

## CICERO AND QUINTILIAN ON THE ORATORICAL USE OF HAND GESTURES

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.<sup>1</sup> This deficiency is especially acute as far as his use of oratorical gesture is concerned. We have of course Quintilian's detailed discussion of the subject (*Inst.* 11.3.65–184), a discussion that illustrates quite strikingly how Roman speakers could use gestures involving their arms, hands, and fingers to give extra force and impact to their words.<sup>2</sup> And yet how exactly Rome's greatest orator exploited these features remains a matter of some speculation. The matter would be straightforward enough if we could assume that Cicero used essentially the same hand gestures as Quintilian describes. But the recent suggestion that oratorical gesture in Rome became significantly more complex during the imperial period means that this continuity in practice cannot simply be taken for granted.<sup>3</sup> A careful re-examination is needed of what precisely the ancient evidence

<sup>1</sup> Cicero includes some useful details about his early oratorical technique at *Brutus* 313–21, where he observes that in his younger days his delivery was characterized by a certain strain and tension through his whole body (*Brut.* 313: *totius corporis contentione*); but he makes no comments about his own use of gesture, although throughout the treatise he makes passing references to the gestural techniques of other orators. (See also *Att.* 16.15.3 for a brief reference to the young Octavian's use of hand gestures in a recent speech.) Later writers provide only occasional remarks about his oratorical delivery (e.g. *Asc. Mil.* 41 [Clark]; *Plut. Cic.* 5). Quintilian's claim at *Inst.* 11.3.97 that Cicero used a specific hand gesture at the beginning of *Pro Archia* seems to be an informed guess rather than a statement of reliable fact (note his use of *credo*). The few relevant details about gesture that Cicero does include in his treatises are discussed in detail below. All primary sources quoted in the following discussion are from Cicero unless stated otherwise.

<sup>2</sup> There has been considerable scholarly interest in Quintilian's discussion in recent years. See Elaine Fantham, 'Quintilian on performance: traditional and personal elements in *Institutio* 11.3', *Phoenix* 36 (1982), 243–63; Ursula Maier-Eichhorn, *Die Gestikulation in Quintilians Rhetorik* (Frankfurt am Main, 1989); Fritz Graf, 'Gestures and conventions: the gestures of Roman actors and orators', in Jan Bremmer and Herman Roodenburg (edd.), *A Cultural History of Gesture From Antiquity to the Present Day* (Oxford, 1991), 36–58; P. Wülfing, 'Antike und moderne Redegestik: Quintilians Theorie der Körpersprache', *AU* 37 (1994), 45–63; Gregory S. Aldrete, *Gestures and Acclamations in Ancient Rome* (Baltimore and London, 1999), esp. 3–43. The edition of Jean Cousin, *Quintilien: Institution Oratoire* 6 (Paris, 1979) includes some useful brief notes on Quint. *Inst.* 11.3. See also G. Wöhrle, 'Actio: Das fünfte officium des antiken Redners', *Gymnasium* 97 (1990), 31–46, and Erik Gunderson, *Staging Masculinity: The Rhetoric of Performance in the Roman World* (Ann Arbor, 2000), although this latter study is almost exclusively concerned with the application to Roman oratory of modern theories of masculinity.

<sup>3</sup> See Aldrete (n. 2), 72 for the assertion that oratorical gesturing since Cicero's day had 'grown enormously in complexity and versatility'. Also 166: 'Between Cicero and Quintilian, the nonverbal vocabulary available to orators became much more elaborate.' A general continuity in practice is accepted by (e.g.) R. G. Austin, *M. Tulli Ciceronis Pro M. Caelio Oratio* (Oxford, 1960<sup>3</sup>), who asserts at 141 that Quintilian's discussion of delivery 'certainly represents the tradition of an earlier age', although he also notes that 'a somewhat more theatrical manner had developed' in the rhetorician's day. The following discussion attempts to define more clearly the relationship between oratorical hand gestures and this more theatrical (or agitated) manner of delivery.

tells us about Cicero's use of hand gestures, and how his technique of delivery was related, if at all, to that of later orators. As we shall see, our ancient evidence on the subject can be usefully supplemented by the findings of modern anthropological studies of gesture, especially when it comes to trying to establish exactly what kinds of hand gesture Quintilian describes in his treatise. Only by clarifying this point can we hope to judge what these gestures may have had in common with Cicero's. Indeed, as will soon become clear, the whole question of Cicero's use of hand gestures is significant not just for our understanding of his performance technique; it also raises important questions about the development of rhetorical theory at Rome, and the role of Quintilian's discussion of gesture within it.

### CICERO ON HAND GESTURES

We may begin by considering what Cicero himself has to say about the use of the hands as part of oratorical gesture. In his formal discussion of *actio* in *De Oratore* he gives the following brief advice (*De Or.* 3.220): *manus autem minus arguta, digitis subsequens verba, non exprimens* ('The hands should not be too lively, accompanying the words with the fingers, but not imitating them'). Hand gestures, then, should complement what is being said, but not attract attention to themselves through too much movement, or through too explicit a representation of the subject matter. Indeed, Cicero characterizes gestures that represent specific words or emotions as too theatrical, as too much like those used by stage actors (*De Or.* 3.220): *omnes autem hos motus subsequi debet gestus, non hic verba exprimens scaenicus, sed universam rem et sententiam non demonstratione sed significatione declarans* ('But all of these emotions ought to be accompanied by gestures—not those used on stage which depict individual words, but gestures that indicate the content as a whole, not through imitation, but by suggesting the general sense').<sup>4</sup> Unfortunately, however, he does not go beyond these general principles to discuss exactly what gestures should be used to reinforce the orator's words in the way that he suggests. Nevertheless, it is clear that Cicero accepts—and approves of—some use of hand gestures in oratory.

His discussion in *Orator* is scarcely more detailed. He begins by urging moderation in the general use of gesture (*Orat.* 59): *idemque motu sic utetur, nihil ut supersit* ('The orator will employ movement in such a way that nothing seems redundant'). And he develops this concern with restraint through a series of negative injunctions (*Orat.* 59): *nulla mollitia cervicum, nullae argutiae digitorum, non ad numerum articulus cadens* ('There should be no effeminate bending of the neck, no twiddling of the fingers, no tapping out a rhythm with the knuckle'). Cicero's concerns here are essentially the same as those expressed in *De Oratore*: gestures should not be too fussy or distracting. The rhythmic use of the knuckles, for example, is objectionable presumably because it draws attention to itself through its insistent repetition.<sup>5</sup> Similarly the phrase *argutiae digitorum* refers only to the *inappropriately* elaborate use of the fingers; it is clear enough from *De Oratore* that Cicero approves of hand gestures that are expressive in an understated way.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Cicero's positive assessment of the use of hand gestures by M. Antonius (cos. 99 B.C.) at *Brut.* 141: *gestus erat non verba exprimens, sed cum sententiis congruens*.

<sup>5</sup> Graf (n. 2), 39 overstates the case when he asserts that Cicero 'explicitly forbids' all gestures that reinforce the tempo or rhythm of a sentence (sometimes called 'baton' gestures). The mention of the knuckle (*articulus*) here is quite specific, and suggests that Cicero has a particular irritating mannerism in mind.

<sup>6</sup> On the negative connotations of *argutiae*, see Maier-Eichhorn (n. 2), 24–6.

