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The Key Role of Habit in Roman Writing Instruction

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Key Concepts. *Habit (hexis) • Roman education as a system • Public schools • Concept of curriculum • Writing and oral language • Quintilian • Facility (facilitas) • Tutorial teaching • Isocrates's influence • Male-centered education • Five parts of Latin rhetoric • Cicero as model • Theory and practice • Triad of precept, imitation, practice • Inheritance from Greek pedagogy • Grammaticus • Rhetor • Grammar and rhetoric as precept • Seven steps of imitation • Form preceding free expression • Graded composition exercises (Progymnasmata) • Hermogenes and Aphthonius • Declamation • Sequencing • Modern criticisms of the system*

The remarkable thing about Roman education is that it took the comparatively loose ideas of Greek educators and molded them into a coherent system, which instilled in its students a Habit (*hexis*) of effective expression. Moreover, the Romans embedded the system in a network of “public” schools (i.e., classrooms of numerous students, each under one master), which used a common curriculum throughout the Roman world.

Virtually every individual element found in the Roman education pattern was inherited from the Greeks. What was not inherited, however, was the deftly designed correlation of these elements into a learning system that could be replicated worldwide as a tool of Roman public policy equal

in geopolitical value to the legions of soldiers and the tax collectors in making the world Roman.

The basic principle of this system is that students can be habituated into both skill and virtue. Skill of language comes from the adroit use of precept, imitation, and practice in the classroom, while moral and political virtues are absorbed through the contents of the texts and orations studied there.

To understand the unique qualities of this Roman educational program, then, it will be useful to examine not only the role of writing but the manner in which the full system came to supplant the old private, tutorial method, which had been the practice in the early days of the Republic.

It is clear that writing and oral language go hand in hand in the Roman educational program. If oral eloquence was the desired product of the schools, writing was a major means to that end.

"In writing are the roots, in writing are the foundations of eloquence." This judgment, written in AD 95 by Marcus Fabius Quintilianus in his *Institutio oratoria*,¹ was not unique to him. It was an idea already pervasive in Roman culture. Quintilian quotes Marcus Tullius Cicero as saying a century and a half earlier that the pen is "the best modeler and teacher of eloquence." Three centuries after Quintilian, the young Aurelius Augustinus, a teacher of rhetoric later to be Christian bishop and one of the four Latin Fathers of the Church, describes in his *Confessions* his own efforts to teach oral and written composition to the unruly young in North Africa. The Christian encyclopedists of the sixth and seventh centuries still insist on the same point.

The Roman educational system—and indeed it was truly a "system"—had rhetorical efficiency as its primary goal. Quintilian's term for this objective is Facility (*facilitas*), or the habitual capacity to produce appropriate and effective language in any situation. This result was to be achieved by a carefully coordinated program of reading, writing, speaking, and listening. The process carried boys from beginning alphabet exercises at age six or seven through a dozen years of interactive classroom activities designed to produce an adult capable of public improvisation under any circumstances.

Writing was an integral part of this process, inseparable from the other elements. As Quintilian notes:

I know that it is often asked whether more is contributed by writing, by reading, or by speaking. This question we should have to examine with careful

¹*Institutio oratoria* X.3.1. Quotations from books 1, 2, and 10 are from *Quintilian on the Teaching of Speaking and Writing: Translations from Books One, Two, and Ten of the Institutio oratoria*, ed. James J. Murphy (Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 1987). Quotations from other books will be from *The Institutio oratoria of Quintilian*, trans. H. E. Butler, 4 vols (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1921-22).

attention if in fact we could confine ourselves to any one of these activities; but in truth they are all so connected, so inseparably linked with one another, that if any one of them is neglected, we labor in vain in the other two—for our speech will never become forcible and energetic unless it acquires strength from great practice in writing; and the labor of writing, if left destitute of models from reading, passes away without effect, as having no director; while he who knows how everything ought to be said, will, if he has not his eloquence in readiness and prepared for all emergencies, merely brood, as it were, over locked-up treasure. (*Institutio* X.1.1)

Since Roman writing instruction was so firmly embedded in such a complex process, then, the modern reader needs to understand all the elements of the system itself in order to appreciate the role played by writing. Consequently, the following section describes the manner in which rhetorical education supplanted the "Old Education" in Rome during the first century before Christ. The next sections discuss that educational process as described in Quintilian's *Institutio oratoria*, followed by a brief analysis of the advantages and disadvantages of the Roman educational pattern.

THE ROMAN TRANSITION TO SYSTEMATIC RHETORICAL EDUCATION

The first century before Christ was the turning point in the Roman transition from the Old Education of the conservative Republic to the more systematic rhetorical program, which dominated European practice for the next two millennia.

The change was from a native Latin, tutorial process to a Greek-originated "school" system. In a real sense it was a triumph of Isocratean educational principles over a familial approach that had emphasized private tutors and apprenticeship. The historian Cornelius Tacitus, writing later in the middle of the first Christian century, looks back fondly on "the good old days" before there were "professors of Rhetoric":

Well then, in the good old days the young man who was destined for the oratory of the bar, after receiving the rudiments of a sound training at home, and storing his mind with liberal culture, was taken by his father, or his relations, and placed under the care of some orator who held a leading position at Rome. The youth had to get the habit of following his patron about, of escorting him in public, of supporting him at all his appearances as a speaker, whether in the law courts or on the platform, hearing also his word-combats at first hand, standing by him in his duellings, and learning, as it were, to fight in the fighting-line. It was a method that secured at once for the young students a considerable amount of experience, great self-possession, and a

goodly store of sound judgment: for they carried on their studies in the light of open day, and amid the very shock of battle, under conditions in which any stupid or ill-advised statement brings prompt retribution in the shape of the judge's disapproval, taunting criticism from your opponent—yes, and from your own supporters' expressions of dissatisfaction. So it was a genuine and unadulterated eloquence that they were initiated in from the very first; and though they attached themselves to a single speaker, yet they got to know all the contemporary members of the bar in a great variety of both civil and criminal cases. Moreover a public meeting gave them the opportunity of noting marked divergences of taste, so that they could easily detect what commended itself in the case of each individual speaker, and what on the other hand failed to please.²

Thus in this older, conservative program, there were three levels of education: home training, military service, then apprenticeship to some prominent orator to learn the practical ways of the world. Cicero's father, for instance, placed him with Q. Mucius Scaevola Augur; however, the young boy's advisers had earlier warned him away from the new-fangled Latin rhetorician L. Plotius Gallus, and Cicero went off instead to Rhodes to study Greek rhetoric there before taking up his apprenticeship with the orator.

If Roman education was male centered, it was because the society was male centered. Women had little status under the law, and children—even adult sons with their own careers—were regarded as subjects of their fathers in many circumstances. This was not so much a conscious social decision as it was a continuation of assumptions common to many ancient societies, including the Greek and the Judaic. It is important therefore for a modern reader, even while deploring this situation, to look beyond that feeling to assess the teaching methods actually employed. Plutarch tells us how the elder Cato (234–149 BC) taught his own son two centuries before Christ:

When his son was born, no duty (save perhaps some public function) was so pressing as to prevent him from being present when his wife bathed the child and wrapped it in its swaddling clothes. His wife suckled the child with her own milk, and would often give her breast to the children of her slaves, so as to gain their affection for her son by treating them as his brothers. As soon as the boy was able to learn, Cato took him personally in charge and taught him his letters, although he owned an accomplished slave, named Chilon, who was a schoolmaster and gave lessons to many boys. But Cato, to use his own words, would not have a slave abuse his son nor perhaps pull his

²Cornelius Tacitus, *A Dialogue on Oratory*, trans. Sir William Peterson (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1946) 105–06.

ears for being slow at his lessons; nor would he have his boy owe a slave so precious a gift as learning. So he made himself the boy's schoolmaster, just as he taught him the laws of Rome and bodily exercises; not merely to throw the javelin, to fight in armour or to ride, but also to use his fists in boxing, to bear heat and cold, and to swim against the currents and eddies of a river. And he tells us himself that he wrote books of history with his own hand, and in large characters, so that his son might be able even at home to become acquainted with his country's past; that he was as careful to avoid all indecent conversation in his son's presence as he would have been in presence of the Vestal virgins; and that he never bathed with him. This last point seems to have been a Roman custom, for even fathers-in-law were careful not to bathe with their sons-in-law to avoid the necessity of stripping naked before them.³

Significantly, the resident schoolmaster Chilon was both Greek and a slave. The militant Romans had conquered Greece, so that many educated Greeks were brought back to Rome as slaves. During the republican period, then, most teachers had a very low social status since they were enslaved members of a conquered class.

Matters Greek were thus to be despised in that period. Despite a popular visit to Rome in 168 BC by the grammarian and literary scholar, Crates of Malos, there was general resentment against Greek philosophy and against certain Greek practices like nudity in athletics. In 161 BC, the Roman Senate passed a decree enabling the Praetor to expel all Greek teachers of philosophy and rhetoric.

The first clear evidence of a Latin, as opposed to Greek, teacher of rhetoric comes from 93 BC. In that year, L. Plotius Gallus began teaching in Latin, but was stopped almost at once. In 92 the two Censors, Cn. Domitius Aenobarbus and L. Licinius Crassus, issued the following edict, which was aimed not only at Plotius Gallus but at other unnamed teachers:

A report has been made to us that certain men have begun a new kind of teaching, and that young men are going regularly to their school; that they have taken the name of teachers of Latin rhetoric (*Latini rhetores*): and that our young men are wasting their whole days with them. Our ancestors ordained what lessons their children were to learn, and what schools they were to frequent. These new schools are contrary to our customs and ancestral traditions (*mos maiorum*), and we consider them undesirable and improper. Wherefore we have decided to publish, both to those who keep these schools and to those who are accustomed to go there, our judgement that we consider them undesirable.⁴

³Quoted in Aubrey Gwynn S.J., *Roman Education from Cicero to Quintilian* (1926; New York: Columbia Teachers Coll., n.d.) 19.

⁴Quoted in Gwynn, *Roman Education* 61.

The tone of this decree would make it appear that the phenomenon of Latinized rhetoric was a recent and even sporadic or unusual occurrence. Yet two almost simultaneous publications, both issued shortly after the decree, show instead that there already existed a well-organized and comprehensive system of Latin rhetoric which included provisions not only for theory but for teaching.

Since the study of that rhetoric was such an integral part of the Roman educational system, it may be useful to describe that subject briefly before turning to the role of writing in the whole pedagogical process.

It is not known exactly how a rather generalized rhetoric from the time of Aristotle (died 322 BC) became a specifically organized and standardized five-part system by about 100 BC. The names of some Greek teachers, especially those on the island of Rhodes, are known, as well as some lost treatises like that of Hermagoras of Temnos, mentioned by both Cicero and Quintilian. Of the precise transition to the five-part theory of rhetoric, however, comparatively little is known.

One thing known is that a young Roman, Marcus Tullius Cicero, wrote a rhetorical treatise circa 89 BC titled *On Invention (De inventione)*.⁵ In it, Cicero declares that rhetoric is divided into the five "parts": Invention, Arrangement, Style, Memory, and Delivery. Cicero discusses only the first of these five, promising to write later about the other four; he never carried out the promise, however.

What is also known is that an anonymous author (Cornificius?) published a book circa 86 BC which treated all five parts named by Cicero. Since the book is addressed to one Gaius Herennius, it has traditionally been titled the *Rhetorica ad Herennium (The Book of Rhetoric Addressed to Herennius)*.⁶ Its full treatment of the five parts makes the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* the first complete Latin rhetoric. It is a rigorously practical manual. The author says he will treat only what is pertinent to speaking: "That is why I have omitted to treat those topics which, for the sake of futile self-assertion, Greek writers have adopted." Moreover, he uses only his own Latin examples throughout the book (as he explains in IV.6.9-10).

