rest, had become the themes of art.

The meaning of these antitheses may be easily illustrated in the history of Venetian painting, which passes, in a period not longer than one generation, from the self-contained and relatively symmetrical designs of Titian, through the swirls of Tintoretto, to the contorted and aspiring lines that make the paintings of El Greco so restless and exciting. Poetry moves in the same way at about the same time; and we could metaphorically apply the terms by which we distinguish El Greco from Titian to the contrast between the rhythms of Spenser and the Petrarchans, on one hand, and the rhythms of Donne, on the other, between the style of Ariosto and the style of Tasso. In the sculptures of Bernini (in his portrait busts as well as in his more famous and theatrical compositions) we may again observe how ideas of motion take the place of ideas of rest; and the operation of this principle is constantly to be observed also in the school of architecture associated with the same artist's name. In the façade of a Baroque church, says Geoffrey Scott, "a movement, which in the midst of a Bramantesque design would be destructive and repugnant, is turned to account and made the basis of a more dramatic, but not less satisfying treatment, the motive of which is not peace, but energy."¹

And finally the change that takes place in the prose style of the same period—the change, that is, from Ciceronian to Anti-Ciceronian forms and ideas—is exactly parallel with those that were occurring in the other arts, and is perhaps more useful to the stu-

dent of the baroque impulse than any of the others, because it was more self-conscious, more definitely theorized by its leaders, and more clearly described by its friends and foes. In some previous studies I have considered the triumph of the Anti-Ciceronian movement at considerable length; but I have been concerned chiefly with the theory of the new style; and my critics have complained, justly, that I have been too difficult, or even abstract. In the present study I hope to correct this defect. Its purpose is to describe the *form* of Anti-Ciceronian, or baroque, prose.

There are of course several elements of prose technique: diction, or the choice of words; the choice of figures; the principle of balance or rhythm; the form of the period, or sentence; and in a full description of baroque prose all of these elements would have to be considered. The last-mentioned of them—the form of the period—is, however, the most important and the determinant of the others; and this alone is to be the subject of discussion in the following pages.

The Anti-Ciceronian period was sometimes described in the seventeenth century as an "exploded" period; and this metaphor is very apt if it is taken as describing solely its outward appearance, the mere fact of its form. For example, here is a period from Sir Henry Wotton, a typical expression of the political craft of the age:

Men must beware of running down steep hills with weighty bodies; they once in motion, *suo feruntur pondere*; steps are not then voluntary.²

The members of this period stand farther apart one from another than they would in a Ciceronian sentence; there are no syntactic connectives between them whatever; and semicolons or colons are necessary to its proper punctuation. In fact, it has the appearance of having been disrupted by an explosion within.

The metaphor would be false, however, if it should be taken as describing the manner in which this form has been arrived at. For it would mean that the writer first shaped a round and complete oratorical period in his mind and then partly undid his work. And this, of course, does not happen. Wotton gave this passage its form, not by demolishing a Ciceronian period, but by omitting several of the steps by which roundness and smoothness of composition might have been attained. He has deliberately avoided the processes of

mental revision in order to express his idea when it is nearer the point of its origin in his mind.

We must stop for a moment on the word *deliberately*. The negligence of the Anti-Ciceronian masters; their disdain of revision, their dependence upon casual and emergent devices of construction, might sometimes be mistaken for mere indifference to art or contempt of form; and it is, in fact, true that Montaigne and Burton, even Pascal and Browne, are sometimes led by a dislike of formality into too licentious a freedom. Yet even their extravagances are purposive, and express a creed that is at the same time philosophical and artistic. Their purpose was to portray, not a thought, but a mind thinking, or, in Pascal's words, *la peinture de la pensée*. They knew that an idea separated from the act of experiencing it is not the idea that was experienced. The ardor of its conception in the mind is a necessary part of its truth; and unless it can be conveyed to another mind in something of the form of its occurrence, either it has changed into some other idea or it has ceased to be an idea, to have any existence whatever except a verbal one. It was the latter fate that happened to it, they believed, in the Ciceronian periods of sixteenth-century Latin rhetoricians. The successive processes of revision to which these periods had been submitted had removed them from reality by just so many steps. For themselves, they preferred to present the truth of experience in a less concocted form, and deliberately chose as the moment of expression that in which the idea first clearly objectifies itself in the mind, in which, therefore, each of its parts still preserves its own peculiar emphasis and an independent vigor of its own—in brief, the moment in which truth is still *imagined*.

The form of a prose period conceived in such a theory of style will differ in every feature from that of the conventional period of an oratorical, or Ciceronian, style; but its most conspicuous difference will appear in the way it connects its members or clauses one with another. In the period quoted above from Wotton the members are syntactically wholly free; there are no ligatures whatever between one and another. But there is another type of Anti-Ciceronian period, in which the ordinary marks of logical succession—conjunctions, pronouns, etc.—are usually present, but are of such a kind or are used in such a way as to bind the members together in a characteristically loose and casual manner. The difference between the two types thus described may seem somewhat unimportant; and it is

true that they run into each other and cannot always be sharply distinguished. The most representative Anti-Ciceronians, like Montaigne and Browne, use them both and intermingle them. But at their extremes they are not only distinguishable; they serve to distinguish different types, or schools, of seventeenth-century style. They derive from different models, belong to different traditions, and sometimes define the philosophical affiliations of the authors who prefer them.

They will be considered here separately; the first we will call, by a well-known seventeenth-century name, the *période coupée*, or, in an English equivalent, the "curt period" (so also the *stile coupé*, or the "curt style"); the other by the name of the "loose period" (and the "loose style"); though several other appropriate titles suggest themselves in each case.⁸

II. *Stile Coupé*

(A)

One example of the *période coupée* has already been given. Here are others:

Pour moy, qui ne demande qu'à devenir plus sage, non plus sçavant ou eloquent, ces ordonnances logiciennes et aristoteliques ne sont pas à propos; je veulx qu'on commence par le dernier point: i'entends assez que c'est que Mort et Volupté; qu'on ne s'amuse pas à les anatomizer. (Montaigne)

'Tis not worth the reading, I yield it, I desire thee not to lose time in perusing so vain a subject, I should be peradventure loth myself to read him or thee so writing, 'tis not *operae pretium*. (Burton)

No armor can defend a fearful heart. It will kill itself, within. (Felltham)

Oui; mais il faut parier; cela n'est pas volontaire, vous êtes embarqués. (Pascal)

L'éloquence continue ennuie.

