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Delivering Delivery: Theatricality and the Emasculation of Eloquence

Abstract: Ever since Aristotle noted in the *Rhetoric* that, when fashionable, delivery ταὐτὸ ποιήσει τῆ ὑποκριτικῆ (has “the same effect as acting”; 1404a), classical and medieval rhetorical theorists fulminated against a crowd-pleasing oratory that had devolved into a theatrical spectacle more akin to that provided by the comic “actress” or the “effeminate” male. It cannot be coincidental, however, that, as the fifth rhetorical canon documents the theatricalization of rhetoric, it also offers companion testimony about the so-called emasculation of eloquence. In this essay, I examine the early belief that legal and religious rituals crossed *gender* lines into effeminacy at the same time that they crossed *genre* lines into theater. Close analysis suggests that the persistent association between theatrics, bad rhetoric, and effeminacy struck four different targets in a single, well-conceived blow: it marginalized women, homosexuals, bad oratory, and theater by casting certain types of speakers and speech as perverse and disempowered. Delivering delivery today thus entails exposing the ways in which early theorists themselves attempted to deliver it from evil.

“In the masculine there is something feminine to be found, and in the feminine something masculine, but the name ‘masculine’ or ‘feminine’ is assigned according to which of the two prevails.”
— Polemo, *Physiognomy*

In the first century, Quintilian was waging a campaign in which he denounced a most disturbing development in the history of rhetoric. It had become increasingly difficult to identify his object of inquiry because of the numerous deviations and corruptions which rhetoric had endured

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during canonized practices of declamation. One particular deviation stands out. Although a histrionic and debauched "eloquentia libidinosa" might have pleased modern audiences by its "resupina voluptate" ("effeminate and voluptuous charms"), an angry Quintilian declined to dignify it with the name of rhetoric because it had ceased to be masculine, ceased to be what Walter J. Ong would later dub the scholastic weapon of ritualistic male conflicts for the truth.¹ Quintilian protests, "eloquentiam . . . nullam esse existimabo, quae ne minimum quidem in se indicium masculi et incorrupti, ne dicam gravis et sancti viri, ostendet" ("I absolutely refuse to regard it as eloquence at all, for it retains not the slightest trace of *purity and virility* in itself, not to say of these qualities in the speaker"; IO V, 12.20).² In the most vivid, dismembering terminology imaginable, he proclaims such theatrical oratory immoral, unnatural, emasculate, disempowered:

Declamationes, quibus ad pugnam forensem velut praepilatis exerceri solebamus, olim iam ab illa vera imagine orandi recesserunt atque ad solam compositae voluptatem nervis carent, non alio mediis fidiis vitio dicentium, quam quo mancipiorum negotiatores formae puerorum virilitate excisa lenocinantur. Nam ut illi robur ac lacertos barbaramque ante omnia et alia, quae natura proprie maribus dedit, parum existimant decora, quaeque fortia, si liceret, forent ut dura molliunt, ita nos habitum ipsum orationis virilem et illam vim stricte robusteque dicendi tenera quadam elocutionis cute operimus et, dum levia sint ac nitida, quantum valeant, nihil interesse arbitramur. Sed mihi naturam intuenti nemo non *vir spadone* formosior erit, nec tam aversa unquam videbitur ab opere suo providentia, ut debilitas inter optima inventa sit, nec id ferro speciosum fieri putabo, quod, si nasceretur, monstrum erat.

¹Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria* (hereafter IO), ed. and trans. H. E. Butler, Loeb Classical Library (1920; rpt. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1980), V, 12.20; Walter J. Ong's discussion of the medieval continuations of forensic rhetoric occurs in *Rhetoric, Romance, and Technology: Studies in the Interaction of Expression and Culture* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1971), pp. 115-19. Immediately before this statement, Quintilian specifies that "libidinem iuvat ipsum effeminati sexus mendacium" ("false resemblance to the female sex may in itself delight lust"; V, 12.19). I wish to thank the Humanities Institute of the University of Illinois at Chicago, which generously funded a year of research on this project, along with Craig Kallendorf and two anonymous readers for *Rhetorica*.

²Miriam Brody analyzes this very passage of Quintilian's from the standpoint of stylistic and writerly excess in *Manly Writing: Gender, Rhetoric, and the Rise of Composition* (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1993), pp. 14-15. I return shortly to her work.

(Declamations, which we used to employ as foils wherewith to practise for the duels of the forum, have long since departed from the true form of pleading and, owing to the fact they are composed solely with the design of giving pleasure [*voluptas*], have become flaccid and nerveless: indeed, declaimers are guilty of exactly the same offence as slave-dealers who castrate boys in order to increase the attractions of their beauty. For just as the slave-dealer regards strength and muscle, and above all, the beard and other natural characteristics of manhood as blemishes, and *softens down* all that would be *sturdy* if allowed to grow, on the ground that it is harsh and *hard*, even so we conceal the *manly* form of eloquence and *power* of speaking closely and forcibly by giving it a delicate complexion of style and, so long as what we say is smooth and polished, are absolutely indifferent as to whether our words have any power or no. But I take Nature for my guide and regard any *man* whatsoever as fairer to view than a *eunuch*, nor can I believe that Providence is ever so indifferent to what itself has created as to allow weakness to be an excellence, nor again can I think that the knife can render beautiful that which, if produced in the natural course of birth, would be regarded as a monster.) (IO V, 12.17-19; emphasis mine here and in later quotations)

In this stunning statement, Quintilian blames a theatricalized rhetorical performance for the emasculation of eloquence.³ Bearing the responsibility for that graphic metaphor of bodily mutilation is the fifth rhetorical canon of delivery (*hypokrisis, actio, or pronuntiatio*), which had long instructed orators in the dramatic execution of their orations and without which persuasion was considered impossible.⁴ Even more striking, however, is the fact

³Two qualifications at this point: 1) I do not make a distinction here between rhetoric and eloquence, and 2) I am aware of the apparently essentializing gesture of repeating the terminology of the "emasculation" of eloquence, which presupposes its masculinity. That is precisely what I propose to deconstruct by exploring how the ubiquitous usage of the term "effeminate" instead of "female" enables male rhetoricians to transform even the category of woman into a male phenomenon. Readers are doubtless familiar with the phenomenology of the problem of essentialism as theorized by Diana Fuss in *Essentially Speaking: Feminism, Nature, and Difference* (London/New York: Routledge, 1989).

⁴According to the pseudo-Ciceronian author of the widely circulated *Rhetorica ad Herennium* (hereafter RAH), for example, such features as soft intonations, pauses, and proper breathing were mutually interdependent with meaning, as were style and gesture: see [Cicero], *Ad C. Herennium*, ed. and trans. Harry Caplan, Loeb Classical Library (1954; rpt. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1977), III, 22. See also Quintilian on delivery as "eloquentiam . . . corporis" ("physical eloquence"; IO XI, 3.1). Indeed, ever since its advent, rhetorical delivery had been linked philologically to counterfeit, feigning, imitation, and "acting" (*hypokritike*). For a brief history of that phenomenon and its effect on the larger generic interplay between legal ritual and dramatic representation, see my *Rhetoric and the Origins of Medieval Drama* (hereafter ROMD) (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), pp. 19-35.

that, when early thinkers accused rhetoric of crossing its proper boundaries into theater (largely because it had nurtured impersonation, that *sine qua non* of drama), they likewise accused theater of crossing its own albeit more poorly delineated boundaries into effeminacy.⁵ The same body of evidence which documents the theatricalization of rhetoric offers companion testimony about the so-called emasculation of eloquence. The consistent theoretical coupling of the *genre*-crossing of rhetoric into theater with the perverse *gender*-crossing of theater into effeminacy is the subject of this essay.

