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Gender and rhetoric: producing manhood in the schools

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'An orator is, son Marcus, a good man skilled at speaking.' This famous line contains worlds of gendered cultural experience in each word. The orator is male, not female; father teaches son; the orator conforms to moral norms; he is trained; he speaks – in public, in a certain way. Yet the orator's gender was a crux of Roman culture and still demands study.

STATE OF THE QUESTION

The question of the relation of gender to rhetoric could not well have been considered before the Roman gender system itself came to be examined, and indeed seems not to have arisen.¹ Recent years have seen a surge of relevant research.² Most of this work, as well as my own, shows the influence of the Berkeley New Historicists, treating the rhetorical schools and performance halls as a locus of gender construction, a place where manhood is contested, defended, defined, and indeed produced.³ Related approaches deal with Rome in the context of cultural studies, wherein ideological apparatus, of which rhetoric is surely one, are analysed as parts of an organic culture.⁴

This work, however, depends on a critical tradition allied to, but often divergent from, feminist theory.⁵ Manhood and male sexuality have tended to take centre stage here, as, for example, in Stephen Greenblatt's influential work, or in the way John Winkler looked toward Michael Herzfeld's *Poetics of Manhood*.⁶ The overwhelmingly male nature of ancient rhetoric naturally has promoted a similarly male focus in current work on gender and rhetoric, with a few exceptions.⁷ It has at least been possible to study ways in which the female persona was used within the rhetorical schools, as if

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women were good 'to think with' – much like the 'elegiac women' described by Maria Wyke, textual figures doing generic work.⁸ In the case of the *scholae*, the female can be seen to serve important social functions as well.⁹ But real women are few and far between in rhetoric, so this chapter is regrettably lopsided.

A full study of the issue would have to consider the nature of the forum as gendered space; the socialization of Roman citizen boys into manhood through the study of rhetoric; the rhetorical handbooks as guides to gender construction; the subject matter of the extant rhetorical exercises; the analogy between gender and geography in the Atticist–Asianist debate; the relation between Greeks, Romans, and others in the rhetorical schools; the contrast between Greek ideas of the meaning of rhetoric and Roman ideas; and the ways in which womanhood is constructed in Roman culture through exclusion from rhetoric. This essay will focus mainly on gender construction in the rhetorical schools, spotlighting the elder Seneca.

THEORETICAL BASIS

Gender and public space. Feminist theorists in architecture and geography have emphasized this axiom: 'Throughout history and across cultures, architectural and geographic spatial arrangements have reinforced status differences between women and men.'¹⁰ These theorists have not dealt with pre-industrial Europe, but the ancient Mediterranean constitutes a prime example; the spaces of the forum and the *scholae* themselves separated male from female.

Gender construction. Judith Butler analyses gender as 'performative – that is, constituting the identity it is purported to be'.¹¹ Current analysts of the masculine postulate that masculinity is particularly problematic, 'a precarious or artificial state that boys must win against powerful odds', and have often turned to the Mediterranean for examples.¹² This approach seems eminently applicable to the world of the forum, where the concern of the oratorical theorists with the precariousness of virility verges on the obsessive.¹³

Similarly, Wayne Koestenbaum traces connections between the singer's throat and the homosexual's body in opera. He notes: 'As long as there have been trained voices, there have been effeminate voices – tainted by affectation or "false" production. The ancients

concurrent in condemning such emissions.¹⁴ The conflict between female voice and male body problematizes the gender of orators as well as singers.

Orientalism. Finally, the Atticist-Asianist controversy forms part of the Roman attitude toward the East, so essential to Roman ideas of self/Other. Edward Said's definition of Orientalism as discourse helps to locate this debate over proper oratorical style in the context of Rome's relation to its empire and to other cultures.¹⁵

THE GENDERED FORUM AND THE TIROCINIUM FORI

During the late republic and early empire, the Roman forum was a major site for the establishment of the cultural meaning of gender. The forum was ringed by buildings in which the (male) business of running the Roman state was carried on; voting, political speeches, the censors' assessment of senators and knights, and jury trials were held in the middle.¹⁶ Women's important business was carried on elsewhere, their girlhood togas dedicated at the temple of Fortuna Virgo in the *forum Boarium*, next to the temple of Mater Matuta; important women's cults were located outside of the *forum Romanum*, with the unsurprising exception of the temple of Vesta.¹⁷ But freeborn Roman boys, each year on the day of the Liberalia (March 17), were brought by their fathers to the forum, clad for the first time in the *toga virilis*, in a *rite de passage* that may have included a physical inspection of the boy's genitalia; the day, then, links the male body with place, dress and male bonding.¹⁸

Indeed, apprenticeship to a great orator was an important factor in this Roman *rite de passage*. It was known as the *tirocinium fori* ('recruitment to the forum'); it paralleled the *tirocinium militiae* of a young officer (Tac. *Dial.* 34).¹⁹ Cicero's remarks on the adolescence of Caelius (*Cael.* 6-15) demonstrate how the boy's sexual attractiveness to older men structured this transition to the forum. Apprenticeship included chaperonage (9):

As soon as [his father] gave him his *toga virilis* . . . he was immediately handed over by his father to me; no one saw this Marcus Caelius in that flower of his youth unless with his father or me or when he was being instructed in the most honourable arts in the most chaste (*castissima*) home of Marcus Crassus.

The adolescent Caelius is passed from man to man in a way reminiscent of the 'traffic in women': from his father to Cicero to his teacher Crassus.