It is frustrating, however, that he gives little precise information about the kinds of gesture that he considers especially effective. To a large extent we have to rely on indirect evidence and informed inference to try to fill the gaps in our picture. We know, for example, that Cicero admired the way in which M. Antonius (cos. 99 B.C.) used his hands in oratorical delivery (*Brut.* 141) and approved of L. Crassus' (cos. 95 B.C.) effective use of the index finger (*De Or.* 2.188; cf. Quint. *Inst.* 11.3.94); he also speaks positively of the graceful gesturing (*gestus venustus*) of P. Sulpicius, tribune of the people in 88 B.C. (*Brut.* 203). It is reasonable to assume then that he modelled his own practices to some extent on these respected models.<sup>7</sup>

Conversely Hortensius Hortalus' style of gesturing almost certainly employed some of the excesses that Cicero advises against in his treatises. Cicero's own criticisms of his famous rival are tempered with a modicum of tact (*Brut.* 303): *motus et gestus etiam plus artis habebat quam erat oratori satis* ('His movements and gesture had even more technique than an orator needs'). Others, however, were more abusive, ridiculing Hortensius for gesturing in the manner of an actor and female pantomime artist (Gell. *NA* 1.5.2–3):

manusque eius inter agendum forent argutae admodum et gestuosae . . . multaque in eum, quasi in histrionem, in ipsis causis atque iudiciis dicta sunt. (3) sed . . . L. Torquatus . . . cum de causa Sullae quaereretur, non iam histrionem eum esse diceret, sed gesticulariam Dionysiamque eum notissimae saltatriculae nomine appellaret.

And when pleading, Hortensius used his hands in a very fussy and expressive way . . . and many taunts were hurled at him, even while speaking in court, for appearing like an actor. (3) But Lucius Torquatus . . . when Sulla was on trial, did not stop with calling him an actor, but said that he was a female mime-artist and a Dionysia—which was the name of a notorious dancing-girl.

Other orators too were apparently quite expansive and energetic in their use of gesture. The elder Curio (cos. 76 B.C.) evidently waved his arms around a good deal (*Brut.* 216–17), while Sextus Titius (tr. pl. 99 B.C.) used such unrestrained (*solutus*) and effeminate (*mollis*) gestures that a type of dance in vogue at the time was named after him (*Brut.* 225). Cicero's disapproval of these mannerisms implies clearly enough that he himself steered clear of such idiosyncrasies.

It would be mistaken, however, to suppose that his own approach to performance was generally restrained. While he chooses not to mention such details in his formal discussions of *actio* in *Orator* and *De Oratore*, we know from comments that he makes elsewhere that he was not averse to an element of studied theatricality in gesture and performance. He admits, for example, that he once held in his arms the infant son of a man he was defending in order to generate sympathy among the jurors (*Orat.* 131).<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Cicero's high regard for these orators is reflected in his use of them as leading characters in his dialogue *De Oratore*; for a convenient English summary of their careers, see A. S. Wilkins, *M. Tulli Ciceronis De Oratore Liber I* (Oxford, 1895), 8–26.

<sup>8</sup> Cicero also states that in another case he raised up the small son of a client and 'filled the forum with wailing and lamentation' (*Orat.* 131: *plangore et lamentatione compleremus forum*). In doing so, he was employing tricks of the oratorical trade that had evidently been in use for a century or more in public speaking at Rome, although these receive little attention in his formal discussions of gesture. See e.g. *De Or.* 1.228, *Brut.* 90, and Quint. *Inst.* 2.15.8 on the oratorical delivery of Galba c. 151 B.C. when defending C. Sulpicius Galus; and *De Or.* 2.194–6, *Verr.* 2.5.3, and Quint. *Inst.* 2.15.7 on M. Antonius' defence of M'. Aquillius (probably 98 B.C.). Cicero also refers to the same M. Antonius going down on one knee during an emotional appeal in his own defence (*Tusc.* 2.57). On the theatricality of Roman oratory in general, see Harold C. Gotoff,

And he seems to endorse the use of gestures such as striking the forehead and slapping the thigh as ways of rousing emotion in the audience.<sup>9</sup> While these grander gestures are different in kind from the smaller gestures involving the hands that form the main focus of our investigation, they do point to a lively performance context in which a general absence of movement in the hands would seem out of place.

We know too that Cicero was a discerning observer of the professional actor's techniques of performance, which, like those of the orator, included considerable use of gesture. And yet, while he presents the contemporary actor Roscius in *De Oratore* as an ideal model for the young orator to imitate, his main concern here is the matter of projecting a powerful presence on stage, not the use of gesture (*De Or.* 1.251). Similarly, although he is said to have studied closely the technique of the actors Roscius and Aesop, it is not stated explicitly that this attention extended to their practices of gesturing (Plut. *Cic.* 5): λέγεται . . . τοῦτο μὲν 'Ρωσκίῳ τῷ κωμῳδῷ, τοῦτο δ' Αἰσώπῳ τῷ τραγῳδῷ προσέχειν ἐπιμελῶς ('He is said . . . to have devoted conscientious attention to Roscius, the comic actor, on the one hand, and Aesop, the tragic actor, on the other'). Macrobius too refers to Cicero's close association with Roscius (*Sat.* 3.14):

et certe satis constat contendere eum cum ipso histrione solitum, utrum ille saepius eandem sententiam variis gestibus efficeret an ipse per eloquentiae copiam sermone diverso pronuntiaret. quae res ad hanc artis suae fiduciam Roscium abstraxit, ut librum conscriberet quo eloquentiam cum histrionia compararet.

And it is certainly generally agreed that Cicero used to match himself against Roscius to see which of the two could express the same idea in the greater number of ways, the one using a variety of gestures, the other the variety of phrases which his ready flow of words would supply—a practice which gave Roscius such a high opinion of his skill that he wrote a book to compare the art of the public speaker with the art of the actor.

Even if this story is reliable, however, it does little to show that Cicero derived much in his use of gesture from the practices of contemporary actors. In fact, as we have already seen, he positively warns against such influences, describing the over-explicit use of hand gestures disparagingly as *scaenicus* (*De Or.* 3.220 quoted above).<sup>10</sup> The overall impression emerges then that while Cicero had clear ideas about the kinds of gesture that the orator should *not* use, he did not apply any detailed theoretical analysis to the gestures that he *did* employ.

This limited theoretical concern with gesture falls squarely in line with the prevailing Greek and Roman rhetorical tradition. Significantly, all our extant discussions of delivery before Cicero's time appear to have eschewed formal classifications and detailed descriptions of individual gestures. Aristotle, for example, makes only some general observations on the subject at the beginning of Book 3 of his *Rhetoric*, and notes that the topic of delivery has been largely ignored by rhetoricians.<sup>11</sup> Indeed, it is

'Oratory: the art of illusion', *HSPH* 95 (1993), 289–313; James M. May, 'Persuasion, Ciceronian style', *CO* 71 (1994), 37–41.

<sup>9</sup> See *Brut.* 278 where Cicero refers to his criticisms of the orator Calidius for not striking his head or thigh during an emotive criminal trial. (The anecdote is repeated at Val. Max. 8.10.3.) See also *De Or.* 1.230 where M. Antonius is made to voice similar criticisms about the restrained oratory of P. Rutilius. Strictly, neither passage shows that Cicero himself used such gestures; but it would be odd if he criticized others for faults which he too shared.

<sup>10</sup> See in general F. W. Wright, *Cicero and the Theater* (Northampton, MA, 1931), 23–30. On the relationship between theatrical and oratorical gesturing, see further below.

<sup>11</sup> Arist. *Rh.* 3.1 (1403b): οὐπω δὲ σύγκειται τέχνη περὶ αὐτῶν, ἐπεὶ καὶ τὸ περὶ τὴν λέξιν

entirely absent from our text of the anonymous *Rhetorica ad Alexandrum*.<sup>12</sup> Theophrastus wrote a work entitled *Peri Hypokriseos*, but how he approached the subject, and whether he discussed primarily stage or oratorical gesture, are matters that are far from clear.<sup>13</sup> Its influence was certainly not profound since the author of *Rhetorica ad Herennium* is able to claim that no predecessor has treated the subject with any great thoroughness (*Rhet. Her.* 3.19: *nemo de ea re diligenter scripsit*).<sup>14</sup> The first Latin teacher of rhetoric, Plotius Gallus, is said to have written *De Gestu*, as too is the prolific academic writer, Nigidius Figulus (Quint. *Inst.* 11.3.143). Both of these works may well have been available to Cicero before he wrote *Orator*, yet there is little sign that they had much impact on him.<sup>15</sup>

Detailed discussions of gesture, then, did not have an established or reputable scholarly pedigree in Cicero's time. The energies of rhetoricians over the centuries had generally been directed towards the first three *officia* of the orator—*inventio*, *ordo*, and *elocutio*. The emphasis of such handbooks was thus primarily academic and literary. Aristotle's disdain for the more practical elements of oratory—his snobbish dismissal of them as vulgar (*φορτικόν*)—seems to have had an important formative effect in this respect.<sup>16</sup> As Fantham observes, Cicero's own approach to gesture seems to have been influenced by a similar 'distaste for technicalities' and his 'literary emphasis';<sup>17</sup> thus his discussion of *elocutio* in *De Oratore* runs to some 64 sections (3.148–212), that of *actio* to a mere fourteen (3.213–27).

