Getting Carried Away: How Rhetorical Transport Gets Judgment Going

Michele Kennerly

Department of Communication, University of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh, PA, USA

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Getting Carried Away: How Rhetorical Transport Gets Judgment Going
Michele Kennerly

Situations calling for judgment give impetus to rhetoric’s ability to “bring before the eyes” absent or unapparent persons, places, or things. Rhetoricians often attribute this aspect of rhetoric’s power to phantasia, the capacity through which images of stimuli past, passing, or to come are generated and made present. This article proposes and pursues a conceptualization of “rhetorical transport” predicated on civic phantasia, a mode of distance collapse whereby rhetors move subjects or objects so as to enable or impede particular judgments. Rhetorical transport abounds in rhetorical practice, but this article focuses on its presence in Gorgias, Cicero, and Thomas Paine.

Rhetoric’s work often consists of giving presence to the unseeable—something not yet or never capable of being seen—or to the unseen—something visible but ignored. A demonstrated need for judgment on matters past, passing, or to come gives impetus to bringing the absent or unapparent into view. To show something or someone previously unseen due to an expanse of distance or time, or previously unrecognized due to a deficit of attention or feeling, a rhetor must appeal to the same mental faculty that enables self-indulgent escapes into fantasy. That state of being 1,000 miles away often registers in heavily lidded eyes, securely sealed ears, and, depending on the fashion of the times, finger-twirled hair, all qualities that seem to work against reliable judgment. But the capacity that enables those fleeting vacations can—must, really—be instrumentalized for judgment purposes. In Book 6 of his magisterial opus on oratorical education, the Hispano-Roman rhetorician Quintilian, enthused at the prospect of doing so himself, puts the matter this way:

When the mind is idle or occupied with wishful thinking or a sort of daydreaming, images (imagines) . . . seek us out, and we think we are traveling or sailing or fighting a battle or addressing a crowd or disposing of wealth which we do not
possess, and not just to think about but actually to do (nec cogitare sed facere) these things. Can’t we give this mental vice some utility? Surely we can. (6.2.30)¹

Designating this mental capacity for conjuring up images phantasia in Greek and visio in Latin, Quintilian describes it as that “by which images of absent things (imagines rerum absentium) are presented to the mind in such a way that we seem to see them with our eyes (oculis) and to have them before the senses (praesentes)” (6.2.29). Quintilian brings phantasia/visio into a section of Institutio Oratoria about pathos and judgment, stressing how much orators rely on and thus must render rhetorically useful this faculty of image production to stimulate relevant emotions and secure desired judgments.² To distinguish the mental vice kind of phantasia from the more useful, rhetorical kind, I will call the latter sort “civic phantasia.” That designation denotes the public possibilities of phantasia that excite Quintilian. Noticing but not giving a name to Quintilian’s instrumentalization of phantasia, Murray Wright Bundy hails it “an ordinary power of reverie, put to practical use in oratory” (107). Indeed, phantasia in its self-directed mode promotes a wandering mind, while phantasia in its other-directed mode promotes a journey of judgment. When images of absent stimuli are generated and made present through civic phantasia, we find ourselves transported, and the conditions of the here, the now, and the self altered. Through its power, rhetors, judges, and/or objects of judgment get carried away, thereby collapsing distance between people and places and affecting judgment.

This article offers a conceptualization of civic phantasia based on some crucial moments of its activation: Gorgias’s Encomium of Helen (fifth century BCE), Cicero’s In Verrem I (70 BCE), and Thomas Paine’s Common Sense (1776). Those selections recommend themselves for their significance to the rhetorical tradition, the range of genres they cover (epideictic, judicial, and legislative, respectively), and their overt recognition that visualization sets rhetorical transport in motion to induce or improve judgment.³ Gorgias, Cicero, and Paine turn phantasia inside

¹Excerpts from Quintilian’s only extant work, the twelve-book Institutio Oratoria, come from the Loeb editions, whose translations I have occasionally altered slightly.

²For an extended treatment of Quintilian’s recommendations on courtroom pathé, see the chapters by Katula, which includes “Quintilian’s Rules” for using this pistis of persuasion, and Martin, in Quintilian and the Law: The Art of Persuasion in Law and Politics.

³Aristotle, Cicero, Quintilian, and Paine have been grouped together before. Walker’s chapter on “enthymemes of anger” positions itself as a counterstatement or at least a challenge to Quintilian’s advice on pathos and its focus on the moving force of the imagistic, turning instead to the pages of Aristotle (Rhetoric), Cicero (De Imperio), Thomas Paine (Common Sense), and Perelman (The New Rhetoric) for alternative viewpoints. Walker writes that neither Cicero nor Paine rely on imagery to produce “emotional force” (373), but rather only to extenuate the pathos they have already built up in an audience through “enthymemically structured logology” (373–4). This “either imagery or enthymeme” conditional elides rhetorical moments wherein an audience is presented with an impartial scene whose strategically missing parts the rhetor equips them to supply, knowing that this co-construction will involve the audience in the situation all the more. See Lamp for a take on how even materially visual rhetoric can operate enthymemically.
out, giving external purpose to image-making abilities that sometimes tend toward vacuous daydreaming. By means of such externalization, powers of visualization operate for the sake of judgment rather than amusement, just as Quintilian proposed.

Quintilian, obviously, was neither the first nor the last to recognize the rhetorical benefits to be had from controlling phantasias wayward tendencies. Phantasias appears in Aristotle's definitions of several pathé (emotions) in Book 2 of his Rhetoric. He defines phobos (fear), for instance, as “a sort of pain or agitation derived from the phantasias of a future destructive or painful evil” (1382a), and he defines the pathé as “those things through which, by undergoing change, people come to differ in their judgments (kriseis) and which are accompanied by pain or pleasure, for example, anger, pity, fear, and other such things and their opposites” (1378a8). By, for example, setting an audience's sights on the prospect of an invading army just visible on the horizon, a rhetor arouses fear and perhaps also an inclination toward approving his recommendation to dispatch a diplomatic envoy to redress the grievances of a bordering country. Because the faculty of judgment is so sensitive to image-rich pathetic appeals, Aristotle frowns upon rhetors who abuse that sensitivity with appeals irrelevant to the case (Rhetoric 1354a4–5).

Although visualization's underlying psychological mechanisms interest Aristotle a great deal, most rhetorical theorists and practitioners who recognize its power focus chiefly on its ability to enable or impede a particular judgment or even to supersede proven patterns of judgment altogether. Much more recently than Aristotle and Quintilian, Martha Nussbaum named fancy, an etymon of phantasia, a central component of judgment. In her book Poetic Justice: The Literary Imagination and Public Life, Nussbaum promotes the power of literature, especially novels, to activate and cultivate facets of imagination that can improve our respective and collective responses to social injustice. For Nussbaum, fancy is

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4 Aristotelian phantasia has been enjoying a lot of press. For more detailed treatments of Aristotle, phantasia, and rhetoric, see, for example, Newman, O’Gorman, and González. For more on the role of krisis in Aristotle’s vision of rhetoric, see Black chapter 4, Farrell throughout, and Garsten chapter 4.