The remarkable correspondence between these two books suggests the prior existence of a standardized theory of rhetorical education, dating perhaps to 100 BC or even earlier. The adolescent Cicero is clearly reporting only what he had been taught some time earlier, while the older author of the *Ad Herennium* not only admits the influence of "my teacher"

⁵Cicero, *De inventione. De optimo genere oratore. Topica*, trans. H. M. Hubbell (Loeb Classical Library: Harvard UP, 1968). Cicero was only nineteen when he wrote the *De inventione*.

⁶Cicero, *Ad C. Herennium De ratione dicendi (Rhetorica ad Herennium)*, trans. Harry Caplan (Loeb Classical Library: Harvard UP, 1954). Caplan's Introduction (especially xxi-xxxii) has interesting notes on the possible author of the book and its possible relation to the *De inventione* of Cicero.

and refers to students studying in schools (*utuntur igitur studiosi*), but specifically declares that rhetorical skill is to be attained through the three means of Precept, Imitation, and Exercise (I.2.3).

Rhetoric, then was the "Precept" portion of the Roman educational triad. As such, it was embedded in a consciously organized program designed to translate the "rules" into activities that would transform the students into rhetorical men. In fact the author of the *Ad Herennium* says that the five parts of rhetoric are what should be "in the orator" (*in oratore*), a phrase Harry Caplan translates as "faculties." In other words, the whole apparatus aimed at practical ability rather than mere knowledge. This ability was to be "in" the person, not in his books.

The striking homogeneity of Roman rhetorical theory at this early period may be seen clearly in the similar definitions of the five parts as given by Cicero and the author of the *Ad Herennium*:

<i>Cicero</i>	<i>Rhetorica ad Herennium</i>
Invention is the discovery of valid or seemingly valid arguments to render one's cause plausible	Invention is the devising of matter, true or plausible, that would make the case convincing.
Arrangement is the distribution of arguments thus discovered in the proper order.	Arrangement is the ordering and distribution of the matter, making clear the place to which each thing is to be assigned.
Expression is the fitting of the proper language to the invented matter.	Style is the adaptation of suitable words and sentences to the matter devised.
Memory is the firm mental grasp of matter and words	Memory is the firm retention in the mind of the matter, words, and arrangement.
Delivery is the control of the voice and body in a manner suitable to the dignity of the subject matter and the style.	Delivery is the graceful regulation of voice, countenance, and gesture.

Both books accept Aristotle's view that speeches are of three kinds: Forensic, dealing with legal accusation and defense; Deliberative or Political, dealing with public policy; and Epideictic, dealing with praise or blame.

The similarity of the two books is so great that, during the Middle Ages and early Renaissance, it was commonly assumed that Cicero was the author of both. Medieval writers called the *De inventione* Cicero's "First Rhetoric" (*Rhetorica prima*) or "Old Rhetoric" (*Rhetorica vetus*), relying on Cicero's statement that he planned to write on all five parts of rhetoric; these same writers believed that the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* was Cicero's carrying out of this promise, terming it his "Second Rhetoric" (*Rhetorica secunda*) or, more frequently, his "New Rhetoric" (*Rhetorica nova*). It was

only in the late fifteenth century that humanists like Raffaele Regio began to question Cicero's authorship of the *Ad Herennium*.⁷

Though there are some differences between the books (e.g., the *Ad Herennium* offers two methods of Arrangement whereas Cicero proposes only one), the basic doctrines are substantially similar. These rhetorical precepts remained standard for antiquity, the Middle Ages, and the Renaissance, and had currency well into the eighteenth century. It is fair to say that there is such an entity as "Roman Rhetoric," characterized by the five-part division of the subject and by standard treatments of each of the parts.

This standardization was achieved by a resolute rejection of eclecticism after about 100 BC. The *Ad Herennium* draws on a number of Greek sources ranging from pre-Aristotelian to contemporary Rhodian ideas. But this "synthesis of various teachings" (to use translator Caplan's term) petrifies the chosen ideas into a lasting framework. Cicero simply assumes that the five-part plan is standard, "as most authorities have stated" (I.6.9).

The basic theoretical proposal of this Roman rhetoric is that the speaking process involves four chronologically arranged interior steps, followed by one exterior step. The speaker finds ("invents") ideas, then arranges them in an order, then puts words to them, then remembers all of this; finally, the exterior expression ("delivery") occurs through vocal sound, facial expression, and bodily gesture. By analogy the writing process is almost the same, with the physical handwriting (*orthographia*) replacing oral delivery as the final step.

Invention was accomplished through two major processes. One was the use of "status" or "issue" questions, which could be asked in any controversy. "Every subject which contains in itself a controversy to be resolved by speech and debate," Cicero says, "involves a question about a fact, or about a definition, or about the nature of an act, or about legal process" (I.8.10). The other method was to discover ideas through the use of "topics" or commonplaces" such as Division, Consequence, Cause, Effect, or Definition; each of these was considered a "region of an argument," a mental pathway that could lead the mind to find a useful line of argument. So important was this method that Cicero wrote a separate book (*Topica*) on the subject.

⁷For an account of the medieval reception of the book see Murphy, *Rhetoric in the Middle Ages: A History of Rhetorical Theory from Saint Augustine to the Renaissance* (U of California P, 1974) 106-114. Interestingly, the book was virtually unknown until late antiquity. For an account of Regio's argument against Cicero's authorship, see James J. Murphy and Michael Winterbottom, "Raffaele Regio's 1492 *Quaestio* doubting Cicero's authorship of the *Rhetorica ad Herennium*: Introduction and Text," *Rhetorica* 17 (1999): 77-87.

Arrangement specified six parts of an oration: Exordium or introduction, Narration or statement of facts, Division or the outline to be followed, Confirmation or proof, Refutation or attack on the opposition's arguments, and Peroration or conclusion.

Style included both general discussion of desirable wording and a very specific treatment of "figures" like Synecdoche, Metaphor, Antithesis, and Isocolon. The fourth book of the *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, in fact, presents the first systematic treatment of Style in Latin, with the first discussion of 64 figures (*exornationes*) which give "distinction" (*dignitas*) to language. Declaring that there are three levels of style (Plain, Middle, and Grand), the author says that good style should have the three qualities of Taste, Artistic Composition, and Distinction. This Distinction is achieved by two kinds of figures:

To confer distinction upon style is to render it ornate, embellishing it by variety. The divisions under Distinction are Figures of Diction and the Figures of Thought. It is a figure of diction if the adornment is comprised in the fine polish of the language itself. A figure of thought derives a certain distinction from the idea, not from the words. (IV.13.18)

Then follow definitions and examples for 45 figures of speech (diction) and 19 figures of thought; the treatment of the figures occupies more than a fourth of the total length of the book, primarily because of the extensive examples the author feels necessary to make his definitions clear. It is interesting to note that this particular set of figures, not particularly well organized and not always mutually exclusive, became a sort of canon for writers as late as the sixteenth century. The figures became an accepted part of Style for Roman rhetoricians from Cicero onwards, and Quintilian regards them as so important that he devotes two entire books (eight and nine) of his *Institutio oratoria* to their analysis.

Memory, "the storehouse of invention," was described as being either natural or artificial. The natural memory could be improved by exercise, just like a bodily muscle. The artificial or artistic memory employed a mnemonic system of "Images" and "Backgrounds," in which the mind could store symbols (Images) set in a visualized neutral space (Background). Here too the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* is the first to describe the image-background system, though the theory may well have been commonly known.

Delivery, the final exteriorization, involved detailed consideration of vocal tones, facial expressions, and body movements, including the management of posture, arms, and fingers.

This five-part division of rhetoric had the virtue of being analytic, permitting further study of the individual parts without neglecting their rela-

from to the whole. Cicero, as it has already been demonstrated, could write an entire book dealing only with Invention, and, within that area another treating only the Topics. Quite naturally there were technical debates about subpoints, for instance, the question whether there were really four issues in Invention or as few as three or as many as five. Nevertheless, the main framework held steady for centuries. Perhaps it was the logicity of the process description, the theory that idea-collection precedes arrangement which precedes style and memory. As a working hypothesis for speech preparation, it seems to have had a recognized value for a very long time.

At the same time, the written treatises had the defect of being schematic at best and mechanical at worst. The technical could, and did, become hypertechnical at times. When Cicero grew older, he began to react against what he saw as an over-technical approach he had favored in his youthful *De inventione*. His dialogue, *De oratore*,⁸ written in 55 BC, argues that a liberal education is more important for the orator than "rules"; while Cicero's spokesman Crassus accepts the familiar doctrines of Roman rhetoric, he also declares that "the prize must go to the orator who possesses learning" (III.35.14). The character Crassus in *De oratore* is the same historical personage, Crassus, who was one of the censors prohibiting the Latin teachers of rhetoric from operating their schools in 92 BC, and Cicero has him explain his motives for the act; Crassus replies that they had no sense of the humanities and "so far as I could see these new masters had no capacity to teach anything except audacity" (III.24.94). In a sense, Cicero's *De oratore*, with its plea for a broad general education, is the last major objection against a well-organized, discourse-centered teaching program which was clearly already well rooted in Roman society.

Yet the treatises of *praecepta* were only a part of the picture. The *Rhetorica ad Herennium* concludes with an insistence on *exercitatio*: "All these faculties we shall attain if we supplement the rules of theory with diligent practice (*diligentia . . . exercitationis*)" (IV.56.69).

What, then, does *exercitatio* mean in this context? What is the nature of the system in which rhetoric is embedded? The evidence indicates that the system was as standardized as its rhetorical precepts.

THE ROMAN EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM AS DESCRIBED BY QUINTILIAN

The most complete description of the Roman educational system appears in a work published in AD 95, almost a century and a half after the death

⁸Cicero, *De oratore*, trans. E. W. Sutton and H. Rackham, 2 vols (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1967.)

of Cicero but reflecting a process already under way during Cicero's lifetime; it was destined to continue in substantially unchanged form throughout antiquity, to survive the barbarian invasions of late antiquity, and to become a major force in medieval and Renaissance education.

What makes Quintilian's *Institutio oratoria* so valuable as a source of our understanding is that it was written by Rome's acknowledged master teacher, based both on twenty years of classroom experience and on years of courtroom practice.⁹ Moreover, because it is Quintilian's method not only to discuss his own methods but to compare other approaches and to analyze the advantages and disadvantages of each, the book offers a wide-ranging treatment of educational issues in addition to its specific descriptions of the Roman process.

Quintilian was born about AD 35 in Callaguris (modern Calahorra) in Spain.¹⁰ When he was about sixteen he went to Rome, attaching himself, as was the custom, to a famous orator, Domitius Afer. At sixteen he would already have finished his formal education in Spain and taken on the toga of an adult. When Domitius Afer died in 59, Quintilian returned to Spain. He must have taken up a career as pleader and orator with some success, for he was among those who went to Rome in 68 with the governor of Spain, Galba, who became emperor in January 69.

Quintilian was both teacher and pleader in Rome. He mentions (IV.1.19) that he once pleaded a case before Queen Berenice, sister of the King Agrippa who questioned Saint Paul in Caesarea before the apostle was sent to Rome for trial. He also says (IV.2.86) that in many trials "the duty of setting forth the case was generally entrusted to me"—certainly a mark of his peers' respect for his oratorical abilities. He says (VII.2.24) that he published one of his courtroom speeches; however, the text has been lost.

His reputation as a teacher, however, was even greater. He was among the rhetoricians provided an annual subsidy from the public treasury in 72 by the Emperor Vespasian. A famous epigram by Martial a few years later, in 84, is evidence of his continuing reputation:

Quintiliane, vagae moderator summe iuventae,
Gloria Romanae, Quintiliane, togae.

⁹"The Empire's greatest professor of rhetoric," according to Brother E. Patrick Parks F.S.C. in *The Roman Rhetorical Schools as a Preparation for the Courts Under the Early Empire* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1945) 98.

