THE CAMBRIDGE HISTORY OF
LITERARY CRITICISM

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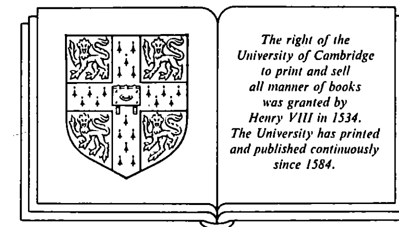
THE CAMBRIDGE HISTORY OF LITERARY CRITICISM

VOLUME 1

Classical Criticism

EDITED BY
GEORGE A. KENNEDY



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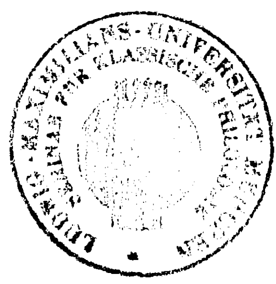

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some if seen dimly, some if in the light, unafraid of the critic's sharp judgement, some please only once, some withstand ten viewings (361 – 5). Horace gives no value judgement, but he will obviously prefer what will stand up to repeated and close study.[35]

Addressing the elder son of Piso, Horace pulls his points together. The boy has the ethical knowledge (*sapis*, 367) but is warned that, in contrast to utilitarian oratory, there is no room for mediocrity in art-forms designed to give pleasure, that talent needs also technique: so submit your writing to a critical ear, such as Horace's, and wait nine years before you publish (338).[36]

After the emphasis on poetry's link with pleasure, Horace redresses the balance with solemn praise of the social and sacral role of poets in an earlier age (391ff.). Poets founded and civilised society, Orpheus tamed beasts (Horace endorses an allegorical explanation: he stopped the eating of meat); Amphion's music moved stones to build the walls of Thebes; poets of old had *sapientia* (wisdom), produced laws, stirred men to war, gave oracles and moral advice, and in lyric mode pleased kings and gave relaxation. Such ideas go back to at least Aristophanes, *Frogs* (1030 – 6) and the claims of the sophists that they, not the poets, were the true inventors and educators. The strength of Roman prejudice against poetry is clear from the very emphasis Horace lays on the poet's historical status in Greece, to show a young Roman like Piso that it is no shame to write poetry.

Finally Horace turns to the question of genius and technique. The need for both, which has underpinned the whole poem, is now explicit: they form a partnership (408 – 11, quoted above). He gives two contrasting cameos, the ideal of *ars* and the warning caricature of untutored madness. First the young Piso is told to avoid flatterers and submit his verses to the judgement of a Quintilius.[37] 'If you ever recited anything to him, he would say "please correct this and that"' (438 – 9). If you dismissed his criticism, he wasted no more time on you. Such a critic will not say: 'Why should I offend a friend over a trifle' (450 – 1). Poetry submitted to scrupulous criticism is followed by the mad poet wandering uncontrolled, a figure to be avoided and left alone when he falls into a well. It is a splendid caricature, a counterpoise to the opening grotesque of uncontrolled disunity, and Horace ends as he began on a note of humour. It is one of the memorable vignettes which together with the abrupt transitions hide the underlying abstract thought and logical connections, but the apparent inconsequentiality is itself the result of infinite art. This has not always been recognised. Scaliger called the poem 'an Art written without art', but there has been an increasing appreciation of Horace's

[35] Brink, *ad loc.*, against R.W. Lee, '*Ut pictura poesis*: The humanistic theory of painting', *The Art Bulletin*, 22 (1940), 199.
[36] An allusion to the nine years of Cinna's *Smyrna*, see above, section 1.
[37] Friend of Horace and Virgil, his death is lamented in *Od.* 1.24.

own skill, and the way in which he attempts not merely a poem on poetics but a poem which itself embodies those poetics.[38]

3 *Dionysius of Halicarnassus*

A close contemporary of Horace, though so far as we know not personally acquainted with him, Dionysius came to Rome *c.* 30 BC and there composed a major historical work, *The Antiquities of Rome*, published in 8 BC. In addition he produced a series of important rhetorical essays. Their order of composition is not entirely certain,[39] but the earliest seem to be the first part of *On Ancient Orators* (*Preface*, *Lysias*, *Isocrates*, and *Isaeus*), *To Ammaeus I*, and perhaps *On Imitation*, then come *On Composition*, *Demosthenes*, *To Pompeius*, *Thucydides*, *To Ammaeus II*, and *Dinarchus*.

