IV THE ORATOR'S EDUCATION

The order of chapters in this book may seem paradoxical: the finished orator is considered before the processes by which he reached that state are examined. The order is indeed back-to-front from the perspective of an individual orator's trajectory, whose training must inevitably precede his activity. But in the wider context of an attempt to understand the nature of oratorical training in the Roman world it makes sense to move from the practising orator back to the embryonic form, since the expectations and norms imposed on the fully fledged orator are the foundations which support the system of oratorical education. This observation does not imply any necessary confidence that Roman oratorical education was designed for the creation of orators who met the criteria for and defused the anxieties about oratory which I discussed in the previous chapter. And even if the material which a modern audience can access did suggest that Roman oratorical education was indeed good at producing Roman orators, there is of course no guarantee that actual practice in classrooms across the Empire bore any relation to these writings or displayed any competence at its task. But an awareness of the practice of oratory can usefully inform analysis of how orators were trained.

The earlier chapters of this book have considered oratory as a set of occasions when men spoke in front of an audience. I have been concerned primarily with oratory in its 'live', performed state; the written texts which provide us with our most significant means of accessing Roman oratory are a product of that performance environment and derive much of their importance from it. The occasions when written speeches do not have spoken originals serve to confirm this: without the possibility of spoken performance the texts of Cicero's *Verrines*, or *Second Philippic*, become pointless, even though these particular speeches were never actually delivered. It was only because they might have been delivered that there was any point to Cicero's having versions disseminated as though they had. However, once one begins to consider the means by which aspirant young men became orators the focus shifts from the occasions of performance to a variety of simulacra of the orator's task.[1]

[1] The texts of speeches may themselves be regarded as such: Cicero certainly was conscious of the value of his writings as models for aspirant young orators, even if this was not the chief motive in his writing them (but cf. Stroh 1975).

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However, before turning to the education of orators two issues need to be discussed briefly. One is the difference between oratory and rhetoric, which, for the purposes of this chapter, can be understood in terms of practice and theory. Oratory refers, first, to speeches delivered orally in the variety of situations discussed in Chapter 1 and then, by extension, to the texts which purport to record these words. Rhetoric, by contrast, is the name for the techniques through which people might speak more effectively. So an orator need know nothing of rhetoric, and a rhetorician may never have delivered a piece of oratory; in practice, however, at Rome, orators sought to benefit from rhetoric as much as they could, and rhetoricians were conscious that their pupils were potential orators. And some orators, most notably Cicero and Tacitus, also wrote works on rhetoric.[2]

The second issue is the place of rhetorical education within Roman education more generally.[3] Rhetoric was one of the more advanced subjects: those studying it would be restricted to the minuscule proportion of Romans who had more than a few years' education.[4] It also had a distinct position within the topics of Roman education, inasmuch as it alone had the potential to lead into practical activity. I have discussed in Chapter 3 the ways in which the practice of oratory as a constant and lucrative occupation could be regarded with disapproval. In educational terms, there were no qualifications which could certify an individual's competence: orators demonstrated their ability only when they spoke.

As soon as one begins to consider the nature of oratorical education at Rome, it becomes clear that there were two methods which were regarded as being fundamentally different: practical experience through the shadowing of an established figure on the one hand, and on the other rhetorical education within a school environment. This opposition is presented with striking clarity in Tacitus' *Dialogus* (34–35). Messalla, the speaker, has described the range of education which orators used to get (28–32) in order to explain the decline in standards of oratory at Rome and has now moved on to considering the kinds of practical training young orators get. He gives a stark contrast between the past and the present day:

[2] Cicero, *On Invention*, *On the Orator*, *Orator*, *Brutus*, *On the Best Kind of Orator*, *Topica*, *Paradoxes of the Stoics*; Tacitus, *Dialogus*. Rhetoricians in antiquity did not confine their critical responses to oratory; see Laird (1999: 6–7).

[3] Marrou (1956); Bonner (1977); Morgan (1998a).

[4] Harris (1989).

