

# Acting Archives Essays

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Claudio Vicentini

## THEORY OF ACTING

### IV

#### THE WORLD OF ORATORY. PERRUCCI, GRIMAREST AND GILDON\*

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#### 1. *The Theatre Controversy*

The clearly-felt need of actors to have their work acknowledged as part of the official cultural scene continued to grow throughout the seventeenth century as theatre gradually managed to put down solid economic and juridical roots in many European countries. Venues for theatre had multiplied in the late sixteenth century, and a number of particularly prominent companies had partly abandoned life on the road, settling in urban areas where a sufficient audience was guaranteed. In the England of Elizabeth I, various companies were already operating in London: Shakespeare's Players regularly used the Globe Theatre, built in 1599. Shortly afterwards French companies tried to establish themselves in Paris, the Comédiens du roi managing in 1629 to obtain exclusive access to the Hôtel de Bourgogne. Five years later another company, under the protection of Cardinal Richelieu, established itself at the Théâtre du Marais. In 1658, Molière's company took over the Petit Bourbon, alternating its own performances with those of an Italian *commedia dell'arte* company. Lastly, in 1680, at the request of Louis XIV, the Comédie Française was established, the first national theatre in Europe to operate under the direct control of the Monarchy.

At the same time comic actors were performing increasingly in France and England, with the double benefit of Crown support and administrative regulation. The norms introduced offered protection for the actors' work, while the rigid control they simultaneously imposed made this a mixed blessing. In England, in 1572, an edict of Elizabeth's Counsel of State assigned the Master of the Revels, the superintendent of court entertainment, complete jurisdiction over companies operating in London. Two years later a new edict obliged all travelling companies to place themselves in the service of a member of the nobility, whose livery they were to wear. Only then were they authorized to perform tragedies, comedies, and stage performances of any kind for the entertainment of the royal subjects and the

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\* Translated by Anita Weston, Libera Università degli Studi per l'Innovazione e le Organizzazioni di Roma. From C. Vicentini, *La teoria della recitazione dall'Antichità al Settecento*, in press (Venezia, Marsilio, February 2012).

Queen's own pleasure. Nine years on, a further decree arrogated for the Crown total control over all theatre activity, to be regulated strictly by special authorisation conceded to the single company. Across the Channel, the French Crown had protected and financed various groups of players from the sixteenth century onwards. In 1641 a formal declaration on the part of Louis XIII had legitimised the profession of actor with the proviso that the plays should be morally acceptable, devoid of all excess and 'equivocal or lascivious' words or actions.<sup>1</sup>

This support for the companies, however, often met with the opposition of political organisations using anti-theatre sentiment as a stick with which to beat centralised power. The London Town Council, like the Parliament in Paris, used its powers to limit performances as far as possible, thereby entering into direct conflict with the King's authority. In 1577 the arrival in Paris of the *Compagnia dei Gelosi*, invited by Henri III, sparked off a fierce legal battle, played out through royal authorisations and parliamentary prohibitions.<sup>2</sup>

A situation of the kind was ideal for broadsides for or against the theatre. In England the opposition of the Church became increasingly dangerous after the death of Elizabeth, during the reign of James I and his successor Charles I. The 1618 Royal Decree, the *Declaration of Lawful Sports*, aimed at authorising a series of recreation activities on public holidays, provoked such a virulent reaction on the Church's part that James was forced to stop its application. Three years later, in direct opposition to the authority of the Crown, Parliament passed a law forbidding a number of recreations listed in the *Declaration*, while the King quickly stepped in to veto the decree, thereby annulling it. When Charles I attempted to pass the *Declaration* again in 1633 he met with fierce and open opposition.

In the same year William Prynne's *Histriomastix* came out, a monumental anti-theatre polemic which constituted the most violent attack on the stage ever to appear in England, and extended to court entertainments in which the nobility and even the Queen herself performed.<sup>3</sup> Government reaction was immediate. Prynne's sentence was severe: imprisonment, a hefty fine, and the chopping off of his ears; but it had no effect whatsoever on Puritan opposition to the stage. In 1642, during the Civil War which was to lead to defeat and death for Charles I, Parliament declared the closure of all theatres; they were re-opened only in 1660, with the Restoration of the Monarchy under Charles II.

In France, hostility to the theatre had increased in the last decades of the sixteenth century, above all in Protestant circles. It exploded with particular force in the second half of the following century, when a number of members of the nobility and the Catholic Church began to show increasing irritation at the attempts of Cardinal Mazarin and subsequently Louis XIV to promote the professional stage. The French Church drew particularly on the condemnation of theatre delivered by Carlo Borromeo, proclaimed saint in 1606, going so far as to persecute actors by adding professional players to the categories of persons excluded from the sacrament in the

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<sup>1</sup> For the text of the declaration, see Gaston Maugras, *Les comédiens hors la loi*, Paris, Calmann Lévy Editeur, 1887, p. 90.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 78-79.

<sup>3</sup> William Prynne, *Histriomastix: the Player's Scourge or Actor's Tragedy*, London, Sparke, 1633, Sig 5Q<sup>v</sup>.

version of the *Rituale Romanum* used in many French parishes.<sup>4</sup> Even Molière, who enjoyed the King's direct protection, was only buried in holy ground after endless difficulties, and then at night, almost in secrecy, after specific authorisation from the Archbishop of Paris.<sup>5</sup>

In religious circles polemics were heightened by prevailing Jansenist tendencies considering austerity, simplicity, and above all control of self and the passions to be the hallmarks of Christian behaviour, as against all forms of exhibitionism, ostentation, and emotivity: everything, in short, which constituted the essence of the theatre, where the public was seen as indulging its baser instincts through empathetic involvement in the scenes represented. Throughout the 1660s, then, the question was debated by the major exponents of the French stage, from Corneille and Molière to the young Racine, while opposition to the theatre was most effectively expressed in the *Traité de la comédie et des spectacles* of Armand de Bourbon Prince de Conti, belonging to the highest nobility in the land, and the Abbé Nicole, whose *Traité de la comédie* is probably the outstanding anti-stage pronouncement in seventeenth-century France.<sup>6</sup>

Far from abating in the following decades, the opposition acquired fresh vigour towards the end of the century, when Louis XIV appeared to lose interest in theatre. The anonymous publication in 1694 of the *Lettre d'un théologien illustre* produced an extremely violent reaction, although its measured defence of the theatre was very much along the lines of those of the Council of Trent.<sup>7</sup> The Theology Faculty of the Sorbonne drew up a 'decision' reiterating a condemnation of theatre, and the author of the *Lettre*, Caffaro, superior of the Paris branch of the Theatine Fathers, was severely punished. Bossuet, tutor to the Dauphin and one of the most eminent French bishops, expressed his position both in a long letter to Caffaro and then in his publication *Maximes et réflexions sur la Comédie*, in which he deployed a range of doctrinal evidence to denounce the heinous evils of the stage and definitively condemned the whole of contemporary French theatre.<sup>8</sup>

## 2. *The Horizons of Oratory*

The determination of late-sixteenth-century players to affirm the dignity of their profession took on a different dimension within this wider polemical context. Distancing themselves from street entertainers and claiming the role of orators was not simply a tactic to ensure recognition as professionals and intellectuals: it was also

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<sup>4</sup> J. Dubu, *Les églises chrétiennes et le théâtre*, Grenoble, Presses Universitaires de Grenoble, 1997, pp. 71-85.

<sup>5</sup> The most meticulous reconstruction of the episode is to be found *ibid.*, pp. 164-149, while the text of the authorization is given in Paul Olagnier, *Les incapacités des acteurs en droit canonique*, Paris, 1899, pp. 179-180.

<sup>6</sup> The treatises by the Prince de Conti (published in 1666), and the Abbé Nicole (1667) are collected in Pierre Nicole, *Traité de la comédie et autres pièces d'un procès du théâtre*, ed. by L. Thirouin, Paris, Champion, 1998.

<sup>7</sup> The 'Lettre d'un théologien illustre par sa qualité et par son mérite, consulté par l'auteur pour savoir si la Comédie peut être permise ou doit être absolument defendue', published in Edme Boursault, *Pièces de théâtre de M. Boursault*, Paris, Guignard, 1694, can be found in *L'église et le théâtre*, ed. by C. Urban and E. Levesque, Paris, Grasset, 1930, with all the literature ensuing from the controversy.

<sup>8</sup> Jacques Benigne Bossuet, *Maximes et réflexions sur la Comédie*, Paris, Anisson, 1694.

the only means possible to ensure the survival of the theatre and its economic and organic development. To distinguish between the actors, working scrupulously to offer entertainment consonant with the canons of official culture, and the licentious mountebanks scraping a hand-to-mouth existence in the more disreputable piazzas was certainly indispensable if they were to counter the attacks from religious circles.<sup>9</sup> But it was equally the main principle in the policy of support for the theatre on the part of organised power. In England the protection offered to actors was subsumed under the vagrancy laws regulating any attempt to scratch a living by a public performance not commensurate with the tastes of a nobleman, or the requirements to enter his service. In France, Louis XIII's declaration proclaiming the legality of the profession of players opened by anathematizing and condemning 'dishonest' actors, who were threatened with heavy sanctions and roundly branded with infamy.

The distinction, it should be added, not only encouraged an ethical stand among actors, facilitating their gradual entry into the official fabric of society, but also slowly had the effect of determining the nature of theatre production itself. Centralised power revealed an interest both in overseeing the ethical standards of the performances and in requiring that they met officially recognised and approved criteria, toeing a line which was possibly drawn with rather greater rigour than the players themselves desired. Significantly, when in 1637 Corneille's *Le Cid* was performed in Paris to enormous acclaim, accompanied, however, by polemics among the literati who deplored the text's putative violation of dramatic canons, Richelieu referred the question to the Académie Française, founded two years previously.<sup>10</sup> Molière's Company, like that of the Hôtel de Bourgogne and the Théâtre du Marais, which in 1629 had been granted the privilege of establishing themselves in Paris, all concentrated mainly on canonical drama based on a written script. The group of *commedia dell'arte* Italian actors, the Comédie Italienne which had operated in the capital for many decades, had similarly ended up by 'normalising' their productions, staging plays written for them by French playwrights.<sup>11</sup>

Two events of the last years of the century assume particular significance in this context: the institution of the Comédie Française, the official pantheon for texts of exemplary literary virtues, and the expulsion, in 1697, of the Italian players, only in part ascribable to contingent factors and demonstrating above all an institutional loss of interest in their particular type of acting.<sup>12</sup> French canons of dramaturgy and acting almost inevitably had a trickle-down effect on the English stage in the period immediately following the re-opening of the theatres, if only on account of direct Court influence on playwrights and companies.

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<sup>9</sup> A distinction to be found in all the principle texts in defence of the theatre published in the early seventeenth century in Italy, England and France. See e.g. Thomas Heywood, *An Apology for Actors* (London, Nicholas Oke, 1612), London, Shakespeare Society, 1841, pp. 43-44; Georges de Scudéry, *Apologie du théâtre*, Paris, Augustin Courbé, 1639, p. 74. On the origin of this distinction, see C. Vicentini, 'Theory of Acting II. From the Church Fathers to the Sixteenth Century', *Acting Archives Essays*, AAR Supplement 2, April 2011.

<sup>10</sup> On the whole episode see Armand Gasté, *La querelle du Cid, pièces et pamphlets publiés d'après les originaux avec une introduction*, Paris, 1898.

<sup>11</sup> See R. Guardenti, *Gli italiani a Parigi, La Comédie Italienne (1660-1697). Storia, pratica scenica, iconografia*, 2 vols., Roma, Bulzoni, 1990, I, pp. 16-17.

<sup>12</sup> For a detailed reconstruction of the episode see *ibid.*, pp. 25-27.

The tendency to bring theatre in line with the aesthetic canons of establishment culture inevitably meant aligning it in some measure with the art of oratory. This meant removing from the very notion of recitation all the gestural and body language at variance with the contained and elegant declaiming of a verbal composition: excluding, that is, the most original and experimental aspects of acting as developed in the professional theatre between the sixteenth and seventeenth century. At the same time, however, considering the actor from the perspective of oratory also meant, in the cultural context of the period, creating the basis for a new perception of his expressive range in speaking and moving, opening up to different stylistic possibilities of interpretation, and developing precise criteria against which to evaluate them. It meant, in a word, constructing the basis for a mature theory of acting.