Les princes et les rois jouent quelquefois; ils ne sont pas

toujours sur leurs trônes, ils s'y ennuiant: la grandeur a besoin d'être quittée pour être sentie. (Pascal)

The world that I regard is myself; it is the microcosm of my own frame that I cast mine eye on: for the other, I use it but like my globe, and turn it round sometimes for my recreation. (Browne)

Il y a des hommes qui attendent à être dévots et religieux que tout le monde se déclare impie et libertin: ce sera alors le parti du vulgaire, ils sauront s'en dégager. (La-Bruyère)⁴

In all of these passages, as in the period quoted from Wotton, there are no two main members that are syntactically connected. But it is apparent also that the characteristic style that they have in common contains several other features besides this.

In the first place, each member is as short as the most alert intelligence would have it. The period consists, as some of its admirers were wont to say, of the nerves and muscles of speech alone; it is as hard-bitten, as free of soft or superfluous flesh, as "one of Caesar's soldiers."⁵

Second, there is a characteristic order, or mode of progression, in a curt period that may be regarded either as a necessary consequence of its omission of connectives or as the causes and explanation of this. We may describe it best by observing that the first member is likely to be a self-contained and complete statement of the whole idea of the period. It is so because writers in this style like to avoid prearrangements and preparations; they begin, as Montaigne puts it, at *le dernier point*, the point aimed at. The first member therefore exhausts the mere fact of the idea; logically there is nothing more to say. But it does not exhaust its imaginative truth or the energy of its conception. It is followed, therefore, by other members, each with a new tone or emphasis, each expressing a new apprehension of the truth expressed in the first. We may describe the progress of a curt period, therefore, as a series of imaginative moments occurring in a logical pause or suspension. Or—to be less obscure—we may compare it with successive flashes of a jewel or prism as it turned about on its axis and takes the light in different ways.

It is true, of course, that in a series of propositions there will always be some logical process; the truth stated will undergo some

development or change. For example, in the sentence from Montaigne at the beginning of this section, the later members add something to the idea; and in the quotation from Pascal's *Pensées sur l'Éloquence*, given below it, the thought suddenly enlarges in the final member. Yet the method of advance is not logical; the form does not express it. Each member, in its main intention, is a separate act of imaginative realization.

In the third place, one of the characteristics of the curt style is deliberate asymmetry of the members of a period; and it is this trait that especially betrays the modernistic character of the style. The chief mark of a conventional, or "classical," art, like that of the sixteenth century, is an approximation to evenness in the size and form of the balanced parts of a design; the mark of a modernistic art, like that of the seventeenth, and the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, is the desire to achieve an effect of balance or rhythm among parts that are obviously not alike—the love of "some strangeness in the proportions."

In a prose style asymmetry may be produced by varying the length of the members within a period. For example, part of the effect of a sentence from Bishop Hall is due to a variation in this respect among members which nevertheless produce the effect of balance or rhythmic design.

What if they [crosses and adversities] be unpleasant? They are physic: it is enough, if they be wholesome.⁶

But the desired effect is more characteristically produced by conspicuous differences of form, either with or without differences of length. For instance, a characteristic method of the seventeenth century was to begin a succession of members with different kinds of subject words. In the sentence quoted from Wotton the first two members have personal subjects, the third the impersonal "steps"; in the quotation from Pascal the opposite change is made.

Mais il faut parler; cela n'est pas volontaire, vous êtes embarqués.

In both of these periods, moreover, each of the three members has a distinct and individual turn of phrase, meant to be different from

the others. Again, in the period of La Bruyère quoted at the beginning of this section, each new member involves a shift of the mind to a new subject. (Observe also the asymmetry of the members in point of length.)

Sometimes, again, asymmetry is produced by a change from literal to metaphoric statement, or by the reverse, or by a change from one metaphor to another, as in the last example quoted from Pascal, where the metaphor of one embarked upon a ship abruptly takes the place of that of a man engaged in a bet. Or there may be a leap from the concrete to the abstract form; and this is an eminently characteristic feature of the *stile coupé* because this style is always tending toward the aphorism, or *pensée*, as its ideal form. The second passage quoted from Pascal illustrates this in a striking way. It is evident that in the first three members—all concrete, about kings and princes—the author's mind is turning toward a general truth, which emerges complete and abstract in the last member: *la grandeur a besoin d'être quittée pour être sentie*.

The curt style, then, is not characterized only by the trait from which it takes its name, its omission of connectives. It has the four marks that have been described: first, studied brevity of members; second, the hovering, imaginative order; third, asymmetry; and fourth, the omission of the ordinary syntactic ligatures. None of these should, of course, be thought of separately from the others. Each of them is related to the rest and more or less involves them; and when they are all taken together they constitute a definite rhetoric, which was employed during the period from 1575 to 1675 with as clear a knowledge of its tradition and its proper models as the sixteenth-century Ciceronians had of the history of the rhetoric that they preferred.

In brief, it is a Senecan style; and, although the imitation of Seneca never quite shook off the imputation of literary heresy that had been put upon it by the Augustan purism of the preceding age, and certain amusing cautions and reservations were therefore felt to be necessary, yet nearly all of the theorists of the new style succeeded in expressing their devotion to their real master in one way or another. Moreover, they were well aware that the characteristic traits of Seneca's style were not his alone, but had been elaborated before him in the Stoic schools of the Hellenistic period; and all the earlier practitioners of the *stile coupé*, Montaigne (in his first phase),

Lipsius, Hall, Charron, etc., write not only as literary Senecans, but rather more as philosophical Stoics.

