

LOVE, ENVY, AND PANTOMIMIC MORALITY IN CICERO'S *DE ORATORE*

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I am not the sort of man who never approves of anything false, who never gives assent, who never has opinions, but we are inquiring into the wise man. And I am a great holder of opinions. I am certainly no wise man.

Cicero in his own persona, *Lucullus* 66

IN BOOK 2 OF Cicero's *De oratore*, Antonius is given one of those not uncommon moments in the dialogue when the discussion of a topic opens a perspective upon key dynamics in the dialogue itself, a moment when Cicero's work on rhetoric invites us to read it as a rhetorically shaped text that implements the strategies it explores. The instance in question concerns a discussion of the emotions (2.205–10). It is not nearly as lengthy or systematic as Aristotle's in the *Rhetoric* (2.1–11), which anatomizes each *pathos* according to the state of mind it involves, the person against whom it is felt, and the reasons for its arousal. Antonius' definitions are relatively brief, and the range of emotions he discusses is narrower than Aristotle's, but among them, love (*amor*) and envy (*invidia*) receive particular attention.¹ Since they are arguably the chief emotions that propel the public lives of upper-class Roman men in the late Republic, this is not surprising; the consequences of their deployment in *De oratore* may be.

Though *amor* may seem too strong a word to describe the complex and diverse relationships that go under the name *clientela* (*amicitia*, *benevolentia*, or *gratia* may seem more apt), it captures a Roman tendency to idealize relationships of advantage into relationships of mutual affection, goodwill, or pleasure taken in doing what is right. In this sense, Antonius' description of *amor* is completely intelligible, for he says a speaker wins if he appears to be upholding the interests of the audience, or laboring on behalf of good men—at least those who are good and useful to members of that audience. He is thinking chiefly, of course, of forensic advocacy, which is modeled on

I have used the Latin text of the *De oratore* by K. F. Kumaniecki (*M. Tulli Ciceronis scripta quae manserunt omnia*, Fasc. 3, "*De oratore*" [Stuttgart, 1995]). All translations are my own.

1. For a discussion of Cicero's knowledge of and dependence upon Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, especially in the discussion of *pathos*, see Wisse 1989, 105–63.

clientela.² But *amor* may also be applied to less obviously hierarchical relationships, to the tie between aristocratic friends united by admiring and validating sentiments of affection. As a force that binds members of elite male society, *amor* has recently been shown by Erik Gunderson to be a key element of Roman social performance, one subject to wide-ranging strategies of discipline and self-mastery.³

Invidia is its close relative and counterpart. With love comes envy—of another's position, reputation, status, wealth. In the Roman world of the first century B.C.E., it makes sense that envy would loom large among the competitive values of the elite, since it is bound up with the conquest of empire and the exploitation of wealth in the provinces.⁴ We might assume, therefore, that envy would figure as an integral part of an orator's education, one of numerous elements to be brought under control or sublimated in the achievement of rhetorical excellence. Yet Gunderson does not treat it, though he pays a fair amount of attention to forms of "cruelty" in the orator's training, which he conceives psychoanalytically in terms of masochistic self-violence aimed at shaping a publicly "effective performance of impeccable masculine authority."⁵ Other recent critics of the *De oratore*, too, have little to say about envy, though in one sense Brian Krostenko's whole argument about aestheticism in elite culture assumes fierce competition.⁶ Reasons for the apparent gap will emerge in the course of this essay.

Whatever the critical situation, the *De oratore* itself reveals at several levels the dyadic relation between *invidia* and *amor*. The emotions emerge as central not only to the social world of the late Roman Republic but also to the interactions of Cicero's dramatic characters, who meet out at Crassus' villa during the *Ludi Romani* to enjoy, it seems, a rest from the frenetic, strife-filled pace of life in the city. This rest turns out to be obsessed with the divisiveness of the world the speakers have left behind and has rippling through it the very disturbances from which they ostensibly seek refuge. From this point of view, Antonius' remarks on love and envy are particularly revealing, for they occur in the context of a scene that enacts the subject under consideration. In doing so, they bear out the degree to which the public and political structure of Roman life, especially as it is lived in the courts and the Forum, inhabits the private and personal—at least in the case of aristocrats, who are for Cicero both the most distinguished members of the social hierarchy and the privileged types whose conduct sets the norm for what is exemplarily human.⁷

2. See Kennedy 1968.

3. On *clientela*, see Wallace-Hadrill 1989, Drummond 1989, and Krostenko 2001, 21–76. Saller 1982 has a useful discussion of the terminology of patronage, including *amicitia* and *amor*. Gunderson 2000, 187–222, develops a reading of the *De oratore* focused on *amor* and the dynamics of homosocial desire among aristocratic Roman males, but the semantic range of *amor* in my argument is both less overtly sexualized than his and more deeply grounded in what Cicero's characters, especially Antonius, say about it.

4. See Wood 1988, 14–41.

5. Gunderson 2000, 97.

6. Krostenko 2001.

7. For Cicero's description of the model gentleman, see *Off.* 1, especially 15–115, which analyze his chief virtues. The bibliography on the *vir bonus* is large, but in addition to Gunderson's recent study, I have been helped particularly by Wood 1988, 100–104, and MacKendrick 1948; see also n. 11 below.

Even more importantly, however, this scene and others to which it is related demonstrate how the competition for preeminence produces a “pantomimic” morality, by which I mean a form of moral conduct that seeks to mask its alertness to the slightest shred of advantage behind the guise of love and service. Within a dominant ideology of good men, *virī boni*, who identify with and imitate each other, rivalry is ideally conceived as admiring *aemulatio* or healthy *contentio*. But in practice it is often revealed as envy with all its attendant insecurity, fear, aggression, and violence. The embarrassments of *invidia* for a culture that values the dignified and admiring collaboration of aristocratic males—a culture that Cicero more than anyone else in the ancient world was responsible for bequeathing to the humanistic tradition—are precisely what get played out in the performance of the *De oratore*. They explain why morality in the dialogue appears frequently as a pose designed to forestall scrutiny of a speaker for whom goodness must always translate into the appearance of goodness, the persuasive image of goodness, whatever else it may be.⁸

By using the term “pantomimic,” then, I mean to put a particular edge on the actorly component of rhetoric that has received increasing attention in recent treatments of Cicero and Roman oratory.⁹ *Actio*, in Cicero’s ideal scenario, refers to a performance in which the orator’s gestures, voice, and body language truthfully enact the inner good man that he is—the thoughts, arguments, interpretations, and ends of his disciplined, well-trained soul. But this sense often gives way to talk about the actor as pretender, masker, dissimulator. In these situations, Cicero sometimes repeats the concerns expressed by Aristotle in Book 3 of the *Rhetoric* when he considers how delivery can overtake and subvert *logos*-bound truth. The Greek context preserves even more vividly than the Roman the problematic slide in *actio*, for it uses *hypokrisis* to describe the category we know in the tradition as “delivery.”¹⁰ The hypocrisy of acting is, at the theoretical level, a problem for a theory of rhetoric staked as Cicero’s is upon an announced moral foundation of right thinking and right doing. As such, it undergoes a variety of interpretive excisions designed to render it safe and virtuous. At the performative level, however, a full-blooded and improvisationally creative *actio* drives the *De oratore* and shapes some of the most engaging scenes. In this sense, it may be identified with the pantomimic instinct of the *vir bonus* who moves through his social environment by masking his envy for peers, throwing up screens to deflect attention from censurable conduct, and, in general, assuming actorly stratagems that cast an aura of seamliness over performances aimed at self-exaltation. Such performances are, by necessity, deeply implicated in protocols of politeness or *urbanitas*.