¹⁰For biography, see George A. Kennedy, *Quintilian* (New York: Twayne, 1969). There is, of course, a considerable bibliography. For a select bibliography see Murphy, *Quintilian On the Teaching of Speaking and Writing* xiv-li. Keith V. Erickson has published a listing of about one thousand items in "Quintilian's *Institutio oratoria* and Pseudo-*Declamationes*," *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 11 (1981): 78-90. See also Kennedy, *The Art of Rhetoric in the Roman World* (Princeton UP, 1972) 45-62.

O Quintilian, supreme guide of unsettled youth,
 Glory of the Roman toga, O Quintilian.
 —*Epigrams* 2.90.1–2

Even the satirist Juvenal remarked on Quintilian's good influence on the young, while his pupils included such famous figures as Pliny the Younger and perhaps the historians Tacitus and Suetonius. The Emperor Domitian entrusted the education of his two grandnephews to Quintilian even after he had retired from teaching. His career was financially successful, as he himself notes (VI. Preface 4); on the other hand, as he laments in the same section, he suffered the loss of a beloved son, then his young wife, and finally a second son. Upon his retirement about the year 90, the Emperor Domitian granted him consular rank, a remarkable honor at that time for a rhetorician. There is no record of Quintilian after the murder of Domitian in 96, and Kennedy suggests that he may have died within a year or two of the publication of his *Institutio oratoria* in 95.

Quintilian says that he spent two years of his retirement preparing to write the *Institutio*, after refusing for a while the requests of his friends that he write a book on the "art of speaking." In his Preface, addressed to Marcellus Victorius, he charges that other books on the subject have failed to recognize that such an art depends on the educational foundation of the orator; he says that a visible eloquence depends on an invisible preparation, "as the pinnacles of buildings are seen, while the foundations are hid." Hence his program is a comprehensive one:

For myself. I consider that nothing is unnecessary to the art of oratory, without which it must be confessed that an orator cannot be formed, and that there is no possibility of arriving at the summit in any subject without previous initiatory efforts: therefore, I shall not shrink from stooping to those lesser matters, the neglect of which leaves no room for the greater, and shall proceed to regulate the studies of the orator from infancy, just as if he were entrusted to me to be brought up. (Preface 5)

The result is a work, divided into twelve books, which proposes an educational process beginning in the cradle and lasting into retirement from public life. It starts with what we would call language acquisition and ends with a discussion of honorable leisure in old age. Quintilian includes a detailed description of elementary and secondary education, with a book (ten) on adult self-education, and a lengthy treatment of the five parts of rhetoric. The final book, twelve, discusses the ideal orator as "a good man speaking well."

Charles E. Little describes the *Institutio* as four books blended into one: a treatise on education, a manual of rhetoric, a reader's guide to the best

authors, and a handbook on the moral duties of the orator.¹¹ Quintilian's own description includes the moral flavor permeating the work:

The first book, therefore, will contain those particulars which are antecedent to the duties of the teacher of rhetoric. In the second book we shall consider the first elements of instruction under the hands of the professor of rhetoric and the questions which are asked concerning the subject of rhetoric itself. The next five will be devoted to invention (for under this head will also be included arrangement); and the four following, to elocution, within the scope of which fall memory and pronunciation. One will be added, in which the orator himself will be completely formed by us, since we shall consider, as far as our weakness shall be able, what his morals ought to be, what should be his practice in undertaking, studying, and pleading causes, what should be his style of eloquence, what termination there should be to his pleading, and what may be his employments after its termination. (I. Preface 21–22)

What then of the subject of rhetoric itself? Quintilian follows this passage with the statement that rhetoric will be taught throughout the whole program, where suitable:

Among all these discussions shall be introduced, as occasion shall require, the art of speaking, which will not only instruct students in the knowledge of those things to which alone some have given the name of art, and interpret (so to express myself) the law of rhetoric, but may serve (also) to nourish the faculty of speech, and strengthen the power of eloquence; for in general, these bare treatises on art, through too much affectation of subtlety, break and cut down whatever is noble in eloquence, drink up, as it were, all the blood of thought, and lay bare the bones, which while they ought to exist and be united by their ligaments, ought still to be covered with flesh. (I. Preface 23–24)

In other words, Quintilian provides an integrated approach in which a major subject, rhetoric, is shown in its proper setting. The author of the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* specifies that the three elements of Precept, Imitation, and Exercise are necessary to the art, but leaves unspecified what he means by Imitation and Exercise. It is quite possible that he felt it unnecessary to do so for his contemporary readers, who would know, from their own experience, what went on in the schools. (As a matter of fact he does remind his readers [II.24.38] of the way "students in rhetorical schools" are taught to use Dilemma in argument.) As already shown, Quintilian complains that previous books on rhetoric ignored the fact that the subject

¹¹Charles E. Little, *Quintilian the Schoolmaster*, vol 2 (Nashville: George Peabody Coll. for Teachers, 1951) 41.

is embedded in a total learning process; this great book fastens on the person learning, not merely on the subject itself. The subject of rhetoric, important though it may be, is but one of the tools in that learning process. Quintilian's title is "The Education of the Orator" (*Institutio oratoria*), not "A Book of Rhetoric" (*De rhetorica*).

As Aldo Scaglione has observed, what we today call "composition" had no equivalent in ancient and medieval literary theory.¹² Instead, the movement from silent voice or empty page to fully fashioned appropriate language was the province of rhetoric as assisted by its ancillary, grammar. The oralness or writtenness of the language was regarded as less important than its wholeness in fitting the situation at hand; that is why there is no separate "art of letter-writing" in Roman antiquity (as there is in the Middle Ages), no separate "art of historiography" or separate "art of poetry-writing."¹³ The movement toward future language is the concern of an entire educational program built around rhetoric in its broadest sense but including much more than rhetoric itself.

The objective of the program is the shaping of an adaptive man of discretion, with an ingrained "habit" of adjusting his language to suit any subject or occasion. This sort of schooling does not attempt to lay down "rules":

But let no man require from me such a system of precepts as is laid down by most authors of books of rules, a system in which I should have to make certain laws, fixed by immutable necessity, for all students of eloquence . . . for rhetoric would be a very easy and small matter, if it could be included in a short body of rules; but rules must generally be altered to suit the nature of each individual case, the time, the occasion, and necessity itself. Consequently, one great quality in an orator is discretion, because he must turn his thoughts in various directions, according to the various bearings of his subject. (II.13.1-2)

Nevertheless, even if Quintilian disdains reliance on "rules," he describes a systematic, programmatic educational program. However, it is possible that a modern reader, untrained in the technical processes of Roman education, may well overlook the architectonic framework lying behind Quintilian's readable style and sensible advice.

¹²Aldo Scaglione, *The Classical Theory of Composition from Its Origins to the Present: A Historical Survey*, U of North Carolina Studies in Comparative Literature 53. (U of North Carolina P, 1972) 3.

¹³For the close correspondence between Horace's *Ars poetica* and the standard rhetorical lore of the day, see George Converse Fiske and Mary A. Grant, *Cicero's De oratore and Horace's Ars poetica*, U of Wisconsin Studies in Language and Literature 27 (U of Wisconsin P, 1929). There was, of course, a separate art of verse-writing in the Middle Ages; see Marjorie Curry Woods in chapter 4 of this volume and Murphy, *Rhetoric in the Middle Ages* 135-193.

It has been noted that if there is an art that conceals art, Quintilian has an art which conceals method. His Latin style makes extensive use of periodic sentences, with frequent parallel structures, sometimes quite complex by modern standards. (A good example may be found in the passage just quoted or in the preceding quotation on the role of rhetoric in the teaching program.) Also, since he usually presents various viewpoints before declaring his own judgment on each point, only the most careful reader will be able to track his main threads of thought through such discussions. His highly personalized accounts of his own teaching methods may also mislead an unwary reader into believing falsely that the *Institutio* is more of an autobiography than an exposition. All of this makes Quintilian extremely difficult to summarize.

ROMAN TEACHING METHODS

Virtually every individual element found in the program described by Quintilian was inherited from the Greeks. What was not inherited, however, was the deftly designed correlation of these elements into a "system."¹⁴ As a system the process could be—and was—replicated over time and space. As a system it could be promoted worldwide as a tool of public policy equal in geopolitical value to the legions and the tax collectors in making the world Roman. As the television commentator Alastair Cooke once remarked, "Language is a dialect with an army and a navy," and history does in fact tell us that for more than half a millennium, the Latin language and its schools served as a kind of social cement throughout the Western world.¹⁵

Quintilian is not the inventor of this system; he is merely describing a process already familiar to Romans for almost two centuries. However, he is one of our best sources for both its philosophy and its details. Donald A. Russell suggested that Quintilian could even be used as a guide to understanding earlier Greek developments:

The conservatism of rhetorical teaching over such a long period makes it possible to give an account of it as a system, based on the late textbooks

¹⁴For a schematic overview of the five elements of the Roman teaching methods, see the Appendix at the end of this chapter.

¹⁵Robert Pattison offers a useful analysis of the power of the Latin language "in the service of authority" in his book, *On Literacy: The Politics of the Word from Homer to the Age of Rock* (Oxford UP, 1982): "As it began its expansion, Rome also began to develop formal, written Latin for the business of the Empire. The soldier and the grammarian proceeded in lockstep to spread the Roman way, one by conquering the world, the other by providing it with correct Latin as a medium of organization" (67).

which survive, without feeling that one's conclusions are likely to be fundamentally wrong for the earlier period. Quintilian is undoubtedly the best guide.¹⁶

Some modern critics have argued that Quintilian is presenting an idealized or even wistfully utopian view of education. They point to his insistence on morality as a reaction to the decadence he saw around him, noting that many of his examples hearken back to the presumably more virtuous days of the pre-Imperial Republic. Yet he says that he bases the *Institutio oratoria* on his own teaching experience in a career that won the approbation of at least two Emperors, Vespasian and Domitian, and attracted the plaudits of writers like Juvenal and Martial.

What is more important, though, is that what Quintilian describes is consistent with other evidence about Roman education from the time of Cicero up to the fall of Rome to the barbarians in the fifth Christian century. It is also generally consistent with the evidence about the early Middle Ages, up to the late twelfth century at least. Obviously not every student went all the way through the course, just as today there are many "dropouts" in even the best of schools. The poor sent their children for only the most elementary education with the *ludi magister* for grammar or the *calculator* for basic numbers.¹⁷ No doubt many students had to content themselves with the instruction in grammar without ever proceeding to more advanced studies with a rhetorician. Nor did every teacher have the mastery of a Quintilian; Seneca tells the story of the Spanish schoolmaster Porcius Latro who could declaim brilliantly before his pupils but was paralyzed with fright when called upon to speak in public.¹⁸

If nothing else, the homogeneous longevity of the system proves its efficiency. Pierre Riché remarks that even in the sixth century teachers of grammar, rhetoric, and law were still listed in the public budget under "barbarians" like Theodoric and his successor Athalaric. "When we look inside the schools of the grammarian and the rhetor," Riché adds, "we can observe that the program and methods of instruction also had not changed."¹⁹ The ever-practical Romans surely did not continue the system

¹⁶Donald A. Russell, *Criticism in Antiquity* (U of California P, 1981) 25. S. F. Bonner also stresses the systematic, devoting 162 pages of his *Education in Ancient Rome from the Elder Cato to the Younger Pliny* (U of California P, 1977) to a section titled "The Standard Teaching Programme."

¹⁷The most comprehensive account of ancient education is that of Henri I. Marrou, *A History of Education in Antiquity*, trans. George Lamb (New York: Sheed, 1956). He discusses Roman education in chapters 4 through 7 (265–313). For a discussion of terms like *calculator*, see E. W. Bower, "Some Technical Terms in Roman Education," *Hermes* 89 (1961): 462–77.

¹⁸Cited in Gwynn, *Roman Education* 67.

