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Versions of Imitation in the Renaissance

by G. W. PIGMAN III

FROM Petrarch's sonnets to Milton's epics a major characteristic of Renaissance literature is the imitation of earlier texts, and the Renaissance contains a vast and perplexing array of writings on the theory and practice of imitation.¹ Although these writings often exhaust themselves in vindictive and ferocious *ad hominem* polemics—

¹ The most thorough discussion of imitation is Hermann Gmelin, "Das Prinzip der Imitatio in den romanischen Literaturen der Renaissance," *Romanische Forschungen*, 46 (1932), 83–360. See also Charles Lenient, *De Ciceroniano bello apud recentiores* (Paris, 1855), Remigio Sabbadini, *Storia del ciceronianismo e di altre questioni letterarie nell'età della rinascenza* (Torino, 1885), Eduard Norden, *Die antike Kunstprosa vom VI. Jahrhundert v. Chr. bis in die Zeit der Renaissance* (Darmstadt, 1958), pp. 773–781, John Edwin Sandys, *Harvard Lectures on the Revival of Learning* (Cambridge, 1905), although his chapter, "The History of Ciceronianism," pp. 145–173, is largely dependent on Sabbadini, Richard McKeon, "Literary Criticism and the Conception of Imitation in Antiquity," *Modern Philology*, 34 (1936), 1–35, Ferruccio Ulivi, *L'imitazione nella poetica del rinascimento* (Milano, 1959), Cesare Vasoli, "L'estetica dell'Umanesimo e del Rinascimento," in *Momenti e problemi di storia dell'estetica*, parte prima (Milano, 1959), esp. pp. 345–354, 380–383, Nancy S. Struever, *The Language of History in the Renaissance: Rhetoric and Historical Consciousness in Florentine Humanism* (Princeton, 1970), pp. 147 ff.; Elaine Fantham, "Imitation and Evolution: The Discussion of Rhetorical Imitation in Cicero *De oratore* 2.87–97 and Some Related Problems of Ciceronian Theory" and "Imitation and Decline: Rhetorical Theory and Practice in the First Century After Christ," *Classical Philology*, 73 (1978), 1–16, 102–116. The best discussion of the interaction between the theory and practice of imitation and of the type of reading which imitative literature requires is Thomas M. Greene, "Petrarch and the Humanist Hermeneutic," in *Italian Literature: Roots and Branches*, ed. Giose Rimaneli and Kenneth John Atchity (New Haven, 1976), pp. 201–224. I am greatly indebted to Greene's work on imitation.

one need only recall Julius Caesar Scaliger's *Orationes* against Erasmus—and dwell at length on what now appears to many a sterile and fruitless debate over whether or not Cicero should be the only model for Latin prose, these treatises on imitation can offer considerable guidance for the interpretation of Renaissance literature. The theories of imitation help structure one's expectations as to the types of relations between text and model which one is likely to find, although they also amount to a strong warning against the difficulties of discovering and analyzing these relations.

Once one turns to writings on imitation, one is immediately struck by a bewildering variety of positions. Besides constant reference to *imitatio*, some treatises appear to have little else in common. Erasmus, Ramus, and Johannes Thomas Freigius, for example, all wrote works entitled *Ciceronianus*; they could hardly differ more. Erasmus' dialogue caricatures extreme Ciceronianism, contains important reflections on imitation and historical change, and concludes with a catalogue which assesses the styles of numerous Latin authors from Cicero's day to Erasmus'. Ramus briefly discusses imitation in a manner similar to Erasmus', but the bulk of his work treats the imitation of Cicero's entire career as the surest way to become *vir bonus dicendi peritus* and emphasizes character formation. Freigius' work is devoted to *inventio*, the discovery and classification of commonplaces.

Writers discuss imitation from so many different points of view: as a path to the sublime ("Longinus"), as a reinforcement of one's natural inclinations (Poliziano) or a substitute for undesirable inclinations (Cortesi), as a method for enriching one's writing with stylistic gems (Vida), as the surest or only way to learn Latin (Delminio), as providing the competitive stimulus necessary for achievement (Calcagnini), and as a means of "illustrating" a vulgar language (Du Bellay). I do not intend this list to limit an author to only one position, nor does it exhaust all the positions taken during antiquity and the Renaissance. And I have intentionally excluded discussions of literary representation deriving from Plato and Aristotle, although they also go by the name of imitation and even though this more philosophical tradition often mingles with the rhetorical theories about models, as in the cases of Phoebammon and Giovanfrancesco Pico della Mirandola.

Consequently the common distinction between philosophical and rhetorical imitation is somewhat misleading because it obscures the distinctions among the varieties of rhetorical imitation.² Occasionally

theorists appear to recognize distinct moments or versions of *imitatio*, but to my knowledge only Bartolomeo Ricci, in his *De imitatione*, first published in 1541, writes as if there were accepted divisions of the genus *imitatio* into species. Ricci is about to discuss at length Virgil's emulation, in his treatment of Dido, of Catullus' Ariadne, but prefaces his remarks with the request that no one accuse him of ignorance because

I attribute to imitation that which belongs to emulation. For although following, imitation, and emulating are three entirely different species, they are similar and do belong to one class.³

Despite this gesture towards a tripartite *imitatio*—*sequi, imitari, aemulari*—Ricci makes no effort to use the concepts precisely; one often feels the choice of a term is dictated only by elegant variation.

Even though no other Renaissance theorist explicitly discusses species of imitation, one can identify Ricci's three species by studying the imagery, analogies, and metaphors of writings on imitation. The distinctions are most accessible in the metaphoric contrasts and comparisons which a theorist adopts to illustrate his position. Very often Ricci's three classes collapse into two, an opposition between imitation and emulation, in which case imitating and following are not distinguished. Thus the two *major* categories of imitation are imitation (*imitatio*) and emulation (*aemulatio*).⁴

These analogies, images, and metaphors fall into three general classes, which I shall call transformative, dissimulative, and eristic. These classes do not strictly correlate with the three types of imitation. The transformative class includes apian, digestive, filial, and simian metaphors. Bees illustrate not only transformative imitation, but non-transformative following, gathering, or borrowing. Digestion and the resemblance of father to son represent successful transformations of a

² See, for example, A. J. Smith, "Theory and Practice in Renaissance Poetry: Two Kinds of Imitation," *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, 47 (1964), 212–243.

³ *De imitationi libri tres* (Venice, 1545), p. 43^v. Unless otherwise indicated all translations are my own.

⁴ The boundaries between the types of imitation are fluid in some theorists, and in practice it is often difficult to distinguish precisely imitation from emulation or following. Consequently I use *imitation* to designate both the larger class and one member of it. I fear that greater terminological precision, although perhaps more convenient, would result in too rigid a system of classification.

model; the ape and also the crow represent failures of transformation. Dissimulative imagery and explicit advice of dissimulation refer to concealing or disguising the relation between text and model. The doctrines conveyed by these two classes pose serious problems for the interpreter who tries to understand imitations and allusions, because they advise the effacement of resemblance between text and model. Eristic metaphors—I borrow the term from “Longinus’” description of Plato’s wrestling with Homer and citation of Hesiod’s *agathē eris*—often support a doctrine which contradicts the advice of effacement: an open struggle with the model for preeminence, a struggle in which the model must be recognized to assure the text’s victory. Besides images of struggle, strife, and competition, the eristic class includes a large group of analogies connected with overtaking and passing people on roads or paths, in particular footsteps and leaders. Eristic metaphors justify the interpreter’s attempt to understand resemblances between texts as allusions, suggest that a text may criticize and correct its model, and reveal a persistent ambivalence in emulation (which may also be called eristic imitation): admiration for a model joined with envy and contentiousness.⁵

I

Because of the work of Gmelin and von Stackelberg⁶ the apian metaphor (Bienengleichnis) is probably the most familiar of all the images in writings on imitation. More importantly, the apian metaphor is perhaps the most misleading topos because it is used to present two opposed conceptions of imitation: the poet as collector (following) and the poet as maker (imitation or emulation). The apian metaphor is not always transformative. The digression into natural history in Seneca’s *Epistulae morales* 84, a central text for all later discussions of imitation, is essential. Seneca says that investigators are not positive whether the bees collect honey from flowers or change what they gather into honey by some process of their own. Their skill may lie in gathering, not in making. However, once Seneca strengthens his advice to imitate the

⁵ Compare the fine discussion of the tension between Du Bellay’s reverence for the ancients and his impulse towards iconoclasm in Margaret W. Ferguson, “The Exile’s Defense: Du Bellay’s *La Defence et illustration de la langue françoise*,” *PMLA*, 93 (1978), 275–289.

⁶ Jürgen v. Stackelberg, “Das Bienengleichnis: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der literarischen *Imitatio*,” *Romanische Forschungen*, 68 (1956), 271–293.

bees with another image of transformation, digestion, one realizes that he is arguing for transformative imitation, not merely eclectic gathering. The bees convert flowers into honey by a process, for my purposes and I suspect Seneca's in this letter, similar to digestion in men.

Macrobius appears to be the first author to assume that the crucial point of Seneca's apian metaphor is not the bees' ability to transform pollen into honey, but their collecting pollen from different flowers. Since Petrarch, it has been customary to criticize the discrepancy between the theory and practice of imitation in Macrobius, who certainly does excerpt large portions of Seneca's letter without acknowledgment or substantial transformation.⁷ For Macrobius, however, imitation does not imply avoiding verbal repetition, a cardinal position in Petrarch and other later authors, but a rearranging of previous material.⁸ Despite his adoption of Seneca's apian and digestive metaphors in language that insists on making something new and different, Macrobius is more concerned with reducing a mass of material into a useful order.