ὁψὲ προῆλθεν ('An art concerned with oratorical delivery has not yet been composed, since even consideration of style [λέξις] was late in developing'). See also 1404a for the assertion that delivery (in this case, theatrical delivery) is largely a matter of natural talent and not easily reduced to artistic rules (*ἀτεχνότερον*). Wöhrle (n. 2), 33–4 explores some of the discrepancies between Greek rhetorical discussions of delivery and its practice.

<sup>12</sup> This work was probably written c. 340–30 B.C. See George Kennedy, *A New History of Classical Rhetoric* (Princeton, 1994), 49–51 for general discussion.

<sup>13</sup> William W. Fortenbaugh, 'Theophrastus on delivery', in W. W. Fortenbaugh, P. M. Huby, and A. A. Long (edd.), *Theophrastus of Eresus: On His Life and Work* (New Brunswick and Oxford, 1985), 269–88, esp. 281–3.

<sup>14</sup> *Rhetorica ad Herennium* provides our only other extant discussion of delivery from the Late Republic. It is a little more detailed and methodically arranged than Cicero's, in that it lists the different kinds of gesture appropriate to the different oratorical styles that the speaker might use. A serious tone, for example, calls for a gentle movement of the right hand and arm (*Rhet. Her.* 3.26); a more assertive, argumentative one requires a brisker motion of the arm, which is sometimes thrust out quite vigorously (*Rhet. Her.* 3.27). And it also refers explicitly to two gestures—striking the forehead and slapping the thigh—that Cicero does not mention in his own formal treatments of delivery (although, as we have seen, he mentions them in other contexts). But overall its discussion is, like those of Cicero, quite brief, running to only two sections in all and omitting detailed descriptions of gestures using the fingers or hands.

<sup>15</sup> On Plotius Gallus, see Suet. *Rhet.* 26; Robert A. Kaster, *Suetonius De Grammaticis et Rhetoribus* (Oxford, 1995), 291–7. On Nigidius Figulus, see Elizabeth Rawson, *Intellectual Life in the Late Roman Republic* (London, 1985), 151.

<sup>16</sup> Arist. *Rh.* 3.1 (1403b): *καὶ δοκεῖ φορτικόν εἶναι, καλῶς ὑπολαμβάνόμενον* ('And it [sc. delivery] seems a vulgar matter when rightly understood'). Cf. Edith Hall, 'Lawcourt dramas: the power of performance in Greek forensic oratory', *BICS* 40 (1995), 39–58 at 41. This aversion to the academic discussion of gesture is not solely an ancient phenomenon. As Adam Kendon, 'Geography of gesture', *Semiotica* 37 (1981), 129–63 notes at 129: 'for much of this [the twentieth] century, it [the study of gesture] has been almost wholly disregarded, apparently because there was no way in which its study could be integrated with prevailing theoretical concerns'.

<sup>17</sup> Fantham (n. 2), 258; see also 261: 'Decorum led Cicero to ignore much that Quintilian is ready to discuss.'

## QUINTILIAN ON HAND GESTURES

Cicero's written discussions of gesture, then, do not describe in full detail all the hand gestures that he regularly used in practice. And even the supplementary evidence that we have considered leaves many gaps in our picture. Faced with these difficulties it is understandably tempting to fill in the missing details from the information that Quintilian provides in his *Institutio Oratoria*. And yet, as we have already suggested, there are some doubts whether we can legitimately do so. One of the main problems derives from the very fact that Quintilian's discussion is so clearly different from Cicero's. At *Inst.* 11.3.92, for example, Quintilian describes in the following terms a gesture especially well suited to a speech's exordium:

est autem gestus ille maxime communis, quo medius digitus in pollicem contrahitur explicitis tribus, et principiis utilis cum leni in utramque partem motu modice prolatus, simul capite atque umeris sensim ad id quo manus feratur, obsecundantibus.

There is however that especially common gesture, in which the middle finger is placed against the thumb and the other three extended. It is suited to the openings of speeches; the hand is carried forward a short distance with a gentle movement to left and right, while the head and shoulders slowly follow the hand's direction.

And at *Inst.* 11.3.100 he discusses in similar detail a gesture used to convey astonishment: *est admirationi conveniens ille gestus, quo manus modice supinata ac per singulos a minimo collecta digitos redeunte flexu simul explicatur atque convertitur* ('Suitable for showing surprise is that gesture in which the hand is turned slightly upwards and the fingers brought together one by one, beginning with the little finger. Then the hand is opened and turned around with a reversal of this motion'). In all, Quintilian describes some twenty different gestures involving the hands, and these form part of a larger discussion in which the orator's use of various parts of his body during delivery are methodically described, beginning with the head (*Inst.* 11.3.68) and proceeding in turn down to the legs and feet (*Inst.* 11.3.128).

This treatment of gesture differs so markedly from Cicero's that it is perhaps natural to wonder whether some significant changes have taken place in oratorical practice during the intervening century or so.<sup>18</sup> Indeed modern scholars have tended to characterize Quintilian's precepts as a complex and challenging theoretical system, sharply divorced from everyday experience.<sup>19</sup> He includes so much detail in his descriptions, it is claimed, because the gestures that he describes were 'not familiar to the average Roman or [because] they had one meaning in the rhetorical system but another in daily conversation'.<sup>20</sup> Cicero, as we have seen, evidently did not have to concern himself with such problems.

This view of Quintilian's discussion, however, is a little disconcerting. In the first place it raises the question of how the Roman public came to understand the subtleties of this system of gesture when the orator himself had to learn them through formal instruction. It is true that Roman crowds during the Late Republic were used to

<sup>18</sup> See Aldrete's comments in n. 3 above.

<sup>19</sup> Graf (n. 2), 50: 'Such a conventional system is teachable, in fact *has to be taught*' (emphasis added). Aldrete (n. 2), 17: 'The vocabulary of gesture that prospective orators had to learn was clearly a complex one in which the correct finger posture had to be combined with the appropriate motions in order to convey the desired emotion.' Cf. also his reference to 'an elaborate system' (45) and 'a complex nonverbal vocabulary' (53). Maier-Eichhorn (n. 2), 62 similarly refers to 'ein ausgeklügeltes Gebärdensystem' ('an ingenious system of gesture').

<sup>20</sup> Graf (n. 2), 38.

contributing actively to oratorical events such as public assemblies (*contiones*) through the use of conventionalized, formulaic shouts and acclamations.<sup>21</sup> It is therefore not out of the question for them to have become accustomed over time to other stylized elements of the oratorical performances that they attended. Moreover, it could be argued that gestures, like linguistic stylistic devices, are able to exert a persuasive effect, whether their subtleties are consciously appreciated by the audience or not.<sup>22</sup> Nevertheless, a rather more straightforward answer is also possible. As we shall see, the evidence suggests that Quintilian's discussion of hand gestures does not constitute an artificial and highly specialized system of movements; it is in fact little more than a catalogue based upon the existing practices of conversational gesticulation at Rome. This conclusion has important implications for our view of Cicero's own use of hand gestures during his speeches.