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In earlier generations the young man who was preparing for a civilian career . . . was taken by his father or by a relative to whichever orator was then pre-eminent in the state. He would become accustomed to follow him around, escort him, attend all his forensic and contional speeches . . . but now our young men are taken to the schools of the men who are called *rhetors* . . . and there I could not say what does more harm to their talents, the place itself or their fellow pupils or the nature of their studies.[5]

The *Dialogus* is a work concerned with the processes of historical and political change and the effects of those changes on the practice and quality of oratory.[6] In this context, Messalla's very broad generalisation should be treated with a degree of caution, as well as an indication of the close connection between education and practice. Nonetheless, Cicero's career provides us with examples of how this practical apprenticeship actually worked: indeed, Messalla refers to Cicero's account of his own education in *Brutus* a little earlier in the *Dialogus*. In this passage of *Brutus* (304–323) Cicero describes his own formation as an orator up to the outbreak of the civil war. There is a variety of different elements in his training. Part of it is indeed attendance on his elders, such as Messalla describes: so he learnt civil law with Scaevola and paid great attention to Sulpicius' *contiones* during the latter's tribunate (306). Elsewhere Cicero describes how he spent time with Crassus and Antonius as a boy (*On the Orator* 2.3). In *Brutus*, too, Cicero refers to his own direct experience of the two men's oratory. Another element which Cicero picks out is practice on his own or with his contemporaries: and for this he uses the verb *declamito*, though with an apology for using a neologism (*Brutus* 310). A third major training activity was study of philosophy: first in Rome, with the Stoic Diodotus, where he concentrated particularly on dialectic, and then at Athens with the Academic philosopher Antiochus.[7]

This amalgamation of practical training with broad cultural expertise is seized upon by the speakers in the *Dialogus* as a single and unproblematic approach to becoming an orator which can be contrasted with the pernickety and artificial exercises to be found in the rhetorical schools. But it is a synthesis not without its own internal tensions, and is itself very much a creation of Cicero. A consideration

[5] Tacitus, *Dialogus* 34–35, *ergo apud maiores nostros iuuenis ille qui foro et eloquentiae parabatur … deducebatur a patre uel a propinquis ad eum oratorem qui principem in ciuitate locum obtinebat. hunc sectari, hunc prosequi, huius omnibus dictionibus interesse siue in iudiciis siue in contionibus assuescebat … at nunc adulescentuli nostri deducuntur in scholas istorum qui rhetores uocantur …: in quibus non facile dixerim utrumne locus ipse an condiscipuli an genus studiorum plus mali ingeniis afferant.*

[6] Mayer (2001: 16–47).

[7] Rawson (1983: 12–28).

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of the different elements which go into the mixture throws some light on the ways in which oratorical education developed at Rome and the conflicting claims which it addressed.

One fundamental tension is between Greece and Rome. Oratory itself was regarded as part of Roman political life since the foundation of the Republic; but rhetoric was an import from Greece. Its arrival was placed in the earlier part of the second century B.C.: the precise details of its acclimatisation at Rome are not recoverable, but rhetoric was clearly located within a variety of practices which were seen to have arrived in Rome as a direct, and deleterious, consequence of the defeat of the Macedonian kingdom and the later absorption of western Asia Minor into Rome's sphere of influence. Indeed, one of the reasons why it is so difficult to give an account of the development of rhetoric at Rome is that a few key episodes become exemplary in a narrative of moral decline and the corruption of Roman character.

At the heart of our knowledge of this complex picture is the elder Cato.[8] We have already seen him as the first Roman orator to exploit the possibilities of writing. In his public life he promulgated a sternly virtuous line which can be seen on occasion to apply specifically to public speaking. Indeed, his maxims on public speaking can be interpreted in the context of the development of rhetoric as a skill and as a reaction to aspects of this development. According to a late rhetorician, Cato encapsulated his advice on oratory in the words *rem tene, uerba sequentur*.[9] This could be seen as an exhortation to simplicity in the face of instruction which complicated the act of speaking through the introduction of rules for organising material and embellishing language. Cato's maxim, by contrast, insists on the primacy of the mastery of content, from which appropriate language will automatically follow.