And I have not gathered things worth remembering into a confused heap. Rather, a variety of matters from different authors and times has been arranged, as it were, into a body so that what I had noted indiscriminately

⁷ Nevertheless Macrobius does change what he finds in Seneca. The most revealing additions are quoted in the text, but are not the only ones. The comparison at *Sat.* 1.pr.8 does not come from Seneca. Macrobius also omits large portions of Seneca's letter: the digression on natural history, the contrast between father/son and man/*imago*, the "magni vir ingenii" who impresses his own form on what he draws from others. The omission of the "magni vir ingenii" may be due to Macrobius' modesty (cf. his own concern over his ability to write good Latin, sections 11ff.), but it might reflect his shift of emphasis from transformation to orderly management: he does not want his material to be unrecognized, as Seneca asserts can happen. Also, the resemblance of father to son is irrelevant to Macrobius' redistribution. Consequently, Petrarch's criticism is not entirely just: "non enim flores apud Senecam lectos in favos vertere studuit, sed integros et quales in alienis ramis invenerat, protulit" (*Le Familiari*, ed. Vittorio Rossi and Umberto Bosco [Florence, 1933-42], 1.8.3-4). Cf. Erasmus' criticism of Macrobius' *centones*, *Il Ciceroniano*, ed. Angiolo Gambara (Brescia, 1965), p. 204.

⁸ Macrobius excuses his reproduction of others' words as follows: "nec mihi vitio vertas, si res quas ex lectione varia mutuabor ipsis saepe verbis quibus ab ipsis auctoribus enarratae sunt explicabo; quia praesens opus non eloquentiae ostentationem, sed noscendorum congeriem pollicetur" (1.pr.4). Borrowing and its unscrupulous cousin, theft, like culling flowers, are frequent images of nontransformative imitation or following.

and without distinction as an aid to memory would coherently come together into an orderly arrangement [*in ordinem*] like parts of the body. (1.pr.3)

Seneca's digestive analogy supports an imitation which completely transforms the model to produce something with its own identity. Macrobius inserts Seneca's analogy into his preface with only insignificant variations until he reaches "lest it belong to someone else," where he makes an addition which reverses Seneca's position:

We should produce the same effect with things that nourish the mind. We should not allow what we have consumed to stay intact, lest it belong to someone else; instead it should be digested into some sort of arrangement [*in quandam digeriem concoquantur*]. (1.pr.7)

Despite the ambiguity of *digeries*, I think Macrobius is using it as Lewis and Short define it, citing this passage, "an orderly distribution, a disposition, arrangement"; *in digeriem* is synonymous with *in ordinem*. Macrobius is concerned with organization, not with transformation; he adds *in ordinem* to another passage he reworks from Seneca: "I too will entrust whatever I have sought in my diverse reading to my pen so that under its direction my reading may coalesce into an orderly arrangement [*in ordinem*]." This coalescing is not the transformation of pollen into honey, in which the pollen loses its identity and becomes something else, but the redistribution of individual excerpts in an organized collection, a *florilegium*. Macrobius conceives of imitation as a type of redistributive reproduction; for him making something different means setting it in a new context.

Macrobius offers an unusually complex example of the confusion of two opposed types of imitation inherent in the apian metaphor. Ordinarily one finds the flower-gathering and honey-making moments of imitation in different contexts. Poliziano's quotation of Lucretius offers two nontransformative uses of the apian metaphor:

Since it is a very great fault to intend to imitate only one person, we shall not err if we place before us as models Quintilian and Statius as well as Cicero and Virgil, if we take from everywhere what we can use, as in Lucretius, "just as the bees taste everything in the flowering pastures, we likewise feed on all Epicurus' golden sayings."⁹

⁹ "Oratio super Fabio Quintiliano et Statii Sylvis," in *Prosatori latini del Quattrocento*, ed. Eugenio Garin (Milan and Naples, 1952), p. 878. The lines from Lucretius are 3.11–12.

In the proem to his third book Lucretius' simile asserts his dependence on Epicurus and refuses *aemulatio*. Lucretius pictures himself as gathering wisdom from his spiritual father, not as modifying what he reads. Collecting doctrine from *all* of Epicurus is the point of the comparison. In this passage Poliziano, strictly speaking, is only utilizing the aspect of gathering from everywhere, although elsewhere he disapproves of imitation without emulation and insists, by digestive metaphor, on transformative imitation.¹⁰ Here, however, his primary concern is to justify his choice of Quintilian and Statius as worthy of study although inferior to Cicero and Virgil. Poliziano is arguing for eclectic imitation, the study and use of all good authors.¹¹

One need not dwell on the transformative application of the apian metaphor since von Stachelberg provides so many examples. One can sum it up with one sentence from Petrarch: "Take care that what you have gathered does not long remain in its original form inside of you: the bees would not be glorious if they did not convert what they found into something different and something better" (*Fam.* 1.8.23). The emphasis on transformation is complete; what's gathered must become something different.

In Seneca the apian and digestive metaphors reinforce one another and are closely analogous. The digestive metaphor has just as long a history as the apian, but, with the exception of Cortesi, who uses it as an argument against eclecticism (indigestion from eating too many different foods at the same time)¹² it is always used to support transfor-

¹⁰ See the letter to Cortesi, *Prosatori*, pp. 902–904.

¹¹ I list a few more instances of apian metaphors in nontransformative contexts to show their general diffusion in the Renaissance, since the reader of von Stachelberg's collection of *Bienengleichnisse* receives the impression that only medieval authors use them to support advice to gather material from a wide variety of sources. Giovambattista Giraldis Cinzio, "Super imitatione epistula," in *Trattati di poetica e retorica del Cinquecento*, ed. Bernard Weinberg (Bari, 1970–74), vol. 1, pp. 199–200, cites the metaphor as a typical argument for eclectic imitation against Ciceronianism. Ronsard uses the metaphor at least four times in connection with gathering. The most revealing case is "Sonnet, à M. des Caurres, sur son livre de Miscellanées," in which Ronsard praises the compiler of a *florilegium*; see *Oeuvres complètes*, ed. Gustave Cohen (Paris, 1950), vol. 2, pp. 942–943. The other instances may be found, vol. 2, pp. 390–391, 614, 862 (I owe these references to Grahame Castor, *Pléiade Poetics: A Study in Sixteenth Century Thought and Terminology* [Cambridge, 1964], p. 72). See also Petrus Ramus, *Ciceronianus* (Paris, 1557), p. 18, and M. Antonius Muretus, *Variarum Lectionum libri viii* (Venice, 1559), book 8, chap. 1.

¹² See the letter to Poliziano, *Prosatori*, p. 910.

mative imitation. After Seneca, one finds it in Quintilian, Macrobius, Petrarch, Poliziano, Erasmus, Calcagnini, Dolet, Florido, Du Bellay, Sidney, and Jonson.¹³ I quote one of Erasmus' versions of the topos as representative:

I approve an imitation that is not limited to one model from whose features one does not dare to depart, an imitation which excerpts from all authors, or at any rate from the most eminent, what is excellent in each and most suits one's intellect, and which does not at once fasten to a discourse whatever beauty it lights upon, but which transfers what it finds into the mind itself, as into the stomach, so that transfused into the veins it appears to be a birth

¹³ Quintilian 10.1.19; Macrobius, *Sat.* 1.pr.7; Petrarch, *Fam.* 22.2.12, *Seniles* 2.3; Poliziano, *Prosatori*, p. 904; Erasmus pp. 176, 178, 290 (quoted below), 300; Celio Calcagnini, "Super imitatione commentatio," *Trattati* 1.213; Etienne Dolet, *De Imitatione Ciceroniana*, in Emile V. Telle, *L'Erasmianus sive Ciceronianus d'Etienne Dolet* (1535) (Geneva, 1974), pp. 18, 63, 76, 91; Francesco Florido, *Succisivarum lectionum libri tres* (Basel, 1539), p. 126; Du Bellay, *La Deffence et illustration de la langue françoise*, ed. Henri Chamard (Paris, 1970), p. 42; Sidney, *An Apologie for Poetrie*, in *Elizabethan Critical Essays*, ed. G. Gregory Smith (Oxford, 1904), vol. 1, p. 203; "Timber," *Ben Jonson*, ed. C. H. Herford, Percy and Evelyn Simpson, vol. 8 (Oxford, 1947), p. 638. In order not to burden the text unnecessarily I will here list some examples of the monkey and crow metaphors, which always (with the exception of Villani, who calls Salutati "scimmia di Cicerone" as a compliment) are used pejoratively to indicate particularly slavish, nontransformative imitation. For the ape see Horace, *Sat.* 1.10.18; Seneca the Elder, *Contr.* 9.3. 12–13; the three ancient and numerous medieval uses of *simia* cited by Ernst Robert Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, tr. Willard R. Trask (Princeton, 1953), pp. 538–540; Filippo Villani, *Le vite d'uomini illustri fiorentini*, cited by Gambaro, *Ciceroniano*, p. xxxii; Petrarch, *Fam.* 23.19.13; Poliziano, *Prosatori*, p. 902; Cortesi, *Prosatori*, p. 906 and "De hominibus doctis dialogus," in *Philippi Villani Liber de civitatis Florentiae famosis civibus*, ed. Gustavus Camillus Galetti (Florence, 1847), p. 234; Pico, *Le epistole "De imitatione" di Giovanfrancesco Pico della Mirandola e di Pietro Bembo*, ed. Giorgio Santangelo (Florence, 1954), pp. 29, 63, 70, 71; Erasmus, with whom *simius* is a favorite term of mockery, pp. 86, 100, 108, 118, 136, etc.; Sperone Speroni, *Opere* (Venice, 1740), vol. 2, p. 365 (joined with a crow comparison); Du Bellay, p. 107; Gabriel Harvey, *Ciceronianus*, ed. Harold S. Wilson (Lincoln, 1945), p. 80, alluding to Erasmus, p. 100. Horace, *Epis.* 1.3.19, reworks the Aesopian fable of the crow and the stolen plumage to dissuade Celsus from plundering the Palatine library for his writings. After Horace, the *cornicula* becomes a commonplace: Petrarch, *Fam.* 22.2.17; Pico, p. 34; Erasmus, p. 204; Calcagnini, *Trattati* 1.216; Speroni 2.365; Ricci, p. 75; Johann Sturm, *De imitatione oratoria* (Strassbourg, 1574), schola to book 3, chap. 1; Harvey, p. 4 (perhaps alluding to Ricci).

