Rhetoric Society Quarterly

Rhetoric and the Essay

Peter Mack

I have often wondered what would happen if one of our students were to hand in an assessed essay which followed the form and style of one of Montaigne's. First and second marker would pronounce it so disorganised as to be unmarkable, and the external examiner would fail it. Only at the final examiners' meeting would we confront the fact that we had confidently rejected one of the masterpieces of the genre.

This story illustrates a potentially destructive paradox. When teachers are defending essay writing, they argue that their students are practising the same genre as such great writers as Montaigne, Addison, Lamb, Woolf and Orwell. But when we mark students' essays we have different and at times rigid expectations, expectations which many of the classic essayists would not meet. This paradox is related to another. The most commonly accepted formulae for educational essays are extremely strict, and look as though they derive from rhetorical precepts on the outline of the oration. In the English model this is the four-part essay (Introduction, points for, points against, conclusion)[1] which appears to derive from the model of the four-part oration (*exordium*, narration, proof and refutation, peroration) by omitting the narration and altering the function of the refutation. The American model of the five point essay (Introduction, three arguments, conclusion) presumably derives from the same source, together with the often repeated instruction to restrict divisions to three headings.[2] These popular (and in their way appalling) instructions run quite counter to Montaigne's open hostility to the rules of rhetoric, when he founded the genre. They are also opposed to the views of many practitioners. Sir William Williams prefaces his *A Book of English Essays* (Harmondsworth 1951), by saying that the essay "has a multitude of forms and manners, and scarcely any rules and regulations" (p. 11). It should be a short piece of prose which is not devoted to narrative. (There are plenty of exceptions even to a rule as permissive as this.) Maurice Hewlett's celebrated "The Maypole and the Column" describes the essay, as "a theme set up, and hung with loving art; then round about it a measure trodden, sedately for the most part, but with involuntary skips aside as the whim takes him" (*ibid.*, p. 238). He prefers dance and digression to order and structure. Lamb is his admired model.

My argument in this essay is that rhetoric, argument and ideas of structure have been involved with the essay (often as imperatives to react against) right from the beginning and that rhetorical ideas can help us understand the relationship between the belles-lettres essay and the schoolroom exercise. I shall raise the historical question of how a genre which originated in opposition to rhetoric came to be taken over by rhetoric. For the sake of brevity my narrative will concentrate on four moments of the story: the birth of the essay, the English essay of the

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[1] e.g. A. Northedge, *Good Study Guide* (Milton Keynes 1990) p. 164. I have tried to keep the documentation of this essay as light as possible.

[2] *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, I. 10. 17, H. Lausberg, *Handbuch der literarischen rhetorik*, 3rd ed. (Stuttgart 1990) pp. 242-43.

seventeenth century, the "classical form" of *The Tatler* and *The Spectator*, and the role of the essay in education.

Montaigne makes his most concentrated attack on rhetoric in essay 51 of book 1, "De la vanité des paroles," where he repeats some of Plato's objections and adds his own, from political history.

> It is an instrument invented to manipulate and agitate a crowd and a disorderly populace, and an instrument that is employed only in sick states, like medicine....

> Eloquence flourished most at Rome when affairs were in the worst state and agitated by the storm of the civil wars; as a free and untamed field bears the lustiest weeds.[3]

In "Du Pédantisme" (1.25) one of Montaigne's reasons for preferring Spartan schools to Athenian ones is that the Spartans avoid teaching rhetoric (*GF* 191, *F* 105). In "Des livres" (2.10) he attacks rhetorical disposition and logical order.

> Cicero's way of writing, and every other similar way, seems to me boring. For his prefaces, definitions, partitions, etymologies consume the greater part of his work; what life and marrow there is, is smothered by his long-winded preparations...

> For me, who ask only to become wiser, not more learned or eloquent, these logical and Aristotelian arrangements are not to the point...I look for good solid reasons from the start...I do not want a man to use his strength making me more attentive. (*GF* 84, *F* 301)

Montaigne here rejects both logical order and rhetorical disposition. He regards his own principles of organisation as quite different.