Senecanism and Stoicism are, then, the primary implications of *stile coupé*. It must be observed, however, that a style once established in general use may cast away the associations in which it originated; and this is what happened in the history of the curt style. Montaigne, for instance, confessed that he had so thoroughly learned Seneca's way of writing that he could not wholly change it even when his ideas and tastes had changed and he had come to prefer other masters. And the same thing is to be observed in many writers of the latter part of the century: St. Evremond, Halifax, and La Bruyère, for instance. Though these writers are all definitely anti-Stoic and anti-Senecan, all of them show that they had learned the curt style too well ever to unlearn it or to avoid its characteristic forms; and there was no great exaggeration in Shaftesbury's complaint, at the very end of the century, that no other movement of style than Seneca's—what he calls the "Senecan amble"—had been heard in prose for a hundred years past.

(B)

The curt or serried style depends for its full effect upon the union of the several formal traits that have been described in the preceding section. We have assumed hitherto that these traits are as rigorous and unalterable as if they were prescribed by a rule; and in the examples cited there have been no significant departures from any of them. But of course slight variations are common even in passages that produce the effect of *stile coupé*; and some searching is necessary to discover examples as pure as those that have been cited. This is so evidently true that it would need no illustration except for the fact that certain kinds of period eminently characteristic of seventeenth-century prose arise from a partial violation of the "rules" laid down. Two of these may be briefly described.

(A) In a number of writers (Browne, Felltham, and South, for example) we often find a period of two members connected by *and*, *or*, or *nor*, which evidently has the character of *stile coupé* because the conjunction has no logical *plus* force whatever. It merely connects two efforts of imagination to realize the same idea; two as-it-were synchronous statements of it. The following from Browne will be recognized as characteristic of him:

'Tis true, there is an edge in all firm belief, and with an easy metaphor we may say, the sword of faith.

Again:

Therefore I perceive a man may be twice a child, before the days of dotage; and stand in need of Æson's bath before three-score.⁷

Often, too, in a period consisting of a larger number of members the last two are connected by an *and* or the like. But this case can be illustrated in connection with the one that immediately follows.

(B) The rule that the successive members of a *période coupée* are of different and often opposed forms, are asymmetrical instead of symmetrical, is sometimes partly violated inasmuch as these members begin with the same word or form of words, for example, with the same pronoun subject, symmetry, parallelism, and some regularity of rhythm thus introducing themselves into a style that is designed primarily and chiefly to express a dislike of these frivolities. It is to be observed, however, that the members that begin with this suggestion of oratorical pattern usually break it in the words that follow. Except for their beginnings they are as asymmetrical as we expect them to be, and reveal that constant novelty and unexpectedness that is so characteristic of the "baroque" in all the arts.

One illustration is to be found in the style of the "character" writings that enjoyed so great a popularity in the seventeenth century. The frequent recurrence of the same subject word, usually *he* or *they*, is the mannerism of this style, and is sometimes carried over into other kinds of prose in the latter part of the century, as, for instance, in writings of La Bruyère that are not included within the limits of the "character" genre,⁸ and in passages of Dryden. It is indeed so conspicuous a mannerism that it may serve to conceal what is after all the more significant feature of the "character" style, namely, the constant variation and contrast of form in members that begin in this formulistic manner.

The style of the "character," however, is that of a highly specialized genre; and the form of the period with reiterated introductory formula can be shown in its more typical character in other kinds of prose, as, for example, in a passage from Browne describing the Christian Stoicism of his age:

Let not the twelve but the two tables be thy law: let Pythagoras be thy remembrancer, not thy textuary and final instructor: and learn the vanity of the world, rather from Solomon than Phocylides.⁹

Browne touches lightly on these repetitions, and uses them not too frequently. Balzac uses them characteristically and significantly. A paragraph from his *Entretiens* may be quoted both in illustration of this fact and for the interest of its subject matter:

Nous demeurâmes d'accord que l'Auteur qui veut imiter Seneque commence par tout et finit par tout. Son Discours n'est pas un corps entier: c'est un corps en pieces; ce sont des membres coupez; et quoy que les parties soient proches les unes des autres, elles ne laissent pas d'estre separées. Non seulement il n'y a point de nerfs qui les joignent; il n'y a pas mesme de cordes ou d'aiguillettes qui les attachent ensemble: tant cet Auteur est ennemy de toutes sortes de liaisons, soit de la Nature, soit de l'Art: tant il s'esloigne de ces bons exemples que vous imitez si parfaitement.¹⁰

The passage illustrates exactly Balzac's position in the prose development of the seventeenth century. Montaigne is indeed—in spite of his strictures upon him—his master. He aims, like Montaigne, at the philosophic ease and naturalness of the *genus humile*; he has his taste for aphorism, his taste for metaphor; he is full of "points," and loves to make them show; in short, he is "baroque." But by several means, and chiefly by the kinds of repetition illustrated in this passage (*c'est . . . ce sont; il n'y a point . . . il n'y a pas mesme; tant . . . tant*), he succeeds in introducing that effect of art, of form, of rhythm, for which Descartes and so many other of his contemporaries admired him. He combines in short the "wit" of the seventeenth century with at least the appearance of being "a regular writer," which came, in the forties and fifties, to be regarded in France as highly desirable. In his political writings, and especially in *Le Prince*, his iterated opening formula becomes too evident a mannerism, and on page after page one reads periods of the same form: two or three members beginning alike and a final member much longer and more elaborate than the preceding that

may or may not begin in the same way. The effect is extremely rhetorical.

(c)

Finally, we have to observe that the typical *période coupée* need not be so short as the examples of it cited at the beginning of the present section. On the contrary, it may continue, without connectives and with all its highly accentuated peculiarities of form, to the length of five or six members. Seneca offered many models for this protracted aphoristic manner, as in the following passage from the *Naturales Quaestiones* (vii. 31):

There are mysteries that are not unveiled the first day: Eleusis keepeth back something for those who come again to ask her. Nature telleth not all her secrets at once. We think we have been initiated: we are still waiting in her vestibule. Those secret treasures do not lie open promiscuously to every one: they are kept close and reserved in an inner shrine.