¹⁹Pierre Riché, *Education and Culture in the Barbarian West Sixth through Eighth Centuries*, trans. John J. Contreni (U of South Carolina P, 1976) 40.

out of any philosophical regard for "liberal arts"—Cicero's *De oratore* in 44 BC was apparently the last major Roman stand on that issue—but rather for the quite pragmatic reason that it worked. It provided literacy for many, competence for some, excellence for a few. The dividing line separating these three levels of accomplishment was based simply on the length of time the student could spend in the program.

What Quintilian demonstrates, then, is the complete system. Whether this or that student benefited fully from it depended more on socioeconomic factors than on the integrity of the system itself.

Consequently, it would seem useful to examine in a bit more detail the actual methods designed to produce what Quintilian calls *facilitas*, the ability to produce appropriate language on any subject in any situation. This examination covers Precept (Rhetoric and Grammar), Imitation, the two exercise programs of Progymnasmata and Declamation, and Sequencing.

Precept

Both grammar and rhetoric are included here. The *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, as has been shown, defines *praecepta* as "a set of rules that provide a definite method and system of speaking." Cicero's *De inventione* defines Eloquence as speaking based on "rules of art." Quintilian, as seen from his Preface, cautions that such "rules" should be not followed slavishly, and he adds in another place that "these rules have not the formal authority of laws or decrees of the plebs, but are, with all they contain, the children of expediency (*utilitas*)" (II.13.6). For him they serve as guides rather than commandments. No doubt this attitude was that of the best rhetors, though we can imagine the worse masters, just as today, driven to a helpless reliance on the rules because they do not know their subject well enough to be flexible.

The exact Roman method of teaching rhetoric as precept is not clear. Quintilian suggests that the precepts operate throughout the program; this could mean either that the master introduced precepts at each stage or that separate times were set aside for them. The *Institutio oratoria* does not describe any separate segment for teaching precepts, though it would seem logical that the older students preparing for Declamation would have to know the principles of at least deliberative and forensic rhetoric, the major fields covered in the imaginary cases students were asked to plead.

The Roman boy's educational progress was divided into three main steps: the acquisition of the most basic language skills, especially reading and writing; then a period of exercises with the *grammaticus*; then, when he was ready, training under the teacher of rhetoric (the *rhetor*). Book 2 of the *Institutio* covers the teaching done by the rhetorician. One might expect a

discussion of *praecepta* at this point. Yet what Quintilian describes is not a systematic instruction in rhetorical precepts, but instead a more advanced version of the same types of classroom exercises already handled under the *grammaticus*. In fact, Quintilian declares that the exercises are more important than the precepts: "I will venture to say that this sort of diligent exercise will contribute more to the improvement of students than all the precepts of all the rhetoricians that ever wrote" (II.5.14). When he does come to a treatment of rhetoric in book 2, he adds another caution about the relation of precept to exercise:

For the present I will only say that I do not want young men to think their education complete when they have mastered one of the small text-books of which so many are in circulation, or to ascribe a talismanic value to the arbitrary decrees of theorists. The art of speaking can only be attained by hard work and assiduity of study, by a variety of exercises and repeated trial, the highest prudence and unflinching quickness of judgment. (II. 13.15)

Since his discussion of rhetoric occupies eight of the twelve books of the *Institutio*, however, it is clear that he regards the subject as important. Yet Quintilian's whole approach is to teach students, not subjects. The most likely explanation is that rhetorical precept was not taught in a block, all at once or even on assigned days; rather, individual concepts must have been introduced whenever they suited the exercise at hand. When Quintilian discusses Narration of histories under the teacher of rhetoric (II.4.3–19), for example, he outlines the qualities of good narration and then refers to his later treatment of the subject under Judicial Oratory in his rhetoric section. Quintilian's recurrent principle for the assignment of individual exercises to the student is "When he is ready." He criticizes grammarians (II.1.2) for taking upon themselves some aspects of rhetorical instruction for which the boys will not yet be ready.

One thing is certain. The rhetoric treatise was not a student "textbook" in the modern sense of the word, with each student having a copy to study. The 'textbook' in our sense of the word is a product of the printing age, when books became cheap enough to distribute in a classroom. In any case, Roman rhetoric was so homogeneous that any reasonably well-educated teacher could master and transmit the principles orally without much difficulty. There were rhetoric texts available for study (they apparently sold well), even if public libraries were comparatively rare.

No doubt students were asked to memorize some materials. For example, the "commonplaces" (topics) would be useful for students to have ready to hand. Certainly it is known that they were obliged to memorize poetry and prose for the process of Imitation, and in fact Quintilian prefers this over having them memorize their own writing, even if doting par-

ents preferred to hear their sons recite their own compositions from memory for public presentations. His argument is that they might as well memorize the best authors rather than perpetuating their own errors. But he makes no mention of memorizing precepts.

Grammar was another matter. Although Quintilian refers to "those rules which are published in the little manuals of professors" (I.5.7), the subject of grammar was not nearly as well developed in his day as rhetoric had already been for more than two centuries. There was no standard treatise on the subject. As a consequence, he feels obliged to devote a significant portion of book 1 (chapters 4–7) to such matters as "word," analogy, usage, spellings, barbarisms, solecisms, vocal tones, and the differences between Greek and Latin. Chapter 7 deals with Orthography, the art of writing words correctly on the page. He justifies this attention to apparently minor matters by arguing that correct language is the basis for every good use of language. "These studies," he says, "are injurious, not to those who pass through them, but only to those who dwell immoderately on them" (I.7.35).

Grammar is regarded as so foundational that students must be taught its precepts directly, especially in the earliest stages. And in the exercise of Imitation, the fine points of grammar are noted carefully in meticulous critiques of the models being studied. These two types of instruction are pointed out in his definition of the subject. Quintilian defines grammar in what was already a traditional way: "the art of speaking correctly, and the interpretation of the poets" (I.4.2). Thus it includes what we would today call the "rules" of correctness, and also the study of what we would call "literature."

(Later Roman teachers had access to a standard textbook on grammar. By the fourth Christian century, a widely accepted manual of basic Latin grammar, the brief *Ars minor* of Aelius Donatus [fl. AD 350]²⁰ was available. This book petrified for later centuries the concept of "eight parts of speech"; another work, his larger *Ars grammatica* (*Ars maior*), not only treats the eight parts of speech in greater detail but includes a section dealing with *schemes* [figures of speech] and *tropes*, which would ordinarily have been treated by the rhetor rather than the grammarian. It was another two centuries before the appearance of what was to become the standard advanced Latin grammar text for more than a thousand years, that is, the *Ars grammatica* of Priscian [fl. AD 500], who was a teacher of Latin grammar in the Greek-speaking city of Constantinople. This work contains eighteen

²⁰It has been translated by W. J. Chase in *The Ars Minor of Donatus*, U of Wisconsin Studies in the Social Sciences and History 36 (U of Wisconsin P, 1926). The Latin text is in Henry Keil (ed.) in *Grammatici Latini* 7 vols (Leipzig, 1864) 4, 355–66.

books, the last two dealing with "construction" [syntax], or the elements of composition.²¹)

Even without such books in the earlier periods of Roman history, however, all the evidence indicates a consistency of grammatical instruction in the schools. The *grammaticus*, after all, received a young boy who had only the rudiments of reading and writing skills; the exigencies of standard-setting through all the complex classroom exercises provided ample opportunity for the grammarian not only to teach the rules themselves but to insist on their proper application in both writing and speaking.

What is to be remembered, above all, about the role of Precept in the Roman schools is that it was only a part of an integrated system designed to produce not merely knowledge but ability. Quintilian reminds his readers of this fact in book 10: "But these precepts of being eloquent, though necessary to be known, are not sufficient to produce the full power of eloquence unless there be united to them a certain Facility, which among the Greeks is called *hexis*, 'habit'" (X.1.1). This facility is resident in the psyche of the person, not merely in his knowledge.

To comprehend how the Romans produced this habit in young men, it is necessary to understand the precise role played in the schools by Imitation and by the graded composition exercises known as *Progymnasmata*.

Imitation

The concept of *Imitatio* (*Mimesis*) is much misunderstood today. On one hand, it could mean the artistic re-creation of reality by a poet or artist; on the other, it could mean the deliberate modeling of an existing artifact or text.²² Actually it was for the Romans the second of these, a carefully plotted sequence of interpretive and re-creational activities using preexisting texts to teach students how to create their own original texts. Each phase in the sequence has its own purpose, but takes its value from its place in the sequence. It would be a mistake, therefore, for a modern reader to assume that each of the parts is independent of the others or to think that the set of compositional activities is a kind of smorgasbord to be picked up and used at random. It is not mere eclecticism.

The concept is certainly an ancient one. Plato has Protagoras say that when schoolboys memorize the great poets they imbibe not only the poetry but the moral qualities of the great men described in the poems (*Protagoras* 325–326). Isocrates makes it a key teaching tool (*Antidosis* 276–277). Aristotle begins his discussion of drama with a statement of

²¹Text in Keil, *Grammatica Latini* 4 367–402. Priscian was the first Latin grammarian to discuss syntax.

²²There is a good brief survey of ancient views in Russell, *Criticism in Antiquity* 99–113.

principle: "Imitation is natural to man" (*Poetics* 1148b). The *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, as we have seen, begins and ends with the injunction to use Imitation as well as Exercise to learn the art of speaking. Cicero, the object of fervid imitation during the Renaissance,²³ opens the second book of his *De inventione* with the statement that he has taken the best from many sources, just as the painter Zeuxis of Heraclea chose the five most beautiful girls from Croton as models for a painting of Helen the city had commissioned for its Temple of Juno. The continuity of Imitation was so strong throughout the Roman period that the first Christian rhetorician, Saint Augustine, writing in AD 426, declares in his *De doctrina Christiana* (IV.3) that Imitation is more important than Precept for the newcomer to rhetoric.

The Roman school system perfected a seven-step process of Imitation, with writing or the analysis of written texts being coupled to oral performance by the students before master and peers in the classroom. What today would be called peer criticism is an integral part of the scheme; in the Roman interactive classroom the student-critic shapes his own critical judgment by assessing publicly what he hears and reads. The teacher is not merely to tell the students what to think, Quintilian says, "but frequently to ask questions upon them, and try the judgment of his pupils" (II.5.13).

A brief explanation of these seven steps may show how Imitation works in the Roman classroom.²⁴

A. Reading Aloud (*lectio*). Either the master or one of the students could read a text aloud. Models are to be carefully chosen for their linguistic virtues, though occasional faulty ones may be used to illustrate how defects may occur. In the later stages when speeches become the texts for study, the master may declaim a speech or even declaim one of his own (though Quintilian prefers that the master use an acknowledged orator like Cicero rather than his own work). Quintilian introduces implicitly a major educational principle at this point, namely, that no exercise should be conducted for a single purpose only. The students hear not only the form of a text, including its rhythmical or other sonic patterns, but also take in unconsciously its subject matter and moral tone. Hence the insistence on histories as well as poems, as offering salutary models of conduct.

²³See Izora Scott, *Controversies Over the Imitation of Cicero as a Model for Style and Some Phases of Their Influence on the Schools of the Renaissance* (Davis: Hermagoras, 1991). It is important to note, however, that some Renaissance discussions of Imitation deal with adults deciding which authors to imitate in their own literary works, while others do deal with Imitation in educating the young.

²⁴A useful account of Imitation may be found in Donald Lemmen Clark, *Rhetoric in Greco-Roman Education* (Columbia UP, 1957) 144–176. Clark's account may be particularly interesting to readers concerned with teaching method, since he consistently analyzes the rationale for the exercises more clearly than other historians like Marrou or Bonner.