8. Burke (1969, 142–49) has been helpful in shaping the concept of pantomimic morality developed in this essay.

9. See especially Gunderson 2000 (111–48), who talks about “good” and “bad” senses of *actio* in Cicero. Acting functions as a key interpretive term in the studies of Roman culture and politics by Bartsch (1994) and Dupont (1985). On the morality of acting see Edwards 1993, 98–136.

10. For a recent treatments of acting as *hypokrisis* see Zerba 2002; Wise 1998; and Svenbro 1990.

The dialogue, then, offers a complex insight into the paradigm Cato summarized and Quintilian consolidated in the phrase *vir bonus dicendi peritus*, a paradigm also advanced by both of Cicero's major spokesmen, Crassus and Antonius.¹¹ Though recent attempts to reassess Cicero's rhetorica have offered various explanations of this complexity, no one has explored the dynamic set out in this essay. I am not arguing for the case of an idealistic theory that jars with the speeches of Cicero the man, who could be both ruthlessly effective and morally specious in his courtroom tactics—who could say or do anything to win. Harold Gotoff has done that, and I will use some of his conclusions in advancing my own. Nor am I arguing that the *De oratore* gives us a performance in which “hedonistic pleasure” or “homosexual attraction” are sublimated within a virile, truth-telling aestheticism whose goal is to exclude potentially subversive conducts.¹² Though I draw extensively on Gunderson's study, I am less concerned with bodies than he is, and I depart from his reading of the dialogue as performing “the good body and the goodness of discipline while purging the world of bad bodies and bad texts.”¹³

My argument, instead, is that the *De oratore* extensively performs the varieties of duplicity it theoretically censures, and it does so through a refined but also sometimes exuberant pantomimic *urbanitas* that discloses the finesse of the *vir bonus*. Krostenko has been of help in formulating this *urbanitas*, and his approach to social performance among the Roman elite is one I partly recreate for my own purposes.¹⁴ But he is more interested in drawing evidence from the *De oratore* for Cicero's language of social performance than in reading the dialogue as a dramatized social performance of its own. In this connection, his view that Cicero's use of such terms as *lepos* and *venustus* reveals a traditionalist, anti-Catullan bent and “a refusal to valorize aestheticism more generally” is worth reexamining.¹⁵ For these elements, restrictively directed in the dialogue's discussions to a treatment of humor, are arguably writ large in the dialogue's performative intricacies, which manage to be both conservatively high-minded and cleverly urbane. Perhaps the theatrical virtuosity of Cicero's dramatis personae brings him closer to the aestheticism of his time than Krostenko, who tends to look at content, concludes it does. Or perhaps the greatness of the bygone age Cicero extols always had in it the refined pantomimic element that its *gravitas* and *auctoritas* would disclaim.

Somewhere around the middle of Book 2, after he has discoursed on a variety of topics that are contained in the conventional manuals of rhetoric that he so roundly disparages at the opening of the dialogue, Antonius ex-

11. Key articulations of the Catonian model in the *De oratore* include 1.46, 2.9, 2.20. For further discussion see Meador 1970; and Michel 1982. Brinton (1983) argues that in Quintilian's *Institutio Oratoria* the moral goodness of the *vir bonus*, which is Platonically influenced, cannot be merely apparent.

12. Gotoff 1993; and Gunderson 2000. Hall (1996) demonstrates that real-life aristocratic manners of evasion and coercion are at work in the idealizing world of the *De oratore*. Smethurst (1953) argues in a political context for the conflict between Cicero's moral idealism and practical expediency.

13. Gunderson 2000, 221.

14. Krostenko 2001; Ramage 1973 has also been helpful.

15. Krostenko 2001, 229–32.

tends a discussion of the three *officia oratoris* (*probare*, *conciliare*, and *movere*) to a more wide-ranging consideration of two dominant styles that, in their different ways, are most effective in winning over an audience.¹⁶ One we might call an ethical style, built around conciliation, and designed to display to the audience tokens (*signa*) of "good nature, generosity, clemency, piety, of a soul grateful and not covetous or grasping, and all those things typical of men who are upright, humble, not violent, not obstinate, not contentious, not harsh . . ." (2.182). It is useful to demonstrate such tokens of character, Antonius tells us; when one does so, it is "as if the speech is portraying the character of the speaker" (*ut quasi mores oratoris effingat oratio*). The result is that those who adopt them appear to be (*videantur*) upright, well-bred, and virtuous men (2.184).

Though the formulation of a conciliatory style begins with an assertion of the dignity a man must have to merit esteem, it moves, in a way typical of Cicero in the rhetorical works, to advice about the dignity he should seem to have. Nowhere do we find a bold statement about the urgency of manipulating perception. In fact, the opposite is the case; the orator should be good. But the presence of an audience to be won over introjects into the discussion a near tacit admission of what the motives of persuasion necessitate. Rhetoric is the art of shaping images that create the appearance of integrity and moral goodness. It is implicated in the generation of "effects," the production of a believing state of mind in listeners who can be convinced through "a soft tone of voice, a demeanor expressive of modesty, and a courteousness of diction" that the orator is worthy of goodwill (*benevolentia*), a more attenuated version of the *amor* Antonius will speak about shortly. Moreover, the moral qualities a speaker evidences will attach to the one he represents, yet another slide in the game of perception.¹⁷ The probative *lenitas* that can be produced by finely crafted language in the mouth of an expert often prevails over the merits of the case, over facts and information. In different ways, the ground of truth in rhetoric is awash with the waves of semblance and opinion.¹⁸

Plato worries the problem. Aristotle tries to control it by making content-driven *logos* the dominant rhetorical force that subordinates the riskier methods of *ethos* and *pathos*. Cicero here participates in the slide and recognizes its inevitability. Via Antonius, he recommends the cultivation of semblance, passing rather smoothly over the problem it poses for a notion of self-consistent truth in performance. We could put it this way: although the moral emphasis requires that the *vir bonus* choose the act and the language

16. Cicero's correlation of the three styles of oratory (grand, middle, and plain) with the three functions (*movere*, *delectare*, and *docere*) is carried out most fully not in the *De oratore*, which makes no use of the scheme, but in the *Orator*. For a discussion see Shuger 1988, 14–54; Gotoff 1979, 42–65; Douglas 1973; and Hubbell 1966. On the significance of *flectere* for *movere* and *conciliare* for *delectare* see Fantam 1973; Schottländer 1967; and Grube 1962.

17. Fantam (1973) considers the slippage as one between "morality" and "style," and treats it as a problem: *lenis oratio* effects via style the attribution of a speaker's morality to a client. The absence of advocacy in Greek courts of law explains, in part, why Aristotle's discussion of *ethos* does not encounter the problem.