of one's intellect, not something begged and borrowed from elsewhere, and breathes forth the vigor and disposition of one's mind and nature, so that the reader does not recognize an insertion taken from Cicero, but a child born from one's brain, just as they say Pallas was born from Jupiter's, bearing a lively image of its parent, and also so that one's discourse does not appear to be some sort of cento or mosaic, but an image breathing forth one's mind or a river flowing from the fountain of one's heart.¹⁴

Although certain elements of this long sentence are peculiar to Erasmus' conception of imitation, one can justly call it a representative instance of the digestive topos for several reasons. First, the metaphors which theorists of imitation use do not appear as incidental ornaments; they usually carry the burden of what the theorist has to say and come at the crucial moments of his argument. In this passage Bulephorus, after having ridiculed extreme Ciceronianism and having argued for eclecticism, is stating his own conception of imitation. All of Erasmus' major concerns appear here with the exception of the fear that Ciceronianism is a disguise for paganism, and even this is implicit in the reference to decorum ("suits one's intellect"), for as I argue elsewhere, historical decorum, which forbids the use of exclusively pagan terms in Christian contexts, because the terms are inappropriate to the changed historical conditions, is the central concept of the *Ciceronianus*.¹⁵ This sentence also states a preference for eclectic rather than Ciceronian imitation and reveals Erasmus' insistence, unusual in treatises on imitation, on sincere expression of the author's personality as an essential of good writing. The passage is also typical—one need only think of Seneca's *Epistulae morales* 84—of the way in which imitative metaphors come in clusters. Besides the digestive metaphor one finds references to mosaics and begging, and a child/parent comparison, all traditional, although Erasmus uses the filial image, unlike Seneca, Petrarch, and Cortesi.¹⁶ Finally, Erasmus thoroughly emphasizes transformation through digestion; a reader will not even recognize Cicero as model.

¹⁴ *Ciceroniano*, p. 290. The representative nature of this passage is highlighted by the fact that it is one of the very few passages of which Dolet, in his attack on Erasmus (p. 91), approves.

¹⁵ See my "Imitation and the Renaissance Sense of the Past: The Reception of Erasmus' *Ciceronianus*," *The Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, 9 (1979), 155–177.

¹⁶ Seneca, *Ep. mor.* 84. 8; Petrarch, *Fam.* 23.19.11; Cortesi, *Prosatori*, pp. 906 (quoted by Erasmus, p. 298), 908. Pico criticizes Cortesi's comparison, p. 63.

With the reader's lack of recognition a new class of imitative imagery and doctrine appears: dissimulation. Theorists often regard transformation as the means to the end of dissimulation, just as Erasmus does in this sentence. In a certain sense this advice is nothing more than an extension of the adage *ars est celare artem* to imitation, as in Erasmus: Did not Cicero himself teach that the chief point of art is to disguise [*dissimulare*] art? . . . Therefore if we wish to imitate Cicero successfully, we must above all disguise our imitation of Cicero. (p. 84)

Since scholars have not paid much attention to the persistent advice to disguise the relationship between text and model, I would like to give an idea of the extent of dissimulative advice and imagery before proceeding to their consequences for a reader of imitative literature. Practically all of the important doctrines and metaphors of imitation appear in Seneca's *Epistulae morales* 84, so it should offer no surprise that he counsels dissimulation: "Let our mind hide [*abscondat*] all those things which have aided it and reveal only what it has produced" (7). This exhortation, which Macrobius takes so literally that he transfers it, along with other chunks of Seneca's letter, to his *Saturnalia* without any hint that he is using Seneca, appears just after the apian and digestive metaphors: Seneca is the first to link transformation and dissimulation.

Petrarch, while developing Seneca's comparison of the proper similarity between text and model to the resemblance of father to son, also dwells on dissimulation. He is writing to Boccaccio about the difficulty of avoiding unconscious verbal reminiscence and casting himself as father to Giovanni Malpaghini, his young secretary, who often inserts Virgilian phrases into his own poems. In this case the son turns out to be only too like his father; Giovanni produces a line from Petrarch's own *Bucolicum Carmen* as a justification for lifting a phrase from Virgil. Petrarch's unconscious reminiscence frustrates his attempt to conceal his models and leads him to reflect on the gap between intention and performance. Nevertheless the dissimulative advice is fundamental:

He will strengthen, I hope, his mind and style and will produce one thing, his very own, out of many things, and he will, I will not say flee, but conceal [*celabit*] the imitation so that he will appear similar to no one and will seem to have brought, from the old, something new to Latium [*Latio intulisse*]. (*Fam.* 23.19.10)

Again one notices the combination of concealing and transforming: making something new from a variety of sources and then disguising the process that has produced it. Petrarch is following this advice, for his sentence conceals an allusion to a famous line of Horace: "Captured Greece captured the wild victor and brought arts to rustic Latium [*intulit agresti Latio*]" (*Epist.* 2.1.156–157). A few lines later Petrarch restates his position on dissimulation:

We must provide that although something is similar, much is dissimilar, and that the similarity itself lie hidden [*lateat*], so that it cannot be perceived except by the silent searching of the mind, that it can be understood to be similar rather than said to be so.

The exception of "the silent searching of the mind" allows for partial dissimulation. The relation between text and model is not necessarily to be obliterated or completely disguised; the possibility of alluding in order to be recognized is left open.

Petrarch's last-quoted pronouncement on dissimulation stops just short of positing different responses by different audiences. Some later theorists take this step. Landino defines the purpose of imitation as "not to be the same as the ones we imitate, but to be similar to them in such a way that the similarity is scarcely recognized except by the learned."¹⁷ Sturm states this imitation for the learned doctrine succinctly: "Imitation lies hidden [*latet*]; it does not stand out. It conceals [*occultat*] rather than reveals itself and does not wish to be recognized except by a learned man."¹⁸

II

What can these transformative and dissimulative metaphors tell someone who is trying to understand an imitative poem? What help do they offer a reader who confronts, for example, a passage in a Renaissance

¹⁷ Because of the inaccuracies of the printed editions of the *Disputationes Camaldulenses* I translate from the manuscript, written by Pietro Cennini in 1474, preserved in the Laurentian Library (Plut. 53.28). This passage appears f. 197^v.

¹⁸ *De imitatione oratoria* 2.3. Of all the theorists of imitation Sturm is the most insistent on dissimulation, which finds a place in his theory from his earliest days (see *Nobilitas Literata* [1538; ed. Philip Müller, Jena, 1680], p. 69). By the time of his major work on imitation, *De imitatione oratoria* (1574), he has elaborated a sixfold scheme for dissimulation which he calls "occultationis partes" (book 3, chap. 1). Bernardino Parthenio, *Della imitatione poetica* (Venice, 1560), p. 48, offers specific advice on methods of dissimulation, but not in as great detail as Sturm.

poem which strongly resembles one in a classical poem? What sort of expectations should such a reader have? Can one translate this advice for literary production into a guide for interpretation? On the basis of the transformative and dissimilative aspects of imitation, only one principle emerges. A reader must be very cautious in even calling a similarity between two texts an imitation or an allusion, much less in analyzing the use or significance of the similarity.

This less than inspiring principle, which could be fairly stated much more skeptically, confronts one at every turn. First, transformation of the model into something new and different, especially when transformation is conceived as the means of hiding a text's relation to its model, calls into question the possibility of identifying the model. A thoroughly dissimulated transformation would not be understood even by "the silent searching of the mind"; the relation between text and model disappears. Or even if the relation is grasped by the learned, one wonders about a communicative intent that is so carefully concealed. The relation may be crucial for understanding the text's genesis or the author's reading, but insignificant for an interpretation of the text itself.