Whatever the process was really like, we have some attestations that it was charged with emotions and sentiments similar to those we attach to boarding school or summer camp, and that it involved a strong hierarchical bonding between seniors and juniors. Both Cicero (*Amic.* 1-2; cf. *Brut.* 304-12) and Tacitus (*Dial.* 2) write fondly of the days when they were sitting at the feet of their beloved mentors. This was a time of pride for young men; the younger Seneca writes to his friend (*Ep.* 4.2): 'Of course you cherish in your memory the joy you felt when you put aside your *praetexta* and took up the *toga virilis* and were led to the forum.'

Nothing resembling this process happened to a young woman, and our scanty evidence suggests that a woman orator was an anomaly.²⁰ Despite Cicero's praise of distinguished ladies who trained their sons to speak well (*Brut.* 210-11, cf. Quint. *Inst.* 1.1.6), the only list of women speakers is three names long and is presented less than enthusiastically: 'We ought not to keep silent even about those women whom the condition of their nature and the robe of decorum were not able to constrain into silence in the forum and the courts' (Val. Max. 5.3 *pr.*). Amaesia Sentia (5.3.1) is presented favourably, but Valerius says she won the nickname 'Androgyne' for her efforts; the speech of Gaia Afrania (5.3.2) is described as 'barking'; only Hortensia, daughter of the great Hortensius, wins undiluted praise (5.3.3). Justinian's *Digest* says flatly (3.1.1.5): 'It is prohibited to women to plead on behalf of others. And indeed there is reason for the prohibition: lest women mix themselves up in other people's cases, going against the chastity that befits their gender, and lest women perform the duties proper to men.' So speech is proper to manhood, but chastity seems to call for silence - a dilemma, in fact, for men.

STYLE AND GENDER IN PUBLIC PERFORMANCE

Considering how the forum served as the locus of the boy's transition to manhood, it is not surprising that the content of Roman oratory includes a consistent strain of invective in which rival orators impugn each other's masculinity.²¹ But these gender terms were also applied by Roman theorists to literary style itself. The logical link

seems to be the principle *talis oratio qualis vita* (Sen. *Ep.* 114.1): a man's style indicates his morals, and his morals will affect the way he speaks.

Seneca's 114th epistle instances several kinds of undesirable personal/literary style, but harps on effeminacy.²² Sometimes style is too inflated, sometimes *infracta et in morem cantici ducta* ('broken and drawn out in the fashion of singing', 114.1). On the connotations of *infracta* ('broken'), we may compare Seneca's association elsewhere (*De Vita Beata* 13.4): *enervis, fractus, degenerans viro, per-venturus in turpia* ('emasculated, broken, degenerating from what a man is, on the way to disgusting things'). The terms *fractus* ('broken') and *enervis* ('emasculated'; literally, 'sinewless') recur in this kind of critique and normally connote a lapse in masculinity.²³ Seneca even rejects what he calls an 'immodest' (*inverecunde*) use of metaphor (114.1), exemplifying the Roman perception of even prose rhetorical and rhetorical *figurae* as subject to the rules governing sexual behaviour (cf. 114.16 on unchaste *sententiae*). The *actio* ('movement') of each person is similar to his speech (114.2); thus the *lascivia* ('sexiness') of public oratory is proof of *luxuria* ('a degenerate lifestyle'). Seneca uses Maecenas as his case in point, reproaching him for a style in line with his effeminate affect (cf. *Ep.* 19.9, where Seneca describes Maecenas as 'castrated'). His speech is *soluta* ('loose'), as he himself is *discinctus* ('unbelted').²⁴ The epistle closes with an elaborate portrait of the affect of the effeminate man – his haircut, the way he shaves, the colours he wears, his see-through toga, the way he is willing to do anything to be conspicuous – and concludes, 'Such is the *oratio* of Maecenas and all others who err not by accident but knowingly and willingly' (114.21).

Seneca's own father's collection of remembered speeches and anecdotes, a memoir as well as a handbook, shows how gender and style served as signs in the rhetorical *scholae* of the early empire. This book was written by the elder Seneca for his sons and expressly dedicated to them, again marking the importance of the training of sons by fathers. Seneca invokes at the outset Cato's definition of an orator; like Seneca, his model addressed his definition of an orator to his son and wrote a book on rhetoric dedicated to that son.²⁵ Cicero wrote the *Partitiones Oratoriae* for his son Marcus, and the book is actually framed as a sort of dialogue, or catechism, the characters being 'Cicero' (that is, Cicero's son Marcus) and 'Father' (that is, Cicero). Seneca's three sons appear occasionally as the intended audience throughout his book; for example, at the end of

Suasoriae 2.23, Seneca remarks that the style of Arellius Fuscus 'will offend you when you get to my age; meanwhile I don't doubt that the very *vitia* that will offend you now delight you'. This goes along with an idea voiced by Cicero that the Asianist style is both more appropriate to young men than to mature men and more admired by young men than by old men (*Brut.* 325–7).

The elder Seneca depicts declamations in the *scholae* staged as verbal duels among the participants, exchanges of witty criticisms, establishing and contesting a hierarchy – often gendered, as in one story about Iunius Gallio (*Suas.* 3.6–7):²⁶

I remember [Iunius Gallio and I] came together from hearing Nicetes to Messalla's house. Nicetes had pleased the Greeks mightily by his rush [of language]. Messalla asked Gallio how he'd liked Nicetes. Gallio said: 'She's full of the god.' [Seneca says this is a Vergilian tag.] Whenever he had heard one of those declaimers whom the men of the *scholae* call 'the hot ones', he used to say at once, 'She's full of the god.' Messalla himself, whenever he met [Gallio] fresh from hearing a new speaker, always used to greet him with the words, 'Well, was she full of the god?' And so this became such a habit with Gallio that it used to fall from his lips involuntarily. Once in the presence of the emperor, when mention had been made of the talents of Haterius, falling into his usual form, he said, 'She's another man who's full of the god.' When the emperor wanted to know what this was supposed to mean, he explained the line of Vergil and how this once had escaped him in front of Messalla and always seemed to pop out after that. Tiberius himself, being of the school of Theodorus, used to dislike the style of Nicetes; and so he was delighted by Gallio's story.

The story points to several features of the game as played in the *scholae*. First, a speaker's style is rejected by labelling him as a woman. The style of the original target, Nicetes, is associated with Greek declaimers in particular and said to be characterized by *impetus*, a flood or rush of words. So the bad style is feminine, foreign, and overly effusive. Second, the people involved range from Ovid's friends and patron to Augustus; this august circle is following, like sports fans, questions of style among declaimers ranging from the Greek Nicetes to the consular Haterius. Moreover, these fans are also players: Tiberius' team affiliation is noted here; Messalla appears repeatedly in Seneca, sometimes as a noted declaimer himself

(*Controv.* 3 *pr.* 14), occasionally insulting another declaimer.

Another story shows how such insults were wielded during the actual declaiming of speeches in the *scholae* (Sen. *Suas.* 7.12):

This *suasoria* [Should Cicero burn his writings to get Antony to spare his life?] was declaimed in the *schola* of the rhetor Cestius Pius by Surdinus. He was a young man of talent, by whom Greek plays were elegantly translated into Latin. He used to make sweet (*dulces*) *sententiae*, but often they were too sweet (*praedulces*) and broken (*infractas*). In this *suasoria*, when he had closed out his previous pretty thoughts with an oath [a common ornament of declamations], he added the words, 'So may I read you' (*ita te legam*). Cestius, the most witty of men, pretended he hadn't heard him so that he could insult this elegant young man as if he were unchaste (*impudens*), and said, 'What did you say? What? "So may I read you?" (*ita te fruar*, literally "so may I enjoy you").'

For us, it is easier to see the mechanics of the situation than to understand Cestius' joke. The young man speaks, the master-declamer interrupts, and gives his interruption a form that enables him to (verbally) penetrate the young man. It is harder to see what exactly it was that set him off. According to Seneca, Surdinus' style of speech was to make *infractas sententias*. I would assume it was not *ita te legam* that bothered Cestius but the unspecified list of *belli sensus* ('pretty thoughts') that preceded it.

The style wars came to play an important role in the history of Latin literature. One of the chief offenders, according to Seneca, was Arellius Fuscus, Ovid's teacher. Here Seneca deplores how Arellius trained the young philosopher Fabianus (*Controv.* 2 *pr.* 1):

Arellius Fuscus' *explicatio* was splendid, indeed, but laborious and convoluted; his ornament (*cultus*) was too far-fetched; the arrangement of his words more effeminate (*mollior*) than could be tolerated (*patis*) by a mind preparing itself according to such sacred and staunch precepts; the overall effect of his oratory was its unevenness, since it was at one point slender (*exilis*), at another wandering and overflowing with excessive licence (*licentia*): his premises, his arguments, his narratives were spoken drily (*aride*), but in his descriptions, all the words were given their freedom (*libertas*), breaking the rules, as long as they sounded brilliant; there was nothing keen, nothing solid,

nothing shaggy; his oratory was splendid, and more sexy (*lasciva*) than happy.

The problem seems to consist largely in the relation between Arellius' style and poetry, a relation both literary and social (cf. *Suas.* 3.5); and poetry is connected with what is *mollior* ('more effeminate'), what is out of control, and what is *lasciva* ('sexy').

Yet, as Seneca makes clear, Arellius was highly thought of: 'No one was thought to have been a more elegant (*cultus*) speaker' (*Suas.* 4.5); his speeches are met with cheering (*Suas.* 4.4). Indeed, Seneca himself had a high opinion of Arellius and not only quotes him extensively but puts him among his top four orators (*Controv.* 10 *pr.* 13); Arellius' 'too cultivated and broken word-order' (*nimius cultus et fracta compositio*, *Suas.* 2.23) is evidently not just for young men. Seneca claims to have included *Suasoria* 2 just so his sons can know 'how brilliantly (*nitide*) Fuscus spoke – or how licentiously (*licenter*)' (2.10), leaving it to them to judge. And then, giving an extraordinary and charming insight into the world of the forum, he says, 'I remember that, when I was a young man, nothing was so familiar as these *explicationes* of Fuscus; we all used to sing (*cantabat*) them, each with a different lilt of the voice, each to his own tune.' 'Singing' speeches was a highly charged practice and Seneca hardly advocates it; still, there he and his friends were, warbling away at Fuscus' well-known words, which they all knew by heart.

The danger to young men of experimenting with extreme style is the theme of Seneca's account of the boy orator Alfius Flavius, who peaked too young, declaiming while still wearing the *toga praetexta*. This poor boy's 'natural force' was 'emasculated (*enervata*) by poetry' (*Controv.* 1.1.22). How did poetry spoil Alfius Flavius, we wonder, and what poetry was it? We find out in the *controversia* about the father who gave his son poison because he had gone mad and was chewing on his own body (*Controv.* 3.7):

Alfius Flavius made this epigram: 'He was his own nourishment and his own ruin.' Cestius attacked him for speaking corruptly (*corrupte*): 'It is clear', he said, 'that you have read the poets carefully; for this is an idea of that man who filled this age not just with arts but with *sententiae* that are amorous. For Ovid . . .'

And he goes on to quote Ovid's lines on Erysichthon. Seneca has plenty to say elsewhere about Ovid's style and its faults; here Ovid

is responsible for leading young Alfius astray. His very way of turning a phrase is said to be erotic (*amatoria*), just like his subject matter. The adjective *corruptus* is often used in Seneca to deplore style (e.g., *Suas.* 1.12, 1.13) or to label anything he finds in bad taste. The story of Alfius Flavus points to a feeling that oratory is contaminated by influence from a certain kind of poetry – a kind of poetry that itself represents a falling-off from a manly style.

A correlative critique from within the world of poetry is presented in the first satire of Persius.²⁷ The relationship between the audience and the speaker's words is depicted by Persius as a sexual one (1.19–21):

Then you may see, neither with right morals nor calm voice,
the big Tituses tremble, when poetry enters
their groins, and they are scratched where it's inmost by a
quavering verse.

The poet likewise is effeminate, as evinced not only by his clothing but by his manner of speech and by the content and style of what he says (1.32–35):

Here some man, wearing a lavender cloak about his shoulders,
speaking some rancid drop from his stammering nose –
Phyllises, Hypsipyles, and something weepy from the bards –
he squeezes it out and trips his words under his tender palate.

And Persius implicitly compares the manly style he claims for himself with the unmanly style he deplores. He puts this in physical terms (1.103–5):

Would these things happen if any vein of our paternal balls
lived on in us? Groinless (*delumbe*), on the tip of saliva,
this swims on their lips, and 'Maenad' and 'Attis' are all wet.

Content (Greek, orgiastic, female, transsexual), style (Greek vocabulary, line structure, *enargeia*, artistic syntax), and the feminized physical body of both speaker and audience unite to form what the manly satirist rejects. Ironically, the critic himself provides a flamboyant example of what he is criticizing; it would be hard to find a more artificial poet than Persius.

It is likewise ironic that the younger Seneca produced such a lengthy sermon on the corrupt style, since he himself was reproached as an outstanding case of it by Quintilian (*Inst.* 10.1.125–31).

Quintilian says that, much as he admires Seneca's style, he had occasion to criticize it (10.1.125–6, 127)

when I was trying to recall [my students] from a corrupt style of speech, broken by all vices (*corruptum et omnibus vitiis fractum dicendi genus*), to a more severe standard. Then, however, [Seneca] was practically the only [author] in the hands of young men. . . . But he pleased [them] precisely for his vices. . . .

If only Seneca had had more self-control, Quintilian concludes, he might have enjoyed the 'approval of the learned rather than the love of boys (*puerorum amore*)' (10.1.130).

This modelling, as has been seen, is not peculiar to Seneca and his fans: style is seen above all as something that is passed on from older men to younger men. Seneca's sons like Arellius Fuscus; Alfius Flavus likes Ovid; teachers train students or ridicule them; young men have fun imitating noted speakers. Young men are said to have a weakness for the ornate style sometimes castigated as effeminate. Oratory, then, not only manifests gender attributes in itself but is a medium whereby older men seduce younger men – though in the word, not in the flesh.

To sum up: The forum was a place for activities that defined Roman male citizens; young men came there to begin their lives as adults and were there trained by older men. This was a time when their sexual identity was felt to be in jeopardy and, perhaps for this reason, to them is attributed a predilection for a style felt to be effeminate. The 'effeminate' style was so called by Roman rhetoricians for multiple reasons: they related it to the putatively effeminate body of the speaker; they found it even in phrasing, syntax and use of rhetorical figures. Orators used imputations of effeminacy to attack each other's style in a world in which men's reputations were on the line while they vied with each other in public performance. That the performative aspect of their world was a source of concern to them is amply attested by the next group of sources.

ACTING AND ACTIO

If one major source of anxiety about style was the danger of effeminacy, another – and related – source was the danger of resembling an actor. The sexuality of actors was itself suspect and

actors (partly on that account) suffered a diminished civil status as *infames* – much like men marked as *molles*.²⁸ William Fitzgerald has suggested that poetry, as a public performance, might have been seen as itself akin to acting, hence tending to cast a shadow on the sexual integrity of poets.²⁹ Certainly this was the case for oratory; the handbooks are full of insistent disclaimers explaining how orators, though as talented as actors, though very like actors, are really not like actors at all.

The problem was not only that orators, like actors, performed in public. The problem was that orators used their bodies in performance in ways that resembled what actors did on stage. They used their voices for effect, and sometimes this reached the point that critics described as 'singing' or 'chanting'. They used their voices to impersonate different kinds of people, including women. And they moved their bodies. The effects to be achieved by various hand and arm gestures, arrangements of the toga, eye movements, and so on constitute the branch of oratory called *pronuntiatio* ('delivery'), or *actio* ('movement'); Quintilian devotes a whole section of the *Institutio Oratoria* to it (11.3), which he begins by stating *actio* to be pre-eminently the most important branch of oratory, appealing to authorities including Demosthenes and Cicero. Students who read the Catilinarians today rarely even hear of *actio*, and it is startling to realize that a Roman orator must have looked more like a hula dancer than like a television anchorman. And that is just what bothered the Roman critics – that oratory should be assimilated to dancing. So it is the orator as singer and dancer who runs the risk of looking like an actor, since actors sang and danced; moreover, this dancing was regarded as morally suspect *per se* (e.g., Macrob. *Sat.* 3.14.4–8, where Scipio watches the dancing school).³⁰ Acting and dancing were both closely associated in Roman thought with effeminacy and sexual penetrability; hence the oratorical style that employed flowing *actio* was associated with the 'effeminate' verbal style discussed above.

The conflation of ideas about oratory, sexuality, acting and dancing is easy to find in sources from the period. The earliest extant Roman rhetorical handbook, the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* (early first century BCE), discusses *pronuntiatio* with special attention to voice (3.19–28).³¹ Considering the sexual overtones of *mollitudo*, it is striking that the *auctor* gives this name to one aspect of voice control; at the same time, the name is a good indicator of the hazards that await an orator who misuses his voice.

Such pitfalls for the oratorical vocalist and performer suggest this warning (*Rhet. Her.* 3.22): 'Sharp exclamation wounds the voice; it also wounds the listener, for it has something about it that is ungentlemanly (*inliberale*) and more suited to womanish clamours (*muliebrem . . . vociferationem*) than to manly dignity (*virilem dignitatem*) in speaking.' Several sections (3.23–5) are devoted to *mollitudo*; the *auctor* observes that the speaker should use the 'full throat' (*plenis faucibus*), yet 'in such a way that we should not cross from oratorical practice to that of tragedy' (3.24). Finally, in the two sections he devotes to body movement, he argues that the purpose of gestures and facial expression is to make the argument 'more probable'; therefore (3.26): 'It is fitting that chastity (*pudorem*) and briskness (*acrimoniam*) should be on your face, and that in your gesture should be neither conspicuous charm (*venustatem*) nor anything disgusting (*turpitudinem*), lest we seem to be either actors (*histriones*) or construction workers (*operarii*).'

Comments on the theatre by other writers explain what underlies these caveats. Columella, who wrote on the quintessentially Roman and manly art of agriculture in the mid-first century CE, begins his book with a classic *locus de saeculo* that includes the following comment on the theatre (1 *pr.* 15): 'Astonished, we marvel at the gestures of effeminate (*effeminatorum*), that, by womanish movement, they counterfeit a sex denied to men by nature, and deceive the eyes of the spectators.' But both dancing and the theatre were extremely popular in Roman culture, and even that hero of Roman conservatism, Scipio Aemilianus, 'moved that triumphal and military body of his to a rhythmical beat' (*Sen. Tranq.* 17.4).

If Scipio was a manly dancer, this oxymoronic state seems to have been the precarious goal of the Roman orator. Quintilian's treatment of *actio* ('movement') is full of cautions about lapses in masculinity. Effeminate *actio* repels him (*Inst.* 4.2.39): 'They bend their voices and incline their necks and flail their arms against their sides and act sexy (*lasciuiunt*) in their whole style of subject matter, words and composition; finally, what is like a monstrosity (*monstro*), the *actio* pleases, while the case is not intelligible.' In an extended passage (2.5.10–12), he complains that 'corrupt and vice-filled ways of speaking' (*corruptas et vitiosas orationes*) find popular favour out of the moral degradation of their audience; they are full of what is 'improper, obscure, swollen, vulgar, dirty, sexy, effeminate' (*impropria, obscura, tumida, humilis, sordida, lasciva, effeminata*). And they are praised precisely because they are 'perverse' (*prava*). Instead

of speech that is 'straight' (*rectus*) and 'natural' (*secundum naturam*), people like what is 'bent' (*deflexa*). He concludes with a lengthy analogy between the taste for such speech and the admiration for bodies that are 'twisted' (*distortis*) and 'monstrous' (*prodigiosis*) – even those that have been 'depilated and smoothed', adorned with curled hair and cosmetics, rather than deriving their beauty from 'uncorrupted nature' (*incorrupta natura*). 'The result is that it seems that beauty of the body comes from bad morals.' The bad body, in Quintilian's book, is that elsewhere associated with the *cinaedus*;³² bad speech is *effeminata*, good speech is 'straight' and natural, tallying with the common assertion that the actions of the *cinaedus* are 'against nature'. The effeminate body stands both by metonymy and synecdoche for the kind of speech that Quintilian rejects; bad speech is both like such bodies and produced by such bodies.

This critique is applied specifically to the voice.³³ 'The transition from boyhood to adolescence' is precisely the time at which the voice is in most danger, for physiological reasons: 'not because of [the body's] heat, but rather because of its *humor*, with which that time of life is swollen' (*Inst.* 11.3.28). That is, the voice is vulnerable to bad oratorical practice at just the age when the young man is most susceptible to penetration. A healthy voice is neither too rough nor too feeble (11.3.32); the extremes are expressed by strings of adjectives, constituting a spectrum of masculinity, although the voice itself is feminine, posing a problematical androgyny. It won't do to be too rough – we might think of the Stoic/pathics targeted by satire;³⁴ nor yet too smooth, explicitly effeminate. But the voice has to be both firm and sweet, great and pure.

Other aspects of *actio* also come in for regulation. It is important to be careful about your eye movements; your eyes should not be 'sexy (*lascivi*) and mobile, swimming and suffused with a certain kind of pleasure, or giving sidelong glances (*limi*) and, if I might say, venereal (*venerei*), or asking or promising anything' (*Inst.* 11.3.76; cf. *Cic. Orat.* 60). In a discussion of *vitia* in hand gestures, Quintilian quotes Cicero, who rules out 'cleverness of the fingers' but approves of a 'manly bending of the sides' (*Inst.* 11.3.122, cf. *Cic. Orat.* 59). The speaker even has to be careful about where he walks: approaching the opponents' bench is 'not quite chaste' (*parum verecundum*, *Inst.* 11.3.133). The arrangement of the toga is an art in itself (11.3.137): it should be 'shining and manly' (*splendidus et virilis*); the toga should come just below the knees in front and to the mid-knee in back 'because a longer length belongs to women and a shorter to

centurions' (11.3.138). Among other possible flaws, throwing the fold from the bottom over the right shoulder would be 'loose and prissy' (*solutum ac delicatum*, 11.3.146).

Moreover, *actio* should not smack of acting or dancing. Quintilian insists that the orator's vocal training is not the same as that of singing-teachers (*phonasci*), though they have much in common; orators need (11.3.19): 'firmness of the body, lest our voice be attenuated to the thinness of eunuchs and women and sick people; this is achieved by walking, applying body lotion (*unctio*), abstinence from sex, and the easy digestion of food – that is, frugality.' For Quintilian, the orator's training should be rough and tough, as opposed to the coddling a singer might give his voice (11.3.23–4): 'For we do not need so much a soft (*molli*) and tender (*tenera*) voice as we do a strong and durable one.' We have to speak 'roughly' (*aspere*); so 'let us not soften (*molliamus*) our voice by pampering (*deliciis*) . . . but let it be made firm by practice'. Likewise, our movements should not look like dancing (11.3.128): 'Most of all should be avoided *mollis actio*, such as Cicero says was exhibited by a man named Titius, so that even a certain kind of dance was called "the Titius".'

The need to divide the orator from the actor shows up repeatedly in the oratorical handbooks. Cicero, in the *Orator*, calls for *actio* that is 'not tragic (*tragica*) nor of the stage (*scaenae*), but by a moderate movement of the body and face still expresses much' (86). The elder Seneca says of Cassius Severus (*Controv.* 3 *pr.* 3) that his 'pronunciation is that which an actor might produce, but still not that which could seem to belong to an actor'. A fine distinction. Yet Seneca puts into Cassius' own mouth a speech on oratory in which he draws on his own *morbus* – his theatre craze – to use the actors Pylades and Bathyllus as instances to illustrate a point (*Controv.* 3 *pr.* 10).

Quintilian emphasizes that too close an imitation of the comic actors will corrupt the youthful student (*Inst.* 1.11.2–3):

Indeed, not every gesture (*gestus*) and movement is to be sought from the comedians. For although the orator ought to use both of these up to a certain point, still he will be very different from an actor; nor will he be excessive in his facial expression or his hand [gestures] or his body movements.

And again, arguing that orators need not study all the nuances of *gestus* (11.3.181–4), he suggests that *actio* 'should be moderated, lest, while we strive for the elegance of an actor, we lose the *auctoritas* of

a good and serious man' – a telling opposition (for further remarks on acting and oratory, see 1.12.14; 11.3.103, 123, 125).

One of the causes of the problem was the fact that orators had to impersonate various characters in the course of making speeches. Quintilian lists 'children, women, foreigners (*populorum*), and even inanimate things' as posing challenges to the orator's skill (11.1.42). The failure to observe the correct tone is especially a problem in the *scholae* because 'many emotions are acted out (*funguntur*) in the *schola*, which we undergo not as advocates, but as victims' (*non ut advocati sed ut passi subimus*, 11.1.55) – might we here posit that the lawyer stood to the client as active sexuality stood to passive? That what 'unmanned' the orator was too close an identification with the experience of the contesting parties? But here Quintilian is advocating a scrupulous adherence to the tone necessitated by the plot of the *controversia*: weep, be emotional, and do it consistently. Yet, paradoxically, what he rejects here is precisely the kind of style associated with acting and effeminacy elsewhere (11.1.56): *cantare, quod vitium pervasit, aut lascivire* ('singing/ chanting, a vice that has become pervasive, or sexy style').

A singing or chanting intonation is mentioned repeatedly as a vice plaguing the practice of oratory. It shows up as early as Cicero's *Orator ad M. Brutum* in a passage in which he discusses earlier Greek practices (57):³⁵

There is, however, even in speaking a certain rather muffled (*obscurior*) singing tone (*cantus*), not that peroration of the rhetors out of Phrygia and Caria that is almost an aria, but that which Demosthenes and Aeschines mean when one charges the other with modulations of the voice (*vocis flexiones*). . . .

As we have seen, the elder Seneca talks of himself and his friends, in his younger days, singing the purple passages from Arellius Fuscus. Seneca likewise calls Vibius Gallus crazy for his habit of singing out cues that he is about to begin a descriptive passage (*Controv.* 2.1.26): 'When he was about to describe love, he would say, almost like someone singing, "I want to describe love", just as if he were saying, "I want to have an orgy (*bacchari*)".' Quintilian suggests that singing may be taken up as the refuge of a weak voice; such a speaker may ease his 'weary throat and side by an ugly aria (*deformi cantico*)' (*Inst.* 11.3.13). He introduces an extended discussion of the vice of chanting by a list of other faults that includes spitting on bystanders and hawking up phlegm, continuing (11.3.57–60):

But any one of these vices would I prefer to the one that now is so belaboured in all court cases and in the *scholae* – that of chanting; I don't know whether it is more useless or more disgusting (*foedius*). For what is less fitting for an orator than a stagy modulation, not infrequently approaching the licence of drunks or carousers? (57) What indeed is more contrary to moving the feelings than . . . to loosen the very holiness of the forum by the licence of the Lycians and Carians? . . . (58) But if it is to be generally accepted, there is no reason why we shouldn't help out that vocal modulation with lyres and flutes – no, by God, with cymbals, which are closer to this ugliness. . . . (59) And there are some who are led by this pleasure of hearing everywhere what might soothe their ears, in accord with the other vices of their lives (60).

Here Quintilian brings together many elements of the critique of gender in style. Singing is repellent, ugly, in the sense that it is morally repugnant and like the improper body; it is associated with the stage or with drunks, recalling the younger Seneca's description of Maecenas' verbal style; it is associated with *licentia*, the opposite of the desired control of the body; it threatens to dissolve, to loosen, the forum, which is called 'holy', and opposed to the licence here attributed to Asia Minor (Quintilian seems to have the passage from Cicero's *Orator* in mind); it is associated first with the musical accompaniment of the stage and, climactically, with the cymbals of the eunuch priests of Cybele – an association both with Asia and with effeminacy. Finally, Quintilian hints that those who like this style have problems with vice in their own lives.

To sum up: the orator's training involved a surprising amount of physical work. The formalized list of appropriate gestures in *Institutio* 11.3 must have involved substantial practice for novices. The orator's vocal range was close enough to a singer's to necessitate training with a voice coach. But always, in these endeavours, the orator risked running to various extremes, among which effeminacy always looms large. The problem above all was how to avoid looking like a dancer and sounding like a singer, dubious statuses that themselves carried the stigma of effeminacy. But the beleaguered orator had even more to worry about; in Quintilian's tirade on singing, we see the traces of a further aspect of gender trouble in oratorical style: the threat to the virile forum from the effeminate East.³⁶

THE ATTICIST-ASIANIST CONTROVERSY

The debate over oratorical style known as the split between Atticists and Asianists is well known and is discussed in detail by modern analysts.³⁷ But the Roman ambivalence over an art so markedly Eastern in origin was often expressed in terms of gender. The Orient, in Roman thought, was associated with luxury and a concomitant deviant sexuality – effeminacy, even self-castration.³⁸ Thus it was logical for a style of speech that came from the East to be labelled as effeminate. The problem was, if you wanted to be an orator, you had to submit to an Eastern regimen – Greek, if not absolutely Asiatic. A solution was to divide the East into less-East and more-East and to identify oneself with the lesser of the two evils. Hence the ‘Atticists’, who spoke of their style as more manly, claimed that it derived from the writers of Athens; the term ‘Asianist’ was applied to writing associated with the rhetorical schools of Asia Minor. ‘Asianist’ was generally a term of abuse, and it is hard to find an instance of someone claiming to be one, though it is not hard to find denunciations of the Atticists.

Quintilian discusses the difference between Atticists and Asianists at some length (*Inst.* 12.10.12–26) and gives an account of the origins of the two schools (12.10.16–17). In antiquity, he says, the Attic was good, the Asianist bad. The Attic speakers were *pressi* (‘concise’) and *integri* (‘whole’), while the Asianists were *inflati* (‘inflated’) and *inanes* (‘empty’); the former had nothing extra, the latter were lacking in both judgement and moderation. Some say, he continues, that this happened because Greek spread from Greece to Asia Minor and the Asianists tried their strength at eloquence when they were not yet skilled in speaking Greek; so they expressed ideas by circumlocutions because they did not know the right words; and then they kept up the habit. Quintilian, however, thinks that the difference is an ethnic one and stems both from the orators and their audience (12.10.17): ‘The Attici, refined and discriminating, tolerated nothing empty or gushing (*redundans*); but the Asiatic race (*gens*), somehow more swollen (*tumidior*) and boastful (*iactantior*), was inflated with a more vainglory of speaking.’ The Asiatics are thus branded both as upstarts on the rhetorical scene and as inherently, even physically, less capable of excellence.

These ethnic adjectives show up associated with gender adjectives in descriptions of the battle between Cicero and his Atticist opponents. Tacitus, in the *Dialogus*, preserves an interchange between Cicero, Calvus, and Brutus (18.4–5):

It is established that not even Cicero was without his detractors, to whom he seemed inflated and swollen (*inflatus et tumens*), not concise (*pressus*) enough, but jumping over the limits (*supra modum exultans*), overflowing (*superfluens*) and not Attic enough. In particular you have read the letters sent by Calvus and Brutus to Cicero, from which it is easy to gather that Calvus seemed to Cicero bloodless and worn (*atritum*) while Brutus seemed idle (*otiosus*) and disjointed. In return, Cicero indeed got bad reviews from Calvus as loose (*solutum*) and sinewless (*enervem*) and from Brutus, if I may use his own words, as ‘broken and loinless’ (*fractum atque elumbem*).

Compare Quintilian’s report of the attack on Cicero (*Inst.* 12.10.12):

But even people of his own times dared to attack him as too swollen (*tumidiorem*), Asianist, gushing (*redundantem*), too repetitive, sometimes frigid in his humour, and in his composition broken (*fractum*), jumping-over (*exultantem*), and almost – which could not be farther from the truth – softer than a man (*viro molliorem*).

The list of adjectives associated with effeminacy is a familiar one, but thought-provoking in its connection with the East. We move from the familiar *mollis* (‘soft’) to the explicit and physiological *elumbis* (‘loinless’) and *enervis* (‘sinewless’/‘emasculated’), to a group of adjectives evoking space and substance: *inflatus* (‘inflated’), *tumens*, *tumidus* (‘swollen’), *exultans* (‘jumping-over’), *redundans* (‘gushing’), *superfluens* (‘overflowing’), *solutus* (‘loose’), *fractus* (‘broken’). These adjectives, also familiar from Seneca *Epistulae* 114 (and cf. *Rhet. Her.* 4.16), are located in the body of the orator as well as in his speech, and in addition suggest a quality he may be passing on to the world around him; compare what Quintilian said about ‘loosening the holiness of the forum’ by importing style from Lycia and Caria (*Inst.* 11.3.58). This fear of flowing, loosening, leaping the boundaries, breaking up, pervades Roman imagery of the city, state and empire.³⁹ In contrast, the Attici are *pressi* (‘concise’) and *integri* (‘whole’).

Yet the heroes of Roman oratory are not Brutus and Calvus but Cicero and Hortensius. Despite the problematic aspects of the Asianist style, the experts agree that it is more beautiful, more noble, and more effective than the arid wastes of the Atticists.

CONCLUSIONS

Although the feminine plays a major part in the world of the forum, real women themselves are almost entirely absent. The players in these all-male games seem to need the feminine both for their own enjoyment and in order to insult each other, but an actual female body does not belong in the forum. Indeed, the charming minutes of the elder Seneca's men's club convey no sense of lack; women are elsewhere, maybe in the women's club, but who cares?⁴⁰

NOTES

- 1 No mention of the subject appears in the lengthy bibliography compiled by Sussman 1984.
- 2 For recent work on gender and Roman rhetoric, see Corbeill 1990; Santoro L'hoir 1992; Richlin 1992d; Gleason 1995; Richlin 1995: 204-5; Corbeill 1996; Gunderson 1996; Richlin 1996; Gunderson (forthcoming); Richlin (forthcoming a).
- 3 For a brief early discussion of sexuality and rhetorical style, see Richlin 1992a: 92-3. On the New Historicists see Veaser 1989. On cultural studies see Grossberg *et al.* 1992.
- 4 Bloomer 1995; Bloomer (forthcoming).
- 5 On the relations and divergences between the New Historicism and feminist theory on the body, see Richlin (1997).
- 6 Greenblatt 1980; Herzfeld 1985; Winkler 1990.
- 7 For consideration of women's participation in Roman oratory, see Hallett 1989: 62, 66; Richlin 1992d.
- 8 Wyke 1987; Wyke 1995.
- 9 For ventriloquism of the female in rhetoric, see Santoro L'hoir 1992: 29-46; Bloomer 1995; Richlin 1996.
- 10 Spain 1992: 3. For feminist theory on space, see also Women and Geography Study Group 1984; Ardener 1993; Rose 1993.
- 11 Butler 1990: 25.
- 12 Gilmore 1990: 11; cf. Brandes 1981; Herzfeld 1985; Winkler 1990; Gleason 1995.
- 13 For performative gender, compare work by Latinists on masculinity in Roman literary texts: Fitzgerald 1988; Fitzgerald 1992; Skinner 1993; Fitzgerald 1995: 34-58; Oliensis (forthcoming).
- 14 See Koestenbaum 1991; the cited passage is found on p. 218.
- 15 Said 1979; pp. 55-8 deal with Greek and Roman orientalizing.
- 16 On activities in the forum, see Stambaugh 1988: 112-19; Zanker 1990: 79-82; Moore 1991. On the gender significance of the shape of the forum of Augustus, see Kellum (forthcoming).
- 17 On Roman women's religion see Richlin (forthcoming b); on the androgyny of the Vestals, see Beard 1980.
- 18 On the Liberalia see Richlin 1993: 545-8. On Roman (unlike Greek)

- rhetorical education as 'responsible for a whole cadre of young men', see Gleason 1995: 121.
- 19 See Bonner 1977: 84-5 with bibliography.
- 20 Richlin 1992d; cf. Bonner 1977: 135-6 on coeducation in secondary schools; Hallett 1989. On voice training for women as a health measure, see Gleason 1995: 94-8.
- 21 For overview and discussion see Richlin 1992a: 83-104, 278-84. For a parallel discussion of rhetoric and gender slippage, see Gleason 1995: 71-3, 75, 98-102.
- 22 For previous discussions of this letter, see Richlin 1992a: 4-5; Gleason 1995: 113.
- 23 On the sexual connotations of *fractus* and its compounds in the context of rhetoric, see Gleason 1995: 112; for other stereotypical adjectives used to connote effeminacy, see Richlin 1992a: 258 n. 3; Edwards 1993: 63-97, esp. 68-9; Gleason 1995: 67-70. On the vocabulary of Roman male gender variance, see ch. 4 of Williams (forthcoming).
- 24 For the connection of *discinctus* with effeminacy, see Richlin 1992a: 92, 280; Edwards 1993: 90; Corbeill 1996: 160 n. 81.
- 25 Bonner 1977: 10-14.
- 26 On the agonistic structure of Greek declamation in the second century CE, see Gleason 1995: 72-3, 122-6.
- 27 Richlin 1992a: 186-7 with further bibliography.
- 28 On these terms and the ideas behind them, see Bonner 1949: 20-2; Dupont 1985: 95-110; Edwards 1993: 98-136; Richlin 1993: 554-61; Edwards (forthcoming).
- 29 Fitzgerald 1992: 420-1.
- 30 Richlin 1992a: 92, 98, 101, 284; Gleason 1995: 106, 113-21; see also Edwards (forthcoming).
- 31 Also discussed in Gleason 1995: 104-5.
- 32 On this word see Richlin 1993.
- 33 On the voice and voice training see Edwards 1993: 86; Gleason 1995: 82-102, esp. 82-3.
- 34 See Richlin 1992a: 138-9.
- 35 On singing see Bonner 1949: 21-2, 59; Gleason 1995: 93-4, 108, 112, 117-18.
- 36 For a later version of this critique by a Greek writer (without the ethnic angle), see Lucian *Nigr.* 11 (actors who speak *gunaikôdes*, 'effeminately'); *Demon.* 12 (Demonax mocks Favorinus' prose rhythm as *agennês*, 'low-born', and *gunaikeion*, 'womanish'); and the extended description of an effeminate, chanting orator at *Rhêtôrôn Didaskalos* 11-12, 15, 19. These and related texts are discussed in detail by Gleason 1995: 126-30, 132-8.
- 37 On Asianists and Atticists see Leeman 1963: 136-67. Gleason 1995: 107-8 de-emphasizes the issue.
- 38 On gender and the East see Griffin 1976; Balsdon 1979: 60-3, 225-30; Edwards 1993: 92-7; Skinner 1993; and for modern Orientalizing, Said 1979: 190.
- 39 On the use of the image of fluid body boundaries to express anxiety over the body politic, see Joshel 1992.