Similar in form is this six-member period from Browne's *Religio Medici*:

To see ourselves again, we need not look for Plato's year: every man is not only himself; there have been many Diogeneses, and as many Timons, though but few of that name; men are lived over again; the world is now as it was in ages past; there was none then, but there hath been some one since, that parallels him, and is, as it were, his revived self.¹¹

What has been said in a previous section of the characteristic mode of progression in *stile coupé* is strikingly illustrated in such passages as these. Logically they do not move. At the end they are saying exactly what they were at the beginning. Their advance is wholly in the direction of a more vivid imaginative realization; a metaphor revolves, as it were, displaying its different facets; a series of metaphors flash their lights; or a chain of "points" and paradoxes reveals the energy of a single apprehension in the writer's mind. In the latter part of the seventeenth century a number of critics

satirize this peculiarity of the Senecan form. Father Bouhours, for instance, observed that with all its pretensions to brevity and significance this style makes less progress in five or six successive statements than a Ciceronian period will often make in one long and comprehensive construction. The criticism is, of course, sound if the only mode of progression is the logical one; but in fact there is a progress of imaginative apprehension, a revolving and upward motion of the mind as it rises in energy, and views the same point from new levels; and this spiral movement is characteristic of baroque prose.

III. The Loose Style

(A)

In the preceding pages we have been illustrating a kind of period in which the members are in most cases syntactically disjunct, and we have seen that in this style the members are characteristically short. It is necessary now to illustrate the other type of Anti-Ciceronian style spoken of at the beginning, in which the members are usually connected by syntactic ligatures, and in which, therefore, both the members and the period as a whole may be, and in fact usually are, as long as in the Ciceronian style, or even longer.

It is more difficult to find an appropriate name for this kind of style than for the other. The "trailing" or "linked" style would describe a relation between the members of the period that is frequent and indeed characteristic, but is perhaps too specific a name. "Liber-tine" indicates exactly both the form of the style and the philosophical associations that it often implies; but it is wise to avoid these implications in a purely descriptive treatment. There is but one term that is exact and covers the ground: the term "loose period" or "loose style"; and it is this that we will usually employ. In applying this term, however, the reader must be on his guard against a use of it that slipped into many rhetorical treatises of the nineteenth century. In these works the "loose sentence" was defined as one that has its main clause near the beginning; and an antithetical term "periodic sentence"—an improper one—was devised to name the opposite arrangement. "Loose period" is used here without reference to this confusing distinction.

In order to show its meaning we must proceed by means of examples; and we will take first a sentence—if, indeed, we can call

it a sentence—in which Bacon contrasts the "Magistral" method of writing works of learning with the method of "Probation" appropriate to "induced knowledge," "the later whereof [he says] seemeth to be *via deserta et interclusa*."

For as knowledges are now delivered, there is a kind of contract of error between the deliverer and the receiver: for he that delivereth knowledge desireth to deliver it in such form as may be best believed, and not as may be best examined; and he that receiveth knowledge desireth rather present satisfaction than expectant inquiry; and so rather not to doubt than not to err: glory making the author not to lay open his weakness, and sloth making the disciple not to know his strength.¹²

The passage is fortunate because it states the philosophy in which Anti-Ciceronian prose has its origin and motive. But our present business is with its form; and in order to illustrate this we will place beside it another passage from another author.

Elle [l'Imagination] ne peut rendre sages les fous; mais elle les rend heureux, à l'envi de la raison qui ne peut rendre ses amis que misérables, l'une les couvrant de gloire, l'autre de honte.¹³

There is a striking similarity in the way these two periods proceed. In each case an antithesis is stated in the opening members; then the member in which the second part of the antithesis is stated puts out a dependent member. The symmetrical development announced at the beginning is thus interrupted and cannot be resumed. The period must find a way out, a syntactic way of carrying on and completing the idea it carries. In both cases the situation is met in the same way, by a concluding member having the form of an absolute-participle construction, in which the antithetical idea of the whole is sharply, aphoristically resumed.

The two passages, in short, are written as if they were meant to illustrate in style what Bacon calls "the method of induced knowledge"; either they have no predetermined plan or they violate it at will; their progression adapts itself to the movements of a mind discovering truth as it goes, thinking while it writes. At the same time, and for the same reason, they illustrate the character of the style

that we call "baroque." See, for instance, how symmetry is first made and then broken, as it is in so many baroque designs in painting and architecture; how there is constant swift adaptation of form to the emergencies that arise in an energetic and unpremeditated forward movement; and observe, further, that these signs of spontaneity and improvisation occur in passages loaded with as heavy a content as rhetoric ever has to carry. That is to say, they combine the effect of great mass with the effect of rapid motion; and there is no better formula than this to describe the ideal of the baroque design in all the arts.

But these generalizations are beyond our present purpose. We are to study the loose period first, as we did the curt period, by observing the character of its syntactic links. In the two sentences quoted there are, with a single exception, but two modes of connection employed. The first is by co-ordinating conjunctions, the conjunctions, that is, that allow the mind to move straight on from the point it has reached. They do not necessarily refer back to any particular point in the preceding member; nor do they commit the following member to a predetermined form. In other words, they are the loose conjunctions, and disjoin the members they join as widely as possible. *And*, *but*, and *for* are the ones employed in the two sentences; and these are of course the necessary and universal ones. Other favorites of the loose style are *whereas*, *nor* (= *and not*), and the correlatives *though . . . yet*, *as . . . so*. Second, each of the two periods contains a member with an absolute-participle construction. In the loose style many members have this form, and not only (as in the two periods quoted) at the ends of periods, but elsewhere. Sir Thomas Browne often has them early in a period, as some passages to be cited in another connection will show. This is a phenomenon easily explained. For the absolute construction is the one that commits itself least and lends itself best to the solution of difficulties that arise in the course of a spontaneous and unpremeditated progress. It may state either a cause, or a consequence, or a mere attendant circumstance; it may be concessive or justificatory; it may be a summary of the preceding or a supplement to it; it may express an idea related to the whole of the period in which it occurs, or one related only to the last preceding member.

