QUINTILIAN, IMITATION AND «ANXIETY OF INFLUENCE»

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«Anxiety of influence» as the main incentive of literary creativity is a central idea of the American literary critic, Harold Bloom's theory of poetry as he has developed it in a series of books, the first of which was published in 1973[1]. In this book, *The Anxiety of Influence*, Bloom defines poetic history as the history of poetic influence and describes poetry as the result of a poet's struggle against the influence of his predecessors in order to make room for himself[2]. The need to struggle for creative space, i.e. the condition defined as «anxiety of influence», is a consequence of the poet's being a latecomer and therefore being forced to relate to somebody else's priority and authority. Bloom argues that the striving for priority -as crucial for creativity as it is illusionary[3]- takes place by way of one poet's misreading (or «misprision») of another[4]. A poem is thus to be read as a

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1. Followed by i.a. *A Map of Misreading*, NY, 1975, *Poetry and Repression. Revisionism from Blake to Stevens*, NY, 1976, and *Agon. Towards a Theory of Revisionism*, NY, 1982.

2. «Poetic history, in this book's argument, is held to be indistinguishable from poetic influence, since strong poets make that history by misreading one another, so as to clear imaginative space for themselves», *op.cit.*, p. 5. «A poem is not an overcoming of anxiety, but is that anxiety», p. 94.

3. «[...] priority in divination is crucial for every strong poet, lest he dwindle merely into a latecomer», *op.cit.*, p. 8. «A poem is a poet's melancholy at his lack of priority. The failure to have begotten one-self is not the cause of the poem, for poems arise out of the illusion of freedom, out of a sense of priority being possible», p. 96.

4. «Poetic Influence - when it involves two strong, authentic poets, - always proceeds by a misread-ing of the prior poet, an act of creative correction that is actually and necessarily a misinterpretation»,

poet's misinterpretation or revision of an exemplar poem, a revision that can be identified according to various "revisionary ratios", as Bloom calls them. The study of influence consequently deals with "the story of intra-poetic relationships" (p. 5) - or as Bloom formulates it later in his book: "The meaning of a poem can only be another poem"[5].

Harold Bloom's theory deals with poetry, and especially with poetry from the period of Romanticism on. In fact, the change of emphasis from tradition to individual originality is usually considered a part of the poetics of Romanticism, whereas pre-Romantic literature is supposed to have sprung from an unproblematic relationship with tradition through imitation[6]. Nevertheless the latecomer's problem of having to relate to his predecessors and to deal with their priority and authority is, I believe, common to all literature, if not to all creative work[7]. The present paper is based on the assumption that the theory of *anxiety of influence* can be profitably used in the criticism of classical literature[8], in this case to illuminate Quintilian's way of dealing with the problem of influence, both as a rhetorical theorist and as an author, in the *Institutio Oratoria*.

In the first part of this paper I discuss Quintilian the theorist's ideas on imitation and invention as they are presented in *IO* X.2. As an example of Quintilian's application of these ideas, in the second part I examine the prooemium of *IO* XII, in which Quintilian comments on his own writing process and his position as an author in the battle between tradition and innovation.

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op.cit., p. 30. "Poetry is the anxiety of influence, is misprision, is a disciplined perverseness. Poetry is misunderstanding, misinterpretation, misalliance.", p. 95.

5. *Op.cit.*, p. 94. On Bloom's "revisionary ratios", see n. 41 below.

6. So A. Momigliano on Roman literature in *Alien Wisdom. The Limits of Hellenization*, Cambridge, 1975, p. 17: "The assimilation of Greek language, manners and beliefs is indistinguishable from the creation of a national literature which, with all the imitation of alien models, was immediately original, self-assured and aggressive" (also quoted in Galinsky, cf. n. 8 below).

7. Cf. also H. Bloom, *op.cit.*, pp. 94-95: "Poets' misinterpretations or poems are more drastic than critics' misinterpretations or criticism, but this is only a difference in degree and not at all in kind. There are no interpretations but only misinterpretations, and so all criticism is prose poetry".