In the seventeenth century the doctrine of oratory subsumed an extremely varied range of sub-disciplines. It included the analysis of textual composition (either written, simply inserted within a dialogue, or improvised orality) and all the forms in which it was concretely delivered. It constituted, then, the theoretical base for a formal poetics and literary criticism, but also a comprehensive overview of the techniques required for religious instruction, the legal profession, a career in Parliament, and more simply the art of discourse and elegant conversation, thereby determining the proper code of behaviour in polite society.<sup>13</sup> And since contemporary communicative practice involved the use not just of the voice but also of gestures, eye-movements, the use of the facial muscles, and body language, the art of eloquence extended to the domains of painting and sculpture, suggesting the cross-fertilisation of poses and expressions in the figures to be represented.<sup>14</sup>

For European culture of the century, acting could only be a form of oratory which, in its turn, conferred efficacy, aesthetics, and perfection on all forms of verbal and gestural expression. 'In the substance of external action for the most part orators and stage-players agree', Thomas Wright stated at the beginning of the century, analysing ways of embodying the different passions.<sup>15</sup> One of the earliest English statements on acting, a passage by John Webster, underlines how the 'excellent actor' must possess all the skills of oratory, since 'whatever is commendable in the grave orator, is mostly perfect in him'. His colleague Thomas Heywood, in his *Apology for Actors*, similarly praises the virtues of the theatre in terms of the art of oratory. Interpreting comedies and tragedies, Heywood stated, constituted an excellent exercise for learning rhetoric, which taught how to regulate breathing, assume the correct posture, and avoid wrong movements of the face, eyes, and body when pronouncing a speech. Some time later, in his *Short Discourse on the English Stage*, Ri-

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<sup>13</sup> On oratory as the basis of different art forms see M. Fumaroli, *L'âge de l'éloquence*, Paris, Droz, 2002, particularly pp. 28-31.

<sup>14</sup> This constituted the beginning of the well-documented influence of oratory treatises on painting and sculpture. The influence was reciprocal, see e.g. Francesco Sansovino, *L'arte oratoria secondo i modi della lingua volgare*, Vinegia, Giovanni dal Griffio, & fratelli, 1546, p. 52, where the orator is advised to follow the example of painting and sculpture.

<sup>15</sup> The statement is to be found in Thomas Wright's additions to the second edition of his *The Passions of the Minde in Generall*, London, 1604 (first edition London, Burre, 1601). Quotes here are from the edition by W. W. Newbold, London and New York, Garland, 1986, p. 215. Wright marks only one difference between the actor and the orator: the former 'pretends' while the latter 'is in earnest': a distinction taken from Cicero's *De Oratore* (III,214).

chard Flecknoe praised Burbage, underlining how, as a great actor, he possessed ‘all the parts of an excellent orator’.<sup>16</sup> In France, a text of 1655 presented the actor as the orator favoured by the tragic muse Melpomene, while Marin Mersenne, in his *Traitez de la voix et des chants* considered even a singer as an orator.<sup>17</sup>

Then, curiously, for the rest of the seventeenth century, after the publication of Cecchini’s *Frutti delle moderne commedie et avisi a chi le recita*, all theories of acting would appear to have disappeared, judging from the available literature, although in actual fact they were simply subsumed under the art-of-eloquence debate. In a word, there certainly existed in the contemporary consciousness a system of codified rules for both prescribing and evaluating the actor’s performance: namely, all the techniques of eloquence considered de rigueur for any kind of public speaking, from the preacher, teacher, and lawyer to the lecturer, politician, and actor.

Given the isomorphism, a number of researchers have attempted to use the various treatises on oratory to reconstruct acting forms and styles then in vogue on the stage.<sup>18</sup> Useful and significant as they have been, however, the results inevitably contain an element of surmise. Besides the inevitable shortfall between doctrinal theory and actual practice, the contemporary stage almost certainly hosted an enormous range of acting and gesturality, from a declaratory and slightly pompous delivery to the agile and more cavalier style inspired by the Italian players, or from the directly mimetic, from-the-life approach to create a particular character, to the upstaging affectation of a Bellerose, the famous leading actor in the Hôtel de Bourgogne Company.<sup>19</sup> It would have been extremely difficult for the general categories of oratory to encompass the varied specificity of the actor’s work on stage, and the complexity of attendant issues.

The doctrine of eloquence was, we know, traditionally articulated in five parts: invention, disposition, memory, elocution, and expression (vocal and gestural), the last element, *actio*, constituting the basic nucleus for all reflections on the art of the actor. Not all treatises on oratory included it, although it is dealt with, for example, in Antoine Fouquelin’s *Rétorique Française* and Abraham Fraunce’s *Arcadian Rethorike*, both inspired by the teachings of Peter Ramus who had promoted a substantial reform of rhetoric in the mid sixteenth century.<sup>20</sup> It was given particular prominence in a series of works on ecclesiastical oratory, from the prime text, Erasmus of

<sup>16</sup> John Webster, ‘An Excellent Actor’ (1615), in *Actors on Acting*, ed. by T. Cole and H. K. Chinoy, New York, Crown Publishers, 1970, p. 88; Thomas Heywood, *An Apology for Actors*, p. 29; Richard Flecknoe, *A Short Discourse on the English Stage* (London, Printed by R. Wood for the Author, 1664), in *Augustan Critical Writing*, ed. by D. Womersley, London, Penguin Books, 1997, p. 6.

<sup>17</sup> *Apologie du Théâtre, dédiée à son Altesse Royale, Mademoiselle, Par le Sieur Dorimond*, Rouen, David Du Petit, 1655, p. 14; Marin Mersenne, *Harmonie universelle, contenant la théorie et la pratique de la musique* (Paris, S. Cramoisy, 1636), Paris, CNRS, 1963, II, *Traitez de la voix et des chants*, Book I, p. 365.

<sup>18</sup> B. Joseph’s *Elizabethan Acting* (London, Oxford University Press, 1951) and *The Tragic Actor* (London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1959) with D. Barnett’s *The Art of Gesture: the Practices and Principles of 18th Century Acting* (Heidelberg, Karl Winter, 1987) are all now classic texts.

<sup>19</sup> Bellerose’s style was apparently particularly affected in love scenes where, according to a contemporary, he gave the impression of carefully selecting ‘where to throw his hat in order to avoid spoiling the feathers’. See Gédéon Tallemant des Reaux’s testimony in *Historiettes*, 9 vols., Paris, Monmarqué, 1854-1860, VII, p. 175.

<sup>20</sup> Antoine Fouquelin, *Rétorique Française, nouvellement revue et augmentée*, Paris, 1555, and Abraham Fraunce, *Arcadian Rethorike*, London, 1588: the French and English versions of Omer Talon’s *Rethorica e Petri Rami professoris praelectionibus observata*, 1548.

Rotterdam's *Ecclesiastes*, through the writings of Louis de Granade, Ludovico Carbone, Carlo Reggio, Nicolas Caussin, and, in 1620, Louis de Cressolles's *Vacationes autumnales*, some six hundred pages comprising a virtual encyclopaedia of vocal and gestural expression, accompanied by a series of considerations and quotations from orators, poets, classical philosophers, Fathers of the Church, and the works of humanism, listing all the expressive possibilities of the head, eyes, mouth, neck, arms, legs, and feet.<sup>21</sup> This concentration on *actio* appeared to spread and intensify in the later seventeenth century, as attested by a series of works dedicated exclusively to this particular aspect of oratory, such as the *Traité de l'action de l'orateur* by Michel Le Faucheur, a Protestant preacher, Jean Lucas's *Actio oratoris*, or René Bary's *Méthode pour bien prononcer un discours et pour bien l'animer*.<sup>22</sup>

The various observations in literature of the kind merged, in seventeenth-century culture, with the knowledge collated from numerous specialist figures studying physical features, gestures, expressions, human typologies, and the complexity and dynamics of the passions, drawing on physiognomy, medical science, and philosophy, or, from a different slant, developing the rudimentary elements of a semiotics of the gestures and signs used in communication between the most widely divergent human categories.

A fundamental text on physiognomy, devoted to the correlation between external features and character traits in the individual, was Della Porta's treatise *De humana physiognomonia*, which appeared in 1586.<sup>23</sup> Then in 1601 Thomas Wright, in *The Passions of the Minde*, analysed different human attitudes and expressions according to the theory of the humours subscribed to by medicine of the period. A substantial volume by Giovanni Bonifacio, published in 1616, presented a study of gestures read as a natural and universal language, and listed a comprehensive category of expressions and bodily movements contextualised within an ample range of sources, from ancient and modern literature, works of oratory, the Bible, and documentary evidence of customs and habits.<sup>24</sup> In 1644 Bulwer's *Chirologia* and *Chironomia* was published in London, describing the language of the hands in terms of unalterable natural laws. Bulwer presented a long catalogue of gestures and movements demonstrating how natural gestures were regulated by the conventions of rhetoric, drawing from this a series of observations he considered useful for preachers,

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<sup>21</sup> Erasmus of Rotterdam, *Ecclesiastes sive de ratione concionandi libri quattuor*, Antverpiae, 1535; Luis de Granada, *Ecclesiasticae rethoricae sive de ratione concionandi libri sex*, Venetiis, 1578; Luigi Carbone, *Divinus orator, vel de rethotica divina libri septem*, Venetiis, 1595; Carlo Reggio, *Orator christianus*, Romae, 1612; Nicolas Caussin, *Eloquentiae sacrae et humanae parallela libri XVI*, Paris, 1619; Louis de Cressolles, *Vacationes autumnales sive de perfecta oratoris actione et pronunciatione libri III*, Parisiis, 1620. On *Vacationes autumnales* in particular see M. Fumaroli, *L'âge de l'éloquence*, pp. 311-326, and his 'Le corps éloquent: une somme d'actio et pronunt rhetorica au XII<sup>e</sup> siècle. Les "Vacatione Autumnalkes" de P. Louis de Cressolles', *XVII<sup>e</sup> Siècle*, July-September 1981.

<sup>22</sup> Michel Le Faucheur, *Traité de l'action de l'orateur ou de la prononciation et du geste*, Paris, Courbé, 1657; Jean Lucas, *Actio oratoris seu de gestu et voce libri duo*, Paris, Simon Bernard, 1675; René Bary, *Méthode pour bien prononcer un discours et pour bien l'animer*, Paris, D. Thierry, 1679.

<sup>23</sup> Giovan Battista Della Porta, *De humana physiognomonia libri IV*, Vici Aequensis, apud Cacchium, 1586.

<sup>24</sup> Giovanni Bonifacio, *Arte de' cenni*, Vicenza, Francesco Grossi, 1616.

teachers, and lawyers. Five years later his *Pathomyotomia* applied the same method to facial expressions.<sup>25</sup>

In France, a series of works of a different scope – François La Mothe le Vayer's *Discours de la contrariété d'humeurs qui se trouve entre certaine nations*, Pierre Le Moyne's two-volume *Peintures morales*, and Gérard Pelletier's *Palatium reginae eloquentiae* – extended the typologies to the traits and characteristics of different peoples and nations, even describing the character and behaviour of mythological heroes and literary figures; while Pilet de La Mesnardière, in his *La poétique*, described in minute detail the characteristics of each individual figure in correlation with age, profession and social rank, and moral disposition and passions.<sup>26</sup> Lastly, the vast number of studies on the passions – divided into simple or elementary, and complex, i.e. derived from a combination of the former – were all intent on meticulously analysing the dynamics of the human mind and the mechanisms determining its states and mutations, considered of enormous interest for both the art of oratory and the figurative arts. In 1640 the first of five volumes appeared of Marin Cureau de la Chambre's *Caractères des passions*, the last one coming out in 1662.<sup>27</sup> however it was above all Descartes's essay, *Les passions de l'âme*, published in 1649, which proved the determining influence on the subject. The relation between facial expressions and specific passions was treated in great detail by Charles Le Brun, court painter and director of the *Académie de Peinture et Sculpture*, in a series of lectures given at the Academy, printed posthumously in a volume which was widely read in France, England and Italy.<sup>28</sup>

By positioning itself within the discipline of oratory, then, which systematically extended to all the branches of expression and communication, the theory of recitation gradually broadened its own horizons and sources of knowledge. While early Italian treatises on acting gave no more than sketchy indications as to characters, passions, and their characteristic modes of expression, oratory and its concomitant disciplines was compiling an impressive and increasingly sophisticated catalogue of human figures, emotions, modes of behaviour, inflexions, and gestures. The task of the actor began to appear as a considerably complicated, multi-faceted

<sup>25</sup> John Bulwer, *Chirologia or the Natural Language of the Hand. Composed of the Speaking Motions, and Discoursing Gestures thereof. Whereunto is added Chironomia or the Art of Manual Rethoricke*, London, T. Harper, 1644; and *Pathomyotomia: Or, a Dissection of the Significant Muscles of the Affections of the Mind*, London, Humphrey Moseley, 1649.