B. *Analysis of the Text (praelectio)*. This is the beginning of the application of judgment. The master literally dissects the text. The immediate intent is to show the students how the author made good or bad choices in wording, in organization, in the use of figures, and the like; the long-range objective is to accustom the student to what today we could call a "close reading" of texts. Since it is a written text done orally, the exercise also trains the "ear" of the student for later exercises in analyzing the oral arguments used in orations. Both good models and bad models are to be presented. Quintilian's brief summary in book 2 of the *Institutio* seems straightforward enough; in the following passage he is explaining the method in respect to analyzing an oration, though the method is exactly the same for a poem or a history (as he points out in I.8.13–21):

The master, after calling for silence, should appoint some one pupil to read (and it will be best that this duty should be imposed on them by turns), so that they may thus accustom themselves to clear pronunciation. Then, after explaining the cause for which the oration was composed (so that what is said will be better understood), he should leave nothing unnoticed which is important to be remarked, either in the thought or the language: he should observe what method is adopted in the Exordium for conciliating the judge; what clearness, brevity, and apparent sincerity is displayed in the statement of facts; what design there is in certain passages, and what well-concealed artifice (for that is the only true art in pleading which cannot be perceived except by a skilful pleader); what judgment appears in the division of the matter; how subtle and urgent is the argumentation; with what force the speaker excites, with what amenity he soothes; what severity is shown in his invectives, what urbanity in his jests; how he commands the feelings, forces a way into the understanding, and makes the opinions of the judges coincide with what he asserts. In regard to the style, too, he should notice any expression that is peculiarly appropriate, elegant, or sublime; when the amplification deserves praise, what quality is opposed to it; what phrases are happily metaphorical, what figures of speech are used; what part of the composition is smooth and polished, and yet manly and vigorous. Nor is it without advantage, indeed, that inelegant and faulty speeches—yet such as many, from depravity of taste, would admire—should be read before boys, and that it should be shown how many expressions in them are inappropriate, obscure, timid, low, mean, affected, or effeminate. (II.5.6–10)

When Quintilian and his colleagues say that they will "leave nothing unnoticed," they mean exactly that. The dissection of the text is intended to be microscopic. While a reader may cover whole sections with a sweep of the eye, the composing writer/speaker must commit himself to one word or even one syllable at a time as he creates a text. Hence the truly analytic

reader needs to reach back through the wholeness of paragraph or argument to identify the microcosmic decisions made by the composer.

An excellent example of this Roman micro-analysis may be found in a later work written by the grammarian Priscian about AD 500. Priscian's *Analyses of the First Lines of the Twelve Books of Virgil's Aeneid* is an extremely meticulous work, occupying 54 pages in the standard edition of Henry Keil. The beginning section provides a good example of the method:

Scan the line *Arma virumque cano Troiae qui primus ab oris*.

How many caesurae are there?

Two.

What are they?

The penthemimera and the hepthemimera [*semiquinaria, semiseptenaria*, Priscian says in his barbarous Latin]. Which is which?

The penthemimera is *Arma virumque cano*, and the hepthemimera *Arma virumque cano Troiae*.

How many "figures" has it?

Ten.

Why has it got ten?

Because it is made up of three dactyls and two spondees.

[Priscianus takes no notice of the final spondee.]

How many words ["parts of speech"] are there?

Nine.

How many nouns?

Six—*Arma, virum, Troiae, qui* [sic], *primus, oris*.

How many verbs?

One—*cano*.

How many prepositions?

One—*ab*.

How many conjunctions?

One—*que*.

Study each word in turn. Let us begin with *Arma*. What part of speech is it?

A noun.

What is its quality?

Appellative.

What kind is it?

General.

What gender?

Neuter.

How do you know?

All nouns ending in *-a* in the plural are neuter.

Why is *Arma* not used in the singular?

Because it means many different things.²⁵

This kind of methodical treatment, carried on over all kinds of texts for ten or a dozen years, must surely have promoted a high degree of linguistic sensitivity in the students. It must be remembered, too, that the same treatment was given to the students' own compositions.

On the other hand, the mere analysis of others' texts could produce a sort of compositional paralysis, with the writer fearing his inability to do as well as the models. Quintilian is quite aware of what we would call "writer's block." He tells the story of a young man named Secundus, whose uncle, Julius Florus, found him in a dejected state one day; Secundus told his uncle that he had been trying for three days to write an introduction to a subject he had to write upon for school. Florus responded smilingly, "Do you wish to write better than you can?" (X.3.14). For improvement, Quintilian adds, there is need of application, but not of vexation with ourselves.

The close analysis of texts was of course not the only method used. It took its value from its place in the system. The next steps called upon the student to apply his own energies.

C. Memorization of Models. Quintilian is convinced that memorization of models not only strengthens the memory in the way that physical exercise strengthens a muscle but also provides the student with "an abundance of the best words, phrases, and figures" for possible use later on (II.7.4). Memorization is especially useful for the very young, who do not yet have the capacity for intellectual analysis of their texts. "The chief symptom of ability in children," he says, "is memory" (II.3.1). (He says the same thing about teaching a foreign language to the very young.) He is quite adamant about the virtue of memorizing good models rather than one's own writing, and in fact says that such memorization will equip the student better to recall his own compositions when necessary. As usual, though, he has a keen eye for the pedagogical opportunity: a student may be allowed to recite his own work from memory only as a reward, when he has produced "something more polished than ordinary" (II.7.5). The problem he sees is that otherwise the student may end up perpetuating his faults if he memorizes his own work.²⁶

²⁵Quoted in Marrou, *History of Education in Antiquity* 279–280.

²⁶There is a brief analysis of Quintilian's view of memory in Frances A. Yates, *The Art of Memory* (Chicago, Chicago UP, 1966), pp. 21–26.

D. Paraphrase of Models. The re-telling of something in the students' own words begins at the earliest stages of the program—for example, with first an oral and then a written paraphrase of a fable of Aesop (I.9.2)—but continues throughout the instruction of both the *grammaticus* and the *rhetor*. The more advanced students deal with more complex types of narrations such as plots of comedies or the accounts found in histories (II.4.2); here Quintilian refers to the concepts of narration to be found in rhetorical doctrine, though he expressly reminds the reader that the exercise is a continuation of that begun earlier under the *grammaticus*. (Here too is another example of the way in which formal rhetorical precepts are fed into the system as the need arises.)

The ultimate purposes of paraphrase are two: to accustom students to fastening on the structure of the model rather than its words, and to begin the development of a personal style in narration. "It is a service to boys at an early age," he says, "when their speech is but just commenced, to repeat what they have heard in order to improve their faculty of speaking. Let them accordingly be made, and with good reason, to go over their stories again, and to pursue them from the middle, either backward or forward" (II.4.15).

It is in this section, dealing with the first efforts of the students to compose in their own terms, that Quintilian lays down his principles of classroom correction. The students should be shown the faults in their writing and speaking, but should also be praised for whatever they have accomplished. If the performance is so bad that the student is asked to write again on the same subject, he should be told that he can indeed do better, "since study is cheered by nothing more than hope" (II.4.13). Quintilian applauds exuberance in compositions by the young, if it is made clear that later on a more sophisticated standard will be demanded. He comments that "the remedy for exuberance is easy, but barrenness is incurable by any labor" (II.4.6). Elsewhere he refers to an ancient aphorism that "it is easier to prune a tree than to grow one" (II.8.9). Accordingly he urges the master to promote freedom of invention in the early stages of the student's development, tolerating (though noting) some stylistic faults which can be corrected as the student becomes more adept in language.

E. Transliteration of Models. There is no precise English term for the Roman exercises in text re-casting. The process could take several forms: direct translation of the text from Greek to Latin or Latin to Greek; re-casting of Latin prose to Latin verse; re-casting of Latin prose to Greek verse, or vice versa; making the model shorter, or longer, whether in verse or prose; altering the style from plain to grand or vice versa. Transliteration could be an extremely sophisticated assignment, demanding precise knowledge of verse forms and prose rhythms as well as an extensive vocab-

ulary. Indeed, Quintilian notes, the difficulty of the exercise makes it valuable for teaching a keen awareness of language. A sure knowledge of the model is a prerequisite. As for critics of this method, he points out agreement on the principle: "About the utility of turning poetry into prose, I suppose no one has any doubt" (X.5.4). Once the principle of usefulness for re-casting is established, he implies, there is no reason to shy away from other modes of accomplishing the same end.

A monolingual culture like the American, in which knowledge of foreign languages is severely limited, might be hard put to use some translatable forms of the method, but other forms (e.g., verse-prose or prose-verse, or plain style-grand style) might well be considered as classroom tools.

F. Recitation of Paraphrase or Transliteration. The oral-written relationship is so strong in Roman educational practice that even Quintilian does not always make explicit what he clearly expects everyone to take for granted. This relationship is spelled out at the very beginning of his discussion of teaching methods: "Not only is the art of writing combined with that of speaking, but correct reading also precedes illustration" (I.4.3). The student, having "read" his text analytically, writes his own paraphrase or transliteration of it, and then brings his own work into the public classroom for oral presentation. Sometimes it will be recited from memory, sometimes read aloud.

G. Correction of Paraphrase or Transliteration. The admonitions of the master concerning this performance are shared with all who hear, thus raising the standards of everyone. Quintilian argues that this is the prime advantage of public over private tutorial education:

At home he can learn only what is taught himself; at school, even what is taught others. He will daily hear many things commended, many things corrected; the idleness of a fellow student, when reproved, will be a warning to him; the industry of anyone, when commended, will be a stimulus; emulation will be excited by praise; and he will think it a disgrace to yield to his equals in age, and an honor to surpass his seniors. All these matters excite the mind; and though ambition itself be a vice, yet it is often the parent of virtues. (II.2.21-22)

This "exercise of judgment," as Quintilian calls it, could also enroll the students themselves as critics. Not only was the Roman schoolroom interactive between master and students, but between students and students as well. Quintilian is quite explicit about this for the older boys doing formal declamations or practice orations: "Shall a pupil, if he commits faults in declaiming, be corrected before the rest, and will it not be more service-

able to him to correct the speech of another? Indubitably" (II.5.16). Even though he does not make the same kind of statement about the earlier stages of the program, the whole tone of the book, especially chapter 2 of book 1 on the virtues of the public classroom, argues for what he continually refers to as "activity of the mind" among the students. There is no reason to believe that this would exclude what we call "peer criticism." Perhaps Quintilian intends only the older boys to comment on each others' work, but everything else he says throughout the book is at least consistent with the possibility that he encourages student criticisms at every stage.

Two principles govern his use of correction. The first is that oral correction should be tailored to the capacities of the student involved; however, since correction is public, the master must keep in mind the other hearers in the classroom, "who will think that whatever the master has not amended is right" (II.6.4). The second is that some early faults can be tolerated, as part of the student's natural development of a particular skill.

For the adult practitioner he discusses in book 10, there is another kind of self-correction involved in the practice of writing. This involves personal decisions about what to add, to take away, or to alter (X.5.1), rather than the public pronouncements in a classroom about something just recited. Even so, it is logical to assume that Quintilian would ask the adult writer to analyze his own written text with the same methods used earlier in the classroom process of Imitation. He proposes lifetime use of methods learned in school.²⁷

The process of Imitation, then, is for Quintilian and other Romans a specific sequence of learning activities for students from the youngest to the oldest. The method remains the same over time, the only change being in the models imitated. The young lad who begins with a simple fable of Aesop ends up years later as a young adult doing the same thing with a complex speech of Demosthenes or Cicero. The student learns political science, history, morals, and literature by a kind of intelligent osmosis. His attention is focused on the style and structure of the particular text, but he cannot escape an awareness of historical circumstances or ethical problems as he moves through the various steps.

The objective, of course, is to enable the student eventually to compose his own texts: "For what object have we in teaching them, but that they may not always require to be taught?" (II.5.13). Free composition must be based on knowledge of the options available to the writer, and this knowledge comes only from Imitation. Imitation is thus a life-long pursuit.

²⁷Accordingly, Quintilian includes in book 10 a lengthy section (X.1.37-2.26) analyzing a wide range of authors and orators worthy of imitation by the adult learner. He concludes the section by saying that "we should do well to keep a number of different excellences before our eyes."