Even if a reader has identified a model or models, another problem of intent arises. One way to approach it is to examine a conflict implicit in the apian and digestive analogies as Seneca uses them:

We too should imitate the bees; we should separate whatever we have gathered from diverse reading (for things held apart are better preserved), and then having carefully applied our intellect, we should mix those various sips into one taste, so that even if where it has been taken from appears, it will nevertheless appear other than where it has been taken from. We see that nature does this in our bodies without any effort on our part. (*Ep. mor.* 84.5–6)

The effortlessness of digestion makes all the difference. Does a similarity between text and model result from conscious intention—the application of intellect—or an unconscious process? The constant advice to digest or assimilate one's reading makes it highly probable that some unconscious absorption and reproduction will take place.

Petrarch's story about Giovanni Malpaghini and the Virgilian phrase in *Bucolicum Carmen* 6 furnishes one instance of unconscious reminiscence. In *Le Familiari* 22.2.11–13 Petrarch provides a disturbingly persuasive analysis of the consequences of complete assimilation,

although one must make some allowance for his obvious desire to impress Boccaccio with the paradox that an author is less likely to remember what he knows best. Petrarch distinguishes two classes of reading which he has done. On the one hand he read authors like Ennius and Plautus only once and quickly at that; if he memorized anything of theirs, it was so alien to his own thoughts that it stood in his memory as another's. On the other hand, he read and reread Virgil, Cicero, Horace, and Boethius. He digested their works so thoroughly that they entered his bone marrow, not just his memory. They became so much a part of his mind that occasionally their phrases came to his pen without his recognizing the source or even that they came from someone else.¹⁹

Petrarch's explanation of unconscious reminiscence offers particular difficulties because it casts doubts on just those texts to which one would suppose an author would allude. For one usually feels most confident calling a similarity between two texts an allusion when the putative model is a famous work or a work known to be familiar to the author of the "alluding" text. An analogue from everyday experience may help clarify Petrarch's explanation and also remove any suspicion that he is exaggerating to make a paradoxical, epigrammatic point. Most students have had an original idea that a later accident, for instance rereading lecture notes after some time has elapsed, has sudden-

¹⁹ Compare Montaigne on his memory in "De la praesumption," *Oeuvres complètes*, ed. Albert Thibaudet and Maurice Rat (Paris, 1962), p. 635: "Je feuillette les livres, je ne les estudie pas: ce qui m'en demeure, c'est chose que je ne reconnois plus d'estre d'autrui; c'est cela seulement dequoy mon jugement a faict son profit, les discours et les imaginations dequoy il s'est imbu; l'auteur, le lieu, les mots et autres circonstances, je les oublie incontinent." Cicero, *De oratore* 2.59–60, uses sunburn as a metaphor for unintentional influence, and E. K., in his dedicatory letter to Gabriel Harvey, uses Cicero's comparison to defend Spenser's archaic diction: "In whom [older English authors] whenas this our Poet hath bene much traveled and throughly redd, how could it be, (as that worthy Oratour sayde) but that walking in the sonne although for other cause he walked, yet needes he mought be sunburnt; and having the sound of those auncient Poetes still ringing in his eares, he mought needes in singing hit out some of theyr tunes. But whether he useth them by such casualityte and custome, or of set purpose and choyse . . ." (Spenser, *Poetical Works*, ed. J. C. Smith and E. de Selincourt [Oxford, 1912], p. 416). Compare Thomas Wilson, *The Arte of Rhetorique* (1560), ed. G. H. Mair (Oxford, 1909), p. 5. I owe these references to sunburn to David Kalstone, *Sidney's Poetry: Contexts and Interpretations* (Cambridge, 1965), p. 191, n. 21.

ly shown to have been their teacher's, but the teaching had been so well digested by the students that it became a part of their thinking, not an element lodged in their memories.

The counsel of a dissimulated imitation only to be understood by the learned suggests different kinds of function. Landino conceives the highest kind of poetry (Virgil, Dante) as written for the learned, so that a hidden allusion, just like the hidden allegory of *Aeneid* 1–6 which Alberti so subtly develops, probably has considerable significance. The fact of an imitation's concealment, therefore, does not necessarily imply absence of function. In other cases, however, the function may be no more than to allow the learned reader the pleasure of recognizing a phrase from an ancient poet. E. K., for example, in his dedicatory letter to Spenser's *Shepherd's Calendar*, mentions the poetic custom of first trying one's powers with pastoral poetry and cites some authors who followed this Virgilian progression, "whose foting this Author every where followeth, yet so as few, but they be wel sented can trace him out" (p. 418). This clause reads like an invitation to the learned to listen for echoes of ancient pastoralists.

Besides the possibility of allusions only for the erudite, one may encounter allusions, plays on words, designed only for the author's pleasure—another type of imitation that may not function in a work. Vida is explicit on this point: "Often I like to play with and to allude to [*alludere*] phrases from the ancients and, while using precisely the same words, to express another meaning."²⁰ Pleasure for the learned or pleasure for the writer both may reduce imitation to a matter of genesis. I do not mean to belittle studies of genesis, but one cannot overlook the confusion created in failures to distinguish questions of genesis and function.

The apian metaphor of eclectic gathering of vocabulary and the specific advice on ways to transform and disguise good phrases are symptomatic of a tendency in writings on imitation: the reduction of imitation to matters of *elocutio*. In his manuscript of Quintilian, next to 10.2.27, "Imitation, I will say again and again, is not merely a matter of words," Petrarch wrote himself a note, "Read and remember, Silvanus."²¹ Both Quintilian and Petrarch, however, devote more

²⁰ The "*De Arte Poetica*" of Marco Girolamo Vida, ed. and tr. Ralph G. Williams (New York, 1976), 3.257–258. I quote Williams' translation here and elsewhere with an occasional modification.

theoretical energy to discussing style than *inventio* or *dispositio*. They are typical in exhorting writers to extend imitation beyond *elocutio* and in neglecting to do much more than exhort. Vida treats *imitatio* primarily as a matter of diction, although he offers the customary admonition to imitate the other two parts of rhetoric: "We appropriate in one instance their brilliant inventions, in another the order they employ" (3.214–215). He quickly returns to his main interest and shows himself an extremist by recommending the theft of "the words themselves." Ordinarily theft belongs to the vocabulary of failed transformation and is used to attack. Only Vida, to my knowledge, exalts theft into a term of praise, although one finds a hint in Macrobius (*Sat.* 6.1.3).²² In any case Vida's conception of imitation as theft, the extreme version of imitation as gathering stylistic beauties, indicates that some imitations are limited to style and do not bring the text and model into relation in any other way.

So far an examination of the transformative and dissimulative aspects of imitation has produced only difficulties, all relating in some way to the major hermeneutical problem of the possibility and importance of assessing authorial intention. The discussions of imitation call into question the possibility of identifying models, or if the identity is agreed upon, the possibility of understanding the use of the model. No method for progressing from the observation of resemblance between two texts to an assertion of relation between them has yet emerged. So far there is very little evidence, from the theorists of imitation, to justify imitation as anything other than an element in the genesis of a text. The third class of analogies for imitation, however, eristic metaphors, does open the possibility of regarding an imitation as an important function of the text itself.

²¹ Quoted by Pierre de Nolhac, *Pétrarque et l'humanisme* (Paris, 1907), vol. 2, p. 92. De Nolhac, p. 91, shows that Silvanus is a name Petrarch often used for himself.

²² Cf. Sturm, *De imitatione oratoria* 1.11. For theft and imitation see Eduard Stemplinger, *Das Plagiat in der griechischen Literatur* (Leipzig and Berlin, 1912) and Harold Ogden White, *Plagiarism and Imitation during the English Renaissance: A Study in Critical Distinctions* (Cambridge, 1935).

III

The two most striking eristic analogies I have found raise competition or strife to a necessary condition for creativity. In "Longinus'" original and stimulating discussion of imitation one finds this comment on Plato's indebtedness to Homer:

Nor does it seem to me that he would have excelled so much in his philosophical doctrines or would have so often hit on poetical subject matter and expression, had he not, by God, with all his heart struggled with Homer for preeminence, like a young competitor against an already admired one, perhaps too contentiously and, as it were, breaking a lance with him, but nevertheless not without profit. For, according to Hesiod, "This strife [*eris*] is good for mortals." And truly this contest for the crown of glory is noble and most worth winning, in which even to be defeated by one's elders is not inglorious. (13.4-5)

This passage expresses a characteristic ambivalence about emulation. Plato's excellence as a philosophic author largely depends on his struggle with Homer, but nevertheless "Longinus" feels compelled to excuse the contentiousness and violence of the competition. "Longinus" shies away from analyzing the motives that lead to struggle and apparently feels some uneasiness about the competitive impulse despite its importance for attaining excellence. Consequently he insists, by his quotation from Hesiod, that one can distinguish emulation or competition from strife and contentiousness.

The opening of the *Works and Days* corrects what Hesiod had said about *eris* in the *Theogony*: there are two kinds of *eris*, a good and a bad. One stirs up war and suffering; the other stimulates men, even lazy men, to increase their substance out of a desire to compete with their neighbors, and "this *eris* is good for mortals." Up until this point one has a fairly simple opposition between bad and good, destructive and creative. The next two lines, however, show that the good, creative *eris* is not so benign as appeared at first: "And the potter bears ill will [*κοτέει*] towards the potter and the carpenter to the carpenter, and the beggar envies [*φθονέει*] the beggar and the singer, the singer." Ill will, malice, anger, envy, begrudging (*kotos*, *phthonos*) at first glance seem much more appropriate to the bad *eris*. A recent and authoritative commentator on the passage, M. L. West, explains the discrepancy with reference to Hesiod's rather loose mental associations, "*κότος* and *φθόνος* are not in the spirit of the good Eris, but the idea of rivalry

makes the lines relevant enough for Hesiod.”²³ I would like to suggest, however, that the appearance of *kotos* and *phthonos* reveals Hesiod’s ambivalence towards the distinction he is now drawing between two types of *eris*. (After all he once recognized only the baleful *eris* of the *Theogony*.) The *odium figulinum*, as Nietzsche calls it,²⁴ points to the darker motivations of emulation and competition—envy, malice. The distinction between the two kinds of *eris* is more concerned with their effects; they partially share motivations springing from some sort of ill will. Even the good *eris* has a bad background.