<sup>26</sup> François La Mothe le Vayer, *Discours de la contrariété d'humeurs qui se trouve entre certaine nations*, Paris, 1638; Pierre Le Moyne, *Peintures morales*, 2 vols., Paris, Cramoisy, 1641 and 1643; Gérard Pelletier, *Palatium reginae eloquentiae*, Paris, Camusat et Sonnius, 1641; Hyppolyte-Jules Pilet de La Mesnardière, *La poétique*, A. De Sommerville, 1639. An essential text on the subject is M. Fumaroli's *L'âge de l'éloquence* (pp. 343-354 and pp. 381-391).

<sup>27</sup> Marin Cureau de la Chambre, *Les caractères des passions*, 5 vols., Paris, P. Rocolet et P. Blaise, 1640-1662.

<sup>28</sup> Charles Le Brun, *Conférence de Monsieur Le Brun, Premier Peintre du Roy de France, Chancelier et Directeur de l'Académie de Peinture et Sculpture sur l'expression générale et particulière des passions, Enrichie de figures gravées par B. Picart*, Paris, E. Picart, 1698. Published posthumously, this gives the text of Le Brun's *Conférence* to the Académie Royale de Peinture et Sculpture in 1668. The great interest in oratory theory for the analysis and description of the passions is attested by, among other texts, Caussin's *Eloquentiae sacrae et humanae parallela* which dedicates one of its sixteen volumes to the subject, and Étienne Dubois Bretteville's *Eloquence de la chaire et du barreau* (Paris, Denys Thierry, 1689), in five sections, the longest dedicated exclusively to a study of the 'science of the heart, namely the art of arousing and correcting the passions'.

art, and the need grew for more precision in representing the character, defining its interior impulses, and deciding on expressions and emotional nuances through which to enact them.

Constructing a character became, at least in theory, a complex matter. Acting the part of a crusty but enamoured old Spanish military man meant selecting and combining the physical characteristics and codified gestures of a challengingly wide range of human categories (not just generational, professional, and moral, but national too), and reproducing the gestures and expressions suited not only to the whole complex make-up of the character (which, of course, had to remain consistent throughout the play), but to all the variety of passions emerging with the different plot-developments. All this had also to meet theatrical demands: the precise position on stage, the volume and speed of delivery according to stage dimensions, the positioning of the head towards the audience, etc., and aesthetic requirements: producing movements and gestures which were elegant, representative, easy, and natural.<sup>29</sup>

All this was theoretically required, although such a complicated procedure could only be followed in minimal part. It constituted, however, the basic criteria which, in line with the methodological method expounded in early Italian treatises on acting, were gradually adopted to describe and evaluate an actor's performance with some precision.

### **3. Recitation: the Mysterious Difference**

By the end of the seventeenth century, then, in keeping with cultural canons of the time, the actor and the orator were seen as essentially very similar figures, as evinced in the number of writers who had carefully underlined the shared need of actors, teachers, and lawyers alike to study gestural and voice intonation, and the basic similarity between the oratorical techniques of preachers and those of the stage.<sup>30</sup>

In many respects however this correspondence of role seemed little more than a statement of principle. That acting and oratory corresponded at many points in the

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<sup>29</sup> On the late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century distinction between theatrical, dramaturgic, and aesthetic requirements in the theoretical model of recitation, see C. Vicentini, 'Theory of Acting III. The Early Italian Treatises and the Theoretical Acting Model', *Acting Archives Essays*, AAR Supplement 3, April 2011.

<sup>30</sup> On the first point see, e.g., John Bulwer, *Chironomia*, p. 151. The actor-preacher comparison is particularly emphasised in a long poem by Louis Sanlecque, canon of Sainte-Geneviève and professor at Nanterre, *Poème sur le mauvais gestes de ceux qui parlent en public, et surtout des prédicateurs*, Harlem, C. Van den Dael, 1696. Sanlecque constantly defines the preacher an 'acteur', when listing both the mistakes in gestural made in the pulpit and his own recommendations as to moving and convincing the faithful: see his *Poème* in *Sept traités sur le jeu du comédien et autres textes*, ed. by S. Chaouche, Paris, Champion, 2001, pp. 253-254, p. 257 and p. 259. All this of course looks back to Cicero and Quintilian, who at various points make the oratory-recitation comparison, and the classical tradition which has it that Demosthenes was influenced by two actors, Satiro and Andronicus, and Cicero by the art of Roscius and Aesop. This classical reasoning subsumes most treatises of the seventeenth century, which were more than open to the idea of an affinity between the two arts. See, among others, Famiano Strada, *Prolusiones Academicæ* (Romae, apud Iacobum Mascardum, 1617), Cologne, apud Joannem Kinckium, 1625, p. 210; and Le Faucheur, *Traité de l'action de l'orateur*, pp. 63-66. Bulwer's *Chironomia*, significantly, opens with an etching showing Cicero and Demosthenes beside Roscius and Andronicus.

ancient world, and that orators could usefully exploit the arts of the stage, was a given. Matters were considerably different for the modern world. An actor's repertoire, de Cressolles pointed out, no longer possessed 'an honest style of gesture and a fashion of pronouncing words worthy of a liberal education'.<sup>31</sup> And several authors underlined some of the more undignified gestures of the stage, to be avoided, such as striking their brow, waving their arms, extending syllables to confer exaggerated gravitas, etc.<sup>32</sup> The orator, it was concluded, had at this point little to learn from acting.<sup>33</sup>

This perception of the defects of actorly behaviour in actual fact concealed an awareness that the actor's technique was essentially different from other forms of oratory, and had its own specificity which was very clearly observable within the stagecraft of the period. Theatre companies, for example, included the figure of the 'orator', generally one of the older or more prestigious actors whose job it was to preface the performance with an address to the audience, or pronounce a well-rehearsed set-piece when the venue was the town or country-house of an important family. It was also received knowledge, in the world of the players, that a formal address required very different skills from those required to interpret a character in a play. In 1674 Samuel Chappuzeau, in a fundamental text on French theatre of the period, extolled Molière, for years the orator of his company, for uniting three gifts of a very different nature, in being simultaneously 'a fine poet, fine actor, and fine orator', thereby constituting 'the true Trismegistus of the theatre'.<sup>34</sup>

It was of course precisely the fact that the actors' gesturality and delivery were particularly unsuited to the pulpit or the bar, according to the treatise writers, which made them so successful on the stage. During a stage performance, as the Prince de Conti observed in his *Traité de la comédie et des spectacles*, the actor's declaiming and gesticulating could move the audience much more than an orator giving a speech.<sup>35</sup> In this way the basis was established for separating the specific characteristics of acting from the technical abilities common to the art of eloquence in its entirety.

The problem, however, still seemed insurmountable. That a difference existed was obvious: in what it consisted was less clear. The actor-preacher comparison, for example, produced observations which today appear singular to say the least. It was more difficult, Andreini wrote in 1627, to act on the stage than to preach in church, since the preacher in his pulpit was only 'visible from the waist upwards', while the actor's whole body was seen, from the sole of his feet to the crown of his head.<sup>36</sup> The difference, then, in this reading, lay exclusively in the difficulty of working with the

<sup>31</sup> In the unnumbered 'Praelusio' of the *Vacationes Autumnales*.

<sup>32</sup> Defects cited in Abraham Fraunce, *Arcadian Rethorike*, sig. K3<sup>v</sup>; and then by John Bulwer, *Chironomia*, p. 47 and pp. 113-115; Nicolas Caussin, *Eloquentiae sacrae et humanae parallela libri XVI* (Paris, Chapelet, 1619), Paris, apud J. Libert, 1643, p. 561; Louis de Cressolles, *Vacationes Autumnales*, p. 539.

<sup>33</sup> See James Arderne, *Directions Concerning the Matter and Style of Sermons*, London, Spencer Hickman, 1671, p. 95.

<sup>34</sup> Samuel Chappuzeau, *Le théâtre français* (Lyon, Michel Mayer, 1674), Plan de la Tour, Editions d'aujourd'hui, 1985, p. 105.

<sup>35</sup> See Prince de Conti, *Traité de la comédie et des spectacles*, pp. 201-202.

<sup>36</sup> Giovan Battista Andreini, *La ferza. Ragionamento secondo contra l'accuse date alla commedia*, Paris, Nicolao Callemont, 1625, reprinted in *La professione del teatro*, ed. by F. Marotti and G. Romei, Roma, Bulzoni, 1991, p. 497.

whole body; and if acting emerged on the whole as the more complex art, any essential specificity denoting its difference from oratory failed to emerge.

Unsurprisingly, the nature of acting's specific technique was more clearly defined in the considerations of playwrights. According to the poetics of the time, poetry too, like recitation, based its norms on the doctrine of eloquence whereby the writing and oral transmission of a text were two strictly-interconnected moments in the same process of composition. For this reason, as the completed literary product generally comprised both a written and performed text, the author was expected to be able to recite his own work effectively.<sup>37</sup> But when it was a question of enunciating a theatre text, the art of the actor seemed to encompass a separate, exclusive skill which lay beyond the writer's abilities. Corneille had no problem in conceding that only the technical excellence of the actor, on stage, could breathe adequate life into the playwright's script; and not because he reproduced in performance the forms and content implicit in the poet/playwright's lines, but because he 'added' to the author's work something which only the specific skills of stage-acting could produce.<sup>38</sup> Georges de Scudéry, commenting on the published version of *Le Cid* after its success at the Théâtre du Marais, expressed all his perplexity. The script appeared to have no beauties beyond those 'lent' it by the masterly skill of the actors, Mondory and Villiers. In a word, *Le Cid* on paper was a very different matter from *Le Cid* on stage.<sup>39</sup>

The most cogent observation however is from a seminal text from the mid seventeenth century, *La pratique du théâtre*, by François Hédelin d'Aubignac, a member of Richelieu's circle. D'Aubignac analysed the question of theatre composition through an extensive series of examples from contemporary plays, and insisted on a fundamental difference between drama and all other literary genres. A poem, a speech, or piece of narrative prose, he declared, acted on the public through the images the words created in the mind. In the theatre, on the other hand, the public is immediately presented with vital images and materials which pass concretely before our eyes in the shape of the characters embodied by the actors, and it is these images – concrete, fleshly, external to ourselves – which strike and move us. The function of the word is transformed, then: no longer a trigger to evoke imagined visions, as in a story or speech, but an element of the real and present figures walking the stage. What the actor pronounces is effective not in being 'beautiful', the evocative and articulate expression of profound ideas, ornamented with rhetorical,

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<sup>37</sup> On oral poetry and reading aloud in the rhetorical tradition, see G. Mathieu-Castellani, "'De bien prononcer les vers": la poétique de la Renaissance et l'héritage réthorique'; and E. Buron, 'Lecture et récitation de la poésie dans la seconde moitié du XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle', in *A haute voix*, ed. by O. Rosenthal, Paris, Klincksieck, 1998. Some seventeenth-century authors, however, sustained the opposite theory whereby the literary process ended with the writing of the text, and was totally distinct from its vocal rendering. François de La Mothe Le Vayer in particular maintained that only silent reading, exclusively 'through the eyes', permitted a sound critical appraisal which reading aloud could only hinder (see François de La Mothe Le Vayer, *Du récit d'un ouvrage*, in *Oeuvres*, reproduction of the 1756-1759 edition, 2 vols., Genève, Slatkine Reprints, 1970, II, p. 650). On the whole issue see P. J. Salazar, *Le culte de la voix au XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle. Formes esthétiques de la parole à l'âge de l'imprimé*, Paris, Honoré Champion, 1995, particularly pp. 147-149.

<sup>38</sup> Pierre Corneille, *Excusatio* (1634), in *Oeuvres complètes*, Paris, Gallimard, 1987, I, pp. 463-464.

<sup>39</sup> Georges de Scudéry, 'Lettre de Monsieur de Scudéry à l'illustre Académie', in Armand Gasté, *La querelle du Cid*, p. 215. See H. Merlin, 'Effets de voix, effets de scène: Mondory entre Le Cid et Marianne', in *A haute voix*, pp. 158-162.

imagination-firing devices, but in enacting the immediate reaction of the character to the circumstances created by the plot-development.