5 See De Anima 427b16, 432a8–9, and 433a26, for example, on phantasias place in the psychological scheme of things.

6 Obviously I have zoomed over dozens of intervening rhetoricians who weigh in on judgment and the imagistic, and I have not touched on scholars of visual rhetoric as currently conceived. While there is no comprehensive treatment of the first category, Gross has traced “the rhetorical history of the concept Chaim Perelman calls ‘presence’” (37), pursuing it from Aristotle, to George Campbell, to Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca to show how concepts from early rhetorical theory “evolve” and “progress” (42). Gross focuses on energeia (activity, liveliness) rather than phantasia or enargeia (stirring vividness), but all three terms belong to the visualization cluster. From the category of visual rhetoric, Finnegan has championed “vision” as a generative theoretical perspective for communication studies as a whole, and Johnson, using Kevin De Luca’s coinage “image event,” locates the challenge of rhetors involved in social movements in “the making visible” (3) of the social problem around which their respective movement turns.

7 In this book, Nussbaum does not concern herself with the centuries-old debate about the differences between fancy and imagination, nor does she emphasize fancy’s etymological connection to phantasia.
a juridically essential will-to-whimsy by which we relate to others, imagine ourselves to be in their position, and allow—consciously or not—the results of such imaginings to affect our public actions and reactions. Somewhat similarly, Quintilian highlights phantasia’s ability to help the orator feel the same emotions his client suffers and to parlay that sympathy into moving words like those the orator himself would use if in the same case (6.2.34–35). Nussbaum hopes a development of the literary imagination “will steer judges in their judging, legislators in their legislating, policy makers in measuring the quality of life of people near and far” (3). Her focus on fancy has much to offer rhetorical theory about flights of them and, besides being fueled by novels, can be driven by more traditional rhetorical forms like orations, manifestos, and pamphlets.

To place civic phantasia before the eyes, I return to the three instances of rhetorical practice introduced earlier. The first selection is Gorgias’s Encomium of Helen, wherein the force of rhetorical transport is on full view. People misjudge Helen’s predicament when they attribute it to her poor judgment, and Gorgias equips us to think through how words and images impact judgment. Second is Cicero’s In Verrem I, wherein Cicero asserts the glaring obviousness of Verres’s misconduct and makes the jurors anxiously aware of all the eyes upon them. Cicero’s deft management of phantasia permits his original audience and all those thereafter to see only one verdict as the obvious choice. Third and final is Thomas Paine’s Common Sense, in which he urges readers to behold the precariousness with which the colonies are perched, a position from which they can either spring into action or topple into the abyss. To foster a common sensibility about America’s future, Paine manages different perspectives—ones made possible by physical locations, mental outlooks, and their overlap—and attempts to create a synoptic view of and on current affairs. As those selections attest, the connection between rhetorical transport and judgment persists across time and context. Structurally, each segment below narrows in on one particular rhetor but also includes brief gestures toward some pertinent contributions of others. Since the three selections arose from contentious times and rhetors about which and whom much has been written before, I confine my treatment to parts of the texts that reveal how rhetorical transport gets judgment going.

Gorgias Re(-)presents Helen

Speech is a powerful lord, which by means of the teensiest and almost invisible body effects the most divine works: it can stop fear and banish grief and create joy and nurture pity. (Gorgias §8)

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8To name only a very few studies: for Gorgias, see Consigny Gorgias; for Cicero, see Dugan and Connolly; for Paine, see Aldridge and Larkin.
Rhetorical transport in Helen’s case manifests itself variously as violent pull and ecstatic abandon; in the case of the reader of this account of Helen’s misfortunes, it presents itself as the ensnaring virtuosity of a master rhetorician. While Gorgias does sweep us up in his logoi, involving us in his language games (paignedion, §21) and willing us to witness what alluring words can do, there is a particular kind of involvement enabled by his words: seeing Helen’s situation anew, we are poised to judge anew judgment itself. Convinced by the “testimony of inspired poets,” people continually and falsely damn Helen, and Gorgias dutifully orchestrates a refutation to their rebukes (§2). To re-evaluate Helen’s case, Gorgias both problematizes previous judgments against her and offers insight into the role Helen’s own judgment played in bringing about her war-inducing elopement. Presenting for scrutiny four likely (eikos, §5) means through which Helen might have been carried away by Paris—chance/gods/necessity demanded it, Paris dragged her, Paris’s speech drugged her, Paris’s beauty entranced her—Gorgias sets up and invites readers into four scenarios that would have placed Helen face-to-face with powerful influences. All the while, he sets in motion two of logos’ manifold abilities; in this case, to remove blame and minimize shame, which is perhaps why he deems his logography an “encomium.” Yet, as Isocrates rightly points out in his own encomium of Helen, Gorgias’s version might be an encomium by name, but it is a defense by content (Helen §§14–15). With graphic flamboyance, Gorgias re(-)presents Helen, serving as something like a modern-day lawyer who also tends to the management of and sometimes repackaging of his client’s image for the sake of the altering judgments against her.9 Applying Aristotle’s nomenclature in the Rhetoric to Isocrates’s observation and Gorgias’s scripted speech, we could say that a reader of Gorgias’s Encomium is partly a spectator (theòros) and partly a judge (krités) of judicial rhetoric.

Gorgias affords most space (§8–14) to the third possible contribution to Helen’s (a)waywardness: persuasive logos.10 In §12, Gorgias links logos to bia (force):

What cause prevents the conclusion that Helen similarly, against her will, might have come under the influence of speech, just as if ravished by the force (bia) of the mighty? For the design of persuasion (tês peithoîs) prevails, since it had the form of necessity, but it does not have the same power (dunamin). For speech (ho logos) persuaded the soul, which it forced and persuaded both to believe the things said (toîs legomenois) and to go along with the things done. The persuader, like a constrainer, acts unjustly, and the persuaded in speech (toî logoû), like the constrained, is wrongly and idly blamed.

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9Poulakos argues that Gorgias might be using Helen as a stand-in for rhetoric, at once defending rhetoric and deflecting attention from himself as rhetoric’s defender by naming his activity a “plaything.” I think rather that judgment—which is, of course, a central rhetorical issue—is the focus of Gorgias’s Helen.