Dionysius is perceptive and sensible, unusually aware of the usefulness of comparative criticism and the close textual analysis of examples. He employs traditional classifications such as the theory of virtues, but he claims to be the first to isolate the characteristics of specific authors and to make a detailed study of word-arrangement (*Preface* 4; *On Composition*, 1). His aim is practical, to provide models for imitation, and he quotes extensively from a wide range of authors. He analyses style from the viewpoint of a moderate Atticist and approves morally or politically useful content. He criticises, for example, to modern minds wrongly, the focus on Greek sufferings in Thucydides' choice of the Peloponnesian War and prefers the pan-Hellenism of Herodotus and Isocrates (*To Pompeius* 3; *Isocrates* 5). He combines a historian's care for evidence with literary scholarship in his interest in biography and authenticity. Two essays belong here. *To Ammaeus I*, on the chronological impossibility of influence on Demosthenes from Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, and the *Dinarchus*, on the biographical evidence for Dinarchus and the genuineness of his speeches. So too internal chronological evidence proves two speeches are not by Lysias (*Lysias* 12). But in the last resort the test of authenticity is trained literary sensitivity, the final criterion the reader's own emotional reaction, his perceptiveness unaided by reason, *alogos aisthēsis*. Lysias, for example, is identifiable by the presence of a charm which Dionysius feels but cannot define (*Lysias* 11; cf. e.g., *Demosthenes* 24). Sensitivity to literature is important, and Dionysius strikingly reveals his own responses in *Demosthenes* 22: he reads Isocrates in tranquillity but is transported by Demosthenes, as if a celebrant in ecstatic rites; he relives each successive emotion as it is evoked, and reflects on the still greater impact on the original audience.

Dionysius also has a sense of historical development, recognising that style, for example, evolves from predecessors. The basic premise for the choice of six

[38] For its enormous later influence, see Russell in *Horace*, ed. Costa, pp. 126 – 32, and n. 32.
[39] Bonner, *Dionysius*, ch. 2; Usher, I, pp. xxii – xxvi; Germaine Aujac (ed.), Dion. Hal. (Paris, 1979), I, pp. 22 – 8.

orators in *On Ancient Orators* is chronological: they are the three most significant of the earlier and later generations of Attic orators; the former originate styles (Lysias, Isocrates, and Isaeus), the latter perfect them (Demosthenes, Hyperides, and Aeschines). This plan is particularly clear in the unusual choice of Isaeus: he is important as the link between Lysias and Demosthenes (he introduces a technical precision which influences Demosthenes), but, unlike the others, he is not a model for our imitation (*Isaeus* 2–3; 20).

The *Lysias*, *Isocrates*, and *Isaeus* were published together with the *Preface* and share the same pattern of biography, style, content, and typical sample pieces. Style is assessed by use of the traditional theory of qualities or virtues, *aretai*, a list of the desirable qualities a writer achieves or lacks. These qualities are subdivided as 'necessary' and 'additional' or ornamental (e.g., *To Pompeius* 3; *Thucydides* 22), and the latter expand the fourth Theophrastean quality of ornamentation, the former match the other three, with the Stoics' addition of brevity. The theory is important as a standard critical framework, it influenced the still greater elaborations of the theory of ideas in Hermogenes, but without application to texts it becomes a mere checklist of approved critical labels, as in Dionysius' *On Imitation* to judge from the quotations in *To Pompeius* 3–6; for example, Thucydides lacks lucidity and charm but has grandeur and force, Herodotus has lucidity, charm, and grandeur, but lacks force.