Cato also described the orator as *uir bonus dicendi peritus*:[10] this emphasis on moral virtue as the leading characteristic of the orator had a long afterlife in Roman reflection on rhetoric, and can be related to the longstanding debate between philosophy and rhetoric in Greek thought, to which I return below. In this context, Cato can be seen as rejecting the artifice of rhetoric, with its promise of persuasive speech regardless of the moral value of the case argued. If, however, the chief qualification of the orator is his moral worth, then

[8] Astin (1978: 131–156); Gruen (1992: 52–83).
[9] 'Hold onto the subject, the words will follow'; Julius Victor 374 (Halm).
[10] Seneca, *Controuersia* 1 pr. 9; Quintilian, *Education of the Orator* 12.1.1.

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anxieties about using rhetoric in order to promote injustice cannot arise.[11]

An anecdote involving the elder Cato reveals his hostility to rhetoric more directly than his comments on the orator and oratory. In 155 a diplomatic embassy containing three distinguished philosophers came from Athens to Rome to ask for help in an internal dispute between Athens and Oropus: the matter had gone to arbitration with Sicyon, which had found against Athens, and the Athenians wanted Roman support in being let off the subsequent hefty fine. The philosophers were Critolaus, a Peripatetic, Diogenes, a Stoic, and Carneades, an Academic philosopher. While they were waiting to address the Senate they gave a series of public lectures which were extremely popular with young Romans. Cato was disturbed by their success and consequently urged the Senate to hear their case, and reach a decision, as soon as possible, so that the ambassadors could leave Rome.[12] According to Plutarch, Cato's fear was that young Romans might be seduced by the eloquence of the Athenian philosophers into attempting to base their reputations on oratory rather than fighting; and Plutarch offers what purports to be a quotation from Cato's actual speech to the Senate, 'We ought to investigate and make up our minds about the embassy as soon as possible, so that the envoys may return to their studies and lecture to Greek young men whilst Roman youth pay attention to the laws and magistrates, as before'.[13]

This anecdote portrays the elder Cato as a man who was deeply suspicious of Greek culture, particularly because of its potential effects on Romans; and this presentation dominates much of the biographical tradition about him. But he had considerable knowledge of what he feared: his writings, in particular, display a familiarity with Greek culture and in certain cases reminiscence of a passage in a Greek model seems highly plausible.[14] Cato's overall position on oratory and rhetoric needs, therefore, to be assessed with considerable care. Direct use of the techniques of Greek rhetoric cannot be

[11] Seneca, however, seems to have regarded *uir* as the crucial word: he continues after the quotation, 'Go now and look for orators among the smooth plucked men of today, men only in their lusts'; see above, Chapter 3.

[12] Gellius, *Attic Nights* 6.14.8–10; Plutarch, *Cato the Elder* 22–23.

[13] Plutarch, *Cato the Elder* 22.5, *δεῖν οὖν τὴν ταχίστην γνῶναι τι καὶ ψηφίσασθαι περὶ τῆς πρεσβείας, ὅπως οὗτοι μὲν λἐπὶ τὰς σχολὰς τραπόμενοι διαλέγωνται παισὶν Ἑλλήνων, οἱ δὲ Ῥωμαίων νέοι τῶν νόμων καὶ τῶν ἀρχόντων ὡς πρότερον ἀκούωσι*. This speech is not recorded in Malcovati.

[14] Examples are gathered by Gruen (1992: 57–8).

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documented and there is little evidence that he wrote systematically on rhetoric.[15] Of the two observations on speaking discussed above, *uir bonus dicendi peritus* is attested to have come from the book of advice he wrote for his son, and this work, *ad Filium*, is a plausible source for the other, too. And if this is correct, we have here pithy summations of an approach – possibly designed to be learned by heart – and not a detailed or nuanced treatment of the subject of rhetoric. Nonetheless, it is possible to extract a consistent picture from them. They can be seen as the embodiment of what might be described as an anti-theoretical approach to the activity of speaking, indeed, perhaps, an anti-rhetorical one: a knowledge of the subject in question and an appropriate moral disposition are all that is required to speak effectively. This is a very different approach from one which simply ignores the question of how to attain oratorical competence: Cato seems to have decided that rhetoric could not simply be disregarded.