The co-ordinating conjunctions and the absolute-participle construction indicate, then, the character of the loose period. Like the

stile coupé, it is meant to portray the natural, or thinking, order; and it expresses even better than the curt period the Anti-Ciceronian prejudice against formality of procedure and the rhetoric of the schools. For the omission of connectives in the *stile coupé* implies, as we have seen, a very definite kind of rhetorical form, which was practiced in direct imitation of classical models, and usually retained the associations that it had won in the Stoic schools of antiquity. The associations of the loose style, on the other hand, are all with the more sceptical phases of seventeenth-century thought—with what was then usually called "Libertinism"; and it appears characteristically in writers who are professed opponents of determined and rigorous philosophic attitudes. It is the style of Bacon and of Montaigne (after he has found himself), of La Mothe le Vayer, and of Sir Thomas Browne. It appears always in the letters of Donne; it appears in Pascal's *Pensées*; and, in the latter part of the century, when Libertinism had positively won the favor of the world away from Stoicism, it enjoyed a self-conscious revival, under the influence of Montaigne, in the writings of St. Evremond, Halifax, and Temple. Indeed, it is evident that, although the Senecan *stile coupé* attracted more critical attention throughout the century, its greatest achievements in prose were rather in the loose or Libertine manner. But it must also be said that most of the sceptics of the century had undergone a strong Senecan influence; and the styles of Montaigne, Browne, Pascal, and Halifax, for instance, can only be described as displaying in varying ways a mingling of Stoic and Libertine traits.

(B)

Besides the two syntactic forms that have been mentioned—the co-ordinating conjunctions and the absolute construction—there are no others that lend themselves by their nature to the loose style, except the parenthesis, which we need not illustrate here. But it must not be supposed that it tends to exclude other modes of connection. On the contrary, it obtains its characteristic effects from the syntactic forms that are logically more strict and binding, such as the relative pronouns and the subordinating conjunctions, by using them in a way peculiar to itself. That is to say, it uses them as the necessary logical means of advancing the idea, but relaxes at will the tight

construction which they seem to impose; so that they have exactly the same effect as the loose connections previously described and must be punctuated in the same way. In other words, the parts that they connect are no more closely knit together than it chooses they shall be; and the reader of the most characteristic seventeenth-century prose soon learns to give a greater independence and autonomy to subordinate members than he would dare to do in reading any other.

The method may be shown by a single long sentence from Sir Thomas Browne:

I could never perceive any rational consequence from those many texts which prohibit the children of Israel to pollute themselves with the temples of the heathens; we being all Christians, and not divided by such detested impieties as might profane our prayers, or the place wherein we make them; or that a resolved conscience may not adore her Creator any where, especially in places devoted to his service; where, if their devotions offend him, mine may please him; if theirs profane it, mine may hallow it.¹⁴

The period begins with a statement complete in itself, which does not syntactically imply anything to follow it; an absolute participle carries on, in the second member. Thereafter the connectives are chiefly subordinating conjunctions. Observe particularly the use of *as*, *or that*, and *where*: how slight these ligatures are in view of the length and mass of the members they must carry. They are frail and small hinges for the weights that turn on them; and the period abounds and expands in nonchalant disregard of their tight, frail logic.

This example displays the principle; but of course a single passage call illustrate only a few grammatical forms. Some of those used with a characteristic looseness in English prose of the seventeenth century are: relative clauses beginning with *which*, or with *whereto*, *wherein*, etc.; participial constructions of the kind scornfully called "dangling" by the grammarians; words in a merely appositional relation with some noun or pronoun preceding, yet constituting a semi-independent member of a period; and of course such subordinating conjunctions as are illustrated above. It is unnecessary to illustrate these various cases.

(c)

The connections of a period cannot be considered separately from the order of the connected members; and, in fact, it is the desired order of development that determines the character of the connections rather than the reverse. In the oratorical period the arrangement of the members is "round" or "circular," in the sense that they are all so placed with reference to a central or climactic member that they point forward or back to it and give it its appropriate emphasis. This order is what is meant by the names *periodos*, *circuitus*, and "round composition," by which the oratorical period has been variously called; and it is the chief object of the many revisions to which its form is submitted.

The loose period does not try for this form, but rather seeks to avoid it. Its purpose is to express, as far as may be, the order in which an idea presents itself when it is first experienced. It begins, therefore, without premeditation, stating its idea in the first form that occurs; the second member is determined by the situation in which the mind finds itself after the first has been spoken; and so on throughout the period, each member being an emergency of the situation. The period—in theory, at least—is not made; it becomes. It completes itself and takes on form in the course of the motion of mind which it expresses. Montaigne, in short, exactly described the theory of the loose style when he said: "J'ecris volontiers sans project; le premier trait produit le second."

The figure of a circle, therefore, is not a possible description of the form of a loose period; it requires rather the metaphor of a chain, whose links join end to end. The "linked" or "trailing" period is, in fact, as we have observed, an appropriate name for it. But there is a special case for which this term might better be reserved, unless we should choose to invent a more specific one, such as "end-linking," or "terminal linking," to describe it. It is when a member depends, not upon the general idea, or the main word, of the preceding member, but upon its final word or phrase alone. And this is, in fact, a frequent, even a characteristic, kind of linking in certain authors, notably Sir Thomas Browne and his imitators. The sentence last quoted offers two or three illustrations of it: the connective words *as*, *especially*, and *where* all refer to the immediately preceding words or phrases; and in another period by the same author there is one very conspicuous and characteristic instance.

As there were many reformers, so likewise many reformations; every country proceeding in a particular way and method, according as their national interest, together with their constitution and clime, inclined them: some angrily and with extremity; others calmly and with mediocrity, not rending, but easily dividing, the community, and leaving an honest possibility of a reconciliation;—*which*, though peaceable spirits do desire, and may conceive that revolution of time and the mercies of God may effect, yet that judgment that shall consider the present antipathies between the two extremes,—their contrarieties in condition, affection, and opinion,—may with the same hopes, expect a union in the poles of heaven.¹⁵

Here the word *which* introduces a new development of the idea, running to as much as five lines of print; yet syntactically it refers only to the last preceding word *reconciliation*. The whole long passage has been quoted, however, not for this reason alone, but because it illustrates so perfectly all that has been said of the order and connection of the loose period. It begins, characteristically, with a sharply formulated complete statement, implying nothing of what is to follow. Its next move is achieved by means of an absolute-participle construction.¹⁶ This buds off a couple of appositional members; one of these budding again two new members by means of dangling participles. Then a *which* picks up the trail, and at once the sentence becomes involved in the complex, and apparently tight, organization of a *though . . . yet* construction. Nevertheless it still moves freely, digressing as it will, extricates itself from the complex form by a kind of anacoluthon (in the *yet* clause), broadening its scope, and gathering new confluent, till it ends, like a river, in an opening view.