Regardless of his attitude towards it, emulation, the good *eris*, has for Hesiod associations less benevolent than its epithet would suggest. Hesiod does not try to excuse a connection of emulation with envy or malice, as does “Longinus” “perhaps too contentiously.” “Longinus” does not focus on the competitive component of emulation. Rather than analyze its motivations or mechanism, he envelops its workings in mystery by comparing it to the inspiration of the Pythian priestess.

The other author who advocates competition as a necessary element of creativity gives a glimpse of the ferocity latent in emulation. Calcagnini closes his letter to Giraldis with the story of the birth of Anteros.²⁵ Venus, worried why Cupid (Eros), her newly born son, was not growing, asked Themis for advice. Themis replied that Cupid would grow if Venus had another son for Cupid to compete with. And after the birth of Anteros, Cupid, of course, had a growth spurt. Calcagnini draws the moral in the closing sentences of his letter:

I think you will easily conclude from this story that no brilliant minds can make substantial progress unless they have an antagonist (as the Greeks say) with whom they may struggle [*quicum decertent*] and wrestle. And we must contend [*contendamus*] not only with our contemporaries, but also with those who wrote in the past, whom we call “silent teachers and masters.” Otherwise we will always be speechless children. (*Trattati* 1.220)

The myth of Anteros allows Calcagnini to justify strife in universal

²³ Hesiod, *Works and Days*, ed. M. L. West (Oxford, 1978), p. 147.

²⁴ See “Homers Wettkampf,” in Friedrich Nietzsche, *Werke*, ed. Karl Schlechta (Munich, 1969), vol. 3, p. 294. Nietzsche, however, argues that Hesiod’s conception of the value of envy is typically Greek and alien to moderns.

²⁵ Robert V. Merrill, “Eros and Anteros,” *Speculum*, 19 (1944), 274ff., discusses this passage and Calcagnini’s *Anteros sive de mutuo amore*.

terms. The myth excuses violence and envy as necessary for the formation of "brilliant minds." Calcagnini lets one detect the passage from admiring, reverent imitation to full-scale warfare with the admired master, for this mythical naturalization of violence follows the gladiatorial glee of overcoming inferiority.

It is not only disgraceful but also dangerous for one old enough to be able to stand and walk to stick always to another's footsteps [*vestigis*] and to use what Varro calls knee-splints,²⁶ since they do not easily become strong who walk with another's feet, fight with another's hands, see with another's eyes, speak with another's tongue, and who finally oblivious of themselves live with another's spirit. Now of course this is fine for those who have yet to come of age, who still eat baby food, whose limbs are still bound in swaddling bands. But those who are mature and whose muscles are stronger, let them now come out of the shade, let them now leap onto the field, let them now contend with the gladiator-trainer himself whose precepts they used to receive, and let them try their strength with him and not yield, but rather press forward, putting it to the test whether they too can be commanders and by their own prowess toss down their adversary from his position. (*Trattati* 1.219)

The model, without whose help any progress is impossible, as Calcagnini says at the beginning of his letter, has become an adversary engaging the young author in a fight to the death. One detects the resentment of dependence not only in the gladiatorial and military imagery and the sarcasm about baby food and swaddling bands. The repetition of *another's* conveys the rising frustration of the imitator, and the repetition of *now* rings out like a battle cry of exhortation. This violence requires an explanation and receives it in the mythical moralization of Anteros; any possible malice, envy, ingratitude are ignored because of the necessity of competition.

Hesiod, "Longinus," and Calcagnini allow one to recognize envy and contentiousness as the dark side of emulation. Later I will suggest that this dark side plays an important role in preventing *aemulatio* from becoming a technical term for a particular type of imitation. But one must first try to show that a fairly clear conception of *aemulatio* exists in some theorists even though they draw no explicit *imitatio/aemulatio*

²⁶ Weinberg prints "semper astris" instead of the correct "serperastris"; see Caelius Calcagninus, *Opera* (Basel, 1544), p. 275. Calcagnini is referring to Varro, *de lingua latina* 9.11.

distinction. The passages from Calcagnini provide a good starting point, although they present unusually violent eristic imagery, because they contain the two most common classes of eristic analogy: *decertent* and *contendamus* in the Anteros myth; *vestigii* in the second passage. Forms of *certo* and *contendo* are generally used to advocate *aemulatio*, often in opposition to forms of *sequor*, a major term for imitation when not used to indicate a third kind of imitation called following. A cluster of images associated with paths—*via* (or *callis* or a similar word), *dux*, *vestigium*—comprise the other class of eristic metaphor. Both classes are used to support both imitation and emulation, depending on the theorist's view of competition and the possibility of successful competition.

The opening of Lucretius' third book offers the earliest example of an eristic opposition of *sequor* and *certo/contendo*. Lucretius is invoking Epicurus:

I follow [*sequor*] you, glory of the Greeks, and I place my footsteps [*vestigia*] firmly in your footprints, not desiring to compete [*certandi cupidus*], but because my love for you makes me long to imitate you. For why would the swallow contend [*contendat*] with swans? (3–7)

Lucretius equates imitation with following the footsteps of his master and rejects emulation as futile contentiousness. This type of following rejects the transformation of *inventio*; Lucretius' use of the bees as gatherers comes immediately after the lines quoted above.²⁷

Although one finds numerous examples of *vestigia* used to state a preference for *imitatio* over *aemulatio*, the other instances of the *contendere/sequi* opposition all support emulation. Quintilian's brief discussion was probably the single most influential statement:²⁸

But even those who do not seek the heights should contend rather than follow. For he who tries to be in front may equal even if he cannot surpass. No one, however, can equal the person whose footsteps he thinks he must tread in: for the follower will always of necessity be behind. (10.2.9–10)

²⁷ In other passages, however, Lucretius asserts the originality of treating such difficult subjects in Latin verse by reversing the *vestigia* topos: "avia Pieridum peragro loca nullius ante/trita solo" (1.926–927 = 4.1–2). For similar assertions of originality see Virgil, *Geo.* 3.289–294, and Horace, *Epist.* 1.19.21–2 and *Ars poetica* 285–8.

²⁸ For a formulation dependent on Quintilian see Daniel Barbaro, "Della eloquenza," *Trattati* 2.359.

Quintilian is recommending *aemulatio* rather than *imitatio* and closes his chapter with another eristic term: "This will be their praise; they will be said to have surpassed their predecessors and to have taught their successors."

One of the few points of agreement between Pico and Bembo in their exchange of letters on imitation is a preference for striving to surpass rather than for following. Pico, after citing Plato's criticism of imitators and Horace's "servum pecus," asserts that all good authors have sought fame by other means than imitation: "Rather, they have either opposed their predecessors in strenuous rivalry or striven to surpass them by a wide margin, not to follow them" (p. 25). Bembo agrees that surpassing the model should be the goal, but believes this best accomplished by devoting oneself to one model (Virgil for epic, Cicero for prose): "This can occur most easily if we imitate to the utmost the one whom we desire to surpass" (p. 56). Bembo is reversing Quintilian's statement that the follower must always be second. He continues by proposing the following "law":

First, we should imitate the one who is best of all; next, we should imitate in such a way that we strive to overtake him; finally, all our effort should be devoted to surpassing him once we have overtaken him. Accordingly we should have in our minds those two outstanding accomplisners of very great matters, emulation and hope. But emulation should always be joined to imitation. (pp. 56–57)

Pico and Bembo are coming very close to a distinction between imitation and emulation. For Pico imitation brings no glory and is equivalent to following; rivalry and trying to surpass are superior. A few lines later Pico explicitly calls Virgil "an emulator of the ancients rather than an imitator," but not in the eristic sense he has just explained. The third stage in Bembo's threefold "law of imitation" represents *aemulatio*. The sentences which follow, however, show that he does not regard it as a technical term, but rather as a feeling of admiring rivalry.

The *vestigia* topos, perhaps the most common of the commonplaces, can support both imitation and emulation. Statius uses it to express his admiration for Virgil and to admit his own sense of inferiority in his address to his book at the end of the *Thebaid*: "Do not touch the divine *Aeneid*, but follow from a distance and always adore its footsteps." Vida advises the aspiring poet to follow Virgil's footsteps: "Revere

Virgil in your mind before all others, then; follow him only, and as far as you are able, keep to his footsteps" (1.208–209). In addition one finds numerous passages in which someone is praised or approved for following footsteps, or is advised to do so, in such authors as Seneca, Pliny, Longueil, Dolet, Ricci, Parthenio, Ramus, Ascham, Sturm, and Harvey.²⁹ Typical of these usages is Giraldis's remark to Calcagnini, "I think that I have achieved enough, if I occasionally have been able to stick to Cicero's footsteps" (*Trattati*, 1.203).

