博士論文

論文題目　Rhetoric as a Critique of Grammatology:
Orality and Writing in Hugh Blair's Rhetorical Theory

（グラマトロジー批判としての修辞学 ―
ヒュー・ブレアの修辞学理論における声と文字）

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Introduction

Although Hugh Blair is not widely known today, he was a "household name" among his contemporaries and early nineteenth-century reading public not only in his native Scotland but throughout Britain as a writer of popular sermons, a literary critic and an authority to be referred to on matters of correct language use.[1] In Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey*, a character called Miss Tilney complains to her brother Henry for constantly spotting in her speech "some incorrectness of language" that "Johnson and Blair" would not approve of.[2] In *Mansfield Park*, a sprightly, secular and stylish Miss Crawford from London names Blair as a clergyman who has a slightly better chance than others of "govern[ing] the conduct and fashion[ing] the manners of a large congregation" through his style of preaching.[3] As a contemporary reviewer of Blair's writes in 1784, his sermons "have gained so universal a reputation, as to render religious and moral instruction fashionable."[4] Blair's sermons, which were full of virtuous sentiments but not always necessarily religious, were a safe topic to raise in polite company even in Austen's time. In Byron's *Don Juan*, Blair is given a canonical status as a preacher, though with a satirical intent, and is mentioned alongside famous seventeenth-century clergymen Isaac Barrow and John Tillotson as one of "the highest reachers / Of eloquence in piety and prose."[5] Clearly Blair's name was instantly recognisable to early nineteenth-century readers, and it stood for accepted good taste and politeness of manners among the educated public.

Blair enjoyed the popularity of his sermons in his lifetime too; it is known that Dr. Johnson, when consulted by a publisher, Strahan, whether or not to publish Blair, wrote in reply: "I have read over Dr. Blair's first sermon with more than approbation; to say it is good, is to say too little."[6] When Strahan published them in 1777 together with other publishers Creech and Cadell, the volume sold remarkably well.[7] In 1780, passages from Blair's sermons were read to Queen Charlotte and King George III, who were delighted with them so much that the King declared that "every youth in the kingdom might possess a copy of the Bible and of Blair."[8] We are never short of pieces of evidence that indicate his phenomenal popular success. Boswell records a humorous boast which Dr. Johnson made at a party held by Mrs. Garrick on Friday, 20 April 1781: "I love *Blair's Sermons*. Though the dog is a Scotchman, and a Presbyterian, and every thing he should not be, I was the first to praise them. Such was my candour," (smiling.)[9]

Blair's fame and literary reputation, to be sure, were not entirely free from challenges. His involvement in the Ossian controversy, the publication of *A Critical Dissertation on the Poems of Ossian* in 1763 and his fervent support of the poems' authenticity put him in a somewhat awkward position, particularly after Johnson's denunciation of Macpherson for forgery in *A Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland* in 1775. However, the question of authenticity aside, Ossian continued to attract readers throughout nineteenth-century Europe. Blair's *Dissertation* was almost always printed alongside the poems from the edition of 1765 onwards, and Blair became "an international figure" as Ossian went on to inspire enthusiasm in France, Germany, Italy,

Spain, Sweden, Hungary, Russia and elsewhere.[10] The dubiousness of their extreme antiquity was only part of the whole Ossian phenomenon, and the merit of Blair's *Dissertation* as a critical work that explains the beauty of the poems in elegant prose was little questioned. As we have seen above, the longstanding difference of opinions between Blair and Johnson over the Ossian issue did not prevent Johnson from acknowledging the literary merit of the sermons. Rather, as Abbott notes, it may well be said that Blair "benefited from his role in the controversy surrounding the poems of Ossian" in terms of publicity as a distinguished man of letters. The reception of the *Dissertation* both shaped and was shaped by the high literary reputation that Blair acquired though his sermons and his most important work, *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres*.[11] Indeed, the review of *Lectures* that appeared in *Gentleman's Magazine* in 1783 testifies to it. It begins thus: "The reputation of this author is much too high for our voice to be able to swell the general applause."[12]

Blair taught the subject of rhetoric and belles lettres in Edinburgh from 11 December 1759 until his retirement in 1783. At Edinburgh University, rhetoric and literary criticism had been taught by a logic professor since 1708, but in 1748 Henry Home, Lord Kames, invited Adam Smith to give a course on "Taste and Composition" in the city of Edinburgh.[13] When Smith moved to Glasgow University in 1751, the post was taken over first by Robert Watson, and then by Hugh Blair. Blair's lectures were hugely successful, and the Magistrates and Town Council appointed him professor in 1760, creating a chair of Rhetoric and Belles Lettres in the University. It was apparently a growing discipline; it is said that his courses "were so well attended, and

excited so much interest, that an application was made to the Crown to endow and assume the patronage of the Chair."[14] As a result, in 1762 Blair was made Regius Professor of Rhetoric and Belles Lettres by George III. His lectures constantly attracted an impressive number of students for decades.[15] It is said that student notes were sold at bookshops in Edinburgh, which Blair gives as one reason for publishing the lectures in book form at his retirement.[16] After his retirement, however, the popularity of the subject declined, and in 1826 the chair was nearly abolished. Yet, with William Edmonstoune Aytoun, who held the post from 1845 to 1865 as the sixth appointment, the position flourished; it was consolidated and renamed as the chair of "Rhetoric and English Literature," while English literature was made "a necessary subject" for graduation for the Arts students.[17] It is for this reason that Blair is usually regarded as the first professor of English literature, and the first person to give "a systematic course of lectures upon English literature" at a university.[18]

Historians of rhetoric consider Blair's *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres* the "most popular and most influential" of the manuals that appeared in the eighteenth century, and notes how "unusual" it was for a writing on this subject to attract such a wide range of readership.[19] The publishing history of *Lectures* provides statistical evidence of its popularity. An extensive bibliography compiled by Schmitz in 1948 counts 128 editions, including abridged versions, of *Lectures* published in Britain, Ireland, America and on the European continent between 1783 and 1850.[20] An even more comprehensive and thorough list of publications made by Carr finds 283 versions of *Lectures* and various abridgements that appeared between 1783 and 1911.[21] Carr

compares the number of editions with those of Blair's contemporary rhetoricians: while Blair's *Lectures* had 46 English, 3 Irish and 5 Scottish printings, Campbell's *The Philosophy of Rhetoric* only had 9 English and Scottish printings, and Whately's *Elements of Rhetoric* had around 18 English versions. Reconfirming the views of critics who wrote on Blair before him, Carr states: "no other advanced eighteenth century work in rhetoric or belles lettres in English appeared in anything like a comparable number of versions."[22] In addition to the editions and abridgements of *Lectures*, Blair was variously quoted in textbooks, self-study guides and popular anthologies such as Vicesimus Knox's *Elegant Extracts*, Lindley Murray's *The English Reader* and *The English Grammar*, and Alexander Jamieson's *A Grammar of Rhetoric*.[23] To make matters more complicated, acknowledgement was not given in some cases when passages were quoted or paraphrased, so it is impossible to determine with precision the extent to which Blair's *Lectures* permeated in the publishing industry.[24] In a much-quoted phrase, Charvat asserts: "half the educated English-speaking world studied [Blair]."[25] His influence was not limited to the English-speaking countries alone. French, German, Italian, Spanish editions of *Lectures* appeared by 1801 and Russian in 1837.[26] In particular, Abbott notes how French, Italian and Spanish translations made Blair their own by freely adding examples taken from their languages and literature.[27] Thus, the reception of Blair's rhetoric lectures was quick as well as long-lasting, and wide-ranging. They were published in a variety of book formats that include casual bindings of the abridgements, accessible octavos and duodecimos of textbooks and anthologies, and expensive quarto editions,

indicating that they targeted readers of different age, needs and social standing.[28]

The influence of Blair's *Lectures* was to last for about a hundred years after its publication, but after that it suffered decline. Already at the time of publication, a reviewer commended Blair's "diligence" in "collect[ing] a great mass of excellent materials," but observed that "[h]is knowledge, though often exact is never profound" and that he is not strong in "reasoning."[29] This criticism was to stay with Blair. Leslie Stephen described the *Lectures* as being "feeble in thought, though written with a certain elegance of manner" in *Dictionary of National Biography*. George Saintsbury, a distant successor of Blair's chair, is more sympathetic, saying that they are "solid," "sound," "ingenious and correct," and that they are "as original as could be expected."[30] Later twentieth-century historians of rhetoric, however, were more generally inclined to explicitly share the view that Blair was lacking in theoretical depth. Golden and Ehninger, writing in 1956, think that *Lectures* is "a wholly mediocre and pedestrian work."[31] Harold Harding, the editor of the 1965 edition of *Lectures*, says that it is "apparent" that Blair was "neither original, comprehensive, nor profound."[32] Howell, in his comprehensive 1971 study on eighteenth-century rhetoric, says Blair's is "not the most meritorious" in terms of contribution to the development of rhetorical theory.[33] Outside the field of history of rhetoric, Blair has hardly become an object of extended critical attention. There is just one book-length study written by Robert Schmitz and published in 1948. This critical biography remains the chief and reliable source of information about Blair's person and work still today. Apart from this, he gets occasional mention in the history of aesthetics, mainly for his comments on the issues

of taste and the sublime.[34] In the field of literary studies, M. H. Abrams treats Blair as a forerunner of romantic critical tradition and discusses him in some detail for his primitivism and expressive theory.[35] Classic studies on the history of linguistics such as those by Hans Aarsleff, Stephen K. Land and Murray Cohen only mention his name in passing, and without substantial discussion.

Historians of rhetoric have classified Blair as a belletristic rhetorician, following Ehninger's division of eighteenth-century rhetoric into four trends.[36] Since the content of Adam Smith's lectures on rhetoric came to be known after the discovery of a student notebook in Aberdeenshire in 1958, Smith has been credited for being the first belletrist rhetorician, and Blair occupies the position of a successor and populariser who "fix[ed] the association between rhetoric and the belles lettres."[37] According to Howell, the term "belles lettres," which refers to a generalised concept of "an entity made up of languages, poetry, rhetoric, history, moral philosophy, and physics," was accommodated to the British context and was made an English word with the appearance in 1734 of an English translation of Charles Rollin's *The Method of Teaching and Studying the Belles Lettres*. Two years afterwards, the word appeared in an English Dictionary, the second edition of Nathan Bailey's *Dictionarium Britannicum*, which marked the start of a more common usage of the term in the latter half of the eighteenth century.[38] Howell thinks that the great contribution of Adam Smith to the development of rhetorical theory was that he reconsidered the relation between rhetoric and belles lettres and "made rhetoric the general theory of all branches of literature — the historical, the poetical, the didactic or scientific, and the oratorical."[39] In other

words, Smith reversed the order of categories, and made rhetoric, which was with Rollin only a branch of literature or belles lettres, the theoretical foundation for it. Meanwhile, Rollin's direct influence on belletristic rhetoric centres around the concern for style. In contrast to traditional rhetoric, Smith and Blair, as well as Rollin, were disapproving of the excessive use of tropes and figures; instead, they endorsed above all "perspicuity" and sought to establish "the plain style of rhetoric."[40] Also, instead of relying on the canon of invention, which in traditional rhetoric was an effective way of finding out topics and means of persuasion, belletristic rhetoric considered that eloquence was a form of "talent," and emphasised the importance of the notions of "genius" and "individuality" as forms of creative impetus that are realised in stylistic form. For this reason, belletristic rhetoric, that of Blair in particular, is often described as being pre-Romantic by historians of rhetoric.[41]

However, the most significant change that belletristic rhetoric brought to the rhetorical tradition was that it reformulated rhetoric from an art of composing and orally delivering persuasive discourse to one of reading written and printed discourse. Belletrist rhetoricians, critics agree, enabled the "subsumption of oral discourse under the heading of lettres" and renovated rhetoric so that it became a critical discipline for virtually "all the forms of discourse."[42] Blair's *Lectures*, for instance, examines Demosthenes's political address, Cicero's forensic oration and modern French and British religious sermons indiscriminately from a stylistic point of view as printed texts alongside historical writings, epistolary writings, philosophy, poetry, novels and dramatic works. As Warnick notes, Blair does not seem to think it necessary to

theoretically distinguish between speech and writing, and the orator and the author.[43] The shift in emphasis from oration to "letters," which consist primarily of writing, brought with it another transition; with the belletrists, rhetoric was converted "from a generative to an analytic art" –– in other words, rhetoric ceased to be art of composition and became art of reception.[44] As we have previously seen, Smith and Blair passed over the classical canon of invention, which has to do with production of discourse. Instead, they focused on the receptive aspect of communication and the audience response, and aimed to cultivate "taste" as means of aesthetic and critical discernment. Nancy Struever persuasively argues that a concern for taste as a "social competence" and an "aesthetics [. . .] of reception" inaugurated an eighteenth-century "reorganization of old rhetorical concerns."[45] Thomas P. Miller also writes: "[t]he belletristic goal of instilling taste is the pivotal point for the transition from the classical emphasis on the composition of persuasive discourse to the modern emphasis on critical interpretation."[46] The chief concern of belletristic rhetoric was, in the phrase used by Struever and Warnick, the acquisition and development of a "receptive competence," and Blair's role was that of "a model critic" who "was to exemplify the proper responses to eloquence and literature" for students to emulate.[47] Accordingly, much of what Blair had to say about the issue of style, Ulman correctly observes, is about "aesthetics [. . .] and reading habits."[48] Historians of rhetoric, thus, largely accept and follow George Saintsbury's words: "Blair is to be very particularly commended for accepting to the full the important truth that 'Rhetoric' in modern times really means 'Criticism.'"[49]

Outside the context of the history of rhetoric, Blair has frequently been mentioned in critical works on Scottish society and literature. In David Craig's "'social history' of literature" in Scotland, Blair is referred to several times as a moderate and fashionable clergyman with an Anglicised sensibility, representing the Augustan imperative for "conformity to the 'proper'" and a sceptical attitude towards the literary potential of the Scottish vernacular.[50] In McElroy's study of eighteenth-century literary clubs and societies in Scotland, we get glimpses of Blair's activities in the Select Society and committee for "Belles Lettres and Criticism," whose members believed that "the future of Scottish letters was in English."[51] The 1980s saw a group of studies on the Scottish Enlightenment emerge. Authors such as Richard B. Sher, John Dwyer, and Fiona Stafford explored various aspects of the Scottish Enlightenment mainly from social and historical viewpoints, and discussed in some detail Blair's role in an intellectual movement that involved writers such as Adam Smith, David Hume, Lord Kames and William Robertson among others, bringing to light Blair's religious Moderatism and advancement of learning (Sher), his sentimental moralism and the doctrine of sensibility (Dwyer) and literary aspirations of the Edinburgh literati as epitomised in the production of the Ossian poems (Stafford).

In the 1990s, Robert Crawford produced a series of works in which he explores the birth of "English" as a university subject in Scotland and its social and political ramifications. Crawford discusses the complexity of a situation where Scottish universities, the "dominant, established, mainstream" channel of education as compared with English dissenting academies, initiated conversion and subordination of their own

culture, a "move from the barbarous Scottish to the polite British."[52] The subject of English, then, generally "went against the grain of aspects of the native culture" and belletrism had a particular mission to equip aspiring Scottish youths with necessary cultural assets in order to assert their presence in a British constitution.[53] Blair in this sense is a lowland intellectual with Anglocentric sensibilities, who contributed to the cultural colonialisation of Scotland by England. At the same time, though, Crawford notes Blair's "cultural patriotism" which leads him to pay more attention than Adam Smith to literary works written in the Scottish vernacular, such as Allan Ramsay's *Gentle Shepherd*.[54] Crawford's study on the Scottish contribution to the institution of the university subject of English, thus, emphasised what has been overlooked in classic studies such as those by Chris Baldick and Ian Michael, and together with critics such as Franklin Court and Thomas Miller, acknowledged Blair's role in setting up the subject.[55]

Recent critics have built their arguments on previous studies. Stephen Carr, who examines the publishing history of the *Lectures*, investigates the phenomenal popularity of Blair both in England and continental Europe. He writes that although Crawford and Miller are correct in pointing out that Blair helped propagate the literary taste of the English establishment "as the normative object of study throughout the British cultural provinces," their viewpoint marginalises the fact that "Blair was published in comparatively expensive multi-volume sets into the 1820s and so the primary readership for his instruction must have largely been the English elites whose linguistic practices and literary preferences he is supposed to be inculcating in the provinces."[56]

Blair was widely read in textbook forms too, so it would be arguable if his "primary" readers were the English elite, but it seems certain that the English upper-middle-class gentry turned to Blair for instruction and accomplishment if we recall the conversations from *Northanger Abbey* and *Mansfield Park*. Blair, then, was a sort of cultural colonist in Scotland while in England he was an outsider and a civilising influence. Unlike Miller, who stresses the "provincialism" of belletristic rhetoric, Carr thus focuses on Blair's "catholicity of appeal" that crosses local and cultural boundaries, and attributes it to "the wide array of topics Blair treats, and his synthetic and judicious use of other theorists, both classical and contemporary, that articulated connections to many discursive networks."[57] I think Carr's viewpoint is persuasive. Blair's popularity lasted for as long as a hundred years in Britain, America and even on Continental Europe because readers from various backgrounds found in his work something that they could relate to and take part in. As Ulman says, Blair even in our eyes "does provide a carefully drawn and richly detailed map of the realms of belles lettres and composition," and I think that his *Lectures* answers some of our needs and questions, and links itself to "discursive networks" of our time too.[58]

Lois Agnew thinks that historians of rhetoric writing on Blair have relied too easily on the familiar narrative of transition from "oral tradition of classical rhetoric" to a "private world of the [written] text." According to her, Blair was "only on the verge of a literary transformation," and he cannot have anticipated concepts such as "literary purity and aesthetic appeal" that are connected to the practice of silent reading, aesthetic appreciation and contemplation of composition as "art objects," and "private and

textually-based knowledge," which, she says, are too often anachronistically attributed to Blair. Instead, Agnew focuses on "Blair's oratorical assumptions about discourse."[59] I agree with her in that we find in Blair a curious mixture of orality and writing. If, with hindsight, Blair appears a belletrist rhetorician who took part in the gradual recasting of classical rhetoric into the reading-writing formula, I think a more nuanced reading of Blair's theory with a particular attention to the issues concerning orality and writing would contribute to a deeper understanding.

When historians of rhetoric in one sweeping gesture say "[o]ne of the major changes in eighteenth-century rhetoric was the shift in interest from oral to written language," it would be worthwhile if we questioned what instances are used to underwrite and endorse this statement, and what ones are necessarily left out.[60] I by no means pretend to run counter to the overall drift of such observations; in the eighteenth century, with its numerous literary societies and salons, and Addison publishing *The Spectator* in order to bring "Philosophy out of Closets and Libraries, [. . .] to dwell in Clubs and Assemblies, at Tea-Tables, and in Coffee-Houses,"[61] a mass of hack writers scribbling in Grub street while a handful of eminent writers presided over them as paragons of taste, and a growing number of readers, both male and female, of the ever-productive genre of the novel, there can be little doubt that the ability to read and write well must have been a game played for high stakes. Blair is quick to acknowledge this situation: his is "an age when works of genius and literature are so frequently the subjects of discourse, when every one erects himself into a judge, and when we can hardly mingle in polite society without bearing some share in such

discussions."[62] Acquaintance with literary matters and good taste were an indispensable social skill in his time.

For all these indications in favour of the written and the literate, nevertheless, I assume that the oral aspect of language must have had no insignificant role in the eighteenth-century cultural scene and its views on language. How, for instance, do the actual debates at the literary societies and tasteful conversations in polite society, in which Blair's students were expected to present themselves, fit into this overall picture of predominant literacy? What about the vivid portrayal and long quotations in translation from the powerful orations of Demosthenes and Cicero which are little short of eloquent dramatic impersonations by Blair, highly charged with the pressing sense of imminent political crisis (Demosthenes) and expressive of warm solidarity with, and vindication of, a particular individual who stands accused at court (Cicero)? What about Blair's enthusiasm for the Ossianic bard and his nostalgic eulogy for the oral and vernacular culture? How do we account for Blair's prose, which is flowing, rhythmical and personal, accumulative rather than analytic, sometimes rambling, sometimes making mild and subtle jokes and drawing little laughs from the readers, and rarely choosing to cast off a certain poise of conversational ease? When such marked instances of orality and speech abound in a belletristic rhetorical theory, it is impossible to assert without some distortion that its predominant interest is in the literate, and not in the oral. The assumption that eighteenth-century rhetoric concerned itself mainly with the written discourse rather than the spoken needs, we feel, some readjustment. Instead, it would be more convincing if we say that the rhetorical theory is interested in

bringing together the two — indeed in the intersection between the written and the spoken.

Reassessing the validity of such an assumption necessarily engenders a different set of questions, this time not only about historical characterisation of a rhetorical theory, but also about the assumed formula of an opposition. Had there always been a mutual exclusion of oral and written discourses in the tradition of rhetorical theory? Had classical rhetoric always embraced and privileged the spoken, to the exclusion and subordination of the written, until the alleged reversal of interest in the eighteenth century? What instances are there of rhetorical interest in written discourse, and how can the eighteenth-century upheaval of interest in literacy be interpreted against them? To attempt an answer to these questions, I would first like to turn to the early ages of rhetorical history in my Chapter One. I shall take Plato's *Phaedrus* as a focal text, as it is one of the earliest accounts on rhetoric. It explores the nature of rhetoric by contradistinguishing it from philosophy, its closest counterpart. It is, at the same time, an extended argument about the nature of speech and writing that inspired Derrida's essay "Plato's Pharmacy," one of the most important earlier works of his "grammatology." By reading these two texts side by side, I would like to investigate rhetoric's standing in relation to the speech-writing opposition as Plato describes it, and I would also like to examine the validity of Derrida's argument against phonocentrism, in which he denounces the systematic subordination of writing by speech in the Western metaphysical tradition.

As one of the most important philosophical works in the twentieth century,

Derrida's grammatology and its approach to language have provoked intense controversy among thinkers on language.[63] An argument particularly germane to my present concern on orality and writing was put forward by Nicholas Hudson in his *Writing and European Thought 1600-1830*. According to him, Western civilisation has always had two attitudes to writing, that of adulation and suspicion, and perceptions about writing were ambivalent and conflicting, though there are certain trends depending on historical periods. The Renaissance, Hudson observes, shows a fascination with the occult powers of the hieroglyph, while seventeenth century scholars committed themselves to the creation and institution of universal writing systems for communication, such as the Royal Society's "real character."[64] It is in the eighteenth century, Hudson affirms, that "[s]cholars of language and rhetoric [. . .] became far more aware of the special powers of speech — powers that could never be fully captured in a written form." The emphasis on the importance of "expressive powers of speech" as realised by gestures, intonation and vocal sounds is called a "new aural sensitivity." Hudson thus concludes that "[t]he 'logocentrism' that he [Derrida] describes belongs to a distinct tradition in European thought stemming less from Plato than from philosophers and rhetoricians of the mid and late eighteenth century."[65] My reading of Plato will endorse this statement.

Hudson also casts a question over Derrida's views on Hegel. "Derrida refers to this philosopher's apprehension of the 'nefarious' influence of writing on speech [. . .]. It is difficult to see how this description is justified." He points out that Hegel placed no importance on the oral aspects of discourse such as "intonation or the 'music' of

speech as necessary features of communication[, and . . .] even of poetic language." Instead, he says, like Coleridge and Hazlitt, Hegel acknowledged the beneficial or "salutary influence of writing on speech and culture" and he quotes from Hegel's *Philosophy of Subjective Spirit*: "'[L]earning to read and write an alphabetical script is to be regarded as an infinitely rewarding means of education.' Writing not only improved speech; it also cultivated the mind." Although Hegel, Hudson says, held speech as the basis of human communication, "this view was accompanied by no hostility to writing."[66] Hegel is beyond the scope of this thesis, so I shall not go into the assessment of this comment of Hudson's. Yet, it is relevant to my present concern in that I have a similar view towards Derrida's reading of Rousseau in his *Of Grammatology*, as I shall show in Chapter Three.[67]

My reading of *Phaedrus* in Chapter One demonstrates that Plato represented rhetoric as a written voice. This combination of orality and writing, or the representation of the voice through writing, will be referred to as a "rhetorical paradox" in this thesis. I shall explore its manifestations in Blair's theory in Chapters Two and Four. Chapter Two argues that Blair's rhetoric, informed by a primitivist theory of language, aims to achieve the expressiveness of the voice through writing. However, as I shall show, Blair's rhetoric encounters an aporia. Chapter Four discusses Blair's notion of stylistic sublime as the nearest equivalent of orality achieved in writing. Blair's ideal of written orality is fully expressed in *A Critical Dissertation on the Poems of Ossian*, which, as my reading shows, exemplifies the achievements and impasses that are encountered in the course of the exploration of the rhetorical paradox, or the

interrelation between orality and writing.

[1] Bander 124.
[2] Austen, *Northanger Abbey* 78.
[3] Austen, *Mansfield Park* 73. Austen also mentions Blair in her juvenilia, *Catherine*. Rigberg 6. McWilliams studies Blair's influence on Austen's *Emma*. McWilliams 133-8.
[4] *Monthly Review* (70: 175) quoted in Miller, *Formation* 244.
[5] Byron 474. *Don Juan*, Canto II, Stanza 165, ll. 1318-9. The narrator says he is not good at English as he only learned it from preachers and not from mistresses as he did with other languages.
[6] Boswell 790.
[7] Schmitz counts four printings in the first six months of its publication. A second volume appeared in 1780, a third in 1790 and in 1794 a fourth volume was published. Schmitz 83. The fifth volume was published in 1800, the year of Blair's death. St Clair chooses Blairs's *Sermons* as an indicator of the circulation in book form of "the official ideology of the romantic period." St Clair 580-1. Reviewing the publishing history of *Sermons*, St Clair notes that it "reach[ed] virtually the whole reading nation, men, women, and children." He records an amusing anecdote that a fictional "Reverend David Blair" was invented by a publisher who capitalised on Hugh Blair's name. St Clair 272.
[8] Grant II 358, Bator 45.
[9] Boswell 1140.
[10] Moore 27. Schmitz 51.
[11] Abbott 71. Golden and Ehninger argue that Blair's high reputation throughout Britain as a preacher and also his stature as a literary figure as the author of the dissertation on the Ossian poems and a "literary consultant" to the publishing industry in Edinburgh helped augment the credence and popularity of Blair's *Lectures*. Golden and Ehninger 18-27.
[12] Review in *Gentleman's Magazine* 53 (August 1783), 684.
[13] For the information about the lectures on rhetoric, I rely on Alexander Grant's account of the history of Edinburgh University. Grant I 272-7.
[14] Grant I 277.
[15] Schmitz thinks fifty to sixty students enrolled each year. Schmitz 63. Ferreira-Buckley and Halloran think this number is "somewhat exaggerated." Ferreira-Buckley and Halloran XXXIV.
[16] Blair, *Lectures* 1. All references to Blair's *Lectures* in this thesis are based on Ferreira-Buckley and Halloran's edition unless otherwise noted.
[17] Grant II 361.
[18] Grant I 277.
[19] Howell 648-9.
[20] Schmitz 144. Most standard accounts on Blair have relied on Schmitz's work. Harding xxxvii, Golden and Corbett eds. 25, Ferreira-Buckley,

"Hugh Blair" 32.
[21] Carr 78.
[22] Carr 82-3, 79.
[23] Knox and Murray acknowledge their indebtedness to Blair. Knox, "Advertisement to the Second Edition." Murray, *Grammar* 7. Little points out that Wordsworth and Coleridge must have known Blair. Wordsworth may have used Blair's *Lectures* as a textbook at Hawkshead Grammar School. Coleridge borrowed the second volume of *Lectures* from Bristol Library in 1798. Both Wordsworth and Coleridge were familiar with Knox's *Elegant Extracts*. Little 254-5.
[24] Carr 77.
[25] Charvat 44.
[26] Ferreira-Buckley and Halloran XIX.
[27] Abbott 69-70.
[28] It is interesting to note that one contemporary reviewer complains that those ("[m]en of sense and of the world") who can afford to buy Blair's expensive books ("[t]he parade of two volumes in quarto") would not want to be "*lectured*" on rhetoric like schoolboys, pointing out the discrepancy between the assumed audience of the lectures themselves and the target of the sales of the books. *The English Review* (August 1783) 91-95. This is the second review of *Lectures* to appear in *The English Review*, which probably indicates the general keen interest in Blair's work. The first review came out in the July issue.
[29] *The English Review* (August 1783) 90.
[30] Saintsbury 462-3. Saintsbury is, however, harsh on *Critical Dissertation*, which he thinks is an "absolutely *un*critical" work, finding Blair's praise of the Ossian poems "hard to indorse." Saintsbury 464.
[31] Golden and Ehninger 16.
[32] Harding xxv.
[33] Howell 648.
[34] T. R. Henn's *Longinus and English Criticism* has a chapter on Blair. Samuel Monk and Walter Hipple also mention Blair.
[35] For instance, Abrams 95-6.
[36] The other three trends are the classicist (John Lawson and John Ward), psychological-epistemological (George Campbell), and elocutionary (Thomas Sheridan). Ehninger, "Dominant" 3-12.
[37] Howell 535. Blair acknowledges his debt to Adam Smith's Edinburgh lectures, which he attended as a student, in Chapter 18 of his *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres*. Blair, *Lectures* 206 n. 6.
[38] Howell 531-3. Warnick shares the view too. Warnick, "Charles Rollin's *Traité*" 56.
[39] Howell 547.
[40] Warnick, "Charles Rollin's *Traité*" 55-6, Howell 551.
[41] The disappearance of the canon of invention is mentioned in Warnick,

Sixth Canon 1. The concept of "talent" is discussed in Warnick, "The Old Rhetoric" 271-2. Emphasis on "individuality," "genius" and belletrists' pre-Romanticism are discussed in Ferreira-Buckley, "Hugh Blair" 31, Ferreira-Buckley and Halloran XLVI, Cohen et al. 284, Golden, Berquist and Coleman 145, Ehninger and Golden 19-20, Ehninger, "Campbell [. . .] Revisited" 178-9, Knowlton 279.

[42] Ferreira-Buckley and Halloran XXXVII, Howell 535.

[43] Warnick, "Charles Rollin's *Traité*" 50. Ehninger comments that Blair's rhetoric disregards the "distinctions between rhetoric and poetic, and also between written and spoken discourse." Ehninger, "Campbell [. . .] Old Friends" 268. McIntosh agrees that the "New Rhetoric" in which Smith and Blair are included is "classical rhetoric adapted to a print culture." McIntosh 159.

[44] Ferreira-Buckley and Halloran XV.

[45] Struever 240-1.

[46] Miller, "Eighteenth-century Rhetoric" 231.

[47] The phrase is Nancy Struever's. Struever 234. Warnick, *Sixth Canon* xi, 3. The same point is made in Thomas P. Miller's book. Miller, *Formation* 231, 234, 238, 248.

[48] Ulman 136.

[49] Saintsbury 463.

[50] Craig 11, 54, 61.

[51] McElroy 54-5.

[52] Crawford, *Devolving* 22.

[53] Crawford ed., *Scottish Invention* 225.

[54] Crawford, *Devolving* 34. Blair says of this work: "It is a great disadvantage to this beautiful Poem, that it is written in the old rustic dialect of Scotland, which, in a short time, will probably be entirely obsolete, and not intelligible." Blair, *Lectures* 445.

[55] Court argues how English literary study had a "political profile" from its inception. The study of English literature was "a way [for Scottish students] to transcend class-based distinctions of refinement and to promote English citizenship." Court 17, 20. Miller makes an intelligent and perceptive argument on Blair's Anglocentric conservatism that asks students to "internaliz[e] the style and sensibility of educated discourse" and thus "strengthens the boundaries of the learned culture that had become blurred by the spread of cheap print literacy." While Blair's moral sermons promoted "the politics of subservience in order to preserve the social order," it also "advanc[ed] liberal tolerance" as seen in the Moderates' attitude to Hume's atheism. Miller, *Formation* 234, 245.

[56] Carr 83.

[57] Miller, *Formation* 250. Carr 85. Miller's chapter, I find, is one of the best writings on Blair, yet occasionally he does seem to push the case of "provincialism" too far, for instance in the following passage: "Provincial

literati like Smith and Blair often speculated about natural genius and the sublimity of primitive languages, concluding that language had originally been intensely metaphorical [. . .]." Miller, *Formation* 323-3. The primitivist views expressed here are common among Enlightenment thinkers like Condillac and Rousseau.

[58] Ulman 118.

[59] Agnew 33, 25-8. Agnew argues that Blair's theory of taste assumes the interaction between the orator and the audience.

[60] Horner and Barton 114.

[61] Bond ed. 44. *The Spectator*, No. 10 (Monday, March 12, 1711).

[62] Blair, *Lectures* 7.

[63] The most notable examples include Paul Ricoeur, and speech-act theorists Austin and Searle.

[64] Hudson, *Writing* 1-2.

[65] Hudson, *Writing* 92-3, 163.

[66] Hudson, *Writing* 159.

[67] Hudson thinks that Rousseau is antagonistic towards writing. Hudson, *Writing* 3, 92, 159. He makes the same point in Hudson, "Philosophy" 18, 27-8.

Chapter One
Rhetoric as a Written Voice:
Plato's *Phaedrus* and Derrida's "Plato's Pharmacy"

Plato's *Phaedrus*

The question of the status of writing in the rhetorical tradition is clearly an immense one, and it certainly requires a much fuller discussion than a chapter will allow if it is to be treated in its entirety. I therefore propose to take one focal text, Plato's *Phaedrus*, as a centrepiece. It is, along with *Gorgias*, one of the chief texts in which Plato examines the "nature" of rhetoric, a rival discipline to nascent philosophy. It is also a contemporary's account of rhetoric in its earliest stages; rhetoric was an art of persuasion and debate that had only lately — about fifty years before the dramatic setting — been born in the courtrooms of Sicily.[1] It was this newly emergent art that was gaining considerable popularity and influence among aspiring Athenian youths like Phaedrus that Plato, through the persona of Socrates, tried to define and delimit, by separating it from his own enterprise, philosophy. Rhetoric, then, was instrumental in defining the way in which philosophy views itself, and *Phaedrus*, vice versa, gave orientation to the later, systematised rhetoric — Aristotle's *Rhetoric* is sometimes described as "an expanded *Phaedrus*."[2] *Phaedrus* will give focus to my present argument for another reason. Famously, it contains Plato's mythos about the invention of writing, which Derrida elaborated in his inspired essay, "Plato's

Pharmacy." The critical dialogue between the two texts by Plato and Derrida epitomises one of the most seminal and fundamental concerns of early Derrida, the critique of phonocentrism and the re-examination of the status of writing in relation to speech in the tradition of Western philosophy. By taking *Phaedrus* as our primary text, we shall be able to explore the question of writing and rhetoric in the earliest stage of its development, as well as examine one of the most influential twentieth-century responses to the subject.

The issue of writing and of written speech is one of the many threads with which the extended argument of *Phaedrus* is woven, along with other themes such as love, the immortality of the soul, myths and fables, memory, the reason and the passions, and rhetoric. In *Phaedrus*, readers are presented with various and interrelated questions about writing: is writing an aid to memory, or is it detrimental to memory? Is the act of writing always to be accused as disreputable and insignificant, or is there a possibility of a proper and respectable writing? In what ways is a written discourse different from a spoken discourse? Is writing inferior to all forms of speech? What is the status of writing in relation to philosophy? We will first attend to Plato's text and to Derrida's argument as a reference point to guide us. Then, in pointing out issues in *Phaedrus* which, it seems to me, Derrida fails to mention, I shall discuss the problem of writing and speech and its significance to the "art" of rhetoric. Next, I shall consider Derrida's "White Mythology: Metaphor in the Text of Philosophy," in order to see how his critique of phonocentrism and the metaphysics of the voice

applies to rhetoric.

Phaedrus is unique among Plato's dialogues in that its dramatic setting is in the Athenian countryside, just outside the city walls of Athens. It seems to draw the reader's attention to the location by presenting a detailed description of the place through the words of Socrates, which is also a rare thing to do in Plato.[3] This is worth mentioning since the setting is of special significance to us for its historical and geographical associations, as we shall see later. On a hot summer morning, Socrates meets Phaedrus taking a walk. Together they walk out of the city walls towards the river Ilissus, that is, towards the south-east of the city. After a playful banter and a little game of detection in which Socrates correctly divines that Phaedrus is hiding under his clothing a speech written on a scroll, they arrive at the destination, where they intend to read and discuss the speech. Socrates, uncharacteristically, exclaims in an apparently genuine admiration of the place:

> By Hera, what a lovely and secluded spot! This plane tree is very tall and flourishing, the agnus is tall enough to provide excellent shade too, and since it is in full bloom it will probably make the place especially fragrant. Then again, the stream flowing under the plane tree is particularly charming, and its water is very cold, to judge by my foot. The place seems by the statuettes and figures to be sacred to certain of the Nymphs and to Achelous. Or again, if you like, how pleasant and utterly delightful is the freshness of the air here! The whisper of the breeze chimes in a summery, clear way with the chorus of the cicadas.[4]

In this delightful place, they leisurely pass the whole long day, reading and making extended speeches about love, and exchanging views about rhetoric, speeches and writing, until the sun sets and the air cools down. The haunting beauty of this scene is more than just a pleasant backdrop against the conversation, for it is not too much to say that the place generates the conversation. It inspires Socrates with an eloquent monologue uncharacteristic of him ("this spot really does seem infused with divinity, so don't be surprised if, as may happen, I become possessed by the Nymphs,")[5] and indeed, at the end of *Phaedrus*, Socrates attributes the conclusion derived from the conversation to the gods in this place ("[T]ell Lysias of our excursion to the Nymph's spring and the Muses' shrine. Explain to him how we listened to speeches [. . .].")[6] There are many instances of changed or disguised authorships of speeches in *Phaedrus*, and this divine inspiration forms a part of the issue.[7] The location is thematically linked to the dialogue in another way. When the conversation takes an apparently abrupt turn after the third speech and shifts its topic to issues of rhetoric, Plato has Socrates improvise a short myth about the cicadas singing above their heads. Socrates says that they are there to report to the Muses which human beings spent their time "doing philosophy and honouring their particular kind of music" and preoccupying themselves "with the way both gods and men use words."[8] Thus the songs of the cicadas ringing in this hallowed place throughout the piece thread together the entire conversation as one that centres on the art of discourse. Plato clearly wants the readers to perceive that the setting is an integral part of the dialogue.

There is something idyllic not only in the landscape but also in the characters. Phaedrus, a young, attractive, enthusiastic speech-lover and a student of rhetoric, is filled with excitement while discussing the problem of good or bad writing, and exclaims, "[w]hat point could there possibly be to life, if it is not given by this kind of pleasure?"[9] In keeping with Phaedrus's good-natured but somewhat naive character, Socrates's tone throughout the dialogue is mostly that of an instructing elder, mixing jokes, gentle chidings and occasional flirtations. He is not the Socrates in *Gorgias* or *Protagoras*, the uninvited guest to famous sophists and rhetoricians who asks penetrating questions, wields clever irony and relentlessly, step by step, pursues the points made by his interlocutors, gradually cornering them into admitting flaws in their own arguments. In contrast, when Phaedrus complains to Socrates about his caricaturing rhetoric and being unfair to it, Socrates asks: "Well, isn't it better to be an absurd friend than a formidable enemy?"[10] In this short remark it is difficult not to hear a distant echo of the other side of Socrates, the uncompromising enemy and iconoclast of rhetoric, or a tone that could possibly but easily turn into a threatening one. Socrates in *Phaedrus*, then, does not deliver an out-and-out attack on rhetoric as in other dialogues, but instead enjoys an amicable conversation with a young enthusiast about how rhetoric should be and what it needs to encompass if it is to call itself an "art" of persuasion.

Phaedrus falls into two sections of the same lengths.[11] The first half displays three model speeches, and the last half gives a "theoretical" treatment of the art of

speech, or rhetoric.[12] The three speeches in the first half deal with the topic of love: one is written by Lysias, the foremost logographer or speech-writer of the day, which is read out aloud by his lover Phaedrus, and the other two are delivered by Socrates, who corrects the faults, both in form and content, that he found in Lysias's speech. When the second speech by Socrates is finished, Phaedrus introduces the topic of the disreputableness of logography, for it was the art of oral discourse and oratory that was held in the highest esteem in democratic Athens, and the practice of writing was placed below it. This leads to the central question of the second half of the text, repeated twice in slightly different forms: "how does one write well or badly?" and "what makes speech and writing good, and what makes it bad[?]"[13] The topic is further divided into two discussions about good and effective speech (from 259e to 274b) and about writing (from 274b to 277a).

The charges against rhetoric or the "art" of effective speech raised by Socrates are coherent throughout the dialogue. When prompted by Socrates, Phaedrus encapsulates the chief concern of rhetoric: "What I've heard about this, my dear Socrates, is that it isn't essential for a would-be orator to learn what is *really* right, but only what the masses who are going to assess what he says might *take* to be right [. . .] because that, not the truth, is the basis for persuasion."[14] According to Phaedrus, what rhetoric tries to achieve, first and foremost, is to address an audience of a certain scale in number and to win their approval and conviction by appealing to, or even flattering if necessary, their tastes, preferences, preconceptions, opinions and common

judgments. Rhetoric is thus set against truth, and is described as taking sides with appearances, probabilities, imitations, images and even disguise. Such neglect of truth is the chief complaint of Socrates against rhetoric. Socrates points out that in order for an orator to persuade the audience successfully, he must have the true knowledge of his subject; in order even to deceive, he must be able to distinguish between what the subject truly is, and how it may appear to people, and gradually shift the points of an argument by degrees, so as not to alert the audience. Socrates's fundamental tenet is: "If you lack knowledge of whatever it is you are thinking about, you are bound to go wrong."[15] The two example speeches delivered by Socrates earlier are consistent with this view; they both begin by defining love, one as desire, and the other as a form of madness.

By the same token, since rhetoric is "a kind of skilful leading of the soul by means of words,"[16] a rhetorician must know the nature of the soul, what kinds there are to them, and by what sort of subject and discourse each kind is most affected. For his speech to be effective, Socrates maintains, an orator must be able to match the correct type of discourse, with its particular subject-matter and style, to a particular type of soul, and not only does he need to know all this theoretically and by knowledge, he must also have the insight in real life to distinguish the characters of living people, and have the various rhetorical techniques of emotional appeals and "mode of speech" at his command — "then and only then will his expertise have been perfected and completed."[17] This interest in the types of human psychology and its functions is

given a full treatment in Aristotle's *Rhetoric*.