It is hardly surprising that Romans responded with enthusiasm to polished speech when they were exposed to it. As we have seen, ability as a public speaker was so important a skill for the elite that anything which offered the possibility of improvement was likely to find a ready market. And in the desire to speak well Romans seem to have ignored some aspects of the Greek intellectual milieu which they were absorbing. One of the things which is curious about the anecdote about Carneades is a blurring of the distinction between philosophy and rhetoric. Carneades and his colleagues were philosophers, not rhetoricians. But – according to Plutarch's version – what attracted young Romans to their lectures was the desire to learn how to speak well as much as the desire to learn about philosophy. Naturally, as ambassadors representing their community at Rome, they would be effective speakers: that would have been one of the criteria behind their selection. It was not foolish of the Romans to be impressed by their abilities to speak in public. But in turning to philosophers for instruction in rhetoric, the aspirant Romans of the mid-second century were, perhaps unwittingly, ignoring the major cultural dispute between the two disciplines which went back at least as far as Plato's writings. Philosophers and rhetoricians had been in competition since that time to establish their own discipline as the universal method for understanding the world and men's actions within it; and central to

[15] Astin (1978: 131–156).

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the philosophical attack on rhetoric was the argument that rhetorical skill, divorced from moral understanding, was a lethal tool.[16]

Cato's description of the orator suggests that he at least was aware of the difficulties which could follow from removing moral content from the orator's task. Insofar as the evidence allows us to speculate, however, this debate was not a cause of major concern as rhetoric developed at Rome. On the one hand, as in the case of the Athenian embassy, little clear distinction is drawn between different manifestations of Greek intellectual prowess which were consumed eagerly and criticised heavily.[17] On the other, the moral probity of rhetoric is assured through its manifestation as an essential part of a civilised state.

This view is articulated with striking clarity and assurance in the preface to the first book of Cicero's *On Invention*, which may be the earliest surviving rhetoric handbook in Latin. The passage is worth quoting in full:

> I have frequently asked myself whether facility in speaking and great devotion to eloquence have brought more good or evil to men and communities. When I consider the troubles in our state, and reflect upon past calamities in outstanding cities, I understand that not the least part of their troubles was generated by persuasive men. But when, on the other hand, I begin to study in the written record events remote in time from our own period, I see many cities founded, very many wars brought to a close, and lasting alliances and the most sacred of friendships have been established through the operation of reason but more easily too through eloquence. And reason itself has led me, as I reflected at length, to the opinion, above all, that whilst wisdom without eloquence can do little good to communities, eloquence without wisdom is very frequently a source of harm and can never be beneficial. And so anyone who spends their time and effort exclusively in the practice of oratory, neglecting the study of honourable and upright behaviour, is turned into a citizen who is useless to himself and dangerous for his country; but the man who arms himself with eloquence, not so as to act against the advantage of his country but to be able to defend it, seems to me to be a man and a citizen who will be most useful and supportive of both his friends' interests and those of his community.[18]

[16] Vickers (1988: 148–178).

[17] Rawson (1985); Gruen (1992).

[18] *On Invention* 1.1, *saepe et multum hoc mecum cogitaui, bonine an mali plus attulerit hominibus et ciuitatibus copia dicendi ac summum eloquentiae studium. nam cum et nostrae rei publicae detrimenta considero et maximarum ciuitatum ueteres animo calamitates colligo, non minimam uideo per disertissimos homines inuectam partem incommodorum; cum autem res ab nostra memoria propter uetustatem remotas ex litterarum monumentis repetere instituo, multas urbes constitutas, plurima bella restincta, firmissimas societates, sanctissimas amicitias intellego cum animi ratione tum facilius eloquentia comparatas. ac me quidem diu cogitantem ratio ipsa in hanc potissimum sententiam ducit, ut existimem sapientiam sine eloquentia parum prodesse ciuitatibus, eloquentiam uero sine sapientia nimium obesse plerumque, prodesse nunquam. quare si quis omissis rectissimis atque honestissimis studiis rationis et offici consumit omnem operam in exercitatione dicendi, is inutilis sibi, perniciosus patriae ciuis*