There is little doubt that *some* of the gestures commonly used in Roman oratory were highly conventionalized and stylized. Slapping the thigh at moments of intense emotion, for example, seems to have been a gesture originally in general use among the Greeks; Homer depicts Odysseus using it when the hero thinks he has been betrayed and abandoned by the Phaeacian sailors.<sup>23</sup> According to Quintilian (*Inst.* 11.3.123), this gesture was first employed effectively in an oratorical context by the Athenian demagogue Cleon in the fifth century B.C. Some adaptation may well have been required in order to sharpen its persuasive effect in this new environment; but after a period of repeated use it seems to have become conventional to the extent that it was then incorporated into Roman public speaking, even though we have no evidence that the gesture was one regularly used in everyday contexts at Rome.<sup>24</sup>

The case seems to have been rather different, however, as far as the smaller hand gestures were concerned. Many of these were evidently closely related to those regularly used in conversational contexts. At *Inst.* 11.3.103, for example, Quintilian is happy to condone the oratorical use of a particular gesture precisely because it seems to be one typically used in everyday situations (Quint. *Inst.* 11.3.103): *digitos, cum summi coierunt ad os referre cur quibusdam displicuerit nescio: nam id et leniter admirantes et interim subita indignatione velut pavescentes et deprecantes facimus* ('I do not know why some persons disapprove of the movement of the fingers, with their tops converging, towards the mouth. For we do this when we are slightly surprised, and at times also employ it to express fear or entreaty when we are seized with sudden indignation'). As the phrase *id . . . facimus* shows, Quintilian is appealing here to common experience. The fact that certain writers on delivery (*quibusdam*) disapproved of this gesture indicates that some attempts had already been made to establish a set of gestures suitable for use in oratory, and to distinguish these from others that did not

<sup>21</sup> See Aldrete (n. 2), 101–27 (a discussion that includes evidence from the Imperial period as well).

<sup>22</sup> See Aldrete (n. 2), 44, 50: 'To what extent was the audience at these speeches able to understand and interpret correctly the gestures of Roman orators? . . . One explanation is the sheer ubiquity of occasions at which the plebs would have been subjected to gesticulating orators.'

<sup>23</sup> Hom. *Od.* 13.198–9. The context is clearly non-oratorical; Odysseus is alone when he uses this gesture.

<sup>24</sup> Gaius Gracchus is said to have been the first to introduce this gesture into Roman oratory (Plut. *Ti. Gracch.* 2). Graf (n. 2), 47 rightly observes that rhetorical gestures 'are a selection and adjustment of gestures from daily conversation to the purpose of public speaking'. But it does not follow that *all* the gestures used by Roman orators were thus *highly* conventional, as he claims, or highly stylized.

work so well. But Quintilian's disagreement shows that these categories were by no means fixed.

Indeed, common gestures might make their way into the orator's repertoire without any great degree of refinement or adaptation at all, as Quintilian seems to imply at *Inst.* 11.3.102: *est et ille urgentis orationem gestus vulgaris magis quam ex arte, qui contrahit alterno celerique motu et explicat manum* ('There is also that familiar gesture by which we drive home our words, consisting in the rapid opening and shutting of the hand; but this is a common rather than an artistic gesture'). The opposition here between *vulgaris* and *ex arte* again points to some mental distinction between commonly used gestures and those appropriate to more formal contexts. But the main concern seems to be one of propriety and refinement—that is, whether the orator can employ the gesture in a dignified way. Despite his reservation that the gesture's rapidity of movement may not appear especially elegant, Quintilian is content in the end for the orator to consider its use.

On other occasions too he gives only general indications as to how a gesture is performed. At 11.3.102, for example, he notes that a gentle movement of the hand (*manus lenior*) expresses assurance or assent (*promittit et adsentatur*), while a brisker motion suggests exhortation or praise (*citator hortatur, interim laudat*). He does not, however, describe precisely how the fingers are arranged in such cases or in which direction the hand is moved. The same is the case with the turn of the hand that he tells us regularly accompanied questions (*Quint. Inst.* 11.3.101): *nec uno modo interrogantes gestum componimus, plerumque tamen vertentes manum, utcumque composita est* ('For asking questions, there is more than one gesture available, but the common one is to turn the hand towards the person being questioned; the fingers may be positioned in any way you choose'). Quintilian seems to be relying here on the reader's everyday familiarity with these gestures to fill in the necessary details. Again the boundary between oratorical and everyday gestures seems to be very flexible.

Indeed, it is significant that Quintilian introduces his whole discussion with an acknowledgement of the extensive part that hand gestures play in day-to-day communication in Roman society (*Inst.* 11.3.85–86):

nam ceterae partes loquentem adiuvant, hae [sc. manus], prope est ut dicam, ipsae loquuntur. (86) An non his poscimus pollicemur, vocamus dimittimus, minamur supplicamus, abominamur timeamus, interrogamus negamus, gaudium tristitiam dubitationem confessionem paenitentiam modum copiam numerum tempus ostendimus?

For other parts of the body merely assist the speaker, whereas the hands themselves virtually speak. (86) Or is it not the case that we use them to demand, promise, summon, dismiss, threaten, entreat, show aversion and fear, question and deny? Do we not use them to express joy, sorrow, hesitation, guilt, regret, measure, quantity, number and time?

These remarks clearly refer to the general Roman use of gesticulation in everyday contexts. Quintilian observes that these gestures arise 'naturally with one's words' (*Inst.* 11.3.88: *cum ipsis vocibus naturaliter exeunt gestus*), and serve as a kind of language common across different cultures (*Inst.* 11.3.87): *ut in tanta per omnis gentes nationesque linguae diversitate hic mihi omnium hominum communis sermo videatur* ('Amid all the linguistic diversity of the peoples and nations of the world, this, it seems to me, is the common language of the human race').<sup>25</sup> It is striking, then,

<sup>25</sup> Quintilian's use here of the word *naturaliter*, and the metaphor of gesture as a common language, raise issues that have provoked considerable debate in modern discussions of gesture.



that a number of the conversational uses of gesture listed here have counterparts in Quintilian's discussion of oratorical gestures. His statement, for example, that Romans in conversation often gesture with their hands when making an entreaty (*Inst.* 11.3.86: *supplicamus*) is matched by a description at *Inst.* 11.3.115 of the gesture used by public speakers when doing the same thing (*supplices*). There is no explicit statement linking the gestures made in these two contexts, but it would be odd if they were not somehow related. Quintilian certainly does not feel the need in his description to distinguish the form of the oratorical version from its conversational counterpart. It therefore seems reasonable enough to regard the orator's use of his hands when making an entreaty as a simple extension of the apparently ubiquitous gesture of entreaty employed in less formal contexts. Likewise, the conversational gesture of pointing mentioned at Quint. *Inst.* 11.3.87 (*in demonstrandis locis*) presumably corresponds in some degree to that used by the orator mentioned at *Inst.* 11.3.115. And a similar correspondence is likely to have existed between the everyday gesture for expressing aversion (*Inst.* 11.3.86: *abominamur*) and the oratorical one described at *Inst.* 11.3.113 (*cum aversantes in laevam partem velut propellemus manum*).<sup>26</sup>

The budding orator will thus have already acquired quite an extensive vocabulary of conversational hand gestures as he was growing up; many of these are likely to have been the same as, or to have formed the basis of, the gestures that Quintilian proposes for oratorical use. What can seem to us remarkably subtle and discerning differences in his discussion of the use of the fingers were thus probably a good deal less so for the student himself. The main challenge for the young orator was not so much acquiring a digital dexterity and vocabulary, as it was adapting his existing gestural habits to the precision and emphasis required by formal oratorical performance.