Petrarch, on the other hand, makes avoiding the footsteps of his predecessors a central principle of his conception of imitation, even though he recognizes the difficulty of the task (*Fam.* 23.19.15). In another letter to Boccaccio Petrarch re-elaborates Seneca's *vestigia* topos; both passages also contain forceful examples of the use of *dux* and *via* (*semita*, *callis*) to show a preference for emulation over imitation:

What then? I will not go through the footsteps of predecessors? Indeed I will use the old road [*via vetere*], but if I discover a flatter and a more suitable one, I will open the way myself. The people who pondered these matters before us are not our masters but our leaders. (*Ep. mor.* 33.11)

What then? I like to follow the path [*semitam*] of predecessors, but not always another's footsteps. I am willing on occasion to borrow, not to steal from others' writings, but as long as I can, I prefer my own. I take pleasure in similarity, not identity, a similarity that is not excessive, in which the light of the follower's mind stands out, not his blindness or poverty. I think it better to do without a leader than to be forced to follow a leader through everything. I do not want a leader who binds me, but one who goes ahead; let me have my eyes with a leader, my judgment and freedom. I would not be prohibited from placing my foot where I wish and passing by elsewhere and trying the inaccessible. And I would be permitted to follow a shorter, or if I am so inclined, a flatter path [*callem*] and to hasten and to stop and to turn aside and to turn back. (*Fam.* 22.2.20–21)³⁰

²⁹ Seneca, *Ep. mor.* 79.16; Pliny, *Epist.* 6.11.2; Longueil, quoted by Telle, *L'Erasmanus*, p. 313; Dolet, p. 66; Ricci, p. 66^v; Parthenio, pp. 65, 87; Ramus, p. 78; Ascham, letter to Sturm, *The Whole Works of Roger Ascham*, ed. Giles (London, 1864), pp. 180, 181; Sturm, *Nobilitas Literata*, p. 23; Harvey, pp. 82, 102.

³⁰ In my opinion there is no doubt that Petrarch is emulating the passage from Seneca rather than just using a topos. Petrarch refers to *Ep. mor.* 33.7, a section against "captare flosculos," in three different letters (*Fam.* 1.3.4, 4.15.17, 24.1.9). The second of these letters contains a long exhortation, based on Seneca, not to excerpt and paraphrases the *via* and *vestigia* sentence: "Placet ignota tentare, ubi sepe viam non

Petrarch's expansion of these lines from Seneca is a good example of his persistent attempt to make his practice conform to his theory. He is following his own advice to abstain from reproducing someone else's phrasing (*Fam.* 23.19.13). He keeps only the common phrase, "What then?", which by itself alerts no one to this passage in Seneca. He uses Seneca's figures—footsteps, road, leader—but changes the wording: "Path of predecessors" for "footsteps of predecessors," "shorter or flatter" for "flatter and more suitable," *semitam* and *callem* for *via*. He preserves Seneca's general idea, but much more determinedly rejects servile following—so much so that he seems defensive. He even corrects Seneca by implying he did not go far enough: the dismissal of masters is not enough. Petrarch wants a leader too, but feels that a leader is sometimes as oppressive as a master. His revision of Seneca's leader/master distinction consequently contains implicit criticism of too facile an opposition in Seneca. Petrarch's own version of what emulation should be—his statement of the attitude one should adopt towards a model—presents a fine example of one common characteristic of emulation: (implicit) criticism of the model.³¹

IV

The proliferation of eristic metaphors allows one to make a distinction between imitation and emulation. Although such a distinction is implicit in writings on imitation from Horace's *Epistulae* 1.19 on, no one makes it explicitly, as far as I know, until Erasmus, who does not adopt

inveniens aut vageris aut corruas; placet illorum sequi vestigia . . ." (4.15.18). For Petrarch's thorough acquaintance with Seneca, especially the letters to Lucilius, see de Nolz, vol. 2, pp. 115–126. It is ironic that Petrarch is violating his own advice against "captare flosculos" and excerpting from commentaries in *Fam.* 22.2; his quotation from Lucretius comes from Macrobius (*Sat.* 6.2.3). Petrarch, as de Nolz (vol. 1, pp. 159–160) shows, has no first-hand knowledge of Lucretius.

³¹ One final *vestigia* topos deserves citation because at least two other authors—Erasmus, pp. 296, 302 (quoted below), and Parthenio, p. 107—approve and quote it. I refer to Poliziano's (*Prosatori*, p. 904): "Sed ut bene currere non potest qui pedem ponere studet in alienis tantum vestigiis, ita nec bene scribere qui tamquam de praescripto non audet egredi." A few examples of *dux* to advocate or approve close imitation: Petrarch, *Fam.* 24.4.4–5; 24.7.3; 24.9.1; 24.12.3, 18, 22, 23, 24, 42; Cortesi, *Prosatori*, pp. 906, 910; Bembo, pp. 51, 54; Dolet, p. 56; Ascham, letter to Sturm, p. 182; Levin to Harvey, *Ciceronianus*, p. 38. One finds *path* used similarly in Bembo, p. 56; Vida 3.185; Dolet, p. 66. Quintilian (10.5.7), Pico (p. 26), and Levin (Harvey, p. 38) use *via* to support emulation.

emulation as a technical term.³² Usually the distinction emerges in the metaphoric contrasts I have been tracing: servile/free (in Horace), follower/competitor or surpasser, thief/borrower-transformer, ape/man. I would like to suggest that *aemulatio* does not emerge as a technical term for the freer, more competitive and transformative type of imitation at least partly because of its ambiguous moral significance.³³ Cicero's *Tusculanae disputationes* 4.17 gives two meanings of *aemulatio*: the imitation of virtue and the anxiety felt when one desires and lacks something which another possesses. Nonius defines the envious aspect of *aemulatio* by contrasting it with *imitatio*:

³² Arno Reiff, *interpretatio, imitatio, aemulatio: Begriff und Vorstellung literarischer Abhängigkeit bei den Römern* (diss. Cologne, 1959), pp. 73ff., claims that *aemulatio* becomes a fixed critical term in the age of Tiberius. The evidence does not bear him out. Phaedrus' use of *aemulatio*, 2. ep. 7, is more plausibly explained as moral rather than technical; his prologues and epilogues are obsessed with envy and the criticism he may receive (*calumniari*, 1. prol. 5; *livor, obtrektare*, 2. ep. 10; *livor*, 3. prol. 60; *obtrektare* 4. prol. 15–16; *livor*, 4.22.1; *invidia*, 5. prol. 9). But the major objections to taking *aemulatio* as a designation for a type of imitation are that it often appears as a synonym for *imitatio* and that Quintilian in 10.2 and Seneca in *Ep. mor.* 84, the two most extended and most important discussions of imitation in the first century (and perhaps in any other), discussions which Reiff curiously neglects, do not use *aemulatio*, although they are advocating it. Quintilian's only use of *aemulari* in 10.2 occurs at section 17 in a list of imitators who fall into the *vitia* nearest to the *virtutes* of their models; the context shows that he is just varying his verbs, not using a technical term. At 10.1.61 Quintilian refers to Horace's "Pindarum quisquis studet aemulari" (*Od.* 4.2.1) as follows: "propter quae Horatius eum merito nemini credit imitabilem." And Pliny, who frequently has *aemulor* and *aemulatio* to describe literary relationships, often uses it synonymously with *imitatio*, for instance in *Epist.* 1.2.2–3 and 1.5.12–13, as Reiff admits (p. 85), and 8.6.13. At 6.11.2 Pliny makes *aemulari* and "meis instare vestigiis" synonymous. Pliny's joining of *improba* with *aemulatio* at 1.2.3 and 7.30.5 suggests that he has its ambiguous moral significance, not a technical literary one, in mind. I do not question the existence of varying conceptions of imitation in the first century, nor do I challenge the usefulness of *aemulatio* to describe one of them, provided that one realizes that it is not an ancient technical term. (For similar criticisms of Reiff see the review by Manfred Fuhrmann, *Gnomon*, 33 [1961], 445–448). Several classicists make a distinction between *imitatio* and *aemulatio*. See, for example, Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Moellendorf, *Sappho und Simonides: Untersuchungen über griechische Lyriker* (Berlin, 1913), p. 323; Folco Martinazzoli, *Sapphica et Vergiliana: Su alcuni temi letterari della tradizione poetica classica* (Bari, 1958), esp. "Introduzione: imitazione, emulazione, originalità," pp. 7–31; G. M. A. Grube, *The Greek and Roman Critics* (Toronto, 1965), p. 211. In particular see Gordon Williams' fine discussion of *imitatio* and *aemulatio* in postvirgilian epic, *Change and Decline: Roman Literature in the Early Empire* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1978), pp. 193–213.

³³ Cf. Giorgio Pasquali, *Orazio lirico* (Florence, 1920), pp. 119–123.