The essay on *Lysias* gives lengthier treatment but similarly cites examples without comment. Thus Lysias has good, ordinary Greek, and lucidity, brevity, compression, vividness, power of characterisation, pleasantly simple word-order, propriety, persuasiveness, and most essentially charm, but he lacks force and grandeur (*Lysias* 2–11). Analysis of examples begins in the *Isocrates*: this essay is more concerned with Isocrates' life and thought than style, but specific texts illustrate the excessive use of balanced periods, and we have the first example of Dionysius' favoured method of *metathesis*, the recasting of an example in a different form (14; 20). It is perhaps significant that Dionysius is analysing word-order: compare already *Lysias* 14, where a passage of Lysias is cited within a quotation from Theophrastus for its balance and antithesis. (Dionysius considers it spurious on grounds of style.) The *Isaeus* rapidly lists Isaeus' qualities of style but then develops a long comparison of Isaeus and Lysias. Close study of the texts of each will show their different styles (2), and contrasting examples are cited from each and analysed in some detail (3–12). Isaeus and Demosthenes are then briefly compared (12–3), again with detail: both use asyndeton and rhetorical questions. Dionysius' characteristic methods of detailed analysis and comparison are already evident, and are openly asserted in the *Demosthenes*: no author can be satisfactorily analysed in isolation (33); judgement is tested by the analysis of examples (9).

The *Preface*, praising the victory of Atticism over Asianism, might lead us to expect an Atticist bias in favour of Lysias, the prime Atticist model. But Dionysius' attitude to the Attic orators is similar to that of Cicero: Demosthenes is agreed by all to be the best (e.g., *Isaeus* 20); there are different types of good style (*Lysias* 11); and though Lysias is unsurpassed in some areas, particularly his apparent naturalism, he lacks that grandeur and force which reveal an orator's full powers (*Lysias* 5, 13). So too Isocrates uses periodic structure, symmetry, and rhythm to excess, but they are not condemned as such and Dionysius avoids an appearance of contemporary polemic by linking his criticism to that of much earlier critics (*Isocrates* 13). Later works show similarly balanced treatment of Thucydides and Plato against uncritical devotees (*Demosthenes* 23; *To Pompeius* 1–2; *Thucydides* 2).

The *Demosthenes* is much longer, as fits Demosthenes' status as the best orator. In chapters 1–34 Dionysius adopts the theory of styles as a useful framework to show the sheer range of Demosthenes, master of all styles (compare Cicero's *Orator*). There are three styles, the grand (model: Thucydides), the plain (model: Lysias) and the middle, invented by Thrasymachus, nearly perfected by Isocrates and Plato, perfected by Demosthenes. The historical perspective of the earlier essays continues, but Isaeus is no longer an originator (8) and Demosthenes is set against all the best earlier writers as 'the ideal eclectic'.[40] He adds vigour to the Lysianic style, lucidity to the Thucydidean, and within the middle or best style he is superior to Isocrates and Plato. The styles are not an entirely satisfactory system, since the middle style lacks individuality, covering everything between the other two, which are seen as polar extremes like the top and bottom notes in a musical scale (2). But Dionysius' proof of Demosthenes' superiority is an excellent example of comparative criticism. He is weakest on Plato, deaf to his irony in the *Phaedrus* and testing his style off the *Menexenus* – it is untypical and probably parodic – but it was then much admired, and his methodology is sound, the comparison of authors on the basis of their best passages (23).