Socrates further points out that rhetoric, as well as not understanding the subject-matter and the soul, lacks knowledge about its own nature, which is responsible for the present state of confusion regarding its various schools of rhetoric. Socrates tauntingly refers to various handbooks of rhetoric that constantly come up with their clever new inventions of rhetorical devices, such as "confirmation," "extra confirmation," "refutation," "extra refutation," "insinuation," "indirect praise," "reduplication," "quotation of maxims," "use of images" and so on. The inventors of such numerous devices each boast that "he alone had discovered the professional way of speaking,"[18] while in fact they are only randomly naming various symptoms of what appears to them each time as eloquent: "[t]hey thought they had discovered what rhetoric was when they had learnt only the necessary prerequisites to rhetorical expertise."[19] Without the knowledge of what rhetoric is, and what it is to speak well, all the collections of handbooks and their devices remain "an unsystematic knack" and therefore do not deserve to be called an "art."[20]

To know, then, or to be able to define, the subject-matter, the psychology of the audience, and rhetoric itself, is essential to rhetoric if it is to grow out of its present state as a heap of practical techniques into a systematic expertise, or art, of leading the soul by means of words. Such knowledge, according to Plato, is acquired through the philosophical method of dialectic. The term "dialectic," which was first used by Plato, covers a range of meanings in his thought.[21] Etymologically the word is

derived from the Greek word for "conversation," so it primarily means a philosophical practice in the form of a dialogue which involves a cross-examination about the nature of things, in order to arrive at the exact knowledge, which, it is often the case, is expressed in terms of a definition. In *Phaedrus*, in addition to the practice of definition, it also encompasses "divisions and collections" of the issue at hand: "I am enamoured of these divisions and collections, Phaedrus, because I want to be good at speaking and thinking [. . .]. I call those who are capable of doing this — only the gods know whether or not this is the right term, but so far I've been calling them 'dialecticians.'"[22] Socrates recapitulates how such dialectic is indispensable to rhetoric if it is to be an art, and what it should entail, towards the end of the conversation:

> First, someone has to know the truth of every matter he's speaking or writing about, which is to say that he has to be capable of defining a whole as it is in itself and then know how to divide it up class by class until he reaches something indivisible. He also has to be able to distinguish souls in the same sort of way, discover the kind of speech which naturally fits each kind of soul, and organize and arrange his speeches accordingly.[23]

In order to be a rhetorician, one has first to become a dialectician, a person who is able to define a matter in its entirety, and to analyse it down to its most basic and fundamental components, thereby applying the right discourse to the right audience. Without this dialectical understanding of a discourse, Socrates and Plato contend, all

the technical devices for eloquence are nothing but smoothing and prettifying of a superficial and vacuous speech.

Up to this point in *Phaedrus*, Plato does not distinguish between speech and writing, and his discussions about rhetoric refer to both indiscriminately.[24] Socrates and Phaedrus then go back to the original question of logography and why it has a bad reputation, and move onto discussions about writing in particular: "But don't we still have to discuss whether or not writing is desirable[?]"[25] In the discussion to follow, as Derrida correctly points out, we encounter a curious denunciation of writing. Plato invents the famous myth in which the god Theuth presents to the king Thamous his new invention, writing, as the "potion [pharmakon] for memory and intelligence." The king, on the other hand, rejects it, saying that it is not a "potion for memory" but for "reminding," and adds: "Trust in writing will make them remember things by relying on marks made by others, from outside themselves, not on their own inner resources [. . .]. You provide your students with the appearance of intelligence, not real intelligence."[26] Writing is thus opposed to qualities such as "inner," "real" and present self, and is associated with "others," "outside" and "appearance," and by analogical extension with semblance, fakes, images, shades and so on. As we shall see later, Derrida's reading takes this passage as its point of departure. Apart from the alleged function of writing to atrophy and corrupt inner and living memory and give a fake knowledge, writing is further charged with three faults by Plato: it does not answer questions; it does not discriminate between suitable and unsuitable audience;

when challenged, it cannot defend itself but needs to seek assistance from its "father," the author.[27] In contrast, speech is comfortably free from all these charges:

> Socrates: It is the kind that is written along with knowledge in the soul of a student. It is capable of defending itself, and it knows how to speak to those it should and keep silent in the company of those to whom it shouldn't speak.
>
> Phaedrus: You're talking about the living, ensouled speech of a man of knowledge. We'd be right to describe the written word as a mere image of this.
>
> Socrates: Absolutely.[28]

Speech is capable of educating the soul and stocks the inner memory with true knowledge. It answers questions, defends itself when challenged and thus engages a suitable interlocutor in an edifying and profitable conversation. Speech as represented here clearly refers to the practice of a dialectician, and Socrates himself.

If we put this observation about speech and writing in the context of the discussions about good and effective speech, or critique of rhetoric, we find certain parallels. For one thing, we may recall that rhetoric was denounced as having more to do with "appearance" and how people think and what they believe rather than with the truth. Secondly, an oration is an extended monologue, therefore it does not permit people to interrupt, or ask questions, and for the same reason, it does not defend itself. Finally, an orator speaks to a large audience, without choosing whom in particular to address and to persuade, so the one and the same discourse is indiscriminately heard by

all those who are present. Rhetoric and writing, then, are together opposed to dialectic. This is implied in the following passage: "whatever the subject, a written speech is bound to be largely a source of amusement, and that no speech which has ever been written in verse or in prose deserves to be taken seriously; that the same goes for the declamations of rhapsodes [reciters of poetry], which are designed to produce conviction, but allow no cross-examination and contain no element of teaching."[29] Writing, and orally delivered discourses that are designed solely to convince and persuade, even though they belong to the order of the voice, are treated as partaking of the same fault, and are placed below the truly worthy practice of philosophical dialectic. Plato's argument here consolidates the alliance of rhetoric and writing, and characterises both as being inferior to the philosophical voice, "the living, ensouled speech of a man of knowledge." *Phaedrus* is thus a clear-cut attack on, and devaluing of, rhetoric and writing from the point of view of a dialectician.

Despite such consistency in *Phaedrus*, or perhaps because of its consistency, there remain questions that arise from little jarring noises in the text, concerning writing and speech or conversation. For instance, at the concluding part of the dialogue, before parting, Socrates tells Phaedrus that Lysias deserves a higher name than a logographer "if he has written from a position of knowledge of how things truly are, [and] if he can mount a defence when challenged on the content of his work."[30] It can be pointed out that this second "if" clause is unnecessary and superfluous as a criticism against Lysias, for Lysias concludes his speech with the following: "I think

that I have said enough to make my point. If you think I have left anything out and you want to hear further arguments, you have only to ask."[31] Why does Plato end Lysias's speech thus? Would the criticism of Socrates not have been more pointed, and would the speech of Lysias not have been more representative of the evils of writing and of persuasion, if it had been finished without these words to open itself to questions and requests from the audience? There are other instances of incoherence in Plato's text, or silent gaps which invite questions from the readers. To take another example, when Socrates sums the discussion up and says that rhetoric concerns itself more with probability than with truth, Phaedrus exclaims: "Socrates, that's a perfect account of what the self-professed rhetorical experts say. I mean, I remembered that we touched briefly on something like this before, but it seems to be the absolute crux of the matter for the professionals."[32] His excitement strikes us as somewhat misplaced, as we know that the same point was raised by Phaedrus himself at the very beginning of their inquiry into rhetoric. He did not have to follow the long course of conversation to arrive at this conclusion — he knew this all along, even before he met Socrates. Has he, in the heat of discussion, almost forgotten that he had known this already? Is it some trick that conversation plays on its participant? It is a kind of dramatic irony. We, the readers, who have the written texts before us, are always able to go back and check. We remember that Plato insisted that speech is directly linked to the inner memory, while writing was linked to forgetfulness. Phaedrus's forgetfulness works as a counter-example to Plato's contention. There is another

episode that escapes notice in oral conversation but is nevertheless apparent in written discourse. At the beginning of the dialogue, when Socrates and Phaedrus are walking along the river Ilissus, Phaedrus raises the topic of a myth and asks if it was here that Boreas abducted Oreithuia. Socrates answers no, tells the precise location, and adds: "There's an altar of Boreas somewhere there." Phaedrus briefly replies: "I've not really noticed it. But tell me, Socrates, [. . .]." Thus Socrates does seem to know the area quite well, but only a little later, Phaedrus comments: "You're quite remarkable, Socrates! You're like a complete stranger[, . . .] not a local resident."[33] Phaedrus seems to have forgotten the little exchange of information, his half-hearted reply, and that he had quickly moved onto a different topic. Nevertheless, the question remains for us. Is Socrates really a man to be found only within the city walls of Athens, as he is known to be, or does he in fact know the place well? Is he just pretending that he does not know the place? It is as if Plato is playing with the written word, and deliberately exploiting the residues which writing leaves but which conversation overlooks and then forgets due to the pressure of the present moment.

Why are these little marks of instability, uncertainty and gaps in speech and the speaking subject subtly introduced in a text that upholds speech as something clear and to be trusted, and denounces writing as dubious and unreliable? Moreover, writing is often referred to as an amusement or something that should not be taken seriously. A person, Socrates says, may commit his thoughts to writing and "write his gardens of letters for amusement" while young, and may have the pleasure to read it over at an

older age. Phaedrus exclaims, “What a wonderful kind of diversion you are describing, Socrates,” only to be told off that there are “better” things to be attended to “seriously.” Yet several sections later Socrates describes their discussion as a diversion: “So now we’ve diverted ourselves for long enough on the subject of speeches.”[34] After all, did Socrates not tell Phaedrus that he is a man who “would count it a matter ‘above all time-consuming business’ [. . .] to hear how you [Phaedrus] and Lysias passed your [their] time,” knowing that they entertained themselves hour after hour by reading written speeches?[35] The textuality of Plato’s *Phaedrus* seems to contradict its apparent doctrine that tells us to denigrate writing. Socrates says, “there’s something odd about writing, Phaedrus”[36] — “it is odd, so it has to be supervised and guarded against” is what the context of the conversation dictates. However, the statement also reads as if it is inviting further inquiries.

We are thus intrigued by the surreptitious workings of written words that seem to erode the stability of the speaking presence. In conversation, the context of the speech usually determines the meaning of a word from among a range of possible meanings, and if the meaning is not clear enough, the interlocutor can raise a question and ask the speaker to clarify his point. Thus the speakers assume that clarity is established between themselves. Speech builds upon the previous speech, conversation moves forward, and the former speeches are left behind in the past, much of whose wordings is to be forgotten, while the speakers are always engaged in the exchange of the immediate present. Writing, on the other hand, preserves every word,

and the word is caught and perpetuated in the text, along with its entire range of possible meanings and implications that are not exactly called for by the initial and immediate context, but nevertheless remain accessible for later interpretations by readers. These strange layers of once superfluous meanings, or correspondences between meanings that were initially alienated by the demands of the present moment in conversational dialogue, have been brilliantly captured and brought into light by Derrida in his "Plato's Pharmacy."

Derrida: "Plato's Pharmacy"

Derrida's reading centres on the various uses of the word "pharmakon" that appear at crucial points in Plato's *Phaedrus*, and displays "the regular, ordered polysemy" of the word and "the malleable unity of this concept."[37] As we have seen in an earlier quotation from the myth about the invention of writing, it is first described as a "potion [pharmakon] for memory" by the inventor-god Theuth. However, the king Thamous contradicts and says that it is rather a potion for reminding, which is but a corrupt form of memory, and that the writing is actually detrimental to living, organic memory, as it equips people with the false appearance of knowledge. As with all drugs, then, writing is a double-edged sword. It can be beneficial, but it can also be fatal. Writing can assist the impaired memory from outside, but by doing so it weakens the memory even more. A drug restores the body to its apparent health and improves the symptoms, but at the same time it interferes with and disrupts the life of

disease and ill-health.[38] Thus, Derrida argues, polarities and oppositions are no longer able to hold in the ambiguous workings of a pharmakon. This, according to Derrida, is excluded from the region of truth, knowledge, memory, animated and living presence of speech and so on, and is associated with non-truth, appearance, mechanical "by heart" of reminding and written speeches which is read in the absence of the author. Yet, it is not as if the pharmakon is a concept postulated so as to offset the truth and form an oppositional set. Since it is not a "*substance*" and it does not have any "ideal identity," it can only be described as a nonentity, nonsubstance, and something that is not: "If the *pharmakon* is 'ambivalent,' it is because it constitutes the medium in which opposites are opposed, the movement and the play that links them among themselves, reverses them or makes one side cross over into the other [. . .]. The *pharmakon* is the movement, the locus, and the play: (the production of) difference."[39] In its resistance to identity and perpetuation, a pharmakon defers the truth from being present to itself; it resists philosophy, which defines, demarcates and determines.

Derrida points out that writing was not associated with the pharmakon for the first time in the myth about Theuth and Thamous, but that the association was already indicated at the beginning of *Phaedrus*. Socrates correctly detects that Phaedrus is carrying Lysias's speech under his cloak, and speaks of his determination to listen to it, at the risk of stepping out of his usual boundary, the Athenian walls: "you've found a way to charm [to pharmakon] me outside. [. . . A]ll you have to do is dangle a speech

on a scroll in front of me and you can take me all over Attica, and anywhere else you fancy."[40] In this passage, Derrida sees the dangerous attraction of the pharmakon which allures a philosopher out of his usual and proper bounds. It is also significant that for Socrates, the person of spoken dialectics, it is the "speech on a scroll" that has the most attraction: "Only the *logoi en bibliois*, only words that are deferred, reserved, enveloped, rolled up, [. . .] only hidden letters can thus get Socrates moving. If a speech could be purely present, unveiled, naked, offered up in person in its truth, without the detours of a signifier foreign to it, [. . .] it would not seduce anyone."[41] Writing, which Phaedrus decries as "a mere image" of speech, an inferior and insignificant shadow, shows itself wielding irresistible power over the philosopher, as a fatally attractive and dangerous surrogate to speech.

Philosophy, of course, says Derrida, resists this "leading astray" and tries to contain the workings of the pharmakon and demarcate and delimit the contours of the truth by separating it from untruth, nonentity, reminding, writing, appearance and imitation, and subordinating them to the order of the present speech and all that it entails. Thus, "what Plato *dreams* of is a memory with no sign. That is, with no supplement. A *mnēmē* [memory] with no *hypomnēsis* [reminding], no *pharmakon*."[42] According to Derrida, Plato's ideal is a self present to itself, undisturbed by the deferring movement of the sign. In this characteristic vein of the attack on phonocentrism, Derrida comments on how the phonetic writing system has affected philosophical thinking, and what status writing has unjustly been given: writing is "the

doubling of a sign, the sign of a sign. The signifier of a phonic signifier. While the phonic signifier would remain in animate proximity, in the living presence of the *mnēmē* or *psuchē*, the graphic signifier, which reproduces it or imitates it, goes one degree further away, falls outside of life."[43]

Philosophy has always tried to contain and denigrate writing as being doubly removed from the ideal state of the signified, as being secondary and inferior, "a mere image" to the "living, ensouled speech," and as a "weakened speech, [. . .] a semblance of breath,"[44] — but only because, according to Derrida, of its dangerous potential as a surrogate, as we have seen in the previous paragraph. Platonism and the "Plato-Rousseau-Saussure" tradition of phonocentrism try to conceal this fundamental breach. However, such attempts at whitewash always leave some trace, Derrida claims. For instance, if we look back to Socrates's characterisation of speech quoted earlier, it is clearly implied in Plato's writing that the speech itself is already contaminated by writing: "It is the kind that is *written* along with knowledge in the soul of a student" (emphasis added).[45] Nothing in language, including philosophical texts, escapes the influence of the pharmakon. On this basis, Derrida sums up that "the conclusion of the *Phaedrus* is less a condemnation of writing in the name of present speech than a preference for one sort of writing over another."[46] Thus, "Plato's Pharmacy" uncovers the subtle and inescapable workings of the pharmakon in Plato's text, and shows how the dictum which tries to establish the supremacy of speech over writing is prevented from realising itself. It is a subtle and exemplary

application of the "deconstructive procedure," to use Spivak's expression, which "spot[s] the point where a text covers up its grammatological structure."[47]

However, it seems to me, Derrida leaves unmentioned one of the biggest, and most important, instances of "grammatological structure" in *Phaedrus*. Let us turn to the very end of *Phaedrus*, where Socrates and Phaedrus finish their daylong discussion and part. Socrates sums up the conclusions drawn from their discussion, and reminds Phaedrus to pass the message to Lysias, his lover.

> Socrates: Then this is what you should tell your friend.
> Phaedrus: And what about you? What are you going to do? After all, we surely shouldn't ignore your friend as well.
> Socrates: Who's that?
> Phaedrus: The beautiful Isocrates. What are you going to tell him, Socrates?[48]

The name of Isocrates is here introduced for the first time in *Phaedrus*. Isocrates was one of the foremost sophists of the day who wrote many influential speeches on public matters. Earlier in life, he was a logographer, like Lysias, who wrote speeches for the court. Isocrates was some eight or so years older than Plato, and was his rival. He taught rhetoric and civic virtue at a school he founded in Athens, and his rhetoric school preceded Plato's Academy by two or three years when it was opened.[49] The introduction of Isocrates at the end of *Phaedrus* reveals a diagram of a parallel between two sets of lovers that was not apparent until then in the text: Phaedrus / Lysias, and

Socrates / Isocrates.

At the prompt given by Phaedrus, Socrates tells what he makes of Isocrates's future:

> He strikes me as being naturally more talented than Lysias and his crowd, and also to have a nobler temperament. So it wouldn't surprise me at all if, as he matured, he came to stand out among everyone else who has ever undertaken speech-writing, as an adult among children and more so — and that's considering the kinds of speeches he is currently engaged on. [. . .] For he does innately have a certain philosophical cast to his mind, my friend. So that's the message I shall bring Isocrates, as my beloved, from the gods of this place, and you already know what to tell your beloved Lysias.[50]

The parallel between the two couples is a neat one. Socrates, the philosopher, the dialectician and the person of speech, is in love with Isocrates, the speech-writer and the person of persuasion and writing. The same holds true for Phaedrus and Lysias, each of whom is a weaker version of Socrates and Isocrates, and thus together they repeat the alliance in a somewhat attenuated tone. Thus, these two sets of lovers embody the irresistible attraction that writing has for speech, and the necessary contamination of speech by writing, which we discussed earlier. The power of writing is also apparent if we read *Phaedrus* as a story in which Socrates attempts to seduce Phaedrus. Socrates does seem to be sexually interested in Phaedrus. When Phaedrus finishes reading Lysias's speech, and asks Socrates what he thinks of it, he

replies, "Yes, it's out of this world, my friend. I was amazed. And you were the reason I felt this way, Phaedrus, because I was looking at you while you were reading, and it seemed to me that the speech made you glow with pleasure."[51] However, at the end of the story, Phaedrus goes back to Lysias; Socrates, the ultimate proponent of speech, loses Phaedrus, the junior speaker, to Lysias, writing. Speech does not have enough attraction to win another speaker away from writing. In this respect, writing seems to have the power to question and possibly subvert the supremacy of speech.

There is another explicit "grammatological structure" that involves Isocrates, this time in the geography of the text, or the location or the dramatic setting of this dialogue. As we have seen, Socrates and Phaedrus go out of the city walls of Athens, turn off the road and walk along the river Ilissus, but do not go as far as the altar of Boreas, and rest themselves in a secluded spot made sacred to Nymphs and Achelous by the statuettes. Hirokawa writes, supported by archaeological discoveries and accounts in Pseudo-Plutarch's *Lives of the Ten Orators*, Pausanias's *Description of Greece* and nineteenth-century philologist Paul Sanneg, that it was around this area that the house of Isocrates, which was also his rhetoric school, was situated.[52] This may explain why Socrates seemed to know the whereabouts of the altar of Boreas. It may also explain why Socrates, or "the gods of this place," seems to exempt Isocrates from his admonition about the evils of writing. In the passage quoted above, Socrates makes sure that Phaedrus gives the warning, or castigation against writing, to Lysias, but he says that he would give Isocrates encouraging advice about his future. As

dramatic personages, it seems as if there has always been a strange complicity between Socrates and Isocrates. However, the story is not so simple as this, for it is accepted among the critics of *Phaedrus* that the criticism of this dialogue is directed throughout against Isocrates, rather than Lysias.[53] It may well have been that Plato's philosophical enterprise had Socrates deliver an attack on Isocrates from within his own field, as it were. Plato's writing thus assumes love between Socrates and Isocrates on the character level, but implies attack on a textual level.[54] In either case, *Phaedrus* starts with a tacit reference to Isocrates, so to speak, by the dramatic setting, reminds the reader of the implication by mentioning the place from time to time during the course of the dialogue, and ends with the explicit naming. It is a philosophical dialogue about persuasive speech, rhetoric and writing, within a larger locational framework of writing and letters, all of which point to one historical figure of Isocrates. The explicit "grammatological structure" here is that the attack on writing, the claim to superiority by speech, is made possible and sustained by the geographical references to writing. The authority of speech is conditioned by writing, the very thing over which the speech claims its power.[55]

As the third factor that undermines and destabilises philosophical determination, homosexuality needs to be mentioned. This is not to say that homosexuality and philosophy are exclusive to each other. On the contrary, throughout *Phaedrus*, particularly in the first half where the speeches by Lysias and Socrates are delivered, a homosexual relationship has been upheld, if not exactly recommended, as beneficial.

If a boy or a young man "gratifies" the love of an older man, many years later he, as an adult man, is able to seek practical assistance in political and public life from his former lover.[56] Homosexual love as Socrates describes it in the second speech of his is less calculating, and has more of an edifying and philosophical cast; love is felt when the soul remembers the celestial world of truth which it used to see before it was born into the world, and the homosexual couple can together pursue this truth. Therefore, it strikes us as somewhat abrupt when Socrates uses the metaphor of procreation and father-son relation to describe philosophical speech towards the very end of *Phaedrus*. Speech is the "legitimate brother" of writing,[57] and a man must prefer speech to writing: "while he ignores all the rest, words of this kind [speech] should be attributed to him as his legitimate sons [. . . as well as] the words that are at once the offspring and brothers of these internal ones of his."[58] Earlier elsewhere, though, a legitimate family was mentioned as a hindrance to the pursuit of homosexual love, and it was admitted that a jealous lover "would gladly see him [his lover] deprived of his father, mother, relatives, and friends," for he sees them as obstacles to his love, and "a lover would pray for his beloved to be without wife, children, and home for as long as possible."[59] Homosexuality, then, is at once a philosophical ideal and a bane, in that it resists procreation and legitimacy. It discloses contradiction in philosophical determination that places speech over writing.

The introduction of Isocrates at the very end of *Phaedrus* thus confirms and indeed epitomises the "grammatological structure" that has been hinted at on various

occasions in the text. Isocrates, a writer and a rhetorician, both upholds and supplements Socrates, the philosopher. It strikes us as strange, then, when we notice that Derrida gives what seems to be a disproportionately slight treatment of Isocrates. He does not touch the episode of the parting scene of Socrates and Phaedrus, nor is Isocrates mentioned as a sub-character of the dialogue. His name is indeed mentioned several times in "Plato's Pharmacy," but invariably, except in just one note,[60] coupled with Alcidamas, who is not mentioned in *Phaedrus*, and together they are made to represent sophistry as opposed to philosophy. The opposition of sophistry and philosophy is certainly one of the important themes in the text of *Phaedrus*, as sophistry, although the word does not occur in the text, corresponds, at least in part, to the "art" of rhetoric, persuasion and the linguistic practice which tries to establish conviction through a skilful manipulation of what people think and believe, rather than the truth. However, Derrida plays down the presence of Isocrates, bids him silence, and makes Alcidamas the mouthpiece for both of them. In one paragraph, Derrida writes: "For Isocrates, for Alcidamas, *logos* was also a living thing (*zōon*) whose vigor, richness, agility, and flexibility were limited and constrained by the cadaverous rigidity of the written sign. [. . .] The only ones who take refuge in writing are those who are no better speakers than the man in the street. Alcidamas recalls this in his treatise 'on those who write speeches' and 'on the Sophists.'"[61] Here Isocrates is referred to as an example of systematic and pervasive distrust of writing in Athens, which of course is the very opposite of historical fact. Even more

importantly, we need to bear in mind that the historical Isocrates and Alcidamas represented antithetical views about writing. Isocrates only publicised his speeches by writing, and never delivered them orally himself. On the other hand, Alcidamas was an orator who prided himself on extemporaneous performances, a bitter critic of premeditated written speeches, and his treatise titled "On those who write written speeches or On sophists" includes abrasive attacks and bitter slurs on Isocrates.[62]

We have seen how, in *Phaedrus*, writing and rhetoric are associated, and are seen to share common traits: they treat appearances rather than truths; they do not answer questions, nor do they defend themselves; they speak indiscriminately to a large audience. These are the particular charges made by dialectics, or philosophy. Derrida says something similar to this, though he arrives it via a different route, when he writes: "it is above all against sophistics that this diatribe against writing is directed."[63] However, after several paragraphs, he modifies this view: "Contrary to what we have indicated earlier, there are also good reasons for thinking that the diatribe against writing is not aimed first and foremost at the sophists. On the contrary: sometimes it seems to proceed *from* them."[64] Thus, Derrida's scheme indicates that writing was an enemy to both sides, philosophy and sophistics. Indeed, Alcidamas modelled himself on the traditional role of an orator, and had a firm belief in the supremacy of speech, its proximity to the inner self, and the importance of live memory, "the active reanimation of knowledge" and "its reproduction in the present."[65] As Derrida indicates, there is a strong chance that his thoughts fed into

Plato's.[66] However, this staunch phonocentric alliance that Derrida describes in his reading of *Phaedrus* is based on, what seems to me, an unfairly slight treatment of Isocrates, who was a sophist, a rhetorician, and who wrote. It is not as if writing was always reduced to the status of a shadow or a ghost of speech all around in the Athenian intellectual scene.[67] It is true that Athens prided itself on its strong tradition of oral speeches, and written discourses were not particularly held in high regard. Havelock argues that "the cultural situation described by Plato is one in which oral communication still dominates." However, as Havelock also notes, the situation was on the verge of change for Plato and Isocrates, and Plato took advantage of the spreading technology of writing to advance his notion of "epistēmē" within the context of the "literate revolution."[68] For Isocrates, writing was inseparably attached to rhetoric, or rather, writing was the sole medium for his rhetorical practice, and it was him that Plato associated with Socrates, or philosophy, as the closest other. This, it seems to me, is the most significant "grammatological structure" of *Phaedrus*.

For the sake of clarity, convenience, and also in order to comply with Derrida, so far I have referred to the opposition between speech and writing. However, as we have already seen, the opposition in *Phaedrus* is not so much between speech and writing as between dialectics and rhetoric / writing. It would be appropriate to quote the relevant passage again:

> whatever the subject, a written speech is bound to be largely a source of amusement, and that no speech which has ever been written in verse or in

> prose deserves to be taken seriously; that the same goes for the declamations of rhapsodes [reciters of poetry], which are designed to produce conviction, but allow no cross-examination and contain no element of teaching.[69]

Not all speech is placed above writing. Such works of literature, declamations and speech as are productive of conviction only, which therefore will include rhetorical deliveries, are no more worthy of respect than writing, for they only tamper with appearances, beliefs and imitations rather than the truth. A dialectical voice, on the other hand, is "the living, ensouled speech of a man of knowledge."[70] What Derrida attacks in his critique of the metaphysics of the voice is this dialectical voice, which is given privilege because of its assumed proximity to the full and present inner self. It is called the "pneumatological" voice or breath.[71] However, we should also note that Plato gives a clear indication that a secondary form of speech, that of persuasion, exists. When Socrates refers to Phaedrus's face as he reads Lysias's speech aloud, he is not just expressing his amorous fascination, but in fact he is pointing to the duality of the speakers, Phaedrus and Lysias, or the hiding of one behind the other. This explains the action of Socrates before he gives his first speech:

> Phaedrus: Speak, then.
> Socrates: Do you know what I'll do?
> Phaedrus: In what respect?
> Socrates: I shall cover my head as I speak, so that I can get through my speech as quickly as possible and not be put off by embarrassment if

I catch your eye.[72]

Socrates's first speech, which is designed for persuasion and therefore secondary to his usual dialectical voice, requires him to hide his face, for it is a speech without presence, or a deferred speech, in the same way as writing is. For the same reason, Socrates does not cover his head for his second speech, which is delivered as a philosopher who has the knowledge of the truth ("I shall not keep my head covered out of embarrassment as I did before, but I shall speak with my head exposed").[73] Isocrates, of course, is also a veiled speaker, as he had his speech read aloud by someone else, and never spoke in public himself, always preferring to write. Persuasion is thus depicted as a veiled speech in *Phaedrus*, for it is a speech from which the present, inner and full self is absent. Plato's text reduces the presence of rhetoric, which was then so powerful as to require Socrates to be a "formidable enemy," to the status of a veiled speaker. How does Derrida's critique of phonocentrism in philosophical tradition, then, treat this particular speech which is made to hide itself behind a veil, denied privilege, labelled as writing, and is sidelined by the phonocentric mainstream of philosophy?

Derrida: "White Mythology: Metaphor in the Text of Philosophy"

"White Mythology" is another text which we cannot overlook when we consider Derrida's views on the relationship between rhetoric and the tradition of Western

philosophy. As is clearly stated in the subtitle, this essay is not about rhetoric per se. It is about how metaphor is implicated in the inception of all philosophical texts, or rather about how philosophical texts are products of metaphor. Yet it certainly bears some connection to the discussions of "Plato's Pharmacy," as its stated purpose is to explore how rhetoric has been contradistinguished from philosophy, and how philosophy decreed its own predominance over rhetoric: "[a Platonic] ideal that is produced in the separation (and order) between philosophy or dialectics on the one hand and (sophistic) rhetoric on the other, the separation demanded by Plato himself. Directly or not, it is this separation and this hierarchy that we must question here."[74] We will focus our discussion on how Derrida argues this question, what conclusions he draws from it, and see how we can build upon Derrida's insight when we study rhetoric.[75]

In a passage reminiscent of *Speech and Phenomena* and *Of Grammatology*, Derrida points out how theories of metaphysics have articulated themselves through metaphors: "do we not actually speak of temporalizing metaphors, metaphors that call upon the sense of hearing not only, as from Plato to Husserl, according to the musical paradigm, but also as an appeal to listening, to understanding (*entendement*) itself, etc.?"[76] It is Derrida's contention that linguistic expression is the act of animating the sign, and that its telos is the presence, without mediation by a signifier, of the meaning itself. This ideal expression of the voice incarnating the soul, or the ideal status of pure consciousness being present to itself, is called "hearing oneself speak": "The

voice *is heard* (understood) — that undoubtedly is what is called conscience — closest to the self as the absolute effacement of the signifier: pure auto-affection that necessarily has the form of time [. . .]. It is the unique experience of the signified producing itself spontaneously, from within the self."[77] When the ideal expression of this unmediated and undeferred presence of the transcendental signified is to be described, it necessarily requires a temporal metaphor, or it has to be done "according to the musical paradigm," as Derrida puts it. He also reminds us that metaphor can be spatialising as well, in that it presents to the mind a materially sensible object as the vehicle for a tenor.[78] Thus Derrida establishes how metaphor necessarily inhabits all forms of linguistic structure, and therefore philosophy.

After pointing out that Aristotle includes all figures of speech and tropes, such as metonymy and synecdoche, under the heading of metaphor, Derrida turns to the category under which Aristotle places metaphor in his *Poetics*. Here he finds the fundamental opposition created by Aristotle in the linguistic system: *phōnē sēmantikē* and *phōnē asēmos*. The term "*phōnē sēmantikē*" signifies a word "which is intelligible by itself, outside any syntactic relation." They include words that "can be nominalized" such as nouns, verbs, adjectives and some adverbs that are its derivatives:

> It is under this heading [noun or the nominalizable] that he [Aristotle] treats metaphor (*epiphora onomatos*). [. . .] They constitute the order of the *phōnē sēmantikē* from which are excluded, as we will see, articles,

> conjunctions, prepositions, and in general all the elements of language which, according to Aristotle, have no meaning in themselves; in other words, which do not of themselves designate something. [. . .] The conjunction (*sundesmos*) is a *phōnē asēmos*. This holds equally for the article, [. . .] and for everything that functions *between* signifying members, between nouns, substantives, or verbs.[79]

The great divide between linguistic elements is instituted between those that are significant and those that are not. Thus, the two concepts of *phōnē sēmantikē* and *phōnē asēmos* assume oppositions between meaningfulness and meaninglessness, identity and non-identity, semantic independence and syntactic dependence, and referentiality and syntax. In terms of grammatical parts of speech, the opposition is between nouns, verbs, adjectives etc, and conjunctions, prepositions, articles etc.

Metaphor, clearly, belongs to the order of the *phōnē sēmantikē*, for according to Aristotle, "A metaphor is the application of a word that belongs to another thing."[80] Referentiality is the necessary condition of metaphor. Metaphorical application or transference, Aristotle states, occurs where similarity or resemblance is detected between two seemingly disparate objects: "to use metaphor well is to discern similarities."[81] In his observation of metaphors, then, Aristotle presupposes and recognises a stable referential relation between a word and a thing, a noun and the object it signifies, and so metaphor is a sort of sliding of a name between objects where similarity is detected. Derrida points out that as such "the theory of metaphor remains a theory of *meaning*," and states that the thesis underlying Aristotle's

assumption is: "What is proper to nouns is to signify something [. . .], an independent being identical to itself, conceived as such. It is at this point that the theory of the name, such as it is implied by the concept of metaphor, is articulated with ontology." Derrida then speculates in his characteristic manner of association that a theory of metaphor as "a theory of *meaning*" calls into questions issues such as truth, logos, identity, mimetic representation, resemblance and propriety, that is, elements that "belong to the great immobile chain of Aristotelian ontology" and its metaphysical determination.[82]

Linguistic elements that are categorised under *phōnē asēmos* are necessarily excluded from the order of metaphor and the ontological chain, for they do not signify, have no relation to independent entities in themselves, and are solely dependent on syntactical relations. As long as the distinctive feature of linguistic elements is whether they are significant or not, those that are classed as *phōnē asēmos* are always to be characterised as negatives, lacks and lapses, as being insufficient, imperfect, and incapable of signification. Derrida comments: "The dissymmetry of these oppositions appears to be rather marked: the superiority of the ideas of object to the ideas of relation."[83] This observation leads to his critique of the affiliation of theory of metaphor with metaphysics and its teleological determination: "the entire teleology of meaning [. . .] coordinates metaphor with the manifestation of truth, with the production of truth as presence without veil, with the reappropriation of a full language without syntax [. . . . There is] the opposition of the semantic and the syntactic, and

[. . .] the philosophical hierarchy that submits the latter to the former."[84] Metaphor is seen as conducive to the teleology of the ideal linguistic expression, where presence, or the meaning itself, manifests and incarnates itself, without being deferred by demands of the syntactical. Thus Derrida shows how philosophy creates a hierarchical opposition between the semantic and the syntactic, subordinates the syntactic to the supremacy of the semantic and the metaphorical, and how rhetorical theories have borne allegiance to and thereby supported philosophy by vindicating the importance of metaphor, as attested by their view on catachresis.[85] In particular, Derrida mentions the theories of Du Marsais and Fontanier, eighteenth and nineteenth-century French rhetoricians, as examples of this vein.[86]

We may now ask how Derrida's opinion applies to eighteenth-century British rhetoric. At one point in "White Mythology," Derrida mentions and quotes from Hugh Blair. His choice of passage is particularly significant. It occurs in a note to Aristotle's generalised definition of metaphor which includes all tropes. Derrida quotes from Blair's Lecture Fifteen, "Metaphor": "Hugh Blair: 'Aristotle, in his *Poetics*, uses Metaphor in this extended sense, for any figurative meaning imposed upon a word [. . .]. But it would be unjust to tax this most acute writer with any inaccuracy on this account; the minute subdivisions, and various names of Tropes, being unknown in his days, and the invention of later rhetoricians.'"[87] Blair is thus quoted as a rhetorician who defends Aristotle, and by extension whose theory is in keeping with the rhetorical contributions to the metaphysical teleology.

However, if we put the passage back in its original context, Blair's overall contention appears to be somewhat different from how Derrida seems to represent it. In the previous lecture on "Origin and Nature of Figurative Language," Blair distances himself from the practices of traditional rhetorical theories, and is wary not to give a full assent to their approach to figurative language:

> The great place which the doctrine of Tropes and Figures has occupied in systems of rhetoric; the over-anxious care which has been shewn in giving names to a vast variety of them, and in ranging them under different classes, has often led persons to imagine, that, if their composition was well bespangled with a number of these ornaments of Speech, it wanted no other beauty; whence has arisen much stiffness and affectation.[88]

Blair clearly refrains from paying what he thinks too much attention to figures and tropes as in the foregoing rhetorical theories, and also disapproves of their influence on practising writers. While Blair's is more of a mild censure than an attack, Adam Smith, with whom Blair shares many ideas and observations as a belletrist, is more unreserved in expressing his irritation: "They [tropes and figures] have no intrinsick worth of their own. [. . . It is from] the divisions and subdivisions of them, that so many systems of rhetorick both ancient and modern have been formed. They are generally a very silly set of Books and not at all instructive." He goes on to say that as it would be strange for a rhetorical theory to pass by "these figures that have so much exercised the wits of men," he will treat it but according to a different scheme

from those of "the ordinary writers."[89] Belletristic rhetorical theories of Smith and Blair, thus, denied the "intrinsick worth" of figures and tropes, and were much less enthusiastic about them than rhetorical theories of, for instance, the Renaissance period. This is quite contrary to Derrida's representation of rhetorical theories as forming a major part of the Western metaphysical tradition and his emphasis on its telos of self-present meaning.

When Derrida asserts that "the theory of metaphor" is inextricably bound up with the metaphysical assumption of being, entity, truth, logos and identity, we cannot agree that the entire rhetorical tradition as a discipline is supportive of this system of values, or indeed advertises it, as Derrida portrays it. What he says about the strong bond between *phōnē sēmantikē* and ontology, even if we take his word, applies only to a small part of rhetoric. He mentions the functions of *phōnē asēmos*, but only in order to point out how metaphysics denigrated and ignored it, for it is Derrida's utmost purpose to uncover the teleological determination, in this case how metaphysical philosophy of Being and identity subordinated syntax to metaphor. He keeps silent about how *phōnē asēmos*, that is, conjunctions, prepositions and articles, is treated in rhetorical texts, and how it has contributed to theories about, and views on, language in the West.

It seems to me that Derrida's neglect or blindness towards the presence of Isocrates in "Plato's Pharmacy" is connected to his silence on *phōnē asēmos* in "White Mythology." Isocrates is noted for his long sentences and elaborate coordination of

members. The syntactical and relational function of *phōnē asēmos*, conjunctions and prepositions or "pivots of discourse" to borrow Derrida's expression,[90] must have been crucial to the rhetorical practice of Isocrates. In addition, it is no coincidence that for Blair the issue of style was a central concern, and he dedicates three lectures on style to the question of how to arrange parts of a sentence in a harmonious, perspicuous and cogent order. As we shall see in Chapter Two, it is precisely this *phōnē asēmos* that is of utmost importance for Blair. He held that beauty and clarity of language depend more on the arrangement of members than on the choice of words, and affirmed that "These little words, *but, and, which, whose, where,* &c. are frequently the most important words of any; they are the joints or hinges upon which all Sentences turn." Also, Blair says that the ancient rhetoricians such as Cicero and Quintilian considered arrangement of members in a sentence "the principal object."[91] Thus, there is a major train of rhetoricians who hold the syntactical in a high regard. It means that they do not adhere to the Platonic and Aristotelian ontology in the way Derrida describes it. On the contrary, it seems as if there is another "grammatological structure" here, in which rhetoric constantly and powerfully resists and defers philosophical subordination and determination.

If we take the above into consideration, and see how rhetoric considered syntax to be the key to good composition, it would not be too much to say that Derrida's silence on Isocrates in his reading of *Phaedrus* is connected to, and indeed symptomatic of, his more general silence on a major tradition, that is, rhetoric. The

phonocentrism of Plato, we have seen in our discussion of *Phaedrus*, was "contaminated" at the very outset in the powerful and hardly concealed figure of Isocrates, and so the grammatological structure is already in Plato. In addition, and very importantly for this thesis, Plato described rhetoric as a written speech: it is a veiled speech, whose identity and self-presence is concealed and reduced to a subordinate status to the dialectic voice. Derrida's grammatology, or the intrusion of writing upon speech, then, has always been the chief concern for rhetoric.

[1] The dramatic date of *Phaedrus* has not been established. However, scholars generally agree that it is between 415 and 405 B. C. Waterfield's note to 227a on Plato, *Phaedrus* 76, and Fujisawa's note on Plato, *Paidorosu* 188. All references to and quotations from *Phaedrus* are from Waterfield's translation unless otherwise noted. In the text, Phaedrus is reported to have studied the rhetorical theories of Tisias, who is deemed to be one of the founders of rhetorical techniques, along with Corax, in Sicily. Plato, *Phaedrus* 66, 273a. The invention of rhetoric is thought to have taken place after the expulsion of the tyrants and establishment of democracy in Syracuse around 466 B. C.

[2] Quoted by Freese from W. H. Thompson's "Introduction" to *Phaedrus* (1868), p. xx. Freese xxv. I have italicised *Phaedrus*.

[3] Ferrari mentions *Protagoras*, *Phaedo* and *Symposium* as works which present the locations with as much care as *Phaedrus*, but points out that *Phaedrus* is unique in that it describes the scene in direct speech, and not through the words of the narrator as in the other three works. Ferrari, *Listening* 2. Wycherley says that with regard to the geographic setting "Plato is being highly realistic. This is the overwhelming impression which one receives" and that Plato "seems to have the details vividly before his eyes as he writes" in his study of the topography of *Phaedrus.* Wycherley 91.

[4] Plato, *Phaedrus* 7, 230b. Cicero imitates *Phaedrus* by setting his own *On the Ideal Orator* under a plane tree. Cicero 63-4, 1. 28.

[5] Plato, *Phaedrus* 18, 238d.

[6] Plato, *Phaedrus* 74, 278c.

[7] Ferrari thinks that the incorporation of Lysias's speech at the beginning of the dialogue is an example of Plato's play with authenticity and "authorial gesture." He also points out that the reader of *Phaedrus* is expected to be an "interpretive performer" and provide the textual "live voice" as he cannot attend the moment of creation by Plato. Ferrari, *Listening* 210-1. Nightingale correctly points out that *Phaedrus* features issues of "hearing" or internalising "alien discourse," and that the production of "authentic" and philosophical discourse is to be set against such experiences. Nightingale 133-4, 136-8, 165-8.