> I have no marshal but fortune to arrange my bits. As my fancies present themselves, I pile them up; now they come pressing in a crowd, now dragging single file. (2.10, *GF* 79, *F* 297)

In "Considération sur Cicéron" (1.40) he speaks of piling up (*entasser* again) only the headings of his material and of using his stories and quotations obliquely:

> They often bear, outside of my subject, the seeds of a richer and bolder material, and sound obliquely a subtler note, both for myself, who do not wish to express anything more, and for those who get my drift. (*GF* 303, *F* 185)

Montaigne's idea of a different, richer meaning available to those who can read more in his quotations than he indicates differs radically from rhetorical instructions about clarity of expression or sticking to the point at issue. In well-known passages from "De l'exercitation" (2.6, *GF* 48, *F* 273) and "Du repentir" (3.2, *GF* 20, *F* 610–11), Montaigne explains that his essays attempt to "follow the wanderings of the mind", "to penetrate the depths of its folds on folds," to "portray passing." This intention requires the oblique procedure he adopts. In "Des livres" he says that the shape of his essays is more noteworthy than their matter. (*GF* 78, *F* 296)

Montaigne's comments on his own practice are illuminating, but he uses rhetoric as much as he denounces it. Pierre Villey has suggested that the formal origin of the essay lies in the books of examples and quotations familiar in the

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[3]I shall cite Montaigne from the Garnier-Flammarion edition (Paris 1979) because it is widely available, and because, unlike the Pléiade edition it accurately records the successive additions to the text, and from D. Frame trans., *The Complete Essays of Montaigne* (Stanford 1958). Because the Garnier Flammarion's three volumes correspond to Montaigne's three books it will be superfluous to add a volume number. 1. 51, *GF* 361-62, *F* 222.

renaissance classroom.[4] According to him the earliest essays collect stories and quotations to illustrate a simple theme. The first version of 'Des menteurs' (1.9) has four elements:

1. I have no business talking about memory, mine is so bad.
2. **People with weak memories should not tell lies.**
3. **Story of Francis I and Francesco Taverna.**
4. Story of Henry VIII and papal ambassador.

Two form the core: an observation about liars needing a good memory (2) and an illustrative story in which Francis I detects a lie (3). This core has the form of story plus comment which we find in the fable in the *progymnasmata*.[5] To this Montaigne adds, first a preface (1) explaining that he has such a poor memory that he has no business talking about it. Here we seem to have a topical connection: liars to memory (through the topic of adjuncts) and memory to my bad memory (through the topics of subject and quality). At the end of the essay the story about Francis I leads to a parallel story about Henry VIII (4). This story has nothing to do with lying, but it is an instance of a king detecting treachery. So the two core elements here are linked by the nominal subject of the essay, but each core element produces, independently of the title, another topically linked element.

In the later versions of the essay Montaigne continues to add elements topically linked to individual items already present:

1. I have no business talking about memory, mine is so bad.
1a. People in Gascony say that lack of memory is lack of wit, but this is not true.
1b. Consolations of a weak memory.
    (People with good memories talk too much.)
    (My weak memory helps me forget injuries and enjoy rereading books.)
2. People with weak memories should not tell lies
2a. Flatterers can be caught out if they forget.
2b. Lying is a terrible vice. It destroys the basis of society. Children must be taught not to lie. I don't think I could bring myself to lie.[6]
3. Story of Francis I and Francesco Taverna.
4. Story of Henry VIII and papal ambassador.

These additions are all interesting, but they have the effect of obscuring the connection which formed the basis of the original essay. There is every reason to think that Montaigne wanted this effect. The impression of a mind throwing out new stories and observations, valuable in themselves and reflecting in oblique ways on each other would portray his mind in action without committing him to a point

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[4]D. Frame, "Considerations on the Genesis of Montaigne's *Essays*", in I. D. Mc Farlane and Ian Maclean eds., *Montaigne: Essays in Memory of Richard Sayce* (Oxford 1982) pp. 1-12 provides a critical account of the competing theories.

[5]Aphthonius, *Progymnasmata* in H. Rabe ed., *Rhetores Graeci*, X (Leipzig 1926) pp. 1-51, R. Nadeau, "The *Progymnasmata* of Aphthonius in translation", *Speech Monographs* 19 (1952) 264-85. Aphthonius defines, describes and exemplifies fourteen exercises in composition: fable, tale, chreia, proverb, refutation, confirmation, commonplace, encomium, vituperation, comparison, character, description, thesis, proposal of a law. His book, in the Latin translation of R. Agricola and R. Lorichius, was immensely successful in the sixteenth century.

[6]But see *Essais* 1.21, *GF* 146, *F* 70-71.

of view or a conclusion. But we should also note that the processes by which the essay reaches this condition are essentially logical ones.