It is worth comparing in this respect the descriptive approaches of modern investigators of gesture. Andrea de Jorio, for example, employs a quite complex scheme of cross-referencing in order to present the gestures of early nineteenth-century Neapolitans in a methodical way.<sup>27</sup> David Efron, on the other hand, uses an illustrated dictionary to portray the 151 gestures that he identified in use among 'traditional' south Italians in New York in the 1930s and 1940s.<sup>28</sup> Both approaches are useful, and both convey well the richness and variety of their respective vocabularies of gesture. But both can also give the impression of a formidable 'system' of gesture that must have required a good deal of effort to master. The reality, of course, is that the speakers in each community learned quite haphazardly to use these gestures over a period of years through the process of imitation.

At the same time, however, even though these gestures were already familiar to his

For an excellent review of the subject, see Adam Kendon, 'Did gesture have the happiness to escape the curse at the confusion of Babel?', in A. Wolfgang (ed.), *Nonverbal Behavior: Perspectives, Applications, Intercultural Insights* (Lewiston, New York and Toronto, 1984), 75–114, esp. 76–80.

<sup>26</sup> For these correspondences, see also Maier-Eichhorn (n. 2), 51–4. Further correspondences are likely for the gestures used for summoning or requesting (Quint. *Inst.* 11.3.86: *vocamus* and *poscimus*; cf. oratorical *invocatio* at 11.3.115); and for expressing regret (Quint. *Inst.* 11.3.86: *confessionem* and *paenitentiam*; cf. 11.3.115: *satisfacientes*).

<sup>27</sup> See the discussion by Adam Kendon at lv–lix in Andrea de Jorio, *Gesture in Naples and Gesture in Classical Antiquity* (Bloomington and Indianapolis, 2000), trans. Adam Kendon. First published as *La mimica degli antichi investigata nel gestire napoletano* (Naples, 1832).

<sup>28</sup> David Efron, *Gesture, Race and Culture* (The Hague and Paris, 1972), 201–26 (originally published as *Gesture and Environment* [New York, 1941]).

students, Quintilian cannot take too much for granted. He needs to engage in detailed descriptions of them in order to ensure that his instructions are pedagogically effective. As a teacher he must make his guidelines for delivery as clear and as explicit as possible.<sup>29</sup> Long experience no doubt had shown him how difficult the task of teaching delivery really was. Indeed, his long list of faults that the student is to avoid gives a good idea of the problems that confronted him (see, for example, Quint. *Inst.* 11.3.79–81, 118–21, 130–3).<sup>30</sup> He thus gives detailed and explicit accounts of the gestures that he recommends, *despite* the fact that most would have been familiar to his pupils.<sup>31</sup>

A certain clarity and precision in description are also demanded by the awkward nature of the subject-matter. The task of conveying accurately the form and nuance of each gesture presented Quintilian with quite a linguistic challenge, one that had already been acknowledged by the writer of *Rhetorica ad Herennium* almost two centuries earlier (*Rhet. Her.* 3.19).<sup>32</sup> Modern discussions of gesture can of course sidestep this problem entirely by using sketches or photographs to depict the gestures that they catalogue.<sup>33</sup> Quintilian, by contrast, has to rely solely on the written word to describe quite subtle differences in finger position and hand movement. It is thus not surprising that his descriptions end up being quite detailed.

In short, we should resist the temptation to view Quintilian's discussion of hand gestures as part of a complex and artificial system largely alien to the experience of most Romans. As we have seen, the boundaries between everyday and oratorical gesture were highly permeable. And while Quintilian certainly makes prescriptive pronouncements on his material and organizes it in a systematic fashion, its essential content is drawn from the existing style of manual communication that prevailed at Rome; as such these gestures form part of the popular cultural heritage. When Quintilian notes, for example, that certain orators may use as many as eight gestures in the space of some seventeen words (Quint. *Inst.* 11.3.108), it seems difficult to view this animated liveliness in gesticulation as something learned entirely *ex nihilo* for oratorical purposes. It derives more probably from the high frequency of gesturing that was already part of the popular cultural style. This feature would then have found its

<sup>29</sup> For Quintilian's work as a practical guide for the orator-in-training, as well as a treatise for professional rhetoricians, see Fantham (n. 2), 244: 'When [Quintilian] opens Book 11 he is still aiming for the double readership, not only of professionals, but of those still learning the trade.'

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Fantham (n. 2), 261: 'We may forget just how mediocre pupils could be, but almost every scion of the governing class aimed to become an orator. Suppose that all the sons of modern politicians were expected to train as Shakespearean actors: professional drama teachers would have to give advice that seems to us elementary.'

<sup>31</sup> De Jorio (n. 27), 31 similarly takes nothing for granted in his readers: 'Hence there is every reason to attend very closely to the exactness of one's descriptions. . . . Such detailed descriptions could, at first sight, appear vain and useless, for we are dealing with something that might be regarded as being very well known, because it is something that can be perceived directly with our senses. But is this really so? Is it always true? Is it true for everybody? Let us see.'

<sup>32</sup> *Rhet. Her.* 3.19: *nam omnes vix posse putarunt de voce et vultu et gestu dilucide scribi, cum eae res ad sensus nostros pertinerent* ('For all writers have thought it scarcely possible for voice, facial expression, and gesture to be lucidly described, since they involve our use of the senses').

<sup>33</sup> See e.g. Efron (n. 28), 124–226; Aldrete (n. 2), 8–38; Maier-Eichhorn (n. 2), 138–43. It is worth noting that photographs and illustrations are themselves limited in their ability to convey the *movement* involved in gestures. De Jorio (n. 27), by contrast, uses primarily verbal descriptions, an approach that may be influenced to some extent by Quintilian. He employs a few illustrations (see the plates throughout pp. 401–77), but these do not function as fundamental parts of his descriptions of gesture; rather they are meant to expand and embellish them. In general, see the discussion by Kendon at lx–lxii in De Jorio (n. 27).

way readily enough into the oratorical context. Moreover, modern studies of gesture suggest that a society's distinctive style of gesturing is the kind of phenomenon that is usually passed on from one generation to the next through the general process of socialization within the family. As such it tends to remain untouched by changes in external social factors, such as upheavals in the political system or shifts in the wider economic situation.<sup>34</sup> It would not be surprising, then, to find a strong cultural continuity from Republic to Empire in the use of everyday conversational gesture.

These are good reasons for supposing that the hand gestures described by Quintilian would in all likelihood have been familiar to Cicero as well. The Republican orator would have acquired most of them almost unconsciously from an early age as he observed and imitated those around him; and he would have employed this rich vocabulary of gesture with only a limited degree of self-reflexive analysis when speaking in public. Indeed it is important to note that, for all their apparent complexity, many of the gestures described by Quintilian could have been employed effectively without any formal instruction in their use. At *Inst.* 11.3.99, for example, Quintilian describes a gesture that helps to mark out the logical flow of what the orator is saying:

interim quattuor remissis magis quam tensis, pollice intus inclinato, habilem demonstrando in latus aut distinguendis quae dicimus manum facimus, cum supina in sinistrum latus, prona in alterum fertur.

Sometimes, by relaxing rather than extending all four fingers, and letting the thumb incline inwards, we produce a hand which is useful for pointing to one side or making breaks in what we are saying: the hand moves palm-upwards towards the left, palm-down towards the right.

The gesture certainly seems subtle and carefully nuanced. And yet, as the recent studies of David McNeill have shown, many such gestures play a significant part in the untutored (and often unwitting) hand movements frequently used in conversational contexts by modern-day North Americans.<sup>35</sup> This particular example from Quintilian seems close in function to those classified by McNeill as 'beats', which are gestures used to help accentuate the narrative structure of what is being said (or in Quintilian's words, *distinguendis quae dicimus*). As McNeill notes, although such gestures are cognitively quite complex in that they require an ability in the speaker to organize the content of what is being said in a contrasting or hierarchical relationship, this skill nevertheless usually begins to manifest itself fully in children from around the age of eleven onwards.<sup>36</sup>

Moreover, Quintilian's observation that this gesture can also be used to point to one

<sup>34</sup> See D. Morris and others, *Gestures, their Origins and Distribution* (New York, 1979), 247–59, who argue that the modern use of the 'head toss' to signify negation in the area around Naples can be traced back directly to ancient Greek colonization. See also Kendon (n. 16), 151, who examines why language systems seem to be more susceptible to change and development than practices of gesturing; and de Jorio (n. 27), 38–44, who identifies several strands of continuity in the gestures used in nineteenth-century Naples and ancient Rome.