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Cicero develops this idea over a further four chapters, which offer an account of the development of oratory and its relationship to the establishment of human communities, followed by reflections on how eloquence subsequently became a force for evil.[19] As an opening to an instructional manual, these reflections provide a bold acknowledgement that what is being offered in the work to come has its own dangers: and this starting point is not without persuasive force, since the reader can have confidence that his guide has thought extensively about the issues involved in this skill. But the problem of the misuse of oratory is not lasting. By the end of these opening chapters, it has been resolved: it is precisely because oratory has the capacity to be misused by 'the stupid and unprincipled' that it should be studied so that effective opposition can be offered to such men.[20] There is no real attempt in this work to resolve the issues which arise from the amorality of rhetoric.

However inconclusive and superficial the theoretical observations at the opening of the *On Invention* they do nonetheless indicate that such debates were now part of the Roman experience of rhetoric. More generally, *On Invention* gives us a sense of what rhetorical education at Rome in the 90s and 80s was like. The opening of the first book is not typical of the whole text: along with the opening chapters of the second book, it is among the few places in the work which break free from the narrow concerns of a technical manual. Much of the content of *On Invention* is remarkably similar to the section on invention in the anonymous treatise on rhetoric, *ad Herennium*. The precise relationship between these two works, and their relative dating, is impossible to determine.[21] But it is certain that both authors are drawing on the rhetorical theory of Hermagoras: both use Hermagoras' status-theory as the means of determining the point at issue in forensic cases and show very considerable similarities in the ordering of the material on the finding of arguments. The most likely intermediary is a teacher of rhetoric active in Rome, whom both authors attended during the 90s B.C.; and then soon afterwards they amplified and embellished their notes into treatises, though in Cicero's case he appears to have lost interest in the project, or been otherwise distracted, as his book covers only one out of the five parts of oratory. The *ad Herennium*, however, deals with all five parts.

alitur; qui uero ita sese armat eloquentia, ut non oppugnare commoda patriae, sed pro his propugnare possit, is mihi uir et suis et publicis rationibus utilissimus atque amicissimus ciuis fore uidetur.

[19] On ancient accounts of the origins of human civilisation see Campbell (2003: 9–18).

[20] *On Invention* 1.5.

[21] Corbeill (2002: 31–47).

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The existence of these works confirms that education from professionals existed alongside practical training in the company of senior Romans: the aspirant Roman made use of both sources of information and improvement. But they also indicate some kind of market for written instruction in Latin on rhetoric: a market that was new, or at least had hitherto not been fully catered for.[22] We cannot be sure why either author wrote down his notes in systematic form, or how widely they envisaged their work circulating. But in Cicero's case it is at least possible that he wanted wide circulation and was using it as a way of getting his name known as someone with ability as a speaker.[23] This in turn would suggest that by the 90s B.C. Rome was an environment in which demonstrable rhetorical competence was an asset.

Finally, these two works contribute to our understanding of the complexity of the relationship between oratory at Rome and its Greek theoretical base. Whatever suspicion may have been felt in the earlier part of the second century B.C., by some Romans at least, about Greek influence over the teaching of oratory at Rome had dissipated to the extent that Greek was regarded by some as the only language suitable for rhetorical instruction. In 92 B.C. the censors, L. Licinius Crassus and Cn. Domitius Ahenobarbus, expressed strong disapprobation of the existence in Rome of schools which offered oratorical training in Latin. Suetonius preserves the text of their decree in his book *On Grammarians and Rhetors*:

> We have been informed that there exist men who have set up a new sort of teaching and that young men gather at their school; they call themselves 'Latin rhetors' and there young men waste away entire days. Our ancestors established what they wanted their children to learn and what sorts of schools they wished them to attend: these novelties, which are against established practice and the habits of our ancestors, are not pleasing and do not seem right. Therefore it seems good to us to make our opinion clear both to those who keep these schools and those who frequent them: we do not approve.[24]

[22] As discussed above, there is considerable doubt as to whether Cato the elder ever wrote a work on rhetoric. M. Antonius (cos. 99) wrote a work on oratory, but it was insubstantial – it is described as a *libellus* – and apparently circulated without his knowledge: Cicero, *On the Orator* 1.94, 1.208; Quintilian, *Education of the Orator* 3.1.19.