This kind of analysis can also be applied to more complex essays: to the way in which the narrative describing his fall and recovery in "De l'exercitation" (2.6) is elaborated with reflections, immediate and general, comparisons, parallel stories, the introduction on practice and imagination, and the conclusion, on the problems and possibilities of his essays; or to the interweaving of narrative, comment and speculation in "Des cannibales" (1.31).

Montaigne's practice is very different from ancient or modern expectations about disposition. But he starts from quotation and narrative as in the schoolbooks and the *progymnasmata*. Following the model of the topics, he works in parallels, contraries, examples and reasonings. He keeps thinking about an audience and an adversary. Like many renaissance authors he employs rhetorical and dialectical techniques while avoiding the recipes the manuals prescribe.

Bacon probably worked his essays up from a commonplace book. Typically, he makes a point with a maxim or a quotation, perhaps adds an example and then moves to another point, independent of the first but topically related to the title of the essay. He avoids transitions. "Of Beauty" (1625) begins

> Vertue is like a Rich Stone, best plaine set: And surely, Vertue is best in a Body, that is comely, though not of Delicate Features: And that hath rather Dignity of Presence, then Beauty of Aspect. Neither is it almost seene, that very Beautifull Persons, are otherwise of great Vertue; As if Nature, were rather Busie not to erre, then in labour, to produce Excellency. And therefore, they prove Accomplished, but not of great Spirit; And Study rather Behaviour, then Vertue. But this holds not alwaies; For Augustus Caesar, Titus Vespasianus, Philip le Belle of France, Edward the Fourth of England, Alcibiades of Athens, Ismael the Sophy of Persia, were all High and Great Spirits; and yet the most Beautifull Men of their Times. In Beauty, that of Favour, is more then that of Colour, And that of Decent and Gracious Motion, more then that of Favour. That is the best Part of Beauty, which a Picture cannot expresse; No, nor the first Sight of the Life. There is no Excellent Beauty, that hath not some Strangenesse in the Proportion. A Man cannot tell, whether Apelles, or Albert Durer, were the more Trifler: Whereof the one would make a Personage by Geometricall Proportions: The other, by taking the best Parts out of divers Faces, to make one Excellent.[7]

The opening section, discussing the relation between beauty and virtue, looks like a passage from a commonplace book (it could even be Hamlet's). Bacon presents a maxim and explains it. This involves a distinction (comely, rather than delicate), which he amplifies (dignity of presence rather than beauty of aspect). Then he presents a corollary generalisation (very beautiful persons are usually not virtuous) with its cause and its effects. This leads to a group of counter-examples. So far he has developed a single subject, amplifying it through the topics. But then Bacon compares three types of beauty (colour, favour and grace of manner). Next he comments on beauty's admixture of strangeness, and then reproves Apelles and Durer. Each of these sections is relevant to the title but there is no sequential connection between virtue in beauty and the three types or between them and strangeness in beauty. Bacon's procedure, in which the title evokes each section separately is almost the opposite of Montaigne's, where the title is left behind and each section is related to its predecessor. But both apply topical invention to rhetorical source material.

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[7]Text cited from Francis Bacon, *The Essayes or Counsels Civill and Morall*, ed. M. Kiernan (Oxford 1985) p. 132.

In some of Bacon's later essays the points are organised in groups (e.g. "Of Plantations", 1625) or even collected into a logical argument. "Of Usury" (1625) begins by discussing common opinions, then collects arguments against usury and arguments in favour of it. Next it considers ways of avoiding the disadvantages and proposes a system involving two different rates of interest. It concludes by rebutting the moral objections to usury. This structure owes something to the *progymnasmata*, specifically the proposal of a law. It might even impress an English examining board.

Bacon took little from Montaigne apart from the title of his work, and the same could be said of the seventeenth-century English essayists' debt to Bacon. Cornwallis favours a disjointed style, in which one "undigested motion" is set directly against its contradiction. He is more tentative than Bacon and more autobiographical. Owen Felltham likes to begin his Resolves with a strong paradox: "I find many that are called puritans; yet few or none that will own the name" or "To reprehend well is both the hardest and most necessary part of friendship". In the body of the essay he unravels the paradox with examples, quotations and moral advice. Most of Cowley's essays collect Horatian comments on the advantages of retirement. Sir William Temple favours elaborate divisions, etymologies and comparisons, padded with subdivisions and historical summaries.[8] The English essayists of the seventeenth century do not, except in a superficial way, imitate Bacon or Montaigne. Nor do they reach any consensus of their own about structure or approach.