[8] Plato, *Phaedrus* 46, 259d.

[9] Plato, *Phaedrus* 45, 258e.

[10] Plato, *Phaedrus* 47, 260c.

[11] Derrida, "Plato's Pharmacy" 73. He says the transition happens at the "precisely calculated center."

[12] Kennedy notes that this two-part organisation reflects the contemporary ways of rhetorical instruction, one through specimen speeches and one through theoretical discussion. He also suggests that the organisation of

Phaedrus is the reverse of that of Isocrates's *Helen*. Kennedy 74.

[13] Plato, *Phaedrus* 44, 258d and 46, 259e.

[14] Plato, *Phaedrus* 46, 260a.

[15] Plato, *Phaedrus* 16, 237c. The deceptive and gradual shifting of points is discussed in Plato, *Phaedrus* 49-50, 262a-c.

[16] Plato, *Phaedrus* 48, 261a.

[17] Plato, *Phaedrus* 64, 271d-272a.

[18] Plato, *Phaedrus* 57-8, 266e-267c.

[19] Plato, *Phaedrus* 60, 269b.

[20] Plato, *Phaedrus* 48, 260e. Here again, Plato is consistent in his attack on rhetoric, for this had been one of the central issues debated in *Gorgias*. Rhetoric as an art and expertise has to be able to define what it is, and explain how it achieves its aims; otherwise, rhetoric is no more than a form of clever use of words to give pleasure, just like cooking does through food, and cosmetics through colourful materials. Plato, *Gorugiasu* 64-70, 463a-465a. Such rhetoric is nothing but flattery. Notomi persuasively argues that Plato was unique among his contemporaries who also wrote about Socrates in depicting him as an opponent of the sophists. Notomi thinks it was Plato's deliberate strategy to set up an image of "Socrates the philosopher" to be differentiated from the sophists. The distinction between the sophists and philosophers was not taken for granted at that time. Notomi, *Dare ka* 63-7.

[21] Notomi, *Aida* 120.

[22] Plato, *Phaedrus* 56, 266b. Waterfield calls attention to the range of meanings of the term "dialectic" in Plato, *Phaedrus* 101, note to 266c. Nightingale remarks that the word is "slippery" and quotes from Robinson: "The fact is that the word 'dialectic' [. . .] mean[s] 'the ideal method, whatever that may be.'" Nightingale 163.

[23] Plato, *Phaedrus* 72, 277b-c.

[24] For instance, Plato, *Phaedrus* 63, 271b-c.

[25] Plato, *Phaedrus* 68, 274b.

[26] Plato, *Phaedrus* 68-9, 274e-275a. "[R]eminding" is Derrida's word. Derrida, "Plato's Pharmacy" 105. Waterfield's phrase is "jogging the memory."

[27] Plato, *Phaedrus* 70, 275d-e.

[28] Plato, *Phaedrus* 70, 276a-b.

[29] Plato, *Phaedrus* 73, 277e. Although in Waterfield's translation the comparison is between writing and declamations, in other translations it is between written and spoken languages. For instance, in Rowe's translation: "none has ever yet been written, whether in verse or in prose, which is worth much serious attention, or indeed spoken, in the way that rhapsodes speak theirs." Rowe's *Phaedrus* 66, 277e5. Fujisawa's translation also draws a parallel between written and spoken languages. Fujisawa's *Paidorosu* 142, 277E.

[30] Plato, *Phaedrus* 74, 278c.
[31] Plato, *Phaedrus* 12, 234c.
[32] Plato, *Phaedrus* 66, 273a.
[33] Plato, *Phaedrus* 6-7, 229b-230d.
[34] Plato, *Phaedrus* 71, 276d-e, 74, 278b.
[35] Plato, *Phaedrus* 3, 227b.
[36] Plato, *Phaedrus* 70, 275d.
[37] Derrida, "Plato's Pharmacy" 77.
[38] Derrida, "Plato's Pharmacy" 102.
[39] Derrida, "Plato's Pharmacy" 128-30.
[40] Plato, *Phaedrus* 7, 230d.
[41] Derrida, "Plato's Pharmacy" 76.
[42] Derrida, "Plato's Pharmacy" 112.
[43] Derrida, "Plato's Pharmacy" 112-3.
[44] Derrida, "Plato's Pharmacy" 144.
[45] Plato, *Phaedrus* 70, 276a.
[46] Derrida, "Plato's Pharmacy" 149.
[47] Spivak lxxiii.
[48] Plato, *Phaedrus* 74-5, 278e.
[49] Hirokawa 34. Hirokawa vividly portrays the antagonism between the two schools. Hirokawa 194-217.
[50] Plato, *Phaedrus* 75, 29a-b. Kennedy thinks that "Socrates' interest in Isocrates is probably historically genuine." Kennedy 79.
[51] Plato, *Phaedrus* 12, 234d.
[52] Hirokawa, 54-9. Travlos gives a detailed map of the area. Travlos 289-91.
[53] Waterfield's note to 278e on Plato, *Phaedrus* 104. One instance of an implied reference to Isocrates may be 270a, where Socrates says that every area of expertise needs a rigorous speculation, and requires one to be a "windbag natural scientist with one's head in the clouds." Isocrates is known to have criticised Plato and his Academy for the uselessness and impracticality of their rigorous scientific studies and their commitment to the pursuit of exact knowledge, which Isocrates thought was unrealistic. Another may be 239a, "one who finds it impossible to speak in public is inferior to an orator." Isocrates, as we shall see in due course, never spoke in public because of his weak voice and lack of assurance. De Vries argues that Isocrates, who was about seventy when he read *Phaedrus*, was highly irritated by the implicit references and the explicit naming at the end of the dialogue, and retaliated against Plato in later works such as *Antidosis*, *Panathenaicus* and *Philippus*. De Vries 17-8. Ronna Burger explores the issue in detail. According to her, Isocrates and Plato both thought that writing is unsuitable as a model for speech, because it does not answer questions, is unable to defend itself and is "nonresponsive to chancing conditions." While Plato had Socrates mention these as shortcomings of

writing, Isocrates thought these were precisely the reasons why writing is suitable for politics and philosophy, as it reaches a wider range of audience and at the same time calls for individual discretion. Burger 121-3.

[54] In real life, Isocrates was not a direct disciple of Socrates in the way Plato was, but is known to have had a great respect for Socrates and his philosophy. According to Pseudo-Plutarch, he is said to have been deep in mourning, dressed in black, showing "excessive sorrow" (trans. mine) the day after Socrates's execution. Hirokawa 28.

[55] Burger argues that Isocrates stressed writing's power of "simultaneously revealing and concealing." In his *Evagoras*, Burger says, Isocrates maintains that writing conceals "the true meaning intended for the few beneath the beautiful surface intended or the many." Burger 123-4. This view about the duality of writing, I think, is enacted by *Phaedrus* in a convincing way.

[56] Plato, *Phaedrus* 21, 241a.

[57] Plato, *Phaedrus* 70, 276a.

[58] Plato, *Phaedrus* 73, 278a-b.

[59] Plato, *Phaedrus* 19-20, 239e.

[60] Derrida, "Plato' Pharmacy" 176-7, note 49.

[61] Derrida, "Plato's Pharmacy" 116-7.

[62] Critics hear an unmistakable and "deliberate echoes of wording" between this work by Alcidamas and "Against the Sophists" written by Isocrates. The similarity between the titles is one of them, and also "the coincidences of vocabulary and phraseology are more than accidental." Alcidamas 41, note. That Alcidamas intended that this work should hurt Isocrates, it is said, is clear from the following passage:

> For whenever someone has been accustomed to work out speeches in detail and to construct sentences paying attention to both precise wording and rhythm [. . .] making use of a slow mental process, it is inevitable that, whenever this man comes to extempore speeches, doing the opposite of what he is used to, he should have a mind full of helplessness and panic [. . .] in no way different from those with speech impediments. Alcidamas 11, section 16.

The word here translated as "with speech impediments" can also mean "weak-voiced." Isocrates famously admits in several of his writings that he prefers not to speak in public because he has a weak voice and does not have the nerve to withstand the rough-and-tumble of a public debate. It must have been instantly recognisable to their contemporaries that this passage by Alcidamas refers to Isocrates. He is here caricatured as a meticulous stylist who weaves out a finished product at great pains, and who would certainly be tossed about and disgrace himself at the cutting edge of quick exchange of words, which Alcidamas prides himself on.

[63] Derrida, "Plato's Pharmacy" 108.

[64] Derrida, "Plato's Pharmacy" 111.
[65] Derrida, "Plato's Pharmacy" 111.
[66] Derrida, "Plato's Pharmacy" 148. Also, Notomi, *Dare ka* 278. There are some expressions that are common to Alcidamas and *Phaedrus*. There is, however, an ongoing debate about the dates of composition for "On those who write written speeches," and some critics think that the influence was in the reverse fashion, by *Phaedrus* on Alcidamas, for instance Muir, Alcidamas's translator. "Introduction" on Alcidamas xiv, Alcidamas 62, note.
[67] Ferrari argues that Plato made Phaedrus read Lysias's written speech in order to show that speech also is liable to the same shortcomings as writing. Ferrari, "Plato and poetry" 146-7. Elsewhere he makes a similar point. Ferrari, *Listening* 209.
[68] Havelock 38, 52-3 n. 6, 56 n. 17. Havelock thinks the change took place between the fifth and fourth centuries B. C. He points out that it is "not only conservative but illogical" of Plato to prefer orality in *Phaedrus*. Havelock 56, note 17. Ong agrees that Plato's writings "marked the point in human history when deeply interiorized alphabetic literacy first clashed head-on with orality." Ong, *Orality* 24.
[69] Plato, *Phaedrus* 73, 277e.
[70] Plato, *Phaedrus* 70, 276a.
[71] Derrida, *Of Grammatology* 17.
[72] Plato, *Phaedrus* 16, 237a.
[73] Plato, *Phaedrus* 24, 243b.
[74] Derrida, "White Mythology" 224.
[75] Paul Ricoeur's response to Derrida's "White Mythology" and its views on metaphor is one of the most important exchanges of ideas between Derrida and a philosopher of language. In this thesis, however, I shall focus on Derrida's argument as it relates to Blair, whom he quotes as we shall see later.
[76] Derrida, "White Mythology" 227.
[77] Derrida, *Of Grammatology* 20.
[78] Derrida, "White Mythology" 227.
[79] Derrida, "White Mythology" 233, 240.
[80] Aristotle, *Poetics* 105, 1457b.
[81] Aristotle, *Poetics* 115, 1459a.
[82] Derrida, "White Mythology" 233, 237, 236.
[83] Derrida, "White Mythology" 236.
[84] Derrida, "White Mythology" 270.
[85] Catachresis is a form of metaphor, sometimes considered to be an abuse of language, which gives a word an extended meaning to cover something for which there is no appropriate term.
[86] Derrida, "White Mythology" 234, 255-6.
[87] Derrida, "White Mythology" 231. I have italicised *Poetics*.

[88] Blair, *Lectures* 147.
[89] Smith, Adam, *Lectures* 26-7.
[90] Derrida, "White Mythology" 234.
[91] Blair, *Lectures* 110, 122, 133-4. Also "In every Language, much of the beauty and strength of it depends on the proper use of conjunctions, prepositions, and those relative pronouns, which also serve the same purpose of connecting the different parts of discourse." Blair, *Lectures* 91.

Chapter Two
Blair's Belletrist Primitivism: Orality Inhabiting Writing

One of the most significant aspects of the eighteenth-century intellectual milieu was its interest in signs. Throughout Europe, writers and thinkers as diverse as Dubos, Condillac, Diderot, Rousseau, Shaftesbury, Hutcheson, Adam Smith, Edmund Burke and Herder, to name but some, concerned themselves with what can now be broadly described as aspects of semiotics. They speculated on issues such as the origin of signs, most notably language, and signification, the relation between the sign and the referent, and interpretation and appreciation of verbal, visual and aural texts such as literature, paintings and music. According to Stephen K. Land, "eighteenth-century writers first explored the relation of *semantics* to *aesthetic* problems."[1] Scholars have discussed this complex and rich epistemological field where philosophy, aesthetics and criticism intersect. Especially pertinent to our concern with rhetoric is the problem of the origin of language, which is "one of the most characteristic features of philosophical activity in the latter half of the eighteenth century," as Hans Aarsleff writes.[2] Condillac's ideas about the primitive state of language and then its gradual development fed into a wide range of eighteenth-century writings about language and semiosis in general, bringing into its scope the bordering fields of interests such as society, history, culture, art and polite letters.[3] In this chapter, I would like to place Hugh Blair in the context of speculations concerning the origin of language, and would like to show how

he incorporated this trend of thought into his rhetorical theory. Yet, as we shall see, Blair's commitment to primitivism and his regressive tendency betray the fundamental fissures in his argument, for his rhetoric at least partially follows the Enlightenment agenda for social progress and improvement. By examining Blair's primitivism and its ramifications in his theory, I would like to argue how he envisioned the relationship between the predominantly oral primitive language and writing, and clarify his achievements and important impasses he encountered in his approach to the highly rhetorical problem of the written voice.

Origin of Language

Among the theories concerning the origin of languages, perhaps the best known today are those of Rousseau and Johann Gottfried Herder. Herder's thesis of language as primarily "a language of feeling" that gives vent to an insuppressible internal urge for expression of passions is regarded as a landmark in Romantic aesthetics and views on language.[4] In fact, though, according to Aarsleff, Herder's essay, which was written in 1770, marks the end of the most productive period of debates on the origin of languages that started with the publication of Condillac's *Essay on the Origin of Human Knowledge* (1746). "With a singleness of origin that is rare in the history of ideas, the fountainhead of this debate was the *Essai*," Aarsleff affirms.[5]

Although Rousseau does not explicitly name Condillac as the source of inspiration in his *Essay on the Origin of Languages*, he elsewhere "approvingly" acknowledges his profound indebtedness and says that Condillac's thesis "all fully

confirm my [Rousseau's] sentiment."[6] It is not the purpose of the present chapter to discuss Condillac's theory in detail and explore and assess its influence on Rousseau's, but the parallels are obvious. Condillac hypothesises, at the originating point of language, the presence of two children with no knowledge of the use of any signs. One child feels a strong desire for a basic need, for instance food, and wrings his body and makes a cry of passion. The other child sees him, is moved, and connects the cry and motion with the object of his desire. Thus a primitive sign is born. It was a combination of a vocal cry and bodily gestures.[7] As articulated language became more sophisticated in the course of time with the progress of civilisation, gestures became elaborate and branched into dance, while the vocal intonation matched the expressiveness of gestures by acquiring the flexible tonal movement of inflection within a wide range of sounds, making speech come closer to song.[8]

Commentators on Rousseau have identified Condillac's seminal ideas which Rousseau incorporated in crucial passages of his own *Essay*. For instance, Rousseau depicts an idealised picture of an idyllic rural scene, where amorous young men and women socialised by a river, and families gathered in festivals. This convivial scene of dancing and singing in a mild southern climate made the first society and gave southern languages their peculiar expressive intonation, Rousseau conjectures.[9] The flexible movement of intonation was considered to reflect and represent directly the movement of the speaker's mind, in particular its psychological state. In another passage where he discusses the theoretical backbone of his *Essay*, the function of "articulation" and "sound" of primitive language, Rousseau asserts that "verses, songs,

and speech have a common origin."[10] The combination of dance, song and the south, and the proposed common origin of poetry, song and primitive speech, as seen in these passages, Rousseau borrows directly from Condillac.[11] As for the centrality these passages have for Rousseau's theory, as well as for Derrida's understanding of Rousseau, I shall discuss in Chapter Three.

As seen in Condillac and Rousseau, primitive language was considered to have close affinities with dances, songs and music, and so primitivist discourses on the origin of languages incorporated concepts and vocabulary from music criticism. The alliance of language and music is also observable in the subtitle of Rousseau's *Essay*, "In Which Melody and Musical Imitation are Treated." The concept of "musical imitation" has its roots in the long tradition of Western views about music, where it was believed that music has a capacity to represent external and internal objects, such as the universe, the world, and the human psychology. Until the end of the eighteenth century, as we shall see in more detail in Chapter Three, music was thus considered to be in a fundamental way analogous to language; a view to which John Neubauer gives the name "verbal paradigm."[12] Rousseau, himself a composer, musician and musical theorist, took up Condillac's substantial arguments on linguistic versification, intonation and musical art, which occupies seven out of fifteen sections in the chapter on the origin of language, further expanded them, and retold a story of a mythical origin where a primitive and passionate cry still retained all the expressive energy in an amalgam that was later to be particularised and institutionalised as the separate conventions and arts of language, music and poetry. Primitivist theory of linguistic origin as a passionate cry thus

highlighted the tonal qualities as the essential and fundamental requisite for linguistic expressiveness, and by extension, significance, setting up a strong conceptual link between language and music by presenting an idealised description of primitive song and primordial poetry.

Present-day critics from across the boundaries of disciplines, such as a musical historian John Neubauer, a musicologist Downing Thomas, and literary critics and theorists Kevin Barry and Christopher Norris have elucidated the implications of an upsurge of interest in the association of language and music in the eighteenth century. If "the verbal paradigm integrated music into the network of meanings, into the signifying practices that make up culture,"[13] speculations about the origin and the primitive state of language in relation to music encouraged a productive exchange of critical ideas across aesthetic genres in the eighteenth century that sheds light on our contemporary concern with signs and semiosis.

Hugh Blair's *Lectures*

Hugh Blair's *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres* is based on the set of lectures on classical rhetoric and literature that Blair gave in Edinburgh from 1759 to 1783. The lectures are known to have been popular and to have attracted a fairly large number of students every year. As we have seen in the Introduction, the published lectures too were a success not only in Britain and America but also on the European continent for a hundred years after the publication. Part of the reasons for its popularity and widespread appeal can be attributed to its comprehensiveness and

inclusiveness. Blair's theory synthesises not only past rhetorical theories but also connects them to related fields of interest such as aesthetics and philosophy, and illustrates his points by drawing on excellent literary materials gathered from across different genres and cultures, both ancient and modern. As a result, his book always has some passages and insights that reward even us, the present readers, whenever we come back to it. Blair's book is particularly notable for its successful combination of width of knowledge and generally sound — if sometimes too bourgeois and moralising — critical observation on literary merits, and a lucid yet personal style that sometimes borders on the conversational, at times even chatty with jokes and little banters on the characters of writers.[14] The relatively informal and sociable tone of the *Lectures*, it strikes us, is an exemplary case of polite and civilised discussion of aesthetic matters that Nancy Struever convincingly argued as belonging to the "conversable world" as differentiated from the "learned world" of scholars.[15] It may well be that Blair's lectures are a British equivalent of the French salon, presided over by a male. The book gives us a sense of what was considered to be tasteful and elegant in the polite society of the eighteenth century, and to what extent individual writers chose to commit themselves to such a cultural standard. Blair's observations on Shakespeare, Milton, Dryden, Pope and Swift show us a list of canonical writers of English literature in the making, while his downright hostility to Restoration playwrights and Abraham Cowley, his overall disregard for the Metaphysical poets, and his partiality for Sir William Temple and some Scottish authors such as John Home, Allan Ramsay, Buchanan and Macpherson show us the critic's more personal taste and commitments.[16] In the

chapters on Addison's *Spectator* articles, we see Blair's critical mind at work, when he appreciates and admires the beauties of certain passages, and corrects sentences and brings their import out into a clearer and fuller view, in a convincing way.[17] We are also impressed by his range of critical language and citations; Blair passes comments on Plato, Aristotle, Quintilian and Cicero as freely as he does on modern critics such as Shaftesbury, Dubos, Addison, Burke, Condillac, Diderot, Rousseau and so on, and engages himself in a critical dialogue with these authors, without apparently betraying the sense of cultural difference between languages, countries or historical periods, which makes us wonder what it is that gave Blair such a confident idea of European cultural community and solidarity.

In this chapter, I would like to focus on his primitivist theory of language, which he borrowed mainly from Condillac and Rousseau, and see how, and to what extent, Blair incorporated this contemporary trend of thought into his rhetoric. Passages which show evidence of direct influence of Condillac and Rousseau can be found throughout Blair's *Lectures*. In particular, Blair allocates two lectures on the topic of the "Rise and Progress of Language," where he mentions in a note Condillac's *Essay* and Rousseau's *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality*, and gives a primitivist account of language origins based on the assumption that the first language was "the cries of passion, accompanied with such motions and gestures as were farther expressive of passion."[18] Like Condillac and Rousseau, Blair believes that the first language was song-like, and that primitive speech was a combination of poetry, music and dance.[19] The primitivist narrative is reiterated and amplified in the lectures "Origin and Nature of

Figurative Language" and "Nature of Poetry." The assumed euphony of primitive language, in the meantime, serves as the "natural" and indubitable foundation for the persuasiveness achieved by "Pronunciation, or Delivery," and as we shall see, becomes the theoretical backbone for his stylistic criticism. Passion and sublimity of emotion, another important trait of primitive language, are repeatedly commended as the highest marks of persuasion, and Ossian's poems are mentioned from time to time as works which exemplify primitive eloquence in *Lectures* as well as in *A Critical Dissertation on the Poems of Ossian, the Son of Fingal*, which we shall discuss in Chapter Four.[20]

In this chapter, I would first like to show how Blair's primitivist view of language as song infuses his notion of the art of letters, and theoretically defines and characterises his approach to rhetoric. In doing so, I shall demonstrate how Blair's primitivism is inseparably bound up with phonocentrism, which leads to a denunciation of writing. Next, I shall focus on Blair's rhetorical theory, and examine how his primitivist stance causes significant frictions against his treatment of writing and his belletrist endorsement of literacy. The argument of Blair's *Lectures*, we find, betrays a rift and struggle between the two opposite goals of primitivist retrogressive nostalgia and Enlightenment belief in progress and improvement.

Blair's phonocentric primitivism

In the early pages of the *Lectures*, Blair allocates two chapters to the "Rise and Progress of Language." The following passage summarises and exemplifies Blair's primitivist stance that informs the *Lectures*, so we would like to start the investigation

with this passage as a guiding thread:

> Language was, at first, barren in words, but descriptive by the sound of these words; and expressive in the manner of uttering them, by the aid of significant tones and gestures: Style was figurative and poetical: arrangement was fanciful and lively. It appears, that, in all the successive changes which Language has undergone, as the world advanced, the understanding has gained ground on the fancy and imagination.[21]

In this short and compressed passage, Blair sketches out the four basic ideas of primitivism. First, he says that primitive language was not copious in its vocabulary, but that the significance of its words was guaranteed by the natural resemblance of the sound of words to their referents —— a view, we have seen, that also underlies the concept of musical mimesis. Second, he thinks, along with Condillac and Rousseau, that primitive language relied heavily on expressive vocal tones and gestures in its signification. Third, he believes, with Condillac and Rousseau, that early language must have been poetical in its passionate expressions, which gave rise to the use of figures. Fourth, he mentions the freer arrangement of words in a sentence in a primitive language, which further brings it closer to poetry and song. As the last sentence in the quotation shows, the general progress of the genius of language, according to Blair, is from liveliness of fancy and imagination to a cool and rational order of understanding. These are the four fundamental characteristics of a primitive language, and Blair consistently relies on and comes back to these viewpoints in his discussion of linguistic origins.

Firstly, we shall examine Blair's account of primitive semantics. Like Condillac and Rousseau, he thinks that language in its most primitive form was "cries of passion, accompanied with such motions and gestures as were farther expressive of passion." A person under a strong agitation of passion made exclamations, and this was the birth of vocal signs. It started as an expression of an internal urge. Violent passions will be expressed by loud sounds, and tender passions by gentle sounds; the sound and the referent were thus mimetically linked. As such a sign was taught by nature, it was "understood by all." So, what was first an expression of a personal experience became institutionalised as a significant sign by being understood by other people. When needs dictated that men use nouns, they invented names by the same mimetic method: "Nothing was more natural, than to imitate, by the sound of the voice, the quality of the sound or noise which any external object made." Referring to Plato's *Cratylus*, Blair argues that this "paint[ing] by Speech" gave the first language a peculiar stability in its referential function; while modern languages are "arbitrary, or instituted, not natural signs of ideas," the primitive language was more "natural," "more picturesque" and "more expressive [. . .] of the thing signified." [22] From its outset, then, Blair's discussion of the origin of language is coloured by a certain orientation in his system of values: primitive language is more congruent with human nature, as Blair conceives it, than arbitrarily instituted modern languages; it is more evocative and generally more pleasant to the senses; in contrast to conventional signs, a primordial sign is meaningful from within, as it were, and its sounds are lived expressions and vivid vocal embodiments of its referent.

The second point is vocal tones and gestures. So as to make up for the paucity of vocabulary, the early speakers animated their speech with lively and emphatic gestures and a "greater inflexions of voice," which gave it "a great appearance of music or singing." As the society and language progressed with the course of time, this "musical and gesticulating pronunciation" grew out of the state of sheer necessity, became more of an "ornament," and formed the basis of the "Prosody of a Language." With its vigorously rising and falling pitch of voice, Blair speculates, the declamation of an ancient Greek orator "approached to the nature of recitative in music," and so "[o]ur modern pronunciation must have appeared to them a lifeless monotony." Blair's primitive language, we may as well note, is purely hypothetical and is clearly a fiction; ancient Greek and Latin, which Blair frequently refers to as instances of early languages, are of course hardly primitive, and Blair makes convenient uses of them sometimes as instances of a language belonging to a highly developed and sophisticated civilisation and at other times as illustrations of the golden age at the beginning of history, as he does here.[23] For our present purposes, however, we would like to bear in mind that Blair's utopian vision of primitive speech and ancient languages thus overflows with "[m]usical pronunciation" and melodious voice, and is strongly marked by euphony.[24]

Thirdly, as for the style of earlier languages, Blair says that it was highly figurative. There are several reasons for this: first, primitive language did not have a well-developed vocabulary, so one noun was necessarily made to stand for several referents; second, the first objects of primitive perception were sensible matters, so abstract ideas had to be represented by the names given to such matters, rendering

speech metaphorical; third, in the "infancy" of society, men were "much under the dominion of imagination and passion." Since primitive men were inexperienced, they often encountered unfamiliar objects and were subject to "wonder and astonishment," and so they tended to express themselves in a hyperbolical, sprightly and enlivened manner.[25] Thus, in addition to the practical reason of a limited range of vocabulary, Blair stresses the psychological factors of a figurative expression. It hardly needs to be said that the surprise and wonder that inspire the use of figures will be expressed in a wildly fluctuating tone of vocal melody, further adding to the expressiveness of the utterance.

Fourthly, passion not only prompts the choice of words, but it also inspires their collocation. The structure of a primitive sentence assumes "whatever order was most agreeable to the speaker's imagination." Therefore, instead of "give me fruit," a primitive man will say "fruit give me," as he will most naturally want to name the thing first which excited him to speak. Thus, Blair says, a primitive word arrangement is "precisely putting into words the gesture," a verbal embodiment of Condillac's original and natural sign and a faithful representation of the impassioned movements of the speaker's mind. As civilisation developed, languages susceptible of "so much musical beauty" such as Greek and Latin carefully studied versification and "the harmony of the period," further expanding the expressive capacity of language through skilful and flexible management of collocation and syntactical structure of sentences.[26]

To sum up, primitive and early languages as Blair envisions them bear the strong marks of passion, enthusiasm and imagination. A primitive voice is semantically full,

with its expressive words that are naturally reminiscent and mimetically descriptive of the object signified. They appeal directly to the senses, by referring to concrete and material objects of sense perception. The words are ordered so as to reflect and embody the speaker's movement of mind as it takes place, and the collocation is a kind of linguistic gesture that unequivocally identifies the object of the speaker's interest as well as the speaker's desire itself. The sentences are uttered with a great inflexion of voice, freely rising and falling as the modulation of the passion dictates. The early speakers, struck by "wonder and astonishment," felt a strong urge for speech, and they put the sentiment in bolder colours than in modern speaking, using what later came to be called metaphor, hyperbole, inversion and a full use of prosody.

All in all, Blair's description of a primitive language is close to that of poetic language, as were those of Condillac and Rousseau. In a later chapter on the "Nature of Poetry," Blair writes: "The most just and comprehensive definition [. . .] of Poetry, is, 'That it is the language of passion, or of enlivened imagination, formed, most commonly, into regular numbers.'"[27] This definition of poetry, we may as well think, can also be applied to Blair's notion of a primitive language with little modification. It is true that the poetical works that he mentions are not at all "primitive" or wild; there is a divide between what his primitivist theory dictates and what he appreciates. The majority of references to poetry in the *Lectures* are to epic poems of Homer, Virgil, Tasso, Milton and other Italian, Spanish and French poets. Horace, Pindar and Pope are mentioned in relation to odes and pastorals, while Hebrew poetry of the Old Testament is also considered. However, when Blair discusses the theoretical concept

of poetry, the cast of argument is towards the lyrical, expressive and what we may call Romantic, often only one step short of Wordsworth's "spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings."[28] As far as theory goes, the defining characteristics of poetry for Blair are passion, enthusiasm, bold imagination and euphony.

The primitive voice was a semantically full sign, and a spontaneous and voluntary expression of an emotional and passionate content; the signifier and the signified were inseparably bound by the bond of nature. In ordinary speech, people spoke with a melodious modulation of voice, and when they sang at festivals, the eloquent song and its native effusions of passions connected people together in a community, and formed the basis of the first society. Ancient Greek and Roman civilisations, Blair thinks, retain these features of primitive society. This era of a happy and blessed speech, however, he says, was disturbed and destroyed by the advent of writing. In depicting the consequences of the invention of writing, Blair follows a typically phonocentric line of argument, asserting that writing introduced a rift in what was entire and self-sufficient, and caused a divide in an organically unified and complete state:

> The Art of Writing was in process of time invented; records of past transactions began to be kept [. . .]. The Historian, therefore, now laid aside the buskins of Poetry; he wrote in Prose, and attempted to give a faithful and judicious relation of former events. The Philosopher addressed himself chiefly to the understanding. The Orator studied to persuade by reasoning, and retained more or less of the antient passionate, and glowing Style, according as it was conducive to his purpose. Poetry became now a separate art, calculated chiefly to please, and confined generally to such subjects as related to the imagination and passions. Even

its earliest companion, Music, was in a great measure divided from it.[29]

According to Blair's formulation, the introduction of writing meant that poetry, which had been almost synonymous with all intellectual and linguistic activities, branched out into several specialised and rational genres of studies such as history, philosophy and oratory. This contention is repeated throughout the *Lectures* in various forms and references, often as a dichotomy of imagination and understanding, and the eventual overtaking of one by the other, and also as a temporal narrative of progress where human civilisation grows out of the realm of passions into that of reason.

In the passage quoted above, Blair identifies writing as an external force that was driven into the timelessness of poetic speech, and started the process of change. History was no longer a heroic and mythical tale sang by a Homeric bard but a "faithful" relation of "real" facts. The style, certainly, varied from one historian to another, and Herodotus wrote "to the Imagination" while Thucydides wrote "to the Understanding," as Blair elsewhere notes. However, the common aim of historical writing was "to record truth for the instruction of mankind."[30] The situation was similar with philosophy. In one passage, Plato is praised for the supreme "richness and beauty of imagination," though the fertility of his imagination, Blair comments, sometimes carried Plato into "Allegory, Fiction, Enthusiasm" and Myths, causing "[t]he Philosopher [to be], at times, lost in the Poet."[31] Plato, then, according to Blair, retains some of the oral tradition in his philosophical writings. Aristotle, on the other hand, is described as a writer in a "Dry Style": "Never, perhaps, was there any author who

adhered so rigidly to the strictness of a didactic manner," and who "writes like a pure intelligence [. . . and] addresses himself solely to the understanding."[32] After these two representative cases of philosophical styles, the general trend of philosophy, Blair characterises, moves away from the fabulous and leads into the rational and logical. As for oratory, the last of the vehement, passionate and enthusiastic orators was Demosthenes. After him, oratory became more regular, stately, studied and methodical as in Cicero.[33] The advent of writing thus generally brought about a shift in focus from the passionate to the rational, from the imagination to the understanding, and from the spontaneity of genius to the meticulousness of art.

With the rationalising movement of writing, poetry itself, the divided origin, was also particularised as a purely linguistic art that specifically concerns itself with human emotions and psychology, that is, subjects "related to the imagination and passions." As in the passage quoted above, another important change that happened to poetry is that it was separated from music, "its earliest companion," in Blair's speculative and mythical narrative of linguistic origins. It is in considering this division of the primordial song, and separation into poetry and music caused by writing that Blair's phonocentrism begins to put on a denouncing tone, describing the advent of writing as a form of corruption, contamination, deterioration and a wounding blow:

> These separations brought all the literary arts into a more regular form, and contributed to the exact and accurate cultivation of each. Poetry, however, in its antient original condition, was perhaps more vigorous than it is in its modern state. It included then, the whole burst of the human mind; the

> whole exertion of its imaginative faculties. It spoke then the language of passion [. . .]. The separation of Music from Poetry, produced consequences not favourable in some respects to Poetry, and in many respects hurtful to Music. As long as they remained united, Music enlivened and animated Poetry, and Poetry gave force and expression to musical sound.[34]

With the use of writing, poetry gained regularity, exactness and accuracy, but it came at a high cost: it was now less "vigorous" than a primitive song, now that it was deprived of its powerful companion, the enlivening and animating music. It was not just a taming and trimming of the wildness of effusion, but a fundamental loss of the persuasiveness and emotional appeal of the primitive song, and by extension, speech. The passion and enthusiasm produced by such a "burst" and "exertion" are now taken away from speech by the advent of writing. In Blair's former utopian vision, the primitive and passionate speech was uttered in a melodious voice and varied tones, and was accompanied with emphatic gestures, to the effect of merging speech, dance and song. The words were natural signs of referents, and the flexible collocation accurately represented the movements of the speaker's mind. Primitive speech was thus the expressions and embodiments, rather than significations, of psychological meanings. For such a blissful wholeness of the semantically full sign, the introduction of writing was "not favorable," and the division and separation it caused was "hurtful." What was once a "united" Song was now separated into Music and Poetry, and poetic language was no longer vigorous, "enlivened and animated," but was threatened by lifelessness, enervation, privation, dispassion, and inertia. The art of poetry started

when the primitive language was lost.

Rhetoric also was a product of the advent of writing, and so is conditioned to use as medium a language whose chief source of eloquence and persuasiveness has already been impaired. Of the siblings that were born at the same time, poetry and rhetoric are the closest twins, Blair says: "Verse and Prose [. . .] run into one another, like light and shade. It is hardly possible to determine the exact limit where Eloquence ends, and Poetry begins."[35] Rhetoric is a prose counterpart of poetry, and, in contrast to the other rational studies of history and philosophy, aims at the poetic goal of passion, imagination and vigorousness of expression, which are the primordial and original sources of persuasion. Blair's primitivist rhetoric, then, is an attempt to recuperate the damage done to language by the advent of writing, and revitalise the postlapsarian language and restore its song-like expressiveness, by replacing enervation and privation with energy, creativity, imagination and passion. What attracts our particular attention here is that Blair tries to achieve an effect of oral and primitive speech through writing, the very anathema that caused its loss. This is the most fundamental and momentous paradox of Blair. We thus find Plato's old problematic of the written voice in the paradoxical logic of the primitivist belletrism of Blair's rhetoric.

Persuasion by the "voice of the living Speaker"

Blair's ideal eloquence and persuasive discourse, we have seen, are described as a theoretical hypothesis of an uncontaminated primitive speech that is close to song and poetry in its passionate expressive power. As with Condillac and Rousseau, in Blair

too primitive speech is characterised as being particularly musical; verbal sounds mimetically represent their referents through tone painting; its discourse, when pronounced, is euphonious and melodious both in its modulation of the voice and its sound patterns. We would now like to examine this phonocentric assumption more closely to see how it reveals the flawed logic inherent in Blair's primitivism in his rhetorical theory.

We shall begin the discussion by investigating a passage from a lecture on poetry, Lecture Thirty-Eight, where Blair expounds on the typically primitivist assumptions about "language of nature" and the origin of poetry:

> Man is both a Poet, and a Musician, by nature. The same impulse which prompted the enthusiastic Poetic Style, prompted a certain melody, or modulation of sound, suited to the emotions of Joy or Grief, of Admiration, Love, or Anger. There is a power in sound, which, partly from nature, partly from habit and association, makes such pathetic impressions on the fancy, as delight even the most wild barbarians. Music and Poetry, therefore, had the same rise; they were prompted by the same occasions; they were united in song; and, as long as they continued united, they tended, without doubt, mutually to heighten and exalt each other's power. The first Poets sung their own Verses; and hence the beginning of what we call Versification, or Words arranged in a more artful order than Prose, so as to be suited to some tune or melody.[36]

We notice the familiar thematic structure. A man in a state of nature feels an "impulse" to express his "emotions," and employs an "enthusiastic Poetic Style" full of bold uses of tropes and figures of speech, such as metaphor and hyperbole, so as to recreate

linguistically the internal agitations and passions that he feels. The same impulse occasions a suitably passionate "certain melody, or modulation of sound" of widely fluctuating vocal tones, which, we have been told, are guaranteed by nature to be mimetically indicative of semantic content, in this case the speaker's emotions and passions, leaving "pathetic impressions" on the audience. Emphatic language and expressive melody, which are incarnations of the speaker's passions, united to "heighten and exalt each other's power," and formed a primordial "song." The combined effect of "Music and Poetry" thus retained in itself all the available resources of a passionate expression. It is an idealised instance of a natural, entire and spontaneous eloquence.

At various turns of argument throughout the *Lectures*, Blair confirms the privileged link between sounds and emotions. With regard to aesthetic taste, he says: "There is no agreeable sensation we receive, either from Beauty or Sublimity, but what is capable of being heightened by the power of musical sound."[37] Blair thus acknowledges the capacity of music to arouse any sort of aesthetic sensation. Elsewhere he writes while discussing syntactical structure of sentences: "Music has naturally a great power over all men to prompt and facilitate certain emotions: insomuch, that there are hardly any dispositions which we wish to raise in others, but certain sounds may be found concordant to those dispositions, and tending to promote them. Now, Language may, is some degree, be rendered capable of this power of music."[38] In this quotation, Blair not only eulogises music's "great power" to address and correspond with "any dispositions" and "emotions," but he also gives it a communicative and persuasive power that takes control of its listeners. It is "naturally"

eloquent and affecting, and is capable of "rais[ing]" and "promot[ing]" a designated emotion in the audience, and achieves a desired effect. In comparison, language is merely secondary and is only allowed "some degree" of the same emotional appeal.

It is of great consequence, then, that an orator fully masters the management of the tone of his voice. In a chapter on "Pronunciation," he writes: "to almost every sentiment we utter, more especially to every strong emotion, Nature hath adapted some peculiar tone of voice."[39] If the orator is able to deliver his discourse in the right tone of voice, he puts "Nature" on his side. Classical rhetoric, to be sure, has always stressed the importance of the management of the voice, as for instance Cicero says: "nothing is, in fact, so akin to our natural feelings as rhythms and the sounds of voices."[40] We may also recall that Demosthenes famously said that the first, second and third most important considerations in persuasion are all "delivery." Yet, when Blair stresses the importance of the appropriate use of the tones of voice in delivery, the observations make conceptual links with his primitivist belief in the eloquence of the primordial song, and they become part of a phonocentric alliance that defines the ideal form of persuasiveness. Blair confidently affirms that modulation of the voice is the key to emotional persuasion:

> [B]eyond doubt, nothing is of more importance. [. . . Delivery] is intimately connected with what is, or ought to be, the end of all Public Speaking, Persuasion[. . . . T]he tone of our voice, our looks, and gestures, interpret our ideas and emotions no less than words do; nay, the impression they make on others, is frequently much stronger than any that words can make. [. . .] The signification of our sentiments, made by tones and

> gestures, has this advantage above that made by words, that it is the language of nature. It is that method of interpreting our mind which nature has dictated to all, and which is understood by all; whereas, words are only arbitrary, conventional symbols of our ideas; and, by consequence, must make a more feeble impression.[41]

The physical and perceptual qualities such as the tone of voice and gestures are linked to the indubitable foundation of eloquence and persuasiveness, that of the "language of nature." The speaker, inspired and warmed by passion, gives vent to the emotions through a wide modulation of vocal tones and lively gestures, which complement and enhance the message conveyed by speech. The orator in this passage is a direct descendant of the primitive speaker as portrayed by Condillac, and the oratorical performance described here is a logical extension of the primitive signification where speeches were songs and dances, and a living incarnation of meanings.

Inherent also in the above passage is the assumption that natural signs are more eloquent than arbitrary and conventional signs. Natural signs have an "advantage" over conventional signs; they have been "dictated" to be meaningful whereas words are only "arbitrary" institutions; they leave a "much stronger" impression, but words "must make a more feeble impression"; and they are "understood by all" while words are dependent on the conventions of society. The primitivist logic thus determines that natural signs of vocal tones and gestures are guaranteed to be meaningful, get the message across better than words, and make more vivid impressions on the audience through sensory appeal. It also betrays Blair's rhetorical phonocentrism, for he

assumes that words are ultimately insufficient and unreliable means of communication unless they are assisted, augmented and given authority by the presence of the speaker. It is easy to deduce from this passage, then, that written words, from which the speaker is always absent, must make an even more "feeble" impression on the readers than spoken words do on the audience, and this is what Blair explicitly admits, as we shall see shortly. Yet, as a belletrist rhetorician and a primitivist, Blair has to attribute orality and its persuasiveness to written language, and this leads him to a theoretical predicament. Blair's phonocentrism and his emphasis on the importance of orality and "Pronunciation" indicate breaches in the logic of his primitivist rhetoric.

Throughout the *Lectures*, Blair's theory consistently advocates the eloquence of spoken discourse, and holds speech above writing. It is indeed a logical necessity of primitivism, which sees the golden age of language and the source of persuasiveness in the primordial "cry of passion." A primitivist text necessarily incorporates the denigration of writing into its logic as a predetermination, and oral expression must always be in a closer proximity to the source of meaningfulness, passions, than writing. As early as in Lecture Seven, "Rise and Progress of Language, and of Writing," this phonocentrist hierarchy is expressly stated:

> [S]poken Language has a great superiority over written Language, in point of energy or force. The voice of the living Speaker, makes an impression on the mind, much stronger than can be made by the perusal of any Writing. The tones of voice, the looks and gesture, which accompany discourse, and which no Writing can convey, render discourse, when it is well managed, infinitely more clear, and more expressive, than the most accurate Writing.