8. I am not alone in this belief; in *The Interpretation of Roman Poetry: Empiricism or Hermeneutics?*, Studien zur klassischen Philologie 67, Frankfurt am Main, 1992, Karl Galinsky (ed.) suggested the utility of Bloom's work for the study of Roman poetry (pp. 28-30 and p. 20), while also expressing the point of view, that "there is the clear recognition that the Roman poets did not consider the past literary tradition as a burden but rather as a challenge to their creativity" (p. 28). I think that this is a false dichotomy which misses the point of the theory of *anxiety of influence*, namely that tradition, seen as a burden, **is** the very challenge to creativity.

1.

Ante omnia igitur imitatio per se ipsa non sufficit, uel quia pigri est ingenii contentum esse iis quae sint ab aliis inuenta. (X.2.4)

In the first chapter of book ten, Quintilian presents his famous list of authors that the future orator should read in order to build up his own *copia* and *varietas* and to get an understanding of the way a text should be arranged[9]. Thus the future orator should pay attention to the model (*exemplum*) of every kind of excellence, «for a great part of our art (*ars*) undoubtedly depends upon imitation»[10]. So Quintilian writes as an introduction to the second chapter of book ten. Yet «invention (*inuenire*) came first and is of chief importance», he continues and thereby sets off to illustrate the relation between imitation and invention in the framework of literary tradition and innovation[11].

In the *IO*, Quintilian uses the noun *inuentio* (and the verb *inuenire*) both as a technical rhetorical term and in the general sense of the word. As a technical term, *inuentio* is used about the first of the five *officia oratoris* or *partes oratoriae*. In a more general sense, *inuentio* can be used about the process or the power of inventing as well as about that which is invented - and in both these latter cases *inuentio* denotes either something rediscovered («res quae antea iam exstabant [...], uel explorando, quaerendo uel fortuito repertae») or something totally new («noui aliquid, ante non cognitum, quod quis tam cogitatione et ingenio quam ratione et experimentis reperit»)[12]. In the context of *IO* X.2, however, *inuentio* and *inuenire* are used in the general sense only, and, with one

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9. On Quintilian's list of author's and Quintilian's own reading, see Aubrey Gwynn, *Roman Education from Cicero to Quintilian*, New York, 1964 - reissue of Oxford, 1926, pp. 225-230.

10. «Neque enim dubitari potest quin artis pars magna contineatur imitatione», X.2.1. When not otherwise indicated, all translations are mine.

11. I have used M. Winterbottom's edition in two vols. of *IO*, Oxford, 1970. *IO* X.2 is translated by M. Winterbottom in D. A. Russell and M. Winterbottom, *Ancient Literary Criticism*, Oxford, 1972, pp. 400-404. A commentary on *IO* X is W. Peterson, *M. Fabi Quintiliani Institutionis Oratoriae Liber Decimus*, Oxford, 1891 - repr. Hildesheim, 1967; cf. also G. Kennedy, *Quintilian*, New York, 1969, pp. 113-115 on *IO* X.2, and D. A. Russell, «De imitatione», pp. 1-16 in D. West and T. Woodman (edd.), *Creative Imitation and Latin Literature*, Cambridge, 1979, esp. pp. 6-7. In the Budé edition, Tome 6, Livres X et XI, Paris, 1979, «Notice», pp. 57-62, J. Cousin treats *IO* X.2; I do not agree with Cousin's general view of X.2, nor with specific parts of his translation of this chapter.

12. Cf. *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae*, 7.2, Leipzig 1956-1979, *s.v. 'inuentio'* I.B, 1 and 2.

exception, always in contrast to *imitatio*, as the power or process of innovation and creation[13].