There is an abrupt new start on sentence-structure in chapters 35ff., and this second part may well have been composed at a later stage, since it mentions and largely repeats ideas from *On Composition*: Demosthenes is the best model of the intermediate type of word-arrangement. His skill in delivery is also stressed, and finely illustrated by the swift pace of *Philippics* 3.26–7 (53–4). Dionysius is in general too uncritical of Demosthenes (he denies him only wit, 54), but his acute and closely detailed textual analysis is a major contribution to ancient criticism.

The essay *On Thucydides* shares the same strengths but carefully balances Thucydides' virtues and weaknesses. Dionysius' assessments do not always convince but they reveal interesting assumptions. He was also himself a historian, as was the addressee, the Roman Tubero, one of Thucydides'

40 Usher, I, p. 235.

admirers.[41] At the end Dionysius fears he may not have pleased Tubero (55) and he very carefully defends himself against charges of malice towards Thucydides (esp. 2–4). Contemporary enthusiasm for Thucydides is also seen by a further essay, *To Ammaeus II*, which meets a demand for Dionysius to amplify the excellent remarks on style in *Thucydides* 24.

In subject-matter (5–20) he praises Thucydides' wish to be useful and the rejection of myth (it does not fit contemporary history), condemns the annalistic structure by seasons (it fragments the narrative), and cannot see why he amplifies some episodes but not others, a criticism which reveals insensitivity to dramatic juxtapositions (e.g., the interweaving of the fate of two defeated cities in Book III). In style Thucydides surpasses earlier historians, and has four main characteristics: innovation in vocabulary, variety of figures, harsh arrangement, and compression of ideas. He is compact, vigorous and, above all, emotionally powerful, but excess leads to obscurity (21–4; cf. 49). This is well observed, and Dionysius' method of proof is new: he will analyse all these aspects together, using selected pieces to examine both style and content (25). He again balances success and failure. Predictably, for example, he admires the tragic narrative of the naval defeat at Syracuse but not the densely analytical account of civil strife at Corcyra (26–8).[42] The former, he notes, can be appreciated by more than the educated élite, a point he resumes in 50–1, where he rebuts the claim of 'some reputable sophists' that Thucydides writes only for a minority, who will find nothing strange in his style: but, if so, the many are deprived of a useful subject, we now need a linguistic commentary, and the style was eccentric even in Thucydides' own day. In short, for Dionysius obscurity is a fault which must be eliminated (as in his own recastings) if we are to imitate Thucydides. Some of the criticism may seem insensitive, but Dionysius is not analysing the uniqueness of Thucydides but assessing him as a model for others.

On Composition is a work of critical theory on the arrangement of words in poetry and prose. Dionysius' arguments for the importance of arrangement are traditional, for example that it can alone rescue a passage of 'ordinary' thought and diction, as in Telemachus' arrival at the swineherd's hut in Homer (3).[43] But his independence is quickly seen as he turns from the inadequacies of earlier textbooks to his own research and with characteristic empiricism refutes the then common notion of a 'natural' word-order, that it would, for example, be more naturally pleasing to put nouns before verbs (5) (cf. Demetrius 195). He aims instead to establish from observing the practice of ancient authors what combinations of letters, words, clauses,

[41] For recent Roman enthusiasm for Thucydides cf. Cic., *Orator* 30–2, and Sallust's emulation.

[42] C. W. Macleod, 'Thucydides on faction (3.82–3)', *Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society*, 205 (1979), 52–68.

[43] *Od.* 16.1–16; cf. Longinus 40.2–3 for such arguments; for Philodemus' rebuttal, see above, ch. 6, section 8.

and sentences are attractive, a programme which elicits interesting glimpses of linguistic and musical theory.[44]

The goal is pleasure and/or beauty (10; cf. *Demosthenes* 47), which is produced by the appropriate combination of melodious sound, rhythmical arrangement, and variety, and, as in music, we have an instinctive appreciation (11). Dionysius accepts the view that sounds and rhythms have 'natural' connotations, but in the identification of melodious sounds he is unusually exhaustive in assigning aesthetic values to each vowel and consonant; thus long vowels are more euphonious, S and R are rough, L is sweet (13–16). The system is too rigid, though it follows logically from the underlying Stoic assumption that sounds and words alike imitate nature,[45] but the supporting examples include some striking sound-effects from combinations of syllables and letters, such as the relentless sound of the sea in Homer (*Il.* 17.265): 'The foreshores boom to the echo of the salty brine',