> For tones, looks, and gestures, are natural interpreters of the sentiments of the mind. They remove ambiguities; they enforce impressions; they operate on us by means of sympathy, which is one of the most powerful instruments of persuasion. Our sympathy is always awakened more, by hearing the Speaker, than by reading his works in our closet. Hence, though Writing may answer the purposes of mere instruction, yet all the great and high efforts of eloquence must be made, by means of spoken, not of written, Language.[42]

In this passage, Blair finds the securest and the ultimate foundation of persuasiveness in the "voice of the living Speaker" whose "tones, looks, and gestures" naturally express "the sentiments of the mind," and, as it were, enact the meaning from within. They are the expressions, or the lived worldly forms of the inner reality of the speaker, and it is their perceptible qualities that "enforce impressions" on the audience. As their meanings are warranted by nature, they never fail to convey their significance and arouse correspondent emotions in the audience, thereby activating "sympathy, which is one of the most powerful instruments of persuasion." The standard of eloquence is the strength of the impression left on the audience, and when compared in terms of "energy and force," speech is "infinitely more clear" than writing, and therefore "[s]poken Language has a great superiority over written Language." Blair's evaluation is thus decidedly in favour of "spoken Language," and speech is placed at an "infinitely" closer proximity to the signified than writing, and its persuasiveness by far surpasses that of written language.

Blair's declared phonocentrism is consolidated at various turns of argument in his

book. The privileged, necessary and original connection between the emotions and the vocal tones and gestures, we have seen, is implied throughout his primitivist theory of language. Elsewhere, in a chapter on the "Conduct of a Discourse," where he explains the technicalities of the traditional five parts of an oratorical discourse, he confirms: "There is obviously a contagion among the passions. [. . .] The internal emotion of the Speaker adds a pathos to his words, his looks, his gestures, and his whole manner, which exerts a power almost irresistible over those who hear him."[43] This "irresistible" persuasiveness is made possible through the "pathos" apparent in the speaker's manner of speaking, for it shows that he actually feels, and not fakes, his emotions. The cultivation of moral integrity and the consequent appearance of probity are highly commended in the speaker, as the genuine passions, he believes, cannot fail to move and persuade the audience by means of powerful sympathy, or "contagion." By the same token, when Blair advocates the importance of "enthusiasm, or warmth of any kind" in public speaking, he states: "Hence a discourse that is read, moves us less than one that is spoken, as having less the appearance of coming warm from the heart."[44] Having no recourse to the "language of nature" of tones and gestures, writing is at several removes from the internal truths, and therefore lacks "warmth" and persuasiveness, and by logical implication may even give the impression of coldness, calculation, insincerity, deceptiveness and manipulation. The source of credibility always lies in the "voice of the living Speaker," and at one point Blair even goes as far as saying: "to render words fully significant, they must, almost in every case, receive some aid from the manner of Pronunciation and Delivery."[45] Without the presence of

the speaker, so Blair's theory determines, words are only partly and insufficiently significant, and to make them entirely meaningful, they must be imbued with the authority of the speaking presence. This reminds us strongly of Plato's phonocentric view of written words as an illegitimate child, who constantly needs to be verified and sanctioned by the father-speaker.[46]

Syntactic structure as the surrogate voice

We have seen that Blair identifies the "voice of the living Speaker" as the ultimate and the securest means of emotional persuasion, and that in the course of the argument he disparages writing as being "infinitely" inferior to speech in its clarity, accuracy and expressiveness. Writing, then, has to be described as deprivation, loss, absence and weakness, and as being forever barred from the most effective means of persuasion. We have to admit, however, that this is a strange thesis to put forward for a chief member of the Scottish Enlightenment who committed himself to the improvement of society by cultivating literacy. It also goes against his stance as a belletrist rhetorician, whose aim is to cultivate and improve critical tastes for literature and good composition; it is clear that Blair in fact at least partially contradicts his doctrine of phonocentric hierarchy in his lectures on literary works by commenting warmly on the excellence of so many written poems and prose. We would now like to move on and see at what points in his argument Blair shows himself unable to contain the contradiction, and the ruptures in his logic become apparent.

If the living voice is the ultimate standard of eloquence, it seems logically

inevitable that the predicament of writing is never to be resolved. Blair's belletrist rhetoric, however, provides a remedy for writing which apparently saves it from the state of privation and loss. The following passage, taken from the lecture on "Structure of Sentences — Harmony," advances a solution that invests writing with a form of orality:

> What is requisite, therefore, is, that we previously fix, in our mind, a just idea of the general tone of sound which suits our subject; that is, which the sentiments we are to express, most naturally assume, and in which they most commonly vent themselves; whether round and smooth, or stately and solemn, or brisk and quick, or interrupted and abrupt. This general idea must direct the modulation of our periods; to speak in the style of music, must give us the key note, must form the ground of the melody.[47]

Here, we notice a curious mixture of writing and orality. At first, this passage reads as if it is about oratorical delivery as it talks about the "general tones of sound" that suit the subject. Whether it is "round and smooth, or stately and solemn," once the appropriate tone has been fixed, "the key note" is struck, the "ground of the melody" is formed, and we are able to "speak in the style of music." However, on a closer look at the passage, we notice that it is actually about "the modulation of our periods." Syntactic structure, Blair here propounds, serves as the equivalent of vocal tones and melodious voice, and is capable of endowing oral qualities and their persuasiveness even to a written discourse. It is clear that Blair had writing in his mind, or that at least he did not here make distinctions between written and spoken sentences, for he makes

this observation just after he mentioned Cicero,[48] and the lecture itself is literary, with full illustrations and quotations from the writings of Addison, Shaftesbury, Dryden and Milton. What can be deduced from the passage, then, is that the musical vocabulary and phrases such as "tone of sound," "key note," "ground of the melody" and "speak[ing] in the style of music" are metaphors for the appropriately and persuasively arranged members of sentences. Blair, then, is putting forward in this passage a way for writing to overcome the fundamental and necessary condition of deprived orality, and is stressing that syntax is the key for writing to be truly eloquent.

It is for this reason that Blair's rhetoric makes a special point of the structure of sentences, and affirms that stylistic merit depends more on syntactical arrangement than on choice of words, and that "in all writing and discourse, the proper composition and structure of Sentences is of the highest importance."[49] Blair takes as example a sentence from Swift's writing: "The Romans understood liberty, at least, as well as we." Blair points out that this sentence is ambiguous, for it is not clear whether Swift means that the one thing which the Romans understood as well as "we" is freedom, or that freedom was understood by the Romans as well as, or even better than, by us. If it were in spoken discourse, Blair says, the ambiguity would have been avoided by the placement of emphasis, for the first meaning would be conveyed by emphasising "liberty," and the second by "at least." As the second meaning is closer to Swift's contention, the written sentence should have been "The Romans understood liberty as well, at least, as we." Blair then speculates:

> [I]n common discourse, the tone and emphasis we use in pronouncing them [words], generally serves to show their reference, and to make the meaning clear; and hence, we acquire a habit of throwing them in loosely in the course of a period. But, in writing, where a man speaks to the eye, and not to the ear, he ought to be more accurate.[50]

In order to compensate for the lack of oratorical "tones and emphasis" to make the meaning clear, a writer needs to be particularly careful with the collocation of words and the arrangement of the members in a sentence. Indeed, most of Blair's corrections of sentences taken from Addison in *The Spectator* are about misplaced clauses and phrases, and suggest transposition as remedies. Syntax, thus, is the written equivalent of vocal tones, and it makes a sentence "[speak] to the eye," and comply with the phonocentric values of Blair's theory.

Syntaxes of languages —— Blair's aporia

Syntax, thus, is a written equivalent of vocal tones and melodious inflections of the oratorical voice. Although, as we have pointed out, Blair contradicts his doctrine by his practice and gives appreciative readings of written prose works, his theoretical formulation still remains phonocentric. Syntax is indeed a pharmakon, for it is a way of attributing speech-like effect to writing, and at the same time reduces writing to a secondary status as pseudo-speech. Blair's observations on syntax lead him to compare and contrast ancient and modern languages, chiefly ancient Greek, Latin and English, and discuss the characteristics, merits and shortcomings, of these languages.

In doing so, Blair's narrative betrays a curious rupture in his phonocentric teleology that upholds the ultimate persuasiveness of the musicality of the voice. Syntax is a remedy for writing as it supplements the absence of the voice, but at the same time it paradoxically makes writing even more "written," as we now set out to demonstrate.

Syntax is of great consequence for Blair because word arrangement faithfully reflects the speaker's or writer's course of mind during the process of thinking. Syntaxes of earlier languages, we recall, assumed "whatever order was most agreeable to the speaker's imagination."[51] Blair is particularly full on this point when he discusses the character of the Latin language. "The Romans," Blair writes, "generally arranged their words according to the order in which the ideas rose in the speaker's imagination," making the Latin syntax particularly vigorous and "animated." The Latin language, then, is capable of a faithful and lively representation of the speaker's contention, and "[s]uch an arrangement is precisely putting into words the gesture."[52] This is why Blair thinks that syntax can replace tones of voice in writing. An appropriately structured sentence, therefore, has nearly overcome the predicament of the absence of natural language of tones and gestures, and can be almost as expressive, reliable, unambiguous and persuasive as the "voice of the living Speaker" even when it is written down.

Blair cites Cicero's sentences as an example to show how the persuasiveness of oral performance can be captured in writing, and says that Cicero's "strength" of sentences is due to his characteristic method, which is "to make the members of them [sentences] go on rising and growing in their importance above one another. This sort

of arrangement is called a Climax, and is always considered as a beauty in composition. [. . . H]e [Cicero] makes both the sense and the sound rise together, with a very magnificent swell."[53] Cicero, a master of periodic sentences, is particularly suitable for illustration, as he himself emphasises the importance of a premeditated and well-structured sentence in *On the Ideal Orator*, saying: "you should form your speech according to this rule of rhythm [. . .] by using the pen, which, in other areas but also in this one, contributes a great deal to our distinction and polish."[54] The skilful syntactical management of words and phrases, Blair says, enables the coordination of "the sense and the sound [to] rise together," and the overall effect is that of a written sentence "speak[ing] to the eye." Further elaborating on the "harmonious arrangement" of appropriately placed members in a sentence, Blair writes: "Sense has its own harmony, as well as sound; and, where the sense of a Period is expressed with clearness, force, and dignity, it will seldom happen but the words will strike the ear agreeably." The structure of a sentence, thus, is the key to the happy correspondence between the sense and the sound. A sentence which has achieved this near-perfect unity of content and form is described as having achieved a "melody" and "music of Sentences."[55] In Blair's phonocentric logic, it is in an orator's voice that the perfect correspondence between the sense and the sound is achieved, so a period that gives an equivalent impression indeed "speak[s] in the style of music." A well-structured sentence, Blair thus emphasises, gives the impression of orality inhabiting writing.

Blair consistently advocates the eloquence of a sentence whose structure vividly and accurately represents the workings of the speaker's mind, and maintains that it is

the "[p]repositions and conjunctions," called "Connectives," that are of vital importance in forming such a sentence:

> It is abundantly evident, that all these connective particles must be of the greatest use in Speech; seeing they point out the relations and transitions by which the mind passes from one idea to another. They are the foundation of all reasoning[. . .]. The more that any nation is improved by science, and the more perfect their Language becomes, we may naturally expect, that it will abound more with connective particles; expressing relations of things, and transitions of thought, which had escaped a grosser view. Accordingly, no Tongue is so full of them as the Greek, in consequence of the acute and subtile genius of that refined people. In every Language, much of the beauty and strength of it depends on the proper use of conjunctions, prepositions, and those relative pronouns.[56]

Blair stresses the importance of "connective particles" such as "conjunctions, prepositions and [. . .] relative pronouns" in the construction of sentences. They are of vital importance in producing the "beauty and strength" of sentences, for they show the process in which "the mind passes from one idea to another." The use of connective particles, thus, is of utmost consequence in achieving the effect of persuasive orality, the "voice of the living Speaker," with written language through their functions of connecting the members and forming a well-structured sentence. As the reasoning faculty improves with the progress of sciences and language comes to trace a complex and subtle, nevertheless smooth, thought processes, the linguistic system will develop more "connective particles." In this way, they are a test of the progress of a

civilisation. The importance of connective particles cannot be emphasised too much, Blair seems to have thought. Several lectures later, he recapitulates: "These little words, *but, and, which, whose, where,* &c. are frequently the most important words of any; they are the joints or hinges upon which all Sentences turn, and, of course, [. . .] both of their gracefulness and strength, must depend upon such particles."[57]

The vigorousness and subtlety of a thinking mind and a syntax that reflects its movement cannot fail to give the impression of beauty, gracefulness and strength to the readers, and in a spoken discourse, to the audience. In Greek and Latin, Blair writes, sentence structures were more expressive of thought processes than in modern languages, and more like "putting into words the gesture." In a lecture where he discusses the "Structure of Language" or the "General Grammar," he compares the grammatical system of modern languages, especially English, with those of Greek and Latin, and considers which factors give each language its peculiar character.[58] Speaking about conjugations and declensions in the classical languages, which are the "marks of relation [between words] incorporated with the words themselves" as they indicate, by the forms of their words and not by the locations in a sentence, the subject and the object of a verb, and the combination of an adjective and a noun, Blair writes:

> [T]he structure of the Greek and Roman sentences, by the government of their nouns and verbs, presented the meaning so interwoven and compounded in all its parts, as to make us perceive it in one united view. The closing words of the period ascertained the relation of each member to another; and all that ought to be connected in our idea, appeared connected in the expression. Hence, more brevity, more vivacity, more force [than

> English]. That luggage of particles [. . .], which we are obliged always to carry along with us, both clogs style, and enfeebles sentiment.[59]

Blair maintains that Greek and Latin languages brought out the meanings of sentences in clear and concise forms, making the readers or the audience "perceive" them, to a great persuasive effect. The contention was represented in a tightly-knit sentence structure, whose syntactical relations between words were unequivocally "incorporated" in the words themselves. The close connections between words reflected the close connections between ideas, and what was in the mind of the speaker immediately "appeared" in the sentence, "in one united view." The sentences were thus an embodiment of the meaning, and were in intimate proximity to the source of meaningfulness, the mind, and therefore the expression had "more brevity, more vivacity, more force." Greek and Latin were wholly free from mediation, mitigation and division, in contrast to English, which is subject to all these, and therefore is by constitutive necessity "clog[ged]," extended, desultory, enervated and "enfeeble[d]."

The Greek and Latin syntaxes accurately reflect the movement of the speaker's mind, and embody the contention with their well-organised members that are closely connected to each other. As a written equivalent of the natural language of tones and gestures, their syntax is expressive of the inner reality of the speaker, without "enfeebl[ing] the sentiment." They allow "the sense and the sound [to] rise together" and are therefore ideal vehicles for "speak[ing] in the style of music." Greek and Latin languages were conducive to such "musical structure of discourse" and "Harmony of

Period" in several respects:

> [T]he ancient Languages, I mean the Greek and the Roman, were much more susceptible than ours, of the graces and the powers of melody. The quantities of their syllables were more fixed and determined; their words were longer, and more sonorous; their method of varying the terminations of nouns and verbs, both introduced a greater variety of liquid sounds, and freed them from that multiplicity of little auxiliary words which we are obliged to employ; and, what is of the greatest consequence, the inversions which their Languages allowed, gave them the power of placing their words in whatever order was most suited to a musical arrangement.[60]

According to this passage, the aural merits of the ancient languages were chiefly of two kinds; one is the result of syntactical flexibility, and the other is the euphoniousness of the vocabulary. As the declensions and conjugations mark the syntactical relations between words, Greek and Latin speakers were able to transpose words freely, and to the greatest musical effect, without confounding the meaning. The sound of their words was pleasant to the ear for their quantity as well as for their quality, and created music with its long and harmonious pronunciation, measured rhythm, and mellow and liquid sounds. Blair writes elsewhere that for the same reasons Greek and Latin had no need of rhyme in verse, for the "melody of verse" was easily and comfortably sustained without its aid, and was perfectly expressive solely through its inverted syntax and sonorous words.[61]

These ancient languages, then, enjoyed "the graces and the powers of melody" as the supreme means of expressing the sentiments of the speaker, and addressing the

passions of the audience. Blair's orator found the perfect linguistic medium in Greek and Latin. Sonorous and euphonious words and phrases were placed in a "musical arrangement," and in such an order so as to bear a rhythmical proportion to each other. The ancient oration, accompanied by animated tones and gestures, was the verbally rendered realisation of "language of nature" at its most eloquent state. It absolutely commanded the emotions of the audience, and aroused their sympathy. Blair writes about the "musical and gesticulating pronunciation" of the ancient orators with scarcely concealed amazement and fascination: "Our modern pronunciation must have appeared to them [the Greeks and the Romans] a lifeless monotony. The declamation of their orators, and the pronunciation of their actors upon the stage, approached to the nature of recitative in music; was capable of being marked in notes, and supported with instruments."[62]

Greek and Roman languages, thus, represented what was most desirable in a rhetorical discourse. The English language, by contrast, is destitute of such merits. English, we have heard Blair complain, are weighed down by the "luggage of particles" and are "clog[ged]" and "enfeeble[d]." Instead of the animated, vigorous and vivacious expressions, English is monotonous, "lifeless," enervated and disjointed. In place of the flexible syntax and the full and swelling harmony of the sound and the sense, English suffers from a narrow, fixed and determined syntax, and a rapid and hurried pronunciation. Its clarity of meaning has to be compromised or sacrificed if musicality is to be achieved. Greek and Roman languages easily accommodate the persuasiveness of the living speaker in their written discourses, whereas English

speakers are never as eloquent, and their persuasiveness is ill represented in their writing. Blair complains: "[o]ur words [. . .] straggle, if we may so speak, asunder from each other; and do not coalesce so naturally in the structure of a sentence, as the words in the Greek and Roman Tongues."[63] He even goes as far as saying: "in a syntax so narrow and confined as ours, there is nothing which demands attention" and hence English writing was never "an object of art."[64] Blair's phonocentrist ideals at this point in his argument lead him to condemn his own language, though his commitment to Scottish Enlightenment ideals should imply linguistic improvement as part of the overall development of society.

We are now ready to ask a fundamental question and investigate whether Blair is not contradicting his own doctrine by his practice. In the earlier part of the *Lectures*, where he sets down the principles of his theories, his primitivism seems to convince him that English is not an ideal language for oral eloquence. "[English] is, indeed, naturally prolix; owing to the great number of particles and auxiliary verbs which we are obliged constantly to employ; and this prolixity must, in some degree, enfeeble it. We seldom can express so much by one word as was done [. . .] in the Greek and Roman Languages. [Our style . . .] make[s] a fainter impression when we utter them."[65] He repeatedly stresses the lack of vigour and energy as the constitutive and immanent character of the English language. His logic then takes him to a point where it becomes necessary to denounce English writing, as we have seen, because of its incapacity to accommodate orality or its compensation, that is, unfettered musical arrangement. However, what he does in the rest of the *Lectures* is nothing but to

uphold writing and try to invest writing with musicality, orality and the persuasiveness of the speaker who arouses passions and sympathy in the readers. He equips his theory with many exemplary quotations from English literary works, and so towards the end of the book he can confidently write: "it is to be regretted, that the English Language, in which there is much good writing, furnishes us, however, with but very few recorded examples of eloquent Public Speaking."[66] Blair thus seems to refute his own previous contention by concluding that the strength of English lies in writing. Such apparent contradiction has puzzled Ulman: "This shift [in emphasis] from spoken to written language may explain in part why Blair's lectures on [the origin and structure of] language appear less fully integrated into his lectures [on style] than, say, Campbell's."[67] The divide between spoken and written languages is, as we have already seen, is not clear-cut, and the "shift" of focus in Blair's argument in fact connects the two forms of language through the fundamental rhetorical interest. However, Blair does certainly struggle to reconcile the two antithetical demands: the denunciation of writing that his primitivism dictates and his mission to vindicate writing as a belletrist rhetorician.

In addition, we may also point out that there are times when Blair's phonocentric doctrine puts pressure on his overall argument, opening up breaches in his logic. Let us take for example Blair's treatment of connective particles. In one of the previous quotations, we note that "the great number" of particles, along with auxiliary verbs, are blamed as the reasons for making English "prolix" and "enfeeble[d]," and therefore capable of making only "a fainter impression" in being uttered. In contrast to

conjugations and declensions that help to present the meaning in "one united view," particles divide sentences into small members and even smaller units of words, making the meaning appear disjointed, thereby depriving utterances of energy. This contention is substantiated at different points in his argument. We have already seen that Blair complained of how the "luggage of particles [. . .] both clogs style, and enfeebles sentiment." Particles are responsible for obstructing swift, forceful and spontaneous expression, and for making style heavy, languid, confined and enervated. Elsewhere, Blair emphasises: "our constant use of prepositions for expressing the relations of things, we have filled Language with a multitude of those little words, which are eternally occurring in every sentence, and may be thought thereby to have encumbered Speech, by an addition of terms; and by rendering it more prolix, to have enervated its force." He continues: by abolishing cases of nouns and employing instead "those little words" such as prepositions, "we have certainly rendered the sound of Language less agreeable to the ear [. . .] and deprived ourselves of that liberty of transposition in the arrangement of words, which the Antient Languages enjoyed." Particles are not only to blame for a lethargic sentence that drags along, but also for depriving language of euphony and musicality, by banishing declensions and their beautiful variety in sounds, and by making syntax stiff and rigid. Blair calls the impact on syntax "the most material disadvantage,"[68] for, we have been informed, a well-organised syntax is the key for achieving the impression of a sentence as an embodiment of meaning, and the speaker's mind incarnate. Particles are thus the enemies of primitivist ideals, and are the obvious signs of deterioration and falling off

from the golden age of speech.

This, however, is in stark contrast to what Blair affirmed shortly before with regard to the Greek language. We recall Blair's words when he praised "connective particles" for their "greatest use in Speech" as "the foundation of all reasoning." They were even characterised as the touchstone of the achievement of a civilisation: "[t]he more that any nation is improved by science, and the more perfect their Language becomes, [. . .] it will abound more with connective particles." Also, "conjunctions, prepositions and those relative pronouns" are symptomatic of "acute and subtile" minds, and are the sources of "much of the beauty and strength" of language. Blair thus seems to take an ambivalent and self-contradictory approach to connective particles. How can these, which in English are regarded as cumbersome "luggage," that enervate and enfeeble style, completely change their role in the Greek language to become the mark of civilisation, improvement, refinement, beauty and strength? In English, particles were the chief reason for making the language prolix and thus unfit for oral presentation. In Greek, however, particles are the incarnations of thought processes, and are vital for a sentence in achieving the effect of the voice of the living speaker. Particles, then, are at the same time the bane and the life of orality. In English, particles steer language away from orality into writing. In Greek, particles help achieve orality within writing.

Another example where Blair's phonocentric primitivism betrays fissures in his theory is his discussion of musicality in sentences. Blair's primitivism, we have seen, upholds the concept of song as the instance of genuine expressiveness which guarantees

ultimate persuasiveness through its medium of the "language of nature" and its irresistible appeal to the passions. In order to recreate this effect, we have also been informed, the proper arrangement of members in a sentence is an absolute necessity. When the contention of the sentence has been grasped by the writer, he will let nature dictate the appropriate tone, and will construct the sentences so that the cadence of the sentence suits the particular tone, thereby achieving the impression of speaking "in the style of music." Thus, for Blair's primitivist rhetoric the metaphor of music represented the ideal state where the content and the form were merged into one, and the signifier was the living embodiment of the signified. Musical vocabulary such as tone, harmony and melody were employed to describe the blissful ideality which sentences should aim to achieve. Blair, we recall, rhapsodised: "Man is both a Poet, and a Musician, by nature."

However, at several points in his argument, Blair expresses a different view towards musicality:

> Men departed from Nature; and sought to give a beauty or force, as they imagined, to their Discourse, by substituting certain studied musical tones, in the room of the genuine expressions of sentiment, which the voice carries in natural Discourse. Let every Public Speaker guard against this error. [. . .] Follow Nature: consider how she teaches you to utter any sentiment or feeling of your heart.[69]

Here, "studied musical tones" are condemned as being contrary to the principles of Nature. While vocal tones are dictated by nature and therefore "genuine" and

unfailing in their beauty and persuasiveness, those public speakers who have deviated from nature must "give" artificial "beauty and force" to their discourse. They have to "substitut[e]" natural and "genuine" persuasiveness with "studied musical tones," which can only be arbitrary and no more than "imagined," as they are deviations from nature. Such musicality is an "error," and they must be avoided by all means. Blair's guarded attitude towards musicality strongly implies his distrust towards its possible artificiality, falsity, disguise, contrivance and its appearance of "force and beauty" that conceals weakness, enervation and lifelessness.

Elsewhere too, Blair warns against the excessive attention to the "music of Sentences": although a certain degree of attention is necessary, "it must also be kept within proper bounds [. . . . A]t least, a very moderate attention is all that is requisite for making the cadence of such a Period pleasing: and the effect of greater attention is often no other, than to render composition languid and enervated."[70] Blair thus advises caution in using musicality in discourse, and recommends "a very moderate" and spare recourse to it. Musicality, if carried to excess, leads to "languid and enervated" expressions, and Blair sounds as if he is afraid of the potential indulgence and hypnosis in the power of music. The figure who represents this pernicious side of music is Isocrates. Blair writes: "The Style of Isocrates [. . .] is swelling and full; and he is said to be the first who introduced the method of composing in regular periods, which had a studied music and harmonious cadence; a manner which he has carried to a vicious excess." Blair condemns his style as "too destitute of vigour. [. . . H]is orations are calculated only for the shade [. . . . With] that swelling and musical style,

[. . .] Cicero himself was, perhaps, somewhat infected."[71] The style of Isocrates is representative of the evils of music, and he is accused for being "destitute of vigour," "calculat[ing]," "vicious," "infecting" and generally confining itself to "the shade." With the figure of Isocrates, we are reminded how far we have come from the other aspect of music that Blair hypothesised. In the primitivist utopia, music was almost the direct opposite of what Isocrates embodies; music was the sign of genuine sentiment, wholesome energy and creativity, spontaneous expression, and primitive effusion of life itself. Musicality in discourse is thus a paradox, or a double-edged sword in Blair's theory that on the one hand guarantees persuasion, and on the other hand corrodes conviction and undermines persuasion.

The Platonic problem of the written voice was thus a main concern for Blair's belletrist rhetoric. He employed the primitivist logic and its vocabulary prevalent in the eighteenth century to address this issue. His primitivism presented a vision where the primordial song was the supreme instance of expressive eloquence, and the song, through its medium of "language of nature," directly appealed to the passions of the audience. In arousing the emotions, we have seen, the oral performance of the living speaker with varied tones of voice and expressive gestures were particularly effective. As written language cannot rely on such means, Blair stressed the importance of syntax in achieving a similar effect. However, at this critical moment Blair's primitivism betray breaches. "Connective particles" and musical arrangement of members, both of which are indispensable for forming a well-structured sentence, have double and paradoxical functions in his primitivism. Firstly, in Greek, particles join members

together to form a euphonious and vigorous sentence. In English, however, they clog the style and enfeeble the sentences with their wordiness. Secondly, music in sentences is upheld as the sign of harmonious arrangement of members, and thus the nearest recreation of the primordial song through writing. At different points in Blair's argument, however, music shows its darker side as the opposite of Nature, as an enervation, calculation, affectation and infectiousness. Thus, while Blair's primitivism with its inherent phonocentrism holds his rhetoric lectures together, it also distorts and fissures the argument, and Blair's *Lectures* is led to contradict itself at the above two stress points which are also the crux of its argument.

Blair tackled the Platonic problem of the written voice from the point of view of primitivism and in particular his focus on the importance of syntax. Yet, as we have seen, his argument was not conclusive. Can the rhetorical challenge of merging the voice and writing find a solution in Blair's *Lectures*? In order to investigate this question in Chapter Four, we will first turn to another primitivist text, Rousseau's *Essay on the Origin of Languages*, and Derrida's discussion of it and examine how these two thinkers address the issue of voice and writing.

[1] Land 21.
[2] Aarsleff, *Study* 17.
[3] The impact made by Condillac's theory of genealogy of semiosis on eighteenth century philosophies of language and related areas is fully explored by Aarsleff. Aarsleff, *From Locke* 146-224. Yamaguchi identifies Condillac as the founding figure of modern semiotics. Yamaguchi ii.
[4] Herder 88.
[5] Aarsleff, *From Locke* 147-8.
[6] Rousseau, *Essay* 574 n. 74. In *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality*, Rousseau mentions Condillac as the first thinker on this problem. Rousseau, *Ningen*, 84.
[7] Condillac II 17-8. This mythical depiction of origin was not meant as a historical reconstruction of the past, but as a theoretical testing ground for Condillac's empiricism. Yamaguchi 247-8, Aarsleff, *From Locke*, 163.
[8] Condillac II 24-30.
[9] Rousseau, *Essay* 314.
[10] Rousseau, *Essay* 317-8.
[11] Rousseau *Essay*, 576 n. 103, 577 n. 112.
[12] Neubauer 9.
[13] Thomas 16.
[14] Ferreira-Buckley explains how Blair was innovative in his approach to style, which he understood to be "the peculiar manner in which a man expresses his conceptions." Blair departed from the traditional view of style as "clothes of thought" and reconfigured stylistic analysis as a study of individual psyche and "author's manner of thinking," which characterises Blair's rhetoric as a study of literature in the modern sense. Ferreira-Buckley, "Hugh Blair" 27-8.
[15] Struever 238-41. The terms "conversable world" and "learned world" are Hume's. Agnew makes a controversial point and argues that Blair's notion of taste defines it as a form of civic virtue and connects it to the public, communal and oratorical culture rather than private and subjective appreciation of written literary texts. Agnew 25, 30, 34. While I agree with the public function of taste, I tend to think that Blair's orality is better described as being more conversational than oratorical. Halloran writes that Blair "regendered" the Quintilian ideal of an orator as "vir bonus" and re-styled rhetoric, like Adam Smith, to suit the taste of the "conversation of ladies." Halloran, 192.
[16] The hostility towards Donne and Restoration playwrights was shared by David Hume, who, according to Costelloe, sided with Locke's denunciation of figures and condemned the ornamental and artificial styles of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Costelloe, *British* 62.
[17] According to Corbett, Blair is the only critic in the eighteenth century to

carry out stylistic corrections, sentence by sentence, to an entire essay. Corbett, "Hugh Blair" 7.

[18] Blair, *Lectures* 56. Rousseau's work mentioned by Blair is *Inequality* and not *Essay*. *Essay* was posthumously published in 1781, which means that there is little time between the publications of *Essay* and Blair's *Lectures*. The first part of *Inequality* contains a primitivist account of language origins. Rousseau, *Ningen* 83-.

[19] Ong describes Blair's primitivist approach to literature as "universalist," which views "individual languages [. . . as] specific variants" of a "hypothetical generic language." Ong, *Barbarian* 199.

[20] Olivia Smith characterises Blair as one of the politically conservative theorists whose books betray an elitist bias in favour of the socially privileged. She says that Blair "dismissed" impassioned style as "primitive both morally and intellectually," and asserts that his book "mak[es] a language considered adequate for public discourse more difficult to learn." Smith, Olivia 29. I find this observation very unconvincing and one-sided. Blair was clearly fascinated with primitive styles even if they went against his neoclassicist doctrine of clarity, politeness and refinement. His Enlightenment affiliations and Scottish background, in the meantime, urged him to promote simple and perspicuous style as accessible and useful among those who had been excluded from the status quo.

[21] Blair, *Lectures* 68.

[22] Blair, *Lectures* 56-7.

[23] Blair did not know Gaelic, and he only knew Hebrew poetry through Robert Lowth. To mention Greek and Latin as instances of ancient languages was also done by Rousseau, and Adam Smith in his "Considerations Concerning the First Formation of Languages."

[24] Blair, *Lectures* 58-60.

[25] Blair, *Lectures* 60-1.

[26] Blair, *Lectures* 65-6.

[27] Blair, *Lectures* 425.

[28] Wordsworth and Coleridge 246.

[29] Blair, *Lectures* 430.

[30] Blair, *Lectures* 400, 396-7.

[31] Blair, *Lectures* 416.

[32] Blair, *Lectures* 203.

[33] Blair, *Lectures* 273, 276-7.

[34] Blair, *Lectures* 430-1.

[35] Blair, *Lectures* 426.

[36] Blair, *Lectures* 427.

[37] Blair, *Lectures* 51.

[38] Blair, *Lectures* 132.

[39] Blair, *Lectures* 375.

[40] Cicero 285, 3. 197.

[41] Blair, *Lectures* 368.
[42] Blair, *Lectures* 74.
[43] Blair, *Lectures* 363.
[44] Blair, *Lectures* 267.
[45] Blair, *Lectures* 368.
[46] Probyn also thinks that the above quotation about the "voice of the living speaker" reads "like a paraphrase from the *Phaedrus*." He argues, borrowing de Man's distinction between allegory and symbol, that Blair's reliance on the body and corporeality for effective and meaningful utterance (symbol) runs counter to his Enlightenment teleology that upholds the alphabet over ideogram as the more civilised and developed form of writing (allegory). Probyn 263-4.
[47] Blair, *Lectures* 140.
[48] Cicero stressed the importance of writing to improve speech. "What is most fundamental, however, is something that, to be honest, we do least of all (for it involves a great deal of effort, which most of us try to avoid) — I mean writing as much as possible." Cicero 91, 1. 150.
[49] Blair, *Lectures* 110.
[50] Blair, *Lectures* 113.
[51] Blair, *Lectures* 66.
[52] Blair, *Lectures* 65-7.
[53] Blair, *Lectures* 126-7.
[54] Cicero 283, 3. 190. Cicero also says "[i]t is the pen, the pen, that is the best and most eminent teacher and creator of speaking." Cicero 91, 1. 150.
[55] Blair, *Lectures* 138-9.
[56] Blair, *Lectures* 90-1.
[57] Blair, *Lectures* 122.
[58] Blair, *Lectures* 75.
[59] Blair, *Lectures* 83.
[60] Blair, *Lectures* 134.
[61] Blair, *Lectures* 435.
[62] Blair, *Lectures* 59.
[63] Blair, *Lectures* 93.
[64] Blair, *Lectures* 96.
[65] Blair, *Lectures* 94.
[66] Blair, *Lectures* 385.
[67] Ulman 134.
[68] Blair, *Lectures* 82.
[69] Blair, *Lectures* 376.
[70] Blair, *Lectures* 138-9.
[71] Blair, *Lectures* 271-2.

Chapter Three
Speech, Writing and the Musical Voice: Rousseau's Primitivism and Derrida's *Of Grammatology*

Blair's theory of language and eloquence, as we have seen in the last chapter, is strongly informed by a primitivist narrative. Language started first as a cry of passion, so it was naturally and unequivocally linked to its semantic content, the passion. As such, primitive language was an ideal signifier that enjoyed a privileged connection with the signified. Primitive language was also blessed with melodious pronunciation and syntax that accurately represented the movement of the speaker's mind, so it was, as it were, a living embodiment of the speaker's psyche. This primitivist assumption led Blair to highlight the importance of syntax and musicality as chief instruments of persuasion. Blair's theory, however, betrayed its phonocentric bias and its logical flaw when considered from the point of view of the rhetorical paradox of the written voice. In this chapter, we shall turn to another eighteenth-century primitivist text, Rousseau's *Essay on the Origin of Languages*. It is an extended speculation about the primordial eloquence of primitive speech, and it shares many ideas and motifs with Blair's *Lectures*. At the same time, the *Essay* is more deeply rooted in the context of music criticism than Blair's rhetoric, so it has more to say about the connection between sound and passions, which Blair tends to take for granted as a "natural" link. In addition, the *Essay*'s phonocentric logic and its treatment of writing inspired

Derrida's *Of Grammatology*. By closely reading the *Essay* alongside Derrida's *Of Grammatology*, we would like to further explore the rhetorical problem of orality and writing. An examination of Derrida's critique of Rousseau's phonocentrism, in the meantime, will reveal the unique achievement of Rousseau's primitivist ideals.

Musical mimesis and language

The full title of Rousseau's *Essay* is *Essay on the Origin of Languages: in Which Melody and Musical Imitation are Treated*. Like Blair, it builds upon Condillac's myth of linguistic origin and argues that the primitive speech was an offspring of the passionate cry, and that the primordial speech and song were inseparable. The parallels drawn between speech and song, and language and music, we would like to note, gained a particular momentum from Rousseau's musical background as a composer and a theorist. As a critic, Rousseau was writing within the context of a long-standing tradition of discourses concerning musical mimesis, and the concept, along with primitivism, constitutes the basic assumptions that inform his language theory, as we shall see in due course. Before we go into the details of the discussion of the *Essay* and Derrida's reading of it, we would first like to explore the concept of musical mimesis, and ascertain where Rousseau stands in the field of aesthetic criticism in which discourses on music and language intersect with and influence each other. Discussion about musical mimesis, as we shall see shortly, necessitated a radical questioning about the nature of the efficacies of music and language,

highlighting the issue of audience response, which will be the subject of Chapter Four in our inquiry.

Since the time of classical antiquity, music has been considered to have a privileged access to the human passions, and parallels have been drawn between language and music for their mysterious powers to express and arouse certain emotions. For instance, we find discussions of alliances between people's characters and styles of music in Plato's *Republic*.[1] Cicero too asserts that "nothing is, in fact, so akin to our natural feelings as rhythms and the sounds of voices" and mentions the unparalleled powers of songs and music to sway the passions.[2] Certain states of mind were considered to be naturally linked to certain tones of voice, and it was thus believed that music had a capacity not only to express and address but also to represent emotions. Music as such, then, was a discourse made of signs; its signification was analogous to that of language.

The application of this "verbal paradigm" to music was most widely practiced in eighteenth-century France, and was frequently a matter of discussion in the fields of aesthetic criticism, philosophy and social sciences among writers such as Dubos, Batteux, Chabanon, Condillac and the Enlightenment thinkers such as Diderot, d'Alembert and Rousseau.[3] In particular, Dubos's *Critical Reflections on Poetry, Painting and Music* is the first significant work that focused on the parallel cases of semiosis of the arts, treating music alongside poetry and painting.[4] According to Dubos, musicians imitate the tones of human voice, accent, pauses and modulation of

vocal pitch, all of which are "signs instituted by nature." These natural signs "have a surprizing power of moving us," which they derive "from nature itself." Dubos goes still further; music imitates not only passions, but also external objects. A symphony, for instance, imitates a tempest using "modulation, harmony, and *rhythmus*," and by these means makes "almost the same impression upon us, as would arise from the very sound they imitate."[5] Dubos is thus fully convinced of music's capacity for tone painting. Musical mimesis does not necessarily directly represent external objects, but it works by exploiting music's power to address the listener's mind and creating the desired effects by giving impressions.

The concept of musical mimesis was fully embraced by Rousseau too, but with slight modifications. He singles out "Melody, [which] by imitating the inflections of the voice, expresses complaints, cries of sadness or of joy [. . . . Melody] not only imitates, it speaks." Of mimetic representations of external nature by melody Rousseau says: "Melody does in music precisely what design does in painting [. . .]. Now, what makes painting an imitative art? It is design. What makes music another? It is melody." Elsewhere, he emphasises: "[music will] agitate the sea, fan the flames of a blaze, make streams run, [. . .] and spread from the orchestra a renewed freshness over the groves."[6] Rousseau, thus, stands firmly in the traditional doctrine of art as mimesis, and music for him is a system of signs, just like language, with a referential function that represents both external and internal natures.

Eighteenth-century Britain, on the other hand, was on the whole sceptical of the

representational powers of music. Among various aesthetic critics who commented on the issue of musical mimesis, James Harris, James Beattie and Adam Smith are often regarded as the landmarks.[7] Harris was one of the first to voice his doubts about the validity of the concept of mimesis to account for musical experience. In "A Discourse on Music, Painting, and Poetry," he asserted that music's capacity of imitation is limited, and that it is only "such THINGS and INCIDENTS, *as are most eminently characterised by* MOTION and SOUND" that music imitates, and that even then "Music does but *imperfectly* imitate [them]" because of the "*Dissimilitude*" between the medium and the represented object, that is, musical sounds and natural sounds and motions.[8] Harris thus pointed out limitations in musical mimesis both in the narrow range of representable objects as well as in the quality and accuracy of representation. James Beattie took a step further and boldly declared that "I would strike it [music] off the list of imitative arts." The pleasure of music, Beattie argues, is derived "not because it is imitative, but because certain melodies and harmonies have an aptitude to raise certain passions, affections, and sentiments of the soul."[9] According to Beattie, the causes of the aesthetic and emotional effects of music can be tracked down to the structural and relational elements of melodies and harmonies, and their merits are to be described not in relation to represented objects but in relation to the psychology of the listeners.

