

**S E D E R I
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**Journal of the Spanish Society
for English Renaissance Studies**

1 9 9 3



Universidad de Las Palmas de Gran Canaria

SERVICIO DE PUBLICACIONES

SEDERI

SOCIEDAD ESPAÑOLA DE ESTUDIOS RENACENTISTAS INGLESES

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Issue number IV of **SEDERI** contains a selection of articles and essays presented in the 4th Conference of the Spanish Society for English Renaissance Studies held at the University of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria in the Canary Islands, Spain, in March 1993.

Copies of this number can be obtained by writing to the following address:
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Depósito Legal: G.C. 1.327-1994 - ISBN: 84-88412-02-9.
Realización: Filmarte. Las Palmas de G.C. Printed in Spain

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REPETITION, METAPHOR AND CONCEIT IN THE RENAISSANCE

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There is a rhetorical technique systematically used by the medievals to intensify the significance, truth and reality of an object, whether thing or person, text or event¹. It consists in *expanding* the object, typically by means of repetition, duplication, multiplication, unfolding, mirroring. The allegorical mode so dominant in the Middle Ages relied for its effectiveness on the conception of the world as twofold, in the sense that every object had a significance which related it, as a mirror-image, to some object in the spiritual domain. The use of the figure of the 'companion' of the hero (Bran's three foster-brothers in the Irish *Voyage of Bran*, Roland's Olivier in *La Chanson de Roland*), or of the figure of his 'double' (Roland's Ganelon, Sir Gawain's Green Knight) exemplifies the same effort to unfold and thereby to emphasize and intensify, through repetition or through contrast, heroic behaviours and values. The exegetical technique similarly allowed commentators to present texts as twofold constructs, endowed with, beside their literal meaning, a second, spiritual level of interpretation.

The technique was known as *amplificatio*, and according to Quintilian it offered four main strategies: augmentation, comparison, reasoning, and accumulation (Preminger 1990:32). Any device which, from the simplest exclamation to hyperbole, division, comparison, or repetition tends to intensify the object, falls under the general label of *amplificatio* (Lanham 1991:8).

The technique is not alien to the Renaissance; 16th century writers used *amplificatio* lavishly as part of their rhetoric of intensification in poetry or drama; let me offer some examples from both Spanish and English texts. In Fernando de Rojas' *La Celestina* (*The Spanish Bawd*, 1499), Calixto, madly in love with Melibea, compares the fire of his passion to that of Purgatory;

¹ See Aguirre (X), where I discuss the uses of repetition in medieval literature and its value in the context of the medieval theory of truth and reality. A more extended treatment of Richard II's soliloquy from the point of view of the medieval definitions of being, truth, reality and meaning is the subject of an article in preparation.