18. The case has recently been argued by Gotoff (1993) in an analysis of Cicero's speeches; for an opposing view, see May 1988, 1–12.

best suited to his nature, the rhetorical emphasis requires that he choose the act and the language best suited to the situation. The Ciceronian focus, to adapt Michael Herzfeld's phrase, is less on "being a good man" than on "being good at being a man." What counts most in the end is performative excellence.¹⁹

Gotoff has demonstrated that the speeches of Cicero show ample evidence of a take-as-take-can attitude in the manipulation of *ethos*.²⁰ We may apply his point to the passage of the *De oratore* under discussion as long as we appreciate that rhetorical opportunism can bear the look of *lenitas*—as it does here in a case where Antonius emulates the moderated style he is advocating. The metarhetorical quality of his speech, which reveals something important about how to finesse a point, will be underscored shortly when he moves into a different style. Though one may remark a pantomimic undercurrent in the whole discussion, the point is launched by Cicero's interlocutor so subtly and charmingly as to deflect the force of such a bold characterization.

The conciliatory style, Antonius goes on to say, is *dispar* (unlike) that other style that seeks not a moderate, gentle, humane approach toward the audience but a vehement assault upon them via the strong emotions of love, hate, anger, envy, pity, hope, joy, fear, and anxiety. Of these, "envy is by far the most violent (*acerrimus longe sit*), nor does it require less power to suppress than to excite it" (2.209). He characterizes the objects whom men envy as

chiefly their equals or inferiors when they feel themselves left behind and are pained that others have ascended over them; but there is also often a powerful sense of envy toward superiors, and it is stronger if they boast insufferably of themselves and overstep the equitable boundary of law in the pre-eminence of their dignity or fortune.

Such a feeling, we are told, may be allayed in three ways: by adducing the "great exertion and great perils" that have accompanied the attainment of superiority, by noting how the eminent individual has applied his advantage not to his own private benefit but to that of others, or by showing how the person to whom glory has accrued was not elated by it but cast it aside and discounted it altogether. Because most people are envious, this failing (*vitium*) being extremely common and widespread, it is vital for a speaker praising an extraordinary man or showcasing his own merits to use such mitigating arguments "that the sentiment may be lowered and that supposedly outstanding fortune may be seen to be (*esse videatur*) thoroughly mixed with labors and sorrows" (2.210). Again, this is a matter of creating impressions in order to direct response. Pragmatic concerns, and a dark view of human failings, prevail over idealizing ones.

An observation Cicero makes in *De officiis* (1.8.26) bears directly on this point:

19. Herzfeld 1985, 17–18. The phrase is quoted by Wray 2001, 61, who uses Herzfeld's concept of performativity broadly in his study of Catullus, as has Gunderson in his study of Roman rhetoricians, though Gunderson is less explicit about the debt.

20. See Gotoff 1993.

Many people are completely carried away to the point of forgetting justice when they fall into a keen desire for command, for honor, and for glory. As Ennius says, "There is no inviolate friendship / Nor faith where kingship is concerned," a point that is widely applicable. For whenever the situation is such that not many men can achieve preeminence, there is usually such great rivalry (*contentio*) that it is extremely difficult to preserve "a friendship inviolate" (*sancta societas*).

What is particularly disturbing about this, Cicero goes on to say, is that the desire for power and honor is found "in the greatest spirits and most brilliant minds" (*in maximis animis splendidissimisque ingeniis*)—an explicit admission of how closely *vitium* coexists with *virtus*. From a rhetorical perspective, the remark emphasizes that prestigious individuals in positions of power are especially obliged to master the skill of throwing up perception-bending screens that reduce the envy attendant upon greatness. And though the transgression of justice by the ambitious rather than the envy of spectators is the *vitium* addressed in the passage, we can appreciate how fully the public visibility of distinguished men is hemmed in on every side by the urgency of managing opinion. Reputation is hardly just a matter of great deeds and a moral disposition.

Let us sum up. Envy may be felt toward one's social inferiors or superiors, but in either case the emotion is generated from feelings of having lost in a competition where the stakes are status-enhancing and could redound to one's own benefit. In certain cases, the *vir bonus* may wish to arouse it, but then one must assume he does so in order to move an audience against an opponent whom he renders invidious. For envy breaks the bonds of attraction that are the very basis of persuasion. Those bonds Antonius calls *amor*, and a good orator works on them by directing the perception of advantage away from himself and toward another (usually in some version of espousing the common or greater good). Love and envy impinge closely upon each other. Each may be a check on the other, qualifying its emergence, reducing its intensity, or even displacing it altogether.

We may be hesitant to see the marks of dissimulation in such a display of love as Antonius here advocates. But he is in fact talking about a pantomime that operates by downgrading rather than upgrading achievement. The gist of the whole passage is that exceptional men not only expect but deserve exceptional praise and reward. To win them, however, they should avoid saying or even implying so. The world does not work as a system of merit in which an audience's recognition of greatness brings the appropriate admiring response. Greatness must mask as humility or service or self-sacrificing labor. If it doesn't, an audience will be offended. People may want their heroes to be like gods, but they expect them to carry on the pretense of being all too human. Machiavelli made a very similar point.

In linking the mild and vehement styles, Antonius hopes to show that few are the situations in which unabated passion is desirable in a speech; in most cases, *asperitas* should be tempered by *humanitas*, *vis* by *temperantia*. Having offset one style against another, Antonius then performs the same balancing act within the discussion of *motus* itself by showing how the violence of *invidia* may be tempered by *amor*, the conciliatory *benevolentia*

played in a stronger key. But at this point we are warranted in seeing “conciliation” not as a discrete rhetorical *officium*, a mode of appeal in its own right, but as a subspecies of “moving”—moving gently rather than forcefully. The slide of one *officium* into another has been noticed by others, and is largely the result of Cicero’s tendency to treat “character” in this passage as a matter of style rather than content, of winning goodwill rather than representing value, action, and belief, of influencing impressions rather than advancing evidence. This is one of the key differences between Cicero’s and Aristotle’s treatments of *ethos*, and it bespeaks the degree to which the third of the *officia oratoris*—*movere*—dominates the other two, an order of priority exactly the reverse of Aristotle’s emphasis upon rendering the facts of the case.²¹

The contrast and balance between the two *officia* turns out to be something of an illusion in another sense, as well. For essential as both styles are in the complete orator, true eloquence as distinguished from mere good speaking is defined by the ability to arouse passion.²² Not all possess this ability. And among those who do, Crassus is unsurpassed. Or so one side of Antonius wants to say. Crassus is a master at building up feelings in otherwise dispassionate judges. He is the exemplar of what Pacuvius praised when he called *eloquentia* “*flexanima atque omnium regina rerum*,” “the soul-bending queen of all things” (2.187). And it bothers Antonius not a bit to explain that this power can support what is sinking or bend what is upright as well as take prisoner, in the manner of a good commander, one who resists and opposes. In these lines, the quality of moral goodness in a speaker is eclipsed by the superior rhetorical trait of being able to assault, as the military imagery makes clear, the emotions of a judge so that even an unbiased one may be made biased. Antonius claims he is terrified when Crassus uses this method of appeal (2.188):

so great is the force of mind, so great the vehemence, so great the anguish in your eyes, your countenance, your gesture, and even that very finger of yours; so mighty is the flow of your most weighty and best-chosen words, of your sound (*integrae*), true (*verae*), and novel judgments (*novae sententiae*), so free from the disguise of coloring and from triviality, that you seem to me not only to set the judge on fire but to be on fire yourself (*sed ipse ardere videaris*).