Aemulatio differs from *imitatio* in that the latter is sincere and admits neither spite nor envy; the former, however, does have the eager application of imitating, but with malice added. (437M)

Envy, contentious striving, jealous rivalry cling to *aemulatio* and hinder its usefulness as a descriptive term; an overtone of condemnation threatens to interfere. In Pliny, for example, who uses *aemulatio* in literary contexts much more frequently than his predecessors, it does not acquire the status of a technical term contrasting with *imitatio* and occasionally requires an apology. In *Epistulae* 1.2 Pliny is sending a speech to a friend for correction:

I have tried to imitate [*imitari*] Demosthenes, always a favorite of yours, and Calvus, recently a favorite of mine, at least in figures of speech; for the “few whom just . . .” [Jupiter loved; *Aeneid* 6.129] are able to achieve [*adsequi*] the force of such men. Nor was the subject matter incompatible with this—I fear I speak presumptuously [*improbe*]*—aemulatio*. (2–3)

Pliny here uses *imitari*, *adsequi*, and *aemulatio* interchangeably; he is following his models, not contending with them, imitating not emulating them. But when using *aemulatio* as a synonym for *imitatio*, he is afraid of laying himself open to a charge of shamelessness or presumption and excuses himself in accordance with rhetorical doctrine on using too daring an expression. At the conclusion of *Epistulae* 7.9 Pliny is advocating *aemulatio* in translation. He explains that this *certare*, this *contentio* is bold but not shameless (*improba*) because it is a private exercise, not a public attempt to shine. In *Epistulae* 7.30 Pliny rejects the moral excess of *aemulari* for the neutral *imitari* and *sequi*. Once again emulating is *improbum*; he also calls it “paene furiosum” (“almost insane”). For Pliny *aemulatio* refers to the author’s emotional attitude and motivation, not to a literary technique.

Regardless of the reasons why *aemulatio* does not become a technical term, it has considerable usefulness as a designation for the type of imitation advocated by eristic metaphors. Erasmus, the first person to distinguish literary *imitatio* and *aemulatio*, uses eristic diction to make the distinction:

Some shrewd people distinguish imitation from emulation. Imitation aims at similarity; emulation, at victory. Thus, if you take all of Cicero and him alone for your model, you should not only reproduce him, but also defeat him. He must not be just passed by, but rather left behind. (p. 116)³⁴

³⁴ One would like to know who these shrewd people are. Does Erasmus have

Towards the end of his dialogue Erasmus returns to *imitatio/aemulatio*:

Again, in this branch of study I want Cicero to be first and foremost, not the only one, and I do not think that one should only follow him, but rather imitate him and even emulate him. For the follower walks in the footsteps of another and is a slave to his model. Furthermore, it has been well said that a person who places his foot in the footstep of another cannot walk well, and no one can ever swim well who does not dare to throw away the life preserver. An imitator, however, desires to say not so much the same things as similar ones—in fact sometimes not even similar, but rather equal things. But the emulator strives to speak better, if he can. (p. 302)

This reformulation shows the fluidity of boundaries among the types of imitation. Instead of a simple opposition one finds the fuller three-fold progression: following, imitating, emulating. Following is rejected as clinging to a model's footsteps. Imitating no longer aims only at similarity, as in the previous passage, but rather at equality. Emulating still in a sense tries to achieve a victory, but the emphasis is shifted to producing something better. The difference between the two statements of *aemulatio* lies in the word's potential ambivalence; *striving* to surpass (contentiousness) or striving to *surpass* (producing something better).

This threefold division partially depends, I think, on a hidden metaphor of the path: following a forerunner, catching up with him, passing him. The division is also determined by the three logical possibilities of comparison: worse (less), equal, better (more). The middle term can quite easily drop out—especially if one is thinking of the brief moment when a runner is alongside a competitor before passing him—and leave a simple opposition: behind/in front of, worse/better. And in fact this is what often happens in writings on imitation. Sometimes the more complete threefold scheme of following, imitating, emulating appears, and following is supposedly distin-

particular people in mind, is he referring to an idea "in the air," or is he just being casual without intending to suggest anyone? As observed earlier, Pico and Bembo come closest to making a distinction between *imitatio* and *aemulatio*. Perhaps Erasmus heard such a distinction during his stay in Rome in 1509, during which visit he heard the Ciceronian sermon which alarmed him so much (see *Ciceroniano*, pp. lvii–lviii and pp. 128ff.). In any event Erasmus claims that he did not know the correspondence between Pico and Bembo until after the publication of the *Ciceronianus*: see the letter to Vlatten, 24 January 1529, *Ciceroniano*, p. 326.

guished from imitating. Other times a simple opposition appears—follow/surpass, servile/free—and imitating and following are identified.³⁵ One finds, for example, in Erasmus, besides the *imitatio/aemulatio* opposition of the “shrewd people” and the later threefold scheme, an opposition between following and surpassing, in which the moment of overtaking is ignored. Bulephorus is describing Cicero’s use of Demosthenes: “He was not content to follow Demosthenes, but prudently chose to avoid some things and correct others, and he emulated what he approved in such a way that he strove to surpass it” (p. 172).

Regardless of whether one distinguishes two or three species of imitation, *aemulatio* includes the attempt to surpass the model, and this attempt generally has important consequences for a reader of imitative poetry because it conflicts with dissimulative advice. *Aemulatio* calls attention to itself and deliberately challenges comparison with its model. The relation between text and model becomes an important element in the text itself. A passage from Vida shows how dissimulation and *aemulatio* are mutually exclusive. He is discussing two possibilities for imitating the style of a model. Some can steal from refined poets and then hide the thefts; others make no attempt to conceal them. The refusal of dissimulation occurs in two cases; the second is *aemulatio* as *libido certandi* indicates:

In other cases, aflame with a desire to compete with the ancients, they delight in vanquishing them by snatching from their hands even material which has long been their peculiar possession, but which is, however, ill-fashioned, and improving it. (3.228–230)

The emulator tries not to disguise the relations between text and model because the reader cannot appreciate the victory over the model without recognizing it.³⁶

³⁵ Ricci’s *sequi/imitari/aemulari* distinction, quoted in the introduction to this paper, may be indebted to Erasmus, although it also recalls Bembo’s above-quoted progression from *imitandum* to *assequi contendamus* to *praetereamus*. A member of Bembo’s circle in Venice, Daniel Barbaro, in his “Della eloquenza” (1557) also offers a threefold division of imitation: “Et in brieve, bisogna aprir gli occhi e nello imitare i dotti et eccellenti uomini si richiede considerare di che forma essi sieno più abbondanti e di che meno, acciò che sapendo per qual cagione essi stati sieno tali, ancora non sia tolto il potere agli studiosi de *accostarsi* loro, et *aguagliarli*, e se possibile è (che pure è possibile al modo già detto) di *superargli*” (*Trattati* 2.450). With these tripartite divisions of imitation contrast Sturm’s opposition between servile and free imitation, *De imitatione oratoria* 1.2.

³⁶ Seneca the Elder and Macrobius both appear to recognize a dissimulative and

What Vida is here saying about style can apply to matters of *inventio* and *dispositio*. The important point is that the rejection of dissimulation reduces and potentially eliminates some of the difficulties raised by transformative and dissimulative doctrine. A reader can feel justified by this aspect of *aemulatio* in interpreting a resemblance between two texts as an allusion. A reader can feel justified in expecting a text to assert its difference from its model and to make use of that difference.³⁷

In addition eristic metaphors suggest what kind of difference *aemulatio* may produce because the continual insistence on conflict suggests that a text may criticize, correct, or revise its model. For example, when Vida's emulator displays his improvement of another's *elocutio*, he passes judgment on the words as "ill-fashioned." The emulator is correcting and criticizing his model. I have already pointed to the implicit criticism which Petrarch's assertion of his independence from a leader makes of Seneca's *Epistulae morales* 33: Seneca does not recognize the danger that a leader may become a master. For explicit criticism joined to an imitation consider the following passage from Milton's *Lycidas*:

Where were ye Nymphs when the remorseless deep
Clos'd o'er the head of your lov'd *Lycidas*?

nondissimulative type of imitation. Seneca is commenting on imitations of the Virgilian phrase, "plena deo," (which does not appear in our texts of Virgil). He reports that Ovid liked the phrase and transposed it to his *Medea*: "non subripiendi causa, sed palam mutuandi, hoc animo ut vellet agnosci" (*Suas.* 3.7). In Macrobius, *Sat.* 1.24.18, Eustathius briefly contrasts Virgil's two methods of imitation: *artifex dissimulatio* and *professa imitatio*. Neither Seneca nor Macrobius is referring to emulation.

³⁷ *Aemulatio*, of course, is no panacea; difficulties remain. The reader starts with a resemblance between texts, not a guide pointing to emulations as opposed to imitations. Even if the author, Petrarch, Poliziano, or Jonson, for example, has expressed a preference for emulation, there is no guarantee that he may not borrow a phrase here and there in a nontransformative, nonemulative fashion. For authors who have not written on imitation/emulation one can only try to deduce from their work which type of imitation they generally approve and practice. Also, it is difficult to be sure whether an emulation is striving with the structure, themes, premises of its model or only striving with the expression; the emulation may not extend beyond a stylistic trick, as often in Vida. Frequently a major interpretive difficulty arises in trying to determine if an emulation is reworking a particular passage or a topos; one is not sure just what is being contended with. I hope to elaborate these points in a future study.

For neither were ye playing on the steep,
 Where your old *Bards*, the famous *Druids*, lie,
 Nor on the shaggy top of *Mona* high,
 Nor yet where *Deva* spreads her wizard stream.
 Ay me, I fondly dream!
 Had ye been there—for what could that have done?