Beattie's formalistic and what we may be allowed to call a proto-hermeneutic approach to musical experience was most clearly articulated by Adam Smith in his

essay on the imitative arts. In the section where Smith discusses musical mimesis of instrumental music, he quotes the above passage we have seen from Rousseau and quips: “[the musician] ‘will sometimes, not only agitate the waves of the sea, blow up the flames of a conflagration [. . .].’ Upon this very eloquent description of Mr. Rousseau I must observe [. . . that] the instrumental Music of the orchestr[a] could produce none of the effects which are here ascribed to it.”[10] Smith thus flatly denies even the possibility of musical imitation while acknowledging music’s power to address and sway the passions and moods. The chief pleasure of music, Smith contends, takes place in the perception of musical structure, and is therefore purely formal:

> A well-composed concerto of instrumental Music, by the number and variety of the instruments, by the variety of the parts which are performed by them, and the perfect concord or correspondence of all these different parts; by the exact harmony or coincidence of all the different sounds which are heard at the same time, and by that happy variety of measure which regulates the succession of those which are heard at different times, presents an object so agreeable, so various, and so interesting, that alone, and without suggesting any other object, either by imitation or otherwise, it can occupy, and as it were fill up, completely the whole capacity of the mind, so as to leave no part of its attention vacant for thinking of any thing else.[11]

This is a finely chiselled and at the same time wonderfully evocative description of a mind appreciating a musical piece, and we get a very real sense of the kind of pleasure

Smith was experiencing while listening to a musical composition. Smith gives a detailed analysis of the aesthetic pleasure derived from music. He first mentions the acoustic variety of different musical instruments, each of which is allotted a part in a symphony. From such discrimination of sounds and melody he moves on to their combination, which forms "the perfect concord or correspondence." Musical perception is a complex yet seamless procedure of blending and separating. He next focuses on the harmony of these varied sounds which are "heard at the same time," and the rhythm or measure that control the successive sounds "heard at different times." Smith thus highlights the synchronic and diachronic natures, or we may say paradigmatic and syntactical natures, of musical pleasure. All of these musical components are put together to form an "object" of perception. It is the dynamic and formal structure of music that is the object of Smith's aesthetic aural appreciation, and it is so "agreeable," pleasant and "interesting" that the mind is entirely occupied in tracing and sorting out while taking in the entirety of its subtle and varied correspondences. Music as such, Smith affirms, does not require any objects external to its patterns and correspondences of sounds. Musical pleasure is here completely dissociated from imitation in Rousseau's sense. It is independent even from emotions and passions in Beattie's sense. For Smith, it is rather the differentiation and combination of musical patterns devoid of any meanings that produces musical perception.[12]

As Kevin Barry argued, eighteenth-century British speculations about the issue

of musical mimesis and the nature of the musical sign broke new ground in aesthetic theories, and became a prototype for textual appreciation including linguistic texts. While the theory of musical mimesis presupposes an original and natural link between sounds and emotions or objects, Smith's notions of music presupposes no stable and essential link between the signifier and the signified, and envisions music as a system of relations that has no referential link to external objects. A musical piece is a play of differences acted out in time, and its significance is produced in the constant qualifications and modifications that musical notes and phrases receive from one another simultaneously in harmony, and consecutively in melody. The psychological effect, as Smith acknowledges, is therefore not referential; it is the product of an active response of the listener occasioned by the music. As such, Barry notes, British views on musical mimesis mark the rise of a new awareness of the "empty" sign, and a shift in focus of aesthetic perception: "[t]he empty sign, the texture and structure of music, directs attention towards the process of response" and "[t]he response of the listener to the 'empty' signs of music becomes a model of the response of the reader to the text."[13]

Along with the shift in critical focus from a work's relation to its object to its relation to the audience, the long-standing "verbal paradigm" for music was being replaced by its reversal, or a musical paradigm for language. In the words of Christopher Norris, by setting up music as the model for "other kinds of language," writers "were beginning to speculate on language as a system of 'empty' signs, words

that convey no immediate, positive or self-present meaning, but whose sense we can grasp only through a form of inward, sympathetic recreation."[14] As Norris says, one of the most eloquent and influential aesthetic theories that focused on the non-referential signification was put forward by Edmund Burke in his treatise on the sublime. In the section where he discusses the nature of the efficacy of words, Burke persuasively argues that words are not very good at raising concrete and accurate images, and that the "affecting" power of a linguistic discourse, even that of descriptive poetry, does not chiefly rely on representation. A common enough sentence such as "I shall go to Italy next summer," he says, does not in fact raise any clear and definite image. He then goes on to boldly affirm that "poetry and rhetoric do not succeed in exact description so well as painting does; their business is to affect rather by sympathy than imitation; to display rather the effect of things on the mind of the speaker [. . .] than to present a clear idea of the things themselves." Words are significant, Burke thinks, because the readers actively participate in its process of signification through "sympathy," and not because they convey a clear and sensible image to a passive mind. Words convey impressions and "effects" of the speaker, but not the exact image of the object of his perception. Therefore, he concludes, "poetry [. . .] cannot with strict propriety be called an art of imitation."[15] Burke thus extends Beattie's anti-mimetic view on music to cover poetry, an established and traditional territory of mimesis, and highlights the affinity of language and music in the context of comparative discourses of aesthetics. In this way, what started in

eighteenth-century Britain as a question and doubt about musical mimesis led to a radical reconsideration about various important aesthetic issues such as representation, sign and signification, meaning and effect, interpretation and reception, creation of meaning and the role of the viewer / listener / reader. We shall discuss in Chapter Four how this shift in focus on matters of aesthetic perception and reception is reflected in Blair's rhetoric.[16]

In this chapter, we would now like to turn to Rousseau's *Essay on the Origin of Languages*. Rousseau writes in the French Neoclassic tradition that embraces the notion of art as mimesis, and his primitivist theory about the origin of languages is directly founded on the assumption of music's capacity to mimetically represent emotions and passions. Rousseau's vision of primitive language as a fully significant musical voice inspired Derrida's critique of phonocentrism. By examining Derrida's argument closely against Rousseau's text, we would like to bring into focus Rousseau's ideas about linguistic sounds and writing, and discuss Rousseau's thoughts about the rhetorical problem of the relationship between the voice and writing. In doing so, we also hope to identify where Derrida departs from Rousseau's text, and examine its validity as a reading of Rousseau.

Rousseau's *Essay*

Rousseau's *Essay* begins its argument by comparing the most primitive language with gesture, which leads to a consideration of the respective merits of visual signs and

vocal signs. When a primitive person encounters "a sentient, thinking Being similar to himself," the "desire or need" to communicate his feelings and thoughts made him appeal to the other through the visual and aural senses, by using "perceptible signs" of gestures and voice. Perhaps rather unexpectedly for a treatise on the eloquence of the voice, Rousseau first seems to give priority to the language of sight: "more objects strike our eyes than ears," and gestures "are also more expressive and say more in less time."[17] He then furthers his speculation to consider other forms of visual signs, referring to several instances of ancient history where visual signs, such as a symbolic action or an object, gave the strongest impressions. He thus praises the "mute eloquence" of the visual sign, calling it "the most energetic language," while at one time disparaging speech and long discourses as nothing but "circumlocution."[18]

However, Rousseau then reverses the order of priority, and sees the problem from a different perspective; he begins to praise the unparalleled power of vocal signs. Rousseau affirms: "[W]hen it is a question of moving the heart and enflaming the passions, it is an altogether different matter. The successive impression of discourse, striking with repeated blows, gives you a very different emotion from the presence of the object itself, which you have seen completely with a single glance."[19] The power of the vocal sign, Rousseau stresses, derives its persuasiveness from consecutiveness, or "successive impression" that a speech produces. The appeal is gradual but irrevocable and ultimately irresistible; the "repeated blows" of a discourse first "mov[e] the heart," and work their way towards "enflaming the passions."

Rousseau thus makes it clear that the consecutive nature of the vocal sign is particularly suited for emotional appeal. On the other hand, the visual sign is useful as a vehicle for messages that hope to produce the strongest impact in the shortest time, as accuracy and instantaneity are the chief characteristics of the visual sign. When the emotions and passions are at stake, though, visual signs are no match for vocal signs.

Having established the superiority of the vocal sign over visual sign in terms of emotional effects, Rousseau concludes the first chapter in an enthusiastic tone:

> The passions have their gestures, but they also have their accents, and these accents, which make us tremble, these accents, from which we cannot shield our organ, penetrate by it to the bottom of the heart, and in spite of us carry to it the movements that wrest them, and make us feel what we hear. Let us conclude that visible signs convey a more precise imitation, but that interest is aroused more effectively by sounds.[20]

In this passage, the affective powers of the vocal sign, or the accents, are emphasised. As opposed to the visual sign, from which we can "shield our organ" by closing our eyes, the vocal sign "penetrate[s]" to the deeper emotions even "in spite of us." It has a peculiar power of arousing "interest," and by transmitting "movements" sways the passions and "make[s] us feel what we hear." It is a powerful, almost compelling instance of emotional persuasion, and its irresistibility is described using strong words that even verge on violence.

In the above quotation, both gestures and vocal accents are said to originate in the passions. Elsewhere, however, Rousseau allocates different origins for gestures and voice: "needs dictated the first gestures and [. . .] passions wrested the first voices."[21] Rousseau's dichotomy of passion and need is by no means a strict one, and indeed he does not seem to mind the inconsistency, as is apparent in his definition of passion, "the moral needs."[22] Even so, the direct link between the passions and the voice is sustained throughout his thesis, and it forms an important part of the central theme of the *Essay*, as we shall see later. Rousseau says: "Neither hunger nor thirst, but love, hatred, pity, anger wrested the first voices from them. [. . . I]n order to move a young heart, to repulse an unjust aggressor, nature dictates accents, cries, complaints. [. . . T]his is why the first languages were tuneful and passionate before being simple and methodical."[23] The "first voices" arose not from physical needs like "hunger" or "thirst," but from emotional needs such as "love, hatred, pity, anger." Such primitive language is described as "accents, cries, complaints" that are "tuneful." Here already at a very early stage of the *Essay*, we find a clear indication that the first language conveyed and addressed the passions, and that its sounds were consecutive, various and pleasant to the ear. The alliances of passions and voice on the one hand and gestures and need on the other further carry their associations into the geographical speculations about the nature of languages. While the southern tongue is amorous, passionate, melodious and full of vocal inflections and rounded vowels, the northern tongue is more articulate, harsh, strong and marked by consonants, because the people

there are always irritated by the sheer need to sustain themselves in the hostile environment, Rousseau says.[24] Thus, in the *Essay*, passion is linked to melodious inflections and the south, while need is linked to articulation and the north.

The undisputed alliance between the passions and tuneful voice as opposed to the articulated voice forms the basis of Rousseau's thoughts about the origin of music. "[P]assion makes all the vocal organs speak, and adorns the voice with all their brilliance; thus verses, songs, and speech have a common origin. [. . . T]he first discourses were the first songs; the periodic and measured recurrences of rhythm, the melodious inflections of accents caused poetry and music to be born along with language."[25] This is a period of primitivistic idyll, where the passions and the sonority of the voice were linked in natural immediacy, and found their expression in the form of the first song. The primitive language, Rousseau says, was sung rather than spoken. As in Blair's primitivism, the first language was closely associated with poetry and music, and was almost inseparable from them. This is the age of "natural innocence" and "the golden age of the present and full speech," to borrow Derrida's frequently used expression. Music, Rousseau thinks, retains something of this original trait, and its affective power lies in melody, and not harmony, for melody "imitat[es] the inflections of the voice" and the "accents of languages, and the turns of phrase appropriate in each idiom to certain movements of the soul; it not only imitates, it speaks."[26] The privileged access the speaking voice has to the listener's psyche is thus mimetically retained in melody, and the appeal of music is described as irresistible

because it imitates passions and the "movements of the soul" with its consecutive train of various sounds. Such a sense of spiritual intimacy and of being brought into close contact with another soul cannot but arouse interest and pity, as we have already seen, and Rousseau is consistent with himself in his discussions of music as in his discussions of spoken language: vocal and musical signs "proclaim a being similar to yourself [. . . . O]ne cannot hear either a song or an instrumental piece without immediately saying to oneself: another sensitive being is present."[27] This is why Rousseau thinks that imitation is a "moral" issue.[28]

This regard for and interest in another sentient presence, which Downing Thomas calls the capacity of "social bonding,"[29] is the chief effect characteristic of both language and music. The primitive people in the south sang and spoke to each other in moments of conviviality, and formed the first society.[30] The ancient Greek people, whose language Rousseau thinks was more musical than modern European languages, made speeches in the public square "a whole day" and people listened to them with rapture. French language, by contrast, which is more articulate and less sonorous, is not suitable for public speeches for it simply will not be heard: "people will hear that he is screaming; not a word of it will be made out." Such, Rousseau says, is a "servile language" and a society that uses it has to rely on "public forces" instead of "persuasion."[31] In the *Essay*, then, by extension of analogies, accent and sonority is associated with the ideal and free society and persuasion, and articulation is associated with loss of liberty, servitude, degeneration and a society strictly regulated

by force.

Derrida on Rousseau

The argument of Rousseau's *Essay* falls into three parts of similar lengths: Chapters One to Seven discuss the origin of languages and their primitive states; Chapters Eight to Eleven discuss local differences between languages; Chapters Twelve to Twenty discuss music and its affective powers through imitation. Concerning this structure, Derrida warns us against "confound[ing] the meaning of the architecture with the declared intention of the work." Derrida asserts that the title of Rousseau's book, "the declared intention," which highlights parallel cases of language and music, does not reflect the actual interests of the work. Derrida goes on: the subject of music "occup[ies] hardly a third of the work [. . . and] the rest of the essay does not deal with it at all."[32] Derrida's book thus demarcates the issue of music as occupying only a small part of Rousseau's work, and sidelines it in the overall design of its argument. Derrida's declared opinion, however, is highly contestable; as we have seen, the *Essay* is permeated throughout with concepts that are overtly related to music, such as melody, harmony, rhythm, song, prosody, and inflections of the voice, even when it is discussing language. Indeed it is Rousseau's contention that language was born out of musical mimesis. In the *Essay*, the issues of language and music are inseparable, as Downing Thomas writes: "music is at the heart of the *Essai*, [. . .] because music explicitly remains present throughout the text as central to Rousseau's

conception of language itself."[33] Such a slight treatment of music may be defended as a part of Derrida's strategy of reading Rousseau's text against the grain, but Derrida's conclusion — or, one of his conclusions — seems to me to depend upon this initial sidelining or blindness, which may indicate that Derrida's thesis is supported by this exteriority, that is, music.

An important passage explicating Derrida's overall thesis goes thus: "if Rousseau could say that 'words [*voix*], not sounds [*sons*], are written,' it is because words are distinguished from sounds exactly by what permits writing — consonants and articulation. [. . .] Articulation, which replaces accent, is the origin of languages. [. . .] Rousseau describes it without declaring it. Clandestinely."[34] I would like to argue that the concept of "sound," which occurs in a crucial passage in Rousseau quoted by Derrida, is the key to understanding Rousseau's thoughts about the interrelation and contradistinction between language and music. Derrida places emphasis on "articulation" as the origin of languages, but it seems to me to be a teleological privileging of "articulation" over "sound." In the course of the following argument, we would first like to turn to Rousseau's text to explore the extent to which the discourses on language and music are interwoven, and see how they feed into Rousseau's key ideas such as the origin, the primitive, passion, pity, society, degeneration and imitation. We will focus on passages from Rousseau which Derrida puts to use in order to give his own argument, deliberately or not, a certain orientation or a bias as a critique of logocentrism.

The chief questions I would like to raise against Derrida's discussion of Rousseau's *Essay* are about his treatment of articulation and writing. Derrida says "the more a language is articulated, the more articulation extends its domain, and thus gains in rigor and in vigor, the more it yields to writing, the more it calls writing forth. This is the central thesis of the *Essay*."[35] Derrida claims to have uncovered this "central thesis," which he says constitutes the conceptual basis of the *Essay* and about which it keeps silence in a typically grammatological fashion. Derrida's conclusion is that articulation and writing are already operative at the origin of languages, and that Rousseau, who wants to outwardly declare that uncontaminated speech is at the origin of languages, in fact "clandestinely" describes the function of articulation at the moment of the birth of languages. I quote again: "Articulation, which replaces accent, is the origin of languages. Altering [. . .] through writing is an originary exteriority. It is the origin of language. Rousseau describes it without declaring it. Clandestinely."[36] Rousseau, Derrida says, is thus caught in the supplementary logic of writing which completely escapes Rousseau's intention and over which Rousseau has no control. However, I would like to point out that Rousseau indeed declares, and not describes, the originary movement of articulation in his discussion. If we examine Rousseau's thesis on articulation closely, we would think that de Man has a point when he says that "[t]here is no need to deconstruct Rousseau" and that Derrida is "deconstructing a pseudo-Rousseau."[37]

In addition, Derrida's critique of logocentrism dictates that Rousseau should

denigrate writing and should conceive writing as self-effacing signifiers in front of the voice. Derrida writes: “Rousseau’s work seems to me to occupy, between Plato’s *Phaedrus* and Hegel’s *Encyclopaedia*, a singular position” and that they form the “three landmarks” of logocentrism.[38] Derrida speaks of Rousseau “distrusting writing” and being steeped in “a classical ideology according to which writing takes the status of a tragic fatality come to prey upon natural innocence, interrupting the golden age of the present and full speech.”[39] This charge, however, it seems to me, is not entirely supportable. As far as the *Essay* is concerned, Rousseau does not denigrate writing, but on the contrary hopes, and in fact sees some possibility of, overcoming the dichotomy of speech and writing on several occasions, for instance in his discussions of vocative marks in alphabetic writing, and also in his observations on non-phonetic writing such as the hieroglyph and Chinese characters.[40] Again, de Man’s insight is rather telling: “the myth of the priority of oral language over written language has always already been demystified by literature.”[41] Rousseau’s *Essay*, I think, as a work of literature, defies philosophical determination and declares language as emerging from various sets of oppositions, such as speech and writing, sound and articulation, passion and need, melody and harmony, north and south, and Eurocentrism and cosmopolitanism.[42] In the following part of this chapter, I would like to examine Rousseau’s and Derrida’s respective discussions of articulation and writing.

Articulation: Rousseau and Derrida

Rousseau's *Essay* touches on a wide range of subjects and presents a complex argument, sometimes contradictory in parts. It is an engaging book, rich in details, anecdotes and episodes that are often rather fantastical. Derrida's book is in some ways quite similar to Rousseau's, and is sometimes as contradictory and is even fuller. It is fascinating to witness Derrida determined to gloss as many passages from Rousseau as possible, as it often seems, and eventually overturn Rousseau's order of priority. In Rousseau's thesis, Derrida detects many sets of oppositions that are intricately and inseparably woven together: accented and melodious speech of the passions, and articulate and harsh speech of the needs; passionate, gentle and warm south, and needful, diligent and persevering north; vocal signs that appeal to one's interest and visual signs that appeal to one's reason; natural and primary melody and artificially instituted harmony; primitive and energetic ancient society and perfected and enervated modern society. Derrida's procedure, which is explained by Christopher Norris as a rigorous application of "a classical (bivalent) logic" that brings out "logical anomalies" in Rousseau, uncovers the underlying assumption upon which Rousseau builds his order of priority, and which, by the logic of Rousseau's own argument, is countermanded.[43]

Derrida points out several of the most important contradictions in, and in the run-up to, section "*III. Articulation*": Rousseau makes gesture represent passion here, and need elsewhere, thereby admitting that "the unity of need and passion [. . .]

constantly effaces the limit that Rousseau obstinately sketches and recalls";[44] Rousseau declares that "articulation and writing are a post-originary malady of language," but describes that they "operat[e] at the origin of language";[45] when immediate presence is "*better represented* by the range of the voice [. . . Rousseau] praises living speech" and when it is better represented by the gesture and the glance, "he praises the most savage writing";[46] the *Essay* itself is one big contradiction, for it "begins with praise and concludes with condemnation of the mute sign."[47] Derrida thus maintains that the myth of the original speech is necessarily strained, and contrary to Rousseau's desires the epoch of the present and full speech that Rousseau dreams of has always already been contaminated by what is supposed to be external, evil and anterior, such as articulation, writing, need, the north, harmony and cultural degeneration, in a supplementary movement that has no origin.

Before we examine Derrida's discussion of Rousseau's concept of articulation, we would first like to quote a passage from Rousseau himself where he describes the origin of language. It appears in Chapter Four of the *Essay*, and it is a passage on which Derrida's critique of Rousseau's concept of articulation is a commentary. Rousseau writes:

> As natural voices are unarticulated, words would have few articulations; a few interposed consonants eliminating the hiatus between the vowels would suffice to make them flowing and easy to pronounce. In contrast, its sounds would be quite varied, and the diversity of accents would multiply these same voices. Quantity and rhythm would provide further

> sources of combinations; in this way — since voices, sounds, accent, and number, which are from nature, would leave little to be done by articulations, which are conventional — one would sing it rather than speak it. Most of its root words would be imitative sounds, either of the accent of the passions, or the effect of perceptible objects. Onomatopoeia would constantly make itself felt. [. . .] It would have many augmentatives, diminutives, compound words, and expletive particles to give cadence to periods and roundness to phrases. It would have many irregularities and anomalies, it would neglect grammatical analogy to stick to the euphony, number, harmony, and beauty of sounds. Instead of arguments it would have aphorisms; it would persuade without convincing, and depict without reasoning. It would resemble Chinese in certain respects, Greek in others, and Arabic in others. Develop these ideas in all their ramifications, and you will find Plato's *Cratylus* is not as ridiculous as it seems to be.[48]

This is Rousseau's ideal primitive language. It is rich in vowels, and articulated consonants are only introduced to make vowels "flowing and easy to pronounce." Consonants are subsidiary and also far less in number than vowels. Various "sounds," "accents," "[q]uantity and rhythm" will diversify the "voices" and "one would sing it rather than speak it." The words are significant not through instituted convention but through "imitative sounds," so it is close to "[o]nomatopoeia." The general character of such speech is less committed to grammatical accuracy than to "euphony, number, harmony, and beauty of sounds."

We shall now examine Derrida's readings of the above passage by Rousseau. Derrida focuses on Rousseau's handling of the concept of articulation and its role in

the origination of language. The theme of articulation is important not only for Rousseau, but also for Derrida's entire critique of the phonocentric tradition, for the term connects Rousseau to Saussure. Saussure, Derrida reminds us, had to admit that "the power of articulation alone" was "natural to man," though it was contrary to his phonologist thesis.[49] Bennington succinctly puts it thus: "The story of *that* articulation [. . .] is a story whereby the apparently inevitable tendency of the self-presence of consciousness to experience itself via voice and 'hearing-oneself-speak' finds itself needing to expel writing from its central concerns."[50] Articulation, Derrida thinks, marks a breach in phonocentrism, and he applies the same observation to Rousseau, in particular to the passage quoted earlier. Derrida comments that it depicts the "time of a language *being born*" and says "[t]he stage thus described [. . .] is *already* that of a language that has broken with gesture, need, animality, etc. But of a language that *has not yet* been corrupted by articulation, convention, supplementarity. [. . . The] mythic limit between that *already* and this *not-yet*."[51] According to Derrida, Rousseau thinks that at its origin the already present speech enjoyed an immediate relationship with truth and meaning, and not through conventional reference, as is the case with later languages. Such meaningful speech was self-sufficient and fully present to itself. It had originated in passion, had separated itself from gestures and by this stage had "already" acquired its unique power to move the heart of another human being. Rousseau's passage depicts the rare moment when this felicitous speech was about to be, therefore "not-yet,"

contaminated by articulation. It is the "mythic limit" where language was being born; speech was already there, but it was yet to be corrupted by "articulation," the sine-qua-non of language. This, according to Derrida, is Rousseau's dream.

Elsewhere, elaborating on the same passage by Rousseau, Derrida develops his grammatological speculation, again focusing on "articulation":

> *Articulation is the becoming-writing of language.* Rousseau, *who would like to say* that this becoming-writing *comes upon the origin unexpectedly*, takes it as his premise, and according to it *describes in fact* the way in which that *becoming-writing encroaches upon the origin*, and arises from the origin. The becoming-writing of language is the becoming-language of language. He *declares* what he *wishes to say*, that is to say that articulation and writing are a post-originary malady of language; he says or *describes* that which he *does not wish to say*: articulation and therefore the space of writing operates at the origin of language.[52]

As Derrida portrays it, Rousseau's passage captures the moment just prior to the "becoming-language of language," or the corruption by articulation. Articulation strikes the unsuspecting and pure speech "unexpectedly," as a "post-originary malady of language." It brings along writing from outside, and starts the degenerative process of "becoming-writing of language," introducing rifts in what used to be entire, and preparing the later developments and divisions that were to become the south and the north, and the passions and the needs. This is Derrida's assumption of Rousseau's contention, or what Rousseau "wishes to say" and "declares." Derrida contradicts

this figure of Rousseau and puts forward his grammatological thesis that articulation "arises from the origin" and was already operative at the origin of languages.[53] He taxes Rousseau for "describ[ing]" it, indicating that Rousseau "does not wish to say" it as it contradicts his belief that the original and fully present speech was pure and uncontaminated by articulation and writing.

I wonder, however, if this representation of Rousseau's contention by Derrida is entirely supportable. Is it not one of the instances of the "pseudo-Rousseau" that de Man mentioned? Once again we attend to what Rousseau says about articulation: "As natural voices are unarticulated, words would have few articulations; a few interposed consonants eliminating the hiatus between the vowels would suffice to make them flowing and easy to pronounce." Here in this passage it is clearly implied that articulation produces consonants. Elsewhere too, Rousseau explains that articulation means "modifications of the tongue and palate," which means that it produces consonants.[54] In the above passage, Rousseau says that "natural voices," which are just cries of passion and not yet a language, lack articulation. However, with "words," articulation is necessary, though "few" in number — just enough number so as to facilitate pronunciation by punctuating a flow of vowels. If for instance in a speech one word ends with a vowel and another starts with a vowel, a "hiatus" will have to occur in order to mark the division of words. In order to avoid it, consonants are used to advantage, as with the Greek language. A spoken discourse consisting of a succession of vowels, punctuated from time to time by consonants, will

indeed sound "flowing and easy to pronounce." Consonants, thus, Rousseau explicitly says, distinguish language from "natural voices" in terms of phonetics. If so, Rousseau indeed "declares," and not "describes," the originary movement of articulation. Rousseau does not suppose a phonetic structure free from all articulation at the origin of language. Without articulation, the voice is just a passionate cry. Derrida's story of articulation, and by extension writing, encroaching upon the pure and original speech unexpectedly and corrupting it as a "post-originary malady" is not told by Rousseau himself. In accordance with this, what Rousseau stresses in the rest of the quotation about the eloquence of "sounds," "accents," "[q]uantity and rhythm," and "euphony, number, harmony, and beauty of sounds" of primitive language, Derrida ignores almost completely, as we shall see in due course.

There is another passage in Rousseau concerning articulation that is very significant when we consider Rousseau in the light of Derrida's thoughts. It occurs at the beginning of the third section of Rousseau's book, which discusses music. Recapitulating what he has written so far, Rousseau writes: "Along with the first voices were formed the first articulations or the first sounds, depending on the kind of passion that dictated the one or the other. Anger wrests menacing cries which the tongue and the palate articulate; but the voice of tenderness is gentler, it is the glottis that modifies it, and this voice becomes a sound."[55] Here again, Rousseau makes it clear that articulation, as well as sounds, were born at the same time as the first speech. Articulation, produced by the use of "the tongue and the palate," is linked to the

passion of anger, whereas sound, produced by modification of “the glottis,” is associated with the tender passions. The births of articulation and sound necessarily accompany the birth of the first linguistic voice. If, as Rousseau says, language was born from song or the passionate cry, this passage overtly confirms that both articulation and sound were present when language separated itself from primary song. It is true that articulation carries a negative connotation in Rousseau, and is connected to anger, need, degeneration and the north, while sound is connected to tender passions, melodiousness, liveliness and the south, and Rousseau obviously prefers the latter to the former, as Derrida says. However, this does not necessarily mean or imply that Rousseau desired a purity of origin free from all traces of articulation, even by extension of Rousseau’s own argument.[56] Rousseau wants to strike a balance between sound and articulation, it seems to me. If, then, Rousseau states that both articulation and sound are at the origin of languages, why does Derrida acknowledge only articulation by saying “[a]rticulation, which replaces accent, is the origin of languages” and “[articulation] broaches language: it opens speech as institution born of passion but it threatens song as original speech”?[57] Is this not a privileging of articulation, and externalising of sound, in Derrida’s order of priority?

In the above quotation, articulation is counterbalanced by sound, forming a binary set. It would be necessary here to examine what Rousseau means by “sound,” which he opposes to articulation, and then see how Derrida treats this concept. The fullest discussion is given in Chapter Seven of the *Essay*, entitled “On Modern

Prosody." This is an important chapter, as Derrida acknowledges: "The entire Chapter 7, 'On Modern Prosody,' [. . .] plays a decisive role in the *Essay*."[58] In this chapter, Rousseau compares modern French and ancient Greek languages in terms of sounds, and points out that what the French call accent in their language is not at all the same thing as accent in Greek, which was "musical accent." He then speculates what Greek accent was like, and shows how French is deprived of this phenomenon; French language acquired its grammatical and logical clarity by renouncing the melodious force of musical accent. Rousseau writes:

> We have no idea of a sonorous and harmonious language that speaks as much by its sounds as by its words. It is a mistake to believe that accent can be made up for by accent marks. Accent marks are invented only when accent is already lost.*[59] What is more, we believe that we have accents in our language, but we do not have them at all. Our supposed accents are only vowels or signs of quantity; they do not indicate any variation in sound. The proof of this is that these accents are all conveyed either by unequal duration or by modifications of the lips, the tongue, or the palate, which produce the diversity of voices, none by the modifications of the glottis, which produce the diversity of sounds. [. . .] Let us now see what it was for the Greeks. [Rousseau then goes on to quote Duclos's passage on an experiment by Dionysius of Halicarnassus, who rendered speech sounds in musical notes.][60]

Rousseau first stresses that modern Europeans cannot imagine a "sonorous and harmonious language" whose communicative power lies not only in semantic aspect

but also in its auditory qualities. French language has accent marks, and people think that they have accent, but French accent is in fact a kind of articulation, "modifications of the lips, the tongue, or the palate," or a varying of the length of vowels. This Rousseau calls "diversity of voices." What Rousseau means by accent in a "sonorous and harmonious language" is created by "diversity of sounds," which is produced by "modifications of the glottis." By "sound," then, Rousseau means the vocal pitch, and by "diversity of sounds" he means vocal inflection.[61]

In order to make himself fully understood, Rousseau next suggests an experiment: "[a]ttune your voice perfectly to some musical instrument, and on this unison pronounce in succession all the most variously accented French words you can muster." As all the accents can be expressed on the same pitch as clearly as they would in varied tones, the accent of French language, it will be deduced, does not depend on sounds.[62] The cadence, or up-and-down movement in intonation, thus, is called "musical accent."[63] The choice of the word "musical" is not arbitrary, nor is it a result of metaphorical transference of meanings; Rousseau rigorously controls his use of the word. The word "prosody" in the chapter title, according to the translator's note, is a translation of the Greek word for "accent," and "involves the study of the rhythm and accent of a language."[64] Rhythm and variation in sounds constitute melody, which Rousseau believes to be the most important component of music, and which, as we have already seen, originated in the imitation of the vocal inflections of speech.

Thus, we are brought back to Rousseau's core ideas about musicality of language and its primary appeal to the passions. Passions and movements of the soul dictate certain inflections of the voice, that is, accents, and so they have privileged access to the listener's psyche, evoking interest. Musical melody, by imitating vocal accents, is thus able to express and address the passions. In the words of Downing Thomas, Rousseau is "pleading the case for a musical 'rhetoric'" or "musical 'oration.'"[65] Primitive language was rich in vowels and changes in intonations, and the train of vowels was rendered agreeable to the ear through a few interposed consonants in between. Thus, one "would sing it rather than speak it," literally.

Rousseau makes himself very clear when he recapitulates his argument several chapters later: the language of articulation conveys ideas, "but in order to convey feelings, images, it still needs a rhythm and sounds, that is, a melody; that is what the Greek language had, and what our[s] lacks." Rousseau also says that a sung speech would resemble poetry: "the accents formed the song, the quantities formed the meter [. . .]. In olden days to speak and to sing were the same thing, says Strabo; which shows, he adds, that poetry is the source of eloquence. He ought to have said that they both had the same source and at first were merely the same thing." As such an experience of eloquence as achieved by the compound of sound and sense is lost in modern Europe, Rousseau says, "We are always astonished by the prodigious effects of eloquence, poetry, and music among the Greeks."[66]

Then, what Rousseau means when he says "[w]ords are written and not

sounds"[67] is clear. Alphabetic writing, to be sure, does not represent up-and-down inflections of the voice in pronunciation. The vocal cadence always escapes from being pinned down on paper. Let us come back again to Derrida's conclusion: "if Rousseau could say that 'words [*voix*], not sounds [*sons*], are written,' it is because words are distinguished from sounds exactly by what permits writing — consonants and articulation. [. . .] Articulation, which replaces accent, is the origin of languages. [. . .] Rousseau describes it without declaring it. Clandestinely."[68] I do not disagree that words and sounds are distinguished by "what permits writing," that is, articulated voice as a train of vowels and interposing consonants. However, I cannot see why Derrida thinks "Articulation [. . .] replaces accent," for articulation and accent are not only completely compatible, but the presence of both are even necessary, in Rousseau's vision of the origin of languages. If Rousseau thinks that linguistic voice was born alongside articulation and sound ("Along with the first voices were formed the first articulations or the first sounds,") how can Derrida focus only on articulation, or articulated voice, as the origin of languages? If we take Derrida's line and assume that articulation alone is instrumental in generating language, sound must come after the birth of language. This is clearly contrary to Rousseau's contention. Sound, the high or low vocal pitch produced by "the modifications by the glottis," is not produced by articulation, which is produced by the "modifications of the lips, the tongue, or the palate." Both are necessary for language, as Rousseau makes clear.

If Rousseau does not presuppose a language that consists only of accents,

articulation cannot encroach upon this pure origin, corrupt it, and start a supplementary process of degeneration as Derrida claims. It can even be said that Rousseau prefigures Derrida's contention in part, for Rousseau declares that articulation is at the origin of languages, as well as sound.[69] Derrida's description of language, it seems to me, unfairly undervalues the role of "sound" in Rousseau's theory, manifesting a teleological determination that privileges articulation and writing as the interior, and excludes sound as exterior. Derrida in fact hardly discusses Rousseau's concept of "sound." He admits that Chapter Seven of the *Essay*, "On Modern Prosody," where Rousseau explains the important notions of "accent" and "sound," plays a "decisive role," yet he chops the chapter up and quotes just one sentence on the issue of "sound," which actually occupies the major part of the discussion in the chapter. The sentence quoted by Derrida is about the lack of variety of sounds in the French language:

> "Our professed accents are nothing but vowels, or signs of quantity; they mark no variety of sound." Quantity is linked to articulation. Here to the articulation into sounds and not, as immediately above, to articulation into words. Rousseau is aware of what André Martinet calls the *double articulation* of language: into sounds and into words. The opposition of "vowels" or "voice" to accent or "diversity of sounds" evidently presupposes that the vowel is not pure voice, but a voice that has already undergone the differential work of articulation. Voice and vowel are not opposed here, to the consonant, as they are in another context.[70]

This passage is rather twisted and obscure, but Derrida leaves the topic here, and

moves onto a different topic of Duclos's influence on Chapter Seven. He leaves unexplained, and just points out, Rousseau's opposition of articulated French voice, including vowels, to "accent," by which he means musical accent, and sound. For us, Rousseau's sentence is clear. Rousseau is setting up an opposition between musical accent and French "professed" accent. This sentence and its interpretation, however, is crucial for Derrida's argument, for in Derrida's dichotomy articulation sides with consonant, and is opposed to accent or "pure voice," which implies that accent and vowels should be on the same side. But here, as Derrida says, vowels are articulated, and opposed to "accent." Derrida seems to attribute the disruption of dichotomy to a possible inconsistency in Rousseau's argument, but our reading shows that for Rousseau articulated voice encompasses both consonants and vowels, and that articulation and accent are compatible, and not exclusive of each other. It also seems to escape Derrida's notice that "articulation into sounds" is impossible, for by "sounds" Rousseau means high or low vocal pitch.

It appears to me that the concept of "sound" is a blind spot in Derrida's argument.[71] In Rousseau's theory, sound plays a major role in the primitivist associations and narrative of linguistic power constituting of musical imitation through accent and sound. To use Derrida's terminology, it forms a vital part of the phonocentrist thesis of Rousseau's argument. It is precisely for this reason that Derrida's persuasiveness is mitigated by this overlooking of the concept of sound. Even Ann Smock, who rightly defines accent as "the voice's changeable tones, its

varying pitches and intensities" and gives a perceptive and detailed analysis of pages 212 to 216 of *Of Grammatology* as the section which shows Derrida's understanding of accent and imitation, does not mention Derrida's handling of the concept of sound, and by extension, the impact it has on the implication of the phrase "[w]ords are written but not sounds."[72] By excluding sound, Derrida also excludes the major train of primitivist and rhetorical associations in Rousseau's theory, for example, accent, passion, speech, poetry, music, imitation and eloquence from his argument. These words, of course, occur in Derrida's book, but they do not carry with them the rich field of associations and analogies that are eloquently described in Rousseau's book.[73] Thus, in discussion of Rousseau, as in that of Plato, Derrida's philosophy marginalises and externalises the subject's central considerations and interests that have a direct relevance to the rhetorical question of the persuasiveness of the written voice.

In accordance with this neglect of the concept of sound, the attraction of vocal pitch and the "interest" aroused by it, which as we have seen are fundamental to Rousseau's ideas about music and linguistic eloquence, seem to escape Derrida's observation. He largely ignores or bypasses the issue, without making substantial comments,[74] yet in one passage he touches on the issue, though just fleetingly: "Speech excites attention, the visible exacts it: is it because the ear is always open and offered to provocation, more passive than sight? One can *more naturally* close one's eyes or distract his glance than avoid listening. Let us not forget that this natural

situation is primarily that of the child at the breast."[75] The reference to the child is quite obscure and elusive, but probably it is a foreshadowing of Derrida's later discussion of Rousseau's É*mile*, where Rousseau talks about inarticulate but intoned "language" of young children.[76] Derrida is here severely undervaluing the importance of attention and the power of vocal accent in Rousseau's thought. Attention and interest, we have seen, are the highest goals to be achieved by music and eloquence. They are also the fundamental and primary source of emotional persuasion that a vocal sign is capable of arousing. Derrida here slights the very sources of eloquence by confining and reducing them to the inarticulacy of an infant, and the physical impossibility of closing one's ears. This is another example of Derrida's exclusion of rhetorical and emotional persuasion from his grammatology.

Writing: Rousseau and Derrida

In the dichotomy as described by Derrida, articulation is connected to writing, and is opposed to accent, musicality and passion. Derrida states: articulation "broaches language: it opens speech as institution born of passion, but it threatens song as original speech." Articulation, in a supplementary movement, brings différance into the self-present voice, and thus language begins its existence as an "institution." Once language has begun its history of degeneration, articulation "pulls language toward need and reason — accomplices — and therefore lends itself to writing more easily. The more articulated a language is, the less accentuated it is, the more rational

it is, the less musical it is, and the less it loses by being written, the better it expresses need."[77] The fundamental divide between passion and need, we may recall, instituted itself in the primary means of communication as speech and gesture. The visual and spatial sign of gesture, then, finds its alliance in need, articulation, reason and writing, and it is this chain of concepts which, according to Derrida, Rousseau subjected and externalised in order to give priority to passion, and which, Derrida restores in his critique of logocentrism. We would now like to examine Derrida's claim.

Derrida points out a "contradiction" in Rousseau's argument, saying that Rousseau starts his book by praising gesture, which is more natural and less conventional than speech, but later he places speech above gesture, in order to show "the superiority of passion over need."[78] Such a contradiction is most apparent, Derrida says, when Rousseau introduces an episode, taken from the writings of Pliny the Elder, of a girl who traced with a stick the shadow of her lover's face projected onto a wall. Rousseau asks, "[w]hat sounds could she have used to convey this movement of a stick?,"[79] implying that the power of speech falls short of the expressiveness of the drawing. In this short episode, Derrida sees the initial hint of gesture supplementing speech, and says that it marks the "graphic of supplementarity" at the origin of languages.[80] To add to this, Derrida sees in this episode a unique instance of the "*immediate sign*," which marks the origin of the sign and inauguration of signification:

> [T]hat small difference — visibility, spacing, death — is undoubtedly the origin of the sign and the breaking of immediacy; but it is in reducing it as much as possible that one marks the contours of signification. [. . .] Now this limit — of an impossible sign, of a sign giving the signified, indeed the thing, *in person*, immediately -- is necessarily closer to gesture or glance than to speech. A certain ideality of the sound behaves essentially as the power of abstraction and mediation. [. . . T]he spoken word [is] powerless to imitate the contact and the movement of the bodies.[81]

The shadow of the lover is almost his presence "*in person*," and the girl's stick traces its contours with accuracy, thus turning his near-presence into a scribed sign. In this immediate sign, the signifier and the signified are distinguished by the smallest conceivable difference.[82] This indeed seems to be the scene of the ideal limit of signification, and Derrida's imaginative reading of what in Rousseau is only three lines of passing reference is, I think, a critical feat. It also serves as the foothold of Derrida's entire thesis by specifying that the origin of signs and the beginning of signification are found in the visual and scribed sign rather than the aural, and by confirming that Rousseau admits this at an early stage of his argument. Yet, I cannot help but wonder if such an immediate sign, if such a thing is possible, is indeed "*necessarily* closer to gesture or glance than to speech" (emphasis added) in Rousseau's thoughts. Is there not in the *Essay* an instance of the aural sign that is in almost as immediate a relation to its signified as this drawing is to the presence of the

lover? Does the aural sign always have to appeal to the concept, or the "ideality of the sound" of speech, in order to signify?

I would like to suggest that Rousseau's concept of musical mimesis presupposes an immediate and aural sign. Sounds and accents, as opposed to articulated vocal signs, do not signify by referring to concepts, Rousseau says: "[a] language that has only articulations and voices therefore has only half its riches; it conveys ideas, it is true, but in order to convey feelings, images, it still needs a rhythm and sounds, that is, a melody."[83] Sounds and accents imitate passions, or "certain movements of the soul," Rousseau says, by transferring them to the ups and downs of vocal inflections. This impassioned accent turns into the musical melody, and thus forms the principle of musical mimesis.

> Melody, by imitating the inflections of the voice, expresses complaints, cries of sadness or of joy, threats, and moans; all the vocal signs of the passions are within its scope. It imitates the accents of languages, and the turns of phrase appropriate in each idiom to certain movements of the soul; it not only imitates, it speaks, and its language, inarticulate but lively, ardent, passionate, has a hundred times more energy than speech itself. Here is from whence the strength of musical imitations arises [. . .]. The sounds of a melody do not act on us solely as sounds, but as signs of our affections, of our feelings.[84]

Rousseau calls the sounds of melody, which also by logical extension imply sounds of speech, "signs of our affections." The relationship between the aural signifier, "signs

of our affections," and the signified, the passions, Rousseau seems to assume, is obvious and instantly recognisable, and is based on similarity — hence imitation. Elsewhere Rousseau says that "[t]he passions have their gestures, but they also have their accents."[85] The alliance of the "passions" and the "accents" is unquestioned and taken for granted, and to the same extent as that of the "passions" and the "gestures."