<sup>35</sup> David McNeill, *Hand and Mind: What Gestures Reveal about Thought* (Chicago and London, 1992). His evidence is drawn mainly from experiments in which participants were asked to describe the plot of a television cartoon that they had just watched. The gestures that they used when relating their narratives were videotaped and then analysed. For a review, see Pierre Feyereisen, *American Journal of Psychology* 107 (1994), 149–55.

<sup>36</sup> McNeill (n. 35), 169: 'Beats . . . signal that the word they accompany is part of some other context than the one that it is immediately presented in. . . . They do not emerge in children until age 5 and are not abundant until age 11. . . . The limiting factor appears to be whether the child has developed the *narrative structures* in terms of which discontinuities and relationships to the external context can be defined' (emphasis in original).

side (*demonstrando in latus*) corresponds well to the abstract use of 'gesture space' observed in many of the participants in McNeill's experiments. Quintilian does not seem to be referring here to a gesture used to point to concrete objects (for these, the gesture described at *Inst.* 11.3.115 seems to be preferred). Rather, he appears to be describing the process by which speakers endow the available gesture space in front of them with an abstract meaning, identifying it perhaps with a particular character, place, or idea. Subsequent remarks involving that character, place, or idea are then often accompanied by a gesture that points to that specific space. In this way speakers can give emphasis and structure to the events that they are describing.<sup>37</sup> Again, what may seem to be a complex gesture that belongs to a specialized system is in fact quite similar to hand movements made by many people today in everyday conversation.

McNeill also identifies a common use of what he calls 'conduit gestures'—gestures that represent the metaphorical notion that language, meaning, knowledge, emotion, and so on are substances capable of being stored in a container.<sup>38</sup> Speakers often cup their hands, for example, so as to create the 'image of a bounded, supportable object that represents an abstract concept'.<sup>39</sup> It is interesting then that we find Quintilian describing at *Inst.* 11.3.97 a gesture in which the orator appears to be entrusting his words to the audience:

eadem aliquatenus liberius deorsum spectantibus digitis colligitur in nos et fusius paulo in diversum resolvitur, ut quodam modo sermonem ipsum proferre videatur.

The hand may also be drawn towards the body, with the fingers pointing down a little more freely, and then opened more widely to face the opposite way, so that it seems to be somehow delivering our actual words.

What the orator says seems to be conceptualized here as something tangible that can be held in the hand and then presented to those listening. The same may well apply to the gesture used to convey modesty (Quint. *Inst.* 11.3.96):

est et ille verecundae orationi aptissimus, quo, quattuor primis leviter in summum coeuntibus digitis, non procul ab ore aut pectore fertur ad nos manus et deinde prona ac paulum prolata laxatur.

There is also that gesture especially suited to modest language: the thumb and the next three fingers are gently converged to a point and the hand is brought close to the mouth or chest, then allowed to fall palm downwards and a little in front.

In this case, the orator's sense of self-importance (or the praise that contributes to it) seems to be conceptualized as a physical thing that is modestly pushed away and refused as the hand is turned downwards and away from the body.<sup>40</sup> The use of these cognitively sophisticated gestures in modern conversational contexts warns us not to assume that Quintilian's catalogue consists of esoteric movements that can only be acquired through instruction. It is thus quite feasible that Cicero used many of the gestures that Quintilian describes, even though he would not have applied to them the degree of conscious analysis that the later rhetorician does.

<sup>37</sup> McNeill (n. 35), 171–5.

<sup>38</sup> McNeill (n. 35), 147–54. The term 'conduit' is based on the label 'conduit metaphor' regularly used in the field of linguistics.

<sup>39</sup> McNeill (n. 35), 149.

<sup>40</sup> Quintilian (*Inst.* 11.3.97) imagines Cicero using the gesture at the start of *Pro Archia* where the orator denies having any great claims to natural ability.

Cicero's use of hand gestures was thus partly spontaneous and partly calculating. It was spontaneous in that, being brought up within a Roman culture where manual gesticulation was used in a lively and animated way, he would almost certainly have employed his hands as a matter of course to add nuance and emphasis to his words. Indeed, it would be highly unusual if orators had *not* made considerable use of such gestures. As modern studies have shown, gestures are not a mere supplement to the spoken word; they are an integral part of spoken communication. We learn to combine gesture with speech at such an early stage in our development that the two are essentially co-dependent. While there may be variations cross-culturally in the precise ways in which gestures are used, spoken communication rarely functions without them.<sup>41</sup>

At the same time, however, Cicero's approach was calculating in that he strove to eliminate gestures that were too fussy, explicit, or distracting, and occasionally employed conventionalized dramatic gestures such as slapping the thigh. Nevertheless he apparently did not subject the smaller hand gestures that he used to careful analysis. Indeed, as we have seen, the existing rhetorical tradition offered few guidelines for how such an analysis could be conducted. Orators such as P. Sulpicius, therefore, whose *gestus venustus* (as we have noted) Cicero much admired, probably reached this level of accomplishment not through any formal method or *ars*, but through practice (*exercitatio*) and innate flair (*ingenium*)—that is, their natural ability to adapt to persuasive ends the range of conversational gestures that they had acquired as they grew up. Cicero himself would have followed much the same procedure, incorporating perhaps, as already suggested, certain elements from the gesturing styles of orators he admired.

If we need some help in trying to imagine how Cicero's approach to gesture would have worked in practice, it may be useful to consider our own experiences as academics in the lecture hall. Many of us are probably aware that distracting mannerisms (such as waving our arms around too much or repeatedly using the same gesture in a wide range of situations) are undesirable. We know too that pointing to blackboards and visual aids can be useful for focusing the audience's attention, and that a few other gestures can help to add emphasis to the point that we are trying to make. At the same time, however, there are nearly always other gestures that we make with our hands of which we are scarcely aware, and yet which form part of the communicative process. (Anyone unfortunate enough to be subjected to video recordings of their own lectures will be familiar with this phenomenon, although a cursory observation of fellow speakers at academic conferences will also demonstrate the point.) When analysed, these gestures may turn out to conform to a coherent pattern of use. That is, they are not entirely random or arbitrary; they have a significant part to play in our communicative goals. But the user of these gestures does not need to undertake such an analysis in order to be able to employ them effectively.

Cicero's approach would probably have been quite similar. He was aware of several 'big' gestures that could be exploited for persuasive effect (thrusting the arm forward,

<sup>41</sup> See Adam Kendon, 'Gesticulation and speech: two aspects of the process of utterance', in Mary Ritchie Key (ed.), *The Relationship of Verbal and Nonverbal Communication* (The Hague, Paris, and New York, 1980), 207–27; and McNeill (n. 35), 2: 'gestures are an integral part of language as much as are words, phrases, and sentences—gesture and language are one system'. And 295: 'When we see the fully developed gestures of adults, we see symbols that may have taken ten years or more to develop and whose path of development was specific to its type. . . . From age two or so onwards, the two never seem to be separate. This is one argument for considering speech and gesture to be two aspects of a single process.'

stamping the foot, slapping the thigh, striking the head). But he was not concerned with manipulating in any deliberate way the smaller gestures involving the hand. As we have seen, he certainly used such gestures; but his main concern in his theoretical works is to ensure that the orator does not employ them in any distracting or inappropriate way. From this perspective, Quintilian's careful analysis of these gestures is in fact an example of theory finally catching up with practice. Now for the first time there was detailed, systematic documentation of the wide range of hand movements that had been used spontaneously both in oratory and in everyday conversation since Cicero's time and before—much as De Jorio's account succeeds in documenting the richness of gesture used by his contemporary Neapolitans.