[23] Steel (2005).

[24] Suetonius, *On Grammarians and Rhetors* 25.2; Gellius, *Attic Nights* 15.11.2, *renuntiatum est nobis esse homines qui nouum genus disciplinae instituerunt, ad quos iuuentus in ludum conueniat; eos sibi nomen imposuisse Latinos rhetorias, ibi homines adulescentulos dies totos desidere. maiores nostri quae liberos suos discere et quos in ludos itare uellent instituerunt; haec noua, quae praeter consuetudinem ac morem maiorum fiunt, neque placent neque recta uidentur. qua propter et iis qui eos ludos habent et iis qui eo uenire consuerunt uisum est faciundum ut ostenderemus nostram sententiam: nobis non placere*.

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It is very unclear why the censors took this step.[25] Some interpreters have seen this as a simply a pedagogical matter: the censors were taking the view that the instruction on offer in these schools – and it is not known how many might have fallen into this category – was not of an adequate standard. This is certainly the line which Cicero adopts in the passing reference to the controversy which he has Crassus make in *On the Orator*: there was nothing of pedagogical value in these schools.[26] However, many have felt that the involvement of the censors in this matter must have been due to some political ramification, and most who adopt this line see the closure of the schools in 92 B.C. in connection with the outbreak of the Social War only a year later. These Latin schools would then be an element in Italian desire for political representation in Rome, offering a means by which men who aspired to gain recognition for their communities could acquire the skills necessary for such an enterprise; and it is possible too that they had distinct links with politicians who supported a radically *popularis* line.

The evidence is, however, too partial to sustain such an interpretation securely; and it may depend on assumptions about access to Greek culture throughout the Italian peninsula which are not sustainable. But this episode does demonstrate that the act of teaching oratory was, at Rome, inherently political because of the vital importance in the political process of being able to speak well. There need have been no specific anxiety about the identity of those who frequented the Latin schools, or indeed about those who ran them, for the censors to believe that there existence was contrary to the existence of the state. That, indeed, was all that their edict meant; and the schools do not seem to have closed. What can securely be drawn from this episode is both the fact that rhetorical education was a matter with which the highest magistrates could legitimately concern themselves and that the transformation in the intellectual scene at Rome over the half century since Cato the Elder had led to Greek being the undisputed medium for this aspect of elite education and the correspondingly inferior status of Latin. Indeed, from this perspective, the decision of both Cicero and the anonymous author of the *ad Herennium* to write technical works about rhetoric in Latin cannot be an entirely neutral contribution to the debate. These works transmit into Latin a technical vocabulary for the analysis of rhetoric:

[25] On the episode, see Gruen (1990: 179–191); Kaster (1995: 273–275) .
[26] Cicero, *On the Orator* 3.93–95.

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the similarities between the works suggest that a single teacher may be behind many choices of terminology, but some divergences indicate that the two authors may also have taken a hand in creating the language to match the resources of Greek.

Much later in his career Cicero returned to writing about oratory and in his mature works he demonstrates an impatience with the limitations of rhetorical training much more reminiscent of what we find in the *Dialogus*. In *On the Orator*, his first and most substantial work on oratory, the discussion of technical aspects of rhetoric is interlarded with dismissive comments. So, for example, when Antonius turns in book 2 to the question of how the orator sets about his task, he says of the rhetoricians:

> But, as I far as I can judge, what they [sc. Greek teachers of rhetoric] teach is absolutely ridiculous; . . . they establish five parts of eloquence, like limbs: to find what you are to say, to arrange it once found, then to decorate it with words, afterwords to memorise it, and finally to deliver and pronounce it; and this is hardly mysterious stuff.[27]

Given the dialogue format of *On the Orator*, it would be unsound to assume that Antonius is Cicero's mouthpiece; in the passage referred to above on the closure of the Latin schools, Crassus, the other main interlocutor, talks relatively positively about Greek teachers of rhetoric. But Crassus also seems to be impatient with systematic exposition; so, when he handles figures of speech, he does so very briefly (3.201–208), offering in their place little more than a list of technical names for different effects.