Milton's lines follow the pattern set by the address to the nymphs in Theocritus' *Idyll* 1. 66–69 and its imitation by Virgil in *Eclogue* 10. 9–12. Milton's last two lines, however, have no parallel. The self-criticism applies also to the models; the nymphs' presence would not have helped Daphnis or Gallus any more than Lycidas. Milton's reversal rebukes Theocritus and Virgil for escaping to a consoling fantasy of what might have been; they are no better than his "uncouth swain." These lines form an important part of Milton's emulative strategy to expose the inadequacy of pagan pastoral elegy as a response to death. At crucial moments in the poem Milton uses conventions of ancient pastoral in order to undermine and deprive them of their consoling power; by pointing out insufficiencies of pagan pastoral consolation, Milton clears the ground for the triumphant Christian consolation of Lycidas' reception in heaven.

Lycidas also allows one to illustrate the difference between imitation and emulation. Although Milton criticizes the convention of addressing the nymphs, he imitates the procession of speakers, best seen in Theocritus' *Idyll* 1 and Virgil's *Eclogue* 10. Milton certainly transforms the procession and uses it to structure the middle section of his poem, but he does not subvert it as he does the address to the nymphs. In Theocritus and Virgil the speakers come to console or sneer at the subjects of the laments, Daphnis and Gallus; the two ancient poems carefully set the scene around the subject and prepare the reader for a procession of visitors. Milton completely changes the situation. The procession receives no setting, and the speakers pass by the "uncouth Swain," the singer of the poem, not Lycidas. Instead of preparing the reader for a procession Milton thrusts it abruptly into the poem. The reader is overhearing the lament over the impotence of poetry in the face of death, a lament which arises out of Calliope's inability to save Orpheus from dismemberment, when all of a sudden Phoebus Apollo interrupts this present interior monologue in the past tense—interrupts the swain in the middle of a line, the only place in the poem where a full stop occurs in midline: "And slits the thin-spun life. 'But not the

praise,' / *Phoebus* repli'd, and touch'd my trembling ears." Phoebus' intrusion is so startling—it forces one to rethink the mode of presentation of the poem, which no longer appears a present lament, but a narrative of a past experience—that one is unlikely to view it as part of the conventional procession of speakers. Milton is disguising his introduction of the convention; one does not recognize Milton's imitation until after the swain's comment on Phoebus' speech:

But now my Oat proceeds,
And listens to the Herald of the Sea
That came in *Neptune's* plea.

Then come Aeolus ("And sage *Hippotades*"), the river Cam ("Next *Camus*"), and St. Peter ("Last came"). Imitating the processions of Theocritus and Virgil also gives Milton "occasion," as he remarks in the headnote to the 1645 edition of his *Poems* in a proud assertion of post-eventum prophecy, to attack "our corrupted Clergy." St. Peter's speech departs considerably from the spirit of previous pastoral elegies, but the digression appears natural as a speech by a member of the procession. Just as Milton transforms the introduction of his procession into the intrusion of Apollo, he transforms the final speech into a topical criticism of the church. Nevertheless he does not direct his criticism towards the convention he is transforming and consequently is imitating rather than emulating.

A final passage from *Lycidas* illustrates another aspect of emulation. Unlike the note of criticism or correction, the eristic component of emulation, this aspect is not always present. I am referring to an exploitation of the historical distance between a text and its model. Awareness of the historical otherness of the model leads in these cases to crucial departures from, sometimes criticisms of, the model. Erasmus is the only theorist to confront explicitly the significance of historical change for imitation and to ground his conception of imitation in his awareness of change.

Erasmus bases his attack against strict Ciceronianism, the doctrine that one can achieve an excellent Latin style by restricting oneself only to Ciceronian usage and style, on an argument which one may call historical decorum. As the full title of Erasmus' work indicates, *Dialogus cui titulus Ciceronianus sive de optimo dicendi genere*, he is concerned with achieving as good a style as possible. He argues that people want to be Ciceronian because that appellation means they are excellent

speakers or writers, since everyone agrees that Cicero is the consummate Latin stylist. A good stylist, therefore, writes or speaks like Cicero. In addition no one speaks well who does not observe decorum, a proposition which anyone trained in classical and Renaissance rhetoric would surely approve. Erasmus asserts that one speaks with decorum (*apte*), "if our speech suits the people and conditions of the present [*praesentibus*]" (p. 124). Erasmus' interpretation of *praesentibus*, which he refers to the general historical conditions of the present instead of the specific circumstances of the delivery of a speech, allows him to assert the paradox that one must be unlike Cicero to be like Cicero:³⁸

Does the present situation of this century seem to correspond with the ways of those times in which Cicero lived and spoke, since the religion, governmental power, magistracies, commonwealth, laws, customs, pursuits, the very appearance of men—really just about everything—have changed radically? . . . Furthermore, since everywhere the entire scene of human events has been turned upside down, who today can observe decorum in his speech unless he greatly differs from Cicero? . . . Wherever I turn, I see everything changed, I stand on another stage, I see another theatre, even another world. (p. 126)

For Erasmus the primary duty of the imitator is to be aware of the differences between his own day and antiquity, in particular to recognize the moral and stylistic revolution of Christianity, and to adapt the writings of the past to the conditions of the present. Historical decorum requires that the imitator found his style on the insight, "I see everything changed."

The conclusion of *Lycidas* shows how even the significance of the sun has changed since antiquity. The rising and setting of the sun no longer mock men with their perpetual recurrence, thereby insisting on man's mortality; for the Christian they recall the resurrection which follows death and provide natural reassurance of immortality.³⁹ *Bion's*

³⁸ Later Erasmus eliminates the paradox by suggesting that Cicero *redivivus* would adapt himself to the stylistic standards of the present. See *Ciceroniano*, p. 274.

³⁹ For Christian sun imagery and typology see Hugo Rahner, *Griechische Mythen in christlicher Deutung* (Zürich, 1966), pp. 89ff., and Franz Joseph Dölger, *Sol Salutatis: Gebet und Gesang in christlichem Altertum* (Münster, 1925), esp. "Jesus als Sonne der Auferstehung und *Sol Invictus*," pp. 364ff. Donne's "Good Friday, 1613. Riding Westward" contains a pointed example:

There [in the east] I should see a sun, by rising set,
And by that setting endless day beget;

Epitaph 99–104 introduces into pastoral elegy a contrast between the natural cycles of recurrence in nature and the finality of human death. Some such contrast becomes conventional in later pastoral, for example, in Sannazaro and Marot. Castiglione and his imitator William Drummond substitute the sun's rising and setting for the vegetational cycles of *Bion's Epitaph*.⁴⁰ The topos receives its most concise, and perhaps most poignant, expression in Catullus' famous poem, which is outside of the pastoral tradition: "The sun can set and return; once our brief light sets, we must sleep an eternal night." Catullus states the contrast and then ignores it; it introduces death too forcefully and would spoil the tone of the poem if elaborated. The sun represents an abyss between the human and natural worlds.

Milton's consciousness of the change which Christianity produces in world history allows him to use the natural world as an analogy for the human and to reverse the traditional contrast of pastoral elegy:

Weep no more, woeful Shepherds weep no more,
For *Lycidas* your sorrow is not dead,
Sunk though he be beneath the wat'ry floor,
So sinks the day-star in the Ocean bed,
And yet anon repairs his drooping head,
And tricks his beams, and with new-spangled Ore,
Flames in the forehead of the morning sky:
So *Lycidas*, sunk low, but mounted high,
Through the dear might of him that walk'd the waves. . . .

The rising and setting of the sun become a confirmation of the resurrection. This moment of Christian transcendence makes the traditional contrast and its assertion of human mortality obsolete; the conditions of the Christian present have made the older poetic convention outmoded. *Lycidas* triumphs over death as *Lycidas* triumphs over previous pastorals which fail to realize that the rising of the sun guarantees

But that Christ on this Cross, did rise and fall,
Sin had eternally benighted all.

The pun son (of God)/sun, of course, inspires numerous passages of English religious poetry in the Renaissance.

⁴⁰ Sannazaro, *Arcadia*, "Eclogue" 11.55–63; Marot, "Complaincte de Madame Loyse de Savoye" 177–180; Castiglione, "Alcon" 54–64; Drummond, "Alcon" 37–44. All these poems may be found in the convenient collection, *The Pastoral Elegy: An Anthology*, ed. Thomas Perrin Harrison (1939; New York, 1968).

immortality, not eternal death. Milton's "day-star" stands as a silent rebuke to earlier elegies, Castiglione's and Drummond's for example, which fall into the contradiction of coupling a Christian vision of resurrection with human exclusion from the cyclical return of the sun.

Three versions of imitation have emerged from this study—versions, not hard and fast categories with immutable boundaries—following, imitation, and emulation. Following, or nontransformative imitation, is the gathering or borrowing of phrases, sentences, passages which amounts to a transcription of the model(s) into the text. Following includes Vida's insertion of random Virgilian tags into his poems and Macrobius' appropriation of Seneca's *Epistulae morales* 84. A certain amount of transforming occurs by virtue of inclusion in a new context, and complete transcription without changing a word is very rare indeed. Consequently one occasionally has difficulty distinguishing following from imitation, in which the note of transformation is strong. In an imitation the differences between text and model are at least as pronounced as the resemblances, as in Milton's procession of speakers in *Lycidas*. Critical reflection on or correction of the model distinguishes emulation or eristic imitation from (transformative) imitation, and this criticism is often grounded in an awareness of the historical distance between present and past, as in Milton's comparison of Lycidas' and the sun's resurrection.

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