10For an intensive focus on “the psychology of the logos” in Gorgias, see Segal.
Several rhetoricians have recently targeted the *logos* section for commentary within their larger projects about ancient Greek rhetorical theory. Rhetoric’s power to move shifts from an alteration of an emotional state full stop to one that transitions into an alteration of location. Words move us, and not always with our permission. Because persuasion’s proud stance as an alternative to violence is a cherished *topos* of the rhetorical tradition, rhetoric-related force merits attention.

Acknowledgments of rhetorical transport’s force appear in at least two ancient theorists subsequent to Gorgias, and they both connect it to emotive visualization. In Book 6 of his *Institutio Oratoria*, Quintilian calls *enargeia* (vivid language) the result of *phantasia* (6.2.32.1–3) and observes that “one who is able to carry off (*rapere*) the judge with him [by means of *enargeia*], and put him in whatever frame of mind he wishes, whose words lead (*perducere*) men to tears or anger, has always been a rarity. Yet this is what dominates (*dominatur*) in the courts, this is the eloquence that reigns supreme” (6.2.3–4). Notice the verb Quintilian uses to capture the judge’s mode of rhetorical transport: *rapio*, *rapere* is not the friendliest way of getting someone to come along with you. Quintilian casts vivid visualization in violent terms without severing it from eloquence; indeed, its masterful deployment signifies the apogee of eloquence. *Verbum*—the Latin *logos*—is a dominator that does not so much move a listener as snatch, throw over the shoulder, and run off with one. A disturbingly thin line separates rhetorical rape from rhetorical rapture.

The other ancient instance occurs in Longinus’s treatment of *phantasia* in his *Peri Hupsous* (*On Height*). In the preliminary passages of this work, Longinus asserts that “the effect of supernatural talents on an audience is not persuasion (*peitho*) but rather transportation out of themselves (*ekstasin*); and the combination of wonder and astonishment always proves superior to the merely persuasive (*pithanou*) and pleasant. This is because persuasion is on the whole something we can control, whereas amazement and wonder exert invincible power and force (*dunasteian kai bian amachon*)” (§4). Later, in §15, Longinus discusses *phantasia*’s role in lofty discourse and distinguishes between its poetic and rhetorical manifestations. The result of poetic *phantasia*, Longinus writes, “far exceeds the limits of credibility,” but the result of rhetorical *phantasia* “is always one of practicality and

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11Ford, for instance, marks §12 as the place where Gorgias “shows that to be persuaded is to suffer compulsion no less than to be physically carried away” (175); Worman highlights the *logos*-as-*sóma* comparison in §8, reckoning that “[b]y giving speech a personified, embodied status, Gorgias brings it closer to both physical force and erotic attraction in the effect of its ‘body’ on human perception” (160); Hawhee also focuses on §8, deeming *logos* ‘a stealthy body, stalking visible bodies, becoming manifest through the motion it incites, through the bodies it affects or, to take recourse in Gorgias’ language of speech as drug, through the bodies it inhabits’ (184); and Haskins, also honing in on §12, notes that for Gorgias “[t]he power of the logos is akin to brute force (*bia*, 12) that moves the hearer in an almost physical way” (15).

12See O’Gorman “Longinus’s Rhetorical Sublime,” in which he argues that Longinus liberates rhetoric from the language of justification and elevates its status. Further, Porter thinks an in-depth comparison between Gorgias’s and Longinus’s descriptions of rhetoric’s force and power is long overdue.
truth’’ (§15.8). The latter “may be said generally to introduce a great deal of urgency and empathy into one’s speeches, but when combined with factual arguments it not only persuades (peithei) the audience, but also positively enslaves them (douloutai)” (§15.9). It is important to tend to the niceties—which, in this case, are not so nice—of the Greek at the end of this passage (douloutai). Rhetorical phantasía does not merely captivate an audience: it takes them captive. As we saw in Quintilian with rapere, here we find violent language of the master–slave variety. One might argue that in a surge of amplification Longinus let his vocabulary run away with him, but that would be to brush away a central feature of verbal visualizations: they overpower. Yet, to bemoan that rhetors who use civic phantasía subject someone else’s whimsy to their words, restricting the free play of the imagination that characterizes phantasía in its unfettered form, is to adopt a Romantic stance on imagination rather than an ancient one (Webb 112–13). The imagination plays such a big role in ancient treatments of rhetorical judgment precisely because it can be moved in predictable ways.

In Gorgias’s evaluation of the case of Helen’s getting carried away, logos and force band together to bind someone against or simply irrespective of her will. Unlike Quintilian and Longinus, however, Gorgias has so far been inexplicit about the role images play in this rhetorical process. We do not have to wait long, though, for Gorgias to shift his attention to opsis (a vision, spectacle, sight), whose influence on the soul he explains with reference to judgment (krisis) and the law (nomos). Gorgias focuses on “phobos resulting from sight” to show how even a consistent adherence to and proper judgment in regard to nomos can be overturned by it. To make this point, he momentarily veers from Helen’s situation, presenting us with men who, having visualized future danger, flee from it as though it were present: “[f]or strong as is the habit of obedience to the law (tou nomou), it is ejected by phobos resulting from sight, which coming to a man causes him to be indifferent both to what is judged (krinomenou) honorable because of the law (ton nomon) and what is judged advantageous to victory” (§16). Although opsis technically pertains to what the bodily eyes behold and not the mind’s eye, Gorgias here extends its meaning from present sights to prospective sights, which are phantasía’s domain. Emotional states brought on by visualization can warp even the most reliable judges, a fear shared by Aristotle even while—or maybe even because—he theorizes on rhetorical krisis’ reliance on emotion.14 Aristotle’s fruitful exploration of phantasía’s role in emotional change and thus in judging is only a catalog of violations in waiting if rhetors use it to enable improper judgments. Gorgias goes on to explain that “many frightening impressions

13Shaffer hones in on the similarities between logos and opsis, asserting as a difference—a gender essentialist one—logos’ link to the masculine and opsis’ link to the feminine.

14“[F]or it is wrong to warp the jury by leading them into anger or fear or pity: that is the same as if someone made a straightedge rule crooked before using it” (Rhetoric 1354a5).
linger, and what lingers is exactly analogous to <what is>spoken (legomena)” (§17, brackets sic). Here he makes explicit the connection between logos and opsis, creating a category Debra Hawhee calls “the visible spoken” (162). They share a further similarity: in §13, Gorgias compares persuasive logos to a stamp that “impresses the soul as it wishes,” a quality he imparts also to opsis in §15, albeit without the wish component. Impressions goad judgment, and their lingering nature works to sustain the sense that the judgment was justified. This is precisely why several subsequent, philosophically motivated accounts of phantasia insist on the careful evaluation of impressions before any assent to their validity. By showing how the imagistic can overthrow even entrenched habits of appropriate judgment, Gorgias further challenges dominant characterizations of Helen’s betrayal: if images of destructive prospects can send even disciplined men running for the hills, think of their effect on a defenseless woman.