According to Quintilian *inventio* came first («primum fuit») and is of chief importance («praecipuum») (2.1). Yet, imitation is something useful («utile»)[14], and from another point of view, namely as regards the process of learning, imitation has priority. To Quintilian the incentive to learn is a general principle in life and consists of a kind of *mimetic desire*[15], a craving to do ourselves what we approve of in others, «quae probamus in aliis facere ipsi uelimus» (2.2)[16]. This can be observed, Quintilian points out, in musicians using their teachers' voice as a guide, and painters their predecessors' works (2.2). Thus a pupil learns the basics of any discipline by imitating examples given, «omnis denique disciplinae initia ad propositum sibi praescriptum formari uidemus», (2.2). These examples offer a direction for the pupil's own endeavour, in so far as the pupil, confronted with defined good examples[17], can either identify or deviate, i.e., in Quintilian's words, be like or be unlike his model[18]. Imitation is, in other words, a principle of learning, namely the teacher's means of securing and the pupil's means of acquiring similarity to tradition.

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13. Cf. «ut inuenire primum fuit», X.2.1; «ea quae bene inuenta sunt», 2.1; «iis quae sint ab aliis inuenta», 2.4; «nempe nihil fuisset inuentum», 2.4; «quod certe scimus inuenisse eos», 2.5; «qualis inuenta est», 2.8; «ingenium, inuentio, uis, facilitas», 2.12; «uim dicendi atque inuentionis non adsecuntur», 2.16; but, in the neutral sense («find»): «nemo sit inuentus», 2.9; «quae in quoque eorum inuenit bene», 2.20. - M. Winterbottom, cf. n. 11 above, translates *inuenire* as «discovery» (e.g. X.2.1.) and *inuentum* as «what has been discovered» (e.g. X.2.4). Elaine Fantham, «Imitation and Decline: Rhetorical Theory and Practice in the First Century After Christ», *CPh* 73, 1978, pp. 102-116, qualifies *inventio* as «independent *inventio*» (p. 106) when she reads it in the general sense of the power or process of innovation. I read Fantham's article after having substantially completed this paper; although we use the same text, and often the same examples, the scope and consequently the interpretations of our readings of *IO* X.2 are in many cases different: Fantham's is a historical survey, whereas I focus on Quintilian's text.

14. «Nam ut inuenire primum fuit estque praecipuum, sic ea quae bene inventa sunt utile sequi», 2.1.

15. This is René Girard's term, referring to his theory of *mimetic desire* as a literary-anthropological structure reflected in e.g. the works of Shakespeare, cf. «*To Double Business Bound*»: *Essays on Literature, Mimesis, and Anthropology*, Baltimore, 1978, and *A Theater of Envy: William Shakespeare*, Oxford, 1991.

16. «Atque omnis uitae ratio sic constat, ut quae probamus in aliis facere ipsi uelimus», 2.2.

17. «Examples» renders «bonis», 2.3, which may be persons as well as things/principles, *boni* or *bona*.

18. «Et hercule necesse est aut similes aut dissimiles bonis simus», 2.3.

The guide-lines that exist now, so Quintilian writes, are the inventions of predecessors who, in their time, had no example to follow (2.6)[19]. So example, or, in other words, tradition, is not pre-existing in absolute terms, but something created and therefore changeable: no art is the same now as when it was invented[20]. Tradition is, so we may conclude, maintained by imitation, but originally a product of invention, by which it continues to be further developed. In the making and developing of tradition, imitation is secondary to invention.

So invention is not a privilege of the predecessors, the «priores» as Quintilian calls them in relation to their successors, or descendents, the «posteri»[21]. These terms, «priores» and «posteri», however, do not just imply relative chronology, they also express a hierarchy of values. In fact, it is possible for a «posterus» to aim at priority, that is, to act, in Quintilian's words, «ut prior sit» (2.10)[22]. Not only is it possible, it is a disgrace («turpe»), he writes, to be satisfied with merely imitating, «turpe etiam illud est, contentum esse id consequi quod imiteris» (2.7). For to Quintilian imitation belongs to «omnis [...] disciplinae initia» (2.2), to the fundamentals and the process of learning and studying, and nothing, so he writes, grows by imitation alone (2.8)[23]. In other words, imitation is only a means of acquiring a certain knowledge and certain skills in order to build up a *copia*, i.e. a basis for one's own invention.