> *ēiones booōsin ereugomenēs halos exō*
> – ⏑⏑| – ⏑ ⏑| – ⏑ ⏑| – ⏑ ⏑| – ⏑⏑ | – ⏑

Note the vowel sequences and monotonous dactyls. Rhythms and metres are similarly categorised (each is noble or base), and Dionysius may be the first critic to offer detailed scansion of lengthy passages of prose (17–18). Though some of his identifications of metrical feet appear arbitrary, prose-rhythm is rightly seen to be used differently by Thucydides, Plato, Demosthenes, and Hegesias. He then briefly proves the need for variety (19) and appropriateness (20), and in a particularly fine and detailed appreciation he analyses Homer's famous lines (*Od.* 11.593–8; cf. Demetrius 72–3) on the labour of Sisyphus, who in five dragging lines of long syllables and rhythms 'pushes up the stone',

> *laan anō ōtheske,*
> – ⏑ ⏑| – – | – ⏑

only for it to 'spin away again to the plain' in a single fluid line of quick dactyls:

> *autis epeita pedonde kulindeto laas anaidēs.*
> – ⏑ ⏑| – ⏑ ⏑| – ⏑ ⏑| – ⏑⏑ | – ⏑ ⏑| – –

Three principal types of arrangement are then introduced: the austere, the elegant, and the well-blended (21–4; cf. *Demosthenes* 37–41). This triad is not to be confused with the triad of grand, plain, and middle styles; it derives from musical theory, and the austere and the elegant reflect the twin goals of beauty and charm. The austere type, illustrated by minutely analysed examples from Pindar and Thucydides, has harsh consonants, long syllables, hiatus,

[44] D. M. Schenkeveld, 'Linguistic theories in the rhetorical works of Dionysius of Halicarnassus', *Glotta*, 61 (1983), 67–94.

[45] Note also the reference to Plato's *Cratylus* in *Comp.* 16. On Philodemus' counter-view see above, ch. 6, section 8.

discordant juxtapositions, slow pauses, and abrupt and asymmetrical sequences of clauses and sentences. The elegant type, as in passages of Sappho and Isocrates, is characterised by the opposite: pleasant sounds and smoothly flowing clauses and balanced periods. In undiluted form both are extremes, but they blend together to provide the third and best type, which (like the middle style) will therefore cover a range of different mixtures, as in Homer, Demosthenes, and Plato. Finally (25–6) Dionysius considers how prose can be like poetry and poetry like prose, but he confines himself to rhythm and is most interesting in his characteristic strength, the deployment of examples.

4 *Minor figures*

Book I of the Stoic Strabo's *Geography* argues against Eratosthenes' claim that Homer is geographically unreliable and poets aim only to please.[46] Homer is the founder of geographical science, morally sound and concerned to present real life. But Strabo allows some compromise: fictions added to give pleasure can obscure the underlying truth, as in Odysseus' wanderings; and poetic licence sanctions a blend of the truth of history, vivid presentation, and the pleasure of myth. Strabo is hardly original, but he well illustrates the widespread acceptance of Homer's educational role.