Quintilian remarks early in the *Institutio* that a child learns spoken language easily through natural imitation, so that even a two-year-old can speak and understand what is said to him. Writing, however, must be taught to him. The boy follows the forms of the letters of the alphabet before he is allowed to write them for himself, tracing indented patterns with his stylus to accustom his hand kinesthetically to the form of a letter before he writes it freely. "By following these sure traces rapidly and frequently, he will form his hand, and not require the assistance of a person to guide his hand with his own hand placed over it" (I.1.27). This kind of tactile Imitation is based on exactly the same principles as the school exercises and the self-learning activity recommended in book 10 for adults to continue even into retirement. To put it into abstract terms, form precedes freedom. The writer who knows only one mode of writing is not free, but is bound to that one mode.

As valuable as Imitation is, however, it too is but one part of the total educational system. The Roman student also underwent a parallel program of specific writing/speaking exercises (*Progymnasmata*).

Progymnasmata (Graded Composition Exercises)

This is one area of methodology in which Quintilian is less than thorough, perhaps because of what he calls "this haste of mine" (II.1.12). In the opening chapter of book 2 he discusses the proper spheres of *grammaticus* and *rhetor*, arguing that the teacher of rhetoric (as well as the teacher of grammar) "should not shrink from the earliest duties of his profession" (II.1.8). What he means is that both should teach the "little exercises" that ultimately prepare the boy to be an adept user of language. Then he rapidly lists nine exercises: narration, praise, blame, thesis, commonplaces, statement of facts, eulogy, invective, and refutation; then in chapter 4, he discusses some of these exercises and adds three more: comparison, cause and effect (which he calls a *chreia*), and praise or censure of laws. Earlier (I.8.3), he had named *prosopopoeiae* in connection with proper oral reading. This makes thirteen altogether. He concludes chapter 4, with this observation: "On such subjects did the ancients, for the most part, exercise the faculty of eloquence" (II.4.41). In other words, he is simply listing rapidly a number of exercises long known and undoubtedly familiar to his readers—hence his brevity.²⁸

What he writes about here is a set of graded composition exercises which had long since come to be called *progymnasmata* (though he himself does not use that term). The name comes from the function of the exercises: if the highest forms of school training are the Declamations or ficti-

tious speeches (*gymnasmata* in Greek), then that which prepares for them is Pre-Declamation (*progymnasmata*). Even though the term itself is Greek, and the major ancient writers of textbooks on the subject were Greek, it is clear from Quintilian's account that the use of the exercises is already solidly entrenched in Latin schools.

The earliest surviving textbook defining and illustrating the exercises is that by Aelius Theon of Alexandria, writing probably in the latter half of the first Christian century—a contemporary of Quintilian though probably unknown to him. Two of the most popular Greek textbooks come long after Quintilian, written by Hermogenes of Tarsus²⁹ (second century) and Aphthonius of Antioch³⁰ (fourth century). Both these books had impact well beyond antiquity. Hermogenes's treatise was translated into Latin as *Praeexercitamenta* by the Latin grammarian Priscian around AD 500, and had use during the Middle Ages and Renaissance. Aphthonius, however, eclipsed Hermogenes in antiquity by far, mainly because he included useful examples, and his work became a standard Byzantine textbook as well; when introduced to the Latin West during the fifteenth century, it achieved a new popularity extending even to colonial America.

Quintilian's concern with the proper role of the grammarian proved to be a prophetic one. It was not a question of whether the *progymnasmata* should be taught, but rather a question of who should teach them. Quintilian urges the rhetorician to keep some control, even if it means taking up "the earliest duties of his profession" by working with very young students just beginning narrations of fables. History tells us that the grammarians eventually won out in Roman schools, taking over these exercises for themselves. As a practical matter, this development may have meant little to the boys who came through the system, since they received the instruction in any case.

We see in Quintilian, then, a comparatively early stage in which these exercises still fall under the purview of both masters. It is true, nevertheless, that his brief account can show us their relation to the schools' objectives. Specifically, he argues that the exercises train students in the exact functions needed in the real world:

But what is there among those exercises, of which I have just now spoken, that does not relate both to other matters peculiar to rhetoricians, and, indisputably, to the sort of causes pleaded in courts of justice? Have we not to make statements of facts in the forum? I know not whether that department of rhetoric is not most of all in demand there. Are not eulogy and invective often introduced in those disputations? Do not commonplaces, both those

²⁹Translated by Charles S. Baldwin, *Medieval Rhetoric and Poetic* (New York: Macmillan, 1928) 23–38.

³⁰Translated by Ray Nadeau, *Speech Monographs* 19 (1952): 264–285.

²⁸Hock and O'Neill 10–22.

which are leveled against vice (such as were composed, we read, by Cicero), and those in which questions are discussed generally (such as were published by Quintus Hortensius, as, "Ought we to trust to light proofs?" and "For witnesses and against witnesses"), mix themselves with the inmost substance of causes? These weapons are in some degree to be prepared, so that we may use them whenever circumstances require. He who shall suppose that these matters do not concern the orator, will think that a statue is not begun when its limbs are cast. (II.1.10-12)

This argument is coupled with the proposal that the *grammaticus* continue to teach the students part of the time even after they join the *rhetor*. This, he says, will show the students the continuity of their instruction while providing them with variety in their masters. "Nor need there be any fear," he adds, "that the boy will be overburdened with the lessons of two masters. His labor will not be increased, but that which was mixed together under one master will be divided. Each tutor will thus be more efficient in his own province" (II.1.13). Perhaps the futility of his argument lay in the fact that both masters used the same methods anyway, with the exception of Declamation belonging clearly to the *rhetor*.

In any case, Quintilian does not define or illustrate most of the terms he uses for the exercises, so we must look elsewhere. The *Progymnasmata* of Hermogenes of Tarsus is as good a source as any, since it transmitted the well-accepted definitions which even the more popular Aphthonius used later as the basis for his own book. Even though Hermogenes is writing in the second Christian century, he reflects a tradition going well back before the time of Cicero.

Donald Lemen Clark has an incisive statement about the educational value of the *progymnasmata* as found in Hermogenes and his successors:

They all give patterns for the boys to follow. They present a graded series of exercises in writing and speaking themes which proceed from the easy to the more difficult; they build each exercise on what the boys have learned from previous exercises . . . yet each exercise adds something new.³¹

The key term here is "graded." Like other elements of the Roman system, the *progymnasmata* are taught not for themselves but for habit-building in the mind of the student. With each accomplishment of the student, there comes a new and more difficult challenge, just as Imitation moves by steps from the oral reading through model-based writing to the final free composition of the student. The "how" is carefully spelled out at each stage.

³¹Clark, *Rhetoric* 181. For a modern adaptation of this idea, see John Hagaman, "Modern Use of the Progymnasmata in Teaching Rhetorical Invention," *Rhetoric Review* 5 (1986): 22-29.

Hermogenes presents twelve *progymnasmata*: fable, tale, *chreia*, proverb, refutation and confirmation, commonplace, encomium, comparison, impersonation (*prosopopoeia*), description, thesis, and laws. (Aphthonius makes these into fourteen by separating refutation and confirmation, and by making censure the opposite of encomium; Quintilian, as we have seen, adds cause and effect.)

The twelve can be divided according to the three types of rhetoric:

Deliberative rhetoric: fable, tale, *chreia*, proverb, thesis, laws.

Judicial rhetoric: confirmation and refutation, commonplace.

Epideictic rhetoric: encomium, impersonation, comparison, description.

However apt this kind of division might be in terms of future usefulness to the student, though, it does not represent the order in which the *progymnasmata* were taught. (Indeed the concept of "three genera of speeches," introduced by Aristotle and followed by the Romans, was always more theoretical than practical in terms of speeches made in the real world; any one oration might require elements of all three genera, as Cicero's performances have shown.) The exercises were taught in a certain order, for the good reason that they naturally succeeded each other.

The following abstract of the twelve *progymnasmata* of Hermogenes is necessarily brief, since the inclusion of overnumerous examples would produce an account as long as the book itself; examples are provided only in those cases (e.g., the *chreia*) which might otherwise be difficult for a modern reader to understand.³²

1. Fable. The first exercise is the retelling of fables from Aesop. The retelling may be either more concise than the original, or expanded beyond it with invented dialogue or additional actions to enhance the tale.

2. Tales. This is the recounting of something that happened (a history) or of something as if it had happened (an epic, a tragedy, a comedy, a poem). Hermogenes names five modes: direct declarative, indirect declarative, interrogative, enumerative, comparative.

3. Chreia. This is an exercise in amplification, dealing with what a person said or did. Hermogenes says there are three types of *chreia* to be used in this way:

Of words only: "Isocrates said that education's root is bitter, its fruit is sweet" (*Chreia* 43).

³²The following account is based largely on Clark.

Of actions only: "Crates, having met with an ignorant boy, beat the boy's tutor" (Quintilian I.9.5).

Mixed, with both words and actions: "Diogenes, on seeing a youth misbehaving, beat his tutor and said, 'Why are you teaching such things?'" (*Chreia* 26).

Hermogenes notes that a *chreia* differs from a maxim in three ways: a maxim has no character speaking, does not involve actions, and does not have an implicit question and answer.

The main point, of course, is the amplification asked of the student. Hermogenes suggests a sequence of eight methods to write about a *chreia*: praise of the speaker quoted, an expanded restatement of the *chreia*, its rationale, a statement of the opposite view, a statement from analogy, a statement from example, a statement from authority, and an exhortation to follow the advice of the speaker.

Ronald F. Hock and Edward N. O'Neill have recently published translations of the *chreia* of seven ancient authors including Quintilian; an appendix listing 68 *chreia* shows a remarkable similarity among the various collections, whether the "speaker" named is Demosthenes, Diogenes, or Plato.³³ This is not surprising, since the books are written for teachers rather than students; and utility not variety is the standard.

4. Proverb. This is an exercise in amplification of an aphorism (*sententia*). It is not radically different from the preceding exercise, but is intended as incremental repetition. Hermogenes suggests methods similar to those for the *chreia*, though of course without praise for a speaker or an action. The *Rhetorica ad Herennium* (IV.43.56-58) cites the Proverb as an element of a figure of speech called Dwelling On One Point (*expositio*); seven means of amplification are offered for the proverb "Often one who does not wish to perish for the republic must perish with the republic."

5. Refutation and Confirmation. This involves disproving or proving a narrative. Quintilian (II.4.18-19) makes credibility the main heading to be considered. Hermogenes, however, says that the elements of Destructive Analysis are obscurity, incredibility, impossibility, inconsistency, unfittingness, inexpediency, or obscurity. Constructive analysis takes the opposite of these.

6. Commonplace. This exercise asks the student to "color," that is, to cast a favorable or unfavorable light upon an established fact, a thing admitted. Aphthonius says the Commonplace is practice in arousing the

³³See footnote 26.

emotions of an audience in the face of an established fact—for example, the discovery of a temple robber:

Begin with the contrary, analyzing it, not to inform, for the facts are assumed, but to incite and exasperate the auditors. Then introduce a comparison to heighten as much as possible the point you are making. After that introduce a proverb, upbraiding and calumniating the doer of the deed. Then a digression, introducing a defamatory conjecture as to the past life of the accused; then a repudiation of pity. Conclude the exercise with the final considerations of legality, justice, expediency, possibility, decency, and the consequences of the action.³⁴

This treatment is called a Commonplace, he says, because it can be applied commonly to any temple robber or other miscreant.

7. Encomium. This is an exercise in praise of virtue and dispraise of vice, either in a thing or in a person. (Aphthonius makes the positive [Encomium] and negative sides [Vituperation] of this exercise into two separate items, but most others keep them as one.) Since praise and blame are the function of Epideictic oratory, the exercise of Encomium could draw upon all the lore of that section of rhetorical theory. Theon is reported to have developed the topics of Encomium in 36 divisions and subdivisions. Hermogenes contents himself with ten ways to praise a person: marvelous events at his birth, his nurture, his education, the nature of his soul, the nature of his body, his deeds, his external resources, how long he lived, the manner of his end, and the events after his death. Quintilian praises this exercise both because "the mind is thus employed about a multiplicity and variety of matters" (II.4.20), and because it furnishes the students with many examples for later use.