The recourse to moral terms in a copious overflowing that mimics the rhetoric it extols illustrates how the style in question can carry an audience along in a conviction of integrity that is in fact won by the sway of emotion. Vehement oratory offers, in situations where it can be successfully unleashed, a shortcut to the perception of probity. It is not that Crassus is only apparently good; it is rather that whether or not he is dissolves in the on-

21. For a discussion of the passage in the *De oratore*, see Fantham 1973. On the tendency of Aristotle to emphasize facts over feelings, and on the complications thereof, see Gellrich 1990.

22. On Cicero and the connection between powerful emotion and the grand style see Shuger 1988, 14–54. In his discussion of Tacitus, Sinclair (1995, 117–32) shows how an emotional, fiery style is reconfigured under the Principate in the language of gladiatorial combat. He also speaks frequently, as in his treatment of Sejanus, about “sham morality” (133) and the person who is “adept at playing with society’s image of itself” (149).

slaught of a display so fiery and captivating that the audience will believe anything he wants them to. Antonius' own performance tries to capture by association some of the same ardency he imputes to Crassus. That is, his catching fire in a passage replete with such well-known strategies of *vis* as repetition, anaphora, asyndeton, and alliteration, is designed to secure the belief of his companions in his own good intentions. And this is the point at which the passage becomes especially interesting. For Antonius' praise of Crassus as a speaker of unsurpassed eloquence is a mere moment in what turns out to be a lengthy piece of self-exaltation. It is an effort to bridge his envy of a rival with love, and thus make his motives appear less invidious and more emulative. If critics often bypass the far-reaching, productive effects of envy in Cicero's dialogue, it may well have to do with the fact that his characters invite us to upgrade their intentions, as Antonius does here, by reading them along the idealizing axis of *amor*. But should we go along with the ploy?

Antonius' pretext for the self-referencing panegyric in which he engages is that Crassus has already praised him for handling the emotional style "divinely" (*divinitus*) and "brilliantly" (*praeclare*), and he must now examine that praise in order to clarify his achievement. Doubling the compliment by returning to it, he avoids the appearance of boasting through a seemingly strategy of deferring advantage to Crassus. Then he proceeds to say that setting a judge ablaze entails being ablaze oneself. Whether or not Crassus' burning with the very passions he intends others to feel is in fact real, that is, whether or not Crassus feigns, Antonius claims not to know; he can speak only for himself. We note again a slip from the attribution of high moral credibility to Crassus to the possibility that Crassus pretends to be suffused with the emotions that validate such credibility. In the name of speaking only for himself, another bow in the direction of cautious humility, Antonius manages to leave the authenticity of his rival in question, avowing, "by Hercules," that he, at least, never tried to arouse in judges either anguish or pity or envy or hatred unless he himself was moved by the very feelings he wished to move in them (2.189). Envy, elsewhere described as a *vitium*, is conceded by Antonius, for reasons of honesty, to be a passion he has felt—when he must sway judges.²³

Of course, having called into question Crassus' passion, Antonius calls into question his own, at the very moment of affirming it. Self-proclaimed veracity cannot close the gap that Antonius' fiery display has already opened. At least it cannot do so in the text of the *De oratore*. This, I believe, is a fundamental difference between the live oratorical performance and the textual rhetorical performance. The speaker who is on fire seeks to "compress the registers" so that self, speech, and audience merge in one emotive discharge that erases all suspicion of acting. Gunderson so characterizes the oratorical motive in his discussion of a later passage in Book 2 that parallels this one.²⁴ I agree with him that the rhetorical text demystifies the compression; it does

23. On *ipse ardere*, see Wisse 1989, 257–68.

24. Gunderson 2000, 145.

so by showing that the supposed requirement of impassioned oratory—that the orator must himself burn first—is an unconfirmed, even unconfirmable, hypothesis. But Gunderson also asserts that the excision of such slips “is an eventual goal of descriptions of the good man” and that the “repeated expulsion of unwanted personae” is a project of “cleaning up the orator, keeping him from falling into the histrionic, the effeminate, the inauthentic, or whatever other abyss may be threatened as the rhetorical subject’s punishment.”²⁵ I don’t think it works this way. When the *De oratore* casts doubt upon the authenticating power of the *ipse ardere* criterion, it does so in order to prove that it is yet another tool in the pantomimic repertoire of the good man skilled in speaking. What the oratorical text strives to achieve—merger—the rhetorical text wants to show. By doing so, it opens a distance that it is interested in keeping open for the purpose of exhibiting the technique as such.

Let us return to fury and tears. If actors exhibit them, Antonius insists, how much more so do *patroni* in representing their *clientes*; how much more did he in representing a trampled former consul, Manius Aquilius, who was prosecuted for extortion after suppressing war in Sicily. It was not “ancient misfortunes” and “fictive griefs” that made him tear open the worthy man’s tunic and expose his battle wounds at the trial. In that instance, he says, “I was not the actor (*actor*) of another’s personality but author (*auctor*) of my own” (2.194).²⁶ He claims absolute identity with Manius Aquilius, an identity enabled by commiseration for one whose status conforms closely with his own and whose suffering invites his sympathy. But the reference to acting, though it takes the form of a disclaimer, can only increase the suspicion that “truth through merging” is, like other professions of love in the drama of the *De oratore*, a subtle stratagem that enhances the speaker’s interest while seeming to enhance someone else’s.

The suspicion is confirmed when Antonius turns to Sulpicius in yet another gesture of conceding excellence in the art of ardent oratory to a fellow speaker, this time a younger one, only to walk off with the palm for himself. The case concerns Caius Norbanus, former tribune of the people, whom Sulpicius prosecuted in 95 B.C.E. against Antonius. The details are less important for us than the fact that Antonius presents himself as having been in a most awkward situation, since his defense of a man who had once been his quaestor against charges of sedition compelled him, an older man of censorian rank, to stand before a mere *adolescens* and justify the uses of sedition—all of this before a tribunal of citizens of the highest rank (*optimi cives iudices*). The case ought to have gone against Antonius, especially since Sulpicius handled himself from beginning to end not only with consummate respectability (*summa cum dignitate*) but with a force and indignation and fiery spirit (*vi et dolore et ardore animi*) that made his rival fear to draw close and put it out (2.195–97). Antonius, however, did draw near and did

25. Gunderson 2000, 143.

26. For a recent discussion of “actorliness” in Cicero’s rhetorica, with full scholarly references, see Gunderson 2000, 111–48, 187–221.

put it out—through a combination of his own inflammatory and commendatory rhetoric that both moderated passion against Norbanus and stirred it up against those he had “seditiously” opposed. That was how Sulpicius’ prosecution was overthrown.