The principle of growth Quintilian formulates as «contendere potius quam sequi» (2.9), to fight, or emulate[24], rather than to imitate. In the same way as imitation is the dynamic of learning, so, according to Quintilian, emulation is the dynamic of invention[25]. The transition from posteriority to priority - i.e. from

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19. «Et cum illi, qui nullum cuiusquam rei habuerunt magistrum, plurima in posteros tradiderint [...]», 2.6.

20. «[...] nulla sit ars qualis inuenta est, nec intra initium stetit», 2.8.

21. «Priores», cf. X.2.2; 2.9; 2.28. «Posteri», cf. X.2.6; 2.28.

22. «Nam qui hoc agit, ut prior sit, forsitan, etiam si non transierit, aequabit», 2.10.

23. «[...] nihil autem crescit sola imitatione», 2.8.

24. Quintilian here uses *contendere* as a synonym of *aemulari*, cf. below, in the sense of *striving to surpass* and not merely imitating. Cf. *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae* 1.1, Leipzig, 1900, where *aemulor* is defined *in bonam partem* as «imitor vel imitando studeo alterum adaequare aut superare». *TLL* (*ibid.*) gives the following synonyms for '*aemulatio*': «imitatio, certatio, certamen, contentio». In my translation, I use the English words «emulate» and «emulation», cf. *The Oxford English Dictionary* 5, Oxford, 1989, p. 196, *s.v.* '*emulation*' 1., «The endeavour to equal *or surpass* [my italics] in any achievement or quality».

25. I disagree with J. Cousin's claim that «C'est en effet l'émulation qui doit être le nerf de l'imitation», *op. cit.*, Tome 6, Livres X et XI, «Notice», p. 60.

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mastery of tradition, by way of imitation, to growth as a result of invention - is made possible by emulation. This subject, *aemulatio*, Quintilian had already discussed in the first book of the *IO*, while describing the advantages of sending a boy to a public school to be taught in the company of equals. Here the boy would make greater progress because he would be stimulated by praise to compete with the others, find it disgraceful to yield to a peer, and honourable («pulchrum») to defeat those who are older than himself[26]. The terminology used in I.2 is close to that of X.2: *aemulari* in book 1 and *contendere* in book 10 is the stimulus of action (i.e. of making progress and of inventing), «turpe» is how any weakness in carrying out the action is evaluated, and «superasse maiores» is the objective of the action. Both the boy in the classroom and the trained orator emulate or compete with their *maiores* or *priores* in order to win priority. Outside the classroom, however, the future orator in his striving for priority may not be able to surpass his example, but thé very attempt is honourable and equality is an acceptable result[27].

Quintilian's theory of literary creation is based on the dialectic between imitation and invention. The status of these terms and their relation to each other is clearly expressed in Quintilian's exposition (see Table 1): «Imitatio» is something «utile», but «inuenire» is «praecipuum»; only a lazy mind, «pigrum ingenium», is content with imitation, whereas the realisation of the «perfectus orator» is dependent on invention. The principle of imitation is to follow, «sequi», whereas «contendere», fighting, is the principle of invention. The one who follows in another person's footsteps, i.e. who only imitates, will always be the last, «posterior», whereas invention is the means of obtaining priority, of becoming «prior». Imitation is doing the same, «idem facere», but invention is doing more, «plus facere». Moreover, imitation is something contrived («facta est») on the basis of a subject offered by somebody else («alienum propositum»), whereas the subject in itself («exemplum») is an invention sprung from nature and the force

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26. «[...] excitabitur laude aemulatio, turpe ducet cedere pari, pulchrum superasse maiores», I.2.22. Quintilian in this context uses *aemulatio* synonomously with *certatio*, contrary, I believe, to Cousin's interpretation: «[...] il est préférable de *certare* et, finalement, d'*aemulari*», *op*. and *loc. cit.*, cf. n. 25 above.