If we consider tragedy in its own nature, it implies so much action, that it seems not to have any room left for discourse: indeed, it is called a *Drama*, which signifies an action, and the persons concerned are called actors and not orators, precisely as those that are present are named spectators, and non listeners. Indeed all the discourses of tragedy ought to be as the actions of those that appear upon the stage; there, to speak is to act, and no speeches exist inserted by the poet to show his eloquence.<sup>40</sup>

D'Aubignac admits that this is far truer of comedy, since tragedies tend to evolve more verbally and diegetically, through pronouncements frequently narrating off-stage events.<sup>41</sup> But in general it is possible to establish criteria for distinguishing the actor's recitation from the orator's *actio*. The orator's task consists in using his voice and movements to enhance the efficacy of his words, the resonance of the figures evoked, the elegance of the text's rhetorical devices, and the perspicacity of the precepts laid down, in order to fire the public's imagination. The actor's skill, on the other hand, is concentrated on reproducing the words, expressions, and gestures which flesh out the living, concrete actions of the character before the spectators' eyes, in the different situations presented to the character. The orator has reached his goal when through the power of the words pronounced he has evoked sufficiently vivid images in the minds of the audience; the actor moves his spectators when he embodies and 'impersonates' the behaviour of a specific character, in a given situation, through his way of speaking, reacting, and articulating.<sup>42</sup> What distinguishes recitation from oratory, in brief, is the need – essential for an actor but secondary and incidental for the orator – to pronounce his words and perform his gestures so as to (re)present above all his character in action, with the specific passions as they pass through his mind.<sup>43</sup> The need, according to the model of the early Italian acting theory, to satisfy first and foremost the 'dramaturgic' requirements of his public and his profession.

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<sup>40</sup> François Hédélín d'Aubignac, *La pratique du théâtre* (Paris, Antoine de Sommerville, 1657), Genève, Slatkine Reprints, 1996, p. 282.

<sup>41</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 283.

<sup>42</sup> The task of the perfect orator, d'Aubignac underlines in *Discours académique sur l'éloquence*, is to use words to 'thrust into the mind of the listeners all images able to please'. When the imagination is 'replete' with pleasant images, his 'judgment', unable to apply itself to other objects, loses all autonomy and can be guided by the orator to his own ends (François Hédélín d'Aubignac, *Discours académique sur l'éloquence prononcé en l'Hostel de Monsieur le Marquis d'Hernault, le 12 Juillet 1668*, Paris, Pierre Colin, 1668, pp. 11-14).

<sup>43</sup> An occasional and secondary requirement for the orator, of course, although the rhetorical figure of *prosopopeia*, or personification, formed part of the training of any orator. This consisted in conceiving and declaiming the speech as if it were pronounced by a character from history, by someone already deceased, or generally by a figure other than the orator. Quintilian illustrates it in the *Institutio oratoria* (III,8,49-54), and also mentions the necessary difference between the declamation of *prosopopeia* and that of the theatre generally (*ibid.*, I,8,3).

#### **4. The New Treatises. Andrea Perrucci, *Recitation, Oratory and Comedy by Improvisation***

D'Aubignac's observations, however, produced no follow-up, and the late seventeenth century continued to consider oratory and recitation as essentially the same thing, albeit with little courage of its conviction. At the same time the sum of observations and awareness accumulated over the century had gradually raised the curtain on a more articulate and complex view of the actor's art, and the more educated spectators had begun to develop a greater sensitivity requiring a more nuanced and sophisticated interpretation and character-rendering. Recitation remained squarely within the discipline of eloquence but clearly required a more than ordinarily complex understanding and actorly competence. What seemed called for was a system of rules for actors, looking back to the doctrine of oratory but simultaneously forward to the specific requirements of the stage. The audience was similarly in need of precisely-determined criteria, possessing only their immediate, untrained reactions with which to evaluate such a complex art.

A new series of works on the norms of theatre recitation, then, began to appear at the turn of the century. The first, Andrea Perrucci's *Dell'arte rappresentativa premeditata, ed all'improvviso*, published in Naples in 1699, analysed all aspects of theatre production, from the choice of script to costume design, with considerable emphasis on the actor's art. In 1707 appeared Jean Léonor Le Gallois de Grimarest's *Traité du récitatif*, and in 1710 *The Life of Mr. Thomas Betterton*, attributed to Charles Gildon. It is in the dialectics of these treatises, with all their evasive verbal somersaults, that the issue gradually began to emerge, with the dramatic force it was to have on the debate of the following decades.

What characterised them was the obvious tension between the urge to keep recitation within the narrow bounds of oratory, and the need to focus directly on the work of the actor, analysing all the specific stage difficulties which had little or nothing to do with the performance of a lawyer in court or a preacher in the pulpit.

This basic dichotomy emerged forcefully in the work of Andrea Perrucci, a Sicilian man of letters and member of various academies, who in 1678 was engaged as playwright and adapter of existing plays by the San Bartolomeo Theatre in Naples. He had also acquired great experience as a semi-professional actor and performance director, both at San Bartolomeo and in various other venues including the court theatre.

On the nature of recitation Perrucci entertained no doubt whatsoever: the arts of acting and oratory are indistinguishable, as the beginning of the treatise states clearly. Before talking about the theatre in general he feels bound to underline the conventional distinction between the 'honest, decorous actors' whose art merits serious analysis, and the 'dishonest and shameful' street entertainers, distinguishing between the two categories however through a concept which by the late seventeenth century had outlived its usefulness, that of the 'mercenary'. These are disreputable players who, he explains, tread the boards for 'sordid wages', as a mere job, 'to eat one's bread so that one gorges oneself at the expenses of others', while 'honest and decorous' are those who perform simply to offer 'delightful

entertainment'.<sup>44</sup> Branding as mercenaries all actors who lived by their profession was certainly questionable, particularly at the precise period when the professional theatre had gained full establishment recognition, and indeed Perrucci ends up rather inconsistently praising Isabella Andreini, the most famous Italian professional actress of the sixteenth century who, he declared, had plied her trade 'with good repute, virtue, and decorum'.<sup>45</sup>

Clearly, the distinction between 'honest' actors and disreputable mountebanks had to be sought elsewhere, in the area of cultural and professional dignity. To be shunned, Perrucci declared, are the players who represent the texts 'poorly or sordidly'.<sup>46</sup> But the cultural dignity of the performance can only be guaranteed by respect for the rules of oratory, 'an art of revealing the inner soul with suitable gestures, voice, energy, and style', that is, 'to convey to the listener the sentiments of the soul through declamation, gestures, and actions, with style and refinement'. Oratory is thus the basic art of expression, and its norms are indispensable not only to actors but to 'men learned in sciences and liberal arts', academicians, ambassadors, and lawyers, and to generals who 'have accomplished more with persuasive speeches to their soldiers and to their enemies than they have with military strength'; even, Perrucci goes on, to doctors since 'it matters greatly that a doctor know how to console his patient with well-expressed explanations, and to give proof of his talent among his peers'.<sup>47</sup>

In actual fact the eloquence of ambassadors, doctors, and generals was not of the slightest interest to the 'poet' of the San Bernardo Theatre, a semi-professional actor and organiser of entertainments. His concern was to draw on his long years of experience to provide norms and precepts for anyone wanting to act on the stage; and he was very aware of the 'novelty', as he himself put it, which the attempt represented in the extensive catalogue of treatises on eloquence.<sup>48</sup> But if recitation came within the general category of eloquence, how to write a work of oratory, of use both in general and to all public speakers, dedicated exclusively to actors? Perrucci's expedient was to present recitation as the paradigm of oratory: oratory at its most emblematic zenith. The norms of theatre recitation offered the best lesson in expressing the soul and moving the sentiments of the listener, whether in law-courts, churches, academies, or political assemblies. 'Though there are differences between the gestures of an orator and those of an actor', Perrucci explained, 'it seems that the nearer an orator approaches the style of an actor, the more highly is he regarded'.<sup>49</sup>

The basic premise of seventeenth-century treatises was thus reversed. The actor was no longer an ambiguous declaimer who, while following the general guidelines for all public speakers, inevitably, in meeting the needs of the theatre, fell into excesses which users of the more refined art of eloquence would do well to avoid.

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<sup>44</sup> Andrea Perrucci, *A Treatise on Acting, from Memory and by Improvisation (1699) by Andrea Perrucci/Dell'Arte rappresentativa, premeditata ed all'improvviso*, Italian text and English translation ed. by F. Cotticelli, A. Goodrich Heck, Th. F. Heck, Laham (Maryland); Toronto; Plymouth, The Scarecrow Press, 2008, p. 6, p. 8, p. 10 and p. 102. First edition is *Dell'arte rappresentativa, premeditata, ed all'improvviso*, Napoli, Nella nuova Stampa di Michele Luigi Mutio, 1699.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., p. 7.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., p. 198.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., pp. 3-4.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., p. 9.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., p. 3.

On the contrary, he now constituted the model for all those who had to externalize their thoughts and feelings, and theatre norms now appeared ‘helpful’, as the title of the treatise implies, not just for actors but for any other kind of orator.<sup>50</sup>

Even from this new perspective, however, the doctrine of oratory remained as the basis for any theory of recitation, blurring to an extent any clear lines as to the actor’s specific skills, which of course were self-evident in any experience of the stage. On this point Perrucci’s explanation of recitation by improvisation was exemplary.

His work is divided into two parts (each composed of a *Proemio* and fifteen ‘rules’), the first dedicated to a production ‘acted by memory’, i.e. composed by a ‘poet’ who has decided on the subject, plot, and lines; the second to a production in which the author provides the subject and the actors decide on the lines. This second part devotes page after page to the *commedia dell’arte* characters (subdivided into Lovers, Fathers and Old Men, Capitani, Zanni, Maidservants and Old Women, and Procuresses), also listing an ample repertoire of *generici* (‘general compositions that can be adapted to every kind of comedy’, Perrucci glosses).<sup>51</sup> One of the most important and detailed sources available for our knowledge of recitation by improvisation, it has made Perrucci’s work justly celebrated.

Now the difference between recitation by improvisation and from memory, particularly the different stage-effects, were quite clear to a minimally trained eye, and, we know, were immediately perceived by those of Perrucci’s contemporaries who were interested in the theatre. Around 1667 a French scholar, Charles de Saint-Evremond, observed, for example, that the performance of *commedia dell’arte* players, unlike that of actors accustomed to playing totally scripted parts, was based on spontaneous, natural, and vivid ‘action’ rather than the enunciation of a speech.<sup>52</sup> And in 1694 Evaristo Gherardi, an actor in the Italian company based in Paris, also claimed the superiority of recitation by improvisation. Drawing on the actor’s imagination and ingenuity rather than mere memory alone, it encouraged a spontaneous link between word and gesture, and an immediate and almost automatic ensemble acting among those on the stage. Actors reciting from memory, on the other hand, Gherardi insisted, were so intent on remembering and repeating their lines that there was no energy left for acting them or paying attention to their own gestures and those of their fellow actors.<sup>53</sup>

The merits of recitation by improvisation were not lost on contemporary commentators, then – the vivacity, the natural fusion of word and action, and the

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<sup>50</sup> *On the Art of Acting from Memory and by Improvisation. In two Parts. Helpful not Only to Those Who Enjoy Acting, but Also to the Preachers, Orators, Academics, and the Curious.*

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 103.

<sup>52</sup> Charles de Saint-Evremond, *De la comédie italienne*, in *Oeuvres en prose*, Paris, Didier, 1966, pp.48-54.

<sup>53</sup> Evaristo Gherardi, *Le théâtre italien ou le Recueil de toutes le scènes françaises qui ont été jouées sur le théâtre italien de l’Hôtel de Bourgogne*, Paris, De Luynes et Gherardi, 1694. Comparisons between actors who acted their parts from memory (the French players), and stammering ‘schoolchildren’ who ‘trembled in acting out their carefully-learned lesson’ was prudently moderated in the 1700 edition where it was acknowledged that a number of ‘illustrious actors’, particularly skilled and gifted, succeeded in ‘concealing art with art’, and though acting a text learned by heart, ‘charmed the audience with the beauty of their voice, the variety of their gestures, the adept flexibility of tone, and the graceful, easy, natural air which accompanied all their movements, and which they infuse into all that they pronounce’. See the opening ‘Avertissement’ in the six-volume edition of the *Théâtre italien ou le Recueil général de toutes le comédies et scènes françaises jouées par les comédiens du roi pendant tout le temps qu’ils ont été au services*, Paris, Cusson et Witte, 1700.

immediate interrelation among the actors present on the stage, all of which seemed extremely difficult if not impossible when the actor was reciting a script. This empirical awareness, however, was to vanish in Perrucci's treatise which, in the name of the general requirements of rhetoric, was intent on reducing all differences between the two styles of acting.