To this recollection by Antonius of a victory over an opponent, Sulpicius can only assent with still half-dazed wonder: “Never did I see anything slip from my hands the way that case slipped from mine!” Moreover, Antonius’ recreation of the moment humbles Sulpicius in his hope that such mastery could ever be learned via precepts: “When you recalled these things just now, I felt no desire for teachings; for that presentation you recalled of your own methods of defense I consider no mean instruction” (2.204). It is likely that Sulpicius himself, at this moment, is doing to Antonius a bit of what Antonius has been doing to him—strutting under the guise of being an urbanely self-abnegating winner. Similarly, the acknowledgment that such an incredible performance cannot be reduced to principles has more than a hint of self-congratulation about it. The envy, however, assumes the guise of a young man’s admiring emulation of another, older man’s greatness. *Amor* masks the contentiousness of a prior rivalry whose force is reenacted in a less intense vein in the dialogue. Once again, however, while the courtroom oratory aimed at merger, the rhetorical reconsideration of it aims at an appreciation of the dynamics that enable merger.

The passage we have been studying does not mark the first time envy comes into view in the *De oratore*. Nor does it mark the first time we witness the gentlemanly strategies by which this “most violent of all emotions” is tempered and rendered charming, gracious, or appropriate in the dynamics of male social competition. It certainly is not the last. The scenario is more or less reenacted after Antonius delivers his impassioned piece of rhetoric on impassioned rhetoric, when the dialogue shifts to another feature of oratory that exhibits exceptional charismatic appeal—humor.²⁷ Antonius, having remarked that Caesar Strabo, who has only lately joined the conversation, is in his opinion the most witty of all men, must listen to Caesar discount his own talent and praise Crassus as the true master of wit. The encomium of Crassus, which turns out to be as lengthy as the one we have just heard by Antonius in his own interest, comes to a halt when Caesar once again decorously defers his own excellence in order to assign “the palm of preeminence in this department also” to Crassus (2.220, 227). To which Antonius confesses that he would have so assigned it himself “if [he] had not sometimes envied Crassus a little in this respect; for to be ever so witty and clever is not in itself to be envied so much, but when one is the most attractive (*venustissimus*) and polished (*urbanissimus*) of speakers, to be and to seem to be the most weighty (*gravissimum*) and austere (*severissimum*) of men, a thing that has befallen this one man only, seems to [him] hardly endurable” (2.228).

Crassus smiles. It is one of the more Socratic moments in the dialogue, a moment when Crassus seems transported right out of the realm of competitive

27. Krostenko (2001, 202–32) treats humor at length. Also see Corbeill 1996.

male challenge into a position of reticent aloofness that requires no response. We might speak of it as an occasion of mystery, since Crassus here appears as “one of us” yet also beyond us, and thus different, alien, divine—the Orator instead of an orator.²⁸ It is the kind of moment Cicero accords typically to Crassus, with whom he so closely identifies and who appears uniquely capable of escaping the ruthless demands of remaining on top in a world where the struggle for excellence can compromise the values it is motivated to secure.

Crassus, of course, can hardly escape such demands. Or to put it another way, when he does escape them, it is in the act of transcending the mortal realm. We see this in the almost allegorical scene recounted by Cicero at the beginning of Book 3, which reveals a vital point about the use of rhetorical screens. Crassus died little more than a week after the day described in the *De oratore*. Violently moved by a speech the consul Philip delivered in which he launched a grievous attack upon the Senate, Crassus responded with an angry counterattack (3.3–4):

He deplored the misfortune and bereavement of the Senate from whose order the hereditary dignity was being torn away by a consul just as if he were a lawless plunderer, he who ought to have been like a good parent or a loyal guardian. Nor, indeed, was it to be wondered at if after he had delivered blows to the Republic with his own policies he was withdrawing the advice of the Senate from the Republic . . . A great many things were at that time reported to have been said in a godlike spirit (*divinitus*) by Crassus.

A few lines later, Cicero describes these things as having been set out with “the most polished and dignified words” (*ornatissimis et gravissimis verbis*) that revealed “the most forceful effort (*vehementissima contentione*) of mind, of intellect, of strength.”

Crassus is in the process of being transported out of his mortality (Cicero has already said in the opening sentences of Book 3 that his genius is worthy of immortality) and into a godly or heroic state, a point underscored by the use of *divinitus* in the passage quoted above, which is repeated in adjectival form a few lines later. But such transport requires a worthy contender. That, precisely, is what the “lawless plunderer” (*nefarius praedo*) Philip turns out to be—a match for his adversary, a man who is “vehement and eloquent and among the most courageous in resisting opposition” (*vehementi et diserto et in primis forti ad resistendum*), words that are also applied to Crassus. The only thing that breaks the balanced rhetorical excellence that makes them images of each other is Crassus’ moral stance: he maintains the dignity of the senatorial class before one who violently plunders it. One is reminded of the Longinian sublime in which transport is similarly predicated on an agonistic stance with an opponent, typically a “strong author,” whose very ability is the driving force behind the struggle to overcome him. In other words, as the example of Longinus suggests, Crassus needs Philip to rise to the heights of his oratorical genius. Excel-

28. On “mystery” and rhetoric see Burke 1969, 101–23, 174–80, 208–33, 271–79; also Gunderson (2000) 192, who connects mystery with *decor* and *decus*.

lence emerges in an agonistic setting.²⁹ Cicero records autobiographically the force of this point when in the opening of the *Brutus* he explains that the death of Hortensius has meant the loss of his keenest adversary, whose competition spurred him on to his greatest oratorical achievements.

Now the heightened moment we've been discussing in the *De oratore* would seem to be one from which any trace of pantomimic posturing is precluded—at least on the part of Crassus, who is depicted as immersed in the emotions that motivate his most honorable defense. He feels intensely at one with the outrage and anger that render him, in Cicero's eyes, unsurpassably noble. Rivalry inspires not a show of response, as it does in the situations of Antonius discussed above, not a display that opens a gap between being and seeming, but a response pure and simple. The sympathetic nervous system is consumed by passions the orator experiences not just mentally but physically. And the outcome of this singular moment that functions as an epitome of what eloquence can achieve in the most extreme of circumstances, where the orator merges completely with the emotions registered in every limb of his body, is telling.

He dies: "That voice and that speech were as the swan song of this godly man (*divini hominis*) . . . for we heard that while he was speaking he suffered a terrible pain in his side, followed by a profuse sweating; then he shook all over, then returned home in a fever, and on the seventh day he died from the pain in his side" (3.6). The occasion on which Crassus achieves the height of his oratorical powers, which is presented as an occasion of truth in rhetoric, is the occasion of passing out of this world. As if to emphasize the point, Cicero observes what an irony it is that while the life of Crassus was racked with the toil of ambition, he was more distinguished for his private duties and his personal genius than for the dignified rank he bore in the Republic, but when he attained the highest position of authority (*summam auctoritatem*), death overcame him. We should recall Antonius' assertion about himself in the case of Manius Aquilius: "I was not the actor (*actor*) of another's personality but author (*auctor*) of my own." Self-authorship and authority are linked.

But the passage under scrutiny takes us farther. In it *auctoritas* is commensurate with a state in which supreme rhetorical mastery coexists with supreme moral probity. This state, however, is already beyond the human, beyond the charged and divisive contexts that give rise to a pantomimic ethics of *dignitas*. Crassus is out of this world. But he is so precisely at the point where the rhetorical is in the process of turning into the unconditional, the metaphysical. That Antonius lives to assert his own *auctoritas* is a mark of declension from the paradigm case of Crassus. And Crassus himself would have had to inhabit a similarly secondary position at all moments but his most hierarchical when he is, in a manner of speaking, apotheosized. In this sense, the death of Crassus is the test case against which other rhetorical moments of "divinity" should be judged.