In his Encomium of Helen, Gorgias acknowledges the common objections against Helen and provides likely options to account for her various vacations: from Hellenic nomos, from her homeland, from her own senses. Gorgias has not rhetorically raped his readers, but Paris may have done so to Helen, and perhaps not just rhetorically. By submitting in a written form (graphai, §21) four scenarios that could rid Helen of the shame poets (§2) and others continually and wrongfully pile upon her, Gorgias returns readers to the scene of the crime, letting them fill in certain details for themselves (§5) and permitting them to investigate his account about it closely, recorded in writing as it is. According to the Gorgianic vision of rhetoric, words and images share the capacity to “stamp the soul,” thereby restricting their recipients’ range of judgment. It is through such restriction that rhetorical transport carries people away with shockingly or shamefully little resistance. Using Helen’s elopement as a representative case of misbehavior, Gorgias induces his readers to judge judgment differently, to consider the influence of persuasive logos and opsis on everyone’s judgment capacities. As we move

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15This is the Stoic position on phantasia. In his Against the Mathematicians, the second–third century CE philosopher Sextus Empiricus described phantasia as “virtually seizing us by the hair, dragging us off into assent” (quoted in Vasaly 92, fn. 7, which includes bibliography on Stoic views of sense perception). Guarding against this seizure is essential to maintaining the Stoic approach to life.

16Before summing up his argument, Gorgias, in a war–love analogy many Roman elegiac poets and American pop singers later use and abuse, extends from images that bring about fear in battle to ones that cause “eager desire” in the “contest of love” (§19). The body (sōmati, §19) of Paris makes Helen vacate first her senses, then Sparta. The teensy body of a logos and the lovely body of a Trojan prince impose themselves on her soul in similar ways. As Andrew Ford concisely concludes, “Helen’s soul, like anyone’s, was designed to be dominated by such impressions” (182). Ford fittingly uses two passive constructions, emphasizing the extent to which we are acted upon and pressed into subservience by external forces out of our control. The Greek verb signifying this stamping (tupto) bears a definitional although not etymological resemblance to the English “smite,” a word we use, with either a faraway or a tortured look in our eyes, to describe the impact of a crush, someone with whom, or even seemingly by whom, we are smitten. The body of Paris likely had this effect on Helen (§19), just as her body (sōmati, §4) at one time had that effect on many suitors, attracting them to her from near and far (§4).
from Gorgias to Cicero and Thomas Paine, we might classify Gorgias’s defensive encomium as a cautionary tale, too, one that shows the unsettling side of rhetorical transport. Gorgias focuses on the brutish aspects of persuasion and visualization because the unyielding negativity around Helen’s case necessitates it. He does not dare justify her action in order to re-present her, but rather questions its categorization as action. Readers of the Encomium undergo a less questionable kind of rhetorical transport as they revisit Helen’s case, showing that persuasion and visualization do not necessarily take us to ugly places, but they do take us places, and the destination often is not up to us.

Ciceronian Sight

A speech does not adequately fulfill its purpose or attain the total domination (plene dominatur) it should have if it goes no further than the ears (ad aures), and the judge feels that he is merely being told the story of the matter he has to decide, without their being brought out and displayed to his mind’s eye (oculis mentis). (Quintilian 8.3.62)

“To move”—a little infinitive with a wide range of meanings—enjoys an august position in the history of rhetoric, movere being one of the three oratorical offices enumerated by Cicero in his rhetorica. Movere, and not docere (to teach) or delectare (to delight), entails ensuring the audience “is moved (moveatur), as by a certain mental impulse or emotional stirring, rather than guided by a judgment or advice (iudicio aut consilio). For men judge (iudicant) much more by hate, love, lust, rage, sorrow, joy, hope, fear, illusion, or some other mental jolt than by truth or authority or any legal norm or judicial principle or statute” (De Oratore 2.42.178). Emotions, more often and rigorously than standards established by previous judges, trigger judgment. This state of emotive judgment frequently comes about through vivid imagery that places past events, future prospects, or present unseens “ante oculis,” before the eyes. The De Oratore passage shows a relationship between emotion and judgment not quite as psychologically sophisticated as the one Aristotle presents in Book Two of the Rhetoric, but Cicero acutely realizes as a theorist and practitioner of forensic rhetoric that jurors’ emotions can be rhetorically steered toward the judgment he wishes them to reach. He also knows the value of a good image.

In the section of his Institutio Oratoria from which I extracted the epigraph positioned at the start of this section, Quintilian again turns to the topic of enargeia (vividness), using an example from one of Cicero’s speeches against the crooked ex-governor of Sicily, Gaius Verres, to elucidate. Quintilian urges his charges to:

[read the passage in the Verrines which runs ‘There stood the Roman praetor, in his slippers, with a purple cloak and a tunic down to his heels, leaning on one of his women on the beach . . . ’] Could anyone show such a lack of producing
images (imaginibus) of things as not to feel he is seeing (videatur) the persons and the place and the dress, and to add some unspoken (dicta non) details for himself into the bargain? I certainly seem to see the face, the eyes, the disgusting endearment of the pair, and the silent loathing and abashed fear of the bystanders. (8.3.64–5)

Quintilian appreciates this passage because the details Cicero provides as to Verres’s clothing, posture, and posse, start one’s mind going, filling in other elements of the land- and soundscape. By participating in this vivid rhetorical construction, receivers of enargeia transport themselves to other times and places. We can see why, when so much of what Verres stands accused occurred far away from Rome, Cicero would rely on civic phantasia to build his case with the jurors. This sliver of In Verrem II.5.86 is but one example of lucid description in the Verrines, a series of seven speeches in all, the very first a preliminary speech called a divinatio, the first (and as it turned out, only) court speech being the actio prima (first delivery; In Verrem I), and the next five constituting the actio secunda (second delivery; In Verrem II.1–5).

Rhetoricians after Quintilian have also noted In Verrem II’s abundant enargeic language (Vasaly ch. 3; Innocenti). Since, for reasons I explore, Cicero did not deliver those speeches during Verres’s trial, I look instead at visualization’s function in one he did, the first Verrine. Cicero’s use of civic phantasia brought about such a speedy judgment that he did not have the opportunity to fully present all the material he had prepared. Once the judgment against Verres was issued, Cicero found himself eager to prolong the people’s judgment of him as master of laws and letters both; he thus amassed and polished his extensive speaking notes and published them as the Verrine speeches (Frazel). The totality of In Verrem stands as a publication Cicero offered the greater jury of Rome as hard evidence of his rhetorical prowess, lest they forget the court scenes.

