Like Thomas Sheridan, Gilbert Austin was an Irishman and a graduate of Trinity College, Dublin, and devoted himself to elocation. But unlike Sheridan, Austin distrusted the natural method. Though the vast bulk of *Chironomia* (1806; excerpted here), his treatise on elocation, is devoted to presenting the views of ancient and modern rhetoricians on the subject, the work is best known for the mechanical system of notation that Austin proposed for recording and choreographing speech performances.

Austin had a number of admirers and imitators, and his book encouraged closer attention to the details of nonverbal communication. But the reigning view was articulated by Richard Whately in 1828, in *Elements of Rhetoric*: “Probably not a single instance could be found of any one who has attained, by the study of any system of instruction that has hitherto appeared, a really good Delivery; but there are many, — probably nearly as many as have fully tried the experiment, — who have by this means been totally spoiled.” Whately praises Sheridan and advocates the “natural” method.

Reprinted here are one of a number of examples in *Chironomia* showing how symbols can be used to indicate the delivery of a speech, four of eleven plates of illustrations, and a summary of Austin’s notation system.

**Selected Bibliography**

Our excerpt is from the facsimile of the first edition of Austin’s *Chironomia*; or, *A Treatise on Rhetorical Delivery*. First published in 1806, the facsimile is edited by Mary Margaret Robb and Lester Thonssen (Carbondale, 1966). The editors’ introduction provides useful information about Austin, the history of the elocution movement, and the development of the elocution curriculum in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Little scholarship is devoted specifically to Austin, though he figures prominently in discussions of the history of elocution. G. P. Mohrmann, one of the few exceptions, defends Austin against complaints that he is merely mechanical, in “The Real *Chironomia*” (*Southern Speech Journal* 34 [Fall 1968]: 17–27). For general studies of elocution, see the headnote on Thomas Sheridan.
SYMBOLES FOR NOTING THE FORCE AND RAPIDITY OR INTERRUPTION OF THE VOICE IN DELIVERY

The symbols are to be marked in the margin near the commencement of the passage which they are to influence.

### Symbols

- Piano
- Uniform loudness, or forte
- Crescendo (as in music)
- Diminuendo (as in music)
- Rapid
- Slow
- Suspension of the voice, (the break or dash after a word)
- Long pause, or new paragraph
- Whisper or monotone

### Compound Symbols

- Piano and slow
- Piano and quick
- Loud and slow
- Loud and quick
- Monotonous or whisper slow
- Monotone or whisper quick

Compare with page 24 of Steele’s *Prosodia Rationalis*.

It is requested to be understood that the various passages, which are marked with the notation, are intended merely to illustrate the foregoing system: and that among the innumerable methods of possible delivery, that which is chosen and represented is to be considered as one method only, how far soever removed from the best. It is one property of this system of notation, that whilst it furnishes the means of recording each person’s ideas of gesture, it does not presume to dictate. It is a language, which may be used to express every variety of opinion.

In the portion of Gay’s fable of the Miser and Plutus, which is doubly illustrated both by engraved figures\(^1\) and by notation, it has been found necessary to omit in the notation some circumstances, in order to express nothing more than what is seen in the figures, and in others for the same reason to be redundant. Thus the retired hand and also the feet are sometimes noted oftener than absolutely necessary, and some transitions are of necessity omitted. It is hoped, however, that the great pains and attention bestowed upon these illustrations will suffice for the purpose of conveying to the reader a tolerably accurate knowledge of the manner of using the notation.

For the greater convenience and precision each figure is numbered in the Plate, and referred to accordingly in the following notation.

The perpendicular line — divides the portions of writing which refer to each numeral and figure.

### THE MISER AND PLUTUS

*Gay*\(^2\)

- The wind was high, the window shakes;
- With sudden start the miser wakes!
- Along the silent room he stalks;

\(^1\)Austin seems to have intended to illustrate some of the positions with drawings, but none accompany the text he refers to here. [Ed.]

\(^2\)John Gay (1685–1732), English poet. [Ed.]
5. Looks back, and trembles as he walks!

6. Each lock and ev'ry bolt he tries,

7. In ev'ry creek and corner pries;

8. Then opens his chest with treasure stored,

9. And stands in rapture o'er his hoard:

10. But now with sudden qualms posses,

11. He wrings his hands, he beats his breast.

12. By conscience stung he wildly stares;

13. And thus his guilty soul declares.

14. Had the deep earth her stores confin'd,

15. This heart had known sweet peace of mind,

16. But virtue's sold! Good Gods! what price

17. Can recom pense the pangs of vice?

18. O bane of good! seducing cheat!

19. Can man, weak man, thy power defeat?

20. Gold banish'd honour from the mind,

21. And only left the name behind;

22. Gold sow'd the world with ev'ry ill;

23. Gold taught the murd'rer's sword to kill;

24. 'T was gold instructed coward hearts

25. In treach'ry's more pernicious arts.

26. Who can recount the mischiefs o'er?

27. Virtue resides on earth no more!

Observations on the Notation

No. I. The direction of motion expressed by the 4th small letter r, means that from the position in which both hands are presented vhf, they should move both towards the right and stop at the position oblique as noted by q, connected by a dash to the position mentioned.

No. II. The 4th small letter n signifies noting. See manner of motion in the synoptical table, and Chap. XIII. . . .

No. XII. The position of the hands at first is, both folded horizontal forwards as expressed in the notation Bfl. hf. At the a connected by the dash, which signifies ascending, the hands are raised up, and at the next notation Bfl. br. they are forcibly withdrawn back on the breast.

No. XXI. This position begins horizontal as first noted Bvhf, and ends elevated as in the figure. Bvhf, but the B is omitted over the word weak, being understood by the connect-dash.

No. XXV. The third small letter relating to the transverse direction of the arm is often placed alone, but connected by a dash with a preceding set of letters, as already observed No. I. In such case it is to be understood that the position of the hands remains as before, and that the transverse direction only of the arm is changed. Here each arm passes through the whole semicircle from the position across to extended.
Positions of the Hands used by ancient Orators.

from Quinellon's "Lettres"

Figure 3
Table 1. Alphabetical Arrangement of Symbolic Letters

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Above the Line. Hands, Arms, Body and Head,</th>
<th>Below the Line Feet,</th>
<th>Capitals and small; significant Gestures.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Capital B and double small Letters. Both Arms and both Hands.</td>
<td>Capitals for Head and Eyes.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Hand.</td>
<td>2. Elevation of the Arm.</td>
<td>3. Transverse Position of the Arm.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>ascending alternate</td>
<td>applied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B backwords</td>
<td>backwards</td>
<td>both</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C clinched</td>
<td>across</td>
<td>crossing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>downwards</td>
<td>descending</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>elevated</td>
<td>forwards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F forwards</td>
<td>forwards</td>
<td>grasping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G grasping</td>
<td>horizontal</td>
<td>inwards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H</td>
<td>inwards</td>
<td>outwards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I index</td>
<td>left</td>
<td>Lips</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K</td>
<td>collected</td>
<td>moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L</td>
<td>natural</td>
<td>left</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>'left'</td>
<td>Nasal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N noting</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O</td>
<td>outward</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P prone</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q oblique</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R Rest</td>
<td>right recoiling repressing ejecting</td>
<td>reposed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S supine</td>
<td>sweep springing, striking shaking</td>
<td>shaking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T</td>
<td>touching throwing</td>
<td>Tossing traverse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U</td>
<td>Uwirds</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V Vertical</td>
<td>revolving</td>
<td>Vacancy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W hollow</td>
<td>waving</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X extended</td>
<td>extreme</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>