The "missing model" was provided by Addison and Steele.[9] But only in retrospect and only as a result of selection. For almost two centuries Addison's essays were presented for imitation to schoolchildren and to authors. But the selection of model essays frequently did not correspond to Addison's own ideas about the essay.

The Tatler and *The Spectator* are very varied and they contain much that we would not classify as essay: short stories, character pieces, the running comedy of Sir Roger de Coverley and his associates in the Spectator club, satire, irony, fantasy and even allegorical dream-vision (*Spectator* 3). Narrative, both pseudo-autobiographical and openly fictional, and characterisation are very prominent. Addison and Steele are as careful to dramatize their fictional personae as Montaigne was to embellish his real one.

By contrast the essays which are chosen as models by nineteenth-century schoolmasters are orderly discussions of moral and literary subjects. *Spectator* 411, "On the Pleasures of the Imagination", one of their favourites, begins by explaining the superiority of the sight over the other senses. The pleasures of the imagination are derived from sight. Then Addison defines the pleasures of the imagination and compares them with other pleasures. He describes the pleasures of the imagination and sets out their advantages. He concludes by preferring them to the pleasures of the understanding. This essay has a strong logical structure. It is an attractive example of Addison popularising aesthetics, or, as he puts it in *Spectator* 10, bringing philosophy out of the schools and libraries and into the tea

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[8]Sir William Cornwallis, *Essayes*, ed. D. C. Allen (Baltimore, 1946), Owen Felltham, *Resolves* (London, 1628), Abraham Cowley, *The Essays and Other Prose Writings*, ed. A. B. Gough (Oxford 1915), Sir William Temple, *Selected Essays*, ed. J. A. Nicklin (London 1911).

[9]D. F. Bond ed., *The Tatler*, 3 vols (Oxford 1987), *The Spectator*, 5 vols (Oxford 1965). Since each is relatively short I cite only the number of the periodical in the text. Melvin Watson, "The *Spectator* Tradition and the Development of the Familiar Essay", *ELH* 13 (1946) 189-215 examines the differences between *The Spectator* and the personal essay of Leigh Hunt, Lamb and Hazlitt.

tables and coffee-houses. But it is nothing like his most inventive or his most characteristic vein.

At their best Addison's "rambles or rather speculations" mix narrative, character and argument. *Spectator* 125, an attack on party divisions, begins with one of Sir Roger de Coverley's anecdotes, in which he is unable to ask the way to St Ann's Lane without offending a Puritan and a Catholic. After reporting Sir Roger's comments on the story, Addison elaborates the moral consequences of divisions, quoting Plutarch and alluding to *Luke* 6. 27. Then he considers the effect on people's judgements about learning and character. Historical examples and a Spanish proverb prepare the conclusion, in which he proposes (half seriously, as an imaginary alternative) an Association of Neutrals. Here a logically organised outline (a consideration of the bad effects of a partisan attitude on different aspects of morals and judgements, followed by praise of its contrary) is decorated with fiction, quotation and an imaginary proposal. Steele, in *Spectator* 11, deflates antifeminist satire through the characterisation of Arietta, her argument, the story she tells, and its effect on the Spectator. Steele uses the resources and the tone of storytelling (on two levels) to persuade. In *Spectator* 411 Addison lectures his audience, but elsewhere he is more subtle and engaging in his mixing of styles and tones—especially perhaps in the way he can make narrative and argument serve each other's purposes or illuminate each other. The manuals chose a quite restricted part of Addison to be the model.

Addison himself did not regard papers like *Spectator* 411 as essays. In *Spectator* 476 he makes a distinction between "some which are written with Regularity and Method, and others that run out into the Wildness of those Compositions which go by the Name of *Essays*." In this second type

> it is sufficient that I have several Thoughts on a Subject, without troubling myself to range them in such order, that they may seem to grow out of one another and be disposed under the proper Heads.

So essays are wild and disordered. But the paper goes on to praise the first kind, methodical writing, as advantageous to reader and writer.

> When a Man has plann'd his Discourse, he finds a great many Thoughts rising out of every Head, that do not offer themselves upon the general Survey of a Subject. His Thoughts are at the same time more intelligible, and better discover their Drift and Meaning, when they are placed in their proper Lights, and follow one another in a regular Series...