27. «Sed etiam qui summa non adpetent, contendere potius quam sequi debent. Nam qui hoc agit, ut prior sit, forsitan, etiam si non transierit, aequabit», X.2.9-10.

of reality («natura et uera uis»). This is why, Quintilian writes, the results of imitation are always inferior to the things imitated as are, for example, the shadow to the body and the image to the face (2.11). And as are declamations to orations, he adds, because declamations are based on «adsimulata materia» whereas orations are based on «uera materia». Furthermore, the most important qualities of an orator cannot be imitated, namely his talent, «ingenium», as well as his creative power, «inuentio», «uis», and fluency, «facilitas»[28]. Finally, at the end of X.2, Quintilian underlines the priority of invention to imitation when he praises the models of his own time, «qui adhuc summi sunt» (2.28), for having taught their successors by offering them an example to imitate, and defeated their predecessors by surpassing them with their own inventions[29].

Table 1.

Imitatio	*Inuenire (Inuentio)*
utile (2.1)	praecipuum (2.1)
pigrum ingenium (2.4)	perfectus orator (2.9)
sequi (2.9)	contendere (2.9)
posterior (2.10)	prior (2.10)
idem facere (2.10)	plus facere (2.10)
alienum propositum (2.11)	exemplum (2.11)
imitatio facta est (2.11)	natura et uera uis (2.11)
declamationes (2.12)	orationes (2.12)
adsimulata materia (2.12)	uera materia (2.12)

The description of the process of innovation/creation, based on imitation and invention, as «creative imitation»[30] does not, I believe, take into account the

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28. «Adde quod ea, quae in oratore maxima sunt, ingenium, inuentio, uis, facilitas et quidquid arte non traditur», 2.12. M. Winterbottom, *op.cit.*, p. 401, translates: «talent, facility of discovery, force, fluency».

29. «Nam erit haec quoque laus eorum ut priores superasse, posteros docuisse dicantur», 2.28.

30. I am referring to D. West and T. Woodman (edd.), *Creative Imitation and Latin Literature*, Cambridge, 1979. In their *Prologue*, the editors stress «the richness, impetus and creative originality of this literary process [i.e. «literary imitation»]. *Imitatio* is neither plagiarism nor a flaw in the constitution of Latin literature. It is a dynamic law of its existence», p. ix. The first part of this defence to a modern readership of the principle of imitation, does not, however, apply to Quintilian's thoughts in so far as the concept of *creative imitation* conflates the two instances of creation that Quintilian has isolated, namely imitation and invention.

difference in levels between *imitatio* and *inuentio* as explained by Quintilian[31]. To Quintilian, *imitatio* is «idem facere» and the aim worth striving for is «plus facere», namely to innovate or create. All creation relates in some way or another to tradition, that is to the predecessors' *exempla* which have been imbibed in the process of learning by way of imitation. But the process of creation, the process of growth, is impossible without invention, the core of which is «aemulatio», the striving to outdo one's model («exemplum») and become «prior» oneself. This is what Quintilian teaches us in X.2, in an exposition which, in spite of its title (which was added in the manuscripts), treats invention as well as imitation.

At the end of the chapter, Quintilian introduces the *perfectus orator* as the one who is able to add his own talent («propria bona», X.2.28) to his basis of knowledge which is formed by, what Quintilian calls, real imitation - i.e. based on a thorough understanding and digesting of his *exempla* - and who invents, and creates, by way of correcting and perfecting his *exempla*[32].