Quintilian's goal of restoring an idealized and empowered male discursive performance to the rituals of forensic training betrays exceptionally thorny assumptions. To consider them is to plunge headlong into the moral and aesthetic conundrum which has eternally plagued the histories of rhetoric and theater alike. Did the crossing of *gender* lines into effeminacy necessarily prompt the crossing of *genre* lines into theater? Or, rather, did the converse hold true: did the crossing of *genre* lines into theater prompt the crossing of *gender* lines into effeminacy? Which was the nefarious catalyst for perversion: theatricality or effeminacy? If the declamatory delivery of lawyers and politicians had diverged completely from rhetoric, then what had it become? If its practitioners were no longer men, then what were they? Was dramatic oratory to be censured because it was too theatrical or because it was too effeminate? Had it come to be viewed as feminine or effeminate *because* it was theatrical? Or had it become theatrical because of the introduction during performance of vocal and gesticular features which had been classified elsewhere (by theorists of rhetoric and of physiognomy) as feminine, effeminate, or emasculated? Finally, did bad rhetoric mean good theater? If so, was it by dint of its theatricality or its badness that declamatory

⁵Recently, there has been a veritable burgeoning of scholarly forays into the relationship between theatricality and sexuality. Although rhetoric is not their primary focus, excellent explorations of this topic include Jonathan Goldberg, *Sodomities: Renaissance Texts, Modern Sexualities* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992), esp. ch. 4, "The Transvestite Stage: More on the Case of Christopher Marlowe"; Froma I. Zeitlin, "Playing the Other: Theater, Theatricality, and the Feminine in Greek Drama," in *Nothing to Do with Dionysos? Athenian Drama in Its Social Context*, eds. John J. Winkler and Froma I. Zeitlin (1990; rpt. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), pp. 63-96; Laura Levine, *Men in Women's Clothing: Anti-theatricality and Effeminization 1579-1642* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); and Sue-Ellen Case, *Feminism and Theatre* (New York: Methuen, 1988). See also my discussion of the advent of impersonation within forensic rhetoric in *ROMD*, pp. 54-68.

rhetoric came to be reconfigured as castrated? If erstwhile men were delivering erstwhile rhetoric, then how could the legal, political, and social practices of rhetoric survive as tools of the male *polis*? How could they be purified?

In a fascinating aspect of the rhetorical corpus which has been surprisingly neglected in the recent outpouring of critical essays on performativity and gendered or queer subjectivities, we find that early theorists offer instructive if occasionally troublesome responses to those questions. As we shall see, the persistent association between theatrics, bad rhetoric, and effeminacy struck four different targets in a single, well-conceived blow. It marginalized women, homosexuals, bad oratory, and theater by casting certain types of speakers and speech as perverse and disempowered. Each type of marginalized discourse—feminine, effeminate, theatrical—could then be invoked as a means by which to marginalize the other types. Most significantly, the theoretical site of that marginalization was *actio*. There, rhetors discovered that one particularly efficacious way to represent a threat to the social order was by demonizing it as "feminine" or "effeminate."

In this essay, I argue from the works of such authors as Quintilian, Seneca, Tacitus, and pseudo-Cicero that the transformation of a rhetorical theory of genre into a performative theory of gender required but a step and that this step was delivery. That is to say that, centuries before Judith Butler ever spoke of "corporeal style," or Maud Gleason of gender as "a language that anatomical males were taught to speak with their bodies," classical and medieval rhetoricians had already scrutinized the phenomenal "physical eloquence" and "styled action" of delivery (*IO XI*, 3.1-2).⁶ In order to prove those claims, I begin with an analysis of the gendered, theatrical metaphors of delivery which pervade Greco-Roman rhetorical theory. Next, I

⁶Here I allude to Judith Butler's theory that "the authors of gender become entranced by their own fictions whereby the construction compels one's belief in its necessity and naturalness," in "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory," in *Performing Feminisms: Feminist Critical Theory and Theatre*, ed. Sue-Ellen Case (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990), p. 273; and to Gleason, "Semiotics of Gender," p. 402. See also Gleason's contention that masculinity was "thought to be grounded in 'nature,' yet it remained fluid and incomplete until firmly anchored by the discipline of an acculturative process," in "The Semiotics of Gender: Physiognomy and Self-Fashioning in the Second Century CE," in *Before Sexuality: The Construction of Erotic Experience in the Ancient Greek World*, eds. David M. Halperin, John J. Winkler, and Froma I. Zeitlin (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), p. 412.

explore some of the startling continuities of that tradition in the Christian Middle Ages, when effeminate theatricality is linked not only to the demise of law but to that of liturgy.⁷ Finally, I conclude with the proposition that a revitalized theory of delivery must inform what might be called a depoliticized aesthetics in the service of social change. Since the study of the fifth rhetorical canon assists us in recuperating important cultural strategies for constructing gender through performance, it responds to Sue-Ellen Case's concern that, since the "analysis of textual rather than performative strategies still predominates," theater studies "has come 'later' to the feminist critique than work in other genres."⁸ *Actio* has also "come later" to New Historicism and to feminist and queer rhetorical criticism, so any subsequent recuperative project of delivery itself further depends on "delivering delivery"—a project that is not without risks of its own.⁹

It could be done right or wrong, it could be appropriate or inappropriate, it could seem powerful or disempowered, it was virile or effeminate. It was delivery, and so great was its power that theorists of rhetoric consistently struggled (however unsuccessfully) to circumscribe its realm. Lionized by the likes of Demosthenes (*IO XI*, 3.6), delivery was the site at which idealized norms of rhetorical performance were created and articulated. But it was also the place where those norms were transgressed.

Few bodies of evidence are as eloquent, as emotional, or as contorted as the numerous early endeavors to distinguish ritual from theater, masculine from feminine, and gender from genre. Yet distinguish theorists did. Ever since Aristotle noted in the *Rhetoric* that, when fashionable, delivery ταῦτο ποιήσει τῆ ὑποκριτικῆ

⁷Within the scope of this study, I emphasize Roman over Greek rhetorical tradition inasmuch as the former was more influential in the Middle Ages.

⁸Sue-Ellen Case, ed., "Introduction," *Performing Feminisms*, p. 2. For a helpful theoretical introduction to this vast subject, see also Tracy C. Davis, "Questions for a Feminist Methodology in Theatre History," in *Interpreting the Theatrical Past: Essays in the Historiography of Performance*, eds. Thomas Postlewait and Bruce A. McConachie (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1989), pp. 59-81.

⁹This may explain why "On Delivery" is the longest of the sections in the stellar analysis by Lisa Ede, Cheryl Glenn, and Andrea Lunsford in "Border Crossings: Intersections of Rhetoric and Feminism," *Rhetorica* 13 (1995): 428-37. Delivery is where the most work remains to be done, perhaps along the inspired lines proposed by Kathleen Ethel Welch in *The Contemporary Reception of Classical Rhetoric: Appropriations of Ancient Discourse* (Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, 1990), esp. ch. 6, which is devoted to the ways in which "electric rhetoric" revivifies the canons of memory and delivery.

(has "the same effect as acting"; 1404a), rhetorical theorists had fulminated against a crowd-pleasing oratory that had devolved into a theatrical spectacle more akin to that provided by the comic "actress" or the "effeminate" male.¹⁰ By the first century, the speaking rhetorical voice had already been classified generically in accordance with such features as intonation, musicality, and the gesticular language of the body—indeed, in ways that illuminate and contextualize contemporary feminist assertions that "the body is not a self-identical or merely factic materiality; it is a materiality that bears meaning, if nothing else, and the manner of this bearing is fundamentally dramatic."¹¹ For example, Seneca notes in eminently self-contradictory fashion that, for the orator Cassius Severus, "pronuntiatio quae histrionem posset producere, [nec] tamen quae histrionis posset videri" ("delivery would have made any actor's reputation, without being at all reminiscent of an actor's").¹² Tacitus reports that rhetors who were unable to enthrall their audiences with the "poeticus decor" ("adornment of the poet") were ineffective: "quos more prisco apud iudicem fabulantes non auditores sequuntur, non populus audit, vix denique litigator perpetitur" ("when they prose along before a judge in the antique style, [they] cannot hold the attention of their audience; the crowd refuses to listen, and even their clients can scarcely put up with them").¹³ Pseudo-Cicero believed in the existence of a fine line that was not to be crossed during speeches delivered as "sermo . . . in dignitate" (in a "dignified conversational tone.") Hence the speaker "plenis faucibus quam sedatissima et depressissima voce uti conveniet, ita tamen ut ne ab oratoria consuetudine ad tragicam transeamus" (was to "use the full throat but the calmest and most subdued voice possible, yet not in such a fashion that we pass from the practice of the orator to that of the tragedian"; *RAH III*, 24). And similar anomalies recur in

¹⁰Aristotle, *The "Art" of Rhetoric*, ed. and trans. John Henry Freese, Loeb Classical Library (1926; rpt. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975), 1404a. Part of the problem here, of course, is that the "actress" was a male who was gendered female during his histrionic performance. In addition to Zeitlin's "Playing the Other," see also Phyllis Rackin's exploration of the paradoxical entity of the later "male actress" on stage in "Androgyny, Mimesis, and the Marriage of the Boy Heroine on the English Renaissance Stage," *PMLA* 102 (1987): 29-41.