The period, that is, moves straight onward everywhere from the point it has reached; and its construction shows ideally what we mean by the linked or trailing order. It is Browne's peculiar mastery of this construction that gives his writing constantly the effect of being, not the result of a meditation, but an actual meditation in process. He writes like a philosophical scientist making notes of his observation as it occurs. We see his pen move and stop as he thinks. To write thus, and at the same time to create beauty of cadence in the phrases and rhythm in the design—and so Browne constantly does—is to achieve a triumph in what Montaigne called "the art

of being natural"; it is the eloquence, described by Pascal, that mocks at formal eloquence.

(D)

The period just quoted serves to introduce a final point concerning the form of the loose period. We have already observed that the second half of this period, beginning with *which*, has a complex suspended syntax apparently like that of the typical oratorical sentence. The Anti-Ciceronian writer usually avoids such forms, it is true; most of his sentences are punctuated by colons and semicolons. But, of course, he will often find himself involved in a suspended construction from which he cannot escape. It remains to show that even in these cases he still proceeds in the Anti-Ciceronian manner, and succeeds in following, in spite of the syntactic formalities to which he commits himself, his own emergent and experimental order. Indeed, it is to be observed that the characteristic quality of the loose style may appear more clearly in such difficult forms than in others. For baroque art always displays itself best when it works in heavy masses and resistant materials; and out of the struggle between a fixed pattern and an energetic forward movement often arrives at those strong and expressive disproportions in which it delights.

We shall return to Browne in a moment in illustration of the point, but we shall take up a simpler case first. In a well-known sentence, Pascal, bringing out the force of imagination, draws a picture of a venerable magistrate seated in church, ready to listen to a worthy sermon. *Le voilà prêt à l'ouïr avec un respect exemplaire.*

Que le prédicateur vienne à paraître, que la nature lui ait donné une voix enrouée et un tour de visage bizarre, que son barbier l'ait mal rasé, si le hasard l'a encore barbouillé de surcoût, quelque grandes vérités qu'il annonce, je parie la perte de la gravité de notre sénateur.¹⁷

Unquestionably a faulty sentence by all the school-rules! It begins without foreseeing its end, and has to shift the reader's glance from the preacher to the magistrate in the midst of its progress by whatever means it can. Observe the abruptness of the form of the member *quelque grandes vérités*. Observe the sudden appearance of the first person in the last member. Yet the critic who would condemn its

rhetorical form would have also to declare that there is no art in those vivid dramatic narratives that so often appear in the conversation of animated talkers; for this period moves in an order very common in such conversation.¹⁸

In this passage the free and Anti-Ciceronian character of the movement is chiefly due to its dramatic vividness and speed. It follows the order of life. Sometimes, however, we can see plainly that it is the mystical speculation of the seventeenth century that changes the regular form of the period and shapes it to its own ends. Sir Thomas Browne provides many interesting illustrations, as, for instance, in the period quoted in the preceding section, and in the following:

I would gladly know how Moses, with an actual fire, calcined or burnt the golden calf into powder: for that mystical metal of gold, whose solary and celestial nature I admire, exposed unto the violence of fire, grows only hot, and liquefies, but consumeth not; so when the consumable and volatile pieces of our bodies shall be refined into a more impregnable and fixed temper, like gold, though they suffer from the action of flames, they shall never perish, but lie immortal in the arms of fire.¹⁹

With the first half of this long construction we are not now concerned. In its second half, however, beginning with *so when*, we see one of those complex movements that have led some critics to speak of Browne as—of all things!—a Ciceronian. It is in fact the opposite of that. A Ciceronian period closes in at the end; it reaches its height of expansion and emphasis at the middle or just beyond, and ends composedly. Browne's sentence, on the contrary, opens constantly outward; its motions become more animated and vigorous as it proceeds; and it ends, as his sentences are likely to do, in a vision of vast space or time, losing itself in an *altitudo*, a hint of infinity. As, in a previously quoted period, everything led up to the phrase, "a union in the poles of heaven," so in this everything leads up to the concluding phrase, "but lie immortal in the arms of fire." And as we study the form of the structure we can even observe where this ending revealed itself, or, at least, how it was prepared. The phrase "like gold" is the key to the form of the whole. After a slow expository member, this phrase, so strikingly wrenched from

its logical position, breaks the established and expected rhythm, and is a signal of more agitated movement, of an ascending effort of imaginative realization that continues to the end. In a different medium, the period closely parallels the technique of an El Greco composition, where broken and tortuous lines in the body of the design prepare the eye for curves that leap upward beyond the limits of the canvas.

The forms that the loose period may assume are infinite, and it would be merely pedantic to attempt a classification of them. In one of the passages quoted we have seen the dramatic sense of reality triumphing over rhetorical formalism; in another, the form of a mystical exaltation. For the purpose of description—not classification—it will be convenient to observe still a third way in which a loose period may escape from the formal commitments of elaborate syntax. It is illustrated in a passage in Montaigne's essay "Des Livres," praising the simple and uncritical kind of history that he likes so much. In the course of the period he mentions *le bon Froissard* as an example, and proceeds so far (six lines of print) in a description of his method that he cannot get back to his general idea by means of his original syntactic form, or at least cannot do so without very artificial devices. He completes the sentence where it is; but completes his idea in a pair of curt (*coupés*) sentences separated by a colon from the preceding: "c'est la matiere de l'histoire nue et informe; chascun en peult faire son proufit autant qu'il a d'entendement."²⁰ This is a method often used by Anti-Ciceronians to extricate themselves from the coils of a situation in which they have become involved by following the "natural" order. A better example of it is to be seen in a passage from Pascal's essay on "Imagination," from which another passage has already been cited.