Our concern, then, is if Rousseau thinks that musical melody and speech sounds imitate "movements of the soul" as signs of our affections, how is Derrida to be justified in focusing only on Rousseau's depiction of scribed sign as what is capable of coming closest to the immediate sign, for its immediacy is also guaranteed by imitation? In musical imitation no "abstraction and mediation" is at work, for it does not involve in its function the process of conceptualisation.[86] Though speech sounds are "powerless to imitate the contact and the movement of the bodies," they are, according to Rousseau, capable of imitating the movement of the soul, and there seems to me to be no justifiable reason for privileging the former type of imitation as being the more immediate. If Rousseau was suggesting, or dreaming, the possibility of immediate signs, one as a scribed sign on the wall, and another as an audible sign of sounds, it would be a distortion of Rousseau's argument to say that Rousseau clandestinely admits that the immediate sign is "necessarily closer to gesture or glance than to speech" in a book that claims the superiority of speech above gesture or glance. Derrida's one-sided claim, it seems to me, manifests his desire to restore, or claim the

superiority of, what he thinks has been subordinated in Rousseau's order of priority.

One of Derrida's fundamental assumptions is that Rousseau denigrates writing and subordinates it to the full presence of speech. It is true that Rousseau stresses the appeal and the irresistible persuasiveness of speech sounds and by extension music, which proclaims the presence of "a being similar to yourself" and makes you feel that "another sensitive being is present." Sound is to be distinguished from articulated speech and its written form, and it will persuade without appealing to the concepts, but by appealing to the passions. It is the contention of Rousseau's argument. This, however, does not necessarily mean that Rousseau undervalues writing, nor does he seem to me to be doing so. Though Rousseau says that accent and sound, his chief interests, cannot be written down ("[w]ords are written and not sounds"), it is a statement of the fact rather than a wilful and partial subordination.

Derrida's stance on Rousseau's attitude towards the issue of speech and writing is most apparent in his discussions of accent and accent marks. Modern languages, Rousseau says, have lost musical accent, which for him is the only genuine accent, and the ancient harmonious and melodious language is beyond our imagination. Sound cannot be written down, so the accent of a language is forever lost when a language falls into disuse. In order that the fleeting accent can be caught on paper for non-native speakers to learn, accent marks are invented ("Accent marks are invented only when accent is already lost"), which for native speakers are unnecessary.[87] Derrida elaborates on this observation of Rousseau's:

> And when writing tries to supplement accent by accents [i. e. accent marks], it is nothing but make-up dissimulating the corpse of the accent. [. . . "]It is mistaken to think that accent marks can *make up for* [*suppléer*] oral intonation [*l'accent*]. One invents accent signs [*accens*] [sic] only when intonation [*l'accent*] has already been lost" [. . .]. Accents are, like punctuation, an evil of writing.[88]

The accent mark, thus, serves very well for Derrida's theory of the supplement. It is an addition and an exteriority encroaching upon the original plenitude, the native voice or the accent. The supplementary accent mark is inferior to what it supplants, and it can never live up to the original voice. It insinuates itself and takes the place of the original voice, thus opening the space of writing within the origin. If the vocal accent represents the good and the true, the supplementary accent mark must be evil, inferior and corrupting. This logic of supplementarity as described by Derrida determines, or almost predetermines, how accent marks should be seen: "[a]ccents are, like punctuation, an evil of writing."

This moral denunciation against the accent mark and punctuation, however, I cannot find in Rousseau.[89] He admits their inadequacy and the impossibility of retaining in them the liveliness of the speaking voice, but it seems to me that Rousseau thinks that though accent marks and punctuation are not entirely satisfactory, some of them are necessary and helpful. Instead of indicting them, Rousseau wants to make the best use of them, and he even suggests how to improve them and give them new

possibilities. The major part of discussions about punctuation and accent marks are to be found in two notes by Rousseau. At the end of the chapter "On Writing," Rousseau compares accented language and written language. Rousseau says that the "greatest energy" of spoken language lies in accent, and that accent even determines the syntax, or the periodic structure. Writing lacks this resourceful accent, so it tries to reproduce the energy by other means, which makes sentences longer. If spoken or read aloud, such sentences would sound "enervate[d]" and prolix. Rousseau then suggests a solution to this problem:

> The means taken up to compensate for this quality [accent] diffuse, elongate written language and, passing from books into discourse [i. e. spoken language], enervate speech itself.* To say everything as one would write it is to do no more than read while speaking.
>
> *The best of these means, and one that would not have this defect, would be punctuation, if it had been left less imperfect. Why, for example, do we not have a vocative mark? The question mark we do have was much less necessary, for one sees by construction alone whether or not a question is being asked, at least in our language. *Are you coming* and *you are coming* are not the same thing. But how does one distinguish in writing a man who is being mentioned from one being addressed? Here is a real equivocation, which the vocative point would have removed. The same equivocation occurs in irony, when accent does not make it felt.[90]

Rousseau here suggests that punctuation should be more functional and be increased in

number and variety, for this would restore some of the "energy" of accented speech to the prolix and enervated sentence structure of written language. Somewhat amusingly, he suggests that the introduction of vocative mark and irony mark would also avoid confusions of meaning that will not happen in face-to-face dialogue. Here we see the obvious dichotomy of present, full and truthful speech on the one hand, and modern alphabetic writing on the other, deprived of all such qualities as energy, vitality, passion and clarity of intention, and Rousseau, here as in elsewhere, prefers the former to the latter. But instead of subordinating writing to speech, it seems to me, Rousseau is here suggesting that writing should acquire elements of speech accent in certain cases, and so in a way he is making a very daring proposal of possible occasions of overcoming, at least in part, the dichotomy of speech and writing. Punctuation, Rousseau thinks, is "[t]he best of these means" for retaining something of the energy of speech in writing. Rousseau is here talking about the French language, which, along with other modern European languages, is the most articulated therefore the farthest from vocal accent. It is significant that even in such a language the possibility of overcoming the disparity of writing and speech is mentioned. It is a gesture of inclusion, rather than externalisation to each other of writing and speech, or writing and the speaking presence. Rousseau does not seem to think that punctuation, which here represents vocal accent, is "an evil of writing."[91] It also needs to be noted that Rousseau is not saying that all writing should imitate speech. The writing is judged as "diffuse" and "enervate[d]" when it is read aloud as "discourse," or when

one speaks as one writes. Such a writing is not suited for oral delivery, Rousseau says, but he does not deny the merits that it displays in being silently read.

Accent marks, to be sure, always fall short of vocal accent. Rousseau says, "[i]t is a mistake to believe that accent can be made up for by accent marks. Accent marks are invented only when accent is already lost.*"[92] This claim can be substantiated on two levels: modern European languages, which have lost musical accent, need to resort to punctuation and accent marks as near equivalents; ancient sonorous language had to invent them when it went into disuse and was being learned by non-speakers. In order to buttress his belief that ancient Greeks had no need of punctuation or accent marks, Rousseau quotes a rather lengthy passage from Cicero:

> *[. . . T]he old Greek masters held the view that in this prose style it is proper for us to use something almost amounting to versification, that is, certain definite rhythms. For they thought that in speeches the close of the period ought to come not when we are tired out but where we may take breath, and to be marked not by the punctuation of the copying clerks but by the arrangement of the words and of the thought; and it is said that Isocrates first introduced the practice of tightening up the irregular style of oratory which belonged to the early days, [. . .] by means of an element of rhythm, designed to give pleasure to the ear. For two contrivances to give pleasure were devised by the musicians, who in the old days were also the poets, verse and melody [. . .]. These two things, therefore, I mean the modulation of the voice and the arrangement of words in periods, they thought proper to transfer from poetry to rhetoric.[93]

Instead of punctuation, the Greeks used sentence structure, “the arrangement of the words and of the thought” to mark the close of the period, and it was Isocrates who introduced this skill into the language. He “tightened up” the oratorical style and bound it by a certain rhythm, thus giving his prose writing qualities of “verse” or a certain musical charm by “arrangement of words in periods.” The other necessary component of eloquence, “melody” or “the modulation of the voice,” was supplied by the Greek language itself, for it was a sonorous and accented language. Isocrates, then, was a felicitous writer who was able to achieve eloquence, by becoming a poet-musician in writing. We may note here that though Isocrates was the foremost writer of oratorical speeches, Rousseau does not disparage him in mentioning this. If Rousseau denigrates writing, Isocrates is an obvious target, with his lengthy prose that is carefully manipulated to the extent that it may appear cumbersome, stretched out, and “enervate[d].” Isocrates’s written speech was literally read while being orally delivered. However, on the contrary, Rousseau seems to admit in the figure of Isocrates that even the most melodious and accented language, Greek, renders itself well in writing. He thus admits that Greek writing system, when read aloud, conveyed the sonority of the accent of the spoken language. Here again, we encounter another instance of a convergence of speech and writing, and this time, it is described as the chief interest of rhetoric represented by Isocrates.

Rousseau, then, does not disparage Greek writing. As we have already seen, he proposes a solution to the modern European predicament of the disparity of the written

and the spoken by cultivating and expanding the use of punctuation. It is quite possible to argue, in Derrida's manner, that punctuation is a pharmakon, and that it cures writing of the disease and enervation, but that at the same time it reduces writing to the state of a patient, and thus deprives it of its energy still more. But even if one chooses to admit this, Rousseau is suggesting that Greek writing is exempt from such a disease, and that it does not need to be remedied. Even according to Derrida's line of argument, Rousseau cannot be said to reduce the entirety of writing in the Western tradition to a subjugated state.

Another thing needs to be pointed out with reference to Rousseau's attitude towards writing. While Derrida confines most of his observations to alphabetic writing of modern European languages, Rousseau extends his thoughts beyond the alphabet, and mentions hieroglyphs and Chinese characters at various points in his argument. In the chapter "On Writing," Rousseau identifies three stages in the development of writing, starting from the crudest form of characters, which represent "objects themselves" rather than sounds. This type includes the hieroglyph of the Egyptians and the writing used by the Mexicans. The second type, which includes Chinese characters, "represent[s] words and propositions by conventional characters." Instead of the objects themselves, they represent meaningful sounds, so they imply "a double convention": one between words and objects, and the other between characters and spoken words. They are, in a way, signifiers of signifiers, but they are exempt from the predicament of the alphabet as we shall see next. The third type, the

alphabet, "break[s] down the speaking voice into a certain number of elementary parts, whether vowels or articulations." Rousseau says that these three types correspond respectively to the three stages of society, the "savage," the "barbarous" and the "civilized."[94] Rousseau's narrow Eurocentrism is manifest here, but it is equally obvious that he does not mean to fully disparage the savage and the barbarous, since for him civilisation is itself the result of degeneration and a distancing from the origin.

Derrida sees in this passage of Rousseau's a "teleological and eschatological anticipation that superintends Rousseau's entire discourse."[95] Simply put, Derrida depicts Rousseau as presenting his narrative of writing as one which starts from the pictography of Mexico and Egypt, and by degrees approach the telos of "purely phonographic" alphabet. In Derrida's version of Rousseau's narrative, the alphabet, "[m]ore purely phonographic than the writing of the second condition, [. . .] is more apt to fade before the voice, more apt to let the voice be." The writing of the second type, then, is "ideo-phonographic. Each signifier would refer to a phonic totality and a conceptual synthesis, to a complex and global unity of sense and sound. One has not yet attained purely phonographic writing (of the alphabetic types, for example) in which the visible signifier refers to a phonic unity which in itself has no sense."[96] Rousseau, according to Derrida's depiction, sees the writing of the second type as not "yet" achieving the status of the alphabet, as one step short of the evolutionary goal of writing.

However, I wonder if Rousseau's ideas about writing are entirely controlled by

such a teleology. Rousseau writes of the second type of writing: "[s]uch is the writing of the Chinese: this is truly to depict sounds and to speak to the eyes." By contrast, of the alphabetic writing: "[t]his is not precisely to depict speech, it is to analyze it."[97] Rousseau's use of the terms "sounds" and "speech" is rigorously consistent. The Chinese characters represent sound, which are, in Rousseau's terminology, capable of mimetic representation of the referent. We may as well recall here that Chinese language, Rousseau thought, might retain some of the features of the primary and sonorous language: "words would have few articulations [. . .]. It would resemble Chinese in certain respects, Greek in others, and Arabic in others. Develop these ideas in all their ramifications, and you will find Plato's *Cratylus* is not as ridiculous as it seems to be."[98] Chinese speech, for Rousseau, indicates the possibility of a sonorous language whose manner of representation, though conventional, retains some of the onomatopoeic mimesis. Chinese writing, then, though it represents speech and therefore is doubly conventional and doubly removed from the signified, does not efface itself in front of the voice like the alphabet. Instead, they "truly [. . .] depict sounds and [. . .] speak to the eyes." Chinese characters, in a way, are the visual embodiments of the voice.[99] Here again, we see Rousseau pointing out the possibility of a language overcoming the dichotomy of speech and writing, and sound and sight. This is a rare achievement, and Rousseau elsewhere introduces an episode of a failed attempt to realise this synaesthetic experience of sound and sight. He recalls having seen a "famous clavichord on which

music was supposedly made with colors." He calls this an "absurdity" and a "[f]alse analogy between colors and sounds."[100] It is in clear contrast to "truly" depicting sounds and speaking to the eyes.

I do not agree with Derrida in his portrayal of Rousseau as subordinating the pictogram (hieroglyph) and the ideo-phonogram (Chinese characters) to the phonogram (alphabet), and subordinating the alphabetic writing to speech. It is this order of priority that Derrida assumes in Rousseau which draws out a remark, in response to Rousseau's praise of the hieroglyphic writing. Rousseau says "[w]hat the ancients [i. e. the Egyptians] said in the liveliest way, they did not express in words but by means of signs. They did not say it, they showed it." Derrida writes: "[t]his praise of Egyptian symbolism may surprise us: it is a praise of writing and a praise of savagery."[101] It does not really surprise us. Rousseau's passage quoted here is found in Chapter One, on the second page of the *Essay*. It is where the *Essay* starts from.

We shall now recapitulate. Just as Rousseau thinks that articulated words and sounds are combined in language, he also seems to think that writing and accent are not mutually exclusive. Rousseau seeks for this possibility of the combination of writing and sound in modern European experience, and focuses on punctuation. He finds the successful cases in the past, the Greek alphabet, and in the present, the Chinese characters. In the case of articulation and sound, we may recall, Derrida focused only on articulation, and neglected sound in his discussions of the birth of

languages, and this was why it was possible for him to subvert Rousseau's assumed order of priority. In the case of writing, again, Derrida demarcates the boundary between writing and speech, and defends or even privileges writing as if it were subordinated by speech in Rousseau's writing. He also puts forward his doctrine of supplementarity that the immediate sign is necessarily spatial and visual rather than aural by referring to only one side of Rousseau's argument and overlooking the major part of Rousseau's core ideas about imitation by sound, including musical imitation. Thus, Derrida's thesis seems to me to be a teleological argument supported by a selective reading of Rousseau's *Essay*, externalising the concepts such as sound, accent, music and musical imitation.

If Rousseau, as a European writing in alphabet, seeks for a moment of overcoming the dichotomy of speech and writing, whether in his own language, or in the Greek past or the Chinese present, can he be said to represent a logocentric tradition? Rousseau, it seems to me, is having glimpses of non-alphabetic experiences in his discussions of vocative marks, punctuation, pictogram and ideogram. He distinguishes, but in doing so declares the compatibility of, articulation and sound, the visual and the aural, passion and need, the north and the south, and speech and writing. Derrida's deconstructive reading of Rousseau's *Essay* brings out the dynamism of the supposed dichotomies, but in pointing out the disparity between what Rousseau "declares" and "clandestinely" "describes," I would like to stress, Derrida has to resort to a "pseudo-Rousseau" which he postulates by externalising some of his

central concerns, such as sound, accent, musical imitation and eloquence. Rousseau's *Essay*, thus, presents a strong argument that combines the primitivist themes of language, music and eloquence, and the rhetorical problematic of written speech.

[1] Plato, *Kokka* I. 210, 398E.
[2] Cicero 285, 3. 197.
[3] The term "verbal paradigm" is Neubauer's. Neubauer 9. The interest the topic of musical mimesis aroused in eighteenth-century France is well documented. Neubauer 9, 60-1, Lessem 325-6, Thomas 16, *Encyclopedia* 515.
[4] Though Dubos himself is not one of the philosophes, his work was highly commended in the *Encyclopédie*. Neubauer 61. Although the title page of *Critical Reflections* gives the author's name as Abbé Du Bos, in my thesis I refer to him as Dubos in accordance with the common critical practice.
[5] Du Bos 361-4.
[6] Rousseau, *Essay* 322, 320-1, 327. The last quotation occurs also in the article on "Imitation" in *Dictionnaire de musique* (1768), and was commented upon by Adam Smith as we shall see shortly.
[7] Overview of critical trends in Britain and France on this issue is given, among numerous others, in Lessem, Fujie, Abrams, Barry, Neubauer and articles on "Expression" and "Mimesis" in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*.
[8] Harris 65-6, 68.
[9] Beattie 119, xi.
[10] Smith, "Of the Nature" 199. Smith quotes from *Dictionnaire de musique*.
[11] Smith, "Of the Nature" 204-5.
[12] According to Barry, late eighteenth-century Edinburgh enjoyed a vibrant musical scene comparable to that in London, and instrumental music was popular. Barry 25, 181. The Edinburgh Musical Society, which had been active since the beginning of the eighteenth century, was formally instituted in 1728. It hosted weekly Friday night concerts in Edinburgh, which quickly became a venue for socialising. The popularity grew so that the society built a concert hall of its own, St. Cecilia's Hall, in Niddry's Wynd in 1762, which became a centre for a musical activity "thoroughly European in outlook." Johnson, David 33-6, 38-9.
[13] Barry 11, 3.
[14] Norris, *What's Wrong* 208-10.
[15] Burke 155-7.
[16] Blair's rhetoric is a combination of the French and British stances. He inherits the French Neoclassical ideas about art as mimesis as well as the primitivist narrative of linguistic origins. As we have seen in Chapter Two, he is convinced that language started as a song-like "cry of passion" that mimetically represents the internal feelings. However, as we shall see in Chapter Four, there are times when Blair comes close to the British view of discourse as a play of "empty" signs which invites the reader's active and

free participation in the creation of meaning.

[17] In *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality* also Rousseau admits the natural efficacy of gestures rather than voice. Rousseau, *Ningen* 88.

[18] Rousseau, *Essay* 289-91.

[19] Rousseau, *Essay* 291.

[20] Rousseau, *Essay* 292.

[21] Rousseau, *Essay* 293.

[22] Rousseau, *Essay* 294.

[23] Rousseau, *Essay* 294.

[24] Rousseau, *Essay* 315-6.

[25] Rousseau, *Essay* 318.

[26] Rousseau, *Essay* 322.

[27] Rousseau, *Essay* 326.

[28] Rousseau, *Essay* 319.

[29] Thomas 105.

[30] Rousseau, *Essay* 314.

[31] Rousseau, *Essay* 331-2.

[32] Derrida, *Of Grammatology* 195.

[33] Thomas 89.

[34] Derrida, *Of Grammatology* 315. Derrida repeats this contention using slightly different phrasings, for instance in Derrida, *Of Grammatology* 229, 242.

[35] Derrida, *Of Grammatology* 226.

[36] Derrida, *Of Grammatology* 315.

[37] De Man 139, 140. Against Derrida's procedure of distinguishing between what Rousseau declares and describes, McDonald also raises a question: "how is one to choose what Rousseau means to say and what he is compelled to say? Why does Derrida deny that Rousseau was conscious of the inconsistencies in his thought [. . .]?" McDonald 93. De Man also points out that in Derrida Rousseau's "double valorization" is made to seem not "simultaneous" but "alternating." De Man 121. I agree with McDonald and De Man that it seems impossible to determine which of Rousseau's words reflect his intentions, and which do not. Referring to De Man's observation, Derrida confirms that deconstruction is always already at work in a literary text, and that deconstruction is an "explicitation of a relation of the work to *itself*." Derrida, *Memoires* 123-4. Even so, I would like to argue, Derrida's thesis is not free from philosophical determination and a certain teleology, and that some of Derrida's readings explicitly contradict Rousseau's words. "[E]xplicitation" in the quotation is Derrida's or the translator's word.

[38] Derrida, *Of Grammatology* 97. Neel calls attention to the "outlandishness" of Derrida's thesis that "a twenty-three-hundred-year conspiracy to exclude writing" in the West as instituted by *Phaedrus* is "kept strategically in place at key moments in the last two centuries by

Rousseau and Saussure." Neel 186.
[39] Derrida, *Of Grammatology* 227, 168.
[40] Vartanian also contends that "there is no suggestion of danger, nor of anything at all sinister or degenerate" in writing as Rousseau saw it, and that Derrida's characterisations of writing as "dangerous, sick, destructive, decadent, or masturbatory" are "Derrida's, and not Rousseau's, categories." Vartanian 133, 135. Vartanian states that Derrida's "presupposition," that is, teleological determination, led to his observations of writing as supplement. Vartanian 130. Bernasconi, who defends Derrida against de Man's criticism, also admits that "it is the account of metaphysics in terms of presence[, a narrative framework borrowed from Heidegger,] which, more than anything else, governs Derrida's account of logocentrism and thus his determination of 'what Rousseau wants to say'." Bernasconi 157.
[41] De Man 138.
[42] Miyazaki argues that De Man's definition of literature as a text without blindness is itself within the framework of metaphysical closure, but he does not question the validity of Derrida's reading of Rousseau. Miyazaki 234, 236.
[43] Norris, *Language* 51-3.
[44] Derrida, *Of Grammatology* 237-8.
[45] Derrida, *Of Grammatology* 229.
[46] Derrida, *Of Grammatology* 237.
[47] Derrida, *Of Grammatology* 233.
[48] Rousseau, *Essay* 295-6.
[49] Derrida, *Of Grammatology* 228-9. Johnson discusses the implications of "articulation" in Derrida's approach to Kant's theory of aesthetic judgment, and also its centrality to Derrida's theory as a way of describing the movement or the "'double bind' of opposing forces or tendencies." Johnson, Christopher 127-9.
[50] Bennington 383.
[51] Derrida, *Of Grammatology* 244.
[52] Derrida, *Of Grammatology* 229.
[53] According to Connors, Derrida emphasises and "dramatizes" the importance of articulation at the origin of languages by using rhymes, half-rhymes and eye-rhymes in his discussion of articulation, in order to stress the difference between the "deathliness of writing" that Rousseau "declares" and his own "self-delighting, articulate energy." Connors 150. The joy of reading Derrida, then, approaches that which is given by literary works. As a reading of Rousseau, though, his claim about Rousseau's "deathliness of writing" is unconvincing, as we shall see in due course.
[54] Rousseau, *Essay* 295.
[55] Rousseau, *Essay* 317-8.
[56] Norris fully embraces Derrida's view, and says that Rousseau cannot claim that both language and music arise from the same source, passion,

while maintaining the distinction between language and music. In order for them to be distinguished, he writes, culture, artificiality, harmony and articulation must supervene upon nature, passion and melody. Norris *Language*, 42, Norris *Deconstruction* 34. My reading shows that this already takes place in Rousseau, and he states that the supposed pure origin has already been breached by articulation.

[57] Derrida, *Of Grammatology* 315, 242.

[58] Derrida, *Of Grammatology* 228.

[59] Rousseau interpolates here an interesting note on accent marks and punctuation, which I shall discuss later.

[60] Rousseau, *Essay* 301-2.

[61] Rousseau compares inflections of speech and musical pitch. Rousseau, *Essay* 328. He also says that "[a]ll musical notes are so many accents." Rousseau, *Essay* 295. As an illustration of the meticulous care and attention the ancient Greeks paid to the vocal pitch, Cicero gives an account of the training of Greek tragedy actors. Cicero 121, 1. 251.

[62] Rousseau, *Essay* 303. My understanding of the words "accent" and "vocal sound" is close to that of Downing Thomas. "[T]he tongue and the palate produce articulations while vocal sound is modified by the glottis in the deeper regions of the vocal tract." Thomas 118. Also Thomas 102-3, 105.

[63] Hudson writes that Rousseau's idea of musical accent is directly influenced by Olivet, who wrote a treatise on French accent, *Traité de la prosodie françoise* (1736), in which he argued that the French language does not have a prosodic accent, or accent by changes of tone. Hudson, *Writing* 123, 133.

[64] Rousseau, *Essay* 572, note 56.

[65] Thomas 124.

[66] Rousseau, *Essay* 318.

[67] Rousseau, *Essay* 300.

[68] Derrida, *Of Grammatology* 315.

[69] Smock says that Derrida discusses the issue of accent as playing "the part of melody" that "express[es] the passions and faithfully imitate[s] nature," and refers to pp. 212-16 of *Of Grammatology*. Smock 146. However, in these pages too we find Derrida's story of articulation encroaching upon the original purity unconvincing. Derrida writes: "In the passage of the *Essay* that we have just cited, the definition of the origin of music was developed in this way, without the contradiction or the impurity becoming its themes. 'Accents constituted singing, quantity constituted measure, and one spoke as much by sounds and rhythm as by articulations and words. To speak and to sing were formerly one, says Strabo, which shows that in his opinion poetry is the source of eloquence.'" Derrida, *Of Grammatology* 214. I do not see how this quotation from Rousseau substantiates Derrida's contention, for in the quotation Rousseau explicitly

says that accents, sounds and rhythm existed simultaneously with articulations and words in primitive song-like speech. Articulation clearly must be an instance of "contradiction" or "impurity" which Derrida says is absent from Rousseau.

[70] Derrida, *Of Grammatology* 227-8.

[71] Peggy Kamuf elaborates on the concept of a "blind spot" and argues that this is also "the point of irreducible originality of [. . .] writing." Kamuf 396-8. If we take this line of argument, it would be possible to say that Derrida's "point of irreducible originality" lies in the concept of articulation, and that this is where Derrida departs from Rousseau and creates his grammatology. The validity of such a "method," to use Kamuf's word, is beyond my scope of argument. My contention is that as a reading of Rousseau's *Essay*, Derrida's argument seems to be based on a material misreading and to betray a certain teleology that unfairly disparages Rousseau.

[72] Smock 145-6.

[73] De Man also points out, with a hint of irony, that Derrida is "more detailed and eloquent in expounding the philosophy of written language and of 'difference' that Rousseau rejects than in expounding the philosophy of plenitude that Rousseau wants to defend." De Man 122.

[74] Derrida takes up the issue of melody imitating the speaking voice, but it is in order to put forward his own thesis on mimesis, that in mimesis the difference between that which imitates and that which is imitated is preserved, while it is reduced as much as possible. "The notion of *imitation*," Derrida writes, "reconciles these two exigencies within ambiguity." The unity of the imitating and the imitated is the "archeo-teleologic definition of nature." Derrida, *Of Grammatology* 196-7.

[75] Derrida, *Of Grammatology* 235-6.

[76] Derrida, *Of Grammatology* 247.

[77] Derrida, *Of Grammatology* 242.

[78] Derrida, *Of Grammatology* 233.

[79] Rousseau, *Essay* 290. In Derrida, instead of the "stick," the more phallic "magic wand" is used by the girl. Derrida, *Of Grammatology* 234. This leads us to the later reference to "movement of the bodies" represented by the drawing.

[80] Derrida, *Of Grammatology* 235. In fact, the *Essay* gives several other instances of gesture supplementing speech, such as in the observation that Europeans make much use of gestures, and that some even gesticulate before speaking. Rousseau, *Essay* 290.

[81] Derrida, *Of Grammatology* 234.

[82] Naas discusses this concept of the "immediate sign" and says that it is a "paradoxical, oxymoronic" notion, because for a sign to be a sign it needs a gap or difference that distinguishes it from the presence or the signified. Naas 152-4.

[83] Rousseau, *Essay* 318.
[84] Rousseau, *Essay* 322-3.
[85] Rousseau, *Essay* 292.
[86] Referring to Derrida's remark elsewhere that "I don't believe that anything like perception exists. Perception is precisely a concept," Loesberg reminds us that Derrida's uses of the words "concept" and "perception" are firmly grounded in the tradition of Continental philosophy, and that in saying the above Derrida is not denying "perceptions of empirical phenomena," but "Husserl's transcendental acts of pure perception in the absence of outside objects perceived." Loesberg 78-9.
[87] Rousseau, *Essay* 301-2.
[88] Derrida, *Of Grammatology* 226-7. All square brackets that contain French words are the translator's.
[89] Hudson makes a similar point in a different context. Referring to Derrida's attack on Condillac's view of writing, Hudson says: "It would seem gratuitous for Derrida to conclude that this philosopher deemed writing 'the root of evil,'" for Condillac thought that "good philosophical writing [. . .] represented language in its most analytical and precise form." He then goes on to point out, correctly, that for many seventeenth and eighteenth-century empiricists writing was "not 'dangerous', but rather beneficial" as it "made language more stable and durable" and "writing often became a template for the reform of speech." He calls this a "*grammacentric* tradition." Hudson, "Philosophy" 22-4.
[90] Rousseau, *Essay* 300.
[91] It is possible to argue, using Derrida's logic, that punctuation is a pharmakon, for punctuation restores the malady of written language to the healthy state of full speech, but in doing so it reduces writing to the status of a patient, thereby further depriving it of its power. I shall discuss this issue later.
[92] Rousseau, *Essay* 301-2.
[93] Rousseau, *Essay* 572, note 58. Rousseau quotes from Cicero in Latin (Rousseau, *Essay* 302), but I quote from the note of Rousseau's translator, who quotes from H. Rackham's translation of Cicero in the Loeb Classical Library.
[94] Rousseau, *Essay* 297.
[95] Derrida, *Of Grammatology* 295.
[96] Derrida, *Of Grammatology* 293-5.
[97] Rousseau, *Essay* 297.
[98] Rousseau, *Essay* 295-6.
[99] Hudson comments that Rousseau's understanding of the Chinese characters not as an ideogram but as a logogram was unconventional for his time. He also states, in a counterargument to Derrida, that Rousseau was writing "*against* the belief that writing was a mark of European greatness, the *via magna* to civilisation and enlightenment — a doctrine that held

virtually unquestioned authority a century before." Hudson, *Writing* 129, 141.

[100] Rousseau, *Essay* 325.

[101] Derrida, *Of Grammatology* 236. Rousseau's quotation is from Derrida, and the passage can be found in Rousseau, *Essay* 290.

Chapter Four
Blair's Rhetorical Sublime:
Sublimity and the Rhetorical Paradox

We have now reached the final phase of our exploration into the complex problem of the written voice. In Chapter One, our reading of *Phaedrus* showed that Plato defined rhetoric as written speech, and made it a counterpart of the philosophical dialectic voice. While philosophy was represented by the figure of Socrates, rhetoric was represented by his lover, Isocrates, who wrote public speeches but never himself appeared in front of the audience to give orations. The design of *Phaedrus*, in this way, is even more explicitly grammatological than Derrida's representation of it in his article "Plato's Pharmacy," and writing has always complemented the voice as a supplement to speech since the beginning of the Western rhetorical tradition. In Chapter Two, we placed this rhetorical problem of the written voice in eighteenth-century context, and explored its significance in Blair's rhetorical theory. His primitivistic ideal of supreme eloquence as language of passion that is close to poetry and song revealed a fundamental rift in its logic when it tried to invest writing with primitive orality through a skilful management of syntax. A harmonious arrangement of periodic sentence achieves a desired musical effect, but it can also give the impression of artificiality instead of primordial eloquence. Connective particles are vital for a well-structured sentence in Greek, but they are detrimental to euphony and energy in English. Thus, the phonocentric logic inherent in primitivism manifests its aporia in Blair's treatment

of syntax in written discourse. In Chapter Three, we investigated Rousseau's primitivist text on musical mimesis and language. We found that his central thesis about the origin of language was formed around the distinction between the notions of sound and articulation, and that the sound was directly and mimetically linked to the referent, the primordial passion. Rousseau thus believed in the possibility of a system of signification through mimetic reference both in visual and aural signs. In addition, he tried to reconcile orality and writing by the use of accent marks. Derrida, we have seen, overlooks these in his exploration and analysis of Rousseau's phonocentrism, and unfairly taxes Rousseau for subordinating articulation and writing to the order of the voice.

In Chapter Four, we shall return to Blair, and pursue the problem of the written voice with reference to the aesthetics of the sublime. Despite his ambivalent stance towards Longinus, we would like to point out that Blair's views on literature and style are close to those of his classical precursor for his insistence on passion and enthusiasm. In addition, Blair's emphasis on the importance of syntax and musical arrangement of discourse, which produce the surrogate voice in writing as we have seen in Chapter Two, bears a strong affinity to Longinus on sublime language. I would like to argue that the interlocking of the voice, passion and musicality in the primordial song-like speech finds its nearest equivalent in written discourse in the reader's psychological experience of sublimity during textual appreciation in a way that reminds us of reader-response theory and its emphasis on temporal linearity and conceptual unification. The sublimity of discourse, seen in this way, is an instance of orality inhabiting writing

realised through the reader's active experience of reading. We shall then focus our attention on Blair's *A Critical Dissertation on the Poems of Ossian*, and see how his argument, which upholds Ossianic poems as the ultimate instances of sublimity and primitive orality, is fissured by his belletrist focus on writing.

The "Longinian sublime" and the "aesthetic sublime"

The eighteenth-century vogue for the sublime which swept through much of the writings on matters of taste in Britain is usually attributed to the re-introduction of Longinus's *On the Sublime*. The text, written by an unidentified rhetorician, had been virtually forgotten in Europe until Boileau brought it to public attention in 1674 through his translation and accompanying treatise.[1] In Britain too, it was Boileau's translation and an English translation of Longinus in 1698 that familiarised the notion of the sublime among critics, and since then it was variously discussed in a wide range of critical disciplines dealing with rhetoric, literature, the fine arts, philosophy and, later in the century, the appreciation of natural scenery.[2] Blair too considers the sublime an important area of investigation, and he draws on aesthetic critics such as Addison, Gerard, Hume, Kames and Burke in his discussion. Blair allocates two lectures to the topic of the sublime and places them at the beginning of the *Lectures* as a part of a general discussion of taste and criticism.

Longinus's is a treatise on rhetoric, and his concern is linguistic style. The sublime is a name given to a certain exalted psychological state described in the following words:

> [T]he effect of genius is not to persuade the audience but rather to transport them out of themselves. [. . . O]ur persuasions are usually under our own control, while these things exercise an irresistible power and mastery, and get the better of every listener. [. . . A] well-timed flash of sublimity shatters everything like a bolt of lightning and reveals the full power of the speaker at a single stroke.[3]

Longinus is interested in the audience's heightened response to a linguistic discourse. The aim of his rhetoric is not a closely reasoned persuasion, but "transport" — a joyous and ecstatic embrace that may even involve an extraordinary moment of rapturous self-annihilation. In his treatise, he enumerates the stylistic techniques that best achieve this intensity of emotion, and quotes and discusses various passages from classical authors such as Homer, Plato, Euripides, Herodotus, Sappho, Demosthenes and the Bible. Burke's notion of fear and danger is certainly not inimical to Longinus's sublime, as is most apparent in the famous discussion of the desperate cry of a terrified Orestes, who believes that he is about to be killed by a group of "snake-like women with blood-reddened eyes," sent by his mother, leaping upon him.[4] However, Longinus's argument focuses itself on the visualising technique of this passage, and not on the description or the categorisation of the emotion expressed in it. Another famous analysis of Sappho's love lyric is about the delicate fluctuations and tremors of a heart in love, and does not contain any element of overwhelming fear or danger.[5]

If the eighteenth-century aesthetic of the sublime started with Longinus, it rapidly outgrew its original text. The sublime scenery, for instance, with great heaps of

rugged rocks, huge cataracts, tall and dark trees shrouded in mist, as are familiar from Romantic paintings and literature, is almost entirely absent from Longinus's treatise. There is just one short passage in Longinus that explicitly refers to natural landscape: "it is by some natural instinct that we admire, not the small streams, clear and useful as they are, but the Nile, the Danube, the Rhine, and above all the Ocean."[6] Edmund Burke is the most eloquent and influential arbiter of the sublime and its psychology, but he mentions Longinus's name in his *Enquiry* only twice, once in the Preface to the first edition, and then in the final pages of Part One.[7]

In a well-informed historical account of the complex etymology of the sublime, Timothy Costelloe distinguishes between the above two forms of the sublime: the "Longinian sublime" denotes the "rhetorical effect," while the Burkean "aesthetic sublime" refers to "those features of objects (such as magnitude, height, and elevation) and the affective states (such as transcendence, awe, fear and terror)."[8] According to him and Éva Madeleine Martin, the Greek noun used by Longinus, "hupsous" and the Latin adjective "sublimis" were combined to form the French word "sublimité," a neologism first used in 1636. This was later translated into English as the substantives "sublimity" and the "sublime." It is Costelloe's contention that Samuel Johnson's *Dictionary*, whose entry for the sublime gives the definition "The grand or lofty stile," distinguishes between the "Longinian sublime" and the "aesthetic sublime," reserving the noun "sublime" solely for Longinus. For the adjectival usage, "great" and "grand" were more common than "sublime" around this time, in keeping with the practice of early writers such as Dennis, Shaftesbury and Addison. As the century wore on,

however, the adjectives became interchangeable, and by the time of Burke, "sublime" almost entirely came to denote the "aesthetic sublime," and "the Longinian sublime all but disappeared."[9] Costelloe tells a narrative in which the word "sublime" gradually shifts its referential focus from the "Longinian sublime" to the "aesthetic sublime" during the course of the eighteenth century.[10]

If we put Blair in Costelloe's chronological scale of gradation of meanings of the word "sublime," he will be seen to belong to the late stage of the transitional period when the word was used interchangeably with other adjectives denoting greatness, and the "Longinian sublime" was making way for the "aesthetic sublime." In Lecture Three, which discusses "Sublimity in Objects," Blair writes: "I consider Grandeur and Sublimity as terms synonymous, or nearly so."[11] Lecture Four is devoted to "The Sublime in Writing," and it is clear that Blair's sublime is "aesthetic" and not "Longinian" when he says: "The true sense of Sublime Writing, undoubtedly, is such a description of objects, or exhibition of sentiments, which are in themselves of a Sublime nature," and suitably his quotations are from Homer on Zeus, and Milton on Satan.[12] For Blair, the sublime sensation caused by a description depends first and foremost on the choice of its matter rather than its manner.

Accordingly, Blair thinks it is an "improper" usage of the term when "sublime" is used to signify "any remarkable and distinguishing excellency of composition." Longinus himself, according to Blair, is also given to such misapplication of the term, and "many of the passages which he produces as instances of the Sublime, are merely elegant." Longinus, thus, was concerned with "the beauties of Writing in general; not

[with] the Sublime in particular."[13] Judging from these observations, Blair does sound like a champion of the "aesthetic sublime," testifying to how far Longinus's concept has lost its hold on rhetoric, and his words may sound all the more definitive because he is speaking with particular reference to rhetoric and eloquence. For Samuel Monk, Blair's words are a virtual declaration of the end of the "rhetorical sublime."[14]

Blair and Longinus: the rhetorical sublime

As we have seen, Blair's definition and treatment of the concept of the sublime in writing can be described as aesthetic in approach rather than rhetorical. It is my contention, however, that he actually upholds and advocates, though sometimes unwittingly and somewhat despite himself, the "rhetorical sublime" in the rest of the lectures.[15] Despite his open criticism of Longinus, Blair, it must be noted, asserts that linguistic sublimity "forms one of the highest excellencies of eloquence and of poetry," and accordingly his critical appreciations of literary works often use the word "sublime" as a mark of the highest commendation, as we shall see shortly.[16] In addition, he enumerates the five sources of the sublime that Longinus describes, and says: "This is the plan of one who was writing a treatise of rhetoric." The categories include "Boldness or Grandeur in the Thoughts," "the Pathetic," "the proper application of Figures," "the use of Tropes and beautiful Expressions" and lastly, "Musical Structure and Arrangement of Words."[17] These five heads, we cannot but think, correspond rather neatly to Blair's own topics in the first nineteen lectures, which include taste and pleasures of imagination, origin and nature of figurative language and its proper uses,

different characteristics of styles and harmony of sentences. Moreover, Blair's ideas about what forms a good style are also close to those of Longinus, which we shall discuss in more detail later. The criticism that Longinus was too loosely inclusive in his definition was intended as a complaint in the context of Blair's argument, as he was trying to be as specific as possible in the lecture about what constitutes the sublime. However, his characterisation of Longinus as a rhetorician who appreciates many different types of beauties of discourse is in itself hardly uncomplimentary. Blair's remark, then, "I know no critic, antient or modern, that discovers a more lively relish of the beauties of fine writing, than Longinus" may sound like the highest possible tribute paid by one man of taste to another.[18] If Longinus is "the spiritual ancestor of critical impressionism," it seems to me that Blair is one of his descendants writing in the eighteenth century.[19]

In the following several sections of the chapter, I shall point out some parallels that can be found between Longinus and Blair. I shall first look at the usages of the word "sublime" in Blair, in particular with regard to the emotional sublime and the use of figures, and see how this concept is central to the primitivist theme of his rhetorical theory. Next, I shall focus on collocation, or arrangement of words and phrases in a sentence, and consider Blair's observations on the technicalities of prose style and compare them with those of Longinus. Lastly, I shall discuss Blair's argument of harmony of sentences, and demonstrate how it echoes Longinus's views on the experience of reading.