¹¹Butler, "Performative Acts," p. 272

¹²Seneca the Elder, *Controversiae*, ed. and trans. M. Winterbottom, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1974), III, Preface.3.

¹³Tacitus, *Dialogus de oratoribus*, ed. and trans. Sir W. Peterson, revised by M. Winterbottom, Loeb Classical Library (1914; rpt. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1980), 20, 23.

Quintilian, who notes that "abesse enim plurimum a saltatore debet orator" ("the orator should be as unlike a dancer as possible")—even as he acknowledges that the *saltator's* combination of music, dance, and gesture might constitute a desirable theatricality: "ut sit gestus ad sensus magis quam ad verba accommodatus; quod etiam histrionibus paulo gravioribus facere moris fuit" ("his gesture should be adapted rather to his thought than to his actual words, a practice which was indeed once upon a time even adopted by the more dignified performers on the stage"; *IO XI*, 3.88).

At the same time, then, that Quintilian, Seneca, Tacitus, and pseudo-Cicero reluctantly acknowledge that the proper boundaries of *genre* and *gender* were difficult to maintain, they scramble to preserve them. On the one hand, they heap praise upon the masculine eloquence of law and politics by crafting monitory examples of effeminate performances to be avoided, as when pseudo-Cicero tries to ward off "acuta exclamatio" ("sharp exclamation") because "habet enim quiddam inliberale et ad muliebrem potius vociferationem quam ad virilem dignitatem in dicendo accommodatum" ("[it] has about it something ignoble, suited rather to feminine outcry than to manly dignity in speaking"; *RAH III*, 22). And Quintilian defines masculine oratory in terms of the absence of effeminacy: delivery is correct "si ipsa vox primum fuerit, ut sic dicam, sana, id est, nullum eorum, de quibus modo rettuli, patietur incommodum; deinde non subsurda, rudis, immanis, dura, rigida, rava, praepinguis, aut tenuis, inanis, acerba, pusilla, *mollis*, effeminata, spiritus nec brevis nec parum durabilis nec in receptu difficilis" ("if the voice be sound, that is to say, exempt from any of the defects of which I have just spoken, and it is not dull, coarse, exaggerated, hard, stiff, hoarse or thick, or again, thin, hollow, sharp, feeble, *soft* or effeminate, and if the breath is neither too short nor difficult to sustain or recover"; *IO XI*, 3.32).

Yet, on the other hand, those same theorists identify a feminine or effeminate voice dedicated to *voluptas* and into which inattentive males were in danger of slipping.¹⁴ Apparently, when a

¹⁴Important discussions of the phenomenon of gender slippage include Stephen S. Greenblatt's "Fiction and Friction," in *Reconstructing Individualism: Autonomy, Individuality, and the Self in Western Thought*, eds. T. C. Heller, M. Sosna, and D. E. Wellbery (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1986), pp. 30-52; and Maud Gleason's application of the concept to the ancient Greek *cinaedus*, who exemplified the "slippage between anatomical sex and constructed gender" ("The Semiotics of Gender," p. 412).

rhetorician chose to cross that line by forsaking the dialectician's scrupulous inquiry into truth for the actor's mastery of his audience through delivery, "pendemus ex laude" (he became the "slave of applause"), lost his masculinity in the bargain (*IO IV*, 2.127), and further slipped into dangerous literary turf. So it is that the histrionic and declamatory voice of delivery was indicted for a host of social ills, not the least of which was the corruption of the manly genres of politics, philosophy, and epic poetry. For his own part, Quintilian clings to his nostalgia for the noble, eurhythmic music of old "qua laudes fortium canebantur, quaque ipsi fortes canebant" (which was "employed to sing the praises of brave men and was sung by the brave themselves"; *IO I*, 10.31). Gone is their philosophical Orphic harmony along with their virility, which was usurped by feminine characteristics:

[A]pertius tamen profitendum puto, non hanc a me praecipi, *quae nunc in scenis effeminata et impudicis modis fracta* non ex parte minima, si quid in nobis *virilis roboris* manebat, *excidit*. . . . Nec psalteria et spadicis, etiam virginis probis recusanda.¹⁵

(Still I think I ought to be more emphatic than I have been in stating that the music which I desire to see taught is not our modern music, *which has been emasculated by the lascivious melodies of our effeminate stage* and has to no small extent *destroyed such manly vigour* as we still possessed. . . . I will have none of your psalteries and viols, that are unfit even for the use of modest girls.) (*IO I*, 10.31)

Crossing gender is accompanied here by crossing genre, which left the rhetorical theory of *actio* with a mission: to transform what was clearly a fluid, circular relationship of degree into an arbitrary hierarchy of gender and performance. If, as Lucian of Samosata observed, an actor may have *σῶμα μὲν τοῦτο ἔν, πολλὰς δὲ τὰς ψυχὰς* ("only one body . . . but many souls"; "*Saltatio*" 66), those souls were invented and reinvented during performance. Hence, one of the primary functions of delivery was the selection of a dominant identity from a vast repertoire of possible performance

¹⁵A similar lament, phrased satirically, occurs in the contemporaneous perspective of Lucian of Samosata, who begins his dialogue on "The Dance" with Crato condemning Lycinus *ὡς ἐπὶ φαύλῳ καὶ γυναικείῳ πράγματι μεγάλην σπουδὴν ποιουμένων* (for "displaying great interest in something unworthy and effeminate"); see "*Saltatio*," ed. and trans. A. M. Harmon, in vol. 5 of *Works*, Loeb Classical Library (1936; rpt. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1972), 1.

choices, one of which was gender. As the ancient Greek physiognomer Polemo asserted, "in the masculine there is something feminine to be found, and in the feminine something masculine, but the name 'masculine' or 'feminine' is assigned according to which of the two prevails."¹⁶ Seen from that perspective, the orator's empowering choice from among all his virtual souls and all the virtual performances thereof suggests several important precepts. First, the visions of theatricality and gender which emerge from rhetorical treatments of delivery demonstrate that gender was and is a rhetorical construct. From this comes the urgency of the warnings against slippage into "the other side" of one's sexuality. Second, if it is during rhetorical delivery that speakers create, construct, enact, and perpetuate their identities, then that activity actually elevates the creative and creational status of rhetoric, sexuality, and theater as cultural forces.¹⁷

In terms of theater and theater studies, for example, the discipline of rhetoric comes to embrace even such seemingly technical theatrical features as costume, which Aristotle had consigned to the prop-master as an inorganic feature of tragedy.¹⁸ In one of many invocations of costume as a metaphor for both stylistic and sexual excess, Tacitus pondered the following possibility:

Quantum humilitatis putamus eloquentia attulisse paenulas istas quibus adstricti et velut inclusi cum iudicibus fabulamur? Quantum virium detraxisse orationi auditora et tabularia credimus, in quibus iam fere plurimae causae explicantur?

¹⁶Polemo 2, 1.192F as cited in translation by Gleason, "Semiotics of Gender," p. 390. The recent work of such critics as Thomas Laqueur has also focused on the *topos* of men "breaking down" or "degenerating" into women. See, e.g., *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990), pp. 126-27.