Cicero’s focus on the imagistic started even before the trial. In the divinatio, Cicero argued his fitness for the job as prosecutor over another orator, one Quintus Caecilius, making character central to the matter of whether he or Caecilius was better equipped to manage the case (May 31–38). Most pertinent to my focus on civic phantasia is this prosecutorial requirement, which requires talent that Cicero begrudges his competitor: “to expose completely the whole life (of the accused), and not only to put it forth to the mind of the judge but also to put it before the eyes and in full view of all (in oculis conspectuque omnium)” (In Q. Caecilium, 8 §27). The visual dimension to which Cicero speaks inheres in any anecdote or detail that illuminates dark, hidden, or suspected aspects of someone’s character or makes visible facets appear more unmistakably. We see Cicero’s aptitude for this species of exposure in all the Verrines.

Cicero fills In Verrem I with eyes. According to him, and it is vital to acknowledge Cicero’s choice of (or even creation of) this perspective, all of Rome watches the jurors to see if they will acquit a very wealthy member of their own social order (that is, the senatorial one, 1 §2 and 16 §46), “even though he has already been
condemned by universal opinion” (1 §2). Cicero immediately imports images of scrutinizing Romans of all walks of life into the minds of jurors, and their presence only grows as Cicero continues to speak. This importation no doubt struck fear into the jurors, part of a class that had since the dictatorship of Sulla served as the sole jurors at judicial hearings and had recently shown leniency in cases similar to Verres’s. Their light touch provoked not only outrage but also prospective legislation that would open up the jury pool to other groups (Political Speeches). Because all legislation in republican Rome was subject to popular vote, images of disgruntled Romans convinced of Verres’s guilt but not of the jurors’ dependability would serve as a nagging if not outright anxiety-inducing reminder that judging in Verres’s favor would cost them. The judges themselves become objects of judgment. Cicero might hope that legal precedent will guide the jury to the right judgment, but he knows fear will, as he acknowledged in the aforementioned De Oratore passage.

Cicero keeps the pressure on with further eyewitness-style details. Verres’s corruption has not escaped anyone’s notice; even so far as the ongoing trial is concerned, he has made stupidly and shamefully “clear (perspicua) to everyone” his schemes to undermine its proceedings and their integrity (2 §5). Cicero then details how Verres interfered with an investigator whom the court tasked with uncovering Verres’s dealings in places other than Sicily, the place to which Cicero went to collect his own evidence—“anyone could see clearly (perspicuum... posset)” what Verres was up to (2 §6). Cicero drags Verres’s out-in-the-openness itself out into the open, ensuring everyone within earshot is well aware of it and shares that line of sight. The word that keeps occurring—perspicuum and its grammatical variations—is the same used in Roman rhetorical treatises to describe the stylistic virtue of clarity. Canonized by Aristotle as saphès (clarity; Rhetoric 1404b; Consigny “Transparency”), perspicuity is later celebrated by, among many others, John Quincy Adams in his Lectures on Rhetoric and Oratory (Lecture XXVI, “Perspicuity,” 161–183) and by George Campbell in his study of The Philosophy of Rhetoric (Book Two, Chapter VI, “Of Perspicuity”). As Adams explains, “[b]y analyzing the word itself we shall immediately discover, that it is itself figurative; and borrowed from the operations of sight. The combination is Latin; per aspicio, to look through. Perspicuity then is the quality of being easily seen through” (162). Cicero makes Verres’s rascality transparent not just by being perspicuum in his rhetorical style but also by continually using that very word. It is not so much that Cicero works to make his audience see, through the lens of his words, the Verres sitting before them more clearly, as he works to make them align the visions of Verres that he (Cicero) marches into their minds with the one sitting before them. To be effective, a visual alignment tool should not draw attention to itself. It must be clear.

Although never stealthy in his low dealings, Verres grows increasingly flagrant, because “he fully realizes that I have come to court ready and prepared to impress his thefts and crimes not only on your ears, but on everyone’s eyes as well (non modo in auribus vestris, sed in oculis omnium)” (3 §7); the very sight of Cicero
makes him desperate. This ears–eyes tie captures Cicero’s intent to appeal to everyone present with both visually vivid words and verbally framed physical evidence, making judgment reliant on all parts (sounds and sights, jurors and the public). From here, Cicero mentions Verres’s maneuvering and boasting since the early days of his prosecution’s organization, telling the jury “I can easily see through (facile perspicio)” (3 §10) this swaggering Verres to one who rightly fears for his freedom. Verres’s name is now so well known that its very utterance conjures up images of his many grievous offenses (5 §15). In the face of such a fiend, Cicero yearns, squirms, jitters to electrify with a lengthy and impactful speech, but he realizes he must use his time to present the voluminous and damning evidence he gathered in his 50 days in Sicily (2 §6). Asking the jury how he should organize his remaining time, he then weighs his options: a long speech would showcase his conscientiousness in preparing to prosecute Verres and win him glory for his eloquence, but may not result in a conviction. “So what can be done? The answer is not, I think, obscure or hard to find (non obscurum...neque absconditum),” he relates, “I must prosecute the defendant instead with account books, witnesses, and public and private certified documents and evidence” (11 §32–33). Cicero again plays with perspicuity and obscurity: the method he must adopt presents itself clearly to his mind, or so he says.

At the expense of great personal and political capital, Cicero opts not to speak at length, but to use his speaking time instead to “put the case before you so clearly, gentlemen, and I will present you with facts so well-known, so well-attested, so looming, so clear (ita notas, ita testatas, ita magnas, ita manifestas) that no one will dream of asking you to acquit this man as a personal favor” (16 §48). The repetition of adjectives modifying “the facts”—Cicero himself seems to be getting carried away here—magnifies those “facts” all the more. He explains that he will conduct his side of the proceedings “in such a way that [the] intrigues [of the defense] will all appear manifest not only to the ears of these men, but also to the eyes of the Roman people (non modo aures hominum, sed etiam oculi populi Romani interesse videantur)” (16 §48). The repetition of the ears of some, eyes of all manifesto introduced at 3 §7 refers this time to what Cicero perceives as the trickery of the defense, which calls for a strategy specially devised to head it off. By asserting the malfeasance of not only Verres, but also his defender, Hortensius, Cicero justifies his unorthodox method: instead of bringing out witnesses all at once after the long speeches are made, he tells jurors he will introduce witnesses in groups that “back up each separate charge” and during the time typically put toward making a “continuous speech (perpetuam orationem)” (18 §55). This change-up likely conferred two major advantages. First, wave after wave of witnesses might erode the support of even the most

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17 See Berry’s introductory notes to his translation of selected Verrines in Political Speeches for details on the court timeline machinations of Verres and his advocate Hortensius.
Verres-backing juror more effectively than an uncontrolled, undifferentiated flood of them; second, any defense objections to Cicero’s surprise method might appear to spring less from a perceived violation of court norms than from wounded pride at being outsmarted.