Addison praises method, but he regards it as antithetical to the spirit of the essay. In retrospect, however, in their function as the classics of the genre, Addison and Steele (but especially the former) are the means by which these two traditions, method and essay, were interwoven, or confused.[10]

In one way, then, the *Spectator* and the *Tatler* initiate the tradition of the periodical essay from Goldsmith, Johnson, Lamb and Hazlitt down to the columnists in the Sunday newspaper. In another way Addison is drawn into the older tradition of composition teaching. Two educational changes partly explain this second role. In the nineteenth century the English language became far more important in advanced education. From the 1850s, starting with the India Office, written examinations began to determine the prospects of students in education and

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[10]On Addison's rewriting and the relationship between his essays and his commonplace book see Bond, *Spectator*, I, lxvii-lxix, and Robert D. Chambers, "Addison at Work on the *Spectator*", *Modern Philology* 56 (1959) 145-53.

in the public service.[11] Skill in essay-writing became essential to success in these fields.

Ian Michael's excellent book *The Teaching of English from the Sixteenth Century to 1870* (Cambridge, 1987) lists a number of guides for teachers of English composition from the seventeenth century to the nineteenth. Two attitudes to the essay emerge. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the essay is a simple five part exercise in Latin composition, part of a group that probably derives from the *progymnasmata*. It precedes the theme which has eight parts. In both exercises students may often have produced an English version before translating into Latin.

Ralph Johnson in *The Scholar's Guide* (London 1665) lists nine exercises in composition: colloquys, essays, fables, prosopopeias, characters, themes, epistles, orations, declamations. He defines an essay as "a short discourse about any vertue, vice or other commonplace" (p. 13). He suggests five sections for the essay (definition/description, types, causes, adjuncts, effects) which correspond to five of the topics of invention. He also emphasizes that brevity is the characteristic of the essay and suggests four appropriate stylistic ornaments.

The theme is a more advanced and more complex exercise. "A theme is a discourse amplifying a subject by shewing the meaning and proving the truth thereof" (p. 15). Johnson's structure for the theme (*Exordium, narratio, causa, contrarium, simile, exemplum, testimonium, epilogus*) is evidently based on the *progymnasmata*, which here rely on the outline of the classical oration. The treatment of theme and essay in K.P.'s *The Scholar's Instructor* (London ?1707) is very similar in detail to Johnson.

William Milns' *The Well-Bred Scholar* (London 1794) suggests only four exercises (letters, fables, themes, and orations). Here the theme is a fairly advanced exercise in five parts. Milns warns the student not to begin themes too early, but rather to begin with "smaller essays" (p. 113).

In the early and mid- nineteenth century, on the other hand, pupils seem to do their writing in English. The theme which remains a strictly structured exercise now precedes the essay which is defined as a free composition. For John Walker in *The Teacher's Assistant* (London 1802) the theme, which has a seven part structure (proposition, reason, confirmation, simile, example, testimony, conclusion), "is the proving of some truth" (p. 88). Essays, on the other hand, 'cannot be reduced to the same rules as regular subjects and themes' (p. 132). To teach essay-writing Walker, like many later authors, analyses model essays into sections ("headings"). For G. F. Graham in *English, or the Art of Composition* (London 1842) who preserves the seven-part theme, the essay "differs from the theme as its divisions are arranged morre according to the will of the writer" (p. 303). Roscoe Mongan in *The Practical English Grammar* (London, 1864) makes the distinction as follows:

> A theme is an exercise in which the subject is treated according to a set of heads methodically arranged. In the essay, the writer is at liberty to follow his own inclination as to the arrangement of his ideas (p. 265).

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[11]Ian Michael, *cit.* in text below, R. L. Archer, *Secondary Education in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge 1921) pp. 8-19, 221-225, John Roach, *Public Examinations in England 1850-1900* (Cambridge 1971).

Some teachers perform analyses on essays of Addison or suggest subheadings appropriate to particular titles but none of them provides a general outline for the essay form.

This was not the result I was expecting. Ian Michael states that around the 1830s theme and essay became interchangeable terms, and implies that the sevenfold structure of the theme was carried over into the essay (pp. 309–314). But the texts he cites, as my examples above show, make a consistent distinction between theme and essay, and insist that the essay is a free form.