¹⁷For a particularly compellingly formulation of this notion, see Laura Levine's critique of how the New Historicism has "been marked by a striking failure to consider that gender . . . may exist only in the theatricalization of itself, only insofar as it is performed" (*Men in Women's Clothing*, p. 8); and for a helpful general introduction to this topic, see Bruce Wilshire, *Role-Playing and Identity: The Limits of Theatre as Metaphor* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982).

¹⁸See, e.g., Aristotle's famous discussion from the *Poetics*, ed. and trans. W. Hamilton Fyfe, in *Aristotle, Longinus, Demetrius*, Loeb Classical Library (1927; rpt. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1946), 6.28.

(Take those gowns into which we squeeze ourselves when we chat with the court, a costume that shackles movement, do we ever reflect how largely responsible they are for the orator's loss of dignity? Or think of the recitation-halls and record-office in which pretty well most cases are nowadays despatched, have they not also greatly contributed to the emasculation of eloquence?) (*Dialogus* 39)¹⁹

Moreover, if we are to believe Quintilian, the orator's concern for his attire had long departed from the practical concerns once exhibited by Cicero, who had reportedly draped his toga in such a way as "id facere Ciceronem velandorum varicum" (to "conceal his varicose veins"; *IO XI*, 3.143). Quintilian was adamant that, no matter how "naturally" certain excessive gestures might occur, they had to be kept under control. If anything, stylistic flair was to follow masculine (not effeminate) excess, and speakers getting all worked up were to exercise the proper bodily surveillance:

Et ut vox vehementior ac magis varia est, sic amictus quoque habet actum quendam velut proeliantem. Itaque ut laevam involvere toga et incingi paene furiosum est, sinum vero in dextrum humerum ab imo reicere solutum ac delicatum fiuntque adhuc peius aliqua, ita cur laxiorem sinum sinistro brachio non subiiciamus? Habet enim acre quiddam atque expeditum et calori concitationique non inhabile.

(And just as at this point the voice becomes more vehement and more varied in its utterance, so the clothing begins to assume something of a combative pose. Consequently, although to wrap the toga round the left hand or to pull it about us as a girdle would almost be a symptom of madness, while to throw back the fold from its bottom over the right shoulder would be a foppish and effeminate gesture, and there are yet worse effects than these, there is, at any rate, no reason why we should not place the looser portions of the fold under the left arm, since it gives an air of vigour and freedom not ill-suited to the warmth and energy of our action.) (*IO XI*, 3.146)

¹⁹While I do not have time to explore it here, there is also evidence of an excess of masculinity, as when Lucian notes that mimes frequently *ὑπερβαίνοντων τὸ μέτρον τῆς μιμήσεως καὶ πέρα τοῦ δέοντος ἐπιτευνόντων*, καὶ εἰ μέγα τι δείξει δέοι, ὑπερμέγεθες ἐπιδεικνυμένων, καὶ εἰ ἀπαλόν, καθ' ὑπερβολὴν θηλυομένων, καὶ τὰ ἀνδρῶδη ἄχρι τοῦ ἀγρίου καὶ θηριώδους προαγόντων ("exceed the due limit of mimicry and put forth greater effort than they should; if something large requires to be shown, they represent it as enormous; if something dainty, they make it extravagantly effeminate, and they carry masculinity to the point of savagery and bestiality"; "Saltatio" 82). I discuss the protodramatic status of forensic oratorical costume for both these authors in *ROMD*, pp. 61-64, 123-25.

According to this "logic," oratory was "bad" because flowery, feminine, or histrionic affectations had rendered it "effeminate," theater was "bad" because such effeminate histrionics were its hallmark, and women and homosexuals were bad because of the encroachment of their histrionics into the once-ennobled discourses of law and politics. Even in these extreme cases, however, there is no real "feminine" oratory. There is only an effeminate oratory which, however ridiculous or dangerous, could only be practiced by men.²⁰ In order to regain the power of seductive, rhetorical display which male rhetoricians simultaneously denied having lost, they were obliged to assimilate and purify the theatrical, feminine, and effeminate qualities they most despised and to rationalize that assimilation.²¹

Male rhetors regularly presented theatricality and effeminacy as disempowered—yet no less threatening to the social order for that presumably disempowered status. As theorists wrestled with a heuristic problem of their own creation, they integrated into a discourse about power the very performance categories (feminine, effeminate, histrionic) which had seemingly *disempowered* masculine speech. Empowered speakers could then go on to denounce theatricality, effeminacy, and class for the very capacity of displacement which served to empower their own rhetoric. What is desirable about these displacements and assimilations is that they inform an art of ostensibly public speaking which relies on histrionics as a means by which to communicate with and to train an audience of assimilators. In this respect, Quintilian's argument is striking in that he actually blames histrionics for having caused the forfeiture of the very power the first rhetorical

²⁰This phenomenon is consistent with similar observations made by Caroline Walker Bynum for medieval devotional writing: "when male writers took femaleness as an image to describe their renunciation of the world, they sometimes said explicitly that women were too weak to be women" ("... And Women His Humanity": Female Imagery in the Religious Writing of the Later Middle Ages," in *Gender and Religion: On the Complexity of Symbols*, eds. Caroline Walker Bynum, Stevan Harrell, and Paula Richman [Boston: Beacon, 1986], p. 269).

²¹In making this suggestion, I endeavor to extend Walter J. Ong's elegant formulation that "mimetic theories of art explain nothing because they do not explain why imitation as such is desirable," in order to consider the possibility that contemporary theories of art as imperialism or assimilation might also be destined to fall short until they explain why such assimilation is desirable (Walter Ong, *Interfaces of the Word: Studies in the Evolution of Consciousness and Culture* [Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977], p. 284).

deliveries must once have possessed. Calling for control of a fashionable and "agitator" ("rather more violent") form of delivery, he endeavors to distinguish "actio" ("serious pleading") from "imitatio" ("mimicry") and admonishes his countrymen to control a discourse that was out of control when its very function was to control: "ita tamen temperanda, ne, dum actoris captamus elegantiam, perdamus viri boni et gravis auctoritatem" ("it requires to be kept under control, otherwise, in our attempt to ape the elegances of the stage, we shall lose the authority which should characterise the man of dignity and virtue"; *IO XI*, 3.184). And yet, this troubled logic actually posits the antithesis of its desired conclusion. Quintilian's unacknowledged implication is, rather, that femininity, effeminacy, and theatricality—even when imagined as male discursive categories—were not *disempowering* but *empowering*.

Perhaps nowhere are the manipulations of this rationale exposed more clearly than in the astonishing solution proposed by Tacitus. In a vividly violent gesture of gender appropriation (akin to Quintilian's which opened this study), Tacitus, too, paints a picture of castration. But his is a picture of the castration of a woman. Rather than render effeminate the followers of Lady Rhetoric, he masculinizes Lady Rhetoric herself—only to castrate her or, at a minimum, to circumcise her. Protesting the pernicious influence of histrionic declaimers, Tacitus writes that

[i]n paucissimos sensus et angustas sententias detrudunt eloquentiam velut expulsam regno suo, ut quae olim omnium artium domina pulcherrimo comitatu pectora implebat, nunc *circumcisa et amputata*, sine apparatu, sine honore, paene dixerim sine ingenuitate, quasi una ex sordidissimis artificii discatur.²²

(eloquence is by them degraded, like a discrowned queen, to a few commonplaces and cramped conceits. She who in days of yore reigned in the hearts of men as the mistress of all the arts, encircled by a brilliant retinue, is now *curtailed and mutilated*, shorn of all her state, all her distinction, I had almost said all her freedom, and is learnt like any vulgar handicraft.) (*Dialogus* 32)

²²In fact, it seems that Tacitus cannot decide between *circumcisa* or *amputata*, so he conflates them. Garrett Epp offered another perspective on circumcision and theatricality in "Foxe, Buchanan, and the Circumcised Stage," paper presented at the Centre for Medieval Studies, Toronto, Canada, 9 May 1995.