In his book on Quintilian, George Kennedy stated that «Fundamental change in literary tradition is not envisioned [by Quintilian], but continual perfecting is

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31. «Levels» here only refers to the relative chronology proposed by Quintilian according to which invention comes after imitation, in so far as invention takes its point of departure in what has been learned by way of imitation. - Recently, Alexandru N. Cizek in his book on *Imitatio et Tractatio. Die literarisch-rhetorischen Grundlagen der Nachahmung in Antike und Mittelalter*, Tübingen, 1994, pp. 44-46, has drawn attention to Arno Reiff's *Interpretatio, imitatio, aemulatio. Begriff und Vorstellung literarischer Abhängigkeit bei den Römern*, Würzburg, 1959 - (likewise mentioned in Herbert Jaumann, *Critica: Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der Literaturkritik zwischen Quintilian und Thomasius*, Leiden, 1995, p. 97, n. 159) - the title of which refers to Reiff's theory of the use in criticism in Antiquity of these concepts to determine three levels of literary dependency, a system supposedly reflected in a technical terminology generally employed in Roman literature. Manfred Fuhrmann in a review of Reiff (*Gnomon* 33, 1961, pp. 445-448) refuted Reiff's thesis on the basis of lack of evidence for its postulated general applicability: «Im Bewusstsein der römischen Schrifsteller hat es offensichtlich niemals ein dreistufiges Begriffsschema gegeben, sondern stets nur eine Anzahl verwandter Ausdrücke, die keinen vom allgemeinen Sprachgebrauch abweichenden Sinn hatten», *art.cit.*, p. 446. - I am aware of this discussion, but do not think that it is relevant to this paper: Reiff's theory does not take into account Quintilian's views on the dialectics of imitation and invention; moreover, I agree with Fuhrmann's warning against inferring a general system from what in fact reflects the specific points of view or linguistic practice of various authors at different times of literary history, cf. Fuhrmann, *art. cit.*, p. 448.

32. «Haec si peruiderimus, tum uere imitabimur. Qui uero etiam propria his bona adiecerit, ut suppleat quae deerant, circumcidat si quid redundabit, is erit quem quaerimus perfectus orator», 2. 27-28.

possible»[33]. Kennedy is here rightly expressing how realistic - and yet also idealistic - Quintilian's theory of literary creation is. Nothing grows from imitation alone, but nothing grows out of the blue, either, invention is to Quintilian a question of adding and correcting[34]. The *inuenta* of the «posterus» are therefore always corrective to one or more appropriate examples[35], - in short, Quintilian's theory of creation is a theory of revisionism. The idealism which is nevertheless also contained in Quintilian's theory and embodied in the *perfectus orator*, envisages, however, a next-to-fundamental change («continual perfecting»[36]) in so far as this must result from as total a revision of tradition as possible.

Quintilian's ideal(ism) is often seen as a reaction to the sad state of affairs, both politically and morally, around him, which, compared with the past, would necessarily underline his own position as a latecomer to a powerful tradition. Yet, Quintilian's *perfectus orator* is conceived not merely as an heir to the glory of the past, but as someone more accomplished than anyone who had lived before. Thus, rather than a protest against any decline of society and rhetoric, Quintilian's creation of the *perfectus orator* defies the dominance of the predecessors and vindicates the general possibility of innovation and creativity - and specifically, one might add, Quintilian's own inventive power. «What would have happened in those times when people were without guide-lines, if they had been convinced that they could not do or think anything but what they already knew? *Nothing* would have been invented! Why then shouldn't *we* be allowed to invent something that has not existed before?», he exclaims in X.2.4[37]. Quintilian's answer is the *perfectus orator*, in itself an incarnation of

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33. G. Kennedy, *op.cit.*, p. 114. - I disagree with J. Cousin's view, in a note on «[la] notion de rivalité ou d'émulation», on Quintilian's exposition: «[...] il y avait, par suite, une certaine indifférence à la noveauté - ce qui est l'un des traits du classicisme», cf. *op. cit.*, vol. VI, «Notes complémentaires (X), Page 60», p. 291.