In the case of recitation by improvisation, Perrucci noted, the actors had to effect a series of operations before the audience – not least inventing their lines and co-ordinating the dialogue. In acting from memory these are for the most part taken care of by the playwright who, Perrucci continues, can take his time, without distractions of any kind, working, reworking and perfecting a draft; while the actor is working and processing 'in real time', there on the stage. In both cases, however, the same operations are required, involving above all the arts of eloquence, 'rules of language, the figures of speech, tropes, and all the art of rhetoric' to invent and articulate lines and speeches.<sup>54</sup> If it is undoubtedly more difficult to perform a play by improvisation than to interpret a fully-elaborated script, the final result is basically the same: to give a rounded and co-ordinated performance.

The rules to be followed for recitation were the same, and no difference exists 'as regards costume, voice, delivery, memory, gestures, and actions'.<sup>55</sup> Only respect for the norms of recitation governing a scripted literary text will save improvising actors from the horrors of the 'charlatans and mountebanks' who appear on stage 'mangling the plots, talking nonsense, gesticulating like madmen'.<sup>56</sup> In a word, recitation by improvisation is essentially recitation from memory, to which is added the task of writing the play, which normally belongs to the playwright.<sup>57</sup> The two acting styles overlap to such an extent that the techniques of improvisation can be adopted in a performance from memory, completely unperceived by the audience, to obviate accidents and contingencies (not least lapses of memory), or when time is too short to study parts and perfect the performance.<sup>58</sup>

### 5. *Experience, Rules and the Insufficiency of Actio*

Once all significant difference has been eliminated between the two types of acting, there remains the question of agreed rules for the actor's stage performance. Here Perrucci finds himself in the same position as the first Italian treatise writers, Ingegneri, de' Sommi, and Cecchini. He too compares the actor's work with *actio oratoria*, generally defined 'eloquence of the body', since the use of the voice and gesturality had to follow the dictates of Cicero and Quintilian, studied and copied with great precision. Like them, too, he takes from the classics all the details as to the expressive meanings of gestures and movements, and the voice and its defects – in

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<sup>54</sup> Andrea Perrucci, *A Treatise on Acting, from Memory and by Improvisation (1699) by Andrea Perrucci/Dell'Arte rappresentativa, premeditata ed all'improvviso*, p. 101.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., pp. 101-102 and pp. 104-105.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., p. 102.

<sup>57</sup> Perrucci particularly recommends that the improvising actor compile a personal collection of rhetorically unexceptionable passages, to be learned by heart and inserted into the performance (ibid., p. 103 and p. 105). The second part of the treatise consists mainly in a detailed collection of *generici* adaptable to the different characters and situations.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., p. 74 and p. 186.

short the basic repertoire of tones, stances, and attitudes to be used on-stage.<sup>59</sup> And again like them he offers the most appropriate solutions to the three types of issues characterising recitation. Firstly theatrical requirements, pronouncing lines so as to be perfectly understood, regulating the volume of the voice according to the size of the premises and number of spectators; timing, so as to avoid overlap in delivering lines; and strategies as to entries and exits.<sup>60</sup> Secondly aesthetic requirements, prescribing elegance and grace of movement and proscribing anything more than the slightest indication of gestures (such as a lovers' embrace) which if realistically rendered could be deemed immodest.<sup>61</sup> Lastly, dramaturgic requirements, orienting the interpretation of character according to minutely-predetermined moral, generational, professional, social, and national categories, and imposing a precise and efficient rendering of the various human passions and attitudes elicited by the specific situations and circumstances in which they find themselves.<sup>62</sup>

The result should be to make the representation, while of course 'feigned', seem 'real, extremely real to the spectators', which is only possible if the players' actions appear spontaneous and natural.<sup>63</sup> The recitation must on the one hand reproduce as closely as possible the features of normal behaviour, so that, for example, in speaking the lines the actor must avoid any sing-song, cadenced elocution which would be 'inappropriate, since one should recite just as one speaks'.<sup>64</sup> On the other, care must be taken that all the players' words and actions, though rehearsed and repeated, should seem casual and not artificially delivered. Similarly, 'prearranged jests are to be spoken as if they were not prearranged, but arose by chance'.<sup>65</sup> And if an actor has to fall down on stage, 'this must to be done in such a way that it seems to be accidental, not premeditated and false', however elaborately studied to avoid unsuitable movements, 'in such a manner that the actor does not turn his shoulders or back to the audience'.<sup>66</sup> And if the actor is required to perform improbable gestures or actions, such as interrupting a dialogue to make an aside, it is necessary to act 'with courtesy and without affectation, as if it were happening by chance and not by design'.<sup>67</sup> The very basic requirement of a good memory is in this respect essential, both because on stage the actor must concentrate on the action of the play, and not on the prompter, but also because unless he remembers his actions and words effortlessly they will be totally lacking all spontaneity and naturalness. 'One must

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid., pp. 51-56, pp. 58-62, p. 64 and p. 70. For Perrucci's scrupulousness in copying classical norms, see particularly pp. 60-62. The whole treatise evinces considerable erudition; apart from the canonical Cicero and Quintilian Perrucci also cites, in a wide variety of context, scores of classical authors (Horace, Svetonius, Seneca, Juvenal, Macrobius, Statius, Strabo, Gellio, Valerius Maximus, Vitruvius, Lucian, Demetrius Phalereus, Pollux, Athenaeus, etc.) and moderns (Lope de Vega, Cervantes, Minturno, Tasso, Guarino, Guidobaldo Bonarelli, Piccolomini, Tassoni, Bibbiena, and Caro through to Samuel Pufendorf).

<sup>60</sup> See *ibid.*, pp. 53-54, p. 62, p. 71, pp. 74-76 and pp. 86-87.

<sup>61</sup> See *ibid.*, pp. 60-61, pp. 70-71 and p. 73.

<sup>62</sup> See *ibid.*, pp. 42-43, pp. 54-57, p. 63, p. 69, p. 82, pp. 103-104, p. 118, pp. 130-132, pp. 134-136, pp. 144-145, pp. 147-148, pp. 149-150, pp. 154-155 and p. 159.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 64.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 55. See also p. 40: 'good actors who recite poetry with perfect skill will turn it into prose; and on the other hand those who are not good at this, or who are beginners, will sing prose'.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 176.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 66.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 70.

memorize one's part extremely well, as to both expressions and actions', Perrucci insists, since they should come together not only 'like twins' but 'unexpectedly'.<sup>68</sup>

Perrucci, however, has developed the model of the earlier Italian theoreticians to an extraordinary extent, exploiting both the reflections on oratory and gestuality which developed throughout the seventeenth century and his own very wide and varied experience of the stage. He devotes a significant amount of space, for example, to the category of nationality in constructing a character. This becomes a criterion not simply for determining the actor's costume, which should be 'in the style of the country in which the work is supposed to take place, that is, Romans should dress in the Roman style, Hebrews in the Hebrew style, Persians in the Persian style', (with considerable praise for the meticulousness of the Spanish players).<sup>69</sup> It also defines the gestures to accompany repeated situations, such as removing the hat in greeting:

Removing one's hat should be done with grace and nobility, accompanied by a bow, but following the custom of the character's homeland. For example, a Spaniard should bring his hat to his breast with the opening to the inside, so that he will not seem to be begging for alms, and when crossing his legs to bow, he should move the right foot in a circle toward the left heel when bowing to Heaven, and the left foot toward the right when bowing to men, always keeping his head and chest straight. In the French manner, one should stand with one's feet still, or slightly draw one foot back after the other, then doff the hat and bring it to the chest, while bending the head and waist toward the person to whom one is bowing. In the Italian manner, one mixes the two usages according to personal inclination. In the Asian manner, without taking off one's turban, one brings the hand to the chest, bowing the head<sup>70</sup>

What is more significant, however, is that given the wealth of notes, comments, and advice dictated by concrete stage experience, the precepts and repertoire of gestures and attitudes suggested by *actio oratoria* now appear less than satisfactory. They are insufficient to cover the range of behaviour and movements required for basic recitation. Perrucci is thus able to offer consolidated teachings based on Cicero and Quintilian when treating the expressive significance of the positions and movements of parts of the face and body (eyes, eyelashes, nose, lips, chest, hands, etc.), or the gestures and attitudes to be avoided as inelegant (it is unacceptable, for example, 'to twist, purse, [or] bite' the nose and lips, to raise the hands above eye-level, to move them away from the body beyond the breadth of the shoulders, to use the left hand without the right, to begin a speech positioning the left foot before the right, or to twist and turn the head, mouth, and shoulders).<sup>71</sup> However, he then has to define other gestures and modes of behaviour which are extraneous to this particular tradition but a necessary component of acting before an audience. The pronouncing of a prologue, for example is preceded by an action which is indispensable in the theatre but out of place in an orator. To silence 'the noise of the people finding their

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid., pp.48-50, where Perrucci gives advice to the actor learning the part. The best time to learn by heart is the evening, and if the speeches are too long he recommends breaking them down into shorter sections and learning them separately.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., p. 20.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., p. 57.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., pp. 57-60, p. 62 and p. 73.

seats', Perrucci advises the player 'to walk about the stage a little', before beginning the prologue.<sup>72</sup>

In the same way the basic principles of *actio oratoria* create a series of difficulties when applied to the theatre. The norm whereby the orator must always face the audience is problematic in a dialogue. Perrucci maintains that the actor must at all times be attentive to the words and actions of his interlocutor, but must equally always turn his face and body towards the public. Perrucci's advice is that the actor should assume a rather curious attitude and 'remain standing with his chest to the audience, only tilting his head toward his companion while [the latter] is speaking, and turning his chest slightly'.<sup>73</sup> The same audience-facing norm requires particular care when the actor has to kneel. If to the left of the audience, they should kneel on the right knee; if to the right, the left, 'so that one's chest always faces the audience'.<sup>74</sup>

But it was above all reasons of theatre performance which dictated the need for gestures and actions not contemplated in the repertoire of traditional *actio*, some of which require great care to avoid physical damage to the actor. Fainting, for example, has its own detailed rubric:

Fainting should be done in such a way that the actor seems gradually to lose his senses. There should be something to lean on, a chair indoors, or some kind of support on the street. With a trembling foot, with laboured breathing, with palpitations of the chest, the swoon should come over him little by little, as he seeks something to lean on, or there could be someone to support him or her<sup>75</sup>

With so many varied aspects of body language to cover, the player clearly requires a behavioural code well in excess of that of *actio*. A system of rules has to be added to those of oratory, contemplating situations more physically detailed and demanding than those of delivering a speech. One possibility which Perrucci suggests is to follow the manuals advising on behavioural norms in the various areas of daily life which inevitably have to be represented on the stage. His recommendation is Giovanni della Casa's *Galateo*, published in 1558, where the actor will find instructions on performing a range of everyday actions – blowing one's nose, or simply eating – which at some point he will inevitably be required to perform on stage.<sup>76</sup>

There remain, however, the more extreme events, 'dreadful' and 'horrible', which no *Galateo* would take into account and which were once only recounted diegetically in a long monologue. In the modern world, Perrucci insists, they should be shown: experience teaches that the public is more readily moved on seeing the horror reproduced before their eyes. In any case, an actor's skill is tested far more by enacting an event than by recounting it: all the more reason to emphasise that

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid., p. 87.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., p. 62.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., p. 63.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., p. 66.

<sup>76</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 59, p. 70 and p. 76. The citing of the *Galateo* also gives a significant indication of what was considered good stage behaviour by at least a part of the actors of the age. If on the one hand the actor was recommended to behave elegantly in every situation, and should be able to wield a stick 'with grace', it was also necessary to remind him not to yawn, belch, or spit on stage 'unless it be into a handkerchief' (p. 59).