This is scarcely Martianus Capella's splendidly clad, armored maiden who would go on to inspire patriotism among her male followers: this Lady Rhetoric is a queen.²³ And Tacitus is doing something quite extraordinary to "her."

At first blush, Tacitus' strategy might remind modern readers of the now-familiar patterns of assimilating the techniques of one's oppressor. But his story has a "twist" in that he assimilates the techniques of his *imagined* oppressor by appending onto a woman the male genitalia which he then excises. Alternatively, he restores to eunuchs that which has already been cut off—to cut it off again. If femininity was power, then Tacitus sought to assimilate that power as he disempowered those who wielded it. He did so by means of an ostensibly "self-mutilating" rhetorical gesture which speaks nonetheless more compellingly to the mutilation of women and homosexuals.²⁴ But since one cannot re-annex a power that has not been usurped, the motivations for all the battle cries against theatrical and effeminate rhetorics can never be disclosed. What renders this corpus germane to current literary-critical ventures into feminism or queer theory is that the one apparent target, the theatrical *pathos* of women's speech, is never really feminine at all but male (even if effeminate), while the other apparent target, histrionic, effeminate speech, is never really queer at all but heterosexual.²⁵

In a triumph of counterintuition, the theorists cited above have performed one of the most anomalous operations ever. They have

²³For the armored maiden of Martianus Capella, see *De nuptiis Philologiae et Mercurii*, ed. Adolfus Dick (1925; rpt. Stuttgart: Teubner, 1969), bk. 5.

²⁴This ideology is consistent with that of torture, as it has been described by Elaine Scarry in *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World* (1985; rpt. New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), pp. 51-56. I treat the interplay among rhetoric, torture, and theatricality at much greater length in *The Medieval Theater of Cruelty* (hereafter MTOC) (forthcoming, Cornell University Press). The symbolism associated with eunuchs (especially by later authors like Tertullian and Saint Cyprian) is a topic too large to treat here, but, in addition to Maud Gleason's work, see, e.g., Miriam Brody, "The Eunuch and Vicious Writing," ch. 2 of *Manly Writing*. While I cannot do justice here to the complexity of her argument, for a compatible perspective see Shirley Sharon-Zisser, "Undoing the 'Tyrannous Advantage': Renaissance Rhetoric and the Subduing of Female Power," *Women's Studies* 24 (1995): 247-71.

²⁵Jonathan Goldberg frames the problem pointedly as he ponders how difficult it is "to use categorical terms which are themselves always under pressure, to treat male and female, masculinity and femininity, hetero- and homosexuality as ontologically pregiven rather than as in the process of deconstitutive construction that also must be thought through in its historic specificity . . ." (*Sodomities*, p. 129).

assimilated and purified the entities which they perceived as most threatening: non-masculine, non-heterosexual power. In so doing, they carve out a moral niche for delivery as the canon responsible for the desirable harmony between rhetoric, virtue, and the social performances of noble, heterosexual men. The idealistic association of a purified theater with morality tended to anchor in questions of nobility, beauty, and character the precept that *hypokrisis* (denoting acting, feigning, or counterfeit) was for orators while *hypocrisy* was for actors: "[n]eque enim minus vitiosa est oratio, si ab homine quam si ab re, cui accommodari debuit, dissedit" ("for a speech which is out of keeping with the man who delivers it is just as faulty as the speech which fails to suit the subject to which it should conform"; *IO* VIII, 3.51). Few things compare, however, to the hypocrisy of the "reasoning" of Quintilian and Tacitus below.

Both rhetors insist that women remain at home, only to blame the much denounced "softness" of Roman youth on those who were not responsible for the education of that youth: women, silly serving girls, and Greek slaves. They attribute to those groups a power they did not really possess, the better to wrest from the disempowered their supposed power to ruin noble children. That ingenious strategy enables Quintilian to blame those who were not empowered enough to influence Roman youth as he simultaneously excuses the failure of noble parents to correct the problem:

Mollis illa educatio, quam indulgentiam vocamus, nervos omnes mentis et corporis frangit. . . . Nostros concubinos vident, omne convivium obscenis canticis strepit, pudenda dictu spectantur. Fit ex his consuetudo, inde natura. Discunt haec miseri, antequam sciant vitia esse; inde soluti ac fluentes non accipiunt ex scholis mala ista sed in scholas adferunt.

(That *soft* upbringing which we call kindness, saps all the sinews both of mind and body. . . . They see our mistresses and minions; every dinner party is loud with foul songs and things are presented to their eyes of which we should blush to speak. Hence springs habit, and habit becomes second nature. The poor children learn these things before they know them to be wrong. They become luxurious and effeminate and far from acquiring such vices at schools, introduce them themselves.) (*IO* I, 2.7-8)

Tacitus is more explicit still when he laments the passing of an earlier time when women knew their place in the home: "Nam pridem suus cuique filius, ex casta parente natus, non in cellula emptae nutricis, sed gremio ac sinu matris educabatur, cuius praecipua laus erat tueri domum et inservire liberis." ("[I]n the good old days, every man's son, born in wedlock, was brought up not in the chamber of some hireling nurse, but in his mother's lap, and at her knee. And that mother could have no higher praise than that she managed the house and gave herself to her children"; *Dialogus* 28.) Those good old days had passed, thanks to the nefarious, "low-class" influence of the effeminate stage, the perverse origins of which could be traced back to the uterus:

At nunc natus infans delegatur Graeculae alicui ancillae, cui adiungitur unus aut alter ex omnibus servis, plerumque vilissimus nec cuiquam serio ministerio adcommodatus. Horum fabulis et erroribus virides statim et rudes animi imbuuntur. . . . Quin etiam ipsi parentes nec probitati neque modestiae parvulos adsuefaciunt, sed lasciviae et dicacitati, per que paulatim impudentia inreperit et sui alienique contemptus. Iam vero propria et peculiaris huius urbis vitia paene *in utero matris* concipi mihi videntur, histrionalis favor. . . .

(Nowadays, on the other hand, our children are handed over at their birth to some silly little Greek serving-maid, with a male slave, who may be anyone, to help her—quite frequently, the most worthless member of the whole establishment, incompetent for any serious service. It is from the foolish tittle-tattle of such persons that the children receive their earliest impressions. . . . Yes, and the parents themselves make no effort to train their little ones in goodness and self-control; they grow up in an atmosphere of laxity and pertness, in which they come gradually to lose all sense of shame, and all respect both for themselves and for other people. Again, there are the peculiar and characteristic vices of this metropolis of ours, taken on, as it seems to me, almost *in the mother's womb*—the passion for play actors. . . .) (*Dialogus* 28-29)

In the same way that the only acceptable femininity or effeminacy was to be enacted by male practitioners, the only acceptable *declassé* professions like acting belonged to men of higher social standing. Thus, when pseudo-Cicero differentiates between the actor's histrionic body-language and the lawyer's elegant gestures, he offers up as his "methodology" the question of

class: "[c]onvenit . . . in gestu nec venustatem conspiciendam nec turpitudinem esse, ne aut histriones aut operarii videamur esse" ("gestures should not be conspicuous for either elegance or grossness, lest we give the impression that we are either actors or day labourers"; *RAH* III, 26). Once again, this aspect of rhetoric is not about women, homosexuals, and servants even as they are invoked. It is a rhetoric devoted to the regulation of illusions of fairness, morality, and gender identity by those who are in charge of social performance. It is a rhetoric which, for all its lofty philosophical ideals, was profoundly corrupt, as James Berlin emphatically recalls: Aristotle "favored an educated and wealthy elite, and his rhetoric teaches this elite to dominate and control their inferiors," and Cicero was "a dirty politician among dirty politicians, supporting in his intellectual and political work one of the cruelest, most violently repressive governments ever to exist."²⁶

