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Reply to my Commentator - Carlos

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Reply to my Commentator

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I am extremely grateful to Professor Pender for providing a broader cultural context for my analysis and for reminding me of further passages from other chapters of the *Essais* (i.e., “Sur des vers de Virgile,” III.5) that bear significantly on this discussion. I also appreciate the references to Susenbrotus’s *Epitome* (1576) which I had not considered prior to reading the commentary. I like Professor Pender’s reading of both Montaigne and Emerson in terms of “redescription” (*paradiastole*) and agree that this Renaissance technique should have a role to play with regard to the two texts. However, while redescription may function as one possible Renaissance counterpart to the Roman idea of softened *licentia* (and *charientismos* on p. 16 of the *Epitome* could serve a similar function), I still hesitate somewhat in accepting it as the *figure-clé* for the two texts. Rather, I see a general rhetorical strategy of softening bold speech that – similar to the classical conception of the *sermo figuratus* (figured speech) – uses multiple techniques and, in the particular case of Montaigne, chief among them would be the figure, “emphasis” (i.e., leaving the audience to infer an additional meaning from what the rhetor says or does not say).

One finds references to “emphasis” in both the *Epitome* and Scaliger’s *Poetices libri septem* (1561). Susenbrotus offers three types of emphasis: one in which the rhetor conveys, through a single word, a more significant meaning than the word normally denotes; a second in which the rhetor means more than what is said; and a third in which the rhetor means something that he does *not* say (p. 44-46). For Scaliger, the figure has a similar meaning: the rhetor implies more than what he says (III, lxxix). This figure corresponds well not only to the passage that I cited with respect to “Des Cannibales,” but also to those of many other chapters of the *Essais* that display even more prominently the terse, and often cryptic, *style coupé* for which Montaigne is known (see, for example, “Des pouces,” II.26).

It is also important to note that the doctrine of figured speech continues to survive in Renaissance treatises on rhetoric (often, as L. Calboli-Montefusco (2003) has noted, in relation to the concept of “ductus,” or the overall character of the speech). For example, George of Trebizond’s *Rhetoricorum libri quinque* (c. 1440) lists five types of ductus, including the *ductus simulatus* in which the rhetor asks for something other than what he actually wants (deflection); the *ductus contrarius*, in which the rhetor asks for the opposite of what he wants; and the *ductus per subioectionem*, in which the rhetor implies

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additional meanings (emphasis) (p. 390-399).

My sense, then, is that there are still other references besides those relating to “redescription” that would be worthy of exploring in order to understand classical indirection during the early modern period.

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