‘wounding, being wounded, killing, and dying on stage must be done with skill’.<sup>77</sup> There then follows advice on this last typology, death on stage, which is obviously beyond the remit of any of the traditional tasks of oratory:

Let the death of tyrants, however, be accompanied by desperate and violent acts; and in the final throes let it be laboured, with thrashing, rolling the eyes, and anguish. Let the death of the innocent be discreet, except to the extent that we feel a natural repugnance at the destruction of a living being, and let it show forth a peacefulness and holy endurance that can move the devout to tears and joy for such a happy death. In the case of the death of lovers or various others, let it be accompanied by the gestures with which a deeply moved soul would usually accept death, whether by his own will, out of despair, or by the power of an enemy’s weapon.<sup>78</sup>

The doctrine of oratory, Perrucci’s treatise makes clear, will always be an inadequate tool for describing recitation, given the concrete nature of the theatre. Whatever the theoretical declarations, the art of the orator and that of the actor are at variance, and the system of norms is constantly undermined by the far-from-minimal exceptions. Having established the rule of elegance and decorum, the occasions for breaking it, at least in part, have to be acknowledged – in the role of the buffoon, for example.<sup>79</sup> Then there are the characters who defy any precise categorisation, such as magicians or necromancers, to be interpreted *a capriccio*: ‘however one likes’.<sup>80</sup> Even the norms regarding stage entrances have to allow for exceptions, ‘to adjust the action to what is happening’.<sup>81</sup> In short, the rule has to be established along with its breach, since ‘not all rules are absolute; they have their exceptions’.<sup>82</sup>

At the end of his long treatise Perrucci’s pragmatic conclusion is that, in the art of recitation, ‘I cannot deny that practice is more effective than theory’.<sup>83</sup> This would seem to be repeating what Flaminio Scala had stated some eighty years earlier, but it now takes on a new significance.<sup>84</sup> Theory, Perrucci, adds, is still necessary because practice alone is ‘like walking blind’, and the best results are obtained ‘when both are joined together’.<sup>85</sup> It is not a question of rejecting theory, but of adapting it to match practice: of describing and guiding the actor’s concrete activity on stage, determining the problems, and suggesting solutions. All this was beyond the reach of a theory extrapolated from the doctrine of oratory when applied to the vast accumulated experience of late-seventeenth-century actors.

## 6. *Grimarest*

Eight years later a fresh attempt was made to analyse recitation subsumed under the norms of oratory by Grimarest, who put the problem in clear and peremptory

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid., p. 67.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., p. 68.

<sup>79</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 61 and p. 71.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., pp. 147-148.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., p. 71.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., p. 92.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., p. 199.

<sup>84</sup> See C. Vicentini, ‘Theory of Acting III. The Early Italian Treatises and the Theoretical Acting Model’.

<sup>85</sup> Andrea Perrucci, *A Treatise on Acting, from Memory and by Improvisation (1699) by Andrea Perrucci/Dell’Arte rappresentativa, premeditata ed all’improvviso*, p. 199.

terms, the result of the particular circumstances in which the treatise arose. Was it or was it not possible, he demanded, to establish a series of rules to evaluate an actor's performance? And if these rules were those of oratory, how were they to be applied to the stage?

Grimarest was a teacher of French, playwright, and dilettante actor, the author of a number of prose works including a volume on military skills, and an occasional guide for foreign travellers passing through Paris. In 1705 he had published the first biography of Molière, in which he praised his style of acting. Molière, Grimarest maintained, acted with a perfection unknown among actors of the new generation, who no longer knew the basic rules of their art.<sup>86</sup> The pronouncement immediately drew down the wrath of an anonymous reviewer who denied that any such stage rules existed. Actors, he sentenced, were individuals of scant culture who would never have been able to study them anyway; moreover the inexistent rules would have improved no-one's acting since it was often the most illiterate of a company's actors who were the best on stage. Acting was 'a gift of nature' which, the reviewer went on, 'experience shapes with no rule beyond that of adapting to the tastes of the audience'. What's more, he added, since a number of actors in the Comédie Française were appreciated at least as much as Molière in his own day, no-one could sensibly maintain that acting standards had degenerated, concluding with a doubt as to whether Grimarest himself, for all his confidence that such rules existed, would be able to explain them.<sup>87</sup>

The basic issue concerned of course the status and dignity of the actor, which could only be assured, in the viewpoint of the period, if the profession required mental abilities, serious study, and a solid culture: in a word, the gifts of an orator. The key point now however was the matter of rules. Without rules to follow, the intellectual side of acting vanished completely and the actor's art was reduced to an innate gift, open to the uneducated and the illiterate. It required neither study nor preparation, which put it beyond the reach of any competent and well-founded judgment beyond that of simple, spontaneous audience-satisfaction. It left no room for the opinion of experts and connoisseurs, and in short was little more than a private manifestation of no cultural substance or interest whatsoever.

Grimarest published a short reply. The principles of recitation, he repeated, did indeed exist: those of oratory; and if acting required natural gifts, such as a resonant voice and agile body, it was also necessary to use them according to accurately-studied norms.<sup>88</sup> Certainly it was necessary to distinguish the *comédien*, who followed the rules in a rough and ready manner, from the *acteur* who interpreted them with elegance and intelligence, putting into his acting 'all the truth and delicacy which

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<sup>86</sup> Jean-Leonor Le Gallois de Grimarest, *La vie de M. de Molière* (Paris, Jacques Lefèvre, 1705), ed. by G. Mongrédien, Paris, Michel Briant, 1955, p. 54.

<sup>87</sup> *Lettre critique à Mr. de \*\*\* sur le livre intitulé, La vie de Mr. Molière* (Paris, Claude Cellier, 1706), now in Grimarest, *La vie de M. de Molière*, pp. 137-138.

<sup>88</sup> The rules apply equally, he emphasises, to the actor and the preacher. Indeed, a good preacher would give an excellent rendering of a passage from a play, and the actor should therefore be considered 'as an orator pronouncing in public a speech composed to touch the heart of the auditorium' (Jean-Leonor Le Gallois de Grimarest, *Adition [sic] à la vie de Monsieur de Molière, contenant une réponse à la critique que l'on en a faite*, Paris, J. Le Febvre et P. Ribou, 1706, now in *La vie de M. de Molière*, ed. by G. Mongrédien, p. 162 and p. 165).

nature demands'.<sup>89</sup> Anyone, however, who had studied the precepts of oratory and understood the script would be able to move the audience – the prime aim of acting.<sup>90</sup>

It was now a question of stating these precepts. At first sight, given that the actor applied only the rules of oratory, Grimarest could have confined himself to citing some of the very many works on oratory in circulation. The reviewer however had challenged him to state the rules which were indispensable for concretely appraising the actors' performance on stage; and the *Journal des savants* had quickly entered the fray by putting the same question to Grimarest.<sup>91</sup> The only way out of it was to recognise recitation as one of the types of oratory, with which it shared the ground rules while applying them in specific ways, according to its specific needs. It was these needs that Grimarest wanted to address in the *Traité du récitatif*.

The *Traité* divided oratory into four essential types: 'reading' (subdivided into 'simple' and 'moving'), 'public action' (speeches pronounced in a court of law, before a prince, or before an assembly), 'declamation' (both preaching and theatre recitation) and 'song'. These four types are distinguished by two basic criteria: the level of passion to be invested in the delivery of the text, and the varying degree of bodily movements and expressions which can accompany the words. Hence 'simple reading' differs from 'moving reading' in that it is concerned with simply rendering the denotation of the text, its logical meaning and the organisation of the discourse, while the second seeks to solicit emotions in the listener; to the norms of simple reading it adds some of the rules of declamation, though communicating only through the voice, without the addition of gestures or movements. If when expressing passions the reader inevitably moves the face or arms in any way, the movements must remain circumscribed, involuntary, or in any case not intentionally used as a means of communication, since 'as a principle gesture must play no part in reading'.<sup>92</sup>

The same rules of simple reading also apply to 'public action': any speech on an official occasion which however draws minimally on gesturality. Marks of solemnity are to condition every expression: while gestures are to be limited to slight arm movements, the voice must be 'sonorous, serious, and imposing', its variations, while necessary 'imperceptible', and at the points where the orator changes his tone to reawaken his public's interest he must proceed 'gradually and imperceptibly': all exclamatory force would be unseemly. He should similarly avoid all emphasis designed to play on the audience's emotions, not simply in formal speeches, but equally in lawyers' speeches – anyone pleading a case and trusting to a judge's

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<sup>89</sup> Ibid., pp. 163-164.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., p. 165. Grimarest again returns to the distinction between *comédien* and *acteur* in the *Traité*, adding however that only the actor can perform skilfully on the stage, while the *comédien* will always end up being 'ridiculous' (Jean-Leonor Le Gallois de Grimarest, *Traité du récitatif*, Paris, J. Le Febvre et P. Ribou, 1707, pp. 188-189). But a knowledge of the norms, and sound understanding of the text remain the cardinal factors of acting; any playwright with a grounding in oratory will recite his own text better than an actor 'since he is able to miss no inflexion of the voice nor gesture, in order to express his required action' (Jean-Leonor Le Gallois de Grimarest, *Adition à la vie de Monsieur de Molière*, p. 125).

<sup>91</sup> In an anonymous article of 22 March 1706 now in S. Chaouche, *Sept traités sur le jeu du comédien et autres textes*, pp. 379-381.

<sup>92</sup> Jean-Leonor Le Gallois de Grimarest, *Traité du recitative*, pp. 77-100.

impartiality, Grimarest insists, must convince through the rigour of his arguments, and would appear ‘ridiculous’ if he attempted to appeal to their passions or feelings.<sup>93</sup>

‘Declamation’ is the type of oratory aimed at ‘touching the listeners’ hearts’, and its norms serve both preachers and their congregation, and actors and their audiences. Grimarest states that he will be concerned only with actors, and starts from the consideration that on stage the voice, tone and accent are in the service both of transmitting the content and also of expressing and arousing the passions.<sup>94</sup> Gesture and word then combine ‘to confer greater veracity to the action’.<sup>95</sup> It would be ‘bad taste’, however, Grimarest continues, to state the rules governing gestures in excessive detail, and limits himself to a few notes on varying facial expression to match the different passions, and the difficulty of moving the arms with elegance and delicacy.<sup>96</sup>

On the question of voice, Grimarest devotes considerable space to tone and the different nuances suited to the different passions. He reprises, though without citing it, Bary’s *Méthode pour bien prononcer un discours*, from 1679, addressed to preachers, even examining the vocal range covering the different mental states and the subtlest of their combinations.<sup>97</sup> The passion of love, for example, can produce ‘sweetness’, ‘joy’, or ‘pain’ and should be reproduced in their corresponding tones: respectively ‘tender and caressing’, ‘gay’, or ‘insistent and mournful’. In expressing hate, accompanied by an attitude which is ‘rough, harsh, and pitiless’, the voice should take on, in different emotional conditions, the tones of ‘harshness’, ‘reproof’, or ‘firm severity’, etc.<sup>98</sup>

‘Song’, his last element, is, as the term implies, a form of declamation associated with music, and from this point of view the art of the singer is more complicated since, Grimarest concludes, it has to combine the tempo and tonality of music with those of declamation, which alone is able to express the passions and transmit them to an audience.<sup>99</sup>

Having embarked on a laborious classification of the forms of oratory on which to base recitation, Grimarest in the end achieved a singular result. He had managed to distinguish the actor from the lawyer, but only by comparing him with the preacher – and within a very circumscribed definition of oratory, essentially limited to the art of delivery. If the use of gestures was the criterion separating the reader and the lawyer from the preacher and the actor, the analysis of recitation came down to the study of vocal expressions, relegating gestural to five of the two hundred pages of his text.

But the treatise also evinced traces of a new sensibility, above all in the parts where Grimarest adapts Bary’s precepts to actors and sets out to define not only the

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., pp. 102-107 and pp. 111-117.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., p. 123.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., p. 183.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., pp. 184-187.

<sup>97</sup> On Grimarest’s extensive and unacknowledged use of Bary’s text, see S. Chaouche, *Sept traités sur le jeu du comédien et autres textes*, p. 329 (note 66). In addition to Bary, Grimarest also draws on Le Faucheur’s treatise and Etienne Dubois de Breteville’s *L’éloquence de la chaire, et du barreau, selon les principes les plus solides de la rhétorique sacrée et profane*, Paris, Thierry, 1689. See also Peter France, ‘Autour du Traité du récitatif de Grimarest. Préceptes et problèmes’, *XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, July-September 1981.

<sup>98</sup> Jean-Leonor Le Gallois de Grimarest, *Traité du récitatif*, pp. 135-139. See René Bary, *Méthode pour bien prononcer un discours et pour le bien animer*, Paris, Deny Thierry, 1679, pp. 8-13.