8. Comparison. This exercise builds on the preceding one of Encomium by doubling the subjects to be treated in one composition. The same methods are to be used.

9. Impersonation. Here the student is asked to compose an imaginary monologue that would fit an assigned person in certain circumstances. The task is to make the language appropriate not only to the person (age, background, and emotional state) but to the circumstances in which he speaks. For example, what might Achilles say to the dead Patroclus, or what might Niobe say over the bodies of her dead children? There were three standard divisions: *Ethopoeia* is the imaginary statement of a known person; *Prosopoeia* is the imaginary statement of an imaginary person;

³⁴Quoted in Clark, *Rhetoric* 194.

and *Eidolopoeia* are lines written for the dead to speak. Despite these theoretical divisions of the textbooks, the term *Prosopopoeia* (as in Quintilian) is often used to denote the whole range of impersonative exercises.

10. Description. The exercise in vivid description (*ecphrasis*) asks the student to write and speak so that he is “bringing before the eyes what is to be shown”—a phrase used by Theon, Hermogenes, and Aphthonius as well as Quintilian. Quintilian discusses this kind of imaging in Book Eight under Ornateness; the figure *enargeia* (Vivid Illustration), he says, portrays persons, things, and actions in lively colors, so that they seem to be seen as well as heard (VIII.3.61). Clark (203) uses the term “Epideictic word-painting” for *ecphrasis*, and quotes Hermogenes as saying that “The virtues of the *ecphrasis* are clearness and visibility.” It requires a careful attention to detail, and here the *ecphrasis* builds on the earlier exercises of Commonplace and Encomium. The student does not simply say a wall is large, but describes its stones, its height, its thickness, its circumference, its battlements—dilation of detail until the reader/hearer can “see” it in his mind.

11. Thesis. This advanced exercise asks the student to write an answer to a “general question” (*quaestio infinita*)—that is, a question not involving individuals. Cicero states in his *De inventione* (I.6.8) that rhetoric does not deal with such General Questions, but only with those involving individuals. Quintilian too notes that a general question can be made into a persuasive subject if names are added (II.4.25). That is, a Thesis would pose a general question such as “Should a man marry?” or “Should one fortify a city?” (A Special Question on the other hand would be “Should Marcus marry Livia?” or “Should Athens spend money to build a defensive wall?”) Hermogenes distinguishes the Thesis from the Commonplace by declaring that the Commonplace amplifies a subject already admitted, while the Thesis is an inquiry into a matter still in doubt. Since both negative and positive answers may be supported, the exercise calls on the student to marshal arguments, using his rhetorical skills on the chosen side; as a consequence both Hermogenes and Aphthonius recommend the same structure that is used in orations.

12. Laws (Legislation). This final exercise asks the pupil to compose arguments for or against a law. Quintilian regards this as the most advanced of the set of exercises: “The praise or censure of laws requires more mature powers, such as may almost suffice for the very highest efforts” (II.4.33). That is, it requires almost as much skill as the most advanced student activity, the Declamation. He says that the chief topics to be considered are whether the law is proper or expedient; under “proper” he includes consistency with justice, piety, religion or similar virtues; the

“expedient” is determined by the nature of the law, by its circumstances, or by its enforceability. Quintilian also complains that some teachers make too many divisions of the two topics he discusses; as a matter of fact Hermogenes lists the six topics of evident, just, legal, possible, expedient, and proper.

The *progymnasmata*, then, offered Roman teachers a systematic yet flexible tool for incremental development of student abilities. The young writer/speaker is led step-by-step into increasingly complex compositional tasks, his freedom of expression depending, almost paradoxically, on his ability to follow the form or pattern set by his master. At the same time he absorbs ideas of morality and virtuous public service from the subjects discussed, and from their recommended amplifications on themes of justice, expediency, and the like. By the time he reaches the exercise of Laws he has long since learned to see both sides of a question. He has also amassed a store of examples, aphorisms, narratives, and historical incidents which he can use later outside the school.

The student is, in short, ready to take on the most complex of all the Roman school’s learning experiences—the Declamation (*declamatio*), or fictitious speech. Declamation is the cap, the culmination of the whole process.

Declamation

The Declamation is a rhetorical exercise designed to develop skill in deliberative (political) and forensic (judicial) oratory.³⁵ The two main types, in fact, are the *suasoria* in which the speaker urges an assembly or person either to act or not to act, and the *controversia*, in which the speaker prosecutes or defends a person in a given legal case. Here again the Romans adapt for the schools a Greek practice apparently in use well before the time of Aristotle. The earliest Latin rhetorical treatises take it for granted. The author of the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* describes several deliberative exercises he finds useful; for example, one finds Hannibal debating with himself whether to return to Carthage or stay in Italy (III.2.2). Cicero says in his *De oratore* that every day he made up fictitious cases and made practice orations on them.

Besides the school practice sessions there was a public form of declamation, first among friends for mutual edification and entertainment (as in the time of Cicero), then under the Empire as a regular type of public display or even competition—the Emperor Nero himself “won” such a competition on one occasion. Later, under the period of oratorical virtuosity

³⁵S. F. Bonner, *Roman Declamation in the Late Republic and the Early Empire* (UP of Liverpool, 1949). For pre-Roman declamation see D. A. Russell, *Greek Declamation* (Oxford UP, 1983). Clark has an account in *Rhetoric* 213–261. There are shorter descriptions in Gwynn, Marrou, Parks, and Kennedy.

known as "The Second Sophistic," the public declaimers attracted crowds and wealth which today only a rock star could command.³⁶

Declamation thus has a curious history. Obviously any would-be orator would want to practice, and there is the famous story of Demosthenes delivering a practice oration on shore against the sound of the breakers to improve his speaking voice. No doubt speakers since the very earliest days have practiced their skills in made-up controversies, and it would not be surprising to find Greek teachers like Gorgias or Isocrates putting their students through such drills.

The great virtue of Declamation for the Roman schoolmaster, though, was that the whole technical apparatus of rhetorical theory was available as resource for the classroom activity of the oration. All that was needed was a set of subjects on which to deliver speeches. It is significant that Quintilian, after devoting most of the first two books of the *Institutio* to the early education of the student, turns briefly to Declamation (II.10.1–15) and then begins the detailed exposition of rhetoric which occupies eight of the ten remaining books. Once Declamation is reached, in other words, rhetoric becomes the master's concern. The complete oration, even in the classroom, demands a full appreciation of the five parts of rhetoric: Invention, Arrangement, Style, Memory, and Delivery. Heretofore, rhetoric has been used piecemeal in the preliminary exercises, the precepts being introduced wherever useful. Now every skill of the student has to be harnessed toward one goal.

The student facing an audience of colleagues and master, and often facing a student opponent as well, had rhetorical problems similar to those in the outside world. Quintilian has high expectations for Declamation, rather sarcastically answering critics who see no value in it:

For, if it is no preparation for the forum, it is merely like theatrical ostentation, or insane raving. To what purpose is it to instruct a judge who has no existence? To state a case that all know to be fictitious? To bring proofs on a point on which no man will pronounce sentence? This is nothing more than trifling; but how ridiculous is it to excite our feelings, and to work upon an audience with eagerness and sorrow, unless we are indeed preparing our-

³⁶See, for instance, Eunapius's account of the declamation which Prohaeresius delivered in Athens in the third century as part of his candidacy for the highly-paid position of *rhetor* in that city; the crowds were so great that soldiers had to be used to control the situation. Prohaeresius started his extempore speech on one side of a difficult theme, then switched to the opposite side—then challenged the shorthand reporters to check his accuracy as he repeated both impromptu speeches word for word! The story is in Eunapius, *Lives of the Philosophers*, in Philostratus and Eunapius, *Lives of the Sophists*, trans. Wilmer C. Wright (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1922) 495–97.

selves, by imitations of battle, for serious contests and a regular field? (II.10.8)

These "imitations of battle" take a standard format in the Roman schools. The master assigns a problem ("theme") to one or more students; they prepare and deliver an oration before the class in reply to the problem posed in the theme; the master delivers an oral comment on the orations, perhaps adding to it a declamation of his own to show how it might be done better. Quintilian in fact proposes that the master ask the students to evaluate his own declamation as a means of sharpening their critical skills (II.2.13). An easy variation involves matching two students against each other, especially in the forensic declamations (*controversiae*).

Typically the declamation is divided into the four parts of proem, narration, proofs, and peroration (i.e., conclusion). A division after the narration could lay out the overall plan the speaker intends to follow; for example he might divide his remarks into Letter of the Law (*ius*) versus Spirit of the Law (*aequitas*). Classroom practice encouraged amplification as a means of testing the students' powers, particularly in the use of weighty statements (*sententiae*) or in the devising of novel approaches (*colores*). To go into greater detail here about the methodology of the Declamation would be to rehearse the entirety of rhetorical theory. This is of course not our main concern.

What part did writing play in the exercise of Declamation? The answer is not clear. Quintilian does not specifically mention writing, though he does say of Declamation that "it comprehends within itself all those exercises of which I have been treating, and presents us with a very close resemblance to reality" (II. 10.2). Certainly writing plays a major part in Imitation and in the *progymnasmata* which go before. Quintilian mentions the practice of providing written outlines for students to follow in their declamations (II.6.2). Given Quintilian's whole orientation toward the relation of speaking and writing, it would not be surprising to find various written forms behind the oral performance. For one thing his constant admonitions about storing examples for future use imply written record as well as strong memory. And what he says in book 10 about the writing orator (e.g. X.3.10) seems to imply that at least some of the oral was first the written. The Declamation itself was of course purely oral, but we are not yet sure how much writing lies behind it.

However, Quintilian's advice to adults about writing may well indicate his attitude toward writing for the young. Certainly Quintilian urges the adult speaker to use writing both as a general preparation and as a tool for shaping certain parts of a speech in advance of its delivery: "By writing we speak with greater accuracy and by speaking we write with greater ease"

(X.7.29). He makes this remark, one of his most famous aphorisms, in discussing the value of meditation as compared to the value of writing:

As to writing, we must certainly never write more than when we have to speak much extempore; for by the use of the pen a weightiness will be preserved in our matter, and that light facility of language, which swims as it were on the surface, will be compressed into a body as husbandmen cut off the upper roots of the vine (which elevate it to the surface of the soil) in order that the lower roots may be strengthened by striking deeper. And I know not whether both exercises, when we perform them with care and assiduity, are not reciprocally beneficial, as it appears that by writing we speak with greater accuracy, and by speaking we write with greater ease. We must write, therefore, as often as we have opportunity; if opportunity is not allowed us, we must meditate; if we are precluded from both, we must nevertheless endeavor that the orator may not seem to be caught at fault, nor the client left destitute of aid. But it is the general practice among pleaders who have much occupation, to write only the most essential parts, and especially the commencements, of their speeches; to fix the other portions that they bring from home in their memory by meditation: and to meet any unforeseen attacks with extemporaneous replies. (X.7.28–30)

Quintilian adds (X.7.30–31) that Cicero and many other orators used written memoranda as aids in preparing their speeches.³⁷ His personal recommendation is to use short notes and small memorandum-books which may be held in the hand while speaking. In his discussion of Memory in book 11 there are constant references to written texts of orations for which the memory must be used (esp. XI.2.25–49). If the adult speaker is urged to use writing, it certainly seems likely that the young student preparing to be an orator would be given the same instructions.

There have been many critics of the Declamation, both ancient and modern. Tacitus complains in his *Dialogue on Oratory* (AD 85) about “the training merely of tongue and voice in imaginary debates which have no point of contact with real life.”³⁸ Quintilian himself says that “The practice however has so degenerated through the fault of the teachers, that the license and ignorance of the declaimers have been among the chief causes that have corrupted eloquence” (II.10.3). To this, however, he immediately has a positive reply: “But of that which is good by nature we may surely make a good use.”