In the end, there is a certain eerie logic to these rhetorical efforts to disempower powerful speech through the assimilation of its feminine and effeminate techniques. What unites the three indicted discourses of theater, femininity, and effeminacy is a sustained effort to deny that any real power is held by certain speaking subjects like women, actors, homosexuals, and persons of low social standing. Yet it is precisely because these speakers express themselves dramatically and effectively that their discourses become desirable candidates not only for assimilation but for subsequent exclusion. When it comes to the early characterizations of female or effeminate performance, rhetorical theory is not descriptive but restrictive of a delivery which is not to be exhibited but prohibited. For example, in Cicero's day, the preoccupation with the anomalous entity of the "nonthreatening threat" culminated in a peculiar Edict of the Praetor which barred certain groups, including "homosexuals, procurers, gladiators, those who fought wild beasts in the arena, comic and satirical actors," from bringing lawsuits.²⁷ At the same time, then, that

²⁶James Berlin, "Revisionary Histories of Rhetoric: Politics, Power, and Plurality," in *Writing Histories of Rhetoric*, ed. Victor Vitanza (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1994), p. 115. In his comment on Cicero, he quotes from T. A. Dorey, "Honesty in Roman Politics," in *Cicero*, ed. T. A. Dorey (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1964), pp. 27-45. Unfortunately, within the scope of this study, I cannot adequately treat the questions of class which subtend this repertoire as much as do those of gender and theatricality.

²⁷The Edict of the Praetor is discussed by Edward Peters, *Torture* (New York: Basil Blackwell, 1986), pp. 30-31.

forensic rhetorical theory was rife with allusions to homosexuals, gladiatorial display, combat, and theatricality, those targeted for exclusion from the forensic arena were the very beings whom lawyers were in the most danger of resembling if they "slipped."²⁸

Indeed, the perilous slipperiness of gender, genre, and class would go on to dominate another period as the Middle Ages saw the rise of a similar document forbidding *histriones* and *scurrae* from pleading in court.²⁹ When medieval continuators of the rhetorical tradition—rhetoricians, clergymen, and dramatists—went on to grapple in their own way with the powers and perils of gendered performance, they offered remarkably similar solutions, not the least of which were various attempts to purge both legal rhetoric and theater from society. Whether or not they were influenced by Quintilian's discussion of mutilation from having been exposed to parts of the *Institutio oratoria* (itself circulating in a "mutilist" form), they, too, addressed the profound instability of gender, genre, and social performance which was occasioned by a theatrical delivery.³⁰

The mere existence of such edicts prompts certain necessary reflections about the striking historical continuity of the emasculation of eloquence and its connections to that cornerstone of Aristotelian tragedy, catharsis. Ironically, a theater concerned with the purgations of pity and fear was imbricated in a social purgation on a larger scale, a disturbing echo of even Aristotle's implication that women and slaves were not "natural choices" for good characters in tragedy. When it came to types of persons, καὶ γὰρ γυνή ἐστὶν χρηστὴ καὶ δοῦλος, καίτοι γε ἴσως τούτων τὸ μὲν χεῖρον, τὸ δὲ ὅλως φαυλὸν ἐστὶν ("even a woman is 'good' and so is

²⁸I discuss the conflictual register of forensic theatricality at length in *ROMD*, pp. 89-110.

²⁹The edict appears in the dubious ninth-century *Benedictus Levita*, which may date from the reign of Louis the Pious. It is discussed by E. K. Chambers in *The Mediaeval Stage* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1903), 1:37-38.

³⁰In Chapter 2 of *MTOC*, I explore additional relationships among purgation, health, and antisemitism on the late medieval stage. The *Institutio oratoria* was the medieval pedagogical manual *par excellence*, even though it was only partially accessible to the early Middle Ages in the mutilist tradition. However, two special numbers of *Rhetorica* 13 have recently demonstrated that Quintilian's influence was much greater than once thought. See esp. John O. Ward, "Quintilian and the Rhetorical Revolution of the Middle Ages," *Rhetorica* 13 (1995): 231-84; James J. Murphy's discussion of the mutilist tradition in *Rhetoric in the Middle Ages* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), pp. 123-26; and, for the transmission of both Quintilian and Tacitus, L. D. Reynolds, ed., *Texts and Transmissions: A Survey of the Latin Classics* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1983), pp. 332-36, 406-11.

a slave, although it may be said that a woman is an inferior thing and a slave beneath consideration"; *Poetics* 15.3).³¹ This is more than preaching to the converted. It is also purging the traces of the assimilated groups. Socially empowered speakers can then use rhetorical theory to exclude from hegemonic discourse the self-same ignoble publics who had partially contributed to the construction of that discourse. They can unmake those who had helped to make it and them, the better to remake themselves as an empowered corps of male speakers. In reality, however, that corps of speakers bore the responsibility for its own unmaking, and was largely responsible for a phenomenon that has captured the attention of contemporary theorists of gender. Their corpus indicates all too eloquently that Eve Sedgwick's fear of erasure is justified: "in particular, my fear is that there currently exists no framework in which to ask about the origins or development of individual gay identity that is not already structured by an implicit, trans-individual Western project or fantasy of eradication of that identity."³² When classical rhetorical theory melds concepts of goodness and badness with theater, gender, and politics, it signals that there is no real space for non-male, non-heterosexual theatrical performance that has not first been assimilated.

Perhaps most familiar to theater historians is a different kind of purge encouraged by Tertullian against the role of theatricality in social corruption. He attacked an impure and effeminate stage which had been perverted by a feature it shared with rhetorical delivery: gesture (as above in the *Ad Herennium* author's inconspicuous gestures; *RAH* III, 26). As Tertullian complains, the charm of the farce derives primarily from the filth of the actor's gesture, "[q]uam mimus etiam per muliebres res repraesentat, sensum sexus et pudoris exterminans, ut facilius domi quam in scaena erubescant, quam denique pantomimus a pueritia patitur ex corpore, ut artifex esse possit" (which is "acted by the buffoon playing the woman, banishing all sense of sex and shame, so that they blush more readily at home than on the stage,—filth that the pantomime undergoes, in his own person, from boyhood, to make him an artist").³³ Likewise, later medieval writers echoed the

³¹For a fascinating, if occasionally anachronistic, view of Aristotelian catharsis, purgation, and social oppressions, see Augusto Boal, *Theater of the Oppressed*, trans. Charles A. and Maria-Odilia Leal McBride (New York: Urizen, 1979), esp. ch. 1.

³²Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), p. 41. Additionally, I invoke deliberately the subtitle of Scarry's *Body in Pain*: "The Making and Unmaking of the World."

³³Tertullian, *De spectaculis*, ed. and trans. T. R. Glover, Loeb Classical Library (1931; rpt. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1977), ch. 17.

concerns of their forbears in the realm of legal rhetoric when such a fourteenth-century legal reformer as Thomas Basin found that forensic pleadings had become so ostentatious that he proposed that delivery be eliminated altogether: "longe melius fit ex scripto quam verbali placitatione lites peragi" ("it would be far better to conduct legal proceedings in writing rather than in oral pleadings").³⁴ Meanwhile, an entire corps of medieval lawyers-in-training known as the Basochiens regularly dramatized the dangers of delivery as they transformed their legal education into spectacle and staged such male figures as the gender-bending "mother fool."³⁵

Not surprisingly, the extensive medieval discussions of theatricality and the emasculation of eloquence tend to focus not only on the deviations of forensic rhetoric but also on those of an equally important, equally protodramatic ritual: the Christian liturgy.³⁶ The same questions that had troubled Quintilian and Tacitus about rhetoric were raised anew by the medieval Christian Fathers, who inferred that a histrionic liturgy posed a threat to the socio-political structure of medieval Christianity which was just as great as that posed to the Roman social fabric by a histrionic legal oratory. In the Middle Ages, effeminacy seems to have been so endemic to any kind of public speaking or singing that even in the devotional context of his *Speculum caritatis*, Aelred of Rievaulx noted with alarm that the singing voice was

[a]liquando, quod pudet dicere in equinos hinnitus cogitur, aliquando virili vigore deposito in femineae vocis gracilitates acuitur. . . . Interim histrionicis quibusdam gestibus totum corpus agitur, torquentur labia, rotant oculi, ludunt humeri, et ad singulas quasque notas digitorum flexus respondet.