<sup>99</sup> See *ibid.*, pp. 196-197 and pp. 222-231.

tonality of voice for the different passions, but the variations in tone matching the nuances of each passion in combination with different emotional conditions. The seventeenth-century typologies of vocal expression available to the actor were thus honed, refined, and extended. Similarly, remaining within the perspective of recitation based essentially on the use of the voice, Grimarest was intent on prescribing a highly-detailed characterisation of the tonal inflexions proper to the different characters, listing a new series of criteria for reproducing on the stage a series of stock figures, and not only the ubiquitous ‘old man’, ‘servant’, ‘peasant’, etc., but also the ‘précieuse’, the ‘Norman’, the ‘Gascon’, the ‘Fleming’, ‘the Swiss’ and so on.<sup>100</sup>

The whole operation of fully fleshing out a character began to take on a different perspective, at least in some detail or emphasis. For Grimarest this meant not simply reproducing the external features and attitudes, with the appropriate voice inflexions: the actor must ‘enter into the spirit of the part’ and ‘study the character’ in depth to avoid accepting roles uncongenial to his own personality. An actor, he insists, ‘may well be suitable to play a king’ but ‘be unable to enter into the part of a young prince athirst with love or glory; or play the part of a confidante, with its humbler actions and feelings’.<sup>101</sup> Not only the physique du rôle, then, but the inner physiognomy of the actor’s own character was becoming an essential element to play the part satisfactorily. And here theory begins to develop an awareness of the psychological dimension of the actor’s art.

### 7. *Gildon*

The third attempt to elucidate the rules of recitation from the standpoint of oratory came from the English man of letters Charles Gildon, tragedian, drama expert, and Shakespeare scholar. His *The Life of Mr. Betterton* is certainly less linear, not to say confused, than Grimarest’s work, but at the same time it is considerably more complex and sophisticated. Despite the misleading title, it is not a biography of Betterton, who died in 1710 and had been the most important English actor of the previous fifty years. Some scant information on his life is given in the first few pages, followed by a description of a visit Gildon had paid him the year before his death, with a long explication of rules and observations allegedly made by Betterton on that occasion. Basically, however, this was an expedient. Gildon, as he himself explains, used Betterton’s name and prestige to give more authority to his own ideas, just as Plato and Xenophon, he pointed out, had used the figure of Socrates.<sup>102</sup>

With or without Betterton’s blessing, Gildon’s aim was clear: to provide a ‘system of acting, which might be a rule to future players’, since in addition to natural gifts ‘a studious application’ is also required, and must be lifelong.<sup>103</sup> Formulating the rules of such a system was far from easy however, Gildon proudly claimed to be the first to attempt it in English, but recognised his debt to French treatises on oratory which, he recalled, had in their turn drawn on Quintilian and other ancients whose doctrine

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., pp. 179-183.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., p. 80 and pp. 128-129.

<sup>102</sup> See Charles Gildon, *The Life of Mr. Betterton*, London, Robert Gosling, 1710, p. 3.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid., p. 15, p. 17 and p. 33.

they had extended to the conditions of the modern world.<sup>104</sup> As a result his text is top-heavy with explicit or tacit references to Latin and Greek sources: Cicero, Virgil, Horace, Quintilian, Lucian, Plutarch and modern writers such as Thomas Wright, de Cressolles or Le Faucheur, evincing considerable knowledge of the whole debate around the principles of *actio*, expression, and gesturality. All such knowledge, though, Gildon emphasises, must go hand in hand with direct experience of the stage; and he proceeds to accompany his ancients with innumerable references to contemporary English actors and actresses: Mrs. Barry, Mrs. Bradshaw, Robert Wilks, Cardell Goodman, Benjamin Johnson, etc.

The dividing line between the two domains, however – the doctrine of oratory and the practice of recitation – remained hazy and problematic. The majority of his examples, Gildon admitted, came from oratory, but only, he immediately explained, because his treatise was obliged to take into account the professional needs of lawyers and preachers, although this in no way excluded the possibility of a new work dedicated exclusively to the stage.<sup>105</sup>

The reasoning is less than convincing and the format of the treatise would seem better explained as an astute publishing strategy, to appeal to as many readers as possible. The point, however, is rather different. If a text specifically dedicated to acting is put off until a later date it is because, for Gildon too, only oratory can provide the necessary basis for a system of acting. The actor's performance, the lawyer's pleading, and the preacher's sermon belong in any case to the same domain, and what distinguishes them, Gildon states, is just the greater importance of the word in church and the law-court, where the discourse functions by reasoning and proof. In the theatre greater significance is given to facial expressions, body movements, and the rhythm and intonation of the voice: the theatre thus requires a 'more strong, vivid and violent' gesturality, but is also the place where *actio* can reach perfection.<sup>106</sup>

Gildon's position, then, shares two basic premises with, respectively, Perrucci's (recitation constitutes the most perfect and effective form of oratory) and Grimarest's (what distinguishes the actor from other orators is the more extensive and accentuated use of gesture), and at first glance there seems to be no further way of distinguishing the actor's work from that of the lawyer and preacher. The treatise is thus mostly dedicated to illustrating the gestural and vocal code of *actio* along traditional lines. Gildon repeats the principle whereby every inner attitude finds its natural sign in the expressions of the body and voice, which however comprise an immediately comprehensible universal language.<sup>107</sup> He goes into some detail over the positioning and gestures of the body, head, face, eyes, eyebrows, mouth, shoulders,

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<sup>104</sup> See *ibid.*, p. vi and p. ix. Betterton knew neither Greek nor Latin, and in the imaginary dialogue with Gildon, justifies his various observations from the ancients as taken from a manuscript, procured by a friend, containing the wisdom of a 'learned jesuit' (p. 43). A manuscript (though not the same one) is also mentioned at p. 17 and p. 45. Among the modern texts in Latin the treatise draws generously on de Cressolles's *Vacationes autumnales*, and among French authors Le Faucheur, *Traité de l'action de l'orateur*, an English translation of which appeared in 1680 (*An Essay upon the Action of an Orator*).

<sup>105</sup> See *ibid.*, p. x.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 25, p. 57 and also p. 79, p. 112 and pp. 137-138.

<sup>107</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 50.

arms, and lastly hands, hand-movements being ‘more copious and various, than all the other parts of the body’, before going on to the placement of the voice.<sup>108</sup>

The simple language of natural expressions always has to be nurtured by art, however: nothing should disturb the eye or ear of the audience, since in that case ‘will his person be less agreeable, and his speech less efficacious to both, by wanting all that grace, virtue, and power’.<sup>109</sup> This leads into the aesthetic requirements of gesturality and vocality, limiting any overly-realistic actions such as ‘bending a bow, presenting a musquet, or playing any musical instrument, as if you had it in your hands’,<sup>110</sup> and imposing their own norms which forbid, for example, inclining the head on the chest or towards the shoulder as this would create an inelegant and unnatural pose.<sup>111</sup> Aesthetic requirements also reinstate the canonical ban, originally sanctioned by Quintilian, on the use of the left hand and leaving the right inactive, or raising the hands above eye-level, while as regards the use of the voice all the mistakes listed in Iulius Pollux’s *Onomasticon* are dwelt on in detail.<sup>112</sup> To correct anything which could compromise the elegance of his movements, Gildon advises the actor to practise in front of a full-length mirror, at the same time reminding him that the studied expression or gesture must never become affectation, which is inevitably annoying and ridiculous.<sup>113</sup>

The modulation of voice and gesture must also of course meet theatrical requirements: the public has to be able to hear and understand what is happening onstage, which becomes an additional element for the actor to factor into his choice of tone and attitude. If he modulates his voice according to ‘a just observation of the common discourse’, selecting an intensity, tone and stress consonant with the natural reaction of a real-life person to a given situation (offence, grief, etc.), he should raise his voice in proportion to the distance from the audience and conditions in the auditorium.<sup>114</sup> He should equally regulate the speed of delivery – a point already made by de’ Sommi – to allow the audience time to follow and fully process his words, avoiding any sudden rush or change of tempo and rhythm.<sup>115</sup> So far so traditional: but the treatise also contains a number of points and contentions pointing forwards to a profound transformation of the perception of acting. Gildon pitches at far more than Grimarest’s scrupulous observation of the norms of oratory. First of all, the fundamental notions on which the rules are based seemingly evade any clear and commonly-accepted definition. Everyone insists on taking nature as the guide for regulating the intensity and type of expression, but, as Gildon points out, there is no consensus as to what is meant by ‘nature’.<sup>116</sup> Then the rules are hardly accessible to everyone, in that to follow and indeed even to understand them takes genius.<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> Ibid., p. 57.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid., p. 54.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid., p. 78.

<sup>111</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 58.

<sup>112</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 74, p. 76 and pp. 89-91.

<sup>113</sup> See *ibid.*, pp. 53-54 and pp. 62-63.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 85 and p. 105.

<sup>115</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 105 and p. 108. On de’ Sommi’s considerations see C. Vicentini, ‘Theory of Acting III. The Early Italian Treatises and the Theoretical Acting Model’.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 88.

<sup>117</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 57.

Normativity works, then, only with the added value of talent and the personal experience of the actor; originality thus becomes a *sine qua non*.

some had advis'd the learner to have some excellent pattern always before his eyes, and urge, that [the orator] Hortensius was so to Roscius and Aesopus, who always made it their business to be present at his pleadings with that attention as to improve themselves so far by what they saw, as to carry away is fine actions and gestures, and practice afterwards on the stage, what they had seen at the bar: yet can I not allow of this imitation in acting; for when a very young player conceives a strong opinion of any one received authority on the stage, he at best becomes a good copy, which must always fall short of an original.<sup>118</sup>

The importance of personal initiative, a fundamental component of the actor's art, regards first of all the script to be interpreted. Gildon clearly considers respect for the text as indispensable; it must be studied and learnt scrupulously: an actor who needs to be 'supported by loud prompting' or, worse, who makes any sort of addition, subtraction, or modification to the playwright's words is seriously compromising the effectiveness of his own acting. Respect for the text should also extend to the playwright himself, whose views and suggestions can be precious: the great Mrs. Barry, Gildon points out, would always consult 'the most indifferent' of the authors she was interpreting.<sup>119</sup> But for full immersion in the work, the actor has to exploit his own talent and personal culture. If the characterisation of, for example, a heroic figure is textually inadequate, the actor should draw from his own reading and consider how the same figure has been treated by other writers.<sup>120</sup> He should also be versed in moral philosophy, to be able to grasp the textual interrelations between the different passions, their dynamics and external manifestations. Some knowledge of rhetoric would be desirable, as would familiarity with the visual arts.<sup>121</sup> A cultural grounding of the kind will improve the staging of even a mediocre writer, and of plays which 'to read would turn a man's stomach'.<sup>122</sup>

Through this complex process of interpretation, while the actor is learning the script, entering completely into the part and enhancing it with his cultural awareness, the contours of the character gradually emerge with more clearly-defined precision. This is then the criterion deciding the stage use of the tools of oratory, orienting the choice of gesture and movement contained within the code of *actio*.

the player is to consider, that it is not every rude and undesigning *action*, that is his business [...] what he represents is man in his various characters, manners, and passions, and to these heads he must adjust every action; he must perfectly express the quality and manners of the man, whose person he assumes, that is, he must know how his manners are compounded, and from thence know the several features, as I may call 'hem, of his passions. A patriot, a prince, a beggar, a clown, etc. must each have their propriety, and distinction in action as well as words and language.<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>118</sup> Ibid., pp. 55-56.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid., p. 16 and p. 39.

<sup>120</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 36.

<sup>121</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 36 and pp. 138-139.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid., p. 16 and p. 39.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid., p. 34.

There is a further complication. The effort of ‘assuming’ the character throughout the play tends to extend the confines of the code infinitely, and require increasingly subtle and sophisticated forms of expression, to reproduce particularly complex emotional combinations and states of mind. To preach in church or plead at the bar requires the passions suited to the subject matter, and the effective communication of them effectively to the listeners; but here the range of feelings to be expressed – compassion, indignation, perplexity, anger, etc. – is relatively reduced and less nuanced. All the other subtleties and variants categorised in the doctrine of eloquence are required not in preaching or pleading but in representing a character in the complexity of his inner being, externalised by his own character and his interaction with other characters and situations.<sup>124</sup>

The courage of Aeneas, for example, of itself was sedate and temperate, and always attended with good nature; that of Turnus join’d with fury, yet accompany’d with generosity and greatness of mind. The valour of Mezentius was savage and cruel; he has no fury but fierceness, which is not a passion but habit, and nothing but the effect of fury cool’d into a very keen hatred, and inveterate malice.<sup>125</sup>

the countenance in the expression of this passion [love] is extremely various, participating sometimes of the transports of joy, sometimes of the agonies of grief; it is sometimes mingled with the heats of anger, and sometimes smiles with the pleasing tranquillity of an equal joy [...] grief is to be expressed according to its various degrees of violence, hate has the peculiar expression composed of grief, envy, and anger, a mixture of all which ought to appear in the eye.<sup>126</sup>

Lastly, a further, essential application of the resources of oratory is required for the actor to ‘assume’ a character, namely, the use of the different facial expressions to transform his physiognomy. The actor only has the one face, Gildon points out, and unless he can change it substantially for the different roles, the audience has to strain its imagination to visualise a different character.<sup>127</sup> However he can change his face by changing expressive signs; ‘by raising, or falling, contracting, or extending the brows; giving a brisk or sullen, sprightly or heavy turn to his eyes; sharpening or swelling his nostrils, and the various positions of his mouth’ he will obtain results similar to those achieved by the use of masks in classical theatre, or, indeed, improve on them. Masks cancel all facial movements in exchange for the rigidity of a fixed expression, while an actor has to draw on all the expressive means at his command, not least the vivid emotions of the face, if he is to record the lights and shadows of the passions passing through the character.<sup>128</sup>

Interpreting a character, however, is not simply a case of exploiting the most advanced forms of oratory and putting them to unexpected uses. It also has the opposite, negative effect of breaking with innumerable norms codified within a longstanding tradition which however remain intangible for lawyers and preachers. Speech rhythms, for example, it was established, were not to alter too rapidly or unexpectedly if the audience was to be able to follow clearly. Stage action, though,

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<sup>124</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 40.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 35.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 64.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 66 and p. 139.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 62.