Other figures of the period are shadowy. Rhetorical theory flourished, but rules and classifications dominated, as in the heated rivalry between the followers of Apollodorus of Pergamum and Theodorus of Gadara, which lasted into the second century.[47] Apollodorus (*c.* 104–22 BC) laid down strict rules for the organisation of speeches: thus every speech must include four parts, always in the order prooemion, narrative, proof, and epilogue; and emotion (*pathos*) is excluded from narrative and proof. Theodorus (*fl.* 33 BC) was more flexible: narrative is not always required; emotion may enter the proof. But for Quintilian the differences are technical and minimal, and both critics ignore the practical requirements of the lawcourts (3.6.1; 5.13.59), a fault we can link to the growing popularity of declamation. Figures of speech also loomed large, to judge from the lost treatises of Caecilius, Dionysius, and Gorgias the Younger (*fl.* 44 BC), whose four books on figures survive in a Latin abridgement by Rutilius Lupus and whose Asianist sympathies emerge from his unusual inclusion of Hellenistic examples, including Hegesias.[48] Augustan or slightly earlier, Tryphon's *On Tropes* is also lost, though its general outline is clear from

46 See esp. 1.1.2, 1.2.3–19; Schenkeveld, 'Strabo on Homer'.
47 Grube, 'Theodorus', rightly refutes wider claims that Theodorus was an empiricist who made emotion all-important; cf. Seneca, *Contr.* 2.1.36; Quint. 2.11.2, 4.2.32, 5.13.59.
48 Seneca, *Contr.* 1.4.7; Quint. 9.2.102; text of Rutilius Lupus (first century AD) in *Rhetores Latini Minores*, ed. Halm, pp. 3–21; also ed. G. Barabino (Genoa, 1967).

its influence on later surviving treatises.[49] A few fragments survive of what sounds like a more original work, *On Wit* (*De urbanitate*) by the epigrammatist, Domitius Marsus,[50] who regarded wit as a pithy elegance of phrase which could be serious or humorous: 'a quality of compression into a brief saying suited to delight and move men to every emotion'.

The tradition of Hellenistic scholarship also continued, though we have little more than a parade of names and titles.[51] There were Latin works on philology by, for example, Messalla, *On the Letter S* (Quint. 1.7.23, 1.7.35), Cloatius Verus, *On Latin Words Derived from Greek* (Gellius 16.12), and Verrius Flaccus, *On the Meaning of Words* (a massive work on ancient and obsolete words which was abridged by Festus); and on critical exegesis we may note especially three freedmen: Caecilius Epirota, Crassicius Pansa, and Julius Hyginus.[52] Hyginus, librarian of Augustus' Palatine library from 28 BC, wrote commentaries on Cinna's *Propemptikon Pollionis* and Virgil; Crassicius wrote a commentary on Cinna's erudite *Smyrna*; and Epirota, 'the nurse of tender young bards' (Domitius Marsus, fr. 3 Morel), lived in the poet Gallus' household and after his death opened a school whose curriculum first introduced contemporary Latin poets such as Virgil. Greek scholarship on Homer also continued with Aristonicus, whose lost work on Menelaus' wanderings was used by Strabo (1.2.31).

There is no sharp break between the critical theory and methods of the Hellenistic and the Augustan periods, nor between that of the Augustan and imperial periods. Critical theory continued along the lines given it by the philosophical schools, while critical practice was dominated by teachings of the grammatical and rhetorical schools. In poetic criticism the most striking development is Horace's unique combination of traditional precepts, personal experience, and sensitive judgement; in prose the phenomenon of Atticism and Dionysius' efforts at a more subtle description of style. Atticism and the identification of qualities of style will remain major concerns of Greek critics of the Empire and also of the Byzantine period.

49 M. L. West, 'Tryphon *De Tropis*', *CQ*, 15 (1965), 230–48, too readily ascribes *Rhetores Graeci* 3, pp. 215–26 Spengel, to Tryphon.
50 Quint. 6.3.102–12; E. S. Ramage, 'The *De Urbanitate* of Domitius Marsus', *CP*, 54 (1959), 250–5.
51 On these and others, see Duret, *Dans l'ombre*.
52 Suetonius, *De grammaticis* 16, 18, 20; Charisius, *Grammatici Latini*, ed. Keil, p. 134.