Among the five sources of the sublime that Longinus enumerates, Blair thinks

that the first two, grand conceptions and vehement emotions, can justly be categorised as such, and he generally adheres to such usage in his work: the sublime is "something that elevates the mind above itself, and fills it with high conceptions, and a noble pride."[20] This heightened state of psychological transport caused by a discourse is a sure mark of excellence in composition for Blair, and he uses the term frequently as a eulogy in the latter half of the *Lectures*, where he discusses literary works. By far the larger number of times the words "sublime" and "sublimity" are used with regard to poetry rather than to history, epistolary writings, novels or dramatic works. By my count, the words "sublime" and "sublimity" are used fifty-nine times between Lecture Twenty-Five and the end of the book, of which fifty are used for poetry. The epic, with its august theme, heroic personages, divine interventions and elevated diction of the poet employed throughout, is most often described as sublime for it is a genre "where admiration and lofty ideas are supposed to reign, [and] the marvellous and supernatural find, if any where, their proper place." Therefore, "[i]t is the region within which we look for every thing that is sublime in description."[21] Homer and Milton are mentioned as the most sublime of epic poets. Hebrew poetry is also praised for its sublimity, due to its great antiquity and the seriousness and enthusiasm of the religious sentiments it expresses.[22]

Perhaps rather unexpectedly, it is the ode as a genre that Blair closely associates with the notion of the sublime along with the epic and Hebrew poetry, which are more predictable choices.[23] The ode, Blair says, can "raise it [the mind] above its ordinary state, and fill it with high enthusiastic emotions," by assuming the "character of the

sublime and noble" as in Pindar's works.[24] We would like to focus our attention on Blair's explanation of the cause of this elevation of sentiment. He attaches an especially important status to the ode form in his primitivist genealogy of poetic origins, part of which we have discussed in Chapter Two. Blair writes of the ode:

> [A]s I observed in the last Lecture, Music and Poetry were coeval, and were, originally, always joined together. But after their separation took place, after Bards had begun to make Verse Compositions, which were to be recited or read, not to be sung, such Poems as were designed to be still joined with Music or Song, were, by way of distinction, called Odes.[25]

Blair refers back to the time when the primordial and expressive voice began to disintegrate with the advent of writing. When the first "separation took place" and "Verse Compositions, which were to be [. . .] read" began to be created, the privileged unity of sound and meaning, or music and emotions in the primitive song was no longer possible. The union of "Music and Poetry" was over, and the primitive speech was divided into specialist arts of letters, we recall, into eloquence, history and poetry. However, in the above passage Blair admits an exception: the Odes were unique and they still retained a privileged link with Music and Song. It means that the primordial voice survives in the odes. Therefore, it follows in Blair's explanation that in the ode "Poetry retains its first and most antient form; that form, under which the original Bards poured forth their enthusiastic strains [. . .]. Music and Song naturally add to the warmth of Poetry. They tend to transport, in a higher degree, both the person who

sings, and the persons who hear."[26] The eloquence of the primordial song-like speech is retained in the ode, and it is the nearest equivalent to the passionate effusion of the primitive man, and the ideal vehicle for the poet-musician. The ode as such is described in vocabulary that is distinctively associated with the sublime: it is an effusion of the poet's "enthusiastic strains" and "naturally" has a peculiar power to "transport" both the poet and the audience. The ode for Blair, then, is a very rare instance where the persuasiveness of primordial orality is retained in a postlapsarian poetic form, and significantly, Blair chooses the word sublime to describe its unique status and its peculiar character.

Although the word sublime occurs more often in the latter half of the *Lectures*, we find some examples in the first half too, for instance in his discussion of "Origin and Nature of Figurative Language." Longinus considers figures of speech as sufficiently material to the sublime to identify them as its third source of the sublime, but Blair at first seems to follow Boileau in playing down the importance: "the strong pathetic, and the pure sublime, not only have little dependence on Figures of Speech, but, generally reject them." According to Blair, figures are only "the dress," and a discourse does not need to embellish itself with artificial decorations if the sentiment to be expressed is purely and genuinely sublime. It will choose simple expressions.[27] However, we cannot overlook the fact that "figures of speech" are actually another topic where Blair uses the word "sublime" more frequently than usual elsewhere. After quoting a passage from Bishop Sherlock's sermon which uses the figure of personification, Blair exclaims: "This is more than elegant; it is truly sublime."[28] Referring to a passage

from The Book of Isaiah in the *Old Testament* where apostrophes as well as personifications are used, Blair comments: "This whole passage is full of sublimity."[29] Interrogations and Exclamations are other examples. Blair says: "They are, indeed, on so many occasions, the native language of passion, that their use is extremely frequent; and, in ordinary conversation, when men are heated, they prevail as much as in the most sublime oratory."[30] Sublime sensation and figurative language, we note, are thus not just antithetical to each other, but congruous and in many cases even concomitant. In fact, all the figures mentioned here, personification, apostrophe, interrogation and exclamation, are at one time or another described as being "the very language of imagination and passion" that originates in heightened emotions.[31] Personification gives an idea of life to inanimate objects, so it requires a certain impetus and imaginative force; apostrophe is passionate address, and it also requires a degree of exercise of imagination as it linguistically brings an absent being to presence; interrogation and exclamation, we readily agree, indicate various kinds of internal agitation or passion. In the context of Blair's primitivist train of thought, these figures of speech are associated with vehement emotions and unfettered expressions: to "such bold Figures of discourse as strong Personifications [. . .] and Apostrophes, the glowing imagination of the ancient Oriental nations was particularly fitted."[32] Thus, Blair's notion of sublime eloquence is directly linked to his ideal of a native and natural eloquence of unpremeditated passionate effusion, as seen here in his discussion of figures of speech.

We are thus led to observe that the sublime is an integral and important part of

Blair's central argument on aesthetics. The primordial eloquence as song is best preserved in poetry, and those poetic forms that arouse a heightened emotional state such as the epic and the ode are called sublime. In particular, the ode is assigned an important place in Blair's genealogy of poetic origins. Figurative language is another characteristic of primitive speech, and despite the notable caution of his explicit remarks on the topic, Blair in fact describes the enthusiasm aroused by the eloquence of figures of speech as being sublime. The word sublime, then, is a key critical term for Blair, both for his critical doctrine of primitivism and his critical practice of judging the merit of linguistic expressions according to the intensity of emotions he feels.

Blair and Longinus: word-arrangement

We would now like to move on to a consideration of Blair's views on prose style, and compare them with Longinus's. Longinus, we have seen, identifies five stylistic factors for achieving the desired effect of transporting the reader. They are, to recapitulate, "the power of grand conceptions," "the inspiration of vehement emotion," "the proper construction of figures," "choice of words and the use of metaphor and elaborated diction" and "dignified and elevated word-arrangement." To add to this, Longinus writes: "the common groundwork, as it were, of all five being competence in speaking, without which nothing can be done." His idea of eloquence in written discourse, then, is founded on the model of speech. Of the five "sources," the fifth merits our detailed attention, for he seems to place a special emphasis on this. He says: "The fifth cause of grandeur [. . .] gives form to all those already mentioned."[33]

It is the word-arrangement that organises and structures the various elements of the sublime and brings them to their utmost effect. Longinus says he has written two books on the subject of word-arrangement, which shows the extent of care and attention necessary to acquire this skill.[34] He puts it eloquently:

> Nothing is of greater service in giving grandeur to what is said than the organization of the various members. It is the same with the human body. None of the members has any value by itself apart from the others, yet one with another they all constitute a perfect system. Similarly if these effects of grandeur are separated, the sublimity is scattered with them: but if they are united into a single whole and embraced by the bonds of rhythm, then they gain a living voice just by being merely rounded into a period.[35]

Sublime thoughts and sentiments, and passionate and striking figures of speech are unavailing and powerless in themselves. In order to be fully effective, they need to form relations with each other to create a sentence. Words and phrases are put to best usage when they find their places as “members” of a “body.” When they come together and cohere to make “a single whole,” they acquire a certain “rhythm” and obtain a movement, a body and a “living voice” of their own. Sublimity, then, as Longinus conceives it, is a form of life. It is a life and a voice that inhabits and animates writing, and it cannot be without word-arrangement that connects and unites the individual parts and members to form a periodic sentence.

Regarding the arrangement of members in a period, T. R. Henn, in his book on the influence of Longinus on British literary and aesthetic critics, taxes Blair for

"fail[ing . . .] to see that the key to Longinus is his insistence on composition, and the organic nature of style."[36] It is true that, as we have seen, Blair's lectures that directly deal with the sublime are more aesthetic and sentimental than linguistic. However, I would like to argue that if we broaden our scope and examine Blair's views on prose style, we will come to a different conclusion. It seems to me that Blair shares Longinus's emphasis on the importance of syntactical arrangement and his ideal of a written discourse endued with a "living voice," though he may not directly call it sublime but "the beauties of Writing."[37]

Blair thinks that a good prose style consists of two characters. Perspicuity "convey[s] our ideas clearly to the minds of others" while ornament "pleas[es] and interest[s] them."[38] The different proportions of perspicuity and ornament decides the individual characters of various discourses such as Dry, Plain, Neat, Elegant or Flowery, as Blair shows in Lectures Eighteen and Nineteen by quoting examples from literary authors. Perspicuity, Blair says, is achieved by paying attention to two things: semantic units of words and phrases, and construction of sentences. In choosing words, Purity, Propriety and Precision should be adhered to. Purity means that we should use expressions that are in "the idiom of the Language which we speak," and are free from "Scotticisms or Gallicisms."[39] Propriety and Precision are achieved when we choose words that signify no more or less than what we mean to say. However, it is the "the proper composition and structure of Sentences [that] is of the highest importance," and Blair devotes three subsequent lectures to the subject.[40]

Perspicuity in structure of sentences requires four considerations: "Clearness and

Precision," "Unity," "Strength" and "Harmony." Clearness and Precision, Blair says, is achieved firstly by "observ[ing] exactly the rules of grammar." Yet, it is not enough that a sentence is free from all grammatical mistakes if it is to be clear and precise. As the English language does not have declensions or conjugations, the relations that words or phrases bear to each other cannot be indicated other than by the positions they occupy in a sentence. Therefore, the second rule is that "the words or members most nearly related, should be placed in the Sentence, as near to each other as possible; so as to make their mutual relation clearly appear."[41] The locations of qualifiers such as adverbs and adverbial phrases, and of relative pronouns and relative clauses, are particularly to be attended to. Blair supports this direction with examples taken from writers such as Addison and Swift, by quoting and improving them. The second element of Perspicuity is Unity. This requires that in a sentence some "one object must reign and be predominant" and that "one proposition [is] to be expressed."[42] So as to achieve this, Blair says, in a sentence that consists of several clauses, their subject should be one and the same; the subject should not be changed from one to another in the course of a sentence. Blair also warns against crowding a sentence with too many things to say, either by interpolations or by adding something unnecessary that "pops out" after its appropriate ending.[43]

With the above two stylistic considerations of Clearness and Precision, and Unity, Blair's mode of explanation and instruction are on the whole grammatical, and his chief aim is to avoid confusion and ambiguity in the sentence. The third element of Perspicuity, Strength, has a slightly different aim: it seeks to achieve "liveliness of

impression, which a more happy arrangement would have produced." A sentence may be clear, grammatical and closely knit, yet it may lack the power to strike the reader. Strength requires "such a disposition of the several words and members, as shall bring out the sense to the best advantage; as shall render the impression, which the Period is designed to make, most full and complete."[44] This for Blair is a stylistic attribute that is best judged by the force of "impression" it makes on the reader, and its chief consideration is the "disposition of the several words and members." It will be fair, though, to admit that sometimes Blair's rules for Strength may seem to overlap with previous ones. For instance, the first rule of pruning redundancies may also be described as a matter of Clearness and Precision, for a meaning may become blurred by being restated in slightly different ways. However, we would like to know what Blair was driving at when he was discussing Strength as a separate stylistic merit. Although Blair does not explicitly mention this, if we recall that Hume defined belief or opinion as "A LIVELY IDEA RELATED TO OR ASSOCIATED WITH A PRESENT IMPRESSION" and that the difference between the two perceptions of the mind, ideas and impressions, is observed only in "their different degrees of force and vivacity,"[45] Blair's regard for "liveliness of impression" of a discourse will seem a highly rhetorical concern, for it aims to induce persuasion and belief in the audience or readers. It was apparently an important consideration for Blair too, for he devotes one entire lecture to this topic.

Blair gives six rules for Strength, most of which concern collocation, and connections and transitions between ideas, words and phrases. Firstly, he advises that a discourse be divested of all redundant words and members: "As every word ought to

present a new idea, so every member ought to contain a new thought." A good sentence develops and grows in its meaning as new words and members are introduced and added to the foregoing part. If a word or a member does not add anything much new, "[t]he attention becomes remiss, the mind falls into inaction," culminating in the impression of "prolixity."[46] What interests us here is that Blair focuses on the active psychological process of reading, and describes how a sentence should keep the reader's "attention" and gradually take form through the additions and qualifications brought about by each new piece of information. A sentence that retains the "attention" throughout, it would seem, achieves "liveliness of impression." Secondly, it is of great importance to "attend particularly to the use of copulatives, relatives, and all the particles employed for transition and connection." Among these "little words," Blair pays a special attention to the word "and." He draws on Longinus's observation that the word "and" technically joins parts, but in effect often separates them by slowing down the process of reading. When a writer or a speaker wants to present a series of objects and scenes in a quick succession, it is best not to use the word "and," as in Caesar's "veni, vidi, vici." Blair remarks: "The reason seems to be, that, in the former case [when 'and' is not used], the mind is supposed to be hurried so fast through a quick succession of objects, that it has not leisure to point out their connexion; [. . .] Whereas, when we enumerate, with a view to aggravate, the mind is supposed to proceed with a more slow and solemn pace."[47] Here again, we notice that Blair's attention is directed towards the process of the mind that goes through the course of a sentence in the act of reading. The reading mind is "hurried" or "aggravate[d]" by the absence or presence

of the word "and," and so the general impression is formed either of rapidity or gravity.

Up to this point, Blair describes the stylistic effect of Strength focusing on the process of an attentive mind in the act of reading. Reading is a consecutive process in time that culminates in different degrees of Strength of impression. Blair's emphasis on the linearity of discourse seamlessly connects the first two rules to the remaining ones concerning the arrangement of members in a period. As the third rule, Blair says that for a full Strength of a sentence, the "capital word" of a sentence should be placed where it "will make the fullest impression." It is best to place it at the beginning of a sentence, where a word is apt to make the strongest impact, or at the end, thereby "suspend[ing] the meaning for a little, and then bring[ing] it out full at the close," leaving the impression that the period has been completely and neatly rounded off.[48] The collocation of words and phrases is important as they decide the impact of expression by regulating the order in which the reading mind should be struck. The fourth and fifth rules are also about the arrangement of words and members. Blair says that a sentence is most eloquent when constructed so that "the members of them go on rising and growing in their importance above one another," so that "the sense and the sound rise together, with a very magnificent swell" until it reaches a "full and oratorical climax" that overwhelms the reader's mind. Therefore, it follows that a sentence should not end with less significant and less euphonious words such as prepositions, for "it is disagreeable for the mind to be left pausing on a word [at the end of a sentence], which does not, by itself, produce any idea, nor form any picture in the fancy."[49] A weak ending leaves the mind with a sense of inconclusiveness and incomprehensibility.

Lastly, when two things are compared or contrasted to each other, "some resemblance, in the language and construction, should be preserved." Blair quotes from Pope: "Homer was the greater genius; Virgil, the better artist: in the one, we most admire the man; in the other, the work." Such parallels in construction, to be sure, bring out the similarities or differences of the two objects clearly and distinctly, and leave a strong impression on the readers.[50]

Blair's discussion of Strength, thus, and indeed most of his observations on style, centre on the disposition of words and members in a sentence, and on the way such arrangement addresses and influences the mind in the process of reading. He illustrates each rule with appropriate examples taken from authors such as Cicero, Addison, Swift, William Temple, Shaftesbury and Bolingbroke, so reading his advice on prose style is like reading their sentences through Blair's discerning eyes and ears with a special attention to the arrangement of members in a sentence. He guides us along various minute and delicate turns of sentences, and lets us experience the rapidity with which we go through a sentence, the gravity when we stop to appreciate each word, the order in which a sentence naturally and effortlessly takes form in the mind, and the feeling of gradual ascent and magnificence when we are led on from a shorter period to a longer and more important period. A sentence examined in such a way becomes a form of experience, an action and an event, and we understand very well that Blair assigned an especially important role to word-arrangement and composition of a sentence in the overall effect of eloquence. His lively relish of the construction of sentences shows us that far from being indifferent, he was keen to demonstrate what

Longinus called “a living voice” which words and phrases acquire “by being merely rounded into a period.” We shall further explore this issue of collocation and orality in writing in the following section.

Blair and Longinus: musicality and the reading experience

Longinus, to be sure, is not unique among rhetoricians in emphasising the importance of syntactic structures. It is Quintilian whom Blair most often relies on for instructions, and it is Cicero that he considers the best stylist in this regard. However, it seems to me that Blair and Longinus share a certain sensibility and an approach towards discourses that highlight an important aspect of the rhetorical paradox of the written voice. We have already discussed Blair’s taste for sentimentality, and emotions, passions and the internal elevation caused by sublimity. His regard for the effects of word-arrangement accentuated the linearity of sentences and discourses which is experienced during the course of a reading process. For a deeper understanding of Blair’s views on the act of reading and its relation to the sublime aesthetics, we would now like to turn to the fourth cause of Perspicuity, Harmony.

The lecture on “Harmony of Periods,” which is the last cause of Perspicuity, treats “Agreeable sound, or modulation in general” and “the sound so ordered, as to become expressive of the sense.”[51] Blair is here seeking to explain the euphony of words and the “harmonious structure and disposition of Periods” in a sentence. With regard to the second point of a “musical Sentence” and its “melodious structure,” the chief rule is that a sentence should be easy to pronounce, and that the sound must swell

and grow towards the end in the manner of an oratorical climax to achieve "dignity or elevation."[52] Blair then moves onto the discussion of the interaction of the sound and the sense, which he says is "the higher beauty."[53] He identifies "three classes of objects" that can be represented by the sounds of words: "other sounds," "motion" and "the emotions and passions of the mind."[54] It is clear that Blair is here not talking about representational functions of sound of words, or phonic signifiers, for they are capable of representing much more than three kinds of objects. Instead, he is drawing on the contemporary debate about musical mimesis and referentiality that we examined in Chapter Three. As with musical mimesis, among the three objects it is "the emotions and passions of the mind" that is of chief interest and importance. Blair discusses in the following passage the assumed correspondence between the sound of a sentence and the reader's emotions experienced during the act of reading:

> Sound may, at first view, appear foreign to these [emotions and passions]; but, that here, also, there is some sort of connection, is sufficiently proved by the power which music has to awaken, or to assist certain passions, and, according as its strain is varied, to introduce one train of ideas, rather than another. This, indeed, logically speaking, cannot be called a resemblance between the sense and the sound, seeing long or short syllables have no natural resemblance to any thought or passion. But if the arrangement of syllables, by their sound alone, recal[l] one set of ideas more readily than another, and dispose the mind for entering into that affection which the poet means to raise, such arrangement may, justly enough, be said to resemble the sense, or be similar and correspondent to it. I admit, that, in many instances, which are supposed to display this beauty of accommodation of sound to the sense, there is much room for imagination to work; and,

> according as a reader is struck by a passage, he will often fancy a resemblance between the sound and the sense, which others cannot discover. He modulates the numbers to his own disposition of mind; and, in effect, makes the music which he imagines himself to hear.[55]

In this passage, Blair describes the intense psychology of a reader who is “struck” by the eloquence of what he is reading. In a moment of aesthetic perception, his emotions are stirred, his imagination is aroused, and he feels as if he is listening to a piece of music as he reads a sentence. The process of reading is compared to the musical experience where one goes through various states of the mind as one’s attention pursues the melody and senses the harmony. When reading a harmoniously structured sentence whose euphonious words and members are placed in a musical proportion to each other, such an “arrangement of syllables” can “recal[l] one set of ideas more readily than another” by its “sound alone,” and without any assistance from significance. According to Blair, the train of linguistic sounds addresses the emotions and passions in the reader’s mind, and “dispose[s] the mind for entering into that affection which the poet means to raise.” The melody and harmony of each sentence, then, raise emotions and prepare the reader’s mind, so that it can more thoroughly and fully understand what the poet wants to convey. In such a musically structured discourse, the meaning of the words and the music of verbal sound interact with and enhance each other to give to the reader a momentary sense of an ideal eloquence realised in writing. This is an instance of the reader listening to a primordial song where the voice is a living incarnation of emotions and passions.[56]

We also notice, however, that although this passage describes a privileged moment of aesthetic perception, it also betrays some conspicuous tone of uncertainty, doubt and reluctance to concede: “This, indeed, logically speaking, cannot be called a resemblance between the sense and the sound [. . .]. But if [. . .]. I admit[. . .].” Blair cannot but “admit” that “there is much room for imagination to work” in the correspondence between the sound and the sense. He says that the reader, when “struck” and put in a certain exalted “disposition of mind,” may “fancy” such a correspondence “which others cannot discover.” Blair is here pointing out the possibility of solipsism, and the apparent danger of being carried away in a fit of enthusiasm. It is nothing but a form of delusion, and it must be all the more undesirable or even fatal for textual appreciation if we consider that Harmony of sentences is a subcategory of Perspicuity, which is all about faithful transmission and reception of the import of a sentence or a discourse.

Yet, at the same time, it can also be said that Blair’s uncertainty and wavering course of argument paradoxically highlights his concealed fervour and tenacious trust in the “beauty of accommodation of sound to the sense” and, towards the end of the passage, what seems like his turning around of his own argument against solipsism. While admitting that the music of a discourse cannot be discovered by other readers and is therefore perhaps illusory, Blair seems to vindicate the private nature of such an experience and uphold the inspired creativity of an imaginative response.[57] With almost a hint of defiance, Blair affirms: “He modulates the numbers to his own disposition of mind; and, in effect, makes the music which he imagines himself to hear.”

He thus defends the autonomy of aesthetic experience by positing a reader who actively transforms the melody of the sentence to suit his exalted emotions and "makes" the music. Under the spell of enthusiasm and the impression of an ideal eloquence present in the writing, the reader transcends the constraint of perspicuity and transmitted meanings, and exercises his imagination to create a meaning and an aesthetic experience for himself. Blair's tenacious argument for the sound-sense correspondence and his vindication of creative reception clearly endorse the legitimacy of a heightened emotional response during the act of reading, and, it would seem, almost celebrate the freedom and creativity of interpretation, even at the risk of misreading. Blair's reader, thus, is guided by the harmonious arrangement of a discourse, and is transported to a momentary vision of an ideal eloquence where the sound is in perfect concord with the sense, and the music of the sentence is a living embodiment of his own feelings.

We are now ready to compare Blair's view with Longinus's observations on the effects of word-arrangement on the psychology of the reader. Longinus first mentions the power of music as a point of reference: "[T]he very tones of the harp, themselves meaningless, by the variety of their sounds and by their combination and harmonious blending often exercise, as you know, a marvellous spell. (Yet these are only a bastard counterfeit of persuasion [. . .].)" In contrast to a delusive persuasion by music, linguistic melody of word-arrangement exercises a genuine power:

> Must we not think, then, that composition, which is a kind of melody in words — words which are part of man's nature and reach not his ears only

> but his very soul — stirring as it does myriad ideas of words, thoughts, things, beauty, musical charm, all of which are born and bred in us, and by the blending of its own manifold tones, bringing into the hearts of the bystanders the speaker's actual emotion so that all who hear him share in it, and by piling phrase on phrase builds up one majestic whole — must we not think, I say, that by these very means it casts a spell on us and always turns *our* thoughts towards what is majestic and dignified and sublime and all else that it embraces, winning a complete mastery over our minds?[58]

Longinus in this eloquent passage describes in detail what is happening in the reader's mind as he is transported to a state of enthusiasm by reading a well-structured periodic sentence. Just like when listening to music, the reader feels various ideas and feelings arise in himself, and under the influence of a "spell" of musical composition he almost seems to renounce his sense of self, letting the discourse win a "complete mastery" over his mind. The experience is almost sensual, and the reader conquered by the eloquent discourse is described as undergoing a feminine rapture. The effect is even stronger than the "marvellous spell" of music. As we have seen, "melody in words" comprises various words, phrases and members, each of which carry sublime ideas, elevated feelings and passionate figurative expressions, and gives form to them and unites them into "one majestic whole." In the above passage Longinus is demonstrating what he is explaining, and lets us experience his sublime "living voice," for it is a long periodic sentence that uses the figure of interrogation to provoke and invite the reader's psychological commitment, and by "piling phrase on phrase" exercises the irresistible force and sublime power of words that get the better of the readers' minds and

overwhelms them.[59]

The sense of the sublime, then, gradually takes form in the course of reading a periodic sentence which builds itself up by "piling phrase on phrase" in a consecutive structure of "melody in words." The mind generates a great number of thoughts and feelings within itself, until finally "*our* thoughts" are overcome with exalted emotions. We would like to note that the ideas, thoughts and feelings stirred up are "born and bred in us," and are not described as given or transmitted by the speaker. To be sure, it is the "speaker's actual emotion" that the reader "shares" with him in the moment of persuasion, but what Longinus seems to value more than transmitted meanings is the activity of the reader: what matters is that "*our* thoughts [are turned] towards what is majestic and dignified and sublime." Longinus elsewhere writes that in a moment of "the true sublime" experience, "uplifted with a sense of proud exaltation, we are filled [with] joy and pride, as if we had ourselves produced the very thing we heard."[60] A sublime moment is when the reader feels as if he is listening to himself speaking. Sublimity, thus, implies that the reader is a creator during the process of reception, and that the moment of transport is also that of a perfect expression. The reader feels that his thoughts are present in the discourse he is reading, and in the music he is listening to.[61]

If we compare Longinus's passage with Blair's ideas about reading, we note that both of these critics describe the process of persuasion and aesthetic perception as an instance of creativity when the imagination of the reader is inspired by attending to the harmonious arrangement of members in a sentence. When struck by the force of a

discourse, Blair's reader is convinced of the presence of a primordial eloquence in which the feelings are embodied in the song, and "makes the music" he hears. Longinus's reader is transported by the melody in words and feels as if he had himself "produced the very thing" he heard. It is a moment of emotional identification with the discourse where the distinctions between subject and object, reception and expression, interpretation and creation, are annulled.

Sublimity, thus, for Blair and Longinus is an instance where the reader finds an ideal form of expression in the discourse he is reading, through responding to his own creation. This view shows an agreement with Derrida's notion of "hearing oneself speak" which he explores in *Speech and Phenomena*. Derrida says that phonocentrism has always privileged "expression" over "indication" as being closer to the speaking presence, therefore to the source of all meanings. In the act of expression "Phonic signs [. . .] are heard [. . .] by the subject who proffers them in the absolute proximity of their present. The subject does not have to pass forth beyond himself to be immediately affected by his expressive activity. My words are 'alive' because they seem not to leave me: not to fall outside me, outside my breath, at a visible distance."[62] According to Derrida, the absolute proximity of the voice to the speaking presence excludes and exteriorises writing, body and indication, and expels them from alleged transparency of signification and spiritual closeness to meaning. The act of reading, then, seeks to animate the dead body of writing by meaning-intentions: "[t]o reactivate writing is always to reawaken an expression in an indication, a word in the body of a letter [. . .]. Writing is a body that expresses something only if we actually pronounce

the verbal expression that animates it, if its space is temporalized."[63] The space of writing is temporalised by reading to become an experience. If we borrow Derrida's framework to explain Blair and Longinus, the reader animates and temporalises writing as a form of experience by "pronounc[ing] the verbal expression" and listening to verbal music. This seems to reflect the reader's own internal self, which experiences a momentary identification with the music. It is a moment of the phonic signifier being in an absolute proximity to the source of meanings. Such a spiritual verbal music is the form closest to auto-affection, as it does not require indication, corporeality, or references to the outside world by musical mimesis; it seems to exist in the reader's mind, self-present to itself and does not "fall outside me, outside my breath, at a visible distance." The reader under the spell of the sublime is transported to a phonocentric utopia.

However, we also recall that for Blair the moment of aesthetic exaltation involved the danger of solipsism and delusion. The spirituality of transparent meanings present in the temporal auto-affection of linguistic music is not as safe, pure or self-sufficient as it desires to be. It is always threatened by the intrusion of exteriority, for instance the presence of other readers who do hear different music in the passage or perhaps feel nothing. We may also recall from Chapter Two that the most musical of sentences can be the most "written" of all. Likewise, we find that for Blair a style that is closest in its character to the sublime is also one which requires to be recognised as having been written. It is called the Vehement style. He who writes in this style "abounds in Rhetorical Figures; and pours himself forth with great impetuosity. He is copious to a

fault; [. . .] He is bold, rather than correct; [. . .] His sentences are varied as to length and shortness; inclining, however, most to long periods, sometimes including parenthesis, and frequently crowding and heaping a multitude of things upon one another, as naturally happens in the warmth of speaking." This is a passionate style that conveys enthusiastic feelings and employs various types of figures to address the reader's emotions. The periods are generally long, and "heap[s]" words, phrases and members one on top of another to create a "copious" impression. The movement of the sentence is rapid and impetuous. This must be a style, we think, that will achieve Longinus's description of sublime language if it is executed well. Yet, Blair also says: "It has a peculiar ardour; it is a glowing Style; the language of a man, whose imagination and passions are heated, and strongly affected by what he writes; who is therefore negligent of lesser graces, but pours himself forth with the rapidity and fulness of a torrent. It belongs to the higher kinds of oratory; and indeed is rather expected from a man who is speaking, than from one who is writing in his closet."[64]

Now, we find, this passage is manifestly self-contradictory. The Vehement writer is inspired, or "strongly affected" by his subject. Impassioned by "what he [himself] writes," he piles phrase upon phrase and constructs a periodic sentence that is abundant and exuberant. But why does Blair have to say, as if to remind us, that this is a style of a man speaking, and not of writing? Or, if such an eloquence is only to be found in declamations, why does he include it among categorisations of various forms of written styles? The Vehement style manifests the phonocentric bias in his attempted valorisations, but precisely because of that it fails to conceal and contain its

written origin. It would seem that for Blair the paradoxicality of orality in writing reveals itself in the discussion of a sublime vehement style. The sublime for Blair is a rare instance of orality inhabiting writing, but it is at the same time a moment of rupture and intrusion where writing declares itself within primitive orality.

Blair and the Ossian poems

Finally, we would like to turn to the Ossian poems to investigate the correlated issues of sublimity and the written voice, as these embody many of the central themes that we have been discussing. Firstly, these become for Blair an exemplary text for his fascination with the idea of passionate effusion as a supreme instance of creativity and literary achievement. *A Critical Dissertation on the Poems of Ossian* recapitulates and builds on the primitivist views of the sublime he expressed in the *Lectures*. At the same time, though, the *Dissertation* manifests the insecurity and rupture inherent in that primitivist logic. Secondly, we would like to note that the Ossian poems present a complex case of an instance of orality inhabiting writing: they were allegedly written transcriptions of ancient bardic poems, but in fact their orality was fabricated by writing. This duplicity — oral and written — of textual status epitomises the wider social context of the Scottish Enlightenment, in which writing and literacy played a major role in acquiring a new form of Scottish identity as a cultured and cultivated citizen of Britain. For Blair, the Ossian poems stood at the converging point of his two goals, primitivism and progress, in important ways. As in Chapter Two, here again we see him torn between his yearning for the primordial and his commitment to an ideal of

cultural improvement, and his ambivalence manifests itself when he discusses the crucial point of sublime orality in the Ossian poems. In the following argument, I shall first discuss their aesthetic and social significance for Blair, and see how it is reflected in the primitivist logic and its disruption in *Dissertation*. Next, I shall show how in *Dissertation* the written textuality of the Ossian poems underlies, supports and distorts its primitivist ideal of sublime oral expression.

Blair and the Edinburgh literati first came into contact with James Macpherson and his "translations" of Gaelic poems in the autumn of 1759. John Home, who had met Macpherson for the first time shortly before in Moffat in Dumfriesshire, requested him to translate some of the Gaelic poems he knew. Home was impressed by the translations, and he showed the manuscripts to the circle of his close literary friends in Edinburgh. Among them, Blair took a special interest in these fragmentary prose poems and immediately arranged to meet the translator in person. As critics such as Sher, Robertson and McElroy have made clear, the cultural scene at Edinburgh at this time was particularly active, and was entering the peak of the Enlightenment movement and the "Scottish aspirations for political and literary parity" with England.[65] Institutions such as the influential Select Society were established to promote politeness and civility through the pursuit of general learning, arts and letters, and regularly held meetings to discuss cultural matters.[66] The Poker Club, which showed a more explicitly political inclination, was founded in 1762 to develop Scottish military power by setting up a national militia that would enable Scotland to defend itself without relying on England.[67] For many of the members of these clubs, the assertion of

cultural independence and even supremacy of Scotland was inseparably linked to the issue of national security. As Sher points out, it was no coincidence that the supporters of the Ossian poems were the most active members in the Poker Club.[68]

The 1750s saw the growth of Scottish literary reputation in Britain, and along with it the desire and the need to assert Scottish identity came to be felt more strongly than ever. By the latter half of 1750, Scottish writers such as Hume, Adam Smith and Robertson were "rapidly shattering the myth that Scotsmen could not write fine English prose."[69] A special committee on belles lettres and criticism was formed within the Select Society in 1755 with Blair, Hume, Adam Smith and others as appointed members. Blair, along with William Robertson and Adam Smith, founded "a nationalist literary journal," *Edinburgh Review*, in 1755 with the ambitious aim to "demonstrate 'the progressive state of learning in this country'" and make Scotland "distinguished for letters."[70] Scotland already had its own first complete edition of Shakespeare's works, published in 1753, anonymously edited by Blair. The publication of the collected works of Shakespeare, as Schmitz notes, attested to the growth and maturity of the printing industry in Scotland which had now become powerful enough to vie with the English printers.[71] As such, this collection had a cultural and political significance, for the "backwardness in the art of printing" was acknowledged by the Scots themselves to have been an obstacle for the advancement of learning in Scotland.[72] Edinburgh now felt ready to declare its literary coming-of-age. The enthusiasm and eagerness to assert Scottish national confidence, however, was also attended by a sense of political, cultural and literary inferiority to England, particularly in the poetic genre, and by an

"embarrassment" about the Scottish language.[73] After the dismal failure in England of William Wilkie's poem *The Epigoniad* (1757), which had been promoted vigorously by the Edinburgh literati, there was "a general need for a national epic."[74] As Stafford writes, "[n]ever could the idea of a Scottish epic have been more welcome than in 1760," and Macpherson's possible "discovery" of an ancient and genuinely Scottish literary heritage naturally provoked keen interest.[75]

Macpherson himself, though, was reluctant to publish his work. However, Blair's excitement over the poems was such that he, as he later recalls, "urged" and "at length prevailed on" Macpherson into publishing them. "[A]fter much and repeated importunity" from Blair,[76] Macpherson gave in and produced a slim volume anonymously in 1760, entitled *Fragments of Ancient Poetry, collected in the Highlands of Scotland, and translated from the Galic or Erse Language*. This book was the first fruit of the entire "Ossianic industry" in which Blair played a chief role and virtually took the initiative.[77] In order to account for such an enthusiastic and wholehearted commitment, critics have pointed out, along with socio-cultural reasons, that Macpherson's "primitive" poems must have had an immense appeal for Blair, who at this time was composing his rhetoric lectures that include topics, as we know, such as sublimity in writing and the origin of poetry. It is assumed that Macpherson's poems seemed to Blair to substantiate and verify the primitivist cast of his own aesthetics, and their sudden appearance in the autumn of 1759 was particularly opportune, for the course of lectures was due to be delivered at the University of Edinburgh from 11 December of the same year onwards.[78]

Blair took further steps in the collaborative work with Macpherson. By the time Macpherson's *Fragments* was published, Blair was convinced of the existence of a longer work waiting to be discovered in the Highlands. He wrote an anonymous preface to the *Fragments* and announced that "there is ground to believe that most of them [the poems here published] were originally episodes of a greater work which related to the wars of Fingal." Blair refers to this "greater work" next as "an heroic poem" and then finally as "this Epic poem," in a subtle gesture that gradually and progressively involves the readers in the excitement of a feasible discovery of an ancient Epic.[79] Macpherson's poems and Blair's preface attracted the attention of the reading public not only in Scotland but also in England; some of the poems along with Blair's preface were reprinted in widely circulated journals such as *Scots Magazine* and *Gentleman's Magazine*.[80] Blair was quick to organize a dinner party in Edinburgh and raised subscriptions to send Macpherson on a research trip to the Highlands in August 1760 with a mission to find the "Epic poem."[81] On his return to Edinburgh in January 1761, Macpherson took a lodging near Blair's house and started "translating" the transcriptions while maintaining close contact with Blair. As a result of this, *Fingal, an Ancient Epic Poem, In Six Books: Together with several other Poems, composed by Ossian the Son of Fingal* was published in December 1761.

Macpherson's poems met with mixed response; they inspired enthusiasm on the one hand, and doubts about their authenticity on the other. Thomas Gray's reaction to *Fragments* captures the sentiment: "I continue to think them genuine, tho' my reasons for believing the contrary are rather stronger than ever: but I will have them antique, for

I never knew a Scotchman of my own time, that could read, much less write, poetry; & such poetry too!”[82] The poems had enough appeal to raise excitement and admiration even in an English antiquarian scholar with a bias, here expressed with some taunting humour, of national prejudice. For Blair, then, with his theoretical commitment to primitivism, and with the sentimental and exigent issue of national pride, the Ossian poems presented a case where important values in literary practice seemed to be at stake. Blair praised the beauties of the poems in the rhetoric lectures he gave at the University, and published an expanded essay separately as *A Critical Dissertation on the Poems of Ossian, the Son of Fingal* in 1763. When the controversy over the authenticity of the poems became more intense, Blair took the advice of David Hume, who was by this time well doubtful, and published an “Appendix” to the second edition of the *Dissertation* in 1765 as evidence that the poems actually exist among the Highland people and in their memories. While Macpherson himself remained silent over the issue, Blair actively defended the poems, and they became, in the words of David Hume, Blair’s “child [. . .] by adoption.”[83] Even after Samuel Johnson’s condemnation in *A Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland* (1775), Blair continued to support the poems and their cause in his lectures as late as in 1779, four years before his retirement and the publication of the *Lectures* in 1783.[84]

Sublimity and Paradox in the Ossian poems

Blair’s *Dissertation* is considered to be one of the century’s “fullest exposition[s]” of literary primitivism, and as a standard preface to many editions of the Ossian poems

formed and nurtured the public's taste for the primitive and the romantic well into the nineteenth century.[85] It begins by characterising the ancient poems as faithful and reliable first-hand account of the human psyche, "[t]he history of human imagination and passion": "They make us acquainted with the notions and feelings of our fellow-creatures in the most artless ages; discovering what objects they admired, and what pleasures they pursued, before the refinements of society had taken place, which enlarge indeed, and diversify the transactions, but disguise the manners of mankind."[86] The familiar opposition between primitive and advanced society is thus set up at the outset. The early humans lived "artless" and simple lives, were under the stronger influence of "imagination and passion" than reason and understanding, and because of their narrower range of experience their emotional lives were limited in scope but coloured by stronger emotions such as admiration and astonishment. Blair's eighteenth century, on the other hand, is more refined, enlarged, diverse and complex, but it is also restricted by various social codes, manners and conflicting interests so that its citizens are obliged to "disguise" their true and natural selves. According to Blair, primitive people had no qualms or reservations about expressing themselves freely: "Their passions have nothing to restrain them: their imagination has nothing to check it. [. . .] As their feelings are strong, so their language, of itself, assumes a poetical turn. Prone to exaggerate, they describe every thing in the strongest colours; which of course renders their speech picturesque and figurative."[87] Prompted by the urge of spontaneous and natural expression, "their ordinary language would [. . .] approach to a poetical style," and their first fruit of creative activity must have been a "song" or

"compositions in which imagination had the chief hand, formed into some kind of numbers, and pronounced with a musical modulation or tone." Figurative language that expresses powerful emotions and undisguised passions naturally assumed a regular rhythm and widely fluctuating vocal tones to form a primordial song. Poetry, then, was the most congenial medium for primitive people, or rather it directly grew out of their daily need to express themselves. A primordial song necessarily displays all the traits that constitute sublime emotions: "that enthusiasm, that vehemence and fire, which are the soul of poetry."[88] Thus, the *Dissertation* shares with the *Lectures* a large part of its primitivist assumptions about the progress of society, the origins of language, the birth of poetry and song, the view of poetry as an effusion of passion, and sublimity as the foremost achievement of poetic eloquence.

Despite the similarities, however, primitivism and the attendant sublime aesthetics of the *Dissertation* differ in a significant way from those of the *Lectures* in their orientation. The primitivism in the *Lectures*, we have seen, served as the theoretical underpinning to sustain the discussions about language and style, and sublimity was a descriptive term for stylistic effects that arouse an impassioned and exalted psychological state in the reader. In the *Dissertation*, on the other hand, primitivism indeed endorses sublimity as the highest form of beauty, but its treatment of the sublime is more sentimental and moralistic than linguistic. The difference becomes most manifest in Blair's treatment of the two different sorts of sublimity of Homer's *Iliad* and the Ossian poems, which are theoretically the two closest known instances of the primordial eloquence: "Both poets are eminently sublime; but a

difference may be remarked in the species of their sublimity."[89] Referring to Homer's "amazing fertility of [. . .] invention," Blair points out the diversity of characters, lively descriptions of battle scenes, a large variety of incidents, skilfully interpolated anecdotes and histories concerning individuals, heroes and deities and "a much deeper knowledge of human nature" than Ossian. Homer's sublimity as discussed in the *Dissertation* and in the *Lectures* is the literary effect of narrative and stylistic accomplishments. Ossian, on the other hand, who lived in a less "advanced" society than Homer, is in a sense more primitive although historically he came over a thousand years after Homer, and his experiences are limited to a narrower range. Accordingly, his sublimity is of a very different nature to Homer's: "In a rude age and country, though the events that happen be few, the undissipated mind broods over them more; they strike the imagination, and fire the passions in a higher degree." Ossian's sublimity, then, is not so much linguistic as sentimental, and is more the result of an introspective and internalised sensibility of the poet. Ossian is often described as "brooding" and "dwelling" on an incident, and by this emotional amplification works up a "limited" range of materials to create a poem whose chief characteristics are, to use a phrase that frequently occurs in the *Dissertation*, "the pathetic and sublime."[90]

In addition to the heightened sensibility of the poet, Blair credits the Ossian poems with "the moral or sentimental sublime" that arises from virtues such as "magnanimity, heroism, and generosity" displayed in the characters and their actions.[91] Blair is particularly attached to the sociable aspect of these virtues such as "the tenderness of lovers, the attachments of friends, parents and children," the venerable

and humane personality of the poet Ossian, and the benevolence of Fingal, who discharges the enemy he conquered for the sake of his old love.[92] Such characters command "sympathy," and their tenderness "dissolves and overcomes the heart" and makes the readers "glow, and tremble, and weep." Ossian's poems abundantly display such instances of "the sublime and pathetic" that "[n]o reader can rise from him [Ossian], without being warmed with the sentiments of humanity, virtue and honour."[93] Blair as a fellow Scot is apparently proud of such a moralistic vein within the poems, and contrasts it with Gothic ferocity and "Greek vivacity," praising the tenderness, "melancholy" and "gravity and solemnity of a Celtic hero."[94] Virtuous sentiments, the sensibility of the impressionable heart and the emotional upheaval in a moment of the pathetic sublime are thus described as having always been Celtic, and Blair, who believes in the universality of "the sentiments of humanity," is able to envision the possibility of an emotional identification with the ancient Celts through the power of "sympathy" that transcends temporal as well as cultural differences.