³⁷For a discussion of the role played by writing in Cicero’s oratory, see Richard Leo Enos, *The Livate Mode of Cicero’s Legal Rhetoric* (Southern Illinois UP, 1988). Orthography—the physical task of writing—is important to Quintilian; he urges writers to use wax tablets for drafts to speed up composition without breaking the pattern by having to dip a pen in ink (X.3.31–33). For a brief history of the wax tablet, see Richard and Mary Rouse, “Wax Tablets,” *Language and Communication* 9 (1989): 175–191. See also Albertine Gaur, *A History of Writing* (London: The British Library, 1984); the illustration of pens and a stylus on p. 52 may help illuminate Quintilian’s remarks noted above.

³⁸Tacitus, *Dialogue*, 31 95.

Many of the criticisms concern the subjects chosen for classroom use.³⁹ Manifestly such subjects must be difficult enough to challenge the capacities of the students, yet generalizable enough to permit the students to work on them without vast research. As a consequence a large array of fantastic or even incredible topics came to be associated with Declamation, and especially with the forensic type. They feature pirates, seducers, wronged heirs, poison cups, cruel husbands, contradictory laws, cures for the blind, shipwrecks, and a host of other calamities and dilemmas calculated to present the student orator with difficulty. The deliberative type was generally more staid (“Cato deliberates whether to take a wife”), but the Romans always considered the forensic the more difficult and therefore exercised more ingenuity in posing its problems. One example from the collection of Seneca the Elder may suffice to show the level of complexity which was employed:

The Daughter of the Pirate Chief

“A young man captured by pirates writes his father for ransom. He is not ransomed. The daughter of the pirate chief urges him to swear that he will marry her if he escapes. He swears. Leaving her father, she follows the young man, who, upon his return to his home, takes her to wife. A well-to-do orphan appears on the scene. The father orders his son to divorce the daughter of the pirate chief and marry the orphan. When the son refuses to obey, the father disowns him.” (*Controversiae* I.6.6)⁴⁰

S. E. Bonner, one of the most perceptive modern students of the Declamation, defends such classroom subjects on the very grounds that critics use to attack them. The subjects are deliberately more complex than real life, he says, as a test of the student’s powers: “they were deliberately designed to provide an almost, but not quite, impossible hurdle.”⁴¹

The publication of declamatory texts also shows a public interest in the topics and their treatment. While the published *Progymnasmata* of Hermogenes and Aphthonius were for the use of teachers, the sets of declamations published by the elder Seneca and by the Pseudo-Quintilian⁴² were intended for a general reader. Such works were successful enough

³⁹“The world of the declamation was a fantastic and melodramatic one,” writes Martin Lowther Clarke, “and for that reason perhaps popular in a humdrum age.” He makes the remark in *Rhetoric at Rome. A Historical Survey* (London: Cohen, 1953) 91.

⁴⁰Quoted in Clark, *Rhetoric* 231.

⁴¹Bonner, *Roman Declamation*, 83.

⁴²See Seneca the Elder, *Controversiae. Suasoriae*, ed. and trans. Michael Winterbottom, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1974). Seneca says he wrote the declamations for his sons, but the work had a more general circulation anyway. Michael Winterbottom has edited the *Minor Declamations Attributed to Quintilian* (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1984), with a commentary which includes treatment of the subject of possible authorship of the collection.

that someone wrote two collections to which Quintilian's name became attached. The reason, of course, is that there were popular public declamations put on by adult orators to demonstrate their rhetorical virtuosity; the throngs attending such displays of extempore eloquence might well treasure a written form of what they had heard, just as sports fans today read eagerly the newspaper account of a game seen the day before.

In any case history shows that the Declamation served the Roman schools for many centuries—again, a case in which the very longevity of the practice demonstrates its perceived value. The Declamation is the remote ancestor of the *disputatio* of the medieval university, and of scholastic debate beginning in colonial American colleges and lasting into the present time. Like the *Progymnasmata* and Imitation, Declamation may well have had far-reaching influences in Western culture not yet completely recognized by modern scholars.

Sequencing

The systematic ordering of classroom activities in Roman schools was to accomplish two goals: Movement, from the simple to the more complex; and Reinforcement, by reiterating each element of preceding exercises as each new one appears. To these can be added another principle: no exercise should be done for just a single purpose.

It is these principles which lead to the constant interrelating of writing, speaking, reading, and listening. Writing is a solitary activity, Quintilian notes, but recitation of the written is a public one. What is written by one student is heard by another when recited. What is read—and we must remember that even private reading in ancient times is generally vocalized, and therefore “heard” by the reader—becomes the model for the written. Writing makes speaking precise, Quintilian says, just as speaking makes writing easy. Listening prepares the student for analysis of the oral arguments he will later hear his opponent raise against him in forum or courtroom. Everything fits: there are no random activities in the Roman school-room.

CONCLUSION

Habituation is the key to success in the Roman school. For example a dozen years of re-telling stories, from simple Aesop to complex Demosthenes, make narrative skill second nature by adulthood. Likewise the analytic phases of Imitation make critical reading the norm. The step-by-step progression through the *Progymnasmata* equips the student with powerful tools of amplification, just as the Declamation prepares him to see in-

structively the two sides to any controversy. Quintilian declares Habit (*hexis*) to be the ultimate goal of the program. What he means is something a bit different from the modern idea of habit as something fixed and somewhat out of our control. His “habit” means a deep-rooted capacity (his word is *facilitas*) to employ language wherever needed, on whatever subject, in whatever circumstances. His meaning is close to Aristotle's, who defines rhetoric as a “faculty” of observing the available means of persuasion in a given case; this ‘faculty’ for Aristotle is seen as virtually a part of the personality (*ethos*) of the rhetor. In a sense, for both men, the person becomes rhetorical.

It is for this reason that Quintilian and other Roman masters are willing to set up this grueling sequence of sometimes petty and dull exercises. The goal is no less than the perfect orator, whose molding is worth every effort. Quintilian would probably say that the way to train an architect is to start him as a boy on building bricks; the child need not know what a wall is, when he begins to make bricks, but later he can be taught how to make small brick piles, then walls, then houses, then palaces, and then even cities. This is just the way Roman schools approach language use. The master envisages word-cities even from the time the child begins to trace letters with his stylus, and then leads him incrementally through a nicely coordinated sequence of learning experiences which make efficient language use virtually a part of his personality. The letter of the alphabet becomes years later a stirring oration in the Roman Senate.

Many of the individual exercises can be used profitably today, of course, since each is largely self-explanatory. Nevertheless a modern reader should understand that the full power of their use resides in their interrelation to each other, and in their place in a proven sequence.⁴³

It was an efficient system, producing a habit of language use designed to last a lifetime. As the next three chapters demonstrate, the core concepts of the Roman educational program lasted in a recognizable fashion through late antiquity, the Middle Ages, and the Renaissance. And later chapters show the massive social and cultural changes in Western society which eroded the coherence of the system even while fragments of its teaching methods continue in use, often unrecognized, to this day.

It is a story of system and continuity. It seems inconceivable that any human activity of such longevity could be valueless.

This is not to say that the enterprise was perfect or without fault. Its very longevity has provided ample opportunity for criticism, from Cicero and Tacitus to modern detractors like Martin Lowther Clarke who notes that

⁴³For a comment on modern use of the system see Murphy, “The Modern Value of Roman Methods of Teaching Writing, with Answers to Twelve Current Fallacies,” *Writing On the Edge* 1 (1989): 28–37.

"The Romans had administrative capacity in their bones, and it could survive even the follies of the lesser rhetoricians."⁴⁴ He complains that the schools fostered a cult of ornateness; that the system of Imitation and Invention by Topics prevented students from thinking for themselves; that truth was made less important than imagination; that directness in speech was discouraged; and that the same educational labor could well have been spent on something better. He concludes with the observation that Pliny is narrower than Cicero, and Fronto is narrower than Pliny. Others complain that the education was purely literary (word-centered) thus training declaimers rather than orators. Still others maintain that the student was given no real sense of history, no training in philosophy except for a scattering of ethical commonplaces, no unifying picture of society or government; another criticism is that as an elitist mechanism the schools merely perpetuated the order of a ruling class.⁴⁵

At the same time its pedagogical values surely seem worth studying. It might be well to conclude this chapter with an observation from a modern historian of language, Louis G. Kelly:

Nobody really knows what is new or old in present-day language teaching procedures. There has been a vague feeling that modern experts have spent their time in discovering what other men have forgotten; but as most of the key documents are in Latin, moderns find it difficult to go to original sources. In any case, much that is being claimed as revolutionary in this century is merely a rethinking and renaming of earlier ideas and procedures.⁴⁶

APPENDIX

OVERVIEW OF ROMAN TEACHING METHODS DESCRIBED IN THE *INSTITUTIO ORATORIA*

They fall into five categories: (1) Precept, (2) Imitation, (3) Composition exercises (*Progymnasmata*), (4) Declamation, and (5) Sequencing.

1. Precept: "a set of rules that provide a definite method and system of speaking." Grammar as precept deals with "the art of speaking cor-

⁴⁴Clark, *Rhetoric* 162.

⁴⁵For a succinct array of charges against the system, see Robert A. Kaster, *Guardians of Language: The Grammarian and Society in Late Antiquity* (U of California P, 1988) 12-13. Kaster also provides (231-440) demographic records of hundreds of teachers for the period AD 250-440.

⁴⁶Louis G. Kelly, *25 Centuries of Language Teaching. An Inquiry into the Science, Art, and Development of Language Teaching Methodology 500 B.C.-1969* (Rowley: Newbury, 1969) ix.

rectly, and the interpretation of the poets." Rhetoric as precept occupies eight of the twelve books of the *Institutio oratoria*:

- a. Invention
 - b. Arrangement
 - c. Style
 - d. Memory
 - e. Delivery
2. Imitation: the use of models to learn how others have used language. Specific exercises include:
 - a. Reading aloud (*lectio*)
 - b. Master's detailed analysis of a text (*praelectio*)
 - c. Memorization of models
 - d. Paraphrase of models
 - e. Transliteration (prose/verse and/or Latin/Greek)
 - f. Recitation of paraphrase or transliteration
 - g. Correction of paraphrase or transliteration
 3. Composition exercises (*Progymnasmata* or *praeexercitamenta*): a graded series of exercises in writing and speaking themes. Each succeeding exercise is more difficult and incorporates what has been learned in preceding ones. The following twelve were common by Cicero's time:
 - a. Retelling a fable
 - b. Retelling an episode from a poet or a historian
 - c. *Chreia*, or amplification of a moral theme
 - d. Amplification of an aphorism (*sententia*) or proverb
 - e. Refutation or confirmation of an allegation
 - f. Commonplace, or confirmation of a thing admitted
 - g. Encomium, or eulogy (or dispraise) of a person or thing
 - h. Comparison of things or persons
 - i. Impersonation (*prosopopeia*), or speaking or writing in the character of a given person
 - j. Description (*ecphrasis*), or vivid presentation of details
 - k. Thesis, or argument for/against an answer to a general question (*quaestio infinita*) not involving individuals
 - l. Laws, or arguments for or against a law
 4. Declamation (*declamatio*), or fictitious speeches, in two types:
 - a. *Suasoria*, or deliberative (political) speech arguing that an action be taken or not taken

- b. *Controversia*, or forensic (legal) speech prosecuting or defending a fictitious or historical person in a law case
- 5. Sequencing, or the systematic ordering of classroom activities to accomplish two goals:
 - a. Movement, from the simple to the more complex
 - b. Reinforcement, by reiterating each element of preceding exercises as each new one appears

Perhaps the most important aspect of these methods is their coordination into a single instructional program. Each is important for itself, but takes greater importance from its place within the whole.