Quintilian (35-100 C.E.) - Rhetorical Terms

Source web site: Silva Rhetoricae (The Forest of Rhetoric) - http://rhetoric.byu.edu

1. exordium

The introduction of a speech, where one announces the subject and purpose of the discourse, and where one usually employs the persuasive appeal of ethos in order to establish credibility with the audience.

Sources: Aristotle 3.14; Ad Herennium 1.4.6-1.7.11; Cic. De Inv. 1.15-18; Cic. Top. 25.97; Cic. De Or. 2.78-80; Quintilian 4.1

2. narratio

The second part of a classical oration, following the introduction or exordium (1). The speaker here provides a narrative account of what has happened and generally explains the nature of the case. Quintilian adds that the narratio is followed by the propositio, a kind of summary of the issues or a statement of the charge.

See Also: progymnasmata: narrative

Sources: Ad Herennium 1.8.11-1.9.16; Cic. De Inv. 1.19-21; Cic. Top. 25.97; Cic. De Or. 2.80.326-2.81.330; Quintilian 4.2

3. partitio

Following the statement of facts, or narration (2), comes the partitio or divisio. In this section of the oration, the speaker outlines what will follow, in accordance with what's been stated as the status, or point at issue in the case. Quintilian suggests the partitio is blended with the propositio and also assists memory.

Related Figures: taxis, merismus, diaeresis, dialysis, eutrepismus, prosapodosis, hypozeuxis, distribution.

Sources: Ad Herennium 1.10.17; Cic. De Inv. 1.22-23; Quintilian 4.5

4. confirmatio

Following the division / outline or partition (3) comes the main body of the speech where one offers logical arguments as proof. The appeal to logos is emphasized here.

Sources: Cic. De Inv. 1.24-41; Cic. De Or. 3.52-201; Quintilian 5.1-12.

5. refutatio

Following the confirmatio or section on proof in a classical oration, comes the refutation. As the name connotes, this section of a speech was devoted to answering the counterarguments of one's opponent.

Sources: Cic. De Inv. 1.42-51; Quintilian 5.13

6. peroratio

Following the refutatio and concluding the classical oration, the peroratio conventionally employed appeals through pathos, and often included a summing up (see the figures of summary, below).

Figures of Summary: accumulatio, anacephalaeosis, complexio, epanodos, epiphonema, symperasma, synathroesmus.

Sources: Cic. De Inv. 1.52-56; Cic. Top. 25.98-99
Additional terms:

accumulatio

Bringing together various points made throughout a speech and presenting them again in a forceful, climactic way. A blend of summary and climax.

anacephalaeosis. (L. complexio)

A recapitulation of the facts. A kind of summary employed in the peroratio.

asynodton

The omission of conjunctions between clauses, often resulting in a hurried rhythm or vehement effect.

congeries

Piling up words of differing meaning but for a similar emotional effect.

diaeresis

- The logical division of a genus into its species.
- Dividing one syllable into two (especially the pronunciation of two contiguous vowels). A kind of metaplasm.

dialysis

- To spell out alternatives, or to present either-or arguments that lead to a conclusion.
- A synonym for asynodton.

distributio

- Assigning roles among or specifying the duties of a list of people, sometimes accompanied by a conclusion.
- Sometimes this term is simply a synonym for diaeresis or merismus, which are more general figures involving division.

epanodos

- Repeating the main terms of an argument in the course of presenting it.
- Returning to the main theme after a digression.
- Returning to and providing additional detail for items mentioned previously (often using parallelism).

epiphanema

An epigrammatic summary which gathers into a pithy sentence what has preceeded. A striking, summarizing reflection.

eute repismus

Numbering and ordering the parts under consideration. A figure of division, and of ordering.

hypozeuxis

Opposite of zeugma. Every clause has its own verb.

merismus

The dividing of a whole into its parts.
metaplasm

A general term for orthographical figures (changes to the spelling of words). This includes alteration of the letters or syllables in single words, including additions, omissions, inversions, and substitutions.

progynasmata: narrative

Telling narratives was one of the first exercises in a rhetorical education according to Quintilian, and included students retelling a story from the end to the beginning, or from the middle backwards or forwards. From providing students an initial experience in expression, narrative exercises became the building blocks for the progynasmata exercises that followed it (which required summaries, digressions, or narrations of various sorts) and principally for the narration (2) portion of a complete practice speech.

Directions for Composition

Students were to take a factual or fictional story from the poets or historians and retell it in their own words, attempting to be clear as to the facts: Who did it / What was done / When it was done / Where it was done / How it was done / Why it was done?

propositio

Coming between the narratio and the partitio of a classical oration, the propositio provides a brief summary of what one is about to speak on, or concisely puts forth the charges or accusation.

prosapodosis

Providing a reason for each division of a statement, the reasons usually following the statement in parallel fashion.

symperasma

A conclusion that includes a brief summary of the foregoing.

synathroesmus

- The conglomeration of many words and expressions either with similar meaning (= synonymia) or not (= congeries).
- A gathering together of things scattered throughout a speech (= accumulatio).

taxis

To divide a subject up into its various components or attributes.

zeugma

A general term describing when one part of speech (most often the main verb, but sometimes a noun) governs two or more other parts of a sentence (often in a series).

Sources:


