

ACTION! QUINTILIAN'S ORATOR BETWEEN STAGE AND PULPIT

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Abstract

Although Quintilian overpraises Menander (*Inst. or.* X, 1, 69-72 *passim*), his critiques of the authors of *comoediae palliatae*, Plautus, Caecilius and Terence, are remarkably severe (X, 1, 99-100): according to Quintilian, Roman comic production would not be more than a faint shadow (“leuem umbram”) of Greek comedy. This paper has two main objectives: (1) to gather evidence to ground Quintilian’s rejection of comedies written in Latin and, specifically, his rejection of the work of Plautus in the context of oratorical education; (2) to indicate the extent to which the speaker idealized by the rhetorician could (or should) use theatrical techniques in public speeches. In other words: where is the boundary of comedic humor in the Roman Forum drawn?

Keywords: Oratory – Quintilian – Humor – Roman Comedy – *Decorum*.

Resumen

Aunque Quintiliano teja módicos elogios para Menandro (*Inst. or.* X, 1, 69-72 *passim*), la crítica de los autores de *comoediae palliatae*, Plauto, Cecilio y Terencio, son notablemente severas (X, 1, 99-100): según el, la producción cómica romana no era más que una sombra débil (“leuem umbram”) de la comedia griega. Este trabajo tiene dos objetivos principales: (1) reunir evidencias para basar el rechazo de Quintiliano a las comedias escritas en latín, y específicamente al trabajo de Plauto en el contexto de la educación oratoria; (2) señalar en qué medida el altavoz idealizado por el rétor podría (más bien, debería) emplear técnicas de teatro en discursos públicos. En otras palabras, ¿dónde se dibuja el límite del humorismo cómico en el Foro Romano?

Palabras clave: Oratoria – Quintiliano – Humorismo – Comedia Romana – Decoro.

INTRODUCTION

The first part of this paper intends to assess how and why Quintilian, in Book X of *Institutio oratoria*, dismisses comedies written in Latin but overpraises Menander, the main author of Athenian New Comedy and Plautus’ model in many of his plays.¹ In

¹ *Bacchides*, adaptation from *Dis Exapaton* and *Aulularia*, inspired by *Dyskolos*, to name only two.

Book X (1, 65-66), Quintilian also spares no praise for Ancient Comedy, “sinceram illam sermonis Attici gratiam [...] retinet” [“which preserves intact the true grace of Attic diction”],² naming its best authors Aristophanes, Eupolis and Cratinus (in this order), the same authors whom Horace mentions in *Sermones* I, 4, 1 (even if Horace sets Aristophanes after Cratinus, in third place). Malcolm Heath (1990: 143) reminds us that “just as there was a canon of three tragic dramatists, so the ancient world recognized a canon of three dramatists of Athenian Old Comedy: Aristophanes, of course, but also Cratinus and Eupolis”. It is likely that our rhetor, in this passage, would refer to a well-established canon in the field, if nothing else.

Although Quintilian overpraises Menander (*Inst. or.* X, 1, 69-72³ *passim*), his critiques of the authors of *comoediae palliatae*, Plautus, Caecilius and Terence, are remarkably severe (X, 1, 99-100): according to Quintilian, Roman comic production would not be more than a faint shadow (“leuem umbram”) of Greek comedy (would there be some implicit reprimand of the methods of imitation that Plautus employed?). Nevertheless, the author of *Institutio oratoria* proceeds to quote directly, in five different passages, verses from the play *Eunuch* that would stand as examples of the efficient use of poetic language.⁴ Curiously, four of these passages quote the same verses, which had already been selected as an example by Cicero in *De Natura Deorum* (III, 72): repeating the quote again and again leaves us wondering the extent to which Quintilian would have been devoted to the direct reading of Terence’s plays or even the extent to which his judgment of the author was influenced by Ciceronian criticism. Aware of these quotes, Andrés Pociña (1981-82: 103) attempts to explain the curious recurrence of Terence’s most popular comedy, also considered the play closest to the type of Plautine comicity:

¿No es esto extraño? Extraño sí, pero explicable: ya en la obra de Cicerón el *Eunuchus* era una de las obras de Terencio más citadas, junto con *Andría* y *Heautontímorumenos*, en menor proporción utilizaba el orador versos de *Phormío*, y nunca de *Adelphoe* y *Hecyra*, las dos comedias de espíritu más terenciano. El dogmatismo de la crítica latina en tres de sus más destacados representantes (Cicerón, Horacio, Quintiliano) parece intentar engañarnos se evita al poco serio Plauto y, cuando se recuerda a Terencio, es precisamente al Terencio más plautino.

² In this paper, all translations of *Institutio oratoria* are from Butler (1921).

³ “Atque ille quidem omnibus eiusdem operis auctoribus abstulit nomen, et fulgore quodam suae claritatis tenebras obduxit” (Quintilian, *Inst. or.* X, 1, 72).

⁴ *Inst. or.* IX, 2, 11 (direct quote of verse 46 from *Eunuch*); IX, 2, 58 (direct quote of three verses [155-157] from *Eunuch*); IX, 3, 16 (repeats the same quotation of *Eunuch*, 46, after stating that “old writers” are full of inverted sentences); IX, 4, 141 (repeats the same quotation from *Eunuch*, 46); XI, 3, 181-182 (third direct quotation from *Eunuch*: v. 46-48).

“Is this not strange? Strange, yes, but explicable: already in Cicero's works, the *Eunuchus* was one of Terence's most quoted works, with *Andria* and *Heautontimorumenos*; to a lesser extent, the orator employed verses from *Phormio*, never from *Adelphoe* and *Hecyra*, the two comedies with a more vivid Terencian spirit. The dogmatism of Latin criticism in three of its most prominent representatives (Cicero, Horace, Quintilian) seems intent on deceiving us when it avoids the unserious Plautus, but when it recalls Terence, it is precisely the most Plautine Terence”.

Caecilius, for his part, figures listed alongside Terence on two occasions (I, 8, 11, and XI, 1, 39), the same Caecilius who, in Cicero's opinion in *De optimo genere oratorum* (I, 2), would have been perhaps the “summum poetam comicum”⁵ and the same Caecilius who is retained in the *Letters to Atticus* (VII, III, 10) as a poor representative of *Latinitas*.⁶ Although there is no room here for further discussion of the concept of *Latinitas* in the context of Ciceronian epistolography, it is convenient to recall that the first record of the term, in *Rhetoric ad Herennium* (IV, 17), also appears associated with *elegantia*:

Elegantia est, quae facit, ut locus unus quisque pure et aperte dici uideatur. Haec tribuitur in Latinitatem et explicationem. Latinitas est, quae sermonem purum conseruat, ab omni uitio remotum. Vitia in sermone, quo minus is Latinus sit, duo possunt esse: soloecismus et barbarismus.

“Elegance makes each and every topic seem to be stated with purity and perspicuity. The subheads under Elegance are Correct Latinity and Clarity. It is Correct Latinity that keeps the language pure and free of any fault. There are two faults in language that can depreciate its Latinity: Solecism and Barbarism”. (My translation)

⁵ “Itaque licet dicere et Ennium summum epicum poetam, si cui ita uidetur, et Pacuuium tragicum et Caecilium fortasse comicum”.

⁶ “Venio ad ‘Piraeae’, in quo magis reprehendendus sum quod homo Romanus ‘Piraeae’ scripserim, non ‘Piraeum’ (sic enim omnes nostri locuti sunt), quam quod addiderim ‘<in>’. Non enim hoc ut oppido praeposui sed ut loco; et tamen Dionysius noster et qui est nobiscum Nicias Cous non rebatur oppidum esse Piraeae. Sed de re uidero. Nostrum quidem si est peccatum, in eo est quod non ut de oppido locutus sum sed ut de loco secutusque sum non dico Caecilium, mane ut ex portu in Piraeum (malus enim auctor latinitatis est), sed Terentium cuius fabellae propter elegantiam sermonis putabantur a C. Laelio scribi, heri aliquot adulescentuli coimus in Piraeum, et idem, Mercator hoc addebat, captam e sunio. quod si δήμους oppida uolumus esse, tam est oppidum Sunium quam Piraeus. Sed quoniam grammaticus es, si hoc mihi ζήτημα persolueris, magna me molestia liberans”. [“Coming to the form Piraeae, I am more to be blamed for writing it thus and not Piraeum in Latin, as all our people do, than I am for adding the preposition ‘in’. I used ‘in’ as before a word signifying a place and not a town. After all Dionysius and Nicias of Cos, who is with me, do not consider that the Piraeus is a town. I will look into the question. If I have made a mistake, it is in speaking of it not as a town but as a place, and I have authority. I do not depend on a quotation from Caecilius: ‘Mane ut ex portu in Piraeum’, as he is a poor authority in Latinity; but I will quote Terence, whose fine style caused his plays to be ascribed to C. Laelius ‘Heri aliquot adulescentuli coimus in Piraeum, and again: ‘Mercator hoc addebat, captam e Sunio’. If we want to call parishes towns, Sunium is as much a town as the Piraeus. But, since you are a purist, you will save me a lot of trouble, if you can solve the problem for me”] (Winstedt, 1913).

In this paper, I am particularly interested in the absolute silence about Plautus (the few references do not refer to the comic playwright, but to the stoic philosopher Sergius Plautus),⁷ despite his large production and popularity.

1. “IN COMOEDIA MAXIME CLAUDICAMUS?”

For Quintilian, comedy can be very helpful in eloquence and will be considered “inter praecipua legenda” (*Inst. or.* I, 8, 7-8), particularly in the case of Menander. For the rhetorician, even Latin comic authors could represent some effectiveness since the reading and comments focus on the parts that nurture the mind and elevate the spirit.⁸ Slightly further (I, 8, 11-12), he names Terence and Caecilius among the poets often cited by Cicero and Asinius Pollio, noting the benefit in mentioning them because the grace of poetry helps rest the ears from forensic roughness and they give strength to the claims as though they were witnesses (note that poets are presented as a source of argument of authority).

Recovering the critical commentary on Latin comedy in book X (1, 99-100), we clearly identify three main reasons why Quintilian would have been so acerbic in his judgement:

In comoedia maxime claudicamus. Licet Varro Musas, Aeli Stilonis sententia, Plautino dicat sermone locuturas fuisse si Latine loqui uellent, licet Caecilium ueteres laudibus ferant, licet Terenti scripta ad Scipionem Africanum referantur (quae tamen sunt in hoc genere elegantissima, et plus adhuc habitura gratiae si intra uersus trimetros stetissent): C. uix leuem consequimur umbram, adeo ut mihi sermo ipse Romanus non recipere uideatur illam solis concessam Atticis uenerem, cum eam ne Graeci quidem in alio genere linguae optinuerint. Togatis excellit Afranius: utinam non inquinasset argumenta puerorum foedis amoribus, mores suos fassus.

“Comedy is our weakest point. Although Varro quotes Aelius Stilo as saying that if the Muses wished to speak Latin, they would use the language of Plautus,⁹ although the ancients extol Caecilius, and although Scipio Africanus is credited with the works of Terence (which are the most elegant of their kind, and would be

⁷ *Inst. or.* II, 14, 2 (first mention of Sergio Plautus, Augustan philosopher, in criticizing one of his translations); III, 6, 23 (second mention of S. Plautus, about the same translation οὐσία / *essentia*); VIII, 3, 33 and 35 (third mention of S. Plautus, still criticizing the neologism *essentia*; Cicero believes that the word *obsequium* has been coined by Terence –the entire paragraph discusses whether the orator can or should create neologisms); X, 1, 124 (fourth and last mention of S. Plautus: among the Stoics, he is useful for his knowledge of the matter).

⁸ In *Attic Nights* (II, 23, 1-22), Aulus Gellius reveals the weaknesses of the comedy *Plocium*, by Caecilius, compared to the original text by Menander. One of the critiques lies in the fact that “in this passage Caecilius chose rather to play the buffoon than to be appropriate and suitable to the character that he was representing” (II, 23, 13; translation from Rolfe, 1927).

⁹ The adjective “plautinus”, rather than the proper noun, is the only mention of “Titus Plautus Maccius”, the comic playwright.

still more graceful¹⁰ if the poet had confined himself to the *iambic trimeter*), we still scarcely succeed in reproducing even a faint shadow of the charm of Greek comedy. Indeed, it seems to me as though *the language of Rome* were incapable of reproducing that graceful wit which was granted to Athens alone, and was beyond the reach of other Greek dialects to achieve. Afranius excels in the purely Roman comedy, but it is to be regretted that he revealed *his own character* by defiling his plots with the introduction of *indecent paederastic intrigues*".

The metric variance (escaping the iambic trimeter model),¹¹ the supposed "lack of grace" of the Latin language (also in XII, 10, 38) and the type of plot brought to scene (if we can extend to Plautus the remark directed to Afranius): those are the alleged causes of Quintilian's generic condemnation of Latin comedy. Regarding the metric, if Horace (*Ars Poetica*, 270-74)¹² points to a change in literary taste at the beginning of the empire, he also notes that Plautus, already in Antiquity, was praised and admired for his sense of humor and metric virtuosity: Plautus would have escaped Quintilian's censure in this regard, but most likely would not in regard to the type of plot that appeals to "foedis amoribus". It is worth noting that Quintilian's moralistic critique is based on the confusion between art and Afranius' *modus vivendi*, an argument that Catullus violently refuted in his famous poem 16 and Ovid ratified in *Tristia* II, 1, 353-355. In *Excerpta of comoedia* (V, 1), Donatus recognizes the Cicero's concern for the didactic aspect of comedy, a concern that helps justify Quintilian's attitude: "comoedia est fabula diversa instituta continens affectuum ciuilium ac priuatorum, quibus discitur, quid sit in vita utile, quid contra euitandum (...) comoediam esse Cicero ait imitationem uitae, speculum consuetudinis, imaginem ueritatis" ["Comedy is a play that comprises various practices of public and private situations, by which one learns what is useful in life and, on the contrary, what one ought to avoid [...] Cicero says that comedy is an imitation of life, a mirror of behavior, an image of the truth."] (Wessner, 1902: 22, 14-19).

¹⁰ I would like to thank Prof. Dra. Leni Ribeiro Leite (UFES/Brazil) for emphasizing the polysemy of the term "gratia" in this context. The fifth meaning of the nine listed by the Oxford Latin Dictionary (1968: 773) reads as follows: "favor enjoyed by the person or thing, popularity, steem, credit". The first three in Lewis and Short (1891: 825) are: "favor which one finds with others, esteem, regard (...)". Thus, Quintilian seems to point to a matter of reception regarding the work of Terence more than to a simple aesthetic valuation.

¹¹ For more information on iambic trimeter (or *senarius*) and metrical patterns in tragedies and comedies, see *Inst. or.* IX, 4, 75-76; 136; 140-142.

¹² "At uestri proauī Plautinos et numeros et / laudauere sales, nimum patienter utrumque, / ne dicam stulte, mirati, si modo ego et uos / scimus inurbanum lepido seponere dicto / legitimumque sonum digitis callemus et aure." ["Yet your forefathers, you say, praised both the measures and the wit of Plautus. Too tolerant, not to say foolish, was their admiration of both, if you and I but know how to distinguish coarseness from wit, and with fingers and ear can catch the lawful rhythm"] (Fairclough, 1942).

Gian Biagio Conte (1999: 71) reminds us that: (1) both Ennius in his tragedies and, to a greater, Pacuvius gave some room to ethical debates that, through imitating Euripidian models, sometimes breathed the spirit of the ancient sophistic antilogies and (2) “the debate over ethical models continues in the drama of Terence, who brings before the Roman public once again the Menandrian ideals of *philanthropia*”. Particularly regarding the plots of his plays, Terence seems to have been a representative of Menander in Rome, disadvantaged from the start by the unfortunate “sermo romanus”. We can understand that Terence’s writings (or Scipio Africanus’, as underlined by the rhetorician) are considered “the most elegant in the genre”: despite the lack of natural brightness of Latin words, Terence could make good verses (such as 46, from the *Eunuch*: “quid igitur faciam?”), useful rhetorically, while still maintaining that moral concern so valued by Quintilian. The metric issues, in this absolutely subjective ranking of qualities (or defects), would have been placed in the background. In this line, Giuseppe Aricò (2001: 270) argues that:

La selezione degli *auctores* drammatici consigliati –operata probabilmente, oltre che sulla scorta dei “canoni”, in base a preferenze conseguenti a personali esperienze di lettura– risponde, oltre che alla esigenza della *utilitas*, sia a dichiarate istanze di natura etica sia ad altrettanto chiaramente manifestate convinzioni estetico-culturali, riassumibili nell’apprezzamento per il *decor*, per il nitore della lingua e dello stile, per l’equilibrio tra *ethos* e *pathos*.

“The selection of dramatic authors recommended –most likely operated, more than under the repertoire of “canons”, based on preferences resulting from personal reading experiences– responds, more than the requirement of *utilitas*, either to instances declared to be of an ethical nature or, equally, to the aesthetic and cultural conventions clearly manifested, which we can resume in appreciation for *decor*, the clarity of language and style, the balance of *ethos* and *pathos*.”

This aspect of *utilitas* suits Quintilian’s praise of the Ancient comedy of Aristophanes, Eupolis and Cratinus (X, 1, 65-66): “si est in insectandis uitiiis praecipua [...] Nam et grandis elegans et uenusta, et nescio an ulla, post Homerum tamen [...] aut similior sit oratoribus aut ad oratores faciendos aptior” [“The old comedy [...] shows special power in denunciation of vice [...] for its style is at once lofty, elegant and graceful, and if we except Homer [...] I am not sure that there is any style which bears a closer resemblance to oratory or is better adapted for forming the orator”].

However, how is this scale of values proposed by the rhetorician reflected in forensic practice by his ideal orator? The second part of our paper is dedicated to this question.

2. WHAT HAPPENED ON THE WAY TO THE FORUM?

Regarding what concerns laughter in Roman oratory, Cicero and Quintilian both state that a *bonus orator* should avoid acting similar to an actor because he could compromise his dignity by doing so (*De or.* II, 239; 244-247; *Inst. or.* VI, 3, *passim*). Nevertheless, when analyzing the persuasive effect of broad-spectrum *adfectus* (πάθος) in the final part of a speech, Quintilian curiously suggests that his ideal orator is supposed to borrow strategies from actors and poets to influence the judge's final verdict. In Book VI (1, 26), Quintilian states that the speaker will be for his client as the mask for a stage actor: the latter will express themselves more effectively through the former.¹³

Quintilian displays a set of techniques that are suitable to be called upon in the course of peroration to arouse convenient emotions in the audience: *deinosis* (δείνωσις, discursive amplification of “unworthy, cruel and hateful actions” VI, 2, 24), *uisiones* (φαντασία), *inlustratio* or *euidencia* (ἐνάργεια, as well as φαντασία, is a technique designed to create effects of presence capable of converting simple listeners into immediate witnesses VI 2, 29; 32-33),¹⁴ etc., those techniques, as described by the author, being commonly assigned to epic poetry (the examples in chapter II of book VI are all from *Aeneid*) and dramatic scenes (see specifically VI 2, 35 and Cicero, *De or.* II, 193). Ruth Webb (2009: 131) explores the significant parallels between the treatments given to ἔκφρασις in the *Progymnasmata*¹⁵ and the techniques of presentification in *Institutio oratoria*, stressing the relevance of Quintilian's treatise in such a lacunar context:

Quintilian's discussions of *enargeia* and *phantasia* explain the functions of vivid language in a rhetorical context as well as providing insights into the psychological processes involved in both the production and reception of such language. The rhetorical functions of *enargeia* –to make the audience feel involved in the events in question –point to the reasons why the art of “placing before the eyes” was considered a useful part of an orator's preliminary training. Quintilian is a valuable source because he is infinitely more forthcoming than the Greek sources. Of these, the *Progymnasmata* are somewhat laconic, [...] while the more advanced treatises tend to be highly technical and do not provide the type of explanation or personal insight we find in Quintilian.

¹³ Subsequently, in VI, 1, 38, he criticizes clients who behave as though they were in a theater, arousing some laughter but often disturbing the speaker's action.

¹⁴ There are two other passages in which Quintilian discusses *enargeia*: IV, 2, 63-65 and VIII, 3, 67-69.

¹⁵ Although several ancient rhetoricians have composed this system of elementary exercises of rhetoric that bears the name of *Progymnasmata*, only four treatises, more or less complete, have survived: those attributed to Aelius Theon, Hermogenes of Tarsus, Aphthonius of Antioch and Nicolaus of Myra.

Although the artists of drama and speech were both interested in techniques to arouse πάθος, Dominik and Hall (2007: 230) indicate the following border demarcation between *actio actoris* and *actio oratoris*:

The orator, who was in practice always a member of the upper classes, should not appear too much like an actor. In the first place, actors were professionals who had to work for a living (unlike aristocrats); and second, their performances often involved gestures, actions, and voices that contravened the norms of senatorial *dignitas* and manliness.

The appeal to the boundaries between one activity and another only corroborates the fact that both arts shared resources in such a delicate venture as conquering an audience. Cicero goes even farther (*De or.* I, 128, my italics): “[...] in oratore autem acumen dialecticorum, sententiae philosophorum, verba prope poetarum, memoria iuris consultorum, vox tragoedorum, gestus paene summorum actorum est requirendus [...]” [“In an orator we must demand the subtlety of the logician, the thoughts of the philosopher, adiction almost poetic, a lawyer’s memory, *a tragedian’s voice, and the bearing almost of the consummate actor*”] (Sutton, 1967).¹⁶

Analogies linking poetry, drama and oratory were certainly not new in Quintilian’s time. Those three arts have always been grounded in the power of language and the effect of persuasive speech is imperative in all of them, even if each one plays it out in its own fashion. In fact, the similarities among *poetae*, *actores* and *oratores* had been observed early in Antiquity: for instance, in Plato’s *Gorgias* (502d), Socrates asks Callicles if he thinks “that the poets in the theatres practice rhetoric”, to which he bluntly replies, “Yes, I do” (translated by E. M. Cope).

In a brief reference to oratorical delivery, Aristotle (*Rhetoric*, 1403b) observes that it

is a matter of voice, as to the mode in which it should be used for each particular emotion; when it should be loud, when low, when intermediate; and how the tones, that is, shrill, deep, and intermediate, should be used; and what rhythms are adapted to each subject.

Having recognized that “there is something of the sort in rhetoric as well as in poetry”, Aristotle then states that an orator who wishes to arouse emotion must know how to use volume, harmony and rhythm.¹⁷ He adds

that those who use these properly nearly always carry off the prizes in dramatic contests, and as at the present day actors have greater influence on the stage than

¹⁶ In *Inst. or.*(VI, 1, 49), Quintilian recalls Cicero’s censures regarding the excess of theatrical scenes in the forum, specifically in *Pro Rabirio* and *Pro Vareno*.

¹⁷ Cicero’s *Orator* (140-238) seeks to define the best oratorical style (“genus orationis optimorum”) that characterizes the perfect speaker. An important element for composing this style is the correct and efficient use of the “rhythmic prose”, which Cicero systematized in detail in his book.

the poets, it is the same in political contests [in the law courts and public assembly], owing to the corruptness of our forms of government (translated by J. H. Freese, 1926).

According to Cicero (*Brutus*, 142 and *De or.* III, 213), Demosthenes believed that delivery was the supreme element in effective oratory, ranking it in first, second and third place in order of importance. Further on (*De or.* III, 214-215), regarding elocution specifically, Cicero states through Crassus' words that "haec ideo dico pluribus, quod genus hoc totum oratores, qui sunt ueritatis ipsius actores, reliquerunt; imitatores autem ueritatis, histriones, occupauerunt." ["orators, who are the *deliverers of truth* itself, have neglected this whole department, and the players, who are only *the imitators of truth*, have taken possession of it"] (translated by J. S. Watson, 1860).

If Plato argued against the stimulus of emotions (and pleasure) that, in a certain type of speech, would remind him of tragic plays suited to popular taste (*Gorgias*, 502b-d; *Rep.*, 493d), Quintilian suggests that the usage of words appropriate to the speech should be in parallel with expressions¹⁸ and gestures capable of provoking such strong emotions in their interlocutors (as occurs in the theater), so that it may even be useful to "lead away [their thoughts] from the contemplation of truth" (*Inst. or.* VI, 2, 5), a somewhat compelling statement for an author widely known for advocating the idea of the *bonus orator*, who is ethically and philosophically consistent, from whom we should expect "not merely the possession of exceptional gifts of speech, but all the excellences of character as well" (*Inst. or.* I, 9-10).

The very words with which Quintilian describes the skills that his ideal orator should pursue are relevant for illustrating the extent to which he would engage dramatic features in judicial speeches (*Inst. or.* VI, 2, 29): "quidam dicunt εὐφαντασίωτον qui sibi res uoces actus secundum uerum optime finget: quod quidem nobis uolentibus facile continget." ["Some writers describe the possessor of this power of vivid imagination whereby things, words and actions are presented *in the most realistic manner*, by the Greek word εὐφαντασίωτος; and it is a power which all may readily acquire if they will"]. The last paragraph of chapter II is all the more powerful because it presents the typical vocabulary of theatrical practices:

Sed in schola quoque rebus ipsis adfici conuenit, easque ueras sibi fingere, hoc magis quod illic <ut> litigatores loquimur frequentius quam ut aduocati: orbum agimus et naufragum et periclitantem, quorum induere personas quid attinet nisi

¹⁸ See *Inst. or.* XI, 3, 73-74 for a description of how masks can be useful for expressing feelings on the stage.

adfectus adsumimus? Haec dissimulanda mihi non fuerunt, quibus ipse, quantuscum que sum aut fui, peruenisse me ad aliquod nomen ingeni credo: frequenter motus sum ut me non lacrimae solum deprenderent, sed pallor et ueri similis dolor.

“(…) Indeed it is all the more desirable then, since, as a rule in scholastic declamations, the speaker more often appears as the actual litigant than as his advocate. Suppose we are *impersonating* an orphan, a shipwrecked man, or one in grave peril. What profit is there in *assuming such a role* unless we also assume the emotions which it involves? I have thought it necessary not to conceal these considerations from my reader, since they have contributed to the acquisition of such reputation for talent as I possess or once possessed. I have frequently been so much moved while speaking, that I have not merely been wrought upon to tears, but *have turned pale and shown all the symptoms of genuine grief*.”

In fact, the terms ὑπόκρισις or *actio* (from the verb *agere*, referring to the fifth of the classical steps for preparing and delivering a speech: *inuentio, dispositio, elocutio, memory, actio*) were used to indicate the activity of both orators and actors.¹⁹ Quintilian uses the noun *actor* thirty-nine times²⁰ throughout the *Institutio oratoria*, meaning “theater actor” only eight times, five of those only in Chapter 3 of Book XI, and there, only three times without any modifier (in the other five, the modifiers are as follows: “actores comici”, “scaenici actores” and “actores comoediarum”). It seems clear that a noun with such a semantic amplitude as *actor* (agent, speaker, lawyer, actor, performer, foreman, administrator in charge, author, applicant, tutor, reciter, etc.) depends on a context to define its application, but the simple record as an isolated word (although in less than 10% of all cases) referring specifically to the theater actor in a treatise dedicated to the speaker’s training convinces us that Andrés Pociña (1981-82: 104) is right when he states that “the orator’s function is similar to the theatrical performer to the point that the same Latin term, *actor*, can refer to both in the work of our rhetorician”.

Both actors and orators observe the *decorum* related to their activities, and Quintilian himself demonstrates that he recognizes that there are good and bad actors as well as

¹⁹According to Pociña (1981-82: 104), “as occurs in the Ciceronian treatises *Orator* and *De oratore*, Quintilian’s *Institutio oratoria* reveals itself to be, in a growing number of pages, a valuable manual for the formation of a dramatic actor. It could not be otherwise, if the orator’s function is similar to the theatrical performer to the point that the same Latin term, *actor*, can refer to both in the work of our rhetorician. At each step, when Quintilian offers standards on oratorical practice, speaking of movement, gestures, pronunciation etc., the element of comparison with the theatrical actor is indispensable. From the passages in which it occurs, we can form an image of the ideal *actor* in his opinion”.

²⁰Book I: 10, 35; Book II: 10, 13; 12, 11; 15, 10; 16, 4; 17, 8; 17, 40; Book III: 6, 17; 6, 92; 8, 51; Book IV: 1, 6; 2, 6; 2, 7; Book V: 7, 20; 7, 21; Book VI: 1, 26; 1, 32; 1, 37; 1, 44; 1, 45; 3, 111; Book VII: prohemium; 1, 10; 1, 38; 3, 22; 4, 30; 6, 2; 6, 4; Book VIII: 5, 21; Book IX: 2, 59; 4, 129; Book XI: 1, 81; 3, 4; 3, 74; 3, 117; 3, 178; 3, 182; 3, 184; Book XII: 7, 1.

orators. To establish a proper comparison, it is thus necessary to distinguish between the types of actor (mimes, *mimici*, buffoons, *scurrae*, histrionic actors, *histriones*, jester, balatrones *et al.* and “theater actors”, *scaenici actores*, or “actors of comedies” *actores comoediarum*, those who are able to squeeze a compliment out of such a demanding critic as Quintilian in XI, 3, 178), the types of speaker (those driven solely by persuasion or those honorable men, *uiri boni*, who will know to distinguish whether the question concerned is fair) and, finally, the types of oratorical speech (judicial, deliberative and epideictic) into play. If we consider, with Quintilian (XI, 1, 48), that epideictic speeches are made to generate pleasure in their listeners, we can align the social function of that particular type of speech with that of the theater.

3. *BONI ORATORES, BONI ACTORES*

In many passages,²¹ Quintilian insists on the crucial differences to be observed even among good actors and good speakers:

1) The orator's primary goal is to speak well (II, 15, 38), as only a good man can do (II, 15, 34), aiming at persuasion, though it should not be set as a mandatory result (II, 17, 23). The first function of a dramatic actor, in turn, is to entertain his audience and to delight by sight and hearing. Both can share appeals to morality through a critique of customs, but their basic purposes would, in principle, be different;

2) The most common practice is that the speaker elaborates and pronounces his own speech, whereas the actor generally recites a text written by a playwright from outside the cast (see, e.g., XI, 3, 4);

3) In a theatrical text, replies are already planned and rehearsed, whereas in a deliberative and judicial discourse, they can only be imagined by an experienced speaker.

Clearly, orators and actors have different aspirations. Manuel Alexandre Junior (2008: 21) states that

a própria ideia do conflito, do embate de forças contrárias, apresenta-se com igual relevo nas estruturas do conflito dramático e retórico da ação. Num caso como no outro, estão presentes o contraditório, a narração dos factos, a argumentação, a dinâmica de causa/efeito, a busca de uma solução para o conflito, a própria catarse.

²¹For example: I, 11, 1-3 and 12 (about the differences between actors and orators and the contribution of the former to the art of the latter); I, 12, 14 (*non comoedum in pronuntiando nec saltatorem in gestu*); VI, 3, 29-35 (about humor as a resource employed with dignity); XI, 3, 181-182 (*non enim comoedum esse, sed oratorem uolo*).

O que, no fundo, distingue a tragédia da oratória está na maneira de dizer o trágico e, sobretudo, na sua resolução.

“the very idea of conflict, the clash of opposing forces, presents itself with equal emphasis on the structures of dramatic and rhetorical conflict in action. In one case as in the other, the contradictory, the narration of facts, the arguments, the cause/effect dynamics, the search for a solution to the conflict, the very *catharsis* are present. What, at bottom, distinguishes tragedy from oratory lies in how to narrate the tragic and particularly in its resolution.”

In chapter six of *Poetics* (1449b), Aristotle presents the concept of *κάθαρσις* as the goal of tragedy: “through pity and fear effecting the proper *purgation* of these emotions” (translated by S. H. Butcher). Clearly, *oratores* and *poetae* or *actores* have different aspirations. From what we learn in the sixth book of *Institutio oratoria*, Quintilian’s orator should not only borrow *κάθαρσις* with which tragedy operates (as an instrument more than a goal) but also consider whether the cause at stake allows him to do so or whether the result to be achieved is worthy of a righteous man. It is convenient to recall what is said in Book II (17, 27): “nam et mendacium dicere etiam sapienti aliquando concessum est, et adfectus, si aliter ad aequitatem perducere iudex non poterit, necessario mouebit orator: imperiti enim iudicant et qui frequenter in hoc ipsum fallendi sint, ne errent.” [“Even a philosopher is at times permitted to tell a lie, while the orator must need excite the passions, if that be the only way by which he can lead the judge to do justice. For judges are not always enlightened and often have to be tricked to prevent them falling into error”].

Pociña (1981-82: 104-105) remarks that Quintilian pays more attention to the comic actor than to the tragic, perhaps because the latter does not well suit his purposes, that is, providing concrete examples of action to a student of rhetoric. Quintilian’s didactic concern in the composition of a vast set of examples is, in fact, one of his greatest assets for posterity. Jon Hall (2004: 143) notes that

It is frustrating how little evidence we have about Cicero’s own practices of oratorical delivery. While we possess texts of over fifty of his orations, few details are provided by his contemporaries about how he turned these words into effective live performances. No less disappointing is the fact that Cicero himself reveals little about these techniques in his rhetorical treatises.

As we have observed, book VI of *The Orator’s Education* is dedicated to the manipulation and control of emotions in a forensic context, but book XI is the most

complete guidance manual on performance²² (voice, breath, posture –back, arms, hands, fingers, legs, feet– facial expression –chin, lips, nose, eyes and head– trimming of the toga, etc.).

When endorsing the importance of a well-made *pronuntiatio*, Quintilian uses the example of *scaenici actores*, whose description could also include the *recitatores* (those in charge of reading aloud documents in legal proceedings –see Cicero, *De inu.* 2, 139– or even reciters of literary works–see Horace, *Ars*, 474):

A proof of this is given by actors in the theatre. For they add so much to the charm even of the greatest poets, that the verse moves us far more when heard than when read, while they succeed in securing a hearing even for the most worthless authors, with the result that they repeatedly win a welcome on the stage that is denied them in the library.²³

We may thus assume that, for the rhetorician, the popularity of a playwright does not necessarily correspond to the aesthetic quality of his plays. In the field of comedy, Quintilian praises three actors in particular, Roscius (XI, 3, 111), Demetrius and Stratocles (XI, 3, 178-180), each one specialized in different types of characters. Roscius is mentioned for his liveliness, as opposed to the seriousness of Aesopus, who recited tragedies. It is worth observing: Quintilian chooses a Roman actor from the Republican age as an example. Quintus Roscius (126 – 62 B.C.), defended by Cicero circa 68 B.C. in a judicial trial (*Pro Roscio Comodeo*), was already considered a fine artist in his time.²⁴ According to Smith (1867: 663),

He was considered by the Romans to have reached such perfection in his own profession, that it became the fashion to call everyone who became particularly distinguished in his own art, by the name of Roscius. In his younger years Cicero received instruction from Roscius; and at a later time he and Roscius often used to try which of them could express a thought with the greatest effect, the orator by his eloquence, or the actor by his gestures.

Demetrius perfectly represented a god, a young man, a tolerant father, a faithful slave, a matron, a respectable old woman, whereas Stratocles was unsurpassed in the roles of a bitter old man, a cunning slave, a parasite, a pimp, or any other “vigorous” (“*omnia agitatoria*”) role. For Nervegna (2013: 103-104),

²²See *Inst. or.* XI, 3, 74 for the importance of eye expression for the actor and the public speaker, and *Inst. or.* XI, 3, 91 for the limits of theatrical imitation, particularly concerning the voice.

²³ “Documento sunt uel scaenici actores, qui et optimis poetarum tantum adiciunt gratiae ut nos infinite magis eadem illa audita quam lecta delectent, et uilissimis etiam quibusdam impetrant aures, ut quibus nullus est in bibliothecis locus sit etiam frequens in theatris.” (Quint. XI, 3, 4).

²⁴ Roscius is mentioned in a very flattering manner in Cicero's *De oratore* II, 233: “Quamquam soleo saepe mirari eorum impudentiam, qui agunt in scaena gestum inspectante Roscio; quis enim sese commouere potest, cuius ille uitia non uideat?”

Their Greek names are no clue as to their nationality –actors were often given Greek names– but both Stratocles and Demetrius were popular enough to be mentioned by Juvenal in his tirade against foreigners crowding Rome and against a Greek Rome (3. 58-125). These performers, Juvenal, or rather his “friend” Umbrius, claims, made it in Rome because the acting business was less competitive than in Greece, “a whole country devoted to comedy”. This implies that Stratocles and Demetrius were Greeks who were in Rome to work there (Juv. 3. 98-100) [...] Being Greek, Stratocles and Demetrius probably performed Greek New Comedy, and Menander remains a strong possibility.

There is a chance, then, that Quintilian would admire those two actors in particular because of the Greek plays that they were performing in Rome. Addressing the theme of *decorum* to be observed in any action and in any art, he stresses that the latter two actors won prestige through diametrically opposite characteristics. Quintilian is aware of the subjectivity and variance of his theme.²⁵ That is, we cannot make general rules that apply to all actors and all orators: it is necessary to consider, first, the natural inclination of each, included the physical particularities of the subjects. Incidentally, Demetrius was helped by his stature and incredible beauty (“*statura et mira specie adiuuabatur*”). This does not mean that some basic principles should be overlooked both in theatrical and in forensic practices. Even if he does not say it explicitly, Quintilian admits that there are inescapable similarities between good actors and good orators regarding their ambitions, techniques, and performance. If the highest authority is the right measure (“*regnare maxime modum*”), it should be noted:

1) Gestures and facial expressions should always be in accordance with the words that we produce (XI, 3, 67); otherwise, we run the risk of not being convincing. The gestures should correspond more to the sense of the things being said and not to the words themselves to prevent good actors and orators from looking similar to mimes (XI, 3, 89);

2) The feelings that we wish to communicate to the public must be genuine as much as possible: we ourselves must first feel the emotions that we intend to convey to someone else (XI, 2, 62);²⁶

3) We need to catch our breath, avoiding any noticeable pause in speech (XI, 3, 39). Where the break is inevitable, the best thing to do is concatenate it with a gesture (XI, 3,

²⁵ In *Inst. or.* XI, 1, 39, Quintilian refers to the *personae* from the comedies of Caecilius and Terence to advise the orator to adapt according to the character whom he represents.

²⁶ Prof. Dr. C. Thomas Schirren (Universität Salzburg), during our presentation at the 14th Congress of the FIEC in Bordeaux (2014), mentioned that, in the theater group at his university, he has observed some correlation between the serious personal problems of actors and their positive effects in representing tragic roles.

110). However, there are breaks that are desirable and convenient, such as those that precede the speaking turn when the auditorium is not sufficiently attentive (XI, 3, 158);

4) The text memorized, previously rehearsed, should be pronounced naturally to give the impression of being improvised in the moment of action. The attention and the audience's trust will be compromised if the sentences seem to have been brought ready-made from home (XI, 3, 46-47);

5) The hesitation, the long silence (XI, 2, 48) and a trembling or effeminate voice, even when we reproduce the words of an old man or a woman, will be undesirable in both the actor and the orator (XI, 3, 91);

6) We should avoid saying words too quickly or too slowly (with the caveat that "the slower the delivery, the greater its emotional power", XI, 3, 111, particularly in tragedies): he who speaks too quickly allows the pauses, the feelings and sometimes parts of the words themselves to disappear; he who, by contrast, takes too long to pronounce them admits his difficulty in finding vocabulary, loses the attention of his listeners due to their indolence and "wastes the water in the clepsydra" (IX, 3, 52);

7) The likelihood while narrating a fact is to be observed both in comedies and in forensic speeches (IV, 2, 53);

8) Knowing how to improvise before a memory failure or an unexpected reply is part of the craft of both acting and oratory (XI, 1, 2; XI, 2, 48; XI, 3, 12);

9) Amplification is welcome in the final parts of both a play and a speech (XI, 1, 44; VI, 1, 52);

10) The memorization techniques are basically the same. Among the various options suggested by the rhetorician, there are two particularly that are popular to this day in theater courses: a) the trick of the "mind palace" (XI, 2, 18-25), according to which we must imagine a large house, full of rooms, and in every room we place an idea to be recovered while we mentally transit through the space of the house, and b) the use of associative signals between an object or person with whom we are familiar and the idea to be retrieved (XI, 2, 30).

CONCLUSION

The recommendations of *Institutio oratoria* concerning the use of humor as a rhetorical strategy can be gathered over an infallible tripod, thoroughly examined in our doctoral thesis (2010): moderation, convenience and brevity. In *De or.* II, 252, Cicero precisely

indicates the four means of raising a laugh that transcend the appropriate domain of the orator (one must sacrifice a jest sooner than sacrifice his dignity, says Quintilian in VI, 3, 30): affected gestures (*mimica actio*), comic imitation (*illiberalis imitatio*, which eventually the speaker can even make use of, though quickly and with moderation), grimacing (*oris deprauatio*) and obscenity (*obscenitas*).

Quintilian adds some more advice to these means: “longeque absit illud propositum, potius amicum quam dictum perdedi; inhumana uideri solet fortunae insectatio.” [“we should never make it our ideal to lose a friend sooner than lose a jest; (...) in the courts as elsewhere it is regarded as inhuman to hit a man when he is down”] (28); “ne dicet quidem salse quotiens poterit, et dictum potius aliquando perdet quam minuet auctoritatem.” [“(my orator) must not display his wit on every possible occasion, but must sacrifice a jest sooner than sacrifice his dignity”] (30); “Nec accusatorem autem atroci in causa nec patronum in miserabili iocantem feret quisquam. Sunt etiam iudices quidam tristiores quam ut risum libenter patiantur.” [“no one will endure an accuser who employs jests to season a really horrible case, nor an advocate for the defense who makes merry over one that calls for pity; there is a type of judge whose temperament is too serious to allow him to tolerate laughter”] (31); “Solet interim accidere ut id quod in aduersarium dicimus aut in iudicem conueniat aut in nostrum quoque litigatorem, quamquam aliqui reperiuntur qui ne id quidem quod in ipsos recidere possit euitent” [“it may also happen that a jest directed against an opponent may apply to the judge or to our own client, although there are some orators who do not refrain even from jests that may recoil upon themselves”] (32); “Vitandum etiam ne petulans, ne superbum, ne loco, ne tempore alienum, ne praeparatum et domo allatum uideatur quod dicimus.” [“insolence and arrogance are likewise to be avoided, nor must our jests seem unsuitable to the time or place, or give the appearance of studied premeditation, or smell of the lamp”] (33);

Illud non ad oratoris consilium, sed ad hominis pertinet: lacesat hoc modo quem laedere sit periculosum, ne aut inimicitiae graues insequantur aut turpis satisfactio. Male etiam dicitur quod in pluris conuenit, si aut nationes totae incessantur aut ordines aut condicio aut studia multorum.

“it is the duty not merely of an orator, but of any reasonable human being, when attacking one whom it is dangerous to offend to take care that his remarks do not end in exciting serious enmity, or the necessity for a grovelling apology. Sarcasm that applies to a number of persons is injudicious: I refer to cases where it is directed against whole nations or classes of society, or against rank and pursuits which are common to many” (34).

Ultimately, Quintilian has a clear purpose: to explain the limits of the usefulness and dignity of humor in a forensic context since the orator would have so much to learn from actors of comedy that the abuse of some expedients should not have been unusual. The balance of technique, coupled with a solid moral framework would help the rhetorician to form his *uir bonus, simulandi*²⁷ *peritus*.

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²⁷ Among the many possible options in Latin, the verb *simulare* was chosen to appear in the title of this work due to the occurrence of the noun *simulatio*, which is used in a hortatory sense in Chapter 3 of Book VI, paragraphs 23, 81, 85 and 92.

²⁸ Editions of Ancient works are formatted according to *American Philological Association* rules.

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