34. «Qui uero etiam propria his bona *adiecerit*, ut suppleat [...], *circumcidat*», 2.28.

35. «Nam praeter id quod prudentis est quod in quoque optimum est, si possit, suum facere, tum in tanta rei difficultate unum intuentis uix aliqua pars sequitur; ideoque cum totum exprimere quem elegeris paene sit homini inconcessum, plurium bona ponamus ante oculos, ut aliud ex alio haereat, et quo quidque loco conueniat aptemus», 2.26.

36. Cf. Kennedy, *op.* and *loc.cit.*

37. «Quid enim futurum erat temporibus illis quae sine exemplo fuerunt si homines nihil nisi quod iam cogniuissent faciendum sibi aut cogitandum putassent? Nempe nihil fuisset inuentum. Cur igitur nefas est reperiri aliquid a nobis quod ante non fuerit?». Cf. also X.2.8: «Ac si omnia percenseas, nulla sit ars qualis inuenta est, nec intra initium stetit: nisi forte nostra potissimum tempora damnamus huius infelicitatis, ut nunc demum nihil crescat: nihil autem crescit sola imitatione».

Quintilian's ideas of literary innovation and creation according to which essential growth results from invention and takes its point of departure in what has been learned by way of imitation.

Quintilian's theoretical exposition (as well as its application in the *perfectus orator*) can be illuminated by Harold Bloom's modern theory of poetic influence. Quintilian exemplifies, and Bloom describes how creation is a reaction to an overpowering influence. Both Quintilian and Bloom refer to a Golden age which is represented to Quintilian by his predecessors and their total priority to tradition, and to Bloom by pre-romantic literature. Both underline the need of the innovative mind to strive for priority. And both see literary creation after the Golden age as a process of constant revision, spurred on by a struggle for room in a space already occupied by the predecessors.

2.

«Cur igitur nefas est reperiri aliquid a nobis quod ante non fuerit?» (X.2.5)

In the preface to *IO* XII we are offered an impression of Quintilian the author's own struggle with tradition. This part of his work Quintilian presents as an offer of assistance to the future orator, who has left school and now has the choice of either relying on his own talent or seeking the help of further studies. After having taught in the preceding books of *IO* what was already known and treated by most rhetorical theorists[38], Quintilian in book XII has reached the point where he is all on his own. Cicero, the one predecessor that Quintilian had been able to follow until now, was satisfied with treating only the *genus dicendi* of the *perfectus orator*[39]. What Quintilian wants to add to this is a discussion of the ideal orator's «mores» and «officia». Such is his analysis and claim in the prooemium to this last book of the *IO*. The degree of originality of Quintilian's thought as found here is of little importance to my reading, the aim of which is to present Quintilian's own evaluation of his endeavour and to examine this in relation to his ideas of tradition and creation, as well as to Harold Bloom's theory of poetic influence.

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38. «[...] dum tamen nota illa et plerisque artium scriptoribus tractata praecipimus», XII.pr.2.

39. «Vnum modo in illa inmensa uastitate cernere uidemur M. Tullium, qui tamen ipse [...] contrahit uela inhibetque remos et de ipso demum genere dicendi quo sit usurus perfectus orator satis habet dicere», pr.4.

More than merely an introduction to the contents of book XII, however, the *prooemium* expresses Quintilian's feelings about the very character of the project he is about to embark on. In the beginning of the text, Quintilian characterises this part of his work as by far the most burdensome and the most important, «pars longe grauissima» (XII.pr.1). The whole project had required an ever increasing effort («per singulas prope partis labor cresceret», pr.1), and the load that oppresses him now is bigger than ever («licet maior quam umquam moles premat», pr.2). Yet, now that he can see the end he has decided rather to risk failure, than to despair, «uel deficere potius quam desperare» (pr.2).