(often forced into the whinnying of horse, and sometimes it lays aside its manly power, and puts on the shrillness of a woman's voice. . . . The

³⁴This is the title of Chapter 7 of Basin's *Projet de Réforme en Matière de Procédure* of 1455. The text appears in J. Quicherat's edition of *Histoire des règnes de Charles VII et de Louis XI* (Paris: Renouard, 1859), 4:51.

³⁵For the theater of the Basoche, see Howard Graham Harvey's classic *The Theatre of the Basoche* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1941); and my *ROMD*, ch. 3. An example of the mother fool can be found in one of Pierre Gringore's *Sotties*, in *Recueil Général des Sotties*, ed. Emile Picot (1904; rpt. New York and London: Johnson Reprint Corporation, 1968), 2:123-26.

³⁶I refer, e.g., to Honorius Augustodunensis, who described the mass as an imitative, gestural spectacle and the priest as *tragicus* in his oft-cited *De tragoediis* from the *Gemma animae* (c. 1100). I discuss this text in *ROMD*, pp. 54-56.

whole body is agitated by theatrical gestures, the lips are twisted, the eyes roll, the shoulders are shrugged, and the fingers bent responsive to every note.)³⁷

But if the oscillation between ritual and representation has long been cited as an origin of drama itself, then situated at the same originary site is the oscillation between male and female. Whether the object of the tirade be the theoretically "masculine" rhetoric of the lawcourts and the political body or the theoretically pious liturgy as performed by male ecclesiastics, the result—as aberrant as it is abhorrent—is identical: both legal and religious rituals crossed *gender* lines into effeminacy as they crossed *genre* lines into theater.

Spanning hundreds of years of Western European thought, the theorists cited above share an aggressivity of response against one and the same phenomenon. There was something so powerful about the abstract theories and concrete practices of entities like "femininity," "effeminacy," and "theater" that they all proved eminently capable of detracting from a male speaker's authority. In fact, early theorists warn us in no uncertain terms that rapacious spectators even went so far as to cheer on the rhetorical slippage into histrionic effeminacy, which was further accompanied by a slippage of male *ethos* into female *pathos*.³⁸ For a social group

³⁷The Latin appears in *Corpus Christianorum, continuatio medievalis*, ed. A. Host and C. H. Talbot (Turnhout: Brepols, 1971), 1:98 (ll. 1233-42). This text is cited by Robert Hayburn, *Papal Legislation on Sacred Music 95 A.D. to 1977 A.D.* (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 1979), p. 19; and it is brilliantly analyzed by Bruce Wood Holsinger with a similar passage from Bernard de Clairvaux in ch. 3 of his "Music, Body, and Desire in Medieval Literature and Culture, 1150-1400: Hildegard of Bingen to Chaucer," Ph.D. Dissertation, Columbia University, 1996. Indeed, Aelred begins this passage with language like that of Tacitus cited above from *Dialogus* 39 ("ferantur debilitatur ac frangitur eloquentia?"): "Nunc vox stringitur, nunc frangitur, nunc impingitur, et nunc diffusior sonitu dilatatur."

³⁸See, e.g., Quintilian on those who "pendemus ex laude" (are "slaves of applause"; *IO* IV, 2.127); and my section of the same title in *ROMD*, pp. 110-28. Although the topic lies beyond the scope of this study, it is equally important to acknowledge that, in the Middle Ages and Renaissance, we do find some evidence of an admirable female performance. See, e.g., the account of the performance of Françoise Buatier, who was praised specifically for her delivery ("les gestes, la voix, la prononciation") when she played the Virgin Mary in Grenoble in 1535. The text appears in Louis Petit de Julleville, *Les Mystères*, vol. 1 of *Histoire du théâtre en France* (1880; rpt. Geneva: Slatkine, 1968); and is discussed by John R. Elliot, Jr. in "Medieval Acting," in *Contexts for Early English Drama*, eds. Marianne G. Briscoe and John C. Coldewey (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989), pp. 243-44.

empowered by reason of their sex and class, the powerful institutional discourses of law, politics, and medieval liturgy were not so powerful after all. At least, they were not as powerful as theorists of rhetoric liked to think nor for the reasons they fabricated. If anything, the history of delivery suggests that real rhetorical power does not derive from learned institutions at all but from popular culture, not from hegemonies but from belittled or disenfranchised groups, not from law but from festival, not from tragedy but comedy, not from facts but from fiction.³⁹

Very early on, Aristotle gathered that it was the special property of histrionic rhetoric to mutate into a defective drama precisely because of the imperfections of political life. Those who skillfully manipulated *hypokrisis*, he noticed, τὰ μὲν οὖν ἄθλα σχεδὸν ἐκ τῶν ἀγῶνων οὗτοι λαμβάνουσιν, καὶ καθάπερ ἐκεῖ μείζον δύνανται νῦν τῶν ποιητῶν οἱ ὑποκριταί, καὶ κατὰ τοὺς πολιτικοὺς ἀγῶνας διὰ τὴν μοχθηρίαν τῶν πολιτειῶν ("usually win prizes in the dramatic contests; and just as in drama the actors now count for more than the poets, so it is in the contests of public life, owing to the defects our political institutions"; *Rhetoric* 1403b).⁴⁰ Moreover, as Quintilian observed later, defective histrionics proved powerful pedagogical models by which to train Roman youth (along with medieval youth exposed to his manual):

Ne id quidem inutile, etiam corruptas aliquando et vitiosas orationes, quas tamen plerique iudiciorum pravitate mirantur, legi palam ostendique in his, quam multa impropria, obscura, tumida, humilia, sordida, lasciva, effeminata sint; quae non laudantur modo a plerisque, sed, quod est peius, propter hoc ipsum, quod sunt prava, laudantur.

(It will even at times be of value to read speeches which are corrupt and faulty in style, but still meet with general admiration thanks to the perversity of modern tastes, and to point out how many expressions in them are inappropriate, obscure, high-flown,

³⁹Excellent contemporary analyses of rhetorical power include Steven Mailloux's book of the same title, *Rhetorical Power* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989), esp. his advocacy of a contextualized rhetorical hermeneutics (p. 134). See also Susan C. Jarratt's recovery of the class reversals inherent in early sophistic theory in *Rereading the Sophists: Classical Rhetoric Reconfigured* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1991), esp. ch. 3, "The First Sophists and Feminism: Discourses of the 'Other.'" Finally, one cannot help but recall here the dangers of comedy as they solve the murder mystery of Umberto Eco's *Name of the Rose*, trans. William Weaver (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1983), pp. 472-79.

⁴⁰This passage is also discussed by Brian Vickers, *In Defence of Rhetoric* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1990), pp. 28-35.

grovelling, mean, extravagant or effeminate although they are not merely praised by the majority of critics, but, worse still, praised just because they are bad.) (*IO* II, 5.9-11)

Even today, one need only pick up any contemporary American newspaper to find a plethora of references to the "theater" of politics or justice—that is, when the word "circus" is not used instead. Bad rhetoric and bad theater are so frequently analogized that if the subtle (and not so subtle) denunciations of womanhood, homosexuality, and class that permeate that analogy are ever to be exposed or corrected, then rhetorical theory must catch up.⁴¹ In other words, the way to deliver delivery today is to expose the opportunistic ways in which early theorists themselves had attempted to deliver it.