29. On agonism and the sublime see Hertz 1985.

That includes one that surfaces in Book 1 of the dialogue. Crassus, with his penchant for the idealistic paradigm, has been asserting that in the orator (he means the Orator) *natura* and *ingenium* take first place over *ars*. He goes on to cite innate qualities that set gifted speakers apart, some of them to such a degree “that they seem not to have been born but to have been fashioned by some god” (*ut non nati, sed ab aliquo deo ficti esse videantur*, 1.115). The reference to divinity seems a near reflex action to counter a challenge orators often face in speaking: “Great is the burden, great the task, both to undertake and carry forward, that while all are silent, one individual is to be heard concerning the most weighty affairs and among a large congregation of men. For there is hardly anyone present who is not sharper and quicker at seeing the defects in one speaking than his good points” (1.116). To overcome such a challenge has in it something superhuman, something divine.

Effortlessly, Crassus moves from these assertions to claiming that those who speak best begin their speeches fearfully (*timide*): “For the better one speaks, the more deeply does he fear the difficulty of speaking, the variable outcomes of a speech, and the expectations of men” (1.120). A speaker who proceeds with no evidence of fear in him, who does not respond with some timidity to the enormous burden of carrying public opinion, is not what we would call “fearless,” in an honorific sense. Rather, he is one who lacks shame (*pudor*), and is therefore worthy of rebuke and blame. Gunderson analyzes the passage under discussion, but again, his orientation toward problems of homosocial love and his conclusion that Crassus is enacting through *pudor* a sexualized scenario of specifically manly virtue differ from my own interpretation of the blushing orator.³⁰

There are several things going on in this passage, and the two on which I want to focus pull in opposite ways. One is what we may call, using a term already employed earlier, a response of the sympathetic nervous system to a vigorous challenge. Aroused “by nature,” the speaker about to open up before a large assembly reveals in his words, gestures, and demeanor a certain pulling back or hesitation on the threshold of engagement. The reaction cannot be otherwise for one who has accurately seen what is entailed by the situation upon which he is about to embark. Threat induces fear; that is the way we are made, and there is something positively upright (*probitatis commendatione*) in one who evidences the expected trembling on the verge. We are, at this level, dealing with an automatic reflex, a phenomenon inbred in the species and resembling what we in the era of psychobiology might call the adrenaline rush of the fight-or-flight response.

On the other hand, the belief that success for the lone speaker in the spotlight can bring transcendence mobilizes a different range of problems. Those problems are apparent in Crassus’ warning that an audience is more prone to criticism than to praise, more prone to diminish for reasons of envy the possibility of superlative achievement. That is a rhetorical difficulty for one poised at the podium—and it necessitates strategy. To understand this is to

30. Gunderson 2000, 205–9.

appreciate how fear and trembling, whatever their visceral origins in the body's adaptation to threat, are also, and more importantly for the rhetorician, a matter of manipulation. For rhetorically speaking, what else is Crassus' demonstration of timidity but a device, self-consciously managed, to reveal "the great exertion and great toil," as Antonius will later put it, that press upon an orator whom spectators envy for his position of prominence? In short, *pudor* is advanced, just as *ipse ardere* is in another context, as a pantomimic strategy of the *vir bonus*. It may or may not be consistent with the moral character of the speaker. That is less important than knowing it is required by the audience's need to see a downgrading by the godlike speaker of his success or his chance for success.

Once again, the weight of the point is carried dramatically. Crassus the self-deprecator tells the story of what happened to him in his youth: "I once as a very young man so completely lost my nerve at the outset of an indictment that I owed a debt to Quintus Maximus, because he dismissed the assembly as soon as he saw that I was shattered and broken down with fear" (1.121–22). In saying this, Crassus admits to something that, in his own words, he has never mentioned to anyone before and deemed worthy of silence (1.119). But the admission of weakness actually gains him higher ground, as we can see in the response of those gathered to this revelation of limb-numbing fear: "At this point, they all began to nod approval and talk among themselves, for there was in Crassus a certain awe-inspiring modesty (*mirificus quidam in Crasso pudor*), which, however, not only took nothing away from his oratory, but even profited him by witnessing to his uprightness" (1.122). At his villa, removed from the hurly-burly of politics in the city, Crassus attempts in the opening rounds of dialogue to stave off envy by engaging in the same strategy of self-effacement he urges for orators who speak in public, especially before large assemblies. And the credit he earns for his admission of timidity is the appearance of goodness. *Pudor* and *timor* are here linked in a moral affiliation.³¹

Antonius attempts to exploit this accrual of advantage by enlarging on the difficulties that face an orator. He remarks that however much judgment settles upon an actor playing his part in a play, his occasional failure to perform effectively is ascribed to his "not feeling well" or "being out of sorts" that day. But no such excuse is allowed the orator upon whom a far more weighty censure bears, for if he is found at fault, "there prevails an opinion everlasting, or at least long-lived, of his dullness (*tarditatis*)" (1.125). Again, labor, toil, peril. From them we are to derive the greatness of these two men who have met the challenge and come out on top. Laying oneself open to abuse in this scenario of masculine self-mastery is again framed in pantomimic terms.

Let us examine one more instance of improvisational genius and the dynamics of *amor* and *invidia*. At the opening of Book 2, we find an extended

31. Again, Gunderson (2000, 206–8) discusses the passage, but he is interested in uncovering a "crypto-sexuality" in it, an anxiety about sexual failure. I see in the passage a pantomimic show in which the anxiety already appears staged. This is an excellent example of what I call at the end of the essay, following Burke, "self-interference."

passage that reveals a tension between Greek and Roman values of the sort that figures prominently in the *De oratore*.³² Both Crassus and Antonius, Cicero tells us in his own voice, were widely thought to be either without education or in possession of very little of it, a fact that impeded not at all their attainment of practical wisdom (*prudentiam*) and an unbelievable eloquence (*incredibilem eloquentiam*). Cicero points out that this lack of formal instruction was a matter of pride to many Roman men in his youth who saw proof in Crassus and Antonius of how useless an advanced education is. The criticism of *eruditio* and *doctrina* is a response to the incursion of Greek rhetoric, philosophy, and history into the Roman world during the period of conquest in the East, an incursion that aroused anxiety about the adequacy of an older cultural model constructed around manly pragmatism, social utility, and military glory.

Cicero himself is ambivalent about the rejection of Greek learning that he reports, and he notes that his own father was intent upon exposing him and his brother Quintus to precisely the type of education that a large number of Romans professed to hate. Moreover, he himself recalls that the teachers his father chose were men Crassus had made his friends, while Antonius he knew to have studied with some of the most illustrious intellectuals of Athens and Rhodes. Cicero's own situation, then, is complicated, and we will say more about it in a moment. But what is most illuminating for our argument about the conflict of opinion featured in the opening lines of Book 2 is this: Cicero presents the postures of Crassus and Antonius as rhetorically constructed choices (2.4):

Crassus did not so much wish to be thought uneducated (*existimari vellet non didicisse*) as to despise education and to prefer on every subject the practical wisdom of our countrymen to the Greeks; Antonius, however, was of the opinion that his speaking would be more worthy of approval (*probabilior*) to the people if he were thought (*putaretur*) never to have been educated at all. And so it seemed to one that he would be greater (*gravior*) if he disdained the Greeks, to the other if he did not know them at all.

