

# Lapham figures of speech essay

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Lewis H. Lapham was born in 1935. He is an American writer credited for writing several books such as *Fortune's Child* (1980), *Gag Rules* (2004) among many others. He also served as the editor of the American monthly *Harper's Magazine*. In his literary works titled *Notebook*, he has written about *Figures of Speech*. Lapham creates a historical context by going into the *Notebook* where he claims that its term lasted for twenty-six years. He then goes back to the time when the *Harper Magazine* began its first appearance and its connection with the time that is in line with Macintosh computers. Lapham comments that during those times the internet didn't exist while the tweet and the blog were not yet recognized as forms or figures of speech. As explained by Lapham, the absence of the internet creates a visual and communication disconnect with the world. He explains how the three dimensions of redesign (readings, annotation and the index) have taken a dive into the wine-dark sea of the cyberspace. This aspect gives a visual appearance of the way redesign has been disengaged. For instance the wine-dark sea depicts an old scene with a dark background to show non-existence. The concerns by Lapham serve to question the authenticity of modern literary works and the place of figures of speech in such works. In a discussion with my colleagues on their reactions to Lapham's essay *Figures of Speech*, one of them (Tiffany Alvarez) asserts that Lapham uses literary figures to reiterate his idea that an essay is written without preconceived notions. The author of this post stresses her point by noting examples given by Lapham such as Twain's *Huckleberry Finn* where the author was never sure of the next sentence s/he intends to write next until the words show up on the page. She quotes Lapham describing the literary

style used in Huckelberry Finn “ a sound heart and a deformed conscience come into collision and conscience suffers defeat” (Lapham). The author of this post is fascinated by instances where Lapham says that writing without necessarily planning where to end helps writers to express themselves blatantly. They also sound more convincing and do so in a simple language. Lapham puts across the idea of writing personal essays from a self-skeptic point of view. Tanika Dierickx, the author of the second post recognizes the work of Michael de Montaigne (1533-1592). Montaigne famously attempted to explore his life and thoughts in a written form. He is thought to be the inventor of the personal essay. The author of this post stresses her point by Montaigne’s tackling of skepticism by asking the question, “ What do I know?” In this regard writers are able to question their own knowledge and write personal essays that are a true reflection of themselves.

Devon Pawley, the author of the third post stresses on the essay being improvised in the direction of music or poetry. The essay reflects a language that is meant to be heard and not seen. The author, a fan of Orlando Gibbon’s Polyphonic Counterpoint explains how polyphony (texture of two or more independent melodic voices) comes into play in Gibbon’s works and is appreciated by Lapham. Use of figures of speech and selecting words for efficiency the language is heard more and seen less in an essay because the words flow as if they were a song. Counterpoint is explained as relationship between voices that are harmonically interdependent but are independent on rhythm and contour. The author appreciates the unique ability in Gibbon’s Polyphonic Counterpoint to select and form words into an exceptional melody on its own.

In my view, Lapham is concerned by the effects of modern forms of communication on literature. I have learnt that I need to exercise writing essays without preconceived notions in order to express blatant ideas in a simple yet convincing language. Moreover, I need to use figures of speech that enhance my essays- making them to be heard more and seen less- as in make the essay to become melodic on its own.

### **Works cited**

Lapham, Lewis. NOTEBOOK, Figures of Speech. 1984. print

Tiffany Alvarez, Discussion post on “ Figures of Speech”

Tanika Dierickx, Discussion post on “ Figures of Speech”

Devon Pawley, Discussion post “ Figures of Speech”-“ Gibbons Polyphonic Counterpoint”