Once the rhetorical evidence has been reintegrated into the contemporary critical dialogue about gender and language and gender *in* language, the crucial position of delivery as a kind of mediator among gender, rhetoric, theater, physiognomy, and sexuality may then inform our debates about how speakers are literally caught in an act of performance every time they open their mouths. In their treatments of delivery, early theorists attempted to erect boundaries between gendered entities which were presumably separable in a way that was "natural." Yet when Quintilian, Tacitus, and their medieval continuators sought to produce and to propagate an autonomy between masculine and feminine, they equated an act of their own will (not an act of nature) with acts of morality, creation, and even purgation. The so-called boundaries between masculine and feminine were just as blurry as those between rhetoric and theater—despite numerous protestations to the contrary founded of equally numerous desires to ground concepts of authenticity, histrionics, masculinity, and femininity in "nature." In that sense, the early rhetorical agenda is consistent with one of the axioms of queer theory as identified by Eve Sedgwick, namely that "the immemorial, seemingly ritualized debates on nature versus nurture take place against a very unstable background of tacit assumptions and fantasies about both nurture and nature."⁴² It has the effect of suggesting that, thanks to a

⁴¹For example, Julie A. Carlson recalls the well-known feminist strategy according to which "bad theatre is good politics" in her *In the Theatre of Romanticism: Coleridge, Nationalism, Women*, Cambridge Studies in Romanticism, 5 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 2-3.

⁴²Sedgwick, *Epistemology*, p. 40.

histrionic delivery, rhetoric was actually *like* theater and masculine *like* feminine.

At the risk of oversimplifying, it is helpful to recall here that both queer and feminist theory have tended to concern themselves with exposing the fictional boundaries between natural and unnatural. Such exposure would then allow for those fictional boundaries to be crossed and for the speakers who inhabit traditionally disempowered discursive spaces to be re-empowered. But simply to speak of gendered rhetorics of theater is, to some extent, to invite participation in the very discourse that saw to it that women and homosexuals were marginalized. The question, then, for feminist or queer theater-studies is whether or not it is ever possible to deliver delivery from its own discursive space. In fact, it may well be that gendered studies of theater do not assist feminist or queer theory nearly as much as more holistic, performative critiques of identity.

Contrary to one of the more common recuperative strategies, it cannot be a given that feminist and queer theory provide a liberated and liberating rhetorical agenda—even along the lines proposed by Lisa Ede, Cheryl Glenn, and Andrea Lunsford, who conclude their insightful discussion of delivery by surmising (with Jamie R. Barlowe) that

when rhetoric and feminism come together, as in this interrogation of the canon of delivery, both are transformed. Rhetoric, a vibrant process of inquiring, organizing, and thinking, offers a theorized space to talk about delivery. And feminism offers a reason to 'bridge differences (rather than to create them), to include (rather than to exclude), and to empower (rather than to seek power or weakness).'⁴³

Nor does it necessarily follow that when we put "influential feminine voices in dialogue with traditionally masculine deliveries, we move beyond a rhetoric of masculine privilege to a transformed rhetorical practice."⁴⁴ Delivery was a coded practice. So the only way to transform or deliver delivery is to break the code—break it in both senses of deciphering and destroying.

⁴³Ede, Glenn, and Lunsford, "Border Crossings," p. 437.

⁴⁴*Ibid.* In "The Feminist Mnemonics of Christine de Pizan," I make the argument that Christine's reconstruction of the female memory in her *Cité des dames* fails to enable her to make the performative move from epistemology to agency (*Modern Language Quarterly* 55 [1994]: 231-49). For a more violent vision of virtuality, see Lynn Worsham, "Eating History, Purging Memory, Killing Rhetoric," in *Writing Histories of Rhetoric*, ed. Victor Vitanza, pp. 139-55.

Fittingly, the notion of coding, decoding, and re-coding brings us to the end, but also to the beginning, because it returns us to the inventional memory as the conceptual precursor to delivery.⁴⁵ Insofar as the function of *memoria* was, as Longinus recalls, to "engender speech," the rehearsals of gender and theatricality analyzed above are grounded in the epistemological moorings of invention and memory.⁴⁶ If, as Sue-Ellen Case intuited, theater studies are ever to catch up with gender studies and create alternative hermeneutic spaces, then intervention must take place at that level. From this emerges another *topos* that peppers literary criticism and that can only be called a kind of longing for different epistemological spaces. For example, Eve Sedgwick imagines a "feminocentric theoretical space" from which the history of lesbian subjectivity might be written, detached from "any gay male-centered theoretical articulation."⁴⁷ And Miriam Brody closes her entire book with an evocation of an idealized epistemological space devoted to the invention of writing:

In this in-between place that we imagine, a place neither male nor female, writers move freely between solitude and community, between single and shared authorship, between plain and ornate writing, and between assertion and qualification, conviction and doubt. With no easy identification of deception and weakness as gendered vices, virtue and truth must make their way unassisted. Alone and ungendered, they are fit companions for writing we call good.⁴⁸

I submit that the epistemological space of the printed page is not the most appropriate venue in which to pursue a theory of delivery. Be that as it may, Sedgwick's chapter on "The Spectacle of the Closet" takes place within novelistic space (a phenomenon that is less axiomatic than symptomatic), while Ede, Glenn, and

⁴⁵Ede, Glenn, and Lunsford treat invention and memory together in "Border Crossings," pp. 409-14; see also Mary Carruthers, *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 20. Carruthers' next book on *Machina memorialis* promises to offer a detailed treatment of the connections between memory and invention.

⁴⁶For Longinus, the primary function of the memory image was to concretize any τὸ ὁπωσοῦν ἐννοήμα γεννητικὸν λόγου παριστάμενον ("idea which enters the mind from any source and engenders speech"), in "On the Sublime," ed. and trans. W. Hamilton Fyfe, in *Aristotle, Longinus, Demetrius*, Loeb Classical Library (1927; rpt. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1946), 15, 1-2; see also RAH III, 30.

⁴⁷Sedgwick, *Epistemology*, p. 39.

⁴⁸Brody, *Manly Writing*, p. 218.

Lunsford cite not a single canonical theatrical text even as they enthusiastically cite Quintilian citing Demosthenes on the primacy of the fifth rhetorical canon: "Delivery, delivery, and delivery."⁴⁹

Although Brody begins *Manly Writing* by "punching" the dictum that "to write well in Western culture is to write like a man,"⁵⁰ it should be equally clear that, at the inception of rhetoric, the more powerful rhetorical axiom was "to speak well is to speak like a man." Rhetorical criticism, rhetorical hermeneutics, and rhetorical power are not complete without delivery, which brings its strategies back to life and inspires new ones. No matter how rhetoric has been gendered, theatricalized, or reified over the centuries, delivery is the outcome of any rhetorical process. Then and now, it makes silences speak.

⁴⁹Demosthenes, cited by Quintilian, *IO XI.3-6*, cited by Ede, Glen, and Lunsford, "Border Crossings," p. 429.

⁵⁰p. 3.

GEORGIANA DONAVIN

"De sermone sermonem fecimus": Alexander of Ashby's *De artificioso modo predicandi*

Abstract. Alexander of Ashby's *De artificioso modo predicandi* has the distinction of being the first medieval sermon rhetoric since the *De doctrina Christiana* to apply classical rhetorical terms to preaching. The text includes a dedicatory prologue to Alexander's abbot (of the Augustinian canons at Ashby), the treatise proper on a sermon's construction, and five sample sermons. In contradistinction to current formalist descriptions of the *De artificioso modo predicandi*, this essay focuses on its audience awareness. I argue that the historical importance of this treatise lies not merely in its revival of classical terminology, but also in its theorization of rhetorical scenes in which classical teachings might apply to the sermon.

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lexander of Ashby's *De artificioso modo predicandi* (circa 1200)¹ has the distinction of being the first medieval sermon rhetoric since the *De doctrina Christiana* to apply

¹James J. Murphy (*Rhetoric in the Middle Ages* [Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1974]) bases his dating of the *De artificioso modo predicandi* on the prologue. Alexander became abbot himself of the Augustinian house at Ashby in 1205, succeeding the man to whom he addresses the work, who had become abbot in 1197. Since Alexander mentions in the prologue (ll. 45-46) a text on the miracles of the saints which he had also addressed to this predecessor, one must allow time for the writing of both works. As Murphy concludes, "Assuming that the preaching treatise and its accompanying sample sermons took some time to prepare after he finished the earlier book, it seems safe to date *On the Mode of Preaching* at about the year 1200. This dating is important, marking as it does the first surviving evidence of a new trend in preaching theory" (p. 312).