Others of Cicero's oratorical works deal with very specific aspects of rhetoric at a high level of detail and concept: they are not works for beginners.[28] And although Cicero is undoubtedly concerned in them to secure his lasting reputation, he is largely interested in defending his own practice as an orator – now finished, as he thought at the time of composition – rather than establishing a new reputation as an educator. Indeed, *Brutus* and *Orator* show very clear signs of being influenced by the controversy over Atticism, which I discussed in Chapter 3.

[27] Cicero, *On the Orator* 3.77–79, *sed tamen est eorum doctrina, quantam ego iudicare possum, perridicula: … dedinde quinque faciunt quasi membra eloquentiae, inuenire quid dicas, inuenta disponere, deinde ornare uerbis, post memoriae mandare, tum ad extremum agere ac pronuntiare; rem sane non reconditam.*

[28] *On the Orator* offers a treatment of prose rhythm; *Topica* explores the application of philosophical argument to the law. See Narducci (2002); Reinhardt (2003).

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These mature works of Cicero are, in short, not very useful as guides for beginners in learning how to speak well. In common with Tacitus' *Dialogus*, they are written by someone who was completely in control of the oratorical medium but not primarily concerned with transmitting skills to beginners. Rather, oratory's intimate relationship with the conduct of the Roman state and the ambitions of its elite made it a productive system of knowledge with which to explore the defects and anxieties of the political life.[29]

However, rhetorical works which do focus on the straightforwardly useful communication of knowledge have a tendency towards tedium and even unreadability for an audience which is not using them as textbooks to learn how to speak: an indication of which is the relative lack of modern studies of the great bulk of instructional works which survive from the imperial period. Quintilian's *Education of the Orator* occupies a position which we might regard as intermediate. It suggests very strongly that he was himself a great teacher; and his work sets conscientiously about the task of communicating the elements of effective oratory in a clear and systematic manner. But it is far more than simply a textbook. Quintilian's own *persona* and motivations are openly displayed; his generally critical views of contemporary oratory and rhetorical training are forcefully expressed; and there is a deep historical awareness throughout the work which is reflected most clearly in the loving accumulation of examples from great orators of the past, above all Cicero. He is concerned with the whole of the orator's education, from early childhood onwards, and in the twelfth book turns to a range of ethical and professional questions about the orator's behaviour once he has begun to practise; systematic instruction is supplemented by an awareness of what the orator does when he has finished with formal education.[30]

The various examples of Cicero, Tacitus and Quintilian demonstrate the limitations of the rhetorical handbook from the perspective of a writer wishing to explore oratory as a phenomenon. From the students' perspective, also, the information in handbooks was not enough, on its own, to create an effective orator. Practice was necessary. Aspiring orators put the skills they were learning into effect by composing, memorising and delivering short speeches on set, artificial topics. This form of exercise is described by the general name of declamation, but assessing declamation in practice is difficult because

[29] Winterbottom (2001); Mayer (2001); Steel (2003); Fantham (2004).
[30] Kennedy (1969); Morgan (1998b).

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it was also a popular pastime among established orators. Four collections of declamatory material exist: the elder Seneca's collection, the minor and major declamations ascribed to Quintilian, and Calpurnius Flaccus' collection of declamations.[31] There seem to have been two types of declamatory exercise: the *controuersia* and the *suasoria*.[32] A *suasoria* offered a simulacrum of a deliberative debate, and often took its subject from history: whether or not Hannibal should march on Rome was an extremely hackneyed example.[33] The *controuersia* provided practice in forensic oratory: it posed a legal problem and expected responses for and against. An example from Calpurnius is, 'Some young men used regularly to go to a brothel. After the brothel keeper had often warned them not to come, he dug a pit and filled it with fire. When the young men came, they were burnt alive. The brothel keeper is accused by the parents of harming the state.'[34] The greater complexity of argumentation in *controuersiae* and the legal knowledge which they required meant that they normally followed *suasoriae* in the school curricula.