Quintilian's discussion thus constitutes a highly significant development in terms of rhetorical theory. Students now had a useful analytical tool that they could apply to their own habits of gesturing. We would expect one result of this development to have been a more deliberate approach to oratorical gesture, with speakers employing a more carefully choreographed combination of hand movements. And indeed Quintilian himself mentions some such effect, although it is not one without its problems. He refers to certain pupils taking so much care over the preparation of their gestures that at times the gestures themselves seem to dictate the words to be used (Quint. *Inst.* 11.3.109): *unde id quoque fluit vitium, ut iuvenes cum scribunt, gestu praemodulati cogitationem, sic componant quo modo casura manus est* ('From this flows another fault; when students are writing something and articulating their thoughts by rehearsing the gestures, they tend to compose their sentences to fit the way in which the hand is to fall').<sup>42</sup> It is certainly difficult to imagine Republican orators taking the same kind of care in the planning of their delivery, at least as far as the subtleties of hand gestures are concerned (as we have seen, a stamping of the foot or slapping of the thigh in emotional passages may have been carefully premeditated).<sup>43</sup>

It is important to note, however, that it is by no means clear that the oratorical use of hand gestures in the imperial period was significantly influenced by Quintilian's theorizing. It is true that at the very end of Book 11 Quintilian observes that the style favoured by his contemporaries is rather more 'agitated' than that used in Cicero's day (*Inst.* 11.3.184):

optime igitur idem qui omnia Cicero praeceperat quae supra ex Oratore posui; quibus similia in Bruto de M. Antonio dicit. sed iam recepta est actio paulo agitatior et exigitur et quibusdam partibus convenit, ita tamen temperanda ne, dum actoris captamus elegantiam, perdamus viri boni et gravis auctoritatem.

So Cicero has given the best instructions on this matter [sc. moderation in the use of gesture] as he does on everything. I have quoted above the relevant remarks from *Orator*, and he states

<sup>42</sup> This passage contains some textual difficulties; I follow here the text of M. Winterbottom, *M. Fabi Quintiliani Institutionis Oratoriae Libri Duodecim Libri VII–XII* (Oxford, 1970), on which this translation of Donald A. Russell, *Quintilian: The Orator's Education Books 11–12* (Cambridge, MA, 2001) is based.

<sup>43</sup> Hortensius is perhaps the exception. He was evidently well versed in rhetorical theory: he wrote a handbook of rhetorical commonplaces (Quint. *Inst.* 2.1.11) and was exceptional in his liking for clear divisions of subject-matter within his speeches (*Brut.* 302). His overwrought, affected manner of delivery may therefore have been a conscious stylistic choice (cf. Val. Max. 8.10.2); it may also, however, have been largely a matter of *personal* style, not based on any theoretical precepts. See Gell. *NA* 1.5.2 for his *munditia* ('refinement', perhaps 'foppishness') in dress and general appearance. On the implications of the label 'Asiatic' that was sometimes attached to his style of oratory (*Brut.* 325), see George Kennedy, *The Art of Rhetoric in the Roman World 300 B.C.–A.D. 300* (Princeton, 1972), 96–100.

much the same thing in *Brutus* when discussing M. Antonius. But today a rather more agitated form of delivery has come into fashion, and is expected.<sup>44</sup> It is suited to certain parts of a speech, but must be moderated nevertheless, so that we do not, in attempting to attain the elegance of the actor, lose the authority of the good and dignified man.

This development, however, seems to have been prompted largely by the competitive atmosphere, mannered language, and melodramatic themes encouraged by the declamatory schools.<sup>45</sup> For Quintilian introduces the subject of this agitated style with a warning against excess in the various elements involved in delivery (*Inst.* 11.3.183): *quare non inmerito reprehenditur pronuntiatio vultuosa et gesticulationibus molesta et vocis mutationibus resultans* ('There is therefore every reason to object to a delivery that pulls faces, irritates by its gesticulations or jumps from one tone of voice to another'). These faults are strikingly similar to those that Quintilian elsewhere claims are displayed all too frequently by recent 'graduates' of the schools. These young orators (he maintains) are used to showing off in front of enthusiastic school audiences, where fancy diction is regularly greeted with noisy approval; they thus often fail to appreciate the value of unadorned language when they find themselves presenting a *narratio* in the more formal surroundings of an actual court (*Inst.* 4.2.37–8). The result is usually a ludicrous and inappropriately histrionic performance (*Inst.* 4.2.39):

at nunc, velut campum nacti expositionis, hic potissimum et vocem flectunt et cervicem reponunt et brachium in latus iactant totoque et rerum et verborum et compositionis genere lascivunt.

As it is, once they have acquired their open field, so to speak, for stating their case, it is at this point in particular that they modulate the voice, throw back the head, strike their arm against their side and take great delight in every type of subject-matter, language and style.

This kind of display incorporates the unusual jumps in vocal pitch and irritating gestures that Quintilian complains about at *Inst.* 11.3.183, together with an affected posture—*cervicem reponunt*—which may have involved the *pronuntiatio vultuosa* (excessive changes in facial expression) that he also advises against. Conservatives such as Quintilian and Pliny could grumble and complain superciliously about these developments,<sup>46</sup> but the anecdotes through which they voice their displeasure suggest that this is a change in fashion that they can not ignore.

There is, however, no reason to view this agitated style of delivery as linked in any way to Quintilian's innovative approach to hand gestures.<sup>47</sup> Indeed, there is little to

<sup>44</sup> OLD<sup>3</sup> s.v. *agitatus*<sup>1</sup> seems to suggest a relatively neutral meaning of 'more animated' for *agitator* in this passage. But the accompanying adjectives *vultuosa* and *molesta* imply a rather more disapproving tone, which is conveyed well by the translation 'more agitated' suggested by Russell (n. 42). The translation 'more violent' proposed by H. E. Butler, *The Institutio Oratoria of Quintilian IV* (Cambridge, MA, 1922) is too strong, and does not apply so well to the meaning of *vultuosa* at *Inst.* 11.3.183.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. Fantham (n. 2), 253: 'tastes had no doubt changed to favour a *poeticus decor* in gesture as in diction'.

<sup>46</sup> See Plin. *Ep.* 2.14.2, 12–13 and Quint. *Inst.* 11.3.57–8 for other examples of the inappropriate use of a declamatory style in the real law courts by younger orators.

<sup>47</sup> As far as we can tell, the schools of declamation seem to have placed little emphasis on the finer points of gesturing. Seneca the Elder, for example, focuses his attention almost entirely on the declaimer's novel *sententiae* and *colores*; the gestures that accompanied such declamations are scarcely mentioned. See Janet Fairweather, *Seneca the Elder* (Cambridge, 1981), 235–9 on Seneca's remarks regarding gesture; and in general, Stanley F. Bonner, *Roman Declamation in the*

suggest that most Roman orators in the imperial period embraced his methods so as to exploit their oratorical hand gestures in a discernibly different way. No doubt Quintilian himself and a few other rhetoricians succeeded in teaching their pupils to be more self-aware and deliberate in their use of gestures; but evidence for any wider influence is difficult to find. Certainly other academics had started to take the subject more seriously. Quintilian refers, for example, to certain *veteres artifices* who had attempted to formulate guidelines for the frequency with which an orator was to gesticulate (*Inst.* 11.3.106–7).<sup>48</sup> What is less clear, however, is how far this theorizing had found its way into general practice. At least one of Quintilian's (older) contemporaries, Manlius Sura, seems to have been as unrestrained in his style of gesturing as Sextus Titius and the elder Curio were over a century earlier (*Inst.* 6.3.54): *Afer enim venuste Manlium Suram, multum in agendo discursantem salientem, manus iactantem, togam deicientem et reponentem, non agere dixit, sed satagere* ('It was clever of Afer to say of Manlius Sura, who used to run around, leap about, throw up his hands and keep dropping and putting back his toga while he was speaking that he was not acting for his clients, but over-acting').<sup>49</sup>