“[I]f anyone feels sorry at missing” his lengthy oration, Cicero assures those gathered in the court and, he supposes, silently clamoring for his extended eloquence, “they will hear [it] in the next hearing” (18 §55), which, of course, never occurs. Cicero concludes his brief opening speech with a reiteration of Verres’s crimes, promising that his novel prosecutorial method:

will make [them] so plain (ita... planum) to you, by means of witnesses, private account books, and certified public documents, that you will realize this: that even if I had had all the time in the world for speaking just as I chose, there would still have been no need at all for a lengthy oration. (18 §56)

We have no further record of how Cicero conducted the first, and, as it turned out, only, hearing against Verres, but we know that Cicero lugged with him from Sicily all manner of material testaments to Verres’s dirty dealings. Cicero had to place every tablet, every shocking testimonial in its context. Although the precise kind of rhetorical transport he enacted is lost to us, it was probably like that displayed in In Verrem II.1–5 (especially 5; Innocenti). Cicero would not have simply and silently pointed out each item of evidence, resting his voice and then his case; he would have put the proper rhetorical framework around the picture of Verres that emerges from all the evidence. Quintilian, fan of civic phantasia that he is, does not take well to orators who would let material images do all the persuasive work, and to them he issues this reproof: “I would not... approve of a practice of which I have read—and indeed have occasionally seen—of having a picture painted on a board or canvas, depicting the atrocious incident by which the judge is to be moved (commovendus). What depths of incompetence must there be in a pleader who thinks a dumb image will speak for him better than his own words” (6.1.32–33). Cicero did not, like Quintilian’s foolish example, let the evidence speak for him, even if that is his constant refrain. Perhaps Cicero’s role was “not that of an orator... but rather that of an extremely clever collector, organizer, and presenter of evidence, especially written evidence” (Butler 82, italics sic), but this role is a thoroughly rhetorical one. Moreover, by tapping into their visualization capabilities from the start of his speech, Cicero prepared the jury to look carefully at the evidence he would present at the end of it.

In the only recorded part of the only trial-delivered Verrine, Cicero highlights the unique opportunity the trial offers the senatorial class to show Rome—and indeed beyond, to show places like Sicily—that they can be proper judges even of their own kind. He does this by first and then continually making the jury conscious of all the eyes upon them. Cicero rhetorically transports into the courtroom all manner of observers from all areas of Roman influence to stare down the jury
and all manner of Verres’s observably scheming ways to be sure the jury cannot claim ignorance of it. Cicero’s astute adoption of this perspective—that everyone is watching and that Verres’s depravity is glaringly obvious to all—creates in the jury a mindset that will look unfavorably on Verres and thus judge against him. The central issue of Verres’s case becomes not the injuries of the Sicilians, but the righteousness of the Romans themselves, which is challenged any time one of Rome’s governors grossly misbehaves and is undermined at this time by a widespread and nagging doubt that a jury composed of the senatorial class will convict Verres. As Cicero himself put it in his *divinatio*, in prosecuting Verres, he undertakes the cause not just of the Sicilians, but also of the Roman people, who demand all improbity be extinguished and done away with (8 §26).

Using all the pigments on his rhetorical palette, Cicero paints an “anti-Roman portrait of Verres” that he relies on to “alienate his audience and the senatorial jury from one of their own” (May 39). Cicero’s various kinds of civic phantasia were so successful that he radically reduced the scope of his rhetorical situation, shaming Verres such that he slinked away before Cicero could reveal anything else. Verres’s retreat signifies yet another kind of rhetorical transport. Even though technically it made the jurors’ official judgment on his case moot, it was what he saw as their impending judgment against him that set him going. Although victorious after just one speech, Cicero, no friend of the silence, issued five more insults and injuries against Verres, who lived out the rest of his life, which lasted longer than Cicero’s, in exile.

**Feeling Their Pain(e)**

In short, Independence is the only BOND that can tie and keep us together. We shall then see our object, and our ears will be legally shut against the schemes of an intriguing, as well as cruel enemy. (Thomas Paine, *Common Sense*, Appendix, 70)

In an encomiastic essay on Thomas Paine, Bertrand Russell credits Paine with making “the preaching of democracy democratic” (134) by using language and argumentation accessible to the education and sensibilities of the people. The historian Eric Foner credits to this quality of *Common Sense* “the explosion of political argument and involvement beyond the confines of a narrow elite to ‘all ranks’ of Americans.”¹⁸ There is yet another dimension to Paine’s accessibility: he renders visible to all readers of his pamphlet the precariousness of the American

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¹⁸Quoted in Cmiel’s *Democratic Eloquence*, 50, this excerpt comes from Foner’s book *Tom Paine and Revolutionary America*. This view of Paine’s style was shared by his contemporaries, including Thomas Jefferson, who opined that “[n]o writer has exceeded Paine in ease and familiarity of style, in perspicuity of expression, happiness of elucidation, and in simple and unassuming language” (quoted in Larkin 1). Notice the double praise of the visual qualities of Paine’s style.
situation so that none can doubt how to judge the issue of independence properly and promptly. The first two segments of *Common Sense* showcase Paine’s suppositions about the origins of political formations, and it is not until the third section that he moves to the American implications of his genealogy of government. He begins the section of his pamphlet called “Thoughts on the Present State of American Affairs” with this seemingly forthright exordium:

> In the following pages I have nothing more than simple facts, plain arguments, and common sense; and I have no other preliminaries to settle with the reader, than that he will divest himself of prejudice and prepossession, and suffer his reason and his feelings to determine for themselves; that he will put on, or rather that he will not put off, the true character of a man, and generously enlarge his views beyond the present day. (24, italics sic)

We see that Paine has little patience for the prefix “pre-”: he banishes “preliminaries” from the page, “prejudice” and “prepossession” from those who read them, and begins a strange rhetorical relationship with “the present.” On the one hand, it is the mark of a properly manly ethos to “enlarge [one’s] views” to stretch from the pinpoint of now to the panorama of tomorrow, but, on the other hand, Paine relies on the press of present circumstances to bestow an unmistakable, insistent, and urgent quality of “is-ness” to the events he describes. He works to make the ravages of the present fully visible so that a future characterized by independence—and a concomitant lack of British governmental mismanagement—will present itself as an attractive alternative.