As a teaching tool, such practice exercises could clearly be extremely effective, despite the formulaic and apparently even artificial quality of the subject matter.[35] However, declamation was also a popular pastime for adults. Overwhelming evidence of this comes above all from the elder Seneca's collections of material from declamations, *Controuersiae* and *Suasoriae*. Seneca's collection is interspersed with anecdotes which give a sense of the environment in which these declamations were being created: men who were established orators declaiming for pleasure alongside teachers of rhetoric.

It would be easy, though misleading, to construct a narrative of declamation which connects its popularity with a decline in 'proper' oratory in the imperial period. The four surviving collections of declamatory material in Latin are indeed all from the first and second centuries A.D.; but it is clear that declamation existed as an exercise for adults during the late Republic.[36] And insofar as declamation did

[31] For a brief survey, see Sussman (1994: 5–6).
[32] Bonner (1949); Bonner (1977).
[33] Juvenal, *Satires* 7.160–164.
[34] Calpurnius 5, *iuuenes frequenter ad lupanar ueniebant. cum his leno frequenter dununtiasset ne accederent, foueam fecit et compleuit ignibus. adulescentes cum uenissent, exusti sunt. accusatur a parentibus eorum leno laesae rei publicae*.
[35] One could argue that practice legal cases need to be artificial, in order to test rules. For ancient criticism, see Sussman (1994: 14–16).
[36] See Cicero, *Letters to Friends* 7.33.

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offer skills useful for the orator, the excitement it clearly generated among some in the imperial period is testament rather to the continuing importance of oratory than to a decline in interest. However, recent criticism is increasingly emphasising declamation's status as a distinct genre, whose preoccupations and themes deserve attention in themselves.[37]

Nonetheless, thinking about declamation may contribute to understanding how aspiring orators made the transition from education and practice to actual speaking. The surviving declamations demonstrate deep interest in finding arguments for both sides of cases. The elder Seneca does not, with one exception only, provide complete speeches delivered in response to topics, but analyses declamatory themes in terms of the epigrams which were included in declaimers' speeches, the analyses of the points at question, and finally the lines of argument.[38] The lines of argument are called *colores*. Revealingly, Quintilian handles *colores* in his section on false narratives; indeed, he seems to offer an etymology for the use of the term which connects it with blushing for embarrassment.[39] In book 12, at the point where he discusses the circumstances under which someone might speak for a bad cause, he imagines someone saying, 'Why have you discussed colours and the defence of difficult cases, and even confession, unless sometimes force and skill in speaking conquer the truth itself?'[40] Facility in devising arguments involved facility in devising arguments on both sides of the case, and hence, in forensic cases, for the guilty as well as the innocent. The skills inculcated and honed by declamation were not only the ability to use language effectively and to structure speech. They included, too, training in the intellectual flexibility to construct a case in support of any line of argument. And that was a vital skill for orators in the Roman courts, whose clients could not always be innocent.[41]

Romans learnt how to become orators through the experience of a range of knowledge and relationships. They were exposed to a curriculum of rhetoric borrowed from the Greeks, modified to

[37] Imber (2001); Gunderson (2004).

[38] The exception seems to be *Controuersia* 2.7. See Winterbottom (1974: xv–xx).

[39] Quintilian, *Education of the Orator* 4.2.88.

[40] Quintilian, *Education of the Orator* 12.1.33, *cur tu de coloribus et difficilium causarum defensione, nonnihil etiam de confessione locutus es, nisi aliquando uis ac facultas dicendi expugnat ipsam ueritatem?* Cf. *Education of the Orator* 11.1.81.

[41] On the moral dilemma of defending the guilty, see particularly Cicero, *On Duties* 2.51; Quintilian, *Education of the Orator* 12.1.33–45.

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reflect Roman law and society, which was itself developing in the ever more closely integrated worlds of Greece and Rome as the imperial period progressed. They practised this rhetorical knowledge on themes derived from the wilder shores of Roman experience and then they began to exercise their abilities on real cases within a society where personal connections were essential to success and recognition.

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