Nor is there any compelling reason to suppose that oratorical gesturing at this time was strongly influenced by the techniques of actors in contemporary pantomimes, as has recently been suggested.<sup>50</sup> It is true that Quintilian warns the student against striving for the *elegantiam actoris* (*Inst.* 11.3.184, quoted above). But this kind of injunction is in fact a traditional one in rhetorical treatises. *Rhetorica ad Herennium* almost two centuries earlier had advised the orator against the overly refined elegance (*venustas*) of the actor, as well as the coarseness (*turpitudine*) of the labourer (*Rhet. Her.* 3.26). Cicero too, as we have seen, carefully distinguishes the gesture of the orator from that of the actor (*De Or.* 3.220, quoted above). Quintilian here is simply reproducing the standard view that underpins these warnings: that the orator must project an image of authority and dignity, an image that is potentially undermined by any mannerism that smacks of the vulgar artisan or effete thespian.<sup>51</sup> To this extent, the great

*Late Republic and Early Empire* (Liverpool, 1949), 54–60; Lewis A. Sussman, *The Elder Seneca* (Leiden, 1978), 35–45. The declaimer Albucius may illustrate best this lack of interest in the subtleties of delivery: he began some of his themes sitting down, only bothering to stand up for the more emotional passages (*Sen. Con.* 7, pref. 1). At the same time, however, we know very little about the day-to-day training in delivery and gesture that the regular rhetor would have given his students.

<sup>48</sup> Unfortunately we have few clues regarding the identity of these writers, but since Quintilian elsewhere (*Quint. Inst.* 11.3.143) classes Nigidius Figulus (who died in 45 B.C.) among the *veteres*, it is possible that he is referring here to rhetoricians from the very end of the Republic and the beginning of the Augustan period. These rhetoricians had evidently started to concern themselves with aspects of delivery that Cicero chose to ignore. On lost rhetorical works on delivery written before Quintilian, see Maier-Eichhorn (n. 2), 21, and Fantham (n. 2).

<sup>49</sup> This is the neat translation of the word-play involving *agere* and *satagere* by Donald A. Russell, *Quintilian: The Orator's Education Books 6–8* (Cambridge, MA, 2001).

<sup>50</sup> See Aldrete (n. 2), 73: 'Perhaps, as suggested by the increased attention given to gesture in the rhetorical handbooks, oratory over this period was incorporating more and more of the actor's gestural vocabulary, and the actions of an aristocratic or imperial speaker did begin to resemble more and more those of an actor or a mime.'

<sup>51</sup> See *Rhet. Her.* 3.22 for the concern with an orator's *virilem dignitatem*; also *Off.* 1.130. This subject has received considerable attention from scholars in recent years. See Graf (n. 2), 44–7; Amy Richlin, 'Gender and rhetoric: producing manhood in the schools', in William J. Dominik (ed.), *Roman Eloquence: Rhetoric in Society and Literature* (London and New York, 1997), 90–110 (with bibliography at n. 28); Jody Enders, 'Delivering delivery: theatricality and the emasculation of eloquence', *Rhetorica* 15 (1997), 253–78; Gunderson (n. 2), *passim*. As these



popularity of the pantomime at this time is essentially coincidental.<sup>52</sup> As we have seen, the twenty or so hand gestures described by Quintilian in his treatise are not a recent development that calls for some contemporary explanation; they are gestures that have been part of the popular heritage for centuries.

In the end, we have too little evidence to assess accurately the impact of Quintilian's new approach to the study of hand gestures. But it is worth observing that if we are right in viewing his discussion not as an innovative system, but as a catalogue of more or less spontaneous gestures already in widespread use, it would not be surprising to find little evidence of a change in the oratorical use of hand gestures. A few students may have been made more aware of the potential for exploiting these gestures; but most others—like Cicero many years earlier—would already have been lively and energetic users of them as part of their informally acquired style of spoken communication. These practices thus probably continued much as they had done in the past.

### CONCLUSIONS

Our attempts to answer an apparently simple question of oratorical delivery have raised some quite significant questions about the relationship between the practices of oratorical gesture and its theory. Cicero for his part, as we have seen, does not describe all the gestures that he regularly used, largely because he chooses to follow the standard approach to gesture that he found in the existing rhetorical tradition. For these writers there was little interest in, or conscious reflection upon, the nuances of the spontaneous hand movements that they regularly used. It thus took some considerable time for rhetorical theory to catch up with practice. Quintilian's discussion marks a crucial stage in this development, although, as we have stressed, it is important to understand what exactly it is that his guidelines present. His precepts in *Inst.* 11.3 are best viewed as a catalogue of the hand gestures regularly used by the orators of his day, many of which had a close relationship to gestures spontaneously used in less formal contexts. This catalogue is prescriptive in that it attempts to establish a set of gestures appropriate for the orator to use and distinguishes these from others that are not suitable. But it is not for this reason a highly artificial theoretical system. Most of the recommended movements would already have been familiar to the student, and to this extent the catalogue is essentially a descriptive one that delineates existing practices.

This conclusion does not in any way diminish the impressiveness of Quintilian's achievement as a writer on gesture. He demonstrates an intellectual curiosity in this facet of human communication that was unusual in its own time and equalled only

discussions note, the orator's projection of an image of social power through gesture was closely linked to Roman concepts of masculinity, as too were the (often derogatory) aristocratic evaluations of the stage actor.

<sup>52</sup> For the popularity of the pantomime at this time, see Ludwig Friedländer, *Roman Life and Manners Under the Early Empire* 2, trans. J. H. Freese and Leonard A. Magnus (New York, 1968<sup>7</sup> [London, 1908]), 100–10; E. J. Jory, 'The literary evidence for the beginnings of Imperial pantomime', *BICS* 28 (1981), 147–61; E. J. Jory, 'The drama of the dance: prolegomena to an iconography of Imperial pantomime', in William J. Slater (ed.), *Roman Theater and Society: E. Togo Salmon Papers I* (Ann Arbor, 1996), 1–27. On stage gesture, see also Boris Warnecke, 'Gebärdenspiel und Mimik der römischen Schauspieler', *Neue Jahrbücher für das klassische Altertum* 25 (1910), 580–94 at 588–91.

sporadically before the twentieth century.<sup>53</sup> He also brings to the subject an important clarity of organization and impressive linguistic precision. He was not, however, inventing, or reflecting the emergence of, a new language of gesture. Rather, like De Jorio many centuries later, he constructs a useful analytical framework that can be profitably applied to the modes of gesturing that have already been in use for many years. The formulation of this framework certainly gave diligent orators the opportunity to modify their existing habits and exploit their hand gestures for greater effect. But, as we have seen, we should not automatically assume that it had a profound impact on actual practice. Indeed, since it was largely based on familiar gestures, it was not likely to prompt any radical change. This interpretation of Quintilian's discussion also neatly answers the question of how the Roman audience acquired its understanding of the orator's supposedly complex system of gesture. It was not a matter of the uneducated populace having to come to grips with an esoteric art; they were already familiar with most of these gestures because they themselves regularly used similar ones every day. As Quintilian makes clear, lively gesticulation was a prominent feature of the Roman cultural heritage.

These considerations lead us to the conclusion that Cicero did indeed make considerable use of hand gestures while delivering his speeches. Some of these he employed consciously and deliberately; but many of them would have been produced spontaneously in order to add nuance, emphasis and clarity of structure to what he was saying. While he himself does not describe their forms, the cultural continuity in styles of gesturing that would have prevailed from Republic to Empire at the popular level suggests that most of them would have been similar to those discussed by Quintilian. Many aspects of the great orator's style of delivery continue to elude us; but now at least we may be a little more certain of the way in which he used his hands during his oratorical performances.

*University of Otago*

JON HALL

jon.hall@stonebow.otago.ac.nz

<sup>53</sup> For a review of historical trends in the study of gesture, see Adam Kendon, 'Some reasons for studying gesture', *Semiotica* 62 (1986), 3–28 at 3–5.