So when and how did the four-part essay (or in America the three point or five-part essay) become the standard form? The short answer is: I don't know. The approach of providing pupils with a set of subheadings to elaborate persisted well into the 1920s and was much criticised. Some teachers regarded the Addison-Lamb type essay as an inappropriate model for schoolchildren. Some advocated a more methodical approach to prose composition in imitation of the French system. Others saw composition primarily as self-expression.[12] From the other end, the four-part essay seems to have a continuous tradition from the 1940s up to the present, with some authors in the 1990s recommending it very strongly.[13]

Every story needs a moral and mine, incomplete as it is, suggests a few. Montaigne attacks logic and rhetoric, but he also uses techniques from both subjects. In that he begins from the story plus observation or that Bacon begins from the commonplace book, we can say that the essay originates from classroom procedures. But most essayists refuse to be methodical and insist on their freedom. The struggle between methodical composition and the belles-lettres essay runs through the whole history of the genre.

Secondly, even the few essays I have described are enough to show the variety of approaches and structures which go under the name of essays. Nineteenth century schoolmasters chose a small part (not the most representative or the best part) of Addison's work as their model. Their choice reflected the wish to identify a "classic" which would confer literary respectability on the older pedagogic tradition of the *progymnasmata*. We might question their choice but our confident assumption that we know what an essay should be (and therefore how it should be marked) is similarly challenged by the variety of approaches within the genre.

Within the educational tradition the simple structural formulae become detached from a consideration of audience and purpose. It is generally true, I think, that rhetoric and dialectic have produced formulae (such as the four-part oration, the five predicables, the ten categories, the two types of introduction) most of them rather deadening. But it is interesting that the idea of four-part structure should be applied to the essay so strongly and so late—as though the rigidities of rhetoric are

[12]For example P. J. Hartog, *The Writing of English*, 2nd edn (Oxford 1908), G. Sampson, *English for the English* (Cambridge, 1921), (The Newbolt Report), *The Teaching of English* (London, 1921).

[13]See footnote 1 above. I remember being taught to write an essay using four-part structure in about 1965. Friends confirm that it was taught in the 1940s and 1950s. R. Ridout and K. Mcgregor, *English for Australian Schools, Book 5* (Melbourne, 1967) p. 82, offers: 1. Introduction, 2. One view, 3. Points against, 4. Other view, 5. Points against, 6. Balance/Conclusion. I presume that this work is based on R. Ridout, *English Today* (London 1947). Esta de Fossard, *Thinking Does It* (Melbourne 1968) pp. 55-56 suggests: Introduction, One view, Other view, Conclusion. I am grateful to Dr Jill Barker for providing these Australian examples. There is a bibliography in David Shayer, *The Teaching of English in Schools 1900-1970* (London, 1972) pp. 188-193. I need to do more work on the rise and popularity of the four-part essay.

part of its appeal even after romanticism and progressive education. Or, as I would say, even after Rudolph Agricola.

But I want to end by making some practical suggestions which arise from these paradoxes. We should not overestimate the link between the kind of writing we expect of students and the tradition of the essay, but the differences can be explained by the principles of rhetoric. To write like Addison or like Montaigne implies a certain idea of one's audience and one's purpose. It involves projecting a certain image of oneself (*ethos*). The student essay must reflect its audience, its purpose and its author's view of herself. That is not the same thing as saying that there is only one approach, *ethos* or structure appropriate to the student essay. An essay which aims at entertainment or display will not have to devote its attention to the point at issue in the same way as one which aims to persuade. Since many different kinds of essay can succeed it will require considerable sympathy and tact to set about repairing one which does not work. (This is a plea against so-called objective methods of marking.) Reasoning is important in its place, but that place may not be everywhere. Montaigne's obliqueness and the studied randomness of his "mind in motion" suit the ethos and audience he is forming, but they would fail if he were unable to jolt us from our expectations, or if we were determined not to be moved.

Both Montaigne and Bacon found that the shape and content of their essays became clear only through rewriting. Even readers who prefer a more logical order should recognise the worth and authority of this precedent. Planning may help in articulating structure and in guiding decisions about what to exclude, but preprocessed plans of the sort I mentioned at the beginning are usually foolish. It can be as mistaken to stick to a plan for too long as to abandon it too early. Even repetition is effective at the right moment. "It is a thorny undertaking, and more so than it seems, to follow so wandering a movement as that of our mind, to penetrate the opaque depths of its folds within folds..."(2.6, *GF* 48, *F* 273).

Peter Mack
Department of English,
University of Warwick,
Coventry CV4 7AL
England