Gildon immediately adds, often requires frenetic delivery and very pronounced speech variations.<sup>129</sup> In the same way actorly affectation, at best irritating and at worst absurd, becomes desirable and even indispensable when it is a component of the part he is playing.<sup>130</sup> Even those actions and attitudes which compromise the elegance of the *actio* can all be rehabilitated:

The mouth must never be writh'd, nor the lips bit or lick'd, which are all ungentle and unmannerly actions, and yet what some are frequently guilty of; yet in some efforts or starts of passion, the lips have their share of actions, but this more on the stage, than in any other public speaking, either in the pulpit, or at the bar; because the stage is or ought to be an imitation of nature in those actions and discourses, which are produc'd betwixt man and man by any passion, or on any business which can afford action; for all other has in reality nothing to do with the scene.<sup>131</sup>

Equally, the rules of oratory forbid holding the head up too high, 'which is the mark of arrogance and haughtiness', but 'an exception to this rule will come in for the player, who is to act a person of that character'.<sup>132</sup> By the same logic 'to shrug up the shoulders be no gesture allow'd in oratory, yet on the stage the character of the person, and the subject of his discourse, may render it proper enough'.<sup>133</sup>

The compulsory violation of the code of *actio* on-stage ultimately measures the distance between recitation and other forms of oratory, and is all the more excusable, Gildon has it, the greater the deviancy of theatre discourse from that of preaching or pleading. This is clear from the two theatrical genres, tragedy and comedy. It is comedy which permits all possible transgressions, Gildon maintains. A number of gestures forbidden in the name of elegance and sobriety, and yet acceptable in comedy, remain for Gildon as inadmissible in church or at the bar as on the tragic stage. Conversely, a series of guidelines regarding the use of the voice, which initially would seem more suited to the sermon or legal pleading than to the actor's monologue, he admits, are actually extremely useful to the actor, particularly in tragedy. This is true not only because tragedy draws more on solemnity and dignity of tone, but because greater space is generally accorded to narrative, dialogue, and introspective monologue.<sup>134</sup> All the differences and modifications which distinguish the actor from other orators, then, are reduced when on stage the narrative and evocative function of the lines outweighs that of the immediate rendering of a character in action.

From the formal criterion in Gildon's treatise which distinguishes recitation (the fact that the actor has to use a more marked and energetic gesturality than other orators) there also emerges, then, deliberately or otherwise, a more effective principle which is to become decisive. Stage oratory takes on such different and unique

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<sup>129</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 108.

<sup>130</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 53.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 72-73.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 58.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 73.

<sup>134</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 73 and p. 112. As already stated by d'Aubignac, *La pratique du théâtre*, p. 283. Grimarest, for his part, saw the distinction between tragic and comic acting in the different placement of the voice: 'sublime and pompous' for tragic characters, and 'ordinary and natural' for comedy. In addition, vocal characterisation of the characters was to be emphasised in comedy and limited in tragedy. This could make tragic acting seem more difficult (Jean-Leonor Le Gallois de Grimarest, *Traité de récitatif*, pp. 177-178).

characteristics because the actor shows a character in action, expressing their passions and feelings variously aroused by plot-developments. It is dramaturgic requirements, prevailing over all others, which mark the distinction between the performance of the actor and that of the lawyer or preacher. On this point Gildon is extremely clear: among the thousand talents and qualities required of the actor, ‘the most necessary’ is the ability elegantly to enter into a role and endow the character, caught in all the complexity of their inner workings and sentiments, with the characteristics and habits most proper to them.<sup>135</sup>

At this point, with final awareness of what it is that separates it from its preaching and pleading cognates, recitation can look for new models on which to mould itself. Grimarest had emphasised how actors’ expressive needs were characterised by a greater use of gestures and body movements; and Gildon, as seen above, is in agreement. His treatise gives the point decisive weight and significance however. Action, in the sense of gesture and movement in space, is ‘the support of nature’ and ‘life’ itself, which is why the eye is immediately attracted by everything that moves, and eschews all that remains inactive and immobile.<sup>136</sup> Whence the cardinal rule for the actor:

This natural power of motion or action is the reason, that the attention of the audience is fixt by any irregular or even fantastic action on the stage of the most indifferent player; and supine and drowsy, when the best actors speaks without the addition of action.<sup>137</sup>

Such is the effect of movement on the observing eye that even when the action is simply represented in a painting, it can often arouse passions and impress itself on the mind with a far greater force than words.<sup>138</sup> A painting of moving figures thus becomes the prevailing model for the actor: *the* model which actors should aim at when they wish to give stage action its own, specific characteristics. Paintings of historical subjects can provide models for variety and nuances of physiognomy,<sup>139</sup> and Gildon cites two famous examples, Jacob Jordaens’s *The Descent from the Cross* and *The Sacrifice of Jephthe’s Daughter* by Antoine Coytel, to show how the same feeling, here pain, can transform into so many different combinations in the gestures and expressions of all protagonists.<sup>140</sup>

This is not the only lesson to be learnt from paintings of historical subjects. They also demonstrate how each character has to seem concentrated on the action taking place – clearly essential for an actor. Unlike a lawyer who is ‘on stage’ only when haranguing or pleading, and virtually ceases to exist for the public when others begin to speak, so can wear any expression he chooses, the actor has to remain intent on whatever is happening on stage, and whoever is speaking. By appearing distracted, ‘gazing about’ or, worse, ‘whispering to one another, or bowing to their friends in the pit’, the cast completely ruin the whole stage effect; and this happens, Gildon reports, all too frequently. Here a useful lesson can be learnt from historical paintings such as

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<sup>135</sup> Ibid., pp. 33-34 and p. 139.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid., p. 25.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid., p. 26.

<sup>138</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 51.

<sup>139</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 63.

<sup>140</sup> See *ibid.*, pp. 36-37.

Le Brun's famous *Alexander and the Family of Darius* where all the characters, of every rank and role, seem to share in the grief of the main protagonists.<sup>141</sup>

The actor's participation in stage events requires a different use of the eyes from the lawyer or preacher. Received wisdom requires every orator to 'cast [...] his eyes' on the listeners, 'turning them gently from side to side with an air of regard, sometimes on one person, and sometimes on another'.<sup>142</sup> To appear natural and plausible the actor, on the other hand, while not disregarding the audience, should also continuously take his fellow-actors into account, and train his gaze in the direction of the action.

No man is engaged in dispute, or any argument of moment, but his eyes and all his regard are fixt on the person, he talks with; not but that there are times according to the turn or crisis of a passion, where the eyes may with great beauty be turn'd from the object we address to several ways, as in appeals to Heaven, imploring assistance, to join in your address to any one, and the like.<sup>143</sup>

In composing the 'picture' represented on stage and directing his expressions, then, the actor maintains a double focus: the eye of the spectator and, simultaneously, the character(s) he is addressing.<sup>144</sup> Again it is painting which sets the examples to be followed, both positive and negative:

in the *Psyche and Cupid* of Coypel, her eyes are directed to him as he descends on the wing, and his to her glowing with love and desire, and yet all this is seen in him by those, who view the picture. Titian has drawn the same story, I mean the loves of Cupid and Psyche; but as she lies on the bed naked, we see nothing but her back-parts, tho Cupid advances his knee to the bed, with the eyes fixt on her face, which are turn'd from the spectator. I know not what the Italian's fancy was, to imagine that the back-parts of the mistress of love should be more agreeable, than her face.<sup>145</sup>

The classical figure of the orator as axiomatic example to the actor at this point seems to waver. Demosthenes and Cicero certainly retain their places in the actors' pantheon: but there are new examples to emulate. The actor, Gildon opines, should be as conversant with the figurative arts as 'a Raphael, or Michelangelo', no less.<sup>146</sup>

This link between painting and the stage was not actually new. It had been widely explored in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries: Francesco Robortello, for example, in his *Explicationes* from 1548 had analysed the difference between the concept of imitation in the theatre, painting, and sculpture.<sup>147</sup> Other writers had underlined the aspect of immediacy distinguishing theatre and painting from poetry, while the problem of creating a unified and cohesive composition in painting, distributing a number of subjects across the surface of a canvass, had been compared with questions of staging. More particularly, the late seventeenth century had

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<sup>141</sup> Ibid., p. 37. This need for the actor to appear continuously engaged in stage action when only listening to his interlocutor is also present in Perrucci and Grimarest. Here however Gildon goes further: the engagement is to apply to the whole of the stage action and its emotional atmosphere.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid., p. 65.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid., p. 66.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid., p. 67.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid., pp. 67-68.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid., p. 139.

<sup>147</sup> See Francesco Robortello, *In librum Aristotelis de arte poetica explicationes*, Firenze, L. Torrentino, 1548, p. 11.

examined in some detail painting's ability to reproduce the effect of movement and action through fixed images, and had taken it as their criterion for placing paintings of historical subjects at the top of the hierarchy of painting typologies.<sup>148</sup>

The seventeenth century had equally considered the similarities between the actor and the painter, as in Webster's description of Richard Burbage, or Richard Baker's in the review *Theatrum triumphans* which defined the actor as a 'speaking picture'.<sup>149</sup> Gildon was doing something different however, centring on painting as the immediate, concrete model to show the actor how to interpret a character, express his personality and inner being, and position him within the crowded canvas of the stage. And while the figure of the orator was gradually beginning to lose its prominence as role model in the visual arts and literature, a new, direct, and mutually-beneficial rapport was being established between acting and painting. In a number of theoretical statements for painters, Antoine Coypel, repeatedly cited by Gildon, lists endless precepts from traditional oratorical doctrine. Above all, however, he is careful to recommend that all those who would be great painters and sculptors should go to the theatre, recalling that classical painters would make a point of taking as their close study the stage, the dance, and pantomime.<sup>150</sup>

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<sup>148</sup> The effect of movement and action in paintings was, e.g., studied in sixteenth-century treatises by Alessandro Piccolomini (*Annotazioni nel Libro della Poetica d'Aristotele; con la traduzione del medesimo libro in lingua volgare*, Venezia, G. Guarisco e compagni, 1575, pp. 41-42, part 11) and by Giovanni Paolo Lomazzo (*Della Necessità del moto*, in *Trattato dell'arte della pittura, scultura e architettura*, Milano, P. G. Pontio, 1584, II, chap. 2, now in *Scritti sulle arti*, ed. by R. P. Ciardi, 2 vols., Firenze, Marchi & Bertolli, 1974, II, pp. 97-98). On the effect of movement and action as criterion for the hierarchical position of historical paintings, see André Félibien, 'Préface' to the *Conférences de l'Académie Royale de peinture et de sculpture* (1668), in *Les conférences de l'Académie royale de peinture et de sculpture au XVIIe siècle*, ed. by A. Mérot, Paris, École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-arts, 1996, pp. 50-51. On the whole question of the relationship between theatre and the figurative arts from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century, a fundamental text is E. Hénin, *Ut pictura theatrum. Théâtre et peinture de la Renaissance italienne au classicisme français*, Genève, Droz, 2003. On the eighteenth century equally essential is M. I. Aliverti, *La naissance de l'acteur moderne. L'acteur et son portrait*, Paris, Gallimard, 1998.

<sup>149</sup> John Webster, 'An Excellent Actor' (1615), p. 89; Richard Baker, *Theatrum Triumphans*, London, Francis Eglesfield, 1662, p. 42.

<sup>150</sup> Antoine Coypel, *Discours prononcés dans les conférences de l'Académie royale de peinture et de sculpture*, Paris, Jacques Collombat, 1721, pp. 163-167.