Manly immunity to the foreign is thrown up by Crassus and Antonius as proof of authority, of *gravitas*. The stance is Catonian.³³ No slavishly mimicking aristocrats, these Romans, no pedants steeped in Greek book knowledge without a shred of common sense. And no imitators of each other. Bound by a common purpose that Hellenophobia motivates, they have their own character-driven, Roman responses to the situation.

Or that is what they would have their audience believe. Cicero, however, effectively exposes the image they seek to project as a screen, a ploy to mask a different state of play. Within this passage itself, we find confirmation of what the dialogue as a whole reveals time and again, that every put-down of the Greeks should be read as an awareness of a Greek influence

32. Scholarship on the subject of Greek and Roman values in Cicero's *rhētorica* is substantial. For recent discussions see Krostenko 2001, 202–32, Hall 1996, and Gruen 1990.

33. See Gruen 1992 for this point, and for arguments about why Cato, who also had wide familiarity with the language, literature, and learning of the Greek world, posed as the archcritic of Hellas and Hellenism.

that the orator seeks to discount in the name of Roman *dignitas* and self-authorization ("I am an *auctor*, not an *actor*"). The first such instance occurs when Crassus tries to subordinate all branches of learning to the practice of oratory, thereby putting Greek *eruditio*, and especially philosophy, in its proper place; Antonius goes a step further by observing that the pursuit of "all knowledge" will take a man away from his most important business, that of speaking before the people and in the forum, or what is just as bad, make "the style of his words polished and sweetly pleasing (*nitidum . . . et laetum*), more filled with the training school and its soft oil than of the city's hubbub and forum" (1.81). Greek effeteness versus Roman virility. Antonius knows the difference. He knows it so well that he betrays, as the dialogue proceeds, a remarkably extensive familiarity with these effeminate, overrefined foreigners. But he downplays that knowledge, going so far as to feign ignorance and claiming that it was late in life he came in touch with the writings of the Greeks, and then only slightly, on his journey as proconsul to Cilicia when he was compelled by bad weather to put in at Athens (1.82). There, under a certain compulsion, he spoke to the most important men of letters. He admits contact with them, but the contact was reluctant; he admits interest in their company, but the interest was the courteous deference of a man of action; he concedes learning a few things as he listened in, but nothing a Roman couldn't do without.

Cicero is not always so explicit about the pantomimic character of such attitudes. But there are reasons why at the outset of Book 2 he overtly exposes the disclaimers of broad knowledge and of Hellenizing sympathies as rhetorically motivated. In the latter half of the second century B.C.E. and the initial decades of the first, Greek influences were feared more deeply than they were from the mid-first century on, when they had been absorbed to a greater degree into Roman models of seriousness and social value.³⁴ Crassus and Antonius were compelled to feign distance from the Greeks in order to be admired by their aristocratic peers, whereas a generation later, in Cicero's time, Greek standards were less dangerously foreign, more intertwined with terms that expressed moral and aesthetic approval. That is why in the *De oratore*, which was composed in 55 B.C.E., there can be so many ironic references to the Greek learning of Crassus and Antonius without their suffering from contamination through association. That is why Plato's *Phaedrus* can be invoked and the example of Socrates under the plane tree imitated (1.28); why Sulpicius can with impunity compare Crassus' villa to the Academy and Lyceum (1.98); why Crassus' fluency in Greek can be singled out for praise and admiration (2.2); why Caesar Strabo can observe of Antonius that he is hardly ignorant of the Greeks, so learnedly and judiciously has he discoursed about a wide range of Greek historians (2.44–61); why Catulus can observe that the *copia* and *vis* of Crassus are in the tradition of Gorgias and Pericles (3.126–43). The list goes on.³⁵ What is important is that the rivalry between Antonius and Crassus as regards learning is

34. See Krostenko 2001, 21–153.

35. Krostenko 2001, 229–30, discusses some of these "Hellenisms."

motivated by different rhetorical stances toward the conservative Roman suspicion of foreign influence, a rivalry that Cicero reads through the lens of a later time, when one could actually profit by displaying that same influence.

It would be a mistake to conclude, however, that Cicero's own greater esteem for Greek culture overcomes an older spirit of censure. We often hear in the *De oratore* of "Greeklings" (*Graeculi*), a disparaging term that betokens a conservative reaction against them. And at one important juncture, Crassus, responding to Caesar's remark that he would not want to appear "tactless" (*ineptus*) by pressing his venerable senior into a fuller elaboration of rhetorical subjects he is reluctant to treat, observes that *ineptus* is indeed a Latin word of very great potency (*vim maximam*): "for he who either does not see what the occasion requires, or talks too much, or puts himself on display, or has no concept of dignity or suitability, or, in short, is in any way awkward or fulsome, that man is described as tactless" (2.17). We are in the semantic range discussed above—of the humble and fearful attitude toward speaking that bears witness to *pudor*. *Ineptus* is at the other end of the scale. It signifies a shamelessness that in the Roman context destroys *gravitas* and *auctoritas*.

This word, Crassus tells us, may not be translated into Greek for the Greeks have no word for it. No wonder their nation abounds in the fault. But even among the Greeks, Catulus muses as he reflects upon this judgment, there were those who applied themselves to discussion in the right way and at the right time; not all Greek speakers, after all, are *inepti*. That raises a question, in Crassus' mind, a rhetorical question: is it appropriate that what were once gymnasia built for physical training have been transformed by the Greeks into schools for philosophers to chatter (*garrire*) in? The analogy, he implies, holds for the current situation: the countryside is a place for *otium*, for restfulness, not for mental competition (*contentio animi*). In it, disquisition on the fine points of particular branches of knowledge, even such noble ones as rhetoric, is *ineptus*, that is, hardly Roman (2.21–25).³⁶

Here we are given insight into the familiar delaying tactics of the *De oratore*. Read against the passage under discussion, such tactics are screens. Crassus and Antonius must pretend repeatedly that they do not wish to enter into a discussion that others urge upon them; they must be remembered by Cotta, Sulpicius, Catulus, and Caesar for all the times they have refused to answer questions of just the sort they are now elaborating upon in full. They must do so for fear of appearing to be *Graeculi* themselves, unable to refrain from chattering in the peace and quiet of a country villa setting. These pantomimic screens cast a glow on the scene, making what might look like impertinence or tactlessness into a moment of rare, graceful disclosure. In the introduction to Book 2 Cicero lays open the rhetorical maneuvering that produces such decorum.³⁷

36. Compare Gunderson 2000, 205–9.

37. Compare Hall 1996.

Of course, his interlocutors' strategies illuminate his own, for the dialogue, after all, is Cicero's creation, even if it presents itself as an account of an historical event. What Crassus and Antonius gain by their show of modesty, reluctance, and timidity mingled with conciliation, force, and amplitude Cicero gains as well. The right moves of the author's characters are the right moves of the author himself. And so it is that praise of his principals is a form of self-praise, which Cicero masks by speaking through them instead of *in propria persona*—another screen operative at another level.³⁸ From this point of view, the remarks about panegyric in the *De oratore* are revealing, and with them we will conclude.