Le plus grand philosophe du monde, sur une planche plus large qu'il ne faut, s'il y a au-dessous un précipice, quoique sa raison le convainque de sa sûreté, son imagination prévaudra. Plusieurs n'en sauraient soutenir la pensée sans pâlir et suer.²¹

Nothing could better illustrate the "order of nature"; writing, that is, in the exact order in which the matter presents itself. It begins by naming the subject, *le plus grand philosophe*, without foreseeing the syntax by which it is to continue. Then it throws in the ele-

ments of the situation, using any syntax that suggests itself at the moment, proceeding with perfect dramatic sequence, but wholly without logical sequence, until at last the sentence has lost touch with its stated subject. Accordingly, this subject is merely left hanging, and a new one, *son imagination*, takes its place. It is a violent, or rather a nonchalant, anacoluthon. The sentence has then, after a fashion, completed itself. But there is an uneasy feeling in the mind. After all, *le plus grand philosophe* has done nothing; both form and idea are incomplete. Pascal adds another member (for, whatever the punctuation, the *plusieurs* sentence is a member of the period), which completely meets the situation, though a grammatical purist may well object that the antecedent of *plusieurs* was in the singular number.

Pascal is usually spoken of as a "classical" writer; but the term means nothing as applied to him except that he is a writer of tried artistic soundness. He is, in fact, as modernistic, as bold a breaker of the rules and forms of rhetoric, as his master Montaigne, though he is also a much more careful artist. *La vraie éloquence*, he said, *se moque de l'éloquence*.

(v)

Two kinds of style have been analyzed in the preceding pages: the concise, serried, abrupt *stile coupé*, and the informal, meditative, and "natural" loose style. It is necessary to repeat—once more—that in the best writers these two styles do not appear separately in passages of any length, and that in most of them they intermingle in relations far too complex for description. They represent two sides of the seventeenth-century mind: its sententiousness, its penetrating wit, its Stoic intensity, on the one hand, and its dislike of formalism, its roving and self-exploring curiosity, in brief, its sceptical tendency, on the other. And these two habits of mind are generally not separated one from the other; nor are they even always exactly distinguishable. Indeed, as they begin to separate or to be opposed to each other in the second half of the century we are aware of the approach of a new age and a new spirit. The seventeenth century, as we are here considering it, is equally and at once Stoic and Libertine; and the prose that is most characteristic of it expresses these two sides of its mind in easy and natural relations one with the other.

IV. The Punctuation of the Seventeenth-Century Period

The "long sentence" of the Anti-Ciceronian age has received a remarkable amount of attention ever since it began to be corrected and go out of use; and there have been two conflicting views concerning it. The older doctrine—not yet quite extinct—was that the long sentences of Montaigne, Bacon, Browne, and Taylor were sentences of the same kind as those of Cicero and his sixteenth-century imitators; only they were badly and crudely made, monstrosities due to some wave of ignorance that submerged the syntactic area of the seventeenth-century mind. Their true character, it was thought, would be shown by substituting commas for their semicolons and colons; for then we should see that they are quaint failures in the attempt to achieve sentence unity.

The other view is the opposite of this, namely, that we should put periods in the place of many of its semicolons and colons. We should then see that what look like long sentences are really brief and aphoristic ones. The contemporary punctuation of our authors is again to be corrected, but now in a different sense. This is the view urged by Faguet in writing of Montaigne, and by Sir Edmund Gosse concerning the prose of Browne and Taylor.

The later view is useful in correcting some of the errors of the earlier one. But, in fact, one of them is just as false as the other; and both of them illustrate the difficulties experienced by minds trained solely in the logical and grammatical aspects of language in interpreting the forms of style that prevailed before the eighteenth century. In order to understand the punctuation of the seventeenth century we have to consider the relation between the grammatical term *sentence* and the rhetorical term *period*.

The things named by these terms are identical. *Period* names the rhetorical, or oral, aspect of the same thing that is called in grammar a *sentence* and in theory the same act of composition that produces a perfectly logical grammatical unit would produce at the same time a perfectly rhythmical pattern of sound. But, in fact, no utterance ever fulfils both of these functions perfectly, and either one or the other of them is always foremost in a writer's mind. One or the other is foremost also in every theory of literary education; and the historian may sometimes distinguish literary periods by the relative emphasis they put upon grammatical and rhetorical considerations. In general we may say, though there may be exceptions, that be-

fore the eighteenth century rhetoric occupied much more attention than grammar in the minds of teachers and their pupils. It was so, for instance, in the Middle Ages, as is clear from their manuals of study and the curricula of their schools. It was still true in the sixteenth century; and the most striking characteristic of the literary prose of that century, both in Latin and in the vernacular tongues, was its devotion to the conventional and formal patterns of school-rhetoric.

The laws of grammatical form, it is true, were not at all disturbed or strained at this time by the predominance of rhetorical motives. There was no difficulty whatever in saying what these rhetoricians had to say in perfect accordance with logical syntax because they had, in fact, so little to say that only the most elementary syntax was necessary for its purposes. Furthermore, the rhetorical forms they liked were so symmetrical, so obvious, that they almost imposed a regular syntax by their own form.

But a new situation arose when the leaders of seventeenth-century rationalism—Lipsius, Montaigne, Bacon—became the teachers of style. The ambition of these writers was to conduct an experimental investigation of the moral realities of their time, and to achieve a style appropriate to the expression of their discoveries and of the mental effort by which they were conducted. The content of style became, as it were, suddenly greater and more difficult; and the stylistic formalities of the preceding age were unable to bear the burden. An immense rhetorical complexity and license took the place of the simplicity and purism of the sixteenth century; and, since the age had not yet learned to think much about grammatical propriety, the rules of syntax were made to bear the expenses of the new freedom. In the examples of seventeenth-century prose that have been discussed in the preceding pages some of the results are apparent. The syntactic connections of a sentence become loose and casual; great strains are imposed upon tenuous, frail links; parentheses are abused; digression become licentious; anacoluthon is frequent and passes unnoticed; even the limits of sentences are not clearly marked, and it is sometimes difficult to say where one begins and another ends.