This decision Quintilian qualifies as an act of «temeritas» and «audentia» (pr.4), foolhardiness and courage, whereas the undertaking as such is described as a desire («cupiditas»), which is acceptable («probabilis»), because its objective is honourable («honesta»). «And it is safer, so to speak», so Quintilian justifies his foolhardiness, «to show courage in attempting what is more likely to be met with forebearance» («et uelut tutioris audentiae est temptare quibus paratior uenia est», pr.4).

The whole of his work has required courage; thus, when he had reached the half-way point, there were many others around him, he writes, who had also dared to engage in the enterprise («multos circa uelut isdem se uentis credere ausos habebamus», XII. pr.2-3). But now, at the point where he claims to have access to the very depths of wisdom which he wants to share with the future orator («auxilia ex ipsis sapientiae penetralibus», pr.3), he is the only one who has the courage to continue into what is described as an immense space («in illa inmensa uastitate», pr.4). Even Cicero has given up, «although», Quintilian writes, «he had so many of the things required for the undertaking» («quamuis tanta atque ita instructa naue hoc mare ingressus», pr.4). But not all the things required, we may infer, at least not *temeritas*, the courage or foolhardiness which Quintilian possesses. What Quintilian endeavours to do, and what requires «temeritas» and «audentia», is to break with tradition by entering into a field in which, as he claims, he has no predecessor to follow and has to go very far, as the case may be (pr.4)[40].

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40. «Ita nec antecedentem consequi possumus et longius eundum est ut res feret», pr.4.

In X.2, in the discussion of imitation and invention, Quintilian asked: «don't we have anything to offer but what we have received as charity from others?» («nihil habebimus nisi beneficii alieni?», X.2.6). The knowledge communicated in the preceding eleven books of his *Institutio* he owes, so Quintilian states, to tradition, i.e., in the words of X.2, to the charity of others. True to his own ideas of imitation and invention, Quintilian must, as he demanded of his «orator perfectus» in X.2.28, add something of his own talent («propria bona», X.2.28) to this knowledge, which is based on imitation, and in this way be able to correct and perfect his *exemplum*. This is what Quintilian sets out to do in book XII, the content of which is, as Quintilian explicitly writes, a supplement and a corrective to the work of his great predecessor, Cicero[41].

Quintilian's *prooemium* is, seen from the point of view of Harold Bloom's theory of poetic influence, a description of how the burden of tradition is turned into a challenge and results in creation. Thus, Quintilian, in his struggle for priority, emulates Cicero, the predecessor that provokes Quintilian's *anxiety of influence*. This anxiety-provoking influence is the burden of tradition that weighs on Quintilian as expressed in the first part of the prooemium. The change of the power of influence from burden to challenge results from Quintilian's decision to take the risk of «deficere potius quam desperare», whereas the last part of the *prooemium* is Quintilian's exorcising his predecessor's influence in order to become one of those of whom it can be said, in Quintilian's own words (X.2.28), that they surpassed their predecessors and served as an example to posterity, «ut priores superasse, posteros docuisse dicantur»[42].

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41. The way Quintilian's invention relates to Cicero's *exemplum* could be determined - and this offers material for another article - as reflecting the first and partly the second of the «revisionary ratios», proposed by Harold Bloom in *The Anxiety of Influence*, namely the ones called «clinamen» and «tessera». Bloom uses the term *clinamen* or «swerve» to denote «poetic misreading or misprision proper», *op. cit.*, p. 14. *Clinamen* is «a corrective movement in [the latecomer's] own poem, which implies that the precursor poem went accurately up to a certain point, but then should have swerved, precisely in the direction that the new poem moves», *ibid*. By *tessera* Bloom understands «a token of recognition» (*op. cit.*, p. 14), in about the same sense as the Greek word «symbolon». *Tessera* is defined as a function of «completion and antithesis», i.e. the author's means of correcting his example, so «as to retain its terms but to mean them in another sense, as though the precursor had failed to go far enough», *ibid*.

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