In Book 2, shortly after Antonius has assumed the mantle as leader of the conversation, Catulus breaks in for a round of applause: Antonius, he declares, has sung the praises of eloquence eloquently, as is only right, for a eulogy of this art must make use of the art it is eulogizing. The metarhetorical attitude makes it easy to shift the reference up a notch to the writer who is eulogizing those eulogizing the art. A few lines later, and not surprisingly, the topic of panegyric surfaces when Crassus observes, with some satisfaction, that the Antonius of yesterday who made the orator out to be "some oarsman or porter . . . someone devoid of learning and unrefined," has reversed himself. Antonius admits he has come around to a more ample, humanistic view of the orator, a view closer to his friend's, and he goes so far as to say, with witty mock bravura, that he was posturing the day before. Why? He wanted to outmaneuver Crassus: "It was my intention, if I had refuted you, to take these students away from you" (2.40). In other words, his antagonistic stance toward the topic of (Greek) learning was an expression of envy and the desire to enhance his own esteem in the group by appearing the arch-Roman, more masculinely pragmatic than his erudite friend.³⁹

We could put it another way: as a member of the audience witnessing a speaker who held the stage and who dominated the position of advantage, Antonius felt envy, and envy led him to find fault. Today, when he has control of the helm, he is ready to concede before Crassus that oratory indeed has a wide range, and he does so, in part, by saying that it includes chiefly the two branches we call judicial and deliberative, which are precisely those that dominate the sphere of Roman politics. These have already been discussed by Aristotle, he understands, along with a third branch pertaining to *laudationes*. "But not everything about which we speak," he goes on, "seems to me necessary to refer to art and to rules." Anyone who plans to deliver a panegyric will comprehend that he has to deal with "the blessings of fortune" (*fortunae bona*), which include those "of birth, of wealth, of connections, of friendships, of resources, of health, of beauty, of strength, of talent, and of all those other things that are physical or come from the outside" (2.44–46). This is a list that judges worth in terms of material advantage,

38. Rudd 1992 analyzes such screens, which he calls "stratagems of vanity," in the context of one of Cicero's letters to Lucceius.

39. Plutarch remarked about Cato (*Cato* 23.1) that all his belittling of Greek culture was in the spirit of *philotimia*. See the discussion in Gruen 1992, 80.

that is, a list that singles out for privileged treatment the *nobiles*, those who are not only blessed but who demonstrate the ability to manage their gifts well. Panegyric may not necessarily be oriented toward the upper crust of the upper class, but that group appears to constitute the paradigm of the genre.

Moreover, *laudatio* should be delivered by someone who is himself in possession of blessings, a *homo disertus* adept in the other branches of oratory and therefore able to figure out, without the aid of precepts and instructions, how to praise someone worthy of praise. In short, panegyric requires a speaker of ability and talent (*ingenium*) who can operate confidently free of rules and who, by virtue of that fact, is suited to praising one also distinguished by *ingenium* and the other blessings of fortune: the god-favored few praising the god-favored few, Cicero praising Crassus and Antonius, all of them men of genius for whom rules can be shackles. We recall Sulpicius' respect for speaking without rules.

The situation that emerges in the discussion of panegyric is very like the one we encounter in one of Cicero's letters to Luceius (*Fam.* 5.12). Here Cicero ventures boldly, but with an array of dignifying stratagems, upon a request that his friend put on record his, Cicero's, achievements at the earliest moment possible, that his name might be rendered illustrious and renowned by a writer whom he always has known to be capable of great things, but who now has surpassed his highest expectations. He goes so far as to suggest a way of organizing the historical account so as to give special attention to his triumphs starting from his opposition to the conspiracy of Catiline.⁴⁰

Cicero's comments on panegyric are, then, ultimately self-promoting, but in a pantomimic fashion that masks the politics of grasping behind a façade of other-oriented attention. This conduct characterizes a great deal of the aristocratic morality Cicero is out to defend. In the *De oratore*, a work concerned above all with rhetorical motives, he cannot help but reveal it for what it is—actorliness (one wishes there were such a word as *actoritas*) generating the effects necessary to create an impression of *auctoritas*. But if this is the case, then has the panegyric motive of the *De oratore* been compromised? For to display strategies of self-promotion in the process of promoting oneself is to demystify both one's subject and one's self. I would not read this as an aggressive disclosure in the dialogue. But it is a disclosure that occurs inevitably as a result of a masterful orator's attention to how the *vir bonus* negotiates—with consummate skill—the treacherous waters of social competition and the requirements of persuasion, both in and out of a court of law. And it creates, I believe, a different ground for praising one who can play the social game especially well.

Technique, of course, is precisely what the orator in a live performance seeks to cover up, for the slightest hint of manipulation can turn an audience against a speaker. As Aristotle so memorably puts it, "naturalness is persuasive, artifice is the opposite; for our hearers are biased and think we have some design against them, as if we were mixing their wines for them" (3.1.

40. See Rudd 1992. Allen (1954) was entirely apologetic in his stance toward "Cicero's conceit."

1404b20). The one who rises to address his judges must "be real," but since, for the forensic orator, in particular, that requirement hardly satisfies the challenges he ordinarily meets in a case, he must have in his arsenal a wide variety of tools for "seeming real." So what prevents an audience of the *De oratore* from recoiling in the face of strategies it reveals as such? The pleasure we take in seeing how a great orator works—not only his sublimations and self-mastery but the verve and gusto with which he goes about plying his trade. The text, as I have already said, does not aim for the oratorical pleasure of merger but for the rhetorical pleasure of peering behind the mask. The disclosure is never full. It does not take shape in the dynamics of a "self-present" text that has purged "bad bodies" in its enactment of a sublimated homosociality, but in the dynamics of a drama whose very revelation of artifice elicits the question, is he or isn't he? Is the orator what he seems to be, given the necessity that even the most visceral and natural of responses must be strategized into technique?

The script that invites such questions is one in which the lag between being and appearing never closes. For good reason: it is the ground of the persuasive motive per se, this difference-from-oneself, the division that arguably drives all other appeals to bridge division. The orator in specific situations may close the gap between himself, his persona, and the audience and thus win the case. But in order to keep on persuading, in order to perpetuate acts of persuasion into a career, the orator would by necessity have an interest in keeping difference-from-oneself active, alive, unfulfilled in an ultimate sense. He would by necessity have an interest in what Kenneth Burke calls forms of "self-interference."⁴¹ For as Cicero's text itself tells us, the most ravishing moments of persuasion are never just about the orator closing the distance between him and the audience; they are about closing the gap between one's persona and oneself as a precondition for closing the gap with the audience. If that were the end of it, there would be no repeat performances. "A persuasion that succeeds dies," in Burke's words.⁴² These little deaths in the life of a successful orator testify to the positively enabling and paradoxically life-maintaining necessity of self-division. It is a fine thing that the *vir bonus* is not one with himself. If he were, he would not be skilled in speaking. That, I believe, is not what Cicero argues, but what he shows, in the *De oratore*.

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41. On self-interference and "pure persuasion" see Burke 1969, 267–79.

42. Burke 1969, 274.

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