Evidently the process of disintegration could not go on forever. A stylistic reform was inevitable, and it must take the direction of a new formalism or "correctness." The direction that it actually took was determined by the Cartesian philosophy, or at least by the same time spirit in which the Cartesian philosophy had its origin. The intellect, that is to say, became the arbiter of form, the dictator of

artistic practice as of philosophical inquiry. The sources of error, in the view of the Cartesians, are imagination and dependence upon sense impressions. Its correctives are found in what they call "reason" (which here means "intellect"), and an exact distinction of categories.

To this mode of thought we are to trace almost all the features of modern literary education and criticism, or at least of what we should have called modern a generation ago: the study of the precise meaning of words; the reference to dictionaries as literary authorities; the study of the sentence as a logical unit alone; the careful circumscription of its limits and the gradual reduction of its length; the disappearance of semicolons and colons; the attempt to reduce grammar to an exact science; the idea that forms of speech are always either correct or incorrect; the complete subjection of the laws of motion and expression in style to the laws of logic and standardization—in short, the triumph, during two centuries, of grammatical over rhetorical ideas.

This is not the place to consider what we have gained or lost by this literary philosophy, or whether the precision we have aimed at has compensated us for the powers of expression and the flexibility of motion that we have lost; we have only to say that we must not apply the ideas we have learned from it to the explanation of seventeenth-century style. In brief, we must not measure the customs of the age of semicolons and colons by the customs of the age of commas and periods. The only possible punctuation of seventeenth-century prose is that which it used itself. We might sometimes reveal its grammar more clearly by repunctuating it with commas or periods, but we should certainly destroy its rhetoric.

NOTES

1. *The Architecture of Humanism* (London, 1914), p. 225.
2. "Table Talk," in *Life and Letters*, ed. Logan Pearsall Smith (Oxford, 1907), II, 500.
3. For example, the *stile coupé* was sometimes called *stile serré* ("serried style"), and Francis Thompson has used this term in describing a kind of period common in Browne. For synonyms of "loose style" see section III of this paper.
4. References are as follows: Montaigne, "Des Livres," *Essais* II.X. ed. J.-V. Le Clerc (Paris, 1865), II, 122; Robert Burton, "To the Reader," *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, ed. A. R. Shilleto (London, 1893), p. 24; Owen Felltham, "Of Fear and Cowardice," *Resolves*

1. 71 (London, 1677), p. 110; Pascal, *Pensées*, ed. Léon Brunschvicg (Paris, 1904), II, 146 (section VII in 1670 Port-Royal ed.); *Pensées*, II, 269 (section XXI in Port-Royal ed.); Sir Thomas Browne, *Religio Medici*, Part II, section 11, in *Works*, ed. Simon Wilkin (London, 1846), II, 110; La Bruyère, "Des Esprits Forts," (*Euvres*, ed. G. Servois (Paris, 1865), II, 239. These editions have been used for subsequent quotations from the authors' works.
5. The phrase comes from a midseventeenth-century work on prose style, and is there applied to *il dir moderno*: Daniello Bartoli, "Dello Stile," *Dell' Uomo di Lettere*, in *Opere* (Venice, 1716), III, 101.
6. Joseph Hall, *Heaven upon Earth*, XIII, in *Works* (Oxford, 1837), VI, 20. Note how exactly this reproduces a movement characteristic of Seneca: *Quid tua, uter [Caesar or Pompey] vincat? Potest melior vincere: non potest peior esse qui vicerit.*
7. *Religio Medici*, 1.10 and 1.42, in *Works*, II, 14, 61.
8. For instance, in the famous passage "De l'Homme," 128, in *Œuvres*, II, 61, describing the beast-like life of the peasants of France.
9. *Christian Morals*, section XXI, *Works*, IV, 107. The period occurs in the midst of a paragraph in which each main member of each period begins with a verb in the imperative mood.
10. No. XVIII, "De Montaigne et de ses Escrits," in *Œuvres*, ed. L. Moreau (Paris, 1854), II, 402-403.
11. 1.6, in *Works*, II, 11. Felltham uses this manner with too much self-consciousness. See, for instance, a passage on the terse style (*Resolves*, 1.20) beginning "They that speak to *children*, assume a pretty lispings."
12. *Of the Advancement of Learning*, Bk. II, in *Works*, ed. Spedding, Ellis, and Heath (London, 1868), III, 403-404; ed. Wright, XVII.3.
13. Pascal, *Pensées*, II, 3 (section XXV in 1670 Port-Royal ed.). There should, rhetorically speaking, be semicolons after *raison* and *misérables*.
14. *Religio Medici*, 1.3, in *Works*, II, 4. Italics are mine.
15. *Religio Medici*, 1.4, in *Works*, II, 5.
16. Observe that the period from Browne quoted on p. 223 begins with movements of the same kind.
17. *Pensées*, II, 4-5 (section XXV in Port-Royal ed.).
18. It may be said that Pascal's *Pensées* should not be cited in illustration of prose form because they were written without revision and without thought of publication. But a good deal of characteristic prose of the time was so written, and the effect at which Bacon, Burton, Browne, and many others aimed was of prose written in that way.
19. *Religio Medici*, 1.50, in *Works*, II, 73.
20. *Essais*, II.X, ed. Le Clerc, II, 127.
21. *Pensées*, II, 5.



Science and English Prose Style, 1650-75

Literary style, like human personality, is a compound exceedingly difficult of analysis, for when its more obvious constituents are made clear, there still remains an illusive element, consciousness of which leaves the analyst with the unpleasant sensation of not having reached the bottom of the matter. As the most complex phenomenon in literature, style is the resultant of all the forces, known and unknown, underlying literary development, and the method and extent of the contribution made by each of these forces are a matter of probable inference rather than of positive demonstration. For that reason, any attempt, however ambitious, to account for the style of a literary epoch must be content with pointing out those more obvious influences that are combined and reflected in speech and writing, and with ignoring other factors which may escape detection. Under the protection of this confession I shall attempt to make manifest what seems to me the most important influence instrumental in changing the luxuriant prose of the Commonwealth into that of a diametrically opposite nature in the Restoration.

To one who is familiar with the writers of the Puritan regime, it would be rash to maintain that the style of this period is homogeneous, but probably every one can agree that the dominating

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