We notice, at the same time, that this sentimental sublime is also a moment of rupture in Blair's primitivism. Blair is slightly ill at ease with himself to find civility and politeness of manners in Ossian's primitive men. He admits: "A variety of personages of different ages, sexes, and conditions, are introduced into his poems; and they speak and act with a propriety of sentiment and behaviour, which is surprising to find in so rude an age."[95] In choosing the word "propriety," which has a strong eighteenth-century connotation, Blair correctly though unintentionally discloses the strangeness of a primitive and "rude" people with modern refinement of manners that

accord with eighteenth-century social codes and tastes. He here comes close to detecting the truth about the authenticity of the poems, but in the end he does not allow his surprise and puzzlement to override his conviction. Instead of provoking doubt, such "surpris[e]" becomes precisely the source from which the Ossian poems derive their power to delight and transport the readers; readers are impressed by Ossian's marvellous characters who are both primitive and civilised. As such, Blair's discussion of the sentimental and moral sublime allows him to commit himself, without apparent contradiction, to the two conflicting strands of logic: primitivism and the Enlightenment agenda.

To our eyes, Blair's fascination with the moral quality displayed in the characters and his enthusiasm for their sociable virtues reflect the intellectual climate of the Scottish Enlightenment and the moral philosophy of Hutcheson, Adam Smith and Hume, who considered that human beings are fundamentally sociable, and that sympathy, benevolence and compassion comprise an essential part of human nature. As Mullan persuasively argued, Hume's *Treatise* radically departed from the tradition of seventeenth-century thinkers such as Hobbes and Mandeville, who considered that the passions originate in selfish interest. In a reversal of argument, Hume focused on the "communicability" of the passions and redefined them as "the very currency of sociability," thereby giving rise to a way of describing and indeed producing the ideal of a society based on the moral principle of sympathy.[96] The Edinburgh literati formed a rich discursive and practical network around this sentimental moralism. As we have seen, numerous clubs and societies were set up in large Scottish cities to improve the

state of manners, learning and language through convivial socialisation. Dwyer has shown that Blair's sermons were particularly popular and effective media for propagating the moralistic vocabulary of compassion and sensibility.[97] According to Juliet Shields, the "innate sensibility" of the Celtic race that Ossian displays presented to Blair and Lord Kames an excellent basis for an argument of a nation, be it Scotland or Britain, united by sympathy and refined sentiments. By appealing to sympathy, Blair's *Dissertation* nurtured in the readers a "sentimental patriotism": "Shared sensibility thus becomes a substitute for shared blood, and the demise of nations founded in race [such as those in the Highlands] becomes the condition of possibility for those founded in sentiment."[98] Morally as well as politically, then, Ossian's characters thus answered to the needs of Edinburgh literati's two potentially conflicting ideals of primitivism and progress.[99]

The Ossian poems thus synthesise the two conflicting exigencies in an emotional sublimation of moralistic sentimentality. Indeed, the unlikely combination of the primitive and the civilised is not the only instance that generates the sublime effect; the discussion of Ossianic sublimity in the *Dissertation* often indicates that it annuls and cancels various types of oppositions. To begin with, Ossian himself was a professional bard as well as a warrior, which "formed a conjunction of circumstances, uncommonly favourable towards exalting the imagination of a poet." As a result, "tenderness" and "delicacy of sentiment" are made compatible with "fierceness and barbarity" while "[s]oftest feelings" such as love and friendship match "the highest ideas of magnanimity, generosity and true heroism."[100] The combination of such

disparate qualities, we have seen, renders Ossian a suitable personage to sympathise with, involving the readers in an exaltation of the sentimental and moral sublime.

A similar "conjunction of circumstances" also helps to define and characterise the Celtic society. Blair describes the Celts and their way of life as depicted in the Ossian poems as belonging to the social stage of hunters and gatherers, before the introduction of agriculture. "Throughout Ossian's poems, we plainly find ourselves in the first of these periods of society; during which, hunting was the chief employment of men [. . . . O]f agriculture, we find no traces. No cities appear to have been built in the territories of Fingal. No art is mentioned except that of working in iron. Every thing presents to us the most simple and unimproved manners."[101] Celtic society as here described is not an organised one, but at best a small community of hunters who got together under a tribal chief. However, when Blair speculates about the roles of the Bards in the society, he depicts a different picture. These, he says, were a sort of spiritual leaders and they belonged to "an order of men highly respected in the state, and supported by a publick establishment." Here, it is assumed that the Celts have a "state" and a form of governmental system and a social hierarchy. "[T]he institution of which two orders [the Druids and the Bards], was the capital distinction of their manners and policy. [. . .] They [the Celts] possessed from very remote ages a formed system of discipline and manners."[102] The images of the Celts, as Blair conceives them, widely fluctuate between those with "the most simple and unimproved manners" and those with "a formed system of discipline and manners."

It is the Bards who represent the mystery of the Celtic society and embody the

two opposites of rudeness and civilisation which continue to fascinate and transport the moderns. Thus it is claimed that "Ossian describes himself as living in a sort of classical age, enlightened by the memorials of former times, conveyed in the songs of bards; and points at a period of darkness and ignorance which lay beyond the reach of tradition." He is a primitive, but not so primitive as to live in "darkness and ignorance"; he lives in an "enlightened" "classical age" and is able to draw on the long tradition and accumulated poetical heritage of generations of bards. It is for this reason that "we find [in his work] the fire and the enthusiasm of the most early times, combined with an amazing degree of regularity and art."[103] As for poetic style, we remember that Blair's primitivism dictates that ancient poetry should express everything in bolder colours because the primitive people were "[p]rone to exaggerate." However, with Ossian it is different: "Ossian's hyperboles appear not to me, either so frequent or so harsh as might at first have been looked for; an advantage owing no doubt to the more cultivated state, in which [. . .] poetry subsisted among the ancient Celtae, than among most other barbarous nations."[104]

Ossian, then, in Blair's criticism stands at a unique point where the primitivist ideals and the requirements of refined "regularity and art" can coalesce with each other without losing themselves. Both these apparently conflicting values can claim Ossian as their own. It seems to me that Ossian had a peculiar appeal for Blair as a sort of metaphorical vanishing point in his literary perspective which consists of various strands of logic, priorities and doctrines. We may also add that in the *Dissertation* Ossian even disintegrates Blair's literary geography: "What we have been long

accustomed to call the oriental vein of poetry, because some of the earliest poetical productions have come to us from the East, is probably no more oriental than occidental [. . .]. Of this the works of Ossian seem to furnish a remarkable proof."[105] In the *Lectures* too, Ossian is a meeting point of the East and the West: "we find all the remains of the antient Gothic Poetry remarkably fierce, and breathing nothing but slaughter and blood; while the Peruvian and the Chinese Songs turned, from the earliest times, upon milder subjects. The Celtic Poetry in the days of Ossian, though chiefly of the martial kind, yet had attained a considerable mixture of tenderness and refinement."[106] Ossian, thus, always escapes any black-and-white formulation or simple dogmatism. Or, to put it in a different way, Ossian's sublimity works as a catalyst for bringing out the contradictions and conflicts in Blair's literary theory.

Orality and Writing in the Ossian poems

We are now ready to focus on our central concern, the paradox of the written voice, and see how it appears in the *Dissertation*. We observe that Ossian's sublimity this time annuls the opposition between orality and writing, and Blair allows writing to intrude upon speech, which is the primitivist stronghold as the source of the ideal form of eloquence. In discussing the sentimental sublime of the Ossian poems, Blair writes:

> His poetry, more perhaps than that of any other writer, deserves to be stiled, *The Poetry of the Heart*. It is a heart penetrated with noble sentiments, and with sublime and tender passions; a heart that glows, and kindles the fancy; a heart that is full, and pours itself forth. Ossian did not write, like modern

> poets, to please readers and critics. He sung from the love of poetry and song. [. . . U]nder this true poetic inspiration, giving vent to his genius, no wonder we should so often hear, and acknowledge in his strains, the powerful and ever-pleasing voice of nature.[107]

Blair is here describing the moment of poetical effusion inspired by the upheaval of emotions and "sublime and tender passions." It is an instance of the ideal primitive creativity, and so it is suitable that Ossian "did not write" but "sung," for the emotions and passions are best conveyed by the voice rather than writing. The phonocentric preference for the song over writing is here confirmed, and the voice is declared to be the signifier closest to the source of all poetical meanings, "the Heart."

However, if we put this passage back into the context, we begin to detect a certain degree of equivocality in the usages of the words concerning writing and singing. It is strange to note that throughout the *Dissertation* Blair often refers to Ossian's "writings." For instance, in the paragraph that immediately follows the above quotation, Blair says:

> It is necessary here to observe, that the beauties of Ossian's writings cannot be felt by those who have given them only a single or a hasty perusal. [. . . H]is style is so concise, and so much crowded with imagery; the mind is kept at such a stretch in accompanying the author; that an ordinary reader is at first apt to be dazzled and fatigued, rather than pleased. His poems require to be taken up at intervals, and to be frequently reviewed; and then it is impossible but his beauties must open to every reader who is capable of sensibility.[108]

For Blair, it seems that the Ossian poems were first and foremost a work to be read

rather than be listened to. Ossian is an “author,” and he who appreciates “Ossian’s writings” is a “reader,” and the beauties of the work is best disclosed by being “taken up at intervals” and “frequently reviewed,” which of course would be impossible if the poems were being recited. Blair here admits the historicity that divides him from the original genius, but we scarcely find in this passage any sense of loss; instead, we hear the discerning and confident tone of a literary critic. In contrast to this description of textual appreciation through the act of reading, the former reference to Ossian’s singing “from the love of poetry and song” and the reader’s listening to “the powerful and ever-pleasing voice of nature” reads less like an account of actual creation and appreciation but more like a metaphorical myth. For Blair, it would seem, Ossian is a writer, and Blair attributes an idealised orality, or a song, to a written text when touched by the sentimental sublimity of the Ossian poems. Here we find an instance of orality inhabiting writing, or the moment of illusory aesthetic experience when the reader “makes the music which he imagines himself to hear.”

The disparity between writing and the voice is thus overcome in the reader’s experience of sublimity. Blair in fact seems to make no distinction between writing and singing in the *Dissertation*, as we notice in the following passage: “Ossian, who wrote from the immediate impulse of poetical enthusiasm, and without much preparation of study or labour.”[109] Here, we observe how far the Ossian poems were ingrained in Blair’s mind as a written text, for his primitivism would have dictated that Ossian should rather sing than write “from the immediate impulse” of enthusiasm. Sublimity in Ossian, then, while it occasions the wished-for fusion of the voice and

writing, is also a moment of rupture when writing invades the primitive oral expression. Paradoxically, the sentimental sublime which arises from the illusion of the phonocentric alliance of the sound and the meaning is the moment when the Ossian poems are conceived as a written work. We could take the paradox still further and even say that for Blair, the Ossian poems were always not only written, but written in prose:

> The measured prose which he [Macpherson] has employed, possesses considerable advantages above any sort of versification he could have chosen. Whilst it pleases and fills the ear with a variety of harmonious cadences, being, at the same time, freer from constraint in the choice and arrangement of words, it allows the spirit of the original to be exhibited with more justness, force, and simplicity.[110]

Blair asserts that the Ossian poems are better rendered in modern prose than in modern verse. He thus admits that it is possible to reconstruct a close approximation of "the spirit" of Gaelic orality by English prose. The translation as it stands is harmonious, powerful and simple. What is more, while English prose "fills the ear" it is also free from "constraint in the choice and arrangement of words." This denotes that the prose into which Ossian has been translated is not so far removed from, or at least shares important features with, the ancient languages such as Greek and Latin, whose characteristics were, we recall, euphony and freedom in the arrangement of words. Blair, to be sure, acknowledges that "whilst we read it [Macpherson's translation], [. . .] we are putting the merit of the original to a severe test. For, we are examining a poet,

stripped of his native dress; divested of the harmony of his own numbers." Yet, for Blair the Gaelic original is well nigh completely lost, and he is content to accept it as unknowable and beyond comprehension. Blair in this way ends the *Dissertation* triumphantly, saying that if Ossian can please the readers even without his original numbers, "we may boldly assign him a place among those, whose works are to last for ages."[111] An Anglicised Ossian is thus canonised. Contrary to its own doctrine of oral supremacy and its idealisation of poetry, Blair's primitivism in the *Dissertation* is sustained by his trust in writing and prose.

Blair envisioned how to reanimate orality as a primitive effusion of song by an imaginative act of reading. His primitivist and phonocentric ideal of the voice, then, is both undermined and upheld by writing. This grammatological structure found in Blair's reading of the Ossian poems can also be observed in his attitude towards contemporary Scottish speech. Just as he tried to recreate an idealised bardic voice as a symbol for a new Scottish identity as an integral part of Britain, he tried to give Scotland a British voice through writing. In the *Lectures* Blair makes explicit his stance towards regional dialects and says that "Scotticisms" are a hindrance to linguistic "purity." He also claims that "broad, vulgar, or provincial Pronunciation" is to be avoided as it is not in "the most polite usage." The Scottish dialect is thus considered to be a defect, an aberration, and a corrupted form of pure speech, and as a symptom of "local disadvantages" it has to be cured and remedied by the prescriptive standard of "propriety of Pronunciation."[112] Such a corrective aim of the *Lectures* is mentioned discreetly but explicitly in one of the notes to Lecture Twenty-One, where Blair gives a

critical examination of one of Addison's essays in the *Spectator*. He writes:

> If there be readers who think any farther apology requisite for my adventuring to criticise the sentences of so eminent an author as Mr. Addison, I must take notice, that I was naturally led to it by the circumstances of that part of the kingdom where these Lectures were read; where the ordinary spoken language often differs much from what is used by good English authors. Hence it occurred to me, as a proper method of correcting any peculiarities of dialect, to direct students of eloquence, to analize and examine, with particular attention, the structure of Mr. Addison's sentences.[113]

Blair apologises in a condescending tone chiefly to the English readers of the *Lectures*, and makes clear his intentions of remedying corrupted speech through writing. On close examination, however, we find in this passage curious leaps and twists in the argument. To us, it seems natural that "ordinary spoken language" should differ from writings of professional authors. The same thing, though surely to a different degree, can be said of native English speakers as well. Blair here seems to confound the two different issues of the disparity between speech and writing, and the problem of the status of dialect. We might also wonder how correcting written sentences can be helpful for remedying "spoken language." It will certainly affect the choice of vocabulary, idiomatic usages and turns of sentences, but it will never amend transgressions of proper and "polite" pronunciation. In this note, then, Blair ascribes all the ills of the Scottish dialect to speech, and says that improvement in English writing can make up for defects in Scottish speech. Thus, deliberately or not, Blair's

logic leaves unquestioned the problem of Scottish pronunciation, and presents the possibility of a spoken language reformed through writing. It is a fictional and hypothesised British voice meant to be acquired by the young aspiring Scots for whom Blair's *Lectures* were addressed: those who are studying eloquence to become public speakers, lawyers or preachers. As Crawford writes, "in important ways Blair's work had been geared to a task of cultural conversion, of Anglicizing upwardly mobile Scots to make them acceptable Britons."[114] Writing, then, was for Blair's project a channel that connects the Scottish people to metropolitan authority. It empowered and enabled some Scots to take part in the new British constitution, while it supposedly helped them shed their "peculiarities of dialect" and its "disadvantages." Blair's *Lectures* thus banished the local and physical voice from the public sphere and tried to create a decontextualised and institutionalised literary voice as a new Scottish identity. Just like his primitivist ideals of the *Dissertation* betrayed their reliance on writing, in the *Lectures* too the idealistic British voice of Scotland also was a fiction enabled by writing.

In this chapter, we have discussed the problem of the rhetorical paradox as it relates to sublime aesthetics. Firstly, we have seen that in the *Lectures* Blair uses the concept of the sublime to denote the reader's heightened emotional state, and that he thinks the key to achieve such an effect largely depends on the syntactical arrangement of units in a sentence. As such, his view of the sublime is close to that of Longinus, while he draws on his primitivist theoretical background. We have also found that Blair and Longinus attach a special importance to the reader's creative act of reading,

and describe the culminating moment of aesthetic experience as a form of auto-affection, or the instance of hearing oneself speak. The phonocentric assumption of the sublime aesthetics, we observed, is undermined in his treatment of the Vehement style. Next, we focused on his *Dissertation* and considered the sublimity in the Ossian poems. Blair's primitivism endorsed what seems to be an artless effusion in the Ossian poems, while his progressivism admired their delicacy of sentiment, politeness of manners and propriety of behaviour in the characters. Such a conjunction of opposites became the basis of Blair's sentimental aesthetics of sublimity, in which the two requirements of primitivism and progressivism were combined without apparent conflict or rupture. The sublime, we have also seen, annuls the distinctions between writing and orality. In a moment of sentimental sublimity, Blair envisions the Ossian poems as writing inhabited by orality, and Blair's *Dissertation* often describes the primitive effusion paradoxically as writing. This grammatological structure of the voice that is both upheld and intruded upon by writing, we have pointed out, is echoed in his ideals of a new British voice of Scotland in the *Lectures*, which is nothing but an Anglicised voice informed by English writing.

[1] The identity of the author of the treatise is still debated. The chief candidates are Dionysius of Halicarnassus, who lived in the first century B. C., and Cassius Longinus, who lived in the third century A. D., though some critics believe the treatise was written in the first century A. D. Heath15. The first English translation of the treatise is by John Hall, published in 1652.
[2] Boulton xlii. Later critics unanimously agree on the seminal influence of Boileau's translation in Britain.
[3] Longinus 163-5.
[4] Longinus 217.
[5] Longinus 199.
[6] Longinus 277.
[7] Burke 1, 46.
[8] Costelloe, "Imagination" 52, Costelloe, "Introduction" 7. Costelloe's teleological narrative of conceptual development from Longinus to Kant is familiar to us from classic studies of Monk and Nicolson.
[9] Martin 79. Costelloe, "Introduction" 5-7. "[I]n Burke and Kant, Longinus and the Longinian sublime were but faint echoes." Costelloe, "Imagination" 59.
[10] According to Ehninger's enumeration, nine editions of Longinus were published between 1710 and 1762, and five translations appeared between 1712 and 1757. It is interesting to note that only one edition and no translation appeared after Burke's *Enquiry*, which was published in 1757. Ehninger, "Dominant Trends" 4. Okochi and Shaw argue that Burke's aesthetic sublime, based on the empirical model of visual perception, cannot help but rely in the end on the rhetorical sublime and the unique linguistic power of psychological evocativeness, as language is the best vehicle for vagueness and ambiguity that are required of the sublime. Okochi 7-10, Shaw 71.
[11] Blair, *Lectures* 26.
[12] Blair, *Lectures* 32.
[13] Blair, *Lectures* 32-3. The notion that Longinus's concept of the sublime is too general and all-encompassing was shared by Burke (Burke 1), Gerard (Hipple 73), Beattie (Costelloe, "Introduction" 7) and George Campbell (Warnick, *Sixth Canon* 89).
[14] Monk 123.
[15] Blair's implicitly rhetorical approach to the sublime may explain the critics' silence. The classic studies on the sublime such as those by Samuel H. Monk, Walter Hipple and Marjorie Hope Nicolson focus on the development of the natural and "aesthetic" sublime in the course of the eighteenth century. For instance, Monk explicitly notes that Longinus's notions of the sublime are "rhetorical, and as such are of minor interest

historically." Monk 14. In Hipple, Blair is sidelined as somewhat of an anomaly in eighteenth-century critical tradition: "Blair's principal concern in the lectures is, of course, the literary arts, [. . . and] his concern is in this respect more like that of Longinus than like that of Gerard and Burke." Hipple 128.

[16] Blair, *Lectures* 45.

[17] Blair, *Lectures* 33. In Longinus's words, the five sources are "the power of grand conceptions," "the inspiration of vehement emotion," "the proper construction of figures," "[the] choice of words and the use of metaphor and elaborated diction" and "dignified and elevated word-arrangement." Longinus 181.

[18] Blair, *Lectures* 33.

[19] Abrams 74. Blair's *Dissertation* on the Ossian poems is praised for its Longinian eloquence by an anonymous writer of Blair's obituary in *The Scots Magazine* (1801). "Account" 5-6.

[20] Blair, *Lectures* 32-3.

[21] Blair, *Lectures* 487-8.

[22] Twenty-five instances of the use of the word "sublime" or "sublimity" are found in the discussion of epic (478-514), including on Milton's *Paradise Lost* (512), where the words occur six times. Hebrew poetry (467-77) has ten references.

[23] The discussion of the ode form (445-52) includes nine instances. Together with the other two genres, it covers most of the mention of the word "sublime" in the latter half of the *Lectures*.

[24] Blair, *Lectures* 446.

[25] Blair, *Lectures* 445.

[26] Blair, *Lectures* 445.

[27] Blair, *Lectures* 147-8. Warnick points out the similarity in Boileau's and Blair's observations. Warnick, *Sixth Canon* 83, 92.

[28] Blair, *Lectures* 176.

[29] Blair, *Lectures* 181.

[30] Blair, *Lectures* 190.

[31] Blair, *Lectures* 174 (on personification). On apostrophe and personification, Blair says "both are the language of passion or strong emotions only." Blair, *Lectures* 180.

[32] Blair, *Lectures* 180.

[33] Longinus 181. The extended discussion focused on word-arrangement begins on p. 285.

[34] Longinus 285, 291.

[35] Longinus 289.

[36] Henn 113.

[37] The phrase "the beauties of Writing in general" is Blair's complaint about Longinus. Blair, *Lectures* 33.

[38] Blair, *Lectures* 99. Perspicuity is discussed from Lecture Ten to Lecture

Twelve, and Ornament, which includes harmony of sentences and figurative language, is discussed from Lecture Thirteen to Lecture Seventeen.
[39] Blair, *Lectures* 100-1.
[40] Blair, *Lectures* 110.
[41] Blair, *Lectures* 112.
[42] Blair, *Lectures* 116.
[43] Blair, *Lectures* 119.
[44] Blair, *Lectures* 121.
[45] Hume, *Treatise* 96.
[46] Blair, *Lectures* 122.
[47] Blair, *Lectures* 122-4.
[48] Blair, *Lectures* 124-6.
[49] Blair, *Lectures* 126-8.
[50] Blair, *Lectures* 129-30.
[51] Blair, *Lectures* 132.
[52] Blair, *Lectures* 133, 137.
[53] Blair, *Lectures* 132.
[54] Blair, *Lectures* 141.
[55] Blair, *Lectures* 142-3.
[56] For Blair, the correspondence between the sense and the sound is what only a masterpiece can achieve. Blair writes of Homer: "His Versification has been universally acknowledged to be uncommonly melodious; and to carry, beyond that of any Poet, a resemblance in the sound to the sense and meaning." Blair, *Lectures* 494.
[57] Stafford discusses the "liberating" effect of writing on the audience and contrasts it with the speaker's desire for "control" through his own physical "dominant presence." Stafford, "Blair's Ossian" 81.
[58] Longinus 285-7.
[59] In the Greek original, the sentence is twice as long and includes the reference to the power of the harp, and before that to the flute. Longinus 284-6.
[60] Longinus 179.
[61] The self-reflexive nature of the sublime has been explored by critics such as Hertz, De Bolla and Ferguson. Hertz 7, De Bolla 34, Ferguson 19.
[62] Derrida, *Speech* 76-8.
[63] Derrida, *Speech* 81. Derrida makes an interesting point for consideration in alphabetic writing. He says: "in phonetic writing [. . .] what it would 'indicate' would be an 'expression,' whereas in nonphonetic writing it would take the place of expressive discourse and immediately connect with the 'meaning'." But he does not discuss this further. Derrida, *Speech* 28, note 1.
[64] Blair, *Lectures* 213-4.
[65] Sher 255.
[66] McElroy's study is the fullest exploration of the histories of such societies.

[67] Robertson explores the intellectual significance of the militia issue with particular attention to the Poker Club. Robertson 185-8.
[68] Sher 257-8.
[69] Sher 255.
[70] Sher 70, 68. Stafford, *Sublime* 114.
[71] Schmitz 21.
[72] Sher 69. As a further credit to Scottish printing, Blair edited a forty-three volume series titled *The British Poets*, which was published in Edinburgh in 1773. It was, according to Schmitz, "the first uniform edition of the poets to be published in the British Isles." Schmitz 69. It was printed in Glasgow, and was "[n]ot sold in England." St Clair 525.
[73] Sher 255-6, 258, Stafford, *Sublime* 114.
[74] Stafford, *Sublime* 114.
[75] Stafford, *Sublime* 113-4.
[76] *Report*, "Appendix" 57. Blair's letter to Mackenzie, 20 December 1797.
[77] The phrase is Sher's. Sher 243. Other personages who took part in this "cabal" are named in Sher 254.
[78] Schmitz 44-5. Golden and Corbett eds. 24.
[79] Gaskill ed. 5-6.
[80] Stafford, *Sublime* 113.
[81] Sher 246, Stafford, *Sublime* 116.
[82] Gray to Mason, 7 August 1760, qtd. in Stafford, *Sublime* 163.
[83] Hume, *Letters* 400. Hume's letter to Blair, 19 September 1763.
[84] Sudo examines the student notes taken down in 1779. Sudo 163. Sher writes that Blair believed in the poems' authenticity until his death. Sher 253, note 196. Even in the nineteenth century there were lingering adherents who continued to support the case for Ossian's antiquity.
[85] Wellek 63. Sher 250.
[86] Blair, *Dissertation* 1.
[87] Blair, *Dissertation* 2.
[88] Blair, *Dissertation* 2-3.
[89] Blair, *Dissertation* 23.
[90] Blair, *Dissertation* 46, 22.
[91] Blair, *Dissertation* 69-70.
[92] Blair, *Dissertation* 22.
[93] Blair, *Dissertation* 71, 62, 74, 49.
[94] Blair, *Dissertation* 22.
[95] Blair, *Dissertation* 67.
[96] Mullan 24-5. The difference between Hume and Hutcheson is discussed in 31-2, and that between Hume and Adam Smith in 44 and 56.
[97] Dwyer, *Virtuous* 58-60. David Allan makes a persuasive point that Blair's view of rhetoric was fundamentally moral in keeping with the Scottish intellectual context of Calvinism and humanism, and that his sermons "exercise[d] the true public purpose of the medium." Allan 186-7.

Dwyer sees a common basis for Blair's moral sermons and his interest in sentimental novels. Dwyer, "Enlightened" 110. Brinton and Golden discuss the use of affects in Blair's sermons and compares it with what he says in the *Lectures*. Brinton 61-7, Golden, "Hugh Blair" 158.
[98] Shields 39, 47.
[99] Potkay identifies this synthetic nature of the Ossian poems, or their "civic primitivism," as the source of their enduring appeal to nineteenth-century readers. Potkay 192-3. Dwyer also notes the inclination towards gentility and morality in Scottish primitivism. Dwyer, "Clio" 53.
[100] Blair, *Dissertation* 15, 11.
[101] Blair, *Dissertation* 17.
[102] Blair, *Dissertation* 11-13.
[103] Blair, *Dissertation* 15, 11.
[104] Blair, *Dissertation* 64.
[105] Blair, *Dissertation* 4.
[106] Blair, *Lectures* 429. Probably "Persian" is more appropriate than "Peruvian" in this quotation, though the word is also in the 1783 first edition of *Lectures*. Blair, *Lectures* (1783) II 319.
[107] Blair, *Dissertation* 21.
[108] Blair, *Dissertation* 21-2.
[109] Blair, *Dissertation* 54.
[110] Blair, *Dissertation* 75.
[111] Blair, *Dissertation* 75.
[112] Blair, *Lectures* 101, 371, 445.
[113] Blair, *Lectures* 236-7 n. 1.
[114] Crawford, *Devolving* 42.

Conclusion

In this thesis, we have explored the various manifestations of the rhetorical paradox of the written voice in Hugh Blair's works, and also in other related texts. We started our investigation into the problem of the written voice with a reading of Plato's *Phaedrus* in Chapter One. This work is an exploration of the nature of rhetoric from a philosophical point of view, and it is one of the first, and the most fundamental and influential books on the subject; Aristotle, it is sometimes said, expanded and systematised it to write his *Rhetoric*, and Cicero for his *On the Ideal Orator* chose a dramatic setting that strongly reminds the readers of that of *Phaedrus*. It should be no exaggeration to say that all later rhetoric books are indebted to *Phaedrus* either directly or indirectly. Apart from the fact that Blair mentions it for its account of the invention of writing, his belletristic rhetorical theory can be read profitably in the light of the central theme of *Phaedrus*, that of the written voice.[1]

In *Phaedrus*, Plato put rhetoric and philosophy in a complementary relationship and made them demarcate and define each other. Philosophy, which is represented by Socrates, is the art of dialectics. It is a pursuit of truth and exact knowledge through conversation, and it aims to arrive at a definition of the object of discussion through divisions, collections and cross-examinations of questions and propositions. According to Socrates, this procedure is indispensable for rhetoric too if it wants to call itself an art. Without correct knowledge of the subject matter of the discourse and the

psychology of the audience, rhetoric will be misused, and remains an unsystematic knack that only works haphazardly. The chief complaint of Socrates against rhetoric, therefore, is that it appeals to people's psyche, and persuades and even misleads them by dealing only with appearances and without having the true knowledge of things.

Apart from its status of knowledge, rhetoric is criticised for another aspect. It is about writing. Throughout *Phaedrus*, rhetoric is represented by Lysias, a logographer, who is a writer of speeches. Writing is bad, Socrates says, for three reasons. Firstly, it does not answer questions. Secondly, it speaks equally to suitable and unsuitable audiences. Thirdly, it cannot defend itself when challenged. Dialectic and philosophical voice, of course, are comfortably free of all these drawbacks. The philosophical voice originates in the meaningful self-presence of the speaker, whereas writing is a simulation of the voice of an absent speaker. As the opposite of the philosophical voice, writing is denied the exact knowledge of how things truly are, and instead is allied merely with the appearance and semblance of truth. In contrast to speech, which is legitimately born from the inner self and augments wisdom and memory, writing is born as a bastard, only imitates knowledge, and reminds from outside rather than stocks the inner memory.

This is the diatribe against writing in *Phaedrus*. However, as we have seen, *Phaedrus* refutes its own doctrine and shows many examples of instability and unreliableness inherent in speech. The biggest mystery is the reference to Isocrates at the end of the dialogue. Isocrates, the foremost logographer of the day, is the lover of Socrates, and Socrates says kind things about him. The dramatic setting of *Phaedrus*

is near where Isocrates's house and rhetoric school were. Plato, thus, is not portraying rhetoric and philosophy in antagonistic roles, and making Socrates beat rhetoric during the course of the dialogue, though that initially appears to be how the story goes. Rather, Plato is enacting the "grammatological" structure through *Phaedrus*, to borrow Derrida's word, where the dominant, authoritative, truthful voice is encroached upon and contaminated by writing. We could take the point further and say that the grammatological structure is what rhetoric is all about, for it is a written voice. Then, it is odd that Derrida should virtually overlook the presence of Isocrates in "Plato's Pharmacy," for he may be regarded as incarnating Derrida's contention.

Derrida's claim that the Western metaphysical tradition has always excluded, marginalised and subjugated writing, thus, does not apply to Plato's *Phaedrus*. The doctrine of *Phaedrus* regards rhetorical voice as a form of writing and holds it below the philosophical voice. Therefore, not all voice is privileged. At the same time, *Phaedrus*'s doctrine of oral supremacy is undermined by its own textuality that explicitly asserts its affiliation with writing. *Phaedrus*, then, escapes philosophical determination, and openly manifests the grammatological structure that Derrida says is concealed and systematically suppressed by the phonocentric tradition that permeates Western civilisation. Derrida's blindness towards Isocrates and more generally rhetoric is connected to another blindness that is observed in "White Mythology." Derrida says that the fundamental distinction in Greek language is instituted between *phōnē sēmantikē* and *phōnē asēmos*. Derrida then points out that rhetoric has sided with philosophy in privileging the meaningful *phōnē sēmantikē*, quoting from Hugh

Blair's comment on metaphor. However, Blair and Adam Smith in fact saw little significance in the study of metaphor and other figures of speech. On the contrary, Blair placed considerable importance on the study of conjunctions and prepositions, that is, *phōnē asēmos*. Derrida's description of the rhetorical tradition, thus, excludes and externalises the concerns of eighteenth-century belletristic rhetoric.

In Chapter Two, we turned to Blair's *Lectures* and explored the implications of the rhetorical paradox of the written voice. We have seen how Blair incorporates Condillac's and Rousseau's primitivist theory of language origins into his rhetorical theory. According to them, language started as a cry of passion, accompanied by widely fluctuating vocal tones and expressive bodily gestures. Primitive language, they think, was full of metaphors as its vocabulary was limited. Syntax was flexible, and the order of words directly reflected the order of thought. Thus, primitive language was a more "natural" medium for the source of meanings, the living presence of the human heart, and a closer approximation of the meaning-intention than modern languages, which are more arbitrary institutions as the signs refer to meanings only through convention.

Blair's rhetoric, informed by primitivist views, stresses that the utmost eloquence is to be found in the living voice of the speaker. His ideal eloquence is prompted by passion, and the choice of words and the arrangement of periods are dictated by nature. The bodily presence of the speaker, with his expressive gestures and vocal tones, imposes vivid impressions on the audience's minds. Blair explicitly says several times in *Lectures* that writing necessarily falls short of the expressiveness of the living voice,

and that writing is bound to make a fainter impression than oral discourses. Blair's primitivism thus leads him to make typically phonocentric statements and disparage writing. However, this doctrine of oral supremacy, we have pointed out, is directly against his own mission and practice as a belletrist rhetorician and an important member of the Scottish Enlightenment, for the advancement of literacy and the improvement of literary taste are the fundamental requisites for individual and social progress and betterment.

If true eloquence resides in the living voice, writing can never achieve it, so Blair as a rhetorician with a specialist interest in writing and composition must find himself in a predicament. However, his theory is able to elude the question posed by its primitivist views by claiming to bestow orality on writing through a skilful management of syntax. Blair states that a good composition has more to do with collocation and arrangement of words and members in a period and less to do with the choice of words. He describes the harmonious arrangement of periods using musical and vocal metaphors. In technical terms, he emphasises the importance of appropriate uses of connective particles, conjunctions and prepositions, in order to make the period flow easily and naturally, and when necessary, swell to an oratorical climax.

When we focused on Blair's observations on the two topics of connective particles and musicality, however, we found inconsistencies. As for connective particles, Blair recommended them as the key to good composition, and in the Greek language the chief source of euphoniousness and the mark of the achievement of an advanced civilisation. In English, however, Blair elsewhere complains that connective

particles clog the style, disrupt the euphonious flow and are detrimental to the energy of expression. Musicality, which at several points in his argument is lauded as the beauty and strength of eloquent composition, is elsewhere described as enervation, infection and weakness, represented by the writings of Isocrates which are, Blair says, artificial, contrived and devoid of natural force. Musicality, which should represent the living voice, makes writing more written when pursued too far. Blair's rhetoric, thus, is fissured by the antithetical requirements of his primitivist doctrine and belletrist practice.

In Chapter Three, we have further investigated the problem of orality and writing in relation to another primitivist work on language, Rousseau's *Essay on the Origin of Languages*, and Derrida's *Of Grammatology*. We started with the exploration of the traditional concept of musical mimesis which interested Rousseau and other aesthetic theorists of the eighteenth century in France and Britain. Rousseau, along with other French critics, strongly believes in the mimetic function of all arts including music, and thinks that music is a kind of sign system, capable of mimetically representing external nature and the human psyche. British critics, on the other hand, were sceptical of the representational and referential powers of music. Adam Smith thought that Rousseau's views on musical mimesis are rather fantastical, and instead focused on musical perception and interpretation. He thought that musical pleasure is formal in its nature, and can be analysed into the structural combinations of melody and harmony, which are entirely free from semantic considerations. For Rousseau, though, music and language were both aural signs, and the concept of musical mimesis forms the

backbone of his primitivist theory of language.

Rousseau's *Essay* tells a similar narrative of linguistic generation as with those of Condillac and Blair, but with different oppositional sets of concepts. Rousseau thinks that primitive language was born from a passionate cry, accompanied with gestures. Drawing on the concept of musical mimesis, he describes how vocal inflections are capable of representing and communicating passions, and how such powers of emotional appeal were retained in primitive language, which was almost a song. According to him, the first voices conveyed emotions and passions in a tuneful modulation of the voice, and languages in the southern climate were more passionate, melodious, full of rounded vowels and expressive. On the other hand, Rousseau says, the northern climate makes language more harsh, rapid, restrained and full of articulated consonants. Derrida criticises Rousseau for his phonocentrism, and says that although Rousseau "declares" that the primitive language was a passionate cry and a voice fraught with self-present meaning, he "clandestinely" has to "describe" that in fact articulation was necessary for language to become itself by ceasing to be just a passionate cry. Articulation thus is central for Derrida's grammatology, and he elaborates the point by associating articulation with concepts such as consonants and writing, which he thinks Rousseau subordinates unfairly.

When we looked closely at Rousseau's passages where he depicts the birth of language, we found a different story from Derrida's. We found that Rousseau in fact explicitly says, or "declares," that language distinguishes itself from a passionate cry and becomes language when the cry transforms itself into both sound and articulation.

Derrida's claim that Rousseau undervalues and subordinates articulation is insupportable. What is more, when we examine Derrida's readings of Rousseau's discussions of musical accent, we notice that Derrida fails to take Rousseau's notion of sound into account. By "sound," Rousseau means vocal pitch. He thinks that ancient languages such as Greek were expressive and eloquent because of their melodious accent that is created by the variety of sounds. In contrast, modern languages are monotonous, and modern French accent indicates nothing but the quantity, not the pitch, of vowels. Although Derrida overlooks the significance of this, this notion of "sound" is central to Rousseau's concern, for it is the very foundation for musical mimesis, which is for him a representation of objects through melody.

We then turned to Derrida's treatment of writing. Although Derrida criticises Rousseau for his alleged attack on writing, it is disproportionate. It is true that Rousseau finds the surest link between sound and the emotions, but he does not disparage writing. On the contrary, when he proposes effective new uses of accent marks, it seems that he is suggesting ways of reconciling writing and orality, or trying to find ways of attributing oral expressiveness to writing. In addition, if we investigate Rousseau's understanding of three types of writing, pictograph, ideo-phonogram and phonogram, Rousseau seems to think that alphabet is the most civilised but too analytic, and that ideo-phonogram is more suited to depicting speech. Rousseau, thus, sometimes overcomes Eurocentrism, and instead of castigating writing, he tries to make it more expressive. Also, Derrida says that there is a passage in Rousseau which suggests that he, despite his stated phonocentric doctrine, seems to admit that the first

sign, a drawing, is spatial and visual rather than aural. However, Rousseau's primitivism assumes the presence of a primordial aural sign, based on the same mimetic principle as the visual sign of drawing. Thus, Derrida privileges, it seems to me, visual signs over oral signs, and articulation over sound, while he distorts Rousseau's views on writing to suit his teleological doctrine of grammatology.

In Chapter Four, we investigated the implications of the rhetorical paradox of orality and writing in the context of Blair's sublime aesthetics. Firstly, we examined the stylistic prescriptions of *Lectures* and discussed how Blair's ideas about literary merit are permeated with the notion of the sublime, despite his conscious distance from Longinus. Blair's primitivism, we have seen, dictates passion and enthusiasm as the highest marks of eloquence. The respective merits of literary genres such as epic and the ode, and figures of speech such as personification, interrogation and exclamation are described according to the standard of sublimity. Blair's views on prose style are also close to those of Longinus. Blair emphasises the importance of perspicuity, and says that it is best achieved through a skilful manipulation of syntactical arrangement of members in a period. In particular, he focuses on the strength of impression transmitted to the reader, and on the harmony of sentences where the reader creatively takes part in the semantic process through the act of reading. Blair and Longinus share this interest in the musicality of sentence and discourse, and both describe the linearity of linguistic experience as a form of auto-affection, or hearing-oneself-speak. Thus, a heightened moment of aesthetic experience for Blair manifests his phonocentrism. At the same time, though, we have seen that it is also a moment when the awareness of

writing intrudes. In this way, sublimity as a culmination of aesthetic sensibility is experienced as orality inhabiting writing.

We next turned to Blair's *A Critical Dissertation on the Poems of Ossian,* where he put his primitivist aesthetics of sublimity into practice. *Critical Dissertation* and *Lectures* share a similar narrative about the poetic nature of primitive language, but their treatments of the sublime show certain differences. While *Lectures* is more inclined to describe and explore the linguistic aspect of the sublime, *Critical Dissertation* focuses on its sentimental aspect, which arises chiefly from the moralistic tendency of the poems, manifest in the unexpected politeness of manners observed in the ancient warlike characters. Instead of causing doubt about the authenticity of the poems, the unlikely combination of ferociousness and gentleness inspired surprise and admiration in contemporary readers. The sentimental sublimity in Ossian, thus, is produced when contrariety is overridden.

The antithesis most pertinent to our concern, that between orality and writing, also inspires a sensation of sublimity. We observe that at the heightened moment of aesthetic appreciation, Blair's *Critical Dissertation* betrays a sense of unease. It frequently describes the Ossian poems as a written work, composed by an author and appreciated by readers. The moment of arrest that Blair experiences in the sublime, for instance, is only possible when the work is read on a page. Blair goes as far as saying that the peculiar genius of Ossian is best rendered in Macpherson's modern prose. Thus, although Ossian's poems are supposed to represent the ideal of primitive effusion of orality, they in fact are best described as a written work. Blair's primitivism, here

again, is both supported and fissured by writing. Both the Ossian poems and Blair's *Critical Dissertation*, thus, embody the antithetical exigencies of a rhetorician writing in the context of the Scottish Enlightenment, with his sentimental attachment to the primitivist ideals, and his rational and also idealistic agenda for cultural progress and social improvement.

The rhetorical paradox of the written voice, which was first observed in Plato's *Phaedrus*, was a central concern also for Hugh Blair. *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres* is a fascinating book; instead of making rhetoric a dry and abstruse subject that prescribes how to write and speak well, it opens itself to a humane world of language and literature, and guides its readers along in the territory of the belles lettres. Although the book is clearly written, it encounters difficulties and contains many discrepancies and inconsistencies. The impasses Blair reaches are eighteenth-century testimonies to the ancient mystery of the written voice, which connects *Lectures* to Derrida's philosophy, a twentieth-century response to the same question. The mystery remains for us. Socrates's word, "there's something odd about writing, Phaedrus," still holds today.

[1] Blair, *Lectures* 73.

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