The enlargement of viewpoint that Paine endorses ties, of course, to the title of his pamphlet, a notion much in circulation in the eighteenth century. In his study of *Thomas Paine’s American Ideology*, A. Owen Aldridge looks at “common sense” as it appears in the work of Paine’s contemporaries, such as Lord Shaftesbury, who “explains that the phrase may mean not only a standard of rational behavior, but also a ‘sense of public weal, and of the common interest; love of the community of society, natural affection, humanity, obligingness, or that sort of civility which rises from a just sense of the common rights or mankind, and the natural equality there is among those of the same species.’”19 Aldridge also mentions this term’s adoption by the French thinker Claude Buffier and the Scottish one Thomas Reid, but Aldridge neglects to mention the *sensus communis* of German thinker Immanuel Kant in his *Critique of Judgment* (§40; published in 1790). This oversight deserves correction, not because Kant’s view resembles Paine’s, but because it differs.

In the purview of his *sensus communis*, Kant includes “a faculty of judgment” (170), which he proceeds to investigate in terms of three “fundamental

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19Aldridge 47. The quote from Shaftesbury comes from the segment called “Common Sense” in his 1711 work *Characteristics.*
propositions” (171), among them what he calls “enlarged thought” (171–2, italics sic). One achieves it by “escap[ing] the illusion arising from the private conditions that could be so easily taken for objective, which would injuriously affect the judgment” (170), by “placing himself [sic] in the standpoint of others” (172). Kant’s “enlarged thought” seems to resemble Nussbaum’s “fancy” and its ability—through imagined exchange of places with others—to improve judgment and serve justice, or even to resemble Paine’s own “enlarged view.” But Kant’s faculty of judgment lacks overtures to improved collective living. In her Lectures on Kant’s Political Philosophy, Hannah Arendt gives that dimension to Kant, emphasizing sensus communis as that which “fits us into a community,” as “the specifically human sense because communication, i.e., speech, depends on it” (70). Although the term “community” and its rhetorico-political entailments are not strictly Kantian, Arendt builds from Kant’s framework to argue that “one can never compel anyone to agree with one’s judgments [ . . . ]; one can only ‘woo’ or ‘court’ the agreement of everyone else. And in this persuasive activity one actually appeals to the ‘community sense.’ In other words, when one judges, one judges as a member of a community” (72). Attitudinally, Paine’s take on common sense resembles Shaftesbury’s position and Arendt’s extrapolation of Kant’s, as he appeals through speech to judgment-enabling human qualities like fellow-feeling to rhetorically transport readers from an inner world of sensus privatus to an outer one of sensus communis.

Paine shows he knows many modes of vision require enlargement and that he must use “persuasive activity” to widen them. The vision in Paine’s sights pertains to ways of seeing brought about by both physical and mental points of view, but as he can do little about the former, he concentrates on the latter. Arguing against those who advocate—in their words or in their ways—reconciliation with the British, Paine classifies them as: “[i]nterested men, who are not to be trusted; weak men who cannot see; prejudiced men who will not see; and a certain set of moderate men, who think better of the European world than it deserves; and this last class by an ill-judged deliberation, will be the cause of more calamities to this continent than the other three” (32, italics sic). Expanding on the visuality in this categorization, the first class of men see only their own stakes, the second are afraid to look at and evaluate the situation for themselves, the third stubbornly refuse to acknowledge what is in full view, and the fourth look at the situation through rose-colored lenses. According to Paine, this last class is the most

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20. “To call Kant’s notion of sensus communis the ‘community sense’ ignores the fact that Kant insisted the sensus communis was independent of any particular community. Kant’s concept is perhaps better called the idea of a community sense, since its content is abstracted from any actual society” (Garsten 103).

21. Because Arendt passed away before completing her book on judgment, we have no cohesive treatment of what was to be the third segment of her magnum opus The Life of the Mind. Ronald Beiner, however, has collected her previously published thoughts on judgment and drawn out from them some educated guesses of what a full-length book on judgment might have looked like. See 104–109, 113, and 122–23, in particular.
damaging because its members behold the situation and not only permit it, but, all
the more disturbingly, judge it sanguine, in the rose-red rather than blood-red
sense of the word.

In the face of such skewed vision, Paine can but attempt to alter perspectives—
and thus also judgment—through rhetorical transport, collapsing distance between
seer and seen/scene. He gives the site/sight of Boston pride of place: “It is the good
fortune of many to live distant from the scene of sorrow; the evil is not sufficiently
brought to their doors to make them feel the precariousness with which all
American property is possessed” (32, italics sic). Paine and his typesetter italicize
the third person plural pronouns to emphasize the slant of self-interest; the they
stand apart from the we, that bold and inclusive collective who view a violation
of one of its members a violation of all. Paine continues, “But let our imaginations
transport us for a few moments to Boston, that seat of wretchedness will teach us
wisdom, and instruct us for ever to renounce a power in whom we can have no
trust. The inhabitants of that unfortunate city, who but a few months ago were
in ease and affluence, have now no other alternative than to stay and starve, or
turn out to beg” (32). By using the subjunctive mood (“let our . . .”), Paine soft-
ens an imperative into an invitation, requesting those far from Boston to visit the
city in their imaginations and take up the perspective not of on-looking travelers
but, instead, of involved neighbors. His description of Boston before the outbreak
of violence wills the reader to picture his or her own hometown, currently at
“ease,” as the next site/sight of devastation. Both visualizations induce the reader
to join in Paine’s judgment: the time for independence is nigh. In the Cicero
section, I emphasized the link between civic phantasia and the oratorical office
of movere; for Paine, though, rhetorical transport also has great didactic power,
teaching and instructing those who are moved from the comfort of their own
circumstances to the misery of those of others. This marriage of docere and movere
recalls Paine’s earlier instructions to the reader to let both “his reason and his
feelings to determine for themselves” how to judge “the present state of American
affairs” (24).

Feelings in particular come to the fore in the next paragraphs. To those
aforementioned viewers who wrongly judge Bostonians’s misery as just that,
their own, and not related to larger political issues of which all are a part,
Paine bids them to “examine the passions and feelings of mankind” and then
lets loose a valley of rhetorical questions: “Hath your house been burnt? Hath
you property been destroyed before your face? Are your wife and children
destitute of a bed to lie on, or bread to live on? Have you lost a parent or child
by their hands, and yourself the ruined and wretched survivor? If you have not,
then you are not a judge of those who have” (33).

Paine, his patience

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22Quintilian instructs incipient orators on how to move an audience to tears with their vivid (manifesta)
accounts of captured cities at 8.3.67ff.
wearing thin, limits the judgment of those with “passive tempers [who] look somewhat lightly on the offenses of Britain” (32). He also moves from the imaginative to the experiential, privileging the judgment of those who have suffered loss directly and thus do not wish to reconcile with the British over those who have lost nothing and “can still pass the violations over” (33), even though they can see those very violations in one sense or another. Worse than this type is another type: one who has had such horrors perpetrated against himself or his family and still does not wish to sever ties with the British. “[I]f you have [suffered them],” Paine writes, “and can still shake hands with the murderers, then you are unworthy the name of husband, father, friend, or lover, and whatever may be your rank or title in life, you have the heart of a coward, and the spirit of a sycophant” (33). Such people seem to lack a capacity of judgment that he can persuasively influence, but Paine recognizes the power of shame to rouse recognition of a wrong.

Expecting the reader to feel jostled by the staccato of rhetorical questions about horrific happenings and the pound of name-calling, Paine responds thus:

This is not inflaming or exaggerating matters, but trying them by those feelings and affections which nature justifies, and without which, we should be incapable of discharging the social duties of life, or enjoying the felicities of it. I mean not to exhibit horror for the purpose of provoking revenge, but to awaken us from fatal and unmanly slumbers, that we may pursue determinately some fixed object. (33)

This explanation, which recalls the fellow-feeling emphasis of Shaftesbury’s “common sense” and the communicative undergirding of Arendt’s sensus communis, makes the proper excitation of the pathé central to sociality, for both the rhetor and the recipient of his rhetoric. It is not only Paine’s readers who behold frightful images and exercise their capacity for pathos; such elements animate his pen also. Quintilian, in his treatment of writing in Book 10 of his Institutio Oratoria, chides the pen for slowing down gushes of emotion that are necessary for eloquence: it is for that reason that “phantasiai, together with everything we intend to say, the persons and questions involved, and the hopes and fears to which they give rise, must be kept clearly before our eyes (in oculis) and admitted to our hearts: for it is feeling and force of mind that make us clear in our eloquence” (10.7.15). Paine “exhibit[s]” horrific imagery not to induce retaliation but to stir snoozing powers of recognition and judgment. His verbal exhibition of absent happenings resembles enargeia as Quintilian describes it: “a quality that makes us seem not so much to talk about (dicere) something as to exhibit (ostendere) it” (6.2.32.1–3).

Paine himself describes writing—in particular, historiography—in strikingly similar terms in the introduction to his 1782 Letter to Abbe Raynal, who published what Paine deemed an insufficient account of the build-up to and
particulars of the American Revolution. In response to Raynal’s historiographical ineptitude, Paine reflects on the difficulty of crafting motivational arguments:

It often happens that the weight of an argument is lost by the wit of setting it off; or the judgment disordered by an intertemperate irritation of the passions: yet a certain degree of animation must be felt by the writer, and raised in the reader, in order to interest the attention; and a sufficient scope given to the imagination, to enable it to create in the mind a sight of the persons, characters and circumstances of the subject; for without these the judgment will feel little or no excitement to office, and its determinations will be cold, sluggish, and imperfect. (Letter viii)

Overstimulation of the emotions throws judgment off-kilter, but without capturing attention and tickling the imagination, the minds of neither writer nor reader “see” those essential aspects of a subject—those faces and places that give it a perceptible form—that jolt judgment into nimble action. Yet, Paine warns, if liveliness descends into silliness, or if imagination dissolves into fantasy, or both, “judgment will be jostled from its seat, and the whole matter, however important in itself, will diminish into a pantomime of the mind, in which we create images that promote no other purpose than amusement” (Letter viii). Visualization must be directed with tact and care. When phantasia regresses to what Quintilian called its “mental vice” mode, it loses its rhetorical component, namely, the other-directedness that endows judgment with an outward orientation.

Further on in Common Sense, Paine acknowledges another problem of vision: that “[m]en do not see their way out” of the current political arrangement “because no plan is yet laid down” for independence (41). It seems people suffer from a poverty of imagination when without a schematic, so Paine provides one, adding humbly that its contents are but “hints,” “straggling thoughts,” and raw material “for wise and able men to improve to useful matter” (41). But, far from being unimaginative when left without a plan of how independence might be gained and maintained, “[t]he mind of the multitude is left at random, and feeling no fixed object before them, they pursue such as fancy or opinion starts” (Appendix 66). Paine worries the people suffer from an excess of imagination when not given an object upon which to fixate their fancy. Here we see how runaway fancy relates to civic phantasia; Paine harnesses fancy so that it does not evade judgment but rather enables it. To fit the two together, “combin[ing] warm passions with a cool temper, and the full expansion of the imagination with the natural and necessary gravity of judgment, so as to be rightly balanced within themselves,” is the mark of good historians, and to add to that an ability “to make a reader feel, fancy, and understand justly at the same time” is the mark of superlative ones (Letter vii–viii).

See especially Larkin’s chapter on “Writing Revolutionary History.”
Appearances enabled by civic phantasia are not always welcome ones, though. Paine brings Common Sense to a close by twice recognizing how “strange [his recommendations] may appear to some” (58) and that “[t]hese proceedings may at first appear strange and difficult” (60). This strangeness will dissipate once readers recognize how “many strong and striking reasons may be given, to shew, that nothing can settle our affairs so expeditiously as an open and determined declaration for independence” (58–9). Exposure, accessibility, and clarity are key to strengthening Paine’s positions and the arguments Americans in turn should make in defense of their movements toward independence. Americans should not hide their reasons for judging a split with England to be appropriate and necessary; independence should be declared openly and evidence of its fitness revealed for all to see. What now seems strange “will in a little time become familiar and agreeable” (60) as people—here and abroad—grow accustomed to the sights and sounds of American independence. If Paine convinced readers of such a comfortable eventuality, and by all accounts he did, he did so by transforming their flights of fancy from individually held visions to a commonly held visualization of a better political arrangement for America and its people. As Paine estimates in the appendix to Common Sense, only when eyes open to this prospective sight will ears shut to the attendant British counterarguments to it.

(De)Parting Words

By making absent things present to the mind’s eye, civic phantasia renders rhetorical discourse “potent with possible judgment and deliberation” (Osborn 82) about them. Gorgias, Cicero, and Thomas Paine use this visual mode of rhetorical transport to move readers or auditors from one position of judgment to another. In Gorgias’s Encomium of Helen, we see how words and images both “stamp the soul” and compel us to judge anew not only Helen but also the various people who wrongly ink her with the tramp stamp. Words have the power to tarnish an image and to rebuff it. In Cicero’s In Verrem I, we witness a rhetorical duality of ear and eye whereby Cicero’s words give the jury the impression of being judged by the people of Rome. Words impress images upon both ear and mind’s eye. In Thomas Paine’s Common Sense, we look upon a city in ruin and cannot deny the injustice of the British perpetrators and those Americans who would overlook it while opening their ears to British justifications. Words launch us on journeys of judgment. The examples of rhetorical transport displayed in this article show that being 1,000 miles away need not entail escapism: such extension of vision provides orientation to those fixed in circumstances demanding judgment.

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